

Editorial

One of the most exciting things for me during 1999 was being involved in a variety of working groups. At most of these meetings I had an opportunity to talk about SAFRING ringing procedures. In February I attended the raptor workshop in the Karoo National Park, outside Beaufort West. I met some of the bal-chatri brigade as well as other lovers of raptors. Although I have a dislike for chemistry, I thoroughly enjoyed Gerhard Verdoorn's chemistry presentation on the poisons used in southern Africa that affect cultures and raptors.

In March I attended a Migrant Pests workshop in Pretoria. A large part of the workshop dealt with the Redbilled Quelea *Quelea quelea*. I presented data on the movements of quelea based on the 510 recoveries in the SAFRING database. There are as yet too few recoveries to obtain a clear picture of quelea movements in relation to rainfall. It is a great pity that the Department of Agriculture has stopped the sponsorship of quelea rings. They may, however, sponsor specific scientific quelea research projects even if they include ringing of quelea.

In April the Crane Working Group (CWG) met in Ugie in the Eastern Cape. The CWG has been putting colour rings on the three cranes, though mainly Blue Cranes *Anthropoides paradiseus*, so keep a lookout for these. Satellite transmitters have been placed on some birds, giving interesting (but expensive!) data on local crane movements. In April I also attended a Population and Habitat Viability Assessment workshop for the African Penguin. Ringing data and published data were used to model the survival potential of this endangered species. Unfortunately I did not attend the Vulture Study Group meeting; hopefully I'll manage it in 2000! Seabirds are ringed in large numbers by Marine & Coastal Management, as well as by other organisations and individuals. I had the

opportunity to join MCM in ringing expeditions on Robben Island.

It is exciting to see the variety of working groups, largely conservation orientated, but including ringing as a tool. By learning more about survival and movements, threatened birds can be better protected. Or, in the case of the quelea, better controlled! It is a pity that the waterbird ringing groups are no longer active. This problem is referred to in the article on 50 years of ringing (pp. 11–13), while the spectacular results of previous waterbird ringing are described in the latest review of ring recoveries (see p. 14). Rondevlei is making a start to learning these skills again. Barberspan has many waterbird rings and there is an opportunity for ringers to become involved in large-scale ringing again. Monitoring waterbirds can help monitor wetlands, a threatened habitat. There was no local Wader Study Group workshop in 1999 but some of their ringers are very active, notably Tony Tree who submitted several articles for this issue of *Safring News*.

Although the above bird groups largely deal with passerines, the mistnetters have not been forgotten. The training workshop and ringers' conference at Witsand in March 2000 promises to be a great event (see p. 56). There is a possibility of holding regular training sessions at a fixed site, namely Wakkerstroom, in the future. This will not prevent local ringing groups from holding mini-training workshops. The Pretoria Ringing Group did so successfully in October 1999 at the Rustenburg Nature Reserve. Ringers are free to invite me to join in their ringing activities. I would like to travel around the country sometime in 2000 to visit as many ringers as possible.

It is encouraging to see several contributions to the ageing and sexing of birds in the hand (pp. 25–30). Keep those contributions coming in, ringers!

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