

Bird ringing or frog atlasing?

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At an Escarpment Bird Club bird-ringing outing on 22 November 1997, at the Gustav Klingbiel Nature Reserve just outside Lydenburg, we had a very interesting ringing experience. Our nets were spanned at numerous sites surrounding a small dam in the reserve from 06h00 onwards. Initially, we caught species such as Spottedbacked Weavers, Cape Weavers and Whitewinged Widows, all of which were breeding profusely in and around the dam.

Much to our surprise however, on a routine check of the nets at about 08h00, we found a Malachite Kingfisher with its food, a large tadpole, also lying tangled in the net below the kingfisher. The tadpole had obviously dislodged from the kingfisher's bill on impact with the net. The amphibian was,

needless to say, dead while the kingfisher had obviously lost his catch of the morning. As most of the people (our EBC members) arrived to see what all the commotion was about, comments rang out, ranging from 'What size ring do we put on froggie' to 'Why go bird ringing when you can do frog atlasing?'

Photographs were taken to capture this unique and interesting event, and then the kingfisher was duly ringed and released, hopefully to try his luck again! Observations of this sort prove that something different and new always presents itself when one participates in such activities. It would be interesting to hear whether other ringers (or birders) have had similar experiences.

