

BENEFITS OF RINGING GROUPS

1. Communication: It makes it easier for SAFRING to communicate to all ringers in a group at once by phoning the local coordinator who in return reports to the rest of the group during meetings or by telephone.
2. The coordinator of the group knows which sites, say in and around Pretoria, are being ringed at and which sites need to be ringed in order to make the sites representative.
3. It is safer to ring in groups when visiting some areas.
4. A list of all ringers' ring numbers makes it easier to look up retraps by simply looking up the ring number on the list to see to whom the ring belongs and phoning the relevant ringer for the details of the bird.
5. Sharing vehicles when going on camps makes it cheaper.
6. The more nets available the more birds may be ringed. When more ringers attend a camp they can spread over a wider area to ensure that the area is thoroughly covered.

This makes the effort more worthwhile.

7. Probably the most important aspect is sponsorship. It is easier to get sponsorship for a group than for an individual. We have managed to get a sponsor for one ringing year, thanks to Andrew Tucker. The money has helped to cover costs such as petrol, equipment and rings in addition to the sponsorship of R2500 per annum from the Pretoria Bird Club for rings. The money is divided between ringers for the effort they expended in ringing as a percentage of the total birds ringed by all ringers in the group. The more birds ringed by a ringer, the more money he or she gets.
8. It is great fun, and great camaraderie and a place where best friends meet!

I would like to make use of this opportunity to thank the Pretoria Bird Club for their annual contribution towards bird-ringing and Andrew Tucker for getting the sponsor to cover the deficit needed towards the ringing effort in PBC ringing group.

SAFRING record keeping

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Record keeping is as important as trapping and ringing a bird. Sending electronic schedules rather than on paper, means that the data has much more value as it is available for analysis. The following is a brief description of the fields to be filled in. More details are available in the Ringer's Manual or by request. Summaries and initial details (i.e. total rings used and dates of first/last rings), which were part of the Schedule 1 form, should be excluded.

Each column or field is discussed in detail

below. The fields are listed in italics, and are listed in the required sequence (see Fig. 1).

Ring

Each record must have a complete ring number, not just the last two digits. The format of the ring number should have no hyphens, blanks or other characters, i.e. the prefix and number should be continuous. For example, 456001 rather than 4-56001, and BC23001 rather than BC 23001.

Code

This is to distinguish recaptures and controls from newly ringed birds. Use the following codes:

- 1 : newly ringed bird
- 2 : recapture or control
- L : lost ring
- X : recovered

- 0 = Age unknown
- 1 = Pullus
- 2 = Juvenile
- 3 = Immature
- 4 = Adult
- 5 = 0 to ½ year
- 6 = ½ to 1 year
- 7 = 1 to 2 years
- 8 = 2 to 3 years
- 9 = Older

In the past only recaptures of over one year needed to be submitted to SAFRING (on the Schedule 2 or 3 forms). Now all recaptures (after the date of ringing) may be submitted. Recoveries can be included in your database in the same way as recaptures. Note that additional details should be submitted separately to SAFRING or in an additional column, i.e. details on the condition of the bird (fresh, decomposing, etc.) and how the bird died etc.

Date

Enter the date: dd/mm/yyyy.

Species

Continue using the SAFRING numbers (similar to the original Roberts numbers). Species not listed in the old Roberts have been assigned numbers by SAFRING (see SAFRING guide to rings). If you ring a bird where you do not know the number, contact SAFRING to get the number before submitting the data.

Ringer

Each ring record must have your ringer's number. For those who have more than one number (for different provinces) only use your current number (i.e. for where you are living now), no matter where the ringing occurs.

Age

Unchanged, i.e.

Sex

Unchanged, i.e.

- 0 = Sex unknown
- 1 = Male
- 2 = Female
- 3 = Possible male
- 4 = Possible female

Marking

Unchanged (but with some additions), i.e.

- 0 = metal ring only
- 1 = Colour ring
- 2 = Wing tag
- 3 = Nasal saddle
- 4 = Collar
- 5 = Harness
- 6 = Colour dyes
- 7 = Dyes and colour ring
- 8 = Radio/transponder
- 9 = Satellite
- 10 = Canadian (colour ring with inscription)

Condition

Unchanged, i.e.

- 0 = no other code required
- 6 = Rehabilitated
- 7 = Artificially reared
- 8 = Released away from place of capture
- 9 = Oiled and cleaned

Where more than one condition applies, use the highest value.

Fig. 1. Example of electronic data table.

Ring	Code	Date	Species	Ringer	Age	Sex	Mark	Cond	Coords	Locality	Prov	Yr	Mass	Wing	Moult
486185	1	21/01/1997	715	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	58,8	89	
486186	1	21/01/1997	390	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	54		
486187	1	14/03/1997	390	32	3	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	31	86	
486188	1	14/03/1997	737	32	3	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	88,5	131	
486189	1	14/03/1997	737	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	85,5	129	
486190	1	01/04/1997	390	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	96	52	92	
CC07729	1	02/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97	40	99,5	000000000
CC07730	1	05/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97		101	000000000
CC07731	1	05/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97		92,5	000000000
CC07732	1	05/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97		103	000000000
CC07733	1	05/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97	38	102	000000000
CC07734	1	09/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97	42,5	101	000000000
CC07735	1	09/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97	39,5	102	000000000
CC07736	1	16/07/1997	545	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97		103	000000000
CC07737	L			32											
482043	2	15/04/1998	390	32	4	0	0	0	3416S 1823E	COGH, Cape Town	WC	97			
486186	2	05/07/1997	390	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97			
486187	2	05/07/1997	390	32	4	0	0	0	2545S 2816E	CSIR, Pretoria	GP	97			

Coords

The coordinates must be obtained from a GPS or from maps. Coordinates obtained from a GPS must be truncated to the degrees and minutes. The format should be 2345S 1828E. You must use the letters S and E since the gazetteer references the field exactly as written.

Locality

Use up to 25 characters here to describe the location. Be consistent in naming localities, and in using the same name every time you ring at the same site. The name should ideally describe the entire minute-by-minute square, because the SAFRING gazetteer uses one name per square.

Province

Use the new province designations as listed below (make sure you know in which province the locality falls). Note the capital letters for provinces and lower case for countries.

WC	Western Cape
MP	Mpumalanga
GP	Gauteng
EC	Eastern Cape
KZ	Kwa-Zulu Natal
FS	Free State
NC	Northern Cape
NP	Northern Province
NW	Northwest Province
bw	Botswana
ls	Lesotho
mw	Malawi
mz	Mozambique
na	Namibia
sz	Swaziland
zm	Zambia
zw	Zimbabwe

YrR

The ringing year (e.g. 2000 for 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001).

Mass

Mass of bird in grams, as on Schedule 1 forms. For large birds of several kilograms you still need to give the mass in grams and not in kilograms.

Wing

Length of wing in mm, flattened wing cord.

Moult

Primary moult: each feather from P1 to P10 in one string, e.g. 5555543100, or 555554310 if P10 is reduced or absent.

Colour rings

Add one column if you use colour rings. Use this format: e.g. red/light green/blue, black/red/metal. Left leg, with rings from top to bottom, comma, right leg with rings from top.

Sent

A field for your own reference. When you have sent records to SAFRING, mark this field (e.g. with the date of sending) so that you do not send the same data again.

Additional fields

You may have additional fields for other measurements or notes.

SOFTWARE

Preferably use Excel for Win95. If you do not have this, use whatever standard spreadsheet or database system you have but check with SAFRING. Corel QuatroPro needs to be converted to version 6 or lower before sending to SAFRING.

SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY

1. Put your Ringing tables on separate pages, one page per series. (If you use thousands of

rings of one type, you can split the data into several pages if you like). You can choose a separate page for recaptures, or else record recaptures on the relevant ring series page.

2. Set up the columns in your spreadsheet, and copy the columns to as many pages as you need for your different ring series. If you're using older versions (without pages) then use separate files per ring series. Name the pages (/files) by the ring prefix.
3. Add in the ring data from your field book after each ringing session.

Adding data

To add consecutive ring numbers in Excel: Type the first ring number (e.g. BC06001). Select the cell and click and hold on the bottom right corner (on the plus symbol) and move down with the mouse. The ring numbers are then automatically incremented as you keep on moving. Let go of the left mouse button to end.

Some fields need only be filled in if relevant, i.e. Marking, Condition, Colour rings.

Mass, Wing, Moult are not compulsory but you are encouraged to fill these in.

All other fields must be filled in for each ring record. Do not use dittos or blanks for repeat data. Use the copy function to copy

dates, localities, etc. that are the same.

Beware of errors. With computers it is easy to make mistakes!

You may have many additional fields (e.g. other measurements) in additional columns for your own use.

Do not use 0 or – for data not obtained; leave the cell blank.

Submission of data

Send data to SAFRING regularly, and certainly by the end of every ringing year. A good idea is to send data whenever you've handled 100 to 500 birds (over one or several sessions). Then the file will not be too large to send (by email). Choose a new page (/file) in your spreadsheet; copy the lines of unsent records from the different series to this page, as well as unsent recapture records.

Copy the page to a separate single file.

If you have access to email, mail the data as an attachment to dieter@maths.uct.ac.za.

If you don't have email, copy the data to a stiffy disc, put your name on the disc, and post it.

When you receive confirmation from SAFRING, check the SAFRING report against your computer records, and mark the records as having been sent (if not done yet).

Reflections on the use of colour-rings in southern Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Among the many tools for studying the lives of individual birds one of the least expensive and cost-effective is the use of colour-rings. For the last 23 years, with a series of helpers, I have been investigating aspects of the lives of a small population of Longtailed Wagtails *Motacilla clara* near my home just outside the

port city of Durban (Piper & Schultz 1988; Piper 1989; Piper & Schultz 1989). In this note I reflect on the successes and failures of that study and make observations on how the use of colour-ringed birds could be extended to other species in the sub-continent. I also draw upon my experiences in working with my colleagues in the Vulture Study Group (VSG) (Mundy *et al.* 1992; Piper 1994).