

## Recent Literature

### BANDING and RECOVERY REPORTS

**Recoveries in Great Britain and Ireland of Birds Ringed Abroad.** Robert Hudson. 1970. *British Birds*, 63, 243-253.

The paper follows the pattern of previous years, and the annotated list is, as usual, highly selective. A record number of recoveries (790 recoveries of 81 species) eventuated.

### ANALYTICAL STUDIES

**The Sex Ratio of Nestling Great Tits.** André A. Dhondt. 1970. *Bird Study*, 17:282-286.

Without dissection, it is possible to sex nestlings of very few species of birds. With Great Tits *Parus major* it was discovered that males about 15 days old had blue-grey outer fringes of the outer coverts, while females lacked any blue. In two samples the method was found to be 87% and 93% correct, from later examination of the birds banded as nestlings. In both studies significantly more males were found amongst nestlings 15 days and older during periods of high nestling mortality, i.e. urban areas and late nesters in non-urban areas. Higher mortality of female nestlings is favoured above the alternatives of difference in the sex ratio or of greater embryonic mortality of females. Because males are heavier and bigger than females, it is concluded that males will have an advantage in feeding during times of scarcity of food. The postulated surplus of adult males is supported by various samplings in several countries.

**Observations on a Decreasing Population of Red-backed Shrikes.** J. S. Ash. 1970. *British Birds*, 63, 185-205, 225-239.

Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* were studied in three areas totalling 162 square miles in Hampshire, England, between 1954 and 1966. A total of 743 Shrikes was banded; retraps of birds banded as nestlings were all within 9½ miles of the natal area, and one female bred 6½ miles away in another season. Most nests were in thorny shrubs (90% of total, of which 53% were in gorse). Most repeat nests (20 of 29) were in sites similar to previous lost nests which indicates localized breeding colonies may have inherent preferences for particular nesting sites. Mean clutch was 4.4, with first clutches averaging 5.0. Lost clutches are readily replaced. Hatching success averaged 94.6%, and fledging success was 91.8%. A mean of 4.1 young fledged from each nest. Mean annual loss between the end of one breeding year and the start of the next season was estimated at 67%, which would require a mean productivity of about 4.1 fledged young per

pair to maintain a stable population. Present evidence indicates the population loss of 50% between 1954 and 1966 is due to loss of adults.

### TECHNIQUES

**A New Technique for Capturing White-throated Swifts.** Charles T. Collins. 1971. *Western Bird Bander*, 46:6-7.

Many species nest in burrows or crevices high on rocky cliffs or steep banks. To catch White-throated Swifts *Aeronautes saxatalis* roosting some 25 feet above an accessible ledge, a miniature mist net rig was made. This consisted of a U frame, 3 feet high and 4 feet wide, made of 1 inch diameter reinforcing rod, and with a 6 inch handle of 5/8 inch diameter metal pipe welded to the centre of the U. A series of 4 feet interlocking standard net poles could be fitted to the handle of the rig to raise the net to the roosting area. The rig was successful initially, but the flock became increasingly trap shy. Doubtless many Australian banders would find a similar rig useful on occasions.

### MISCELLANEOUS

**Sky Conditions in Relation to Ring-billed and Herring Gull Orientation.** William E. Southern. 1969. *Illinois State Academy of Science*, 62: 342-349.

Some 50 Herring Gulls and 379 Ring-billed Gulls breeding in Michigan, U.S.A. were used in homing trials, and their behaviour was contrasted with sky conditions prevailing at the time of release. No evidence was obtained to support the use of sun or stars as orientational cues. Juvenile Ring-billed Gulls showed preference for south-east and east headings, and this suggests that this species has an innate ability to select courses required to reach the population's winter range.

**Diseases Diagnosed in Free-living Wild Birds.** Lars Karstad. 1970. *Ontario Bird Banding*, 6:6-17.

Because they handle large numbers of birds, banders have unique opportunities for observing diseases in free-living birds. The present paper lists diseases diagnosed in Canadian birds between 1961 and 1970. Salmonellosis was the common identified bacterial infection. All 68 cases noted referred to House Sparrows, all in winter months, usually when the sparrows concentrated around backyard bird feeders; other species using the same feeders were not affected. Mite infection (14 cases) and pox (46 cases) were the common causes of skin lesions, but neither disease was considered to be an important mortality factor. Enteritis

(14 cases), hepatitis (23 cases) and intestinal parasitism (flukes: 25 cases) were the common diseases of the digestive system. Other significant diseases encountered were sarcosporidiosis (18 cases), pneumonia (17 cases), poisoning by D.D.T. (23 cases) and lead poisoning (16 cases of waterfowl). Three illustrations show salmonella in House Sparrow, pox lesion in the mouth of a Yellow-shafted Flicker, and fibroma in the throat of a starling.

**Some Results of Bird-banding in the Congo (Kinshasa).** A. F. De Bont. 1970. *Ostrich*, 41: 195-199.

Banding in the Congo has been carried out since 1954 on a limited scale, and the present paper summarized data derived from these activities. Movement, age composition and moult in the wintering population of the European Swallow *Hirundo rustica* are summarized and compared with recent South African studies.

**The Australian Bird-banding Scheme—Its Problems and Future.** D. Purchase. 1970. *Ring*, 63, 25-31.

**The Future of Bird Ringing in Asia.** H. Elliott McClure. 1970. *Ring*, 63, 32-34.

**Bird Ringing in Southern Africa.** M. K. Rowan. 1970. *Ring*, 63:34-38.

Opinions on problems of banding in various parts of the world were invited. These three papers resulted. The problems of the Australian scheme are, fortunately, mostly past, and have been well publicised elsewhere.

In Asia, most banding to date has been initiated by the Migratory Animal Pathological Survey; as this programme is now closing, banding in most Asian countries is declining. Continuation, and possible expansion, of banding is probable in Malaya, Japan and India. Most other countries have neither the literacy level nor cultural interest to sustain a widespread banding scheme, and most Asians are, of necessity, interested in birds only as a source of food (or profit, if possible).

In South Africa, the basic problems are lack of finance and the relatively few banders scattered over vast areas. Recoveries tend to be low because of sparse population (and the unsophistication of much of this population) and the high density of predators and scavengers. The risk of infection with bilharzia (waterborne parasitic worms) is always present when handling birds which roost or nest in reeds or under culverts or bridges. The need for a series of permanent banding stations across the country is stressed.

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## Bird Banding Supplies

Present prices for mist nets and spring balances are set out in vol. 8, no. 4, page 86 (December 1970).

## NEW MEMBERS

### Full Members:

WYNTHAM, E., Zoology Department, University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W.

### Associate Members:

CHANDLER, E. W., 57 Northcote Street, Crows Nest, N.S.W.

CLANCY, G. P., 52 Argyle Place Millers Point, N.S.W.

CONGREVE, P., Yanchep National Park, W.A.

DENNETT, Miss X., 100 Mountain View Parade, Rosanna, Vic.

ELPHINSTONE, J. P., Yanchep National Park, W.A.  
MILLINGTON, Mrs R. E., 30 Neville Street, Chatswood, N.S.W.

NEASBEY, N. W., 37 Glenwall Street, Kingsgrove, N.S.W.

PRINGLE, Dr C. T., Century Chambers, Church Street, Dubbo, N.S.W.

SHARPLES, F. P., Calabash Road, Arcadia, N.S.W.

### Junior Members:

FAIRMAID, R. J., Box 275, Shepparton, Vic.

GRIFF, Miss S., 31 Trafalgar Avenue, Roseville, N.S.W.

PURNELL, C. J., 67 Herbert Street, Rockdale, N.S.W.

SUSSMAN, T., 37 Cowdroy Avenue, Cammeray, N.S.W.

### Change of Status:

The following members, having become licenced banders have been advanced to Full Membership.

COVENTRY, P. P., 12 Baroona Avenue, Cooma North, N.S.W.

GEORGE, A. D., 73 Weston Street, Dulwich Hill, N.S.W.

LAVERY, H. J., c/o Animal Health Station, P.O. Box 623, Townsville, Qld.

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## Notice of Meetings

A **Special General Meeting** of The Bird Banders' Association of Australia will be held in the Staff Recreation Room, Australian Museum, Sydney (access at side entrance, William Street) at 7.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 14 July 1971.

Alterations to the constitution, particularly concerning investment of moneys will be considered.

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The next **Annual General Meeting** will be held in Canberra, A.C.T. on 22 January 1972. Further details will be advised in later issues.