

# Editorial

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## Ring wear

This is a great *Afring News* issue for me as it has several articles on weavers! Sociable Weavers live in a tough environment. The Osbornes' study shows that Sociable Weavers will fly a few kilometres to find water. Rick Nuttall shows that aluminium rings are definitely not suitable for these weavers and this raises the issue of ring wear. I did a quick query on SAFRING's database with the following criteria: I searched for all retraps and recoveries of weaverbirds (Ploceidae) with BC (stainless steel) and BD (aluminium alloy) rings, and an elapsed time of more than 5.5 years. There were 190 records for BC rings and 34 for BD rings. Of course, most of the 100 000 BC rings have been used and have been in circulation longer than BD rings. The 'oldest' weaver BC ring is of Masked Weaver BC13187 that was found dead 11.5 years after ringing. The 'oldest' weaver BD ring is not far behind, belonging to Red Bishop BD16398 that was retrapped 8 years after ringing. Thus it seems that BD rings can survive for many years, but ringers will need to assess if they are suitable for specific species and in specific areas. I still prefer to use stainless steel rings on weavers.

## Moult

It is great to see articles on primary moult in birds, as this is one area where every ringer can contribute. It is not easy to study moult in the Scalyfeathered Finch since there are many irregularities, as Stephanie Tyler's paper shows. It is still important, however, to know this and understand how moult fits into the annual cycle of birds living in arid regions. Mark Brown and colleagues indicate that moult in Thickbilled Weavers is synchronous in a local area. Now we need more data from other areas to compare the timing and duration of primary moult in different regions. I have extracted the electronic data from SAFRING's database to start such an analysis.

## Export material

Ringers are often requested to send samples of ringed birds (feathers, blood) to researchers. This is a great way in which ringers can contribute to science. We need to be aware, however, of the legal export requirements. Mark Anderson and his colleague have provided the legal background and requirements for exporting material from the Northern Cape. Similar regulations may be expected in the other provinces. Ringers need to ensure that the researcher requesting material is aware of these requirements and allow sufficient time to obtain these before starting the collecting. If you have any reservations about the research project, please make contact with SAFRING.

## Other news

It is pleasing to have an article by Malcolm Wilson on the large numbers of migrants and residents he has ringed in Uganda. He visits South Africa frequently and has started ringing locally as well. In future issues of *Afring News* there will be ringing reports from Tanzania, Zambia and other African countries.

Vincent Ward wrote an article on ageing and sexing Cape Siskins. What about all the other ringers, wondering what to do with their data? Please look at ways of ageing and sexing the birds you catch most often, and write it up!

During 2002 there will be two national ringing courses in addition to local courses and ringing weekends. In October there will be a course in Lamberts Bay, and in December the annual Wakkerstroom course. Details will be made available on our web page, BirdLife South Africa's newsletter and other media.

A final request to all ringers – *please* send ringing schedules in regularly. Timely submission enables us to respond promptly to members of the public soon after their reports of a ringed bird are received by SAFRING, and also facilitates ringing reporting.

*Dieter Oschadleus*