

Geldenhuys, J.N. & Blom, J.J. 1983. Trapping, ringing and colour-marking moulting Spurwinged Geese at Sterkfontein Dam, Harrismith. Safring News 12: 17-26.

Roy A. Earlé, National Museum, P.O. Box 266, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9300

*(A copy of the above report was sent to the Director of Nature Conservation of the Orange Free State for comment and I am pleased to print his reply below* Ed.)

Dear Mr. Oatley,

PERMITS FOR BIRD RINGING

Your letter of May 3rd refers.

As regards the matter under consideration, I have to point out that several legal actions are involved when capturing birds for ringing purposes:

- (a) Birds are classified as Protected Game, Ordinary Game and Wild Animals according to species. Formerly some species were even regarded as classified vermin, but we do not use the category any more for any animal species. For the capturing, killing or pursuit of any species of animal of the first two categories, either a permit (for protected species) or a licence (for ordinary species) is required. For the remaining wild animal category no special authorization is needed.
- (b) Certain methods of capturing wild animals are prohibited except under permit, several of which are commonly used to obtain birds for ringing or examination. Some of these are the use of nets, traps, snares and stupefying substances.

If your correspondent has certain fixed ideas about the terminology used for describing these actions in law, it certainly is his personal prerogative but the term "hunting" is merely used in the legislation to describe all the actions detailed above. As such then a bird ringer will have to "hunt" the birds, and what is more, make use of a "prohibited hunting method" to do so. I can see no way of circumventing this.

Licence fees are prescribed, even if the activity has as aim to increase the store of scientific data.

At present there is no further obstacle in the way of a potential bird ringer and our approach is that if a person has to ring birds in a professional capacity, the organization employing such person should be responsible for the fees for the authorization. The present scale of fees is not regarded as unreasonable for a private person who indulges in bird ringing as a pastime, and we can not agree that this could be obstructive to the practice. It should merely be seen as an expense to be incurred in the exercise of a chosen recreational activity. In this light, and compared to other forms of recreation, the cost must be regarded as almost negligible.

At present then, there is no method of issuing free permits for bird ringing or, for that matter, for other forms of scientific collecting of animals, in this Province. This does not mean that we are unaware of the value of scientific work which may be of assistance to our primary function of conservation. This should be amply borne out by the fact that we support SAFRING's technical function to the amount of R5 300 per annum. This facility is at the disposal of all ringers at no cost to themselves and is the only way to make their work - or recreation as some would see it - really meaningful.

P. Le Roux, Director of Nature Conservation, Orange Free State Province, P.O. Box 517, BLOEMFONTEIN, 9300.

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