

GARDEN WARBLER *SYLVIA BORIN* IN THE SOUTHWESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

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Between July 1986 and May 1992, 113 ringing sessions were held in the Durbanville Nature Garden (33°50'S, 18°38'E) and a total of 5 047 different birds were handled. On 22 December 1990, a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* was trapped in a mistnet set up near a fig tree. The measurements and colours of bare parts were: wing 81 mm; bill (to featherline) 10 mm, horn grey; tarsus 22 mm, grey with bluish tint; total length ca. 150 mm. The mass was 23.9 g and there was no primary moult. The bird was ringed (SAFRING A-90904) and released. From the

distribution maps in Maclean (1985, *Roberts' birds of southern Africa*) this record is ca. 900 km to the southwest of the normal range for Garden Warblers in Africa. Hockey *et al.* (1989, *Atlas of the birds of the southwestern Cape*) considered the Garden Warbler to be a dubious Palearctic vagrant, based on a single unconfirmed sight and sound record in February 1985 from Franschhoek (33°55'S, 19°06'E), ca. 45 km to the east of Durbanville (Martin 1986, *Promerops* 173: 11). This record suggests that "Palearctic vagrant" is the appropriate status description for the Garden Warbler in the southwestern Cape Province.

I am grateful to the Durbanville Municipality and Mrs T Dreyer, curatrix of the reserve, for permission to ring at the Durbanville Nature Garden.

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CAUTIONARY TALES

From: *Birdwatching* July 1992: p. 72.

"In October 1968, Spectacled Warbler [*Sylvia conspicillata*] was admitted to the British list on the basis of a bird at Spurn [a bird observatory in Yorkshire]. By 1979, two more had been accepted. Recent advances in identification however, led to a review, and by the end of last year the species had been erased from the record books, first-winter female Subalpine Warblers [*S. cantillans*] being an un-foreseen identification pitfall. No sooner had this been done, and seemingly in an act of defiance at being dropped, a full-

blown male Spectacled Warbler landed securely in a mist net at Filey on May 24. Yorkshire has now, for the second time, claimed Britain's first — this time it will surely stick.

So engrossed was the ringer in the exacting identification process that he clean forgot to ring it ..."

An accompanying photograph shows the bird hopping around in all its glory — and naked-legged as the day it was born.

Mike Fraser

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