

DRUMMING UP A STORM PETREL

Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* breed in colonies on offshore islands in northwestern Europe, and migrate south to spend the northern winter in the south Atlantic Ocean off South Africa and Namibia, with some venturing into the Indian Ocean.

How do you catch a Storm Petrel without venturing out to sea, or without even getting your feet wet? Here is the secret recipe. The ingredients are a tape-recording, an amplifier and speaker system suitable for a disco, a mist net, and the ocean within earshot. These ingredients are set up as in Fig. 1.

If results from Europe are anything to go by, South African and Namibian ringers could be rewarded with some surprises. In a pilot exercise in Portugal, where Storm Petrels had never been ringed before, 90 Storm Petrels were tape-lured using a 375 W amplifier and speaker near the lighthouse at Ponta de Piedade (Harris *et al.* 1993). Six were controls; five had been ringed in Norway and one

in Shetland. Seven of the Portuguese-ringed petrels were subsequently retrapped, one at Fair Isle, three in Shetland, one in the Faeroes, one in Tyneside, England, and one at A Vogsoy, Norway. The remarkable percentage of controls is due to the activities of the Northeast Atlantic Storm Petrel Enquiry, which has stimulated and coordinated petrel ringing activities in Europe.

The lure consists of the burrow call made in the colonies and is played at night. It attracts only "wandering pre-breeders". There should be plenty of these in the south Atlantic because most young birds do not return north to prospect for nest sites until their second or third year. Harris *et al.* (1993) predict that March will be the best month for us to get the disco speakers busy blasting the calls out to sea. They conclude their paper: "The observation that wandering Storm Petrels respond to attraction to tape lures during migration raises the fascinating prospect of tape luring at Cape Verde in May, or even at the Cape of Good Hope in March."

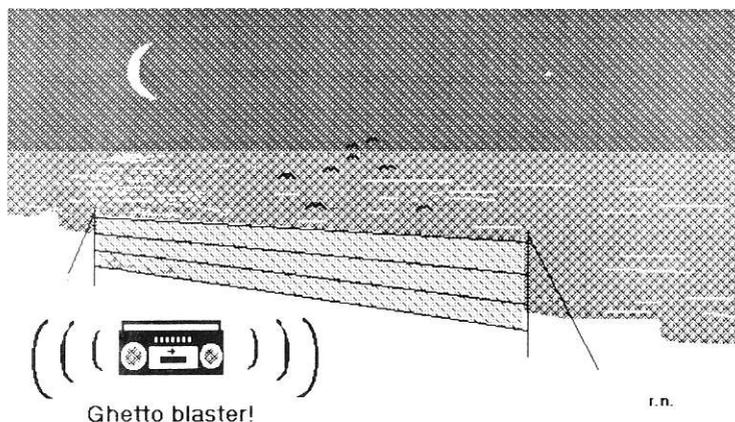


Figure 1. The setup for catching Storm Petrels

Any SAFRING ringers wanting a copy of the Storm Petrel recording should send a blank cassette to SAFRING, and we will fill it with a bizarre collection of grunts, burps and shrieks, and other irresistible (to a Storm Petrel) good vibrations. We hope to be able to report the first successes in the next issue of *Safring News*!

REFERENCE

HARRIS, P., FOWLER, J.A. & OKILL, J.D.
Initial results of Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* ringing in Portugal. *Ringling & Migration* 14: 133-134.

Les Underhill

2	Found
ALSATIAN young male found Lower Kenilworth on 9/11. Ph Helen 62-3922 o/h: 61 2355 a/h.	
BIRD caged. dead. ring CVO2223 Ottery. Ph 73 9926.	
BORDER COLLIE female with broad brown collar found Protea Valley/Welgemoed on 9th November. Phone 913 5644	
BUDGIE in Silvermine area. Thursday 9th	

CIRCUITOUS ROUTE FOR RING RECOVERY

Two Cape Town ringers independently spotted the above notice in the *Cape Times* 'smalls' and notified SAFRING because the 'CV' prefix meant it was, in all probability, one of our rings. And so

it was, an adult male Cape Weaver, ringed by George Underhill at Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary on 22nd August 1991. It fell prey to a cat in the nearby suburbs of Ottery on 15 November 1993.