

It seems unfortunate that Cleaves rather than I had not been assigned to present a historical sketch of bird banding in its early days. He really lived with the banding of those times and could, without doubt, have given a much more complete account of bird banding history. However, having briefly glimpsed something of the infancy period of bird banding, we may I think feel that this activity has reached its maturity and has attained a sturdiness and supporting interest that will assure its continuing and increasingly valuable results.

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(The above paper was read by Beecher Bowdish at the EBBA Annual Meeting in April 1958. Howard Cleaves also spoke at this meeting, and if we can get him to set down on paper his memories of bird banding's infancy we shall hope to publish it in EBBA NEWS. --Ed.)

#### BIRD RINGING IN SOUTH AFRICA By C. Brooke Worth

Bird banding, or "ringing" as it is called in South Africa, is conducted privately although within the framework of laws for the protection of birds. Bands of sufficient size are inscribed, "Notify Pretoria Zoo." There is a central volunteer agency for correlating data. Bands are distributed to various bird clubs and individuals who are interested and qualified for carrying out various projects.

Within less than two weeks of my arrival here I had an opportunity to accompany a half dozen members of the Johannesburg Bird Club on a bird-watching and bird-ringing expedition to an area some 80 miles northwest of the city. This is an arid region, particularly so at present since it has not rained for almost five months. The rainy season is due to begin in about two or three weeks. We camped in a valley just south of some hills known as the Magliesberg Range. These hills rise rather steeply to within several hundred feet of their summit, where perpendicular cliffs surmount them. The face of the cliffs is broken into numerous irregular ledges, affording nesting sites for various kinds of birds.

The Bird Club group was headed by a real hot-shot young ornithologist, and he was assisted by a number of youths in their teens who ran up and down the ledges like mountain goats. In one morning they banded 103 fledgling Cape Vultures, *Gyps coprotheres*. In addition we observed Lanner Falcons, Black Eagles, Alpine Swifts and a Black Stork.

At night we set out incars to examine ~~and~~ banks and culverts for anything that could be banded. In one bank were caught a number of White-fronted Bee-eaters, 3 Brown-hooded Kingfishers and 1 Sand Martin. Last year they caught Black-collared Barbets also. The 3 kingfishers and the Sand Martin were all recoveries from last year. Under the culverts along the highway they hand-caught 3 species of swallows and 2 of swifts. The rest of the trip was devoted to bird-watching rather than banding.

Throughout these operations the leader of the Club lolled comfortably while everyone else worked. However he kept all the records and made certain that each of his assistants was doing the job properly. It was an example of meticulous efficiency and organization. And the assistants were having the time of their lives.

This makes me wonder how much help we may be wasting at our EBBA stations and excursions. I understand that in "Operation Recovery" we use some unlicensed help, and certainly this has been done at times with large Chimney Swift projects. We are, of course, bound by legal obligations and restrictions that do not apply in South Africa. But nevertheless the example I have just witnessed makes me think that there might be situations in which the enlistment of volunteer groups such as Boy Scouts might add significantly to the value of our work. In a reverse sense it would help recruit serious bird students from a promising youthful group of this sort, for instead of earning a routine merit badge for birdstudy by compiling a list of common bird identifications, there would be the stimulation of aiding in useful and active bird enterprises.

I have always been a solitary bander, whether at home or among tern colonies at the shore. Somehow I prefer it this way, and when I see some one a half a mile away I begin to become uneasy. This would not be the case if the public at large were more bird conscious, and especially bird-banding conscious. The bird atmosphere in South Africa seems to be shared by almost everyone -- at least they all know what is going on, whether they are active in it or not. How can we accomplish the same effect but by allowing more people to share our ventures with us?

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**BARRELS FOR GULLS** An open barrel, standing on end, with a 3 or 4 inch board across the top baited with an old fish, will trap adult gulls at a dump. Attach a cord to the board on which the piece of fish has been placed and carry this tring to a spot at some distance. When the gull alights on the board, quickly pull the string so that the gull falls into the barrel. The bird's wing-spread will prevent it from flying out of the barrel. A battery of several barrels placed on a dump where gulls flock in winter or early spring will enable an operator to catch a goodly number in a short time. \*\*\*