

EURING Newsletter 1

edited by

Fernando SPINA and Andrea PILASTRO

ISTITUTO NAZIONALE PER LA FAUNA SELVATICA

FOREWORD

Dear Colleagues and friends,

the need for a newsletter has been long discussed within EURING, and this first issue comes after a further delay due to many problems in assembling the material. But here we are at last, and that's good anyway!

The reason for the newsletter is to offer all EURING members and associate schemes a forum to exchange information and experiences, discuss methods in data gathering and use, publicise more widely the role and activities of EURING.

Scientific bird ringing is at a crucial point; within the framework of an increasing international awareness of the need for sound scientific data for the proper enforcement of the different existing political instruments (e.g. E.U. Directives) for the conservation of natural resources, we have the opportunity to offer the results of a unique long-term research activity carried on at the continental scale by European ringers within EURING.

We have possibly underestimated so far the value of the data we gathered (both as recoveries at the EURING Data Bank, or as ringing data by the different schemes); yet, the EDB in itself is a unique case of a huge data set offered for analysis of both basic science and applied issues, while the even much larger amounts of data collected from ringed birds provide information on crucial aspects for international conservation and management policies, such as networks of staging and wintering sites, flyways, zoogeographical data, physical conditions of migrants, demographic parameters of breeding populations.

It is high time now to provide such information to the relevant international organisations, and for this purpose we need to start getting fully involved also in trying to obtain proper funds for improving data management and analysis.

Meanwhile, the international economic situation causes several schemes to suffer from financial cuts, affecting the ongoing ringing activities as badly as to even put at risk the existence of these centres. All efforts are therefore needed now also from this respect, if we really want to maintain EURING as a really continental organism.

In the meantime, we also have to evolve and further improve our capabilities of properly collecting data by means of standardised and calibrated methods. From this respect, planning large-scale projects clearly addressed to scientific and applied problems could be a very powerful strategy for EURING. Examples like the ESF Network project are a demonstration of the possibility of spreading properly verified field methods, to build up homogeneous data sets which can then be more easily analysed to clarify different aspects of the biology and status of European bird populations.

From this respect, the results EURING has already obtained through its Technical meetings of having statisticians and ornithologists working together to produce models for the calculation of demographic parameters offer a powerful tool to set up suitable project plans.

EURING being a large community of professional ornithologists, amateurs and data managers, we have many different aspects to take into account and problems to solve; from this respect, all EURING members should try and offer their contribution to the further improvements of our activities. I hope this newsletter will be the instrument for everybody to get in contact with all our colleagues, making suggestions, proposing developments, spreading news for the benefit of EURING and hence of our European birds.

Fernando Spina

EURING President

EUROPEAN RINGING SCHEMES: WHO'S WHO

We thought it would have been useful to introduce the first issue of this newsletter by offering an overview of the active schemes within EURING. A brief presentation of the staff, organisation and activities of the different centres would have offered a better idea of the potential as well as of the problems which characterise scientific bird ringing in Europe after just nearly one century of its existence. A questionnaire has therefore been distributed to all centres, a copy of which is enclosed here.

Getting replies was not that easy, nor fast, but yet we're very happy we were eventually able to collect replies from ALL schemes! This means that we're now presenting a really exhaustive and updated list of addresses, names, activities, etc.

We ask all of you to go through this list, check again for any further information to be added (e.g. changes in personnel, newly activated e-mail addresses, etc.), and send us comments and suggestions.

EURING (THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR BIRD RINGING)

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EURING NEWSLETTER N° 1

Scheme

- Based at: (Museum, Institute, etc.), address, Tel and fax number, e-mail, year established

Staff

- Academic, number and names (Academic and Clerical)

Ringers

- Number of ringers
- Ringing courses Y/N
- Exams for trainees to become ringers Y/N

Ringings/Recoveries

- Average number of birds ringed/year
- Average number of species ringed/year
- Average number of recoveries/year; own/ foreign recoveries

Ringing Reports

- Production of annual EURING ringing reports? Y/N
- Ringing reports distributed to other schemes? Y/N, need support for distribution? what kind of support? (e.g. producing copies, postage or both?)
- Ringing reports available upon request since year
- Ringing reports sent to the EDB on diskette? Y/N

Rings

- Rings: number of types, number of sizes, range of size, in mm.
- Do ringers pay for the rings?

Computers

- Recoveries computerised: Y/N, since year
- Ringings computerised: Y/N, since year
- Special software for ringers: Y/N, distributed free
- Do ringers computerise ringing data? Y/N, % over the annual total
- Do ringers computerise recovery data? Y/N, % over the annual total

Projects

- Co-ordinated and special projects at a national scale: subject(s)
- Supporting projects co-ordinated at an international scale: Y/N, mention projects
- Colour-ringing and other visual marks
- Is colour-ringing/marking co-ordinated by the Ringing Scheme? Y/N
- Do ringers have to apply for a special permit in order to start a colour ringing/marking program? Y/N
- Has the scheme regular contacts with the international co-ordinators for the different groups of species? Y/N

Field work adverts - If you would like to advertise for help with any projects please complete the section below:

- Field support required for project(s): essential information on local facilities, logistics, costs, etc.
Contact address for applications:

Addresses and staff members of the EURING Member Schemes

Country: **Belgium**

Royal Belgian Institute
for Natural Sciences
Address: rue Vautier, 29
B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 627 43 67
Fax +32 2 646 44 33
E-mail: roggeman@kbinirsnb.be

Staff

Walter Roggeman (Head of the scheme)
Michel Degreef
Daniël Huisseune
Luc Los
Anita Van den Bogaert
Diane Sleeuwagen

Country: **Bulgaria**

Bulgarian Ornithological Centre
Institute of Zoology, BAS
Address: Boul. Tzar Osvoboditel, 1
1000 Sofia, Bulgaria

Tel. +359 88 51 15
Fax: none
E-mail: none

Staff

Dimitar Nikolov Nankinov (Head of the scheme)
Antonia Kojnova

Country: **Channel Islands**

The Channel Islands Bird Ringing Scheme,
Société Jersaise
Address: 7 Pier Road, St. Helier,
Jersey, Channel Islands, JE2 4XW

Tel. +44 1534 58 314
Fax +44 1534 88 82 62
E-mail: none

Staff

Roger Long (Head of the scheme)
Margater Austin
Margaret Long

Country: **Croatia**

Institute of Ornithology
Address: Ilirski trg 9,
10000 Zagreb, Croatia

Tel. +385 1 27 48 78

Fax +385 1 44 93 78

E-mail: none

Staff

Dragan Radovic (Head of the scheme)
Jelena Kralj

Country: **Cyprus**

Bird Ringing Centre
Institute Kanaris
Address: St. N. 4, Sroulos 2059 Nicosia,
Cyprus

Tel. +357 2 49 36 89

Fax none

E-mail: none

Staff

Arct Maurommati (Head of the scheme)

Country: **Czech and Slovak Republics**

Bird Ringing Centre
Address: Hornomecholupská, 34
102 00 Praha 10 Hostivar

Tel. +42 2 75 63 21

Fax +42 2 23 69 489

E-mail: none

Staff

Jiri Formánek (Head of the scheme)
Skopek Jaroslav
Tichá Helena

Country: **Denmark**

Bird Ringing Office
Zoologisk Museum
Address: Universitetsparken 15
DK-2100 København ø

Tel. +45 35 32 10 29

Fax +45 35 32 10 10

E-mail crahbek@zmuc.ku.dk

Staff

Carsten Rahbek (Head of the scheme)
Jan Bolding
Ursula Friis
Berit Ree
Kjeld Pedersen

Danmarks Miljøundersøgelser Kalø
Address: Neri, Grenåves 12, Kalø,
DK 8410 Rønde, Denmark

Tel. +45 89 20 14 00
Fax +45 89 20 15 14
E-mail: IC@ADMU.DK

Staff

Ib Clausager (Head of the scheme)
Karen Asferg

Country: Estonia

Bird Ringing Centre
Matsalu Nature Reserve
EE 3190 Lihula, Estonia

Tel. +372 47 78 413
+372 47 78 114
Fax +372 47 78 413
E-mail: none

Staff

Eva Kastepold (Head of the scheme)
Marika Mann

Country: Finland

Ringing Centre, Finnish Museum of Natural
History
Address: Zoological Museum, P.O.Box 17,
FIN-00014 University of Helsinki

Tel. +358 9 17 447
Fax +358 9 17 443
E-mail: elmu_rengas@cc.helsinki.fi

Staff

Pertti Saurola (Head of the scheme)
Jukka Haapala
Seppo Niiranen
Pekka Puhjo
Jarmo Ruoho

Country: France

C.R.B.P.O.
Address: Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
55, rue Buffon
75005 Paris, France

Tel. +33 1 40 79 30 78
Fax +33 1 40 79 38 35
E-mail: none

Staff

G. Jarry (Head of the scheme)
G. Hemery
A. Erard-Croiset

P. Nicolau-Guillaumet
J. Sovera
J. Bakstrom (volunteer)

Country: Germany

Institut für Vogelforschung
Vogelwarte Helgoland
Address: An der Vogelwarte, 21
D-26386 Wilhelmshaven, Germany

Tel. +49 4421 9689 0
Fax +49 4421 9689 55
E-mail: foken@ifv-terramare.fh-
wilhelmshaven.de

Staff

Walter Foken (Head of the scheme)
Franz Bairlein
G. Thesing
M. Enxing
D. Peuckert

Vogelwarte Hiddensee
Address: Landesamt für Umwelt und Natur
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Beringungszentrale Hiddensee
Wampener Str., D-17498 Neuenkirchen

Tel. +49 3834 89 96 55
Fax +49 3834 89 96 56
E-mail: none

Staff

Ulrich Köppen (Head of the scheme)
Eva Fredrich
Simone Scheil
Harry Schröder

Vogelwarte Radolfzell
Address: Schloß Möggingen
D-78315 Radolfzell, Germany

Tel. +49 7732 15 010
Fax +49 7732 15 01 34
E-mail: Peter.Berthold@uni-konstanz.de

Staff

Peter Berthold (Head of the scheme)
Ute Hückler
Inge Oesterreich
Rolf Schlenker

Country: Greece

Hellenic Bird Ringing Centre
Address: P.O.Box 20006, GR-11810 Athens,
Greece

Tel. +30 1 36 35 359 (c/o Min. Agriculture)
 Fax +30 251 41 212 (private)
 E-mail: none

Staff

Filios Akriotis (Head of the scheme)
 Georgy Handrinov

Country: Hungary

Hungarian Bird Ringing Centre
 Hungarian Ornithological and Nature
 Conservation Society
 Address: Költő 21, Budapest, H-1121

Tel. +36 1 17 58 327
 Fax none
 E-mail: none

Staff

Lajos Varga (Head of the scheme)
 Bendegur Entő
 Sraboles Kóday

Country: Iceland

Icelandic Bird Ringing Scheme Icelandic
 Institute of Natural History
 Address: Hlemmur 3, P.O.Box 5320
 125 Reykjavík, Iceland

Tel. +354 562 9822
 Fax +354 562 0815
 E-mail: aevar@nattfs.is

Staff

Aevar Petersen (Head of the scheme)
 Helga Valdemarsson

Country: Italy

Istituto Nazionale
 per la Fauna Selvatica
 Address: Via Ca' Fornacetta, 9
 I-40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italy

Tel. +39 51 65 12 111
 +39 51 65 12 216 (ringing office)
 Fax +39 51 79 66 28
 E-mail: nfsmigr@iperbole.bologna.it

Staff

Fernando Spina (Head of the scheme)
 Alessandra Grattarola
 Rosita Mantovani
 Pierfrancesco Micheloni
 Osvaldo Negra
 Andrea Pilastro

Country: Latvia

Ringing Centre
 Institute of Biology
 Address: Ringing Centre, Miera 3,
 Salaspils 2169, Latvia

Tel. +371 94 53 93
 Fax +371 9 34 54 12
 E-mail: elmira@hidro.edu.lv (Ring)

Staff

Juris Kazubiernis (Head of the scheme)
 Mara Kazubiernis

Country: Lithuania

Lithuanian Bird Ringing Centre
 Zoological Museum
 Address: Laisves aleja, 106
 LT-3000 Kaunas, Lithuania

Tel. +370 7 20 58 70
 Fax: none
 E-mail: none

Staff

Ricardas Patapavicius (Head of the scheme)
 Danguole Kvedariene

Country: Malta

Bird Ringing Scheme
 Malta Ornithological Society
 Address: P.O.Box 498, Valletta CMR 01, Malta

Tel. +356 23 06 84
 Fax +356 22 56 65
 E-mail: none

Staff

Joe Sultana (Head of the scheme)
 Charles Gauci
 Mark Gauci

Country: Netherlands

Vogeltrekstation Arnhem
 Centre for Terrestrial Ecology
 of the Netherlands Institute of Ecology
 Address: (Mail) P.O.Box 40, 6666 ZG Heteren,
 The Netherlands
 (Visiting address): Boterhoeksestraat 22,
 Heteren

Tel. +31 26 47 91 234 (ringing office)
 +31 26 47 91 244 (head r.c./EDB manager)
 +31 26 47 91 111 (central desk)
 Fax +31 26 47 23 227

E-mail: vogeltrekstation@nioo.knaw.nl (ringing off.)

rinse@nioo.knaw.nl (EDB manager)
noordwijk@cto.nioo.nl (A. Noordwijk)

Staff

Arie J. van Noordwijk (Head of the scheme)
P. de Goede
G. Speek
Rinse Wassenaar

Country: Norway

Ringling Centre
Stavanger Museum
Address: Muségt., 16
N-4005 Stavanger, Norway

Tel. +47 51 52 93 80
Fax none
E-mail: none

Staff

Olav Runde (Head of the scheme)
Else Aasland

Country: Poland

Ornithological Station
of the Institute of Ecology
Address: Nadwislanska 108
80-680 Gdansk, Poland

Tel. +48 58 38 07 59
Fax +48 58 38 07 59
E-mail: stornit@task.gda.pl

Staff

Maciej Gromadzki (Head of the scheme)
Jadwiga Gramadzka
Maria Wieloch
Wojciech Kania
Arkadiusz Sikora
Anna Zawadzka
Irena Filiponek
Barbara Lachwicz
Waldemar Pagowski
Tomasz Mokwa
Alicja Bielska

Country: Portugal

Bird Ringing Centre/CEMPA
Instituto da Conservaç_ão da Natureza
Address: Rua Filipe Folque, 46 3°/5°
1050 Liboa, Portugal

Tel. +351 1 352 30 18
Fax +351 1 357 47 71
E-mail: none

Staff

António Teixeira (Head of the scheme)
Mário Silva
António Araújo
Maria Filomena Castro

Country: Rumania

Centrala Ornitologica Romana
Institute for Plant Protection
Address: 8 Ion Ionescu dela Brad Avenue
Code 71592, 1st Sector,
Bucharest, Romania

Tel. +40 1 633 58 50
Fax +40 1 633 53 61
E-mail: none

Staff

Mircea Gogu-Bogdan (Head of the scheme)
Victor Ciochia
Lucica Geara
Mihai Mechea
Gianini Feroli

Country: Russia

Bird Ringing Centre
Address: Leninskiy prospect 86-310,
Moscow 117313, Russia

Tel. +95 138-2231
Fax +95 423-2613 (I.N. Dobrynina's personal)
E-mail: sevin@sovamsu.sovusa.com

Staff

Inna N. Dobrynina (Head of the scheme)
Elena V. Dobrovolskaya
Elena N. Gurtovaya
Sergei P. Kharitonov
Konstantin E. Litvin
Eugeny V. Syroechkovsky
Sergei B. Vorobjev
Irina A. Kharitonova
Ekaterina D. Popova-Bondarenko
Alekssei Y. Sapetin

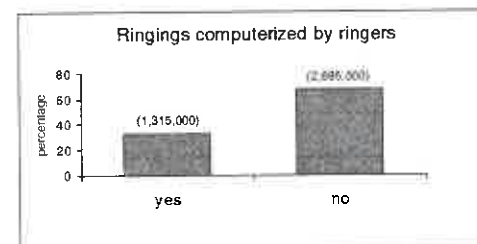
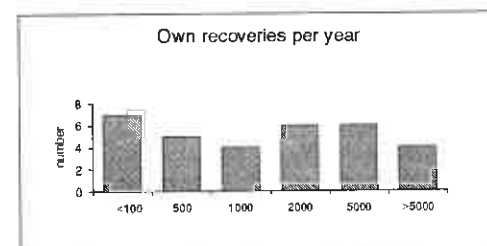
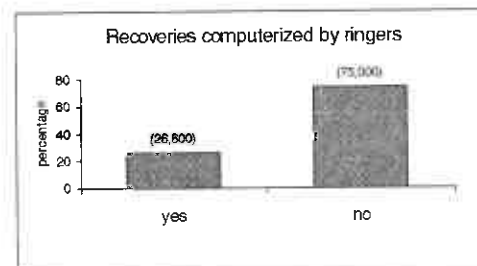
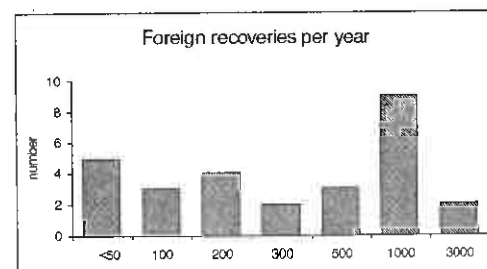
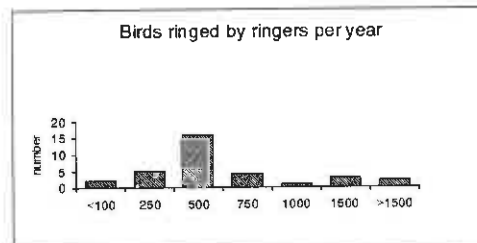
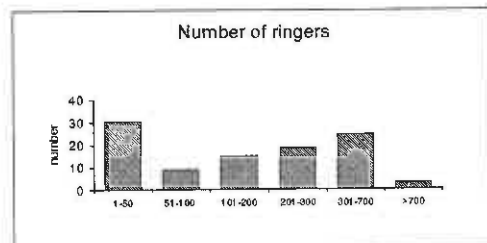
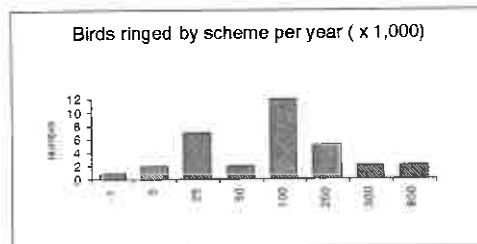
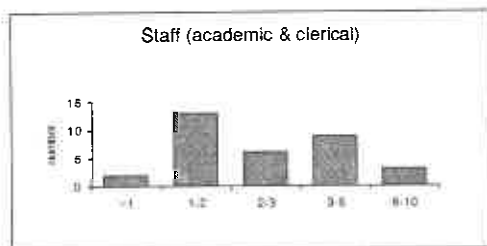
Country: Slovenija

Bird Ringing Centre
Slovene Museum of Natural History
Address: Presernova, 20
P.O.Box 290,
SLO-1001 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Tel. +386 61 21 16 70
Fax +386 61 88 46
E-mail: none

Staff

Dare Sere (Head of the scheme)



From left to right and from top to bottom: 1) number of staff (Academic + Clerical); 2) yearly average number of ringed birds per ringing scheme; 3) number of active ringers per ringing scheme; 4) yearly average number of ringed birds per ringer; 5) yearly average number of foreign recoveries/controls processed by each scheme; 6) percentage of recoveries directly computerised by the ringers (see Table 1 for list of schemes); 7) annual number of own recoveries per scheme; 8) percentage of ringings directly computerised by the ringers (see Table 1 for list of schemes)

Table III. E-mail, ringing reports, rings, colour rings and computers (statistics).

Country (and scheme)	% of yes	answered	not answered
E-mail	42%	33	0
Ringing reports			
annual report (if not now, until)	59%	32	1
distributed to other schemes	59%	32	1
support needed	15%	26	7
reports available since year*	1958	29	4
report to EDB on diskette	20%	30	3
Rings			
no. of different sizes*	15	31	2
min. size (mm)*	2.2	27	6
max. size (mm)*	25.4	27	6
payed by ringers	25%	32	1
Colour rings			
co-ordinated by the scheme	75%	32	1
permit needed	75%	32	1
contacts between schemes	69%	32	1
Computers			
recoveries computerised	81%	32	1
since year*	47	22	11
ringing computerised	34%	32	1
since year*	85	9	24
software for ringers	38%	32	1
free°	100%	9	24
ringing comp. by ringers	59%	32	1
% over annual total°	26%	30	3
recoveries comp. by ringers	32%	31	2
% over annual total°	9%	28	5

* average

The questionnaire: some brief remarks on the results

We first of all wish to thank all schemes for sending their replies to the questionnaire. The meaning of this initiative is to offer all schemes an overview of the activities of the other centres, with contacts and names of all staff members. These data allow a general sketch of the present situation of scientific bird ringing in Europe. We decided to limit the extension of our comments, since we hope the questionnaire will be an opportunity for further notes from the staff and ringers of the different schemes. We will be happy to accept comments and publish them in the next issue.

1. **Staff**, (Table 1, Fig. 1): most schemes have got at least one full-time staff, the most frequent situation being represented by a couple of people. Only a fraction of the centres have to

rely on volunteers or part-time involvement of single persons; on the opposite extremes the few schemes run by 9-10 people staff.

2. **Rings**, (Table 1, Fig. 2): most schemes ring between 50,000 and 100,000 birds/year, for a total of approximately 4,000,000 ringed birds at the continental scale. Most European ringers ring some 500 birds/year (Fig. 4), with rather few exceptions of single ringers able to mark over 1,500 birds. The average value may be influenced by the predominant role songbirds may play within the activity of some of the schemes, when compared to the situation of those centres more concentrated on non-passerine species.

A yearly average number of 174 different species are ringed by each scheme (Table 1),

with a range of variation between less than 50, to over 300 bird species. Thanks to all possible variations in habitat typologies sampled by the ringers, trapping and ringing techniques and special projects, EURING is undoubtedly able to gather information from a huge range of species both breeding and migrating through the continent.

3. Ringers, (Table 1, Fig. 3): nearly one third of the schemes rely on the activity of less than 50 ringers, while a comparable number of cases refers to schemes with over 300 ringers. Three centres involve over 500 ringers, while the B.T.O. in U.K. is the only case of over 2,000 licensed ringers.

4. Ringing courses and exams, (Table 1): an almost equal percentage is found between schemes which routinely organise ringing courses and those which don't. For a slightly higher percentage of 60.6% of the centres, passing an exam is a pre-requisite for getting a ringing license. Given the growing demand for high quality information gathered through ringing, and the increasing potential represented by large-scale co-ordinated ringing projects based on standardised field methods, more attention should be paid within EURING in order to optimise ways and protocols to be followed when issuing a new ringing license.

5. Ringing reports, (Table 1): annual ringing reports are very important in order to have a general overview of ringing activities at the European level. Most schemes (61%) regularly produce such reports, 24% are not able to do so, while 15% of the centres have, for different reasons, stopped issuing their annual reports.

Only 18% of the centres send their reports on floppy to the EDB; this situation could be improved, in order to facilitate the work of the EDB manager in compiling, and hence making available, the annual totals of birds ringed within EURING.

6. Recoveries, (Table 1): a bit less than 500 foreign recoveries are processed every year by the single schemes. This makes an overall total of more than 15,000 recoveries originating from birds ringed in Europe, with an annual recovery rate of about 0.4% of the ringed birds. Over 2,500 own recoveries are annually processed by each centre, with

schemes gathering more than 10,000!

In total, EURING is able to collect and code in a standard format over 100,000 recoveries and controls in a single year, a huge set of data offering a great potential for analyses! This situation could be further improved by having more national schemes allowing their ringers to code and computerise recoveries.

7. Data management: the handling of ringing and recovery data is at the moment going through a positive period of fast development. Most schemes are computerising recovery data, which makes these available to be included in the EURING Data Bank, and all efforts have to be made in order to support the centres which still have to start. Only a third of the centres routinely computerise ringing data, and this is a situation we surely have to improve if we want to be able to use these crucial information for survival analyses. Having ringing data computerised is requested by most of the analytical models produced also thanks to the EURING Technical meetings and, as a matter of fact, several schemes distribute special software to their ringers in order to have them computerise ringing data. Some centres already get a large fraction of ringing data computerised by the ringers, the example being represented by the 100% received by the Dutch centre!

8. E-mail connections: nearly half of the schemes are already connected by e-mail. This is quite interesting, given the possibility of using this fast and cheap method to exchange data among schemes (*see* also the EDB section in this issue).

9. Final remarks: brief reports on the organisation of all ringing schemes has traditionally been an agenda item at all EURING General meetings. We hope the information collated in this newsletter will be a useful material already available for a quick reference already during the next meeting in Praha. We kindly ask all schemes to send in variations or additions to what reported in their replies to the questionnaire, in order to circulate an updated version before the meeting next autumn. This will leave time to analyse the situation of each scheme within the more general context, and hopefully stimulate discussion at the General meeting.

THE EURING DATA BANK

This important section of the newsletter will give all relevant information on EDB matters. The EDB Manager Rinse Wassenaar will report on the activities related to the updating of the bank (a hard job!) and the more recent applications for data. We will also try to produce as complete as possible a list of the papers based on data analysed through the EDB. This will help all of us to appreciate even more the important role the EDB has got within EURING as well as the international scientific community, and will hopefully stimulate more scientists to make proper and active use of the EDB contents.

In this first issue, Rinse Wassenaar reports on recent applications and new additions to the main database. As EDB manager, he is also very keen in making proposals aimed to further facilitate and speed the exchange of data among schemes and (hopefully) between the different centres and the EDB. As a very stimulating example, a case of e-mail exchange of ringing/recovery data between schemes is offered to evaluate the potential of such new kind of procedure, which could already be activated by several schemes.

For different aspects of data management at the ringing scheme level, technology is able to make the network of ringing centres a really international research unit; EURING surely needs to discuss and plan future developments along these lines.

Electronic mail allows fast Recovery-responses between Hemispheres.

Ordinary mail, per ship, car, train or plane, is a well established way of exchanging letters, rings, floppy discs and other matters of interest for ringing schemes all over the world. Such mail can also be send "registered". For more urgent matters, telephone calls provide a quick and personal response to a simple question. The rapidly increasing popularity of telefax machines showed the need for "photocopying using someone else's machine elsewhere". In fact a fax is a photocopy at a distance, combining text and telephone line speed. In many buildings, the ringing office officials have to type, print and walk to a telefax, before there message was ready to be sent to the addressed

colleague at his or her institution. And there, sometimes such an urgently meant fax message, could then laid to rest in the receiver's office - snail - mail box!

Nowadays, electronic mail combines the advantages of almost all means described above. You sit at your Personal computer in your own room, type a message on your own screen, and then, in milliseconds indeed, use your e-mail software package and send the original text to your address. Be it a colleague within your own institute, be it a ringing office at another Hemisphere!

The following example might show the speed of this technical miracle:

Wednesday, Jan. 17th., 1996: The start, an e-mail message from Safring:

From: "Cynthia Best" <RIMEL@maths.uct.za>
 To: rinse@nioo.knaw.nl
 Date and Time: Wed, 17 Jan 1996 12:12:40 SAST-2
 Subject: Dutch ring recovery
 X-Confirm-Reading-To: "Cynthia Best" <RIMEL@maths.uct.ac.za>
 X-Pmrqc: 1
 Priority: normal
 X-Mailer: Pegasus Mail v3.22

Dear Colleagues

We are pleased to report the following recovery of one of your ringed birds. The ring is following by airmail.
 Ring No.: 1333689

Species: *Sterna sandvicensis*
 Date found: 11 January 1996
 Finding locality: Walkerbaai, near Hermanus, Western Cape Province, South Africa
 Coordinates: 34 30' S, 19 20' E
 Condition: Found about one week dead.

Please could you confirm receipt of email.

With best wishes to all of you,
 Cynthia Best
 SAFRING - Avian Demography Unit Tel: 27 021 6502422
 Dept Statistical Sciences Fax: 27 021 6503726
 University of Cape Town
 Rondebsch 7700 SOUTH AFRICA Email: rimel@maths.uct.ac.za

Wednesday morning, Jan. 17th. 1996, 11.41 hrs. message read and information within Heteren forwarded to ringing office:

Your message:
 FROM: rinsee@nioo.nl
 TO: Speek, Gerrit send DATE: 01-17-96
 subject: Another one! send TIME: 11:41

Was accessed on 01-17-96 11:54
 Same Wednesday morning,
 Third chapter, information processed, coded, computerized and sent to SAFRING

Finding data:

sch	ringnr	fspec	vs	fx	fa	fdate	
NLA	.1333689	0611O	5	0	0	Jan 11 1994 12:00:00AM	

fy	far	fca	fcB	fq	c	ci	tr	pr	fs	fb	diot	dir	e	fid	ref. date	ref. time
0	FPCG	3430	1920	S	2	01	0	0	0	0	9849	172	2	581	Jan 17 1996	11:58:00AM

Ringing data:

sch	ringnr	rSpec	rf	ch	rx	ra	rs	rb	p	rdate	ry	rar	rca	rcb	rq	rid
NLA	.1333689	06110	0	1	0	1	0	2	R	Jun 16 1994 12:00:00AM	0	NL19	5148	0357	E	025

Rinse Wassenaar, on suggestion of Les Underhill

In the EDB is the combined collection of european ringed recovered birds to be housed. Well over 1.2 million recoveries have been stored by now, and ringing figures are also

available. For any further information on EDB matters, please contact Rinse Wassenaar (e-mail RINSE@NIOO.NL, or fax +31 (0)26 47 23 227

SOME RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE EURING DATA BANK

RECOVERY FILE PER 15-01-96

Scheme	Code Species	Code	Number
Helgoland	DFH Bewick's Swan	01530	11
Arnhem	NLA Bewick's Swan	01530	66
Helgoland	DFH Teal	01840	199*
Arnhem	NLA Teal	01840	530
Paris	FRP Teal	01840	3115
Madrid	ES- Teal	01840	10
Moscow	SUM Teal	01840	2430
Stockholm	SVS Teal	01840	66
Kaunas	SUK Teal	01840	4
Bologna	IAB Teal	01840	29
Gdansk	PLG Teal	01840	38
Stavanger	NOS Honey Buzzard	02310	16+
Arnhem	NLA Honey Buzzard	02310	5
Arnhem	NLA Redwing	12010	147
Bruxelles	BLB Redwing	12010	1595*
Budapest	HGB Redwing	12010	18
Gdansk	PLG Redwing	12010	4
Kaunas	SUK Redwing	12010	8
Helgoland	DFH Redwing	12010	378*
Stockholm	SVS Redwing	12010	83
Moscow	SUM Redwing	12010	344
Paris	FRP Redwing	12010	14
Budapest	BSB Sedge Warbler	12430	72
Gdansk	PLG Sedge Warbler	12430	120
Kaunas	SUK Sedge Warbler	12430	162
Bruxelles	BLB Sedge Warbler	12430	248*
Stockholm	SVS Sedge Warbler	12430	242

* - grand total for this scheme

+ - including data from other Norwegian schemes

Some randomly picked recent provisions of data from the EDB

To	From	Species	Code	What (for)
Aebischer, Nicholas	UK	Wood pigeon & Stock Dove		analysis
Pulido, Francisco	DE	Blackcap	12770	analysis
Exo, Michael	DE	Oystercatcher	04500	project
Lens, Luc	BE	Crested Tit	14540	analysis
Martinez, Alfonso	ES	Common sandpiper	05560	analysis
Baillie, Stephen	UK	Snipe & Woodcock		analysis
Gatter, Wulf	DE	W. African migrants		avifauna
Hayakawa, Ellen	CA	all available		administ
Keller, Thomas	HE	Cormorant	00720	ringing figures
Taube, Erica	FR	Lapwing	04930	analysis
Williams, Robert	UK	Longeared Owl	07670	analysis

COLOUR RINGING AND VISUAL MARKING (a very useful tool and a long-debated issue!)

The organisation and international co-ordination of colour ringing and visual marking is a traditional source of problems within (as well as outside!) EURING. Hours have been spent at every General meeting trying to find solutions which may in the meantime offer as wide an opportunity as possible to increase the number of recoveries through visual sightings, but yet keep an efficient control on ringers' activities.

This section of our newsletter will offer all schemes an opportunity to introduce colour ringing projects, maintain regular contacts between the schemes and the international co-ordinators, have an updated overview of what's going within EURING. We hope all of you will make use of this slot, in order to improve what is still quite often a difficult situation.

The picture presented below is still far from complete, as there are many other species in which colour marking programs are properly run (e.g. Flamingo, Cormorant, etc.); we hope we'll be able to offer a more complete list of all schemes in the next issues. In the meantime, for a recent general overview of many current projects, see the paper by Renaud Flamant in Aves 31: 65-186.

Introduction. The co-ordination of colour-marking schemes causes many problems to ringing schemes. Most ringing schemes have systems set up to deal with local birds but for birds who migrate over long distances central co-ordination of marking on each flyway is essential.

Difficulties occur in ensuring that all schemes are registered and that there are no clashes between schemes. Tracing sightings is often impossible, sometimes because the sightings are incomplete but also because the Ringing Scheme may not know who is using particular colour-marks. This can cause public relation problems as the scheme is unable to tell the person who reported the bird anything about it.

To try and alleviate the problems with colour marking EURING has designated a number of co-ordinators for the species which cause most problems. The current EURING colour marking co-ordinators are:

Waders

Wader Study Group

Stephen Browne & Harriet Mead.

The National Centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, UK

Large Gulls (Lesser Black-backed, Greater Black-backed, Herring and Yellow-legged Gull)

Peter Rock

59 Concorde Drive, Westbury on Trym, Bristol, BS10 6PX, UK

Small Gulls (Black-headed, Mediterranean and Common Gull)

Kjeld Pedersen

Daglykkevej, 7, DK-2650 Hvidovre, Denmark

Wildfowl (Geese and Swans)

Wetlands International

11 Marijkeweg, PO Box 7002,

6700 AC Wageningen, The Netherlands

Raptors

Guy Jarry

Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle
55, rue Buffon

75005 Paris, France

Tel. +33 1 40 79 30 78

Fax +33 1 40 79 38 35

Central co-ordination for these species has helped to avoid the duplication of schemes and has led to far more sightings being identified than was the case previously. Reproduced below is an article from the *Wader Study Group Bulletin* about the wader colour marking schemes. It was written by Jane Marchant who co-ordinated the scheme before it was taken over recently by Stephen and Harriet. I hope this is useful to member schemes. We intend to have information about colour marking in each of these newsletters to try and alleviate the problems associated with this extremely useful marking method in future.

Jacquie Clark

EURING General Secretary

REPORT OF THE WSG REGISTER OF PERMANENT COLOUR MARKS

by Jane Marchant

The use of colour-marking facilitates studies of bird behaviour, movements and survival. It is a well-tryed-and tested tool in wader research and is popular with both amateur and professional researchers. The WSG colourmarking register functions as a central record of wader marking schemes - it avoids interference between projects and provides a single contact point for the reporting of sightings. The register co-ordinates colour-marking schemes for waders throughout the East Atlantic flyway, but does not deal with schemes operating in the Americas or on the Asian/Pacific flyway. It is concerned with permanent marks which may last the lifetime of the bird, not with temporary ones such as plumage dyes. These are co-ordinated by Roger Beecroft who can be contacted at the same address.

When waders were first colour-ringed, the choice of colours and ring combinations was largely determined by the ringer, according to the rings that were available. It soon became obvious, especially with the more commonly marked species such as Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, and the longer-lived species such as Oystercatcher *Haemotopus ostralegus*, that some control was necessary to avoid new schemes ringing birds with combinations that had already been used elsewhere. Attempts were made to gather all information about colour-marking schemes, and eventually a central register was established. This exercise has been largely successful, at least for the UK and for much of the rest of Europe.

The organisation of the register was voluntary, but there were costs to the WSG in terms of postage and stationery. As the register became more complete, and the demand for more marking schemes grew, so the amount of correspondence involved increased. In 1983 new regulations were introduced (WSG Bulletin 38) and new charges were levied to cover administrative costs. Computerisation of the colour-marking register began in the early 1990s. The system is not yet fully operational, but computerisation has already improved the efficiency of the routine correspondence and provides the database for allocating ring combinations for new schemes and for tracing sightings.

COLOUR-MARKING SCHEMES

As the register grew, progress has been made towards standardising the use of colour-rings, especially in individual combinations. The introduction of the "scheme identifier" demonstrates this. For example, with a single colour ring placed on one of the tibiae as the scheme identifier, the same combinations of colour rings on the tarsi could be used for a number of projects. For some long-legged species such as Curlew *Numenius arquata*, rings identifying schemes are on the tarsus and those identifying individuals are on the tibia. When allocating schemes the minimum numbers of rings are used in an attempt to conserve combinations. There are, however, several species where the possibilities are nearly exhausted.

For waders, only PVC/darvic rings are recommended. In the past acetate and celluloid rings have been used, but these fade after only a short time. All the colours tend towards a creamy-pink and this makes observations confusing and often useless. Nine colours of darvic are used because they are easily described and relatively unlikely to be confused in field conditions. These colours, together with the metal numbered ring, form the basis of marking schemes. There are four ring positions, each of which might hold more than one ring, depending on the size of the bird - left or right leg, above ankle joint (above "knee", on "tibia") or below (on "tarsus").

A table giving suitable ring sizes for each species is available from the register. Tall rings can be useful for long-legged species which spend a lot of time in water or mud. Care should be taken to ensure that the rings do not interfere with the bird in any way. Darvic can also be used to make engraved rings. When two layers of different colours are sandwiched together, the outer layer can be cut away to reveal stripes, letters or numbers. These rings are only suitable for larger species, such as Oystercatchers and Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*. The use of flags and wing-tags requires special licensing and permission cannot be granted by the WSG alone.

The register currently contains details of 432 schemes for 35 species. Only 123 of these

schemes are 'active', but sightings of longer-lived species from long-dead projects are still being reported. A standard registration fee (currently UK £5) is charged as a new scheme is set up, and a variable annual fee (minimum UK £5) is collected throughout the duration of the project. The amount of the annual fee is determined by the number of combinations

allocated to the marking scheme, and is intended to cover the costs of handling sightings reported both during the period for which the annual fee is charged and subsequently. Table 1 gives a rough breakdown of how many colourmarking schemes there are for each species and where they are based.

Table 1. Numbers of schemes registered, by species and region, as at May 1994.

Species	UK	Netherlands Belgium	Germany Denmark	Sweden Norway Finland	France	Spain Portugal Italy	Austria Hungary Poland	Africa	Russia Taymyr
Oystercatcher	14	6	5	4	3	2	0	0	1
Black-winged Stilt	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
Avocet	4	3	3	0	2	2	1	1	0
Little Ringed Plover	3	1	0	2	0	2	1	0	0
Ringed Plover	14	1	4	6	1	1	2	0	5
Kentish Plover	2	1	1	1	4	8	1	0	0
Dotterel	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
Golden Plover	9	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	5
Grey Plover	1	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	8
Lapwing	21	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	0
Knot	4	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	4
Sanderling	3	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	5
Little Stint	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	8
Temminck's Stint	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Curlew Sandpiper	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	6
Purple Sandpiper	12	1	2	4	0	1	0	0	1
Dunlin	8	0	5	5	1	3	1	0	4
Ruff	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	2
Black-tailed Godwit	7	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
Bar-tailed Godwit	1	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	1
Whimbrel	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
Curlew	8	5	5	3	1	1	0	0	0
Spotted Redshank	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
Redshank	12	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	0
Greenshank	4	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
Green Sandpiper	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
Wood Sandpiper	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
Common Sandpiper	9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Turnstone	8	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	7

Also other species: Collared Pratincole (1, Spain), Stone-curlew (1, UK; 1, Spain), Great Snipe (1, Norway), Snipe (1, UK; 1, Germany), Red-necked Phalarope (1, UK; 2, Russia), Grey Phalarope (1, Russia).

Notes:

- 1) All marking schemes are represented, although the majority are not now actively marking birds.
- 2) Marking schemes tabulated include those involving just single rings as site codes as well as more complicated ones in which birds are marked to identify them as individuals.
- 3) Area refers generally to the ringer and in some cases is not where the marking was taking place. Schemes operating in the Taymyr region of Siberia are listed separately.

Table 2. Numbers of sightings reported for each species, and percentage traced, in relation to numbers of registered schemes, as at September 1993. Untraced sightings are those where the ringer has not yet been identified.

Species	Schemes registered	Sightings 1991-93	Percentage traced
Oystercatcher	33	93	82%
Black-winged Stilt	5	33	76%
Avocet	18	46	59%
Ringed Plover	29	45	62%
Kentish Plover	15	7	29%
Lapwing	32	13	62%
Knot	13	18	67%
Sanderling	12	133	93%
Curlew Sandpiper	10	17	82%
Purple Sandpiper	18	21	86%
Dunlin	24	53	60%
Black-tailed Godwit	14	15	60%
Bar-tailed Godwit	9	13	85%
Curlew	21	41	81%
Turnstone	19	73	82%

SIGHTINGS

Sightings come to the register only when the finder does not know the origin of the bird. Up to 300 sightings are received each year, but not all the birds can be traced as individuals or even to a scheme. There are several reasons for this, the most common of which is the incomplete observation of ring combinations. Other factors affecting the ability to trace a bird are the fading or loss of colour rings (leading to ambiguous reports), unregistered schemes, the use of unauthorised combinations by schemes that have been registered, and possibly overlap between schemes on different flyways. Table 2 shows the numbers of schemes on the register for selected species and the success rates for tracing recent sightings.

All sightings are acknowledged. Many reports require extensive further correspondence in an attempt to establish the origin of the bird. Once a ringer has been sent details of an observation referring to a combination they have been allocated, they are required to supply the observer with as much

information as possible. This co-operation is normally a condition of having a scheme registered, and may be called upon many years after birds have ceased to be marked. It is vital for the ongoing success of marking schemes that ringers safeguard the good relations we have with people reporting observations of marked waders.

Resulting data from sightings handled by the register belong both to the ringer and to the finder - no central record is kept. However, ringers should send details of birds traced as individuals to their national ringing schemes.

The probability of a marked bird being traced successfully depends partly upon the quality of the sighting. For larger species the rings tend to be more obvious but, since these birds are also often longer-lived, combinations are more likely to become incomplete or unreadable owing to loss or wear. The success rates of tracing some species, for example Sanderling, reflects the fact that several researchers are currently both ringing birds and searching for sightings. The low sample of sightings received so far for Kentish Plover explains the apparently low success rate in tracing them. Most of the projects for this species have not been in operation for very long.

With the increased complexity of colour combinations, and the need for accuracy in descriptions of them by observers, it is important that potential observers should be made aware of the possible positions and colours that rings may take. A new colour-ring sighting report form has been devised which it is hoped will lead the observer through all the possibilities and result in a useful observation being recorded. A copy of this form is enclosed with this Bulletin. The form will also be sent to observers when sightings are acknowledged and when asking for further details of incomplete observations.

UNTRACED BIRDS

Table 3 gives a list of untraced sightings. Did you ring these birds? Details are given of ring combinations, date and place of sighting. If you are able to help in tracing any of these sightings please contact the WSG Colour-marking Register.

Table 3. The combinations are read as follows: Right tibia//tarsus; Left tibia//tarsus, e.g. O//R/M; //Y/W means orange on right tibia, red over metal on right tarsus; yellow over white on left tarsus. Colour codes - Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Light green (Lime), Blue, Pale blue, black (Niger), White, Metal

Ref	Species	Description	Date seen	Place seen	Ref	Species	Description	Date seen	Place seen
1	Oystercatcher	//; //G/W/N	10/92	Dyfed, UK	31	Curlew	R//M; R//	8/86	Pontevedra, Spain
2	Oystercatcher	//G; //M	6/91	Elnesvaagen,	32	Curlew	R/Y//M; R/Y//	8/86	Pontevedra, Spain
3	Oystercatcher	//M; //Y/R	?	Norway Cumbria,UK	32a	Curlew	N/R//M; R/N//	2/87	Pontevedra, Spain
4	Oystercatcher	//W/B; //W/M	12/91	W Glamorgan, UK	32b	Curlew	R/Y//M; R//	2/87	Pontevedra,
5	Oystercatcher	M//; //R/P	4/92	Devon, UK	33	Curlew	//W; //W	5/93	Lothians, UK
6	Oystercatcher	//W/M; //	5/92	Dumfries, UK	35	Green	//; B/R//M	8/91	Herts, UK
7	Oystercatcher	//Y; //W/M	5/92	Dumfries, UK	36	Sandpiper			
8	Oystercatcher	//B; //M	3/92	Isle of Mull, UK	36	Green	//R; //	7/93	Dorset, UK
9	Oystercatcher	//Y/W; //	6/92	Argyll, UK	39	Sandpiper			
10	Oystercatcher	//M; //Y/P(L)	?/92	Tayside, UK	39	Black-tailed	//; R//W(code)	10/93	Essex, UK
11	Oystercatcher	//G/Y; //M	3/93	Faroe Islands		Godwit			
13	Avocet	Y//; R//	4/92	Elmley, UK	40	Avocet	R//; O//	9/93	Essex, UK
14	Avocet	Y//; Y/N/R//	5/92	Ely, UK	41	Dunlin	//R/Y; //	10/93	Sussex, UK
16	Ringed Plover	//; //Y	7/92	Norfolk, UK	42	Black-winged	M/N//; Y/G//	4/93	Huelva, Spain
17	Ringed Plover	//M/L; N//N/W	12/90	France		Stilt			
19	Grey Plover	L//M; //	7/92	South Africa	43	Dunlin	//Y/B; //	1/94	Essex, UK
20	Grey Plover	//R; //G	3/92	Mauritius	45	Oystercatcher	M//; //Y/W	4/93	Dumfries, UK
21	Lapwing	//N/W; //R/M	5/92	Cumbria, UK	46	Ringed Plover	M//; //R/Y	11/92	Essex, UK
22	Sanderling	//R/Y; Y//R/M	10/91	Orkney, UK	47	Oystercatcher	//M; G/R//	6/93	Runde, Norway
24	Dunlin	Y//R; //R	10/92	Norfolk, UK	48	Black-tailed	Y//R; //	3/94	Suffolk, UK
26	Dunlin	pink/Y; pink	2/92	Guernsey, CI		Godwit			
27	Dunlin	//O; //O	3/92	Sussex, UK	49	Curlew	N/P//M; N/P//	2/94	Devon, UK
28	Bar-tailed	//Y; Y/W//	11/92	Humberside, UK	50	Curlew	Y/L/M; Y/R//	8/93	Norfolk, UK
29	Bar-tailed	G/R//; G/O//Y	12/92	Sylt, Germany	51	Knot	//R/O; //R/Y	2/94	Lanzarote, Spain
30	Bar-tailed	//; Y/W//	11/92	Zeeland,	52	Common	//O; M//R	7/94	Lancaster, UK
	Godwit			Belgium	53	Sandpiper			
	Godwit				53	Dunlin	Y//; //	4/94	Orkney, UK
	Godwit				54	Common	Y//; R/G/R//	7/94	Haverer,

SETTING UP A NEW SCHEME

Setting up a new colour-marking scheme requires careful thought. The increased demand for new marking schemes over the last few years means that for some species it will soon be impossible to find combinations that have not already been allocated. Before applying to the WSG, please consider whether or not the colour-marking can genuinely be justified in terms of furthering our knowledge of the species. Approval by the WSG is not automatic.

It is also important to allow plenty of time for registering a new scheme. Quite often, ringers planning expeditions allow far too little time and send a letter or fax along the lines that "the team of ringers is to leave next week and 100 combinations for 10 species are required now"! It is not always possible to deal with such a request in the time available. The colour-marking proposals deserve as much forward planning as any other element of an

expedition, yet are often left to the last minute. Sometimes the ringers' reason for delay is that funds for the project might not materialise - but if this happens the reserved combinations can always be reallocated. Please apply early.

Care should also be taken in planning ahead for long-term projects. Amending existing marking schemes can be very difficult, especially where the original request was for relatively few combinations.

Finally, emphasis must be given to the importance of registering the scheme, rather than not doing so, and of using only combinations that have been authorised. For many of the more commonly marked species the chances are high that the use of unauthorised combinations will interfere with existing schemes and the results of both projects will be corrupted.

THE FUTURE

The main priority for the register at present is the completion of the computerisation of all data about discontinued and current schemes. It is hoped that one of the benefits of this will be the possibility of identifying unused combinations from old schemes and re-allocating them for new projects. The success of this will depend largely on the quality of records kept by ringers. Another important venture is the further co-operation with organisations concerned with other flyways. Some contact has been made with the Asian/Pacific Flyway via the Asian Wetland

Bureau, and these links must be strengthened, especially with the large increase in activity by European ringers in Siberia.

The success of the colour-marking register depends upon co-operation. This co-operation must be made to work smoothly not only between organisations, but also between ringers, other WSG members and the wader-watching public as a whole.

This article has been previously published on the Wader Study Group Bulletin. We thank the Author and the Editor for allowing the reproduction.

EURING PROJECTS

All new projects co-ordinated by EURING will be presented in this section, which will also offer progress reports and summary results. Being EURING a large community of highly experienced ringers, one of our main features is represented by the possibility to collect data from wide geographical areas, following standard protocols.

Yet, co-ordinated projects need feedback to the participants, and basic information on ongoing activities and results should be published here, to be spread to all schemes; this would allow the different centres to transfer the information to the ringers by means of national ringers' bulletins, circulars, or during ringers' meetings.

Setting up new projects is quite difficult, since many different aspects have to be properly planned, organised and financed. It is therefore crucial to get inputs from all EURING members, and all schemes should try and take part in the planning of a new project by advising on issues of particular relevance to both basic and applied science, general needs in terms of contacts with the project co-ordinator(s), people, equipment, etc.

We hope this section of our newsletter will see the active role of all of you!

NEW PROJECTS

1) THE EURING SWALLOW PROJECT

All schemes have already received a first version of a project proposal written by Fernando Spina, on the basis of a draft plan by Arie van Noordwijk, on the Swallow. Some centres have already reacted to the request for comments and suggestions, and it is quite clear that this project could really become a large-scale initiative, given the general positive replies.

In the meantime contacts have been taken with scientists working on the species, as well as international organisations (BirdLife International, WWF International, E.U., ESF)

which might be interested in supporting the project.

Finding suitable funds for such a large initiative will not be easy; while applying for funds at the national/international levels, an initial strategy could be trying to start on an experimental basis in a certain number of countries in 1997. We could then use the partial results which would be obtained to put forward an even 'stronger' application, offering a practical example of the scientific data which the project would produce, to be used also for monitoring purposes and conservation policies.

At this stage it is essential to have replies from all schemes on the proposal you received; please try to send back your comments as soon as possible.

We will then revise the draft version accordingly, in order to start applying for funds. From this respect, it would be interesting to know whether you think you would be able to get funds at your national level on the basis of the larger EURING project.

2) WATERFOWL MIGRATION ATLAS

There has recently been a lot of interest in different aspects of bird migration at the international level, with reference to proposals for partly revising the EEC Bird Directive N. 409/79. In particular it has again become evident how sound information on seasonal movements, as well as origin and destination of the different geographical populations, would be of great importance to properly evaluate these proposals. Of particular interest in terms

of international management plans are waterfowl species.

EURING has got by far the largest data set available on waterfowl movements across Europe, and a proposal has therefore put forward within the EURING Board for a specific waterfowl atlas to be produced as a EURING initiative, and possibly through the involvement of other international organisations which might (or have already) shown interest in the project, such as C.I.C.-O.M.P.O. (Conseille Internationale de la Chasse - Oiseaux Migreateurs du Palearctique Occidental), or Wetlands International.

The proposal is being worked out, and will be circulated to all schemes fairly soon. This could be a very important initiative to promote an active role for EURING at the international level, and we're confident you all will try and contribute to the proper drafting of this project.

MEETINGS

In this section of our newsletter, we will offer all relevant information on the meetings organised by EURING, or which will see our involvement at different levels. Our intention is also to inform on different meetings devoted to bird migration. We therefore kindly ask you to send us any information on such initiatives for publication on the newsletter.

EURING MEETINGS 1997

Next year EURING will be actively involved in the organisation of both its technical and general meetings.

- EURING 97. Large-scale studies of marked birds.

The next EURING Technical meeting will be organised and kindly hosted by the BTO, National Centre for Ornithology, between 7-12 April 1997 at the University of East Anglia in Norwich (Norfolk, U.K.). This will be the sixth in a series of international meetings initiated by EURING, which have greatly contributed to the development of models and methods for the analysis of data gathered through marked birds. Ornithologists, ecologists and statisticians will join the meeting and offer contributions on how to better interpreting data generated through the ringing of wild birds.

Three full days of the conference will be taken up by six scientific sessions. The topics and organisers of the sessions are:

1. Avian survival: estimation models. Dr. Stephen Freeman;
2. Avian movement and survival: estimation methods. Dr. Jim Nichols;
3. Integrated population studies. Dr. Nadav Nur;
4. Population monitoring (numbers and survival). Dr. Will Peach;
5. Applied studies. Dr. Andreas Kaiser;
6. Overviews and future priorities. Drs. Stephen Baillie & Philip North.

Two other initiatives will make this conference an extremely interesting event: the first day of the meeting will be devoted to a short course, held by Dr. Jean-Dominique Lebreton, in order to provide essential background information on the techniques and software, while a computer software session will also be organised by Dr. Roger Pradel.

For all further details on the meeting, please contact: EURING 97 - BTO, National centre for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk, IP24 2PU, UK. Tel +44 1842 750050, Fax +44 1842 750030.

These technical meetings are among the most important initiatives EURING has set up; given the very interesting integration of theory and practice which will characterise this next meeting, we hope to get as wide a representation as possible from the different ringing schemes. We hope to see you all in Thetford!!

- 12th EURING GENERAL MEETING

The next EURING General Meeting will take place in the beautiful Praha, kindly organised and hosted by our Czech colleagues and friends Jiri Formanek and Jaroslav Skopek. The meeting will take place between October 1st-5th 1997, while the Board will have a preliminary meeting on September 30th. A conference hall just close to the historical Charles Bridge should be available, while accommodation is offered at 50\$ single and 90\$ double (including breakfast) at Botel Racek (= *Larus*), a boat hotel on the river Vltava. The conference fee is 30\$, inclusive of dinners and excursion. The excursion is planned to a water reservoir in Southern Moravia.

The detailed programme of the meeting is being drafted and will soon be circulated to all Schemes. In the meantime, further details on the meeting will be available through Jiri and Jaroslav: Tel. Ringing Centre +42 2 756 321; fax National Museum +42 2 242 264 88.

Needless to say how important it is to have delegates from ALL schemes joining the General meeting. This is particularly true in this crucial phase for EURING, when a new long-term strategy for bird ringing in Europe is being discussed to be soon implemented.

We ask all delegates who may have problems in attending the meeting (funding, visa, etc.) to contact the organisers as soon as possible, in order to try and solve them, although it will not be easy finding external support.

OTHER MEETINGS

- 100 YEARS OF BIRD RINGING

In 1999 it will be a century since the first birds ever were ringed by the Danish teacher Mortensen. EURING is planning to organise a special international meeting to celebrate the date, aiming to illustrate and evaluate the many uses researchers have made in these last 100 years of the different ringing and marking techniques. An important support to organise the conference will come through Jon Fjeldsa,

who has contacted EURING expressing also his intention to organise a special event in 1999. At the moment, details on how to organise the congress are being discussed between Ib Clausager, Lucas Jenni and Arie van Noordwijk for EURING together with Jon Fjeldsa; all relevant information on this important initiative which will hopefully be a milestone in the history of scientific bird ringing and EURING will be circulated as available.

- FOUNDATION MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL UNION

The foundation of the European Ornithological Union will take place during this first meeting of this new permanent union, scheduled for August 28-30 1997, in Bologna, Italy.

The meeting should attract ornithologists from all over the continent, to analyse the 'state of the art' of European Ornithology, and discuss the role, organisation and future of the Union.

The main programme will include talks by invited speakers covering a wide range of topics of relevance to European ornithologists. Plenary talks will be: Half a century with Great Tits (**C. Perrins**), The European-African songbird migration network: new challenges for large scale study of bird migration (**F. Bairlein**), Ornithology and the European Conservation Agenda (**C. Bibby**), History and Evolution of European Bird Faunas (**J. Blondel**), Sexual selection and birds: Evolution, conservation, and avian models of humane nature (**A. Pape Møller**), Microevolution in reproductive traits in the Great Tit (**A. van Noordwijk**), The EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds: a contribution to science and conservation (**J. Greenwood & W. Hagemeijer**), Ecological, morphological and conservation aspects of spring songbird migration strategies across the Mediterranean (**F. Spina & A. Pilastro**).

Ample opportunities will be offered to present poster papers on different subjects; a certain number of the proposed poster contributions will be selected to be presented as oral papers during six symposia on: Evolutionary biology and population studies, Behavioural ecology, Ecophysiology, Migration and ringing, Atlas projects, Conservation.

During a general assembly the Union will be formally founded; the statute and aims of the

Union, as well as its future activities will be discussed and its official representatives appointed by the assembly.

The time table of the congress is as follows: 28 August 1997 assemble Bologna, 29th-30th August full days of meetings, 31st August full day excursion, 1st September departs.

The official language of the meeting will be English; no translation will be available.

The proceedings will be published by the Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica as a

volume of its series 'Supplementi alle Ricerche di Biologia della Selvaggina'.

The organising secretary of the Conference will be Dr. Fernando Spina, Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, Via Ca' Fornacetta 9, 40064 Ozzano Emilia (BO), Italia (Tel. +39 51 65 12 111, Fax +39 51 79 66 28, E-mail: infsmigr@iperbole.bologna.it), from whom further details will be available.

BIRD RINGING ACROSS THE WORLD

This section of the newsletter will be reserved to the introduction of bird ringing from an international perspective, trying to get a better knowledge of how ringing activities are organised and carried on also outside the EURING Schemes. This will undoubtedly offer new prospects and ideas to improve scientific bird ringing in Europe. In this first issue, Terry Oatley offers a brief introduction to SAFRING, the South African Ringing Scheme, with an overview of the organisation and the main projects carried on by our colleagues from the other hemisphere.

BIRD RINGING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

by Terry B. Oatley

Southern Africa is the destination of many Palaearctic migrants which travel south to escape the winter months of the northern hemisphere. Some 75 Eurasian species commonly 'winter' in southern Africa, including several species of terns and many shorebirds (waders). Of the terrestrial birds the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* is undoubtedly the most numerous migrant and the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* one of the most noticeable. Other Eurasian species that winter in southern Africa in large numbers are Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus*, Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni*, Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* and European Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*.

These migrants arrive in the southern hemisphere summer when most of the over 750 local Afrotropical species are breeding. Bird ringers in southern Africa therefore have an impressive diversity of species on which to target their activities.

The South African bird ringing scheme was initiated by the South African Ornithological society (SAOS) in 1948. At that time the society's headquarters were in Pretoria, which

was also the site of the National Zoological Gardens. "ZOO Pretoria" was adopted as the return address for the scheme's rings. Initially, much of the ringing was concentrated on colonially nesting waterbirds such as egrets and ibises; other colonially nesting species such as Cape Vultures *Gyps coprotheres* also received attention. Some of the provincial Nature Conservation authorities also initiated duck-ringing projects.

The annual ringing effort increased steadily, and by the late 1960's was outstripping the resources of the SAOS to adequately administer and finance it. In 1970, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research convened a series of meetings which resulted in the formation of the South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING). This Unit started operation in 1971 at the University of Cape Town under the supervision of Director of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology. It was funded by the provincial Nature Conservation Departments whose ornithologists had become some of the main users of bird rings, primarily to facilitate research into waterfowl populations.

One of the initial goals of SAFRING was to computerise all documented recoveries or ringed birds and to initiate a databank of annual totals of species ringed. The University main frame computer was used for this purpose, and by 1981, a custom-written set of programs were in use to produce recovery printouts for ringers and finders, schedule summary printouts and species totals lists for ringers, regions, or time periods.

In December 1991, SAFRING became part of the Avian Demography Unit (ADU) of the Department of Statistical Sciences at the University of Cape Town. It is the first ringing scheme to find a home in a statistics department, and the move has proved very beneficial to the scheme. Problems of small data sets and the need to merge recoveries and recaptures to achieve adequate sample sizes have all received enthusiastic attention in the new environment. Additionally, bird ringing fits in very well with the other projects of the ADU (atlassing, waterbird census, population studies of large birds, etc.) and with its mission, which is to improve our understanding of avian population dynamics and to make a contribution to bird conservation by providing a scientific basis for conservation action. The ADU has a close association with the SAOS and focuses on large-scale demographic studies in which participation by amateurs is a vital element.

From the inception of the ringing scheme in 1948 to June 1995, over 1.57 million birds of 845 different species had been ringed in South Africa and the neighbouring countries of Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia, and on the islands of Mauritius and Sub-Antarctic islands of the Prince Edward group, Gough, and Tristram de Cunha. The numbers of birds ringed annually have fluctuated. Ringing effort peaked in the late 1960s at about 70,000 birds per annum, then dropped as low as 17,000 in the course of the following decade. Since the 1980s there has been a steady upward trend and over 71,000 birds were ringed in the 1994-1995 ringing year (the natural, austral ringing year is from July to June). During the 1980s there were generally between 90 and 110 ringers active in any year; this figure has increased to 130 ringers active in the 1994-1995 ringing year. Approximately 85% of registered ringers are amateurs. All ringers, both amateur and professional, have to pay for the rings they use.

The most frequently ringed bird in southern Africa is the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, with over 198,000 ringed by June 1995. Only two other species, the Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* and the Redbilled Quelea *Quelea quelea* have ringing totals exceeding 100,000 and another two, the Yellowbilled Duck *Anas undulata* and Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*, exceed 50,000 birds ringed.

Recovery rate of birds in southern Africa are lower than in most European countries; currently the overall recovery rate for South African rings is barely 1%. Recovery data sets are consequently meagre. Only the Cape Gannet and the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* have more than 1000 recoveries each; 28 other species have more than 100 recoveries each. 245 species boast less than 10 recoveries each, and for 471 species there are no recoveries at all. Many of the latter are small passerines and for such birds retrap records by ringers make up for the paucity or lack of recoveries and provide insight into survival rates.

Numbers of recoveries reported to SAFRING averaged 462 per year during the 1980s but have increased in recent years following increased ringing effort. The number of foreign rings reported each year is usually between 30 and 40, with Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, Barn Swallows, White Storks and Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* being the species most commonly reported.

Before extensive ringing of Barn Swallows started in southern Africa it was believed that most such swallows were from the British Isles because some 64% of all ring recoveries of this species involved BTO rings, with a scattering of rings from other schemes, mainly in western Europe. Once South African ringers learnt that Barn Swallows could be caught by the thousand at their reedbed roosts, a steady stream of recoveries were received from the former USSR, mainly between longitudes 21°E and 91°E. In fact some 80% of Barn Swallows which winter annually in southern Africa are evidently of Russian origin. Some of these have been controlled by Prof. Gavrillov whilst on spring migration through the Chok Pat Pass in Kazakhstan. Further evidence that our Barn Swallows are mainly of Eurasian origin is reflected in the very few foreign-ringed controls caught during swallow-ringing activities in South Africa.

Wader ringing has also yielded interesting information on the origins of shorebirds visiting southern Africa. Several species have been recovered in Russia, with the Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* undertaking the longest migrations from the Gauteng Province of South Africa to 67°N and 15°E in Asia a great circle distance of 14174 km.

Over 3500 Willow Warblers have been ringed in southern Africa but there have as yet been no recoveries from the northern hemisphere. The few European-ringed birds that have been recovered here have born either Helsinki or Stockholm rings; most Stockholm-ringed Willow Warbler recoveries have been made from farther north in the African continent, so it seems that those that have been recovered in South Africa have overshot their normal wintering area. All three races of the Willow Warbler visit southern Africa, with *P. t. acredula* perhaps the most common and *P. t. yakutensis* the least common.

There is obviously still much to be learned about the origins of Palaearctic migrants in southern Africa. Many birds captured and ringed here are retrapped in subsequent years, yielding information on fidelity to wintering site. But, as indicated above, the great majority of visiting migrants are unringed and it is apparent that most are coming here from the Asian side of Eurasia rather than from the European side.

Increased ringing of Barn Swallows in Europe may yield an increasing number of controls from South Africa because this is one species in which individuals from all over Europe appear to mix with the large populations from further east and fly around together on their winter holiday. We hope that renewed interest in ringing this species in Europe will bring many happy returns from South Africa.

T.B. Oatley is Ringing Co-ordinator of the SAFRING at the University of Cape Town

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In this section of the newsletter we will publish different announcements (projects, specific local initiatives requiring support, field work adverts, etc.). Please send in your information and requests to be published in the next issue!

- Albanian Ringing Scheme

The newly established Albanian Ringing Centre is a section of the Albanian National Association for Migratory Birds. Dr. Grigor Jorgo is in charge of the scheme, which has been able to produce rings for large birds, with the inscription: QUENDRA UNAZIMIT RINGING CENTRE TIRANE - ALBANIA

The full address of the Scheme is: Shoqata Kombetare e Shpendeve Shtegtare, Rruga Naim Frasheri, Pall. 23 - Tirana, Albania.

Our Albanian colleagues are planning to publish an updated list of foreign-ringed birds found in their country, which would represent a very interesting reference material.

Please contact Dr. Jorgo for any further information.

- Moroccan Ringing Scheme

Dr. Mohamed Dakki is now in charge of the Moroccan Ringing Scheme in Rabat. The full address of the scheme is:

Centre d'Etude des Migrations d'Oiseaux - Institut Scientifique de Rabat, Avenue Ibn Battola, B.P. 703 - RABAT-Agdal, Morocco.

In order to update the Rabat files, Dr. Dakki would very much welcome receiving all relevant information concerning recoveries in Morocco of foreign-ringed birds; he is also ready to help translating recovery letters, finding localities, etc.

Please contact him for all aspects related to Morocco.

- EURING brochure

The EURING brochure has been produced to publicise as widely as possible the activities and role of our organisation. A large number of copies have already been distributed to representatives of the different Governments.

Yet the impression is that the distribution of this very well-received brochure is still far from complete.

You are therefore kindly asked to provide updated address lists of all relevant organisations and people in your country as well as at the international level. The brochure can be distributed together with a brief introduction letter drafted by Chris Mead and Fernando Spina.

If you need further copies of the brochure, which has so far been translated into German, Hungarian, Italian and Portuguese, please contact Fernando or Arie van Noordwijk.

We hope you will try and make a better use of this important introduction to EURING!

- Redundant computers

Several ringing schemes badly suffer from shortage in both hardware and software to store

data and process recoveries. In the meantime, different centres are in the opposite lucky situation of upgrading their computer systems, and may therefore have redundant computers available, which may prove extremely useful to other colleague schemes. Although transferring machines is not necessarily easy between distant countries, we kindly ask all centres in the position of having redundant hardware/software to contact Fernando Spina in Bologna, who will try and arrange contacts. Thanks for help!

- Next issue of the EURING Newsletter

This first issue of our newsletter should not be the last! Information, ideas, proposals are strongly needed for the second issue, to be distributed in July 1997. Please send your contribution to Fernando Spina by the end of May at latest! The newsletter can only be issued on a regular basis if we all contribute to making it a real information tool for the best of scientific bird ringing!

- Acknowledgments

We wish to thank again all those who contributed to this first issue of the EURING newsletter, and in particular Jacquie Clark, Jane Marchant, Terry Oatley and Rinse Wassenaar. Mrs. Maria Luisa Romagnoli kindly helped assembling the material to go to the printer.

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Country: Spain**ICONA**

Oficina de Anillamento
 Ministerio de Agricultura Pesca y Alimentación
 (M.A.P.A.)
 Address: Dirección General de Conservación de
 la Naturaleza
 Oficina de Anillamento
 Gran Via de San Francisco, 4
 28005 Madrid, España

Tel. +341 34 76 145
 Fax +341 34 76 303
 E-mail: none

Staff

Francisco J. Cantos (Head of the scheme)
 Angel Gómez Manzaneque

Sociedad de Ciencias Aranzadi
 San Telmo Museoa,
 E-20003 Donostia, S. Sebastian, Spain

Tel. +34 943 42 29 45
 Fax +34 943 42 13 16
 E-mail: none

Staff

Josepto Riofrio Aizpurua (Head of the
 scheme)

Country: Sweden

Bird Ringing Centre
 Swedish Museum of Natural History
 Address: Box 50007, S-104 05 Stockholm,
 Sweden

Tel. +46 8 666 40 80 (office)
 +46 8 666 40 81 (head of Unit)
 Fax +46 8 666 42 44
 E-mail:rc-bengt-olov@nrm.se
 rc-thord@nrm-se

Staff

Bengt-Olov Stolt (Head of the scheme)
 Thord Fransson
 Roland Staav
 Bo Sällström
 Lennart Sällström

Country: Switzerland

Bird Ringing Centre
 Schweizerische Vogelwarte
 Address: CH-6204 Sempach, Switzerland

Tel. +41 41 462 97 00
 Fax +41 41 462 97 10
 E-mail:jennil@orninst.ch

Staff

Lucas Jenni (Head of the scheme)
 Elisabeth Wiprächtiger

Country: United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland

British Trust for Ornithology
 Address: The Nunnery
 Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, England

Tel. +44 1842 75 00 50
 Fax +44 1842 75 00 30
 E-mail: ringing@bto.org
 jacquie@bto.org (J. Clark)

Staff

Jacquie Clark (Head of the scheme)
 Will Peach
 Jeff Baker
 Sue Adams
 Jonathan Simons
 Peter Beaven
 Jeremy Blackburn
 David Balner
 Nicki Read
 Harriet Mead
 Shirley Ann Mooves

Table 1. Staff, ringers, courses and exams, birds and species ringed and recoveries

Country (and scheme)	Staff		Number of ringers	Courses	Exams	Birds ringed	Birds per ringer	Species ringed	Recoveries		
	academic	clerical							own	foreign	total
Belgium	1.0	5.0	375	n	y	600,000	1,600	230	4,750	1,000	5,750
Bulgaria	1.0	1.0		y	y						
Channel Island	1.0	1.5	15	n	y	9,000	600	85	80	120	200
Croatia	2.0	0.0	44	n	y	15,000	341	140	120	70	190
Cyprus	0.0	1.0	11	n	n	350	32	30	4		4
Czech and Slovak Republics	2.0	1.0	570	n	y	80,000	140	210	1,200	600	1,800
Denmark (KALO)	0.5	0.5	25	n	n	5,000	200	20		300	300
Denmark Zool. Mus. Copenhagen	0.5	2.5	153	n	n	100,000	654	185	3,500	500	4,000
Estonia	1.0	1.0	125	y	y	67,000	536	166	1,850	125	1,975
Finland	1.0	4.0	670	y	y	235,000	351	240	24,000	550	24,550
France	3.0	2.0	320	y	y	100,000	313	200	2,500	3,000	5,500
Germany (Hiddensee)	1.0	3.0	290	y	y	87,000	300	216	5,500	784	6,284
Germany (Helgoland)	0.5	3.5	270	n	n	100,000	370	200	2,500	500	3,000
Germany (Radolizell)	0.2	0.9	285	y	y	80,000	281	190	750	50	800
Greece (HBRC, Athens)	0.2	0.0	12	y	n	1,600	133	90	12	25	37
Hungary	1.0	2.0	300	y	y	100,000	333	230	400	100	500
Iceland	0.1	0.5	45	n	n	14,000	311	60	767	91	858
Italy	2.0	2.0	300	y	y	200,000	667	330	1,000	450	1,450
Latvia	0.0	2.0	100	y	y	35,000	350	160	300	200	500
Lithuania	1.0	1.0	50	n	y	85,000	1,700	145	1,400	350	1,750
Malta	2.0	1.0	15	y	n	12,500	833	100	40	10	50
The Netherlands	0.2	2.2	391	y	n	170,000	435	225	12,000	525	12,525
Norway	1.0	1.0	425	y	y	200,000	471	275	3,000	500	3,500
Poland	0.8	3.2	176	y	y	80,000	455	190	2,000	600	2,600
Portugal	2.0	2.0	15	n	n	20,000	1,333	100	175	220	395
Rumania	1.0	3.0	63	y	y	5,530	88	110	38	14	52
Russia	6.0	4.0	200	n	n	100,000	500		350	300	650
Slovenia	0.0	1.0	65	y	y	66,000	1,015	140	36	34	70
Spain (S. Sebastian)	0.0	1.0	22	y	n	5,500	250	76	19	24	43
Spain (Madrid)	2.0	0.0	581	n	y	150,000	258	210	1,500	800	2,300
Sweden	2.5	1.0	250	n	n	300,000	1,200	240	3,000	800	3,800
Switzerland	1.0	1.0	200	n	y	40,000	200	170	750	140	890
UK and Republic of Ireland	7.3	2.5	2,200	y	n	800,000	364	275	12,500	1,000	13,500
AVERAGE	1.4	1.7	268	y=55%	y=59%	120,734	519	169	2,776	445	3,119
TOTAL	45	57	8,563			3,863,480			86,041	13,782	99,823

Table II. E-mail, ringing reports, rings, colour rings and computers

Country (scheme)	UK and Rep. of Ireland	Switzerland	Sweden	Spain (S. Sebastian)	Spain (Madrid)	Slovenia	Russia	Rumania	Portugal	Poland	Norway	The Netherlands	Malta	Lithuania	Latvia	Italy	Iceland	Hungary	Grece (HBRC, Athens)	Germany (Radolfzell)	Germany (Helgoland)	Germany (Hiddensee)	France	Finland	Estonia	Denmark (Zool. Mus.)	Denmark (KALO)	Czech and Slovak R.	Cyprus	Croatia	Channel Island	Bulgaria	Belgium	
E-mail	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	n	y	n	n	y	n	y	y	n	y	n	n	n	y	y	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	y	
Ringing reports																																		
annual report (if not, until year)	y	y	y	n	y	n	n	n	86	y	y	y	n	n	n	y	54	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	
distributed to other schemes	y	y	y	n	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n		
support needed	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n		
available since year	36	24				26			77	95	14	11	65	75	75	75	32	74	85	82	75	76	78	13	71	31	75	77	70	10				
report to EDB on diskette	n	y			n	n	n		n	n	n	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n		
Rings																																		
no. of different sizes	26	14	18	11	18	13	12	10	16	20	16		10	11	20	13	17	10	20	18	23	19	16	23	12	21	6	14	14	15	7	15		
min. size (mm)	2.0	2.3		2.0	2.0	3.0	2.0	6.0	2.0	2.0	1.8		2.0		1.8	2.0	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.8		1.8	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	
max. size (mm)	26	25		26	26	15	35	35	26	33	25		11		25	26	26	25	26	32	26	26	25	26		28	25				19	25		
payed by ringers	y	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	n	y	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	y	
Colour rings																																		
co-ordinated by the scheme	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	
permit needed	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
contacts between schemes	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	
Computers																																		
recoveries computerised	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	
since year	79	24	11	59	54	83	92		10	32	14	11		79	86	n*	88	8	85	47	64	76	21	13		31	50							
ringing computerised	n	y	y	n	n	y	n	n	n	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	n	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
since year						87				90	96	91					89				77	77		74										
software for ringers	y	n	y	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	n	n	n	y	n	n	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
free																																		
ringing comp. by ringers	y	n	y	n	y	y	y	n	y	y	y	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	
% over annual total	0	0	0	0	25	0	50	0	20	40	75	100	0	0	0	80	0	40	50	10	50	50	25	60	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
recoveries comp. by ringers	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	
% over annual total	0	0	0	0	25	0	50	0	20	40	75	100	0	0	0	80	0	40	50	10	50	50	25	60	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Projects																																		
national projects (no.)		1				0			9			3			4	3	6	1	1	1	10	10	4	4	7	n	14	n	n	n	n	n		
special projects (no.)		12				1			2	6	3	7			5	5	6	5	2	5	5	5	5	5	20	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	
international projects (no.)	1					0		2	2	5	4	4			2	3	5	0	0	1	6	6	1	1	4	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	