



Report of the Radolfzell ringing scheme (DER)

Presented to the EURING General Assembly 2011

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Organisation

The Bird Ringing Scheme “Radolfzell” (DER) is hosted at Vogelwarte Radolfzell in the small village of Möggingen near the city of Radolfzell. Since 2005 Wolfgang Fiedler is head of the ringing scheme. Vogelwarte Radolfzell is a subdivision of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology and is officially named as “Departement for Migration and Immuno-Ecology” of Prof. Martin Wikelski.

The Bird Ringing Centre at Vogelwarte Radolfzell issues bird rings with inscription „Radolfzell Germania“ for use in Southern Germany, Berlin and Austria. Strong efforts have been made together with colleagues from Austria (especially from Konrad Lorenz Institute for Comparative Ethology in Vienna) to organize bird ringing independently by a future Austrian Ringing Scheme. First parts of the ringing centre’s administration have been moved to Austria while the stable financing of this new Austrian scheme still is a major issue to solve. The Radolfzell scheme continues to provide all materials and services necessary until the situation stabilizes.

Within Germany all three existing bird ringing schemes (besides Radolfzell: Helgoland - northern Germany and Hiddensee - former GDR area) work together efficiently. The federal structure of Germany with the States (“Bundesländer”) as highest authorities in nature conservation and animal welfare issues including own legislation and administrative structures in these fields means in practice that in Germany three ringing schemes are dealing with 15 countries and this makes any further unification a challenge. However, the institutions of the three German Ringing Schemes agreed to take up this task to achieve a long term perspective for bird ringing in Germany.

Staff

The head of scheme holds a 100% researcher’s position at the institute and shall assign ca. 50% to the ringing centre. For recovery processing we have a 50% technician’s position and for various help in the routine work we have two “minijob” positions with 6 hrs/ week each. The gate service at the institute helps with digitizing of data and another technician is responsible for the ring supply (ca. 10% of his work). Altogether this sums up to approximately a 50% researcher’s and 75% technician’s position.

Annual fee / costs of rings

There is no annual fee for the ringers and the costs of rings are covered by the ringing scheme (except for colour marks in larger funded projects).



Ringers

Currently the ringing scheme counts 385 licensed bird ringers (58 from Austria)

Courses

The training for ringers consists of several elements:

- 1) obligatory visit of a 2 day theory course for all new bird ringers (in 2010 two courses with 46 participants, in 2011 for far one course with 15 participants).
- 2) practice training either on a bird ringing field station or in a mentor system together with a senior bird ringer.
- 3) Course on field methods in breeding biology studies (2 days) for those ringers who want to work at open-breeding songbird's nests.

Licenses

Ringling Licenses are issued by the nature conservation authorities, regularly on application by the ringing scheme in the name of the ringer. Licenses are always bound to natural persons (not to groups or institutions) and relate to a distinct research project. There are no general bird ringing licenses enabling ringers to catch and mark any bird on their own (or the ringing scheme's) decision.

Birds ringed and recovered

In 2010 ca. 20,000 nestlings of 86 species and ca. 30,000 fledgelings of 153 species have been ringed. In the same year 9.800 recoveries and retraps have been processed. The number of recoveries that need more action than just loading it to the database is around 3000 / year.

Database

In 2000 we introduced the electronic database system RINGZENT which has been developed together with the Helgoland bird ringing scheme (Institute for Avian Research Wilhelmshaven) based on the existing Dutch system. With the component RING ringers now deliver ca. 90% of all ringing data by electronic way to the central database. Electronically available ring recoveries and retraps increased from less than 0.2% of the annual ringing totals before the year 2000 to roughly 20% in 2010 on average.

Projects

- Integrated Monitoring of Songbirds (Constant effort sites; in cooperation with the other German ringing schemes): 5 plots
- Studies of breeding and population biology in various species (Barn Owl, Little Owl, Peregrine, Mediterranean Gull, Dipper, Wheatear, Field Sparrow, House Sparrow, Jackdaw, Whinchat, Stonechat, Reed Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Hoopoe, Swift, Barn Swallow, House Martin and other).
- Nestbox project (12 plots with ca. 2000 nestboxes).
- Nest record scheme: breeding biological data of 60.000 broods of 152 species are stored at Vogelwarte Radolfzell. The most numerous ones (> 1000 records) are Barn Owl, Little Owl, Barn Swallow, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Wren, Black Redstart, Robin, Pied Flycatcher, Collared Flycatcher, Redbacked Shrike and Field Sparrow.

- Focus Project "White Stork" (in cooperation with the other German ringing schemes): Integrated population monitoring; measurement of immigrants, emigrants, recruitment, survival and age structure; migration behaviour and changes in migration.
- special projects with various partners: fitness differences of Blackcaps wintering in Spain and in the UK; Wintering areas of Wheatears; population genetics of a rapidly growing Wheatear population in intensive farmland; studies of global change effects on birds incl. morphometry.