

EURING GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STRASBOURG, 24-25 AUGUST 2005

ITALIAN REPORT

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- 1. General situation:** the last two years have been very difficult not only for the Ringing Centre but also for our Institute in general. Significant cuts in general funds have badly affected our efficiency, especially as these coincided with a particularly critical period of passage to a new central information system at the ringing centre. Requests for letters of support have been circulated within EURING, and we wish to warmly thank here the following schemes, for their immediate and strong support: Vogelwarte Helgoland, British Trust for Ornithology, Institute of Ornithology Gdansk, Vogelwarte Sempach, Ringing Centre Latvia, Ringing Centre National Academy of Science Belarus, Max-Plank Institut Vogelwarte Radolfzell, Ringing Scheme BirdLife Malta, EURING Data Bank, Finnish Ringing Scheme, Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Netherlands Institute of Ecology Dutch Ringing Scheme, Lithuanian Bird Ringing Centre, Praha Bird Ringing Centre. It is important to point out that these letters have had a very positive effect, and have been efficiently used to contrast pressures for a split of the institute into regional organisms, which might have involved also the coordination of ringing. Presently such pressures should no longer be a problem, although we are still waiting for the final decision on a new hunting law which would still put the role and activities of our Institute at risk. The decision should be reached within October at latest.
- 2. Staff:** the staff is still made of 5 full-time positions, some of which covered on a part-time basis by two different people; we recently welcomed Cosimo Tendi to complement the part-time position of Rosita Mantovani. The present situation is: 2 academic (Fernando Spina 50%, general organisation; Davide Licheri 100%, database management, informatic system), 4 clerical (Stefano Macchio 50% & Ezio Orfelini 50%, project management, database analyses; Rosita Mantovani 50% & Cosimo Tendi 50%, licensing; Dario Piacentini 100%, rings, recoveries). We also could get external funds, through projects, allowing us to have extra staff: Chiara Campomori (100% for 8 months, recoveries; Stefano Volponi, 40% migration atlas; Andrea Ferri, 40% regional atlases; Massimo Sacchi, 40% central database management support).
- 3. Ringers:** the last two years have been characterised by a further increase in the number of ringers. Regular sessions of exams to release new licenses and test ringers to move to higher level of permits have been organised in 2004 and 2005. We have continued to invite to these exams also those ringers who have not been active for at least three years, irrespective of their level of permit. Presently we have reached the level of 400 licensed ringers, with a further 150

trainees at different levels of training. The applications for ringing permits still show a positive trend.

4. **Ringings:** annual numbers for 2003 and 2004 are 202,017 and 176,622 respectively, although we're still missing data from some ringers. Once the new system will be up and going we should be able to compensate for the bad delays in the production of our national annual ringing reports. All ringings, including morphometrics, are computerised by the ringers; we have recently reached the level of 4,000,000 data in the central database.
5. **Recoveries:** the new informatic system has allowed us to start processing recoveries again on 24.12.2004; since then we have processed 1,286 recoveries. Recoveries are now exchanged with National Ringing Schemes and with Italian ringers only via e-mail. We are working on a lot of over 2,000 more recoveries to be still processed.
6. **Information system at the Ringing Centre:** during the last two years the development and deployment of the new information system at the Ringing Centre has continued. A series of procedures have been activated at the central level, and some are being opened to use by the ringers and co-workers. A more detailed description of the progress in the implementation of the system, called EPE (EURING Protocol Engine) is attached to the present report.
7. **Projects:**
 - **Progetto Piccole Isole:** the project still goes on with an annual coverage on ca. 20 different sites in Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Greece. Over 600,000 birds have been ringed so far. Two recent papers have been published on international journals in 2004-2005: a) RUBOLINI D., SPINA F., SAINO N., 2004 – Protandry and sexual dimorphism in trans-Saharan migratory birds. *Behavioural Ecology* 15 (4): 592-601; b) RUBOLINI D., SPINA F., SAINO N. - Correlates of timing of spring migration in birds: a comparative study of trans-Saharan migrants. *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*, 85: 199-210.
 - **Progetto Alpi:** the project started in 1997 and investigates patterns of autumn migration across the barrier represented by the Alps. It is based on a network of stations widely stretched along longitude and on high passes, mountain slopes and valley bottoms. A total of 32 stations have been involved, out of which 27% in the western, 57% in the central and 17% in the eastern Alps, respectively. A total of 178,562 birds belonging to 153 species has been ringed so far. An annual average number of 70 licensed ringers are involved, plus a number of trainees. The secretarial work is ensured by the Museo Tridentino di Scienze Naturali. A general report of the first 5 years of the project is being finalised and will be published in 2006.
 - **EURING Swallow Project:** ringing activities still go on in Italy, although the effort has surely decreased compared with the first years of the project. The Italian contribution to the central database of the project will be of 373,926 swallows ringed during the migration and wintering seasons since 1997.

- **Italian Migration Atlas:** the project is financed by the Italian Ministry of the Environment. The overall sample dates back to 1906 and is made of 165,000 recoveries from over 250 species. Analyses are going on and species texts prepared; we hope we'll be able to complete the production of the volume by end 2006, although the volume will be printed in 2007.
- **Use of data by the Ringing Scheme:** we have continued to produce analyses of the large set of data of first captures. In particular, standard morphometrics of ringed birds have been analysed in three volumes, which have been distributed to all Ringing Schemes (free extra copies available on request): LICHERI D., SPINA F., 2002 – Biodiversità dell'avifauna Italiana: variabilità morfologica nei Passeriformi. Parte II (*Alaudidae-Sylviidae*). Biol. Cons. Fauna, 112: 1-208; SPINA F., LICHERI D., 2003 – Biodiversità dell'avifauna Italiana: variabilità morfologica nei Passeriformi. Parte III (*Muscicapidae-Emberizidae*). Biol. Cons. Fauna, 113: 1-180; LICHERI D., SPINA F., – Biodiversità dell'avifauna Italiana: variabilità morfologica nei non-Passeriformi. Biol. Cons. Fauna, 114: 1-192.

Development and implementation of EPE (EURING Protocol Engine)

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Things done:

- Deployment of architecture of ORACLE 9i *Three-Tier*
- Migration of ringing and recovery data into ORACLE 9i
- Modelling of *entity/relationship* scheme for HR data and lookup-tables (places, species, etc.)
- Migration of HR data and lookup-tables (places, species, etc.) into ORACLE 9i
- Normalisation of HR data and lookup-tables (places, species, etc.)
- Automation of DBA tasks (*monitoring, tuning e backing up*) into ORACLE 9i
- Development of ASP pages for automated web-based user affiliation, HR administration, ring stock and locality codes
- Web server publication in WWW
- Development of functions to temporarily receive data via e-mail
- Development of functions for recovery processing and e-mail data exchange with foreign RC

Things which have been started but not yet completed:

- Modelling of *entity/relationship* scheme for ringing and recovery data
- Development of ASP pages for automated web-based query of ringing and recovery data
- Development of functions for receiving data via FTP
- Development of a remote application for ringing data management by the ringer (VB .NET)
- Improvement of automatic procedures for processing recoveries
- Modelling of *entity/relationship* scheme for new lookup-tables (morphometric ranges, moult and wing formula forms, netting habitats, etc.)
- Instructions for users

Things to be started:

- Passage from an *entity/relationship* to an *object-oriented* scheme for access to XML technologies
- Passage from ASP pages to *servlet/JSP* ones for databank management
- Development of functions to receive data via *Web services* (SOAP)
- Internationalisation of *labels* and data