

Malachite Sunbird recaptured after ten years

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Malachite Sunbirds *Nectarinia famosa* were ringed at various localities in the Free State since 1990 (De Swardt 2001). At one of these sites, the Free State National Botanical Gardens, capture sessions were mostly during the period March – May (when *Leonotus leonurus* are in flower) and on few occasions during September (when *Aloe granidentata* are flowering at the hilly areas of garden). Since the sunbird project was initiated in the Free State, 128 sunbirds were caught and ringed at the *Leonotus* clumps and 12 were recaptured or controlled, all except one at the gardens (De Swardt 1995, 2001).

During 2002 and 2003 some ringing were done in an effort to collect recapture data of the sunbirds and other species. A Fiscal Shrike, *Lanuis collaris*, ringed during 1989 by Deon du Plessis, was recaptured in September 2001 after 12 years and seven months – probably a new record for the gardens! On 22 April 2003, the gardens was visited to capture sunbirds and while still busy erecting the last 6 meter net in the *Leonotus* clump, I saw I already got my first captured sunbird in the net opposite me in the clump. I noticed, while busy with the net, its red colour-ring and know that is a recaptured bird.

The recaptured sunbird female carried ring number F31781 and I had reason to be excited as I recognized the ring number recaptured on previous occasions! The bird was ringed on 19 April 1993 at the same *Leonotus* clump at the Botanical Gardens and was that time sexed as a juvenile and possible a female. After been ringed in April 1993, it was first resighted on 21 April 1994 and thereafter recaptured four times since the last recapture during 2003. All recaptures and resighting were at the same *Leonotus* clump at the Botanical Gardens during the April – May period. The other recaptures were on 4 May 1996, 26 April 2000 and 9 April 2002. During all recapture dates the sunbird were in primary moult (moult scores 32, 23 and 17) and average mass were 15.6 gram.

It can be speculated on occurrence of this individual during other times of year. Malachite Sunbirds were rarely recorded around Bloemfontein during summer and only few records were available (De Swardt 2001). The fact that the sunbird was recaptured every time at the same site in the gardens during April – May, suggests that they were also probably there during the other years when not noticed. This control prompted me to urge other ringers (especially in Free State) to go out and capture Malachite Sunbirds wherever you go. I am planning to revisit my other study sites such as Kirklington near Ficksburg during June – July and will visit the Free Sate National Botanical Gardens annually (see also De Swardt 1998). You never know what recaptures will be waiting for me!

De Swardt, D. H. 1995. Malachite Sunbird ringing in the Free State. *Safring News* 24: 15-18.

De Swardt, D. H. 1998. Bird ringing at Kirklington, Ficksburg. *Mirafra* 15: 39-41.

De Swardt, D.H. 2001. Preliminary observations on Malachite Sunbird movements in the Free State. *Ostrich* 72: 203-206.