

Bird ringing

What is bird ringing?

Bird ringing is the capture and fitting of wild birds with permanent leg rings marked with unique codes, so that individual birds can be identified. This practice enable researchers to gain information on the long term movements and survival of bird populations.

The oldest ringed bird in the world is a female Albatross called "Wisdom", who was ringed in 1956, and has last been seen in 2021.



Top: Wisdom (Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_\(albatross\)#/media/File:Laysan_albatross_fws.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_(albatross)#/media/File:Laysan_albatross_fws.JPG))

Methods of capture

Some of the most common methods of capturing birds for ringing is using *mistnets*, *walk-in traps*, *bal-chatri*, or capturing *nestlings*.

Mistnets:

Mistnets are large, fine nets deployed vertically in areas where birds are expected to fly. Birds are captured when they fly into the nets and are restrained in pockets inside the net.



Right: Bird caught in mistnet (Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/bird-captured-in-the-mist-net-gm166153155-23628664>)

Walk-in traps:

Walk-in traps are generally used to catch larger, ground-feeding birds such as vultures. These traps usually use bait to get the targeted bird to walk into the trap, after which a mechanism is deployed which prevents the bird from exiting the trap.

Bal-chatri:

A bal-chatri is a device consisting of a double cage in which live bait such as mice are placed. The outside of the cage is covered in fine nooses, which are used to capture the bird's feet as it tries to get to the bait. It is usually used to capture raptors. This device may only be used with special training.



Right: Bird caught in Bal-chatri. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Novn9olxy90>)

Regulation of bird ringing

Anyone doing bird ringing in the Northern Cape needs a bird ringing permit from the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform, as well as a valid SAFRING Authority card.

SAFRING (South African Bird Ringing Unit) coordinates bird ringing in South Africa.

Report sightings of ringed birds:

Sightings of birds ringed with numbered metal or plastic rings can be reported at https://safring.birdmap.africa/upload_retrap.php (if you can see the numbers on the ring).



Left: Examples of rings (source: https://safring.birdmap.africa/upload_retrap.php)

Sources:

Wikipedia (2022). Wisdom [Online]: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_\(albatross\)#:~:text=Wisdom%20\(Z333\)%20is%20a%20wild,banded%20bird%20in%20the%20world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom_(albatross)#:~:text=Wisdom%20(Z333)%20is%20a%20wild,banded%20bird%20in%20the%20world), accessed 12 December 2022].

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