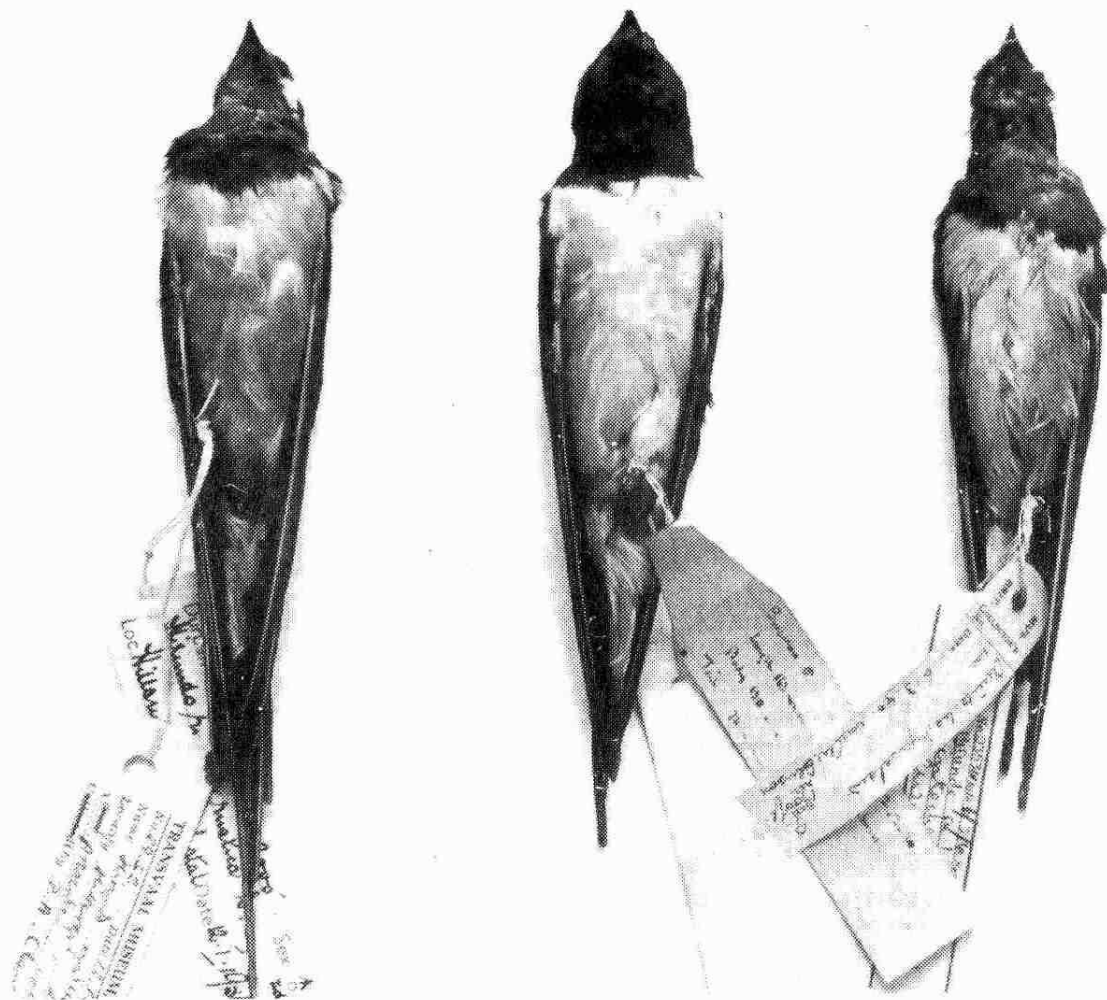


BIRD-IN-THE-HAND

RACES OF THE EUROPEAN SWALLOW - *Hirundo rustica*

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As far as is known, only two races of *Hirundo rustica* L. overwinter in southern Africa, namely the nominate race, *H. r. rustica* and *H. r. gutturalis* (Clancy, Durban Museum Novitates 27.2.70). The latter breeds in Eastern Asia. It has been established that birds of this race reach southern Africa on migration and there are a number of specimens in our museums. Although these have so far only been obtained in



Two specimens of *H. r. gutturalis* are shown on either side of *H. r. rustica*, illustrating the chestnut penetration of the breast band.

Natal, Rhodesia and Botswana within our region, as well as Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi north of the Zambesi, there is evidence to suggest that they also occur in the Transvaal and possibly other parts of South Africa. Swallow ringers should, therefore be on the alert and carefully examine any deviate bird coming to hand.

In *H. r. gutturalis* the chestnut of the throat patch is possibly a little paler than in *H. r. r.* but the most signif-

icant characteristic is that the chestnut penetrates the breast band and frequently to such an extent that only remnants remain on either side of the chest. There is no difference in size although wing length is slightly more in the nominate race.

It appears that H.r.gutturalis arrives rather late in southern Africa - possibly only in January - and is present until late in the season. This is borne out by the fact that a number of specimens from Rhodesia and Natal were collected in May and even early June (1).

In the 1971/72 ringing season a number of birds with the characteristics described above were found in Pretoria whereas in the past season only H.r.rustica were caught. This is possibly due to the cessation of ringing activities on that site in January as the roost was abandoned by the birds at that time. However, the effect of climatic variations on the spread of H.r.gutturalis should not be ruled out.

IDENTIFYING, AGEING & SEXING THE RED BISHOP & THE CAPE WIDOW

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In areas where the Red Bishop Euplectes orix and the Cape Widow Coliuspasser capensis are found together, the correct identification of females and non-breeding males may prove difficult. Most Red Bishop males do not breed until they are two years old and thus do not assume full breeding plumage in their first year. The following hints should help any ringer to correctly identify, age and sex both species.

Red Bishop Euplectes orix

Adult male in breeding plumage : unmistakeable.

Adult male in eclipse plumage : wing length 75 - 80mm (maximum chord), culmen is slightly heavier and larger than in females (♂ 15 - 16mm, ♀ 13.5 - 14mm according to Roberts).

1 Y male : these cannot be distinguished from adult males in eclipse plumage, but in the breeding season they are best identified by the longer wing length as compared with females (♂ 75mm and over) and by their larger culmen.

Females : except when very young, these birds cannot be aged. When newly fledged the young birds retain traces of the yellow gape for a short period. Wing length of females - normal range from 68 - 72mm.

Birds do occur with intermediate wing measurements and these cannot usually be sexed with any certainty.