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AFRING NEWS

LONGEVITY OF THE HELMETED GUINEAFOWL *NUMIDA MELEAGRIS*

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Abstract

A Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* with ring 862414 was recaptured at Diep River wetland in Cape Town after 9 years 2 months 5 days (ringed at the same site), becoming the longevity record for this species. The previous record was 7 years 9 months 5 days.

Study site

The Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* was captured at Diep River wetland (34° 02'S 18° 28'E), next to Roscommon Road, Elfindale, Cape Town. The river has been canalised here and runs through a patch of grass and reeds, adjacent to a sports field.

Our first ringing session at this site was in January 2007 and we have ringed here at least once a year since. But ringing effort varied widely resulting in 20 to 297 birds being ringed per year at this site. The five top ringed species are Cape Weaver *Ploceus capensis* (256 birds ringed), Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* (221), Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* (147), Levillant's Cisticola *Cisticola tinniens*



Fig. 1. Helmeted Guineafowl at the Diep River wetland, with ring 862414, aged 9 years, 2 months, 5 days.

(136), and Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* (88). Only one Guineafowl has been caught in this wetland.

A flock of Helmeted Guineafowl is regularly seen in this area.

Ringling and recapture

On 16 October 2007 Mike Ford and I were ringing at Diep River wetland, Cape Town. We caught 41 birds, including several recaptures. A Helmeted Guineafowl, caught in a mistnet, was ringed (ring 862414) by Mike Ford but not measured.

On 17 December 2017 a team (Barry and Sue Schultz, Jarryd Dunn, and I) were ringing at the same wetland. We caught 70 birds, including several recaptures. The guineafowl was caught in a mistnet, as it had

originally been trapped (Fig. 1-2). The wing length was 282 mm, within the range for both males and females (Hockey et al. 2005), and it was moulting the primaries (score 5555300000, Fig. 3).

The ring was wearing away on the lower edge of the ring, already obscuring the bottom half of the first digit (Fig. 4), and thus a new, thicker ring (800060) was added on the other leg.



Fig. 2. Helmeted Guineafowl (ring 862414) head.



Fig. 3. Helmeted Guineafowl (ring 862414) primary wing moult.



Fig. 4. Helmeted Guineafowl (ring 862414) ring wear.

Discussion

The elapsed time was 9 years 2 months 5 days, making this the greatest longevity for the Helmeted Guineafowl. The previous record was 7 years 9 months 5 days (ring 52403292, Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve).

To date 3019 Helmeted Guineafowl have been ringed, 15 recaptured, 111 found dead and 1 found sick. A histogram of elapsed times shows a typical pattern of exponential decrease (Fig. 5).

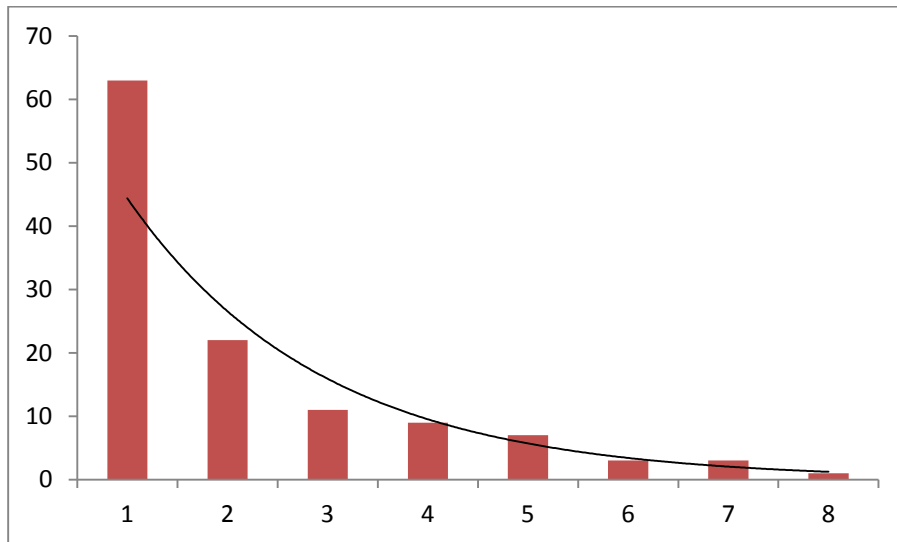


Fig. 5. Histogram of elapsed time (in years) for Helmeted Guineafowl ringed with SAFRING rings, 1948–2016. The black curve shows the modelled exponential decrease.

Not much is known about longevities of southern African gamebirds. Roberts 7 (Hockey et al. 2005) lists the following: Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* – at least 8 years (in Eurasia), and Helmeted Guineafowl c 8 years (unpublished source, but based on ring 52403292 in SAFRING).

Acknowledgement

Thanks to all our ringing helpers at Diep River wetland over the years!

References

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) 2005 Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, 7th ed. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

The ringing record for Helmeted Guineafowl 862414 is online at:
http://safring.adu.org.za/ring_info.php?ring=862414