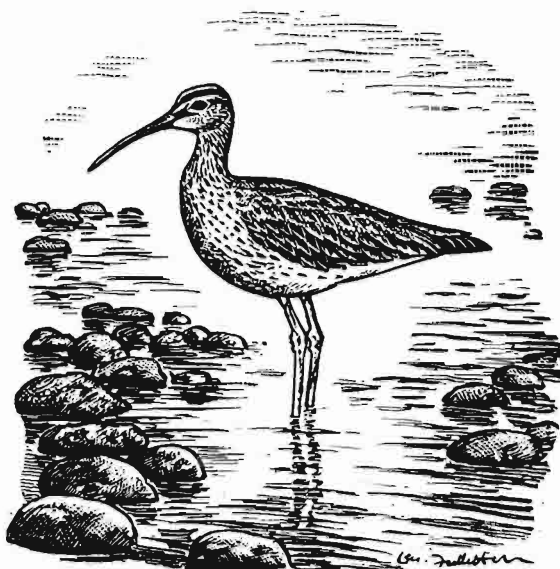


SCOTTISH BIRDS



The Journal of
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Vol. 1 No. 4

Summer 1959

FIVE SHILLINGS

THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

THE Scottish Ornithologists' Club was founded in 1936 and membership is open to all interested in Scottish ornithology. Meetings are held during the winter months in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St Andrews, at which lectures by prominent ornithologists are given and films exhibited. Excursions are organised in the summer to places of ornithological interest.

The aims and objects of the Club are to (a) encourage and direct the study of Scottish Ornithology in all its branches; (b) co-ordinate the efforts of Scottish Ornithologists and encourage co-operation between field and indoor worker; (c) encourage ornithological research in Scotland in co-operation with other organisations; (d) hold meetings at centres to be arranged at which Lectures are given, films exhibited, and discussions held; and (e) publish or arrange for the publication of statistics and information with regard to Scottish ornithology.

There are no entry fees for Membership. The Annual subscription is 25/-; or 7/6 in the case of Members under twenty-one years of age or in the case of University undergraduates who satisfy the Council of their status as such at the time at which their subscriptions fall due in any year. "Scottish Birds" is issued free to members.

The affairs of the Club are controlled by a Council composed of the Hon. Presidents, the President, the Vice-President, the Hon. Treasurer, one Representative of each Branch Committee appointed annually by the Branch, and ten other Members of the Club elected at an Annual General Meeting. Two of the last named retire annually by rotation and shall not be eligible for re-election for one year.

A Scottish Bird Records' Committee, appointed by the Council, produce an annual Report on "Ornithological Changes in Scotland."

Full details are given in the Syllabus of Lectures Card of the names of the present Office-bearers of the Club.

An official tie with small white Crested Tits embroidered on it can be obtained in dark green or in navy blue by Members only from Messrs R. W. Forsyth Ltd., Princes Street, Edinburgh, or 5 Renfield Street, Glasgow, C.2, at a cost of 13s 9d post free. A small brooch in silver and blue can be obtained for the use of Members of the Club. Price 2s 6d each from the Secretary, or from Hon. Branch Secretaries.

Forms of application for Membership, copy of the Club Constitution, and other literature is obtainable from the Club Secretary, Mrs George Waterston, 5 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh 2.

CLUB LIBRARY

The Club Library is now housed in the Secretary's Office at 5 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, 2. The collection has recently been augmented by several gifts, and the Council appeals to Members to donate books and periodicals which they may wish to dispose of. We have no volumes of the "Ibis" prior to 1944. The Library is open during office hours for reference. Books or magazines, of which we have duplicate copies, can be obtained on loan.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

All notes dealing with birds in the eastern Lowlands, from Berwick-on-Tweed to Dundee, should be submitted to A. T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh, 13; all other contributions to M. F. M. Meiklejohn, 20 Falkland Street, Glasgow, W.2. It would be helpful if notes were typewritten, if possible, and double spaced.

SCOTTISH BIRDS



THE JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

Vol. 1 No. 4

Summer 1959

Edited by M. F. M. MEIRLEJOHN, with the assistance of D. G. ANDREW and A. T. MACMILLAN. Business Editor, ARTHUR J. SMITH. Cover design (Whim-brel) by LEN FULLERTON. *Published quarterly.*

Editorial

BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION: CENTENARY CONFERENCE

THIS extraordinarily interesting and ably organised meeting was held at Cambridge, the original nesting-site of the B.O.U., from 20th to 23rd March, a select representation of the S.O.C., including two from as far north as Sutherland, being there. The meetings for the most part consisted of four half-hour talks each, and each meeting dealt with a single aspect of ornithology (migration, behaviour, etc.). The amateur ornithologists were delighted to find that themes which they might have considered beyond their scope—systematics, for instance—were treated with brilliant clarity by the pundits, although a few of the lectures were undoubtedly below standard for an occasion such as this, not from the point of view of subject matter so much as from that of delivery. Ornithologists ought to realise two things: that figures and graphs are not suitable subjects for a lecture any more than a metronome, however much it may assist the musician, makes a symphony, and that lecturing is a subject that has to be learned like any other. A lecturer who mumbles off a sheet of paper is like a one-legged woman setting up as a ballerina. It was a pleasure for everyone to meet old friends from abroad, although leisure for talking to them was rather scant. The exhibitions were on traditional lines, with the exception (as one would expect) of that set out by Colonel R. Meinertzhagen and consisting of down from the nests of ducks and geese of the world, and of objects taken from the crops of birds, which included two-pound jars filled with pebbles taken from a single Ostrich and even stones from the crop of a Dodo. The show of bird-books from the Newton Library was of fascinating interest and beauty. On the Monday a gargantuan banquet, at which the carousers were served with a whole chicken each, took place at Fishmongers' Hall in London; but for the Scottish delegates the gastronomic delights were exceeded by the delight of seeing Dr E. V. Baxter and Dr D. A. Bannerman add to their numerous ornithological honours by receiving the Medal of the Union.

ISLE OF MAY BIRD OBSERVATORY AND FIELD STATION REPORT FOR 1958*

Prepared for the Observatory Committee by W. J. EGGELING,
Hon. Secretary.

As is appropriate to a National Nature Reserve, the Isle of May Observatory concerns itself with the whole field of natural history. This report deals with all the activities involved.

Observer cover in 1958 was about average, at 160 "watched days." There were, however, some unfortunate gaps, notably at the very beginning of September when other East Coast observatories were experiencing one of the most spectacular autumn influxes ever seen, outdoing even that of 1957. It was only by chance that a picnic excursion on 6th September enabled the tail-end of this exceptional movement to be recorded. The year was not outstanding for rare species, the highlights being the island's first Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* and its second Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*.

MIGRATION

The first visit of the year was in many ways the most rewarding of all. The Hon. Secretary had gone out on 18th March, intending to stay four days: he got off on 2nd April, having been storm-stayed eleven days beyond his time! On the 26th an easterly gale was in full blast, continuing until the 29th: on the 30th there was fog and on the 31st a gale from the south. During the 26th birds began to arrive, five Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, twelve Skylarks *Alauda arvensis*, two Mistle Thrushes *Turdus viscivorus*, about fifteen Song Thrushes *Turdus ericetorum* and about thirty Blackbirds *T. merula*. For the next six days the numbers of all these species remained high, although fluctuating considerably: Lapwings rose to sixty on the 27th, with a maximum of 150 on the 31st; Skylarks totalled 150 on the 28th, declining thereafter; there were at least twelve Mistle Thrushes on the island at once; up to 65 Song Thrushes; over 100 Blackbirds on the 28th and over 500 on the 31st. Only a handful of Fieldfares *T. pilaris* and even fewer Redwings *T. musicus* were seen.

A Black Redstart *Phoenicurus obscurus* on the 27th, four Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* on the 27th and 28th, three Reed

*Previous reports in this series have appeared as follows: for 1935-38, 1946-50, 1953-56 in *The Scottish Naturalist*; for 1951-52 in the *Fair Isle Bird Observatory Report*; for 1957 in the *Edinburgh Bird Bulletin* (Vol. 8, Special Number).

Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus*, the first Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* of the season and three Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* helped to enliven proceedings, but the most notable feature of the movement was the presence throughout of big numbers of Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and Hedge Sparrows *Prunella modularis*, with maxima of sixty, sixty and eighty respectively on the 30th. Many if not all of the Robins and Hedge Sparrows were Continental, and it is probable that the Chaffinches and Stonechats, as well as some of the other species involved, had the same origin. Less certain as to source were two Tree-Creepers *Certhia familiaris*, which arrived on 30th March and 1st April (first spring notices) after the easterly gale had passed: neither was examined in the hand.

At the height of the gale, which was accompanied by much rain, the island was an extraordinary sight. It was oozing with water, there were torrents like Highland burns in spate rushing down the slopes, and little mobs of Lapwings were sheltering in every hollow, in the cover before the traps and (with Skylarks and Chaffinches) in the walled gardens. By the 29th the Harbour Rocks up to the edge of the turf were almost hidden from view by spume and spindrift lying in shivering drifts from three to five feet deep. Within this fortnight more Hedge Sparrows (46), Skylarks (13) and Mistle Thrushes (3) were caught than in any year before. Lapwings (4) were ringed for the first time, only two fewer Blackbirds (162) were taken from the traps than in the whole of 1957, and more Song Thrushes (41) than in any of the preceding three years. Never, before this, had Continental Robins and Hedge Sparrows been recorded in more than ones and twos in spring.

April, May and June were unexciting by comparison. July yielded the Subalpine Warbler (from 16th to 22nd, when it was found dead) and the second July notice of a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* on the 27th. In August there were three Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* (one on 19th, two on 28th), an unusual number of Garden Warblers (over fifteen on the 20th), a Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius cristatus* on the 23rd, and a good movement of Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* at the end of the month (over 75 on the 24th, when 57 were ringed). From 29th August to 5th September came the regrettable gap: then, on 6th September, the writer went out to the island and found it alive with migrants. He and his two sons abandoned the picnic, concentrated on the birds, watched the rest of the party sail away, and stayed the night. This proved well worth doing for, that afternoon and evening, and the following forenoon, a fine selection of birds was seen. It was clearly only the last phase of a very large movement which, according to the Principal Lighthouse-keeper, Mr W. Watt, had been at its height on

the 2nd and 3rd. By noon on the 7th almost all the birds had passed on, but during the twenty-four hours the following had been recorded and (in brackets) ringed: Wryneck 2 (2), Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* 3 (3), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* over 50 (14), Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* 1 (1), Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* 1 (1), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* 1 (1), Garden Warbler over 20 (11), White-throat *Sylvia communis* 2 (2), Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* 1 (1), Willow Warbler about 50 (23), Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* 6 (1), Pied Flycatcher about 20 (9), Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* 2 (1), Red-backed Shrike 1 (1), Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* 1, Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* 1. It is unfortunate that all we know about the peak of this movement is that there were more small migrants on the island than Mr Watt had ever seen, with Redstarts particularly noticeable, but warblers and flycatchers also prominent and several Wrynecks.

The rest of September until the 27th was fully watched, but only the 6th to 12th and 20th to 22nd October, and the 8th to 10th November. There was at least one more Wryneck in September, on the 9th, three more Bluethroats (two on 9th, one on 26th-27th), some intensive Swallow *Hirundo rustica* passage (maximum about 400 on the 8th), and an exceptionally numerous movement of Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, which began with 2,000 birds on the same day. A third Red-backed Shrike turned up on 9th September and single Red-breasted Flycatchers *Muscicapa parva* on 11th and 26th. The first Spotted Redshank to be recorded on the island was seen on the 17th, 18th, 25th and 26th September, and 7th and 9th October. Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* were more numerous than in any previous autumn: three on 9th and two on 15th, 20th and 27th September, and one on 23rd September. There was a late Black Redstart on 9th November. The usual big autumn influx of Blackbirds was missed entirely, but according to Mr Watt there were many hundreds on the island in the first week of November.

ADDITIONAL UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES

Manx Shearwater *Procellaria puffinus*. Three on 10th June. First June notice.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*. One on 20th March. First March notice.

Grey Plover *Charadrius squatarola*. One on 6th September. Second notice.

Curlew *Numenius arquata*. Unusually high numbers on 14th September (over 100) and 22nd September (85).

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. One on 7th June. Fifth notice and first for spring.



COMMON TERNS

Photograph by Alistair J. M. Smith

Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*. One on 23rd March. First March notice.

Black Guillemot *Cepphus grylle*. Twelve on 9th November, the highest number yet recorded.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*. Fifty on 23rd April, a high number for spring.

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*. One on 7th June. First June notice.

BREEDING POPULATIONS

On 18th March, when the Observatory opened, there were two Hedge Sparrows in the Top Garden and two in the Thistle Field and Bain Trap area; both couples were clearly paired. One of the Top Garden birds disappeared, its mate finally departing also, but the other pair nested successfully late in the season, although nobody knows where, and produced two young that fledged in early July. This is the first breeding record for the island since 1884! On 10th June, when this pair had just laid the foundation of a nest which they never finished, they were seen carrying food to a nestful of young Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* and one was twice seen to remove a faecal sac on its departure. Probably nine or ten pairs of Linnets bred and several raised at least two broods. Five nests were located on grassy banks, with at least four pairs involved. G. L. Sandeman again did sterling work in assessing the breeding populations of Linnets, Rock Pipits *Anthus spinoletta*, Meadow Pipits and Wheatears. Between 7th and 14th June he tracked down nests of just over thirty Rock Pipits, seven Meadow Pipits and nine Wheatears, and estimated the populations at forty to fifty, nine or ten, and ten or eleven pairs respectively. An albino pipit (species uncertain) seen during July and August (*antea* p. 43) may well have been reared on the island. Two pairs of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba yarrelli* established territory, but one bird early vanished and the other pair only reared two young. No Pied Wagtails were ringed, which has not happened since 1934. A pair of Swallows nested in the Naval Huts for the third successive year and raised a single brood. No Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* bred, so that the 1957 nest remains unique.

Of the sea-birds the Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* was, as always, the first to nest. Many had already started nest building by the 18th March but the wild weather which followed, persisting well into April, put the great majority off their stride and caused a mass exodus. On 11th April only 22 were counted around the entire coast. Although all returned later, nesting was much delayed and only the few intrepid individuals which had persevered in sheltered sites, or high up on the cliffs, got their young away at the normal time. But the progressive build-up of this population continued, there

being eventually more nests than in 1957 when at least 315 pairs bred. Numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* showed little change, and, though no counts were made, being eventually even more nests than in 1957 when at least 315 the same is probably true of the huge Herring Gull *L. argentatus* population, which may even have increased. Breeding Oyster-catchers *Haematopus ostralegus* suffered much from the gulls and there can be little doubt that it was only the latter which prevented the fairly extensive breeding of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on the west side. One young Puffin, hatched on the May, was only the second of its kind to be ringed there.

No terns *Sterna* spp. bred: very few appeared and they made no attempt to nest. The Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* fared much as usual: by mid July less than a third of the nests still had contents, and from the eleven which at that date contained either an egg or a chick it is improbable that more than about half a dozen young were reared: gulls were almost certainly to blame. It is satisfactory to record that "Joe" and "Jessie" were among the successful parents: the former has been known since 1949 and the latter since 1952 at the same site, and have been mated for at least seven years. Both were given new rings.

The Eider *Somateria mollissima* population, estimated in 1951 and 1952 at about 70 pairs, and in 1955 at about 100 pairs, is still growing, despite heavy predation by gulls. An estimate on 25th May, when probably about fifty ducks were brooding, suggested a population of 150 to 160 pairs, plus about two dozen unpaired individuals.

RINGING

Only 1,333 birds of 58 species were ringed, the lowest total since the war. Over a quarter were caught in the first fortnight of the season. Subalpine Warbler and Lapwing were ringed for the first time.

RECOVERIES

Seventeen reports of first year Shags, and one of a second year Shag, were received from the east side of Britain between Ross-shire and Essex. The recoveries from England, several of them from quite far inland, were associated with a "wreck" of this species after severe gales. As young birds were chiefly involved, it would seem that adults were better equipped to deal with such conditions.

Among other recoveries reported during the year are the following:

Sparrowhawk 329143. Ringed, first winter male, 23.9.57. Trapped and released at Fair Isle, Shetland, 7.5.58.
Guillemot *Uria aalge*. AT 33712. Ringed, young, 26.6.57. Shot

- about eight miles SSW of Torbjornsker Lighthouse, Oslofjord, Norway, mid-January, 1958.
- Blackbird X 65325. Ringed, full-grown, 13.10.57. Caught and released, Heligoland, Germany, 8.4.58.
- Redstart C 64486. Ringed, full-grown female, 21.9.57. Shot at Alcalá de los Gagules (Cadiz), Spain, about 10.11.57.
- Gannet *Sula bassana* 132227. Ringed, first winter, 14.9.58. Caught (oiled) and released, near Breskens (Zeeland), Holland, 25.9.58.

Five Gannets altogether have been ringed on the May (all in different years) and it is likely that they allowed themselves to be caught only because they were sickly. Three of the birds have been reported, all within twenty days of ringing and one after only nine days, from this same part of Holland.

Greater Black-backed Gulls *Larus marinus* are roosting on the May in winter in greater numbers than ever before; over 500 were seen on 25th September. On 21st March, a recently dead Greater Black-back (ring no. 410894) was picked up on the North Ness, where it had been ringed as an adult on 9th November 1956. This is one of the few definite instances of a sea bird which breeds away from the island returning there in different winters.

RETRAPS

Linnets and Meadow Pipits are examples of species which breed on the island and winter off it. At least twelve of the Linnets and six of the Meadow Pipits which arrived in the spring of 1958 were present the previous summer. One of the Linnets, back for certainly the fourth successive year, was at least five years old. We know that not all the returning first year birds of these two species stay to breed and from the data now available it seems probable that in the case of the Linnet, at any rate, family groups or "island aggregates" stay together throughout the winter. What probably happens is that the winter parties break up finally at the onset of the breeding season, after they have returned to the island, and it may well be a shortage of nesting sites which forces the younger birds to leave and make their homes elsewhere.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

MAMMALS

Rabbits are once again teeming, despite efforts by the lighthouse-keepers to reduce their numbers with guns, snares, and ferrets. There has been no recrudescence of myxomatosis. So far no black or white individuals have been reported in the new population. The increased sheep flock had a good lambing but despite being grazed by some 65 ewes and lambs, and by swarms of rabbits, the grass cover is still rank.

Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* were present in larger numbers than ever before. That they represent an off-shoot of the Farne Islands colony is now certain, for individuals tagged there as pups have been identified. The highest counts were made in summer, over 60 on 22nd June, over 50 on 21st July and between 60 and 70 on 1st August. Twice in spring light-house-keepers were able to crawl up to (and on one occasion catch) tagged seals basking on the rocks and "take their numbers," whilst a third individual was stalked at night by an observer who crept close enough to read the serial by torchlight. Of the 17 animals on the rocks on this latter occasion, at least six carried Farne marks. If one is looking for them, the tags are not particularly difficult to see and on 18th September were clearly distinguished not only on a seal on the Norman Rock but also on another in the water. Details of the three seals so far identified are:

3555. Marked North Wamses, Farne Islands, on 24.11.57 (a male in first coat, 3-4 days old). Caught and released Isle of May 5.4.58.
3720. Marked Brownsman, Farne Islands, on 17.11.57 (a male, seven days old, weighing 47 lb.). Tag read by daylight, Isle of May, 14.3.58.
3782. Marked Staple Island, Farne Islands, on 24.11.57 (a female 3-4 days old). Tag read by torchlight, Isle of May, 19.3.58.

INVERTEBRATES

The Junior Honours Zoology class from Glasgow University, which visited the island from 20th to 27th June, concentrated most of its attention on freshwater and marine biology. The material collected is still being identified but is expected to include a number of new notices.

From 5th to 7th July Mr E. C. Pelham-Clinton made preliminary reconnaissance of moth-trapping possibilities using both a mercury vapour lamp and sugar baits. He found moths disappointingly scarce, with the exception of the Diamond-back *Plutella maculipennis*, that scourge of brassica crops, of which there had been a mass invasion from the Continent the previous week. Much of the East Coast of Britain was affected and although the May did not suffer the vast hordes recorded elsewhere (e.g. East Lothian and the St Andrews area) the species was nevertheless "a considerable nuisance when collecting other small moths." Altogether 37 species of moths were collected during the week-end, fourteen of which had not previously been recorded.

Two half-days spent by W. J. Eggeling collecting earthworms were equally profitable, resulting in five new occurrences for the May (named by Dr J. Morton Boyd) and bringing the total of species recorded to twelve.

First notices of a large number of other invertebrates, including slugs, snails, woodlice, harvestmen, freshwater bugs and water fleas, resulted from a visit by Mr T. Huxley (Nature Conservancy) from 15th to 18th September. It is greatly to be hoped that he and Mr Pelham-Clinton will be able to repeat their visits, and that other persons interested in the invertebrate populations may also be persuaded to add their quota of information to the general survey now under way.

PLANTS

The fungi of the May are still imperfectly known. A collection made by T. W. Eggeling on 18th September, kindly identified by Mr D. M. Henderson, produced three new notices and brought the number recorded to 37.

On 24th September M. F. M. Meiklejohn and L. J. Reed found a small colony of Field Pansy *Viola arvensis* on the North Ness, the first definite notice of the species. Corn Marigold *Chrysanthemum segetum* again flowered.

ANCIENT MONUMENTS

The Committee are pleased to report that, after a visit by an Inspector of the Ministry of Works, St Adrian's Chapel and the Old Lighthouse have been scheduled as Ancient Monuments. Recommendations by the Ministry for the preservation of the Chapel are being studied.

PUBLICATIONS

The following notes relating to birds on the May appeared during the year :

- FLOWER, W. U. Goldcrest caught on hooks of burdock. *Brit. Birds* 51:276.
- MEIKLEJOHN, M. F. M. Yellow-breasted Bunting at the Isle of May. *Scottish Birds* 1:20.
- MEIKLEJOHN, M. F. M. Semipalmated Sandpiper on the Isle of May. *Scottish Birds* 1:35.
- M(EIKLEJOHN), M. F. M. Waiting for Godwit. *Glasgow Herald*, 4th October 1958.
- M(EIKLEJOHN), M. F. M. The Bluethroats. *Glasgow Herald*, 11th October 1958.
- R(AWCLIFFE), C. P. September Migrants at the Isle of May. *Scotsman*, 4th October 1958.
- WATSON, DONALD. Subalpine Warbler on the Isle of May. *Scottish Birds* 1:41.
- WATSON, DONALD. Albino Pipit on the Isle of May. *Scottish Birds* 1:43.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are glad of the opportunity to express again the gratitude of all observers to the Principal Lighthouse-keeper and

Mrs Watt, and to the other keepers, for their unfailing help and kindness. They are an object lesson in hospitality. It is also a pleasure to say Thank-you to our boatman, Mr Willie Hughes, for his tolerance to bird-watchers in general, and for the genial and friendly way in which he so invariably seeks to meet their often odd requirements.

SHORT NOTES

WHITE-BILLED DIVERS IN EAST ROSS-SHIRE

On the afternoon of 4th February 1959, in bright sunlight with a very calm sea, I saw near Avoch Harbour, Inverness Firth, a diver swimming some 50 or 60 yards offshore. It was of heavy appearance and its bill was white with a very definite uptilt. The back and wings appeared through binoculars to be a plain brownish black, the same colour extending up the back of the neck. There was more of this colour than of white on the neck, the somewhat indefinite dividing line coming almost straight down from the line of the bird's eye. Two timed dives were of 30 and 32 seconds.

The bird was watched through a 3" x 60 telescope on 5th February in company with Mr J. Macintosh, on the 6th with Dr Maeve Rusk and on the 11th with Mr A. Anderson. Under greater magnification the bill was examined: the top edge of the upper mandible looked slightly upcurved and the bottom edge of the lower mandible very definitely so. The line of the gape gave a slightly tapered appearance to the top mandible, which projected very slightly beyond the bottom mandible. We could see the acutely pointed dark mark where the feathering joined the top mandible and the delicate dark line where, from the angle of the gape, the edge of the white feathering curved irregularly to the base of the bill. The bill was ivory white, with a suggestion of greying towards the base. The back showed some irregularity of tint, some parts being rather browner than others. The dark edging of wing and back came down to water level, the lighter part showing only when one of the legs was uplifted.

While I was examining the diver with binoculars on 4th February a sweep of the sea brought into view another diver, some 200 yards offshore. It had a yellowish bill, upturned but not so definitely as in the first bird. It had rather conspicuous white spots above, those on the lower back being larger and whiter than those on the upper back. On 8th February I got a close-up view of this bird, about a mile further east. The bill was yellowish, with a darkening towards grey both at the base and the point. The neck had much more white than in the former bird, the line of demarcation (well

behind the eye-line) being very indefinite. The area over the eye was white. The back and wings looked almost black; spread over the back area were what looked like tufts of white feathers of varying size, but on the lower part of the wings forming an almost reticular pattern. The upper edge of the bill was practically straight.

I have no doubt that these birds were White-billed Divers *Gavia adamsii*. The bird from Sweden, illustrated in *British Birds* 48, no. 11, was in some ways similar to the second bird, but the latter had a more definite uptilt of the bill, and the light spots were more pronounced on the lower coverts than the upper.

JOHN LEES.

HERON FEEDING ON CARRION

On 13th March 1959 in the Beinn Eithe Nature Reserve, near Loch Clair in Glen Torridon, I noticed three birds feeding on the fresh gralloch, head and hooves of a stag: a Greater Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*, a Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* and a Heron *Ardea cinerea*. The gull and the crow were feeding intensively, while the Heron advanced somewhat timidly, skulking into the proceedings and making dabs at the carrion. I could not be sure, even with the use of my telescope, that the Heron actually swallowed carrion, but its behaviour suggested strongly that it did.

J. POLSON.

GADWALL BREEDING IN SOUTH INVERNESS

On 29th July 1957 I saw a pair of Gadwall *Anas strepere* with four young on Loch Ghuilbinn, to the north of Loch Ossian. They were seen at close quarters and the following details noted: appearance very similar to Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, white speculum, orange sides of bill and yellowish legs. The age of the young would be hard to say, but I would think a few weeks old as they had developed the white speculum.

A. V. SMITH.

(Note by courtesy of P. F. Goodfellow.—ED.)

VELVET SCOTER IN KINROSS-SHIRE

On 15th March 1959 I saw a Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* near the sluice on Loch Leven. It was an adult drake, black except for the prominent white wing-patches, and in a very good light at close range I was able to see a small white crescent under the eye. There was a noticeable thickening at

the base of the bill. The bill was pale orange on the upper mandible with a heavy dark nail. This seems to be the first record for Kinross-shire.

GEORGE DICK.

[Notes on the Snow Goose in North Perth, West Lothian and Inverness are temporarily held over]

WHITE CYGNETS OF MUTE SWANS AT DALBEATTIE

(See illustrations on page 103)

For the past four years a pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* on a pond at Collieston Park, Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire, have hatched out young birds. Each year they have produced either one or two white cygnets of the type described as the "Polish Swan" by Yarrell (*Proc. Zool. Soc. London* 1838). The plumage of the normal cygnets is grey brown, but in the mutants it is white.

On one Sunday in June 1955 I was informed that the parent cob had killed one of the two white cygnets and that it was attacking the other one. When I arrived the remaining white cygnet was almost dead and had to be humanely destroyed: it was about six weeks old. The other five grey cygnets were not attacked and fledged successfully.

On 19th June 1956 I was notified by the Dalbeattie Police that two boys had rescued the only white cygnet in a brood of six, after it had been attacked by the parents, chiefly the cob again. I called at Dalbeattie Police Station and found that the youngster was not too severely injured, although it had been pecked on the back of the head and back. Captain and Mrs P. G. Barton of Auchenskeoch undertook to look after this bird and it was kept in a small enclosure in a burn and housed by night until it was about three-quarters grown, when it was given the freedom of the pond along with several Chinese Geese. It remained there for about eighteen months and then suddenly disappeared.

In 1957 I arranged through my Headquarters to convey the one white cygnet in a brood of nine to the Zoological Park, Edinburgh, when it was about five weeks old, before another attack was due from the parents. Mr G. D. Fisher has since told me that this cygnet died.

In 1958 two grey and two white cygnets hatched from a clutch of seven eggs. The parents were unable to get the first newly hatched young back up a ramp to the nest on the small island, and the remaining three perished while hatching. These were two grey and one white, which would have made four grey and three white if this misfortune had not happened. On 21st June I again arranged to convey the two white

cygnets, about five weeks old, to the Zoological Park, Edinburgh, where they can be seen and are doing well. They have pale grey feet and legs, and a grey beak. Their eyes are perfectly normal.

G. P. McWILLIAM,
Inspector, S.S.P.C.A.

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE IN SCOTLAND

About the middle of December 1958 a friend of mine shot a Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*, one of a pair unfortunately, within half a mile of Melrose, Roxburghshire. I enclose some flank feathers of the bird as evidence of identification. I have made extensive inquiries from the large landowners round about in three counties and none have put any down or imported any eggs.

PHILIP CHRISTISON.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS IN ABERDEENSHIRE

On 25th October 1957, J. G. H. watched a Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* at close range sitting on the golf course beside the Ythan Estuary, Aberdeenshire, and within thirty yards of the houses of Newburgh. The bird allowed close approach and behaved in a most odd manner, sitting with its head hunched into its shoulders and with the plumage fluffed out. When it flew it quickly pitched again and was silent.

Searching for it later the same day J. G. H. found it dead, with feathers scattered around: it appeared to have been killed by some animal, probably a dog from the village. The bird was extremely wasted. It was sent to J. M. H., who found that it was suffering from an extensive enteritis. It was an immature male in moult to winter plumage. This appears to be the first record for the mainland of Scotland, the previous record being from Shetland in 1953.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON.
JAMES M. HARRISON.

SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER IN LANARKSHIRE

On 18th October 1956, beside the banks of the Clyde in the Old Parks at Hamilton, on a patch of muddy ground overgrown with persicaria, W.K.R. discovered a "Pectoral Sandpiper". The inverted commas indicate the provisional nature of the identification: from the first, the pale appearance of the bird, especially in flight, its apparently smaller size and its twittering call-note were points which did not correspond

with this observer's previous experience of the Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*. On the following day, and on the 16th, it was seen by M.F.M.M. The bird was snipe-like in habit and squatted until closely approached, when it would fly off in a wide circle until it landed—usually on the other side of the river, where it was lost. At first, on account of the white lateral upper tail-coverts (giving it the appearance of a small Reeve *Philomachus pugnax*) and the black rump and centre of tail, it was thought that the bird was a Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*, possible differences being attributed perhaps to immaturity, a pardonable error when it is considered that only the back of the bird was seen, and that not particularly closely. The bird's call-note, invariably uttered on rising, was a rather shrill "trrt", sometimes repeated as "teet teet trrt-trrt", and of a swallow-like quality. On 20th October good views were had by a number of observers (John Baird, Guy McCaskie, C. E. Palmar and W.K.R.), who then noted for the first time that the streakings on the breast were confined to its sides, except for a few in the centre which were visible only at close range in a very good light, and that the continuous line of demarcation, so characteristic of *C. melanotos* in all plumages, was absent. W.K.R. immediately suggested that the bird was the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *C. acuminata* ("Siberian Pectoral Sandpiper" in *The Handbook*), a suggestion which received further confirmation when the bird flew directly overhead revealing the shape of its tail—the central feathers elongated, but the others decreasing gradually in size towards the outermost. Later in the afternoon the bird was seen by D.S. who, by a lucky coincidence, had recorded an (American) Pectoral Sandpiper on Holy Island only a fortnight before. He commented: "Each time, when it was flushed, it gave a fairly high-pitched melodic twitter. This call, I feel, is quite dissimilar to that of the Pectoral Sandpiper I observed on 30th September and 1st October on Lindisfarne. The American call was very much lower pitched, and of entirely different rhythm. It consisted of two distinct notes at intervals and was of a reedy character as noted in *The Handbook*—rather reminiscent of a telephone heard ringing before the receiver is lifted at the other end". The bird was again seen on 21st October by D. McRedie, M.F.M.M., C.E.P. and D.S., when, as the bird sat in a curiously upright position behind a grass tussock, with its breast facing the observers, it gave the impression of being, as far as its underparts were concerned, a pale bird rather than a fairly dark bird, as *C. melanotos* would seem to be.

The following details were observed: crown buffish, with heavy dark streaking; nape dark; light eyebrow continued to form thin band over bill—eyestripe appeared rather lighter than in American bird (D.S.); lores dusky; upperparts as in

melanotos, the pointed feathers, dark with bright chestnut-buff edgings giving a very brilliant effect; pale diagonal line runnings across wing from bend, bordered by darker lines; "strong and distinct V marking on darker back is probably common to both species, but very prominent in this bird" (D.S.); a curious pale oval patch of side of breast by bend of wing with darker smudges running across it; outer tail feathers with white tips; underparts white with a slight buffish tinge on breast, and thin dark streaks on the sides of breast continued down almost to flanks; a few dark streakings were visible in the centre of breast at ten or fifteen yards in good lighting conditions (J.B., G.McC.) but could not be seen at ten yards in less favourable conditions; the bill was rather thick at the base, long and tapering, with slight downward curve near tip—dark, but yellowish at base; legs yellow ochre. No suggestion of the line of demarcation across the breast, as in *melanotos*, but otherwise a very similar bird, both in appearance and habits.

The colours of the soft parts as given in *The Handbook* are no doubt taken from museum specimens; descriptions in *The Ibis* (1904:423 and 1955:335) support ours.

The bird's favourite resort was flooded on the 24th, when it was absent.

We have no doubt that the bird was the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, the first for Scotland and fifth for Britain, as well as the only one recorded outside Norfolk.

M. F. M. MEIKLEJOHN.
W. K. RICHMOND.
D. STALKER.

ROLLERS IN ORKNEY

On the morning of 27th May 1958 a brilliantly coloured bird about the size of a Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* alighted on the branch of a tree in our garden at Isbister House, Rendall. It stayed only a brief time, perhaps no more than a minute, and was off again in a flash of bright greenish blue and chestnut. There is no doubt it was a Roller *Coracias garrulus*. It was predominantly of a bright greenish blue, with darker borders to the wings and dark central tail feathers. It had a large chestnut-brown saddle-like patch across the back. The dark coloured beak was fairly short and strong-looking and in all it was a thick-set robust bird of rather corvine appearance.

Then on 7th June a friend telephoned to tell me of a brilliantly coloured bird which was frequenting a roadside in Deerness. I could not see it myself, but it was found later and identified as a Roller by Miss Marjory Traill-Clouston and a friend. It stayed for several days.

Towards the end of June Mr R. Watson and others reported a Roller from Wideford Brae, about five miles west of Deerness. The bird made a small group of low trees and bushes by the roadside its headquarters and fed largely in a big field of turnips heavily infested by Black Diamond moth. On 19th July Mr Watson took two colour photographs of it. It was last seen on the 21st. The possibility of these records referring to the same bird should be considered.

E. BALFOUR.

OVERLAND MASS MIGRATION OF REDWINGS

On 18th October 1958, while crossing Rannoch Moor in darkness, I heard Redwings *Turdus musicus* and disturbed a flock from the wood at Kingshouse on the morning of the 19th. Weather was wild, with strong south-west wind, and it kept us in most of the day, but in the evening among the woods of the Black Mount Forest, west of Loch Tulla, we put up flock after flock of Redwings from trees and moor. It was not until we had climbed clear of the wood that we became aware that a large passage of birds was taking place, with flocks in the air wherever we looked. Some were mere specks, some were low flying flocks, and, so far as we could make out, they did not seem to be following any particular direction. Certainly we saw many thousands of birds, mostly Redwings, but there were a fair number of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* among them, perhaps ten per cent. It was on this same day that large numbers were pouring into Skokholm.

T. WEIR.

ROCK PIPIT IN KINROSS

On 16th November 1958 we had a good view in indifferent light of a Rock Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* at Loch Leven. The mantle had the typical olive appearance, there was no conspicuous white eyestripe or outer tail feathers, and the legs were dark. The bird fed among stones close to the water's edge and called typically when flushed. This is the first record for Kinross.

T. BOYD.

R. W. J. SMITH.

WINTER BREEDING OF STARLING IN SHETLAND

In the first week of December 1958, at Baltasound, Shetland, it was brought to my notice that a pair of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris zetlandicus* had been seen carrying food into a hole in the wall above the door of a cattle-shed. Upon investigation I could hear the young calling, but could not see them. Up till the end of December the weather was extremely mild for these parts, although this island of Unst is the most northerly of the British Isles. Unfortunately January brought

heavy frost and snow; one of the parents was found dead, while the young were not heard again.

S. T. SAXBY.

HAWFINCHES IN ABERDEEN

On 5th October 1958 I was in Allervale Cemetery, Aberdeen, beside the River Dee, when my attention was drawn towards the peculiar notes of some bird and, in a matter of seconds, I caught sight of a pair of Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* flitting about, and flying over and between the headstones of the graves. When I was a boy my grandfather had a Hawfinch sent him from England and I am therefore familiar with the appearance of the bird.

E. WYLLIE FENTON.

NORTHERN BULLFINCH IN THE CAIRNGORMS

On 28th October 1958 my wife and I observed a male Northern Bullfinch *Pyrrhula p. pyrrhula* on the Silver Mountain in the northern foothills of the Cairngorms (Inverness-shire). It was above the tree-line at 1,600 feet feeding on heather seeds which my wife was able to identify from the plant as those of the Cross-leaved Heath *Erica tetralix*. The bird was unmistakable, being extremely large, with the breast and cheeks brilliant scarlet pink and the back a pure and pale French grey. I may add that I am familiar with this race of the Bullfinch, both in the field on the Continent and in the museum, having assisted my father, Dr James Harrison, when he was reviewing the races of the Bullfinch. The contrast was all the more marked because Scottish Bullfinches tend to be darker and duller than those elsewhere in the British Isles.

This record appears to be the first from inland in Scotland. According to Baxter and Rintoul (*Birds of Scotland*), all the definite records are from the east coast or northern isles. The situation, high on the open moors, is also a surprising one, and the very unusual site further confirms the record.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON.

CURRENT NOTES

(These notes are considered to be fully authenticated. To preclude possible confusion it should be pointed out that the name "John Murray" refers to two different observers).

Records for 1957 and 1958. Apparently unpublished are records of the Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris testacea* from the Endrick Mouth (Dumbarton) on 9th June 1957 (M. Forrester,

T. Weir) and of a Grey Plover *Charadrius squatarola* on the Clyde above Hamilton on 25th September 1957 (T. Weir). 58 Bean Geese *Anser arvensis* were seen near Auldhouse, Lanarkshire, on 16th March 1958, and one at the Doonfoot, Ayr, on 20th April 1958 (L. A. Urquhart). An immature male Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* passed the whole summer of 1958 at the mouth of the River Ythan (Aberdeen), being last seen on 25th November (A. J. M. Smith). Other Solway occurrences of the Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* are from Caerlaverock Merse (Dumfries) in autumn 1958: two on 21st August, at least 15 on 23rd and ten on 29th, also two on 2nd October (E. L. Roberts). Spotted Redshanks were seen at the River Ythan on 22nd August (two), 20th September (one) and 4th October (two) (A. J. M. Smith). Terns *Sterna* sp. were heard passing in numbers to the SW over the Braids, Edinburgh, in the dark at 2045 hours on 11th October (G. L. Sandeman) and a late House Martin *Delichon urbica* occurred at Dunbar on 4th November (A. Macdonald).

Winter visitors. A Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* continually perched on the steeple of the Leckie Memorial Church, Peebles, in February (Mary E. C. Rankine). Gadwall *Anas strepera* were seen regularly during the winter on the Ken-Dee marches (Kirkcudbright) (Donald Watson) and on Figgate Pond, Edinburgh (P. Holt) and a pair on the sea at Leith on 7th February (S.O.C. excursion from Glasgow). Smew *Mergus albellus*, of both sexes, were seen intermittently on Loch Ken, R. Dee and Carlingwark Loch (Kirkcudbright) from 8th January (Donald Watson) and a pair on L. Milton (Kirkcudbright) on 1st January (W. Austin *et al.*); a female on L. Macanrie (S. Perth) on 1st March (M. F. M. Meiklejohn). A White-fronted Goose of the eastern race *Anser a. albifrons* was seen with the Bean Geese at Castle Douglas on 2nd and 3rd February, and a Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* from 30th January to 4th February (H. G. Alexander, Donald Watson). Five Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, of which four were Light-breasted *hrota*, were at Tynninghame (E. Lothian) on 18th January (T. Boyd, R. W. J. Smith). The Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*, seen at Auldhouse (Lanark) on 9th November 1958 (*antea* 1:77), was also seen on the same day at Dunwan Dam (Renfrew), on each occasion accompanied by a hybrid, perhaps between Barnacle and Grey Lag *Anser anser*, of which it is hoped to publish a fuller account later (L. A. Urquhart). A pair of Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* were at Merryton (Lanark) on 28th November 1958 (L. A. Urquhart). A Buzzard *Buteo buteo* was seen over Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow, on 17th February (John Murray). A Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, seen in the Loch Ken area from 28th December, will receive a separate note (Robert Smith *et al.*). A Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* haunted Black-

ford Pond, Edinburgh, between 12th January and 2nd February (Ian Hay, Mrs Elspeth Hamilton). An adult Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* was seen at Craigmaddie (W. Stirling) on 8th February (M. F. M. Meiklejohn) and an immature bird, probably the same as was present during the first half of 1958, at Tongland power station (Kirkcudbright) (D.W.). Two or more Tree-creepers *Certhia familiaris* were in the Stornoway woods on 28th March (W. A. J. Cunningham) and another wintering Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, a female, is reported from Wigtown in the first half of February (Mary McKinna). A Mealy Redpoll *Carduelis f. flammea* was seen near New Galloway (Kirkcudbright) on 3rd February (H. G. Alexander, Donald Watson) and three Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* on the Moor of Forvie (Aberdeen) on 25th November (A. J. M. Smith).

Distribution and breeding. Single Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* are reported from Loch Fyne on 11th December 1955 and on 2nd April 1959, and two from Loch Sween on 7th January 1956 (I. Rainier). A Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* hatched a brood of seven on 15th November at Carsebreck (Perth) (G. T. Jamieson). Single Black Guillemots *Cephus grylle* occurred near the Bullers of Buchan (Aberdeen) on 17th May 1958 and near Fowlsheugh (Kincardine) on 27th May 1958 (A. J. M. Smith): one in summer plumage was seen at Eyebroughty (East Lothian) on 1st April 1959 (A. Ablett). Mrs Rainier reports the colonisation of North Knapdale by the Jay *Garrulus glandarius* beginning in October 1957. Chiffchaffs *Phylloscopus collybita* were heard singing in three new localities in Islay, in addition to Bridgend: Port Askaig, Kildalton (at least four) and Kilmory (John Murray). A pair of Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* were building a nest in Bennan Forest, New Galloway, on 13th January, but no proof of successful breeding: birds were seen in the district up to 3rd May (Donald Watson).

Spring Migration. Among scarcer migrants may be mentioned a pair of Garganey *Anas querquedula* at the Endrick Mouth (seen in both W. Stirling and Dunbarton) on 19th April (K. H. Paterson, W. K. Richmond), and two drakes and one duck at the Loch of Strathbeg (Aberdeen) on 25th April (D. P. Willis). *British Birds* (52:140) reports exceptional numbers of Garganey on passage in England. A Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* was at Gullane Point (E. Lothian) on 8th March (J. E. King); at Rosyth mudflats there was one on 21st, two on 23rd and six on 25th April (P. G. R. Barbier) and at Bothwell Bridge six on 24th April (M. F. M. Meiklejohn). An exceptionally early Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* occurred at Fort George (Inverness) on 23rd March (David Hope).

Habits. Alick Ross (Barrahead Lighthouse) reports that at

Suleskerry nests of the Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* have been found containing old bolts, nuts, etc., thrown out of the engine-room. The Rev. E. T. Vernon reports the perfect impression of a bird, probably a Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*, on his dining-room window at Bridge of Weir. "The bird must have flown against it with considerable force. The wing-span is complete, the individual primaries clearly marked; the head, legs and even claws show up well." (Cf. *British Birds* Nov. 1955 and Sept. 1957).

CORRIGENDA

Antea 1:42. Under Arctic Warbler add scientific name *Phylloscopus borealis*.

Antea 1:57. In caption of photograph for "Marsh Sandpiper" read "Wood Sandpiper".

Antea 1:68. For "auxiliaries" read "axillaries."

Antea 1:77. The last flock of Waxwings at Aviemore was on 10th and not 20th January. The flock at Elie was on 31st December not 31st January.

THE GLASGOW BIRD BULLETIN

"The Glasgow Bird Bulletin" was founded in 1952 to provide an outlet for the rapidly increasing number of notes on birds of the West, a more or less direct descendant of "Clyde Bird News," the news-sheet I issued in 1944-5. It began with a handful of subscribers and at best had just over 300. Published quarterly at 5/- per annum, it was originally called "The Glasgow and West of Scotland Bird Bulletin", the name being shortened in 1956. It had many similarities with "The Edinburgh Bird Bulletin", but in many ways was quite different. It was not confined to the local branch of the S.O.C., about a third of the subscribers not being members of the Club and ranging throughout the West of Scotland, and elsewhere. It did not go in for a series of local reports, but was more concerned with accounts of visits to islands in which the West abounds, local lists for various regions, etc. Sometimes it gave the first published account of the birds of a particular region. Some of the articles were based on observation of only a few hours or days duration; others were more substantial, covering a life-time's experience. Much of the material was therefore transient in interest, as it should be, but some is of permanent value and will be consulted for many years to come. Among the more important items published can be mentioned Major F. M. Crum on "The Birds of Rosneath," James Bartholomew on "The Birds of Baldernock Parish," Lord David Stuart on "The Birds of Bute," James Greenlees on "The Birds of Southend," Iain M. Murray on "The Birds of Skye," and my own articles on the Clyde islands, and on the breeding birds and waders of Renfrewshire. The Bulletin has undoubtedly made mistakes, but on the credit side can fairly claim to have been right when other more illustrious publications have been wrong. "The Glasgow Bird Bulletin" was subject to probably the most remarkable series of irregularities and delays in publication that ever afflicted a bird journal: it can now be disclosed that the real reason for this was the inherent laziness of the Editor. In view of this the Editor would like to thank his subscribers sincerely for the loyalty they showed him over the years. Editing was great fun and made me many new friends.

J. A. GIBSON,

B.T.O. CONFERENCE, DUMFRIES, 1959

The twelfth Annual Meeting and Conference of Regional Representatives of the British Trust for Ornithology was held for the first time in Scotland at the County Hotel, Dumfries, from 30th January to 1st February 1959 and was attended by over 70 representatives and members of the B.T.O. and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club, who were associated with the Conference on this occasion. The conference, planned to give the maximum time in the field, was opened by the President, R. C. Homes, who introduced Donald Watson to give a talk on the birds of Dumfriesshire and Galloway with particular reference to their habitats: this was illustrated with slides from his own paintings, some of which were on exhibition in the hotel. After this talk, an expedition was made to the Caerlaverock Nature Reserve under the leadership of E. L. Roberts, who ably steered the whole party along a hedge on the other side of which was a flock of about 1,300 Barnacle Geese. In the evening, with A. B. Duncan, Regional Representative for Dumfriesshire and Chairman of the Nature Conservancy, in the chair, H. J. Boyd spoke on "How Many Geese?", describing some of the recent work of the Wildfowl Trust on the distribution, numbers and breeding success of goose populations, with examples from his recent survey of the geese in Islay.

On 1st February the field excursion was to the Castle Douglas area, where Donald Watson led the party along a lane from which it was possible, without disembarking from the cars, to observe a flock of Bean Geese, among which was a single Lesser White-fronted Goose which had appeared for the first time the previous day and, on the way back to Castle Douglas, a Marsh Harrier flew slowly past the entire procession of 25 cars. In the afternoon the main party visited Loch Ken where they were able to see the seventh advertised species of goose, the Greenland White-front. Other species of interest recorded by breakaway groups included Peregrine, Smew and Waxwing, these completing a week-end that will long be remembered for the excellence of the local arrangements by W. Austin, the birds, the weather and the lectures.

THE INVASION OF WAXWINGS

Bombycilla garrulus, December 1958

ANDREW T. MACMILLAN

This summary deals mainly with the third substantial invasion of Waxwings into this country during the past three winters. The ultimate factors which lead to these irregular invasions, as distinct from the proximate factors which start the birds on their flights, have been discussed in a very interesting paper by Dr Gunnar Svårdson ("British Birds" 50: 314-343). He suggests that irruption-species such as the Waxwing start a flight each year stimulated by the same proximate factors as other migrants but that the movement stops where they encounter an abundant food supply. Irruptions occur when they do not find adequate food supplies within their normal range.

In the winter of 1956/57 the rowan crop in Sweden was quite exceptional and Waxwings appeared there from December 1956 onwards. Numbers in some places were greater than ever before and Svårdson predicted that Waxwings would breed abundantly in Fenno-Scandia during 1957 and, since the crop of rowan berries would certainly be inferior in the autumn because of tiredness, there might well be an irruption into Great Britain in the winter of 1957/8.

As it turned out some overflow from the invasion of Sweden reached the east coast of Scotland and England during the second half of February and the beginning of March 1957. This was probably the biggest invasion since the winter of 1946/7 and came at a rather unusual time of



WHITE CYGNETS OF MUTE SWAN AT DALBEATTIE

I.—1955. Parents with normal cygnets. II.—White cygnet from same brood as that shown above, taken at same age. III.—1957. Parents with eight grey cygnets and one white about a week old.

year but it was evidently just the overflow from the far larger immigration into Scandinavia where plenty of food was available to halt the birds.

As predicted by Svårdson the crop of rowan berries in Sweden was very poor in the autumn of 1957 and, there being no abundance of food to stop their migration flight, Waxwings began to arrive in this country about 6th November 1957 and were recorded from many parts of the country in ones and twos and small flocks.

After invasions in two successive winters one might have expected no more Waxwings for a while but, from late September 1958 throughout October, there came reports of an unusually early and heavy movement south and west in the Baltic area, followed by a build-up in southern Scandinavia in November and an invasion of Germany in December ("British Birds" 52: 32).

Small numbers of Waxwings visit Scotland every winter and until mid December 1958 the pattern for the winter was normal. Only a few earlier records have been received, single birds having been seen south of Nairn on 23rd October, at Avoch in Ross-shire on 11th November and at Fortrose, two miles away, on 2nd December. There was one on Fair Isle on 18th 19th and 24th November, and two at Colinsburgh (Fife) on 19th November.

The invasion did not start until about 13th December when a single Waxwing was reported from Golspie (Sutherland). The following two days odd birds were noted at Crail (Fife), Dunfermline (Fife) and Glasgow; about this time, too, there were records from Kirkwall (Orkney) and Wick (Caithness). On the 16th two spent the day at Rannoch Station (Perth) and on the 17th six were noted in Stornoway (Lewis). By this time they were also present near Cockburnspath (Berwick).

All these reports referred to very small groups but on the 18th a flock of twelve was noted in Glen Nevis (Inverness) and thirty made a brief stop at Rannoch Station. Next day two were reported at Thurso (Caithness) and three had reached Canna (Skye). On the 20th there were small flocks in Aberdeen, Perth and Guardbridge (Fife), and next day twelve were seen at Golspie and 25 at Dalkeith (Midlothian), as well as small numbers by Loch Tay (Perth), at Avoch and at Pittenweem (Fife). Nine were reported from Fort William (Inverness) on the 22nd.

It is fairly easy to catalogue the records which have been sent in, but less easy to eliminate bias from them. It is most noticeable that there tend to be more records on Sundays than on other days of the week. Another source of bias is that the bulk of the reports sent in were received in response to letters published in "The Scotsman" on 3rd January and "The Glasgow Herald" on 12th February. Though these papers have a wide circulation throughout Scotland there is naturally a bias against those areas where they are not extensively read. Furthermore, the tendency is clearly for people to write when they see the request for information; one is therefore sent the records that are fresh in their minds, and older and subsequent notes come only from those who are most interested in the birds.

During the next few days, up to 26th December, odd reports were received from a number of scattered localities. By Christmas Day seven had reached the Solway at Glencaple (Dumfries) and on Boxing Day there were twenty at Corpach (Inverness).

At this time there was a most spectacular invasion into NE Northumberland, just outside our area. 65 Waxwings arrived on 26th December, followed by 150 at midday on the 27th. During the afternoon many parties were watched flying in from over the sea and at least 500 were counted. Numbers seemed to increase from the 29th to the 31st until every sizeable hedge had its quota of Waxwings eating the heavy crop of berries and by 4th January there were at least 1,000 in the area.

On 27th December, while this great invasion of England was taking place, there were 27 at Aberfeldy (Perth) and next day 30 at Aviemore

(Inverness), twelve at Dundee and 16 at Bridge of Cally (Perth). About this time there was an increase of 20 at Ballater (Aberdeen) and on 28th and 29th smaller numbers were recorded in a number of places, including the first for the winter at Gullane (East Lothian), in a garden, where they are seen with such regularity that this is the fifth successive winter in which they have been noted.

Numerous records for the next few days may perhaps be put down to the publication of the letter in "The Scotsman" on 3rd January, but there were reports from no fewer than nine new localities for 31st December, including the first for St Andrews (Fife) whence eleven different people wrote about the comparatively small flocks that frequented the town until the beginning of April. A single bird on Tiree (Inner Hebrides) on 1st January is claimed as the first record for the island. Flocks included twelve in Elgin and fourteen in Callander (Perth) on 2nd January, and eleven at Inverness and twelve at Banchory (Kincardine) on the 3rd. About the 5th and 6th there were increases at Ballater and near Aviemore, and on the 6th twenty were recorded at Spinningdale (Sutherland). Flocks of twelve were seen near Croy (Inverness) and Nairn in early January and there were twenty at Kirkcaldy (Fife) about the 7th.

All these records refer either to the first reports of the birds in the areas or to local increases but, as the season progresses, confusion is obviously created by flocks moving from place to place and there is of course no guarantee that the day the birds are first noted is the day they arrived.

7th January saw the start of a general invasion of the Black Isle and between then and the end of the month there were many reports of small parties and flocks of up to 25 birds in the area.

Fresh records for the next twelve days of January are fairly evenly spread out and the most notable feature was the presence about 10th January of several flocks in the Aviemore area totalling roughly 100 birds.

About the 20th and 22nd there seemed to be local increases at Inverness, Grantown (Moray) and Gullane, while twenty were noted near Callander and four at Tillicoultry (Clackmannan). There was a further small group of records for the 25th to 27th with flocks at Boat of Garten (Inverness), Broughty Ferry and Dundee, Crieff, Comrie and Dunblane (all three Perth), and yet a third small group of records about the 2nd and 3rd of February. It is difficult to know what significance should be attached to these records but it seems more likely that they reflect movement within the country rather than fresh influxes from Scandinavia. Flocks of Waxwings continued to turn up in new localities until the very end of the season. Ten were in south Glasgow on 10th February, 16 near Melrose (Roxburgh) on 9th March, twelve at Fochabers (Moray) on 3rd April, five at Dallas (Moray) on 5th April and a number at Evanton (Ross) from 8th to 15th April when one flew against the window of the manse and was killed: five there on the 16th and 17th are the latest reported this winter.

On 1st March there was a notable flock of 60 Waxwings at Avoch: these birds were very restless and took a massed flight round a field before returning to the tree they had just left. Vigorous flight alternated with periods of gliding. Such large numbers had not been seen together before in the area and, although a few birds lingered there until the middle of April, it is possible that this flock was thinking of going home. As in past years, most of the birds seem just to disappear and this is almost the only note sent in that gives any hint of their going.

In some localities, presumably where food was most abundant, the Waxwings remained for a considerable time and some 210 birds (26 reports) were reported in March and April. Apart from localities already mentioned they were present during April in Inverness (twelve from 10th to 12th), Invergowrie (Perth) (several on 1st), St Andrews (until at least

7th) and Perth (one on 11th).

The total number of reports received from Scotland in the winter is about 200, referring to over 1,300 Waxwings. The bulk of these reports naturally refer to the east coast, with approximately 490, 140, 270 and 230 birds recorded in the Faunal Areas of the Moray Basin, Dee, Tay and Forth respectively. From records received last year it seems that the invasion in November 1957 was of much the same size in Scotland but the figures are not at hand for comparison with the earlier invasion in February and March 1957. Almost certainly each of these three invasions was bigger than any since 1946/47. In that winter about 12,500 were reported in Great Britain, of which some 7,000 were in Scotland. The two smaller irruptions in 1948/9 (over 200) and 1949/50 (over 2,000) hardly touched Scotland, with one report for the former years and about 300 birds in the other ("British Birds" 44: 158-163 and 418-419). On the other hand there was a very small but well marked influx in November 1951 ("Edinburgh Bird Bulletin" 2: 20 and 34).

Numbers reported from outside the Faunal Areas already noted were five in Orkney, eight in Caithness, eight in the Outer Hebrides, four in Skye, 45 in Argyll, two in the Inner Hebrides, 37 in Tweed, 40 in Clyde, and 69 in Solway. It is interesting to observe that some of the earliest records come from the west of Scotland (Lewis, Mull, Skye, Glen Nevis and Glasgow), just as Baxter and Rintoul noted for 1921, 1937 and 1946 ("The Migration of Waxwings into Scotland, 1946". Edinburgh 1947). There are also reports from all parts of England and even from Ireland, but these form no part of this paper.

It is instructive to compare the choice of food of Waxwings in different years and this is no doubt dictated by the relative abundance of the various berries. In 1921 their preference was for hips, while in 1937 it was for cotoneaster and in 1946 for haws (Baxter and Rintoul).

The favourite berries this winter were again of cotoneaster (59 reports) as in 1957/8 ("Edinburgh Bird Bulletin" 8: 30-32), but there were not nearly so many reports of berberis (15) as last year. Other favourites were hips of various kinds (24) and haws (14). Where the cotoneasters were identified they were *Franchetii* (1), *horizontalis* (4), *salicifolia* (1), *frigida* (1) and *Simonsii* (1). One observer noted that the first three were favoured in that order.

Other berries mentioned were holly (6, including two occasions when it was put out in a vase), elder (3), rowan (the three parties at Rannoch Station took the berries from the ground), juniper (2), honeysuckle (2), privet (1), *viburnum* (1) and "*Malus Yunnanensis*" (1) in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. There are three reports of birds taking crab apples (rotten in one case) and nine references to feeding on apples either still on the trees or put out for the birds. One Waxwing was suspected of eating the newly formed buds of an apple tree. A bird in Skye made several unsuccessful endeavours to swallow a breadcrumb, but another at Buchlyvie seemed to enjoy the bread and toast on which it was fed. It was enthusiastic about some holly in a vase, but only pecked at a cabbage it was offered and did not eat any.

One bird at Lundin Links, watched feeding on the hips of a dog rose, suddenly tossed one into the air and deftly caught and swallowed it. Twice it tried to repeat this feat of leger-de-bec, but failed; it watched closely as the berry found its way down through the branches to the ground.

My sincere thanks are due to the very large number of people who sent in the records without which this summary could not have been written. Lack of space unfortunately makes it impossible to publish a list of all who have helped. This same shortage of space also means that there is no room for a detailed list of records, but the complete data will be passed to the Editors of "British Birds" for their proposed analysis of the invasion in relation to the whole country.

THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

IMPORTANT NOTICE

A SCOTTISH CENTRE FOR ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD PROTECTION

OVER the last four years the Club has been indebted to the National Trust for Scotland for the provision of free office accommodation at 5, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. It has, however, become increasingly obvious that the room, which has also been used as an office for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, is no longer adequate, particularly in view of Mr G. Waterston's recent resignation from the position of club secretary. The Council has also been aware for some time that, in view of the continued expansion of the National Trust for Scotland, the Club should not trespass upon their hospitality much longer. The Council wishes to record its gratitude to the Trust for the way in which it has helped both the Club and the interests of ornithology in Scotland over the years.

A sum of money was recently offered by an anonymous donor to the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Endowment Fund for the purpose of establishing, with the co-operation of the S.O.C., a Scottish Centre for Ornithology and Bird Protection. By agreement with the donor the F.I.B.O. Endowment Trust has now purchased premises in Edinburgh which will be let to the S.O.C. In view of the unique opportunity which this presented to develop the interests of ornithology in Scotland, the Council of the Club, after full consideration of the responsibilities and implications, unanimously agreed to accept this most generous arrangement. It considered that such a centre would serve the constitutional purposes of the Club, and was workable and financially sound.

Premises at 21, Regent Terrace, Edinburgh, have been acquired, which will provide suitable accommodation for the Club Office, the Library, Council Meetings and informal discussion groups. Office accommodation will be sub-let by the Club to the R.S.P.B. representative, the terms having been agreed with the Society. The two upper floors of the building will be let to Mr and Mrs George Waterston.

The Council have confirmed the appointment of Mrs Waterston as Secretary and Treasurer of the Club. Mr Robert Hillcoat remaining as Hon. Treasurer.

The Council considered this centre as a separate financial proposition, and it is estimated that the two rents from the two sub-lets referred to will provide enough income to meet the annual burdens, limiting the Club's commitments to £50 per annum. The Council realise that the removal from the present premises will entail payment of rents, rates and other associated burdens, and, to counteract this, Mrs Waterston has accepted her appointment at a lower salary than was paid to Mr George Waterston.

It is intended that the Library should be made available to members during office hours and on certain additional evenings, while at other times members could use the Library by previous arrangement. The residence of Mr and Mrs Waterston will ensure that the Club Room is available to members. Evenings for informal discussion groups will be arranged, and also the borrowing by post of duplicate books from the Library.

It is hoped that alterations and redecoration of the house and the removal of the Library from its present accommodation will be completed by the end of July. Details of the hours when the office and Club Room will be open will be announced to members in due course. The Council believes that the new Centre will be of great benefit to members of the Club and to ornithologists throughout Scotland, and when visiting Edinburgh they are warmly invited to make full use of the centre.

CHARLES G. CONNELL,
President.

10, Duke Street, Edinburgh.

SUMMER EXCURSIONS

Members are reminded of the Branch Excursions arranged for this summer, and are asked to give them their full support. Early booking is appreciated by the leaders, particularly if boats or buses have to be reserved. Full details are given in "Scottish Birds", Vol. 1, No. 3.

ABERDEEN—Sunday, 6th September: Ythan Estuary and Lochs.

DUNDEE—Sunday, 28th June: Isle of May. Sunday, 13th September: Tay mouth to Tentsmuir Point.

EDINBURGH—Sunday, 5th July: Farne Islands. Saturday, 18th July, Bass Rock. Saturday, 22nd August: Aberlady Bay Nature Reserve.

GLASGOW—Saturday, 20th June: Little Cumbrae.

ST ANDREWS—Sunday, 28th June: Isle of May. Saturday, 11th July: Tentsmuir.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The twelfth Annual Conference of the Club will be held at the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling, from 23rd to 25th October, 1959. The conference programme will be published in the next number of "Scottish Birds," and this intimation is given in order that members may make reservations at hotels in Stirling in good time. All hotel bookings are made direct with the hotels in which you wish to stay. Owing to the general shortage of single rooms, younger members are urged to make arrangements to share a room with a friend. Private arrangements must be made with your hotel for lunches each day. The Secretary is NOT responsible for hotel bookings.

Hotel Accommodation in Stirling

- GOLDEN LION HOTEL, 10 King Street (Tel. 1950). Conference H.Q.
Bed and Breakfast from 27/6.
- STATION HOTEL, 56 Murray Place (Tel. 1057)
Bed and Breakfast from 27/6.
- WAVERLEY HOTEL, King Street (Tel. 1950)
Bed and Breakfast from 27/6.
- GARFIELD HOTEL, Victoria Square (Tel. 430)
Bed and Breakfast 19/6.
- DOUGLAS HOTEL, 4 Arcade (Tel. 286) — Bed and Breakfast 19/6.
- ALLAN PARK HOTEL, 20 Allan Park (Tel. 298)
Bed and Breakfast 18/6.

Mrs GEORGE WATERSTON,
Secretary and Treasurer.

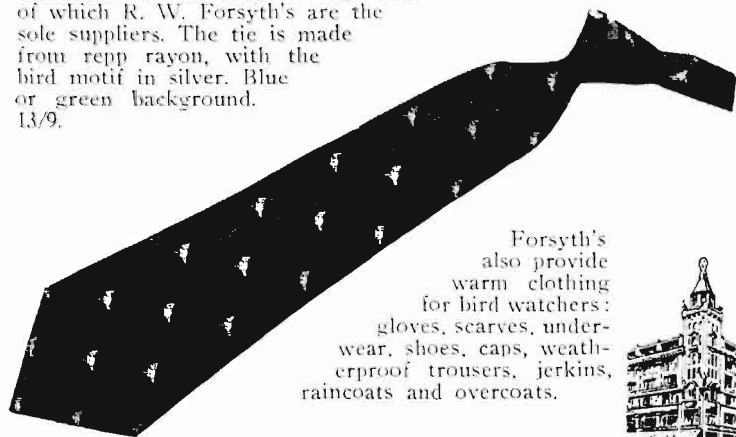
NOTICES

BIRD MIGRATION, a Bulletin of the British Trust for Ornithology. Edited by Kenneth Williamson. Published twice a year, No. 1 appeared in December 1958. Reports of the Bird Observatories for autumn 1958 and analyses of interesting movements. Copies 2/6 post free. Cash with orders to Business Editor, B.T.O., 2, King Edward Street, Oxford.

REPRINTS FROM BIRD STUDY. Scottish Census of Heronries, by E. A. Garden, 1/-, postage 2d. Scottish Mute Swan Census, by C. P. Rawcliffe, 6d, postage 2d. Cash with orders to B.T.O., 2, King Edward Street, Oxford.

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club Tie

Illustrated is the Official Club Tie, of which R. W. Forsyth's are the sole suppliers. The tie is made from repp rayon, with the bird motif in silver. Blue or green background. 13/9.



Forsyth's also provide warm clothing for bird watchers: gloves, scarves, underwear, shoes, caps, weatherproof trousers, jerkins, raincoats and overcoats.



R. W. FORSYTH

R. W. Forsyth Ltd. Princes Street Edinburgh And at Glasgow

THE BIRDS OF SCOTLAND

E. V. Baxter and L. J. Rintoul

"This magnificent work forms an outstanding contribution to the ornithology of the British Isles . . .

This will be the standard work on Scottish ornithology for many years to come."

SETON GORDON in *Nature*.
2 vols. 63s net

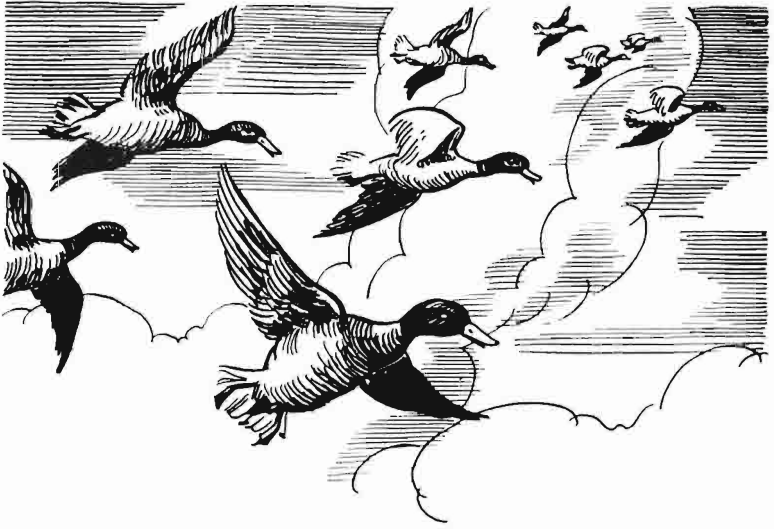
BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF SHETLAND

L. S. V. and U. M. VENABLES

"This book contains so much valuable ornithological experience, succinctly analysed and pleasantly set forth that no naturalist can afford to be without it."

The Scotsman
30s net

OLIVER AND BOYD



Leaflet B55/SK
on request



Binoculars by
BARR & STROUD LTD.

ANNIESLAND, GLASGOW W.3
KINNAIRD HOUSE, 1 PALL MALL EAST, LONDON S.W.1