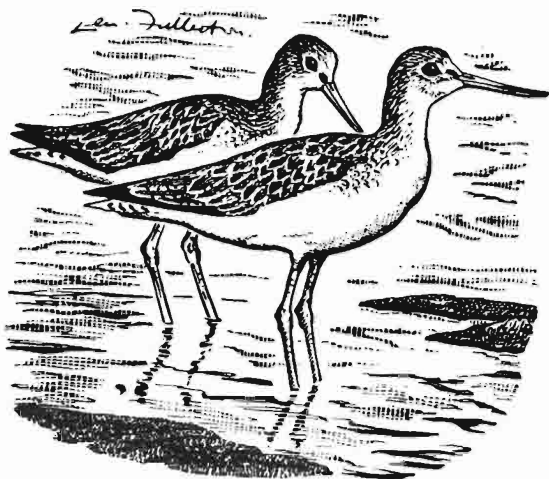


SCOTTISH BIRDS



The Journal of
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Vol. I No. 7

Spring 1960

Reprinted 1978

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, Scottish Centre for Ornithology and Bird Protection, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh 7. (Tel. Waverley 6042).

CLUB-ROOM AND LIBRARY

The Club-room and Library at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh 7, will be available to members during office hours, and on Wednesday evenings from 7 to 10 p.m. (except the Wednesdays of Branch Meetings). Members may use the Reference Library and borrow books from the Duplicate Section. Facilities for making tea or coffee are available at a nominal charge and members may bring guests by arrangement. The Aldis 2" x 2" slide projector and screen may be used for the informal showing of slides at a charge of 2s 6d per night to cover the replacement of bulbs.

Informal meetings for Junior members will be held in the Club-room on the first Friday of each month from October to April at 7.30 p.m.

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.

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

Editorial for Beginners

EXPERIENCED ornithologists may skip this and pass on to the body of the journal, but a large proportion of the members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club are beginners, and they are asked to delay for a minute or two before going on to more interesting reading.

Ornithology is a cheap hobby: only think of the cost of a set of golf clubs. All we need is a pencil, the back of an old envelope, a good pair of walking boots, a pair of Wellingtons for watching water birds, and a pair of field glasses. This last, although some consider motor cars as an essential, is the most expensive item of equipment. For most purposes 8x35 binoculars are sufficient, and very good ones can be got second-hand, though in special circumstances something larger is needed, higher powered glasses or a telescope being necessary, for example, in watching birds out to sea, or on extensive inland waters. Remember that it is the thinner end that you put to the eye.

Then begins the ABC of bird-watching, getting to know the common birds. This is essential. If you start hunting rare birds at the very start, you will have no valid standard of comparison for the ones you see. It is useless to try and identify the rarer waders, for example, if you cannot know at sight the Dunlin, Ringed Plover, Redshank and so on. There are now many excellent volumes for the identification of birds in the field, Peterson, Hollom and Mountfort's *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* being perhaps the most popular. But two words of warning are necessary in the use of birds books: as a rule they will only show the adult plumage of the two sexes of each species, and you will often be puzzled by birds which seem not to correspond to any picture in your book: these will mostly be of immature birds, especially in autumn, and here you will have to have recourse to *The Hand-*

book of British Birds, which is about the only book to show the immature plumages—and not all of them. In addition it is advisable not to take books with you into the field: it is far more safe to take notes on the spot of any species you don't know and then check your results when you get home. The presence of a bird book is liable to make the inexperienced observer decide that his bird is one that vaguely resembles a plate in the book, and much valuable time, which might have been spent in taking down notes, is wasted in turning over the pages and trying to reach an immediate decision. The psychological effect of suggestion can be very powerful in bird illustration, an example being that many more people than ought to do so think they see Firecrests, simply because a popular manual has a picture of Firecrests on the dust jacket.

If you see an unusual bird, how do you set about reporting it? The important thing is to note down absolutely everything you can. Colour—in difficult species the minutest details are necessary. Shape—what other bird does it most closely resemble to your eye? Size—compare your bird with any other bird that may be present; it is very hard to judge the size of a bird which is by itself, since this depends on the conditions of lighting. Behaviour—many birds will have individual tricks of stance, flight and feeding behaviour which may make your description diagnostic. Voice—here again two very similar species, as for example the Tawny Pipit and Richard's Pipit, may be conclusively determined by a good account of call-notes.

And how do you know whether a bird you see is unusual in your area or not? There are books to tell you that: first of all Baxter and Rintoul's *Geographical Distribution and Status of Birds in Scotland*, which is now, however, 32 years old, and the need for a new edition is illustrated by the fact that Dr Baxter started on a revision shortly before her death. The same authors' *Birds of Scotland*, though, is much more recent, and will fill many gaps for the intervening period. The regional faunas of Scotland are now mostly very old, and there are still parts of Scotland (Lanarkshire is the outstanding example) which have never been adequately covered.

With a thinner density of ornithologists than exists in England, much work remains to be done on the distribution of birds in Scotland; and remember that this is changing all the time. The general tendency is for southern species to spread northwards; this is especially noticeable in Scotland with warblers such as the Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Garden Warbler. The Carrion Crow is also at the present time invading the Highlands and islands, with a resulting scarcity of its fellow subspecies, the Hoodie. Birds previously regarded as English

rather than Scottish are spreading north of the Border. A recent number of *Scottish Birds* described the first nesting of the Little Owl and now the Nuthatch is said to be nesting in Scotland, although full details are not to hand. At the same time arctic birds are growing scarcer at the southern limit of their range, the Ptarmigan being perhaps the best example.

To get an idea of the distribution of birds in your area the best method is to walk across country. Here Ordnance Survey maps can be of great assistance: look out places sparsely inhabited by humans, especially if they are well watered or well wooded. You can frequently find large concentrations of birds by this means, and it is perhaps the best way of finding flocks of geese. You will meet with frequent disappointments, but that is part of the game and you will have the consolation of having covered the countryside thoroughly.

Going out with observers more experienced than yourself is advisable and, indeed, almost essential, twice as valuable as the help given by books. You are no longer working in a void, and better observers can correct your mistakes as a book which cannot answer you back, can never do. This is especially valuable in the case of birds' calls, which cannot be committed accurately to paper. You will learn bird noises far quicker if there is somebody at your side to tell you what they are, than by turning over the pages of a book, and finding a written transliteration of the call, which may or may not be the right one. Gramophone records are, of course, very helpful but the cases in which they can be used in the field for direct comparison are few and far between.

Not all ornithology consists in the identification of birds and the plotting of their distribution. These are only the initial steps, but they have to be taken before further progress is made. One of the spheres of ornithology in which amateurs can make, and have made their greatest contribution is that of bird behaviour. Any interesting aspect of this should be noted down, and amateurs, especially if living in the country, have unrivalled opportunities for doing this, especially those that have bird-tables and see the same individuals regularly. The colour ringing of birds in the garden will greatly help you in this.

Here it is difficult to know what is worth recording and what is not, and in most cases only life histories of the birds concerned can help you, together with articles in such journals as *British Birds*, *Bird Study* and so on: but even if a form of behaviour may have been recorded before, it is often worth while to report it again, just to see how regular such behaviour may be.

Finally, this is the last number of *Scottish Birds* to appear before the breeding season of most birds gets under way, and

the question of protection of their nests and eggs arises. It was Lord Grey who suggested that the best way of protecting the nest of a bird was not to look at it all, or if it is found accidentally not to visit it again. Birds are temperamental animals and quick to desert the nest, and the larger, one-brooded birds may not be able to lay again if they fail the first time. Furthermore, if you find the nest of a rare species, secrecy is the best policy. Your urge, in the excitement of your discovery, will be to gain as much credit as you can, and reveal the fact; but human beings have very big ears, and the race of egg-collectors is not yet extinct, especially in summer in Scotland, when the invasion of these sportsmen from south of the Border takes place. If, however, you report your discovery to the Editor of a responsible journal, you may be sure that the locality is kept secret, as has been done in the case of the Redwings reported in this number of *Scottish Birds* and of the Wood Sandpipers in the last. Of course, some large birds, especially when nesting within sight of a road, cannot escape general invasion; and, in the case of the Ospreys on Speyside, for example, it was obviously better to invoke the sympathy of the Press and the public on their behalf than to try to keep secret what was a secret no longer.

You may, of course, be simply watching birds for your private enjoyment and, since this is a personal matter, nobody can quarrel with your attitude. It may be suggested, though, that your enjoyment will be greatly increased if your records are published, with the additional satisfaction of assisting other people and of cooperating in the large body of ornithological work that it going on all over Scotland.

DR E. V. BAXTER

The names of Miss Baxter and Miss Rintoul may become something of a legend among future generations of Scottish naturalists, but to those who knew them, their mention will always kindle a glow of affectionate personal memory.

Evelyn Vida Baxter, who died on 1st October 1959, found in her near neighbour, Leonora Jeffrey Rintoul, a kindred spirit and inseparable companion who shared her love of country activities and particularly of natural history. Miss Baxter was born on 29th March 1879, the daughter of John Henry Baxter of Gilston, Largoward, Fife: Miss Rintoul was born at Largo in the previous year. While still in their teens they began to visit Tentsmuir in north-east Fife, which was then being made into a nature reserve. Intimately connected with this project were Dr Lewis R. Sutherland, Professor of Pathology in University College, Dundee, and a pioneer in the study of bird

diseases, and Dr Eagle Clarke of the Royal Scottish Museum. These two eminent ornithologists gave "the girls" every encouragement to study birds in the field, for they were themselves both field naturalists, no less than workers in laboratory and museum. To Tentsmuir, also, during the early years of the century, came naturalists from many parts of the United Kingdom and overseas. Grouse and blackgame, artificially introduced to the moor, were being made the subject of special studies in connection with the Grouse Inquiry of 1904 to 1911. The Reserve also more than fulfilled the most optimistic expectations as to its attractiveness for birds on migration. Miss Baxter used to say that Tentsmuir had been the door through which she had entered ornithology.

At that time Dr Eagle Clarke was increasingly absorbed in studying migration. In 1905 he made his first visit to Fair Isle and his observations stimulated Miss Baxter and Miss Rintoul to investigate migration at the Isle of May, on approximately the same longitude as Fair Isle, but some two hundred and fifty miles further south. They spent a fortnight there in September 1907, staying at the lighthouse, and they returned to the May to study migration in spring and autumn for the next twenty-five years. The Observatory in the Isle of May National Nature Reserve carries on their work—one of the many monuments to their memory.

Eagle Clarke was working on the assumption that migrating birds followed long-established routes, on which the islands might serve as essential resting places. Miss Baxter became impressed, at an early stage in her own observations, by the apparent influence of weather. In 1918 the two ladies published their classic paper in the *Ibis* emphasising the importance of "drift." Two quotations illustrate what were then revolutionary ideas: "The direction of the wind does not prevent birds migrating—they move when the wind is at every point of the compass—but although this is so, in our opinion the direction of the wind has a great influence on the route followed and therefore on the species which occur on our shores." "We believe that the deviation from the direct route is largely, perhaps mainly due to drift, though voluntary 'tacking' may be a factor."

Studies of migration led Miss Baxter and Miss Rintoul to examine afresh the normal distribution of birds in Scotland, and particularly to establish data against which future changes might be checked. In 1922 they published *Some Scottish Breeding Duck, their arrival and dispersal* and in 1928 came the indispensable *Geographical Distribution and Status of Birds in Scotland*. The joint authors contributed a large number of papers to *The Scottish Naturalist* and other journals, not all devoted to ornithology, and their *Vertebrate Fauna of*



DRAKE GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*. This photograph, characteristic of Mr Palmar's pictures away from the nest, was taken on the Clyde above Hamilton.

Photograph C. E. Palmar

Forth was a worthy addition to the nine regional faunas already issued in the series begun by Harvie-Brown. Their greatest literary work was the completion, just before Miss Rintoul's death in 1953, of the two volumes on *The Birds of Scotland, their History, Distribution and Migration*, a book revealing its authors' knowledge and love of Scotland, no less than of its birds.

The achievement which probably ranked first in Miss Baxter's estimation was the part she played, with Miss Rintoul, in the creation of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. It was founded on 24th March 1936, with only a score of supporters, and she saw it grow within twenty years to a membership of nearly a thousand; and to an extraordinarily large number of the members Miss Baxter was not only the club's Honorary President, but a personal friend whose advice was keenly sought and unstintingly given.

It was not only as an ornithologist and naturalist that Miss Baxter was well known throughout Scotland. Her versatility and energy led her in many directions. She was keenly interested in agriculture and was an organiser of the Women's Land Army in the 1914-18 War and again in 1940, when she was also a member of the Agricultural Executive Committee and of the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board. She was a leading member of the Women's Rural Institute movement and served in many offices in Institute, Federation, Area and Central Council. Skilled with her own hands, she took the Demonstrator's and Judge's tests and toured Scotland visiting Institutes from the Shetlands and Outer Hebrides to the Borders. She was Convener of the Handcrafts Committee of the Central Council. Young people followed her leadership as keenly as did their parents and she loved to serve them, not more in a broad field, for example as a Commissioner in the Girls Guildry, than in the personal intimacy of her Sunday School in Largo Parish Church.

Many distinctions and honours came to Miss Baxter, but they seemed only to increase her natural humility. In 1945 she was awarded the M.B.E. for her war work. In 1951 when she and Miss Rintoul were made fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, they were among only eight ladies elected up to that time, and were the only non-graduates so honoured. In 1955 the University of Glasgow conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws upon her. Miss Baxter was the first lady to become a Vice-President of the British Ornithologists' Union and at the Centenary Banquet, in March 1959, she was presented with the Medal of the Union. The reward she valued most, however, and the one she had most fully earned, was the universal affection and respect in which she was held by all who knew her; her integrity would never allow her to condone

inferior work, whether of hand or head, but her humour and understanding enabled her criticisms to be constructive, kind and welcomed. Miss Baxter's influence will extend far beyond the fourscore years of her own fine life, now sadly ended.

J. B.

ISLE OF MAY BIRD OBSERVATORY AND FIELD STATION REPORT FOR 1959

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

The Low Light was manned for 161 days between 28th March and 24th November. April, May, August and September were covered almost fully, but observer gaps in June, July and October resulted in few nestling seabirds being ringed and a period of considerable migrational activity went unrecorded.

The island's first Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* was reported; other unusual species included a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, a Scarlet Grosbeak *Carpodacus erythrinus* and a party of Continental Great Tits *Parus m. major*. The great expansion of nesting Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* continued.

Migration

SPRING

The spring was mild and dry; strong winds were noticeably absent and there was little haze or fog. On only fifteen days in April and May was the wind in the south-east, and only once (23rd-24th April) did it stay in that quarter for more than a few hours.

March. Judging from the birds present on the island on 28th March, and from what the lighthouse keepers reported, there had been a slight drift movement involving Continental Hedge Sparrows *Prunella m. modularis* and Continental Robins *Erithacus r. rubecula* the previous week. The first Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* had appeared on 24th March, the first Shag's egg was laid on 25th, the first of the breeding Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* returned on 28th and the first Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* was reported on 30th—this stayed until 3rd April and is the earliest notice to date.

April. The wind was continuously west until 7th, with the 8th and 9th calm. Throughout this period there was a slight but steady movement of Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, Wheatears and on some days Curlews *Numenius arquata*. Single Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros* were noted on 2nd and 3rd, the first Redstart *P. phoenicurus* and Willow

Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* on the 10th, and the first Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* and Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* next day. South-east winds with haze on 23rd and 24th brought the first considerable Willow Warbler influx of the year—about thirty birds, half of them caught. On 25th April the first Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* were seen, there was another Redstart on 27th, the first Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* turned up on 28th, and there was a Corncrake *Crex crex* from 30th April to 3rd May.

May. The pattern of movement remained much as before, but with more birds and species implicated. On the 3rd of the month a B.B.C. "round-up" of Bird Observatories included the Isle of May; its contribution was made up from the main Lighthouse, looking down on the Top Trap. Although there was not a great deal of movement on that particular day, the Corncrake helped to provide a talking point. As the broadcast proceeded, it was noticeable how well the dates of arrival of spring migrants in the Forth fitted into the pattern of systematic northward spread throughout the country.

6th May was noteworthy not only for the visit of over 150 passengers from M.S. *Meteor* on the National Trust for Scotland's Islands Cruise but also for the obliging appearance of a first year Rustic Bunting which, after being trapped, was admired by a number of the visitors. Weighing 16.3 grams, it arrived on the sixth consecutive day of westerly wind.

The 6th, 8th and 9th were good ringing days, dominated by Willow Warblers: on 9th, after half a day of south-east wind on 8th, 63 Willow Warblers and 17 Whitethroats were taken. A Pied Flycatcher *Muscicapa hypoleuca*, a Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and a Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* figured among the birds ringed on 11th. On 13th, thirty Willow Warblers, seven Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, two Lesser Whitethroats *Sylvia curruca* and fifteen Whitethroats were trapped. Whitethroats (22) dominated the catch on 25th and 26th. A movement of special interest was a northward passage of 237 Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, up to seven at a time, on 20th May. Has a steady movement of these birds ever been recorded?

It is worth noting that none of the unusual birds recorded in May, for example the Wryneck on 10th and 11th, a Red-backed Shrike *Lanius cristatus collurio* on 20th and a Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* on 22nd and 23rd came after south-east winds; in each case the wind had been due east or north for at least three days. A Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* trapped on 27th May was carrying a Vogelwarte Helgoland ring; it had been ringed full-grown on Heligoland on 23rd August 1957.

AUTUMN

Observers were present from 30th July to 12th August, 21st August to 17th September, and 19th September to 7th October. Passage was already in progress on 30th July, when over 200 Curlews, a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* and nine Swallows were recorded. A Dark-breasted Brent Goose *Branta b. bernicla*, probably a bird of the previous year, which may have been present for some time before it was first seen on this date, remained until 22nd August, providing the third recorded occurrence on the island and the first Brent to be determined racially. The dates are very unusual for Britain.

August. The biggest fall of the month was on 4th, when, after 2 days of west wind, overnight fog brought down about 120 Willow Warblers, mostly juveniles, 79 being trapped and ringed. Other birds involved were four Sedge Warblers, two juvenile Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* and a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*. The 7th was notable for the southward departure of many Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus argentatus* and *fuscus*, leaving after the breeding season. Almost 240 (nine tenths Herring Gulls) were counted moving off between 10.30 and 11.30 a.m. Easterly winds with haze and light fog ensured the arrival of more migrants during the next few days, with small numbers of Willow Warblers a constant feature. On 9th there were five more Crossbills, two Redstarts, two Whinchats and another Cuckoo; the numbers of Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* rose by at least fifty to 250, with a further rise to 300 next day. On 11th four Whinchats, two Pied Flycatchers and a Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* arrived. Easterly wind, Force 2, with fog from 2 a.m. till noon, saw a marked influx on 12th. Willow Warblers (about fifty; half of them juveniles; 39 ringed) were again the most numerous species, other arrivals including five Whitethroats, a Garden Warbler, two Barred Warblers, two Pied Flycatchers, a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, five Whinchats, a Redstart, a Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* (the earliest autumn notice so far), another Crossbill and a Whimbrel. After a gap in observation from 13th to 20th August, the party landing in the late afternoon of 21st (mostly foggy with a fresh easterly wind) ringed thirty birds before dark, among them thirteen Pied Flycatchers, seven Willow Warblers, six Garden Warblers and two more Barred Warblers. A Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was caught next day.

Small scale coasting movements, mainly in clear visibility and with Force 1 to 4 winds from a variety of directions, continued until the end of the month. Two Manx Shearwaters *Procellaria puffinus* had been seen on the 21st, and from 23rd until 30th never less than eleven were recorded daily, with a maximum count of 38 on 24th. A Sooty Shearwater *P. grisea* was recorded on 25th and two on 26th. On the latter date, a

clear sunny day with south-west wind abating from Force 6 to Force 1, and veering north-west, there was a considerable immigration of butterflies, mostly Large, Small and Green-veined Whites *Pieris brassicae*, *rapae* and *napi*, but with Red Admirals *Vanessa atalanta*, and a few Small Tortoiseshells *Aglais urticae* and a Peacock *Nymphalis io*: all arrived from the east. More butterflies were recorded on 27th, 29th and 30th. On the 28th and 29th a Scarlet Grosbeak provided excitement and on the 31st the seventh Barred Warbler of the year occurred.

September. To round off a phenomenally fine summer, September was another hot and almost rainless month. Water had to be sent out to the Observatory. Winds throughout were very variable, seldom above Force 3 and then for short periods only. The weather was thus for most of the time well suited to normal autumn coasting movements and there was the usual well-marked passage of Curlews, Great Skuas *Catharacta skua*, Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*, terns, *Sterna* spp., Meadow Pipits, Wheatears and hirundines. In addition there was a steady trickle of arriving birds which may well have been taking advantage of the settled conditions to make a direct crossing of the North Sea. Goldcrests, for example, were passing through daily in small numbers, notably in the first fortnight of the month, and on two occasions small parties were seen to arrive from the east against what wind there was. Butterflies—Admirals, Whites and Tortoiseshells—came in during the first week, as well as some Silver Y moths *Plusia gamma*, with further butterfly arrivals on 26th and 30th.

The first autumn Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* was reported exceptionally early on 2nd September, on the third day of light south-east wind. On the same day there was the unusual count of nineteen Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, the highest number yet noted. The first autumn Chiffchaff was trapped on 4th, and a big passage of Swallows and Rock Pipits *Anthus spinoletta petrosus* (several hundreds each), observed early on 6th, was emphasised by normal Rock Pipit numbers next day. On 7th two Grey Wagtails *Motacilla cinerea* were recorded; on 9th a Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* and a Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* appeared: a Barred Warbler, five Pied Flycatchers and another Grey Wagtail were noted on the 11th; and there were single Grey Wagtails again on 14th and 23rd September, and 4th October. So distinct a passage of this species is unusual on the May.

Mid-September brought the arrival of two Blackcaps on 13th, an increased (evening) passage of 250 "Comic" Terns *Sterna "macrundo/hirura"* on the 14th, and the arrival of a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* and a Spotted Red-

shank *Tringa erythropus*, recorded previously only in 1958, the same day. The 16th, which saw the trapping of what was by then the tenth Barred Warbler of the season, was followed on the 17th by a small movement comprising 10 Pied Flycatchers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa parva*, another early Fieldfare, a Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (present on 18th also), a Robin and a Redstart, with a Sooty Shearwater out to sea. These birds appeared on the third successive day of NNE or north-east wind.

The last ten days of September were particularly interesting. On 20th at least 100 Manx Shearwaters and over twenty Sooty Shearwaters were seen, and on 22nd, after three days of westerly wind, more than forty of each were recorded. The 24th was showery; the wind was in the south most of the morning, south-east for a short time about noon, then went south again, and finally south-west. Next day (25th) twenty-five Song Thrushes *Turdus ericetorum*, fifteen Redwings *Turdus musicus*, three Bramblings *Fringilla montifringilla* and two Pied Flycatchers appeared, but overshadowing all else were the quite unprecedented numbers of shearwaters of the east shore, at least 500 Manx and the same number of Sooty, concentrated mainly into three large rafts.

The 26th brought a Redpoll *Carduelis flammaea*, a duck and drake Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* (third occurrence, first in autumn) and about twenty Red Admiral butterflies. Shearwater numbers were down by the 27th—over 20 Sooty but only three Manx noted—but more than 1,000 Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* were observed moving south. Only about five Red Admirals remained but more came in on 28th, when two seen arriving from the north, low over the water.

On 30th arrivals included a Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, six Fieldfares, about fifty Song Thrushes, twelve Redwings, fifteen Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, a Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, the male Firecrest already mentioned (it weighed 5.3 grms. on 3rd October, the day before it left), two Red-breasted Flycatchers, a Reed Bunting and a Lapland Bunting. A Manx Shearwater and seven Sooty, many terns and an adult Little Gull *Larus minutus* (fourth occurrence) were seen. The wind was south-east, Force 4 to 5, after a light south-east breeze the previous evening.

October. Only the opening week was watched, but it is known from the Principal Keeper that there were big movements of birds later in the month. 1st October was cloudless with south-east wind, but the day quickly became overcast, the wind dropping to nil. Altogether 52 birds were trapped including 17 Blackbirds, eight Song Thrushes, two Blackcaps, a Chiffchaff, a Pied Flycatcher, four Hedge Sparrows, six Chaffinches *Fringilla coelebs*, five Bramblings, and three out of

eight Reed Buntings. Throughout the day Blackbirds (about 75), Song Thrushes (about 50), Redwings (12), Chaffinches (50) and Bramblings (35) were moving: until noon a north to south passage of Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* (80 counted) went on and 4 Siskins *Carduelis spinus* were also noted. In the morning and evening of 2nd the wind was light from the south-east but in the middle of the day was calm. Nineteen birds were trapped including seven out of about fifteen Reed Buntings, five out of 25 Song Thrushes and a Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*. About thirty Swallows, two House Martins *Delichon urbica*, a Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, about thirty Skylarks, fifteen Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*, five *alba* wagtails and a flock of 44 Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were noted passing. About 65 Manx and fourteen Sooty Shearwaters were seen, and an unusual visitor was a Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*, only the eighth notice. Two more Reed Buntings were included in the thirteen birds trapped on 3rd (wind still in south-east), when a newly arrived Robin proved to be one which had wintered the previous year. Over 200 Skylarks passed between 8 and 10.30 a.m. 4th - 7th October were hectic: a calm dawn on 4th gave way to a stiff south-east breeze reaching gale force in the afternoon, with thick mist at night; throughout 5th and 6th the wind remained south-east, Force 6 to 7, hazy in the mornings but clearing later. On 7th (foggy in the afternoon) the wind was still south-east, but less strong (Force 4), dropping at night. On these four days the traps reaped a rich harvest: 57 birds were ringed on 4th, 107 on 5th, 60 on 6th and 71 on 7th. Among individuals totals were: 71 Goldcrests, 69 Song Thrushes, 42 Blackbirds, 23 Bramblings, 18 Robins, 16 Reed Buntings, 9 Chiffchaffs and 9 Chaffinches; there were also five Blackcaps, two Ring Ouzels, three Siskins, a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*.

On 4th October big flocks of Skylarks were again noted passing in the early morning and parties of Redwings (50), Bramblings (20) and Chaffinches came in during the forenoon. Blackbirds (over 100) were in the majority in the morning but were outnumbered in the afternoon by Song Thrushes (250). Seven Ring Ouzels were counted. *Turdidae* were still numerous on the 5th and a mixed party of between 200 and 300 Bramblings and Chaffinches was seen to arrive at the North Foghorn in the evening. There was also a big fall of Goldcrests; 59 were ringed out of over eighty on the island. Goldcrest numbers had more than doubled by the 6th, with Redwings (200) more numerous also; Song Thrushes (300) and Blackbirds (100) were in about the same strength as before. Starlings were passing and another Great Grey Shrike and two more Red-breasted Flycatchers appeared. For the first time no Wheatears at all were seen.

On 7th, when Chaffinches and Bramblings were still coming in, Siskins (30) and Reed Buntings (12 out of 24 ringed) had increased. Redwing numbers rose to 300 and the sixth Red-breasted Flycatcher of the season was reported.

Reduced seas on the 8th unfortunately permitted the departure of the two watchers who had been privileged to partake of this feast of movement. The remainder of October went unrecorded.

November-December. Observers were in residence on 1st-2nd, 7th-9th and 21st-24th November: their records have been supplemented by notes from the Principal Keeper, Mr W. Watt.

Three Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* arrived on 2nd November, passing on the same day: two others were present on 17th and 18th. They constitute the fourth and fifth notices for the island. There was a very high count of 230 Curlews on 23rd, the birds arriving on the North Ness in flocks of thirty or forty at a time at short intervals from the direction of Fife Ness. On the same day five Greenfinches *Chloris chloris* and a Redpoll were recorded. Two Goldfinches *Carduelis carduelis* were seen on 23rd and 24th: on the 24th one of them and a Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* were caught in the same drive of the Low Trap; the Goldfinch was of the British race *britannica*. Two Blackcaps appeared on 17th and one was noted on 21st. Although not recorded between 22nd and 24th November, a male and female were "still visiting" the Watts' bird-table on 4th December, so that perhaps the same two birds were present all the time. A small party of Continental Great Tits had arrived on the island some time after 7th October and four of these were ringed on 4th November. Three of the birds stayed on and were still on the island at the end of the year. Great Tits have been recorded on the island only four times before.

Unusual Occurrences

Most of the unusual occurrences of the year have been mentioned above, but the following are also deserving of notice:

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*. One on 10th November. Sixth notice.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*. One on 30th November. Seventh notice.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*. One on 16th May. Third spring notice.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. One on 12th May. Fifth occurrence.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*. One from 11th to 14th May. Third occurrence.

Knot *Calidris canutus*. Two on 29th and 31st March. Second spring notice.

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. One on 16th May. Third spring notice.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. Three on 25th August. Recorded previously only in 1954.

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*. One was seen on 22nd November: race uncertain. Sixth occurrence.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*. The single birds on 2nd and 17th November are the earliest yet recorded.

White Wagtail *Motacilla a. alba*. One on 1st June is the latest notice for spring.

Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*. One on 18th May. Only the sixth recorded occurrence in 35 years.

Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*. The movement from 1st to 7th October, which peaked on 2nd and 7th with 15 and 24 birds respectively, was in larger numbers than ever recorded before.

Ringing

The year's total of 1,635 birds of 56 species ringed, the highest since 1954, can be regarded as satisfactory. Less than one tenth were nestlings and it is disappointing that so few people thought it worth visiting the island in the latter part of the nesting season. The ringing of young Razorbills *Alca torda* and Guillemots *Uria aalge* is especially to be desired, for their movements are imperfectly known. Like the Shags, which deserve particular study in view of the continuing increase of their colony, they yield a high percentage of recoveries.

The trapping total of 475 Willow Warblers was well in excess of the previous highest (331 in 1949), Reed Buntings at 32 were also a record (previous highest 20) and so were Song Thrushes at 117 (94). Several other species produced totals falling only a little below the previous highest, for example Pied Flycatcher 53 (59), Barred Warbler 8 (9), Chiffchaff 20 (27), Goldcrest 112 (136) and Rock Pipit 79 (107). In contrast only 105 Blackbirds were ringed, less than one third of the average for the ten preceding years.

Recoveries

Two young Shags ringed as nestlings in 1958 have been recovered at a distance, one at Chapel St Leonards, Skegness, Lincs., in January 1959, and the other on the island of Flotta, Orkney, in July 1959. Two more Guillemots of a batch of young ringed in June 1957 have been recovered, one on the west coast of Texel, Holland, and the second in the Oslofjord,

Norway, where eleven other Guillemots ringed on the May have been reported shot in previous years.

There have been eight Blackbird recoveries since the last annual report was written, four from Norway, two from Sweden, one from Holland and one from Ireland. All fit in well with the pattern of previous movements.

The two most interesting retrappings of breeding species were those of Fulmar "Joe," known from the same site since 1949, and of a Herring Gull ringed as an adult in May 1949, re-caught on a fishing boat four miles ENE of the Bass Rock in February 1959, and subsequently released. It was then at least fourteen years old.

A bird which would undoubtedly have yielded valuable information if it had been caught was a ringed Turnstone seen on 24th September. 52 Turnstones were caught and marked on the island between 1952 and 1957, and the probability is that it was one of these.

Breeding Populations

The pair of Hedge Sparrows which nested on the island in 1958 did not return in 1959, nor did any Blackbirds or Song Thrushes try to breed. The Swallows, which first nested in 1956, were back again in 1959 and reared two broods, and a pair of Pied Wagtails *Motacilla alba yarrelli* was similarly successful. A second pair may have nested also. The Linnet population remained at not less than ten pairs, half of them nesting in the traps and half in grass tufts. There was no noticeable change in pipit numbers, but they may have been rather fewer Wheatears.

A pair of Carrion Crows *Corvus c. corone* built on the cliffs and eggs were laid, but this nest was deserted later: the site may have been used in former years without having been discovered, for it is extremely well concealed.

In face of the now commonplace superfluity of nesting gulls, the Puffins *Fratercula arctica* again failed to establish themselves away from the cliffs, and for the second successive year not a single tern laid. The phenomenal build-up of the Shag colony continued; 352 nests were counted on 17th May and, making allowance for nests hidden in caves, it is considered that about 400 pairs must have bred.

A detailed assessment of the Kittiwake colonies was made for the first time for several years. On 17th May, when there were hardly any full clutches and much building was still in progress, 1,276 nests were counted. Ten days later, on 27th, there were 1,517, to which about 150 could be added in respect of dead ground, and on 13th June Dr J. C. Coulson coun-

ted 1,651 nests from the sea. There were eighteen nests in the East Tarbet colony and thirteen at the South End.

Probably about 37 pairs of Fulmars nested. There were twelve chicks on the ledges on 9th August and all of these may have flown.

Miscellaneous Observations

The phenomenally dry summer, combined with the attentions of a multitude of Rabbits (back to pre-myxomatosis level) and the grazing of over 100 ewes and lambs, reduced the grass growth to something approaching the close cropped sward of five years ago. Two more ferrets have been acquired by the Head Keeper and many hundreds of Rabbits have been accounted for, although this is unlikely to do more than slightly retard their natural increase.

Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus* continue to frequent the North Ness in numbers. A pup dropped on the island in November is only the third known to have been born there.

During the year six more seals marked on the Farnes were captured on the May, their serial numbers recorded and the animals released. One of them provides a record of exceptional interest: it was tail-tagged on the Brownsman, Farne Islands, on 23rd November 1959 as a male two to three days old, was caught and released on the May on 21st December 1959 when thirty to thirty-one days old, and was found entangled in a fishing net at Kvalavag, Karamoy, Norway, on 30th December 1959, when 39 to 40 days old.

Several invertebrates new to the island were recorded. They included a Garden Spider *Araneus diademata* and the mite *Poecilochirus necrophori*, both collected by J. G. Elliott and K. Holt and determined at the Royal Scottish Museum.

Two weeds of cultivation not previously reported were found in Lachie's Garden by Mrs W. Watt, Black Nightshade *Solanum nigrum* and Small-flowered Melilot *Melilotus indica*. Neither is common in Scotland.

The year saw a number of improvements to the Observatory, notably the provision of a new range in the living room and replacement of the piping leading from the water tanks to the kitchen. Also on the credit side is the fact that an especially severe storm in November removed one of the island's war-time relics, the big naval hut in the Thistle Field. This had been becoming increasingly derelict yearly and it was a relief to see it finally collapse, the keepers making a prompt job of disposing of the remains. Unfortunately this same gale caused considerable damage to the Low Light roof, the renewal of which is now a top priority, and also played havoc with the

traps, which will need more than usually extensive repair in the spring of 1960. The Gully Trap has been so hard hit that, if it is to become effective once more, it will have to be virtually rebuilt. This trap has never been very productive, although it has sometimes yielded quality if not quantity, and the final decision may well be that it ought not to be replaced.

Publications

The following articles, papers and notes relating to the May appeared during the year:

- BELL, G. S.—The Vegetation of the Isle of May, Firth of Forth, in 1957, relative to exposure features. *Coturnix* (Ann. Rep. Bishop's Stortford College Nat. Hist. Soc.) 1958:23.
- CERELY, S. Back to the Isle of May. *Country Life*, 24th September.
- DUNCAN, A. A. M.—Documents relating to the Priory of the Isle of May, c. 1140-1313. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* 90: 52.
- EGGELING, W. J.—Reports from Bird Observatories: Isle of May. (a) Spring Migration 1959, *Bird Migration* 1, 2:43. (b) Autumn Migration 1959. *Bird Migration* 1, 3:100.
- "ESKDALE"—For Sunshine go to the May. *Edinburgh Evening News*, 12th June.
- FRESHWATER, P. B.—Isle of May—Structural Features and Historical Data. *Coturnix* 1958:20.
- G(RANT), D. R.—Firecrest at Isle of May. *Scotsman*, 24th October.
- GRANT, D. R.—Firecrest on the Isle of May. *Scottish Birds* 1: 153.
- M(EIKLEJOHN), M. F. M.—A new Scottish Bird. *Glasgow Herald*, 10th October.
- OAKLEY, R. G.—The Birds of the Isle of May, Firth of Forth, August 10-24, 1957. *Coturnix* 1958:29.
- PRESSLAND, D. E.—The Ant Fauna of the Isle of May, Firth of Forth, August 1957. *Coturnix* 1958:28.
- WATSON, A. D.—Extraordinary Numbers of Sooty Shearwaters in the Forth. *Scottish Birds* 1:144.

Acknowledgments

The debt owed by the Observatory to Principal Keeper W. Watt and his wife for innumerable kindnesses increases annually, and a similar mounting debt is owed to our boatman Mr W. Hughes of the *Fair Morn*. On behalf of everyone who visited the island in 1959 we say Thank-you to all three.

SHORT NOTES

(A number of the notes printed below were originally submitted to *British Birds* and, through the courtesy of the Editors have been forwarded to us for publication in more detail than would be possible in that journal. The records in question are those of Little Bittern, Baldpate, King Eider, Goshawk, Crane, Icterine Warbler, Rose-coloured Starling and Two-barred Crossbill. They have all been approved by the Rarities Committee of *British Birds*, to the Secretary of which, Mr G. A. Pyman, we are especially grateful for his kindly cooperation.—Ed.)

LITTLE BITTERN IN ANGUS

At about 10.30 a.m. on 12th July 1958 I saw a strange bird going across the road to Balgavies Loch, just below Auldbar Station, Angus. It was the size of a Woodcock or Lapwing, about 12 inches long, of a dirty brownish colour, with bill and legs yellowish. I was about fifteen yards from it and, as it was crossing the road, its head seemed sunk into its shoulders. I hurried down to the water's edge and here it was sitting among some irises, with neck stretched straight into the air. It seemed to me just like a Heron with wings tight into the body, like a statue. I mentioned this to a retired gamekeeper, Mr Anderson, and before I had given him a full description, he told me it was a Little Bittern: he had seen a pair a good number of years ago on Rescobie Loch. I have no doubt whatever that my bird was a female Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*.

R. MIDDLETON.

(This seems to be the first record of the Little Bittern in Angus.—Ed.)

BALDPATE IN INVERNESS

Midday on 9th October 1958 brought broken skies and bright sunlight to the Beaully Firth. A strong breeze from the southwest had roughened the sea and in the lee of the south shore many parties of waders and surface-feeding duck were resting and feeding. At 11.30 hours I was driving west along the coast road to Dingwall making frequent stops to enjoy the spectacle. During one such halt, three quarters of a mile east of Lenham Station, I was looking through a flock of thirty Wigeon *Anas penelope* when I noticed one bird which immediately struck me as paler than the others. As I watched it move through the flock I became more and more certain it was not *penelope*.

Aided by x9 binoculars and a x30 telescope and with the sun behind me, I examined the bird in detail for fifteen minutes at a range of forty yards. I made a sketch and field notes, of which the following is a summary: "a Wigeon appearing slightly larger and distinctly paler than duck *penelope*; further distinguished by dirty cream forehead and fore-crown,

distinct dark shade behind eye, greyish ear-coverts, throat and neck (darker on hind neck) contrasting with pinkish buff-brown chest and flanks (those of duck *penelope* were much darker and warmer), greyer back and a bill showing some bright blue-grey; in flight no prominent white wing coverts but whitish edges to greater coverts quite prominent."

In addition to the above differences I was interested to observe that two Wigeon showed aggressive behaviour towards it, though the reason remained obscure. I was convinced that the bird was a Baldpate *Anas americana*, a species that I got to know well in Canada in 1956.

Two days later Miss Karin Bryde-Williams (who had been with me) and I were able to compare my notes and sketch with the descriptions and plates of *americana* in *The Popular Handbook*. My companion did not hesitate in picking out the illustration of an immature drake, and I agreed.

We could not find the bird again on 13th October.

D. I. M. WALLACE.

(This appears to be the first record for East Inverness.—ED.)

TUFTED DUCK BREEDING IN SHETLAND

Though the Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* has greatly increased in Shetland since the days of Dr Saxby (1859-1871), there have previously been only two breeding records for the islands: brood /6 on the Loch of Hillwell, Dunrossness, 2nd June 1952 and brood /2 on Loch Kirkigarth, Walls, 31st July 1957.

On 29th May 1958, when we were at the Loch of Collaster, Sandness, with Dr M. Rusk and Miss I. M. N. Ryan, we were interested to see a pair of Tufted Ducks and two solitary males. On 28th July 1959, when Miss M. Sanderson visited this loch, she found three females with broods on the water (broods/7, 6, and 3) as well as three other adult females and six adult males.

None of these localities is a typical acid moorland loch. All are situated in or below cultivated land with consequent mineral-rich influx burns, resulting in a good growth of water plants around the loch shores.

L. S. V. VENABLES.

U. M. VENABLES.

KING EIDER IN SHETLAND

On the morning of 24th June 1959 a King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* was seen on Bigton Wick between St Ninian's Isle and the mainland of Shetland. It was watched from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. by several observers, including Miss Goodfellow, Mr

Tom Henderson, Mr and Mrs William Kay, Dr H. Mackay and myself. The bird spent the greater part of the time at rest, except for a short flight, and moving from place to place on the water. It came ashore twice for short periods and was diving and feeding for approximately an hour and a half. It was last seen swimming strongly towards the open sea.

The following notes were taken on the spot: 1. Upper parts black except for white stripe on forewing and white spot near short tail. 2. Breast off white with all black upperparts seen several times when bird raised itself to flap wings. 3. Bill orange, with colour continuing to top of head where edged with black against grey crown. Latter divided from greenish side of head by clear yellow eyestripe stretching downwards to neck.

We concluded that the bird was an adult male. I enclose photograph.

E. A. GROVE.

SNOW GOOSE IN ABERDEENSHIRE

On 21st December 1959 at 2.30 p.m. in good light and clear visibility, standing at the middle of the south shore of the Loch of Strathbeg, Aberdeenshire, I saw a flock of about 200 grey geese get up from the east end of the loch and fly along in front of me. Behind this flock was a solitary white bird, goose-shaped and noticeably smaller than the grey geese it followed. Its black wing-tips were visible to the naked eye, and through 8x binoculars I could see that it was obviously a goose and had a pale bill. I am very familiar with the shape and flight of Gannets and know that this was not a Gannet. My father, Dr Alan Lyell, was with me and we agreed that the white bird could only be a Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* subsp.

BRIAN A. LYELL.

FEMALE SPARROWHAWK ATTACKING INTRUDER AT NEST

In the 1957 breeding season I had the nest of a pair of Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* under observation in a conifer plantation in the neighbourhood of Dornoch. The nest was built at a height of over twenty feet in a larch. During the early stages of incubation the female bird showed no aggressive behaviour. When flushed on 1st June, however, instead of flying away as she had done on previous occasions, she alighted in a nearby tree, where she kept up an insistent "kekking" and, as I was looking into the nest, which held five eggs and a chick, she dashed past almost touching my head. On 5th June she again became very noisy when flushed from the nest. As I was climbing the tree the "kekking" note suddenly ceased and, next moment, she swooped past, striking me a sharp

blow on the back of the head and sweeping my hat to the ground. Later I succeeded, without further molestation, in reaching the nest, which then contained four chicks and two eggs. Unfortunately a few days later the nest was found plundered.

I cannot find any reference in the literature to a similar attack, although J. H. Owen, who had unrivalled experience of the species, refers to an incident (*British Birds* 10:25) when "one bird and only one shrieked 'kill-kill-kill', and flew backwards and forwards through the next tree after passing within a few inches of us and on rare occasions even touching us."

D. MACDONALD.

GOSHAWKS IN ISLAY

On 28th April 1959, at Loch Ballygrant a large bird of prey was seen flying across the water. It resembled a large Sparrowhawk with broad blunt wings and a very long tail. The most conspicuous part of the plumage was the under tail coverts, which were white, and noticeable when the bird twisted out of the trees. The underparts were pale, lined across. The upper parts brown. As it hung motionless above the conifers it looked as large as a Buzzard and, compared with a Wood Pigeon in the immediate vicinity, it was much longer and larger. It flew with glides and flapping wingbeats, jinking from side to side. Once it dived into the conifers from a height, very much like a Sparrowhawk.

S. GREENWOOD.

(Mr B. E. Cooper, who also saw the bird, has submitted a very similar description, except that he describes the upper parts as "greyish brown."—ED.)

PARTRIDGES NESTING AT HIGH ALTITUDES

The Partridge *Perdix perdix* is generally a bird of agricultural areas, but in Scotland it is well known to breed at deserted old crofts or farms in upland places, and "a certain proportion do inhabit the edges of the moors and may even be found far out on the hillsides" (*The Birds of Scotland*: 738). However, the highest Scottish nesting records in that book come from Tomintoul (1157 feet) and Dalwhinnie (1153 feet). In Deeside the Partridge has regularly bred at higher altitudes at least since 1950. I have records for two years of a pair of Partridges rearing young near an old crofting place (deserted after the '45) at about 1,400 feet in Glen Lui, west of Braemar. In nearby Glen Ey, I have notes of a pair rearing young several years near the house at Auchelie, at about 1,450 feet, and in Glen Muick near Ballater I have seen a pair with small young near the top of the glen at 1,350 feet. At all these places the habitat was rough grassland, grazed by deer. In July 1958 I

found a pair with small young at 1,600 feet on the moors north of Balmoral, and eventually this pair reared eight young which were still there in late October. The habitat was a shallow basin with patches of grasses among long heather, and juniper bushes here and there. The nearest deserted croft lies over three quarters of a mile away. All the above pairs became resident in these places weeks before egg-laying, so there was no question of them having bred lower down and later moved up with their young.

ADAM WATSON.

CRANE IN SUTHERLAND

At 2 p.m. on 6th August 1958 I disturbed a Crane *Megalornis grus* from the long grass on the raised beach near Lothbeg Point, Helmsdale, Sutherland. The Crane flew a short distance before settling again at a distance of about fifty yards. The bird was much larger than a Heron, standing very upright high above the grass. The plumage of the bird was mainly a light slate grey, except for the very long neck and the wing-tips. The neck was a very dark grey or black with a broad stripe of white on each side, running from the eye to halfway down. The wing-tips were black and the inner secondaries drooped beyond the tail. The bill and legs seemed to be greyish in colour. The red crown was not visible.

As I approached the Crane took flight, flying goose-like with its head and neck fully extended, drooping slightly earthwards, and its long legs extending well beyond the tail. In flight the grey scapulars and wing coverts appeared to have a mauve tint. The primaries were black and in flight they were separated at the tips, appearing to bend clumsily after a wing beat. The Crane flew below fifty feet northwards along the coast, with slow wingbeats. It appeared very wild and its feathers not damaged at all.

D. J. MITCHELL.

SONG OF THE WATER RAIL

In June 1949 on the marsh at Cley, Norfolk, M.F.M.M. heard a bird call which was new to him coming from a reed-bed. This call, which was heard also by a number of other observers, began regularly at sundown and continued without intermission for a considerable time, perhaps even all night. It consisted of a series of ticks—usually three, sometimes more—followed by a thin, agonised, wheezy scream, often declining in pitch at the end. It could be rendered as “tic tic tic wheee-oo.” The bird responsible, known for convenience as the Hip-hip hooray Bird, was thought to be possibly the Little Crake *Porzana parva*, one of whose notes is described by *The Handbook* V, 188) as “tjip-tjip-tjip-treeo.” R. A. Richardson tells us that in the spring of 1950 there were two, if not

three, birds making the same noise on Cley Marsh. The possibility of a Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* being responsible was thought unlikely because of the unfamiliarity of the call, and because no exactly corresponding description could be found among the Water Rail's notes described in the literature.

On 12th April 1956 M.F.M.M. heard the same call proceeding out of a reed-bed at Whitwell, Hertfordshire. He informed other ornithologists and A.R.J., F. C. Gribble, A. C. Morriss and Henry Key succeeded in hearing the bird. H. Key made a recording of the call, intending to play it back and attract the bird within view. A few days later, however, A.R.J., using 10 x 40 glasses at about fifteen yards, succeeded in obtaining a very clear view of the bird in the repeated act of calling. To his surprise it turned out to be a Water Rail!

The Handbook (V, 194) says that the Water Rail has "a sharp *kik-kik-kik* and variants. Especially in spring and summer these may be repeated with great persistence at dusk and through a great part of night in long sequences, which may be more or less uniform or increasing in speed to the finish or rising to a climax and tailing off in a few disconnected notes, or with other variations." These remarks are probably meant to include, but do not accurately describe, the call heard, which was, by contrast, of a set and formal type, only varying in the number of tickings and, sometimes, in the quality of the final scream. It seems likely that the call is only uttered for a short period in the breeding season and may be of the nature of a song. This seasonal aspect, together with the fact that it is more often uttered by night, may account for its being unfamiliar. The Whitwell bird, however, frequently called by day, though not continuously. We feel that this note is worth publishing if only in order to prevent other ornithologists who hear the sound suspecting the presence of one of the rarer crakes and going to a great deal of trouble to prove the identity of the bird.

A. R. JENKINS.
M. F. M. MEIKLEJOHN.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS IN ABERDEENSHIRE

On the afternoon of 15th September 1959, at the Cotehill Loch, by Collieston, Aberdeenshire, our attention was drawn to an unusual wader close to two Ruff's *Philomachus pugnax*. It was feeding leg-deep in the water, after the fashion of a Greenshank, but, although we critically examined it from about fifty yards in a good light, we could not identify it. A.J.M.S. thought it rather resembled a large Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, using a nearby Lapwing for size comparison. R.M. thought it grey above and white beneath, rather like a

delicately proportioned Greenshank. A.J.M.S. approached to within 30 yards of the birds before the Ruffs flew up and were joined by the strange wader. Excellent views were obtained in flight before the birds again alighted in deep grass nearby: seen from above the upper parts of the stranger again recalled the Wood Sandpiper. The crown, mantle, wing and rump were greyish, with large scaly pattern of darker, probably brownish grey, colour. The tail was whitish, providing Greenshank-like contrast, and boldly barred with greyish brown. As it alighted a very good view was had of the legs, a distinct bright yellow, quite different from the greenish yellow of the legs of one of the Ruffs. In the general din of other birds calling we thought we heard the "tew, tew" call, but could not be certain.

We feel that it was a Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* because its finer proportions, particularly with regard to its delicate bill, differentiate it from the only other wader it could possibly be, the Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*.

ALISTAIR J. M. SMITH.
R. MAXWELL.

COLLARED DOVES IN FIFE

On 23rd and 25th August 1959 I observed a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* which was calling regularly and lustily from a poplar in a garden near the park above Lower Dunfermline Station. It was very shy and kept to the treetops so that it was extremely difficult to get good views of it among the foliage. I had suspected its identity from the call-note, an unmistakable deep coo-coo-coo in the tones of a Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* and with the stress on the second syllable. I know the call in Norfolk. The bird's head appeared to be a bluish grey with a dusty brown crown and a black half collar round the back of the neck; the general colour of the rest of the upperparts was pale dusty brown and the underparts were paler with a pink tinge on the breast; in flight the primaries showed sooty and darker than the rest of the wings. I was unable to get a proper view of the tail but George Dick, who originally drew my attention to the bird, was able to see the characteristic black and white pattern. We have no doubt the bird we saw was a wild Collared Dove. We had previously wondered if it could have been an escaped Barbary Dove *S. risoria* from Pittencrieff Glen aviary in Dunfermline, but we were told that escape from the cages was impossible and that no doves had escaped for years. We were able to contrast the plumage of these birds with our Coloured Dove and among other points noted their creamy colour and the lack of dark wing-tips. The call was quite different, being softer, higher pitched, with a rhythm reminiscent of a crowing cock, and a tone more like a Turtle Dove *S. turtur*

than a Wood Pigeon. This is the first record of a Collared Dove in Fife and Forth.

P. G. R. BARBIER.

On 4th October 1959 I found a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* lying under a shrub in my garden at Methil, Fife. It was very bedraggled and exceptionally tame, allowing me to pick it up. The tail was almost completely absent, only a few stumps being left; the rump was bare, as if the feathers had been ripped out, possibly by a predator. There was no ring on its legs. After two days, when the bird seemed much brighter, it was released at Leven.

T. S. WEBSTER.

(There is no doubt, from the description sent by the recorder, that this was a Collared Dove. The circumstances of its arrival and capture, however, might be thought to cast a little doubt on its truly wild status.—ED.)

ROLLER IN SHETLAND

On 20th July 1959 the local postman noticed a Roller *Coracias garrulus* in a narrow dale called Trollodaal in the parish of Northmavine, and on the following day I and some friends also discovered the bird. Larger than a Blackbird, but not so bulky as a Rock Pigeon, it resembled a crow in outline. It was an adult in full plumage, generally greeny blue with chestnut back. It perched on telegraph wires, from which it repeatedly flew down to feed, appearing really brilliant when it did so. It remained for three or four days.

J. PETERSON.

SONG THRUSH CARRYING YOUNG

On 12th May I was walking with my three children at Bieldside, near Aberdeen. As we walked up a wooded lane one of the children drew my attention to a "humpy-backed" bird which had flown from a tree and landed about thirty yards in front of us on the roadway. I got to within twenty yards and through my binoculars I identified a Song Thrush *Turdus ericetorum* with a fledgling hanging on to its back. It was positioned well up on the shoulders and facing front. The Song Thrush remained for a few moments on the ground and then flew into the trees with the youngster still on its back.

R. MAXWELL.

REDWINGS BREEDING IN SUTHERLAND

Consequent on the recent publication of a note on Redwings *Turdus musicus* breeding in Ross-shire (*British Birds* 52:315), it now seems opportune to place on record that there is evidence to suggest that Redwings have bred more or less reg-

ularly in Sutherland for about the past six years.

The information that there were breeding Redwings in the country was first obtained, almost casually, in 1956, by Mr George Waterston from an unusually interested and alert gamekeeper. Mr Waterston passed the news on to me and together we visited the place on 6th May 1956. We were informed by the keeper that the birds had been there for two or three years and that in the previous year (1955) there had been three nests from which a total of nine young had been reared. We certainly confirmed the presence of several adult Redwings, which we both saw and heard, although we found them to be exceedingly shy and unobtrusive. We did not find any nests. On 31st May 1956 I revisited the place and camped overnight. Redwings were singing well, particularly in the early morning and late evening, but again I did not succeed in finding any nests in spite of a careful search.

For subsequent years I have only the information supplied by the keeper. In 1957 there were two or three pairs, and later five flying young were seen. Redwings were present in the breeding area throughout the winter, though of course there is no proof that these were not immigrants. Two pairs were in the breeding area in the spring of 1958, and this year (1959) two nests were found by the keeper, who thinks there may also have been a third. The birds were there throughout the summer and in September it was believed that there was a total of fourteen around the area, including adults and young.

Redwings nested elsewhere in Sutherland in 1925, probably 1927 and in 1933 (*British Birds* 40:277). The locality was not published, but I have good reason to believe that it was at Skelpick, near Bettyhill, where however none have been seen subsequently in the breeding season. There is also a record (*British Birds* 37:17-178) of a singing Redwing elsewhere in north Sutherland on 16th June 1943, though no nest was found.

It is quite possible that Redwings nest in the north of Scotland more often than is generally realised, and visitors to the Highlands should bear this in mind; but it is also worth remarking that the Skelpick pair nest in a red-currant bush, and there is no harm in telling that the pairs described above have been in rhododendrons in a garden, so habitats other than birchwoods ought to be looked for.

IAN D. PENNIE.

ICTERINE WARBLER IN SHETLAND

An Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* was watched for about half an hour by myself, L. S. V. Venables and Miss I. M. N. Ryan at the west side of Loch Spiggie, South Shetland, on the evening of 3rd June 1958. The bird was first seen in a small group of willows but later moved to a nearby croft where it

spent some of the time inside the derelict buildings. It is of interest to note that the pale edgings to the secondary feathers formed a continuous light patch on the closed wings.

Description: size about the same as Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* with which it was in company for part of the time. Head, back and rump olive green. Prominent yellow eyestripe. Wings and tail dark brown. Light patch on wing. The underparts were bright yellow with the exception of the under tail coverts that were whitish. The bill was flesh-coloured and of uniform depth for nearly the whole length. Legs bluish black. The wing when closed was long and pointed, the tip of the longest flight feather extending about halfway down the tail. The flight was like that of the Whitethroat. A conspicuous feature of the bird was the high forehead which was noted at all times. It was not heard to call or sing.

LESLIE A. BROWN.

(Mr Brown has also submitted an accurate sketch of this bird.—Ed.)

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER IN ABERDEENSHIRE

On 12th October 1959 we were mist-netting along the hawthorn hedges which border Culterty Field Station, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, when we saw a Red-breasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa parva*.

Strong easterly winds had sprung up in the early morning and there was a large influx of drift migrants, including Blackbirds, Robins, Goldcrests, Blue Tits, three Redstarts, a Willow Warbler and a male Blackcap. The first three mentioned were in large numbers with about 200 passing through every hour during the early hours of daylight.

When the Red-breasted Flycatcher was first seen, it was half hidden in the hedgerow and A.J.M.S. thought it resembled a Lesser Whitethroat as it moved away from us in the thick hawthorns. Then it flew out in front of us and perched in the open no more than five yards away. In flight it showed two fairly broad longitudinal white patches, one on each side of the tail. We watched it with binoculars as it remained in view for several minutes. It was so close that we had to move back in order to bring the bird into focus. It was slightly smaller than a Robin, a dainty bird; brownish upperparts with pale underparts; light eye-ring; whitish throat and belly, warm buff on breast; white patches extending from base of tail slightly more than halfway down the outer tail feathers; darkish legs.

There was no doubt that it was a Red-breasted Flycatcher. We continued to watch it for nearly fifteen minutes, while we viewed it from all angles as we attempted to drive it into the

mist-net. Unfortunately when disturbed it flew to the topmost branches and always passed over the top shelf of the net. A maddening experience! On several occasions it uttered a typical flycatcher note, which we rendered as "chik."

ALASTAIR J. M. SMITH.
R. MAXWELL.

(This is the first record for Aberdeenshire and the third for the Scottish mainland.—Ed.)

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING IN SHETLAND

On 7th September 1958, while I was staying in Fetlar, one of the residents of the Hubie district reported that he had seen a "black and white magpie" that morning and that it seemed rather an unusual occurrence. Others had seen it too and reports varied: one even said it was "as big as a pigeon." When I heard, however, that "some of da boys said it wis pink," I wasted no further time, but wandered round the Hubie houses in search of the bird. I soon discovered it perched on a fence with a flock of Shetland Starlings. I did not see it stationary at any time for more than a few seconds, so the crest was not immediately noticeable. I had the impression that the dark parts (head, neck, wings, tail) were very much darker than the corresponding parts of the common Starling. The pink colouring was quite beyond dispute, though not very brilliant in quality. There was some light colouring in the bill.

The bird was an undoubted adult Rose-coloured Pastor (or Starling) *Sturnus roseus*. It was still present on the following day.

R. N. WINNALL.

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL IN SHETLAND

On 21st August 1959, while camping on Foula, Shetland, I noticed a bird flying along the cliff-top at the north of the island which I first took to be a female Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, an uncommon visitor to the island. I watched it settle on some rocks and further examination showed it to be an immature Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*. It remained for about an hour feeding on seeds of Thrift *Armeria maritima* on the rocks and grassy slopes.

The superficial resemblance to a hen Chaffinch was remarkable, due to the greenish-grey plumage and white wing bars. Upper parts grey-green, crown and back with heavy black streaking, underparts paler with longer narrower streaks from breast to under tail, most conspicuous on flanks; wings dark with two very broad white crescent bands, lower band broader, and with three short white bands on the second

daries, giving barred effect. Bill stout but quite long, upper mandible strongly hooked, closed bill inconspicuously crossed. Legs and eyes dark. Smaller and slenderer than Crossbill *L. curvirostra* and comparable in size to Chaffinch.

Crossbills were numerous in Shetland at the time, with other migrants from east Scandinavia. The bird was also seen by R. I. Duncan and H. G. Rees.

J. V. Boys.

NOTES FROM ISLAY

(The following notes are selected from data provided by A. Allen, Hugh Boyd, D. Gardener-Medwin, J. E. King, E. A. Maxwell, M. F. M. Meiklejohn, John Murray, R. J. Olliver, H. G. Usher and Alan Walker).

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*. A pair were displaying and calling off the east coast in April 1959 (D.G-M.)

Dabchick *Podiceps ruficollis*. In April 1959 pairs calling on Loch Lossit, L. Ballygrant, L. nan Cadhan and L. nan Diol (J.E.K., J.M.)

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*. What was probably an abnormal Barnacle Goose was seen near Bridgend on 25th January 1959: face usual creamy white, but rest of head and most of neck brown, not black. Black band encircling lower neck and upper breast; back and scapulars very pale grey, barred darker; primaries white. The breast and flanks were clear white, instead of ash grey; soft parts black. "We hope this ugly goose lives a long time and is seen by many people, as records of its occurrence could help to track the movements of the Islay geese." (H.B., E.A.M.)

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. Two brown birds in centre of the island on 16th February 1959 (M.F.M.M.); a male near Port Ellen on 29th March 1959 (A.A., R.J.O.) and another there in April 1959 (J.E.K.)

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. In late August 1957 three were seen near Port Ellen and one near Loch Gruinart (A.W.)

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*. One at the head of Loch Indaal on 1st April 1959 (A.A., R.J.O.)

Greater Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. In April 1959 one was seen in the wood at Loch Lossit and one in a wood near Ardbeg (D.G-M.)

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*. M.F.M.M. saw four at Machrie on 17th November 1957 and two there on 14th February 1959. D. G-M. reports one at Port Ellen (April 1959) while J.E.K. (April 1959) says that it is "widely scattered over island."

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*. A family party at Kildalton in June 1955 (H.G.U.). Also reported from Port Askaig, Loch Lossit and Loch Skerrols.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*. To the localities reported

(*antea* 1:100) add Ballygrant, June 1955 (H.G.U.).

Goldfinch *Carduelis elegans*. A pair at Laggan Bridge on 17th November 1957 (John Cameron, M.F.M.M.) and a pair at Loch Skerrols, 1st April 1959 (A.A., R.J.O.).

CORRESPONDENCE

FIRECREST IN SCOTLAND

It has been assumed that the Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* seen on the Isle of May this autumn (*antea* 1:153) was the first for Scotland. Certainly there is no mention of one in *The Birds of Scotland* or in *The Handbook*: there is, however, a mention of a Firecrest in Gray's *Birds of the West of Scotland*, p. 100, where he notes the one referred to in *The Birds of East Lothian* by Turnbull. I have this week seen for the first time a copy of this book of Turnbull's and what he says about the occurrence is the following, under stragglers or irregular visitors:

"Fire-crested Wren *Regulus ignicapillus*. Two seen by me in Gladsmuir Woods in 1848. Afterwards shot one in Forest Wood."

The copy of Turnbull's book which we now have here (The Nature Conservancy, Edinburgh) is his own working copy, with an interleaved duplicate at the back containing his notes from 1863 to 1864. In this he has inserted some additional notes. He has amended his original description by adding after "Gladsmuir Woods" "in summer of 1848", and says of the one shot in Forest Wood: "I shot one in 'Forest' Wood in 1848, its markings as described by Jardine in *Birds of Great Britain*, Pt. 2, Fol. 160—it was rather larger than the Goldcrest.

I do not know whether the authors of *The Handbook* and of *The Birds of Scotland* overlooked this record or whether they dismissed it as unsatisfactory. Just possibly Turnbull's skin may have been preserved.

W. J. EGGELING.

HYBRID GEESE

Messrs A. D. Watson and L. A. Urquhart (*antea* 1:147-8) have described hybrid geese seen in Kirkcudbrightshire and Lanarkshire.

In 1939 one of my Greylag males paired with a Barnacle Goose, four young being reared. I gave two to Dr John Berry of Tayfield and left the remaining two loose on Lindores Loch, Fife. I sold Lindores in 1941, and did not visit the loch again until 1945 or 1946, when I saw that this pair were still on the loch with one young one. Whether Dr Berry's bred and escaped, or whether the ones I bred went to Lanarkshire or

Kirkcudbrightshire, I do not of course know, but it does seem that these were the hybrid geese described.

Holmwood, Perth.

J. C. LAIDLAY.

We submitted the preceding letter to Dr John Berry, who comments as follows:

I had read the note in *Scottish Birds* with interest and had considered whether the hybrids seen in south-west Scotland might have been Tayfield birds. Some of those which have flown away from Tayfield in recent years might fit the description, but on the whole I am much more inclined to think that these were genuinely wild hybrids. The two Grey-lag x Barnacle Geese which, as described by Mr Laidlay, nested at Lindores Loch, have not been seen or heard of for several years, nor have their progeny. If only on size, I would respectfully reject Mr Laidlay's suggestion that the south-west birds were of Lindores stock.

When Mr J. C. Laidlay sold Lindores in 1941, along with other geese transferred to Tayfield were two hybrids, Grey-lag male x Barnacle female. These two geese were pinioned; two others of the same brood were full-winged and, having thus escaped capture, remained on Lindores Loch. All four hybrids bore a remarkable resemblance to Canada Geese *Branta canadensis*, except that they were nearer to Barnacle Geese in size and the black of the neck extended on to the breast, as in the Barnacle. A photograph of the birds, their descriptions and measurements, and a discussion of this and other similar cases of hybridisation, was published in the *Avicultural Magazine* 1942 (Ser. 2, VII, pp. 83-6).

The two full-winged hybrids continued to frequent Lindores Loch in subsequent summers and bred there. The young resembled the parents. The two pinioned birds were also a male and a female, but the male paired with a Barnacle Goose. A photograph showing him at the nest was published in 1945. The accompanying article refers to his threequarter Barnacle progeny and also notes that hybrids produced by a Grey-lag gander, who had simultaneously guarded the nests of three Barnacle females with whom he had mated in that year, closely resembled the reverse cross of a Barnacle male x Grey-lag female. *Avicultural Magazine* 1945 (Ser. 5, X, pp. 102-107).

Plumage and the colour of bills and legs of geese may change materially during the first few years, and this is noticeably the case with hybrids. In subsequent years change in plumage of the black geese and their hybrids is unusual. In 1960 the Grey-lag x Barnacle hybrid male is still exactly as pictured sixteen years ago in the second article mentioned above. Nor does size normally increase after maturity. In my

experience few Barnacle hybrids are as large as Grey-lags; even Barnacle male x Chinese female *Anser cygnoides* hybrids are conspicuously smaller, although a (Snow x Grey-lag) male x Barnacle female was an unexpectedly large bird. Canada x grey goose hybrids are usually about the size of Grey-lags and resemble Barnacle x grey goose hybrids, except that the breast is unlikely to be black unless there has been Barnacle (? or Brent) in the recent pedigree. Barnacles, however, seem particularly prone to cross-breed. Miss A. P. Gray (*Bird Hybrids* 1958) lists sixteen different crossings with a Barnacle.

Apart from the significant fact that two of the hybrids recorded in south-west Scotland were seen with a Barnacle in a flock of Grey-lag, I agree, from the descriptions, that the hybrids were probably Grey-lag x Barnacle, and quite possibly from fully wild parents.

CURRENT NOTES

These notes are divided into two sections, the first of which has been held over from the preceding issue of *Scottish Birds*. The second section consists of those notes which have been sent in since 1st December 1959.

Part I.

(These notes are considered to be fully authenticated. Notes from Fair Isle are published in the *Fair Isle Bird Observatory Bulletin* and those from the Isle of May in a separate report in *Scottish Birds*. Unless otherwise stated, all dates apply to 1959).

BREEDING AND DISTRIBUTION

A Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps caspicus* in summer plumage was seen at the Clyde breeding haunt (cf. *antea* 1:5) on 24th July (P. G. R. Barbier). On 26th August a Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* appeared as far up the Forth as Longannet Point, opposite Grangemouth (G. Dick): in Edinburgh single Fulmars have been seen over St Margaret's Loch on 18th June 1958 and near Samson's Ribs on 5th August ("Eskdale," *Edinburgh Evening News*, 29.8.59). Gannets *Sula bassana* have been seen above the Forth Bridge, all of them immature birds: one off Culross on 6th September and one off Cults Ness on 1st October (G. Dick), also two between Grangemouth and Kincardine on 8th September (J. Hoy). In the last week of June 1958 a pair of Gadwall *Anas strepera* were several times seen in the Tongue area of Sutherland (R. J. Ross). In late August numbers of Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasicus* were seen

on the Forth above the Forth Bridge and on 23rd August three of these flew beyond the Kincardine Bridge in the evening (P. G. R. Barbier). On 14th June at St Serf's Island in Loch Leven there were three Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus graellsii* and later one of them flushed from three eggs (A. Macdonald). A Herring Gull with pale yellow legs, resembling the race *Larus argentatus omissus*, was at Figgate Pond, Edinburgh, on 22nd October (D. R. Anderson). A Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* was seen on 19th June near Bonnybridge Generating Station, Stirlingshire (Ronald Logan). At the Ayrshire nesting site of the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (cf. *antea* 1:125) nine birds were present in late October, six adults and three juveniles (Helen C. Todd). On 16th August a Little Owl *Athene noctua* was seen at Barnes Ness, East Lothian: it had a little down above the eyes, but flew strongly (A. Macdonald). A Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* was heard at Bordie, Kincardine, Fife, on 3rd June (J. Hoy, P. G. R. Barbier) and another at Cameron Reservoir, Fife, in late July (A. Macdonald, R. I. Mitchell). New species for Cramond Island are a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* seen on 13th December 1958, and single Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* on 3rd May 1958 and 15th August (P. Holt).

MIGRATION

Two records not previously published are of a female Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* at Stobo, Peebles, on 18th May 1958 (R. Traquair Thin) and of a number of Pied Flycatchers *Muscicapa hypoleuca* at Sands of Forvie, Aberdeen, on 2nd September 1958 (A. J. M. Smith).

Winter 1958-59.

A Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* was at the Doonfoot, Ayr, on 25th January, and on 8th and 15th February (L. A. Urquhart). At Barassie, Ayrshire, an immature Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* was present on 19th April (L. A. Urquhart). A Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* seen on the late dates 16th and 18th June in the Morar area, W. Inverness (Marion Dickson per R. W. J. Smith) was doubtless a delayed winter visitor, as may have been Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* seen at Ormiston, East Lothian, two on 15th May and one on 14th June (John Baird).

Spring 1959.

An interesting paper on *Spring Migration (1959) at the Butt of Lewis* by B. A. E. Marr, J. Reaney, W. H. Truckle and E. J. Wiseman was published in *Bird Migration* 1 (2). Extensive northward migration of geese was observed and among the

scarcer species seen were Gadwall, Black-tailed Godwit, Iceland Gull and Little Auk.

A drake Garganey *Anas querquedula* was watched at Aberlady on 10th May (John Baird). Large numbers of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* have already been reported (*antea* 1: 129): in addition, at Morton Lochs, Fife, 32 were seen on 12th April, 23 on 23rd April, and smaller numbers on other occasions: there were also 42 on the sands at Tentsmuir on 29th April (L. Fullerton). Swifts *Apus apus* were seen in Skye on the following occasions: six on 21st June at the head of Portree Loch, three on 22nd June four miles west of Portree, and two, flying south, on 25th June between Portree and the Storr Lochs (L. A. Urquhart).

Autumn 1959

Two Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps griseigena* still with chestnut necks, were at Aberlady Bay on 2nd September (A. Ablett).

A Sooty Shearwater *Procellaria grisea* was seen ten miles south of Sula Sgeir on 8th September (W. A. J. Cunningham).

A female Garganey *Anas querquedula* was at Hule Moss, Berwickshire, on 15th August (W. Murray). As many as 21 Pintail *Anas acuta* were together on Loch Leven on 9th October, and two on Peppermill Dam, Kincardine, Fife, on the 10th (G. Dick). Inland records of Scaup *Aythya marila* come from Hule Moss—three on 9th and 15th August and four on 22nd—(W. Murray) and from Peppermill Dam, a duck bird on 10th October (G. Dick). Early arrivals of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* are 23rd September at Strathtay, Perthshire (J. W. Campbell) and 24th September, when 93 were counted over Blackford Hill, Edinburgh (W. J. Egge-ling). A big southward movement was observed at Strathtay on 17th October, over 430 birds being counted from a single spot between 9.30 and noon: others were heard but not seen. On the same day 80 "geese" flew south over Pitlochry and a big lot of "geese" near Dalwhinnie. About 200 more passed over Strathtay on the 18th, but none have been seen since (J. W. Campbell). Several Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* have appeared outside their usual areas: two at the Endrick Mouth, Dunbarton, on 27th September (D. Stalker) and three there on 10th October (T. Weir); one at North Berwick on 2nd October (T. C. Smout), there having been a single bird on the Isle of May the same morning; and four at Gladhouse on 4th October (D. G. Andrew). The first Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* reported was at Cobbinshaw Reservoir on 19th September (T. Boyd): other arrivals are of 22 flying up the Forth at Grangemouth on 18th October (J. Potter) and of

two adults and two young birds flying west at Seafield, Leith, on 25th October (A. T. Macmillan).

One Grey Plover *Charadrius squatarola* was seen at Gladhouse on 20th September (R. W. J. Smith) and two on 27th (D. G. Andrew). On 28th September two Grey Plovers were seen at Ardmore, Dunbarton (C. M. Morrison) and one at the mouth of the River Endrick in the same county on 4th October; it had been there for over two weeks (T. Weir). We can trace no previous occurrence of this bird in Dunbartonshire (Ed.) Two Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* were seen at Tankerness Loch, Orkney, on 15th September (John Baird): the other autumn records of this species come from Forth and Tay—one at Tynninghame, 26th July (R. W. J. Smith); one at Aberlady, 5th August (A. Ablett); north of Grangemouth there were one or two from 11th to 22nd August, one on 5th and seven on 20th September, and two on 3rd October (P.G.R.B., G.D., J.H., and J.P.); nine at Loch Leven on 5th September and 4th October (T. Boyd, R. W. J. Smith); and single birds on the Eden Estuary on 12th and 15th September (G.D.). A large flock of 500 Bar-tailed Godwits *L. lapponica*, many of them in breeding plumage, were at Tentsmuir Point, Fife, on 5th August (Graham Williams) and an inland record of this species comes from the Endrick Mouth, Dunbarton, on 4th October (T. Weir). Records of Green Sandpipers *Tringa ochropus* come from Clyde—one near Carstairs on 16th August (T. Boyd); from Tweed—three at Hule Moss on 9th August, and single birds on 15th and 22nd August, and 13th September (W. Murray)); from Forth—single birds at Tynninghame on 10th August (Ian Hay) and on the 23rd (R. W. J. Smith) and 26th (A. Ablett); also north of Grangemouth a single bird from 9th to 15th August (P. G. R. Barbier, J. Hoy) and on 13th September (G. Dick); and one on the Blackhope Burn, Moorfoots, Midlothian, on 5th September (W. Brotherston); and from Tay—one at Morton Lochs, 27th July (A. Macdonald), one at Cameron Reservoir, 7th August (R. S. Weir) and one on the R. Eden on 15th September (G. Dick). A number of Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*, all solitary birds, have been seen: at Morton Lochs on 28th July (A. Macdonald), at Gladhouse on 29th July and 22nd August (R. W. J. Smith), at Cult Ness, Fife, from 31st July to 10th August (P. G. R. Barbier, G. Dick and J. Hoy), at Aberlady on 23rd August (A. Ablett) and north of Grangemouth from 5th to 7th September (G. Dick, J. Hoy and J. Potter). Records of Spotted Redshanks *T. erythropus* come from Solway—one at the Piltanton Burn, Glenluce, on 31st August (A. W. F. Mills, A. D. Watson); from Clyde—one at the mouth of the R. Endrick, Dunbarton, on 10th October (T. Weir); from Tweed—a single bird at Hule Moss from 22nd to 28th August and on 13th September (W. Murray); and from Dee—single birds at

the R. Ythan on 1st and 29th September (A. J. M. Smith); but the majority of autumn Spotted Redshanks have been seen in the Forth area—single birds at Gladhouse on 9th and 29th August (R.W.J.S.), at Cobbinshaw on 22nd August and 19th September (T. Boyd), north of Grangemouth on 22nd August and repeatedly between 2nd September and 3rd October, two birds occurring on 13th September (P. G. R. Barbier, G. Dick, J. Hoy), at Cult Ness on 3rd September (G. Dick), at Tynninghame on 13th September (K. S. Macgregor, R. W. J. Smith) and at Fife Ness on 29th September (G. Dick). Inland records of the Knot *Calidris canutus* include two at Carstairs (Lanark) on 16th August (T. Boyd), single birds at Hule Moss on 22nd and 23rd August, and two there on the 26th (W. Murray). At Gladhouse numbers were exceptional for an inland locality, thirteen on 12th August, four on the 13th, six on the 15th, ten on the 19th, nine on the 22nd, eight on the 26th, two on 6th September: none were seen on 2nd September (D. G. Andrew, R. W. J. Smith). In connection with these records it is interesting to note that 25 flew south from Tynninghame at 1650 hours on 9th August on a route that would probably land them at Gladhouse by way of the Moorfoots: similarly thirteen took off in the same direction at 1600 hours on 23rd August (R. W. J. Smith). Another inland record is of one at Cobbinshaw on 3rd October (T. Boyd). All but two records of the Little Stint *Calidris minuta* are from the Forth: two at Aberlady on 5th August (A. Ablett) and on the 18th (A. Macdonald); one at Tynninghame on the 23rd (R. W. J. Smith); one at Fife Ness on the 30th and 31st (P. G. R. Barbier, J. Hoy); one north of Grangemouth on 13th and 14th September (G. Dick, J. Hoy); one at Gladhouse on the 17th (R. W. J. Smith); one at Loch Leven on 21st September and 4th October (T. Boyd, R. W. J. Smith); one at Aberlady on 30th September and two there on 4th October (K. S. Macgregor). The other records are from Clyde—one seen at the Endrick mouth, Dunbarton, on 10th October (T. Weir); and Dee—two near Collieston, Aberdeenshire, on 15th September (A. J. M. Smith). Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris testacea* have been unusually numerous: in Solway—one at Browhouses near Annan on 27th August (E. and R. Smith) and three there on 13th September (W. Austin, R. Smith); nine at the mouth of the Piltanton Burn, Glenluce, on 31st August (A. W. F. Mills, A. D. Watson); two on the shore of Loch Ryan on 12th September (A. D. W.); one on 14th September on the extensive mud then exposed on the Ken-Dee marshes at Livingston, Kirkcudbrightshire (L. A. Urquhart, A.D.W.); and one at Maryport, Mull of Galloway, on 14th October (A.D.W.). A. D. Watson comments that Curlew Sandpipers have not often been recorded from Kirkcudbright and Wigtownshire. In Clyde—at Hamilton on 5th September two Curlew Sandpipers

(W. U. Flower, D. Stalker) and four there on the 6th (W. K. Richmond, D.S.); five at the Endrick mouth, Dunbarton, on 4th October (M. Forrester, T. Weir). In Forth the first Curlew Sandpiper was seen at Aberlady on 5th August (A. Ablett) and the only others that month were four north of Grangemouth on the 22nd; later seven were counted there on 5th September, ten on the 7th and between three and eight until the 20th; a single bird was present on 5th October (P. G. R. Barbier, G. Dick, J. Hoy and J. Potter). At Aberlady there were three or four on 13th September (K. S. Macgregor) and one on the 19th (R. W. J. Smith); at Tynninghame two on the 13th (T. Boyd); at Gladhouse single birds on the 12th and 20th (R. W. J. Smith); at Musselburgh two on the 28th (J. Baird); and at Loch Leven three on 21st September and one on 4th October (T. Boyd, R. W. J. Smith). In Tay—one Curlew Sandpiper was at Guardbridge, Fife, on 30th September (Doris M. Wilson). Inland records of Sanderling *Crocethia alba* come from Gladhouse where, as already recorded, one was seen on 19th July (*antea* 1:133): on the 25th there were four and it is interesting to note that the following day the observer found 150 at Tynninghame, the largest number he has ever seen there. Single Sanderling were also seen at Gladhouse on 9th and 15th August (R. W. J. Smith) and at Hule Moss on the 19th and 22nd (W. Murray). The majority of Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* are recorded from the Forth area, forty having been seen between 1st August and 11th October, at Cult Ness, Grangemouth area, Cobbinshaw, Gladhouse, Aberlady and Tynninghame: the largest number (eight) being at Gladhouse on 2nd September (R. W. J. Smith). Elsewhere there are records from South Uist, a male moulting into winter plumage on 13th July (R. W. J. Smith); from Hule Moss, a single bird on 2nd August (W. Murray); from Carstairs, one on 16th August and three on 6th September; from Hamilton, one on 9th August (L. A. Urquhart); and from the Endrick mouth, Dunbarton, five on 2nd October (T. Weir).

On 16th July an immature Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* was seen flying south after a north-west gale off South Uist (T. Boyd, R. W. J. Smith) and another immature was seen at Aberlady on 4th October (K. S. Macgregor). An almost adult Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* was seen in company with Greater Black-backed Gulls *L. marinus* at Cult Ness on 16th September (G. Dick) and another Glaucous Gull on the R. Ythan on 29th September (A. J. M. Smith). Some details have already been published (*antea* 1:133) of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* in the Leven-Largo area of Fife, smaller numbers, up to eighteen, were recorded there throughout August, the last three being seen on 2nd September; the only number of juveniles seen was ten on 30th August. Six were at Ruddon's Point, Largo Bay, on 9th Septem-

ber (R. S. Weir). Single birds were seen at Fife Ness on 3rd, 13th and 14th September (J. Hoy, R. S. Weir) and at Cameron Reservoir on 31st July, while on 30th July several were seen in a daylight roost of other gulls half a mile inland on the road from Lundin Links to Cupar (A. Macdonald). Three were resting at Tentsmuir Point on 30th September (L. Fullerton), but by far the most interesting and unusual record is from Loch Earn, Perthshire, on 17th September, when five or six immature Little Gulls were seen at intervals along the edge of the loch, in one or two cases side by side with Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* and mostly standing at the edge of the water (L. Fullerton). Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* have occurred in the Clyde area—one at Castle Semple Loch, Renfrewshire, on 13th September (Gordon Fraser, Wallace H. Wild), in Forth—one on 31st July at Lundin Links (R. S. Weir), one near Torryburn, Fife, on 6th September (G. Dick) and one at Aberlady on 3rd October (M. F. M. Meiklejohn); and in Tay—two on the Eden estuary, Fife, on 12th September (G. Dick). The following occurrences of the Guillemot *Uria aalge* exceptionally far up the Forth have been noted: three on 6th September opposite Valleyfield and one a mile below the Kincardine Bridge on 5th October (G. Dick, J. Potter).

An early flock of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* were observed on 27th August on Whiteside Law, Midlothian (W. Brotherton).

The immigration of Redwings *Turdus musicus* was at its peak about 11th October, when about 1,000 were seen at Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire (Ronald Logan) and then and on the ensuing days many Redwings were seen or heard at night in different parts of Scotland. The situation is well summed up in Dr J. W. Campbell's account of passage over Ardrennich, Strathtay, Perthshire.

"October 6th. The first seen this autumn were two or three passing south-east at 0730 hours.

"October 7th, 8th and 9th. Odd Redwings passing south-east.

"October 10th. Small parties passing south-east all day. One heard calling at 2200 hours.

"October 11th. Small parties passing all morning and early afternoon. On the 10th and 11th hundreds must have passed through. Occasional parties perched, but only remained for minutes. The steady passage was noteworthy and is the largest movement seen here for some years.

"October 12th. Still a few passing south-east in the morning.

"October 13th. No evidence of movement.

"October 18th. Heard passing after dark.

"On 14th October there was a large flock at 1250 hours, with a few Fieldfares at the south end of the Sma' Glen, and on the 19th many large flocks, hundreds being involved, were passing south west of Doune, Perthshire."

On 11th and 12th October there was an extensive fall of passerines on the east coast of Scotland and at Aberlady on the 11th Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* were numerous and a male Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* was seen. There had been another Stonechat (a different individual) present there on 4th October, and a male was seen at Glencorse Reservoir, Midlothian, on 7th October (A. Ablett). On 11th October a male and female Stonechat (not together) were seen between Buchlyvie and Gartmore, Stirling, in an area where they do not usually occur (M. F. M. Meiklejohn, K. H. Paterson). On 9th August thirty Whinchats *S. rubetra* were counted between Kincardine Bridge and Skinflats, Stirling, and sixteen on 15th August (J. Hoy): the observer states that these birds do not breed there and evidently some sort of movement was taking place; he has noticed similar movements at this time of year about his house on the other side of the Forth at High Valleyfield, Fife. An immature Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* spent 30th and 31st August in the garden of the observer at Rendall, Orkney (E. Balfour) and single Barred Warblers (of which full notes have been provided) were seen at Fife Ness on 29th August and 14th October (P. G. R. Barbier, R. S. Weir).

Four "yellow" Wagtails *Motacilla flava* were at Barnes Ness, East Lothian, on 9th August (T. Boyd) and a male *flavissima* at Watch Reservoir, Berwickshire, on 29th August (W. Murray), while a male Blue-headed Wagtail *M. f. flava* on the River Esk near Edinburgh on 21st August is described in *The Scotsman* (19.9.59).

A Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* occurred at Fife Ness on 11th October (W.J.E., R.S.W.): it remained on the same Brussels sprout plant while the former went to fetch his wife from Anstruther. Another Great Grey Shrike was seen on the Stevenston side of the River Garnock, Ayrshire, on 25th and 26th October (Gordon Fraser).

A Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* frequented a garden at Kirkwall, Orkney, for about a week at the end of August and beginning of September, feeding on cotoneaster berries (E. Balfour).

Much interesting evidence of yet another invasion of the Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* has been sent in, in addition to that already reported (*antea* 1: 134). A small flock were seen at Lerwick, Shetland, on 25th July (J.P., *Scotsman*, 8th August) and another small flock at Borve, Har-

ris, where they had probably also been earlier in August, on 30th August and 1st September (J. W. Campbell). At Applecross, Wester Ross, there was a party in the first fortnight of August (I. F. Stewart). At Gladhouse eight arrived on or about 29th July (R. W. J. Smith). At Coldingham, Berwickshire, there were about twenty, including one red male, on 1st August (C. M. Morrison). A few were reported at the Isle of May about the second week of August (*per* W. J. Eggeling). At Keith Bridge, near Humbie, East Lothian, ten were seen on 16th August and 13th September, three remaining till 11th October (G. and M. I. Waterston) and five were at Stobo, Peeblesshire, on 31st August (R. Traquair Thin). Finally, the remains of a male, dead for some time, were picked up in a garden at Muirhouse, Edinburgh, on 12th October (W. A. Cameron).

Habits.

On October 2nd 1959 boys at Gordonstoun School reported a nest of the Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* on the estate. Investigation showed two chicks estimated at about ten days of age. The nest was in the hollow of an isolated ash about fifteen feet from the ground (Roland Richter).

Dr D. A. Bannerman writes from Boreland of Southwick, by Dumfries: "The last few years we have always had House Martins *Delichon urbica* here, as many as eight nests, usually on the farm house. Last year, in awful rain and gales, the nests all fell down and, though it was late in the season, no young were hatched. In 1959 not a single bird came near the house, until 28th July, when a number of birds came back with their grown young, at least ten in all, and spent the whole afternoon flying up to the eaves where the House Martins had the disaster last year and to the very same spots where the nests had been, the young ones following the parents' example. On the 29th all had disappeared."

On 24th February 1957 a party of fifteen Twites *Carduelis flavirostris* were watched near Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, feeding on Marsh Samphire *Salicornia herbacea*. One was noticed raising a foot to grasp a plant and feed on it, while it stood firmly on the wet mud with the other. The observer adds: "I am familiar with the way in which some passerines, notably crows and tits, will clamp things with their feet while they work at them with the bill, but I have not at any other time seen a bird of this family apparently steadying a food plant in this way to facilitate nibbling at it. When moving about among the vegetation the Twites sometimes walked and sometimes hopped, landing in the latter case on one foot noticeably before the other." (I. F. Stewart). (The Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* frequently progresses by this "cantering" method of hopping.—Ed.)

Part II.

(In this section, to save space, we are not employing scientific names for species that have been mentioned elsewhere in this number. Initials denote the following observers: A. Ablett, J. Baird, H. Boase, J. Hoy, R. W. Marriott, M. F. M. Meiklejohn, W. Murray, A. J. M. Smith, R. W. J. Smith, L. A. Urquhart and A. D. Watson. Unless otherwise stated dates apply to late 1958 and early 1959).

Distribution and Breeding.

A Buzzard *Buteo buteo* was seen on 18th October 1959 by Gryfe Reservoir, Renfrewshire, two miles from Upper Greenock Station (J. D. Stewart).

Several Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* were seen over the Kyle of Eriboll, Sutherland, in late July, and one near Lairg in early August (R.W.M.).

Further records of the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* are of one seen at Gartcosh, Lanarkshire, about ten years ago (S. M. Stewart) and of one at Larkhall, in the same county, on 6th December (D. Stalker). One, possibly two, Greater Spotted Woodpeckers *Dryobates major* were seen near Bonar Bridge, Sutherland, on 20th September (Sir Charles Connell).

A flock of ten Carrion Crows was seen in the Melness area of northern Sutherland in late July (R.W.M.), and a Magpie *Pica pica* in the parish of Rosskeen, Ross-shire, on 20th September (Sir Charles Connell).

Other interesting Sutherland records are of a Blackcap in the pine-wood at Lairg on 9th August and five singing Chiffchaffs in the same place on 11th August (R.W.M.).

The Pied Flycatcher has nested in a garden wall at Port of Menteith, Stirling, for the last three years (F. G. S. Graham).

During December 1956 a Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* was twice watched at close quarters from a caravan at Kilmacolm, Renfrewshire (J. D. Stewart) and in August 1959 one was seen by two different observers in a garden at Lochgilphead, Argyll (P. S. Govan).

Tree Sparrows *Passer montanus* continue to thrive in north Ayrshire, where eight nests were found in the Overton district in May and June, three of them having second broods: all the nests were in holes in trees (L.A.U.).

Autumn 1959.

Donald E. Baird has sent us an interesting list of non-breeding species seen in the Flannans between 30th June and 14th August, of which full details have been submitted to *Bird Migration*: they include Heron, Kestrel, Lapwing, Ring-

ed Plover, Golden Plover, Curlew, Whimbrel, Redshank, Knot, Little Stint, Dunlin, Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, White Wagtail and Crossbill.

On 17th September a Sooty Shearwater was seen off Collieston, Aberdeenshire, and on the following day three between Shetland and Fair Isle (V. M. Thom).

About 150 Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* were offshore near the mouth of the R. Ythan, Aberdeen, on 1st September (A.J.M.S.) and an inland record of a duck Common Scoter *M. nigra* is from High Dam, Eaglesham, Lanark, on 10th October (L.A.U.).

A record of an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* from near Poolewe on 16th October, accompanied by a good description, was published in *The Ross-shire Journal* of 30th October (Ian Cameron).

Four Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa* were at Kingoodie, Perthshire, on 27th August, and fourteen in the neighbouring Invergowrie Bay on the 30th (H.B.): they were last seen there on 22nd September. Late records (which might perhaps be better included under wintering birds) are of at least one at Aberlady on 7th November (W. K. Richmond), three at the same place on 11th November (A.A.) and of three on the Clyde above Dumbarton on 11th December—a locality from which there are but few records (E. M. Brock).

A Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* was seen at the mouth of the R. Ythan on 1st September (A.J.M.S.) and two at Lintrathen on both 29th September and 1st October (H.B.).

Other records of Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris testacea*, in a year when these were especially numerous, come from Solway—at least twelve on 16th September at Browhouses, Dumfries (E. L. Roberts); from Clyde—one at Ardoch on 29th September (E. M. Brock) and single birds at Barassie on 4th and 18th October (L. A. U.); from Forth—one at Aberlady on 10th, 17th and 20th October (Alastair Macdonald); and from Tay—one at Invergowrie Bay on 12th October (H.H.B.).

Single Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax* occurred at Kinnordy, Angus, on 29th August and at Kingoodie, Perth, on 9th September (H.B.). At Aberlady there were six Ruffs on 18th October and 1st November, but only three on 15th November and after that no more (J.B.).

A light-breasted adult Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* was seen on 27th October at Kingoodie, Perth, on arable land, feeding on a dead Black-headed Gull (H.B.).

October records of Sandwich Tern are one at Tayport on 4th (H.B.) and three at Seafield, Leith, on 19th (A.A.).

Seven Swallows were seen at Cult Ness, Fife, on 1st November (J.H.), one sought refuge in a house at Beauly on the

14th (M. L., *Scotsman*, 28th November), one was still about at Colinton, Edinburgh, on the 24th (J.B.M., *Scotsman*, 28th November), and one flew in from the sea at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 6th December (J.B.). A late House Martin was seen at St Andrews on 10th and 15th November (E. P. Dickie).

A very late Ring Ouzel, a female, was seen at Dalserf, Lanarkshire, on 23rd November (D.S.), and one at Barnes Ness, East Lothian, on 4th October (A. Macdonald).

Of particular interest is a record of a Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and a Redstart on 1st September at the R. Ythan mouth, Aberdeenshire, both of which were carrying rings (A.J.M.S.). On 17th August Redstarts, not usually present in the locality, occurred in numbers in the hedges at Milton, Dunbarton (E. R. Brock).

A late Sedge Warbler was at Barnes Ness, East Lothian, on 4th October (A. Macdonald) and great numbers of Goldcrests *Regulus regulus* are reported from Orkney on 14th October (E. Balfour) and from Unst, Shetland, at the end of that month (S. Saxby).

An adult male Yellow Wagtail *flavissima* was at Watch Reservoir, Berwickshire, on 29th August (W.M.).

Invasions.

In the late autumn and winter several species have been unusually numerous.

Two Grey Phalaropes *Phalaropus fulicarius* were seen at Fife Ness on 28th and 29th October (Mary Henderson), one at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 29th October (C. Pountain) and three at North Berwick on 16th December (I. C. T. Nisbet, T. C. Smout). (Full details of the above have been received. The first of them seems to be the first record of the species in South Fife. Readers of *British Birds* will know that there have been many reports of Grey Phalaropes in the south of England and elsewhere, mainly in October, including a fantastic carpet of some 350 birds in St Agnes Bay, Isles of Scilly, on the 23rd.—Ed.)

Little Auks *Plautus alle* occurred at many places, mostly on the east coast, from the end of October throughout November. In Moray: one was found at Evanton, Ross, five miles inland, on 19th November and survived for a few hours (John Lees). In Tay: on 15th and 21st November single birds were seen off the pier at St Andrews (J. Holdroyd, Miss Haig); on the 18th one was found alive but exhausted in a garden at Brechin (photograph in *Dundee Courier*, 19th Nov.); and about the same date one was found alive but exhausted at Ladybank, Fife (*Dundee Courier*, 23rd Nov.). In Forth: at

North Berwick a few were about from 28th October (F. Marr) and seventeen were flying past Dunbar on 31st October (A. Macdonald); on 1st November single birds were reported from Trinity Bay, Edinburgh, (B. R. Thomson) and Aberlady, as well as four probables at Gosford Bay (J.B.); six or seven at Lundin Links, Fife, on the 3rd (R. S. Weir); one by the Forth Bridge on the 7th (J. W. Wightman); twelve between Leven and Lundin Links on the 9th (T. S. Webster); four at Joppa on the 10th and 11th (J. Milne); four at Gullane Point on the 15th (J.B.); two at Seafield, Leith, on the 21st (A. T. Macmillan, B. R. Thomson); five at South Queensferry at causeway of road bridge and by the pier from 25th to 30th (John Hyatt); and one hit by a car at Inverkeithing on about the 27th (Sheelah Anderson). In Tweed: one occurred on 31st October at Hule Moss, Berwickshire (W.M.). In Solway: one was shot in late November at Colvend, Kirkcudbright, by Mr W. Robertson, who mistook it, as it swam, for the head of an otter (*Dumfries Advertiser*, 28th Nov.). In the Inner Hebrides: one was picked up dead on 17th December near Portnahaven, Islay (R. M. H. Cree).

Migrant Great Tits *Parus major*, probably of continental origin, as follows: there were four pairs at Halligarth, Unst, and others elsewhere on the island at the end of October (S. Saxby); two on Fetlar on 16th October and others, at least six, till the end of the month (L. Brown); and two at Voe, Shetland, on 3rd December (Mrs D. Adie). Continental Great Tits have also occurred on the Isle of May (see above).

A quite extraordinary number of wintering Blackcaps are reported. Mr Peter Davis informs us that numbers seen and trapped on Fair Isle in autumn were exceptional, several staying until late in November, the last one being seen on the 27th. In the Skye area: a male and female on Rhum from 16th November until at least 3rd December (P. Wormell *per* W. J. Eggeling). In Moray: a male was seen at Newton, near Elgin, from 15th November till 12th December, feeding on aphids among brussel sprouts, but also at a bird-table (E. Baldwin); and another male occurred at Lossiemouth on 17th and 18th December, which, like others recorded, was very aggressive to other small birds (E. S. Mingay); and about 22nd November two females and a male were at Evanton, Ross (J. Lees). In Tay: a male occurred in Perth on 14th October (V. M. Thom); one at Killiecrankie in late November fed on fat put out for tits (F. A. Becher); from 4th to 12th December a female was present in Dundee (B. Neath) and another female at St Andrews from 18th to 22nd December (J. McFarlane). Probably also in the Tay area were a male and female in west Perthshire for a fortnight up to 3rd December (W.A.R., *Scotsman*, 2nd Jan). In Forth: Blackcaps at the Isle of May have been mentioned above. In Tweed: a pair near West Lin-

ton, Peebles, on 22nd November (A. D. F. Leishman). In Clyde: about Christmas a male Blackcap spent two or three days in a garden at Bardowie, W. Stirling (M. D. Smith) and a female occurred on 11th and 12th January at Kilmaccolm, Renfrew (D. MacRobert). In Solway: a female Blackcap haunted a garden at Dalry, Kirkcudbright, from 23rd November to 15th December, apparently feeding exclusively on rotten apples hung up to attract Waxwings, preferring Cox's Orange Pippin to Laxton Superb. At first it was chased by a Robin and sometimes dispossessed of its apple by House Sparrows, but after a week became very aggressive: then it drove away Chaffinches, Dunnocks, Great, Blue and Coal Tits, stood its ground with Robin and House Sparrows, and only gave way to Starlings and Blackbirds. It had a fierce battle with a Robin: result indecisive (A.D.W.). A male Blackcap was seen at Gatehouse of Fleet on 12th December; it remained a few days and fed on apples and breadcrumbs (Dr Grace Fleming).

Details of the invasion of Waxwings are still being collected.

Winter 1959-1960

This appears to be an excellent winter for ducks. W.M. reports that he has never seen so many at Hule Moss, Berwickshire, since he started going there in 1946; at one time there were over 100 Shoveler *Spatula clypeata*. Teal *Anas crecca* seem to be especially numerous: 400 were seen together on Loch Leven on 24th October "in close company" (H.B.) and 89 at Duddingston on the 27th is three times the previous record for that loch (D. R. Anderson): at about the same time there were 800 at Gladhouse (D. G. Andrew, R.W.J.S.). Gadwall *Anas strepera* are again wintering in Edinburgh, a pair being seen at Dunsappie between 7th November and 8th January (T. C. Smout), and a drake at Duddingston on 8th and 14th October (T.C.S.) and a pair there (perhaps the Dunsappie birds) some time later (D. R. Anderson). Two Scaup *Aythya marila* with white foreheads were at Hamilton on 8th November (L.A.U.) and between Grangemouth and Kincardine twelve Scaup on 3rd November and fifteen on the 15th are the first J.H. has seen in the area during the ten years he has watched it. 636 Tufted Ducks at Duddingston on 17th January is the highest number recorded there (D. R. Anderson).

A Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* was on Hule Moss on 31st October and 1st November (W.M.) and a male on Forfar Loch on 4th November (H.B.). Smews *Mergus albellus* have been more widespread than usual this January on the Kirkcudbrightshire lochs, one or two, both adult drakes and "redheads" having been on at least six different inland waters

(A.D.W.). On 9th January there was a "redhead" on Bogton Loch, Ayrshire (R. Stokoe, A.D.W.).

A European White-fronted Goose *Anser a. albifrons* (pink bill noted) flew over the R. Carron at Bonnybridge, Stirling, on 1st November (R. Logan). Seven dark-breasted Brent Geese *Branta b. bernicla* were at Aberlady on 13th and 20th December (J.B., M.F.M.M.), four Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* at Gladhouse on 1st November and two at Hule Moss on 31st October and 1st November (W.M.).

A Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewicki*, in company with six Whoopers, was on the Loch o' the Lowes, New Cumnock, Lanark, on 10th January (J. A. Begg). Still there on 31st.

A Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* was flying round the tower of the University, Glasgow, on 27th November (M. J. M. Larkin): it was probably this bird that was responsible for a headless pigeon falling at the feet of a lecturer in Eng. Lit. some time previously.

A late Corncrake *Crex crex* is reported from near Auchencairn, Kirkcudbright (where it had been for a fortnight before) on 9th November (Rev. M. D. Walker).

A good year for Jack Snipe, especially at Duddingston (D. R. Anderson). J.H. saw his first north of Grangemouth on 15th November, and at Tynninghame on 1st January, at high tide, seven were flushed in an area fifteen yards square; perhaps they had come in with the north winds (R.W.J.S.). Two were seen at Stranraer on 16th January (M.F.M.M.).

Wintering Greenshank are reported from Tentsmuir on 20th November (L. Fullerton), Aberlady on 28th November (J.B.), and Doonfoot, Ayr, on 9th December—there was also one there between 25th January and 15th February last winter (L.A.U.). Two Green Sandpipers are passing the winter (last seen 3rd January) alternating between Bells Burn, Edrom, and Duns Sewage Works (W.M.).

A Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus* was seen at the Ythan mouth, Aberdeen, on 29th September (A.J.M.S.) and an adult Iceland Gull *L. glaucoides* at Troon harbour on 24th January (M.F.M.M.).

Large numbers of Wood Pigeons *Columba palumbus* have been reported from various areas, but it should be remembered that, despite a general opinion to the contrary, we as yet have no conclusive evidence that any of these have crossed the North Sea. On 11th December W. J. Eggeling was at Lathones, SSW of St Andrews, out at dawn hoping to see geese: "just before 8 a.m. Wood Pigeons began to pass over and pitch in the kale and turnip crops behind me, odd birds at first, then parties of ten to thirty and then flocks of 100 to 200, till they were pouring past. I was unable to keep a count

in spite of several attempts, but later put the birds up from the crops; they were in numbers such as I have never seen before, certainly 3,000 and probably as many as 5,000. All the birds I saw came from the west and for the most part they were feeding on the kale leaves. Large numbers of Greenfinches were also coming in at the same time. The same pattern was repeated next morning and again on 19th December. On the latter there were certainly fewer pigeons and I was able to estimate that there were about 3,000 (to the nearest 500). All of these birds definitely came from far out of sight to the west, probably from some huge roost, and were flying eastwards."

A male Shorelark *Eremophila alpestris* was seen at Aberlady on 11th November (A.A.).

Two Jays *Garrulus glandarius* were in the woods at Valleyfield, Fife, on 10th November, only the observer's second winter record for the area (J.H.).

On 8th November at Herbertshire Estate, Bonnybridge, Stirling, a Long-tailed Tit was seen which resembled the northern race *Aegithalos c. caudatus*: it had a pure white head and its underparts were also whiter than those of about ten Long-tailed Tit with striped heads with which it was associating (R. Logan).

Large numbers of Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, 2,000 to 3,000 in all, were seen in fields between Kincardine and High Valleyfield, Fife, on 25th October (J.H.); on the 31st unusual numbers (150) were seen at Cobbinshaw and movement was doubtless going on (T. Boyd, R.W.J.S.); and on the following day they were arriving, with Starlings, all day at Tynninghame, in small parties (T.B., R.W.J.S.). Unusual numbers were near Glencorse Reservoir on 7th November, settling in heather and rough grass, which is unusual too (R.W.J.S.).

Two Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* were at Cult Ness on 1st November and two at Longannet Point, S. Fife, on the 30th (J.H.). A pair were at Threipmuir on 7th November (R.W.J.S.).

Two Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor*, one of which was eating a Linnet, were seen in Orkney about 14th October (E. Balfour); one occurred at Port of Menteith, Stirling, on 6th December (A. J. B. Loudon) and one at Tarfside, Angus, on 15th December (D. Jenkins). Another was at Stevenston, Ayrshire, at the end of October and the beginning of November: on 4th November its song was heard, "a mixture of low warblings and harsh grating sounds, which on the whole was rather pleasing" (G. Fraser). We have late news of a sixth Great Grey Shrike, in Arran, between Brodick and Lamlash, on 16th November (A. R. Hutchison, I. K. Munro).

Larger flocks of finches than usual seem to be present, as,

for example, in East Lothian (A. Macdonald), big numbers of Greenfinches being especially noticeable. On 30th November near Carnbee in Fife there was a very large finch flock in kale and on recently cleared sugar beet: about 1,500 all told, with Chaffinches in the majority, but almost as many Greenfinches, a number of Brambling and a few Goldfinches. Several hundred Skylarks, and numbers of Fieldfare, Redwing and Song Thrushes were also present. On 11th December at Lathones, Fife, Greenfinches came trickling in with the Wood Pigeons till there were at least 1,000; fewer on subsequent dates (W. J. Eggeling). In the wintering flock of Greenfinches at Seafield, Leith, there was a sudden peak at the beginning of December, 900 being counted on the 5th (A.T.M.). 500 Greenfinches at Mount Lothian, near Gladhouse, on 6th December, was a very big flock for that area (R.W.J.S.). At Fala Toll on 27th December there were about 1,500 Chaffinches and 200 Bramblings (R.W.J.S.), while at Longannet, S. Fife, there were the exceptional numbers of about 600 Bramblings on 20th January (J. Potter) and about 350 two days later (J.H.). A few Bramblings, fairly scarce in Clyde, were noted at Dunoon in December (K. M. Kesson). Nearly 400 were seen in fields at Portmore, Peebles, on 20th December (J. E. King and others).

As is usual in "Crossbill years," Siskins have also been numerous. About fifty were seen near Loch Faskally, Perth, on 9th October (H.B.) and about 100, in two flocks, at Tynninghame on 1st November (T. Boyd, R.W.J.S.), while fifty were flying west at Dirleton on 8th November (T.B.). One was at Gosford, East Lothian, on 11th November (T. C. Smout) and small parties at the end of the year near Milton Bridge, East Lothian (C. K. Mylne). At Duddingston the first seen there since 1950 were three on 19th January (D. R. Anderson). From the west come reports of three at the Doonfoot, Ayr, on 26th November (D.S.), about fifteen near Milngavie on 14th November, and about thirty, of which one was picked up dead, at Blanefield, Stirling, on 12th December (J. W. Taylor).

The following wintering Twites *Carduelis flavirostris* have been reported: at Aberlady a total of twenty-four on 1st November was a record, but there were over fifty on the 7th and 15th, and seventy or more on the 22nd and 28th. The peak was on 6th December when there were at least 150, mixed with Linnets: on the 20th numbers were down to about seventy and on 10th January there were a mere thirty or forty (J.B.). At Cult Ness there were thirty or forty on 22nd November (J.H.), north of Grangemouth a large flock on 29th November (J. Potter), at Barnes Ness forty on 6th December (T. Boyd).

There were several Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus* at Aberlady on 1st November (J.B.). What is the first record for the Edinburgh area, and doubtless also for Midlothian,

comes from Dr I. C. T. Nisbet: "while descending Arthur's Seat on 14th December I heard the unmistakable 'teu . . . teu . . . tikitikitik' of a Lapland Bunting in flight overhead. I am very familiar with this species and had watched it in East Anglia only two days before."

For the first time in ten years J. H. saw Snow Buntings at Longannet Point, S.W. Fife, nearly forty birds on 30th November, and on 7th December he and J. Potter saw over fifty there, the numbers rising to 100 by 22nd January. A count of 180 in the Portmore-Gladhouse-Rosebery area on 27th December is unusually high for such a date (R.W.J.S.). They have also been unusually numerous on the Clyde Coast: on 30th December, at Girvan, between fifteen and twenty were seen on the North Shore (R. M. Ramage, J. Shanks); on 17th January about 150 at Lendalfoot and fifty just south of Girvan (M.F.M.M.); and on 23rd January several at Stevenston (G. M. T. Conacher).

Behaviour and Habits

FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis*. On 25th May four Fulmar nests were located in a field at the foot of Saxa Vord hill, Unst. This is between half and three quarters of a mile from the sea and, being in a hollow, birds on the ground would not be able to see the sea either at Haroldswick or Norwick Bay. The grass near the nests was cropped short, but nearby was a stream and marshy land almost dry after a period of fine weather. Three nests were on the ground at the foot of an old stone pen, two inside the small compound, the walls of which were about three feet high, and the third in a corner outside where a wall had been extended. The fourth nest was some fifty yards away on rising ground in a hollow that may once have been a rabbit hole. Each nest had one egg. Two nests came to grief, but on 2nd July the remaining two birds were still sitting (D. J. Mentier).

GANNET *Sula bassana*. About 7 a.m. on 23rd November the caretaker of my flat in Ravelston Gardens, in the centre of Edinburgh, was surprised to see a large white bird plane down and crash-land in the rose-bed. From my window above I saw it was an adult Gannet, appearing in good condition and able to walk and flap well. I was much relieved when it took itself off to a patch of waste ground some way from the dogs and traffic, since the verge of the road seemed no place for a Gannet. When I left for work, having summoned the S.S.P.C.A., the Gannet had several admirers, including the postman and a spaniel. By 10 a.m. it could not be found. Previously it had seemed unable to take off, but with a rising wind it had probably been able to make use of a six foot drop

on the waste ground to launch itself into the air. (P. Alexander).

EIDER *Somateria mollissima*. On 24th January, with a cold south-east wind blowing, I was waiting at Feolin Ferry, Jura, opposite Port Askaig, when up the Sound of Islay, flying due north, came a few flights of Eider. These suddenly became a stream and I began to count them. In the course of ten minutes or so over 600 Eider went past. The large flights I estimated by counting ten and then comparing this with the whole flock. The largest flight was about seventy birds, but a few went by in pairs. (K. Townsend).

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* and **ROOK** *Corvus frugilegus*. On 23rd September I was watching Common Terns fishing on the ebb tide at Kingsbarns, Fife. Every now and then they would be harried by Rooks, which seemed to be chasing them out of sheer devilment and not for the sand-eels they were catching. The Rooks would keep up the chase for some minutes, although they were outmanoeuvred easily. When they tired of chasing the terns they would return inland to their rookery, cawing loudly, to return to the fun a few minutes later. (M. H. E. Cuninghame).

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*. About 22nd November and on 2nd December a Starling was seen in Hermitage Gardens, Edinburgh, with a bill shaped liked that of a Whimbrel, both mandibles being elongated, and more than twice as long as normal. The bill was creamy yellow towards the tip. The bird fed by probing in the usual way. An interesting discussion of the persistence of this deformity in the area will be found in *The Edinburgh Bird Bulletin* (4: 55-56). (N. B. Watson).

SOLWAY WEEK-END

Quite often we seem to get some wonderful sunny days at the beginning of February, and they seem that much more exciting because of the gloomy weather that has gone before. For the Club's Week-end Excursion to the Solway from 5th to 7th February the weather could not have been better, for, in spite of the most depressing forecasts and dense fog in Glasgow, the early morning mist on Saturday cleared away and gave us two gorgeous sunny and almost windless days to explore the beautiful countryside around Dumfries.

A record number of fifty-five members and friends, including some lone wolves and splinter groups, came for the week-end and voted it one of the best yet. Members came from as far away as Peterhead, Aberdeen, Wolverhampton and Oxford. Most of us managed to get to the County Hotel on

Friday night to be briefed for the morrow. Thereafter conviviality was the order until well after midnight when a very jolly party found themselves on opposite platforms in Dumfries Station waiting to welcome our Irish guests from either direction. Back at the hotel the staff of a big local garage were having a great time at their annual dance, and sleepless bird-watchers were busy rehearsing for the next day their individual claims to have been sited in the bedroom most directly above the noise.

After breakfast on Saturday a long line of cars set off to look for Barnacle Geese at Caerlaverock where, we had already been warned, we would be unlikely to find them. After turning back from the correct road, driving several miles up the wrong cul-de-sac into the wrong farmyard, and twice passing the same unaccompanied cows on a narrow country lane, the survivors eventually straggled down to the Reserve. The car which had agreed to follow behind and round up any laggards had evidently got there some time earlier.

Led by Langley Roberts, the Warden of the Reserve, forty eager bird-watchers set off through the mud and disappearing mist for a four-mile walk over field, fence and ditch—not to mention ooze. In fact, at one point, when we forded a shallow but treacherously soft stream, it seemed that we might lose one or two members in the ooze. By the time half the party had crossed quickly over, the soft crust got so puddled up that one member was soon over his knees and sinking steadily: helpers rushed to his aid and began to sink as well, or were pulled over by other enthusiastic rescuers. Eventually a chain of hands hauled everyone out and retrieved all their footgear, but quite a few people got more than a little muddy in the process and there were a lot of squelching Wellington boots for the rest of the morning.

Langley Roberts was most apologetic about the flock of 1,650 Barnacles which had inconsiderately flown off to feed on the English side of the Solway. However, with the great concentration of optical fire-power, two of them were at last identified as they walked on the distant mud—one of them with a broken wing. One of the tragedies of the bird world is the sight of a lone goose by the side of its wounded and flightless mate when all the others have gone away. Suddenly the sky was filled with geese, not Barnacles but Grey Lags and Pinkfeet, pouring in to settle on the fields at East Park farm where we ate our sandwiches. Along the road to Glencaple we saw many more and were able to watch them at point-blank range without getting out of the cars.

In the afternoon most people went down the west side of the Nith to Carsethorn passing a flock of thirty-seven Whoop-

ers feeding in a field just outside Dumfries. The tide was out at Carsethorn but we had superb views of Pintail and there were flocks of Scaup further out. A skein of black geese which flew past some way out were thought by several people to be Brents—very unusual in the area—but local opinion was against the identification. Subsequent events at Carlingwark the next day suggested that even good observers might have been misled.

In the evening Miss Valerie Thom showed her fine 8 m.m. documentary film of life on Fair Isle, with sequences of all the activities and industries of the island and a commendable absence of pictures of bird-watchers. We also saw a short film of local Waxwings and a fine assembly of Whoopers at Glenbuck by Mr J. Lockerbie, Sanquhar.

On Sunday morning, lured by tales of the birds to be seen and undeterred by forecasts of heavy fog, five enthusiasts were away by 7.45 a.m. to look at L. Arthur as soon as it was reasonably light. Such keenness was rewarded by the sight of no less than five Smew on this one small loch, four red-headed birds and a fine drake swimming and diving as we watched them. Beside the road we found a party of Long-tailed Tits, a Tree Creeper and a Great Spotted Woodpecker—and all before breakfast, to which we returned full of virtue.

On the way to Castle Douglas a brief call at Auchenreoch turned up a nice variety of birds including a Willow Tit and splendid views of Goosander glinting in the sun as they flew past close to the road. On Carlingwark, under the able direction of Willie Austin, we located two more Smew—red-heads again—and it cannot be often that one can see seven in so short a time. A party of about seventy geese flew over honking as we were leaving and hardly anyone gave them a second glance. After they had gone the local experts set about explaining that they were not Grey Lag but Bean Geese and that we should probably see no more that day. In fact we did see some twenty-five close to the road later in the day, but they have been difficult to find and numbers are low this year.

From Castle Douglas we headed up L. Ken in a long convoy of cars with Willie Austin to the fore. At the expected spot Greenland Whitefronts were duly located. The first was only a head sticking up behind a grassy bank on which a fine flock of Wigeon was resting, but we saw others later.

On Woodhall Loch we found yet another species of duck. Very few dissentient voices were raised when a distant black and white blob was diagnosed as another Smew, but a quarter-mile walk along the road turned it into a Long-tailed Duck (more or less tailless of course)—a very unexpected visitor there. This was the sixteenth, and probably the seventeenth, species of duck to be seen in two days.

At the New Galloway end of L. Ken an abortive search for Willow Tits was not kept up for very long. A few more persistent souls, however, were well rewarded for their greater enthusiasm by hearing a Willow Tit and a Jay almost at the same time. On a carpet of washed-up vegetation and seeds by some marshy willow-scrub we found a small party of birds including Siskins and Redpolls which were chased by a Sparrow Hawk that appeared from nowhere. Even a Tree Creeper took to the thicket growing in the water and looked most out of place climbing the thin stems of the bushes.

So ended a superb week-end as people disappeared in search of food, buses, trains and the road home. About eighty-five different species of birds were seen by one of the writers, and the tally for the whole party cannot have been very far short of a hundred—not bad for a week-end in the coldest month of the year.

ANDREW T. MACMILLAN.
GEORGE WATERSTON.

UNUSUAL MORTALITY OF YOUNG PUFFINS ON ST KILDA, 1959

DAVID BODDINGTON

The population of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on St Kilda during the breeding season probably numbers one million pairs, the largest and most dense colony being on the island of Dun, which forms the south side of the Village Bay. Landing on Dun is only possible in periods of calm weather, but the colonies on Hirta are accessible more easily.

On 20th July 1959 a large number of dead young Puffins, from two to four weeks old, were found on the Hirta colony of Carn Mor, most of which showed no signs of injury. On 24th July a number of dead birds were lying on the talus slopes below Ard Uarchdarachd. There were freshly dead young among the boulders of Carn Mor on 31st July. On the next day a landing was made on Dun and a transect of 1,100 yards was made at a height of 200-300 feet as far as Point of Dun, thereby covering all but 200 yards of the complete length of the island. Weather conditions did not allow more than three hours stay and the luxuriant vegetation, of which Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* was the dominant species, made a thorough search impractical. In the five yard wide transect through the most densely populated area, 205 dead birds were counted on the way to the Point of Dun and 166 along a slight-



The Isle of May from the south-east. On the top of the island the lighthouse can be seen, and the Low Light, where visitors stay, is at the end of the white wall to the right of it. The May is just over a mile long.

Aerofilm Ltd.



Firecrest on the Isle of May, 30th September 1959 (See *antea* 1:153). The characteristic head markings of this species are well shown.

Photograph Dennis Munns.

ly higher level on the return journey. All the birds were estimated to be between twelve and 40 days old, and only a small number showed any evidence of injury.

On the assumption that fifty acres of this eighty acre island are as thickly colonised by Puffins, there must have been at least eight thousand dead birds, not counting those below ground or in thick vegetation. Examination of several birds was made and three specimens, thirty to forty days old, were sent to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Veterinary Laboratory, Lasswade, Midlothian, where R. H. Duff, M.R.C.V.S., made a pathological report, of which an extract follows.

“Post-mortem examination showed that the Puffins had died in very poor condition. The crops and gizzards were empty. The intestines were very narrow and thin-walled and flaccid. The kidneys were brownish . . . and the livers were small. No parasites were in the intestines and the presence of *Escherichia coli* was of no pathogenic significance . . . From these findings starvation is the most likely cause of death.”

Lockley states that the young Puffin is deserted about the fortieth day. At this time and until it goes to sea it would be expected that the alimentary canal would contain no food, but younger birds examined showed similar features. Fish is stated to constitute 32 per cent of the animal matter in the Puffin's diet (*The Handbook of British Birds*), being composed of Sand Eels *Amnodytes* spp. and the fry of Herring *Clupea harengus* and of Pollack *Gadus pollachius*. Boyd *et al.* have recorded specimens of Norway Pout *G. esmarkii* in a puffinry on St Kilda.

It seems likely that food shortage was the main cause of the unusually high mortality and the fact that, during the many hours spent in the St Kilda Puffin colonies, no discarded fish and few birds bringing in fish were seen, lends support to this.

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

SUMMER EXCURSIONS

IMPORTANT—Members intending to come on Excursions must, where necessary, inform the respective organisers immediately, so that arrangements can be made for numbers which in some cases are limited. Bookings will be accepted in strict order of application. Members of the Club are entitled to attend ANY Branch Excursion, and guests may be invited where numbers are not limited.

ABERDEEN

Applications for all Excursions to be made to Miss E. A. Garden, Eider Cottage, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire (Tel. Newburgh 95) one week in advance. Transport will be by private cars, and members having spare seats should inform Miss Garden.

Saturday, 7th May :

YTHAN ESTUARY AND LOCHS—Leader, Miss E. A. Garden. Meet Ythan Hotel 2 p.m. Bring picnic tea.

Sunday, 5th June :

CRATHIE AREA—Leader, Mr C. Murray. Meet Crathie Post Office 11 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

Sunday, 4th September :

FORVIE MOOR (Autumn Migrants)—Leader, Mr A. Smith. Meet Ythan Hotel 10.30 a.m. A ferry service will be arranged over the river, so that a walk up the coast to Collieston can be made. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

DUNDEE

When private cars are to be used, applications for all Excursions should be made to Mr Jack Scobie, 3 Constitution Road, Dundee (Office Tel. 3141) one week in advance.

Sunday, 6th March :

FORFAR RESCORIE AND BALGAVIES LOCHS—Meet City Square 10 a.m. Transport by private cars. Bring picnic lunch.

Sunday, 3rd April

FORT ALAN AND RIVER TAY—Meet Perth Bus 10.30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch.

Sunday, 15th May :

NORTH ESK ESTUARY AND AUCHMITHIE—Meet City Square 10 a.m. Transport by private cars. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

Sunday, 12th June :

TENTSMUIR AND SHELLEY POINT—Meet Tay Ferries 9.45 a.m. Transport by private cars. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

ISLE OF MAY—Date to be announced later. Limited to twelve members.

Sunday, 18th September :

EDEN ESTUARY (GUARD BRIDGE to ST ANDREWS)—Meet Tay Ferries 9.45 a.m. Transport by bus. Bring picnic lunch.

EDINBURGH

Times of buses and trains should be checked with Summer Time-tables. Costs may also be subject to alteration. Private hire buses will only be provided at the charges shown on condition that a minimum of 30 attend. Anyone unable to attend, and having booked a seat, may be required to pay the fare unless one week's notice is given.

Saturday, 14th May :

ABERLADY BAY NATURE RESERVE (Spring Migrants)—Leaders, Mr W. Birrell and Mr C. N. L. Cowper. Meet Timber Bridge 2.30 p.m. Bring picnic tea. (S.M.T. Bus leaves Edinburgh Bus Station at approx. 1.40 p.m.)

Saturday, 21st May :

PENICUIK HOUSE GROUNDS (by kind permission of Sir John D. Clerk, Bt.)—Leader, Mr R. W. J. Smith. Meet outside Penicuik Post Office 2.30 p.m. Bring picnic tea. (S.M.T. Bus leaves Edinburgh Bus Station at 1.30 p.m.)

Sunday, 29th May :

THE HIRSEL, COLDSTREAM (by kind permission of the Earl of Home)—Limited number. Applications by 21st May to Mr Andrew T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh 13. Leader at the Hirsell, Major the Hon. Henry Douglas Home. Private bus will leave Waverley Bridge at 11 a.m. returning at approx. 7 p.m. Picnic lunch and tea to be taken. Cost : bus approx. 8/- per person.

Saturday, 11th June :

ISLE OF MAY Limited number (12)—Leader, Dr W. J. Eggeling. Applications by 4th June to Miss O. T. Thompson, 52 Inverleith Row, Edinburgh. Train to Anstruther leaves Waverley Station at 9.10 a.m. Boat leaves harbour 11.40 a.m. prompt. Time on Island approx. 12.45 to 4.30 p.m. Return train leaves Anstruther 6 p.m. arriving Edinburgh 8.56 p.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Cost : Day return rail ticket, 8/11; boat approx. 9/-.

Sunday, 19th June :

PARADISE WOODS, DUNS, AND ST ABBS HEAD CLIFFS (Limited number)—Applications by 11th June to Miss O. T. Thompson, 52 Inverleith Row, Edinburgh. Leader at Paradise Woods, Mr W. Murray. Private bus will leave Waverley Bridge at 10.45 a.m. and return approx. 6.30 p.m. Picnic lunch and tea to be taken. Cost : approx. 8/-.

Sunday, 3rd July :

FARNE ISLANDS (Limited Number)—Applications by 25th June to Mr A. G. Ablett, 7 Craigmount Gardens, Edinburgh 12 (COR 4258). Leader from Seahouses, Dr E. A. R. Ennion. Private bus leaves Waverley Bridge 9 a.m. arriving Seahouses 12.30 p.m. Boats leave harbour on arrival. Bring picnic lunch. Cost : Bus 11/-; boat 11/-; High tea at Monks House, 6/-.

Saturday, 16th July :

BASS ROCK (by kind permission of Sir Hew Hamilton Dalrymple, Bt.)—Applications by 9th July to Mr John King, 103 Marchmont Road, Edinburgh 9. Boats leave North Berwick Harbour 2.30 p.m. and return at 7 p.m. Bring picnic tea. Cost : Boat 7/6.

Saturday, 20th August :

ABERLADY BAY NATURE RESERVE (Autumn Migrants)—Leaders, Mr W. Birrell and Mr K. S. Macgregor. Arrangements as for 14th May.

GLASGOW

Times of buses and trains should be checked with Summer Time-tables. For all Excursions, excluding the first, applications must be made as stated so that adequate reservations may be made.

Saturday, 30th April :

HAMILTON BIRD SANCTUARY (by kind permission of the Town Council of the Burgh of Hamilton)—Leader, Mr D. Stalker. Meet at Hamilton Cross at 2.30 p.m.

Sunday, 29th May :

THE HIRSEL, COLDSTREAM (by kind permission of the Earl of Home) (Limited number)—Joint Excursion with Edinburgh Branch. Train to Edinburgh leaves Queen Street Station at 9.40 a.m. and arrives 10.54 a.m. Private bus leaves Waverley Bridge at 11 a.m. returning approx. 7 p.m. Applications by 21st May to Mr Andrew T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh 13. Picnic lunch and tea to be taken. Cost : Bus approx. 8/-.

Saturday, 4th June :

AILSA CRAIG—Maximum number, two parties of 14. Applications by 28th May to Miss M. G. Scott, 68 Evan Drive, Giffnock, Glasgow. Boat leaves Girvan Harbour with first party at 11 a.m. Time on Ailsa Craig, 3 to 4 hours. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Cost : Boat 10/- per person.

Saturday, 19th June :

LITTLE CUMBRAE—Applications by 11th June to Miss M. G. Scott, 68 Evan Drive, Giffnock, Glasgow. Boat leaves Fairlie 11.30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Cost : Boat 3/6 per person.

ST ANDREWS

Applications for the Excursions to the Isle of May and Loch Leven must be made to Miss M. M. Spires, 2 Howard Place, St Andrews (Tel. 852) not later than 1st June.

Saturday, 28th May :

LINDORES LOCH—Leave St Andrews Bus Station on Perth Bus at 12.45 p.m. Bring picnic tea.

Sunday, 12th June :

ISLE OF MAY (Limited number, 12)—Boat leaves Anstruther Harbour 10 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

Sunday, 26th June :

LOCH LEVEN (by kind permission of Kinross Estates)—Boats leave from the Sluices, Scotlandswell, for St Serfs Island at 11 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

SCOTTISH BIRDS : VOLUME I, No. 1

A number of requests have been received from Libraries for complete sets of "Scottish Birds" to date. As the first issue, Volume I, No. 1, (September 1958) has been out of print for some time, the Secretary will be very glad to receive any copies, in whatever condition, which members can spare to enable these orders to be fulfilled.

WEEK-END EXCURSION TO AVIEMORE

Arrangements have again been made with Mrs M. J. Grant, The Dell Hotel, Rothiemurchus, Aviemore (Tel. 216) for a week-end Excursion to Speyside.

Accommodation for up to twenty members has been reserved for the week-end 6th to 8th May at inclusive terms of 45/- per person as follows : Bed on Friday night 6th; breakfast, packed lunch, dinner and bed on Saturday 7th; breakfast and packed lunch on Sunday 8th.

Members wishing to come on this Club Excursion should book direct with Mrs Grant, mentioning that they are members of the Club, and are asked to send her a postcard to acknowledge their booking, once this is made. Members may bring guests. Reservations will be accepted in strict order of application. Arrangements for transport by private cars should be made through Branch Secretaries.

CLUB LIBRARY

Members are asked to note that the Club Library will not be open on Wednesday evenings during the summer months. The Secretary will be glad, however, to welcome members who wish to use the Library in the evenings if previous arrangements are made. There will be no Junior Meetings during the summer months.

Dr N. TINBERGEN ON "BEHAVIOUR OF GULLS"

Members who were present at the Stirling Conference and who heard Dr Tinbergen's fascinating talk will be interested to hear that he has kindly presented copies of reprints of his recent work, "Comparative studies of the behaviour of Gulls : A Progress Report," 1959, to the Club Library. They are available for borrowing.

DUNDEE BRANCH

Owing to a mis-print in the Syllabus of Winter Lectures, the date of the Dundee Branch Lecture in April has been given as 26th; this should read 28th April.

OPERATION OSPREY, 1960

There are still vacancies for Volunteer Wardens (male) and Cook-caterers (female) during the period 28th May to the end of August. Anyone prepared to assist should contact George Waterston, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh 7, at once.

THE LATE T. LESLIE SMITH

Members will learn with regret of the death of Mr T. Leslie Smith who served on the Club Council as the Dundee Branch Representative since March 1959.

Mr Smith was a man of wide interests, particularly in Youth work, and was president of the Y.M.C.A. in Dundee for nearly twenty years. He joined the Club in 1956 and took a keen interest in all its affairs.