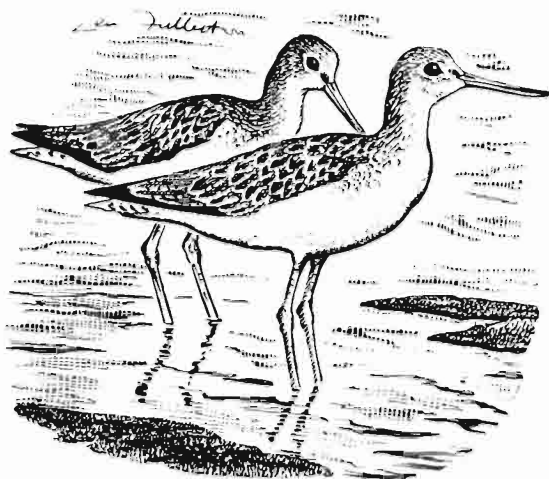


SCOTTISH BIRDS



The Journal of
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Vol. 1 No. 11

Spring 1961

FIVE SHILLINGS

THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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, 16 Athole Gardens, Glasgow, W.2. It would be helpful if notes were typewritten, if possible, and double spaced.



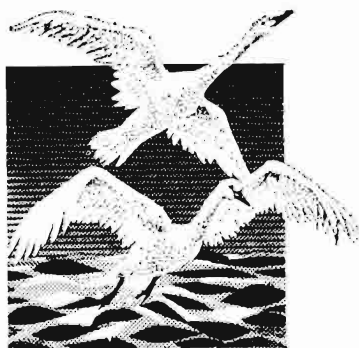
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SCOTTISH BIRDS

THE JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB



Vol. I No. 11

Spring 1961

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

Editorial

THIS might be said to be a Review Number of *Scottish Birds*, in that it contains more reviews than this journal has ever had before, and it is gratifying to see that three of the books concerned are by members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. From the editorial point of view the purpose of such accounts is to help bird-watchers, especially the less expert, to choose what books they wish to purchase. It is beyond the means of most of us to get all the bird books published in Britain, and so a selective approach must be made. It is not difficult, even for the poorest of us, to collect books on one aspect of ornithology, whether it be migration, behaviour, distribution or systematics. Much of contemporary ornithology is bedevilled by the problems of identification, which is really only the ABC of the subject and, while difficulties will always exist here, it is best to have an interest outside it. We are in danger sometimes of doing too much "Bird-spotting" and too little reading and, even if you cannot afford all the books you would like to have, please remember that the Club now has an excellent library at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh.

SPECIAL JUNIOR MEETING

A special meeting for Junior members of the Club and members of the J.B.R.C. has been arranged for Saturday, 15th April, 1961. This will take the form of a conducted Excursion by private bus, possibly to Linlithgow Loch, leaving 21 Regent Terrace at 2.30 p.m. If the weather is unsuitable other arrangements will be made. Refreshments will be provided, but a small charge will be made to cover the cost of the bus hire. Junior members wishing to attend this Excursion must inform the Club Secretary not later than 1st April.

CLUB LIBRARY

Miss Rona Hunter has very kindly prepared a typewritten list of all the books in the Club's Lending Library. This list is available on loan.

ISLE OF MAY BIRD OBSERVATORY AND FIELD STATION REPORT FOR 1960

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

An island field station depending for its records exclusively on volunteer observers cannot expect to maintain a continuous cover throughout every migration season. In 1960 the May was manned for most of April-May and for the greater part of August and September, but October went almost entirely unreported. June and July, also, were poorly covered, so that little new was recorded of the breeding populations and very few nestlings were ringed. This is a position which could easily be rectified by ornithologists seeking a cheap and pleasant summer holiday for their families.

Highlights of 1960 were the first recorded occurrences of Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Pelican *Pelecanus* sp., Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* and Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*. The first three must all be suspect as possible escapes from captivity.

Migration

Spring. As in 1959, the spring was mostly warm and dry with relatively little rain, drizzle, fog or "haar." There were no particularly large arrivals although the ringing total was higher than for several years, due mainly to periods of easterly weather in the first week of April and in the first and second weeks of May. There were observational gaps on 27th-28th April, 16th-20th May and 31st May.

An east wind (force 2-4) on 1st April, which increased to force 5 after dark, was succeeded on 2nd by a south-east wind (force 6-7) accompanied by poor visibility, bringing in 5 Lapwings, over 80 Blackbirds, 10 Song Thrushes, 30 Skylarks, 15 male Wheatears, over 20 Meadow Pipits, 7 Robins, 15 Chaffinches and the first Chiffchaff. One of the 6 Robins trapped was undoubtedly Continental and another probably so; the remainder appeared to be British. In similar weather on 3rd April more Lapwings arrived and although many Blackbirds and all but the wintering Robins had departed these were replaced by about 25 Redwings, several Song Thrushes, 4 Fieldfares and a Missel Thrush. More Meadow Pipits (over 100) were recorded but noticeably fewer Wheatears.

South-east and south-south-east winds (force 2-3) on 4th, with mixed visibility, resulted in considerable Blackbird movement, some birds departing but many others coming in.

Meadow Pipit and Lapwing passage continued and a few Continental Song Thrushes and Robins arrived. A party of 5 Continental Great Tits joined 3 that had over-wintered, all 8 being trapped together. The 5th saw the end of the easterly weather, the wind going south to south-west and temporarily increasing in strength to force 5 with good visibility. Unexpectedly, Blackbird numbers remained high, 200 birds arriving to replace about 100 which had departed the previous night: 50 were ringed compared with 30 on 4th, 13 on 3rd and 16 on 2nd. Starling numbers almost doubled from 80 to 150, and a Ring Ouzel and 2 Woodcocks were newcomers. Apart from a sustained trickle of Goldcrests and Wrens there was a steady decrease in passage between 6th and 10th April, but a female Black Redstart turned up on 11th and a party of about 40 *alba* wagtails looked in fleetingly on 12th. The first Willow Warbler appeared on 17th, first Redstart on 19th, Sandwich Tern on 25th and Swallow next day.

From 1st to 7th May winds were variable and light; from 8th to 14th they were east, force 2-6. On the 3rd, some Swallows, the first Swift and House Martin, 2 Ring Ouzels, the first Sedge Warbler, the first Whinchat, 3 Redstarts and a considerable increase in Wheatears were recorded. The first Sand Martin was seen on 4th. From 3rd May until at least the middle of the month, Whinchats (1-8 daily), Redstarts (1-18 daily) and Wheatears (mostly 12-20 daily) were on the move, with Willow Warblers and Whitethroats (up to 40 of each) passing most days. There was a Goldfinch on 6th (only the ninth occurrence), and a Lesser Redpoll and the first "comic" Tern on 7th. Two Yellow Wagtails were seen on 6th, with single birds on 7th and 12th. A Tree Pipit, a Turtle Dove and 10 Tree Sparrows (all trapped) turned up on 9th, and there were single Corncrakes on 9th and 14th. Single Lesser Whitethroats were recorded on 7th and 11th, single Grasshopper Warblers on 9th and 10th, and the first Garden Warbler and Blackcap on 13th.

The only considerable influxes were those which included 40 Willow Warblers on the 7th, and about 40 Whitethroats and 40 Willow Warblers on the 14th. The latter was easily the most exciting day of spring, and the only one when more than single Spotted and Pied Flycatchers were reported (12 and 3 respectively). The movement followed south-east wind, force 6, and heavy rain the previous day: the 81 birds ringed included 10 Redstarts, 4 Whinchats, 6 Spotted Flycatchers, 20 Willow Warblers, 29 Whitethroats, 3 Garden Warblers and 6 more Grasshopper Warblers. A Night Heron appeared at the East Landing (first record for the island) and a Siskin was seen.

Autumn. The island was manned from 4th to 10th and 17th to 31st August, throughout September and on 1st-3rd October.

From light-keeper information, and also from observations at Fife Ness, it is clear that much migration was missed in October.

Winds throughout August were light and very variable, scarcely ever south-east. Normal autumn coasting in small numbers was recorded: Wheatears logged between 15 and 30, and Swallows mostly at between 10 and 25, daily. In the evening of 24th August the wind was fresh north-east and the island enveloped in fog; next morning it was strong north-east with visibility down to 100 yards. In the afternoon of 25th the wind went south-east but on 26th August and also on 27th and 28th it was back in the north or north-east. A single Pied Flycatcher was seen on 24th August but both next day and on 26th 35 were recorded, numbers dropping gradually thereafter. Garden Warbler numbers rose from 1 on 24th to 10 on 25th, fell to 6 on 26th and rose again to 25 on 27th and 28th. Willow Warblers (and Whitethroats) showed the same pattern: 4 (0) on 24th, 40 (0) on 25th, 50 (2) on 26th, 80 (20) on 27th, 50 (15) on 28th, with numbers declining thereafter. Much the same was true of Whinchats, Redstarts and Spotted Flycatchers: 1, 0, 0, respectively on 24th; 3, 2, 1, on 25th; 10, 6, 1, on 26th; 30, 15, 8, on 27th; 25, 15, 1 on 28th, with generally smaller numbers on following days.

Other records for August included the inexplicable Pelican on 4th; a Sooty Shearwater on 5th; an early Great Skua on 7th; single Wood Warblers on 8th-10th and 31st; 1-5 Knots on five days between 20th and 26th; the island's first Arctic Warbler on 26th; an Aquatic Warbler on 27th; 4 if not 5 Wrynecks on 27th-28th; a Little Stint, 2 Barred Warblers, a pair of Stonechats, 2 Ortolans and a quite exceptionally early Fieldfare on 28th; and 2 Icterine Warblers on the 29th. A Wren and 2 Blackbirds on 21st August and another Blackbird on 28th were also unusual dates. A trickle of Tree Pipits passed through between 26th August and 2nd September.

The wind in the first two weeks of September was variable but on 6th, when it moved light south-east, there was markedly increased Swallow (320) and Meadow Pipit (1,100) movement, these numbers comparing with only 35 and 400, respectively the day before. Pipits were also numerous on 8th (500) and from 9th-11th (200, 200, 150). During the night of 15th-16th the wind again went south-east, backing east to north-east in the afternoon of 16th and veering to south-east gale (with a tendency to back east) towards dusk: the day was thickly overcast, with heavy showers. On 17th the wind was due east, force 3-5, with fog or thick fog all day, but by 18th, abated to force 1-3 with improved visibility, it was moving erratically between south-west and south-east. In the four days 16th-19th, 231 birds were trapped. Small-scale Meadow Pipit and Swal-

low passage continued throughout most of the second fortnight of the month with a jump in Pipit numbers from 50 to 300 on 18th and of Swallows from 10 to 300 on 19th. There was another productive spell of weather at the end of September. The wind went south-east in the evening of 26th and stayed in that quarter until mid-day 30th, when it backed to east, remaining there until noon on 3rd October.

Although September had opened auspiciously with a Scarlet Grosbeak on the 1st it was not until the wind went south-east on the 16th that there was any sizeable arrival of overseas migrants. That afternoon 5 Redstarts, 2 Whinchats, 3 Garden Warblers, 4 Pied Flycatchers and a Red-breasted Flycatcher were seen, and the first Tree Pipit for 2 weeks. Next day (17th), 4 Kestrels, 25 Wheatears, 50 Redstarts, 10 Whinchats, 7 Blue-throats, 10 Robins, 6 Blackcaps, 50 Garden Warblers (a high count), 6 Whitethroats, 5 Lesser Whitethroats, 15 Willow Warblers, 5 Chiffchaffs, 10 Pied Flycatchers, a Spotted Flycatcher, 15 Tree Pipits, a Wryneck, 10 Song Thrushes, 2 Redwings, 45 Siskins and 4 Chaffinches were recorded. The next few days were equally productive, although overall numbers fell: there was another Red-breasted Flycatcher on 18th September and 2 Lapland Buntings were present on 18th-19th. A second Aquatic Warbler was identified on 19th.

After a lull, a Turtle Dove appeared on 27th September, and the first major autumn arrival of Thrushes took place on 28th, when 75 Song Thrushes, 175 Redwings, 2 Ring Ouzels and 6 Blackbirds (but no Fieldfares) were recorded and 6 Pied Flycatchers and another Ortolan were seen. There were further falls of Turdidæ during the next five days. A Yellow-browed Warbler was present from 28th-30th September and a Rustic Bunting from 29th September to 2nd October.

Other noteworthy autumn occurrences not mentioned above included a Sooty Shearwater on 1st September, 2 Ruffs on 13th, the island's second Firecrest on 22nd, 10 Whimbrel (a large number for the May) on 24th, a Redpoll on 25th, a Gold-cuckoo on 28th, and a phenomenal movement of at least 10,000 "comic" Terns observed at about 11 a.m. on 30th September moving steadily south-east (none the day before, only 400 on 1st October and again none on 2nd). Little Stints were reported on 16th September (2), 20th-21st (1), 24th (1), 25th (2) and 26th-27th September (1).

Except for the first three days of the month, only occasional notes from the Principal Keeper are available for October. Four Blackcaps were present on 1st-2nd, 10 on 3rd, 1 on 23rd, 6 on 24th, 1 on 29th-30th (and one on 8th November). Chiffchaff numbers built up from 1 on 29th September to 15 on 2nd October and 40 on 3rd—a large number for the island; a single bird was seen on 27th. A third Red-breasted Flycatcher appear-

ed on 2nd October and was ringed next day. Goldcrests were estimated at 50 on 2nd October, the highest number of the autumn. A Great Grey Shrike came in the same day and there were others (at least 3 birds involved) on 21st-22nd, 25th and 30th. There was a Bluethroat on 3rd October, when 70 Skylarks (compared with 10 on 2nd) were recorded, as well as 2 Bar-tailed Godwits (first October occurrence). The lighthouse staff reported a big fall of Fieldfares, Redwings, Song Thrushes and Blackbirds on 21st October and subsequent days, but most of the birds had moved on by 26th. A pair of Bullfinches visited the island briefly on 28th October, the first record of this species since 1910, and a late Great Skua was seen on 9th November.

Breeding Populations

A pair of Teal *Anas crecca* nested for the first time on record. On 15th May a light-keeper flushed the duck from a nestful of eggs under the end of an uptilted plank on the North Ness. The eggs vanished later, probably taken by gulls. Down and feathers from the nest confirmed the identification.

On 28th May, the breeding burrow of a pair of Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* was discovered on the North Plateau and on 12th June the parent birds were encountered escorting 8 ducklings to the sea near Burnett's Leap. This is only the second recorded instance of this species breeding on the May: the first occasion was in 1936.

From 1956 to 1959 a pair of Swallows had nested in the Old Naval buildings. In 1960 two pairs bred, one in the same place, raising two broods, the other in the Tractor House, raising certainly one. Again only one pair of Pied Wagtails nested, and there was a big and quite unexpected drop in the number of nesting Linnets. Since 1953, when 3 pairs nested, the breeding population had built up to at least 10 pairs in 1959, but in 1960 only two pairs turned up, 3 of the birds involved having been ringed in previous years. One of the pairs certainly nested and possibly both, but it is improbable that more than two broods of young flew.

The daily census records for Teal and Linnet deserve mention. Between April 14th, when a pair of Teal were noted, and May 15th, when their nest was found, no Teal at all were recorded. Similarly, on many days in the weeks preceding 10th June no Linnets at all were entered, yet on that date a brood of young just out of the nest and three adults were seen in one of the traps. One is left with the impression that observers cannot have covered the island fully, otherwise surely at least the off-duty Linnets should have been noted.

No detailed counts were made of breeding sea-birds but the indications are that the Shag colony maintained itself at about

400 pairs and that the Fulmars had as successful a breeding season as they have ever had, for at least a dozen chicks hatched. For the first time Fulmars were recorded in November, when six birds were seen on and around the cliffs on 22nd and 23rd. Fulmars have now been noted on the island in every month of the year.

The two Kittiwake colonies established at East Tarbet and on the cliffs at the South End in 1956 continue to expand. The former has grown from 10 to 25 pairs, the latter from 2 to about 14.

Ringling

The ringling total for 1960—1,685 birds of 60 species—was higher than for several years past but only 18 nestlings were included in the total. This is greatly to be deplored because it is from birds ringling as young that much of the most valuable recovery and retrap information accrues. Too many visitors seem interested only in rare migrants and dismiss the local birds as beneath notice, yet the changing pattern of breeding populations, and the movements of the individuals concerned, are at least of equal fascination and offer in many cases a largely unexplored field. Rock and Meadow Pipits, Wheatears, Shags and the Auks are all species where nestling ringling could pay handsome dividends.

Two birds, Red-headed Bunting and Jack Snipe, were ringling on the island for the first time. The ringling totals for Turtle Dove (2), Swallow (10), Great Tit (5), Whinchat (32), Redstart (105), Grasshopper Warbler (8), Blackcap (30), Chiffchaff (30) and Tree Sparrow (10) were the highest ever. Those for Blue-throat (5), Wryneck (5), Garden Warbler (89) and Wren (34) were the second highest so far recorded. Exceptionally low totals were Linnet (8) and Shag (9).

Recoveries

A Fulmar ringling as a chick early in August 1960 was reported from the sea area north-west of Ireland (about 240 miles west of the May) at the end of October; this is the first recovery of a bird of this species hatched on the island. A Greater Black-backed Gull ringling as a youngster at Lake Orrevann, Rogaland, Norway, in June 1959, was picked up dead on the South Plateau in April 1960, whilst one ringling on the May in its first year in April 1956 was recovered in Jutland in November 1959.

There was one Cuckoo recovery—a bird ringling on the May in July 1958 when only a couple of months old which was picked up dead near Cluanie in Glenmoriston, Inverness-shire, in June 1960 after striking a telephone wire.

Blackbirds, as so often, provided a number of interesting

records. The most notable were those involving an adult male ringed at the Copeland Bird Observatory in County Down on 17th March 1960, which was trapped on the May on 5th April 1960 on its way back to its breeding quarters in Scandinavia, and a full-grown female ringed on the May in April 1960, caught as a breeding bird in Finland in July 1960—the first instance of a Blackbird ringed on the May being reported from that country. Two other Blackbird recoveries deserve mention. The first was a first winter bird ringed in October 1959, killed by a cat in July 1960 in Westphalia, Germany (presumably its breeding locality). The second was a bird ringed as a juvenile in July 1951, possibly but not certainly bred on the island; it was picked up exhausted at Galashiels, Selkirkshire, in October 1960, being then 9 years old. It was released next day, when it had recuperated.

In 1960 Blackcaps figured for the first time in the list of recoveries. Two birds were involved, and the movement of one of these, a full grown female ringed on the May in September 1956 and shot in the Lebanon in April 1960 is without precedent, for never before has a British-ringed Blackcap been recovered from anywhere near this area. The second bird, another full grown female, ringed in October 1960, was netted at San Rafael del Rio, Spain, on the 22nd of the same month.

There were few retrappings of note. The two Fulmars "Joe" and "Jessie" bred successfully. They have been mated since at least 1952 and "Joe" is known to have occupied the same nest site for at least 12 years.

Miscellaneous Observations

The two Blackcaps which it was hoped might stay on the island through the winter of 1959-60 did not in fact do so. They were seen together at the bird-table on 4th December 1959 and a single bird appeared there for the last time on the 16th.

The Rabbit colony remained free from a recurrence of myxomatosis but numbers were lower than in 1959. Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who visited the May in June in connection with trials of humane traps estimated the population at about 800 animals and certainly not more than 1,000. They noted that the Rabbits, although fairly well distributed, preferred the east side of the island, the highest concentrations being around Nettle Hollow but with fair numbers in the Ruff Green-St Andrew's Well area, and just north of the Tower. At that season they appeared to have evacuated the main gull colonies and there were thus very few indeed on Rona and the North Ness.

At the end of the year the Principal Keeper disposed of his sheep stock in anticipation of his retirement in the Spring of

1960. It will be interesting to observe how the Rabbit population reacts to the increased amount of grazing available to them, and to reduced trapping.

Grey Seal numbers remained much as in 1959 although a count of at least 60 animals towards the end of May is the highest yet recorded so early in the year. Two more animals marked on the Farne Islands the previous autumn were identified in February and March. No pups were dropped in 1960.

Six plants new to the island were reported and the unconfirmed identification of another (the moss *Bryum intermedium*) was upheld. The new records were the moss *Pohlia delicatula*, the lichen *Peltigera spuria*, the subspecies *inodora* of Scentless Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*), Aaron's Rod (*Verbascum thapsus*), Musk (*Mimulus moschatus*) and a species of Mallow (*Malva* sp. near *nicaeensis*). The last three all turned up in or around Lachie's Garden and fall into the category of casuals or escapes.

During the Summer, the Low Light was completely re-roofed. This work was quite beyond the Observatory's financial resources and was only made possible by a generous grant from the Helena Howden Endowment Trust, which the Committee acknowledges with gratitude. The next major repair, to be tackled in 1961, is the complete re-decoration of the living room.

Two parties sponsored by the Conservation Corps of the Council for Nature did excellent jobs in April and June, completely restoring the Gully Trap, repairing the Bain and Low Traps, making new wall-scaling ladders, erecting artificial cover, screening live cover and removing a great deal of unsightly war-time rubbish. It is greatly to be hoped that these very productive visits will become annual events.

Lastly, it should be recorded that during the Summer of 1960 visitors to the island included a party from St Augustine's Abbey, Ramsgate, with Fr. Paul Browne, O.S.B., one of its members. They brought with them a consecrated altar stone and on the afternoon of their arrival, 11th August, after it had been set in place, and the appropriate altar cloths and hangings erected, Compline (in English) was recited in the Chapel, perhaps the first public act of worship there for four centuries. Next morning, 12th August, Mass was offered—a Votive Mass of the Sacred Heart to the Glory of God and in memory of the Apostle St Adrian and his martyred companions. As one of the participants recorded in the log, "the ruined oratory, which to many a visitor must seem (as Columba said of his own Iona) 'mean and narrow' was transformed by sunshine and the colour of the vestments into a place of unique but austere loveliness—a beauty in no way alien to the character of the May."

Publications—

- EGGELING, W. J., *The Isle of May*. Edinburgh. 1960.
 LACK, D. A comparison of "drift-migration" at Fair Isle, the Isle of May and Spurn Point. *Scot. Birds*, 1: 295. 1960.
 WATSON, E. V. Further observations on the bryophyte flora of the Isle of May. II. Rate of succession in selected communities involving bryophytes. *Trans. Bot. Soc. Edinb.*, 39: 85. 1960.

LITTLE GULLS IN ANGUS AND FIFE

J. GRIERSON

(EDITOR'S NOTE. As will be seen, Mr Grierson's data do not go beyond the beginning of 1956, when he left Dundee, but it has been thought advisable to publish now this valuable account of the increase of the Little Gull in the Tay and Forth estuaries. Meanwhile Mr Brian Neath (1, Newearth Road, Walkden, Manchester) is collecting information on records of the Little Gull from all over Britain. From the Tay and Forth he is particularly anxious to receive records from between 1956 and 1958. For other records of this species in Scotland readers are referred to *Scottish Birds* I: 37, 118, 129, 133-4, 199, 202-3, 252, 279-80, and 339).

In a note to *British Birds* (vol. xlvii, pp. 170/172) Henry Boase described the substantial increase in numbers of Little Gull *Larus minutus* on the Angus and Fife coasts, and also drew attention to the marked separation in location of spring and autumn numbers. These annual visitations continue to take place and the object of this report is to give details of records obtained since Boase's note was published.

The Angus coast from Broughty Ferry to Easthaven was visited regularly by the writer, and other observers, from about mid-1953 to January 1956 and records obtained of the Little Gull are shown in Table I. Also shown are records from Largo Bay, Fife, for the same period. These records show that in 1954 the pattern followed that shown by Boase for previous years, with Angus receiving all the spring numbers, while the bulk of the autumn visitors were found at Largo Bay. The flocks of 19 on 23rd December 1953, and 29 on 24th October 1954, both at Monifieth, were considered unusual, though it should be noted that this gull is becoming more frequent as a winter visitor to Angus. In the spring of 1955 Little Gulls were once again absent from Largo Bay, while the total of 135 at Monifieth on 11th April was the highest on record. Fewer visits were made to this area during this period, which possibly accounts for the smaller number of records. In the autumn, the pattern



(Photograph by G. W. Day & Sons)

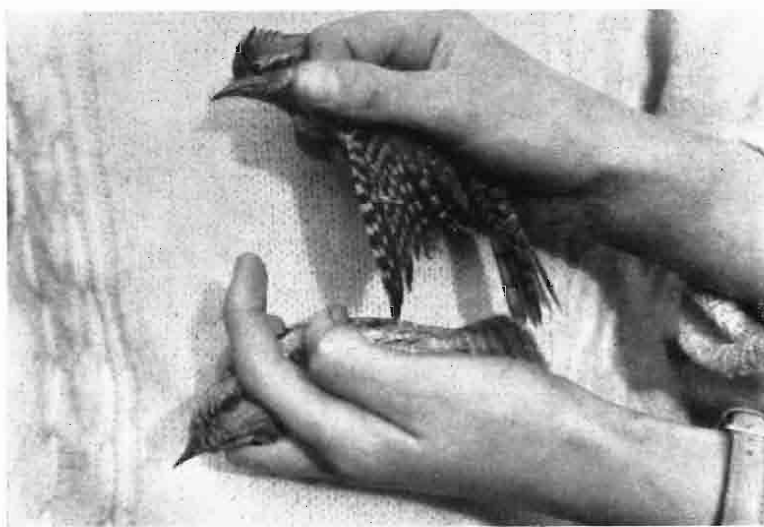
S.O.C. ANNUAL DINNER — North Berwick, 29th October, 1960

Top Table (left to right): Col. R. Meinertzhagen, Mr C. K. Mylne, Lady Haddington, Mr E. M. Nicholson, Sir Charles G. Connell (Chairman), Dr I. C. T. Nisbet, Lady Connell, Mr A. B. Duncan, Mrs David Bannerman, Lord Haddington and Miss W. U. Flower.



Aquatic Warbler, Isle of May, 27th August 1960.

(Photo: J. M. S. Arnott)



Wrynecks, Isle of May, 27th August 1960.

(Photo: J. M. S. Arnott)

to the end of October was as in previous years with most records for Fife, though the numbers involved were perhaps smaller than usual. The party of 22 at Carnoustie on 13th July was unusual enough, but the surprisingly large numbers at Monifieth on 5th/6th November are unprecedented during autumn. These numbers may be at least partly accounted for by the fact that during the preceding week, strong to gale force south-easterly winds prevailed over the North Sea.

In addition to the coastal records, Little Gulls were found at Morton Lochs, Fife, from mid-May to early June 1955, and again in the same period of 1956. These freshwater lochs lie about a mile south of Tayport and the same distance inland from the sea. In 1955, five were first noted there on 16th May, increasing to 18 or 19 on the 18th, about 30 on 23rd, and about 10 on 31st May, while the last record was for 17 on 5th June. All birds seen were immature. There is also one inland record for Angus, an immature bird at Lintrathen Reservoir on 28th August 1955.

As well as total counts, attempts were made whenever possible to assess the proportion of immature to adult birds on the Angus coast. At the best of times this was a difficult task for the flocks were usually found by the edge of the water and had to be approached across open shore. It was found that isolated flocks of Little Gulls were comparatively tame and on occasions it was possible to approach to within 25 yards or so. Generally, however, larger gulls were also present and being more wary, precluded a close approach. High winds and poor visibility also prevented other than total counts on occasions. The results of these counts are shown in Table II where it will be seen that, as a rule, immatures are in the majority in spring, with adults predominating in autumn. Comparable figures for Largo Bay are not available, though the late Miss Baxter informed me that she found the proportions to vary.

One feature of these visits was that the Little Gull showed a decided preference for a shore of fine sand, which exists at both Monifieth and Largo Bay. Also common to both areas is that a freshwater burn flows out over the sands into the sea, and it was around the mouths of these burns that the flocks were generally found. At Tayport on the south shore of the Tay, the shore is very muddy and though larger gulls are found there in large numbers, it is only rarely that the Little Gull is seen. In fact, there is only one record during the period, for a single bird on the shore at Tayport during 1954.

At Monifieth, the Little Gull uses the shore only as a resting ground where it comes to bathe and preen. It has never been noted as feeding when on the shore, or by the water's edge, though on four occasions numbers have been watched hawking for insects over the sands and adjacent moorland. (The birds

at Morton Lochs seemed to feed mainly in this way). Generally, feeding took place over the sea, the birds swinging back and forth low over the water, frequently dropping to pick from the surface. On occasions they were seen to hover in tern-like fashion about twelve feet up then drop lightly to pick from the surface. On one occasion, three adults were watched for some minutes diving from flight. Generally, the dives ended in partial submergence only but on three occasions complete submergence was noted. The search for food was not confined to close inshore, but the flocks dispersed over a large sea area from a few yards out to about a mile or more offshore. It is perhaps worth recording that the Little Gull was never seen to join other gulls in feeding at the sewer outfalls in the river.

Despite the large numbers seen at Monifieth in November 1955, the marked separation of spring and autumn numbers remained a feature of the Little Gull visits to these areas, though there would seem to be no apparent reason for this. It may be that food supply is at least partly responsible.

Owing to other commitments, it was impossible for me to continue my investigations into this problem, but I hope that these notes will stimulate others into taking up what promises to be a very rewarding study.

I am indebted to the late Miss E. V. Baxter for records for Largo Bay, and to John Berry and W. J. Eggeling for notes from Morton Lochs. Information relating to the Angus coast is gratefully acknowledged from Henry Boase, Gordon B. Corbet, Alexander Cross, John Gordon and Wallace Wild.

TABLE I.

Total Counts of Little Gulls on Angus and Fife Coasts.

Date	Angus	Fife	Date	Angus	Fife	Date	Angus	Fife
1953			28/2	23		1954		
23/8	6		6/3	3		8/5	13	
27/8		5	7/3	32		16/5	1	
6/10	6		14/3	2		17/5	1	
7/10		22	17/3	17		2/7	3	
16/10		3	21/3	60		27/8		3
20/12	19		28/3	19		30/8		14
1954			3/4	73		3/9		21
24/1	10		6/4	25		14/9		6
31/1	13		7/4	95		18/9		13
7/2	1		15/4	60		20/9		6
12/2	9		16/4	76		23/9		14
13/2	6		18/4	c. 60		1/10		8
20/2	1		19/4	13		4/10		c. 60
21/2	3		21/4	23		7/10		20
25/2	3		1/5	13		12/10		15

1954			1955			1955		
Date	Angus	Fife	Date	Angus	Fife	Date	Angus	Fife
14/10		50/60	17/2	1		1/10		30/40
16/10	6		20/3	3		3/10		2
20/10	3		26/3	6		6/10		1
23/10	1		11/4	135*		7/10		3
24/10	29		13/4	12		29/10	3	
28/10		12	14/4	14		5/11	70	
1/11		7	15/4	9		6/11	116	
4/11		7	17/4	2		12/11	39	
20/11	3		1/5	1		20/11	45	
3/12		19	8/5	2		26/11	11	
4/12	present		13/7	22		11/12	11	
5/12	present		17/8		17	18/12	5	
1955			4/9	7		1956		
23/1	3		9/9		6	8/1	4	
2/2	1		24/9		1	26/2	1	

*11th April 1955: In addition to this number a further 50 were seen about a mile further east and may have been different birds.

TABLE II. *Adult/Immature Proportions—Angus Only.*

1953				1955			
Date	Total	Adult	Immat.	Date	Total	Adult	Immat.
23/8	6	6		23/1	3	3	
6/10	6	4	2	17/2	1	1	
20/12	19	10	9	20/3	3	2	1
1954				26/3	6	6	
24/1	10	5	5	11/4	135	c. 35	c. 100
31/1	13	10	3	15/4	9	6	3
7/2	1		1	1/5	1		1
12/2	9	2	7	8/5	2	2	
13/2	6	2	4	4/9	7	7	
20/2	1	1		29/10	3	3	
21/2	3	1	2	5/11	70	33	37
25/2	3	2	1	6/11	116	82	34
28/2	23	17	6	12/11	39	36	3
7/3	32	9	23	20/11	45	36	9
17/3	17	3	14	11/12	11	9	2
7/4	95	20	75	1956			
16/4	76	10	66	8/1	4	4	
8/5	13	11	2				
17/5	1		1				
2/7	3		3				
16/10	6	3	3				
20/10	3	3					
23/10	1	1					
24/10	29	21	8				
20/11	3		3				

REVIEWS

THE BIRDS OF THE BRITISH ISLES. Vol. IX. David Armitage Bannerman. Illustrated by G. E. Lodge. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1961. Pp. xii : 398; 26 col. plates. Price £3, 3s.

The previous volumes of Dr Bannerman's great work are by now so familiar that it seems unnecessary to comment on their scope, style and presentation, and the eagerly awaited ninth volume, which deals with about half the waders—from Godwits to Buff-breasted Sandpiper, in Hartert-Handbook order—is a worthy successor which can only be described as magnificent.

Dr Bannerman acts more in the capacity of compiler and editor than author, making full use of his astonishing familiarity with ornithological literature, but interspersing the text throughout with expressions of opinion in his own characteristically charming but forthright manner. Summary castigation is meted out both to egg collectors and to selfish and thoughtless photographers. He upholds, with clearly stated reasons, all the Hastings-Romney Marsh records, upon which an "official" pronouncement is still awaited. He believes in the Faeroe Snipe, and sympathises with Jourdain's battle for the substantiation of the Spitsbergen Phalarope. He believes that the Eskimo Curlew is not extinct but does not think that the Red-necked Phalarope is ever likely to attempt to breed anywhere in Scotland other than in the well known places: let us hope that the former be correct, but that in the latter he may yet be proved wrong.

The customary practice is followed of having large sections specially written by acknowledged authorities on individual species or areas, those most called upon in this volume being Dr G. M. Sutton of Oklahoma University and Dr H. M. S. Blair, who has placed his wide knowledge and experience of Scandinavian birds unreservedly at Dr Bannerman's disposal. Dr Sutton writes on the American species as a sensitive and observant field naturalist frequently gracing his articles with some engaging personal reminiscence of the bird described, while to those who are fortunate enough to have opportunities of being confounded by unidentifiable stints his discussions should prove a revelation. With regard to Dr Blair's contribution, it is not too much to say that we are as deeply indebted to Dr Bannerman for bringing forward some of Dr Blair's work, of which only too little has hitherto been published, as Dr Bannerman is to Dr Blair for his generous assistance.

It is not impossible to find minor faults on careful scrutiny. For instance, one could dispute the presumption (shared by the Editors of *British Birds*) that the Black-tailed Godwits re-

cently breeding in Caithness and Shetland have been of the nominate race, when all specimens from Faeroe or Norway ever examined have proved to be *islandica*. It is stated also that satisfactory evidence is still lacking of the breeding of the Red-necked Phalarope in Spitsbergen although Dr Lovenskiold proved this in 1949, but the slight imperfections in the Spitsbergen records are a reflection not of any shortcoming on the part of Dr Bannerman so much as of the serious want of an up to date book on the birds of Spitsbergen.

The plates by George Lodge vary a bit in quality, but although one or two are rather disappointing, others are very fine indeed, both pictorially and as bird portraits. It becomes increasingly evident as the book progresses that no serious bird library is going to be complete without it, and while congratulating Dr Bannerman on his achievement we look forward to further volumes not without some slight feeling of relief that the winning post is now almost within sight.

I. D. P.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR. J. L. Cloudsley-Thompson. Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd. 1960. 15s.

"An eminent botanist relates that on a collecting expedition in tropical forest he employed a tame monkey to gather epiphytic orchids from the upper branches of the trees. One day he saw some magnificent orchids growing on some lianas that hung down a vertical cliff. He told the monkey to climb down for them, but it refused and neither bribe nor entreaty would persuade it to go. The poor botanist was feeling quite desperate when at last the monkey relented, shrugged its shoulders, and began to pull up the lianas hand over fist."

Professor Cloudsley-Thompson's new book is one which anyone interested in animal behaviour—and that ought to mean every field naturalist—should read. His information has been obtained either at first hand or has been checked by himself, and he never makes the mistake of the orchid-seeking botanist of failing to keep a clear mind on the immediate objective.

The book sprang from a series of London University Extra-Mural lectures: it explains simply and very readably the modern approach to the study of animal behaviour, and analyses the complex interactions between physiology and environment that form the basis of behaviour in higher forms, illustrating them by comparison between the simple reactions of lower animals, the rigid instincts of insects, fishes and birds (in which learning is comparatively unimportant) and the more plastic type of behaviour found in mammals, which culminates in human insight. Although the book is easy for the non-specialist to follow, serious students of animal behaviour will also

learn much from it, for it contains accounts of experiments and observations from an unusually wide field.

As Dr Kenneth Mellanby points out in his foreword, the author shows very clearly that the amateur who is willing to accept the standards and discipline of the professional can contribute observations which may advance the frontiers of knowledge, and thus help to solve some of the problems raised in his book. This matter of standards and discipline is important: it is something which all amateur naturalists, including many ornithologists, should constantly bear in mind.

It is difficult to understand how a book so beautifully presented as this, with a wealth of photographs and line drawings, can be produced so cheaply. It is undoubtedly a bargain. Your reviewer appreciated especially the two superb photographs of owls; the photograph of grunion spawning; the drawing of a female shrew with her "caravan" of young (which have an innate tendency to hold the tail of the one in front during the first three weeks after birth); the diagram of hippopotamus territories furrowed with trails and landmarked with lavatories—because he had never appreciated that such territories existed; and all the pictures which illustrate the chapter on courtship and mating.

This is a book to excite interest and stimulate observation; it deserves a wide sale.

W. J. E.

IDENTIFICATION FOR RINGERS No. 1: The Genera *Locustella*, *Luscinola*, *Acrocephalus* and *Hippolais*. Kenneth Williamson. Oxford, British Trust for Ornithology. 1960. Pp. 56, 4 plates. 3s 6d.

As more observatories are manned, more independent ringing is carried on, and mist-nets become widespread, an increasing number of rarities is recorded. Better aids to identification are therefore required, and here is the first of them, an excellent beginning to a planned series of booklets.

The rarer warblers include some of the hardest migrants to identify. Guide No. 1 deals not only with those members of the four genera concerned which have occurred in Britain, but with all their races in the Palaearctic which "have even an outside chance of drifting to the British Isles." Each account, of the 26 species accepted, begins with a minimum description of plumage, since details and illustrations can be found in the usual reference books. More space is given to the differentiation of allied races, and to cases where confusion with a commoner species could occur. The author stresses those points which help identification in the hand. Field characters are therefore included only in certain cases, though references to journals are given. Ageing, colours of soft parts, measurements, weight (if known), wing formula, moult (if information

is sufficient) and distribution are the other headings in each section. Valuable "CAUTIONS" stress points where misidentification might arise. The parts on separation of first winter birds from adults will be specially welcomed by those who have found available information inadequate. So will the descriptions of soft parts, taken from a wide range of living or freshly killed material. Moults are considered in relative detail, providing a stimulus to this little studied facet of the ringer's work. Its importance is shown in the same author's paper in *Bird Migration I*: No. 4, of August 1960. Tables at the end show Mr T. Bagenal's statistical analysis of the measurements of long series for each race.

It is hoped that further numbers in this series are speeding along the assembly line. Guide No. 1, with the Migration Research Officer's clear, succinct text, the effectively illustrative photographs by Eric Hosking and C. C. Doncaster, and the well designed cover by Robert Gillmor, begins to fill the gap.

W. U. F.

THE ISLE OF MAY. By W. J. Eggeling. Edinburgh 1960. Oliver & Boyd. pp. xiv + 280. Photographs and line drawings. 30s.

Islands, lighthouses, sea birds; all are associated in our minds. The birds came first and in our seas one can imagine with what eagerness island after island was occupied, or re-occupied, as the ice moved towards the pole. Perhaps man followed early, sometimes in monastic settlements seeking refuge from the temptations of this earthly life. Lighthouses came much later and to all manner of islands, and this reviewer has observed the breeding of sooty and noddy terns from lighthouse islands in the coral seas of two oceans.

Those islands have no history whereas the Isle of May, which lies across the entrance to the Firth of Forth and so to Scotland, has everything—breeding birds, occasional seals, a ruined chapel as evidence of monastic settlement and a lighthouse with an earlier beacon erected in 1636. On this a ton of coal, rising to three times that amount when fanned by winter gales, was burnt nightly for almost two centuries. The island is a narrow mile long strip of olivine-dolerite and is the property of the Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses who in 1956 entered into a 99-year Nature Reserve Agreement with the Nature Conservancy so that it is now a National Nature Reserve.

All springs initially from the activities of the Midlothian Ornithological Club which in 1934 established the Isle of May Bird Observatory which was the first co-operatively managed migration study-centre in Great Britain. After the war, with interest including financial help happily secured from the

Scottish Universities, the range of activities enlarged to include every aspect of life upon the island.

Apart from its resident breeding population, essentially of sea birds, the Isle of May is admirably placed, should the wind be from the east, to catch north or south bound migrants flying along the continental coast. From the headquarters of the Observatory, in the now disused Low Light, watch is kept on the four Heligoland traps where intercepted migrants are identified, ringed and released so that gradually, from later identifications elsewhere, the pattern of bird migration becomes revealed.

Dr Eggeling, introduced far too late into the review, gives us what is clearly a labour of love, a delightfully written and beautifully illustrated book which tells us all that is known about the history of this notable Scottish island and about its animals and plants and the activities of the Observatory. The human element is not forgotten. In extracts from the daily log are recorded, in what one may hope represents some degree of immortality, the triumphs and exasperations of the watchers culminating in the poet's cry,

Oh, for a week of south-east rains,
When Scarlet Grosbeaks are a pest!
Ah! vain is hope! The wind remains
Unalterably West.

Because the Isle of May is distinguished by its bird watchers no less than by its birds.

An altogether admirable book which even a zoologist, let alone a true ornithologist, delights to possess.

C. M. Y.

ATLAS OF EUROPEAN BIRDS. K. H. Voous. pp. 284. 419 maps. 355 photographs. London and Edinburgh, Nelson. 1960. 70s.

This sumptuous and fascinating book is one that the ornithologist will always be taking from the shelf and looking into, whether to find some new fact, to admire the illustrations or simply for the plebeian pastime of discovering what percentage of European breeding birds he himself has seen. Like Gaul, it has three parts, text, maps and photographs. The last are of varying quality, but there are masterpieces in the pictures, for example, of the Black Stork, Capercaillie and Robin. It is encouraging to see the overall excellence of British bird photography: most of our masters (Hosking, Yeates, Markham) are here, although it is a pity that C. C. Doncaster is not represented. The "Old Masters" are worthily represented by Arthur Brook. Many eastern European species are not figured, pictures of which are especially useful to the western naturalist and, while realising that of some of these no photographs exist, it would make the book more complete if at least

there were line drawings of them. Some, like that of Harlequin Duck and Kentish Plover, are most useful for identification, but No. 320, labelled as "Snow Bunting," is surely a picture of a Redpoll.

The maps are the essential part of this book. Britain occupies such a small part of the earth that the red spots on her surface are sometimes difficult to see and, from a solely insular point of view, larger scale maps might have been possible, especially when a species' breeding range is confined to Europe. Rightly, the species here is the unit: there is a certain tendency towards "lumping"; the Bean and Pink-footed Geese remain together, our Gannet (somewhat hesitantly) is fused with the Australian and African Gannets and, rather daringly, the Pine Bunting with the Yellow, but, for reasons well explained, Professor Voous has not gone so far as to "lump" the Gyr. Saker and Lanner Falcons. To stimulate the mind on the subject of the origins of present distribution the maps of the Black-winged Kite, and of the Hen, Pallid and Montagu's Harrier can be recommended. Sometimes there are answers to the question marks that appear here and there; if, for example, the author were to visit the episcopal palace at Oristano he would discover whether the Tree Sparrow breeds in Sardinia or no.

The text is the complement to the maps: here are described the geographical faunal type of each species, its range in relation to isotherms, its necessary habitat, food and nesting requirements, and the possibility of competition with other species: "all these," says Sir Landsborough Thomson in his preface, "are limiting factors on distribution." The material is well up to date and there are excellent accounts of the recent spread of the Collared Dove, Syrian Woodpecker, Cattle Egret and Fieldfare. The nesting of the Dotterel and White-backed Woodpecker in Italy are mentioned, though perhaps that of the Wood Sandpiper in Scotland and the White Stork in Italy are too recent.

In spite of its price this book will well repay purchase, as the buyer can look forward to many happy hours of interest and entertainment. The author himself appears as a delightful character in the modesty of his introduction and the generosity of his dedication to all his helpers: they could not have wanted a better return for their help.

M. F. M. M.

SEA BIRDS, Charles Vaucher. Edinburgh, Oliver & Boyd. 1960. £5, 5s 0d.

A sea-bird colony, with its never-ending merry-go-round of action and its never-silent babel of voices, is a magnet which attracts every bird-lover.

In Scotland we take our sea-birds for granted. On sand-dune

and shore, on headland and stack, on islet and pinnacle, the birds, like the pounding sea itself, are there as a matter of course. Observation and photography of our native species have reached very high standards, and it is not surprising that, from time to time, guests from other lands come to visit our sea-bird sanctuaries.

One such is Charles Vaucher, whose "Sea Birds" results from visits to, among other places, the Bass Rock, Tentsmuir, and the Farnes, as well as to islands near Stockholm, and those near Tvarminne in Finland. The book has been translated from the French, and has been admirably produced by Messrs. Oliver and Boyd, who have maintained the high standards to which we are accustomed.

British readers will be particularly interested in the Gull-billed and Caspian Terns, and the Little Gull. The other species dealt with are familiar enough to us all—the Fulmar, Shag, Gannet, Cormorant, Eider, Shelduck, Arctic Skua and the commoner Gulls, Terns and Auks.

The text makes pleasant, though brief reading. The author's love of the sea is clear throughout. In the main text the birds are described as he saw them in the various places he visited. At the end of the book the salient characteristics of each species are summarised on text-book lines.

The 252 plates (of which 15 are in colour) dominate the text, and must therefore primarily concern us here. In many of them, the author displays the originality and taste of his race; they are the work of an individual who upon occasion is also a master craftsman. Such pictures are the Shelduck flying on page 123, or walking on wet sand, as on the next two pages. Similar masterpieces are the Eiders in flight on page 104; the Eider group on page 110; the Sandwich Terns flying over Tentsmuir on page 176; the Puffins on page 236; the Rock Pipit on page 245, and the study of Terns flying, on page 248. All these are exhilarating and refreshing pictures which epitomise the animation of the birds. With a few exceptions, British workers have tended to fight shy of such subjects. One could scarcely see too many of these splendid away-from-the-nest studies.

The seascapes, too, are quite sublime; Vaucher has a soul as well as a camera. As with his best descriptive passages in the text, he has the power to raise a spirit of elation in the reader, as though one were there on the headland or in the ternery.

Nevertheless, as one turns the pages of the book, this initial feeling of elation begins to pass. A feeling of uneasiness creeps in. The price of the book is five guineas and one is entitled to take a closer look at it. A continental photographer who

publishes a book of seabird pictures in Britain is, after all, entering the lion's den.

There seem to be too many pictures of some species; sometimes the bird looks ill at ease, so that one wishes the picture were not there, as with the Fulmar on page 34, and that on page 45.

At other times, over-enlargement and too close a trim, combined with the fact that the bird is looking out of the picture, give a "gross" result. The Shag on page 56, the Gannet on page 79, the Sandwich Tern on page 180, the Razorbill on page 198, the Guillemot on page 213 and the Puffin on page 222 are positively overwhelming. The actors lack elbow-room.

As against this, the "big-head" of the Eider on page 102 is most successful: it conveys all the intimacy of a close-up view, without overpowering the observer.

At times, the photographs have technical imperfections which ought to have excluded them: examples are the Shag on page 59 and the two Eiders and chicks on page 109, all of which have excessive contrast, while the Shag on page 74, the standing Arctic Skua on page 127 and the Puffins on page 220 have ugly out-of-focus foregrounds. Worst of all is the picture of Black-backed Gulls mating, on page 133, the foreground of which is reminiscent of the tangled girder-work of a dive-bombed aircraft hanger. This photograph should certainly have been taken, but only for showing say, to Dr Tinbergen. It may well merit publication in a book on behaviour, but hardly in its present context.

Incidentally, if the coloured plate on page 117 shows the Lesser Black-back, surely the bird on the same nest shown on page 132 is not the Greater Black-back? And what of those on page 133?

The "gardening" is often bad, and fuzzy foregrounds, due partly to too low a viewpoint, and to lack of a swing back, all too frequently take the gilt from the gingerbread, as in the Turnstones on page 244 and 245. Otherwise, these two pictures are better than most as they show a more pleasing ratio of surrounding to bird.

On the other hand, the nest and egg studies tend to suffer from too high a viewpoint, giving a dull, plan-like result.

It is in regard to such considerations that most Continental and American bird-photographers are a long way behind the standards set by such men as Chislett, Hosking, Barlee, Lowes and Higham in this country. Nor may such points (though remaining entirely valid) matter quite so much in a cheap book. In a five guinea volume, however, we are entitled to expect uniformly high standards.

Summarising, Mr Vaucher has produced an invigorating

book about a dynamic group of birds. His pictures are a mixed bag, the best being second to none. One is left with a feeling of real regret that a more critical selection was not made, as a book containing only two-thirds of the plates would not only have been smaller and cheaper: it would have been much better.

C. E. P.

REV. JOHN LEES, OF AVOCH, ROSS-SHIRE

One of the outstanding ornithologists of the north of Scotland passed away in the Royal Northern Infirmary, Inverness, on 7th February 1961.

Apart from his pastoral work his lifelong interest was in natural history. He often said that his degree should have been a B.Sc. and not a M.A. It was fortunate that he was called to a parish which was as favourably situated as Avoch, on the north side of the Moray Firth, where rare as well as common migrants congregate; it has even been suggested as a possible site for another bird observatory. His years of patient and detailed observation from day to day, and extensive ringing on a scale open to few amateur ornithologists gave him an intimate knowledge of the birds of the area, which he was ever ready to share with others. He was a pillar of strength to the Inverness Bird Watching Group as well as a supporter of various national ornithological bodies. His major contributions to the literature were on the Robin, the early breeding of the Rock Dove and wintering Blackcaps. He was the first to record the Nightingale on the Scottish mainland, and among recent species reported by him is the White-billed Diver. His name will always be associated with the birds of Easter Ross.

M. R.

CORRESPONDENCE

SISKINS USING FEET AS FEEDING AIDS

In an earlier number (*antea*, p. 205), I. F. Stewart records watching a Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* using a foot as an aid to feeding, and remarks that this is the first time he has seen a bird of this family "apparently steadying a food plant in this way to facilitate its nibbling at it." It may therefore be of interest to record similar behaviour on the part of Siskins *C. spinus*.

On 6th January 1961 at Glassel, Aberdeenshire, I had an excellent opportunity of watching a small flock of these birds at a range of only a few feet as they fed on the small cones of the Alder *Alnus glutinosa*. These cones are arranged later-

ally along the branches on stalks between 1 and 2 inches long and they tend to droop below the level of the branches. To get at them, a Siskin would sometimes adopt the familiar inverted position, but much more frequently it would reach out to pull in the cone with its beak, at the same time extending its front toes so as to clamp the cone in against the branch on which the bird was perched. Several attempts were sometimes needed to achieve this position, but the bird was then able to work over the cone thoroughly. I should stress that the feet were merely used as a clamp, and that I never saw a bird make any attempt to lift a foot off the branch to assist in pulling in a cone. In this respect the Siskin's use of its feet was much more restricted than is the case, for instance, in the tit family.

D. G. ANDREW.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE, NORTH BERWICK, 1960

Why a Sassenach, and particularly one suffering from amnesia, should have been ordered to report the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Club is far from clear. Suffice it that George Waterston's Annual Circus, as it is now widely known, came to North Berwick on 28th October 1960 for three days and the secretary of the Club, whether it be George or his able successor (Mrs Waterston), is fast becoming as notable an impresario with his performing ornithologists as Bertram Mills is with his clowns and walruses and acrobats. Whether his troupe is balancing on some tightrope of avian controversy, or making witty after-dinner speeches, all air and fire, they are all well worth watching and listening to.

True, the weather was not at its best and a Dr Johnson, watching the rain-soaked gaggles of excursionists homing to the Marine Hotel out of the mist on Saturday, would have observed that "it is very strange, and also very melancholy, that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us even to call bird-watching one of them." It is true, too, that the lounge, so long sacred to solemn golfing shop, and reserved, in the words of the programme, "for informal refreshments", resounded later that night with some of the most unornithological anecdotes to which we have ever lent our ears, but everybody seemed to enjoy themselves immensely. Nor did any ill-mannered Hoodwink turn up on the greens or foreshore of North Berwick to embitter rival identifiers. In fact the only *contretemps* caused by a live bird was when a Hawfinch crossed the bow of the leading car of one excursion and nearly caused a classic pile-up while the leader was braking hurriedly to watch it.

Everyone was sorry to say goodbye to Sir Charles Connell who, after presiding over the Club for three busy and prosperous years, is vacating the office he has notably adorned. He will not be forgotten, but his successor is that redoubtable figure, Professor Maury Meiklejohn, from whom no bird, however improbable, dares to hide its identity. For once our new President looked naked without Excalibur, his great binocular, which he had sheathed and left in the cloakroom, but all wish well to him and his new Vice-President, Dr Ian Pennie of Golspie.

The various meetings ran without a hitch. Mr James Wishart, the Provost, welcomed us to North Berwick and made us free of the Burgh Museum. The huge crowd which came to the papers on Saturday taxed the acoustics and space of the Royal Hotel dining-room badly, but all three of the speakers, Sir Charles himself on *Birds in Literature*, and E. M. Nicholson and I. C. T. Nisbet on *Ornithology in Europe and America* gave us much to think about.

A vast concourse of members and guests sat down to the Annual Dinner and it was followed by some quite brilliant speeches, notably those of Arthur Duncan and Christopher Mylne, unexpected by those who had met them an hour or two before, looking broody and preoccupied like a Cuckoo about to lay. There were sideshows too, some fine films of birds, Dr Jenkins' grouse exhibit from Glen Esk, and a magnificent set of original paintings by Archibald Thorburn. The organisers can rest assured that the Conference was from every point of view a success, and that the Club in these matters can give a useful lead to other clubs in less favoured portions of the British Isles.

J. K. S.

SHORT NOTES

GYR FALCON IN WEST STIRLING/DUNBARTONSHIRE

On 5th November 1960, while I was watching Grey-lags near Wards Farm near the mouth of the River Endrick my attention was drawn to a general uprising of duck and Lapwings on the marsh as a big, nearly buzzard-sized predator made a pass at them. My first impression was of an outsized Peregrine, but the method of attack was unlike that bird's, not so steeply angled and more laboured. The outline was altogether heavier, with the wings broader and not so clean-cut. The bird was dark grey above, whitish below. As the Lapwings rose to the height of several hundred feet, it circled slowly and made repeated attempts to knock one of them down, never stooping but always coming in on a level trajectory. Though the precise race must be left in doubt, a touch of white on the nape as the bird swung round into the sun strongly suggested an Ice-

land Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus islandus*. These manoeuvrings continued until the falcon and Lapwings were well over 1,000 feet above Loch Lomond, when the former gave up the chase and flew off up the loch.

W. KENNETH RICHMOND.

COLLARED DOVES IN RHUM AND LEWIS

On 5th May 1960 I saw a Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* on the Castle greens at Kinloch on the Isle of Rhum. It was feeding on mash which was put out daily in buckets for two ponies on the greens. Because of its tameness I thought on this occasion that it might have been a Barbary Dove *S. risoria* but the following morning was able to watch the bird again at close quarters feeding with the ponies and could confirm it as the Collared Dove. It had a clear black half ring on the back of the neck. The primaries appeared black, contrasting strongly with the otherwise dusty brown colour. The underparts were paler and there was a pinkish tinge on the breast. When the bird took flight the tail revealed much white. It returned at feeding-time on the morning of 7th May, but I did not see it afterwards.

P. WORMELL.

On 2nd June 1960 a Collared Dove flew across the road at Stornoway, near the County Hospital, and settled in a tree above me, where I had good views of it at about 25 yards through my field-glasses. Its most unusual pinkish grey plumage was conspicuous, as was the black stripe on the back of its neck. As it flew away I seemed to notice that its outer tail-feathers were white in colour. It seemed very tired.

W. A. J. CUNNINGHAM.

(Mr William Crawford informs us that at the Morayshire colony of the Collared Dove on 1st September 1960 he saw seventeen birds, eleven of which were perched on one television aerial!—Ed.).

GREEN WOODPECKER BREEDING IN DUMFRIES-SHIRE

On 6th May 1960 Mr R. Adamson and myself found the newly excavated nesting hole of a pair of Green Woodpeckers *Picus viridis* in a deciduous wood in Dumfries-shire. We were attracted to the tree by the amount of wood chips lying on the ground at the base of the trunk, and the nest-hole was about eight feet from the ground. The nest contained no eggs, but caught on the bark at the edge of the hole I found a small green feather.

On 19th May we revisited the site and were both thrilled and relieved when we saw, with the help of a small torch and

mirror, a Green Woodpecker brooding. On flushing the bird we saw at least four eggs. On the evening of 6th June the bird was very reluctant to leave so, assuming that the eggs had hatched or were very near hatching, we let her brood undisturbed.

On none of our visits to the nest did we ever see a mate but twice in April we had seen a pair of Green Woodpeckers about a quarter of a mile from the nest site.

E. DICERBO.

BARRED WARBLER IN LEWIS

A juvenile Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* was picked up dead by Mr A. MacEachern on 20th September 1960. It was sent by Mr W. A. J. Cunningham to the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow, where its identity was confirmed by Mr C. E. Palmer and Miss W. U. Flower.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER IN STIRLINGSHIRE

While stalking a Great Grey Shrike along the disused railway line near Buchlyvie on 6th November 1960 I noticed what at first I took to be a small pale Chiffchaff. Its call-note, however, was unfamiliar, and Dr and Mrs Scobie (who were with me) described it as a clear ringing *tseet tseet*. The bird was retiring and elusive, slipping from branch to branch in the willows in company with Long-tailed Tits. Its short-tailed appearance made me curious and, when eventually it emerged, it showed a yellowish eye-stripe and a double wing-bar (the one on the upper wing-coverts being slightly obscured) with lighter edgings to the secondaries, and underparts appearing silvery white. Superficially it resembled a Goldcrest, but the call-note was most distinctive. The bird was undoubtedly a Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*. The latest Scottish date for this species mentioned in *The Handbook* is also 6th November.

W. KENNETH RICHMOND.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING IN SHETLAND

Mr George Waterston informs us that a Rose-coloured Starling *Pastor roseus* was picked up exhausted on Foula by Mrs J. A. Gear on 13th Aug. 1960. It died a short time later and was sent to the Royal Scottish Museum for preservation, where it was sexed as female. Mr A. T. Macmillan has examined the skin and says that it is "nicely pink and therefore apparently adult."

CORRIGENDUM

Antea 1: 345. The observer of Lapland Buntings at Aberlady was J. Baird, not J. Ballantyne, as stated.



PAIR OF PIED FLYCATCHERS

(Photograph by J. E. Ruxton)



WHIMBREL AND CHICK, SHETLAND

(Photograph by Rosemary Upton)

CURRENT NOTES

(The observers whose initials are given below are: A. Ablett, G. R. Acklam, D. R. Anderson, D. G. Andrew, J. Baird (J. Bd.), J. Ballantyne (J. Bal.), Miss P. G. Baxter, D. Bell, H. B. Bell, Dr J. Berry (J. By.), W. Birrell (W. Bi.), R. O. Blyth, H. Boase, T. Boyd, W. Brotherston (W. Br.), W. S. Caie, N. Campbell, Miss M. H. E. Cuninghame, C. Dunlop, Dr W. J. Eggeling, Sir R. Erskine-Hill, G. Fraser, Seton Gordon, D. Knowlson, D. Lawson, Lt-Col. W. M. Logan Home, J. Hoy, Miss R. S. Hunter, G. Kerr, A. J. B. Loudon, A. Macdonald, Miss G. Macgregor, A. T. Macmillan, Mrs D. MacRobert, W. Marshall, R. K. Martin, M. F. M. Meiklejohn, D. Mills, Miss M. Mowat, Mrs D. A. Murray, B. S. Nau, J. Oliver, Dr I. D. Pennie, Mrs I. Rainier, W. K. Richmond, E. L. Roberts, I. B. Roy, Dr M. Rusk, J. Shanks, W. Skene, P. Slater, R. W. J. Smith, T. C. Smout, R. P. Snodgrass, T. Speed, L. A. Urquhart, Dr R. S. Weir and G. E. R. Young. All dates, unless otherwise stated, apply to 1960 or early 1961).

Breeding and Distribution

A late brood of six **Teal**, fully feathered but still not in flight, was seen at Gladhouse on 28th August (R.W.J.S.).

Four **Grey Lag Geese** were seen at Marlee Loch, near Blairgowrie, Perthshire, on 16th July (H.B.) and one at Gladhouse on 20th August (R.W.J.S.). These birds are included in this section in view of the possibility of their having summered. (Ed.).

A **Green Woodpecker** flew across the road near Lochgilphead, Argyll, on 13th November (I.R.) and another was heard calling on 3rd February near Killearn, W. Stirling, the first the observer has recorded from the district (A.J.B.L.). One was also observed in a small deciduous wood on the N.E. side of Dalmahoy Hill, Balerno, S.W. of Edinburgh, on 10th, 17th and 24th May 1959 (D.B.), while another was seen clinging to the concrete blocks at Aberlady Bay on 27th December (G.M., J.S.).

A **Marsh or Willow Tit** was briefly seen on 12th August in the marshy surroundings of a small pool with scattered willow-trees at Vallevfield, Fife (J.H.).

A **Chiffchaff** was heard singing on the Isle of Eigg on 15th June (D.K.).

At Ormiston, East Lothian, fifteen **Crossbills**, including several juveniles and three males were observed on 15th May: only one remained on 24th May (J.Bd.).

Several **Tree Sparrows** were found in a thick hawthorn hedge at Dundonald, Ayrshire, on 27th October (L.A.U.).

Autumn Migration, 1960

On 21st August there was a **Red-necked Grebe** off the rocks at Barassie, Ayrshire (L.A.U.).

On 13th September at Montrose Basin what were first thought to be posts turned out to be 34 **Heron**s, and six more were found elsewhere in the Basin (H.B.).

Twenty-seven **Shoveler** on 23rd September at Duddingston Loch is a record number for the locality (D.R.A.).

An **Osprey** is recorded from Trotternish, Skye, on 20th September (Miss J. Brownlow *per* S.G.).

Several observers have commented on large numbers of **Kestrels** in November and early December, in the Central Highlands (R.P., *Scotsman*, 10th December), East Lothian (A.M.), Glenshee (A.T.M.) and Drumochter (W.J.E.).

Three **Grey Plover** were at Gladhouse on 22nd October (R.W.J.S.).

A **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Longannet, Fife, on 22nd August (J.H.) and one at Red Point, Wester Ross, on 26th August (R.O.B.). This species is unusual in the N.W. Highlands, but compare *antea* 1: 339 (Ed.).

Green Sandpipers are reported from Craigendunton Reservoir Ayrshire, (two) on 20th August (T.A.U.) and one from a pool near Killearn on the 28th (A.J.B.L.).

A dead **Redshank**, recently shot, was picked up at Tynninghame on 16th October: it had wings of 170 and 171 mm. and bill from feathers to tip 46 mm., thus coming well within the measurement range of the Icelandic race (R.W.J.S.).

A **Spotted Redshank** was on Dunwan Dam, Renfrewshire, on 14th August (L.A.U.).

Further records of the large number of **Little Stints** last autumn are three at Invergowrie Bay on 26th September, which appear to be the first Perthshire record (H.B.); one at Aberlady on 8th October (D.B.); and single birds at Tynninghame on 30th October (R.W.J.S.), 6th November (I.B.R., W.S.) and 11th December (T.B., I.B.R., W.S. and R.W.J.S.): the first of these three had only one leg.

At Barassie, Ayrshire, there were three **Curlew Sandpipers** on 4th September (L.A.U.) and one at Invergowrie Bay on the 26th (H.B.), while single **Ruffs** are reported from Craigendunton Reservoir, Ayrshire, on 20th August, and from Barassie on the 21st (L.A.U.), two being seen on the Endrick bank near Drymen on the 27th (A.J.B.L.).

On 29th August a **Grey Phalarope** was resting on the sand near the mouth of the Don, Aberdeen, in company with terns (B.S.N.).

Two **Little Gulls** flew south at Easthaven, Angus, on 13th August and an immature bird was seen in Lunan Bay, Angus, on 9th September (H.B.).

Two late **Swallows** were at Culross, Fife, on 31st October

(J.H.) and a late **House Martin** at Lundin Links on 23rd November (R.S.W.).

Single **Ring Ouzels** on passage are reported from near the top of Arthur's Seat on 2nd October (T.C.S.), from Aberlady on the 16th (J.O.) and from Pittenweem (where it was eating cotoneaster berries) on the 24th (*per* T.S.).

Late **Redstarts** occurred at Tynninghame on 29th and 30th October (R.W.J.S.) and at Gullane on the 29th (G.R.A., M.F.M.M.). There were "dozens" of **Robins**, considered not to be local birds, at Whitekirk, East Lothian, on 3rd November (A.M.).

A **Lesser Whitethroat** (of which a description has been sent) occurred at Fife Ness on 16th and 17th October (P.G.B., R.S.W.).

There was a considerable fall of passerines on the East Lothian coast between Tynninghame and Barnes Ness on 29th and 30th October, including four species of thrush, Robins, Wrens and Goldcrests (R.W.J.S.).

Winter Visitors 1960-61

A **Black-throated Diver** was seen at close range on Loch Tay on 5th October (H.B.). Three hundred **Great Crested Grebes** on the sea at Seafield, Leith, on 31st December, is a very high count even for there (R.W.J.S.).

A pair of **Gadwall** were at Lochgoin, Renfrewshire, on 4th November (L.A.U.) and on Dunsappie Loch, Edinburgh, four were noted on 26th November and six on 1st December (A.A., J.Bal.).

Numbers of **Goldeneye** at Seafield, Leith, are at record level, about twice the previous maximum, with just over 1,000 counted on 30th December (A.T.M.) and 1,800 the next day (R.W.J.S.). There is an inland record of an adult female **Long-tailed Duck** at Gladhouse on 20th and 27th November (D.G.A., R.W.J.S.).

Numbers of **Eider** at Seafield, Leith, appear to increase every year and between three and four hundred on 21st December is a record for the locality (N.C., P.S.).

Single red-headed **Smews** are reported from Loch Leven, Kinross, on 17th October (R.W.J.S.), Cobbinshaw, Midlothian, on 6th November (T.B., R.W.J.S.) and Camphill Reservoir, Ayrshire, on 27th November (D.L.), and a pair were seen on Loch Flemington, E. Inverness, on 14th and 15th January (C.D.).

A **Shelduck** turned up inland at Duddingston on 9th December (D.R.A.).

Two **White-fronted Geese** of the Eastern race *albifrons* were at the mouth of the R. Endrick, Dunbartonshire, in November

in company with Grey Lags; they had small pink bills, hardly any barrings and "were petite" (W.K.R.). A white **Snow Goose** thought to be a Greater, was at Fala between 15th and 23rd October (W.Br., M.M.) and what must have been the same bird was at Hule Moss on 13th November (W.Br., W.M.L.H.): in each case the Snow Goose was with Pink-feet. The white Snow Goose did not return to Libberton this year (R.E.-H.), but an adult **Blue Goose** was seen there from at least the second half of October (R.E.-H., R.S.H.). Plumage details of neither of these birds have so far been received (Ed.).

Two **Barnacle Geese** were seen on Hunterston Shore, Ayrshire, on 16th October and 13th November (G.K.) and three at Aberlady on 30th October (J.Bal.).

Six **Bewick's Swans** frequented the High Dam, Eaglesham, between 12th and 26th November (L.A.U.) and five were on Gartmorn Loch, Clackmannan, on 7th February (J.By.).

Single **Water Rails** are reported from Tynnighame on 29th and 30th October (*per* R.W.J.S.) and Aberlady on 4th December (W.Bi.). Over 300 **Coot** were counted on Forfar Loch on 24th August (H.B.).

Late records of the **Whimbrel** from Longannet, Fife, are of two on 16th and 17th October, and single birds on 13th November and 20th December (J.H.).

A wintering **Greenshank** was found on 28th December in the estuary of the R. Conon, Ross-shire—very far north (D.M.): three were seen in Cardross Bay, Dunbartonshire, on 30th December and one there on 1st January (R.P.S.); one, or two, winter at Tynninghame, but four seen there on 1st January is a winter record (W.S., R.W.J.S.).

The only **Little Auk** so far reported was picked up newly dead near Tayport on 4th January (*per* R.W.J.S.).

A single adult **Shore Lark** occurred at Tynninghame on 27th November (T.B., W.S., R.W.J.S.).

A **Coal Tit** with the characters of the typical race *ater* frequented a bird-table at Kilmacolm at the end of December: compared with resident Coal Tits it was much more spruce and well-groomed, with a very large white patch on the back of its head: it was also altogether brighter in colour, and larger (D.MacR.).

A male **Blackcap** was seen at Longannet on 4th November (J.H.) and single females frequented two gardens in Edinburgh between 17th and 21st December (R.K.M.) and between 8th and 12th January (D.A.M.). A male was seen at Kirkcaldy on 5th January (H.B.B.). A **Chiffchaff** was seen at Bearsden on 17th November (G.E.R.Y.).

Several **Waxwings** have again been reported this winter: five at Golspie, Sutherland, on 2nd November (I.D.P.); one at

Ullapool between 16th and 28th November, which ate not only berries at *Cotoneaster horizontalis* but also bread and cheese (W.S.C.); one at St Andrews on 18th November (M.H.E.C.); two at Gullane on the 17th (A.A.); at Longniddry there was a flock of forty just before 16th November, over forty on 21st and 22nd, seven or eight on 25th-27th, and over 100 in a different neighbouring area on the 28th (W.Bi.); in the Inverness neighbourhood three were seen on 27th December (Miss Munro per M.R.) and one on 18th January (M.R.).

Unusual numbers of **Great Grey Shrikes** have been reported this year: six have already been published (*antea* 1: 344) and we have heard of several of which details have so far not been received. Verified records of single birds come from Crinan Moss, Argyll, on 4th November (I.R.), Skye in mid-November (S.G., *Scotsman* 31st December), Strathbrora, Sutherland, on 16th and 27th November (I.D.P.), Pitgaveny, near Elgin, on the 24th (W.M.), Caerlaverock, Dumfries, on the 26th (E.L.R.) and Muirhead Reservoir, Ayrshire, on 4th January (G.F.).

Back Notes

A record of three **Sanderling** from Kingoodie on 12th May 1957 seems to be the first for Perthshire (H.B.).

The following records are all from G.R.A.: a drake **Garganey** among a flock of Mallard at Barr Loch, Renfrewshire, on 26th May 1959; a **Turnstone** in summer plumage at the west end of the Lake of Menteith, on 21st May 1960; two **Whimbrel** at the Endrick mouth, Dunbarton and Stirling, on 23rd May 1959 and two at the Low Parks, Hamilton, on 8th August 1959; a **Black-tailed Godwit** at Bothwell Bridge on 17th May 1958 and two near Erskine Ferry, Renfrewshire, on 3rd October 1959. On the same date, in the same area, a **Ruff**. Two **Common Terns** on 28th June 1959 appeared to be nesting, with one bird incubating, on Barr Loch, Renfrewshire.

General Notes

(These observations cover a number of aspects—behaviour, plumage variation and so on. They are given in the observers' own words. Ed.)

"On 21st October I was looking at a Greater Black-backed Gull perched on a rock in the sea at Dunbar. Suddenly a **Cormorant** flew up and knocked the gull off what was perhaps its favourite stance. Immediately on gaining its place the Cormorant spread out its wings, in the heraldic position. This seems to be further evidence that this action is caused by a wish to keep other birds away." (M.F.M.M.).

"On 20th October 1960 we saw a leucistic variety of the

Pochard *Nyroca ferina* on a small roadside loch near Achavanish, Caithness. It was swimming with many other Pochard and was the same size and shape. Its head was a warm buff-brown, almost as dark as the head of a duck Merganser. The breast was light buff, the forepart of the wing light greyish brown, and the rest of the plumage creamy white, some parts being lighter than others." (A. Anderson, A. Watson).

"During the past winter, 1959-60, I saw six **Whooper Swans**, four in adult plumage and two immatures, on agricultural land at Fordoun, Kincardineshire, nearly every week. Local farm-workers assured me that the swans were regularly seen soon after dawn and in the gloaming. Presumably they roosted in the fields. The Water of Bervie, a small stream, runs about half a mile away, but it is probable that the birds spent the entire winter from mid-October to the last week in March on the fields and runways: in January and February they were seen during periods of snow. Their food apparently was mainly potatoes, grass and winter wheat, and there was usually some water in rain puddles on the runways." (D. Jenkins).

"On 2nd June 1960 in the Isle of Lewis I noticed from my car two **Golden Eagles** close to the road. One flew off, but the other stood on the top of a peat-cutting right beside a fully grown sheep in the cutting. The bird followed the sheep back and fore along the cutting, keeping within about a yard of it. I thought that perhaps there was an injured lamb hidden from me in the rushes but, when the sheep stopped to scratch itself on the bank, with the massive bird alongside it, I began to have my doubts, as this seemed to be carrying sangfroid too far, even for a sheep! Then, to my amazement, when the sheep wasn't looking, the eagle hopped on to its back, or tried to. This was too much for the sheep, which jumped round and squared up to the bird, and for a moment beak (and what a beak!) and nose were only a few inches apart. Eventually the eagle grew bored or something and flew off. Judging from its plumage I should say it was a young bird, perhaps playing." (W. A. J. Cunningham).

"On 12th December 1960 an acquaintance who breeds minks at Steinish, near Stornoway, came to me with an adult **Black-headed Gull**, though it was without any kind of head at all. The poor thing had tried to steal the minks' dinner and had its head bitten off. The point of the story, poignant as it is, is that one leg was missing, but on the other was a ring marked Stavanger Museum 629045. I have since learned that it was ringed by Holger Holgersen about fifteen miles south of Stavanger (Norway) on 26th June 1958." (W.A.J.C., see also *Scotsman* 28th January 1961).

"On the overcast and drizzling afternoon of 3rd January 1960

I was standing on the south side of Gloucester Cathedral, England, watching small parties of **Black-headed Gulls**, with a few **Common Gulls**, flying down from inland to roost on the Severn. I counted over 200 of these and all without exception passed a few yards to the west of the cathedral tower. It seemed clear that they used it as a guiding mark in bad weather. Indeed, one party of ten gulls, seen approaching about 200 yards west of the tower, altered course to fly in close to the tower before continuing their flight." (M.F.M.M.).

"On 7th February 1960 at Lochgoin, Renfrewshire, my attention was attracted by a small and noisy flock of about forty **Black-headed Gulls** swooping low over the surface, and I found they were pursuing and mobbing a **Short-eared Owl** which was crossing the loch. In spite of the gulls' harrying tactics, the owl was making steady progress and was only 100 yards from the shore when the gulls suddenly drove it down on to the water. The owl floated there buoyantly enough, as the loch was flat calm, and glared up at its tormentors. For perhaps threequarters of a minute it remained on the loch surface; then, without any apparent difficulty, it rose, shaking the water from its plumage, and continued its flight, landing on the bank within fifteen yards of me. Having shaken itself it flew away across the moor." (L.A.U.).

"On 25th October 1960 the King of Nepal was being banquetted in Edinburgh Castle, which was floodlit for the occasion. The night was very misty and clouds swirling into the beams gave to the castle a look of an ingenious backcloth to *Macbeth*. I walked for half an hour in the centre of the town and heard countless **Redwings**, several **Blackbirds** and **Song Thrushes**, a **Fieldfare**, a **Black-headed Gull** and a **Snipe**. Perhaps the castle could be used as a bait on every misty autumn evening." (T.C.S.).

"On 28th May 1960 a **Spotted Flycatcher** took up a hunting position on a rain-gutter directly outside a window of the Manse of Ranfurly, about a foot from the window, where it remained for six days. The perch provided a very favourable position for the closest observation and, by pasting brown paper with observation holes on the window, I made the bird unaware of my presence. Quite frequently the bird seemed to retch, and then disgorged a small pellet about the size of lead shot, once or twice with sufficient force to hit the glass of the window with a distinct pop. Another interesting feature was that it frequently caught insects on the glass of the window, when the succession of taps resounded curiously through the house." (E. T. Vernon).

SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

SUMMER EXCURSIONS

ABERDEEN

Application for all Excursions to be made to Miss E. A. Garden, Eider Cottage, Newburgh, Aberdeenshire (Tel. Newburgh 615) one week in advance. Transport will be by private cars, and members having spare seats should inform Miss Garden.

Sunday, 7th May

LOCH OF STRATHBEG—Leader: Miss E. A. Garden. Meet at St Mary's Chapel at south end of Loch at 10.30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

Sunday, 28th May

BLACKHALL FOREST (by kind permission of the Forestry Commission)
—Leader: Mr C. Murray. Meet at Blackhall main gate at 10.30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

Sunday, 27th August

YTHAN ESTUARY AND LOCHS. Leader: Miss E. A. Garden. Meet at Ythan Hotel 10.30 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea.

DUNDEE

Where private cars are to be used, applications for all Excursions should be made to Mr Jack Scobie, 3 Constitution Road, Dundee (Office Tel. 22741) one week in advance.

Sunday, 21st May

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

Sunday, 18th June

CAIRNGORMS (FOR DOTTEREL HUNT)—This may be a week end Excursion. Numbers will be restricted to cars available. Arrangements will be made known later.

Sunday, 25th June

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

Sunday, 9th July

BASS ROCK (by kind permission of Sir Hew Hamilton-Dalrymple, Bart.)
—This may be a week-end Excursion. Numbers will be restricted to cars available. Arrangements will be made known later.

Sunday, 17th September

EDEN ESTUARY (Guardbridge 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 Timetables. 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. Any one unable to attend, and having booked a seat, may be required to pay the fare unless one week's notice is given.

Saturday, 13th May

ABERLADY BAY NATURE RESERVE (Spring Migrants)—Leader: Mr W. K. Birrell. 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, 20th May

PENICUIK HOUSE GROUNDS (by kind permission of Sir John D. Clerk, Bart.)—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, 28th May

THE HIRSEL, COLDSTREAM (by kind permission of the Earl of Home)—Limited number. Applications by 20th May to Mr A. T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh 13. Leader at the Hirsell: Major The Hon. Henry Douglas Home. Private bus leaves Waverley Bridge 11 a.m. returning approx. 7 p.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Cost: bus approx. 8s per person.

Saturday, 24th June

ISLE OF MAY—Number limited to 12. Applications by 17th June to Mr Alastair Macdonald, Hadley Court, Haddington (Tel. 3204). Train to Anstruther leaves Waverley Station 9.10 a.m. Boat leaves Harbour 11.40 a.m. prompt. Return train leaves Anstruther 6 p.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Cost; Day Return rail ticket 8s 11d; boat approx. 9s.

Sunday, 2nd July

FARNE ISLANDS—Limited number. Applications by 24th June to Mr A. G. Ablett, 7 Craigmount Gardens, Edinburgh 12 (Tel. COR 4258). Private bus leaves Waverley Bridge 9 a.m. arriving Seahouses 12.30 p.m. Boats leave Harbour on arrival. Bring picnic lunch. Cost: bus 11s; boat 11s. High Tea will be arranged for those who apply for it. (It is regretted that as places in the boats are limited to the number of seats in the bus, applications from those wishing to travel by private car cannot be accepted).

Sunday, 9th July

BEN LAWERS, PERTSHIRE (Mountain birds and flowers)—Excursion by private cars. Numbers limited to seats available. Applications by 2nd July to Mr Michael Robson, Little Bellwood, Glencorse, Penicuik (Tel. Penicuik 386). Meet at Lawers Car Park at 11 a.m. Bring picnic lunch and tea. Petrol expenses should be shared.

Saturday, 29th July

BASS ROCK (by kind permission of Sir Hew Hamilton-Dalrymple, Bart.)—Applications by 22nd July to Mr John King, 103 Marchmont Road, Edinburgh 9 (Tel. MOR 2671). Boats leave North Berwick Harbour 2.30 p.m. and return approx. 7 p.m. Bring picnic tea. Cost: boat 7s 6d. (If the weather is uncertain, it is advisable to check with the Leader on the morning of the Excursion in case landing is impossible).

Saturday, 9th September

ABERLADY BAY NATURE RESERVE (Autumn Migrants)—Leader, Mr W. K. Birrell. Arrangements as for 13th May.

GLASGOW**Sunday, 30th April**

HAMILTON BIRD SANCTUARY (by kind permission of the Town Council of the Burgh of Hamilton)—Leader, Mr D. Stalker. Meet at gates to Municipal Golf Course at 2 p.m.

Sunday, 28th May

THE HIRSEL, COLDSTREAM (by kind permission of the Earl of Home)—Limited number. Joint Excursion with Edinburgh Branch. Train leaves Queen Street Station at 9.40 a.m. and arrives Waverley 10.54 a.m. Private bus leaves Waverley Bridge 11 a.m. Applications by 20th May to Mr A. T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh 13. For arrangements and costs see under Edinburgh Excursions.

Saturday, 10th June

LUSS ISLANDS, LOCH LOMOND (by kind permission of Sir Ivor Colquhoun, Bart.)—Applications by 27th May to Mr George Kerr, 166 Old Castle Road, Cathcart, Glasgow S4. Service bus via Balloch to Luss; alight at Bandy Bay, half-mile south of Luss. Ferry boat leaves 1 p.m. and 2 p.m., returning 5.30 p.m. Fare approx. 3s. Bring picnic tea.

Sunday, 18th June

LITTLE CUMBRAE (by kind permission of Highland Engineering Ltd.)—Applications by 6th June to Mr George Patrick, 11 Knollpark Road, Clarkston, Glasgow. Boat leaves Fairlie 11.30 a.m. Fare 3s 6d. Bring picnic lunch and tea. N.B.: **This Excursion will take place subject to permission being granted.**

Saturday, 24th June

HORSE ISLAND (by kind permission of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)—Applications by 10th June to Mr George Patrick, 11 Knollpark Drive, Clarkston, Glasgow. Boat leaves Ardrossan Harbour 2.30 p.m. Fare approx. 3s 6d. Bring picnic tea.

Sunday, 17th September

HAMILTON BIRD SANCTUARY (by kind permission of the Town Council of the Burgh of Hamilton)—Leader, Mr M. Forrester. Meet at gates leading to Municipal Golf Course at 2 p.m.

ST ANDREWS

Applications for all Excursions should be made to Miss M. M. Spires, 2 Howard Place, St Andrews (Tel. 852) not later than ten days before each Excursion. Transport will then be arranged.

Saturday, 27th May

KILCONQUHAR LOCH (by kind permission of Nairn Estates)—Enter by North Lodge at 2.30 p.m. Bring picnic tea.

Sunday, 18th June

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

Saturday, 8th July

TENTSMUIR (by kind permission of Mrs Purvis)—Leave St Andrews Bus Station 2 p.m. Bring picnic tea.

WEEK-END EXCURSION TO AVIEMORE

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

Accommodation for up to twenty members has been reserved for the week-end 12th to 14th May at inclusive terms of 4s per person, as follows: bed on Friday night, 12th; breakfast, packed lunch, dinner and bed on Saturday, 13th; breakfast and packed lunch on Sunday, 14th.

Members wishing to come on this Excursion should book direct with Mrs Grant, mentioning that they are members of the Club, and are asked to send her confirmation of their booking once it is made, and also to inform her if they require dinner on Friday evening (extra). Members may bring guests. Arrangements for transport by private cars should be made through Branch Secretaries.

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should be made to Mr Peter Davis, Warden, Fair Isle Bird Observatory, Fair Isle, Shetland. (Telephone Fair Isle 8).

SAMPLE CENSUS OF MUTE SWANS

1961

MEMBERS are asked to co-operate once again in a sample census of Mute Swans in the Forth area during 1961. This Census, which is sponsored by the B.T.O. and the Wildfowl Trust, is being organised by Mr C. P. Rawcliffe, 35 Comely Bank Road, Edinburgh 4, to whom all records should be sent.

Information is required on the number of nests seen, the hatching success, and counts of any non-breeding birds in the area, which covers the Lothians, Stirlingshire, Clackmannan, Fife and Kinross.

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