

SCOTTISH BIRDS



The Journal of
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Vol. 1 No. 12

Summer 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.

Joint membership is available to married couples at an annual subscription of 40/-. "Scottish Birds" is issued free to members, but Joint members will receive only one copy between them.

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."

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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).

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

Editorial

THIS number of *Scottish Birds* breaks new ground by publishing an article by General Sir Philip Christison Bart. on birds in Gaelic proverbs. This branch of ornithology (folklore and so on) has been much neglected since Victorian times, and we feel that it is very desirable that it should be revived.

Good news for all Scottish ornithologists is the announcement by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds of no fewer than five new bird sanctuaries in Scotland, by agreement with the owners: these are Horse Island in the Firth of Clyde, and Inchmickery, Eyebroughty, Fidra and the Lamb in the Firth of Forth. Mr George Waterston, the R.S.P.B.'s Scottish Secretary tells us: "Horse Island lies only half a mile out from Ardrossan Harbour and contains a large Black-headed gullery, possibly four species of terns, other gulls, Oystercatchers, Ringed Plover and Waterhens. Eiders and Shelduck also breed. Anyone wishing to land on Horse Island must obtain a permit from the R.S.P.B. Scottish Office, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh 7.

"At Fidra there are large colonies of four species of tern; these birds were formerly menaced by rats, but as a result of action taken by the Society in the spring of 1959, the rats have been exterminated and the terns had a successful breeding season in 1960. Care will be taken by the Society to ensure that gulls do not encroach into the breeding area of the terns and, during the nesting season, the terns' breeding colony will be cordoned off (as on the Farne Islands) to prevent visitors from inadvertently trampling on eggs. The small rocky islet of the Lamb has a recently established colony of Cormorants, the only one in the Forth area, and Eyebroughty is a tidal island off the East Lothian coast near Dirleton and is a well known haunt of Eiders. Terns formerly bred but have not done so since the war owing to the large number of rats; the Society intends to take steps to eliminate these.

There are no restrictions on public access to these islands, but visitors are asked not to disturb the breeding birds.

“Finally, Inchmickery lies almost midway between Cramond and Aberdour and has large tern colonies. Since terns have been squeezed out of the Isle of May and the Carr Craig by invasions of Herring Gulls, the Society intends to control the gull population on these islands.”

We feel that bird protection in Scotland, under Mr Waterston's guidance, is in a very healthy state; but we must not forget also the long-established sanctuaries. One of these is Duddingston Loch, in Edinburgh, and members of the S.O.C. will receive as a special supplement to this number of *Scottish Birds* a paper on the birds of this sanctuary—gratis and for nothing.

BIRD NAMES IN GAELIC FOLKLORE AND PROVERBS

by

GENERAL SIR PHILIP CHRISTISON BT.

The Celtic people of Scotland put much store on the interpretations given by their wise men to the actions and songs of birds. Many superstitions and proverbs concerning birds have come down to us, and some are observed and used to-day.

The Celtic Patron Saint of birds is St Bride, and her particular bird is *Gille Bride*, servant of Bride, the Oystercatcher. An old saying runs *Bha Gàidhlig aig na h-eoin uair, agus Thuigeadh iad glòir nan dan* (The birds once spoke Gaelic and understood the speech of song). Mention, however, of birds in ancient Celtic literature is sparse: in the Ossianic epics only the eagle and falcon are noticed, though night birds are startled by the noise of Fingal's shield, and a flight of sea birds observed. It is not until the sixteenth century that we have records of the Gaelic poets singing of birds.

A study of Gaelic proverbs is useful in showing that the old Highlanders knew the birds around them, and used this knowledge. It also shows that certain birds now rare or unknown in Scotland were sufficiently common at one time to be used in proverbs, such as the Kite, Rough-legged Buzzard, Crane, Black-throated Diver, Wryneck and Water Rail.

All birds were originally sacred to the Gaels; migrants were fairy birds, the Cuckoo, Corncrake and Wheatear inspiring



SHAG AT NEST

(Photograph by A. J. M. Smith)

particular superstition. The Cuckoo turned into a hawk for more than half the year, the Corncrake sang on its back with feet in the air to keep the heavens from falling, and the Wheatear was known as the Grandson of the Toad. The death-feigning posture of the Corncrake at harvest, and the burrow-nesting habit of the Wheatear were no doubt responsible.

A bird flying into a house over a person's head is a bad sign, but it is lucky if one sees a bird, other than a sparrow, as the first living thing seen on looking out in the morning. A sparrow seen first means the death of a child. If the bird is flying towards one it means a letter. Specially lucky birds to see first are a cock grouse, Mallard or pigeon, but on going a journey, the Raven, crow and Wheatear are unlucky if the first birds seen. The first arrival of the geese is watched with care; if they fly seawards it means a good spell of weather, if to the mountains, bad.

To hear the Cuckoo on an empty stomach means a year's bad luck, and a Ring Ouzel seen near a house signifies the death of an inmate. A Robin singing cheerily on summer evenings means good weather, even if it is raining at the time, but, if it is singing dismally from inside a hedge, it will be wet, even if fair at the time. A Twite perching on a house or nearby wall, and singing, indicates a sudden cold spell, with snow perhaps, in spring or early summer.

The Magpie is always lucky for a Campbell. Otherwise one seen on the right was lucky, on the left unlucky; if seen ahead the luck will be only fair. Hopping near a house means good news; seen before breakfast it is a bad omen. If a Magpie hops on the road before a traveller, he will have a good journey. To cure the bewitched the leg of a Magpie had to be eaten; for malaria or dysentery a pigeon had to have its back skin removed, and the patient had to place his feet on the still living bird's warm back. For colic the skin of an Osprey, with feathers on, was kept; this was warmed and applied to the patient's stomach when required.

It is unlucky to stuff a mattress or pillow with pigeon's feathers.

The following proverbs give some idea of how frequently the Highlanders used, and in many cases still use, bird names with proverbial significance.

RAVEN. Mas olc am fitheach, chan fheàrr a chomunn. Bad as the Raven is his company is no better.

Tha fios fithich agad. You have a Raven's wisdom.

Bàs fithich ort! A Raven's death on you! (It was thought the young kill the old Raven in the end).

Feumaidh na fithich fréin a bhith beò. Even Ravens must live.

Ge duch am fitheach, is geal leis 'isean. Though the Raven is black his young are white to him.

Nead air Brighde, ugh air Inid, eun air Chàisg: mur bi sin aig an fhiteach, bithidh am màs. Nest at Candlemas, eggs at Shrovetide, young by Easter; unless the Raven does this there will be death.

Ciod a b' àill leat fhaighinn an nead an fhithich ach am fitheach fein? What can you expect in a Raven's nest but the Raven himself.

Am fitheach a dh' éireas moch 's ann leis a bhios sùil a' bheathaich a tha 's a' pholl. It's the early Raven that gets the eye of the beast that's in the bog.

Cha toir am fitheach an t-sùil dha isean fhéin. The Raven won't give the eye to his own chick. (Too great a delicacy).

Fitheach dubh air an taigh, fios gu nighean an dathadair. A black Raven on the house is a warning to the dyer's daughter. (Notice of death: the dyer's daughter had to dye dresses black for mourning).

Gaol an fhithich air a' chnàimh. A Raven's love for the crow (great love)

Fitheach dubh as tFhogar agus feannag as tEarrach. Raven in autumn, crow in spring (signs of good weather).

CROW. *An taobh a théid an fheannag bheir i a feumainn leatha.* Whichever way the crow come, she brings her filth with her. (Nicolson's *Gaelic Proverbs* has: *An taobh a théid an fheannag bheir i' feaman leatha.* When the crow flees her tail follows).

Is toigh leis an fheannaig a (h-isean) gorm garrach fhéin. The crow likes its greedy blue nestlings.

Bheireadh e a sùilean nam feannag e. He'd take it in front of a crow's eyes.

Foighnich sin dha na feannagan. Ask that of the crow (the impossible).

GOLDEN EAGLE. *Tri aois féidh sois firein, trì aois firein aois craoibh-dharaich.* Three times the age of a deer is the age of an eagle; three times the age of an eagle is the age of an oak tree.

FALCON. *Cha déanar seabhag de'n chlamhan.* You can't make a falcon out of a buzzard. (Cf. silk purse from a sow's ear).

Mar as àirde thèid an calman 's ann as dòcha an t-seabhag breith air. The higher the pigeon flies, the easier for the falcon to reach it. (One can't escape one's responsibilities).

Is beò na h-eòin, ged nach seabhagan uile iad. The birds survive though they are not all falcons.

KESTREL. *Abhsadh a' chromain-luch.* Shortening sail kestrel-fashion (i.e. letting it drop too suddenly).

KITE. *Cha tàinig eun glan riamh a nead a' chlamhain-gobhlach.* A clean bird never came out of a Kite's nest.

Tha 'n clamhan-gobhlach 'nam measg. The Kite's among them (panic).

BUZZARD. *Chan ann gun fhios car son a ni an clamhan fead.* It is not for nothing the Buzzard whistles.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. *Namh e am bleidire-tònach e?* Isn't he a Rough-legged Buzzard? (i.e. uncouth, clumsy, hairy-heeled).

TAWNY OWL. *Tha a' chomhachag ri bròn, thig tuiltean òirnn.* The owl is mourning, we shall have a flood.

THRUSH. *Cha dean aon smeòrach samhradh.* One thrush doesn't make a summer.

An smeòrach ri fàilte 's an lon-dubh ri cumha. The thrush for welcome, the Blackbird for lament.

Cho binn ri smeòrach air géig. As sweet as a thrush on a branch.

Chan 'eil port a sheinneas an smeòrach 'san Fhaoilleach nach caoin i mun ruith an t-Earrach. There is no time the thrush sings in the last weeks of winter that she will not lament before the passing of spring.

MAGPIE. *A h-aon aig, breith, a dhà aig bròn, trì aig banais, ceithir aig bàs.* One for a birth, two for sorrow, three for a wedding, four for a death. (This is contrary to the English and Scots proverb).

SKYLARK. *Chan 'eil deathach an taigh na h-uisge.* There's no smoke in the lark's house.

WHEATEAR. *Cloicheran-spàgach, ogha na muile-màig.* The wide-footed Wheatear, he's just the grandson of the toad. (It was believed that the toad looks after the Wheatear's eggs when he bird flies out to feed).

Trì latha sgathaidh an chloichearain. Three days of Wheatear's punishment (April days for borrowing).

STONECHAT. *Chunnaic mi cloichearan air creag lom, 's dh' aithnich mi nach rachadh a' bhliadhna liom.* I saw a Stonechat on a bare rock and knew I'd have bad luck that year.

WREN. *Is bigid e siod, is bigid e siod, mar a thuir an dreathan-donn 'nuair a thug e làn a ghuib as a' mhuir. Is mothaid e siod, is mothaid e siod, 'nuair a rinn e a dhileag 's a' mhuir mhóir.* It's the less for that, said the Wren as he filled his beak from the sea. It's the bigger for that, as he passed his droppings into the ocean.

Cha tàinig ugh mór riamh bho nead an dreathan-donn. A big egg never came from a Wren's nest.

Is farsainn a sgaoileas an dreathan-donn a chasan 'na thaigh fhéin. The Wren spreads his feet wide in his own house.

Ged 's beag an dreathan-donn, is mór a theaghlach. Though tiny the Wren, his family is large.

WRYNECK. *Le teanga fhada bhiorach thug gille-na-cuthaige smugaid-na-cuthaige a beul na cuthaige gu bròg-na-cuthaige.* With his long pointed tongue the Wryneck takes the cuckoo-spit from the Cuckoo's mouth and places it on the Cuckoo's shoe.

CUCKOO. "*Gug, gùg*" arsa a' chuthag latha buidhe Bealltainn. *Latha Fhéill-Eòin théid a' chuthag gu taigh-geamhraidh.* "Cuckoo" says the Cuckoo at Beltane (1st May); on St John's Day (24th June) he starts for his winter home.

Luath no mall 'gan tig am Màigh, thig a' chuthag. Late or early comes May, the Cuckoo will come.

Chuala mi a' chuthag gun bhiadh 'nam bhroinn. I heard the Cuckoo without food in my belly. (Unlucky).

A chur a ruith na cuthaige. Hunt the gowk.

'Nuair a ghairmeas a' chuthag air an sgitheach lom, reic do bhó is ceannaich arbhar. When Cuckoo sings on bare thorn, sell your cow and buy corn.

SWALLOW. *Cha dean aon ghobhlan-gaoithe samradh.* One Swallow will not make a summer.

SWIFT. *Cho luath ri aigne, aigne nam ban baoth.* As fast as a Swift the thoughts of foolish women.

PIGEON. *Gob a' chalmain-chàthaidh, bidh tu slàn mu'm pòs thu.* By the beak of moulting pigeon you'll be well before you marry (encouragement to a sick child).

BLACKCOCK. *Is duilich an coileach-dubh a ghleidheadh bhò 'n fhraoch.* It's hard to keep the Blackcock from the heather.

Rinn e coileach-dubh dheth. He made a Blackcock of him (i.e. shot him). This expression is found in the evidence of the trial of James of the Glens: Duncan Campbell, change-keeper at Annat, deponed that Allan Breck had said that "if the deponent had any respect for his friends he would tell them, that if they offered to turn out the possessors of Ardshiels estate, he would make *blackcocks* of them before they entered into possession, by which the deponent understood shooting them, it being a common phrase in the country." (*The Trial of James Stewart*, ed. David N. Mackay; 2nd Ed. 1931, p. 139).

RED GROUSE. *An coileach-fraoich as moiche a ghoireadh 's a' bhruaich.* It's the grouse that calls first from the hill.

PTARMIGAN. *Gus an tig an tarmachan gu taigh-nan-cearc.* Until the Ptarmigan comes to the hen-house.

Cha chuir fuachd no acras an tarmachan gu srath. Neither

cold nor hunger will make the Ptarmigan descend to the valley.

GOLDEN PLOVER. *Cho luath ris na feadagan-firich.* As swift as the Golden Plover.

WOODCOCK. *Cha dean aon choileach-craobhach geamhradh.* One Woodcock doesn't make a winter.

CURLEW, HERON and GOOSE. *Is sealgair math a mharbhas gèadh is còrr is guilbneach.* He's a fine hunter who can kill a goose, a heron and a curlew.

GOOSE. *Innsidh na geòddh as t-Foghar.* The geese will tell it in autumn.

Chan fhaide gob an gèadh no gob ganrail. The goose's beak is no longer than the gander's (cf. sauce for the goose).

Suidhe a' gheòidh an dorus taigh an t-sionnaich. A goose sitting at the mouth of the fox's den (cf. a sitting duck).

CRANE. *Cha chluinn e glaothaich nan còrr.* He cannot even hear the Crane's creaking cry.

Ghoideadh e an t-ugh bho 'n chòrr 's a' chòrr fhéin 'na dheireadh. He'd steal a Crane's egg from the Crane, and the Crane herself at his heels.

"Fhuair mi nead na corra-dubh ann an cùil no mòna." So runs an old verse of *Port-a-beul* (mouth music): "I found a Crane's nest in a hollow in the moor."

OYSTERCATCHER. *Cho èolach 's a tha am bridean 'san tràigh.* To know something as well as the Oystercatcher knows the shore.

HERRING GULL and KITTIWAKE. *Guth na faoileige am beul na sgàireige.* A Herring Gull's voice in the mouth of a Kittiwake (i.e. poor imitation by an inferior).

Faoileagan manadh an t-sneachda, sgàireagan an uisge. Herring Gulls foretell snow, Kittiwakes rain (when they appear in cultivated areas).

BLACK-THROATED DIVER is said to say "*Deoch! deoch! tha an loch a' traoghadh.*" Drink, drink, the loch's drying up!

CORMORANT. *Trod nam ban mu'n sgarbh. 's an sgarbh a muigh air an loch.* The scolding of women about a Cormorant and the Cormorant away out on the loch (idle gossip, or female lack of reasoning).

SHAG. *Bioddh gach fear a' toirt sgairbh a creagan dha fhéin.* Let every man take Shags off the rocks for himself (i.e. mind your own business).

WATER RAIL. *Buachailleachd nan snagan-dubh 'san luachair.* Shepherding by Water Rails in the rushes (i.e. poor leadership, or failure to keep beasts together).

(The author and editor are indebted to Professor Angus Matheson for assistance and the addition of several notes).

SHORT NOTES

SNOW GEESE IN MIDLOTHIAN, BERWICKSHIRE
AND NORTH UIST

At Fala Moss on 15th October 1960 I was thrilled to see a large white goose fly in with one of the major flights from Cowberry, and to make out black wing-ends before it settled. On the ground it stood like a lighthouse, whilst the Pinkfeet around blended with the moor and were barely visible in the fading light. It was clearly as big in size as the very largest Pink-feet (much bigger than most) and bulkier, with slightly broader wings and heavier neck. In my opinion it was a greater Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens atlanticus*. I thought I saw a very slight tinting of the head area—not quite the same incandescent white.

On the following day I confirmed all the points mentioned above, except that I could see no sign of staining on the head and neck. I also saw that the eye was dark, and the bill dull flesh-coloured. I saw the bird again on 4th and 5th February 1961, succeeding in photographing it on the 4th. It stayed until at least 4th March. What was almost certainly the same bird was seen at Hule Moss, Berwickshire, on 9th November by Lt.-Col. W. M. Logan Home.

W. BROTHERSTON.

(Mr Brotherston informs us also of the following as yet unconfirmed reports of Snow Geese: from the mouth of the R. Urr, Kirkcudbrightshire, in December 1960, from the R. Earn and R. Tay in January, and from Loch Spynie, near Elgin on 27th March. It will be observed that these dates are not inconsistent with the occurrences all referring to the same Snow Goose.—Ed.).

When the Grey Lags appeared in great numbers this winter on the machair at the back of Bernera, North Uist, the young lads were surprised to see what they thought was a "Gannet" in their company. They tried their best to get this mysterious bird, but so far haven't succeeded in getting it, dead or alive. So far as I know it is still (3rd March) with our friends the Grey Lags. The white goose has black tips to its wings and so cannot be an albino.

WILLIAM MACKENZIE.

(This note has been kindly passed to us by Miss M. Cunningham.—Ed.).

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARDS IN INVERNESS-SHIRE

On 12th January 1961, near the Caledonian Canal at Kytra, Fort Augustus, I saw a Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* quartering systematically over a stubble field, very low, at two or three feet. My attention was first drawn by this, to me, un-buzzard-like system of working, then, as it worked full away from me, by the large white area in the tail. This was clearly obvious although the bird was about 600 yards away, on a dull drizzly day. I focussed my stalking telescope on it as it flew away: it appeared dark brown with the very distinct, almost white-looking tail ending in a dark terminal band. It alighted once or twice on the stubble, taking wing low over the field as before, never rising high or soaring like a Common Buzzard hunting. I saw the bird again in the same field on 20th January.

L. MACNALLY.

On the morning of 7th March 1961, Wing-Commander and Mrs R. J. Fursman and I saw four buzzards soaring over Ord Ban, Rothiemurchus. On examination, when they circled over Loch an Eilean, I identified one of them as a Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*. The white tail with a thick black terminal band was obvious from above and below as the bird soared. The underwing was white, contrasting with the dark body and black carpal patches; the upperparts were brown with a paler head. In flight the bird was larger than nearby Buzzards *Buteo buteo* and the wings appeared longer. Finally they drifted away over the moor beyond the loch.

Several days later Col. J. P. Grant saw it in the same area.

R. H. DENNIS.

MARSH HARRIER IN CAITHNESS

On 5th March 1961, on a marsh about seven miles from Thurso, I saw a male Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. The bird flew over a small lochan on the edge of the marsh and, in perfect light at a range of about thirty yards, I had no difficulty in identification.

It was noticeably larger and heavier in build and flight than the Hen Harrier, a fairly common bird hereabouts, and the contrasting grey secondaries and dark primaries were particularly striking. The head was a little paler than the back and somewhat streaked, and the rump a slightly paler grey than the tail. The underparts were richly coloured chestnut brown in the bright afternoon sun.

The bird flew over the lochan twice and settled on the

raised bank where it stayed for about ten minutes. It then flew off south-west, being continually mobbed in flight by Lapwings. I am fairly familiar with Marsh Harriers in Norfolk.

PAMELA McMORRAN.

OSPREY AT ABERLADY, EAST LOTHIAN

On 23rd April 1961, with Alistair Inglis and David Merrie, I saw an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* at Aberlady. It was first seen at a height of about 200 feet off Gullane Point. It was surrounded by several Herring Gulls from which it was easily picked out by its size and heavy flight. The dark brown plumage above and the pale underparts were characteristic and at that range the facial markings could be made out. Soaring in tight circles it rapidly gained height and moved away northwards across the Forth; it was eventually lost after five minutes view.

This is, I believe, the first Aberlady record.

JOHN BAIRD.

WHIMBREL BREEDING IN SUTHERLAND

In Sutherland, at the end of July 1960, I was attracted by a Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*, which, from its calls and behaviour, I thought must have a nest or young. I watched it for about half an hour as it moved about the hillside, with a soft call *wheoo wheoo*, and eventually I distinctly saw a young one, being able to distinguish its head-pattern, straight bill, and greenish grey legs, from a distance of between 50 and 100 yards.

The birds were not seen when we passed the place on three later occasions.

MARY HENDERSON.

HOOPOE IN SELKIRKSHIRE

On 17th April 1961 the local water-bailiff identified a Hoopoe *Upupa epops* at Howden Haugh, Selkirk. He saw it also the next day, watching it feed on the grass between the whins within five yards of his car. My fourth visit was successful and I had an excellent view. Selkirk is one of the three Scottish counties for which there is no previous record.

ARTHUR J. SMITH.

WEEK - END AT DUMFRIES

17th to 19th February 1961

The Dumfries week-end's success was repeated. Once more, from the sleet, gales, murk and other ills of February weather, it provided two days when birds and bird-watchers enjoyed brilliant sun. Speculum of distant duck and nail of far-off goose gleamed through the objectives of all the elaborate optical equipment focussed on them.

Once more Willie Austin, Langley Roberts and Donald Watson, helped by other residents, effectively briefed and led a group which totalled ninety, though not all were present all the time. And again we welcomed contingents from Edinburgh and Glasgow, many others from north and south of the Border, from places as distant as Rothes and Limpsfield, Newcastle, Oxford and Belfast, both old members and new.

As before, the convoy assembled on Saturday morning by the river, and this year the queue entertainers were leaping salmon, while Lesser Black-back was ticked off on a number of 1961 lists. Two years ago the Caerlaverock Barnacle Geese were massed in a field, stalked by hordes of bird-watchers. last year they used evasive tactics, crossing the Solway, but this time we saw about a thousand in distant flight, and later another four hundred or so at close range. On the way to Glencaple, where we lunched (in bright sun) Grey Lags were feeding in fields sloping up from the road. Pinkfeet beside them provided such text book comparison that the Petersonic lines were almost visible.

The first main stop of the afternoon was at Loch Arthur, which showed a variety of duck, but no Smew this year. Its great attraction was a mixed flock of small stuff drifting along the alders, and most bird-watchers drifted along the road, getting excellent views of Willow and Long-tailed Tits, Treecreepers, Siskins and Redpolls. Later on, some car-loads watched a few waders and duck at Southernness, at nearly high tide, while others had tea. At Carsethorn there were Scaup and Pintail, Knot and Dunlin to watch at close range before the light weakened. As darkness fell, homing cars disturbed Barn Owls hunting along the roadside.

On Friday and Saturday evenings there were shows of slides: some excellent local views by Jim Young, a set illustrating an interesting talk by Peter Slater on migration in North Ronaldshay, tantalisingly lovely and few African ones

by Ted Skinner, and a fine full series of nesting moorland birds by Willie Brotherston.

As usual Sunday was the Carlingwark and Loch Ken day, and the full convoy of thirty-four cars which started off evoked the usual looks of curiosity, unbelief, amusement or frustration. Donald Watson had spoken of the gradual diminution of the Bean Geese in recent years, and it was remarkably lucky for us that he had found the small flock near Carlingwark Loch that morning. We watched about twenty feed over the ridge and out of sight. Some people saw the Smew and a rather dim little female Long-tailed Duck on the loch.

West of the Loch Ken road all the telescopes came out to examine three Greenland Whitefronts and one Pinkfoot in a flock of Grey Lag. Many more Whitefronts and Grey Lag were seen later, and a fine selection of duck, including a pair of Gadwall, with Wigeon, Pintail and Shoveler. Woodhall Loch provided little, but small birds were thick in the trees and bushes bordering the loch by Cairn Edward forest. Willow Tits, Redpolls and Long-tailed Tits ignored the constant arriving or starting of cars, were unperturbed by banging of doors, but flitted accommodatingly about at close range and eye level.

The Ken Bridge Hotel provided relays of teas, before cars dispersed in various directions. The two-day tally was about ninety-four species. A remarkable thing is that about seventy-five of these were, or could have been, seen without getting out of a car in a long convoy, and for few of them was a walk of more than a few yards necessary.

W. U. F.

WITHOUT COMMENT

From *The Haddingtonshire Courier*, 24th February 1911:

There have been many complaints concerning the damage that is being done by solan geese on East Lothian farms, and this season their depredations have been more than usually severe. They come from the Bass Rock and other natural habitats and settle in large flocks on the fields of winter wheat...

CURRENT NOTES

(Key to initials of observers: A. G. Ablett, A. F. Airey, D. R. Anderson, D. G. Andrew, J. Ballantyne, I. V. Balfour-Paul, P. G. R. Barbier, Miss P. G. Baxter, J. A. Begg, W. K. Birrell, E. Boase, H. Boyd, Rev. G. Carse, C. N. L. Cowper, R. H. Dennis, E. Dicerbo, G. Dick (G. Di.), Dr G. Dunnet (G. Du.), W. Edwards, Miss W. U. Flower, M. Forrester, Miss E. A. Garden, Mrs E. Hamilton, W. Handyside, Dr G. H. G. Hope, J. Hoy, Miss R. S. Hunter, Miss D. A. Lunt, A. Macdonald (A. M.), K. S. Macgregor, H. N. MacLachlan, A. T. Macmillan, A. MacRae (A. MacR.), W. Marshall, Mrs V. Meadows, M. F. M. Meiklejohn, Mrs M. Meyer, J. Milne, K. Murdoch, Mrs D. A. Murray, C. K. Mylne, Mrs M. J. Nisbet, J. Potter (J. P.), J. Peterson (J. Pet), G. A. Richards, I. B. Roy, A. Shepherd, A. J. Smith, D. Stalker, R. W. J. Smith, T. C. Smout, W. Stein, R. Stokoe, R. G. Thin, A. Tod, Viscount Traprain, L. A. Urquhart, G. Waterston, Mrs M. I. Waterston, A. D. Watson, T. Weir and R. D. Wilson. N.B.—Unless otherwise stated dates refer to 1961)

Breeding and Distribution

Fulmars bred at the Heads of Ayr in 1960, probably for the first time; in March 1961 there were about six pairs present (G.A.R.).

The **Cormorant** has hitherto been a rare visitor to Duddingston Loch, but on 10th January one was there, and one or two were frequent visitors throughout the month and by 3rd February the observer was referring to their "almost daily visits." One was on the nearby St Margaret's Loch on 28th January (D.R.A.). H.B., commenting on this record, says that Cormorants seem to be coming inland more often: he recently counted eleven on burnt trees on one of the islands in Loch Leven, and reports a group roosting by the Tay at Kinclaven, nine and a half miles to the north of Perth. In this connection the presence of one at the Loch o' the Lowes, New Cumnock, on 21st September 1960, is of interest (J.A.B.).

An immature **Shelduck** was on a pond at New Cumnock from 14th to 16th August 1960 (J.A.B.).

In 1960, for the second successive year, a pair of **Hen Harriers** reared young in a county in which they had not been reported breeding since the last century. Another pair bred successfully apparently for the first time this century, in a different county. The male of the first pair, which reared three young, was in brown plumage, lacking any noticeable grey until beginning to moult in July. It was almost certainly a first year bird. E. Balfour states that he has known males to breed in their first year, in Orkney, but it does not seem to have been often recorded. The young did not fly from this nest till 10th to 16th August and there is reason to suspect that the clutch of five eggs, laid in mid June, were a repeat after the

first clutch had been robbed. Another feature was the building of a rough platform of large heather twigs, only about 12 feet from the nest, not long before the young were fledged. At a late stage food remains were found here and in the nest itself. (For the sake of security the name of the above observer has been suppressed: we are sure he will have no objection.—Ed.). Two records of Hen Harriers from unusual areas are of a "ringtail" in west Fife on 6th March (G.Di., J.P.) and a male at Delnies, Moss, Niarn, on 16th March (M.J.N.).

An unusual date for the **Jack Snipe** was 27th June 1960, when one was flushed at Peppermill Dam, west Fife (G.Di., J.P.). The observers have sent a description of the bird. One by Loch Leven on 7th February may be the first record for Kinross (M.F.M.M.).

On 17th September 1960 two **Ruffs** were seen on the estuary of the Dee, at Manxman's Lake, near Kirkcudbright: the observer knows of only three previous records for the county (A.D.W.).

The first **Little Gull** to be seen at Duddingston Loch turned up on 8th April: it was in summer plumage (D.R.A.).

Mr Brown, a postman in Kirkcudbright, has sent full details of a pair of **Turtle Doves** which he repeatedly observed on a farm road near that town in June and July 1960: there was no proof of breeding (A.D.W.).

A **Barn Owl** seen at Keith Bridge, East Lothian, on 5th February, is the observers' first for the locality (G.W., M.I.W.). The **Long-eared Owl** appears to be much less common in Kirkcudbrightshire than formerly: it is therefore of interest that an adult together with a brood of recently fledged young were found in a small wood of spruce and pine at about 800 feet on the slopes of the Kells range on 8th July 1960 (A.D.W.).

Two pairs of **Stonechats** were seen at Longannet, Fife, on 28th January, a female on 4th January (P.G.R.B., J.H.) and an immature bird on 5th March (J.B.). A male was at Dirlerton, East Lothian, on 2nd January (R.G.T.), a male at Aberlady on 19th January, and a male at Gullane Point on 16th February (A.G.A.) and a male and female on Braid Hills, Edinburgh, on 29th March (R.G.T.).

A **Blackcap** was recorded singing on 26th May 1960 near the head of Loch Lubnaig, Perthshire (L.A.U.).

Seven **Goldfinches** near Killearn, W. Stirling, on 16th April, are a large number for that area (W.U.F.).

The Edinburgh Bird Bulletin (4:20) gives only one record of the **Tree Sparrow** for Kinross, claiming it as the first for

that county: it is therefore of interest that one was seen in a rick-yard on the south shore of Loch Leven on 7th February, while two roosts, of about ten birds each, were found in conifers to the north of the loch (M.F.M.M.).

Winter 1960-61

The first **Black-throated Diver** to appear on Duddingston Loch since 1937 was present from 10th to 21st January and was seen by many people: it remained swimming on the loch even when only a small area, teeming with duck, was left unfrozen (D.R.A.). Inland records of the **Red-throated Diver** come from Drumpellier Loch, near Coatbridge, Lanark, on 11th March (W.S.) and from Gladhouse, 2nd April (R.W.J.S.).

A **Red-necked Grebe** was identified at Gullane on 5th March (T.C.S.). The first **Slavonian Grebe** for Duddingston since 1937 occurred on 28th January (D.R.A.): the high number of 28 Slavonian Grebes (beating Aberlady's best total by twenty) was seen in the bay at Gullane on 30th March (T.C.S.) while, on the same day, thirteen were on Loch Ewe, Wester Ross (R.D.W.). It is perhaps not generally realised how common this species is in winter off the west coast.

On 4th November 1960, after strong southerly winds and heavy rain, a **Storm Petrel** was found dead in a burn at Lennox Plunton near Gatehouse of Fleet. A farm worker told Mr and Mrs J. Skinner, who showed the bird to the recorder (A.D.W.).

At Dunsappie Loch, Edinburgh, there were three **Gadwall** on 11th February, two pairs on 8th March and six on 23rd March (J.B., A.M.). At Edgelaw, Midlothian, there was a drake on 25th March and 2nd April (D.G.A., R.W.J.S.) and at Tynninghame there was a pair on 26th March, the observers' first record for the area (T.B., I.B.R., R.W.J.S.).

Fifteen **Scaup** were at Duddingston on 2nd February, but they left for the sea (D.R.A.). There were high numbers, about six thousand, at Seafield, Leith, on 19th February (A.T.M.). Eight hundred **Tufted Duck** and 1,450 **Pochard** at Duddingston on 3rd February are exceptional counts (D.R.A.).

An inland **Long-tailed Duck** was seen at Merryton, near Hamilton, on 1st January: it was associating with a party of eight Dabchicks (L.A.U.). This is not a common species in the Clyde and Solway and it is therefore worth recording that one was at the Prestwick sewage outlet between 12th and 18th March (G.A.R.) and another off the Kirkcudbright coast near Abbey Head on 22nd April (R.S.).

In the Forth large numbers of **Common Scoters** were noted

on spring passage, 1,500 at Seafield, Leith, on 18th and 27th March (J.B.) and about 1,000 off Gullane Point on 9th April, the biggest count there for some years (W.K.B., C.N.L.C., K.S.M.). It is interesting that counts at Seafield can vary much though made only a few hours apart: on 27th March most of the birds were far out, but flew in when disturbed by a passing ship. Two **Velvet Scoters**, an uncommon species in the Clyde, were at Prestwick on 16th March (G.A.R.) and ten in Loch Ewe, Wester Ross, on the 30th (R.D.W.).

Red-headed **Smews** have been recorded from Sand Loch, Collieston, Aberdeenshire, between 12th December 1960 and 25th March (G.Du., E.A.G.); from Forfar Loch, Angus, on 12th and 17th February (H.B., A.S.) and what may have been the same bird was on Rescobie Loch on 5th and 12th March (A.S.); from Duddingston from 31st January till 12th February (D.R.A., G.W., M.I.W.); from Yetholm and Hoselaw Lochs, Roxburgh, on 22nd January (A.J.S.). A drake Smew flew in to Loch Fitty, Fife, on 16th February and was also noted there on 12th March (G.Di.).

Four **White-fronted Geese** frequented Creoch Loch, New Cumnock, from 7th to 11th March 1960, the observer being unable to approach close enough for subspecific identification (J.A.B.). A pair of **Barnacle Geese** flew up from the Loch o' the Lowes, New Cumnock, on 5th October 1960: this is only the second time that the observer has seen this species in the neighbourhood (J.A.B.). A single Barnacle Goose was seen on Horse Island, off Troon, on 20th April (G.W., M.I.W.). On 24th March a single Barnacle was seen in a field with thirteen Oystercatchers at Cromdale, Morayshire: it did not seem to be injured and the observer thought it might have joined these similarly black and white birds for the sake of companionship (W.M.).

An immature **Whooper Swan** frequented the Tweed between Walkerburn and Innerleithen, Peebles-shire, from mid January till 28th March (J.B.): this apparently ordinary record is included since Peebles is a sparsely watched county and Baxter and Rintoul, *Geographical Distribution of Birds in Scotland*, give no record. It is not however the first record as one was seen at Portmore in 1958 (*Edinburgh Bird Bulletin* 8:64).

A single **Grey Plover**, unusual in the area in winter, was seen on 10th December 1960 on the coast at Forvie Moor, Aberdeenshire (E.A.G.).

Single wintering **Black-tailed Godwits** are reported from Aberlady on 19th January and Seafield, Leith, on 10th Feb-

bruary (A.G.A.), while a pair of wintering **Greenshank** were seen at the Loch o' the Lowes, New Cumnock, on 20th and 21st February (J.A.B.) and five together on Prestwick Beach on 17th March (G.A.R.).

Two **Grey Phalaropes**, of which a full and accurate description has been given, were with a group of Dunlin, Sanderling and Ringed Plover at Aberlady on 19th November 1960 (E.H.).

A late **Arctic Skua** was harrying gulls at Longannet, Fife, on 21st November 1960 (G.Di., J.P.).

An immature **Glaucous Gull** was in Ayr Harbour on 5th March; it had probably been there some time, as it was very tame, coming to be fed with the other gulls (M.F.M.M.). Another immature was at Barnes Ness, East Lothian, on 19th March (T.B.).

At Seafield, Leith, an immature **Iceland Gull** was seen on 15th January (A.T.M.) and again on 3rd February (A.G.A.).

Little Auks have not been frequent, but three are recorded from Joppa, Edinburgh, on 25th January (J.M.) and one, picked up dead, from Lundin Links, Fife, on 23rd February (P.G.B.).

A spectacular weather movement of **Skylarks** was watched at Longannet, Fife, on 4th February, when there was an inch of snow on the ground: in the two and a half hours before midday thirty flocks were noted, totalling nearly 4,500 birds. The largest flock totalled nearly 500 birds; they were swarming westwards along the north shore of the Forth with smaller flocks coming across the water from the Grangemouth side (J.H.).

A very late **Redstart** was seen at Biggar on 3rd November 1960 (R.S.H.) and several late and wintering **Blackcaps** have been seen: at Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire, single male and female Blackcaps visited a garden between 6th and 31st October, there was again a male present on 22nd November and a female on the 23rd (A.D.W.). At Brightons, near Falkirk, a female came daily to eat on a window-sill between 20th January and 1st February: as often with this species, it behaved aggressively towards other birds, in this case tits (V.M.). The bird already reported (*antea* 1:386) from Colinton on 8th January was still present at the end of March; a male Blackcap came to the same garden on 25th January and, though a much rarer visitor, was still about in the middle of March (D.A.M.). Another observer, who did not know about these two birds, was astonished to catch the female on 18th February, when bat-fowling nearby, and even more so to catch

the male the following evening (I.V.B.P.). Finally a male Blackcap came to a window to be fed at Whittingehame, East Lothian on 24th February and for about a week before that (Vct.T.).

A small leaf-warbler, almost certainly a **Chiffchaff** frequented a garden at Liberton, Edinburgh, between 23rd December 1960 and 1st January (G.C., C.K.M.).

Great Grey Shrikes, as already reported (*antea* 1:387), were unusually numerous this winter; twelve records have already appeared in *Scottish Birds. Moray*: one was seen on 24th November 1960 at Nethybridge, where it remained the whole winter until 6th March at least. It fed beside a burn and among farm buildings. On 2nd December it was seen to catch a short-tailed vole (W.M., R.H.D.). On 16th January one struck a window at Forres and was seen to capture a Hedge Sparrow (*Scotsman* 28.1.61). On 5th April one was seen on roadside wires at Boat of Garten, and another by Loch Inch, near Kingussie (C.K.M.). *Dee*: on 1st November 1960 one was caught at Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, in a farm out-building, ringed and released (E.A.G.). *Tay*: one picked up dead near Amulree, Perthshire, on 15th December 1960, and another was seen in the same area on four occasions between 7th and 12th January (W.E.). One was at Killin on 14th January (A.T.), and another two miles north of Blair Atholl on 12th March (G.H.G.H.). *Forth*: one was seen at Peppermill, Fife, on 16th January; it unsuccessfully pursued two Pied Wagtails (G.Di., J.P.). One was seen near Penicuik, Midlothian, on 22nd January and what was perhaps the same bird was seen twice during December 1960 in policies of Penicuik House, (W.H.). *Clyde*: one was seen in the Carrick Hills on 4th March (A.MacR.) and one at Biggar on 30th March (R. S.H.). *Tweed*: one was seen at Thirlestane, Ettrick, on 29th March (H.N.M.). *Solway*: one was seen in the Dundeugh forest, near Carsphairn, Kirkcudbright, on 24th October 1960 by Dr and Major Ross of Dalry. Between then and mid January single birds were seen by A.D.W. and others in scattered localities near Dalry and New Galloway, there being at least two, and probably more individuals. One bird seen on 21st November 1960 was pinkish cream on the underparts, showed little graduation in the tail, had a single white wing-patch and no white superciliary. In contrast to an obvious Great Grey seen later this bird might almost have passed for a Lesser Grey, but the rather prominent white fringes to the scapulars, proportion of wings to tail, and the bill shape seemed to us to mark it as a Great Grey. This and the later bird both showed faint barrings on the underparts and appeared to be in first winter plumage. The second bird was also "single barred" on the wing. The only prey noted was a Long-tailed Tit (L.A.U.,

A.D.W.). (Mr Watson painted a picture of the unusual shrike and it is certainly very like a Lesser Grey in general appearance. We feel that, since the breeding ranges of the two species overlap very considerably, the possibility of hybridisation should not be excluded.—Ed.). One was seen at East Park, Dumfries-shire, on 5th February and its persistent pursuit of a Hedge Sparrow is described in *British Birds* (54: 163-4). Finally one on 12th April, near Beattock, was seen to capture a small mammal (E.D.).

A flock of over 6,000 **Starlings** are reported roosting in reeds at Kilconquhar Loch, Fife, on 8th August 1960 (A.F.A.). Near Humbie and just in East Lothian there was a big roost and on 31st January 1960 quite a number were caught: their numbers were in the order of 100,000 birds. On 15th January 1961 plans were made for further trapping, but the birds did not arrive, going elsewhere. The interest of this is that the change had taken place very recently because substantial numbers had been going there only ten days earlier (A.T.M.).

The largest number of wintering **Twites** at Aberlady was twenty-three on 14th February (A.M.).

A party of seven **Crossbills** were watched closely on some Scots pines, by Dr and Major Ross, and A.D.W. on 8th February 1960 in the Bennan forest, New Galloway. These birds had distinctly heavier bills than others the observer has seen closely in the district. The call-notes, too, seemed softer, lacking the very sharp metallic notes heard commonly from immigrant birds. It is likely that these were Scottish, or possibly true Parrot Crossbills. In the present winter Crossbills seem to be absent from local haunts where they were often to be seen in the previous two seasons, and in 1956-57 (A.D.W.).

A **Lapland Bunting** was seen at Aberlady on 9th April (W.K.B., C.N.L.C., K.S.M.).

Spring Passage 1961

Little information has so far been received on this, but the following records are worth publishing separately.

A **Black-necked Grebe** was on the R. Endrick on 16th April (M.F., D.S., T.W.), on the Stirling-Dunbarton boundary.

Two **Black-tailed Godwit** and a **Knot** were at the mouth of the R. Endrick on 20th April (W.U.F.). Single **Spotted Redshanks** each in dark summer plumage, were seen at Tingwall Loch, Shetland, on 5th March and 7th May (J.Pet.). An early

arrival of eleven **Ruffs** was observed at Cotehill Loch, Collieston, Aberdeenshire, on 19th February; eight of these birds remained until at least 11th April (E.A.G.). A new locality for the **Chiffchaff** is Gordonstoun, near Elgin; one was singing there on 5th May (K.M.).

Behaviour. Habits, etc.

A pair of **Mallard** nested at Duddingston fifteen feet up in a tree, in a box intended for owls (D.R.A.).

On 25th April a **Tawny Owl's** nest in a rabbit burrow on the floor of a spruce wood was visited near Dalry, Kirkcudbright. It contained three young owls and two addled eggs, 37 field voles, six bank voles, two long-tailed field mice and the feet and tail of a male Yellowhammer. About a third of the prey had been partly eaten (A.D.W.).

A **Coal Tit** was seen on 9th February at North Berwick which had a long decurved beak; it seemed as though both mandibles were overgrown and the bill was twice as long as normal. The bird seemed in good health (M.M.).

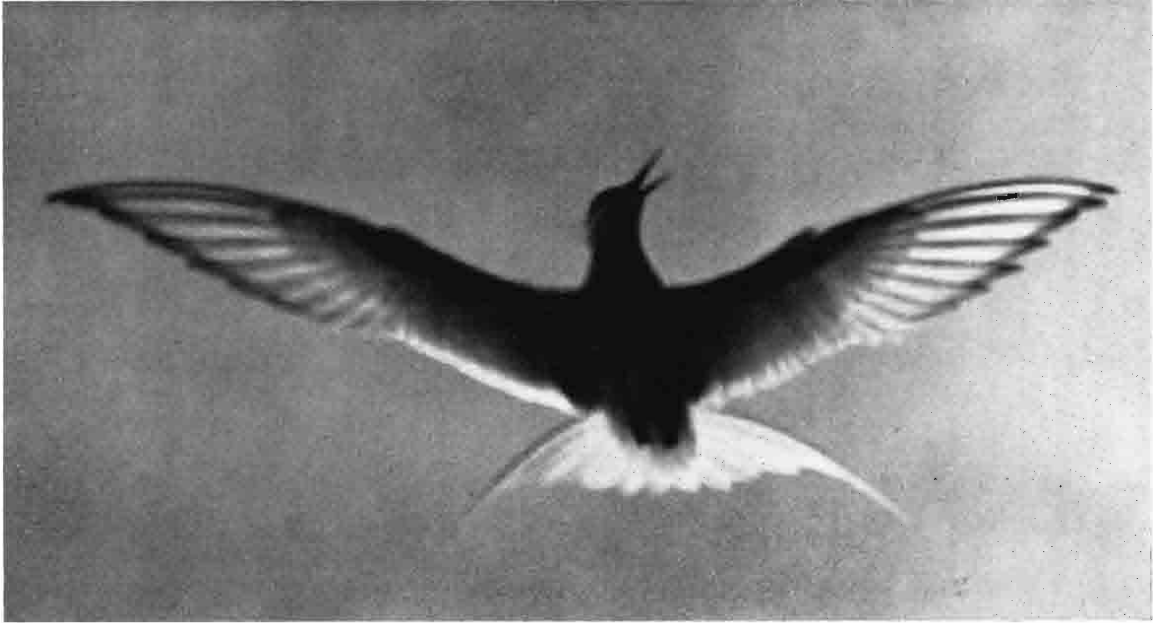
An unusual **Starling** was seen at Lenzie on 21st January; it was uniformly light grey, except the head which was a little darker. It had no iridescence. With binoculars the light spots could be made out, but at a distance they merged into the grey background of the plumage. Beak and legs were the usual colour (D.A.L.).

CORRIGENDA

Antea 1:343. The **Ruff** at Meikle Loch was seen on 18th September, not the 17th.

Antea 1:385. The **Smew** at Loch Leven on 17th October was seen by Dr R. S. Weir, not R. W. J. Smith.

Antea 1:386. The **Greenshank** on 1st January reported as from Cardross was seen at the mouth of the R. Endrick.



ARCTIC TERN (Photograph by R. Roddam)

This shows one of the best methods of distinguishing the Arctic Tern from the Common, by the very large transparent area in the wing. In the Common Tern, there is only one small transparent patch at the inner side of the bend in the wing.

OFFICIAL SECTION

SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The fourteenth Annual Conference and twenty-fourth Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held in the Dunblane Hotel Hydro, Dunblane, Perthshire, from 27th to 29th October 1961. The Conference Programme will be printed in the next issue of "Scottish Birds," and this intimation is given in order that members may make their Hotel reservations in good time. All bookings, including those at the Hotel Hydro, should be made direct with the Hotels. The Secretary is not arranging reservations in the Conference Hotel this year.

Hotel Accommodation in Dunblane

DUNBLANE HOTEL HYDRO (Tel. 3161). Special Conference charge: Dinner and bed on Friday 27th; breakfast, lunch, Annual Dinner and bed on Saturday 28th; breakfast and lunch on Sunday 29th—£4, 5s 0d. (A 10% gratuity charge will be added to all bills).

STIRLING ARMS HOTEL (Tel. 2156). Bed and breakfast from 22s 6d.

*THE NEUK PRIVATE HOTEL, Doune Road (Tel. 2150). Bed and breakfast from 17s 6d.

*SCHIEHALLION HOTEL, Doune Road (Tel. 3141). Bed and breakfast from 17s 6d.

BLAIRALAN, Dargie Terrace (Tel. 3196). Bed and breakfast from 16s 6d.

¶ARDLEIGHTON HOTEL (Tel. 2773). Bed and breakfast from 15s.

*These Hotels are some distance from the Conference Hotel.

¶Sited near the Hotel Hydro gates.

Hotel Accommodation in Bridge of Allan

ALLAN WATER HOTEL (Tel. B. of Allan 2293). Bed and breakfast from 27s 6d.

ROYAL HOTEL (Tel. B. of Allan 2284). Bed and breakfast from 27s.

Members with cars who have difficulty in obtaining single rooms in Dunblane should find that the above two Hotels in Bridge of Allan have ample single accommodation. The distance from Dunblane is approx. 3 miles.

The above terms for Hotels other than the Conference Hotel are quoted as a guide only, and prices should be confirmed.

Owing to increased costs, the Conference registration fee will be 8s 6d.

The cost of the Annual Dinner to members not staying in the Hotel Hydro will be 15s.

Members travelling from the south by night train arriving early on Saturday morning are asked to inform the Secretary, giving details of their trains, as it may be possible to arrange for trains to be specially stopped at Dunblane if a sufficient number require this facility.

ENQUIRIES

Members are reminded that the British Trust for Ornithology are organising Enquiries into the status of the Peregrine falcon and the

Stonechat during 1961, and are urged to send any records to the Organisers.

Records of occurrences of Peregrines, their numbers, distribution, and feeding habits, should be sent to Dr D. A. Ratcliffe, c/o B.T.O., 2 King Edward Street, Oxford. Records of the Stonechat (including negative reports and casual occurrences) should be sent to Mr J. D. Magee, 68 Bushey Mill Lane, Watford, Herts. Copies of a Questionnaire for Stonechat records are available on request in the Club office.

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY BRANCH

The Council have agreed to establish a new Branch of the Club in Dumfries and a Meeting will be held in the County Hotel, Dumfries on **Monday, 26th June, at 8 p.m.** to inaugurate the new Branch and to elect Office-bearers. A general discussion will be held. It is hoped that all members in the Dumfries and Galloway area will be able to attend.

"BRITISH BIRDS"

If any member has a spare copy of "British Birds" for March 1957 (Vol. 50 No. 3), Mr C. K. Mylne, 4 Milton Mill, Milton Bridge, Midlothian, will be very glad to purchase this in order to complete his set for binding.

MISSING LIBRARY BOOKS

The following books have been borrowed from the Club Library in the past, and have not been returned. If any member can help to trace the whereabouts of these books, will they kindly inform the Secretary.

ANNALS OF SCOTTISH NATURAL HISTORY: 1908 (Bound volume).

BRUCE, George: "The Land Birds in and around St Andrews."

DICKSON, John: "Emeralds Chased in Gold, or The Islands of the Forth."

S.O.C. PUBLICATION

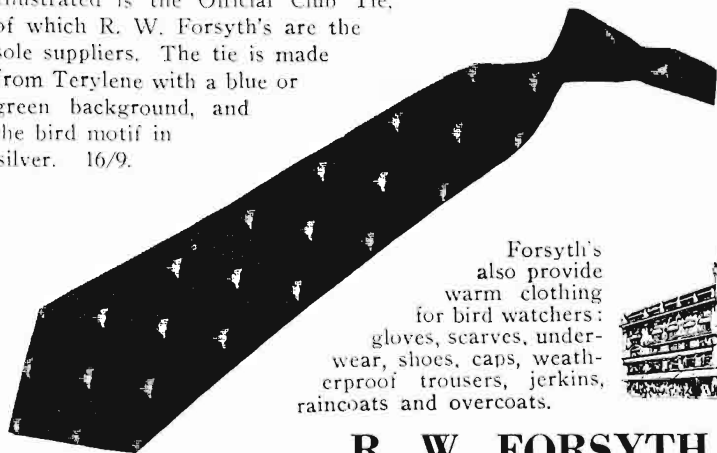
"**The Birds of Aberlady Bay Nature Reserve**", by F. D. Hamilton and K. S. Macgregor. This article, which has been reprinted in booklet form by the Club from the "Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists' Society", Vol. VIII, is now available to Members for 5s (postage 4d extra) and may be obtained from the Club Secretary or from Branch Secretaries.

DEEDS OF COVENANT

The Club has now obtained permission from H.M. Inspector of Taxes to reclaim Income Tax on subscriptions paid under Deed of Covenant. This will be of great benefit to the Club as it will almost double subscriptions paid in this way. The Council therefore invites Members who pay Income Tax at the full rate to undertake a seven-year Deed of Covenant for their subscriptions (this does not apply to subscriptions to the Journal only). Full details, with a suitable form, are available from the Secretary. Completed forms should be returned to the Secretary, who will forward a Certificate for the Deduction of Tax for signature each year.

The Scottish Ornithologists' Club Tie

Illustrated is the Official Club Tie, of which R. W. Forsyth's are the sole suppliers. The tie is made from Terylene with a blue or green background, and the bird motif in silver. 16/9.



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