

SCOTTISH BIRDS



The Journal of
The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

Vol. 2 No. 7

Autumn 1963

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, Ayr, Dumfries, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and elsewhere 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, the Editor and Business Editor of "Scottish Birds", the Hon. Treasurer of the House Fabric Fund, 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.

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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. during the winter months. Members may use the Reference Library and borrow books from the Lending Library. 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 can be used for the informal showing of slides at a charge of 2s 6d per night to cover the replacement of bulbs.

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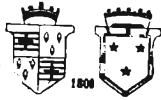
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Editorial

S.O.C. Bookshop. The Scottish Ornithologists' Club now has a fine bookshop at the Scottish Centre for Ornithology and Bird Protection. Details appear on another page, and an order form is enclosed. The bookshop is recognised by the Publishers' Association, and you may now get all your new bird books there, by post or in person. Any profits from the sale of books will help to pay for the Club's other activities—*Scottish Birds*, the library, lectures. By buying from the S.O.C. you will benefit ornithology in Scotland at no cost to yourself.

For the S.O.C. this is yet another step forward: in a way it is an act of faith in you. Nothing quite like it has been done in Britain before. We very much hope that all Club members and readers of *Scottish Birds* will support this venture. The aim will be to carry the most comprehensive stock of worthwhile bird books in Scotland. Already the selection has tempted your editors into buying an impressive number of books missed when they first appeared. With a wide range of books in the S.O.C. bookshop, and with R.S.P.B. nestboxes, feeding devices, greeting cards, records, wall charts and other gifts under the same roof, the Scottish Centre seems an excellent place to buy Christmas presents for your bird-watching friends; and it will not be surprising if you come away with something for yourself as well.

B.T.O. policy. The British Trust for Ornithology, currently moving to new headquarters at Beech Grove, Tring, recently resolved that its policy should be: "The study of the bird population of the British Isles in respect of distribution, numbers and movements and of the ecological factors, including those of human origin, affecting them. It shall be one of the principal objects of this policy to answer the following question: In what ways is contemporary man affecting wild birds and, in particular, how are changes in forestry, agricultural and horticultural practice influencing bird populations?" The B.T.O.'s various activities—ringing, nest records,

census of common birds, inland observation points, toxic chemical studies etc.—are being coordinated towards answering this question.

In the April 1963 number of *Bird Migration* emphasis has shifted from “migrations” to “movements,” and an examination is made of the ways in which the number of individuals of a species noted at the observatories may indicate the level of population on the breeding grounds. Post-breeding dispersion under conditions of high population density is now suggested as an explanation for certain puzzling falls of migrant species in settled anticyclonic weather.

Birds of Prey Conference. By every account the Birds of Prey Conference at Cambridge in March was an outstanding success. The tremendous decline of Peregrine, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel and other species in England during the past few years was one of the most urgent topics, but contributions and discussion ranged widely; text and summaries of the papers will be found in *Bird Notes* (Summer 1963) and *British Birds* (April 1963).

A most encouraging feature of recent years has been the growing realisation that bird watchers and sportsmen need not be always attacking each other—they share an enjoyment of birds and open places, and their interests are by no means as much in conflict as the extremist paints them. The Birds of Prey Conference showed what may be achieved through co-operation and friendly discussion of differences of approach. Many valuable contacts were made, and in place of violent argument and disagreement (for which some sections of the press had evidently hoped!) a unanimous resolution was passed that:

“This Birds of Prey Conference, of sportsmen, falconers, pigeon fanciers, landowners, farmers, gamekeepers, naturalists, research scientists and others, finds conclusive evidence of an alarming decline in numbers of birds of prey in Britain over the past six years. The Conference finds that the chief factor in this rapid decrease is the use of certain types of toxic chemicals on the land and gives warning that continuance of present trends would lead to the early extinction in Britain of one or more species. Because of their great value on scientific and economic grounds and as part of our national heritage, birds of prey, therefore, urgently need all possible aid for their preservation. The Conference urgently recommends that the agricultural, horticultural and forestry use of such chemicals, especially persistent chlorinated hydrocarbons, should be critically re-examined and where necessary reduced. There is also a need for intensified research, better observance and enforcement of the Protection of Birds Act 1954, and more public education about this emergency.”

Toxic chemicals. The perceptive reader must have noted how the foregoing items are both related to the problems

of toxic chemicals on the land. This reflects the sudden realisation by British bird watchers that this is the biggest threat to birds, and not only birds, in recent years.

The subject was debated in the House of Lords on 20th March 1963, but press comment was disappointingly sparse and complacent, and it is clear that official sources do not view the matter so gravely as do many well-informed and impartial observers.

In June the R.S.P.B. asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to withdraw without delay the booklet *Chemicals for the Gardener* recently published by the Ministry. The booklet claimed that, "so far as is known, none of the garden packs when used according to the directions is likely to be harmful either to birds or other wild life in the garden." The R.S.P.B. felt that this was untrue and would add to the mounting toll of bird life; research carried out by the Nature Conservancy, together with the now considerable published evidence, had demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the chlorinated hydrocarbons, such as Aldrin, Dieldrin, DDT and BHC were a grave hazard to wild life. The booklet has now been withdrawn.

Miss E. A. Garden. Her many friends will be saddened to learn that Betty Garden, who had been seriously ill for some time, died on 2nd September 1963. A full notice will appear in the winter number of *Scottish Birds*.

Fair Isle. Our good wishes go to Peter Davis; after six notably successful years at Fair Isle he returns to the less rigorous life of the south to an appointment with the B.T.O. Fair Isle has a very special place in the affections of Scottish bird watchers. In a quiet way we feel a sort of irrational personal pride in the fact that this famous bird observatory is Scottish; and many of us cherish unforgettable memories of the island and its people and of birds seen there. But all the time the very existence of the island community, and with it the bird observatory, hangs by a thread. No further introduction is needed to Peter Davis's fascinating and penetrating study of the island in this number—first the people, and second the birds. Fair Isle is so much a part of Scottish bird watching that everything about it is of enormous interest to us all.

As we go to press we learn that the new warden is to be Roy H. Dennis, who knows the island well, having worked there as assistant warden. We wish both Mr and Mrs Dennis every success at Fair Isle.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT FAIR ISLE

PETER DAVIS

A request from the editor of *Scottish Birds* that I should review the recent developments at Fair Isle, both in ornithology and with regard to the island's economy, came shortly before I made the difficult decision to quit the isle for another post. What follows is therefore a review of the six years I have lived and worked on the island, written from the more detached viewpoint of one no longer committed to share the pleasures and the problems of life in Scotland's remotest community.

I should explain, for the benefit of those readers who are unfamiliar with the island and its affairs, that when the bird observatory was founded by George Waterston and his colleagues in 1948, it was hoped that not only would it make an outstanding contribution to the study of birds, but also, through the hostel, give a substantial boost to the stagnant economy of the island. While the first hope was amply realised, through the energy and ability of Kenneth Williamson, the second was not entirely fulfilled. Although the visitors provided a steady market for the local knitwear and a new source of income for the crew of the mailboat, and the hostel consumed the produce of the crofts, it was only in the first two or three years that any considerable sums could be spent on local labour; thereafter, the observatory's financial position steadily deteriorated. Meanwhile the native population (not counting lightkeepers and other temporary residents) decreased from nearly seventy in 1948 to less than fifty in 1954. In this year, Mr Waterston persuaded the National Trust for Scotland to purchase the island, which he had owned since 1947, realising that it was far beyond the scope of private individuals to provide the capital for developments which were imperative if the community was to survive and prosper. Mr Waterston became the National Trust's factor for the island, continuing also as honorary secretary of the Bird Observatory Trust, which remained an independent body.

My wife and I and our new staff arrived at Fair Isle in the spring of 1957, at a crucial and interesting stage. The plans of the National Trust were beginning to take shape, and we were to see them develop. Our own commission was to maintain the ornithological work, and at the same time to try to re-organise the hostel on a profitable basis; and to offset the losses (amounting to over £2000) incurred in earlier years. With the help of a generous contribution of £1000 from the National Trust, these debts were repaid by 1961; and although rising costs temporarily overtook us in 1962, there is every



PLATE 20. FAIR ISLE. This view shows the island mailboat *Good Shepherd* in the North Haven, the new pier, the slipway up which the boat must be hauled except in settled summer weather, the hostel and bird observatory buildings, and Sheep Craig (see page 400).

Photograph by Angela Davis.



PLATE 21. FAIR ISLE. The warden, Peter Davis, with a Kittiwake (see page 400).

Photograph by Angela Davis.

reason to suppose that the hostel can continue to pay its way in the future. The observatory and its greatly increased number of visitors have been spending between £1000 and £1500 in the island in recent years, much of this in the reopened general store.

ISLAND DEVELOPMENTS

The restoration of the island shop was the earliest result of the National Trust's policy of encouraging immigration to the isle. An English family, the Tills, came in to run the store and a croft, at the end of 1956. Early in 1957 Stewart and Anne Thomson and their children returned to live in the isle, where Stewart (an Unst man) had served as a lightkeeper and married a local girl twelve years earlier. They worked the croft of Springfield until they took over the post office and the Shirva croft in 1959. In the autumn of 1957 Adam Johnson, a handloom weaver who had instructed several islanders in this craft the previous winter, brought in his family from Shetland and settled at the Haa. Following this immigration, the population of the crofts stood at 56 at the close of 1957.

The decline in the population up to 1956 had resulted in an improvement in the incomes of those who remained, for there were fewer families to share the available sheep grazing, the knitwear market, and the various perquisites—manning the mailboat, lighthouse work, coast watching, road mending and suchlike. In 1957 the rebuilding of the nurse's house by the county council gave steady employment to several men. The following year, 1958, was particularly eventful and prosperous. There was ample work for the increased population at the construction of a new pier at North Haven, and at the rebuilding of the croft house at Midway; the first of the National Trust's cruises in M.V. *Meteor* brought a new outlet for textiles; lobster fishing was revived, one boat working the whole summer with considerable success; and as the result of agitation by the Trust and others, the county council agreed to take over the running of the mailboat *Good Shepherd*, to pay the crew a regular wage, and to improve the service by introducing twice-weekly sailings in the summer months. The new pier, which cost the county £10,000 and the National Trust £1000, was a tremendous boon, eliminating the use of flit boats and permitting a great saving in manual effort and time—always an important factor in the short winter days.

After this year of activity and prosperity, there were unfortunate setbacks in 1959. Two small construction jobs gave brief employment, and the cruises became an annual event, but otherwise the community had to rely on its own resources. Three boats worked the lobsters all summer, but the immigrants could not participate in this rewarding occupa-

tion. By autumn the Tills were obliged to leave; and they were soon followed by an island family who had been planning for some years to join their relatives in New Zealand. A bright spot was the marriage of a young islander to a Lerwick girl, and their decision to remain in the isle and take over the shop. The Johnsons departed early in 1960, and the community declined below the level of 1956.

Since 1960 the National Trust has invested a good deal of money in the rebuilding of two more houses, Schooltown in 1961 and Shirva in 1962, and in 1962 provided diesel generators to supply electricity to all the houses and the bird observatory at a cost of some £5000. The two miles of underground cable was laid by voluntary labour from International Voluntary Services. One more immigrant settled in; a young Englishman, Gordon Barnes, who had spent two seasons as my assistant, took over the Setter croft after the accidental death of its previous tenant in 1961.

At the end of 1962 the crofters were enjoying better living standards and amenities than at any previous time, but the population was down to 41, of whom five were receiving further education outwith the island. This year, the number will increase by nine—a newly-wed couple from Edinburgh and a family of seven from Kent—but the increase will be partly offset by the emigration of a young member of the mailboat's crew and his mother, and four more children (including two of the immigrants) will be away at school.

What are the prospects for the future of the community? One would need prevision to answer this with confidence, but in my view they are far from bright. The painful truth is that the native community is no longer viable. Nearly half the people are over fifty years of age, and although they include at present some of the most able and active members, the time when they will become less sprightly cannot be postponed indefinitely. The younger generations are sadly thinned by emigration, and indeed there is a whole missing generation of girls, for by some strange biological quirk, none were born between about 1930 and 1950, though some seventeen boys came in that time. By the end of the year, only three of these young men will remain, and only one yet has a wife and family. Moreover, the present system of education which removes the children to Lerwick at the age of twelve, and trains them to take their places in the wider world, must result in few, if any, returning to live and work in the isle.

Can immigration make good these losses? Recent experience suggests that it will be very difficult to find permanent settlers; and that for the most part there will be a succession of romantic enthusiasts who will enjoy the novelty of island life for a few years, and then depart. Such temporary resi-

dents could hardly provide the native skills, especially on the sea, which are vital to the future. Even if the crew of the *Good Shepherd* relished the idea of introducing outsiders into the crew, which at present they do not, they estimate it would be at least ten years before an incomer would have a working knowledge of one of the trickiest crossings in northern Europe. The transport problem is therefore the rock upon which the whole enterprise is most likely to founder. At present the service to Shetland is maintained with truly astonishing regularity. Experience at other remote islands (among them Lundy, where I lived from 1951 to 1954) shows that there would be continual frustrating delays and uncertainties if the community had to rely on a ferry based elsewhere. The hostel could hardly continue to operate in such circumstances, and few people would accept such conditions as a permanent feature of their lives.

The barriers against permanent settlement by outsiders are so often minimised that it is time they were discussed with candour. First, we must accept that people who are used to a similar life in other remote places will be unlikely to offer themselves; at any rate, they have so far shown no signs of doing so. Secondly, it is obvious that there are no financial inducements to immigration. It follows that most candidates will be from the more densely populated parts of Britain, activated largely by a desire to "get away from it all," and by a rather romantic conception of life on a small island. This was true of almost all the sixty-odd applicants for the two vacant crofts advertised in 1962. This attitude usually predicates a degree of misanthropy and unwillingness to conform, and is most often found in people with an "intellectual" background. At Fair Isle the immigrant enters a community which inevitably values practical far above intellectual abilities, and which seeks to exact a high level of conformity in nearly all individual and communal activities, including, of course, religious practices. Despite the great hospitality which the islanders always show to visitors, an immigrant's failure to conform may result in outspoken criticism and even passive obstruction. Even without such obstacles, integration into a community which is made up almost entirely of close blood-relations, which has already partitioned most of the more lucrative part-time jobs, and most members of which resent the introduction of outsiders even while conceding its necessity, poses many problems. The ideal immigrant would be a man whose main ambition was to have a piece of land and work it, a man untroubled by imaginative or intellectual interests, of extremely placid temperament, and willing to adapt himself completely to the ways of the island. Such men appear to be few and far between, and wives to match them even scarcer.

How do the islanders themselves regard the recent developments? The majority look back with nostalgia to the days when every house held a large family and the isle was buzzing with communal life; they are fatalistic about the future, regarding the end of a thousand years of settlement as inevitable, though many hope it will not be in their time. A small but vocal minority believes there is still a future for the community, that the possibilities for agricultural development and reclamation are considerable (which is undoubtedly true), and that somewhere there are people who would be content to accept hard work for comparatively low incomes, and the narrow horizons, and share in this effort. Both groups have generally welcomed the improved amenities provided for them in recent years, though the expense of maintaining some of them is often deplored. Despite the largesse of the National Trust, some element of the age-old resentment towards the laird persists, and this has not been diminished by the Trust's rather paternalistic approach to some matters in recent years. It should be admitted, however, that island opinion is rather difficult to sound, because the islanders seldom express their true feelings about any proposals at the public meetings called by the Trust representatives, and also because there is seldom any real unanimity among them. An illustration of the radically different outlook of the islesfolk and the Trust was provided in 1962, when the Trust arranged for the demolition of the derelict radar station on Ward Hill in order to improve the profile of the island, and assumed that this would meet with general approbation. There was, on the contrary, a general outcry, for the islanders regarded the concrete structures not as hideous eyesores but as admirable shelters for the hill sheep! Matters were made worse when it was discovered, after the explosions, that several acres of grazing were now covered with outsized rubble.

The general complaint about the recent developments, that they came thirty or forty years too late, is not of course an indictment of the Trust; though it is a good swipe at the indifference of the government. It seems however to be a fair comment that the improvements in the past six years have been made piecemeal, and have concentrated on amenities rather than on the economy, which is what really matters. There has never been any implementation of a comprehensive plan to save the island, or even any clear statement of aims. At this late stage it is not clear what the aims can be. Certainly it is too late to preserve the community as a sort of museum tableau of ancient language, customs, and practices, even if this were desirable or feasible in the twentieth century. The main concern of the islanders is in fact to reject the "old things" and to have material standards comparable with those enjoyed by their fellow countrymen elsewhere. As yet

there is no prospect of a radical improvement in the basic agricultural economy which must support these standards when the present phase of subsidised improvements to housing and amenities comes to a close ; and with two or three honourable exceptions the remaining islanders are unlikely to take the initiative in new developments. One must therefore regretfully conclude that, in spite of the recent developments, the position of the community is now more precarious, and the future more uncertain, than at any time in its long history.

THE BIRD OBSERVATORY

The observatory will sink or swim with the island community ; for in the event of evacuation the observations could only be continued by occasional expeditions, mounted at considerable expense. Meanwhile the work has gone steadily forward.

The main function of a bird observatory is to make daily counts of migrating birds, and to subject them to detailed laboratory examination and ringing ; this work has continued along the general lines established before 1957. There has however been an extension of the season of observation, which before 1957 normally covered only May to October, and since then has occupied the whole year except for a period of three to eight weeks in December and January. This increased coverage has given us a better knowledge of the winter bird population ; and the strength of the movements in March, April and in November has been something of a revelation, especially those of the thrushes, Robins and finches. In some years the heaviest falls of the season have occurred during these months. The number of species observed each year has risen from an average of less than 150 to around 180.

The ringing totals are now much higher both as the result of this exploitation of the early and late migrations and because we have started to ring the cliff-nesting seabirds, which were largely neglected before 1957. The Shag, Puffin, and Fulmar are now among the leading scores in each annual ringing list, and the other auks and gulls are well represented. Shag recoveries have been so numerous that we already have a good picture of the dispersion from Fair Isle, and the pattern begins to emerge for other seabirds also. The annual ringing now amounts to over 5500 birds, compared with an average of less than half that number before 1957, and recoveries oversea have increased from under twenty in 1957 to seventy-five in 1962. Some of these recent recoveries are remarkable for their distance or unexpected direction from Fair Isle, such as the Bar-tailed Godwit in Siberia, the *Bonxie and Puffin in

* Great Skua

Greenland, the White Wagtail in West Africa, or the Snow Bunting in Newfoundland; others have thrown new light on obscure problems, or posed new ones yet to be completely solved. Among these I may mention two Blackbirds which returned, presumably, to Scandinavia, where they were recovered within a few days of being ringed at Fair Isle in autumn; and an interesting series of birds which had returned to the south or south-east within a short time of being ringed here in spring, presumably having overshot their real destination. These include Blackbird and Robin and Hedge Sparrow in West Germany, Bluethroat in Belgium, and Hedge Sparrow, White Wagtail and Starling in eastern England. Birds of a variety of species, ringed in Iceland, Spitzbergen, N. Russia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Holland, and various parts of Britain have been recovered at Fair Isle during the past six years. Details of these, and of many other interesting recoveries, appear regularly in the observatory's own journal, the *Fair Isle Bird Observatory Bulletin*.

The introduction of mist-nets, first used here in 1956, and the growth of the exciting sport of dazzle-netting at night, have supplemented the catch of the Heligoland traps, and contributed to extend the variety of species handled each year. A figure of 87 species ringed in 1957 was then a record for the observatory, but in 1958, with 101, we became the first British ringing organisation to achieve the century, and this has been surpassed in each subsequent year. By 1962 our record year's catch stood at 125 species, or about two-thirds of the number seen on the island in the year. Nearly 190 species have now been ringed by the observatory.

Fair Isle has maintained its reputation as a place where extreme rarities will frequently delight the tally hunter. Since 1957 there have been two more additions to the British List, the Song Sparrow and the River Warbler, bringing the total of new British birds found on the island to seventeen. Several other birds have given their second or third British records. A further three species were acceptably recorded for the first time in Scotland, Mediterranean Gull, Dusky Thrush, and Bonelli's Warbler, with a fourth if the Parrot Crossbill is regarded as specifically distinct from the Scottish race (and provided one treats all previous reports as not proven). In addition to these six species, twelve others were added to the island list; bringing it, by my reckoning, to 283 species (a further dozen have more or less dubious records for earlier years).

The establishment of the British Trust for Ornithology's migration research office in 1958, and the radar studies of migration made by Dr W. R. P. Bourne in N.E. Scotland and by Dr M. T. Myres in Shetland between 1959 and 1961, have

resulted in good use being made of the Fair Isle observations. In connection with the radar work it was found that the Fair Isle records corresponded more frequently and more closely with the movements observed by radar than was the case with the parallel observations at radar stations and observatories in eastern and southern England, presumably because of Fair Isle's remoteness and the greater readiness of birds to land and be seen by the time they reached our area. Dr Bourne, in collaboration with the observatory, has made a detailed analysis of all the Fair Isle records up to 1960 which will be an integral part of his forthcoming paper on the radar watch. Thus, by identifying the species which were only blips on the radar screen we have contributed to the greatest advance in migration study for many years—a work which has removed the study of "invisible" migration from the realms of hypothesis into the world of observed fact.

Our mid season study of the Arctic Skua colony, begun by Kenneth Williamson in 1948, was continued until 1962. The main objective of this study was to define the social structure of the population, its age composition, mortality, and breeding success. This involved colour marking almost the entire breeding population, recording progress at all the nests, ringing virtually all the young and keeping check until they were fledged. Far from being discouraged by all this prying into their private lives the birds thrived on it, increasing from some fifteen pairs in 1948 to an almost unmanageable seventy pairs in 1962. Several birds were breeding throughout these fifteen years; one pair remained faithful for fourteen of them. No less than forty-nine birds ringed as chicks in the colony were recaptured as first-time breeders between three and six years later. A vast quantity of data remains to be analysed, digested, and eventually published.

One early result of the study was the discovery that Arctic Skuas occur not simply in pale and dark colour-phases, but that many are intermediates (heterozygotes). These superficially resemble the dark phase, but can usually be distinguished in the field by the paler cheeks and nape, and in the hand by whitish bases to the feathers of the underparts. Most chicks can be readily assigned to one or other of the colour-phases, though the plumage characters are rather different from those of adults. The Fair Isle material provided the basis for a genetical study made by Peter O'Donald of the Cambridge University Department of Genetics for a Ph.D. thesis presented in 1961.

The observatory has continued to play its part in the nationally organised inquiries and censuses; in improving standards of field identification and ringing instruction; and in providing facilities and material for workers in many non-

ornithological fields. The variety of subjects, both esoteric and mundane, with which we and our visitors have been involved in the past six years is astonishing in retrospect. Flowering plants, mosses and lichens, insects and arachnida, littoral and freshwater life, have all been worked by their devotees; the Fulmar's powers of flight have been scientifically observed and analysed, its oil supplied for medical research; the ecology of the Fair Isle field mouse has been investigated; place names have been listed and mapped, the local dialect tape-recorded; the island's economic geography has been the subject of one thesis and is being resurveyed for another. This catalogue by no means exhausts the list of recent activities; yet the possibilities for future investigation are almost infinite.

Last, but not least, we have provided good food and comfortable accommodation to scores of visitors who are not scientists or curious naturalists, but simply lovers of the open air and the remote islands. The happy combination of field research and recreation has justified the enterprise of those who founded the observatory, and merits the support of all who read this journal.

NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF BEARASAY, LEWIS

MICHAEL ROBSON and PETER WILLS

The rocky west coast of Lewis and Harris, which together form one large island, is broken into by several sea lochs. The widest and most northerly of these is Loch Roag. There are many islands in Loch Roag, but none apart from Great Bernera is permanently inhabited, and they diminish in size as the mouth of the loch is approached. On the margin of the open Atlantic, outermost of all, lies the islet called, in English, the Old Hill, on whose landward side, with about 500 yards between, is Bearasay. Since we have found no detailed mention of this island elsewhere, it may be useful to supply a description.

Because of its exposed position, Bearasay is difficult to reach, and the north-west wind, which often brings fine weather to the area, does not facilitate landing. Like the Old Hill, Bearasay is a large lump with sheer or nearly sheer cliffs all round, and a green top of weed and grass with rocky outcrops; its highest point is 175 feet above sea level, and its greatest length is about 200 yards. On the northern and western sides the cliffs are steep and overhanging, but those facing south are more broken, with weedy ledges and short slopes of thrift, and at one point a large gully filled with scree and boulders. At the east point, and again at the western

tip, there is a separate stack or tower of rock; both of these, about half the height of the main island, have tops of lush weed, but neither looks accessible. The western one helps to enclose a sea pool at the foot of the Bearasay cliff and is therefore called *Stac an Tuill*, the rock of the sea pool. We do not know the name of the other, so that it will be referred to only as the eastern stack. From the summit of Bearasay, the view includes all the other islands of Loch Roag, the nearest one south being the very small and flat *Floday*. Beyond is the surrounding mainland of Lewis from the *Carloway* district to the *Uig* hills and the peaks of *Harris*. The *Old Hill* stands steeply to the north-west, and far out the main islands of the *Flannans* group are usually visible. At night the spark from the *Flannan* lighthouse is clear and at times there are also the lights of anchored fishing boats.

Bearasay has its place in local history. At the summit of the island is a small cairn. Beside it are the remains of a rectangular building, standing apart from another set of ruins at a lower level and near the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea pool. The second group consists of at least three structures, fitting closely together. The ground in this area is of loose, light soil covered with tussocks of thrift, and these have submerged the crumbling foundations. Elsewhere, between the rocks and brackish pools, there is a thin layer of firm turf, except along the edges of the cliffs where thrift tussocks again predominate. On the turf a circular foundation of, perhaps, a sheepfold is still visible, and the island, like most others of its kind, provides pasture for a few ragged sheep. A story has it that a pirate of standing, *Neil MacLeod*, once took refuge here and harried the seas, until he was forced to submit when his wife was captured by opponents, tied to a reef and threatened with drowning by the flow of the tide.

It is possible to get ashore at Bearasay in good weather at the foot of the cliff on the west side of the gully. A stiff climb up slabs and loose thrift leads to the top without great difficulty, except that of moving one's equipment, which has to be bulky because there is no shelter, no fresh water, and a stay may be prolonged far beyond expectations by a rapid change in sea conditions.

In making the following list of birds, we have been unable to draw much upon the experiences of other visitors. Apart from vague, general references to *Loch Roag*, the only information that we have found of real interest is that provided by *Atkinson and Roberts* (*Scot. Nat.* 1955: 110). They visited Bearasay and the *Old Hill* as well as *Thars Sgeir*, a neighbouring islet, and their comment is quoted below. *Harvie-Brown* says that he investigated the islands off the west of *Lewis*, but adds little more. We should be most interested

to hear of any other first-hand accounts of this rewarding area. We certainly feel the need for much more information. The species here listed were those found in the first week of August 1962.

Leach's Petrel. This petrel is known to breed in large numbers on the Flannan Isles, their nearest station to Loch Roag. It was therefore impossible to avoid the hope that we might find them on Bearasay, particularly as local lobster fishermen thought them to be present on the island, and as Atkinson and Roberts had reported that, "On Bearasay the only place showing any sign or smell of petrel activity was in a group of ruined bothies on the cliff edge... Here, excavation uncovered two adult Leach's petrels, each in a definite chamber on a fresh nest pad, but neither with an egg. The much-branching burrow was excavated for 6 feet. There were several unoccupied nest chambers and side entrances; old rat droppings were also found, but no evidence of recent occupation. We returned to Bearasay later the same evening (6th June 1955) and spent the night ashore, but there was no further sign of petrels anywhere on the island." They also went to the Old Hill for an hour but found the ground unsuitable for petrels and no sign of a bird. Thars Geir likewise revealed no petrels.

During the night we spent on the island, a dozen flight calls of Leach's Petrels were heard, one of these from the ground near the solitary ruin. Only twice was a bird actually seen in the sky. In daylight we excavated at the ruins and around them but found nothing, and we cannot therefore say for certain that the birds breed on the island. As there was a bright moon, nocturnal activity may not have been at its best, and the birds found in the burrow in 1955 might have laid eggs well after 6th June. It is quite possible that a few birds do breed, but a longer stay on the island is required to prove this. Conditions are certainly suitable for a petrel colony.

Manx Shearwater. Gray ("Birds of the West of Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides," 1871) said that Manx Shearwaters were then to be found on P'abbay (south of Barra) and on St Kilda only among the Outer Isles. Clyne reported from the Butt of Lewis lighthouse ("Scot. Nat." 1915: 80), "one of these (Manx Shearwaters) was killed at the lantern in August 1910, and, as they breed in other parts of Lewis, may often pass unobserved." The vague indication of breeding in the area was not enlarged upon, and we have found no mention anywhere of a shearwater colony in the west of Lewis. Travellers to the Flannans, however, have reported shearwaters on the water in Loch Roag, and we ourselves saw several on our way to the Flannans in 1957. We therefore had them in mind on visiting Bearasay, although Atkinson and Roberts had said nothing about them after their landing in 1955.

While camping on Floday, a place of few birds, we heard the yelping cry of a single shearwater as it passed in the night. The next night, that of our stay on Bearasay, we found a large colony of shearwaters all along the eastern cliff face, and on either side of the gully. Birds were arriving frequently, and plunging into inaccessible ledges; it was impossible in the short time we had to estimate numbers. The area of activity did not seem to extend beyond the eastern cliffs, but might include the two stacks. Arrivals did not begin till well after dark—about 12.45 a.m., and movement ceased about 4 a.m. Investigation in daylight showed that the nesting burrows were in parts not easily accessible without a rope, the lack of which prevented us from further discovery. It would seem, nevertheless, that Bearasay supplies the colony which was felt to exist in that area.

Fulmar. This bird, sometimes called in Lewis the St Kilda Gull, is not

common among the Loch Roag islands. There is a small colony on the west side of Great Bernera, and a pair or two haunted a creek on Floday. We counted 6 to 8 pairs on a recessed part of the cliff on the north side of Bearasay, and several pairs were nesting on the cliffs above the sea pool opposite Stac an Tuill.

Cormorant. Harvie-Brown ("A Vertebrate Fauna of the Outer Hebrides") said in 1888. "At the present time it (the Cormorant) is looked upon as rare in Loch Roag, Lewis, whatever may have been the case formerly." Gray reckoned that there were not many in the Outer Isles, perhaps a few in the eastern sea-caves of Lewis and Barra. We have found no other significant mention of this bird in our area.

Bearasay, however, provided a Cormorant colony of considerable size. Our visit being in August, we were unable to estimate the exact extent of breeding, but we counted 26 nests in such condition as to suggest recent use, and there were many adult and young Cormorants standing around their nesting area, which was along the edge of the eastern cliff eastwards of the gully top. Large pale slabs of stone whitened by the birds made the colony conspicuous from a distance. On our approach during the day, adults and young would retreat along the cliff edge and then fly down to the water or away towards Floday, but at night it was possible to come quietly into the colony and sit beside sleeping birds within stroking distance. Cormorants may also breed on the eastern stack, which turns the slope of its summit away from Bearasay.

Shag. This bird was present in small numbers, chiefly on the two stacks, but also near the Fulmars at both their nesting sites. They evidently breed.

Great Black-backed Gull. A pair stood on Stac an Tuill and may have bred there.

Herring Gull. This bird was in evidence over Bearasay itself and on the stacks. Two or three pairs may have nested.

Black Guillemot. Two birds floated on the sea off the north-eastern part of the island.

Rock Pipit. Three pairs occupied different parts of the top of Bearasay.

Bearasay is probably too small to have any Wheatears, which were present on Floday as well as on the larger islands in the loch. Oystercatchers were also on Floday, but not on Bearasay. One evening on Floday, two Ravens, which had apparently nested on the island, were seen flying over towards Bearasay. Guillemots and Razorbills might well have nested on the stacks, but we saw none. Another bird which may well be found to breed on Bearasay is the Storm Petrel; the jumbled stones in the gully are a likely spot, although no sound was heard either there or in the ruins.

Atlantic seals were present in the sea pool and below the eastern cliffs, but were far more numerous in the creeks of Floday. Rats, whose traces are mentioned by Atkinson and Roberts, did not show themselves on Bearasay, but were found on Floday and other islands, where they may have destroyed some burrow-breeding birds. Their influence upon wild life in the area, including Bearasay, may be extensive.

We have had to be approximate in our records of the birds on Bearasay—a result of our lack of time—but we hope that

the attractive nature of the island to ornithologists is apparent, and we wish to express our gratitude to the people of Bernera who helped us to get there.

BIRD WATCHING ON THE YTHAN ESTUARY

G. M. DUNNET

Scottish bird watchers are probably not generally aware of the attractiveness of the Ythan Estuary as a birding area. The greatest assets of this estuary are its small size coupled with a wide variety of habitats. The tidal part of the river extends only about 4 miles from the mouth, ending at the Logie Buchan bridge; and though the estuary may be up to 600 yards wide in some places at high tide, the channel is a mere 20 yards wide at low water. This contraction leaves exposed a big area consisting of pure sand, gravel beds and mudflats with all intermediate states and combinations, the invertebrate fauna of which provides rich food for birds, mainly ducks and waders.

The Ythan lies only 13 miles north of Aberdeen and is readily accessible by bus or car. On the right (west) bank is the village of Newburgh, and the road follows the estuary along the very edge of the water for much of its length. As a result many of the birds, notably the Eider, Shelduck and waders, are accustomed to people and their vehicles and are remarkably tame. This tameness together with the small size of the estuary means that observers can usually see the birds at close quarters. Across the water from Newburgh, and forming a wedge between the river and the sea, is the Sands of Forvie Nature Reserve, with a variety of breeding birds including terns, gulls, Eider, Shelduck, Fulmar and Red Grouse.

At the mouth, the estuary is bounded by extensive sand dunes, which in summer are the home of many hundreds of terns of four species—Sandwich, Common, Arctic and Little. The number of Sandwich Terns fluctuates markedly from a few tens to several hundreds of pairs from year to year; the Common Tern is most numerous, the Arctic less so, while the Little Tern is scarcest, breeding along the foreshore and not in the dunes. These terns feed up and down the estuary, following the shoals of sile, and often roost in compact flocks on the exposed gravel-beds or on the sandy foreshore. Situated within the busy ternery is a colony of Black-headed Gulls, and the confusion of activity and sound in the area during May and June is tremendous. A few isolated Eiders nest here too and a solitary pair of Stonechats breeds each year among the whins near the lifeboat shed.

Further upstream the sand gives way to gravelly patches, on which mussel-beds have become established, and to extensive mudflats, though sandy areas occur here and there. The mussel-beds retain many small pools at low tide with marine worms,periwinkles, various amphipod crustaceans and other creatures in abundance. These are the main feeding grounds of the Eiders, which are greatly concentrated on them at low tide, and of many species of waders. On the mudflats, rich in a burrowing species of amphipod, and in snails, which are present frequently in thousands per square metre in the muddier parts, Shelduck can be seen spaced out in pairs on their territories throughout the spring. Oystercatchers find cockles in the sandier areas, and flocks of wintering waders, especially Knot, Dunlin, Golden Plover and Redshank, feed on the mud at low tide. Near the tidal limit of the estuary is a very attractive reed-bed, sheltering the elusive Water Rail, and Sedge Warblers in season, and providing the roost for thousands of Starlings each autumn.

It is difficult to say which season is the most interesting. In winter, waterfowl are the chief attraction. Some two thousand geese—Greylag and Pinkfoot being nearly equally abundant—make the estuary and neighbouring lochs their headquarters, and ducks in considerable variety abound. On the river, Scaup, Goldeneye and Long-tailed Duck accompany the remaining Eiders, usually with hundreds of Wigeon, while the lochs abound with Mallard, Wigeon, and Tufted Duck, with smaller number of Goosander and Pochard. Occasionally Red-necked Grebe and Smew occur on the lochs in early winter. Red-throated and Great Northern Divers are common on the sea, and usually appear in the estuary from time to time. Flocks of Common and Velvet Scoters lie off the river mouth, and some of these birds come in too.

Spring seems more a season of arrivals than one of departure: we tend to miss the exodus of the ducks and geese, which linger on until mid April. Terns arrive, Shelduck continue to increase, and the great influx of Eiders goes almost unnoticed: the return of warblers, Swallow, Swift and martins is more conspicuous. Late spring and summer are much more exciting and the river is then teeming with bird life. The young Eiders begin to appear in late May and during June and July and form crèches of over a hundred young birds. Up to a couple of thousand may be on the river at one time along with their mothers, and this is a strong attraction to large numbers of Herring Gulls and some Great Black-backed Gulls which come and prey on the ducklings. Drake Eiders have little to do with all this, and during June they gather in hundreds at the sand-bar near the mouth of the river, still in their full plumage, before moulting into eclipse

and going to sea. The Eiders nest on the moorland of the Nature Reserve—in pure stands of heather and rushy and grassy places. In early spring large rafts of adult Eiders display and call on the river, and in April individual pairs can be seen flying up on to the moor to select nest sites and to begin laying. At the height of incubation it is difficult to walk over much of the Sands of Forvie without disturbing or even treading on the incubating ducks.

The terns are now feeding in large numbers in the estuary, as are the Black-headed Gulls. Waders still occur—many of them presumably non-breeding birds. Chief among them are Oystercatcher, Redshank, and Ringed Plover, though odd Knot and Turnstone can be seen at any time. Oystercatcher, Lapwing and Ringed Plover nest commonly round about, but no young of these species are ever seen on the estuary.

This busy summer season merges almost imperceptibly into autumn, which is one of the best times of year. Waders, at first mainly passage migrants, arrive back from their breeding grounds in considerable variety. On Sunday 19th August 1962, for example, I went out for a short walk with children and dog—not the best circumstances for bird-watching—and with a high tide the meadows along the Tarty Burn were alive with waders. I identified Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Turnstone, Snipe, Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Redshank, Spotted Redshank, Greenshank, Knot, Dunlin and Ruff—a total of 16 species without really trying! I had seen Whimbrel on the river the previous day, and other regulars in the estuary are Grey Plover, Curlew Sandpiper and Black-tailed Godwit in small numbers, and Sanderling in small flocks at the river mouth. At this time too Arctic Skuas appear and spend some hectic days harrying the terns all over the river before passing on south. Occasionally Great Skuas visit the Ythan too. Given an easterly wind at this time many migrants land up on the Sands of Forvie Nature Reserve or in the patches of trees around Newburgh. Red-breasted Flycatchers, Blackcaps and Black Redstarts are fairly regularly detected, and large numbers of Goldcrests, Fieldfares and Redwings arrive on the Reserve every year, and flocks of Snow Buntings regularly overwinter on the dunes. Gradually the wader flocks increase, the terns go, the geese arrive, and we begin to think of winter again.

Few places provide the ornithologist with such a sense of intimacy and satisfaction. With even a few regular visits one can get to know the area very well, and by watching the tides can predict where the birds are likely to be. For a relatively small cost in time and effort great rewards of pleasure and accomplishment may be had.

SHORT NOTES

SHEARWATER MOVEMENTS IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES

During the course of two weeks spent in the Outer Hebrides in the second half of August 1962 regular sea watches were made in all areas visited. Shearwater movements were the principal feature observed, and an account of these is given below. The two sea areas covered by the observations were the Minch and the Atlantic coast.

Sea watches in the Minch were made on a sea crossing to Stornoway on 13th August; from Port of Ness, Lewis, on the 16th; and from a steamer travelling from Lochmaddy to Lochboisdale on the 29th. On the first two occasions the wind was NE, but on the third it was SW. This may have caused the passage on the 29th to take place further out into the Minch, but on all three occasions the observations were similar—a random movement of Fulmars, and a predominantly northward one of Manx Shearwaters.

Observations on the Atlantic coast were made from Uig in West Lewis on 15th August; from Eoropie, Butt of Lewis, on the 16th; and from the Ard an Runair peninsula in North Uist from 23rd to 28th. The sea watches at Eoropie and Uig revealed very little movement, for which the easterly winds during the first week may have been to blame. Those made at Ard an Runair, however, had the benefit of westerly winds, and produced more interesting results.

Ard an Runair is a peninsula jutting a mile out into the Atlantic from near the village of Tigharry. Heavy sea passage of Fulmars and shearwaters was seen each day—nearly all the birds going southwards this time. The heaviest movements occurred with NW winds, on the 24th when the shearwater count reached a maximum of 387 in an hour, and on the 27th when up to 100 passed in an hour. Five Great Shearwaters and a single Cory's Shearwater were seen during these six days, but only two Sooty Shearwaters.

The Cory's Shearwater was seen on 23rd August 1962, moving south about 300 yards out, rather closer than the majority of shearwaters, and watched through a x60 telescope in good light. It was a distinctly large shearwater, general colour sooty grey-brown and markedly paler than a Manx; underparts white, the darker colour of the crown merging gradually with the white of the throat; bill noticeably large, and pale; flight of normal shearwater type, but appearing somewhat heavy when it flapped—which was only once or twice during the time it was in sight.

Although these observations of shearwaters are limited it

seems reasonable to conclude that the passage in the Minch is of a different character from that along the Atlantic coast. Probably only a small proportion of the Atlantic movements at this time of year penetrate into the Minch. With the exception of six Sooty Shearwaters seen from Port of Ness on the 16th it is believed that most of the shearwaters seen in the Minch were dispersing northwards from breeding grounds in Hebridean waters. By contrast, the passage observed on the west coast probably reflects widespread Atlantic movements.

P. J. K. BURTON, JENNIFER M. BURTON.

(Notes on autumn movements of shearwaters in North Sutherland and Easter Ross were published earlier this year (*antea* 2: 304), and attention is also drawn to J. H. Phillips' recent paper on "The distribution of the Sooty Shearwater around the British Isles" (*Brit. Birds* 56: 197). The record of Cory's Shearwater is the fourth for Scottish waters and first for the Outer Hebrides. Other noteworthy birds included a pale-phase adult Long-tailed Skua seen on the crossing from Kyle of Lochalsh to Stornoway on 13th August 1962, and two adult Ortolan Buntings near Eoropie, Butt of Lewis, on the 16th, the first record of this species in the Outer Hebrides other than St Kilda.—Ed.)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL IN INVERNESS-SHIRE

On 5th February 1963 while counting a flock of Teal in the Moray Firth just east of Inverness I noted a drake Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca carolinensis* among them. From forty yards I was able to note the white vertical mark in front of the wing, the lack of a white stripe on the scapulars, the lack of a yellow line separating the green and brown head pattern, and the darker buff breast. The white mark was an excellent field character, and I was able to identify the bird with ease at 400 yards range.

Later in the morning I found it feeding on the mud with four Teal, one of them a female, but it was impossible to determine this bird's race. Next day I found the Green-winged Teal in the same area, and it was seen again from 19th to 22nd, but not after this. I previously saw a drake Green-winged Teal in Hampshire in February 1955.

R. H. DENNIS.

(This is the fifth record of this American race in Scotland and the first for Moray and East Inverness.—Ed.)

SNOW GEESE IN PERTHSHIRE

Two Snow Geese were first seen by John Craig, Jnr., a few days before 21st January 1963 keeping company with a flock

of Grey Lag Geese in the neighbourhood of Comrie. They were seen regularly in the same area until 10th February, when large numbers of geese deserted the area as a result of the hard weather. Relatively few geese returned with the thaw and the Snow Geese were never seen again in spite of much searching.

I saw these birds on many occasions, and twice I was able to watch them only a few yards away. One (ringed on the right leg) was slightly larger than the other (ringed on the left leg), and they constantly kept together as a pair. They were quite certainly fully adult, with snowy white plumage broken only by the distinctive black wing-tips. In size they were only a little smaller than the Grey Lag and this, coupled with the absence of any grey patch on the red bills, rules out the possibility of their having been Ross's Geese. I believe that they were Lesser Snow Geese as they did not look coarse enough in the beak, head and neck for Greater Snow Goose.

J. RALSTON CRAWFORD.

On 3rd March 1963 I found two Snow Geese feeding with a flock of 100 Grey Lag in stubble fields by Drumatherty Farm, near Spittalfield. They kept together as a pair on the outskirts of the Grey Lag flock and they were noticeably smaller and less stocky than their companions, being more the size of a Brent Goose. Their plumage was a dirty-white colour, and the black wing-tips were a conspicuous feature in flight and could be seen even when the birds were on the ground. The bills appeared to be blackish, and not pink.

R. JOB.

(Only 21 days and 24 miles separate these two records. There must, therefore, be a strong likelihood that they refer to the same individuals. There are discrepancies between the descriptions—notably as to size, body colour and bill colour—but these could be accounted for by different conditions of observation. It will be noted that the Comrie birds were ringed in exactly the same way as the two geese seen in Galloway during the 1961/62 winter (*antea* 2: 307). Again there is a discrepancy in that the Galloway birds were described as having a grey patch at the base of the bill which was definitely observed to be lacking in the Comrie birds, but even so it is hard to believe that there are two pairs of Snow Geese going round Scotland wearing exactly the same combination of rings. The association with Grey Lag Geese is another feature common to all these records and also to a further record of two "white geese" seen near Carsebreck on 29th October 1962 (*antea* 2: 313).

The fact that these birds were both ringed makes it almost certain that they had originated in captivity, even though it

is known that Snow Geese have been ringed intensively in America. The problems inherent in the field identification of the two races of Snow Goose and Ross's Goose are therefore further complicated by the possibility of hybridisation in captivity between these geese. It seems fairly clear that these records do not refer to the Greater Snow Goose, but the many experienced observers who watched the Galloway birds were unable to reach any clear decision on their identity, and the two latest records must also be regarded as inconclusive although the Comrie birds do sound very like Lesser Snow Geese.

The general position as regards the likelihood of escapes from captivity was discussed in our comments on the Galloway records. Since then we have received some further information from Dr John Berry, who informs us that he has a number of hybrid Snow Geese at Tayfield, a few of which might be mistaken for pure Snow Geese although in fact they all have some aberration in plumage, varying from a few black secondary or tertiary feathers or coverts in the wing to a more or less piebald appearance. One of these was shot on the Tay near Dundee during the 1962/63 winter.

Dr Berry also quotes from a letter which he received in March 1963 from Lord Dundee, who keeps a collection of wildfowl at Birkhill, near Gaudry, on the Firth of Tay: "Two of my full winged Lesser White Snows have left the sanctuary lately. One is a last year's gosling, ringed... The other is a year older hatched in 1961. But I do not think the older bird is ringed at all... The younger bird is not yet in full plumage and its back is still half grey, so it should be easy to identify." It would be an easy matter for these birds to have moved to either Comrie or Spittalfield (both of which lie within 30 miles of Birkhill) but Mr Ralston Crawford's description of the Comrie birds (which were both ringed) as "fully adult" would seem to rule out the possibility of these birds having escaped from Birkhill. The only thing one can say with any confidence is that the balance of probability is heavily against a wild origin for the birds concerned in these two latest records.—ED.).

GOSHAWK IN DUNBARTONSHIRE

While out for my morning walk on Duncryne Hill on 20th November 1962, I saw a powerful-looking hawk travelling towards me at a height of about 400 feet. The long tail was a conspicuous feature, as was the flight action which consisted of a series of wing beats and glides. The bird passed right over me and I saw an outline of rounded wings, ragged with projecting primary tips, and underparts pale and barred all over. In outline it was like a very big Sparrowhawk, and I

have no doubt in my mind that it was a Goshawk. I could get no impression of the colour on the upperparts, but I think that this may have been the same bird as I saw a few days before attacking a Hen Harrier on the nearby Gartocharn Moss, and I then had the impression of brownish upperparts. In size the bird appeared to be larger than a Peregrine, though its shape was, of course, entirely different. Apart from the fact that my bird had its tail closed, its outline was very close to that shown in the sketch of the adult Goshawk soaring in *The Handbook of British Birds* (4: 73), and the markings were as definite as those shown in the sketch.

TOM WEIR.

On 25th November 1962 we saw a very large hawk flying low over marshy ground at Gartocharn Moss on the south side of the Endrick Mouth. At first we took it for a Sparrowhawk, as it had the characteristic flight action of a few wing beats followed by a glide, but we soon realised that it was much too big. It settled on a fence post and we could see that the underparts were whitish with no trace of buff, and that the mantle and wings were brown with darker brown on the primaries. At a range of 400 yards it was not possible to make out any more details but we had the impression of a whitish stripe from eye to ear coverts.

A "ring-tail" Hen Harrier was hunting in the vicinity, and whenever it came too near the Goshawk, the latter would attack it and the two birds would spar in the air. On every occasion it was the Goshawk that was the aggressor. The considerable wing span of the Goshawk could be compared with that of the harrier when they were sparring. On one occasion the two birds settled on fence posts only 40 yards apart. The harrier then looked the larger bird, though it may have been partly due to the hunched attitude adopted by the Goshawk. It seems worth adding that Sparrowhawks normally hunt this beat quite amicably with the harriers.

The Goshawk was again present when we re-visited the area on 13th January. On this occasion the bird was first seen perched high in a birch tree, and from a distance its size suggested Buzzard. As we got closer, however, it began to look too pale underneath and about the head, and when it left the tree it dropped with a shrike-like swoop and flew off with the characteristic flight action about 10 feet above the ground. It flew off to another tree where we had an excellent view in good light. The long, strongly barred tail could be clearly seen and the upperparts now appeared quite a russet-brown colour.

M. FORRESTER, DONALD STALKER.

(This is the first recorded occurrence of the Goshawk in

Dunbartonshire. Presumably these observations refer to the same individual, though it is worth drawing attention to the fact that, whereas Mr Weir's description of the barred underparts leaves no doubt that his bird was an adult, the description of the upperparts as "russet-brown" in the second note is more suggestive of an immature bird.—Ed.).

RED-FOOTED FALCON IN ORKNEY

On 8th May 1962 my wife and I were driving through rough heather pasture in Stromness Parish on the Mainland of Orkney when we saw a small, long-winged hawk alight on the heather by the side of the road between 25 and 35 yards from the car. For a few moments it stayed there, giving us a good side-on view, and then it flew up and over the car and disappeared. It could not be found again in spite of an exhaustive search.

In profile it looked slightly bigger than a Merlin but slimmer than a Kestrel—both species with which I am very well acquainted. The feature that immediately caught our attention was the brilliant red colour of the feet and legs. The upperparts were dark with a distinct brownish tinge to the upper back and perhaps also about the head, which was turned slightly towards us. There were dark bars on the back and the tail. The underparts were of a lighter brownish colour except for the throat and part way across the neck and upper breast, where the colour was cream or creamy-buff. We were not close enough to see whether there was any red colouring about the eyes, but there could be no doubt that the bird was a female Red-footed Falcon. This is the first record of the species for Orkney, and it coincided with a spell of easterly winds which brought in a number of other migrants, including an Osprey.

R. BREMNER.

CRANES IN FIFE, INVERNESS-SHIRE AND LANARKSHIRE

Two Cranes were present at Dunbog, near Newburgh, on 27th June 1962. They were first seen at 10.30 a.m., but I suspect that they had been in the neighbourhood since the previous evening as my own captive cranes had been very excited and had called a lot during the night. I saw them first as they sailed overhead above some beeches, calling a flamingo-like grunt (which I have never heard my captives make and which does not correspond with any note described elsewhere), and landed in a field adjacent to my crane paddocks. They were not particularly wary and walked to within about 20 yards of a roadway, where they showed really very little concern for a van which was passing. With

this in mind I drove down to them with the hope of getting some photographs, but unfortunately by the time I had made all the preparations they had wandered more than 100 yards into the field. However they were near enough for me to be able to examine them critically with 15x binoculars.

Both were without any trace of the brown-buff juvenal plumage, and in both the dark slate and white neck patterns were fully developed though with less distinct margins than in the full adult plumage; the dark part was less dark than in the adult plumage, though the intensity of the dark stripe varies greatly in different individuals from dull black to mid-slate. The curved, extended, disintegrated inner secondaries and humerals were not developed, but in one bird (the bigger of the two) a patch of greater secondary coverts, with the tips of the inner secondaries just beginning to show, was growing in and showed as lighter, greyer and less sooty-tinted than the rest of the plumage. Neither bird showed the sparsely bristled crown patch; both showed dark juvenile irides.

They allowed me to approach within about 150 yards before taking off. They flew off for about half a mile and then returned, sailing close overhead to land in another field which had been cultivated in preparation for sowing rape and was bare earth. In the expectation that they would walk up to the boundary fence that separated them from my captive cranes, I strewed wheat in a long line over the approach. However they ignored this offering and came right up to the netting where they preened and dosed and ate small clods of earth, while the pair inside demonstrated aggressively at them. They seemed very tired and this, together with the absence of the usual whitish powdery bloom, convinced me that they were newly arrived from a long flight. They stayed for two hours and then, without being disturbed, they flew off to the north-east, sailing and circling in a stork-like manner.

I am convinced that they were both two-year-olds, i.e. hatched in 1960. Although I have not yet bred the European Crane *Megalornis grus*, my experience with other members of the genus has shown me that extensive relics of the buff juvenile plumage are retained until the second autumn, and that the extended inner secondaries do not develop until the third autumn.

At the risk of seeming very uncharitable I would like to comment on the infelicitous figure of the species Lodge has made for Vol. XI of Dr Bannerman's *The Birds of the British Isles*. The illustration in *The Handbook* is much happier and also shows the variation in body colour and in the amount and extent of the black markings on the inner secondaries

and coverts which occurs in both the typical race and *M. g. lilfordi* (if this subspecies is in fact a valid one, which I greatly doubt) and is independent of sex or age and seems to be fixed in each individual. Worst of all, Lodge shows the Crane to have a bright ruby eye. This is completely wrong and I can only think he must have copied it from the specimen mounted in the Royal Scottish Museum*. The only crane with a red eye is the Demoiselle *Anthropoides virgo*—ruby red in the male and topaz in the female. In *M. grus* the iris of the adult male is a very, very pale straw colour—almost silver—while that of the female, though a little more variable, is much darker and is just plain straw colour infused with a biscuity tint. The young have dark eyes and I do not know when the light colour is developed. It seems likely that they are not sexually mature until five years old, so there is plenty of time for this colour change after two years old. The red crowns in both illustrations have slipped back badly, though this can be explained by faults in the taxidermy of the models. The bare crown is not so extensive nor so brilliant a red as is usually figured, and I feel that some of the illustrators may have had the Manchurian Crane *M. japonensis* in mind when they coloured their pictures. In this species, of course, the patch is quite naked, coarsely carunculate and bright sealing wax red.

*Since writing this I have seen a single specimen at Vincennes Zoo in Paris which had a ruby-topaz eye. This is the first aberrant specimen of which I have heard, although I must have seen over a hundred captive European and Lilford's Cranes.

TOM SPENCE.

In mid July 1962 a telephone call was received at Inverness County Police Headquarters from a Mrs Girvan of Corriemony, Glen Urquhart, asking if there had been any reports of straying storks, as two very large birds were in fields near the farm house. From her description I was able to suggest that they were probably Cranes, but unfortunately it proved impossible to visit the area before the birds left.

From Lindsay Girvan I learned that they were first seen on 23rd June, and had remained in the flat fields near the R. Enrick at Corriemony until 27th July, when they left and were not seen again. He described them as two large, slow-moving birds, 3½ feet high; slate grey, with body like turkey, long neck, large beak, black on neck and throat; neck and body in straight line in flight; large high tail bent back in curve; thin legs.

The birds fed in the grass fields and were very wary, so that they could not be approached nearer than 200 yards. They stayed during the afternoons but went to another farm at night. When I showed the *Field Guide* to the family they all

pointed to the Crane as the bird they had seen. The birds were also seen by J. D. Michael, retired from the Indian Railways, who identified them as similar to cranes seen by him in India.

JAMES MACGEOCH.

Hearing that two strange birds resembling emaciated turkeys had been seen near Carnwath since 30th September 1962, my daughter and I went in search of them on the afternoon of 7th October. We were taken to a large stubble field, at one edge of which was a marshy patch, but the birds were not there. As we were on the point of leaving, two huge birds appeared over the woods and were obviously intent on landing until they saw us. They had long, fully-extended necks, and long trailing legs. They were grey in colour, except for very noticeable and well separated black "fingers" at the wing tips. As they were flying into the sun we could not see the colour of the head and neck, but even so had no hesitation in identifying them as Cranes.

Early next morning, on the way to their usual haunt, we suddenly saw them in the air. As we got out of the car, they landed in a grass field not 300 yards from Carnwath. Their landing was a splendid sight, reminiscent of storks landing on chimney pots. They alighted right alongside a sheep which, not unreasonably, looked a little surprised, and provided an interesting contrast in shape and size. We had excellent views, and the black head and neck, and the white stripe on them, were clearly visible, though it was difficult to make out the red patch on the crown. The wings when ruffled looked like out-sized feather dusters. We tried to approach them, and succeeded in getting to within 250 yards, when they were put up from the opposite direction. They flew off low with a very direct flight and landed about two miles away. So far as I know they have not been seen in the area since.

ROBERT ERSKINE-HILL.

(These notes include the first records of Cranes in Tay and North Fife, and in Clyde and Lanarkshire. During summer 1962 two Cranes were also seen in Shetland around 20th May, on Fair Isle—the first documented record for the island—on 29th May (*Fair Isle Bird Obs. Bull.* 5: 12, 29), and in Aberdeenshire from 14th to 16th August (*antea* 2: 245); while a single adult was present on Fair Isle from 19th July to 28th August (*F.I.B.O.B.* 5: 45). The neat picture, ignoring this single bird, of just one pair of Cranes wandering about Scotland, is rather spoiled by the carefully checked overlap of dates of the Fife and Inverness-shire records. It is, however, clear from the plumage descriptions and from a drawing of the Inverness-shire birds submitted by Mr Girvan, that these

two records refer to different birds. It is still possible that the other five records of a pair of Cranes, leaving aside the Fife birds, could all refer to the same individuals.—Ed.).

SPOTTED CRAKE IN KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE

At 12.30 a.m. on 15th June 1963 W. Austin, D. Skilling and A.D.W. heard the peculiar "whip-lash" call (see *Brit. Birds* 53: 523) of a Spotted Crake from a marsh in Kirkcudbrightshire. It was a brilliant, calm night and the call first attracted our attention at a range of about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. We approached until at about 30 yards the note, repeated without variation at intervals of a very few seconds, became astonishingly penetrating, and the "crack of the whip" at the end of each whistle clearly audible. All three of us remarked on the resemblance to a whip crack, but at long range the main impression was of a liquid staccato whistle urgently repeated again and again.

From familiarity with an excellent Swedish recording, A.D.W. was able to recognise this as without doubt the call of a Spotted Crake. Later the same night all three of us listened to this recording and the identification was agreed. The following night the bird eluded efforts to tape-record it by remaining silent—conditions were cooler and showery. But on 16th June Sir Arthur B. Duncan and A.D.W. heard it again for about an hour from 10.30 to 11.30 p.m. A.B.D. also listened to the Swedish recording afterwards and was in full agreement with the identification. On this second occasion the call was rather more intermittent and slightly further out in the marsh. Subsequently a number of visits to the marsh were made at and after dusk, usually without result, but occasional calls on 19th June and 5th July showed that the bird was still present. The very dense growth of sedge, reeds and other marsh plants renders the chances of seeing it rather slim. The season at which it has been heard, and perhaps also the tendency for the call or "song" to fall off recently, suggest that a breeding pair may well be present.

For a number of years I have sought this species in the neighbourhood, for its previous history in Galloway is intriguing. According to Robert Service it was often shot towards the end of the 19th century; it had been found breeding in Dumfriesshire, and Clark-Kennedy told Harting that he had taken the nest in Kirkcudbrightshire (*Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.* 1896: 123). The last known breeding in Scotland was in 1912 when Abel Chapman found a brood in Roxburghshire. According to *The Birds of Scotland* there have been a number of autumn and winter records for Dumfriesshire and there are also records for the other counties in south-west Scotland.

But in 1948 A.B.D. knew of no recent records for Kirkcudbrightshire, and I do not know of any if we exclude a bird seen near Castle Douglas in mid February 1958 by Professor M. F. M. Meiklejohn, F. D. Hamilton and me. This record was not published because we could not be absolutely certain, at that season, that the bird was not a Carolina Crake (see *antea* 2: 219).

It is right to be cautious about identifying a scarce bird by call alone, but all who heard this bird agreed that the sound was quite unmistakable. It is hardly necessary to add that there is always hope of seeing the bird or birds in another season, if not this, for it may well be that the Spotted Crake occurs more often than is suspected.

A. DONALD WATSON.

GREAT SKUA BREEDING ON ST KILDA

During June 1963 I spent two weeks on St Kilda with a National Trust for Scotland working party. On my way to the tunnel at Gob na h'Airde in Glen Bay on the 9th, my first day there, I noticed a Great Skua being harried by a Great Black-backed Gull. This seemed unusual, as the Great Skua is recorded as only an occasional visitor in July and to the surrounding seas in October (*St Kilda Summer*).

On my way back from the tunnel I found the bird still in the same area, and thought it might be nesting, so I climbed a hill and waited. After 20 minutes and two further visits to the spot it settled, and I was able to find the nest. It was typical of those I had seen on Fair Isle on a previous visit and contained two eggs.

I visited it again a fortnight later but the eggs had not yet hatched. Both birds were present, and much more aggressive than before. The nest was not far from colonies of Great and Lesser Black-backed, and Herring Gulls. This is the first record of breeding on St Kilda.

KERR POLLOCK.

(This represents a further extension of range in the remote north and west of Scotland for the Great Skua, which has increased very greatly following protection in Shetland especially. It has in recent years been recorded breeding in the Outer Hebrides other than St Kilda, actually in Lewis (*Scot Birds* 1: 124, 156, 259), and on the Scottish mainland in Caithness (*Brit. Birds* 46: 262; *Scot. Nat.* 1955: 105).—ED.)

ARCTIC REDPOLLS IN INVERNESS-SHIRE

On 4th January 1963 I stopped my car by the Caledonian Canal at Tomnahurich, near Inverness, to look at a Goldfinch

on the fence. It flew down to a patch of nettles and landed beside a small group of redpolls. One was a normal Lesser Redpoll *Carduelis flammea disruptis*, but the other two were Arctic Redpolls *C. hornemanni*.

The redpolls were so tame that I was able to approach within a few yards as they fed on the nettle seeds. The Arctic Redpolls were very pale, with unstreaked white rumps very obvious in flight; underparts very white, and upperparts much paler than Lesser Redpoll, with a marked frosty appearance on the shoulders; wing-bars white; both birds had crimson crowns; no pinkish flush could be seen on their breasts but the light was poor. The Arctic Redpolls appeared larger than the Lesser Redpoll, but their calls were similar.

From this field description I was not able to assign them to a particular race. I left them feeding on the nettles and they were still there just before dusk, but I could not find them on subsequent days. The weather, which had been frosty and snowy since 26th December 1962, became even more severe.

R. H. DENNIS.

(Taxonomists disagree about the classification of the redpolls and the validity of the various races and species; and the whitest examples of *flammea* may be inseparable from *hornemanni* in the field even under favourable conditions. Meantime it is considered desirable to record under Arctic Redpoll any birds which show the characters associated with *hornemanni*, and this record has been accepted by the Rarities Committee on this basis (see *Brit. Birds* 54: 238; 55: 582). There is no previous record of either race of Arctic Redpoll for Moray or East Inverness.—ED.).

CURRENT NOTES

(Key to initials of observers: R. W. Adamson, A. F. Airey, D. R. Anderson, D. G. Andrew, W. Austin, J. A. Bailey, Miss V. E. C. Balfour-Browne, I. V. Balfour-Paul, G. H. Ballantyne, J. Ballantyne (JB), Miss P. G. Baxter, A. Black, G. W. G. Boag, T. Boyd, W. G. Breed, J. Bremner (JBr), A. W. Brodie, R. G. Caldow, C. V. Chilcott, D. A. P. Cooke, H. G. Cree, Miss M. H. E. Cuminghame, W. A. J. Cunningham, N. P. Danby, P. E. Davis, R. H. Dennis, D. Dewar, A. A. Diack, E. Dicerbo, G. Dick, H. F. Dixon, H. E. M. Dott, Hon. H. Douglas-Home, Dr G. M. Dunnet, Sir R. Erskine-Hill, M. Everett, H. Fisher, Miss W. C. Flower, H. A. Ford I. M. Ford, R. W. Forrester, Miss E. M. Gall, A. G. Gordon, D. R. Grant, H. Halliday, S. G. A. Harper, A. H. Hazell, R. Hodgkinson, J. A. D. Hope, J. Hoy, R. A. Jeffrey, Dr D. Jenkins, W. M. Johnson, J. Kerr, J. E. King, Miss H. Knight, J. Lockertie, A. J. B. Loudon, J. G. Lyon, A. Macdonald, D. Macdonald (DM), Mrs M. K. Macduff-Duncan, Miss G. MacGregor, K. S. Macgregor, I. Maclean, Mrs M. J. C. Maclean, A. T. Macmillan, R. W. Marriott, W. Matheson, W. S. Medlicott, Prof. M. F. M.

Meiklejohn, Mrs D. Melrose (DMc), J. K. R. Melrose, T. D. H. Merrie, D. Mills (DMi), K. D. G. Mitchell, Rev. R. I. Mitchell, J. Murray, R. Murray, Mrs N. Neilson, J. B. Nelson, D. W. Oliver, J. D. Oliver, G. L. A. Patrick, J. Phillips (JPh), J. Potter (JP), C. A. Pountain, W. Pryde, Mrs I. Rainier, R. M. Ramage, C. P. Rawcliffe, G. A. Richards, E. J. Roberts, Dr M. Rusk, H. M. Russell, Mrs J. MacA. Simpson, A. J. Smith, R. T. Smith, R. W. J. Smith, Dr T. C. Smout, D. Stalker, J. A. Stewart, R. Stokoe, J. H. Swan, C. Tait, Miss V. M. Thom, A. M. Tittensor, L. A. Urquhart, Mrs K. Wallace, G. Waterston, Mrs M. I. Waterston, A. D. Watson, W. Watt (WWa), D. N. Weir, Dr R. S. Weir, T. Weir, D. P. Willis, Mrs M. I. Workman, W. Wyper (WW), J. G. Young, B. Zonfrillo.

Unless otherwise stated all dates refer to 1963.)

Introduction

As a lot more information on the effects of the past winter has been sent in we are again devoting a section to this subject. Other sections deal with 1963 notes on distribution, some earlier records, and observations on a variety of general topics. Current Notes for the winter number should be submitted by 30th September.

Effects of the severe weather

The paradox of Current Notes is that by the time they are read they are no longer current—at best they are about two months old. The more up to date one tries to be with information and comment the more obvious this snag can be. When it was written, the section in the last number on *Effects of the severe weather* (*antea* 2: 369) was an adequate summary of the little information received; yet long before publication it was clear that more emphasis should have been given to the losses which people expected certain species to suffer and which were then being noted.

Even now it is not always easy to sort out the facts; because for every person who says that a species has been drastically reduced in numbers there seems to be another to report that there are as many as ever in his area. For example, **Bullfinches**—perhaps not birds to be severely hit by hard weather—are just not to be seen at Haddington (AM), whereas at High Valleyfield, Fife, both Bullfinches and **Goldfinches** have increased tremendously this year, though other species are down in numbers (JH).

Some effects are predictable. Resident species which did not move out from severely snowbound hill districts, such as the Moorfoots, fared worse than the same species on lower and more sheltered ground. Seed-eating and scrap-eating species do relatively well in association with man in his towns and farm steadings.

A complete survey has not been attempted, but a few notes on individual species may be of interest. Too few reports

have been received about most of the scarcer local species to give an unbiased picture, so that these comments are largely confined to the commoner species, and especially to those where losses have been widely reported.

Lapwings were definitely hard hit, and this is reported from many places, possibly because this is a very conspicuous species. In Lewis they are conspicuous by their absence (WAJC); at the end of April the shortage of birds in Wester Ross was desperate—no Lapwings and very little else (TW); in south-east Sutherland numbers are probably down to about a third, with hardly any in some places but other areas much as before (DM); in the lowland districts of East and Midlothian they are fewer in numbers (AM), much reduced (ATM), much down and breeding in pockets, with a 50% or 75% reduction at Gullane Links (KSM), and have almost ceased to breed at Hillend where they were frequent before (JGL); they are down to about half their former numbers in the Lothians and Peeblesshire (TCS), and certainly down by half in the Moorfoots and the Tweed Valley in Peeblesshire (JB); one pair nested in an area in Fife where there were six in 1962, though 13 unpaired birds are also on the ground (GD); in south Berwickshire roughly one pair in ten remains (HD-H); in Kirkcudbrightshire numbers are much reduced, with birds absent or down to one in ten in some areas but almost normal in others (ADW), though another observer reports that in contrast to other parts of Scotland Lapwings are breeding fairly well in the county (AFA).

Snipe have become extremely scarce in the Gladhouse area; the first was not seen until 22nd April, and up to early July only three single birds had been seen, compared with 75 bird/records during the same period in 1962 (DGA, RWJS); in Peeblesshire Snipe have definitely been hard hit (JB).

Woodpigeons have apparently been affected rather patchily, but perhaps a high initial population makes it difficult to detect quite heavy mortality. Certainly in the woods round Coldstream the density of the population is astonishing (ATM), and the winter has not halted its progress (HD-H). The usual comment is that although numbers are down there are still plenty of pigeons about.

In East Lothian numbers of **Green Woodpeckers** are evidently down (KSM); two dead birds were found near Selkirk (AJS); and numbers are seriously affected in Berwickshire (HD-H); yet in Kirkcudbrightshire there is some evidence that there are even more than in 1962 (ADW).

The **Long-tailed Tit** is one of those tiny birds which one expects to succumb in hard winters, but reports are completely conflicting, possibly because it is not a particularly numerous species. In south-east Sutherland it is very much reduced

(DM); on lower Deeside none has been seen since the winter (DJ); in south Berwickshire it has been almost wiped out (HD-H). Yet there is no apparent reduction in East Lothian (KSM); they have come through the winter surprisingly well in Peeblesshire (JB); and they are as plentiful as usual in Kirkcudbrightshire (ADW).

Treecreepers have not been seen since the winter in parts of lower Deeside (DJ), though at least as numerous as usual at Glassel (DGA); are somewhat reduced in Peeblesshire (JB); and 90% wiped out in south Berwickshire (HD-H).

Opinion is almost unanimous in describing the **Wren** as one of the worst hit species. In south-east Sutherland it is very much reduced (DM); on lower Deeside only two have been heard since the winter (DJ); though it is apparently unaffected at Glassel (DGA); in many areas of the Lothians where Wrens were numerous last summer they seem to have been almost wiped out (ATM), and another observer suggests a 75% reduction in numbers (KSM); at Bush and Glencorse, near Edinburgh, it is almost gone from areas where it was abundant last year (NPD); at Gifford and in central Edinburgh Wrens are clearly very badly hit, even in the city, though they remain as common as ever at Cramond and Dalmeny (TCS); in Peeblesshire numbers are definitely much reduced (JB); in south Berwickshire they are 90% wiped out (HD-H); and they are much reduced and very scarce indeed in Kirkcudbrightshire (ADW).

Though still well distributed **Song Thrushes** are fewer in south-east Sutherland (DM); in East and Midlothian they are reduced but still there in fair numbers (KSM); in Peeblesshire they are down by well over half (JB); in Berwickshire numbers are seriously diminished (HD-H); and in Kirkcudbrightshire somewhat reduced (ADW).

Within four or five miles of Dornoch, Sutherland, 23 pairs of **Stonechats** were counted in 1961, when the population was considered to be very high; the 1961/62 winter made serious inroads on these numbers, and this has been continued in 1962/63 so that not one has been seen since (DM); in inland forestry plantation areas in Kirkcudbrightshire they are much down with only occasional pairs where there were a score in 1962—a year of abundance (ADW),

Goldcrests are unchanged in south-east Sutherland (DM); but much reduced at Glassel, Kincardine (DGA); 50% down in East and Midlothian (KSM); seriously reduced in Peeblesshire (JB); and almost completely wiped out in south Berwickshire (HD-H).

Finally, some detailed counts are available for an area on the outskirts of Edinburgh at Fairmilehead and Swanston. Numbers of all species were counted or estimated in 1962

and most interesting figures obtained by repeating the census in 1963. Of the larger ground-feeding birds the most affected were **Lapwing** (33 pairs down to 6 pairs), **Curlew** (8/3) and **Partridge** (9/6). Of the crow family only **Jackdaw** (20/15) was down. Small insectivorous woodland birds were badly hit, most notably **Wren** (13/3), **Treecreeper** (6/1) and **Goldcrest** (5/1), but **Coal Tit** (12/4), **Blue Tit** (44/25), **Great Tit** (12/6) and **Robin** (42/20) also suffering. **Mistle** and **Song Thrushes**, **Blackbird**, **Skylark** and **Meadow Pipit** all left during the coldest spell, being present at the beginning of January but certainly gone by the end of the month; they reappeared at the end of March and built up steadily through April to normal numbers by the beginning of May. **Greenfinch**, **Chaffinch**, **Bullfinch** and **Yellowhammer** stayed on and must have depended almost entirely on garden feeding on scraps and Swoop; all showed a slight decrease only. **Linnet** (68/16) was the one seed-eater to suffer; the birds probably moved out, as the stubble on which large flocks usually feed was under one to three feet of snow for two months. The pair of **Grey Wagtails** (1/0) went, and **Pied Wagtail** (9/6) decreased. **Corn Bunting** (6/4) and **Reed Bunting** (10/8), probably too shy to visit gardens, stuck it out in the fields. **Snow Buntings** usually winter in the fields, and about New Year there were 1000; in mid February they were found feeding on the tops of Allermuir and Caerketton where the sunshine had melted large areas of snow. **Kestrel**, **Tawny Owl**, **Hedge Sparrow**, **Starling** and **House Sparrow** stayed in the area and showed no decrease (HAF).

In time a fuller picture of the effects of the past winter on individual species will emerge for the country as a whole; it should, however, be remembered that these effects are not necessarily the same in all districts—the past winter was not much worse than average in some places—and particularly that it is the conditions in a bird's winter habitat that matter, not those on the deserted breeding grounds. And lastly, it is starvation, not the cold, that kills birds.

Distribution

This section deals with 1963 observations; earlier records are given in the following section.

Some comments are given on the arrival and build-up of summer visitors under species, but attention may be drawn here to a remarkably heavy late movement. Writing on 30th May PED reports that late May was quite good for migrants at Fair Isle, with more of the common warblers than at any time last year, and a good sprinkling of sub-rarities. Notes from the Bass Rock indicate a very substantial movement at that time; there was a striking passage of warblers on 25th and 26th, with over 20 **Willow Warblers**, two **Sedge War-**

blers, two or three **Whitethroats** and one **Lesser Whitethroat** on the latter date; on 6th June this late spring migration was still continuing, with Willow Warblers, Whitethroats, another Lesser Whitethroat, two **Swallows** and a cock **Brambling** (JBN).

In Gosford Bay, East Lothian, three immature **Great Northern Divers**, surprisingly scarce there, were seen on 18th April (HFD, TCS). A steady migration of **Red-throated Divers** in mid Forth was noted at Elie from 18th to 21st April (DWO), and one was at Corby Loch, Aberdeenshire, on 19th May but did not stay (DRG).

For the first time a pair of **Great Crested Grebes** bred and hatched out young at Peppermill Dam, Tulliallan, Fife (GD, JP). A **Red-necked Grebe** was seen at Aberdeen on 17th February (WGB), and in East Lothian between Gullane and Gosford there were reports of two on 14th April (IMF), 12 in communal display on the 18th (HFD, TCS), one on the 27th, and two on 4th May (CT). A **Black-necked Grebe** was at Hallcraig, Aberdour, Fife, on 25th April (GD, JP), and one at Barr Loch, Renfrewshire, on 2nd and 3rd May (RGC).

In an hour on 19th May, 122 **Manx Shearwaters** were counted from Elie Ness, Fife, making their way down the Forth towards the Isle of May (DWO). Substantial numbers of non-breeding birds may remain in the mouth of the Firth of Forth during the summer, but there are tantalising local rumours that a pair may have nested during the past two or three summers on Craigleith, off North Berwick, where one was hanging about on the evening of 17th June. This bird has never been found breeding in the Forth, and as the man who says he found the nest will not show it to anyone it can only be regarded as an intriguing possibility (ATM).

Occasionally since 1958 odd **Fulmars** have been seen about the gable of a famous tenement with 27 chimney pots on a single stalk on Portobello Esplanade, Edinburgh; once there were about a dozen birds there, and on 13th June there were four, of which two flew up to the exposed fireplace niches in the wall and settled in them, one being fed by its mate; they had evidently been there for about a week, but seemed only to be prospecting (JBr), and there was no sign of them on 3rd July (ATM). Once again there are reports from various parts of Edinburgh, with single birds at the Royal Botanic Garden on 2nd April (JHS), Duddingston Loch—the first for the sanctuary—on 6th May (ATM), Merchiston Castle School, Colinton, on 26th and 29th May and 24th June (IVB-P, IMF), and Fairmilehead on 16th June (HAF). In Dunbartonshire one was seen from Ben Vorlich flying south over Loch Lomond on 23rd June (TDHM).

Two pairs of **Garganey** were flushed from flooded marshland

at Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, on 12th April (JAB, ELR); a pair was on Rosslynlee Reservoir, Midlothian, on 22nd and 28th (DGA, RWJS); and there was a drake on a pool near the mouth of the Endrick on the 28th (WUF).

A June record of **Scaup** comes from Skibo on the Dornoch Firth, Sutherland, where there was a duck on the 11th (DM). Single drake **Goldeneye** were noted at Loch Garten, Invernessshire, on 26th May (DWO), and at Seafield, Leith, on 13th June (CT), the latter just possibly the same bird that patrolled a short stretch of the lower reaches of the River Almond, West and Midlothian, from 20th April until 22nd May (TCS); two were at Gladhouse on 7th July, one previously having been seen intermittently on the Moorfoot reservoirs (DGA). Four pairs of **Velvet Scoters** were seen in the Sound of Gigha on 21st April; this species is distinctly uncommon on the west coast compared with the east (TDHM).

Further **Smews** are reported to add to those already noted (*antea* 2: 313, 376): one frequented the River Blane near Killearn, Stirlingshire, from 6th to 20th February, on which date a second bird was also present (AJBL); and there were single red-heads by the Tay Bridge on 17th February (CVC), at Threipmuir, Midlothian, on 31st March (CT), and at Barr Loch, Renfrewshire, on 10th April (LAU).

For what they are worth we may note single **Grey Lag Geese** at Tynninghame, East Lothian, on 12th May (CT), on the Eden Estuary, Fife, on the 18th, when it was thought to be a flightless bird (DWO), and 19th, and 16th June (CT), and off-shore at Ballantrae Bay, Ayrshire, on 22nd June (RMR). Both "pricked" birds and free-flying domestic flocks make it difficult to assess such records. A lone **Bean Goose** was seen with large numbers of Pink-footed and Grey Lag Geese at Newburgh, Aberdeenshire, on 9th April; earlier observations of Bean Geese in the county have already been noted (*antea* 2: 376) (WGB, GMD). After the cold spell the "blue" **Lesser Snow Goose** (see *antea* 2: 377) did not return to Libberton, Lanarkshire, where it had last been seen on 11th November, until 9th March, by which time the thaw had finally set in; it was seen several times thereafter until 13th April (RE-H).

One **Barnacle Goose** was with the Pinkfeet at Tynninghame on 7th April (CT), and three were with Pinkfeet at Libberton on the 15th (RE-H). At Elie Ness, Fife, two **Canada Geese** were flying out towards the Isle of May on 7th April (DWO), and from 12th to 14th two consorted with eight Whooper Swans on the Clyde at Libberton (RE-H).

Single **Whooper Swans** were at Loch Raa, Coigach, Ross-shire, on 19th May (TDHM), and at Tynninghame on 2nd June (TB). There are further reports of **Bewick's Swans**. Six seen by Loch Ken on 17th March have already been recorded

(*antea* 2: 378); on the 16th there was an adult with Whoopers near Stranraer, Wigtownshire, and on the 18th two adults at the Loch o' the Lowes, New Cumnock, Ayrshire (JGY).

A **Rough-legged Buzzard** was seen between Rogart and Lairg, Sutherland, on 4th February (DNW). A female or immature **Marsh Harrier** was seen on 5th May low over Forvie Moor, Aberdeenshire, causing an uproar among Black-headed Gulls and mobbed by Curlews (DPW); a similarly plumaged bird was present on Roxburgh Moor, Roxburghshire, on 22nd June (WMJ), and may have been there for a week and on the 23rd (per WSM). A "ring-tail" harrier, presumably a **Hen Harrier**, was at Loch Leven on 13th April (RWJS); there is no satisfactory record of this species in Kinross-shire.

The big disappointment of summer 1963 is the failure of both pairs of **Ospreys** on Speyside to hatch any of their eggs. The original pair duly returned to the Loch Garten eyrie and laid, but a disastrous gale disturbed the nest and the eggs were lost. It was hoped the birds might start again, but after building a frustration eyrie nearby they lost interest and moved away. Meanwhile a second pair had been discovered building an eyrie in an undisclosed area; later they abandoned this and built a nest at Inshriach on Forestry Commission ground and began incubating eggs on 12th May. One of the birds was carrying a ring on its left leg—probably placed there in Sweden where many young birds are ringed. The R.S.P.B. mounted a continuous watch at this eyrie also, and moved the public observation post to Inshriach when it became obvious that the Loch Garten birds were not going to lay again. Unfortunately the eggs never hatched, and these birds also lost interest. At the beginning of July the observation post had to be closed down as there was nothing for the public to see. An egg was taken under licence and is now being examined to determine whether it contains residues of toxic chemicals, or whether failure to hatch was due to the male bird's immaturity or some other natural misfortune (GW). An Osprey was seen at Girdle Ness, Kincardineshire, on 24th April; it was perching on a high rock by the sea and when disturbed flew slowly south into the Bay of Nigg, mobbed by two Crows and followed by hundreds of Common and Herring Gulls (AMT).

With numbers of **Peregrines** catastrophically reduced in England through accumulating toxic agricultural chemicals from the bodies of their prey, it is pleasant to note an apparently new eyrie, where no Peregrines were seen in the three previous years, at the south end of the Island of Bute on 27th May in a Raven's old nest (WW, BZ).

There was a lek of 19 **Black Grouse**, a large number for the area, near Gladhouse, Midlothian, on 7th April (DD).

The fact that a few reports of **Corncrakes** in southern Scotland seem worth mentioning indicates how scarce they have become there. Two calling, one from 21st May, near Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire, both had unusually high-pitched voices (ADW); one was calling at Collin, Kirkcudbrightshire, on 15th June (AFA); one present for about a fortnight during May near Ayr (RMR); two calling from different fields near Gladhouse on 16th June, one on the 23rd, and others in the district, this being in fact the first record from Gladhouse (DGA, RWJS); and one heard at Ardeonaig, Loch Tay, Perthshire, during June—the first there for some years (per VMT). In Lewis the species seems to be on the increase, at least at Stornoway where it now nests within the town boundary. A pair of **Moorhens** nested successfully just outside Stornoway; this is a very rare breeding bird in Lewis (WAJC).

Though **Grey Plover** may be seen in summer at Aberlady Bay, one in breeding plumage on the West Lothian bank of the Almond estuary on 2nd June was interesting as the species is always scarce there (AWB). **Whimbrel** were passing over Gartocharn, Dunbartonshire, on 23rd April (TW), and one flew NNE over Morton Lochs, Fife, on the 27th (DWO), while other reports come from Forth: one at Gullane Point on 11th May (RM); three at Tynninghame on the 12th (JADH); one flying north over Craigmillar on the 15th (JEK); one each at Peppermill Dam and Longannet on the 25th (GD, JP); one at Elie Ness on 2nd June (DWO); and one at Tynninghame again on 26th June (HAF). At Glencaple, Dumfriesshire, there were at least 60 **Black-tailed Godwits** on 14th April (ELR), while counts of the flock on the Eden estuary, Fife, gave totals of 26 on 20th April (DWO) and 35 on the 28th (CT). Other records are of one at Skinflats, Stirlingshire, on 7th April (GD, JP), two at Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, on 22nd May (ELR), and 12 that remained for a few days from 20th May at Garynahine, Lewis (WAJC). In East Lothian there was a **Green Sandpiper** at Aberlady on 14th April (KSM), and two were seen at Tynninghame on the 27th (RM).

The first **Common Sandpipers** arrived about the usual date:

- 13 Apr—3 Thornhill, Dumfries (JHS), 1 L. Leven, Kinross (TB).
- 14 Apr—Sanguhar, Dumfries (AB, JL), 1 Gladhouse, Midlothian, and 2 Portmore Peebles (RWJS).
- 17 Apr—Sannig, Islay (CT).
- 18 Apr—Corsock, Kirkcudbright (AFA), Vale of Leven, Dunbarton (TDHM), Haddington (AM).
- 19 Apr—King's Cross, Arran (GM).

Single **Greenshanks** were noted at Caerlaverock, Dumfriesshire, on 16th April and 31st May; they are rarely seen on spring passage in the Solway (ELR). A **Curllew Sandpiper**, always a rare bird in spring, was seen by the wooden bridge at Aberlady on 7th May (CAP). Single **Ruffs** were seen at Skin-

flats on 7th April (GD, JP), Caerlaverock on the 16th (ELR), and Dornoch Point saltmarsh, Sutherland, on 25th and 29th (DM); and later there were two ruffs and two reeves at the Loch of Mey, Caithness, on 1st June (RM), and a single reeve at Gladhouse on the 2nd (RWJS).

An anxious pair of **Great Black-backed Gulls** was obviously defending territory and evidently nesting on Craigleith, off North Berwick, on 15th June but formal proof of breeding was not obtained (RWJS). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** of the British race was at Inverness on 4th February (RHD). As there is a small wintering population of this species, especially on the Solway, it is difficult to know when the first spring migrants arrive, which they do earlier on the west coast than the east, but at Caerlaverock the first few were seen on 12th March (ELR), not an early date. Another substantial spring movement of **Common Gulls** (see *antea* 2: 3, 206, 357) was seen at the Bass Rock between 18th April, just a few days earlier than last year, and the 26th (JBN). An adult **Iceland Gull** was at Ayr on 17th February (GAR), and a 3rd winter bird at Oban on 30th March (AGG, TDHM). A 1st summer **Little Gull** was at Kilconquhar Loch on 21st May, and other East Fife records are of five 1st summer birds at Morton Lochs on 6th April (DWO), about 50 there on the 21st (six or eight in adult summer plumage and most of the rest in 1st summer plumage) (IVB-P, AHH, IMF), over 40 adults and immatures at the Eden estuary on 19th May (CT), and two 1st summer birds at Morton Lochs on 1st June (DWO). The **Black-headed Gull** colony at Hilda Marshes, Glasgow, increased rapidly from about 20 pairs in 1960 to 50 and 250 pairs in the following years, but in 1963 after reaching about 400 pairs the colony was deserted in the middle of May owing to the disturbance created in filling the marsh with rubble to make football pitches (WW). There do not seem to be many Scottish records of **Kittiwakes** resting on the shore in numbers; on 14th April right up the Solway at Browhouses, Dumfriesshire, 200 were resting on the sands half way across the firth, being constantly mobbed by immature Herring Gulls (RTS); while at Largo Bay, Fife, on 30th June there were 250, mostly adults, on the sandy beach (DWO). In the Forth the Inchkeith colony which had one nest in 1961 (*antea* 1: 478) increased to two in 1962, and there were 20 nests on 19th June this year (RWJS).

A **Black Tern** was at Morton Lochs, Fife, on 21st April (IVB-P, AHH, IMF), and there was a small influx at the beginning of June: eight on the Castle Loch and one on the Kirk Loch at Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, on 2nd June (HMR, RTS), all seen leaving NE at 9.45 p.m. (DMe, JKRM), and one each on the Castle and Kirk Lochs on the 3rd (RTS); one at Pepper-mill Dam, Tulliallan, Fife, on the 4th (GD, JP); one feeding

over Bonnykelly Reservoir, near New Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire, on the 8th (AAD); and one hawking insects over Loch Spiggie, Shetland, on the 13th (DAPC). Numbers of Black Terns are often recorded on spring passage in south and east England, but it is most unusual at that season for so many to reach Scotland, especially the northern counties.

Single **Common or Arctic Terns** inland were seen at the Black Esk Reservoir, Dumfriesshire, on 19th May; between Walkerburn and Innerleithen, Peeblesshire, on 2nd June (JB); at Threipmuir, Midlothian, on 11th June (CT); and fishing the River Lyne south of Romanno Bridge, Peeblesshire, on the 16th (TCS). Sixteen **Common Terns** flying rapidly east near Buchlyvie, Stirlingshire, on 2nd June may have been late migrants to the Forth terneries drifted west by the east winds which had been blowing for the past few days (MFMM). The first **Common Terns** of the year were three near Girvan, Ayrshire, on 15th April (WP), and five at Elie on the 18th (DWO). The earliest **Little Tern** was in the Sound of Gigha on 21st April (TDHM). Four early **Sandwich Terns** were at Portencross, Ayrshire, on 31st March (ME, RWF, GLAP); and ten at Elie on 14th April (DWO), not a particularly early date but a week before a number of other reports: five seen by another observer at Elie on the 20th (IMF); two lots of two over Longannet (JH), some at Kinghorn (GHB), and 60 at Tentsmuir (IMF), all in Fife on the 21st; and three at Dirleton, East Lothian, on the 22nd (KSM).

The body of a **Little Auk**, estimated to have died one or two weeks earlier, was found at Girdle Ness, Kincardineshire, on 25th April (RWM, AMT).

Three **Turtle Doves** were reported at the beginning of June from areas where they do not breed: on the Bass Rock on the 1st (JBN); near Currie, Midlothian, on the 11th (CPR); and near Moffat, Dumfriesshire, also on the 11th, for the whole day and leaving NW in the evening (RWA, ED).

Collared Doves continue to spread and multiply. On the mainland of Shetland there was one at Loch Spiggie on 23rd June (DWO), and at Fair Isle at least half a dozen different birds appeared during the spring (PED). Two in a stackyard at Dunnottar Castle near Stonehaven on 23rd June are the first for Kincardineshire (VMT), though whether this falls into North Kincardine (Dee Faunal Area) as shown on the maps in *The Birds of Scotland* (1953) and *The Vertebrate Fauna of Dee* (1903), or into South Kincardine (Tay Faunal Area) as claimed by *The Geographical Distribution* (1928) and *A Fauna of the Tay Basin* (1906), is far from clear. Harvie-Brown in this last work admits to extending the boundaries of Tay further north than was previously accepted (p. lxxix), and we prefer the older interpretation (followed by *The Birds*

of Scotland) which treats more than a remnant of the county as North Kincardine. On Islay doves with collars have been seen in various places for some time but never certainly identified; there were three at Aoradh on 5th April 1962 (JM); and five were there in 1962 and said to have bred in 1961; two moved to the Post Office on the Flats; and two tame birds were reported about Port Ellen (GW, MIW). In 1963 there were further reports of three birds behind the Post Office at Gruinart Flats on 1st January but these were not seen well, and local information suggested that doves had been brought into the area; on 14th April two birds with very dark primaries but no white under the tail were also unsatisfactory (CT). Finally a genuine Collared Dove was found in a weak condition at Killinallan in the Loch Gruinart area and died (RH, HK); the body was sent to GW who confirmed the identity and presence of white on the underside of the tail; it arrived in Edinburgh on 6th May and is now in the Royal Scottish Museum. Collared Doves on Islay are said to have interbred with "pigeons" in 1962 (HK). In Edinburgh Collared Doves were reported in Dick Place in 1961 and nearby in Mayfield Terrace in 1962 (*antea* 1: 486; 2: 260). This year in the same area two were seen in Queen's Crescent on 11th and 18th April and one or two on various dates from 2nd to 11th June (MJW); a pair nested in Dalrymple Crescent close to a hen run and fledged two young in mid May (SGAH); and they were also seen in Hope Terrace (per GW). In Solway one was seen at Barrbank, near Sanquhar, Dumfriesshire, on 26th April (JL), and two feeding by a hen house next day (AB).

The first **Cuckoo** was at Selkirk on 16th April (AJS); one near Dalry, Kirkcudbrightshire, on the 18th (ADW); and one at East Linton, East Lothian, on the 22nd (GWGB); reports have not been received from any other localities until it was noted at Sanquhar on the 27th (JL), Portmore, Peeblesshire (EMG, RWJS), and Lagganbridge, Invernessshire, on the 28th (HAF), and Roslin, Midlothian, on the 29th (JB).

A **Short-eared Owl** was seen over the Royal Botanic Garden in the centre of Edinburgh on 28th March (JHS).

On 22nd June in Glen App, Ayrshire, a **Nightjar**, and possibly a second bird, was churring and display fighting (RMR).

Once again the first **Swifts** were seen in April, though there are only two reports:

- 27 Apr—1 Barr Loch, Renfrew (LAU).
- 28 Apr—2 Gladhouse (EMG, RWJS).
- 1 May—1 Colinton, Edinburgh (IMF).
- 2 May—1 Stockbridge, Edinburgh (JHS), 1 Haddington (AM), 2 Kilconquhar, Fife (DWO).
- 4 May—1 Aberlady (CT), Kirkcaldy, Fife (GHB), Killearn, Stirling (AJBL).

The first **Swallow** appeared on 11th April, but in general the early ones were about a week late:

- 11 Apr—1 north edge of Moorfoots, Midlothian (JB).
- 13 Apr—1 Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbright (AFA).
- 14 Apr—1 Sanquhar (JL), 3 Gorebridge, Midlothian (DD).
- 15 Apr—Kilconquhar, Fife (RIM).
- 16 Apr—Newbattle, Midlothian (DD).
- 17 Apr—2 Gullane, East Lothian (IMF), 1 Braids, Edinburgh (JAS), 1 mouth of R. Endrick (HFD), 2 Brodick, Arran (GM), Staffin, Skye (MJCM).
- 18 Apr—2 Corsock, Kirkcudbright (AFA), Vale of Leven, Dunbarton (TDHM), 2 Baliron, Stirling (AJBL), Selkirk (AJS), 2 Pityoulish, Aviemore, Inverness (HAF).
- 19 Apr—Cockburnspath, Berwick (AM), East Linton (GWGB), Haddington (AM), Isle of May (AM), 1 Lossit Bay, Islay (CT).
- 20 Apr—17 Barr Loch, Renfrew (RWF), Duddingston, Edinburgh (DRA), 30 Bridgend, Islay (CT).
- 21 Apr—1 Marybank, Ross (MKM-D).

House Martins arrive later and were up to time:

- 18 Apr—Isle of May (AM).
- 21 Apr—Kirkcaldy, Fife (GHB).
- 22 Apr—Drymen, Stirling (TDHM).
- 23 Apr—Eddleston, Peebles (NPD), Duddingston, Edinburgh (DRA), Kilconquhar (DWO).
- 25 Apr—Bush, near Edinburgh (NPD), 1 St Andrews (MHEC).

At Cramond very few were seen during May and the main return to the colony seemed to take place in the first few days of June, two being present on 30th May but many by 6th June (TCS).

One **Sand Martin** was reported on 8th April but no others until the 12th, and as in 1962 these first dates are very late and indicate the extent to which migration was held up by the weather:

- 8 Apr—1 Balloch, Dunbarton (RAJ).
- 12 Apr—1 Kilconquhar (PGB).
- 14 Apr—1 Thornhill, Dumfries (JHS), 1 Threipmuir, Midlothian (TB).
- 15 Apr—Selkirk (AJS).
- 17 Apr—Sanquhar (AB).
- 18 Apr—Vale of Leven, Dunbarton (TDHM).
- 19 Apr—Tynninghame (AM), St Andrews (MHEC).
- 20 Apr—Duddingston (DRA), Longannet, Fife (JH), 8 Barr Loch, Renfrew (RWF), 2 Bridgend, Islay (CT).

In Ayrshire a **Hooded Crow** was seen near Maybole on 2nd February (RMR). In East Lothian, where **Magpies** are very scarce, one was near Yester on 26th May (KSM).

Following the recent arrival of **Blue Tits** in Stornoway (*antea* 2: 91, 95, 261, 347) at least three pairs nested in holes in trees in the woods—the first record of breeding in the Outer Hebrides. At least two pairs of **Treecreepers** brought off broods in Stornoway Woods this year following the unsuccessful 1962 attempt (*antea* 2: 93, 95, 350) (WAJC, IM, WM).

A late **Fieldfare** was at Dunfermline, Fife, on 7th and 9th

May (GD, JP). A recently fledged **Redwing** was watched for some time on 2nd June in a birch copse by a river in north Ross-shire; this was at the same place where a nest with young was found in 1961 (*antea* 1: 454) (DM). On 13th January at Cramond the body of a Redwing was found below a ledge on which it had been roosting; it appeared to have starved to death. From its plumage it was taken to be an example of the Iceland form *coburni*, and this was later confirmed from the wing measurement of 124/126 mm (depending on how the measurement is taken). Though this race may well be quite common in winter this is in fact the first definite record for Midlothian (RM). There was a distinct lack of reports of early **Ring Ouzels**, which usually appear in the second half of March. After a particularly early bird reported on the Isle of May on 8th February (WVa per AM), and a cock at Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, on 23rd March (JHS), the next note was from Selkirk on 8th April (AJS).

There are a number of March records, some of them particularly early, of **Wheatears**, but no great numbers seem to have arrived until mid April and many active bird watchers did not see their first until well into the month:

- 10 Mar—1 on high ground near Stranraer, Wigtown (HF).
- 16 Mar—cock Doonfoot, Ayr (ATM).
- 18 Mar—Gullane Point (CAP).
- 22 Mar—1 near Stranraer, perhaps the same as on 10th (HF).
- 23 Mar—1 near Dumfries (JKRM per WA), several moving north between Loch Ken and Carsphairn, Kirkcudbright, and one pair displaying and going in and out of a hole (WUF), 2 singing near Little Loch Broom, Ross, and 1 Inverness (TW).
- 26 Mar—cock near Linlithgow (HGC).
- 29 Mar—3 Ayr (DS).
- 30 Mar—1 Aberlady (CT).
- 31 Mar—Sanquhar (JL).
- 5 Apr—pair Carloway, Lewis (WAJC).

On 16th April in a small glen near Tarland, Aberdeenshire, there were at least 40; this is a good example of the late arrival of this species as there had been none there on the 15th (KW). On 8th May a pair was present in the Royal Botanic Garden in the centre of Edinburgh (JHS).

Being late migrants **Whinchats** were up to time: one near Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, on 23rd April (ADW); two at Cranshaws, Berwickshire, on the 30th (AM); a cock at Lagganbridge, Inverness-shire, the same day (HAF); and noted at Addiewell, Midlothian, on 1st May (HH).

Redstarts appeared a little late about 20th April in widely scattered districts: a cock singing at Crichton, Midlothian, on the 20th (KSM); two cocks at Gladhouse on the 21st (NPD), and noted on the Isle of May (AM) and at Inveraray, Argyll, the same day (TDHM); a cock near Thornhill, Dumfries, on the 22nd (JHS); and heard at Gartocharn, Dunbartonshire,

on the 23rd (TW). A hen appeared in central Edinburgh on 6th May in the Royal Botanic Garden (JHS).

The first **Grasshopper Warblers** were reported from four localities on 27th April—several reeling at Barr Loch, Renfrewshire (LAU); one reeling at Aberlady (CAP); noted on the Isle of May (IVB-P); one reeling at Kilconquhar (RIM) where it may have been present earlier and where a second arrived on 7th May (DWO). Others were at Jardine Hall, Lockerbie, on 30th April (RTS), Newton Stewart on 5th May (JGY), and near Auchencairn on the 8th (AFA). At Gladhouse there were three different birds reeling in the area this year (DGA, JK).

Apart from one at Kilconquhar on 25th April (DWO), the first **Sedge Warblers** were noted on 5th May: at Sanquhar (AB), five at Barr Loch, Renfrewshire (RAJ), and one at St Abbs, Berwickshire (JADH). A pair feeding a fledgling on 30th June on the outskirts of Stornoway is evidently the first positive breeding record for Lewis, although the observer has noted the species at this site before and once at Uig carrying food on 10th July 1958 (WAJC).

A cock **Blackcap** visited a garden in Ainslie Place, near the West End of Edinburgh, on 6th and 9th February and daily until the 27th; it fed on a mixture of fat, crumbs and Swoop, and was very aggressive towards other birds (NN). Early summer arrivals were about the usual date: present at two places near High Valleyfield, Fife, on 25th April (JH), and a cock at Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, on the 27th (JHS). One was seen at Cockburnspath, Berwickshire, on 5th May (JADH), and a cock was at Blackford Pond, Edinburgh, on the 12th and 21st (HEMD).

Garden Warblers at two places near High Valleyfield on 29th April were distinctly early birds, especially as summer visitors usually tend to be slow in getting through to this central area. Later there were the usual 10 singing cocks in the area, numbers being back to normal after the drop in 1962 caused by disturbance from forestry road making (*antea* 2: 211) (JH). One was at Kilconquhar on 3rd May (DWO).

Whitthroats were in two localities at High Valleyfield on 28th April (JH); one at Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire, on 1st May (AFA); reached Stornoway on 3rd May (WAJC); and several noted at Coldingham, Berwickshire, on the 5th (JADH).

Single **Lesser Whitthroats** were on the Bass Rock with other late migrants on 26th May and 6th June (JBN), and an extremely skulking bird was singing at Scalloway, Shetland, on 27th June after a week of SE gales (DWO).

Willow Warblers were a week or ten days late, but then reported from a host of places in the middle of April:

16 Apr—heard St Andrews (MHEC).

18 Apr—1 Paisley, Renfrew (RAJ), Vale of Leven, Dunbarton (TDHM), 2 St Abbs (IMF).

19 Apr—Sanquhar (JL), Selkirk (AJS), 1 Gifford, East Lothian (HFD, TCS), Bush near Edinburgh (NPD), Addiewell, Midlothian (HH), 2 Bridgend, Islay (CT).

20 Apr—1 Dalbeattie (AFA), 1 Newbattle (DD), Duddingston (DRA), 1 Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (JHS), 1 Dalmeny, West Lothian (HFD, TCS), Longannet (JH).

21 Apr—4 East Linton (GWGB), Kirkcaldy (GHB), Kilconquhar (DWO).

22 Apr—Stornoway (WAJC), abundant Gladhouse area (DGA).

23 Apr—Jordanhill, Glasgow (HGC), Haddington (AM), numerous near Lagganbridge, Inverness (HAF).

A **Willow Warbler** or **Chiffchaff**, presumably the latter, was on the Isle of May on 16th March (WWA per AM), and a definite **Chiffchaff** on the 29th (AM); on the last day of the month one was at Gartocharn (DS); and another at Fair Isle, the first to be recorded there in March since the war (PED); in early April single birds were recorded at Stornoway on the 6th (WAJC), Polton, Midlothian, on the 7th (RWJS), High Valleyfield (JH) and Laurieston, Kirkcudbrightshire, on the 8th, and Auchencairn, Kirkcudbrightshire, on the 9th (AFA).

The only significant arrival date quoted for **Spotted Flycatcher** is 28th April at Kilconquhar (DWO). The first **Pied Flycatcher** was at Sanquhar on 26th April (AB); one was at Loch Ken next day (ADW); and a cock was at Kilconquhar on the 28th (DWO); a hen was seen at St Abbs on 5th May (JADH). This is a local species in Kirkcudbrightshire, but it has bred regularly for at least the past ten years in one locality in the south-west of the county (RS). On 28th April one was singing in a wood on the southern fringe of Flanders Moss between Arnprior and Kippen; there are few records from this area and none of breeding in Stirlingshire (MFMM). The **Pied Flycatcher** is rare in Ross-shire, where a cock was present near Contin in the east of the county from mid May to the first week of June (DMi).

Tree Pipits arrived at about the usual time: one was at Lockerbie on 19th April (RTS); four at Thornhill, Dumfriesshire, on the 21st (JHS); a number at Gartocharn on the 23rd (TW); and noted at High Valleyfield the same day (JH).

The **Pied Wagtail** is a scarce breeding bird in the Outer Hebrides, and although *The Birds of Scotland* says they breed regularly at Stornoway a pair there this year provided the observer with his first breeding record (WAJC). Two **Yellow Wagtails**, evidently both cock *M.f. flavissima*, were at Gladhouse on 5th May (DGA), and a pair was at West Barns, East Lothian, the same day (TB, RWJS). On the 11th a hen at Loch Leven, Kinross-shire, resembled the race *M.f. thunbergi* (RWJS). In Glasgow the breeding area at Hilda Marshes (*antea* 2: 212) has unfortunately been bulldozed to make

football pitches, but a single Yellow Wagtail was seen flying over on 11th May (WW) and two were there, an ordinary hen and a Blue-headed *M.f. flava* cock, on the 22nd (BZ).

In addition to the small number of **Waxwings** already recorded (*antea* 2: 323, 381), one was in the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh on 1st January feeding on the Himalayan tree *Malus sikkimensis*, probably the first record of this food being taken (GM), and one in Inverness on 7th April (MR).

A glorious cock **Brambling** in full plumage appeared on the Bass Rock with other migrants on 6th June (JBN).

Two **Corn Buntings** were noted well within Edinburgh at Blackford Glen on 1st June (HEMD). A cock **Red-headed Bunting** was seen near Collin, Dumfriesshire, on 11th May, but current thinking is to regard all examples of this popular cage bird as escapes unless there is strong contrary evidence (VECB-B). The **Reed Bunting** is sparsely distributed in the Outer Hebrides so that it is worth noting a brood of young at Stornoway on 30th June and two nests at Dalbeg, near Shawbost, on 9th June (WAJC). Two **Tree Sparrows** near Morton Lochs on 21st April are evidently the first for the Tentsmuir area for over 40 years (see *antea* 2: 159) (IVB-P, IMF, AHH).

Earlier observations—before 1st January 1963

A **Black-necked Grebe** was seen on 17th August 1962 in the Bay of Clachtoll, near Stoer, Sutherland; there are few published records for the county (GM).

Two winter **Greenshanks** were at Caerlaverock from 20th to 28th December 1962 (ELR).

To add to the list of **Black Terns** noted last autumn (*antea* 2: 259, 317, 383) is yet another, at Kilconquhar Loch, Fife, on 7th October 1962 (DWO).

On the Island of Bute a pair of **Nightjars** was discovered at Scalpsie on 2nd July 1962 with two eggs, one of which hatched out two days later (AWB).

The record of **Green Woodpeckers** nesting in Dumfriesshire in 1960 was the first published record of breeding in Solway (*antea* 1: 379, 2: 195), but this is a most misleading claim as the bird was well established long before that. It was seen at Eastriggs, Dumfriesshire, in 1952 and may even have been quite widespread in the county by then. During the S.O.C. enquiry it was found breeding in 1954 in Dumfriesshire at Bankhead near Lochmaben, Newtonairds, Dunscore, Springkell near Kirtlebridge, and Raehills near Johnstone; it was noted but not proved to be breeding at Woodcock Air near Hoddom, Jardine Hall near Lockerbie, Rammerscales near Lochmaben, Dalswinton, Stapleton near Annan, Ecclefechan, and The Broats near Kirkpatrick-Fleming, (JPh, RTS). In

Kirkcudbrightshire it was noted at Munches near Dalbeattie in 1954 (JPh, RTS), and in the south-west of the county one was seen at a hole in 1957 and presumably nested, and the species has been there ever since (RS); while not upsetting the first claimed breeding record this information now carries the first occurrence back to 1954 (see *antea* 2: 43, 261, 318, 346, 349).

The 1961 record claimed as the first for Selkirk (*antea* 2: 43, 346) is certainly not the first as the species bred in the county as early as 1951 (*The Birds of Scotland* Appendix II); it was reported at Bowhill near Selkirk in February that year and the identification confirmed on 20th April, and an adult with fledged young was seen in Yarrow on 16th July (AJS). Other records were collected for the S.O.C. enquiry in the early 1950's but these have not yet been published.

In North Argyll a Green Woodpecker was heard and reported seen on 31st May 1955 at Achnamara, and reported again on 16th August 1956; both these records are earlier than the first previously published for the Argyll Faunal Area and North Argyll (*antea* 1: 257). Single birds were seen near Tayvallich on 13th November 1960 (recorded as "near Lochgilphead" *antea* 1: 383) and two miles away on 3rd December 1960. On 15th April 1961 one was seen on the western outskirts of Lochgilphead, and this is the first record for South Argyll (IR).

Further evidence of the northward impetus of the Green Woodpecker is provided by the record of one seen on several occasions during a short holiday about mid November 1961 between Laurencekirk and Fettercairn, Kincardineshire; this is the first published record for South Kincardineshire (JMS).

A Wryneck was heard and seen in characteristic pose near the Loch Garten Osprey wardens' camp at Inchdrein on 26th May 1962 (KDGM); we have previously commented on the curious concentration of records of Wrynecks in this part of Scotland (*antea* 1: 494).

General observations on food, plumage and behaviour

At about 0430 hrs GMT on 20th May on the Isle of May 15 Shags were found standing or hopping about on the turf at the head of Pilgrim's Haven, where the high pressure pipe runs to the south foghorn. They were amusing themselves with communal games; one was doing a tightrope act along the pipe, balancing with its wings; one, finding a suitable bunch of dried grass, flew off with it to the nest; two more were vainly trying to lift a piece of wire that was too heavy; but the majority were making sudden sharp darts with their bills at something on the ground. At first I thought that they

were feeding off some hatch of insects, but when I inspected the ground later I found that they had been snipping off the heads of sea pink buds, of which about a hundred lay on the turf. This form of game probably develops out of the communal collection of nesting material—that used by the Shag, as is well known, being of extraordinary variety. I visited the spot on the five ensuing mornings at about the same hour, but the Shags, like nymphs disturbed bathing, did not return. (MFMM).

On 10th May a **Buzzard** flying over a flock of about 50 Oystercatchers on the shore of Loch Fleet, Sutherland, suddenly circled and, swooping down, captured one of them. The Buzzard had not risen more than 50 feet when the Oystercatcher escaped, falling about 20 feet before regaining its balance and, apparently little the worse, rejoining its companions which were by this time mobbing the Buzzard. An Oystercatcher is probably on the large size for a Buzzard if it does not make a clean kill (JDO).

On 27th May in a small glen in Kirkcudbrightshire adjacent to a large plantation of young conifers where voles were abundant, a pair of **Kestrels** was breeding in a former Raven's nest and another pair in an old Buzzard's nest, within 200 yards of each other. Kestrels bred fairly plentifully in this area in 1963 (ADW).

A **Black Grouse** lek was discovered near the Lake of Menteith in a field sown with corn. Although the spot was only 200 yards from the farmhouse, and despite the character of the site having been changed completely by ploughing, the tradition of the lek was so strong that the birds continued to display on the bare earth. At the height of the season on 4th May there were ten cocks and four hens. On the 15th, when six cocks were at the lek, noises could be heard from three other places within a mile and small parties were located at two of them, suggesting a very local nature for these particular leks (TDHM).

At a pond on the Bush Estate, Midlothian, in 1962 a **Moorhen** had a nest with two eggs which soon disappeared; another seven were laid and also disappeared; the pair then built a second nest at the other end of the pond and laid and lost a further six eggs; in next to no time another six were laid, by which time the nest was safely covered with wire netting; the eggs duly hatched, but the bird laid 21 to achieve this (DD).

A hen **Cuckoo** of the scarce rufous colour phase was seen with a cock bird at Scalloway, Shetland, on 25th June (DWO).

On 23rd April the first **Swallow** returned to Lundin Links, Fife. A few weeks earlier the electric wires which ran along

the side of the road had been removed, but the poles remained. The Swallow approached to within eighteen inches of one of the poles and hovered for a few seconds in an obvious attempt to perch where the wire had previously been. Unless the bird recognised the pole as a place where it ought to find wires to perch upon, it seems that it must have remembered the wires from the previous year (RSW).

A hen **Blackbird** at Robroyston Hospital, Glasgow, on 30th June had a broad white ring round the nape and throat, and from the front it resembled a Ring Ouzel (BZ). In Paisley a pure white Blackbird has been resident for at least five years and raised several broods all of which appeared normal, although a cock with several white tail feathers was seen half a mile away on 19th May (RAJ). Albinism is very common in this species.

In 1960 and 1962 a hen Blackbird, presumably the same one as it had almost no tail in each of these years, indulged in multiple nest building in Paisley. In 1960 it had a nest seven feet up in a lime tree; a few days later it built by itself a nest three feet off the ground in a hedge about 100 feet away; no eggs were laid in the first nest but three in the second; it did not incubate these, but within a few days began work on four new nests all at the same time; these were in four identical ventilating holes in the gable end of a brick out-building; no eggs were laid in them. The bird then disappeared until 1962, when it returned to work on a new set of four nests facing the old ones, the remains of which could still be seen in the building opposite; it abandoned these after a week of frenzied straw collecting and began a nest several feet above its old one in the lime tree, later abandoning this too and disappearing, much to the relief of the observer (RAJ).

A completely white fledgling **Starling** was seen with a brood of normal ones in Dumfries on 28th May, and an aberrant cock **Chaffinch** at Glencaple on 16th April had the entire plumage orange-buff, as on the breast of a normal bird, but bill and legs were normal (ELR).

Correction

The ten **Tree Sparrows** on 12th December 1962 (*antea* 2: 382) were seen at Symington, Ayrshire, not at Symington, Lanarkshire (GAR).

REVIEWS

A SAILOR'S GUIDE TO OCEAN BIRDS: ATLANTIC AND MEDITERRANEAN. (Bosun Books No. 18). By Ted Stokes. Illustrated by Keith Shakleton. London, Adlard Coles, 1963. Pp. 64; 19 figures. 6/-.

A simple, attractively produced little elementary guide suitable for inexperienced people, especially children, with a passing interest in the seabirds seen during a long voyage. There are three parts: first a simple recognition table according to size, appearance and area; second, brief descriptions of all species expected, with illustrations of the commoner ones; and third a list of species by James Fisher. The accounts of species are much more sketchy than those in Peterson's *Field Guides* for both sides of the North Atlantic, or especially W. B. Alexander's *Birds of the Ocean*, first of all field guides and still the only one devoted to all seabirds, and which Mr Stokes seems to regard as an American production. Mr Shakleton's half-tone drawings of the more familiar species are pleasant to look upon but lack the diagnostic detail provided by Peterson. The recognition tables lack the detail provided in the rather clumsy arrangement of groups of descriptions of similar species given by Alexander, and seem much less helpful than the analagous juxtaposition of drawings of similar species practised by Peterson, while as usual in field guides insufficient allowance is made for the occurrence of variations in plumage with season and age. Mr Fisher follows the current fashion for combining species of seabirds and changing their names; I feel myself that he goes too far when he starts to combine species of albatrosses (the two Sooty Albatrosses nest alongside each other on Marion Island), or refers to the "Tristan Great Shearwater".

W. R. P. BOURNE.

PEOPLE OF THE FOREST. By Hans Lidman. Translated from the Swedish. Edinburgh and London, Oliver & Boyd, 1963. Pp. 191; 143 photographs. 42/-.

This is a translation from the work of a well known Swedish naturalist and photographer. His object, achieved with considerable success, is to convey an impression of the life and atmosphere of a forest in northern Sweden, probably near the Finnish border, through the changing seasons. He combines photography with an episodic text. The latter comprises twenty-one vignettes, each of some three to four pages, describing fictional incidents in the lives of forest creatures;

many events are made to centre upon the activities of Enok, a trapper.

The photographs, occupying about two-thirds of the book, are excellent. Many are strikingly parallel to, and perhaps inspired by, the paintings of forest life executed by the great Swedish artist Bruno Liljefors (1860-1941). Sixty-two of the total show us 18 species of birds, over half of them familiar in Scotland. Mammals come a close second numerically, and the balance ranges over a smaller selection of reptiles, insects, flowers, and scenery of forest and lake. There are several unusual and spectacular action sequences; outstanding among these is the series of high-speed pictures of a day-old Goldeneye duckling frozen at various stages of its flight to the ground from the nesting hole, braking with tiny wings and webbed feet. We are shown dancing Cranes, their nest and young; a superb series of a Black-throated Diver; a sequence of a dragonfly emerging from its larval skin; Capercaillies strutting in display. Variety in techniques avoids monotony. Thus much use is made of more than life-size enlargement; a whole page devoted to an Eagle Owl's eyes and beak, or to the soft outlines of a white hare's features, convey well the extremes of ferocity and quietude.

Though the descriptive incidents carry the ring of accurate observation, the book sets out to be non-scientific, and sometimes this desirable simplicity is carried rather far. Thus in photographs of a young "gull", a "bat", and a "lizard" we are not told the species. Likewise with some, but not all, of the pictures and text about owls. Five plates show animal tracks, but we are left to guess their identity. Even accepting that only a cross-section of People of the Forest are being spotlighted, there are some unexpected omissions. Thus while wolverine and bear each have an episodic chapter to themselves there are photographs of neither. It is disappointing too, that though he mentions them in the text Mr Lidman has not turned his marked skill towards including elk and Black Woodpecker, both so photogenic and such magnificent features of the area portrayed.

The dominant theme however, so successfully conveyed, is that the continuous forest process of death from predators, from cold, from starvation, brought out in the text, is nevertheless throughout associated with beauty, whose impact is the task of the photographs. These can, as a collection to keep, be looked at with renewed pleasure many times over.

D. C. ANDERSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR,

Sandwich and Roseate Terns on the Farne Islands

With reference to G. L. Sandeman's recent paper on "Roseate and Sandwich Tern Colonies in the Firth of Forth and neighbouring areas" (*antea* 2: 286-293), it is now possible to give the 1962 breeding figures for the Farne Islands. These are: Roseate Tern 27-32 pairs, Sandwich Tern 1,478 pairs.

At the same time some minor errors in the pre-1930 Farne Island records of Sandwich Terns should be pointed out. First, the figure of 300 pairs (page 287, line 34) relates to 1896, and not to 1886. Second, it is not correct to state that after 1897 there were no further breeding reports until 1925. There were certainly colonies, and apparently fairly large ones, in the period 1911-14, and evidence suggests that before and after this the birds nested annually. Information, especially for the earlier years, is not easy to obtain, but I think there is no doubt that the Farnes were not deserted by the Sandwich Terns for any long period during the years from 1850 to 1925. After an extensive search for additional evidence I have been able to find the following references:

1. G. Marples. "Sea Terns or Sea Swallows," 1934. Records Sandwich Terns numerous and breeding on six of the Farne Islands in 1856; only 200 nests in 1867; colony present in 1870; colonies on Wide-opens and Knoxes in 1885; enormous increase in 1892 with at least 2,400 nests reported; on Wide-opens and Knoxes in 1909 and 1911, spreading to Brownsman in 1912; on same islands in 1913 with 1,000 nests on Brownsman; great numbers in 1918 with 1,000-1,200 nests on Knoxes; back to Brownsman by 1921; temporary desertion in 1923. How reliable some of these counts may be one can only guess, and a reference to a raid in 1923 (p. 211) seems to be a year out, but the series bears out the idea that there was nearly always a colony on the islands.

2. T. R. Goddard's manuscript cards in my possession include extracts from the migration reports of J. A. Harvie-Brown and others which indicate that Sandwich Terns nested annually from 1880 to 1887, the reports giving arrival and departure dates and occasionally referring, as in 1887, to hundreds of terns about the nesting places.

3. G. Bolam, "Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders," 1912, p. 607. The Sandwich Tern is described as "a common summer visitant, breeding annually at the Farne Islands," and the 1896 figure of 300 pairs is cited.

4. R. Fortune. The Birds of the Farne Islands. "The Naturalist" 1907: 234-238. Records nesting on Knoxes in 1907.

5. E. Miller. A list of birds observed on the Outer Farnes, season 1911-1914. "Vasculum" 1: 97-99. "Nests in numbers on the Knoxes and occasionally visits outer islands. One egg laid 1913 on the Brownsman but destroyed by gulls." E. Miller's original diaries in the Hancock Museum, Newcastle, support these statements, and suggest that the birds attempted to nest on the Brownsman as early as 1911. There were 200 ringed on the Farnes in 1913, and 258 in 1914 on the Knoxes alone. The diary refers to an article on "Disappearing British Birds" by A. P. Machline



PLATE 22. OSPREY landing on its eyrie, Inshriach, Inverness-shire, June 1965 (see page 455).

Photograph by J. A. McCook.

("Countryside" 14th April 1906) which says, "The Sandwich Tern is practically confined to the Farne Islands where it is rigorously protected. The colony now numbers some hundreds and Seebohm states that on his visit in 1870 the nests averaged one to the square yard whilst on a subsequent visit to another part of the island he found them placed so close together as to render it impossible to avoid treading on the eggs."

6. G. Watt. "The Farne Islands," 1951, pp. 122, 217. Recoveries of birds ringed in 1913 and 1914 are given, and reference is made to Sandwich Terns laying in 1922 but being much harried by visitors; the desertion at this time lasted for only a year or two.

7. M. G. S. Best. Letter in "British Birds" 15: 71. In June 1921 Sandwich Terns were breeding very numerous on the Brownsman.

8. The Minutes of a Conference on 18th January 1923 concerning the purchase of the islands refer to eggs laid in 1922 being taken as soon as they appeared, though the birds persisted for some weeks.

9. F. C. R. Jourdain reviewing "A History of the Birds of Norfolk" in 1931 ("British Birds" 24: 228) remarks that, "It is, however, a somewhat strange anomaly that the presence of the Sandwich Tern on the Norfolk coast is almost certainly due to the wholesale raiding of their homes on the Farnes for a short period when the protective system broke down, and completely unsettled the birds for a time."

10. A Report of the Secretary of the Farne Island Association shows that they were back in large numbers on the Brownsman in 1925, and I think they must have been there in 1924 from the wording of the report.

GRACE HICKLING.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Black Grouse. At the request of the Forestry Commission, the Nature Conservancy Unit of Grouse and Moorland Ecology is investigating the distribution and status of blackgame in Scotland, and the damage done by these birds to trees. A questionnaire is being circulated to foresters and other people who may help. If any member of the S.O.C. would like to assist with this enquiry will he or she please write to David Jenkins, Nature Conservancy Unit of Grouse and Moorland Ecology, Blackhall, Banchory, Kincardineshire.

Birds of Ayrshire. G. A. Richards, 29 Fullarton Road, Prestwick, Ayrshire, is compiling a check-list of Ayrshire birds, and would be grateful for any unpublished notes.

Rock Doves. While many pigeons frequenting the Scottish coast are obvious mongrels, especially in the south, there are some apparently true Rock Doves (showing two distinct black wing bars and a white rump) in most places. Counts of these and all coastal pigeons are wanted, and details can be had from Roy Hewson, 170 Mid Street, Keith, Banffshire.

OFFICIAL SECTION

THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

HOTEL DUNBLANE, PERTHSHIRE

25th to 27th October 1963

PROGRAMME

Friday 25th October :

- 5 to 7.30 and 8.30 to 9.30 p.m. Conference Office in the Hotel Dunblane opens for members and guests to register, collect name cards and Annual Dinner tickets.
- 6.15 p.m. Meeting of Council.
- 8 to 9 p.m. FILMS introduced by C. E. Palmar. "The Living Pattern" by The Nature Conservancy; "Highland Heronry" by C. E. Palmar; and "Marsh and Water Birds in Denmark" by F. Gordon Hollands.
- 9 p.m. EXCURSION PLANS. Leaders will describe the places to be visited on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
- 9.30 p.m. to midnight. Lounges available for informal discussions and refreshments (late licence).

Saturday 26th October :

- 8.45 to 9.15 a.m. Conference Office open for registrations.
- 9.20 a.m. Official Opening of the Conference in the Ballroom. ADDRESS OF WELCOME by Archibald McLellan, Esq., Provost of Dunblane.
- 9.30 a.m. LECTURE. "Birds of Prey and their Environment" by Dr Kai Curry-Lindahl (Zoological Department, Nordiska Museet & Skansen, Stockholm) followed by discussion.
- 11 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee and biscuits.
- 11.30 a.m. FILM. "Flamingoes of the World" filmed and introduced in person by Dr Roger Tory Peterson (National Audubon Society, New York, U.S.A.).
- 1 to 2 p.m. INTERVAL for informal lunches.
- 2 to 5.30 p.m. EXCURSIONS by private cars leaving the Conference Hotel car park. Details of the excursions will be posted in the Conference Office.
- 6.15 p.m. 27th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CLUB in the Ballroom.
BUSINESS:
- (1) Apologies for absence.
 - (2) Approval of Minutes of 26th Annual General Meeting of the Club held in Dunblane on 27th October 1962 (see "Scottish Birds" 2: 271-272).
 - (3) Report of Council for Session 26.
 - (4) Approval of Accounts for Session 26.
 - (5) Appointment of Auditor.
 - (6) Election of President of the Club. Professor M. F. M. Meiklejohn, having completed three years term of office, is due to retire. The Council recommend

the election of Dr I. D. Pennie.

- (7) Election of Vice-President. The Council recommend the election of Dr W. J. Eggeling to succeed Dr Pennie.
- (8) Confirmation of the election of M. K. Hamilton as Hon. Treasurer of the Club.
- (9) Election of new members of Council. The Council recommend the following elections:
 J. H. B. Munro and Dr D. H. Mills to replace A. G. S. Bryson and Lt. Col. J. P. Grant who are due to retire by rotation.
 G. L. A. Patrick to replace G. H. Acklam who has gone abroad.
 C. K. Mylne to replace Dr W. J. Eggeling, and A. J. Smith to replace A. T. Macmillan, who as Editor of the Journal is now an ex-officio member of Council.
- (10) Consideration of the following proposed amendment to the Constitution under 4 (h) Financial Year: that the words "The Financial Year of the Club shall end on 31st August" shall be deleted and in their place shall be substituted "The Financial Year of the Club shall end on 30th June."
- (11) Any other competent business.

7.30 for 8 p.m. ANNUAL DINNER in the Diningroom of the Hotel Dunblane (Dress informal).

Sunday 27th October :

- 9.30 a.m. LECTURE. "The Threat of Toxic Chemicals to Wildlife" by Stanley Cramp (Senior Editor of "British Birds" and Chairman of the B.T.O./R.S.P.B. Joint Committee on Toxic Chemicals), followed by discussion.
- 11 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee and biscuits.
- 11.30 a.m. FILM. "The Island Hills" (Ecology of the Scottish Islands) filmed and introduced by F. Gordon Hollands.
- 1 to 2 p.m. INTERVAL for informal lunches.
- 2 p.m. EXCURSIONS by private cars leaving the Conference Hotel car park.

INFORMATION

Please read this carefully.

(1) **Conference Post Card.** In order to simplify arrangements it is **essential** that members intending to be present should complete the enclosed printed post card and send it to the Club Secretary **not later than 21st October**. Owing to limited seating accommodation the Council regrets that members may invite only one guest each to the Annual Dinner.

(2) **Registration.** Everyone attending the Conference must register (10s each) at the Conference Office on arrival (for opening times, see Programme). Members wishing to attend only the Annual General Meeting do **not** require to pay the registration fee, which covers incidental expenses.

(3) **Annual Dinner.** Tickets for the Annual Dinner (price 16s 6d inclusive of gratuities) should be purchased when registering on arrival. Members and guests staying in the Conference Hotel will be charged for the Annual Dinner in their inclusive hotel bill, but **must** obtain a ticket from

the Conference Office as all tickets will be collected at the Annual Dinner. No payments should be made in advance to the office in Edinburgh.

(4) **Morning Coffee.** As the special Conference charge in the Hotel Dunblane now covers mid-morning coffees with other extras (see Hotel Accommodation below), the hotel staff have assumed responsibility for collecting the cost of morning coffees (1s 6d) from non-residents after serving. Members and guests who are not staying in the hotel are therefore asked for their co-operation so that there will be no undue delay in the Interval.

(5) **Luncheon.** Non-residents will be able to obtain luncheon in the Conference Hotel on Saturday and Sunday and are asked to inform the Hotel Reception Desk in good time if they wish to avail themselves of this arrangement.

(6) **Dinner on Friday Evening.** Dinner is served in the Conference Hotel from 6 to 10 p.m.

(7) **Hotel Reservations.** All reservations must be made direct. Owing to the shortage of single rooms, members are urged to make arrangements to share a room with a friend.

(8) **Swimming Pool.** The indoor swimming pool in the Conference Hotel will be available during the weekend at no extra charge.

(9) **Excursions.** Members are asked to provide private cars if possible and to arrange to fill their passenger seats; to avoid congestion in the car park the minimum number of cars will be used. Petrol expenses should be shared. Maps of the area covered are O.S. 1" maps, Old Edition Nos. 62, 63, 66, and 67, and New Edition Nos. 53, 54, 55, 60, and 61. Members wishing to go out on their own are particularly asked not to go in advance of led excursions to avoid disturbing the birds.

(10) **Exhibit of books, etc.** A selection of new ornithological books from the Club Book Shop will be displayed in the Conference Office for purchase or orders. R.S.P.B. and B.T.O. literature will also be on sale.

(11) **Exhibit of binoculars, telescopes etc.** Charles Frank Ltd. of Glasgow have agreed to mount a small exhibit of binoculars and telescopes suitable for bird-watchers. These will be on view in the Conference Office. Mr Arthur Frank will be present on Sunday morning to give advice.

Hotel Accommodation in Dunblane

DUNBLANE HOTEL HYDRO (now called HOTEL DUNBLANE) (Tel. 3161). Special Conference charge: £4, 16s 0d. This includes accommodation and all meals from Friday dinner until Sunday luncheon, the Annual Dinner, after-meal coffee, morning coffee and early morning tea. A 7½% gratuity charge will be added to all bills.

Residents staying part of the weekend will be charged as follows: room and breakfast 32s 6d, dinner 12s 6d, (or 16s 6d for the Annual Dinner, paid to the Conference Office), luncheon 7s 6d, afternoon tea 3s 6d, after-meal coffee 1s, early morning tea 1s, morning coffee and biscuits 1s 6d.

STIRLING ARMS HOTEL (Tel. 2156). Bed and breakfast from 25s.

*THE NEUK PRIVATE HOTEL, Doune Road (Tel. 2150). Bed and breakfast 18s 6d to 19s 6d.

*SCHIEHALLION HOTEL, Doune Road (Tel. 3141). Bed and breakfast 18s 6d to 21s.

BLAIRALAN, Dargic Terrace (Tel. 3196). Bed and breakfast 17s 6d to 18s 6d.

¶HARDLEIGHTON HOTEL (Tel. 2273). Bed and breakfast 15s to 17s 6d.

*These hotels are some distance from the Conference Hotel.

¶Situating near the Conference Hotel gates.

Hotel Accommodation in Bridge of Allan

ALLAN WATER HOTEL (Tel. Bridge of Allan 2293). Bed and breakfast 35s to 47s 6d.

ROYAL HOTEL (Tel. Bridge of Allan 2284). Bed and breakfast 33s to 36s.

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

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

SUBSCRIPTIONS, DEEDS OF COVENANT AND BANKERS' ORDERS

Subscriptions for the new Session are now due and should be sent with the enclosed form to the Club Secretary or paid to Branch Secretaries. The winter number of "Scottish Birds" will only be issued to paid-up subscribers.

Members are once more reminded that the Club is able to reclaim Income Tax on all subscriptions paid under Deed of Covenant, which greatly benefits Club funds. The Council invites members who pay Income Tax at the full rate to undertake a seven-year Deed of Covenant by using the form enclosed. Completed forms should be sent to the Secretary, who will forward a Certificate of Deduction of Tax for signature each year.

A Bankers' Order is also enclosed for the use of members who find this a more convenient way of paying the annual subscription; this should be returned to the Secretary and not to the Bank.

CLUB BOOK SHOP

The Club has now received recognition from the Publishers Association. This enables us to obtain new ornithological books from all publishers at full trade discount. Books are of course sold at the retail price and the profits are applied to the General Funds of the Club. A stock of new books comprising over one hundred titles is now available for sale in the Bird Book Shop which has been opened at the Scottish Centre, and a selection of these books will be on sale at the Annual Conference.

It is hoped that by establishing the new bookshop we may be able to give a useful service to members both directly, by stocking a wide selection of books, and indirectly, by the increase in our revenue. Members are therefore invited to support this new venture by ordering their books through the Club. Purchases may be made at the Scottish Centre during office hours (weekdays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 5 p.m.). Books ordered by post will be sent carriage free, and we will endeavour to obtain any book which is not in stock. An Order Form giving a selection of the stock is enclosed with this copy of the Journal.

NEW LENDING LIBRARY

The reconditioning of a new room for the Lending Library (see "Scottish Birds" 2: 396) is now complete, and books and journals are available on loan. The Lending Section is still not very large although all duplicate volumes we receive are placed there. We will be very glad to receive gifts of any books which members do not require with the provision that if these are already in stock we may dispose of them for the purpose of buying other books to fill gaps in the collection.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

All contributions should be sent to Andrew T. Macmillan, 66 Spylaw Bank Road, Edinburgh 13. Attention to the following points greatly simplifies production of the journal and is much appreciated.

1. Papers should if possible be typed with double spacing. All contributions should be on one side of the paper only.

2. Topical material for Current Notes should reach the Editors **before the end of March, June, September and December**, at which time they begin to compile this section. All other notes should be sent promptly but important items can be fitted in until a month or so after these dates.

3. Proofs will normally be sent to authors of papers, but not of shorter items. Such proofs should be returned without delay. If alterations are made at this stage it may be necessary to ask the author to bear the cost.

4. Authors of full-length papers who want copies for their own use **MUST ASK FOR THESE** when returning the proofs. If requested we will supply 25 free copies of the issue in which the paper is published. Reprints can be obtained but a charge will be made for these.

5. Particular care should be taken to avoid mistakes in lists of references and to lay them out in the following way, italics being indicated where appropriate by underlining.

DICK, G. & POTTER, J. 1960. Goshawk in East Stirling. *Scot. Birds* 1:329.
EGGELING, W. J. 1960. *The Isle of May*. Edinburgh and London.

6. English names should follow *The Handbook of British Birds* with the alterations detailed in *British Birds* in January 1953 (46:2-3) and January 1956 (49:5). Initial capitals are used for names of species (e.g. Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit) but not for group names (e.g. diving ducks, tits). Scientific names should be used sparingly (see editorial *Scottish Birds* 2:1-3) and follow the 1952 B.O.U. *Check-List of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland* with the changes recommended in 1956 by the Taxonomic Sub-Committee (*Ibis* 98:158-68), and the 1957 decisions of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature (*Ibis* 99:369). When used with the English names they should follow them, underlined to indicate italics, and with no surrounding brackets.

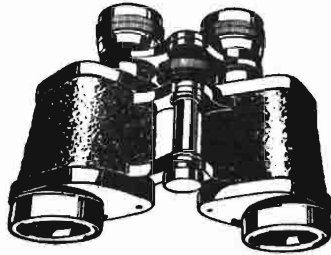
7. Dates should normally be in the form "1st January 1962", with no commas round the year. Old fashioned conventions should be avoided—e.g. use Arabic numerals rather than Roman, and avoid unnecessary full stops after abbreviations such as "Dr" and "St".

8. Tables must be designed to fit into the page, preferably not sideways, and be self-explanatory.

9. Headings and sub-headings should not be underlined as this may lead the printer to use the wrong type.

10. Illustrations of any kind are welcomed. Drawings and figures should be up to twice the size they will finally appear, and on separate sheets from the text. They should be in Indian ink on good quality paper, with neat lettering by a skilled draughtsman. Photographs should either have a Scottish interest or illustrate contributions. They should be sharp and clear, with good contrast, and preferably large glossy prints.

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Further details can be had from the General Secretary :

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