

# Scottish Birds



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The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

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*Autumn 1966*

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THE JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

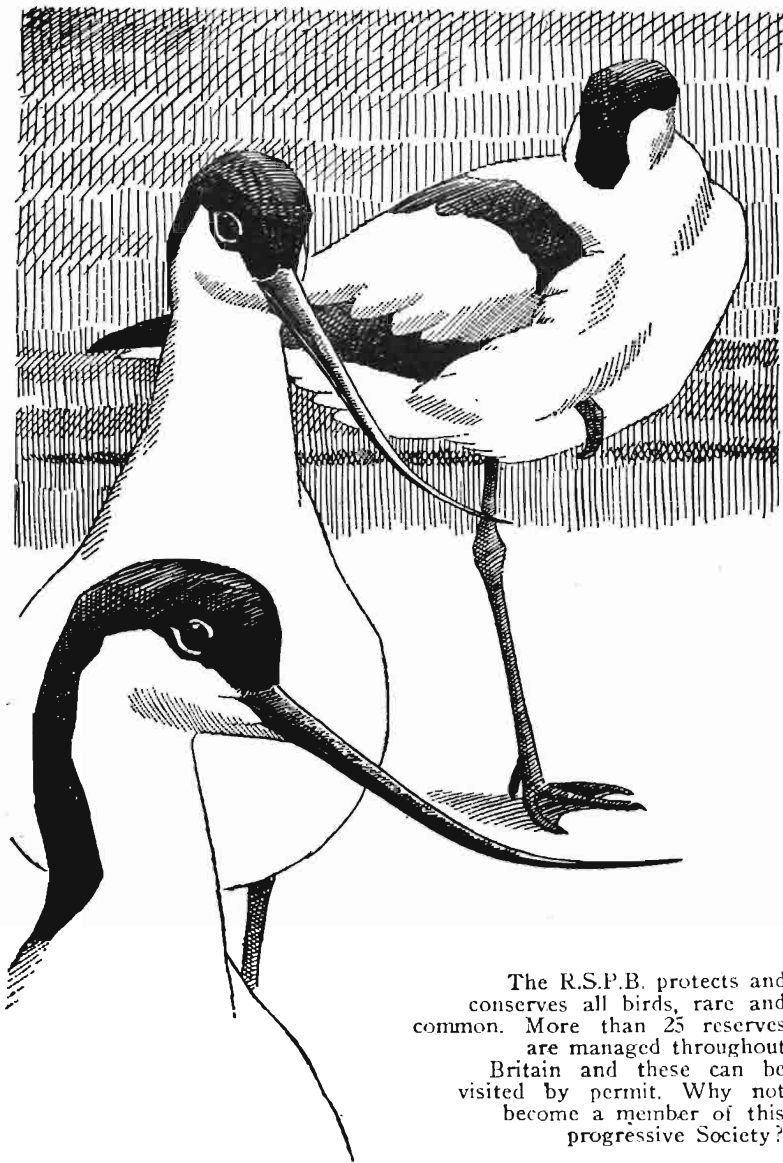
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THE JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB



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Volume 4 No. 3

Autumn 1966

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Edited by A. T. MACMILLAN with the assistance of D. G. ANDREW, T. C. SMOUT and P. J. B. SLATER. Business Editor, T. C. SMOUT.  
Cover Design (Leach's Petrel) by LEN FULLERTON.

## Editorial

**Scottish Bird-Islands Study Cruise.** By all accounts the cruise was an enormous success—a fitting reward for the tremendous amount of work put into it. We plan to have a full report and pictures in our next issue.

**Protection of Birds Bill.** On the dissolution of Parliament for the General Election the Protection of Birds Bill was automatically lost, along with various other bills that could not be completed before the end of the session. It now has to pass through both Houses again and it is to be hoped that this will mean delay rather than complete frustration.

**Bounties for Cormorants.** It is notorious that bounty schemes are unsatisfactory as a method of control. The aim is to wipe out the pest but the effect may well be to pay heavily for a crop of surplus individuals which would have perished anyway from natural causes at some other season. Sometimes bounties are paid on wrongly identified species, and suitable bodies (or beaks, or feet) may even be imported from neighbouring areas on a profit-sharing basis. Almost certainly the effort is applied unevenly and at the wrong season for effective control.

Last year the River Tweed Commissioners paid out £195, 5/- for 781 "cormorants" destroyed. It is an encouraging comment on the greater understanding of predator-prey relationships that this year the bounty scheme has been dropped. On the basis of research by Dr Derek H. Mills the Commissioners have concluded that damage done to the fisheries by the Cormorants is not enough to justify the cost of the scheme.

**Ospreys and the R.S.P.B. in Speyside.** In 1966 the Ospreys came back for the eighth successive year to their Loch Garten eyrie and for the fourth successive year to their other site. Unfortunately both nests were destroyed by gales on 27th-28th April when there were three eggs in the Loch Garten eyrie and one in the other. The same thing happened three years ago at Loch Garten.

An excellent booklet with a fine cover painting by Donald Watson has been produced about the Ospreys, including 1959/65 statistics on breeding (13 fledged) and viewing (141,500 watched). It is *Ospreys in Speyside*. By George Waterston. 1966, R.S.P.B. booklet. Pp. 40; photographs and line drawings. 5/-.

In April the R.S.P.B. announced the appointment of Wing-Commander Dick Fursman as their full-time representative in Speyside. As well as continuing to supervise Operation Osprey he will be responsible for liaison with landowners, developers and the public. He will watch the effects of the extensive tourist developments in the area and generally put forward the case for bird conservation. His address is The Boathouse, Aviemore (telephone 223).

**Balranald Bird Reserve.** A fine 1500-acre R.S.P.B. reserve has been established in North Uist by agreement with the landowners and with the crofters of the township of Hougary, which forms part of the reserve and where traditional methods of land use still continue. The reserve includes the small offshore island of Causamul and a variety of typical Hebridean habitats—Atlantic beaches, sweeping white sands, dunes, big stretches of machair (meadow land) with abundant flowers and Corncrakes, and a variety of lochs and bog.

Causamul forms a natural refuge for a large part of the winter population of surface-feeding ducks frequenting Balranald marsh, and it is a breeding station for a small number of grey seals. Breeding birds of special interest at Balranald include sea-level Dunlin and also Red-necked Phalaropes. The R.S.P.B. intends to put up observation hides from which these and other species may be watched without disturbance. Even this remote area is not beyond the limits of tourism and it is good to see plans being made for its future in good time. Visitors should contact the R.S.P.B. warden in Hougary. For pictures and further details see *Birds* 1: 71-73.

**Scottish Wildlife Trust reserves.** A good deal of unspectacular spadework in the early days of the Scottish Wildlife Trust is now starting to produce visible results; though it should never be forgotten that some of the most valuable influence for wildlife conservation is achieved by advice and discussion behind the scenes. To coincide with National Nature Week at the end of April the Trust was able to announce its first three reserves, set up by agreement with the owners.

These were Enterkine Wood, a varied and well managed woodland in Ayrshire; 190 acres of loch and surrounding amenity woodland at Duns Castle, Berwickshire; and the small Hare and Dunbog Mosses at 900 ft near Selkirk. Later another fine piece of unspoiled wetland at Gordon Moss,



Berwickshire, was added to the list. The establishment of these reserves does not necessarily mean any great changes in their use but it does guarantee that they will be managed with the interests of wildlife in mind.

**Nature trails.** At the new Enterkine Wood reserve the S.W.T. laid out a nature trail and opened it to the public for National Nature Week. This gentle form of practical education is becoming very popular. Various trails have been established in Scotland, including a splendid long one round Loch an Eilean in Speyside and one at the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill in Edinburgh.

The trail is marked with numbered posts or rocks and one follows it with a booklet (unless there are notice boards instead) to point out interesting features of the flowers, birds, mammals, rock formation and suchlike, preferably with a few facts that may be checked on the spot. It is as if one went round with the experts who planned the trail. Somehow the whole thing becomes an adventure that comes to life when one has to explore it on the spot for oneself.

The trail can keep people on routes where they will do least harm to the habitat and at the same time show them some of the highlights of the area. A fine new trail has just been opened at Yellowcraig in East Lothian. There is a big car park and now a caravan park, but instead of visitors being told what not to do they will be able to get a booklet and find out for themselves just what a fascinating area it can be in quite unexpected ways.

**The "Handbook" and the "Field Guide."** Few ornithologists would deny that the most valuable general work of reference on the birds of this country is *The Handbook of British Birds*. Written over 25 years ago it is still extraordinarily useful. Likewise, for a really helpful pocket guide to bird identification *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* is even more obviously the first choice—and not just in Britain but throughout western Europe as well.

For some years the *Handbook* has been out of print, but it is to be reprinted this autumn to meet the steady demand for copies. The long-awaited revised edition of the *Field Guide* is now out. Some birdwatchers go through one a year but even those still using their 1st-impression 1954 copies will want this new edition. The changes are subtle but important—better methods of identification for difficult species, entirely new distribution maps, and more illustrations of more species.

Post free from the S.O.C. Bird Bookshop the 5-volume *Handbook* costs £4, 4/- a volume (£21 in all) and the *Field Guide* 30/-.

**Current literature.** Recent papers of special interest to Scottish ornithologists include:

The Fulmar population of Britain and Ireland, 1959. James Fisher, 1966. *Bird Study* 13: 5-76. A meticulous list of colonies gives a new base for assessing the rate of increase; this has slowed, perhaps because of the smaller quantity of fish guts thrown overboard now. Evidence of Fulmar exploitation at St Kilda in Viking times is discussed.

Post-mortems of Peregrines and Lanners with particular reference to organochlorine residues. D. J. Jefferies and I. Prestt, 1966. *Brit. Birds* 59: 49-64. Two Scottish birds probably died of other causes.

An analysis of recoveries of Great Skuas ringed in Shetland. A. Landsborough Thomson, 1966. *Brit. Birds* 59: 1-15. Based on 119 recoveries, in spite of the bird's pelagic mode of life.

The natural history of a population of Guillemots (*Uria aalge* Pont.). H. N. Southern, R. Carrick and W. G. Potter, 1965. *J. Anim. Ecol.* 34: 649-665. Deals with colonies in east Scotland.

Distribution of bridled Guillemots in east Scotland over eight years. H. N. Southern, 1966. *J. Anim. Ecol.* 35: 1-11.

Movements of Woodpigeons in north-east Scotland. D. Robertson and G. M. Mackintosh, 1966. *Scot. Agric.* 45: 68-71. Discussion of November flocks and recoveries of ringed birds showing local movements only.

Movements of British Robins as shown by ringing. D. W. Snow, 1966. *Brit. Birds* 59: 67-74. Includes Scottish data.

Orkney for the bird watcher. Eddie Balfour, 1966. *Birds* 1: 45-47. Useful general review.

**Ornithological stamps.** The Post Office used to insist that postage stamps should be utilitarian, and was strongly opposed to commemorative issues: such things were all very well for everyone else, but too degrading for the inventors of the Penny Black. Now it has flown to the opposite extreme and issues pictorial stamps at regular intervals during the summer tourist season, even without commemorating anything, and sometimes several different designs of the same face value in a block (not to mention local varieties and experimental paper treatments). Philatelists may rebel; but the attractive 8-colour 4d series of Blackbird, Robin, Blue Tit and Black-headed Gull, issued on 8th August 1966, should please most birdwatchers as evidence of how high a place their hobby now takes in the affairs of the country.

## Sex and age ratios and weights of Capercaillie from the 1965-66 shooting season in Scotland

F. C. ZWICKEL

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Natural History Department, Marischal College, Aberdeen

Sex and age ratios are important parameters to an understanding of the population dynamics of a given species. Helminen (1963) has presented a comprehensive review of autumn sex and age ratios for a large series of Finnish Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* but no such data have been published for Scottish birds. During the 1965-66 shooting season I examined 117 Capercaillie bagged by hunters in northeast Scotland and since it is doubtful that this study will be repeated in the immediate future the data are presented here. When relevant, I have included observations from field studies conducted during the autumn and winter of 1965-66.

I was able to obtain weights of 109 of these birds and include these also. An analysis of the crop contents of 99 of the birds has been presented elsewhere (Zwickel 1966).

### Methods

All birds were shot between 22nd October 1965 and 27th January 1966 and were examined either at the time of the hunt (19) or at game dealers (98). The determination of sex was no problem because of the striking sexual dimorphism of Capercaillie (Thomson 1964). Ages were determined on the basis of the shape of the two outer primaries (Helminen 1963) and in most cases were checked by probing of the bursa of Fabricius. Birds were classified into four sex and age categories; adult male, adult female, first-winter male, and first-winter female—first-winter birds being those hatched in 1965 (5-8 months of age).

All birds were weighed on spring balances read to the nearest 50 gms and all had crops and viscera intact. Most (100) were weighed within three days or less of the date of kill while the remainder (all from October) had been killed approximately 11 days before being examined.

I have used the 5% level of probability for determining significance or non-significance in all statistical analyses.

### Results

A summary of the number of birds recorded in each sex and age category and the general areas where they were taken is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Number of Capercaillie in each sex and age category, by area of kill

	Perthshire	Aberdeenshire and Kincardineshire	Inverness-shire and Morayshire	Total
Male				
Adult	16	6	10	32
First-winter	6	1	3	10
Female				
Adult	21	22	17	60
First-winter	7	1	7	15
	<hr/> 50	<hr/> 30	<hr/> 37	<hr/> 117

The samples are too small to make meaningful statistical comparisons between regions and most of the following analysis will therefore be concerned with only the total numbers recorded in the different sex and age categories. The birds examined were killed in the following months: October—9, November—9, December—45, January—54.

**Sex ratios.** There is no statistically significant difference between sex ratios in the two age classes. Since this is so, the data have been combined, giving a ratio of 42 males to 75 females (56:100). This differs significantly from a 100:100 sex ratio.

In the course of field studies, principally in Glen Dye, near Banchory (Zwickel 1966), I identified the sex of 183 birds flushed between 13th September and 31st March; 91 were males and 92 females. This does not differ significantly from a balanced sex ratio (nor do any of the samples for particular months) but does differ from the sex ratio recorded for the kill. If my field observations are representative of populations in northeast Scotland the unbalanced ratio found in the kill must be caused by some bias associated with shooting. Such bias might be caused by the large difference in size between the sexes (Koskimies 1958)—males may be able to carry shot better than females—or by some difference in behaviour between the sexes. For instance, I have found in my winter studies that males flush at a significantly greater mean distance from an observer than do females; 190 feet for males and 120 feet for females. It is also possible that males fly higher or faster than females, a suggestion sometimes made by sportsmen.

The preponderance of females in the Scottish kill is different from that found by Helminen (1963) in Finland. He found more males than females. He reports, however, that Finnish hunters hunt selectively for males. Having observed three shoots in Scotland I can see no such selection on the part of Scottish sportsmen. One male and 12 females were taken on these shoots, yet I saw 20 males and 21 females

flying by the hunters and this does not differ significantly from a balanced sex ratio.

**Age ratios.** Because there is an indication in table 1 that fewer young were produced in the Aberdeenshire-Kincardineshire area than in the other areas from which samples were obtained, I have done a chi-square analysis of these data. The differences in the proportion of first-winter birds recorded in the different areas are not statistically significant and I have therefore combined the figures (there was also no significant difference between months). The percentage of first-winter birds of each sex found was as follows: males—24%, females—20%. There is no significant difference between the sexes, and the combined percentage of first-winter birds in the kill was 21%. This is very low when compared to similar data for other gallinaceous birds, as presented by Hickey (1955), or to autumn age ratios from Finnish Capercaillie (Helminen 1963).

Annual production is often expressed in terms of young per breeding female. The data in table 1 give 0.4 young per adult female. If the population is assumed to have a balanced sex ratio and the number of first-winter birds is so adjusted, then this figure becomes 0.5 young per adult female. These figures are very low for most gallinaceous birds and indicate that Capercaillie had a poor reproductive season in 1965, a suggestion also made by several gamekeepers with whom I talked.

**Weights.** A summary of mean weights and the range in weights within the different sex and age categories is presented in table 2. Adults were significantly heavier than first-winter birds in both sexes.

**Table 2. Mean weights and range in weights of Capercaillie of different sex and age categories**

	Males		Females	
	Adult	1st-winter	Adult	1st-winter
Number in sample	27	10	59	13
Mean weight - gms	3920	3155	1755	1608
Standard error - gms	49	52	15	31
Weight range - gms	3400-4400	2900-3450	1500-1950	1400-1800

The mean weight of first-winter males is 80% that of adult males and the mean weight of first-winter females 91% that of adult females. These data suggest that females grow faster than males, and are very similar to like figures presented by Koskimies (1958) for Finnish birds (82% and 92%, respectively).

Koskimies also reported a large difference in mean body weight between male and female Capercaillie. In my sample the mean weight of adult females was 45% that of adult

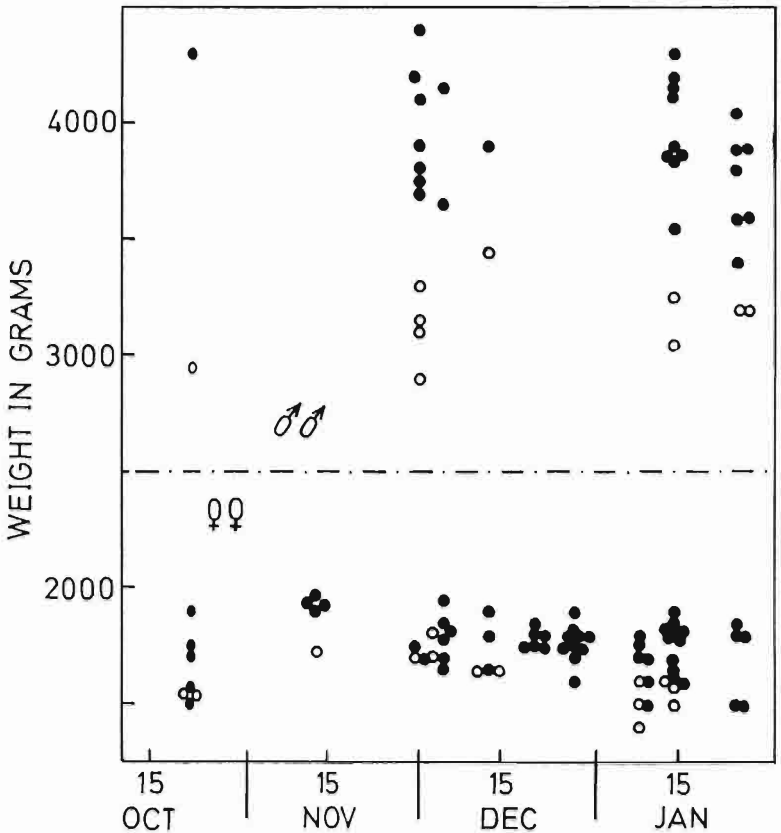


FIG. 1. Individual weights of Capercaillie plotted by date of kill. Males are above the dotted line, females below; adults are shown by closed circles, first-winter birds by open circles.

males and the mean weight of first-winter females was 51% that of first-winter males (Koskimies found adult females to be 48% the weight of adult males).

I checked too few birds in each month, in most sex and age categories, to test for monthly changes in mean weights. I have, however, plotted the individual weights by date of kill in fig. 1. These suggest that peak winter weights were reached in November or early December and that there was a gradual decline in all groups, except possibly first-winter males (where samples are very small), from this time through January. Mean weights of adult females for December ( $1773 \pm 10$  gms) and January ( $1725 \pm 26$  gms) where samples are reasonably good, are significantly different from each other. Koskimies (1958) has shown that Finnish Capercaillie reach a peak weight in November, with a decline in December.

The data shown in fig. 1 support his findings and suggest that this decline continues into January.

The mean weights of Finnish birds, as reported by Koskimies, appear to be slightly higher than those found here. Koskimies had no data from January, however, so that the mean weights of the Scottish birds may be influenced by inclusion of data from the lighter birds from this month.

### Acknowledgments

This study was supported by the National Research Council of Canada. Facilities for study were provided by Professor V. C. Wynne-Edwards, University of Aberdeen, and by the Nature Conservancy. The following persons assisted me with the collection of data: T. B. Band, R. Slaughter and G. Mitchell, game dealers at Perth, Cromdale and Letham respectively; Col. J. W. Nicol of Ballogie; D. McLeod, S. McIntosh and R. Fraser, gamekeepers at Finzean, Learney and Ballogie estates respectively; and G. W. Johnstone, Natural History Department, University of Aberdeen. Field studies were done on the Glen Dye and Seafield-Strathspey estates and on Forestry Commission lands at Blackhall, Culbin and Rannoch. G. W. Johnstone, R. Moss and A. Watson made valuable criticisms of the manuscript. I am very grateful for the help given by all these persons and groups.

### Summary

A total of 117 Capercaillie from the 1965-66 shooting season were examined for sex and age ratios in northeast Scotland. Weights were obtained from 109 of these birds.

A sex ratio of 56 males to 100 females was found. This unbalanced ratio appears not to reflect that of birds in the wild but appears to be caused by biases relating to shooting.

Only 21% of the birds were in their first winter. This is very low when compared to age ratios reported for most gallinaceous birds and suggests that Scottish Capercaillie had a poor reproductive season in 1965.

The mean weight of adult females was 45% that of adult males, and the mean weight of first-winter females was 51% that of first-winter males. Mean weights of first-winter birds suggest that females develop faster than males, in terms of body weight. Birds appear to reach a peak weight about November or early December, with a gradual decline starting in December and continuing into January.

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## An investigation into the recent decline of the Barn Owl on an Ayrshire estate

DOUGLAS N. WEIR

### Introduction

The area studied is a 1600 acre agricultural and sporting estate and a further 400 acres of adjacent ground in north Ayrshire. Some notes on raptors have been made here ever since 1947. There is a wide variety of farm, marginal and woodland habitats in this area and nearly 70 species of birds nest in most years. This paper investigates the change in status of the Barn Owl in the area over the period 1954 to 1965.

I am most grateful to my father, Viscount Weir of Eastwood C.B.E., for this and all my opportunities to study birds here and to all the estate staff and others who furnished much of the information needed for this investigation. My thanks are also due to Dr V. P. Lowe of the Nature Conservancy whose valuable criticisms led me to revise the paper completely.

### Nest sites and ranges, and history of the decline

In 1954 three pairs of Barn Owls were known to breed, all using sites which appeared to have been occupied for many years. Pair 1 bred in a pigeon loft above a stable, part of a range of buildings around a courtyard. The birds were known to hunt the extensive lawns and a large walled garden, woodland edges and roadsides and nearby fields and paddocks.

Pair 2 also bred in an old pigeon loft, in farm buildings  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles north of the first pair. They were known to hunt the farmyard and surrounding fields, and favoured two small glens, partly wooded with thorns and containing running water.

About  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles NE of the first pair and the same distance SE of the second, pair 3 nested in the rocky side of a wooded pit, about 20 yards long and 20 feet deep. Their known range covered young conifer plantations and woodland clearings and they often hunted four rushy fields.

Many observations over the years showed that the owls rarely occurred more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile from the nest sites, so that there appeared to be very little overlap in the ranges, either in summer or in winter. Dates of the last known nests and last sightings within their presumed ranges are given in table 1.



**Table 1. Last known nests and sightings of Barn Owls**

Pair No.	Last known nest	Last sighting
1	1955	1957
2	1961	1965
3	1961	1962

Pair 1 may have nested in a hollow beech nearby in 1956. A single bird used the site of pair 2 as a roost in 1962. Although a bird could still be seen in this locality in 1965 the site was no longer used as a roost.

#### **Status of other raptors**

Since 1954 there appears to have been little change in the status of the three non-breeding raptors which occur in the studied area. These are the Peregrine, Merlin and Short-eared Owl. Among breeding species, the Kestrel has remained unchanged at 1 to 2 pairs, the Buzzard has increased from 0 to 1 breeding pairs, the Sparrowhawk has declined from 4 or 5 breeding pairs to 1, the Tawny Owl has probably remained unchanged at 6 or more breeding pairs and the Long-eared Owl declined from at least 6 breeding pairs in 1954 to 1 or none in 1963 and risen again to at least 3 pairs in 1965.

The breeding density of all hawks and owls was therefore about one pair per 105 acres in 1954 and one pair per 155 acres in 1965.

#### **Human activities in relation to Barn Owls**

The data presented in this section are not quantitative, some events important to Barn Owls may have been overlooked, and some of the statements made are open to dispute. The human activities examined are disturbance or destruction at nests, farming or forestry programmes affecting hunting ranges, and the local use of chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals.

Since 1954 there has been no destruction of adult owls. There was no disturbance or destruction at the nest of pair 3. But in 1955 there were structural alterations to the stable above which pair 1 nested, including renovation of the loft. Pair 2 were often watched at the nest with no apparent ill-effects, but in 1955 one of the three owlets was removed, and in 1961 both the owlets were taken.

Farming and forestry programmes did not affect the range of pair 1 but one of the small glens hunted by pair 2 was planted with conifers. What effect this had on its suitability for hunting is not known. By 1962 the rushes in four fields often hunted by pair 3 had been eradicated. Although forestry work nearby appeared to create a little additional range, it seemed that their most favoured hunting ground was considerably reduced.

By enquiry it was found that there was no use of chlorinated hydrocarbons in forestry, and their horticultural use was very severely restricted. It was not possible to obtain figures for their use in farming but it appeared to be lower than is usual in the surrounding area and in any case, since this is a dairy farming region, the amount of crop grown is small and the use of these substances is less than it is on arable farmland.

About 500 Pheasant eggs are collected annually for rearing from birds caught up and penned on the estate, and it was thought that serious local contamination of the habitat would be detected by a drop in the hatchability of these eggs, increasing over the years. This has not occurred and the proportion of eggs hatched varies between 85% and 93%.

#### Food spectrum of pair 2

In September 1964 a large mass of pellet debris was collected from the floor of the loft where pair 2 had nested and roosted. Checks made on the spot indicated that this material was reasonably typical of all that present. Most of the material was presumably over two years old but had been well preserved in the weathertight loft.

The material was examined and all bony fragments collected. The number of individuals of each species or family represented was then worked out, using all reasonable precautions against error. 568 identified items are listed as percentages in table 2. Since no correction figures for part-consumption only of some prey species are available for the Barn Owl, the figures represent the number of individuals of each species taken and not the more accurate total weight of each species consumed.

Table 2. Food spectrum of Barn Owl pair 2

	Percentage by number of items in sample
Common shrew <i>Sorex araneus</i>	33.4
Short-tailed vole <i>Microtus agrestis</i>	31.9
Wood mouse <i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	18.3
House mouse <i>Mus musculus</i>	3.9
Bank vole <i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	3.1
Water shrew <i>Nomys fodiens</i>	2.4
Pygmy shrew <i>Sorex minutus</i>	1.7
Brown rat <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	0.3
Water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	0.2
Mole <i>Talpa europaea</i>	0.2
Sparrow, probably all <i>Passer domesticus</i>	3.8
Thrush/Starling <i>Turdus</i> sp./ <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> —juv.	0.2
Small bird	0.2
Unidentified beetle	0.4
<b>Total—568 items</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Discussion

Until 1954 three pairs of Barn Owls bred on the estate, but by 1962 none did so. From observation and enquiry it appeared that the Barn Owl was commoner over much of southern Ayrshire than it was in the study area, and that it had greatly declined in numbers in this, presumably more favourable, region in recent years.

There are two possible explanations. The first is that the Barn Owl notoriously fluctuates in numbers in northern temperate countries such as Scotland (Voous 1960; Baxter & Rintoul 1928), being presumably sensitive to quite mild pressures at the edge of its range. The second is that a marked decline, possibly attributable to the use of chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals on the land, has recently occurred in most British breeding raptors, including the Barn Owl (Woodford *et al.* 1963).

Although another raptor which has declined nationally, the Sparrowhawk, became rare as a breeding bird in the area during this period, the Long-eared Owl had a marked drop in numbers followed by a considerable recovery. The changes in status of these raptors could therefore be considered to be due to two different causes and so shed no light on the local decline of the Barn Owl.

Information on local use of toxic chemicals is inadequate to indicate anything, but the continued high hatching rate of Pheasant eggs might suggest only a modest degree of local contamination.

The food spectrum of pair 2 does not show that these birds preyed heavily on a likely source of contamination; shrews and small rodents seldom carry heavy concentrations of chlorinated hydrocarbons in areas of low use (N. Moore, pers. comm.) and the 3.8% of sparrows in the diet would seem to be an insignificant source. No drop in the breeding success or numbers of sparrows in this locality has been obvious.

The data here presented are therefore inadequate to explain the cause of the local decline, which in any case might be a combination of the two possible explanations suggested; but they seem to raise a point, important to conservation practice, on the mechanics of the decline.

It is at least a striking coincidence that all three pairs ceased to breed following single adverse happenings within their territories. These were considerable disturbance of the site (pair 1), the taking of all the young (pair 2) and reduction of the favoured hunting range (pair 3).

Since this owl was also decreasing in an adjacent region where it was commoner, the abandonment of the territories discussed might be a withdrawal from marginal range as part

of a more general decline. The actual checks which precipitated it might otherwise have been only temporary but appear to have had an exaggerated effect on a marginal part of a shrinking population.

### Summary

1. The decline of three pairs of Barn Owls in a 2000 acre area of north Ayrshire was investigated between 1954 and 1965; all bred regularly up to 1955 but none bred after 1961.

2. The nest sites and hunting ranges are described.

3. The status of other raptors is examined and a decrease in the Sparrowhawk and fluctuations in the Long-eared Owl breeding populations are noted.

4. Human activities in relation to Barn Owls are noted as disturbance or destruction, farming or forestry work physically affecting ranges, and the local use of chlorinated hydrocarbon chemicals.

5. The diet of one pair is examined.

6. The data are discussed and it is suggested that the cause or causes of the decline cannot be shown but that the species was decreasing in an adjacent, more favourable, region and therefore quite minor man-induced checks were sufficient to precipitate withdrawal from this marginal ground. This point is relevant to conservation practice.

### References

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## Short Notes

### Great and Cory's Shearwaters at Fair Isle and on east coast

Sea-watching at Fair Isle is generally dull and unproductive, but this was certainly not the case in September 1965, when we witnessed the largest and most varied migration of shearwaters recorded at Fair Isle.

Cory's Shearwater had never been recorded from Fair Isle or the surrounding sea area and there were only four previous records for Scotland. Single Great Shearwaters had been seen at Fair Isle by L. S. V. Venables on 14th and 21st September and 8th October 1936. The crew of the *Good Shepherd*, plying between Fair Isle and Shetland once or twice a week, had never noted these large shearwaters during their crossings.

When I meet visitors to Fair Isle I am always interested to learn of the birds they have seen during the crossing from Shetland. Ron Kettle and Keith Noble arrived on 17th Sep-

tember and reported at least 30 Great Shearwaters. The birds were in groups of four or five, the first about five miles from Shetland and the last about three miles from the island. Several times the birds came within ten yards of the *Good Shepherd*, and other large shearwaters were seen at a greater distance but not specifically identified.

Nicholas Dymond and I sea-watched from the Niz (the most northerly point of Fair Isle) between 0645 and 0730 hrs GMT on 18th September and we saw three large shearwaters fly west and one east. We had reasonable views of these birds and noted that the upperparts were uniform brown with no pale areas on the rump or nape and the underparts were pale. There was no great contrast between the brown and white areas, so we concluded that they were Cory's Shearwaters. This was confirmed later in the morning.

We returned to the sea-watch position at 0835 with most of the birdwatchers staying at the observatory, and at 0900 four Cory's Shearwaters flew west. From then until 1015 hrs 55 more Cory's Shearwaters flew west past the Niz in groups of 2, 1, 8, 26, 4, 11 and 3; and three singles flew east. We noted no more shearwaters before we left at 1100 hrs. A short watch in the afternoon produced one Sooty Shearwater but none of the larger species.

The following day one Cory's and three Sooty Shearwaters flew west between 0625 and 0715; later, between 0905 and 1130, six Cory's and six Sooty Shearwaters were noted. At 1050 three large shearwaters flew east, and these were considered to be Great Shearwaters; this was confirmed by observations on 20th September. The upperparts of these three birds were brown, with the primaries, tail and crown darker, and there was a distinct capped appearance. The underparts were very white and there was a sharp contrast as the birds careened from side to side in flight. Further watches on the 19th until 1230 and from 1555 to 1620 only produced two Manx Shearwaters.

On the 20th, 21 Great Shearwaters flew east and seven flew west past the Niz between 0900 and 1130; one Cory's flew east, nine large shearwaters (too distant to identify) flew west and seven flew east during the same period. At the south tip of Fair Isle 12 Cory's, one Great and four large shearwaters flew east between 1025 and 1230. During subsequent watches on 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th September we recorded mainly Great Shearwaters, with smaller numbers of Sooty and Manx Shearwaters and two Cory's.

The following table itemises the shearwater watches made during this period of September 1965.

## Shearwaters at Fair Isle in September 1965

Date	Period of watch (GMT)	Wind	Great	Cory's	'large'	Sooty
18th	0645-0730	NE3-4		3W, 1E		
	0835-1100	NE3-5		59W, 3E		
	1115-1130 (S)	NE3-5				1W
	1330-1530	NE3-5				1W
19th	0625-0715	N1-2		1W		3W
	0905-1230	NW1	3E	6E	3E	1W, 5E
	1555-1620	NW1				
20th	0900-1130	SW3	7W, 21E	1E	9W, 7E	4W, 7E
	1025-1230 (S)	SW3	1E	12E	4E	1E
	1310-1430	SW3	3E			1W
	1415-1500 (S)	SW3			1E	
21st	0615-0900	S4	5W, 3E		3W, 14E	3W
	1530-1630	NW5				
22nd	0910-1135	W3	38W		4W, 1E	
	1035-1115 (S)	W3				
	1430-1530	W3				
	1525-1535 (S)	W3	1W, 2E		1E	
23rd	0620-0705	SW1		2W		
	0850-1115	SW2	9W, 4E		5W, 5E	5W
	1510-1525 (S)	S3				1E
24th	0615-0715	NW2-3	1W		2W	
	0915-1015	NW2-3				
<hr/> 61W, 37E 65W, 23E 23W, 36E 19W, 14E						

(S) indicates watch made at south tip. W indicates bird flying east to west, and E vice versa.

A special trip on the *Good Shepherd* to determine the distribution of shearwaters in the sea area north of Fair Isle and to photograph them had to be cancelled because of rough seas. On 21st September however Bill Porteous went on the return trip of the *Good Shepherd* between Fair Isle and Sumburgh Head. The boat was delayed by a gale and he returned the following morning. The crossing is about 24 miles and takes an average of three hours. The outward journey began at 0615 and the return to Fair Isle at 0900.

**Numbers of Great Shearwaters seen from the 'Good Shepherd'  
on 21st and 22nd September 1965**

	Miles out from Fair Isle towards Shetland		
	0-8	8-16	16-24
21st	5W	3W, 1E	2E
22nd	1S	2S	6W, 4S
	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 6	<hr/> 12

These observations show that Great Shearwaters were in evidence throughout the area between Fair Isle and Shetland

and as was to be expected there was a greater number off Sumburgh Head, because of passage round the southerly point of Shetland. Conditions for observation from the *Good Shepherd* are very poor and these numbers are a minimum. Watchers on the *Niz* observed about ten shearwaters (probably Great) circling the *Good Shepherd* 2-3 miles off Fair Isle on the 21st; only two or three were seen in this area from the boat.

Great Shearwaters were subsequently recorded from the *Good Shepherd* on 24th September (17 on outward and 8 on return trip), 28th September (8 on outward trip) and 5th October (6 on outward trip). No more were seen by the crew until 9th November, when there were two, and the last was one on 16th November. Descriptions of both species are given below.

#### Great Shearwater

About same size as Fulmar, although body looked smaller and wings slightly longer and narrower. Upperparts generally dark brown; cap blackish and clearly demarcated; tail darker, and wings had a three-colour effect, noticeable at great distance, up to about 2 miles (wing coverts deep brown, primaries darker, and area in mid wing on trailing edge paler greyish brown); at close range from boat, buffish tips to wing coverts gave a scaly appearance; upper tail-coverts white, forming narrow V, visible up to 800 yards, but difficult to see at usual shearwater range of over one mile, although in favourable conditions this pale patch flashed in the sun at a mile or more; underparts very white, and underwing white with dark markings and lines running to tips; white on sides of neck nearly joined across nape, giving the dark head a capped appearance; black and white areas sharply demarcated; from boat a large brown smudge noted on flanks in front of wing, and smaller dark marks behind. One bird was noticed to have a large dark patch on the belly. From the shore we did not see this dark belly smudge until we learnt when to look for it—when the bird is turning away from the observer and down to sea. In such cases we always noted this smudge, even at distances of nearly a mile. The bill was dark.

The flight was heavier than Manx Shearwater and rather Fulmar-like. The wings were held straight but drooping from the body in a bowed manner. The flight was low over the water, veering slowly from side to side, with long glides interspersed with several flaps, slower and heavier than Manx Shearwater. As the birds turned from showing their upperparts a flash of white from the sides of the neck preceded the white of the underparts. This flashing contrast between the white and black areas was nearly as noticeable as in Manx Shearwater. Those observed feeding in the area had an irregular flight, changing direction frequently and rarely rising more than a few feet above the sea; while those flying past had a regular and more direct flight, rising only a small distance above the sea and flapping more often than the Cory's Shearwater. One bird was heard to give a single, short, soft call, not unlike a Herring Gull—but softer and more musical.

#### Cory's Shearwater

Larger than Fulmar, wingspan greater and body slimmer, more Gannet-like. Whole upperparts uniform dark brown, not as dark as Sooty Shear-

water; upper surface of wings appeared uniform and there was no white above tail or on nape; belly white, and rest of underparts and underwing whitish, centre of underwing whitish to tip; no demarcation between upperparts and underparts—the brown merged into white and there was no real flash as the bird turned from side to side; a drabber more uniform bird than the Great Shearwater.

When gliding the wings were slightly but noticeably swept back from the carpals, and held straight below the body in a shallow anhedral. The flight was regular and bounding; the birds rose high above the sea before making a long smooth return. These arcs of flight were much higher and longer than those of the Great Shearwater. The Cory's flapped their wings less often than Great Shearwaters and they did not careen from side to side so much.

All the shearwaters on 18th and 19th September were flying purposefully past Fair Isle, but on 20th, 22nd and 23rd September a few Great Shearwaters were foraging over the water within 300 yards of the Niz. They often circled rafts of Fulmars and several times settled at the outer edge of a raft. Two birds on the 23rd were slowly foraging past the point; at times they pattered across the surface of the water and then plunged in and swam under water with their wings for a second or two. We did not see them catch anything although we felt certain that they were feeding on some small fish or organism. There was a tremendous wreck of jellyfish and small floating organisms on the beaches at Fair Isle during this period.

Both Sooty and Manx Shearwaters were noted in greater numbers than usual, but this may have been partly due to the intensive spell of sea-watching in September. The yearly totals of Sooty Shearwaters seen at Fair Isle and on the crossing from 1957 to 1965 are 1, 4, 8, 0, 23, 12, 8, 32 and 56 respectively. It would appear that the Sooty Shearwater has become commoner in these waters in recent years, and the season of occurrence has been extended from August-September to August-November.

As well as those mentioned above, the following watched the shearwaters in this period: G. Barnes, G. Brown, M. Christersson, A. Vittery, J. Gregory, R. Lightfoot, R. Lorand, C. Millican, J. Davies and E. J. Wiseman. I am particularly grateful to Douglas Brown and Nicholas Dymond who gave me their full notes on these movements.

ROY H. DENNIS.

I was lucky enough to be on board a trawling vessel, the F.R.S. *Scotia*, on 22nd September 1965. On a southeasterly course from Girdleness, North Kincardineshire, and between 8 and 11½ miles from this point, I saw not less than six Great Shearwaters. The boat passed alongside these birds about midday, and a few seen flying later may or may not have been the same individuals. The closest of the birds—between



15 and 20 ft away—was foraging by touching down on the water at intervals of a few feet and sometimes submerging completely for short periods. Full descriptions have been supplied to the editors.

H. E. M. Dorr.

(These Great and Cory's Shearwaters were part of an unprecedented influx of thousands of each species to the western side of the British Isles noted from Fair Isle to the Scillies at this time. There are no previous records of the Great Shearwater for North Kincardine or Dee, and none of Cory's Shearwater for Fair Isle or the Northern Isles.

In connection with the regular occurrence of Sooty Shearwaters in Shetland waters in autumn we are publishing a most unusual photograph of one taken by Dennis Coutts from a fishing boat off Scalloway on 23rd August 1965. We are also including a remarkable shot of a milling mass of Fulmars taken on the same occasion.—Ed.)

#### Food of the Sparrowhawk on Speyside

Between March 1964 and April 1966, 89 food items taken by Sparrowhawks in nine separate ranges near Aviemore, Inverness-shire, were identified. Of these, 61 were collected at or near nests and 28 during the rest of the year, and there is therefore a bias towards food brought to the young, especially during the later stages of nesting. The 81 birds recorded were Chaffinch (27), Woodpigeon (9), Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redstart, Meadow Pipit (4 each), Blue Tit, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Yellowhammer (2 each), Skylark, Jackdaw, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Wren, Fieldfare, Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, Willow Warbler, Waxwing, Siskin, Reed Bunting (1 each), and unidentified gamebird (1), thrushes (2) and small passerines (6); there were also two short-tailed voles, a common shrew, a rabbit and four unidentified beetles.

The list of items given in the *Handbook* does not mention common shrew, Ring Ouzel, Wren or Waxwing, though Brüll includes Wren (3) and Waxwing (1) in a list of 731 items from ten Sparrowhawk territory-years in Germany (*Proc. I.C.B.P. Working Conf. on Birds of Prey and Owls*. Caen, 1964: 24-41).

Differences between the list and studies made in lowland Britain, such as the absence of House Sparrows, indicate differences in the local bird populations. However, the absence of two local woodland passerines—Crested Tit and Crossbill—may be noted. Crested Tits were abundant in the

study area throughout the period; Scottish Crossbills were scarce, but immigrants were common on passage in July and August in both years and Sparrowhawks were seen hunting them.

DOUGLAS N. WEIR.

### **Goshawk in Midlothian**

On 15th April 1966 we watched a Goshawk in Dens Cleuch at the east end of Threipmuir Reservoir for about three minutes before it flew off round Black Hill. It flew fast with long glides in straight flight, and when soaring it went quickly round in a small circle with tail fanned. The Red Grouse were flying about in great confusion.

At first we took it for a Buzzard but we soon realised that the silhouette of the wings was too short and the tail too long and narrow (though very broad when the bird was circling)—more like a large Sparrowhawk. It was much bigger than a nearby Carrion Crow. As it completed a circle and banked over in front of us at a height of about 150 ft we got a good view of the underparts. The breast was barred darker than the whitish belly. The underwing was dirty white (and could possibly have been barred) and there were no conspicuous carpal patches or dark tips. We did not see any marks on the tail as we were concentrating on the wings and breast. The wings were short and rounded and very broad, with fingered primaries. The head was small in silhouette and projected slightly in front of the wings. The upperparts seemed to be dark but we did not get a good view of them.

We are both absolutely sure that the bird was a Goshawk.

M. A. MACDONALD, R. L. SWANN.

### **Little Ringed Plovers in Scotland in autumn**

Martin Coath, Stewart Crooks and I were standing near the Gully on Fair Isle on 4th September 1965 when at the same instant I saw and heard a small plover flying over the hillside and MC recognised the call of a Little Ringed Plover. SC and I confirmed the call and I persuaded the bird to return and land on the road beside us by imitating its call. It was a young bird in good plumage. After moving to a wet shingly area it flew off and disappeared over the hill. I re-found it on the gravel airstrip and we mistnetted it there in the evening. It was taken to the observatory, where it was weighed, measured, ringed and released. The following description was noted:

Upperparts drab brown with feathers tipped and fringed sandy buff;

forehead buffish white; dark mark from lores through eye; white feathering round eye, and yellow orbital ring; dark brown band below white nuchal collar; underparts white with dark brown pectoral band, narrower and buffer in centre of breast; primaries dark brown with dark shafts, except for white shaft to second; rest of wing brown, with thin white tips to secondaries, greater and lesser coverts; underwing white; tail mainly brown, banded subterminally black, and tipped white, but outer pair of feathers mainly white; small bill black with orange-flesh base to lower mandible; legs and feet yellowish, tinged green at joints, and claws black; iris dark brown; weight 29.2 gm (1st-winter Ringed Plovers usually weigh 40 to 60 gm); wing 115 mm; tail 59 mm; bill 13 mm; tarsus 24 mm; primaries, secondaries, greater and primary coverts fresh, the rest of the plumage old, and tertials and scapulars very worn.

The bird was last seen on 7th September, and by this time it had been seen by many people, including G. Barnes, P. J. B. Slater and E. J. Wiseman.

ROY H. DENNIS.

On 17th September 1965 I was watching birds at a salt-water pool near Brough, Whalsay, Shetland, and noted six Ringed Plovers. It was not until the birds flew on my close approach that I was aware that one of them was making a different call from the soft *tloo-it* of the Ringed Plover, with which I was well acquainted. The call was a higher pitched *pew pew* or *tew tew*. After flushing the birds several times, hearing this call, and noting that one bird lacked the white wing-bar of the Ringed Plover, I was convinced that it was a Little Ringed Plover.

By this time the light was fading and I left the pool, to return unsuccessfully several times next day. However on 19th September the birds were back at the pool, and in bright conditions with 12x50 binoculars I watched the bird both in flight and at rest at distances of from 20 to 30 yards. It closely resembled a Ringed Plover except that it was a little smaller and slimmer and the back and wings were a little paler and more mousey coloured, and there was no white wing-bar. The leg colour could not be seen as the bird always rested among loose seaweed and mud, but the blackish bill and yellow ring round the eye were noted. I was left in no doubt that the bird was a Little Ringed Plover.

JOHN H. SIMPSON.

On 12th October 1965 at Aberlady Bay, East Lothian, with A. Leitch, D. W. R. Macdonald and P. C. Williams we saw what we identified as a Little Ringed Plover. We took notes on the spot. It was very like a Ringed Plover, brown above and white below, with a similar pattern of black breast-band, white collar, black eyestripe and dark crown, but in adverse lighting we could not see a white line above the forehead nor the leg colour. It had no wing-bar at all, and

its call was a high piping disyllabic *teu teu* quite unlike a Ringed Plover's call, with which we are all familiar.

We flushed it three times and also watched it on the ground. We all thought it was smaller than a Ringed Plover but we could not compare size as it kept on its own all the time. There was no doubt in our minds that it was a Little Ringed Plover.

M. MACDONALD, R. L. SWANN.

(These three records, which probably all refer to young birds, are the first reliable reports for Fair Isle, Shetland other than Fair Isle, and Forth. The species now breeds in the north of England, yet there have been no Scottish records for well over 50 years (and then only two) apart from a slightly puzzling report of three adults in Skye on 3rd June 1949 (*Brit. Birds* 43: 131).—Ed.)

### Kentish Plover in Fife

At 8 p.m. on 21st April 1966 with 8x40 binoculars we watched a Kentish Plover in Elie Bay for about five minutes at distances of from 10 to 25 yards. The evening sun was behind us as it fed at low tide near rocks on the sandy shore.

The bird was particularly tame. It resembled a Ringed Plover but we immediately noticed that it was slightly smaller and less sturdy, being a slighter bird with a different head pattern and a much greyer brown back. We did not hear it call, but examined it carefully and noted the following points before it flew off behind us and disappeared into the sun:

Crown and nape same grey-brown as back, with no black stripe on forehead separating crown from white above bill; black eyestripe bordered white above and white below; no pectoral band, but smudge on either side of upper breast; underparts white; light wing-bar visible in flight; centre of tail and rump slightly darker than back, and sides of tail white (more than just outer feathers); bill black and less sturdy than Ringed Plover's; legs black.

EDWARD HUTCHISON, J. J. C. HARDEY.

(The only previous Scottish records are of single birds at Fair Isle on 14th May 1949 (*Scot. Nat.* 1950: 24) and in Aberdeenshire on 3rd and 4th May 1962 (*Scot. Birds* 2: 246).—Ed.)

### Dowitcher in Shetland

On 20th October 1965 I found a bird feeding at the edge of a small brackish loch immediately behind the beach at Symbister, Whalsay. With 12x50 binoculars I watched it at

ranges down to 30 yards both in flight and at rest and was in no doubt that it was a Dowitcher.

It alternated between the loch and the open seashore when flushed, and fed along the shoreline and among seaweed with a quick stabbing motion of the long bill. It was about the same size as a Snipe and its flight was similar but a little more direct. The neck seemed to be drawn in to the body and the bill (about the length of a Snipe's) was carried at a downward angle. The legs were not seen to extend beyond the tail in flight, and no call was heard. When it settled it dropped very suddenly.

The head, neck, upper back and wings were greyish brown and the underparts whitish. A prominent white rump extended well up the back. The bill was brownish but the colour of the legs was not seen clearly.

On 7th November it was feeding on the shoreline but flew away when flushed and was not found again. This is the second record for Shetland, one having been seen on Unst on 23rd and 24th May 1964 (*Scot. Birds* 3: 254).

JOHN H. SIMPSON.

### Great Snipe on Fair Isle

At 1730 hrs GMT on 1st May 1965 we were walking across marshy ground between Kennaby and Quoy at the south end of Fair Isle. From one of the small ditches we flushed a Great Snipe which flew off a short distance and landed in another ditch. We saw it in flight three more times before it disappeared behind a hill. It probably landed in a marsh there, but we could not find it again.

The flight was not erratic like a Snipe and it did not fly far before landing—like a Jack Snipe. When flying a longer distance it resembled a small Woodcock, flying in a heavier and slower manner than a Snipe, low to the ground and with the bill pointing obviously downwards. It did not call.

The plumage was generally similar to Snipe but the upperparts were darker, with the pale stripes appearing narrower, like a Jack Snipe. When it landed we noted that the wing coverts were pale, forming a greyish patch on the wings. The underparts were white, but the flanks and sides of the body were heavily barred dark brown, much darker and more noticeable than on a Snipe. The tail appeared slightly longer and there was some white on the outer feathers but this was not so noticeable as we expected. Bill and legs were similar to a Snipe's, although the bill appeared relatively shorter.

On 27th September 1965 EJW flushed another Great Snipe

from the same marshes. As it rose the bird gave two low soft grunting notes. The flight, size and plumage were similar to the spring bird, and these points were confirmed when the bird was flushed for a second time from a patch of potatoes at Busta. Finally it flew off low over the hill and was not seen again.

These are the fourth and fifth records for Fair Isle since 1948, the other three all being in autumn. There are two old spring records—5th and 15th May.

R. H. DENNIS, E. J. WISEMAN.

### Probable breeding of Wood Sandpiper in Perthshire

On 11th June 1966, when visiting a hill loch in the North Perthshire division of Tay, I observed a small wader which I identified as a Wood Sandpiper. It was first seen in flight, when the white rump and the legs projecting beyond the tail were most noticeable. When next seen it was in song flight over the loch. The song, although somewhat obscured by the calls of gulls, was noted as a series of short notes on the same pitch. The bird was later located on a patch of peaty mud near the shore where it allowed approach to within 20 yards. It had to be actively flushed to permit examination of the tail pattern, when it rose silently and pitched again a short distance away.

A second visit was made during the first week of July and on this occasion two birds were seen. Both behaved in an agitated manner, one bird 'chipping' almost continuously and making short flights overhead while my companions and I were in one particular area of heather and peat hags. The second bird made only two brief appearances during which it too chipped anxiously. About an hour was spent searching for the chicks which I supposed to be in the vicinity but we were unable to find them in the very broken terrain.

The Wood Sandpiper has not been recorded previously in North Perthshire.

VALERIE M. THOM.

(In addition to the sites in Sutherland (*Scot. Birds* 3: 196, 425 etc.) there is at least one other locality in Scotland where this species is almost certainly breeding.—Ed.)

### A big flock of Little Stints

At 4.30 p.m. on 21st August 1965 I was watching Dunlin on the beach at Dornoch, Sutherland, when another flock of birds came ashore from the northeast. I was surprised to be

allowed to walk right into the middle of the flock as the birds ran busily past on either side feeding round my feet and cheeping like a flock of domestic chickens. Though I waved and shouted they took no notice.

The average of three counts was 230, and every bird was a Little Stint. The birds were compared with the Dunlin a little way away and detailed notes were made. After about five minutes they rose unhurriedly in wisps of 10 or 15 and streamed across the Dornoch Firth in the direction of Morrich Moor.

JAMES D. OLIVER.

(This exceptionally large flock, apparently newly arrived, may be compared with one of over 100 birds at Findhorn Bay from 18th September 1960 (1: 333). More Little Stints than usual were recorded in autumn 1965, a few of them just after this big flock was noted in Sutherland (3: 426).—Ed.)

#### Temminck's and Little Stints in East Lothian in spring

On 15th May 1966 my wife and I were walking along the edge of the saltings at Aberlady Bay Nature Reserve when we came on a stint-sized wader which appeared to be about half the size of nearby Ringed Plovers. Our attention was first attracted by a sort of twittering chatter—almost a song—as it sprang away from us and beat erratically around over the grass. It returned to the edge of the saltings and, although very nervous and erect at first, settled to feed very rapidly about 25 yards away, where we were able to watch it with the sun behind us. There were many people all over the reserves and the area where we saw the bird was perhaps the quietest part that was not just sand.

We flushed the bird three or four times and each time its note was the same almost song-like chatter with no single notes in it. In the air it was difficult to follow but it showed a wing-bar similar to a Dunlin's and clear areas of white on each side of the rump and tail coverts, though we could not see for certain whether the white extended to the outer tail feathers. The flanks and belly were pure white. Although the back showed brown in flight, on the ground the bird's general colour was slate-grey, with slate-grey wing coverts and a sort of dappled slate-grey over face and breast; there was a faint eyestripe. The bill was short and the legs seemed rather short too. They were not black but a brownish yellow, not easy to define against the ground.

On these points—especially the voice and leg colour—I identified the bird as a Temminck's Stint.

J. A. D. HOPE.

(By an awkward coincidence a Little Stint was seen in the same general area on 21st May by R. W. J. Smith. However, the fact that it was not the same bird is confirmed by its feeding below high water mark with Ringed Plovers and Dunlin (instead of more or less on its own at the edge of the saltings), by its silence, and by its plumage. It had a muddy brown mantle, mottled buff and black, evidently breeding plumage; prominent V on back; Dunlin-type tail pattern; brown head suffused pink, with russet on sides of neck and breast; light colour on throat, extending to breast and belly, but narrowing on neck; and apparently black legs. It was watched for half an hour but in the flock it could not be approached nearer than 100 yards. The observers studied each other's notes and are convinced that they did not see each other's bird.

This is the first record of a Temminck's Stint in East Lothian in spring though there are three autumn records (*Scot. Nat.* 1949: 126; 1954: 44; *Scot. Birds* 4: 88).

We have been asked why the last of these birds got so much more space in a recent issue than one shot at Islesteps (*Scot. Birds* 4: 111)—a first record for Solway and the latest autumn record for Scotland by a full seven weeks. Partly this arose from the chance that space was short when the Solway bird was reported, the East Lothian record being already set in type, but equally there is more that can be said about a live bird than a dead one and a bigger problem in establishing its identity. The Solway bird has been examined by C. E. Palmar, Curator of Natural History of Glasgow's Art Galleries and Museum at Kelvingrove, where the skin now is, and by two of the editors. It should be added that Islesteps, although close to Dumfries, is in Kirkcudbrightshire.—Ed.)

#### Cream-coloured Courser in East Lothian

On 9th October 1965, Douglas Baty, and Ian and Tom Robertson, independently discovered a strange bird frequenting the dry sand and dunes above the highwater mark at Aberlady Bay, between the sand-spit and Gullane Point. Baty, who had a copy of the *Field Guide* with him, identified it as a Cream-coloured Courser. He telephoned the Scottish Centre from Aberlady village and asked for someone to come and confirm his identification. George and Irene Waterston immediately left Edinburgh by car, joined Baty at the Timber Bridge, and were taken to the area to find P. W. G. Gunn and others watching the courser. There was little difficulty in confirming the identification of this strikingly distinctive bird.

Apart from its head markings it was a uniform light fawn



colour, darker above and paler below, paling to white towards the vent. There was a black stripe running back from the dark eye and a white stripe above it, both curving down to meet at the nape in clear-cut Vs; the crown was sandy at the front and grey at the back, shading to black in the point of the V. It was a plump bird (*Field Guide* says 'slim'), with long dirty-white legs. In size it appeared to be between Dunlin and Knot. In gait it resembled a Golden Plover—often taking short rapid runs and stopping abruptly to adopt a very erect posture (more upright than in the *Field Guide* plate). The bill was dark and rather short, with a downward curve to a somewhat sharp point. The tail was short with a narrow black band at the tip. Unlike plates in the *Handbook* and the *Field Guide* the black edges to the primaries were completely obscured by the buff covert feathers when the bird was on the ground; they were only seen when it bent forward to pick at the sand.

The whole appearance and colour of the bird seemed to change when it took flight, with black flashing from the underwings and the top-side primary feathers. It would flick suddenly to the ground, close its long pointed wings, and stand bolt upright. A. D. K. Ramsay noted that when a Redshank flew swiftly overhead it crouched in a cowering position, and it was then that one could appreciate the wonderful camouflage and its protective value from predators.

R. S. Baillie noted a feature unrecorded by anyone else. When the bird was in flight and the wings fully extended, he recorded "a white or nearly white stripe, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$ " broad, running across the full width of the wings from the carpal joint backwards between the secondaries and primaries. The stripe was not obvious to the naked eye, but through a powerful binocular at a range of approximately 12 yards the stripe was most conspicuous."

M. J. Everett heard it call once when flushed, completing the call before being properly airborne—"a quiet liquid *kwoo-ee*, rising on the second syllable." On another occasion A. K. J. B. Glasier heard "a soft melodious *too-li*, somewhat similar to a Ringed Plover."

As the bird showed little fear of observers and allowed them to approach to within three to ten yards, and as it was frequenting a nature reserve, it was decided to announce its presence and location in the columns of the *Scotsman* on 13th October, so as to give as many birdwatchers as possible an opportunity of seeing this rare species (see Editorial 3: 385). Hundreds of people made the journey to Aberlady, not only from different parts of Scotland but from as far away as the south of England. Many excellent views of it were obtained; and although some photographers were inclined

to harry it unnecessarily, it paid little attention to people and would continue to feed.

It kept mostly to the dry dunes, a habitat similar in many ways to its native deserts of North Africa and southern Asia. On one occasion however it was seen on the shore at the west end of Gullane Bay. It was last recorded at Aberlady on 21st October, having spent nearly a fortnight in the area.

DOUGLAS BATY, GEORGE WATERSTON.

(The only recognised Scottish record of the Cream-coloured Courser is of one shot near Lanark on 8th October 1868. A brief report of three seen in the same county on 10th October 1949 (*Glasgow Bird Bulletin* 2: 31), which the Scottish Bird Records Committee declined to accept without further corroboration (*Scot. Nat.* 1955: 102), is being looked at again.—Ed.)

#### Lesser Grey Shrikes in Orkney and Shetland

On 11th November 1962 I observed a Lesser Grey Shrike at Stennady, Finstown. When I first saw the bird it was perched on the TV aerial on the chimney. Subsequently it flew from place to place and perched on various trees in the garden. For a time it was on the topmost twig of a small tree about 15 feet high as I watched within 20 yards with 7x binoculars. Here I had a good opportunity of checking its size against a Robin which had occupied the same perch only seconds before. I got the impression of rather small size—body no bigger than a Corn Bunting's.

The head, including forehead, crown and nape, and the mantle were dull medium grey, slightly brownish; rather a broad blackish-brown patch through the eye, from the bill to and including the ear coverts, with practically no blackish feathers on the forehead above the bill; wings blackish-brown with a single conspicuous white bar seen at rest, and noted in flight as extending across the bases of the primaries only; tail same colour as wings, but outer feathers appeared mainly white and there were white tips to the others; underparts a soiled creamy colour; bill blackish; legs and feet dark; iris dark brown.

I am quite familiar with the Great Grey Shrike, having watched migrants on many occasions. This was definitely a smaller bird with a different wing pattern; and evidently a first-winter bird. There had been a spell of east to south-easterly weather and there was a considerable fall of other migrants, including Fieldfares, Redwings, Blackbirds and Goldcrests.

This seems to be the first record for Orkney, though details have recently been published of another, found dead in a

water barrel on North Ronaldsay in May 1965 (*Scot. Birds* 3: 420).

E. BALFOUR.

On 23rd September 1965 I was given a message that a grey shrike had been seen in the Sellafirth district of Yell. I went there and found the bird working along a fence close to the road, and I was able to watch it from the car at distances from 25 to 75 yards. The light was good, there was a light breeze, and I was using 10x43 binoculars.

The bird was behaving in typical shrike manner, perching for a time on the fence wires, and periodically flying, sometimes gliding, to the ground to pick up an insect. It rarely came back to the same place but usually moved on a few yards.

In May 1965 I had watched a Great Grey Shrike which staved in the east Yell area for over a week. It preferred the higher telegraph wires as a vantage point. Other differences were that the present bird looked smaller, sat in a more hunched attitude, did not appear to have such a long tail, and the first time it turned to face me I saw that it had a different head pattern, the black of the lores and ear coverts extending over the forehead and rather merging into the grey of the crown.

The wing and tail pattern were also clearly seen as the bird glided to the ground, and the single large white patch on the blackish wing and the white outer feathers on the dark tail were very obvious. Perhaps the bird was tired, for the wings were held rather drooped and the feathers, particularly round the head, were a bit fluffed up when the bird relaxed. I was left in no doubt that it was a Lesser Grey Shrike—either a female or a 1st-winter male.

**Description.** Blackish patch through eye, lores and ear coverts meeting over forehead which, seen closely, appeared mottled and rather merged with crown; crown, nape, back and scapulars blue-grey with brownish tinge on scapulars (but no pale edging apparent on scapulars); underparts creamy white, lighter on throat, neck, and possibly belly; wings dark brownish black with conspicuous white patch at base of primaries and narrow buff-brown edgings to secondaries and secondary coverts, the edging being wider and paler (but not white) on tips of secondaries; tail blackish with white outer feathers, the rounded tip showing less white than Great Grey Shrike; bill bluish black, almost horn at base; legs and feet blackish.

The bird was seen in the area until at least 30th September. There have been a number of records of Lesser Grey Shrikes on Fair Isle but the only other Shetland record is of one shot on Whalsay on 14th September 1929.

ROBERT J. TULLOCH.

### Woodchat Shrike in Shetland

On 3rd October 1965 at Gremista, Lerwick, I saw a bird which at first glance looked like a very pale female Red-backed Shrike (I have handled this species at Fair Isle) but with white at the base of the primaries. From my car I was able to watch it in sunlight with 10x50 binoculars from as close as 20 feet.

It sat on fence posts by a cornfield and continually watched the road for flies. On a post, or on the wire, it twitched its tail from side to side, flew down to the ground for a brief second and flew back to the fence, always working along it without returning to the same place. I watched and followed in the car very carefully for about 45 minutes and was successful in taking a number of photographs using an 800 mm lens. From a picture of the bird on the fence and another showing the wing pattern in flight R. H. Dennis identified the bird as an immature Woodchat Shrike.

It was a pale sand colour all over, palest on breast, very slightly darker on back, and primaries and tail a little darker still; these latter feathers all with paler warmer edging; most noticeable feature a near white wing flash at base of primaries; shoulder patch not very obviously pale though showing on photograph; bill blackish, creamy at base of upper mandible; eyes and legs very dark.

I saw the bird again in the same place two days later for a further 30 minutes.

DENNIS COUTTS.

### Current Notes

Compiled by P. J. B. SLATER

(Key to initials of observers : D. R. Anderson, D. G. Andrew, R. St. J. Andrew, R. H. Appleby, R. S. Baillie, W. Bain, I. V. Balfour-Paul, J. Ballantyne (JBt), Miss P. G. Baxter, Dr J. Berry (JBy), H. Boase, T. Boyd, A. W. Brodie, K. Brown, J. Bruce (JBc), R. J. Buxton, A. Campbell (ACl), R. Campbell, R. N. Campbell, M. Carins, P. Clark (PCk), Sir C. G. Connell, Mrs P. Coull (PCl), D. Coutts, A. Cowieson (ACn), H. G. Cree, G. M. Crichton, Miss M. H. E. Cuninghame, W. A. J. Cunningham, T. Delancy, R. H. Dennis, G. Dick, R. C. Dickson, H. E. M. Dott, Hon H. Douglas-Home, J. Dunbar, Mrs J. P. D. Dunlop, J. M. Dunn, J. N. Dymond, W. M. M. Eddie, J. Edelsten, N. Elkins, M. J. Everett, Miss W. U. Flower, H. A. Ford, M. Forrester, R. W. Forrester, Mrs M. Gear, I. Gibson, K. Goodchild, Mrs S. Goold, J. Goss-Custard, Mrs J. A. R. Grant, T. Grieve, J. S. Groome, Mrs E. Hamilton (EHm), J. J. C. Hardey, I. A. D. Hope, R. B. Hughes, D. C. Hulme, E. N. Hunter, E. Hutchison (EHt), P. F. James, R. A. Jeffrey, R. Job, D. Joy, Miss E. M. Kerr, Miss H. Knight, D. Law (DLw), D. Lea (DLa), A. L. A. Leslie, J. A. Love, I. H. J. Lyster, A. Macdonald (AMcD), D. Macdonald, M. A. Macdonald, Mrs M. K. Macduff-Duncan, I. M. MacLean, J. Macleod,

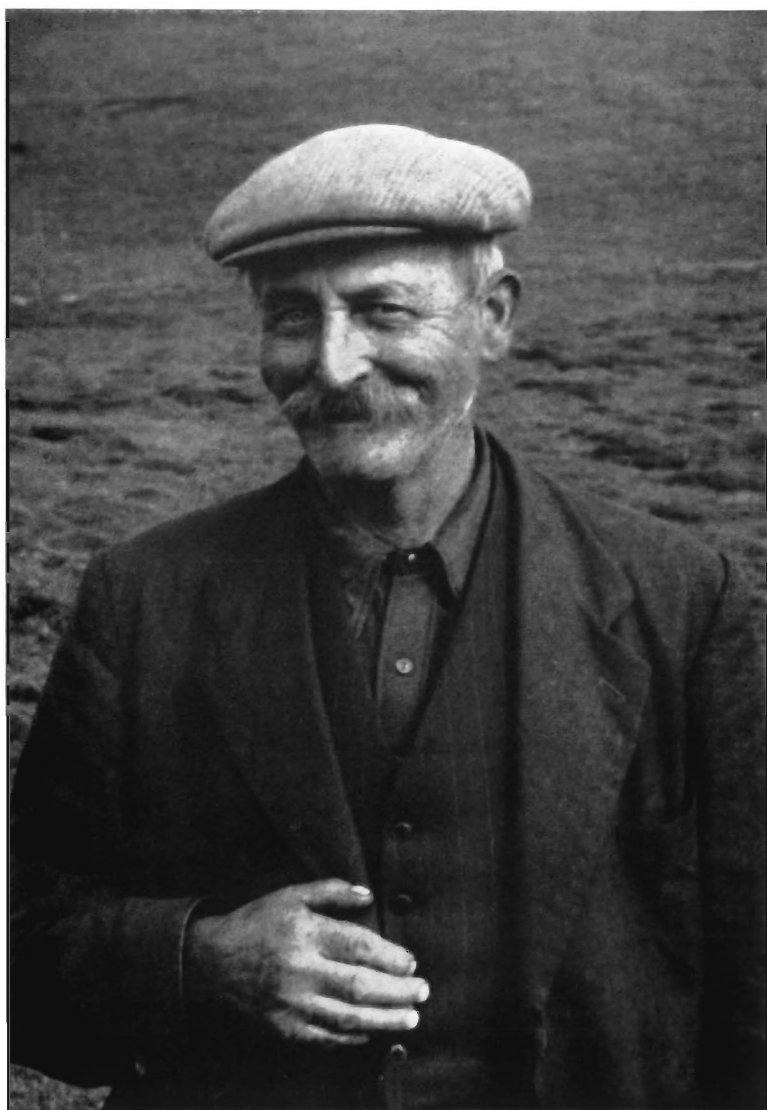


PLATE 25. George Stout of Field (see p. 255).

*Photograph by Angela Davis*

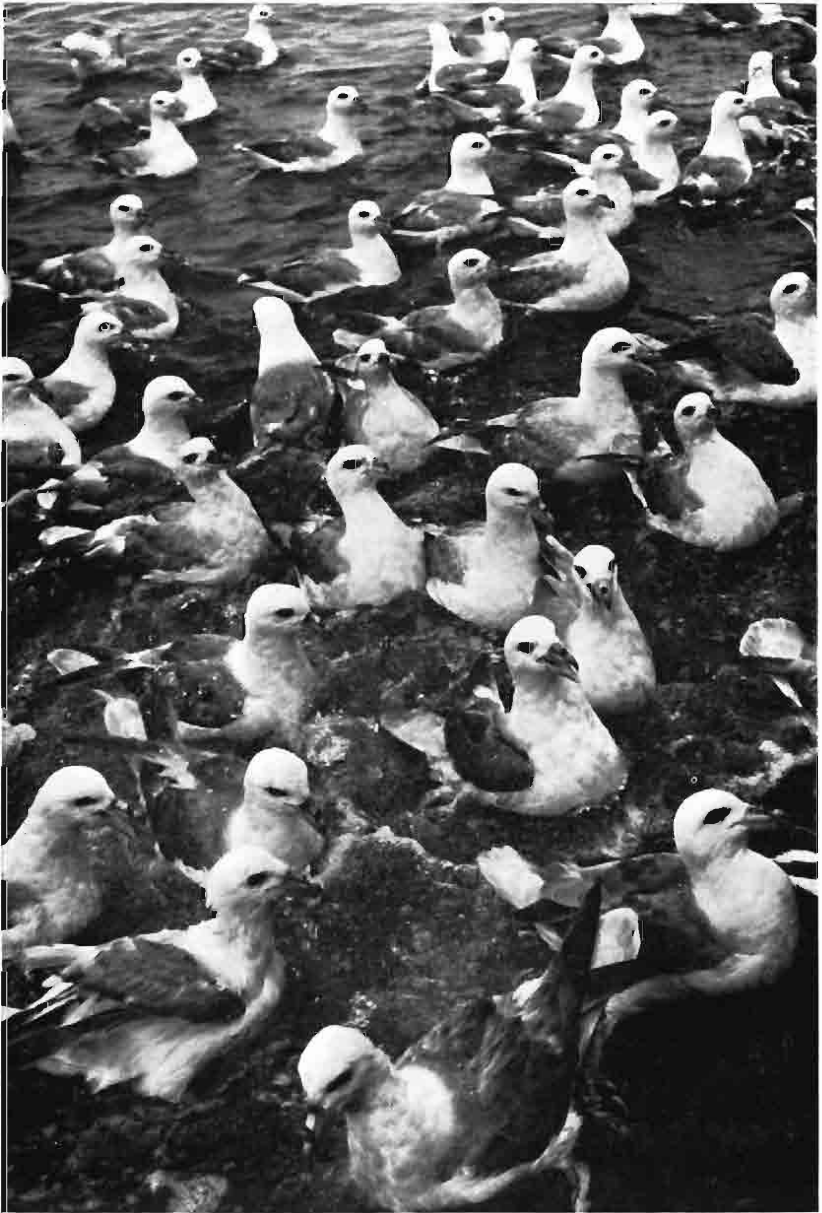


PLATE 26. Part of a milling mass of some 500 Fulmars jostling round a fishing boat at the Burra Haaf fishing grounds on the west coast of Shetland on 23rd August 1965.

*Photograph by Dennis Coutts*



PLATE 27. Sooty Shearwater photographed from a fishing boat at the Barra Haaf, six miles off the west coast of Shetland, on 25rd August 1965. Numbers of these birds had been seen all summer in the area and they are regular in autumn in Shetland waters (see p. 223).

*Photograph by Dennis Coultis*

A. T. Macmillan, Mrs E. H. L. Macmillan, G. McMurdo, A. Malcolm (AMm), M. B. Malcolm, J. R. Mather, W. Matheson (WMn), Prof. M. F. M. Meiklejohn, J. K. R. Melrose, E. Mercer, Lady A. Morrison-Low, C. M. Morrison, N. Morrison, W. M. Morrison, W. Moss (WMs), K. R. Munro, C. C. I. Murdoch, J. B. Murray, W. Murray (WMy), D. J. Norden, W. Ogilvy, D. W. Oliver, J. S. Oliver, C. E. Palmer, T. Paterson, G. L. A. Patrick, Prof. R. W. Pickford, N. Picozzi, R. K. Pollock, W. Porteous, J. Potter, A. D. K. Ramsay, C. P. Rawcliffe, G. A. Richards, Dr M. Rusk, W. Russell, P. W. Sandeman, J. H. Simpson, M. Sinclair, A. J. Smith, Mrs E. M. Smith, R. T. Smith, R. W. J. Smith, Dr T. C. Smout, R. Spencer, D. Stalker, J. K. Stanford, D. M. Stark, A. I. Stewart, R. W. Summers, J. Swan, R. L. Swann, C. Tait, I. Taylor, J. W. Taylor, Miss V. M. Thom, R. B. Tozer, R. J. Tulloch, Mrs P. V. Upton, L. A. Urquhart, K. Walker, F. D. E. Walls, G. Waterston, A. D. Watson, J. Watt, Hon. D. N. Weir, T. Weir, G. T. White, W. H. Wild, D. E. Williams, Miss H. A. Wright, W. Wyper, J. G. Young, B. Zonfrillo.

Unless otherwise stated, January to July dates refer to 1966 and all others to 1965.)

Because there was not any room in the last number for Current Notes, the period covered here is about twice as long as usual. In order to keep the article to a both writable and readable length it has therefore been necessary to select items for inclusion more rigorously than normal. One way in which contributors can help to lighten the task of abstracting useful points from their notes is by listing the species they have seen in the Wetmore order, as used here, and it would be helpful if those who are not in the habit of doing so would bear this in mind. Almost everyone now sends their notes in time to reach the editor before the end of each quarter. As may be imagined, this is a great help. Notes from over 150 observers are given in detail in Current Notes in this issue.

### *Distribution*

This section is restricted to observations made since 1st November 1965—older records are given later except where relevant to more recent topics.

**Black-throated Divers** have previously been noted wintering in Loch Torridon, Wester Ross (3: 367), but 17 seen there on 10th January is a large count (ENH). An exceptional event on the Water of Leith at Currie, Midlothian, from 3rd to 8th January was the occurrence of a **Great Northern Diver** which was diving in the river and apparently uninjured (DEW). Inland reports of single **Red-throated Divers** are of a badly oiled bird found dead at Duns, Berwickshire, on 4th February (ACn); one seen at the Endrick Mouth, Stirling/Dunbartonshire, on 23rd January and subsequently found dead (ACI, JMD); and one which had been dead for about a month, found at Gladhouse, Midlothian, on 15th May (DGA).

The return of **Great Crested Grebes** to the Moorfoot lochs



took place suddenly about 13th March when four were at Gladhouse and one at Portmore, Peeblesshire (DGA). The picture at Morton Lochs, Fife, is the same, with singles on 30th January and 26th February, but seven on 19th March. As last year (3: 367), three pairs bred (RJ).

Although there are many records of **Red-necked Grebes** on the south side of the Forth, one seen at Elie, Fife, on 21st April is the only one reported elsewhere (JJCH, EHT). Notable for their unusual choice of habitat are single **Slavonian Grebes** seen on the River Tyne at Tynninghame, East Lothian, on 9th January (CT), and in Leith Docks on 10th (CPR). Four **Black-necked Grebes** on Loch Ryan at Stranraer, Wigtownshire, on 11th March is a high count: there had been one there with four Slavonians on 26th January (GAR). Two **Black-necked Grebes** in summer plumage were at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 26th March (MAM, RLS); inland records of this species are of one at Loch Spiggie, Shetland, on 20th March (DC, DJ); and another, the first recorded in Roxburghshire, at Horselaw Loch, Yetholm, on 19th and 20th March (RSB). The presence of two **Little Grebes** at Morton Lochs on 13th February and one on 26th indicates an early return to this breeding site (RJ).

A **Leach's Petrel** found dead at Newcastleton, Roxburghshire, on about 4th March was nearly 20 miles from the sea (TG per IHJL). A **Storm Petrel** was seen in a strong SE wind at Elie Ness, Fife, on 5th April (RBH); and four were recorded in flat calm conditions between Ayr and Arran on 17th June (GAR). **Fulmars** seen away from the sea have been singles at Fairmilehead, Edinburgh, on 24th April and 6th June (HAF); one flying over Clairinch, Loch Lomond, in Stirlingshire on 5th June (CEP); and at Inverness on 3rd May one 2 miles from the sea in very direct flight NE over the outskirts of the town (as if from the Great Glen), one next day at the same place heading SW, and one a few minutes later heading NE (WMM).

Seabirds and fishing boats congregated in large numbers in the Moray Firth during the early part of the year to share the spoils of a particularly rich herring and sprat fishery. Apart from thousands of gulls, peak counts of **Gannets** were of 600 in Banff Bay on 24th January (JE); 700 off Inverness on 26th February (RHD); the remarkable total of at least 1600 off Longman Bay, Inverness, on 26th March, and still 500 there on 10th April (WMM).

Two breeding colonies of **Hérons** have been found which do not appear to have been reported previously (see *Bird Study* 5: 90). Nine birds were present at Brucefield estate, Fife, in early April and two nests were found (RC); and there were at least six pairs at a heronry at Loch Meurach, Harris.

on 2nd April. This colony has apparently been in existence for at least five years (per NE).

A **Flamingo**, present at Tynninghame for about three weeks from 9th May, was an immature of the Chilean race as it had grey legs and pink 'knees'; it is therefore safe to assume that it was an escape (RB, MJE, AMcD).

A drake **Garganey** was seen flying in to Paisley Moss, Renfrewshire, on the evening of 11th May (IG). There are various records of **Gadwall**:

- Balranald Marsh, N. Uist—4 pairs on 7 Jan (DLA, GW).
- Moray Firth, at Inverness—1 on 12 Feb (RH1).
- Edzell, Angus—2 on 25 Jan (RWP).
- Kennetpans, Clackmannan—2 on 13 Feb (TP).
- Eden estuary, Fife—2 on 27 Mar and 29 May (CT).
- Morton Lochs, Fife—2 on 19 Mar; male on 15 and 29 May (JD, RJ).
- Cupar, Fife—1 pair on 29 May (JD).
- Duddingston, Edinburgh—1 pair on 18 Apr (DRA).
- St Margaret's Loch, Edinburgh—male on 12 Feb (CT).
- Aberlady, E. Lothian—1 on 22 Jan, 5 Feb, 12 Feb and 14 Apr (JSO, ADKR, CT).
- Moorfoot reservoirs—1 between 17 Oct and 13 Feb (DGA).

The most noteworthy reports of **Pintail** are from the isles: in Shetland there was one on Fetlar on 17th January and 13th April (WO) and eight birds at Yell on 27th April (RJT). Two males were seen at Stornoway, Lewis, on 24th May (WAJC, WMn).

High counts of **Scaup** are of 2500 in St Andrews Bay, Fife, on 8th January (TCS), and 250 at Invergordon, Easter Ross, on 15th (RHD). Inland, 43 at Duddingston on 21st November is an exceptional number—their presence was no doubt due to strong easterly winds prevalent at the time (DGA). In Inverness-shire three males and a female were on Loch Garten from 2nd to 4th May (MJE, GW), and there was a male at Loch Ruthven on 25th (MJE, CCIM). June records are of a pair at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 19th (WMME), and a male at Loch Kinnardochy, Perthshire, for at least a fortnight from 12th (VMT).

Duck which winter inland are particularly susceptible to cold weather and their numbers are liable to fluctuate erratically. On 5th December, when Loch Leven was icebound, there were 300 **Tufted Duck** and 400 **Pochard**, as well as 500 **Mallard**, on the sea off Leven, Fife (DGA, RStJA). Numbers of **Pochard** at Duddingston stood at 2700 on 21st November—an early date for so large a count. By 8th January they had fallen to under 400 although there was no ice at the time, but by 8th February there were 4000 on the loch (DGA). At Kilconquhar Loch, Fife, the situation seems to have been the reverse, with a peak of 2100, about twice the normal, on 16th January (DWO).

Winter peaks of **Goldeneye** were of about 950 at Invergordon on 15th January; about 450 at Inverness on 11th January (RHD); and 650 which came in to roost at Kilconquhar on 31st March (DWO). A bird answering the description of the aberrant Goldeneye described previously (3: 409) was seen at Monikie reservoir, Angus, on 16th April in the company of four normal Goldeneye with which it was identical in every respect except plumage (CMM). Single Goldeneye lingering into the summer were at Skinflats, East Stirlingshire, on 19th June (IT), and Cramond, West Lothian, on 28th May and 3rd July (TCS).

Two **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen off Ayr on 22nd December (GAR). Inland occurrences have been of one at Gladhouse on 14th November (DGA); one at Gartmorn Dam, Clackmannanshire, on 12th and 13th March (TP); a pair on Lindores Loch, Fife, from 5th to 30th March (JW); and a male which stayed on Kilconquhar Loch from 9th February to 12th May (DWO). A late female was at Fair Isle, Shetland, between 11th and 27th June (RHD).

A summer record of **Velvet Scoter** is of three off the east shore at Tentsmuir, Fife, on 25th June (RJ). There were about 6000 **Common Scoters** in St Andrews Bay on 8th January (TCS), and in Stirlingshire, a pair was seen flying past Inchcailliach, Loch Lomond, on 21st May (CEP). Two **Eiders**, the first for five years in the observer's experience, were seen off Cramond Island on 24th April. On 3rd July a female with four small young was seen nearby at Dalmeny, West Lothian (TCS).

Small numbers of **Goosanders** are seen throughout Scotland outside the breeding season, but the largest wintering concentration is on the Beaully Firth, where a maximum of 560 was recorded on 28th December (RHD).

The following are reports of wintering **Smew**, many of which tie up with those given previously (4: 107) (all except the Shetland bird were red-heads):

Clickimin, Shetland—ad ♂ from 9 Mar to about 10 Apr (DC, RHD, WP, RJT).

Strathbeg, Aberdeen—1 on 13 Mar (JE).

Stormont Loch, Perth—1 on 16 Apr (VMT).

Endrick Mouth—1 on 16 Jan (RWF).

Tullibody, Clackmannan—1 on 6 Mar (TP).

Barr and Castle Semple Lochs, Renfrew—at least 4 on 13 Feb (JND, WHW); 1 on 6 and 29 Mar (RAJ).

Loch Libo, Renfrew—1 on 6 Jan (GAR).

Rowbank Reservoir, Renfrew—3 on 23 Jan (RWF); 1 on 20-21 Mar and 1 Apr (HGC, MJE, RAJ).

Roseberry Reservoir, Midlothian—3 on various dates between 12 Dec and 13 Mar (DGA).

Horsclaw Loch, Roxburgh—1 on 19-20 Mar (RSB).

There are also two summer records of this species: a male seen in Loch Eriboll on 11th June is the first record of a Smew in Sutherland (RJB), and a very late red-head was at Kilconquhar on 25th June (DWO).

Eleven **White-fronted Geese**, suspected of being European, flew in to Gladhouse on 14th November (DGA). Counts of 55 on 9th January and 84 on 16th at the Moor of Genoch are large, even for the Greenland race, in Wigtownshire (RCD). Birds of undetermined race outside their normal wintering areas have been three at Loch Spiggie, Shetland, on 13th March (DC, RHD); 11 at Loch Heilen, Caithness, on 16th January (KG); one near Methven, Perthshire, on 31st January (VMT); and three flying over Tayfield, Fife, on 26th February (JBy). The largest flock of **Bean Geese** to be reported from the Castle Douglas area of Kirkcudbrightshire was of 70 birds seen on 20th February (JND). 102 **Pink-footed Geese** were at Loch Garten on 2nd May—a late date for such numbers (MJE).

A **Snow Goose**, which has previously been reported (4: 108), probably wintered in the area of Strathbeg, Aberdeenshire, being seen there on various dates up to 13th March and at Meikle Loch on 7th April (HEMD, JE). Six birds, two of which bore rings, were at Wester Wooden Loch, Roxburghshire, from 31st March to 4th April (HD-H, AJS). Single blue-phase **Lesser Snow Geese** have been seen at Morton, near Tayport, Fife, on 26th February (JBy), and with Pinkfeet near Methven, Perthshire, on 31st January and 4th February (VMT).

There are a number of reports of Pale-bellied **Brent Geese** in the Forth area during February and March. Largest counts were of 27 going south at Fife Ness on 13th February (PGB), and 20 at Tynninghame on 27th (TB, EMS, RWJS). Two of this race and one Dark-bellied bird stayed at Eyebroughty, East Lothian, from 13th March to 3rd April (RSB). The occurrences of 28 **Barnacle Geese** at Dounreay, Caithness, on 26th January (EM), and two at Loch Strathbeg on 14th April (HEMD), are the most unusual for this species.

Uncertainty with regard to the feral status of the **Canada Goose** in different areas makes it difficult to assess the records which are frequently sent in. There are, for instance, few reports for Wigtownshire but the species was introduced there in 1963 and has bred in the county each year since (JGY). A pair was discovered with a nest at Morton Lochs, Fife, on 23rd April (DWO).

Large concentrations of **Whooper Swans** during the winter were of 144 at Loch Spiggie, Shetland, on 31st October (MC); 391 at Invergordon on 15th January (RHD); and 267 near Tullibody on 12th December (TP). Two at Forfar Loch, Angus,

on 25th April were still there on 28th June (HB, GMC). Other late birds were two by Kinloch Rannoch at Dunalastair, Perthshire, on 13th May and one, which was probably injured, at Kingoodie in the same county between 2nd and 18th June (HB). The only report of **Bewick's Swan** is of an adult and an immature on Tiree on 18th April (JADH).

In Shetland, where **Buzzards** are rare, single birds were on Unst on 1st and 5th May (MS), and on Fair Isle on 14th and 15th April and on 24th May (RHD). Also noteworthy is one seen near Yetholm, Roxburghshire, on 12th May (RSB). A **Honey Buzzard** was at Fair Isle on 21st May (RHD). A **Marsh Harrier** seen briefly at Gartocharn, Dunbartonshire, on 9th June (TW), was doubtless the same bird as was seen flying over the Endrick Mouth on 12th June, and again on 3rd July (MF, DS). An immature was present at Tynninghame on 10th May (MJE, IHJL). There being few published records of **Hen Harriers** in Kincardineshire, it is worth noting that a brown bird was seen in the Glenbervie area several times in early January (WB).

Most readers will already be aware of the misfortune which befell the two pairs of **Ospreys** breeding on Speyside this year. A storm-force wind on 28th April blew down both nests: the one at Loch Garten had contained three eggs, and the remains of at least one egg were found at the other site (DNW). The following are reports of Ospreys seen outside Speyside:

Yell—1 on 7 Jun (RJT).

Whalsay, Shetland—1 on 8 Apr (JHS).

Fair Isle—1 on 25-26 Apr; 1 on 28 May (RHD).

River Earn, Perth—1 near Forteviot on 16 Apr (VMT); 1 at Dalrooch, near Dunning, on 29 May (PCK).

Kilconquhar—1 on 25 Jun (DWO).

Isle of May—1 going S on 14 May (DWO).

Eyebroughy—1 going W on 29 May (RSB).

Loch Ken, Kirkcudbright—1 on 1 May (LAU, ADW).

Notes continue to come in of the poor breeding success of birds of prey, but there is a glimmer of hope in the fact that **Peregrines** are doing better on Speyside (DNW). In Shetland, however, "after a promising early season, it is the same old story of a seeming loss of interest and departure from the eyries, with no hatching success" (RJT).

**Quail** heard calling have been one near Paisley Moss on 21st May (IG, RAJ); one near Gifford on 27th May (per AMcD); and one on Fair Isle on 11th June (RHD). A **Spotted Crane** was found dead at Weisdale in Shetland on 9th April (RJT). The only April record of **Corncrake** is of one at Fair Isle on 10th (RHD).

Nine **Oystercatchers** by the River Isla at Coupar Angus,

Perthshire, on 30th January were inland on a very early date (VMT). A high count of **Grey Plover** for Aberlady is of about 80 seen there on 6th March (MJE, GLAP). An early **Dotterel** was seen on Tiree, Argyllshire, on 15th April (JADH), and two more migrating birds were at Machrihanish in the same county on 14th May (PGB). An odd record of a **Turnstone** is of one in summer plumage at Barr Loch on 14th May (LAU).

Highest numbers of **Whimbrel** on passage were on 8th May when there were at least 16 at Tynninghame (HAF), and 21 at the Endrick Mouth (RWF).

**Black-tailed Godwits** have been seen at the following places:

- Fair Isle—1 in summer plumage on 25 May (RHD).
- Dornoch Point, Sutherland—4 on 28 Apr (DM).
- Montrose Basin—9 on 5 May; 1 on 20 May (GMC).
- Near Errol, Perth—2 on flooded grassland on 11 Apr (VMT).
- Eden Estuary—7 on 23 Apr (DWO).
- Seafield, Midlothian—2 on 22 Jan and 5 Mar (CT).
- Eaglesham, Renfrew—1 in summer plumage on 25 Apr (LAU).
- Luce Bay, Wigtown—10 on 1 May (GM, JGY).

Apart from several seen at Fair Isle between 7th May and 9th June (RHD), single **Green Sandpipers** at Summerston, Glasgow, on 14th April (WR), and Lentrán, Beaully Firth, on 3rd June (JAL, WMM), are the only ones reported. Passage of **Wood Sandpipers** at Fair Isle took place between 23rd May and 18th June (RHD). Further south, one was calling over a marsh near Kilconquhar on 28th April (DWO); single birds were at Paisley Moss, Renfrewshire, on 12th May and 19th June (IG, RAJ), and on the Dunbartonshire side of the Endrick Mouth on 28th May (DS).

The earliest report of **Common Sandpiper** is of four at the Endrick Mouth on 12th April (WR). There are a number of records in the south during the following week, but the first birds at Fair Isle and in Lewis were not until 2nd May (RHD, JM).

Single **Spotted Redshanks** were at Montrose Basin on 16th January (JD); Paisley Moss on 30th April (IG); and Luce Bay on 1st May (GM, JGY). Two were seen at Dornoch Point on 24th April (DM), and late birds in summer plumage were singles at Loch Dornal, Wigtownshire (RTS, JS, JGY), and at Fair Isle (RHD), on 19th June.

An odd date for a **Greenshank** so far north is 24th December, when one was seen at Fort William, Inverness-shire (RHD). At least two were back at Gairloch, Wester Ross, on 30th March (ENH). A late migrant was at the Endrick Mouth on 11th June (HGC, DLw).

Single **Ruff** seen have been one at Tynninghame on 27th March (TB, RWJS), and a male at Elie, Fife, on 4th January

(DWO). There were seven coming into summer plumage at Paisley Moss on 30th April (IG, RAJ); 11, including several sparring males, at Aberlady on 4th March (MFMM); and nine at Skinflats on 12th and 19th March (GD, JP, IT). Also at Skinflats a male was present between 7th and 10th May (IT).

Two **Avocets** were seen on the bank of a freshwater loch in Whalsay on 16th May (JHS). **Phalaropes** in winter plumage are tantalisingly difficult to identify with certainty: one such was at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 2nd and 3rd April (IVB-P, JSO).

Winter **Great Skuas** are unusual: one was off Whalsay on 13th January (per JHS); one was seen flying north at Fife Ness on 20th February (PGB); another was with gulls on the Moor of Genoch, Wigtownshire, on 26th February (RCD); and a fourth record is of one found dead at Turnberry, Ayrshire, on 15th March (GAR). Two **Long-tailed Skuas** were seen near Whalsay on 25th May (JBc).

Ten **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Barassie, Ayrshire, on 21st February is a good number even for an area where this species winters (GAR). Two were at Tweedsmuir, Peeblesshire, on 4th February (MJE, GW); one at Paisley Moss on 28th February (IG); and the first to return to Shetland was seen on Fetlar on 15th March (RJT). A pair of **Herring Gulls** seen at a nest on a mud island in Loch Broom at Ballinluig on 7th June are apparently the first recorded breeding in North Perthshire since 1884 (VMT).

A first-winter **Glaucous Gull** was seen at Tentsmuir on 13th March (RJ), and an immature was at Paisley Moss on 8th April (IG). Also at Paisley Moss was an adult **Iceland Gull** on 2nd March and an immature between 9th and 14th April (IG). Other reports are of singles at Inverness on 16th January (RHD), 13th March and 10th April (WMM); Stannergate, Dundee, on 10th April (JKRM); and Gairloch, Wester Ross, on 21st May (WAJC).

The largest flock of **Little Gulls** in the Tay area was of 47 off Kingoodie on 20th April—there were still six there on 30th June (HB). Outside this normal wintering locality an adult was at Gladhouse on 10th April (RWJS).

A **Black Tern** at Aberlady on 22nd May (RWF), was followed by no less than eight at Threipmuir, Midlothian, on 29th, though these had all gone next day (TD). A **Common Tern** at Fife Ness on 16th April (DWO) was the first reported, although a Common/Arctic bird had been seen at Aberlady on 14th (MAM, RLS). Three incubating **Arctic Terns** were located in a colony of Common Terns near Caputh on the River Tay, Perthshire, on 26th May (VMT). The earliest re-

port of a **Little Tern** is of one at Ardwell, Wigtownshire, on 23rd April (RCD). **Sandwich Terns** were well up to time, the earliest being two at Prestwick, Ayrshire (GAR), one at Largo Bay, Fife (DWO), and seven at Dornoch, Sutherland (DM), all on 2nd April.

There are a number of reports of **Little Auks** outside the northern isles where they are often seen in winter—except where mentioned all were found dead:

Bower quarry, Caithness—1 caught on 19 Jan, died 2 days later (DMS).

Rosemarkie, E. Ross—1 on 11 Feb (per MR).

Nairn—1 oiled and dying on 23 Dec (per MJE).

St Andrews—3 oiled on 25 Feb (PGB); 1 on 5 Mar (JARG).

Fife Ness—1 seen in flight on 13 Feb (PGB); 1 found on 24 Mar (JARG).

Craik, Fife—2 on 5 Mar (JARG); 1 on 22 Mar (PGB).

Elie Ness—1 on 26 Feb; 1 on 18 Mar (DWO).

Largo Bay, Fife—1 on 9 Feb (PGB); 1 dying on 21 Mar (DWO).

Aberlady—1 on 5 Mar (per MJE).

Dirleton, East Lothian—1 on 16 Jan (RSB).

Tynninghame—1 on 30 Jan (TB).

A bridled **Guillemot** was at Cramond on 16th January—an odd date for a species which winters at sea (AWB, WMs). The discovery of a pair of **Black Guillemots** at Garroch Head, Bute, on 29th May raises hopes that they may be found nesting on the island soon (WW, BZ). At Inchkeith, Fife, where ten **Puffins** were seen and one egg found in summer 1965, there were some 40 birds offshore and on the rocks in June this year. Eleven were also seen off Fidra, East Lothian, in June—a single empty nest hole is the first indication of breeding on this island (EMS, RWJS).

**Turtle Doves** have again nested near Longniddry, East Lothian, where a nest containing one egg was found seven feet up in an elder on 9th June. They also nested at this site, the same as that at which they were first found in 1958 (1: 120), in both 1964 and 1965, one hatching in the latter year (NM per JBM).

The arrival of **Cuckoos** seems to have been on the late side, the first seen being one at Ladybank, Fife, on 22nd April (DWO), and one at Duddingston on 25th (DRA). One had reached Lewis by 30th (IMM). A female of the scarce rufous phase was seen near Sorn, Ayrshire, on 6th May (GAR).

There was a **Barn Owl** by the Peffer Burn at Aberlady on 20th April (DS).

Reeling **Nightjars** are reported at Southfield Hospital, Edinburgh, on 1st May (MAM); the south end of Glen App, Ayrshire, on 1st and 2nd June (GAR); and at Muir of Ord, Easter Ross, from 6th to 22nd June (DCH).

In contrast to most other migrants, **Swifts** arrived early



this year and there are many reports for the last few days of April. The first seen were singles at Ayr on 23rd (GAR); Forfar Loch, Angus, on 25th (HB); Edinburgh on 26th (PWS); and Girvan, Ayrshire, on 27th (RBT).

Three **Hoopoes** were seen in May: one at Sumburgh, Shetland, from 2nd to 4th (MC); one at Moss Side, Strachan, Kincardineshire, on 18th (NP); and one at Kilmaron Castle, Cupar, Fife, on 10th (AM-L).

Single **Green Woodpeckers** have been seen in Perthshire, on the fringe of their range, at Glenlochay, near Killin, on 7th and 8th April (RWS); and at Bonskeid, near Pitlochry, on 19th March (see also 3: 322) (RNC). An adult which had been dead for about two months, was found near Ballater, Aberdeenshire, on 15th June (AIS); and one heard at Brucefield on the Fife/Clackmannanshire border, on 27th March, provides further evidence of the spread of this species (RC). They almost certainly bred in East Stirlingshire last year, as a pair with a nest-hole was found near Falkirk in late May, but no young or eggs were seen. The discovery of a dead bird in a nearby garden in late March, may explain why no nest was found this year, although at least one bird was in the area on 29th May (IT).

The sudden appearance of heavy snow early on 19th February seems to have triggered off a very large movement of **Skylarks**. At Morningside, Edinburgh, 1000 were estimated to have passed during the course of the day, accompanied by 3000 Starlings. These are certainly underestimates as only a very narrow front could be observed (DGA). At Powfoot, Dumfriesshire, on the same day an estimated 15,000 moved past in an easterly direction during the morning. A male **Shore Lark** was seen at the same place and at least three more were heard amongst the flocks of larks as they moved overhead (RHA, JRM).

An exceptionally early **Swallow** was at Unst on 4th March (MS), but no others were seen until 7th April. On this date one was at Langbank, Renfrewshire (RAJ, GTW), and two were at Musselburgh, Midlothian (JSO). Although there are one or two records for the following ten days, the first birds in the north were much later: on 21st at Muir of Ord (DCH), on 23rd at Fair Isle (RHD), and on 25th on Lewis (IMM); and it was also at this time that the main arrivals seem to have taken place further south. Swallows bred in Stornoway this year and a nest containing young was located on 22nd June in the same place as they apparently bred last year, though the observer was not shown the nest till after the breeding season (IMM).

The first **House Martin** was seen in Edinburgh on 19th April (ADKR), and there was one in St Andrews on 21st (MHEC),

with several records from the south on the weekend 23rd-24th. A March **Sand Martin** record is of one at Roslin, Midlothian, on 31st (ADKR). In April, there were two at Wemyss Bay, Ayrshire, on 3rd (ALAL); one at Endrick Mouth on 4th (RKP); and one at Dumfries (JKRM) and seven at Loch Arthur, Kirkcudbrightshire, on 6th (PGB). The first at Fair Isle was not until 23rd April (RHD).

A flash of yellow is often as much as one can hope to see of a **Golden Oriole** as the species is very secretive. A young male was heard calling and seen briefly in Camperdown Park, Dundee, on 5th June (CMM).

The **Magpie** is very local in Perthshire: one was at Balhaldie on 6th March and three were at Carsebreck on 20th (VMT). A pair was seen near Lochgilphead, Argyllshire, on 30th April and 1st May (TCS).

**Tits** are still being seen in Shetland—no doubt birds which remained behind after the small invasion there last September (3: 430). Two **Great Tits** were still at Norwick, Unst, during January and there were at least three on Fetlar and three on Yell in February and March (RJT). The discovery of an adult feeding three fledged young in Stornoway Woods on 27th June is the first record of this species breeding in Lewis (IMM). A pair of **Blue Tits** was at Leagarth, Fetlar, up to 2nd February (WO), and one also wintered on Whalsay (JHS). **Coal Tits** were suspected of breeding in Stornoway Woods last year (3: 374). They were again present this year and a party, including some young birds, was seen on 25th June (WMn).

Two **Marsh Tits** have been seen in East Lothian—an area for which there is only one previous record (*Scot. Nat.* 1957: 42). One was near Keith Bridge, Humber, on 30th January (RS per GW), and the other was beside the Tyne, near Tynninghame, on 13th February (RWJS). At Yetholm, Roxburghshire, one was seen and heard on 31st December and again on 17th-19th January, near where the first for the county was seen in 1964 (3: 204). Further to this, however, an adult was seen feeding two newly fledged young in the same area on 20th June, and another adult was seen flying in and out of thick cover nearby. The birds were again watched on 26th and 27th June. Hitherto the only Scottish county in which this species was known to breed was Berwickshire (RSB).

A black-bellied **Dipper**, which wintered on Fair Isle, was last seen on 15th April (RHD). Others in Shetland were one at Scatness on 24th April (DJ), and one, possibly two, on Fetlar from 23rd to 25th (WO).

**Ring Ouzels** were very late in arriving, with only one

March record—a male at Loganlee, Midlothian, on 26th (HEMD). In April, a male was near Barr, Ayrshire, on 1st (RBT); on 3rd there was a pair at Loganlee (ADKR); and the first had arrived at Fair Isle by 7th (RHD).

There are many records of **Wheatears** during the first week of April, but few during March. The earliest male was at Flotterstone, Midlothian, on 19th (ADKR). On 26th a male was at Aberlady (MAM), and there were two males and a female near Yetholm (RSB). A male was at Barns Ness, East Lothian, on 30th (HAF). Single **Whinchats** at Fair Isle on 27th April (RHD), and Dunragit, Wigtownshire, on 29th (RCD), are the earliest reported. On 30th there was one at Paisley Moss (RAJ), a pair at Aberlady (JSO), and one at Stornoway (IMM).

The **Redstart** illustrates well what seems to be the case with most April arrivals this year: while the first birds were well up to time and even early, the main arrival was delayed till the end of the month. One on the Isle of May on 6th April (IT), and a male at Morton Lochs on 10th (CT), suggest an early year, but the next report is not until 23rd when two males were singing at Yetholm (RSB). The first on Speyside was not until 24th (DNW), and that at Fair Isle was on 27th (RHD).

Several **Black Redstarts** were seen on Fair Isle during May and June (RHD), and one was at North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 14th May (KW). Elsewhere, females were seen at Balgay Hill, Dundee, on 22nd May (HB), and at Tynninghame on 5th June (CT), and a male was at Laurieston Place, Edinburgh, on 30th May (MAM).

It is worth listing the records of **Grasshopper Warblers** as this bird is local in its distribution—the three reported for 25th April were the earliest:

- Near Dunragit, Wigtown—1 on 26 Apr (RCD).
- Thornhill, Dumfries—1 on 25 Apr (JKRM).
- Near Martnaham, Ayr—first on 28 Apr (GAR).
- Yetholm, Roxburgh—1 seen and heard on 22 May (RSB).
- Georgetown, Renfrew—1 on 7 May (IG).
- Gifford, East Lothian—1 singing between 1 and 3 May (per AMcD).
- Duddingston—1 heard on 1, 4 and 6 May (DRA, CGC, ATM).
- Threipmuir—1 on 14 May (MAM, RLS).
- Cramond Island, Midlothian—1, the first for the island, on 11 Jun (TCS).
- Braid Hills, Edinburgh—1 singing on 12 and 28 May (HAF).
- Milngavie, Dunbarton—1 on 1 May (WR).
- Kilconquhar—1 on 25 and 26 Apr (PGB, DWO).
- Loch Mahaick, S. Perth—2 heard in area on 2 Jun (TP).
- Montreathmont Moor, Angus—1 on 3 May (GMC).
- Fair Isle—first passing on 25 Apr (RHD).

The first **Sedge Warblers** were two at Morton Lochs on 23rd April (RJ). One was at Kilconquhar by 25th (DWO), and on

28th the first was seen at Loch Fergus, Ayrshire (GAR), and at Fair Isle (RHD).

A male **Blackcap** frequented gardens at Cumlodden Avenue, Edinburgh, during early March (HAW), and what was doubtless the same bird was seen, and ultimately caught, in a nearby garden in Murrayfield between 12th and 27th March (ATM, EHLM). Other wintering birds were a male at Jordanhill, Glasgow, for five weeks from 5th February (SG); a female near Maxwell Park, Glasgow, from 6th to 22nd January (JPDD, DJN); and another in Bonnyrigg, Midlothian, for a few days up to 13th February (PCI). It is interesting that wintering records of this bird are nearly always in town and often at bird tables, which Blackcaps would never visit in summer; no doubt the shortage of food is responsible. There are a great many reports of migrant Blackcaps this spring, and several observers have commented on how common they seem to be this year in the south of Scotland. The first seen were two at the Isle of May on 6th April (IT). A male at Tynninghame on 18th (TB, EMS, RWJS), and a female at Portencross, Ayrshire, on 19th (DS), were the next. On 24th there was a female at Kilconquhar (DWO); males were at Port William, Wigtownshire (RCD), and Thornhill, Dumfriesshire (JKRM), on 25th; and by 26th there were four in Saltoun Woods, East Lothian (AMcD). A male was seen and heard at Duddingston on 4th, 6th and 11th May—there are few records for the reserve (DRA, CGC, ATM).

The earliest **Garden Warblers** were one at Kilconquhar on 1st May (RBH); one near Annbank, Ayrshire, on 6th (GAR); and two at Roslin on 11th (ADKR). One was singing at Duddingston on 10th June (DRA). The first **Whitethroats** were singles at Dunragit on 26th April (RCD), and Fair Isle on 27th (RHD). The number of records during the ensuing week suggest a large arrival throughout the country at this time—there were, for instance, five at Summerston by 30th (WR).

**Willow Warbler** arrivals began with one at Port Logan, Wigtownshire (RCD), and one on the Isle of May (IT), both on 7th April. As with other migrants, there were only reports of odd birds thereafter until 23rd-25th April when the main influx occurred: 17 were at Yetholm on 23rd (RSB), and 10 at Arbroath on 24th (JD). The only March **Chiffchaffs** were two heard at Coodham Gardens, near Ayr, on 20th (FDEW per GAR), and one at Culzean Castle, Ayrshire, on 21st (RBT). The first at Dornoch was on 2nd April (DM), and small numbers were seen at Fair Isle from 4th onwards (RHD). These seem to have coincided with the main immigration further south as there were nine at Culzean on 4th

April (GAR) and 10 on the Isle of May on 6th (IT). In Wester Ross one was singing at Leckmelm, Lochbroom, on 17th June (DCH).

A **Wood Warbler** had reached Ballinluig, Perthshire, by 30th April (VMT), and there were at least two at Drumlanrig, Dumfriesshire, on 7th May (RBT). The first definite record of a nest in Sutherland since 1885 is of one containing six eggs at Spinningdale on 18th June (DM).

Single **Spotted Flycatchers** at Roslin on 7th May (ADKR), at Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, on 9th (GAR), and at Kilconquhar on 9th (DWO), were the first. Two were at Fair Isle on 18th (RHD), and one at Stornoway on 19th (IMM). A male **Pied Flycatcher** was seen in Glen Lyon, Perthshire, on 8th May (VMT), and a pair at Roslin on 11th (ADKR). Two nests and one singing male were located at Inversnaid this summer and this constitutes the first breeding record for West Stirlingshire (JSG).

Few observations of **Tree Pipits** have been sent in, but the first were on Tiree on 16th April (JADH), and Fair Isle on 26th (RHD). A female **Grey Wagtail** was at Lerwick, where this species is something of a rarity, between 28th February and 3rd March (DC). Single **Yellow Wagtails** of undetermined race were seen at Aberlady on 23rd April and 14th May (MAM, JSO). A fine male of the blue-headed race was at Gladhouse on 1st May (DGA).

There were unusually many **Great Grey Shrike** records:

Bressay, Shetland—1 dead on 2 Feb (per RJT).

Fair Isle—1-3 from 10 to 26 Apr (RHD).

Inverness—1 on island in River Ness, 23-31 Jan (WMM, MR).

Loch Mhor, Inverness—1 on 6 Apr (TW).

Tulloch Moor, Inverness—1 from 2 to 29 Apr (HAF, DNW).

Kincraig, Inverness—1 on 6 May (MJE, JKS).

Killin, Perth—1 on 3 Jan (VMT).

Comrie, Perth—1 for 1 week to 14 Apr (per VMT).

Balmakin, Fife—1 still in area during Mar (see 4: 115); probably same as seen on Colinsburgh/Cupar road on 25 Jan (DWO).

Fife Ness—1 on 29 Apr (PGB).

Kincardine, Fife—1 on 5 Mar (GD, JP).

A pair of **Hawfinches** was seen in Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, on 20th April (KRM), and two were at Roslin on 7th May (ADKR). In Shetland there were one or two in Lerwick during early April, and one in Yell and two in Unst on 27th (RJT).

Four male and three female **Crossbills** were seen in Troon on 6th March (per GAR). Scattered reports in Shetland from 16th June onwards are perhaps a portent of an invasion (RJT). On Fair Isle they were seen daily in fluctuating numbers from 12th June, with maxima of 37 on 24th and at least 30 on 30th (RHD). On Barra, Outer Hebrides, a female was

present on 18th June, a pair on 19th and three birds from 20th June to 1st July (AMM, MBM).

Last winter was obviously a good one for **Brambling** as many large flocks have been reported. The following are the most notable of these:

- Fair Isle—peaks of 100 on 11 and 15 Apr (RHD).
- Near Edzell, Angus—at least 500 on 17 Apr (GMC).
- Near Brechin—at least 50 all winter (JD).
- Near Arbroath—at least 200 all winter (JD).
- Airlie Castle, Angus—50-60 on 24 Mar (VMT).
- Tibbermore, Perth—over 100 on 31 Jan (PFJ).
- Elie estate, Fife—150 on 13 Feb (DWO).
- Largo Bay, Fife—100 on 10 Feb (DWO).
- Portmore—over 250 on 29 Mar (HAF).
- Newbattle woods, Midlothian—peak of about 50 on 18 Jan (EHm).

A late female was still at Arbroath on 15th May (JD).

Unusual birds in the northern isles are a **Yellowhammer** seen on Foula, Shetland, on 1st May (MG), and two male **Red-headed Buntings** at Fair Isle in late May (RHD). One of the latter was wearing a foreign cage-bird ring which has not yet been identified—but at least it can be said with certainty to have escaped from captivity.

A pair of **Reed Buntings** has already been mentioned as showing signs of nesting on Cramond Island last year (3: 377); three pairs bred there this year (TCS). A very unusual record is of a fine male **Lapland Bunting** on 30th April at about 1500 ft on the hills just above Balmaha, Stirlingshire (DS).

Six **Tree Sparrows** at Portsoy, Banffshire, on 25th March (JE), and one at Clunie Loch, Perthshire, on 29th June (VMT), were in areas where this species is not common. Hard as it may be to believe that the species has anywhere in the country left to colonise, the discovery of a pair of **House Sparrows** at Saxavord, Shetland, on 10th April is apparently only the second record there in the last five years (MS).

*Earlier observations—before 1st November 1965*

An exceptional raft of at least 181 **Eiders** was counted off the Dunbartonshire shore of Loch Long at Coulport on 5th October 1965. Other recent counts have been 60 on 19th July 1965 and a mere 11 on 17th January 1966. When the observer came to Coulport in 1954 there were no Eiders; the first were seen perhaps two years later, and numbers have increased gradually since. Breeding has not been proved, but two adults were swimming close to the shore with three half-grown young on 8th July 1965. There seems to be no previously published record of this species in Dunbartonshire (EMK).

Good views were had of an immature male **Hobby** at Mains

of Tarty farm, Aberdeenshire, on 17th September 1965 (JG-C, WMy).

The **Herring Gull** has not been recorded as breeding in Renfrewshire, but in 1964 there were several pairs on Loch Thom and one pair on Gryffe Reservoir nearby. Two chicks were located on the island in Loch Thom on 14th June that year, and there was one chick at Gryffe Reservoir on 27th (RAJ).

The scarcity of **Magpies** in the islands makes it worth noting that one was found dead in Port Ellen, Islay, in April 1965, and one was seen at Gruinart on the same island in June that year (HK).

*General observations—behaviour, etc.*

A female **Mallard** seen on the Water of Leith in Edinburgh on 6th June had somehow adopted a brood of six newly hatched Moorhen chicks. Although there was a pair of Moorhens in the vicinity they paid no attention as the Mallard escorted the chicks about on the water (RSB).

The observation of a **Golden Eagle** flying past at the same time and same place on two successive days, 11th and 12th June, near Loch Tay, Perthshire, made the observer wonder whether these birds follow a definite daily route during the breeding season (PWS). This would seem a likely occurrence as being the most efficient way of defending a territory and exploring it for food.

A stoat was seen to attack a **Buzzard** in the Black Isle, Easter Ross, on 17th May. The stoat followed the bird as it flew from one fence post to another, climbed the post it landed on and assaulted it, forcing it to fly up into a tree (MKM-D). The remains of a female **Sparrowhawk** were found at the nest of a **Peregrine** on Speyside on 28th April (DNW).

When a sitting **Oystercatcher** was approached at its nest on an island on Loch Druidibeg in South Uist on 12th May, the bird rose, ran to the far end of the island and swam some 30 yards into the loch. There it waited until the observer withdrew before returning and settling on its eggs. Although Oystercatchers are known to be capable of swimming well, this form of distraction display must be very unusual (RNC).

Two unusual nest sites are those of a **Common Sandpiper** on the sea shore just above the high tide mark near Balcarry Point in Kirkcudbrightshire (WUF), and of a **Black-headed Gull** among some boulders in the middle of the River Almond at Almondell, West Lothian. The river was very low at the time and had the eggs not disappeared about 6th May they

would have been washed away with the next rainfall (JBt).

A curious **Sandwich Tern**, having a completely yellow bill, was seen amongst normal individuals at Gullane Point, East Lothian, on 1st May (RSB).

**Hooded Crows** were seen raiding **Sand Martins'** nests at a large colony near Fochabers, Morayshire, last summer. The crows were seen to hang on to the entrance holes and pull out nest material until they reached the eggs or young (per PVU).

A **Blackbird** which built its nest on a tenement windowsill in the High Street, Edinburgh, was no less than 45 feet from the ground (RSB).

On 10th August 1965 near Newton Stewart, Wigtownshire, a **Redstart** was seen making persistent attacks on a wood mouse. The bird was seen trying to peck at the mouse while flying over it for about three minutes until the mouse disappeared into the undergrowth (JGY).

A **Willow Warbler's** nest near Ballater became covered by about a foot of water when the River Dee rose on 23rd May. On 26th the bird returned to it and laid three eggs in addition to the two remaining in it from before the flood (JWT per AIS).

The limitation of numbers of breeding birds through lack of nest sites in otherwise suitable areas is a well known phenomenon. In 1963 six nest boxes were erected in a locality in Dumfriesshire where **Pied Flycatchers** were unknown. Five were occupied by this species in the first season, and all six in the two subsequent years. Although the birds were in the area this year none bred, as the boxes had been removed in the interim (JGY).

On the evening of 27th January, during thick fog, a large flock of **Starlings** crashed into the telephone wires strung across the main street of Yetholm. The birds had been heard circling the village and apparently lost, for about an hour beforehand. On 29th 62 bodies were counted on a 300-yard stretch of street and it is estimated that at least 100 birds were killed (RSB).

Finally, an anecdotal tale of **House Sparrows** celebrating the New Year prematurely in Yetholm. About 100 drunken birds were found roistering in some cherry trees on 30th December. They had apparently been feeding from a sack of partly fermented grain thrown out into his yard by a local farmer. The following day "a number of seedy-looking sparrows were observed wandering morosely about the garden and drinking copiously from the bird-bath!" (RSB).



## O b i t u a r i e s

### GEORGE STOUT

(Plate 25)

Fair Isle's oldest inhabitant and best-known island ornithologist, George Stout of Field, known to everyone as 'Fieldy', died at Fair Isle on 5th April 1966 in his eightieth year. All who know Fair Isle will be saddened at the passing of this fine old man. His kenspeckle figure was a familiar sight trudging over the island roads in all weathers or searching the 'banks' for driftwood with always an eye open for a passing migrant. Fieldy was the last of the old-type collector-ornithologists; he pinned his faith in his .410 shotgun and never used binoculars. Even in old age his eyesight was remarkably keen.

It was in 1921 that Eagle Clarke paid his last visit to Fair Isle with a newcomer to the island, Surgeon Rear-Admiral J. H. Stenhouse. Fieldy's comment on the two elderly ornithologists bothying in the old cottage at Pund was "Man, they lived on bad food and good whusky for a month." It was entirely due to Stenhouse that Fieldy first became seriously interested in birds.

In 1923 Stenhouse began a succession of visits to Fair Isle. The first mention of George Stout of Field is in a paper by Stenhouse (*Scot. Nat.* 1927: 53) where he records that "after my departure, a female Short-toed Lark, *Calandrella b. brachydactyla*, was obtained by Mr George Stout on 19th October (1926)." From then on, Fieldy contributed regular notes to the *Annual Report on Scottish Ornithology*, edited by E. V. Baxter and L. J. Rintoul.

Stenhouse paid his last visit to Fair Isle in May 1928; and after his death I began to correspond with George Stout, whom I had not met. On 8th May 1931 he obtained the first British specimen of the Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*. It was sent to the Royal Scottish Museum and the occurrence published by Percy H. Grimshaw (*Scot. Nat.* 1932: 1). There is however an inside story to the account given by Grimshaw. When the skin arrived at the R.S.M., Grimshaw telephoned to tell me that my friend George Stout had sent in a bird labelled "Pale Harrier *Circus macrourus*, ♂ Fair Isle 8th May 1931." Grimshaw, an entomologist, thought that the bird was in fact a rather small male Hen Harrier and had written to Fieldy suggesting that it was a bit presumptuous of him to name the specimen "Pale Harrier," and was he aware that the species had never been recorded in Britain before. Back came a letter from Fieldy: "Don't judge other people by

your own ignorance. The bird is a Pale Harrier." Strong words from a crofter on Fair Isle to the Head of the Natural History Department of the Royal Scottish Museum! Grimshaw sent the specimen to the British Museum where N. B. Kinnear pronounced that George Stout's identification was correct. Grimshaw sent him a handsome apology.

It was not until September 1935 that I was able to visit the island with A. G. S. Bryson. Between 1928 and 1935 no outside ornithologists had landed on Fair Isle. It was obvious from the warmth of our welcome that Fieldy and Jerome Wilson had missed the live contacts with the outside world of ornithology. We worked the crops at the south end of the island every day accompanied by both islanders with their guns at the ready; they were expert shots. At the end of the day it was an education to watch them both skinning and preparing specimens, but a bit disconcerting to find that the skinning knife used by Fieldy (with arsenical soap as a preservative) was also used for cutting bread.

In 1936 when I again visited Fair Isle in company with Dennis Sandeman we stayed with Fieldy in his croft. He was a widower and lived alone. When we arrived he was gutting a lamb on the kitchen table. We ate our way stolidly through the animal for a week, at the end of which I for one could hardly look a sheep in the face. As a change from the everlasting boiled mutton I suggested sheep's head by way of variety. When we returned that evening, tired and hungry, Fieldy had a big iron pot bubbling and frothing on the open peat fire. "Well, what's it to be tonight Fieldy?" Fieldy, with a broad grin, replied "Man, it's the sheep's heid!" I lifted the lid off the cauldron to disclose a simmering froth of hairy scum. I understand there is some technique about singeing the head first—but how were we or Fieldy to know? The grinning skull was forked out of the pot and placed in the middle of the table and we all dug in. I think the only bit I could face up to was the beast's tongue.

Most people will remember Fieldy for his fund of stories—most of them highly imaginative. From the beginning of the War, Fieldy's imagination began to run riot and greatly to the sorrow of his old friends we came to treat his sightings of rarities with suspicion.

Those of us who were privileged to know him well will always remember him as one of Nature's real gentlemen. It was a joy to hear him talking in his strong Fair Isle dialect about "Bairred Wairblers," or clinching an identification argument with "it had to be wan o' thaim." Dear old Fieldy—how we shall miss you and your chuckling laugh.

GEORGE WATERSTON.

## A. C. STEPHEN, D.Sc., F.R.S.E.

Dr A. C. Stephen, Keeper of the Department of Natural History at the Royal Scottish Museum from 1935 to 1958, died suddenly at his home in Edinburgh on 3rd June 1966 in his 73rd year.

Born at Garvock, Kincardineshire, he was educated at Robert Gordon's College and Marischal College, Aberdeen, which he entered in 1913. His academic course was interrupted by service in France and Belgium with the Special Brigade R.E. and he saw action on the Somme and at Ypres. He graduated B.Sc. with distinction in Zoology at Aberdeen in 1919. His first appointment was Junior Naturalist on the scientific staff of the Fisheries Board for Scotland in 1920 where he was responsible for an investigation into the distribution of animal life on the bottom of the North Sea; his report threw fresh light on the animal communities and their relation to fishery problems.

He joined the staff of the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh in June 1925 as Assistant in the Department of Natural History, and his period of service was notable for the opening of new halls and galleries which, in their presentation of material, were well in advance of other museums in this country. His chief interest was marine zoology and he was a world authority on the taxonomy of echiurids, sipunculids and priapulids. He completed a synopsis of the British species and at the time of his death was engaged in the preparation of a monograph of the world species.

He came in closer touch with ornithologists as Editor of the *Scottish Naturalist* from 1935 to 1939. This journal was of course the principal outlet for notes on Scottish ornithology during the years up to the outbreak of war in 1939. The writer recalls with gratitude the encouragement and sympathetic interest shown by Alastair Stephen in the establishment of the Isle of May Bird Observatory and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. Under his editorship the *Scottish Naturalist* was adopted as the official organ of the S.O.C. He took a keen and lively interest in the setting up of the Fair Isle Bird Observatory, of which he was a Trustee. He never missed an annual meeting of the Trust. He served as President of the Royal Physical Society and the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh.

He was a man of robust physique. His large, slightly stooping figure, carrying a small shopping bag, could be seen trudging along Princes Street in the lunch hour. He endeared himself to his friends by concealing a sensitive and kindly nature below a rough hearty exterior.

GEORGE WATERSTON.

## WILFRID BACKHOUSE ALEXANDER

"28th September 1934: W. B. Alexander"—this is the opening entry in the Isle of May visitors' book, and at Christmas 1964 W.B.A. was able to write to his friends that he had fulfilled his dream of the coasts of Britain being encircled by a chain of bird observatories. And although he paid many visits to Scotland, notably to Islay with the Oxford Ornithological Society in 1936, it is in connection with the Isle of May that he has had most influence north of the Border. He was also a visitor to Fair Isle and on one trip saw from the boat what he was sure was Bulwer's Petrel, but which he, the author of *Birds of the Ocean*, refused to mention in print, as the view was so brief: a model of scientific caution which might be followed by many today.

But his influence must also be a general, all-British one. After his work in Australia, when his many journeys from there to South America in search of the cactoblast, resulted in *Birds of the Ocean*, a pioneer work with diagrammatic sketches still essential to the sea traveller, he was appointed first director of the Edward Grey Institute at Oxford and was thus perhaps the first professional ornithologist in Britain, a pioneer in this, as in so many other, modern trends. He was closely connected with *The Handbook* and, after the death of F. C. R. Jourdain, took over his sections of the work. His influence on others is as important as that of his published writings, and he, with B. W. Tucker, in the Oxford of the 1930s, initiated a new school of ornithologists. Those who today all over Britain are making censuses, making field identifications, and trapping birds for ringing are unaware how much their systems and techniques owe to this father of modern ornithology. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of bird literature combined with an extensive memory, and the library of the Edward Grey Institute is his deserved memorial.

It is pleasant in a famous ornithologist to find a taste for the lighter side of the subject: W.B.A., just as he kept maps of Britain with every road marked along which he had driven, so kept a bird list for every British county. The present writer has had the privilege of bashing a hedge, in order that a Willow Tit might be driven out of Herts into Bucks for his benefit. Let not the modern ornithologist, who so often mistakes for knowledge the ability to count things, despise this attitude. If a man is able to make his profession also his hobby he is blessed, and W.B.A., with his exceptional memory, could use his list-making for a very thorough knowledge of bird distribution.

In person he was short and round—*un gentil bonhomme*, as

a French ornithologist affectionately described him. With his hat, his gumboots and his stick with a crook (so that it could be hung over the arm when he used his fieldglasses), his field characters were unmistakable. His round gold spectacles gave him an owl-like look of wisdom and, as you spoke to him, he would fix you through them, uttering, as a mark of attention, a curious plaintive *mm, mm, mm*, which remains one of the most memorable and lovable things about him. He was ready to laugh, or rather chuckle, and was always especially pleased by rather learned jokes about birds. On reading in the paper about a poor mad woman in a London park who, in order to protect her friends the sparrows from imagined persecution, used to put them in her mouth, W.B.A. asked: "And did she bring up pellets?" He has been known to complain about trifles, but often amusingly, as for example, about lunch in a country hotel: "the whole thing was cold, except the icecream."

He had plenty of talents; a very wide knowledge of English literature was among them. He was also a first-class swimmer. Once on the Isle of May, when the storm cone was hoisted, he swam round the rock at the entrance to the harbour and, when disbelief was expressed, did it again as proof. He was then over fifty. A disappointment was that never in his long life did he manage to see a Little Auk, and mention of that bird in his presence was almost embarrassing. Nor, although he compiled a monograph on the Woodcock so extensive that it was the chief feature of *The Ibis* from 1945 to 1947, did he ever have the luck of seeing a Woodcock carrying its young: "I don't believe it does it at all!" he once exclaimed crossly.

One of three famous ornithologist brothers, he died shortly before Christmas 1965. It is hard to think that he was over eighty, and hard to imagine the world of ornithology without him. His generosity with his experience, knowledge and advice will not be forgotten by those who benefited from them.

M. F. M. MEIKLEJOHN.

## Reviews

**Birds of the Atlantic Islands. Vol. 2. A History of the Birds of Madeira, the Desertas, and the Porto Santo Islands.** By D. A. and W. M. Bannerman. Illustrated by D. M. Reid-Henry. Edinburgh and London, Oliver & Boyd, 1965. Pp. xlviii+207; 9 plates (8 in colour); 38 line drawings and fold-out map. 26½ x 18½ cm. 84/-

Originally it had been Dr Bannerman's intention to include the birds of the Madeiran islands and of the Azores in one volume but he has now sep-

arated the two groups, leaving the Azores to be dealt with in volume 3. His final aim is to complete the Atlantic Islands series with a fourth volume on the birds of the Cape Verde Islands. A change from volume 1 (see 3:45) is that Dr Bannerman shares the authorship with his wife, although he remains entirely responsible for writing the text.

In a historical introduction, which is preceded by a bibliography of the literature on Madeira, the reader is given a detailed and extremely interesting account of the numerous ornithologists, past and present, who have furthered the knowledge of Madeiran birds. Foremost, perhaps, of this distinguished company were Ernest Schmitz, a German padre, who resided on Madeira from 1874 to 1908, and the Portuguese, Senhor Adolfo de Noronha, who lived on the barren island of Porto Santo during the years 1900-1903. A criticism of volume 1 was that it did not contain an account of the topography and climate of the Canary Islands. Such an omission is rectified in this volume in a special chapter contributed by G. E. Maul, Curator of the Museu Municipal do Funchal, who gives a lucid description of the topography, climate, vegetation and geology of the Madeiran archipelago. Tucked inside the back cover of the book where it is readily available for reference is a useful, folding map.

Despite a similarity of habitats shared by the two island groups, it is rather surprising to find that there are considerably fewer resident species than in the neighbouring Canaries. Many common Canarian species, ranging far afield in their choice of habitats, are absent from the Madeiran islands. Nevertheless, several of the breeding land and sea bird species are of exceptional interest, ranging from the Soft-plumaged Petrel, one of the least known of the Atlantic Islands seabirds, to the endemic Madeiran Firecrest, so aptly described by Meinertzhagen as an "exquisite and delicate little gem." Dr Bannerman deals fully and authoritatively with each individual species, and his text is often interspersed with vivid descriptive passages as, for example, the account of his trip along a levada edge to the dense mountain woods overhanging a steep ribeira in search of the magnificent Madeiran Laurel Pigeon, which Reid-Henry has so splendidly portrayed in the frontispiece. Many problems, particularly regarding the breeding biology of the insular land birds, remain unsolved: an excellent opportunity awaits a resident ornithologist prepared to undertake an intensive study of these species.

About 170 migratory species have been recorded in the islands but barely a quarter of these occurs with any regularity. It might perhaps have been advantageous to have divided this section into two parts, one dealing with the regular passage migrants and another with irregular migrants and rare vagrants. Incidentally, the authors are to be congratulated on adding three new species to the Madeiran list. Appendices deal with unconfirmed and unsatisfactory records, the origin of migrants, ringing records, and additions and corrections to volume 1.

The eight coloured plates, depicting 14 species, by D. M. Reid-Henry are of outstanding merit and, in addition, a few of them portray distinctive features of the Madeiran landscape. Although it is difficult to single out any one painting of this delightful set, the reviewer's choice is the enchanting study of the Madeiran Barn Owl. As in volume 1 the line drawings by various artists enhance the pages of the text.

This rich, fascinating and superbly illustrated book will not only be a valuable source of reference to the expert ornithologist but will provide the visiting birdwatcher with an indispensable guide to the birds of Madeira and their diverse habitats.

D. MACDONALD.

**Birds in the Balance.** Survival Books series No. 5. By Philip Brown. London, Deutsch, 1966. Pp. 124; 15 photographs (9 plates), one in colour. 21 cm x 16½ cm. 25/-.

As an indication of the scope of this book it should be recorded that its stated aim is to be an introduction to some of the problems of conserving wild birds. It consists of eight chapters dealing with: why conserve? the historical background, the concept of the bird reserve, the post-war revolution, legislation (safeguard or shibboleth?), conservation and sport, introductions and re-introductions, bird reserves (some problems and experiments), and birds in the balance. The chapters are basically individual essays, possibly written to pre-selected titles, and they do not succeed entirely in presenting a logically connected narrative.

I have not found *Birds in the Balance* easy to review, although it is short and can easily be read through at a sitting. It is pleasantly and informally written, holds one's attention, and performs a useful service in outlining the development of conservation thinking in the realm of bird preservation. Yet at the end I had doubts if I would ever wish to read it again, or to refer to it for the development of new ideas, so can I honestly recommend it as a book to buy? Suffice, that it is one that I am glad to have read, and that others should read: how they get hold of it is their affair.

In a somewhat florid and over-written foreword, Aubrey Buxton says that this is not another book just about birds, but a book about people and about what people have done about birds. "It is really about us, us frightful bird people... and of the splendid muddles we have managed to contrive, or allowed others to perpetrate, in the grand cause of keeping Britain a good bird place for our descendants." He states also that it is "a stirring account of the wonderful things that have been done, particularly since the war."

All this is true enough. Philip Brown is a well known figure; as the blurb tells us, he served with the R.S.P.B. for 17 years—for 11 of them as Secretary—and is now the editor of the *Shooting Times*. He is therefore in a position to take a broad view, and so he does. Equally, he has a fund of reminiscence to draw on, and does not hesitate to use it. This makes for good reading, and if at times the anecdotes tend to obscure the main theme this is understandable and readily forgiven, for there are some good stories. What is more unsatisfactory is that sometimes—and in particular in his chapter on legislation—Mr Brown is over-destructive and insufficiently constructive. In bird conservation, as in many other fields, what is needed is not so much new legislation or better law enforcement but a more enlightened public opinion, itself the most effective authority and sanction. Surprisingly, in view of his own close association with the project, the author does not stress as much as he might the splendid work done by the R.S.P.B. in safeguarding the Speyside Ospreys by making them of personal concern to so many ordinary people; it is not only the Ospreys that have benefited, but all the birds of Scotland and beyond.

The choice of illustrations is disappointing; nearly half are of shot or trapped birds, and not all are particularly apposite. None of these is dated, and several have appeared before. It would be especially interesting to know just when the picture was taken of eight Buzzards and a Merlin decorating a keeper's shed, and that of two Sparrowhawks on another gibbet. One might be forgiven for wondering from these if the reduction of birds of prey by toxics and traps has been as great as is popularly supposed.

W. J. EGCELING.

**The Owl Family.** By Frank Wenzel. Translated from the Danish by F. H. Lyon. British edition. London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966. First published in Denmark 1965 (or 1963?) as "Hvad Hojen Fortalte." Pp. 132; 32 colour photographs. 25¼ cm x 19 cm. 35/-.

A succinctly described cameo of wildlife by the author of *The Buzzard*, centred on a family of Long-eared Owls on a Danish estate. A.T.M.

**The Golden Eagle.** By Robert Murphy. Illustrated by John Schoenherr. British edition. London, Cassell, 1966. Previously published in America, 1965. Pp. 157; 11 drawings. 21 cm x 13¼ cm. 25/-.

Vividly written biography of an imaginary American Golden Eagle, by the author of *Varda: the Flight of a Falcon*. A.T.M.

**The Living Air. The Memoirs of an Ornithologist.** By Jean Delacour. Foreword by Peter Scott. London, Country Life, 1966. Pp. 173; 17 plates (35 photographs). 23½ cm x 15½ cm. 45/-.

Attractive autobiography of world-famous ornithologist, author of *The Pheasants of the World*, *The Waterfowl of the World* (4 vols.) and other works. A.T.M.

## Letters

SIR,

### The Birds of Renfrewshire

The Council of the Paisley Naturalists' Society and the Department of Natural History, Paisley Museum, are collaborating in a complete resurvey of the natural history of Renfrewshire, last undertaken by the Paisley Naturalists' Society almost exactly fifty years ago. It is hoped to publish a series of up-to-date handbooks on each subject, and we have been appointed Records-for-Birds by the Joint Committee.

In 1948 Dr Gibson and the late T. Thornton MacKeith produced a joint manuscript on the "Birds of Renfrewshire" but owing to the sudden and unexpected death of MacKeith this was never published. We are now revising this and bringing it up to the end of 1965—fifty years after the last comprehensive accounts of Renfrewshire birds:

MALLOCH, T. 1915. Renfrewshire birds. *Trans. Paisley Nat. Soc.* 2: 69-84.

ROBERTSON, J. & MACKEITH, T. T. 1915. The birds of Renfrewshire. *Scot. Nat.* 1915: 124-127, 244-250, 268-275.

We shall be very glad indeed to hear from anyone who has unpublished information on Renfrewshire birds or who knows of records published in an out-of-the-way journal; records in the standard journals will have been noted.

We are hoping to include a tribute to Thornton MacKeith, the leading Renfrewshire naturalist of his generation, but we are having difficulty in finding a photograph suitable for publication. If anyone possesses such a photograph we should



be very glad to be allowed to borrow it.

If anyone can assist we shall be very grateful if they will communicate with us at the Museum, High Street, Paisley, or at Foremount House, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire. All letters will be answered, and full acknowledgment of all assistance received will be made when the handbook is published.

J. A. GIBSON, JAMES ANDERSON.

SIR,

**Notes on the birds of Berneray, Mingulay and Pabbay**

In their paper on the birds of Berneray, Mingulay and Pabbay (3: 397-404), Diamond, Douthwaite and Indge give an account of the birds they found there in June and July 1964. From 15th July to 7th August 1965 a further party from Cambridge visited Berneray and Mingulay, and changes in the status of several species were noted.

Diamond *et al.* found no trace of petrels on the islands, but at 0530 hrs GMT on 17th August 1965 a single Storm Petrel was caught in a mistnet in the marshy area just above the landing slip on Berneray. No other petrels were seen or caught during our stay although the nets were left up for three days and nights under constant observation. There was no evidence to show whether or not this bird was breeding.

Although Golden Eagles were seen throughout our stay in 1964, none at all was seen in 1965. It seems worth recording that sheep dips containing Dieldrin are used on the islands, although there is no evidence to connect this with the disappearance of the eagles.

Four or five Swifts were regularly seen circling round a west-facing gully on Berneray, and the lighthouse keepers reported that they had been present for some time. None was recorded in 1964.

There is no recent record of Corncrakes south of Barra; in 1965, at least two were heard calling throughout our stay on Berneray, and two were caught in a mistnet on 20th July.

Song Thrushes had increased on Berneray to four pairs—two in the village, one just above the landing slip, and one at the lighthouse. On Mingulay there were two pairs in the village, but only one nest was found. In addition, single birds were seen on the north slopes of Carnan, and on Solon More, a stack to the northeast of the island.

Migrants included a moribund Tree Sparrow at Berneray lighthouse on 3rd August, several Redshanks on the east point of Berneray and a Dunlin on Mingulay on 2nd-3rd August.

D. P. L. WILLIAMS,

SIR,

**Buzzard breeding in Clackmannanshire**

In view of the report of Buzzards breeding in 1964 and perhaps earlier as the first record of breeding in Clackmannanshire (3: 410) some earlier notes of mine may be of interest.

In May 1956 I was informed of a nest in a 40 ft pine in a wood about 1½ miles west of Dollar. On the 13th I found three eggs in it and these were showing signs of hatching by the 22nd. I was unable to return for almost a fortnight, but on 5th June I found the nest severely damaged by stones thrown into it and two young birds dead. I estimated that one was about 12-14 days old and the other about six days old; there was no sign of a third young bird.

That was the first and only time I found a nest although I searched in 1957, 1958 and 1959 as Buzzards were still in the area.

GORDON M. CROSTHWAITE.

SIR,

**Garden Warblers in West Stirlingshire**

I see from the first records of Garden Warblers in West Stirlingshire (3: 396) that its status in this division has been neglected until lately and that breeding has not been recorded.

On 5th June 1954 I found a Garden Warbler on a nest with 5 eggs in a bramble clump in a deserted garden at Coillie Mhor, near Rowardennan. A week later I noted a bird near Balmaha. In 1955 one was singing in scrub woodland on the east side of the Endrick mouth on 22nd May and there were a number in the area on 9th June, especially in bramble and rhododendron wilderness near Buchanan Castle. On 15th June 1957 I found a cock's nest after hearing one singing at Clairinsh, an island off the mouth of the Endrick.

For completeness I may mention my records from nearby areas at that time—a bird by the Lake of Menteith, South Perthshire, on 27th May 1956; three singing near Aberfoyle in woods at Duchray Castle, East Stirlingshire, on 25th May 1957; and three between Ardlui and Glen Falloch, Dunbartonshire/Perthshire, on 1st June 1957.

H. MEYER-GROSS.

SIR,

**Notes from the Isle of Iona**

In their notes from Iona (*Scot. Birds* 4: 80-81) Kerr and Hope say they saw no sign of Rooks having bred there. They have done so for a fairly long time round the manse—since at least 1948 I understand.

W. J. EGGELING.

(At Dr Eggeling's suggestion we wrote to Dr D. S. Stiven just before he retired from being minister on Iona. He told us that the Rooks were there when he came to the island in 1958, and was able to take the story back to the early 1940s. He put us in touch with the Rev. D. MacCuish of Galashiels who was on Iona from 1933 to 1940, remembered that the birds were already there in 1933, and referred us back to Peter Macinnes on Iona. Here at last the loose threads of the tale were woven together. Early in his ministry in the period 1890-1930 the Rev. Archibald MacMillan planted trees in a spare part of the manse policies, and these flourished. The Rooks seem to have first come to breed in the early 1920s and they have nested ever since at a fairly steady level of 20 to 30 pairs (sometimes rather more or less). There is a daily influx from the woods of Mull, and especially on stormy days they fly very low in the trough of the waves.

We have also been reminded by T. Hedley Bell that in "Some notes on the birds of Mull and Iona"—deposited in the S.O.C. Library—he had a note of a party of about 10 Knot flying over the island on 28th August 1963 which displaces the 1965 record as the first for Iona.—Ed.)

**Request for Information**

**Influx of Great Shearwaters in autumn 1965.** September 1965 heralded one of the largest influxes on record of Great Shearwaters to British and Irish waters. The biggest numbers were seen in southwest Ireland, but it is apparent that the birds were widespread around our coasts, numbers being seen at Fair Isle and to the northwest of the Scottish mainland. Also involved were Sooty Shearwaters and very much smaller numbers of Cory's Shearwaters. At the suggestion of the Seabird Group and *British Birds* A. Gibbs and R. G. Newell have agreed to collect all records relating to the distribution of these three species in the north Atlantic and western Europe during the summer and autumn of 1965 with a view to publishing a paper. Anyone who has records of Great, Cory's and Sooty Shearwaters for this period is asked to send them to R. G. Newell, 55 Avonmore Road, West Kensington, London W.14.

## The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

### NINETEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE HOTEL DUNBLANE, PERTHSHIRE

21st to 23rd October 1966

#### Friday 21st October

- 5 to 7.30 p.m. Conference Office in the Hotel Dunblane opens for  
and 8 to 9 p.m. members and guests to register, and collect name cards  
and Annual Dinner tickets.
- 6.15 p.m. Meeting of Council.
- 8.30 to 9.30 p.m. S.O.C. BIRD-ISLAND STUDY CRUISE FILM AND  
SLIDE PROGRAMME in the Ballroom.  
At 9.30 excursion leaders will describe places to be visited  
on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
- 9.30 p.m. to  
midnight Lounges available for informal discussions and refresh-  
ments (late licence).

#### Saturday 22nd October

- 8.45 to 9.15 a.m. Conference Office opens for registrations.
- 9.20 a.m. Official Opening of the Conference in the Ballroom.  
ADDRESS OF WELCOME by the Provost of Dunoon.
- 9.30 a.m. LECTURE, "Problems of Irruptive Bird Migration"  
by Dr Staffan Ulfstrand (Lunds Universitets Zoologiska  
Institution, Sweden), followed by discussion.
- 11 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee and biscuits.
- 11.30 a.m. LECTURE, "Irruptions in the British Isles" by R. K.  
Cornwallis (former Vice-President of the B.T.O.), follow-  
ed by discussion.
- 1 to 2 p.m. INTERVAL for lunch.
- 2 p.m. EXCURSIONS by private cars leaving the Conference  
Hotel car park. Details will be posted on the Conference  
notice board.
- 3 p.m. MEETING for R.S.P.B. members in the Ballroom.
- 6 p.m. 30th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CLUB  
in the Ballroom.  
BUSINESS:  
(1) Apologies for absence.  
(2) Approval of Minutes of 29th Annual General Meeting  
of the Club held in Dunblane on 23rd October 1965  
(see "Scottish Birds" 3: 438-440).  
(3) Report of Council for Session 29.  
(4) Approval of Accounts for Session 29.  
(5) Appointment of Auditor.  
(6) Election of President of the Club. Dr I. D. Pennie,  
having completed three years term of office, is due to  
retire. The Council recommends the election of Dr  
W. J. Eggeling.  
(7) Election of Vice-President. The Council recommends  
the election of A. Donald Watson to succeed Dr W. J.  
Eggeling.  
(8) Election of new members of Council. The Council  
recommends the election of Dr David Jenkins and

R. G. Caldwell to replace Dr G. M. Dunnet and Dr D. H. Mills who are due to retire by rotation.

(9) Any other competent business.

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

### Sunday 23rd October

9.30 a.m. LECTURE, "Range Changes in European Birds" by Stanley Cramp (Senior Editor of "British Birds"), followed by discussion.

11 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee and biscuits.

11.30 a.m. FILMS, "Steller's Albatross (*Diomedea albatrus*) in Torishima Island, Japan", and "The Private Life of the Kingfisher" (awarded the Diploma of Merit in the first National Festival of Nature Films 1966).

1 to 2 p.m. INTERVAL for lunch.

2 p.m. EXCURSIONS by private cars leaving the Conference Hotel car park.

### Conference Office

Outwith registration hours the Conference Office will also be open at intervals during the weekend for members to see the exhibits. A wide selection of new books from the S.O.C. Bird Bookshop will be displayed for purchase or orders. R.S.P.B. literature, Christmas cards, garden bird equipment and gramophone records will be on sale, and also a selection of B.T.O. literature and Christmas cards.

### Film and Slide Programme

The programme from 8.30 to 9.30 p.m. on Friday evening is intended to give members and guests an opportunity of showing 2" x 2" slides or 16 mm films taken on the Cruise. These must however be submitted beforehand to the Conference Film Committee, and should be sent, **by 7th October at the latest**, to the Club Secretary, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh 7. The slides should be titled and sent with brief notes on what will be said about them, to enable the Committee to make a selection and to form a good programme. It will not be possible to show material which has not been received by this date.

### INFORMATION

(1) **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.

(2) **Conference Post Card.** 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 17th October**. Because of limited seating accommodation, the Council regrets that members may invite **only one** guest each to the Annual Dinner.

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

(4) **Annual Dinner.** Tickets for the Annual Dinner (price 25s inclusive of red or white wine or fruit cup, and of gratuities) should be purchased when registering. Members and guests staying in the Conference Hotel pay for the Annual Dinner in their inclusive hotel account, but must obtain a

dinner 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.

(5) **Other Meals.** Dinner on Friday evening is served in the Conference Hotel from 6.30 to 9 p.m. Non-residents will be able to obtain lunch on Saturday or Sunday by prior arrangement with the Hotel Reception desk.

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

(7) **Excursions.** Members are asked to provide cars if possible and to fill their passenger seats; to avoid congestion in the car park the minimum number of cars will be used. The following 1" O.S. maps cover the area: Old Edition 62, 63, 66 and 67; New Edition 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.

#### **Hotels in Dunblane**

**Hotel Dunblane (Hydro)** (Tel. 2551). Special Conference charge £7.11.0d (or 75/6 per day) including service charge, covering bed and all meals (except tea on Saturday afternoon) from Friday dinner to Sunday lunch, after-meal coffee, and the Annual Dinner (with wine or soft drinks). For less than a full day, bed and breakfast is 42/-, lunch 11/6 and dinner 17/6.

**Stirling Arms Hotel** (Tel. 2156). Bed and breakfast from 25/-.

**Neuk Private Hotel**, Doune Road (Tel. 2150). B & B 20/- to 23/-.

**Schiehallion Hotel**, Doune Road (Tel. 3141). B & B 18/6 to 20/6.

**Ardleighton Hotel** (near Hotel Dunblane gates) (Tel. 2273). B & B 17/6 to 21/-.

#### **Hotels in Bridge of Allan (3 miles from Dunblane)**

Members with cars who have difficulty in getting single rooms in Dunblane should find these two hotels have ample accommodation.

**Allan Water Hotel** (Tel. 2293). B & B 37/6 to 42/-.

**Royal Hotel** (Tel. 2284). B & B from 39/-.

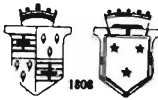
**Owing to the Selective Employment Tax all hotel prices, except for the Conference Hotel, are provisional and should be confirmed.**

#### **SUBSCRIPTIONS, COVENANTS AND BANKER'S ORDERS**

Your subscription for the new session is now due and should be sent at once with the enclosed form to the Club Secretary or paid to Branch Secretaries. The winter number of the journal will only be sent to paid-up subscribers.

If you pay income tax at the full rate and have not already signed a seven-year Deed of Covenant, this is the way you can help the Club funds at no extra cost to yourself, as the tax we are allowed to reclaim on a subscription of 25s is nearly 18s. If only 50% of our members signed Covenants the Club would gain an annual income of nearly £600, which could be used to give increased services through the journal and other publications, Conferences and lectures, more reference books for the Library, and in many other ways. May we invite you to use the enclosed form, which should be sent on completion to the Secretary, who will forward a Certificate of Deduction of Tax for signature each year.

A Banker's Order is enclosed for the use of members who find this a more convenient way of paying the annual subscription, and it will also help to lessen the administrative work in the Club office; this should be returned to the Secretary and not to the Bank.



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## The London Natural History Society

This Society, which covers all branches of natural history, has a strong ornithological section. Lectures, film shows, practical demonstrations and field meetings are arranged and research work is undertaken, most, though not all, of these activities taking place within the Society's area, that is within a 20 mile radius of St Paul's.

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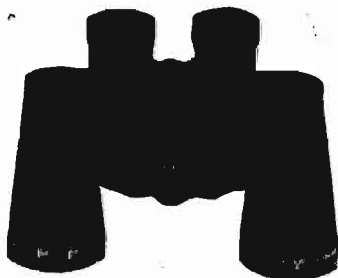
Further details can be had from the General Secretary:

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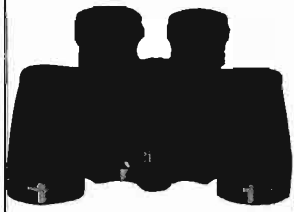
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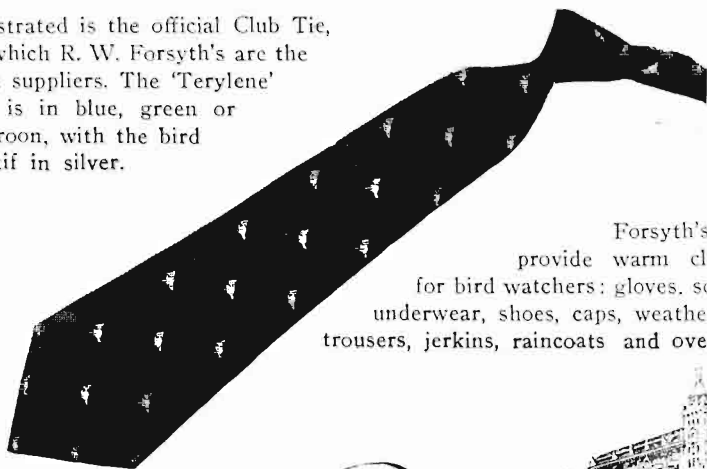


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