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# SCOTTISH BIRDS



THE JOURNAL OF THE  
SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

Volume 10 No. 2

Summer 1978

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Volume 10 No. 2

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## Editorial

**New Fair Isle warden** Early this spring the RSPB advertised for an assistant to their Highlands Officer, Roy Dennis, and the post was given to Roger Broad. Roy, you will remember, was also warden of Fair Isle before Roger. Before you could say "Heligoland trap" Roger had moved from the Fair Isle to the Black Isle and his place was taken by Iain Robertson from Portland Bird Observatory. Iain had previously been an assistant warden at Fair Isle and has lived on Fetlar and Out Skerries. So if you fancy a career in the Highlands with the RSPB, start on Fair Isle! We wish Roger and Iain satisfaction in their new jobs.

**Irish Birds** We were pleased to receive a copy of the new journal *Irish Birds*. Like *Scottish Birds* it publishes papers and notes, and includes the Irish bird report and a ringing report. The following is worth quoting from the editorial: "Its aim is to include papers both by professionals, perhaps summarising and reviewing their own work published elsewhere in a less accessible form, and amateurs stimulated to publish their results by the example of others... It is hoped that authors will be willing to develop their ideas a little further than they might in other journals. Papers which express ideas and discuss their implications will get preference over those which purely document factual information". We wish them well. It is intended to publish annually and it is available from K. W. Perry, 11 Magherana Park, Waringstown, Craigavon, Co. Armagh, at £1.50.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

Heard (more or less distinctly) on Radio Forth commercials advertising the many attractions of the Royal Highland Show: "... And an exhibition of rare breeds of barn owls," amended in later broadcasts to "farm owls."

## Some breeding birds of Unst

GRAHAM BUNDY

Plates 5 - 6

The following notes provide base-line data for selected breeding species on Unst, the northernmost island of the Shetland group and, with the exception of the much larger Mainland, the most varied geologically. The island is mostly open moorland, with some 22 km<sup>2</sup> of cultivation. High sea-cliffs exist in one place on the east coast but more extensively on the west side, including the well-known seabird cliffs and stacks bordering the Hermaness National Nature Reserve.

Very broadly the island can be divided into two types of moorland, each with its peculiar vegetation and bird communities. These are the peaty schist and gneiss hills in the west and north and the impermeable tundra-like serpentine and greenstone areas of the eastern half. The damp gneiss hills support predominantly coarse grasses *Eriophorum* spp and heathers, with many lochans important for breeding Red-throated Divers (Bundy 1976, 1978). These moors support relatively few species but good numbers of the two skua species breed. Most of the birds breeding on gneiss moorland are dependant on the marine environment but the waders that become numerous on parts of the eastern serpentine feed largely on the breeding grounds as well as the littoral. The serpentine and gabbro-granite greenstone zones of the east and southwest consist of lower plateaux with rocky outcrops and some boulder-strewn slopes, these being covered with a more varied vegetation than the dark peaty hills that dominate the western half of the island. Heathers *Erica* and *Calluna* spp. grow locally up to 40 cm (16 in.) especially on the east-facing slopes of Virda Field and Colvadale. More characteristically the vegetation is well-cropped grasses, dwarf heathers and various other plants. These areas are grazed by sheep and ponies and tend to have a higher number of breeding species than elsewhere (see fig. 1 below).

While on Unst it seemed obvious that the breeding distribution of most waders, gulls and terns was governed by the distinct geological formations and the more obvious differences in the resulting vegetational types. Certain species were selected for censusing while notes are added on the expanding populations of large gulls and skuas.

### Methods

The writer lived on Unst for nearly two years during 1973



and 1974 and revisited the island frequently in the summer of 1976 while carrying out a survey for the RSPB. Regular transects were made over the whole island (c. 132 km<sup>2</sup>) between March and September but more intensively from May to August. The methods used conform broadly with those advocated by the British Trust for Ornithology for their Common Bird Census: recording on outline maps the presence of birds considered to be breeding. Nests were not particularly sought, evidence for breeding usually being the consistent presence of a single male on territory, or the regular presence in a given area of adults showing parental alarm, in some cases both, in addition to positive evidence. As cliff nesters present obvious mapping difficulties the following were omitted: Gannet, Shag, Kittiwake, Razorbill, Guillemot, Black Guillemot, Puffin, Rock Dove, Raven and Rock Pipit. Fulmars breed in great numbers on the cliffs but also quite commonly on old buildings and banks bordering certain freshwater lochs and burns, so are included in fig. 1 (below). Omitting cliff-nesting species, breeding birds were plotted using the convenient 400 hectare squares (4 km<sup>2</sup>) of the national grid.

## Results

The results are summarized in fig. 1. The high densities in the northwest are the well-known colonies of Great Skuas, in the east there are large assemblies of gulls, terns and some waders, while the southwestern square owes its high score

		10B		
		15C	12B	16B
	14C	15B	17A	29B
15B	17B	25B	15A	20B
	15A	25B	19B	
<hr/>				
	14A	17A	15A	
18B	14A	25B	26C	20B
	22B	25C	16B	
29C	18B	27C		
25B	22B	20A	16B	

**Fig. 1.** Diagram of Unst showing number of breeding species and density of breeding pairs (excluding cliff nesters) per 400 ha (4 km<sup>2</sup>) of the national grid. A=under 200 pairs, B=200-500 pairs, C=over 500 pairs. Data from 1974. Lines show 10-km square boundaries of national grid. Some coastal squares with small areas of land are omitted.

principally to the terneries on the slopes overlooking the Blue-mull Sound.

### **Oystercatcher**

A common summer visitor to the island, a few birds arrive in February but the bulk of the population is not present until March when flocks in the fields around Belmont, Uyeasound, Lambaness and Skaw often exceed 100. Williamson (1951) described it as less common than the Lapwing, but this is certainly not true today although no detailed counts were made. It is much more widespread than the Lapwing, being especially numerous on the stony parts of the serpentine and granite moors where the vegetation is short or absent. On the western hills it is more or less confined to the grassy slopes, usually near cliff tops where sheep and rabbits have produced well-mown areas. It avoids the peaty moors with rank heathers and moist grass slopes but is not uncommon in cultivated areas where the grass is short. Although arriving early, breeding does not commence until mid May and most pairs have vacated their breeding territories by late July and it becomes very scarce during August. Sometimes a small flock of white-collared immatures lingers until the beginning of September.

### **Lapwing**

First bred in 1854 (Saxby 1874) and has increased since. In 1974 about 95 pairs bred, around 0.7 per km<sup>2</sup>. As a breeding species it is absent from the damp gneiss hills of the north and west (c. 56 km<sup>2</sup>) and density in the remaining part of the island would be around 1.3 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. In good pasture or on moorland with short well-cropped heather, mosses or grass, pairs are often found nesting in loose colonies or clusters. By mid March birds have taken up territory and chicks have been seen by 14th May, suggesting that the breeding season is similar to that in southern Britain. Williamson (1951) was struck by the "noticeable association" of this species with the Shetland pony and postulates that in addition to the effects of grazing, the pony droppings have a beneficial effect on the abundance of insect life. From mid June flocks occur commonly and there was suggestive evidence of a westerly passage during late June and July. Flocks in the fields above Heogland during July have numbered up to 200 but wintering flocks fluctuate considerably and are presumably dependent upon temperatures remaining above freezing.

### **Ringed Plover**

Although it is present in small numbers on the littoral during the winter there is a marked influx in late March and early April. In 1974 68 pairs were located, only ten

of these being on the shoreline, the remainder frequenting stony or boulder-strewn areas on the serpentine moors. Sheep grazing has probably helped it to spread to some areas for it shuns vegetation other than very closely cropped grass. It avoids the gneiss-schist moorland with its longer vegetation and absence of stone debris but pairs may occasionally be found on areas of close-cropped Rabbit-inhabited cliff top (fig. 2). Eliminating the areas of gneiss, density was about 0.9 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> on the remainder of the island.

Most eggs are laid in late May and early June with chicks being tended throughout July and into early August. Small chicks in early August could have been second broods but it was not established whether this species is double-brooded in Unst; late chicks could equally have been the result of replacement clutches. Individuals, usually juveniles, that resort to the shoreline in August and September are likely to be migrants, often feeding in association with immature Dunlins. It becomes generally scarce during September.

### **Golden Plover**

In 1973 55 pairs were located; in 1974 58 pairs were generally distributed over both types of moorland (fig 3). Slightly higher densities of breeding pairs were noted where vegetation, usually heathers, was over 20 cm (8 in.) tall and where there was also a good sprinkling of rocks. It seemed to prefer drier tracts of moor and was less numerous on the damper zones on the west and north (but not much less, *contra* Ratcliffe 1976, p. 92). Excluding about 22 km<sup>2</sup> of cultivation, the 1974 survey indicates about 0.5 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> of moorland.

Males are song-fighting over the moors from early March, first clutches are laid in late April with chicks seen from early June. Clutches found as late as 27th June and small chicks in mid July are probably the result of replacements of earlier failures. By mid July flocks of up to 440 were counted, comprising in 1974 about half juveniles, suggesting some immigration about this time. In late August 1973 flocks on the serpentine around Crussa Field and Dalepark exceeded 2,000. It is mainly a summer visitor to the island, present from early March to September but chiefly April to late August. Winter flocks are irregular and probably, like Lapwing, depend to a great extent on temperature. Flocks of up to 160 have been noted during December-February in the lower fields.

### **Snipe**

A common resident throughout the island although numbers are considerably reduced outside the breeding season. Drumming was first noted on 3rd April but the breeding



**Figs. 2, 3, 4.** Distribution of breeding waders on Unst in 1974 in relation to geology : dark circles—gneiss; open circles—serpentine.

Fig. 2. Ringed Plover : 68 pairs, all on serpentine (58) or shoreline (10).

Fig. 3. Golden Plover : 58 pairs, 27 on gneiss, 31 on serpentine.

Fig. 4. Dunlin : 49 pairs, 16 on gneiss, 33 on serpentine.

season is protracted; Saxby found eggs from early May to mid August, the writer found small chicks tended by adults performing elaborate distraction display as late as 22nd August. Although no island-wide counts were made, on a census plot near Baltasound two pairs were present in 1973 and 1974, holding territory in the same places in both years. It is probably the most numerous wader on the island, although not the most conspicuous and a difficult species to census satisfactorily. It breeds quite commonly in dry areas, heathery slopes, in short vegetation on serpentine heath and grassy verges of cultivated fields, as well as in the more typical rushy meadows and marshy fields and moorland.

### Whimbrel

A summer visitor, early individuals are sometimes present in late April but the majority arrive in the last two weeks of May. Birds often feed quietly in the lower fields prior to breeding and numbers on the nesting moors are probably not at maximum until the majority of first clutches are laid in late May. Most chicks hatch in the last week of June; by late July those that have survived are flying and many juveniles and adults leave the island, seemingly as soon as the young can fly.

In 1974 at least 65 pairs bred, 55 of these on serpentine heath with short vegetation and stone debris. The remaining ten pairs bred on dry sloping moorland with a more uniform covering of taller vegetation of about 15 cm (6 in.). Excluding the peaty moors (about 56 km<sup>2</sup>) and cultivation (about 22 km<sup>2</sup>), the approximate density of pairs on seemingly suitable ground would be 1.2 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>. It tended to be distributed in clusters of up to ten or 12 pairs however, rather than evenly spread over the ground; the same areas were used by very similar numbers in all three summers, the surviving adults presumably returning to the same place each year. Wide tracts of apparently identical ground are not occupied.

In several small areas it overlaps with a few pairs of Curlew but although interspecific competition has been noted elsewhere, none was seen on Unst. Curlews tend to breed a month earlier than Whimbrels and many are song-flighting during March, two months before the main arrival of Whimbrels. On Unst nearly all Curlews are ecologically separated from the present species, breeding in lower fields and valleys where the sedges and grasses are invariably longer. Despite the suggestion that Curlews are replacing Whimbrel in northern parts of its range, there is no evidence yet that this is the case in Shetland.

Assuming that past accounts were the result of complete coverage of Unst, Whimbrels would appear to have increased since the early 1950s. It is described as "common" in the 1830s by Dunn (1837) but apparently absent in 1938 when J. Peterson covered all areas. B. W. Tucker and the Venables found a minimum of 35 pairs in 1949, while in 1952 Jeffrey Boswall located at least 33 pairs (Venables and Venables 1955).

While no precise data are available, fledging success was probably good in 1974, many flying juveniles being seen in July. A Great Skua was seen to knock down a flying juvenile on 25th July 1973 and, with another bird, began to eat it before I could reach the spot.

It seems worth noting also an apparent increase in the neighbouring island of Yell, where it had apparently ceased to breed in the 1940s (Inkster 1951). In 1976 I found nine pairs in five scattered localities: seven pairs on the drier moors in the north and two pairs in the south.

### **Redshank**

Present throughout the year, it is not known whether the birds wintering along the shores are local breeders, but it seems certain that some at least are winter visitors. It was a rare breeding species in the nineteenth century, not breeding annually (Saxby 1874) and only one pair was located in 1890 (Evans and Buckley 1899). In 1949 at least 12 pairs were breeding in four areas (Venables and Venables 1955). In 1973 I located 25 pairs probably breeding and 1974 32 pairs, some of which had been overlooked in the first year. Excluding the gneiss and cultivated areas none of which were known to support breeding pairs, the density in 1974 was 0.6 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>.

Laying commences in early May and although earlier clutches were not seen they cannot be ruled out; laying in southern Britain commences in mid April (Witherby *et al* 1942). Newly fledged juveniles were seen chiefly between 21st June and 2nd July. It frequents marshy areas, especially where grasses are well grown, usually over 25 cm (10 in.) in the vicinity of fresh-water. Williamson (1951) noted its colonisation of the Faeroes in the 1940s and suggested the recent northern spread was due to climatic change.

### **Dunlin**

A summer visitor arriving in early May and leaving very soon after juveniles fledge in July or early August. It is very scarce in winter, usually absent although a few presumed migrants occasionally frequent the littoral in early autumn. In 1974 49 pairs were located, mostly concentrated in rough

grassy or heathery margins of small freshwater lochans. In several instances pairs were clustered around lochans forming what might be termed loose colonies (fig. 4). Several isolated pairs were found nesting in dwarf heather on dry serpentine, up to a kilometre (c. 1,000 yds.) from the nearest water. Although some pairs may have been overlooked, it was curiously absent from many seemingly suitable areas of damp grassy moorland on the western hills. Elsewhere up to eight pairs were found close to a single small loch. Density figures are thus apt to be misleading. Excluding some 22 km<sup>2</sup> of cultivation about 0.45 pairs per km<sup>2</sup> were present in 1974. The main period for first clutches is 15-25th May; hatching mainly in the period 8-20th June.

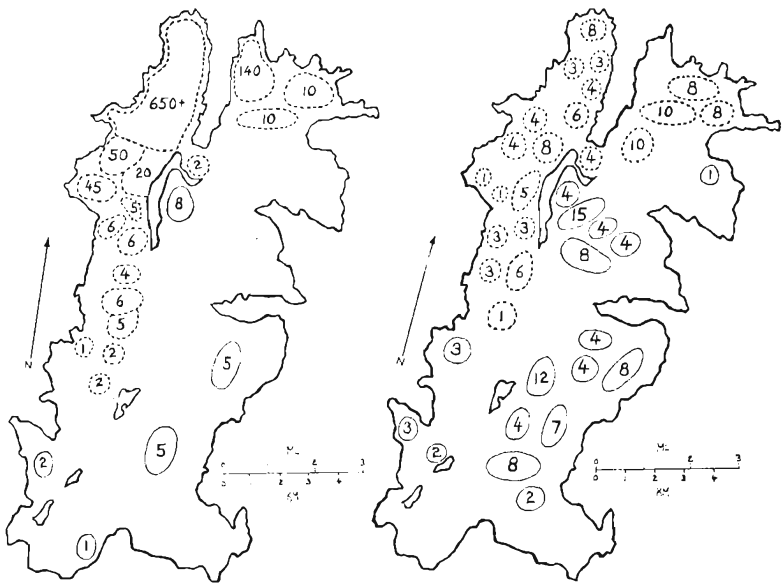
### **Great Skua**

The dramatic increase in numbers since the 1890s, when seven pairs bred on Hermaness with a single pair on Saxa Vord, has been well documented, especially by Venables and Venables (1955) who state that in 1949 300-350 pairs were present in the northwest and about 45 pairs on Saxa Vord. Recently several counts have been made, notably by a team of observers from the University of East Anglia, whose efforts seem to have been confined to the Hermaness peninsula however. I am indebted especially to the late David Frost of this team for his help with the 1974 figure for that area. Fig. 5 illustrates the present distribution of about 1,075 pairs over the whole island. Excluding the cultivated areas, 9.7 pairs were present per km<sup>2</sup>. Bonxies arrive from early April with the first eggs being laid in mid May and the first chicks usually about 8th June. It departs during September but individuals are not uncommonly seen even later.

### **Arctic Skua**

A summer visitor arriving in late April, with most departing soon after juveniles fledge in August. More evenly distributed over the island than Great Skua, it is equally at home nesting on sparsely vegetated serpentine heath as on damp, peaty moors (fig. 6). On the northern and western gneiss hills it seems to prefer heather zones and tends to shun the wide slopes where grasses (and Bonxies) predominate.

In 1974 a total of 193 pairs were located over the whole island (about 1.7 pairs per km<sup>2</sup>), an apparent 5% decrease since 1922. It seems to have decreased markedly on the Hermaness headland since that time (Furness 1977). Numbers were estimated at between 60-100 pairs until 1974 when I counted only 40 pairs north of Libbers Hill (not 72 as quoted by Furness). Assuming that the coverage of past workers was complete away from Hermaness, there would appear to have been a



**Figs. 5-6.** Distribution of breeding skuas on Unst in 1974 in relation to geology: broken lines—gneiss; solid lines—serpentinite.

Fig. 5. Great Skua (c. 1,075 pairs).

Fig. 6. Arctic Skuas (193 pairs).

remarkable shift in distribution of pairs on the island in the past 50 years. A small sample was studied for breeding success in 1973 and 1974 near Skaw in the northeast. In 1973 the average clutch was 1.2 and all the eggs produced flying young. In 1974 the average of five clutches was two and at least nine juveniles flew, a high success rate even for a small sample. Flying juveniles are seen from mid July.

### Large gulls

In the mid nineteenth century, when the human population of Shetland reached its peak of over 30,000, Saxby (1874) noted a decline in virtually all large and conspicuous birds with the exception of the larger gull species, which fed on waste from the fishing industry. A reported decline in the last 60 years seems to have reversed, certainly in the cases of Great and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Birds breeding on cliff-faces and offshore stacks were not considered.

Venables and Venables (1955) report a considerable decline



in Lesser Black-backs breeding on moorland areas and Williamson (1951) could not find this species on the hill ground although he mentions visiting several current sites. In 1974 Lesser Black-backs were present in colonies on the north side of Clibberswick Hill but chiefly on the serpentine and granite slopes south of Baltasound (about 270 pairs). Only on Gallow Hill in the south was it outnumbered by Herring Gull away from the cliffs and stacks. A total of 354 pairs was estimated breeding on Unst moorland. Lesser Black-backs are summer visitors, the bulk arriving in mid April, the first noted on 7th March 1973.

Great Black-backs were almost confined to cliffs and offshore islets in the 1930s and 1940s, with a few pairs resorting to the vicinity of freshwater lochs for breeding. On Unst the largest moorland colony is one of around 30 pairs on Vord Hill, with scattered pairs in 1976 on Vallafeld where they were absent in 1973. It is worth noting here that on Yell in 1976 I counted 146 pairs on moorland areas where they were apparently absent 30 years ago (Yeates 1948). In North Roe on Mainland Raeburn (1885) found three or four pairs around Swabie Water and the Venables found three pairs there in 1952. In 1976 it was the dominant species between Roer Water and the west coast, including Swabie Water, numbers increasing nearer the sea around Lang Clodie and the west side of Birka Water south to Sandy Water. Conservatively, 80-100 pairs breed in this sector now. This increase in large gulls has locally had a detrimental effect upon some freshwater lochs where they regularly assemble to preen and bathe in flocks often exceeding 300.

Herring Gulls remain one of the most conspicuous Shetland species but are largely confined to breeding on the cliffs and offshore stacks. The colony on Gallow Hill consists of about 40 pairs with odd pairs amid the Lesser Black-backs at Sobul and Clibberswick.

### **Common Gull**

On Unst this species breeds almost exclusively on the short vegetation amid rock and stone debris in the eastern half of the island, and in well grazed pasture close to freshwater. In 1974 about 565 pairs were counted, these being distributed in 20 loose colonies averaging about 35 pairs. The main laying period is in late May but hatching eggs were noted on 14th June and 8th July so there is some variation; laying times do not differ from other parts of its range. Juveniles are flying by late July, while at this time and through August birds largely desert the colonies and descend to pastures, especially

fields of stubble and freshly cut hay. There is an exodus in August but this is incomplete, birds being present throughout the winter.

### Black-headed Gull

Not present as a breeding species in the nineteenth century (Saxby 1874, Evans and Buckley 1899) but about 100 pairs nested between Norwick and Haroldswick in 1952 (Venables and Venables 1955). In 1973 about 120 pairs nested in the Norwick marsh with additional pairs at Haroldswick and Lund. Only three juveniles were seen at Norwick where the colony was flooded during heavy rain in late May and early June. In 1974 only about 40 pairs returned but fledging success improved with 35 juveniles seen there in late July. Wintering birds are usually immatures but numbers seldom exceed ten. Adults start to arrive in late February and March.

### Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Keith Brockie whose artistic talents make my maps presentable.

### Summary

Some numerical data are given for breeding populations of waders, skuas and gulls on Unst, Shetland. Comparisons are made with data from the past. The geology and resulting vegetation have a bearing upon the breeding distribution of most of them. An appendix lists species known or suspected to have bred on the island and indicates known increases or otherwise in breeding populations.

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### Appendix. List of Unst breeding species

Status: R—resident; M—migrant; C—casual; F—former breeder; brackets indicate irregularity.

Numbers: order 1—1-9 pairs; order 2—10-99 pairs; order 3—100-999 pairs; order 4—1,000—9,999 pairs; order 5—at least 10,000 pairs; plus or minus signs indicate known increases or decreases during the last 150 years.

		<i>Order</i>
Red-throated Diver	M	2+
Fulmar	R	5+
Manx Shearwater	(F/M?)	
Gannet	M	4+
Cormorant	(R?)	
Shag	R	3
Mallard	R	2
Teal	M	1
Wigeon	F	
Tufted Duck	(M?)	
Eider	R	3
White-tailed Eagle	F	1-
Red-breasted Merganser	R	2
Peregrine	F	1-
Merlin	M	1-
Kestrel	F	1-
Quail	C	1
Corncrake	F/C?	1-
Moorhen	(M?)	
Oystercatcher	M	3
Lapwing	R	2+
Ringed Plover	M	2
Golden Plover	M	2
Snipe	R	3
Curlew	R	2
Whimbrel	M	2+
Common Sandpiper	M	1
Redshank	R	2+
Dunlin	M	2
Red-necked Phalarope	M	1
Great Skua	M	4+
Arctic Skua	M	3-
Great Black-backed Gull	R	3+
Lesser Black-backed Gull	M	3+
Herring Gull	R	3
Common Gull	R	3
Black-headed Gull	R/M	3+
Kittiwake	M	4
Common Tern	M	2
Arctic Tern	M	4
Razorbill	M	4
Guillemot	M	5
Puffin	M	5
Rock Dove	R	2
Woodpigeon	M	1+

		<i>Order</i>
Collared Dove	R	2+
Skylark	M	3
Swallow	C/M	1+
House Martin	C	1
Raven	R	2
Hooded Crow	R	2
Wren	R	3
Redwing	C/M	1+
Blackbird	R	2
Wheatear	M	3
Reed Warbler	C	1
Meadow Pipit	M	3
Rock Pipit	R	3
Starling	R	3
Twite	R	2
Corn Bunting	F	
Reed Bunting	R	1+
House Sparrow	R	2
Tree Sparrow	C/R	1

Two species are omitted for security.

Turnstone, Red-backed Shrike and Snow Bunting have been suspected of breeding.

*Graham Bundy, 90 Cauldwell Lane, Monkseaton,  
Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear.*

## Gulls and terns nesting inland in northeast Scotland

W. R. P. BOURNE, A. J. M. SMITH,  
ANDREW DOWSE

Some further points remain to be made about reports of gulls and terns nesting inland and the subsequent correspondence (8: 73-76, 281, 9: 72, 301). The developing sequence of events at St Fergus Moss probably illustrates the natural history of such colonies. It was presumably founded because this is the largest piece of undisturbed waste ground behind the low-lying coast between Peterhead and Fraserburgh where there is a large gull population which cannot find cliff breeding-sites (see map). It has apparently been building up for over 20 years but has only become large recently when the birds have left the northern part of the moss (known locally as Crimond Moss) to concentrate in the south because it is becoming overgrown with conifers. A limited area here held between 500-1,000 pairs of birds in 1977, with a majority of Herring Gulls, many Lesser Black-backs, about 100 pairs of Common Gulls,

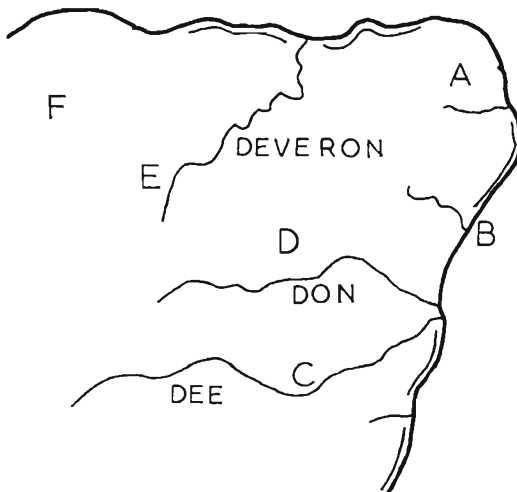


Fig.: The location of some major concentrations of breeding gulls and terns in northeast Scotland.

Double line : cliffed coasts with breeding gulls. A : St Fergus Moss.  
 B : Sands of Forvie. C : Lochs of Parks and Leys. D : Correen Hills.  
 E : Craigwatch and Tips of Corsemaul. F : Teindland Hills.

and three pairs of Great Black-backs; when the latter arrived the year before they were the first occurring inland in the area. The site is now becoming overcrowded and increasingly attractive to egg-collectors and other predators, so that the birds now have a very low breeding success. It seems likely that with the imminent start of mechanical peat extraction from the moss they will soon move elsewhere.

The vast colony of Common Gulls further inland in the Correen Hills is also interesting. Alan Knox has pointed out that it has been in existence a long time, since the Hill of Drum-barton, where George Sim was shown breeding Common Gulls in 1890 (*Vertebrate Fauna of Dee*, 1903) is its eastern extremity. Birds which feed on the rich agricultural land of the Gordon district fly up to breed immediately over the bare crest of a 1,000 ft (305m) horseshoe-shaped ridge, where they are concealed from the plain below by the curve of the slope so that they do not attract attention, while a growing number of larger gulls are now also nesting in the longer herbage of the rugged slopes of the deserted central valley below them. Despite the regular appearance of scores of dead birds, some of which were found by the DAFS Agricultural Scientific Services to have been poisoned by the organophosphorus insecticide dimethoate

in 1974 while others had been shot, this colony has also increased rapidly in recent years, and in 1976 was thought to hold between 4,000-5,000 pairs of Common Gulls, 80 pairs of Lesser Black-backs, and 40 pairs of Herring Gulls. In 1977, when different observers considered that there were about 5,000 individual Common Gulls present at one time, there were also three pairs of Great Black-backs. The breeding success here varies; thus for example many young died in 1973, apparently from starvation, although more have survived since then despite the occasional depredations of predators such as Stoats *Mustela erminea*.

Further west there are two colonies of Common Gulls of the order of a thousand pairs each in the hills between the River Deveron and Duftown. The more northerly is crowded into long heather on a spur of the hills north of the Tips of Corsemaul overlooking a road and agricultural land, and also holds a good many Herring Gulls and some Lesser Black-backs. It was suffering a high rate of predation in 1977, with the remains of many dead old and young birds strewn around, many late breeders, and groups of birds continually gathering to mob predators hidden in the herbage. It seems likely that as with St Fergus Moss this site may soon be abandoned due to disturbance and poor breeding success. The more southerly colony on remote, bare, marshy ground southwest of Craigwatch, which also held scores of Black-headed Gulls and a few Lesser Black-backs, appeared much more successful and may involve the development of an alternative site. There were also smaller numbers of Common Gulls nesting in the Teindland Hills south of Elgin in the 1930s. To the south there are small colonies of Common Gulls on the hills overlooking Deeside and some of its mosses, but Black-headed Gulls breeding in the swamps such as those occupying the sites of the former Lochs of Park and Leys near Banchory appear to be the commonest species here and at the Sands of Forvie on the coast. There are other smaller gull colonies distributed throughout the area, but the large concentrations tend to occur about 25 miles (40 km) apart commanding the more intensively cultivated land.

Terns are found mainly along the coast, the largest number breeding on the Sands of Forvie and some in the St Fergus area. Small numbers of Common Terns frequent the inland waters, breeding on islands in the lochs and shingle-banks along the Dee. It should perhaps be made clear that there has always been some doubt about the identity of the birds nesting with the gulls in the Correen Hills. They were first identified as Common Terns in 1973, and then as Arctic Terns in 1974 (see 8: 75-76, 281). A pair seen at close quarters with a flying chick in

1975 were Common Terns, as were four pairs, one of which had a nest with three eggs (found by Chris Bremner) in 1976 and birds seen in 1977. At least three anxious Common Terns were also frequenting the gullery on the Tips of Corsemaul on 23rd July 1977. The first site directly overlooks the River Don, and the second the River Deveron at a greater distance, and Common Terns were seen feeding along both rivers, which lacked shingle beds suitable for nesting, while the birds could be seen carrying quite large fish a considerable distance up to the hill-top gull colonies. The Common Terns breeding in the Correen Hills appear to lay rather early, with the Common Gulls. At the Sands of Forvie on the coast where the Sandwich Terns lay even earlier, with the Black-headed Gulls, the Common Terns do not lay until later, in June, so that none had flying chicks at the time when one was seen in the Correen Hills on 19th July in 1975. It would appear that these terns are prepared to travel a long way and lay early in order to breed alongside the gulls, presumably to escape the attention of ground predators, which were clearly attacking the more conspicuous gulls first.

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## Short Notes

### Goosander attacking Osprey

On 25th June 1977 I was sitting with my children on the shore of Loch Lomond near the Endrick mouth when the waders and Shelduck scattered frantically as an Osprey came beating along Ring Point (Dunbartonshire). Seconds later my small son pointed out another. We watched them fishing unsuccessfully for about 15 minutes. During this period I was surprised to see a drake Goosander rise and vigorously attack an Osprey, causing it to veer several times before the Goosander returned to rest on the water. We had earlier seen a duck Goosander with several small young in the immediate vicinity.

GILBERT J. BROCK

[Drake Goosanders usually take no part in parental care.—  
Ed.]

### Terek Sandpiper in Shetland

At 20.30 BST on 20th June 1975 I found a wader on a loch on Whalsay, Shetland. In size it was considerably larger than Dunlin, next to which it was seen, and like a Wood Sandpiper

but the heavy streaking on the sides of the upper breast was more like a Common Sandpiper and its legs were yellowish orange. The bird was feeding along the water's edge, moving slowly in my direction and often hidden from view amongst grass. After watching for half an hour I was sure its long black bill was upturned and when it flew on to a rock I saw it had a grey-brown rump, which with other features convinced me it was a Terek Sandpiper.

I then called on Dr Brian Marshall and we flushed the bird several times, saw its white trailing wing edges and heard its various calls. It was seen later that evening by W. Arthur and others. We were still watching it at 01.00—Dr Marshall remarked on how easily you could read the *Field Guide* at that hour. The bird stayed at the loch the following day and was photographed by Dr Marshall and Dennis Coutts. It was last seen about 21.30 on 21st but had gone by 23.30 and was not seen again. The following is a description by Dr Marshall from notes made on the spot.

Walked along muddy edge of loch, feeding very actively, daintily picking food (small insects?) from the water and aquatic vegetation, and frequently reaching up to peck at the stems of overhanging grasses. It several times flew on to rocks at the pool edge. It bobbed on one or two occasions but this was not a noticeable feature. It generally flew for only short distances, low, with rather whirring wingbeats and a tendency to spread its tail when alighting. Voice: a subdued Whimbrel-like titter (JHS, WA); on several occasions a penetrating *Twee-twee* or *Twee-twee-twee*, rather like Common Sandpiper, heard especially on the evening of the 21st; a Turnstone-like rattle given on two or three occasions when the bird was flushed (BM).

**Description** Greyish brown above; crown and nape paler than mantle and wings; dark streaks down either side of back (probably over scapulars); rump paler and greyer than back or tail. Pale supercilium from base of bill to behind eye; lores and ear-coverts greyish white; dark line through eye; chin, throat and upper breast white, streaked greyish; quite dense greyish smudges on either side of upper breast, not meeting in middle (rather like Common Sandpiper); rest of underparts whitish; under tail-coverts dark, perhaps brown, thought to be due to soiling. Upper surface of wing as back, some dark smudging on coverts; obvious dark line right round carpal joint on closed wing; white trailing edge to wing visible in flight (rather like Redshank); underwing not seen. Long bill, fairly broad at base, becoming very fine towards tip, markedly upturned, especially outer half; black, with a little orange at extreme base of cutting edges. Moderately long legs, relatively longer than Dunlin but shorter than Redshank; conspicuous yellowish orange colour at once noticeable at long distance. Dark eye.

JOHN H. SIMPSON

[Breeds from east Siberia to the Baltic and winters around



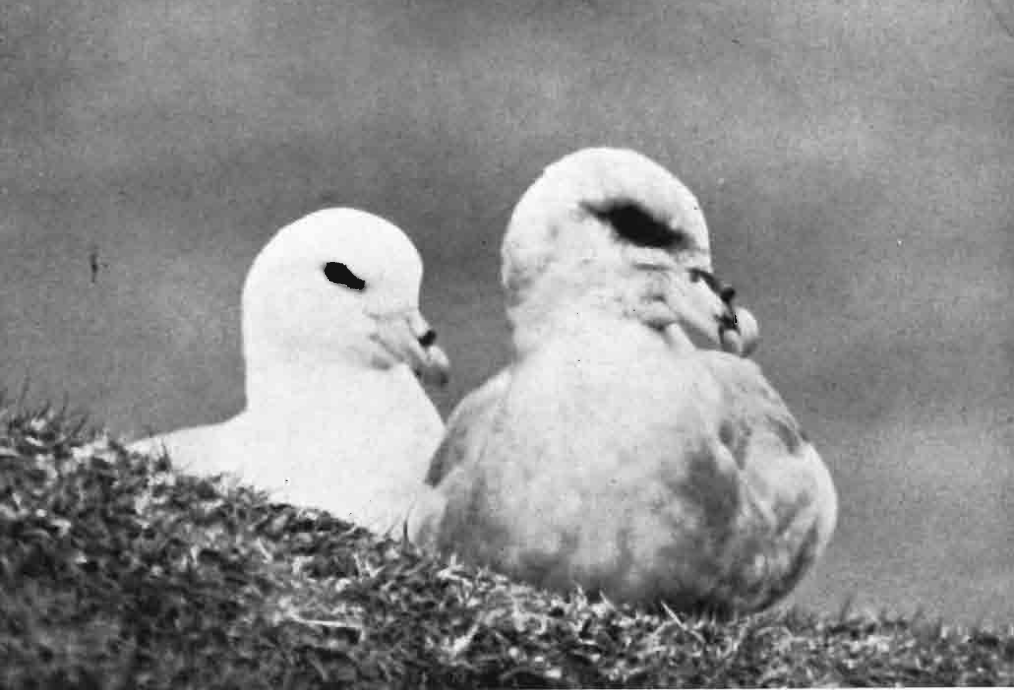


PLATE 5. Pair of Fulmars at Skaw, Unst, Shetland, in 1974 (p. 39). The dark morph or blue Fulmar predominates in the high Arctic and is rare here, although some breed, mainly in the Northern Isles. Colour morphs, such as the phases of skuas or bridling in Guillemots, occur independently of any racial variation.

*Photographs by Graham Eundy*





PLATE 6. Great Skuas and Oystercatchers on Unst, Shetland, in 1974 (pp. 40, 45). Although the Eonxies were not actually seen to kill the dead Oystercatcher, they will take birds when fish are not available.

*Photographs by Graham Bundy*





PLATES 7-8. A selection of photographs by Donald A. Smith.

PLATE 7 (a) Female Short-eared Owl at nest with owlets. (b) Tawny Owl returning to nest.





PLATE 8 (a) Great Owl with Common Shrew *Sorex araneus* returning to nest in barn. (b) Peregrine—female objecting vociferously to photographer's presence.

Photographs by Donald A. Smith



the Indian Ocean. By 1976 there seemed to be 15 British records involving 13 birds, all since 1951 and mostly in southern England in late spring. This is the first Scottish record and its photograph appeared in the 1975 Scottish Bird Report (9: plate 17a). With the gradual westward extension of its breeding range and its increasing frequency in England we can expect more. Sadly, Mr Simpson died before we went to press.—Ed.]

### Rufous Turtle Dove at Fair Isle

On 31st October 1974 G. J. Barnes had a brief view of what he initially thought to be a late migrant Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* at Setter, Fair Isle. Late in the afternoon he saw it again more clearly and gained the impression that it was large, very dark, with narrow buffish edges to the forewing and scapulars giving a very mottled effect in flight, and an obvious long grey rump. Its flight was atypical—more like Stock Dove and he had been very surprised to hear it clap its wings twice on rising from the ground. In failing light GJB and I relocated the bird on the stubble at Setter but it quickly flew away. My impressions were scant but complementary to his.

The following day I had several brief, mainly flight views, as I inadvertently flushed it from various patches of stubble. On each occasion it rose rapidly to fly away low with a direct flight that lacked the side to side actions of most Turtle Doves. Eventually I saw the bird feeding with two Rock Doves on stubble and was able to approach to about 50 m (54 yds.) and watch it through a telescope in good light for more than ten minutes. When it flew, of its own accord, it passed close overhead.

Although obviously a turtle dove *Streptopelia* sp. it appeared hefty, lacking the slimness associated with *turtur* and in flight the wings were broader based and rather rounded at the tips and the tail appeared a little shorter. On the ground it approached the Rock Doves in size and bulk. The plumage appeared dark, the upperparts lacking much of the rufous hue of Turtle Dove and the underparts appearing generally dark grey on the belly, flanks and underwing.

**Description** Crown, nape and neck grey, a little paler on forehead; mantle browner than neck; rump dark grey from lower back to the upper tail-coverts (very striking in flight). Bill greyish; eye ring probably dull reddish (difficult to see). Sides of face mainly grey, similar to crown; no collar marks present on neck (indicating it was a bird of the year). Underparts dark vinous-grey, uniform on belly and flanks but a little darker on upper breast and neck. Scapulars and wing coverts dark brown, feathers with narrow rufous fringes, narrowest on inner greater coverts, lower scapulars and tertials; outer median coverts and lesser coverts paler and more buff; dark grey stripe probably formed by outer 1-2 greater coverts, running

front to back part way across the wing; underwing as dark or a little darker than flanks, grey without vinous tinge and lacking brown colour of flight feathers. Tail very dark brown with narrow whitish border to all except central feathers.

We identified the bird as a Rufous Turtle Dove *S. orientalis*, our pooled descriptions agreeing with the reference works at our disposal except in one particular point. All the works consulted indicated that the margin to the tail is white in *turtur* and grey in *orientalis*. At no time were we able in the field to make this distinction between greyish or whitish.

R. A. BROAD

[This is the first Scottish and only the fifth British record. The species breeds and winters within Asia.—ED.]

### Barn Owl on dead Hedgehog

Whilst driving near Carrington, Midlothian, at about 23.00 BST on 30th July 1977 we saw quite clearly by the light of our headlights a Barn Owl perched on a dead Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* in the road. The Hedgehog looked fully grown and freshly run over, although not flattened, with some red flesh showing on the underside. From its position the owl looked as if it had been or was about to commence eating from the Hedgehog's underside but it flew off after about five seconds.

CHRISTINE and BOB DUNSIRE

[David Glue comments that he can trace no previous records of Barn Owls taking Hedgehogs or carrion.—ED.]

### Dusky Warbler at Fair Isle

On 13th October 1974 I. G. Black located a small, dull coloured, skulking *Phylloscopus* warbler in a dense patch of vegetation at Leogh on Fair Isle. His attention had been attracted to the bird by its harsh *tchak* call, given from cover. The call together with the details that he had been able to see led him to believe it was either a Dusky or a Radde's Warbler. R. D. Moore and D. R. Waugh soon joined IGB and between them they compiled a description that G. J. Barnes and I were able to confirm when we arrived.

We watched the bird at ranges down to 5 m as it intermittently came out of cover into view. It was feeding among thick rose bushes, occasionally emerging to feed along the top of a surrounding wall or creeping about on the side of a

nearby haystack. It made several short flights to a wire fence 15 m away and dropped to feed among the grass below it before returning to the safety of the bushes. In the bushes it was seen to climb the stems rather like a Reed Warbler and its upward progress on a few occasions brought it into the open to feed at the top of the bush, picking insects off the surface of the leaves. It was often seen to nervously flick its wings in a Dunnock-like fashion and would also swing its tail from side to side. Its very distinctive call was given on alighting and at times at regular short intervals from cover. The quality of this harsh call was likened to that of a *Sylvia* warbler or a Wren.

It appeared to be a little smaller and less sleek than a nearby Willow Warbler, its rather dumpy proportions being accentuated by shorter wings and tail. The bill appeared similar in proportions to Chiffchaff and although generally dark the base of the lower mandible was paler. The only feature to relieve the uniformity of its plumage was the narrow, dusky but distinct supercilium contrasting with a darker line through the eye and extending to the hind margin of the ear coverts. Otherwise the upperparts, wings and tail were uniformly greyish brown and the underparts were uniformly off-white, liberally suffused with buffy brown on the neck, breast, flanks and under tail-coverts. The legs appeared to be dark fleshy brown.

Having watched the bird at length we felt confident that it was a Dusky Warbler and this was confirmed the following day when it was relocated, again in dense vegetation, at another croft where it was later trapped.

**Description** (in the hand). Upperparts uniform greyish-brown, a little brighter on rump. Supercilium long, narrow and distinctly buffish white anterior to eye, becoming rusty buff above and posterior to eye; greyish black line through eye, becoming mottled rusty buff on ear-coverts; incomplete faint eye ring above and below eye only. Chin off-white with a buffish tinge; throat and upper breast rusty buff; belly greyish white with some creamy tips; under tail-coverts tinged rusty buff; flanks uniform buff and darker than belly. Wings uniform brown with fringes to flight feathers a little brighter and similar to mantle; underwing coverts with dark centres and broad pale tips; axillaries as flanks. Tail feathers abraded but all rounded, grey brown with broad, brighter fringes. Iris dark; upper mandible dark blackish brown but paler at cutting edge, lower mandible similar but base yellowish straw; tarsus medium brown anterior and yellowish posterior, claws grey-brown.

R. A. BROAD

[This is the third Scottish record, the second for Fair Isle, and the 15th in the British Isles. It now occurs almost annually in Britain in late autumn. It breeds in Siberia and winters in India and southeast Asia.—Ed.]

### Baltimore Oriole at Fair Isle

At 16.30 on 19th September 1974 A. R. Dean, B. R. Dean, P. D. Hyde and J. Ridley discovered a bird on Meoness at the south end of Fair Isle that they identified as an immature New World oriole of the genus *Icterus*. They watched it for two minutes before it flew strongly and disappeared near Reevea. Poor weather hampered the subsequent search and it was not rediscovered until the following day, in a patch of turnips at Shirva. The weather had improved and it was watched at length by many observers down to 15 m (c. 16 yds.) as it moved from crop to crop, stopping for long periods hidden in the vegetation and at other times feeding actively and perching in full view. It seemed tame, allowing close approach, but when it flew it did so strongly, sometimes moving as much as a quarter of a mile (400 m) at a time. It was identified as an immature Baltimore Oriole *Icterus g. galbula*, sufficient detail having been seen to distinguish it from the similar Bullock's Oriole *I. g. bullockii* and the Orchard Oriole *I. spurius*. The following details are based on the observations of the four original observers. The bird was not heard to call.

In size and shape it resembled no European passerine but superficially looked like an oversize finch, approximately the size of a Starling or a little smaller, but with a relatively longer tail which was square-ended or slightly notched. It regularly adopted a hunched attitude with its head drawn in. Its bill was very distinctive, long, slightly decurved and pointed.

**Description** Crown, sides of face, nape and mantle deep olive brown with an olive green tinge in strong light; at very close range the nape and mantle were seen to be faintly streaked darker (centres of feathers darker than the fringes); rump paler than mantle with a slight yellowish flush. Chin and throat yellowish white becoming bright yellow with distinct orange flush on upper breast and flanks; colour of lower breast and belly less intense than on upper breast and mainly yellow; under tail-coverts bright orange-yellow, very conspicuous especially in flight. Wings: primaries and secondaries mainly blackish but primaries with faint, narrow pale edgings, secondaries with conspicuous white edgings; coverts mainly blackish brown, greater and median coverts with narrow white fringes and broad white tips forming two distinct white wing bars (the lower a little broader than the upper). Tail: central feathers olive brown, a little darker than the mantle; outer feathers (probably about three pairs) bright orange yellow and very conspicuous, especially in flight. Eye dark; long, dagger-like bill about two-thirds the length of the head, pointed and slightly decurved, steel grey in colour but a little paler at the base of the lower mandible; legs short and blue-grey.

R. A. BROAD

[The Baltimore Oriole and Bullock's Oriole are now treated as a single species known as the Northern Oriole by the Americans. This is the first accepted record of Baltimore



Oriole for Scotland and the 12th for Britain (none for Ireland) all since 1958 and mostly in October in the southwest. It breeds in eastern North America and winters in the American tropics. One in Shetland on 26th September 1890 was not admitted to the list because in those days passerines were thought incapable of crossing the Atlantic unaided. This record should be reviewed.—Ed.]

## Obituary

### HUGH FRANCIS DOUGLAS ELDER

Frank Elder, who died on 1st December 1977, was not yet 16 when in October 1929 he became the youngest founder member of the Inverleith Field Club. Less than four years later he was a founder of the Midlothian Ornithological Club and he was secretary of that club and of the Isle of May Bird Observatory Committee from 1934 to 1955. In 1936 he was one of that small group who established the Scottish Ornithologists' Club and was a member of council from its inauguration until 1948. In 1945 he became a founder member of the Bird Observatories Committee, which was later taken over by the BTO.

In all this activity Frank Elder played a prominent part but most of all in connection with the Isle of May. In 1933 R. M. Lockley had erected a bird trap on Skokholm. This splendid effort, however, was largely an individual enterprise and the first co-operatively manned bird observatory in the British Isles was that established on the Isle of May in 1934. The fact that this was a place where numbers of migrants might be seen was discovered several years previously, chiefly by the Misses Rintoul and Baxter, but the observatory project was evolved following a camping expedition to the May by Frank Elder and George Waterston in September 1932. The MOC took this up and Frank went to endless trouble working out details of traps designed for particular localities, constructing models, and estimating exact quantities of materials required. The first entry in the log is initialled "F.E." and is dated 28th September 1934. On that day Frank and three others—W. B. Alexander, R. M. Lockley and E. V. Watson—landed on the island and the entry records: "... The shrubs, to form the artificial cover, wood, wire, netting and other materials for erecting the trap had been sent over earlier..." Five days later the first drive into the newly completed trap yielded four birds—Blackbird, Goldcrest, Song Thrush, and Wren. Over 40 years later this Low

Trap is still in use, proof of the excellence of its design and construction.

A seed merchant in Haddington, Frank was well known in agricultural circles in the east of Scotland. During the War he reached the rank of Major in the Royal Artillery and saw active service in northwest Europe. He had many interests besides ornithology. At school he was a skilful cricketer, in the 1930s he played tennis for the East of Scotland, and he became a more than useful golfer at North Berwick and Muirfield. The Royal Horticultural Society gave him an Award of Merit for developing a hybrid iris *Iris histriodes* x *Iris winogradowii* which has been named Frank Elder. As an angler, he was a weel-kent figure on the Don near Bridge of Alford. He made a highly specialist study of the dry-fly hackle and shortly before his death he had completed a book—*The Book of the Hackle*.

Those who knew Frank Elder, of the slow smile and the quiet jest, will remember him as the pleasantest of friends. Among ornithologists he should be remembered as one who played a leading part in ensuring that the foundations of the Isle of May Bird Observatory and of the SOC were well and securely laid.

B. A. STENHOUSE

## Reviews

**The Winter Birds.** By M. A. Ogilvie. London, Michael Joseph, 1976. Pp. 224; numerous colour and plain photographs and maps. 27 x 20 cm. £5.75.

This is a lovely book to look at. All who love the Arctic will want a copy for the photographs alone, as will many of those birdwatchers who know the Arctic birds only as winter visitors to temperate lands. The text comprises two brief chapters on the nature of the Arctic and the birds' adaptations, four on the birds themselves, and the obligatory chapter on conservation. The chapters on the birds comprise each species' natural history, with general notes on each group of species. The coverage is decidedly uneven, which is not entirely due to our uneven knowledge.

The book's main failing is revealed in the first two chapters. One would expect an account of Arctic birds to develop themes concerned with life in the Arctic, around which the histories of individual birds could be woven. These two chapters attempt to do so only superficially, perhaps satisfying on first reading to one unfamiliar with the subject, but no more. There is little critical discussion of controversial topics, such as the adaptive significance of polar whiteness. One wonders at times whether the author has even thought twice about what he has written. For example, we are told on pages 34-35 that the Snowy Owl, Ptarmigan, Raven and Snow Bunting are the four species of land bird regularly wintering in the Arctic; on page 42 the list is revised to Snowy Owl, Ptarmigan, Raven, and Arctic Redpoll; the Gyr Falcon is omitted from both lists. The distribution maps are based on one of only two outline maps. A more flexible approach would have allowed more detail to be conveyed for

many species. Another fault is the difficulty one has in tracing the original sources of information quoted. There are bibliographic lists but no mention in the text of which fact comes from which source, and some of the facts are not in the publications listed.

Given these criticisms, is this book worth buying? The answer is yes, if one is interested in the Arctic or in the summer life of the winter birds. It is only disappointing that this fascinating topic should not have been better treated.

J. J. D. GREENWOOD

**The Naturalist in Britain: a Social History.** By David Elliston Allen. London, Allen Lane, 1976. Pp. 292; 8 pp. monochrome photographs; 16 drawings. 21½ x 13½ cm. £9.00, £1.25 (paper).

It is alleged that Sydney Smith said he never read a book because "it prejudices a man so". Perhaps he was thinking of reviewers who detail every mistake and say little about the content or purpose of the book. Notwithstanding this I should point out that although the Midlothian Ornithological Club is mentioned the SOC is not.

The book traces in great detail the development of lay interest in natural history since about 1690. Interests changed according to fashion and popularity. They were stimulated by new discoveries, popular writers, co-operative effort, availability of microscopes and binoculars, and improvements in transport. Nature study in schools helped and photographers such as the Kearton brothers and R. B. Lodge provided stimulus early this century. At one period the vogue was for geological excursions, at others for the collection of butterflies, flowers, seashells or stuffed birds.

I found this well written book of great interest and it must have involved reading a vast number of minutes, reports and other documents and books. It examines the rise and fall of societies, the motives of their founders and supporters, and the sometimes extravagant attitudes adopted in pursuit of their objectives.

The value of the book is that such a survey has never before been carried out. It concludes with a consideration of recent developments. We are now in the cult of wilderness, ecology and environment. I believe the book is timely and will have served its purpose if we look again critically at our sometimes narrow interests in the light of the story it tells.

CHARLES G. CONNELL

**Ta Onomata Ton Poylion Tes Ellados: Die Volksnamen der Vogel Griechlands.** By Ant. X. Kanelle and W. Bauer. Athenai, Ekdotis Ellenikoy Oreibatikoy Syndesmoy, 1973. Pp. 101; some text figures. 24½ x 17 cm. DM7.50.

A checklist of Greek birds with scientific Greek, English, French and German names, and bibliography. Available from W. Bauer, D6000 Frankfurt/Main, Schneckenhofstr. 35, Germany.

**Bird Conservation in Europe.** By Stanley Cramp. London, HMSO, 1977. 58 pp., 27 plain photographs, 4 figures. 24½ x 15½ cm. £2.25.

Stanley Cramp is splendidly qualified to write on this subject and this is a high quality publication in every way. It is described as a Report prepared for the Environment and Consumer Protection Service of the EEC and has apparently been produced under the auspices of the Nature Conservancy Council. Coverage of this wide field is brief but comprehen-

sive. Most of the booklet is devoted to describing the more notable recent changes in numbers and distribution in Europe and the underlying reasons. Inevitably some of this makes depressing reading, particularly the decline of many wetland species and birds of prey as a result of loss of habitat, pollution and persecution. However the European viewpoint is valuable and does show how many of our problems in Britain could well be a lot worse. The booklet finishes with various suggestions as to what should be done in the present situation. These proposals are undoubtedly valid but the implementation of the more significant ones affecting land use will require nature conservation to have much greater political sway than it yet has. It is thorough and thought-provoking and is strongly recommended for all interested in wildlife conservation.

JOHN F. HUNT

**East Anglia and its Birds.** By Peter Tate. London, Witherby, 1977. Pp. 288; 56 monochrome photographs, 24 drawings, 2 maps. 24 x 16 cm. £6.50.

No region of Britain is more renowned for its ornithological interest than East Anglia. If Norfolk's wonderful range of habitats ensures it first place for bird interest, Suffolk, enriched by Minsmere, Walberswick and Havergate, is a close rival. This work begins with an account of human and natural history, followed by notes on East Anglian naturalists, including some rare characters, several but recently gone from us, whose influence on ornithological matters has been felt far beyond. Distribution and status of birds are discussed in chapters on the coast, the Fens, Breckland, the Broads, and farmland, giving us not only a good review of the birdlife but much general data respecting reserves, large estates, historical changes, and so on. These chapters should be very helpful to ornithologists making a first acquaintance with this marvellously rich region. The species list, filling the last 50 or so pages, is, as may be expected, an excitingly varied and lengthy one. To sum up: a finely produced, very readable and useful book.

WILLIAM AUSTIN

**The Hen Harrier.** By Donald Watson. Berkhamsted, T. & A. D. Poyser, 1977. Pp. 307, 4 colour plates, many plain illustrations, 15 diagrams and maps, 24 x 16 cm. £6.80.

This book describes the Hen Harrier, its habitat and its lifestyle. A brief introduction places the bird in context by describing all harrier species. The main text is in two sections, the first reviewing current knowledge of Hen Harriers and the second giving details of the bird in southwest Scotland. Figures show the breeding ranges of harrier species, the status of the Hen Harrier in Britain, ringing recoveries and analyses of sight records, and 30 tables include prey, pesticides in eggs and carcasses, and breeding data.

The information in the first part of the book is drawn from literature, personal communications with other workers, and the author's own experience. The result is a comprehensive account of how harriers live, how they fared in the past and how they are currently placed in Britain. The range of variation of each aspect of the Hen Harrier's ecology is described, but there is no summary and little attempt to relate these variables, so the reader has to refer to several places to see, for example, whether birds nesting closer together tend to rear more young, and whether this is related to a particular food supply. However, this is a minor drawback and at least the information is presented accurately, which is more than can be said of some other recent books about raptors.

The second part of the book relates the author's study in southwest

Scotland. Breeding in both moorland and forest habitats is described and contrasted but the most outstanding new contributions to harrier ecology are the detailed accounts of communal roosting, and an analysis of sight records, implying that cocks and hens prefer different habitats and possibly have different wintering areas. The last chapter discusses the harrier as a predator of game birds. It is encouraging to see the honest way in which the author admits that harriers take game, yet convincingly argues against the present widespread persecution of the bird.

The illustrations scattered throughout the book ensure the reader is kept in visual contact with the subject of the text. In my opinion the author's greatest artistic skill is in portraying birds within their habitat, so I was disappointed that the majority of such scenes were monochrome and not given full page status. So few colour plates is probably the result of the publishers' desire to produce a low cost book. This aside, I liked most of the pictures, in particular the sketches of harriers in flight and the vignettes of Whinchat, Golden Plover and butterflies.

In general, the book is a pleasant blend of hard fact, anecdote and illustration. I particularly enjoyed reading the descriptions of harriers and habitats in Galloway, these passages showing that Donald Watson illustrates as well with words as he does with brush or pen. Considering this monograph is also a significant contribution to the raptor literature it is cheap at £6.80, which is, after all, only a quarter of the price of a weekend at the Marine Hotel, North Berwick.

M. MARQUISS

**How Birds Live.** By Robert Burton. London, Elsevier-Phaidon, 1975. Pp. 160, over 140 colour illustrations, diagrams, maps; 29 x 22 cm. £3.95.

**Bird Life: an Introduction to the World of Birds.** By A. Cameron & C. Perrins. London, Elsevier-Phaidon, 1976. Pp. 160, many colour illustrations and diagrams; 31 x 24. £5.95.

These books are designed to appeal to the armchair ornithologist. Unfortunately, in attempting to be all-embracing, they are superficial. For instance, Perrins does not mention the fact that birds moult. Both books are aimed at a gullible public and it seems that the only motive in publishing them is to line the publishers' pockets. Perrins' book is the glossier but the illustrations by Cameron, although extremely capable, have little feeling.

J. H. BALLANTYNE

**Parent Birds and their Young.** By Alexander F. Skutch. Austin and London, University of Texas Press, 1976. Pp. 503; 116 plates; 18 tables; 19 figures; 29 x 22 cm. £19.20.

This book is a thorough survey of most aspects of breeding, ranging from pair formation to independence of young, and deals in detail with such topics as breeding seasons, territory, nests and eggs, incubation and parental care. It is concerned solely with ecological aspects that can be studied in the field, and does not deal with the physiology of breeding, which has formed the subject of several other recent books.

Skutch has worked for more than 40 years in tropical America, and has probably spent more hours in hides watching more kinds of birds than anyone else. He has written several previous books, and more than 200 papers on birds, plants, conservation and philosophy. His Neotropical experience gives him a refreshingly different view from that of most other writers. Subjects that get only scant attention in most books receive in-depth treatment here, including nest-construction, helpers at the nest, the education of young birds, and the use of nests as dormitories outside

the breeding season. The book includes extensive coverage of the literature for other regions and no other recent book covers this field so thoroughly.

The interpretation of many of the phenomena that Dr Skutch discusses will almost certainly change as more information becomes available, but in the final chapter I was interested to see that he has stuck to an early view on the evolution of breeding rates in birds. In contrast to David Lack and others, he holds the view that breeding rates evolved to offset the usual adult mortality, and that many species (at least in the humid tropics) hold their breeding rates well below the maximum possible in order to conserve resources. The difficulty with this view is in explaining how such constraints could have evolved, because natural selection should favour those individuals that contribute most offspring to future generations, rather than those that hold back for the good of the group.

The book seems to be aimed at the intelligent layman who has not dipped widely into the ornithological literature, but I think that everyone will find something new and interesting in it. The author writes a leisureed and graceful prose that is particularly easy to read. Considering its content, the book is good value. It is also very well produced, firmly bound, printed on good quality paper and illustrated with well chosen photographs and drawings.

I. NEWTON

**Bird Count : a practical guide to bird surveys.** By Humphrey M. Dobinson. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1976. Pp. 192; over 100 drawings, figures, maps histograms and tables. 20 x 13 cm. £2.75, 75p (paperback).

This book is intended to be a guide, for beginners, to the practical aspects of counting birds. It is, however, more than this, and can be fairly labelled as an introduction to practical ornithology in general. Advice is given on how to watch birds, including hints on the identification of 60 common British birds, and on how to take notes on unfamiliar species. Alas, there is no illustration showing the topography of a bird, which novices would have found useful. The problems and techniques of counting migratory, breeding and roosting populations of birds are described lucidly, with pertinent allusions to published results. Again, a minor criticism is that no mention is made of photography as a device in assessing the numbers of birds in flocks. A chapter dealing with the special art of sea-watching is particularly instructive, and also stimulating is the section on nest recording. The reader is advised of the best literature, while the book is laced with interesting information drawn from these sources. A well-structured and informative book, which every beginner (and expert) should buy and read.

JAMES REID

**Current literature** Periodical articles and other material such as unpublished reports are listed here. Any work acknowledging the use of a significant amount of Scottish data is included, as well as purely Scottish studies. Most items are available for reference in the club library, but we would be grateful to authors for reprints of their work published out-with the main ornithological journals.

Food consumption of Red Grouse in relation to the age and productivity of Heather. C. J. Savory, 1978. *Journal of Animal Ecology* 47: 269-282.

*Birds of the River Devon : SOC (Stirling Branch) Survey—1977.* R. J. Young et al. (No date, address or price).

Notes on the Birds of the Island of Elgg. W. J. Edwards, 1977. (Unpublished report).

- Various papers and notes on the wildfowl, waders, etc of the Hawick (Roxburghshire) area. T. W. Dougall. (Unpublished reports).
- Common and Black-headed Gulls feeding on road corpses. P. K. Kinnear, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 80.
- Identification of hybrid or leucistic gull, M. Davies, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 80-82.
- Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1976. J. T. R. Sharrock and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 11-33.
- An analysis of the recoveries of British-ringed Fulmars. M. A. Macdonald, 1977. *Bird Study* 24 : 208-214.
- The breeding biology of the Stonechat and Whinchat. R. J. Fuller and D. E. Glue, 1977. *Bird Study* 24 : 215-228.
- Westward vagrancy of Siberian passerines in autumn 1975. K. Baker, 1977. *Bird Study* 24 : 233-242.
- The role of disease in the ecology of British raptors. A. Greenwood, 1977. *Bird Study* 24 : 259-265.
- The numbers of Canada Geese in Britain, 1976. M. A. Ogilvie, 1977. *Wildfowl* 28 : 27-34.
- The mortality of Yorkshire Canada Geese. C. B. Thomas, 1977. *Wildfowl* 28 : 35-47. (Includes data on Beaully Firth flock).
- Further mass seabird deaths from paralytic shellfish poisoning. I. H. Armstrong, J. C. Coulson, P. Hawkey, M. J. Hudson, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 58-68.
- Establishment of weight hierarchies in the broods of House Martins. D. M. Bryant, 1978. *Ibis* 120 : 16-26.
- Report of the Forth Ornithological Working Party, 4 vols. L. H. Campbell (ed) 1978. (Copy in SOC library; inquiries for copies to NCC, Edinburgh.)
- Clyde Area Bird Report* 1976. I. P. Gibson (ed) 1978. Obtainable from The Ranger, Muirshiel Country Park, nr Lochwinnoch; price 50p, (65p including postage).
- The effect of Hooded Crows on hill sheep farming in Argyll, Scotland. D. Houston, 1977. *J. Appl. Ecol.* 14 : 1-30.
- Cape Wrath : A new Kemorovo group orbivirus from *Ixodes uriae* (Acari : Ixodidae) in Scotland. A. J. Main et al. 1976. *J. Med. Ent.* 13 : 304-308.
- Avalon and Clo Mor two new Sakhalin group viruses from the North Atlantic. A. J. Main et al. 1976. *J. Med. Ent.* 13 : 309-315. (Seabird viruses from Sutherland).
- Conference : The changing seabird populations of the North Atlantic, Aberdeen University 1977, abstracts. *Ibis* 120 : 101-136.
- Observations on the effects of low-flying aircraft at seabird colonies on the coast of Aberdeenshire, Scotland. G. M. Dunnet, 1977. *Biol. Conserv.* 12 : 55-63.
- Further tests of radio-marking on Red Grouse. A. N. Lance, A. Watson, 1977. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 41 : 579-582.
- The social and spatial organization of winter communal roosting in Rooks. I. R. Swingland, 1977. *J. Zool.* 182 : 509-528.
- The Peregrine in NE Scotland in relation to food and to pesticides. D. Weir, 1977. *Pilgrimsfalk* : report from Peregrine conference, Sweden. (Obtainable from SNF, Kungsholms strand 125, 112 34 Stockholm.)
- The Edinburgh Natural History Society Journal* 1977. (Includes 'Terns and the big gulls' by R. W. J. Smith.)
- A Report on the Peregrine Falcon in the Loch Lomond/Trossachs area of Scotland in 1977.* J. Mitchell, 1977. (NCC report.)
- Report on the heronry at Gartjairn Wood, West Strathgushe, for 1977.* J. Mitchell, 1977. (NCC report.)
- Report on a breeding wader census carried out on the Ring Point, Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve in 1977.* J. Mitchell, 1977. (NCC report.)
- Loch Lomond Bird Report No 6* 1977. J. Mitchell (comp.) 1978. (Unpublished report.)

- Diving times of Great Northern Divers on the sea. P. K. Kinnear, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 126-7.
- Blackcaps killed by striking window panes. D. Macdonald, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 132-3.
- Possible polygamy by Red-throated Divers. G. Bundy, 1978. *British Birds* 71 : 179-181.
- Ayrshire Bird Report* 1977. R. H. A. Hogg (ed) 1978.
- Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* holding feeding territories on the Ythan estuary. D. C. Cook, 1978. *Bird Study* 25 : 11-22.

## Letters

### Predation of seabirds by seals

Further to the note on this subject (9: 342-7), between seven and ten years ago, from the cliff top about three miles east of St Andrews, Fife, during the summer months (probably July or August) two adult Herring Gulls were on the water fairly close together. Other gulls were present on the water but not in the immediate vicinity. I think I would have noticed if one bird had been sick but at this date I could make no firm statement on the matter (I am a surgeon and often have sick birds to care for). A seal surfaced near one gull, took it in its mouth and submerged with it. The companion gull displayed distress. The seal surfaced with the gull still in its mouth and half alive. The process was repeated before it surfaced a third time when the bird appeared to be dead. The seal then submerged with the bird and I saw neither of them again. The companion gull displayed little interest towards the end of this rather horrible episode. I cannot recall the species of seal. Both occur in these waters but I believe Grey Seals are much commoner.

D.E.R.

You have asked for records of predation of birds by seals, as a postscript to a note (9: 342-7). May I draw your attention to a note I contributed (1959) to *British Birds* (52: 383-4)? In this I by inference suggested that Gannets and Great Black-backed Gulls appeared to deliberately avoid Mackerel shoals being driven inshore by seals at St Kilda, and probably because they realised that seals were present. I also recorded an attack by a seal on a diving Gannet viewed from a cliff above the shoal, though the Gannet escaped. During the same month, also at St Kilda, a Gannet was seen to leave the water distressed after a dive, and a seal seen to appear at the same site as it got away.

DAVID BODDINGTON.

[The new *Handbook of British Mammals* (2nd edn., ed. Cor-



bet and Southern, 1977) states under Common Seal: "Occasionally take birds (ducks, gulls)" and under Grey Seal "Occasionally take birds swimming on surface of sea."—Ed.]

### Predators and proverbs

The succinct and memorable note of E. S. da Prato (Sparrowhawk taking Sedge Warbler from a ringer's hand 9 : 381) described how a Sparrowhawk treated a photographic arrangement as a temporary feeding station. I should like to speculate that this observation also throws light on the poorly studied field of the evolution of proverbs. The Accipitridae, it would seem, have evolved actions that correspond remarkably well to the old saying "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

C. J. HENTY

## Notices

**American connection** A club member, Mr Brian E. Cassie who lives in South Carolina, USA, has very kindly offered to help other SOC members who may be visiting his state or Massachusetts, and who would like to spend time birdwatching in the area. Any member who wishes to take up this offer should contact the club secretary for Mr Cassie's address.

**Swedish connection** Mr Stefan Ericsson, of Hemvagen 8, S-902 33 Umea, a bookshop customer from north-central Sweden, would like to contact ornithologists in Scotland and kindly offers to guide visitors in his area and to give advice on birdwatching in northern Fenno-Scandia. Birds such as Thrush Nightingale, Greenish Warbler, Scarlet Rosefinch and Rustic Bunting breed locally, and early this spring he located 47 Tengmalm's Owls in one night !

**Dead birds** Glasgow Museums would be grateful to receive any dead birds you might come across. Contact Mr C. E. Palmar, Natural History Department, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow G3 8AG (phone 041-334 1134). Other museums also welcome freshly dead specimens, even of common species.

## The Scottish Ornithologists' Club

### THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

#### MARINE HOTEL, NORTH BERWICK

27th - 29th October 1978

### PROGRAMME

#### Friday 27th October

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 4.30 - 9 p.m. | Conference office open for members and guests to register and collect name cards. |
| 6.15 p.m.     | Meeting of Council.   |
| 7 - 9 p.m.    | Dinner.   |

8.30 - 9.30 p.m. FILM AND SLIDE PROGRAMME in the lecture theatre.  
9.30 p.m. Lounges open for informal discussions and refreshments.

### Saturday 28th October

8 - 9 a.m. Breakfast.  
8.45 - 9.15 a.m. Conference office open for registration.  
9.20 a.m. Official opening of the Conference by the President, Andrew T. Macmillan, in the lecture theatre.  
**Lectures on "Game birds"**  
9.30 - 10.30 a.m. LECTURE on 'Game bird habitats' by Dr Art N. Lance, Nature Conservancy Council, Edinburgh.  
10.30 - 11 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee.  
11 - 11.55 a.m. LECTURE on 'The Partridge' by Dr Dick Potts, Director of Research, The Game Conservancy, Fordingbridge.  
11.55 a.m.-12.50 p.m. LECTURE on 'Capercaillie and Grouse' by Dr Bob Moss, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Banchory.  
1 p.m. INTERVAL for lunch.  
2 p.m. Afternoon free for private excursions.  
4 - 5 p.m. Tea.  
5.30 p.m. 42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CLUB in the main Dining Room.

#### Business :

- (1) Apologies for absence.
- (2) Approval of minutes of 41st Annual General Meeting of the Club held at the Marine Hotel, North Berwick, on 21 January 1978.
- (3) Matters arising.
- (4) Report of council for session 41.
- (5) Approval of accounts for session 41.
- (6) Appointment of auditor.
- (7) Election of new office bearers and members of council. The council recommends the following elections :  
**President** Miss V. M. Thom to replace A. T. Macmillan who has completed his term of office.  
**Vice-President** Dr I. T. Draper to replace Miss V. M. Thom.  
**Members of council** J. M. S. Arnott and Mrs H. Halliday to replace Dr I. T. Draper, and J. Edelsten who is due to retire by rotation.
- (8) Any other business.

7.30 for 8 p.m. ANNUAL DINNER in the lecture theatre (dress informal).

### Sunday 29th October

8.15 - 9.15 a.m. Breakfast.  
9.30 - 11 a.m. A series of short talks on ornithological research in Scotland will be given : "Pied Wagtail roosts in Perth" by Bob McMillan; "Waders on the Firth of Forth" by Stan da Prato, and "The moult migration of Yorkshire Canada Geese to the Beaully Firth" by Alan Walker.  
11 - 11.30 a.m. INTERVAL for coffee.

- 11.30 a.m. - FILM 'Halcyon' presented by Gordon Hollands, who produced the film for European Wetlands Year.  
 12.50 p.m. CLOSING remarks by the President.  
 12.50 p.m. CLOSING remarks by the President.  
 1 p.m. INTERVAL for lunch.  
 2 p.m. CONFERENCE DISPERSES; informal private excursions.

### Conference Office

Outwith the registrations hours the Conference Office and the Exhibition Room will be open most of the weekend for members to see the exhibits. A wide selection of new books from the SOC Bird Bookshop will be on display for purchase or orders, and paintings by wildlife artists will be displayed for sale in these rooms. In addition to exhibits by various organisations, Messrs Charles Frank Ltd. will have their usual extensive selection of binoculars and telescopes.

### 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 16mm films. These must however be submitted beforehand to the Conference Film Committee and should be sent by 20th October 1978 at latest to the Club Secretary, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT. 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.

### INFORMATION

1. **General** The conference will be held in the Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Numbers staying in the hotel are limited to 200, but 240 can be accommodated for the annual dinner and 270 in the main lecture theatre. Priority at the dinner and lectures will be given to those staying at the Marine Hotel. There are twin bedded rooms but very few single rooms and, for the benefit of others, members are urged to make arrangements to share with a friend. In addition there are 6 four bedded rooms and 5 seven bedded rooms; generous reductions are made to members sharing these rooms providing that all beds in the rooms are filled. If more than 150 members and guests stay at the Marine Hotel, the SOC is guaranteed the sole use of the whole premises for the entire weekend.
2. **Reservations** at the hotel must be made direct with the Manager, but in order to check numbers these **must be on a form only obtainable from club secretary** (see enclosed Booking Sheet). As there are fewer seats in the lecture hall than in recent years, early booking is advised to avoid disappointment. **Booking should be made before Friday 29th September 1978.**
3. **Charges** The special Marine Hotel conference charge which covers the annual dinner, but not wines at the dinner nor the registration fee (see below), is £24.00. This includes bed, all meals and coffees, service charge and VAT, from Friday afternoon to Sunday lunch inclusive. For those prepared to share in the four bedded rooms there is a reduction of £4 for the week-end, and for those in the seven bedded rooms a reduction of £8, provided that all beds in the rooms are occupied. All resident charges, except the registration fee, are payable direct to the Marine Hotel.
4. **Registration** Everyone attending the conference must register at the conference office on arrival. The registration fee, which must be paid in advance when booking, is £2 for the whole conference or £1.25 if attending for one day only. Members attending only the Annual General Meeting do not require to pay a registration fee.

5. **Annual Dinner** The cost for members and guests staying at the Marine Hotel is included in the special conference charge payable to the hotel. Advance booking by non-residents is essential; tickets must be paid for in advance when returning the conference booking sheet. The cost is £5.00 per person, inclusive of service charge and VAT, but not wines. Wine for the dinner can be booked during the conference.
6. **Other meals** Non-residents can obtain dinner (£4.00 fully inclusive) on Friday night and lunch (£3.00 fully inclusive) on both Saturday and Sunday, by prior arrangement with the hotel reception staff. Morning coffees for all are included in the registration fee.

#### BRANCH MEETINGS

Will members please note that the dates of the first Meetings of Branches next winter will be as follows :

<b>September</b>	19th	Edinburgh, Inverness and Wigtown (in Newton Stewart)
	20th	Ayr, St Andrews and Thurso
	21st	Dundee, New Galloway and Stirling
	27th	Dumfries
<b>October</b>	2nd	Aberdeen and Glasgow

**Dundee Branch** venue for the first meeting (above) and the last winter meeting will be the Chaplaincy Centre, University of Dundee.

**Stirling Branch** See Syllabus for location of new venue.

The venue and times for all other meetings is unchanged; full details of all winter meetings are published in the Syllabus of Lectures enclosed with this number.

#### NEW BRANCH SECRETARIES

The following new Secretaries have been appointed :

**Aberdeen** Alistair Duncan, 12 Cairncry Avenue, Aberdeen. Tel. 0224 43717.

**Dundee** Dr Kathleen Watson, 39 Clepington Road, Dundee. Tel. 0382 41095.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS — IMPORTANT

All members who pay their subscription by Banker's Order, and those who have a Deed of Covenant, were sent a letter by the secretary which was enclosed with the spring number of the journal.

The response to this letter was very gratifying and the secretarial staff would like to thank those members who replied so quickly. At the time of writing (mid June) just over half of the 1300 members who received a letter had replied.

**The secretary urges all those who have not yet replied to do so—as soon as possible please.** Not only is there a great deal of work to be done in the office, but members' Banks have to be notified of a change in the subscription in good time before 1st October in order to correct their computer.

If you have mislaid your letter or the form, please write to the secretary at 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT, for another.

#### MAJORCA

It has been suggested that, if there is sufficient interest from SOC members, it might be possible to arrange a charter flight for a week's

holiday in the spring of 1979. To test possible demand, will anyone who is seriously interested please advise the Secretary, SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT by post before 31 August 1978, and enclose an sae for a reply which would be sent some time after that date.

### INVERNESS BRANCH EXCURSIONS

**Saturday 23 September** GARMOUTH and LOSSIE FOREST. Leader Roy Dennis. Leave at 8 am (lunch and tea).

**Sunday 22 October** UDALE BAY and ETHIE. Leader Roger Broad. Leave 9.30 am (lunch and tea).

Both excursions meet at the Cathedral car park, Inverness. Names and further information from Mrs J. Morrison, 83 Dochfour Drive, Inverness IV1 5ED (tel. 0463 32666). Please send s.a.e. if writing.

## Branch and Group News

Stirling Members from the Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh branches attended the Stirling branch Argyll weekend in March based at a comfortable country cottage near Ford. The weather on Saturday was excellent, as were the birds, and a good day in the field was rounded off in the evening by a superb meal prepared by Mrs H. Greig. Sunday provided a good half day in the field. Amongst the 83 species seen was a Light-bellied Brent Goose. The Stirling branch hope to repeat this weekend next year.

SANDY MITCHELL

**Edinburgh** In December three members from the Glasgow branch, D. Clugston, R. Forrester and B. Lambie, took part in 'A Glasgow Evening' The evening was very successful and we have been asked to field a team to represent us in Glasgow this coming winter. In March Nick Dymond nobly came to our rescue with a talk on birds of Gambia when Mr T. C. White had to cancel because of illness. The winter programme ended with our AGM and members' night. Dr Derek Langslow described a visit to the Iberian Ringing Group, John Murray finished his talk on the Highlands and Islands, and Miss Whitehead showed slides of Robins.

Daphne Peirse-Duncombe organized a wine and cheese party at 21 Regent Terrace in April to raise money for club funds. About 65 members and their friends attended and all appeared to have a good time. The library was open and aroused much interest, particularly by first-time visitors. There was a raffle, a vast amount of food and a plentiful supply of wine. It was a most successful evening, especially as it raised £77. Unfortunately Daphne, who did all the hard work organizing the event, was unable to be at the party because of her father's illness.

M. ADAMS

## Current Notes

*These notes include unchecked reports and are not intended as a permanent record, nor will they be indexed. Please send records via local recorders at the end of January, April, July and October.*

**Departure of winter migrants** After a disappointing winter for Shore Larks, 16 passed through Tynninghame (E Loth) in Feb, 2 remained at Greg Ness (Kinc) until 15 Mar, and one visited Hackley Head (Aber) on 26 Apr. **Great Northern Divers** rose to 25-30 in Sinclair's Bay (Caith) on 5 Mar, **Green-winged Teal** *A. c. carolinensis* appeared at Strathbeg (Aber) and Scatness (Shet), **King Eiders** off Arran and Troon (Ayr), a **Snowy Owl** in

N Uist, a **European Whitefront** *A. a. albifrons* (a rare bird in Scotland) at Forvie (Aber) and a **Gyr Falcon** at Murray's Monument (Kirk). **Lapland Buntings** dropped in at Rattray Head (Aber) and Fair Isle in mid Apr, up to 3 at Fair Isle on 2 May, and one at Noss Head (Caith) on 6th. Fair Isle had 1,000 **Fieldfares** on 23 Apr and 200 **Bramblings** on 5 May. From a boat in Shetland in early May, the local recorder and the warden of Fetlar saw every diver species in summer plumage in 20 minutes—hundreds of **Red-throated**, one **Black-throated**, 8 **Great Northern** and 2 (yes, 2) **White-billed**.

**Sea passage** Fulmars passed Fraserburgh (Aber) at a rate of 5,000 E per hour on 29 Jan. Interesting movements occurred in Apr, mostly in on-shore winds. There were 9 blue Fulmars in the NE, max 7 at Girdle Ness (Kinc) on 28th. Two **Cory's Shearwaters** passed Fife Ness on 15th and one was off Turnberry (Ayr) in Jun. At Noss and South Heads (Caith) 23+ **Great Skuas** flew N in 5 hrs from 16-27 Apr, and at Fraserburgh **Kittiwakes** flew W at 4,200/hr on 22nd. A **Roseate Tern** reached Peterhead (Aber) on 29th.

**Spring arrivals** In general, first dates of most species were on time but main arrivals were late. Early dates were **Black Redstart** at Dunure (Ayr) on 11 Feb, 2 **Sandwich Terns** in E Lothian on 5 Mar (although both species may have wintered) and **House Martin** in Edinburgh on 29 Mar.

Early spring brought some interesting arrivals, with **Dark-breasted Barn Owl** *T. a. guttata* at Newburgh (Aber) on 31 Mar, and in early Apr a **Marsh Harrier** at Strathbeg, a few **Black Redstarts** on the E coast, up to 160 **Robins** at Fair Isle, and several **Hawfinches** in Shetland (4), Fair Isle and Wick (Caith) (2).

With SE-NE anticyclonic winds from late Apr came the bulk of the migrants, until a lull in mid May. **White Storks** appeared at Maybole (Ayr) and Reston (Ber), a **Spoonbill** or two at Strathbeg, **Marsh Harriers** at Aberlady (E Loth) and Fair Isle, **Red-footed Falcon** on Yell (Shet), **Quail** at Noss Head, **Spotted Crake**, 3 **Corncrakes** and 3 **Dotterels** on Fair Isle, **Kingfisher** at Wick (Caith), **Hoopoe** at Tynninghame, and **Wrynecks** along the E coast, max c.30 on Isle of May. Fair Isle also had **Calandra Lark**, 2 **Short-toed Larks**, up to 45 **Ring Ouzels** and 350 **Wheatears** in a day, **Thrush Nightingale**, **Red-backed Shrike**, 2 more **Hawfinches**, and 2 **Ortolan Buntings**. A **Grey-headed Wagtail** *M. f. thunbergi* was identified at Rattray Head, and a hybrid **Swallow** x **House Martin** with a big arrival at Cruden Bay (Aber).

Exotic arrivals resumed in late May and June with a **White Stork** over Edinburgh, **Honey Buzzard** at Fair Isle, **Marsh Harriers** at Insh (Inv) and Drem (E Loth), 5+ **Ospreys** at Fair Isle, **Hobby** at Aberlady, **Temminck's Stints** on Wick River (1-2), Wester River (Caith) and Aberlady, 2 **Curlew Sandpipers** on Wester River, and a **Caspian Tern** at Fair Isle. A **Golden Oriole** sang at Duddingston (Midl) and 2 were on Fair Isle, as well as another **Thrush Nightingale** and some **Bluethroats**. Bluethroats also landed at St Abbs, including a **White-spotted** *L. s. cyanecula*, and a **Red-spotted svecica** sang inside fruit netting next door to the county ranger in Aberlady. Fair Isle had **Great Reed Warbler**, 2 **Marsh Warblers**, **Tawny** and 3 **Red-throated Pipits**, 18 **Red-backed Shrikes**, a **Crossbill** and a suspected **Parrot Crossbill**, and **Rustic Bunting**. An **Icterine Warbler** stopped at St Abbs and there were several **Red-backed Shrikes** on the E coast.

**Rare summering birds** The **Black-browed Albatross** returned to Hermaness on 23 Mar. The following turned up in suitable breeding habitats in the E and C Highlands in May: a pair of **Scaup**, **Whimbrel** in song, a pair of **Temminck's Stints** and 2 single in song at a regular site, a pair of **Red-necked Phalaropes** at last year's successful breeding site, the usual **Wrynecks**, and a pair of **Bramblings**.

D. J. BATES

Scottish Ornithologists' Club

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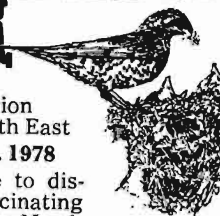
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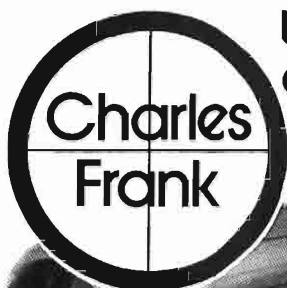
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