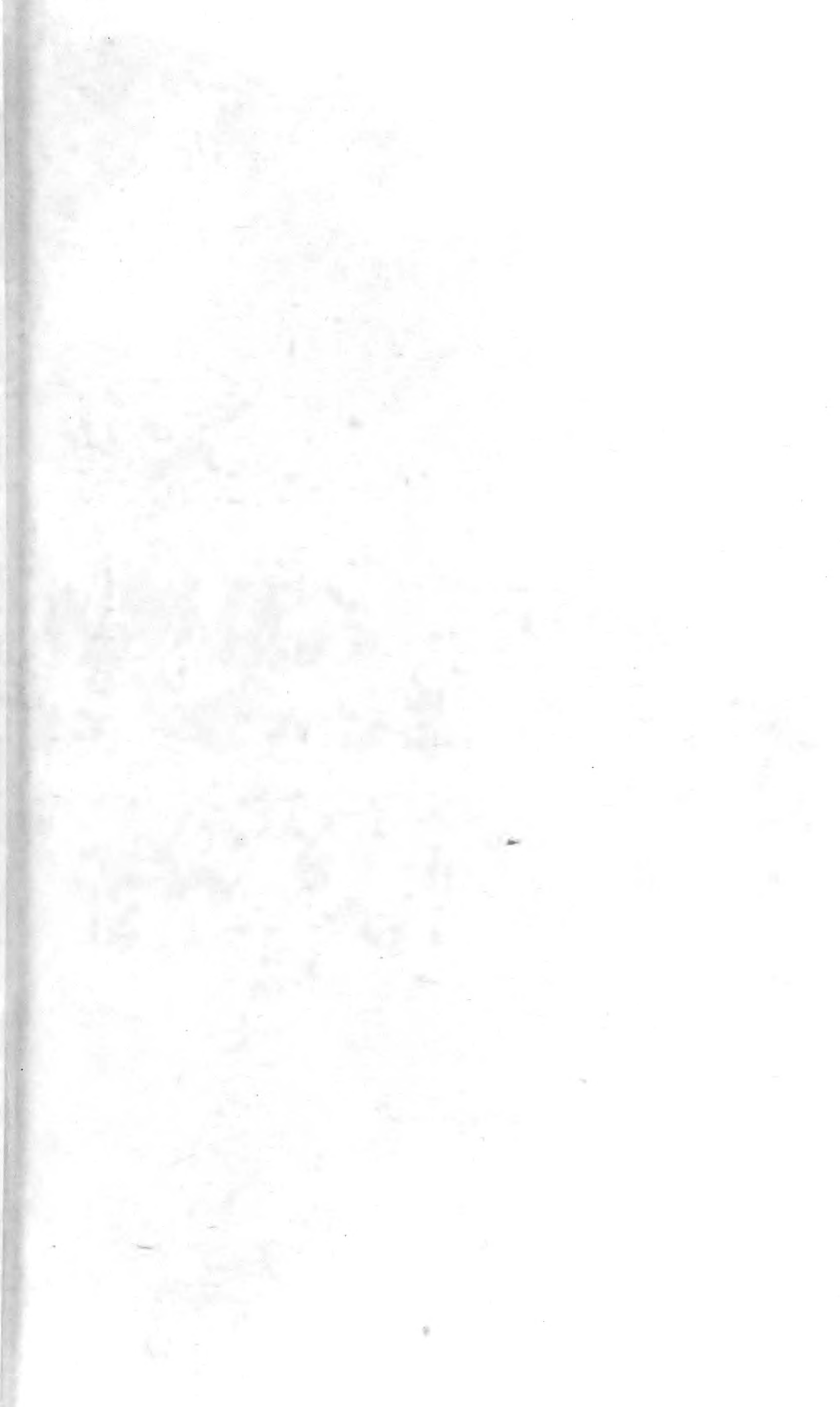




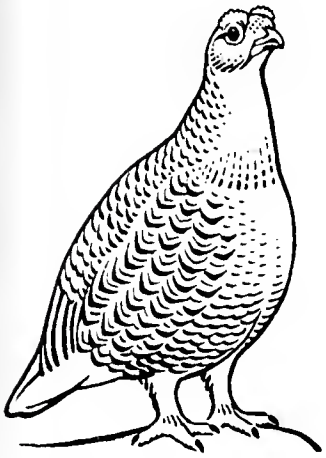
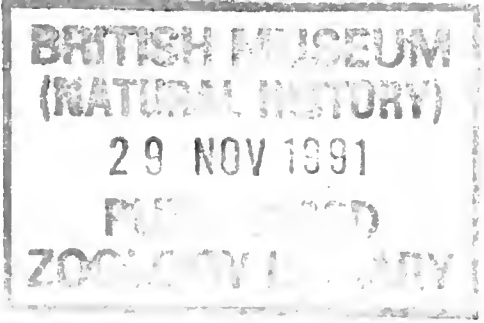
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(5) 'Reviews' and 'Short reviews', which are listed together under these headings in alphabetical order of authors reviewed.

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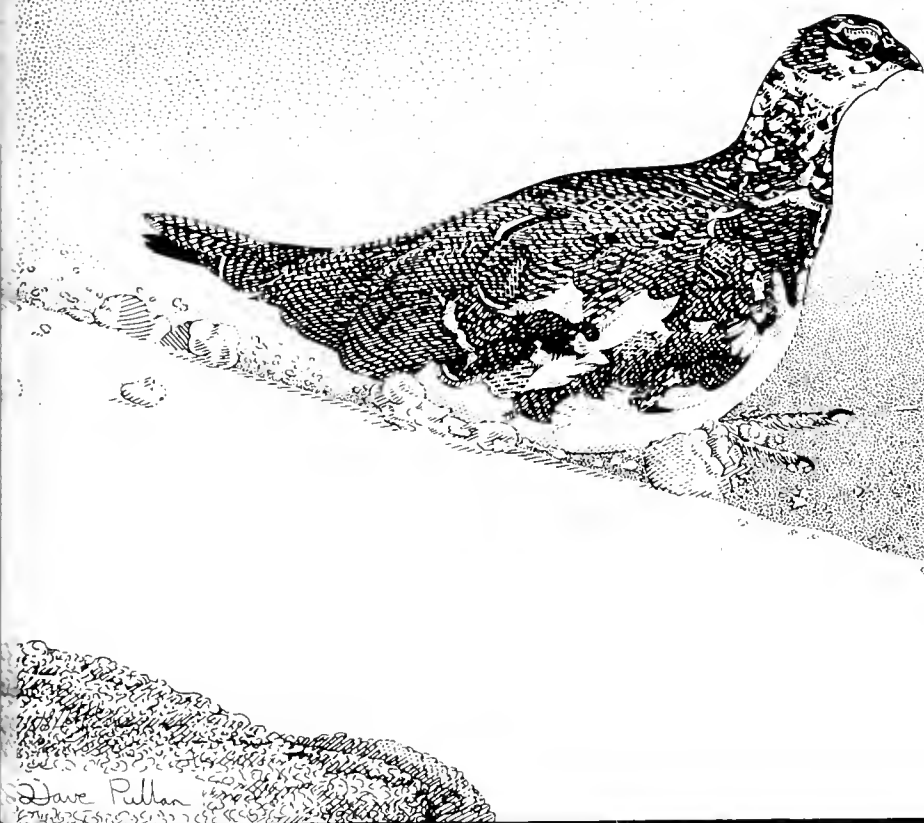
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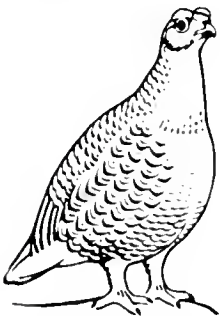
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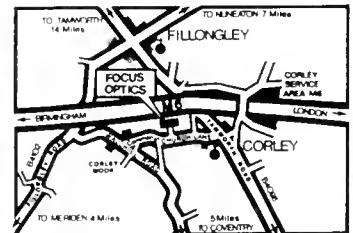
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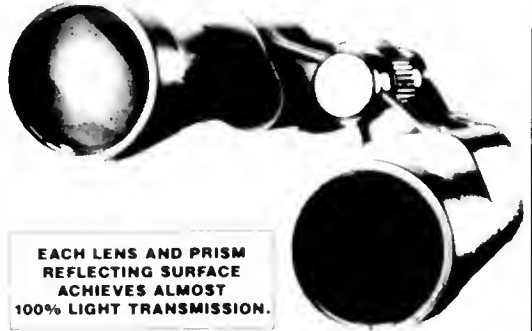
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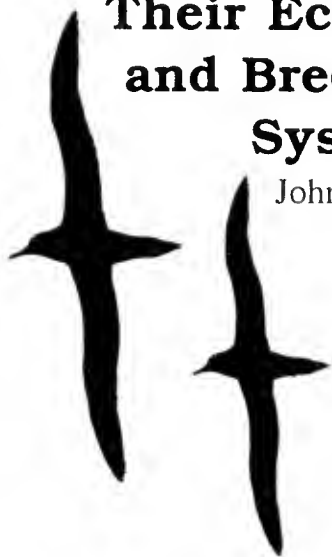
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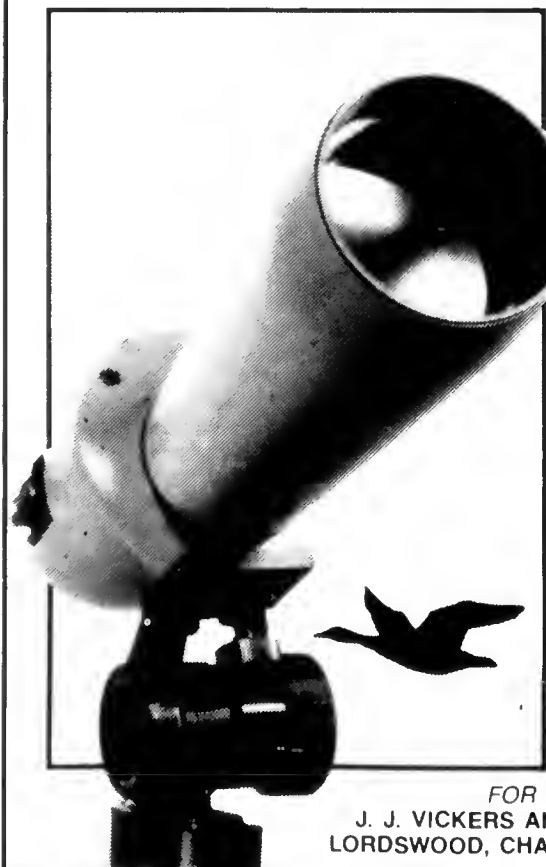


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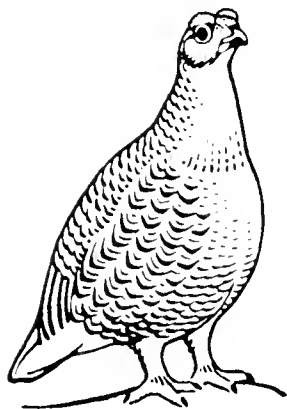
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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1991



European news

This twenty-eighth selection includes records from 26 countries. We are pleased to be able to draw attention to the addition of Egypt to the list of countries represented. New contacts in unrepresented West Palearctic countries will be very welcome. The official correspondents whose detailed six-monthly reports are summarised here are acknowledged at the end. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country.

If you have made observations in any of the countries included here, and do not know to whom records should be sent, we suggest that you send a copy of your records to the relevant 'European news' correspondent listed at the end of this summary; for countries not included here, we suggest that you send them to *British Birds*, and we shall do our best to pass them on to the appropriate person.

Records awaiting formal verification by national rarities committees are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Ostrich *Struthio camelus* EGYPT First report for about five years: male in Wadi Allaqi (east of Lake Nasser), in January 1990 (first confirmed record within Western Palearctic since 1982). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* EGYPT First suggestion of breeding since 1935: pair displaying on Great Bitter Lake during June-July 1989.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* TUNISIA First breeding record: several present

during summer and one pair with one young at Garaet Kelbia on 7th July 1990.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* EGYPT First record: off Port Said, on 10th March 1989. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* POLAND First record: single found dead on Hel Peninsula on 1st April 1990.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* EGYPT Second record for Egyptian Red Sea: near Suez on 14th July 1989 (third record for Red Sea).

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* ESTONIA Second record: Pärnu on 26th November 1989 (first was in November 1983, *Brit. Birds* 77: 233).

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* LATVIA Amendment to first breeding record: inspection in January 1990 of nesting colony on Lake Lubāna indicated that 16 nests were used, not five (*Brit. Birds* 83: 8). Second breeding record: two nests in West Latvia in 1989. UKRAINE Census: 22 pairs in 1990 in Western Ukraine in Ivano-Frankivsk Region (recolonisation in 1989, after break of 105 years, *Brit. Birds* 83: 8).

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus* FRANCE Second record (first this century): Camargue on 24th March 1990* (cf. recent records in Austria and Cyprus, *Brit. Birds* 82: 321; 83: 222).

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* EGYPT First record since 1903: eight on Lake Nasser, 50 km south of Aswan on 21st March 1988. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens* EGYPT Highest-ever count: 64 in Abu Simbil area, on 17th June 1990 (previously considered rare passage visitor, now apparently regular summer visitor to southern part of Lake Nasser). FRANCE Second record: Marais d'Olonne, Vendée, on 30th April 1990*. (Cf. recent records in Israel and Austria, *Brit. Birds* 83: 8, 223.)

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* FAROE ISLANDS Second record (first this century): adult found dead at Hoyvik on 13th April 1990*.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* CZECHOSLOVAKIA

First breeding record in western Slovakia: three nests with young on Dunaj River, near Komárno, in 1989 (sixth breeding record in Czechoslovakia); first breeding record in Moravia was in 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 9).

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* EGYPT Highest-ever count: 114 in Abu Simbil area, on 17th June 1990 (previous highest count was 21 in November 1984). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* BYELORUSSIA Census: 1,007 occupied nests found during 1985-89. UKRAINE Census: 130-150 pairs in Western Ukraine during 1983-87 (main concentration in Volyn' Region and L'vov, Rovno Region).

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* AUSTRIA Range extension: at least six new breeding sites in mountain region, southwestern Lower Austria in 1989 and 1990. CZECHOSLOVAKIA Small decreases: in Czech republic, 929 nests in 1987, 922 in 1988 and 915 in 1989 (cf. counts in Czech republic in 1984-86, *Brit. Birds* 81: 15); Slovak republic, 1,176 nests in 1968, 1,124 in 1974 and 1,020 in 1984.

Marabou *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* FRANCE Vagrant: Parc Régional du Languedoc in April 1990 and on Ile de Ré on 12th May 1990 (cf. records in Spain in 1987, 1988 and 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 9, 223).

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* AUSTRIA Absence: for first time, no breeding record in 1990. ITALY First breeding record: two pairs in Comacchio Valley in May 1989.

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* FRANCE Second and third records: Dombes, Ain, during 13th-24th April 1990* and adult at Boismont, Somme, from 16th May 1990 onwards* (first was in September 1987; cf. other recent records in Austria and Spain, *Brit. Birds* 82: 322; 83: 9, 223).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* TUNISIA First successful breeding attempt since 1974: about 3,000 young at breeding colony in southern Chotts in 1990 (a second breeding colony, with 1,200 nests, failed because of predation by foxes *Vulpes vulpes*).

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* SWEDEN Possible influx: unknown (but unusually high) number at scattered localities in southern Sweden in July and August 1990

1 & 2. Male King Eider
Somateria spectabilis, Nether-
lands, April 1990 (Arnoud B.
van den Berg)



(‘perhaps escapes, but wild origin more likely considering the high number and geographic pattern’).

Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* JORDAN First breeding record: adult with 15 ducklings at Azraq on 24th May 1990.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* EGYPT First record: dead male for sale in bird-market at Port Said during winter 1989/90.

Pintail *Anas acuta* TUNISIA Breeding record: nest with eight eggs at Garaet Kelbia on 26th June 1990 (last breeding attempt apparently in 1963). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a ‘European news’ summary.)

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* JORDAN First breeding record: pair with

seven well-grown young at Azraq on 23rd July 1990.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* MOROCCO Largest-ever winter concentration: 232 in Larache marshes on 26th December 1989 (160 still present in January 1990, *Brit. Birds* 83: 223-224).

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* DENMARK Third record: male at Hjarbaek Fjord, Jutland, during 18th February to mid April 1990. FINLAND First record: male in Pori during 20th April-3rd May 1989.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: female at IJmuiden, Noordholland, on 8th April 1989, and immature male at Kornwerderzand, Friesland, during 7th-9th October 1989

(probably same individual at Harlingen, Friesland, during 4th-30th April 1990, plates 1 & 2)(second was in December/January 1981/82, *Brit. Birds* 75: 269; former first, in January 1966, is now rejected).

Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First record: male on Ohře river, near Kadaň, northern Bohemia, on 21st November 1987. NORWAY Correction: third record was during 26th-28th December 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 323).

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* NETHERLANDS Breeding: annually in Gelderland since 1985, with five pairs in 1989 (cf. recent events in Belgium and Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 78: 650; 82: 15, 323).

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* FINLAND First and second records: male at Dulunsalo during 22nd-24th May 1989, and male at Naantali during 29th October to 13th November 1989 (cf. first and second Norwegian records in 1985 and 1986, *Brit. Birds* 81: 15; 82: 15-16).

Smew *Mergus albellus* BYELORUSSIA Second breeding record: two nests at Beloe fish-breeding farm, Zhitkoviichi district, Gomel region, in May 1989 (10-12 pairs breeding in 1990; first breeding record was in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224; cf. first breeding in Czechoslovakia in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 80: 10).

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* EGYPT First record since 1953: four males at Zaranik, North Sinai, on 12th January 1990. NETHERLANDS Breeding: annually in Zeeland since 1977, with about ten pairs in 1989.

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* FINLAND First record: male at Siikajoki on 8th July 1989. ITALY First record: pool of Molentargius, Sardinia, from 17th December 1987 to 10th January 1988. NORWAY Third record: two adult males at Engasjyen, Rana, Nordland, during 16th-21st May 1988 (record—of group of two adult males and first-year female—on 30th October 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224, becomes fourth).

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* GREECE Highest-ever numbers: 423 at Vistonis Lake on 27th January 1990 (cf. 405 in February 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 16). SPAIN Range expansion: nest with eggs at Campillos Lagoon, where perhaps up to three breeding pairs (first breeding in Málaga province; cf. previous expansion and increases, *Brit. Birds* 83: 10).

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* HUNGARY Census: 300-350 pairs in 1989.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* FRANCE First proved breeding record: three young hatched in Pyrénées-Atlantiques on 21st July 1990 (cf. prediction of future breeding, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587). SPAIN First proved breeding in Andalucía: three young reared from nest in Doñana National Park in spring 1986 (cf. range expansion and increase in numbers, *Brit. Birds* 77: 587).

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* HUNGARY Census: 160 pairs in 1989. YUGOSLAVIA First breeding record for Slovenia: nest with one young at Lesce, near Bled, on 2nd July 1990.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* HUNGARY Census: 25 pairs in 1989.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* ESTONIA First record: adult near Mõisaküla, Viljandi District, on 30th June 1990*.

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* MOROCCO Second record: Boumalne du Dadès in April 1989* (first was over 30 years ago in Western Sahara). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* HUNGARY Census: 40-50 pairs in 1989. UKRAINE Census: 25-30 pairs in Western Ukraine during 1982-85.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* HUNGARY Census: 1,000 pairs in 1989.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* HUNGARY Census: 100 pairs in 1989.

Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates* MOROCCO High count: up to five in usual area of Sous Valley in winter 1989. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* HUNGARY Census: 1,500 pairs in 1989.

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* HUNGARY Census: 600 pairs in 1989.

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes* HUNGARY Census: five to ten pairs in 1989.

Buzzard *Buteo buteo* HUNGARY Census: 2,500 pairs in 1989.

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* MALTA First record: Comino Island in October 1989

(cf. other 1989 records of one in Gibraltar and two in Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 83: 10, 224).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* HUNGARY Census: 150 pairs in 1989.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* ESTONIA Deletion: 1985 record of *A. h. adalberti* (*Brit. Birds* 79: 287) not now accepted. HUNGARY Census: 27 pairs in 1989, with highest-ever breeding success (21 young fledged).

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* HUNGARY Census: two pairs in 1989. JORDAN First breeding record: pair with nest in eastern desert on 5th May 1990. UKRAINE Census: six or seven pairs in Western Ukraine during 1982-86.

Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* JORDAN First to fourth records: one in southern desert on 13th April 1981, pair on 3rd April 1986, possible immatures on 24th April 1987 and 22nd April 1988. (Record in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224, now becomes fifth record.) Sixth record and first proved breeding: pair plus fledged immature at same site during 14th-16th April 1990.

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* HUNGARY Census: ten pairs in 1989. UKRAINE Census: 12-14 pairs in Western Ukraine during 1982-86.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* SPAIN Population estimate: 4,000-5,000 pairs in 1989 (more than 80% in Extremadura and Andalucía).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* DENMARK Spring influx: about 50 at Skagen and about 30 at Zeeland during May 1990. FRANCE Spring influx: many, including up to 19 together at Ancelle, Hautes-Alpes, on 13th May 1990, and up to 50 near Gap, Hautes-Alpes, on 27th May 1990. HUNGARY Census: 1,500 pairs in 1989. UKRAINE Census: 15-20 pairs in Western Ukraine during 1982-85.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* HUNGARY Census: 600-700 pairs in 1989.

Saker *Falco cherrug* HUNGARY Census: 65 pairs in 1989, with highest-ever breeding success (92 young fledged).

Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* NETHERLANDS Continuing decline: 44 males in 1988 and 31 in 1989 (cf. 3,000 in late 1950s, 450 in 1976 and less than 100 in 1982, *Brit. Birds* 77: 235).

Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus* GREECE Newly discovered population: on Mt Athos, Chalkidiki.

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* NETHERLANDS First record: two adults near De Peel at Heusden, Noorbrabant, from second half of August to 12th September 1989 (only other West European records during 1977-89 were in Denmark, Finland and France, *Brit. Birds* 72: 591; 76: 568; 79: 287; 80: 11-12; 81: 332).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* NETHERLANDS Fourth-best year this century: 22 breeding attempts (ten in Flevoland, 12 in Delta area, southwestern Netherlands), at least seven young fledged, in 1990. YUGOSLAVIA First breeding record for Slovenia: two pairs with young at Sečovlje Salinas during June-July 1990.

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* EGYPT First confirmed breeding: six nests at Zaranik, North Sinai, during May-July 1990.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oediconemus* GERMANY, EAST Apparently extinct: pair near Leipzig in 1987, but none found since.

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* FINLAND Second record: one (killed by Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* shortly after being found), Kullaa on 25th September 1989 (first was in October 1893).

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* FINLAND Second to fifth records: single adults at Salo during 1st-3rd August 1989, Siuntio on 4th August 1989, Järvenpää during 7th-8th August 1989, and Kemiö during 20th-22nd August 1989 (first was in May 1984, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588). NORWAY Third record: adult at Mølen, Larvik, Vestfold, on 3rd June 1985 (first and second were in June 1976 and June 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 591).

Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* MOROCCO First record: four at Merzouga in January 1990*.

Lesser/Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus/C. leschenaultii* GERMANY, EAST Vagrant: Langenwerder, near Wismar, in August 1986. NORWAY Fifth record: adult at Nordkapp, Finnmark, during 22nd-23rd June 1988 (earlier records were of indeterminate individuals in 1970 and 1971, a Lesser Sand Plover in 1973 and a Greater Sand Plover in 1984, *Brit. Birds* 73: 258; 78: 341).

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* JORDAN

Third and fourth records: two at Azraq on 20th April 1990, and 12 on 26th April 1990 (first and second were in 1969 and 1987).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* SWEDEN Fourth record: Ledskär, Uppland, in mid October 1989*. (Corrections: after revision of *P. dominica* and *P. fulva* records, that in September 1981, *Brit. Birds* 75: 570, becomes first, and those in June 1986 and July 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 324, become second and third.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* EGYPT First record: Gebel Asfar on 21st April 1990.

Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* ITALY First record: near Fontanetto Po, Vercelli, Piedmont, on 9th September 1989 (the only other recent West European records were in West Germany in September 1978 and Belgium in April 1988, *Brit. Birds* 72: 277; 82: 18).

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* AUSTRIA Second record: Rheindelta, Vorarlberg, on 20th March 1990 (first was in April 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 570).

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* TUNISIA Second record: Nouail on 29th November 1986.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* NETHERLANDS First record: Oostvaardersplassen, Flevoland, during 11th-13th June 1989*. SWEDEN First record: at Hålsnäs, Öland, on 3rd August 1990*. (Compared with Britain and Ireland, where there have been 56 records during 1958-89, very few have been discovered on the Continent; 'European news' has noted only the first in Austria in 1985, the first in Norway in 1987 and the third in France in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 80: 324; 82: 325.)

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* SWEDEN Fourth record: single in summer plumage at Sandbyborg, Öland, on 17th July 1990* (the previous three were in 1985-86, *Brit. Birds* 80: 11; the only other recent Continental records have been in Austria in 1984 and 1985, Denmark in 1986, the Netherlands in 1987 and Belgium in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 80: 324; 81: 333; 82: 325).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* EGYPT First record: Wadi El Natron during late May 1990.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* NETHERLANDS First record: Philippine, Zee-

land, during 14th-21st September 1989 (cf. first Belgian record in September 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 225).

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* JORDAN Second record: Azraq on 23rd July 1990 (first was in 1965).

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* ITALY Second record: Natural Reserve of S. Severa, Rome, Latium, on 27th August 1988.

Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* FRANCE First record (and first for Western Palearctic): in Baie de Somme, Somme, during 5th-7th May 1990*.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* CANARY ISLANDS First breeding on El Hierro: nest with four eggs in mixed pine forest on 21st June 1989.

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* GREECE Porto Lagos on 19th April 1987, and Aghios Mammias Lagoon, Chalkidiki, on 16th July 1987. TUNISIA Metbassetta during 26th November to 1st December 1986 and Sebkhâ Menzel Dar Bel Ouââr on 29th December 1989. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* LATVIA Increased breeding: at least ten pairs observed and four nests found at fish-ponds near Lake Lubāna during summer 1990 (first breeding record was in 1974; cf. other evidence of range expansion into Finland and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 71: 584; 81: 18; 82: 326).

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* FRANCE Third record: Chalamont, Ain, on 26th April 1990* (first and second were in August 1987 and November 1989, *Brit. Birds* 81: 383; 83: 225).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* JORDAN First record: Azraq on 22nd June 1990.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* FINLAND Second record: Oulunsalo from 14th May 1989 for about a week (first was in June 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 571). ITALY First record: Dora Baltea River, Aosta, on 19th April 1986.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* NORWAY Second and third records: adult female at Sandbløstvågen, Fraena, Møre & Romsdal, on 11th May 1984, and adult at Nesheimvannet, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 26th July 1988 (first was in May 1980, *Brit. Birds* 75: 27).

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* BYELORUSSIA First record: single in Minsk on 15th June 1989.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* FINLAND Third record: adult at Pattijoki on 30th May 1989 (first and second were in May 1984 and May 1988, *Brit. Birds* 77: 588; 82: 326). GREECE Severe decline: largest colony (c. 5,000 pairs), at Alyki Lagoon, Pieria, failed completely to nest in 1989 and 1990, owing to very low water levels. LATVIA Second record: two at Lake Pape on 14th May 1990 (first was in 1970).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* DENMARK Correction: third record was in 1988, not 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 19).

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* NETHERLANDS Correction: second record was on 10th (not 20th) June 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 327).

Little Gull *Larus minutus* EGYPT Highest-ever count: 50,000 at the northern Delta Lakes during winter 1989/90.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* DENMARK First record: August 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 19), see plates 3 & 4. FRANCE Third record: adult on Ouessant, Finistère, on 15th February 1990* (second was in October 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 334). MOROCCO First and second records: Melilla in May 1983* and Oued Sous estuary in February 1990*. NETHERLANDS Date extension: June 1988 individual stayed until 28th January 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 327). SPAIN Third record: first-winter at Gijón, Asturias, on 21st January and 7th March 1990* (first and second were in 1982 and 1986, *Brit. Birds* 81: 18).

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* JORDAN First record: Aqaba on 30th March 1989 (presumed same as Eilat, Israel, individual, *Brit. Birds* 82: 327).

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoideus* POLAND Third record: adult on Vistula River near Nieszawa on 19th January 1990 (second was in January 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* NETHERLANDS First breeding records: Hoogse Platen, Zeeland, in 1982-85, female hybridising with Common Tern *S. hirundo* (at least one young successfully reared in 1984).

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* FRANCE Third record: Banc d'Arguin/Arcachon, Gironde, on 27th May 1990* (first and second were in July 1986 and July 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326;

81: 334). NETHERLANDS First records: two at Terneuzen, Zeeland, during 4th-8th July 1989; presumably same individuals at Camperduin and IJmuiden, Noordholland, on 24th July, and at Philipsdam, Zeeland, from 29th July to 1st August 1989. (There were nine records in Britain & Ireland during 1958-89, but the only other report in 'European news' concerns the first Danish record in July 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 19.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* UKRAINE Census: 5,000 pairs in Western Ukraine during 1986-87 (main concentration in Ternopol Region and L'vov, Ivano-Frankivsk Region); breeding population expansion during 1983-90 (cf. expansion in Poland in 1986 and Byelorussia in 1987-88, *Brit. Birds* 80: 12; 83: 226).

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* EGYPT First confirmed breeding: ten to 15 pairs nesting near Abu Simbil in June 1989 and June 1990 (species seen regularly on the Nile near Kom Ombo in early 1990, but not during summer breeding season).

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* NORWAY First record this century: adult female at Rinnleiret, Verdalen, Nord-Trøndelag, from 20th July to at least 18th August 1990* (last previous record was on 3rd January 1889). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Stock Dove *Columba livia* JORDAN First record: five at Shaumari during 4th-10th November 1988 (1989 record becomes second, *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Pink-headed Turtle Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea* EGYPT First confirmed records outside Gebel Elba region: seven at Abu Simbil on 7th November 1989 and five on 14th April 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* MOROCCO Continued expansion: up to ten in Larache and up to 20 in Casablanca during spring 1990 (cf. earlier colonisation, and range expansion in Spain, *Brit. Birds* 82: 20; 83: 226).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* MOROCCO First breeding record: Sous Valley during spring 1990*.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* DENMARK Influx: at least seven individuals during January-



3 & 4. Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, Denmark, August 1988 (Vagn G. Larsen)



April 1990* (cf. influx in Sweden in November-February 1989/90, *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Long-eared Owl *Asio otus* EGYPT First breeding record: nest with chicks near Bilbis in the eastern Delta in spring 1990 (species is rare winter visitor to Delta region).

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer* NORWAY Second record: two at Eftang, Larvik, Vestfold, on 15th June 1986 (first was in May

1984; range expansion noted in Spain during 1979-86, *Brit. Birds* 80: 13, 326).

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* JORDAN First and subsequent records: one in Aqaba on 17th April 1979; others in same area in 1981, 1985 and 1986 (these predate the records given previously, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* SPAIN First record: adult at Delta del Llobre-

gat, Barcelona, on 15th June 1989* (cf. three British records in June-July 1989 and first Danish record in June 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 13, 471).

Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus* BYELORUSSIA First and second records in southwestern region: near Brest, in March 1988 and June 1990; first breeding record in extreme southeast—Komarin—was in 1980 (cf. range expansions in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 74: 261-262; 76: 275; 81: 19).

Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* EGYPT Second record and first proved breeding: ten 35 km southwest of El Arish, North Sinai, in January 1990; at least four males singing, defending territories and carrying food on 8th May 1990 (first record was single north of Nekhl, North Sinai, on 17th March 1981). SPAIN First record: Mojácar, Almería, on 16th April 1989*. (Cf. influx into Israel in winter 1988/89 and subsequent breeding, *Brit. Birds* 82: 328; 83: 14.)

Thick-billed Lark *Rhamphocoris clotbey* JORDAN First proved breeding record: four (including a pair) at Qasr Hrana on 24th April and adult with juvenile on 22nd June 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* NETHERLANDS Second record: Texel on 16th May 1988 (first was in October 1980; records in 1960 and 1977 are now rejected, *Brit. Birds* 75: 270).

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* EGYPT First regular breeding records: large numbers holding territories, displaying and carrying food in various locations (concentrated along Wadi El Arish) in Northern Sinai, during June 1989, and May and July 1990 (only previous evidence of breeding was of female with large incubation patch at Wadi El Natron).

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* NORWAY First record: Mølen, Larvik, Vestfold, during 7th-23rd November 1987 (cf. only other vagrant noted in 'European news' was first Swedish record in April 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 13).

Brown-throated Sand Martin *Riparia paludicola* EGYPT First record: Suez in May 1990.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* FRANCE Breeding records: nests at two or three places in Var département in 1990, following breeding records in Hérault, Cor-

sica, Var and attempt on Aveyron in 1989 (cf. increase of migrants in spring since 1988, e.g. *Brit. Birds* 82: 20-21).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* NETHERLANDS First record: first-year female trapped and collected at Westerschouwen, Zeeland, on 13th November 1983 (the only previous Continental records noted in 'European news' were five in Finland, all in October/November, one in 1974, three in 1986 and one in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 14).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* NORWAY Correction: 1981 record was eighth, not fourth (*Brit. Birds* 83: 227). POLAND First winter record: Rewa in Puck Bay on 24th February 1990.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* JORDAN Possible breeding: pair at Samra sewage-lagoons, Zerqa, on 7th June 1990.

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* JORDAN First record: Aqaba on 9th April 1990 (origin uncertain)(cf. first Israeli record in nearby Eilat in April 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 21).

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* EGYPT First confirmed record: Gebel Asfar on 5th January 1990. JORDAN First proved breeding record: adult with juvenile at Dibbin Forest on 13th July 1990.

Dunnock *Prunella modularis* JORDAN First record this century: Shaumari on 8th November 1988 (records noted earlier become second and third this century, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227).

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* UKRAINE First record: Luga Ruva, Volodymyr Volynski, Volyń Region, on 13th May 1990.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* FRANCE First and second records: single males at Vendoeuvre s/Barse, Aube, on 29th April 1990*, and on Ouessant at end of May 1990*. UKRAINE First record in western region: male in Shack National Park, Volyń Region, on 25th May 1990.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* NETHERLANDS Second record: Oud-Alblas, Zuidholland, during 24th-26th April 1989.

Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* EGYPT First record: one, with characters of the *opistholeuca* phase, 80 km west of Safaga, on the Red Sea, on 5th February 1989. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Roermond, Limburg, during 5th-7th May 1989 (third was in September-October 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 350).

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* JORDAN Second record: Shaumari during 8th-10th November 1988 (second and third records become third and fourth, *Brit. Birds* 83: 228).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* SWEDEN Third record: Alvik, Norrbotten, 22nd June to at least 18th July 1990 (previous records were of individuals found dead in 1939 and 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 337).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* FRANCE Third record: near Montpellier, Hérault, on 13th April 1990*. NORWAY First record: adult at Herdlevaer, Øygarden, Hordaland, on 11th July 1988.

Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* EGYPT First record: Wadi Rish, North Sinai, on 4th May 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* POLAND Third record: male singing at Borowiec in southeast Poland on 26th May 1990 (first and second were also of singing males, in May 1986 and May 1987, *Brit. Birds* 80: 328; 82: 22).

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* ITALY Second record: Isle of Linosa, Sicily, on 23rd April 1988.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* MALTA Third record: one ringed in November 1989.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* EGYPT First record: Na'ama Bay, South Sinai, on 12th-13th October 1989.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* NORWAY Third record: adult at Utsira, Rogaland, on 12th May 1988.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* EGYPT First record since 1968: two at Mersa Matruh in October 1989. JORDAN Second record: Dibbin Forest on 16th February 1990 (first was in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 229).

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* LATVIA Possible breeding record: male singing in limited territory during 10th-11th May 1990 (the only breeding record was in 1893).

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* EGYPT

First breeding records: Rafah, North Sinai, on 9th June 1989; others breeding at same locality in May 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata* ITALY First record: one ringed on Capri on 22nd April 1988 (the only other recent West European records were in France in April 1980 and Malta in September 1982 and April 1985, *Brit. Birds* 75: 573; 76: 569; 79: 290).

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* JORDAN First documented occurrences and first breeding record: recorded every April at Dibbin Forest since 1984; other sightings in same locality in October 1989, February and June 1990, with some fledged young in June.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* NETHERLANDS First record: wintering on high building in Amsterdam during 13th November 1989 to 11th April 1990 (cf. Belgian records in March 1986, winter 1986/87, December 1987, March 1989 and November 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 229).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* NETHERLANDS Colonisation: breeding annual since 1981, and rapidly becoming established with 55 pairs in 1989 (cf. earlier increases there and in Belgium, Latvia, Spain and Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 82: 22; 83: 16, 229).

Nile Valley Sunbird *Anthreptes metallicus* EGYPT First record outside Nile Valley and Delta: male at Hurghada, on the Red Sea, on 12th-13th April 1990 (approximately 150 km outside species' normal range). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* JORDAN First record: 50 at Ajlun on 27th March 1988 (1989 record becomes second, *Brit. Birds* 83: 229).

Raven *Corvus corax* NETHERLANDS Reintroduction: successfully reintroduced since 1969; more than 30 'wild' breeding pairs in 1990 (last breeding record probably in 1927)(cf. reintroduction into Belgium, *Brit. Birds* 73: 578).

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor* FRANCE First breeding records outside Corsica: presence in Aude in 1989 was followed by breeding in two or three villages in Aude département in spring 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* EGYPT First breeding record: several males singing near group of large nests in *Eucalyptus* trees at El Arish on 11th July 1990 (presence at El Arish in July reported previously).

Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* EGYPT Second record: ten near Nuweiba, South Sinai, during 30th October to 3rd November 1987 (first record was also at Nuweiba).

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* JORDAN First and second records: two at South Shuna on 19th March 1989, and pair nest-building at Kafrein on 1st May 1990 (both localities are in Jordan valley)(cf. establishment in Israel, *Brit. Birds* 82: 354).

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* JORDAN First record: two at Shaumari during 7th-10th November 1988 (first and second records become second and third, *Brit. Birds* 83: 229).

Siskin *Carduelis spinus* JORDAN First record: Shaumari on 7th November 1988 (records in 1989 and 1990 become second and third, *Brit. Birds* 83: 229).

Redpoll *Carduelis flammea* ESTONIA Deletion: first two breeding records from 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 338) rechecked and not accepted.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* SWEDEN Potential eruption: as in recent years, flocks on the move in east-central Sweden in July 1990, appearing in unusually high numbers also in southern Sweden.

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* FAROE ISLANDS Irruption: from 4th June 1990 (even bigger than last one, in June/July 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 291). MALTA Irruption: up to 50 in one locality in early July 1990 (last recorded influx in 1979). SWEDEN Erruption: massive westerly and southwesterly movement throughout Sweden in July and August 1990, and many left the country at Falsterbo (more than 1,000 daily during 16th-20th August 1990).

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* EGYPT Third and fourth records: subadult near El Arish, North Sinai, on 1st November 1989, and two adults flying about 20 km south of El Arish on 28th April 1990 (several sparrow-like nests found on large acacia tree at Wadi Rish, North Sinai, in May 1990 probably belonged to this species). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* FAROE ISLANDS Fourth record (first in spring): adult male trapped on Nólsoy on 3rd-4th June 1990. NETHERLANDS Continued colonisation: 15 breeding pairs in 1989 and probably more in 1990, 'especially successful in Flevoland' (first breeding was in 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 338).

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* FINLAND First record: female at Kustavi during 25th-27th April 1989. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Griend, Friesland, on 10th June 1989 (third was in April 1977, *Brit. Birds* 71: 587; no others have been reported in Europe in recent years, apart from 16 in Britain & Ireland during 1958-89).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* NETHERLANDS Decrease: only 33 breeding pairs in 1989 (cf. decrease in Austria and Norway, *Brit. Birds* 72: 280; 76: 276). UKRAINE Census: 300 pairs during 1983-88 in Western Ukraine.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* MALTA Third record: one ringed in August 1989 (the only other recent vagrant records were in Finland in May 1981 and a report of five in Poland in August 1982, *Brit. Birds* 75: 30; 76: 576).

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* SPAIN First record: male ringed at Los Palacios, Sevilla, on 21st December 1987.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* DENMARK Second record: Christiansø, on 19th June 1990* (first was in August 1984, *Brit. Birds* 79: 292). SPAIN Second record: male at Belchite, Zaragoza, on 7th November 1987 (first was at Chipiona, Cádiz province, on 3rd October 1969).

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* FINLAND Second and third occurrences: Ylitornia during 3rd-7th May 1989, and Utsjoki on 23rd May 1989 (considered to be escapes, as was first, in May 1982, *Brit. Birds* 78: 644). NETHERLANDS Second record: male at Amsterdam during 10th-23rd March 1989*. (Cf. first Danish and Swedish records in August 1987 and April-May 1989, *Brit. Birds* 81: 22; 83: 17).

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* ITALY First record: one ringed in Massaciuccoli Lane,

Tuscany, on 18th September 1989 (cf. only other recent Continental records, in Norway in November 1977 and in France in October 1987, *Brit. Birds* 71: 257; 81: 339).

Northern Oriole *Icterus galbula* NETHERLANDS

First record: immature female ringed at Vlieland, Friesland, during 14th-20th October 1987 (cf. only other recent Continental record, in Norway in September 1986, *Brit. Birds* 82: 24).

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YUGOSLAVIA Iztok Geister, 64202 Naklo, Pokopaliska pot 13

No information was received from Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany (West), Gibraltar, Iceland, Israel, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania or Switzerland.

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests,

but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

Freshhold Optical Support

Most telescope-users carry tripods to provide a stable image. Modern binoculars are generally lightweight, but, if you have ever sat in a hide and compared the hand-held image with that achieved by resting your binoculars on solid wood, you may have yearned for a binocular support. The *Freshhold* optical support attempts to service this need. It is basically an inverted 'V' that rests across your chest, supported by a neck strap. Binoculars are held in a vice-like grip at the top of this V. Each arm consists of two inter-sliding tubes with a quick-release lever for adjusting the length. The grip holds anything up to 65 mm in diameter, with a powerful spring.

When scanning from a fixed position, the support can be very useful, and the image is clearly sharpened, although the benefit is less than that achieved by a tripod.

So far, so good, but in practice only a small proportion of my time in the field is spent scanning with binoculars. Generally, I am either on the move, or scanning with a mounted telescope, or mixing binoculars and telescope. The support can be kept in position whilst walking, but is cumbersome. The manufacturer suggests slinging the support over your shoulder with binoculars still in the vice grip, but they are not then ready for instant use, as demanded by a birdwatcher.

Whilst seawatching, many people scan with binoculars and, having spotted something, quickly switch to a telescope. The support definitely improves binocular efficiency, but is awkwardly positioned between chest and telescope. The resulting loss of dexterity with the telescope is irritating. For anyone without a telescope, however, the support would be a significant help.

The binocular support is, unfortunately, awkward to use when looking upwards, so is of limited use in woodland. It was, however, valuable when scanning for Houbara Bustards *Chlamydotis undulata* in desert, for raptors over distant woodland, and for a Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* singing in a large reed-bed. I found it of most use when carried detached from binoculars and brought into play when the situation demanded.

The weight (500 g) is hardly noticeable. Design is good; a modification (promised by the manufacturer) will make it easier to focus binoculars without the support partially closing (a problem experienced primarily by spectacle-wearers).

The greatest value will be for specialised use (as described above), for anyone wishing to survey one spot continuously for a long period, and for disabled, elderly or incapacitated birdwatchers who find it difficult to hold binoculars steady.

DAVID BRITTON

Mystery photographs



162 A small bird flashes quickly past on spread wings, its tail frequently manoeuvred to parallel the gusty wind. The initial observation is too brief to give a sharp impression of it, and, as the underparts are in shadow, their colour cannot be accurately determined. It is apparently a hirundine, of which there are seven regular species to take into consideration in the Western Palearctic. The seemingly sooty underparts might suggest a Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*, but the outer tail feathers are elongated, which is a feature found only on Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica*. Swallow usually has white underparts (although certain individuals and

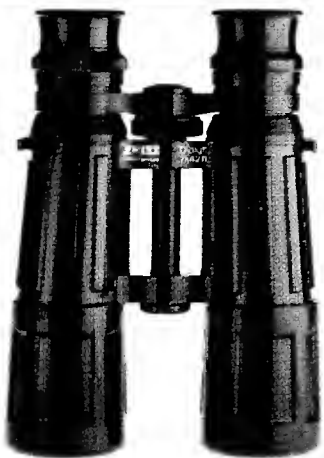
subspecies can show a more or less strong reddish tinge) with contrasting dark (red) throat patch bordered by a dark (violet-blue) band, but the mystery bird seems to lack that contrast on its underparts; furthermore, the elongated outer tail feathers of this bird appear slightly incurved (not straight) and too short and thick for Swallow. Judging from our quick impression, it is probably not a Swallow, but then there are (rare) hybrids between Swallow and House Martin *Delichon urbica* to consider; these could exhibit long outer tail feathers and plain underparts. In fact, this bird's build is more like that of a House Martin than that of a Swallow, with rather broad, triangular wings that are held out from the body, rather than the Swallow's narrow, often backswept wings. One feature, however, immediately rules out the hybrid theory: the undertail-coverts are black, a feature unique to Red-rumped Swallow. The individual shown last month (plate 304, repeated here) was photographed by Arnoud van den Berg in the Netherlands in October 1989.

Although Red-rumped Swallow's tail-streamers are slightly incurved and both shorter and thicker than Swallow's, care should be taken with recently fledged juvenile Swallows and adult Swallows returning early in the season (and still growing their tail feathers) when assessing this character. The underparts of Red-rumped Swallow are clearly orange-white, perhaps with small dark streaks (Swallow is always unstreaked below); the pale underparts are also squared off at the rear, emphasising the black undertail-coverts, which are further isolated by the pale rump 'wrapping around' onto the vent. The upperparts are very dark purple-

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 2. Entries must be sent by post, each one on a separate postcard, and be received at the *British Birds* Editorial Office (Monthly marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ) by 15th of succeeding month. Every care will be taken, but, even if negligence is involved, no responsibility can be accepted for non-delivery, non-receipt or accidental loss of entries.
 3. All 'BB' subscribers are eligible, *except* members of the Editorial Board and staff of *British Birds*, Directors and members of staff of SUNBIRD/WINGS Holidays, and Directors and members of staff of our printers, Newnorth Print Ltd. (Members of 'BB' Notes Panels, the Rarities Committee, and other voluntary contributors—including bird-photographers, even if one of their photographs is used in the competition—are eligible unless proscribed above.)
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 7. No correspondence can be entered into concerning this competition.
 8. The name and address of the winner will be announced in *British Birds*.
7. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (sixth stage: photograph number 55). Identify the species. *Read the rules (above)*, then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 28th February 1991



Notes

Cormorants drinking in flight In November 1984, at the Bharatpur Reserve in India, we watched Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* of the Asiatic race *sinensis* drinking while in flight. The air temperature at the time was about 30°C and there was no wind. The Cormorants circled the open-water areas and descended in a long, shallow glide to within a few centimetres of the surface, before dipping their partly open bill in the water in the manner of a skimmer *Rynchops*; they continued to glide in this fashion for about 20 m, before starting to flap their wings to rise above the trees, raising their heads while flapping, apparently to swallow the water. Over 20 individuals were involved within a period of 30 minutes or so, and some repeated the procedure several times. At no time did we see the Cormorants drop their feet as if to land on the water. We have never seen this behaviour by the nominate race *P. c. carbo*, and *BWP* (vol. 1) makes no reference to drinking by this species.



S. J. SUTCLIFFE and A. C. SUTCLIFFE
Skomer Island, Marloes, Haverfordwest, Dyfed

Wigeon head-shaking while feeding J. B. Higgott (*Brit. Birds* 80: 626) described Garganeys *Anas querquedula* and Teals *A. crecca* head-shaking while dabbling. In 1983-85, I studied the feeding behaviour of breeding Wigeons *A. penelope* in Hordaland, western Norway; observations were made from vantage points about 200 m from the lakes, using 8 × 40 binoculars and a 25-40× telescope. After having dabbled in typical fashion in shallow water, the ducks sometimes shook their heads; their feeding behaviour was characterised by rapid head-plunging, and it occurred most regularly as the ducks foraged along the shore among patches of aquatic vegetation (e.g. water lobelia *Lobelia dortmanna* and the moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*). In some cases, Wigeons tried to get rid of small pieces of vegetation hanging from their bills as they brought their heads out of the water. When the ducks left, I collected some of the moss and found that it contained several insect groups, mainly mayflies (Ephemeroptera) and caddis-flies (Trichoptera). The Wigeons may have been taking freshwater invertebrates, which are reported to be a superior source of high-quality protein, calcium for forming egg-shells and other nutrients necessary for egg-production (e.g. Sugden 1973; Swanson & Meyer 1973; Driver *et al.* 1974).

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'The action which Mr Jacobsen describes for the Wigeon, and earlier J. B. Higgott for the Garganey and Teal, would seem to be simply the typical anatid comfort movement named "head-shake" by F. M. McKinney (1965, *Behaviour* 25: 120-222) or, possibly, as neither Mr Jacobsen nor Mr Higgott clearly describes the movement, the more complex one he called "head-flick", both of which function to remove foreign material and surplus water from the bill (as well as serving as display actions in particular circumstances). In 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 72: 563-569), I listed lateral head-shaking as one of the five methods used by grebes (Podicipedidae) to drain water from the bill, especially after diving, and further commented: "Lateral head-shaking (with the bill inclined somewhat down) or latero-vertical head-flicking would appear to be the main response by ducks to water on the head and bill (see McKinney 1965); I recently confirmed this for surfacing Tufted Ducks *Aythya fuligula* and Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*, though such movements seem to be relatively infrequent."' EDS

Pair of Mallards eating cherry blossom On 29th April 1988, in Kensington Gardens, London, I watched a pair of Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* busily eating fallen petals of pink cherry *Prunus* blossom from the grass in a railed-off shrubbery.

R. H. KETTLE

75 Dupont Road, London SW20 8EH

Petals are not normally eaten by any birds, even omnivorous species such as the Mallard (though see the recent comment concerning House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* by Dr J. J. M. Flegg, *Brit. Birds* 83: 333). EDS

Prey-capture technique of Peregrine Of three hunting methods of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* described by N. Baker (*Brit. Birds* 80: 424-425), one involved a falcon passing very slowly through the midst of a flock of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* and emerging with prey. On 4th September 1982, at Start Point, South Devon, during dry overcast conditions with a light wind, I watched a Peregrine fly purposefully towards the lighthouse, but, instead of an expected pursuit, it positioned itself around the landward side of the light, just below its skyline. A flock of pigeons *Columba livia*, approaching from the sea, soon passed just below the light, apparently unable to see the waiting raptor. The Peregrine simply lowered itself, with body horizontal, very slowly through the flock as it passed, emerging with a pigeon grasped in one foot. The flock flew on without deviation and with only a minimal, temporary change of formation, virtually as if nothing had happened. The Peregrine flew to nearby cliffs with its victim. Despite having witnessed very many pursuits by Peregrines, using varied techniques and with varying success, I have never before, nor since, seen such amazing behaviour.

VIC TUCKER

Periglis, 4 Clovelly View, Turnchapel, Plymouth, Devon PL9 9SY

Derek Goodwin has commented: 'Except for the Starling/Peregrine observation referred to, I have not read of such tactics, which would seem to rely on the Peregrine not being recognised as such. The remarkable, and to me very surprising, success of this is clearly evinced by the lack of escape or panic reactions by the pigeons.' EDS

Oystercatcher with breast pierced by bill At 09.30 GMT on 7th October 1984, B. J. Clements, M. G. Wells, I. Wells and I were walking along the



Fig. 1. Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* with breast pierced by bill, Kent, October 1984
(J. D. Fearnside)

shore from Shellness towards Leysdown, Isle of Sheppey, Kent, when our attention was drawn to a bird fluttering on the sands. Through binoculars, we saw that it was an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, obviously in some distress, as it stumbled, jerking its head and flapping its wings. We quickly caught and examined the wader and found that its lower mandible had passed through the skin of its breast, causing it to hold its head lowered in a permanently bowed posture with the bill almost closed (fig. 1). We released the bill with some difficulty; it was intermediate between the pointed and the blade-tipped bill types, the upper mandible being squarish-ended and the lower sharply pointed. We could imagine only that the Oystercatcher had suffered some accident while preening and that the tip of the bill had pierced the skin and subsequently been driven through the breast. Presumably, this could not have happened very long before we found the bird, as it would have been impossible for it to feed; its plumage was in a bad condition and the bird appeared to be weak. We released the Oystercatcher and it made off across the sand, but it was too weak to fly.

A similar injury to a Rook *Corvus frugilegus* has been reported (*Brit. Birds* 55: 46), but the individual concerned had apparently suffered for some time.

J. D. FEARNSIDE

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A field character for identification of Collared Flycatcher in female and non-breeding plumages The capture of a first-winter Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 8th October 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 586) and observation during the next five days of three separate Pied Flycatchers *F. hypoleuca* (one of which was trapped and photographed) led me to suspect that a hitherto undescribed character existed for the field identification of Collared Flycatcher in female and non-breeding plumages. To verify this character, I studied all skins of Collared, Pied and Semi-collared Flycatchers *F. semitorquata* in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring.

The character comprised the length, and more particularly the shape, of the white primary bar formed by that part of the primary bases visible on



8. First-winter Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Shetland, October 1986 (N. J. Riddiford). Note the club-shaped white primary bar, ending just short of the leading edge of the wing



9. First-winter Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Shetland, October 1986 (N. J. Riddiford). This individual showed practically no white primary bar. Better-marked birds show a roundish blob at the base of the inner primaries or, at best, a short, thin, dagger-shaped bar

the folded wing beyond the primary-covert tips (see plate 8). An interspecific difference in the number of primaries showing a white base to their outer webs has already been described by Svensson (1984), who found that, whereas white bases extended only to the 6th or 7th primaries (sometimes 5th) on Pied Flycatcher, on Collared they were visible to the 3rd, 4th or 5th primaries (see plates 10 & 11). Löhrl *et al.* (1976) also referred to a 'white area on the primaries' on some (but not all) female and young Collared. In the field, these visible white primary bases appear as a white line or bar (depending on the width of the white bases). Unfortunately, this character alone is of doubtful use in the field, as the termination of the line or bar in relation to primary number is extremely difficult to judge.

Fortunately, however, not only does the length of the white line or bar differ between the two species, but so, too, does its shape. On individuals in female/non-breeding-male plumage, I found that, whereas on Pied the amount of visible white was greatest on the outer webs of the innermost two or three primaries (8th, 9th and 10th) and progressively narrower descendently (plate 11), on Collared the width of visible white increased descendently from the innermost to its greatest amount on the outer webs of the 7th or 6th (plate 10) before narrowing rapidly to terminate on 5th, 4th or 3rd. On some Pied, the primary 'bar' is not readily viewable in the field, and when visible appears on the closed wing as a short thin line (see plate 9); the best-marked individuals show a short, thin, dagger-shaped bar broadest immediately below the greater-covert bar and tapering to a point well short of the leading edge of the wing. The shape of the white primary bar on the closed wing of the Collared trapped on Fair Isle was by contrast longer, and club-shaped, starting relatively narrowly below the



10. First-winter Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Shetland, October 1986 (N. J. Riddiford). Visible white bases extend to the 4th and are broadest on the middle primaries



11. First-winter Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Shetland, October 1986 (N. J. Riddiford). Visible white bases extend only to the 6th and are broadest on the innermost primaries

greater-covert bar and broadening markedly before ending abruptly close to the leading edge of the wing (plate 8).

Although the majority of the museum specimens were males in breeding plumage, the collection also included female and non-breeding-plumage male skins of 20 Collared, 26 Semi-collared, 162 Pied of the nominate race *hypoleuca*, six Pied of the race *speculigera* and three of the race *iberiae*. My findings were as follows:

PIED FLYCATCHER All 162 nominate Pied had white at the base of the inner primaries, but on most no white at all was visible on the closed wing as the outer secondaries overlapped the inner primaries (perhaps more so on museum skins, but in nature, too, the outer secondaries overlap the inner primaries in a normally-folded closed wing). Those Pied with visible white primary markings had a line of white bordering the inner primary coverts or, on the best-marked individuals, a roundish blob or irregular spot at the base of the inner primaries. On all three female/non-breeding *iberiae*, a race which tends to have more white in the wing, white visible bases frequently extending to the 5th or 4th and occasionally the 3rd primary (Curio 1960), the white was still broadest on the inner primaries and thus appeared as a tapering dagger mark or line. Adult male *speculigera* showed a larger white primary patch than equivalent-age/sex nominate *hypoleuca*, but the six females/first-year males did not: one first-year male showed broader white bases, but ending on the 6th primary; the others were as nominate *hypoleuca*.

COLLARED FLYCATCHER It was not possible to judge the exact shape of a white primary bar from skins, but 17 (85%) of the 20 female/non-breeding specimens shared with the Fair Isle individual clearly visible white bases to 4th or 3rd primary and greatest amount of white on the middle primaries, particularly on 6th. One of the three specimens which lacked those features (having visible white to 7th primary only) also had no white band on the feathers of the back of the neck (the white band being a diagnostic 'in-the-hand' character for Collared: Svensson 1984): it was labelled '*F. albicollis*, Egypt, 2/V/09'. Egypt is not part of Collared's breeding range, but both Collared and eastern populations of Pied migrate through the eastern Mediterranean (Löhrl *et al.* 1976) and my opinion is that this specimen is a migrant Pied wrongly identified/labelled. If so, this would bring the percentage of Collared skins showing the characteristic white primary-bar length and shape to 90%.

SEMI-COLLARED FLYCATCHER All ages/sexes of Semi-collared Flycatcher tend to be intermediate in plumage characteristics between Collared and Pied, and the same applied to the white primary bases. On skins, the primary bar was generally broader than that of Pied. On 14 (54%) of the 26 female/non-breeding specimens the shape of the white was nearer to



12. Adult female Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Powys (Breconshire), May 1974 (Graham F. Date). A well-marked female, showing a roundish blob or irregular spot at the base of the inner primaries

that on Pied (white primary line or sharply tapering bar), and on ten (38%) it resembled that on Collared, but with a shorter, more oblong-shaped bar. A further two (8%) possessed a primary bar as long as on Collared, but lacked the distinctive club shape, the width of the white on the middle primaries being equal to or slightly narrower than the white on the innermost primaries; thus, in the field, the bar would probably appear oblong-shaped or slightly tapering.

Breeding-plumage male Collared and some Semi-collared are readily identifiable in the field (although there are a few breeding-season male Collared in 'female' plumage in the British Museum collection). In-the-hand identification of other plumages depends on the patterning of individual feathers at the back of the neck, the number of primaries with white at the base of the outer webs, the colour tone of the upperparts, and subtle differences in wing formulae (see Svensson 1984). Spring Semi-collared of both sexes show a diagnostic white median-covert bar (Svensson 1984), but this is of no value for identification in autumn or winter. The patterning on the neck feathers is occasionally of help in the field, as breeding females and autumn males can show a light grey neck band or collar (Löhrl *et al.* 1976), but many individuals do not. Colour tone, too, can be misleading. Though Collared and Semi-collared are *usually* greyer on the upperparts and Pied browner (Svensson 1984), this is not always the case (Löhrl *et al.* 1976), and direct comparison of tones is often not available when a single 'suspect' individual is under scrutiny. Certainly, the Fair Isle Collared, although considered (without direct comparison) marginally greyer than Pied, still had a distinct brownish tinge; and many of the British Museum Collared and Semi-collared specimens were similarly brown-tinged (though most were about 100

years old and may have suffered from 'foxing').

A contrastingly bright pale grey rump identifies some Collared in female-type plumage (Löhrl *et al.* 1976), and a greater extent of white in the tail is a useful feature for male Semi-collared in all plumages (Svensson 1984). Unfortunately, female Semi-collared and many Collared do not possess such straightforward identification characters, and there is little in the literature to help with these. The character of a more pronounced white primary bar on Collared has already been published by Löhrl *et al.* (1976), and Svensson (1984) describes the difference for birds in the hand. It is not, however, sufficient to judge a species in the field on the existence or otherwise of a primary bar, nor to make a value judgment of the relative length of the bar. Yet this is potentially *the* major field character available to an observer who suspects a brighter or greyer individual to be Collared.

My researches indicate that the length *and shape* of the white primary bar may be of considerable help in field identification. Löhrl *et al.* (1976) found that this bar was completely lacking on some female-type Collared. British Museum skins suggest, however, that, if the primary bar extends virtually to the leading edge of the wing *and is club- or flask-shaped, bulging on the middle primaries*, the species is Collared. If the bar is non-existent, or is merely a short rounded blob at the base of the inner primaries or a short tapering dagger-shaped bar or line, it is probably Pied (i.e. not ruling out a small percentage of female Collared). If the bird has an obvious, relatively long primary bar (to beyond the middle primaries) which is not club-shaped and does not bulge on the middle primaries, *appearing oblong-shaped or slightly tapering*, Semi-collared may not be ruled out (and would be extremely likely within its areas of occurrence).

Using the combined criteria of primary-bar length and shape, no Pied Flycatchers would be misidentified as Collared and (with the proviso that sample sizes for Collared and Semi-collared were small) Semi-collared would probably not be misidentified as Collared. A small proportion of Collared (10% from skins) might be overlooked as Pied or Semi-collared.

Nevertheless, observers using this new character would be advised to approach the identification of a possible Collared Flycatcher with great care and caution. Accurate assessment of the length and shape of the white primary bar is practicable only given good, prolonged views at close quarters, and where possible, particularly for individuals seen outside their normal range, the character is best used in conjunction with other identification features (though not all female-type Collared show any).

I am extremely grateful to the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, for access to skins and to the staff of the Bird Room there for their considerable help.

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Letter

Spread-wing posture of Cormorants and Shags Just outside our house, at Anstruther, Fife, we have often seen Shags *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and Cormorants *P. carbo* surface on the sea, holding in their bills large flatfish, at times amazingly wide, which, after much neck-stretching and repeated diving, eventually go down the throat. Almost immediately that the fish has been swallowed, the bird seeks out a rock or shelf to clamber on to; and, as soon as it is out of the water, it opens its wings in the characteristic posture, as wide as possible, stretching and vibrating them for quite a considerable time thereafter. We have often seen similar behaviour by these species out at sea, where no handy rocks are available: having swallowed their catch, they sit as high in the water as possible, flapping their wings vigorously, and also hold them wide open for quite some period of time.

The real purpose of this spread-wing posture is, we believe, to persuade the no doubt very spiky and uncomfortable fish to pass down to the stomach, the spreading of the wings allowing as much room as possible between the bones of the breast and the alimentary tract; the vibrating movements would then shake the fish down, slowly but surely. The typical posture often adopted by these species, with wings spread wide and held still for long periods, may be related to this.

CHRIS SMOUT and ANNE-MARIE SMOUT
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Spread-wing postures by large birds are discussed in some detail by Dr K. E. L. Simmons in *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds: a guide for ornithologists* (1986). Eds

PhotoSpot

31. Desert Warbler

In the semi-arid desert of the Southern Arava in Israel, there is no relief, even in winter, from the eye-aching glare of the sand and the heat of the sun beating mercilessly onto the back of your neck. Suddenly, you hear a strange call and turn to see a quick movement—something scurrying out across the sand before swiftly returning to shadow and cover. A mouse, perhaps? You are just about to dismiss it, when it happens again. This time you have a Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* in full view, its true character revealed as it feeds quietly, unconcerned by your presence.

The Desert Warbler does not show sexual dimorphism and there is very little variation in plumage related to age characters, features shared within the genus *Sylvia* only by the Garden Warbler *S. borin*. The adults moult completely in late summer, when the juveniles body-moult, and both



13 & 14. Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* of nominate, eastern race, Israel, March 1988 (David M. Coltridge).
(The inclusion of these plates in colour has been subsidised by a donation from ZEISS West Germany)



arrive on the wintering grounds in fresh plumage. At this time, the whole of the upperparts are uniform greyish-sandy brown, relieved only by ill-defined dark centres to the tertials. Each feather of the short, dark-brown primary projection is narrowly tipped white. The underparts are whitish, slightly sullied buff; the lores are greyer, and their upper edge is whitish, forming a short, broad supercilium from eye to bill. The ear-coverts match the nape, and are framed by slightly lighter grey feathering. The rump, uppertail-coverts and closed tail contrast strongly with the rest of the plumage, being a warm rufous-orange. Only the two central tail feathers are so coloured, the remainder being dark sooty-brown. The outermost two feathers on each side are edged and tipped whitish. At close range, the colour of the iris is yellow (see *Brit. Birds* 81: 325), the inner orbital ring blackish, the outer orbital ring yellow, and the (feathered) eye-ring whitish. The bill is delicate and short, blackish-brown, except for the base of the lower mandible, which is yellowish-horn. The legs, too, are yellowish-horn.

The Desert Warbler behaves very like the Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata*, making frequent runs out over the sand before returning to cover. It may stay hidden for long periods in the same bush, whereas on other occasions it may be very 'showy' for some minutes before becoming elusive again. The tail is often held horizontal, in line with the back, or slightly cocked. It is a quiet bird, occasionally uttering a 'tuc tuc' recalling Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* or other calls recalling Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta*. The song is distinctive, rather like that of Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*.

The North African race *deserti* has more-rusty upperparts and the tail and rump are brighter orange than those of the eastern races *nana* and *theresae*.

To assist in our studies of the genus, we would be most grateful for any photographs of *Sylvia* warblers, or information, particularly on moult, ageing and habitats.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI, DAVID COTTRIDGE and ALAN HARRIS
'The Sylvia Project', PO Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel

Seventy-five years ago...

'Unlike most species of duck, Sheld-drakes are not clumsy on land. They assembled on their leking-ground about 11 a.m. and 3 to 4 p.m. Some bathed and then sat apart preening themselves. Others began to play at once . . . When close together, the wings were raised and arched, yet pressed close to the body. Then the neck was suddenly thrust out horizontally, and the drake which first got his thrust home would throw up his head vertically. This seemed to signify that he had scored a point . . . Sometimes these combats took the form of duels, but frequently there was a general *melée*, when it seemed as if "Everybody had won and all must have prizes." The entertainment was entirely lacking in hatred or any uncharitableness.

It was a beautiful game to watch and in addition very amusing. The Sheld-drake's upper mandible curves upwards. When the brilliant red bill is wide open, as the birds rush squealing at each other, their whole expression is irresistibly funny.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 212, January 1916)

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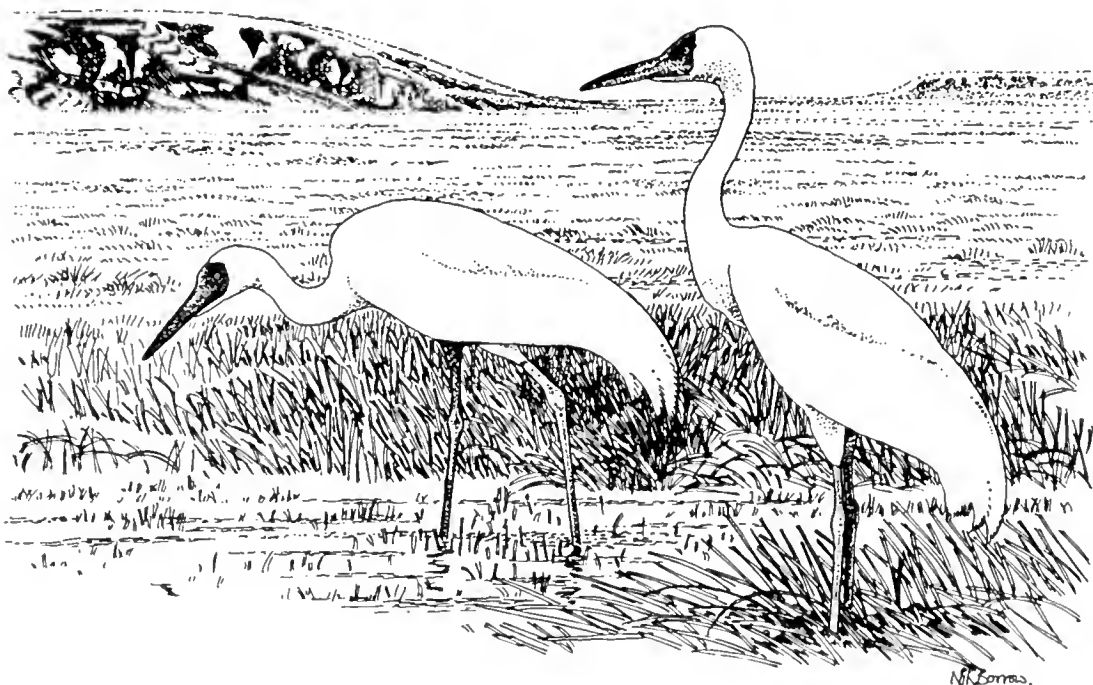
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(D769)



The aim of this occasional series is to pass on tips which may improve readers' fieldcraft when birdwatching. For each topic, the authors will have not only drawn on their own experience, but also summarised advice gleaned from other specialists.

3. Clothing

Be dull and quiet. Every birdwatcher should have these two aims as he or she gets dressed to go out in the field. The equally practical requirements of most birdwatchers are that their clothing combines warmth, comfort, waterproofing and lightness in weight; four conditions that are by no means easy, or cheap, to achieve.

The following remarks refer in the main to clothing suitable for average British weather, which therefore excludes long, hot summer days when one wears the minimum necessary for decency and comfort.

Leaving aside undergarments—including string vests and long johns for really cold conditions—and assuming a shirt of some kind, the next layer is likely to be one or more sweaters. Remember that two thin sweaters, which trap a layer of air in-between, are warmer than the equivalent thickness in a single garment, and wool is a lot warmer than man-made fibre. Wearing two sweaters gives the added advantage of being able to moult gradually as one warms up.

Trousers should preferably be windproof and, unless waterproof over-trousers are worn, should dry quickly after getting wet. Jeans are good in this latter respect, though perhaps not very windproof, while corduroy and tweed, which keep out the wind, can take an age to dry.

For outer garments, the principal requirement is for a coat or jacket of some kind, plus optional over-trousers, hat and gloves. Jackets come in a very wide variety of types and many people may have two quite different ones rather than one all-purpose garment. Manufacturers often claim the ultimate weatherproof jacket has arrived, but so far only at the more expensive end of the market.

Lightweight waterproof jackets, of nylon or similar material, usually with matching over-trousers, have the great advantages of being comparatively cheap, of being light in weight, and of rolling up small enough to fit into a large pocket or knapsack. They are, though, best considered as clothing for showery days, quickly donned and as quickly shed, but suspect in fiercer elements. Check, among other things, for short zips or fasteners at the foot end of over-trousers, which can greatly aid their donning or removal over boots.

Among the disadvantages of this kind of garment are: a fairly short life as truly waterproof; a lack of virtually any insulating properties in cold

weather; any sweating by the wearer can make them as wet inside as out; they are often brightly coloured, though this can be avoided; and, most seriously, they can be very noisy when in motion.

This last is one of the more infuriating aspects of birdwatching in a group. The 'swish swish' as nylon over-trousers rub together and arms swing against sides can successfully mask all but the loudest bird calls as one tries to listen during a woodland walk. So do test garments before purchase. Velcro fastenings on anoraks and jackets can also sound amazingly loud when ripped apart, the same applying to similar fastenings on haversacks and camera bags. Zips can be nearly as bad, though it is usually possible to operate a zip quietly if one tries.

Heavier jackets, often advertised as thornproof, and aimed at the country dweller and sportsman, with *Barbour* the accepted brand leader, are excellent wear for birdwatchers, too. They keep out the wind and rain as well as thorns, can be exceptionally hard-wearing, have ample pockets, which lightweight garments may not, and are universally dull in colouring. Look for high standards of finish at seams and pockets, good-quality lining, and an ability to be periodically re-waterproofed, by re-waxing. Zips should have a storm-flap and there should be adequate cuff closures. Over-trousers in thornproof material are also available, but they can be heavy for lengthy wear and also take up quite a lot of room when not in use.

In between the lightweight nylon and the heavy thornproof wear come the latest 'breathable' materials and special proofings that are completely waterproof yet also allow air to pass so that sweat no longer accumulates inside. *Goretex* is the commonest brand-name material, though there are others, including *Sympatex* and *HydroDry*. Most, including *Goretex*, are still relatively expensive, but worth it if you can afford it. Rather too many makes are of brightly coloured material and advertised as for hill-walkers, for whom this may be a safety feature. Even some dull-coloured garments may have a contrasting liner which will show when the collar is folded down, or the jacket worn with the front open.

In a survey a few years ago of coats and jackets worn by *British Birds* readers (*Brit. Birds* 79: 198-202), the following manufacturers' jackets were rated highly: *Barbour*, *Berghaus*, *Peter Storm*, *Fjällräven*, *Mascot*, *Sprayway* and *Britton*, though there were many others with very satisfied wearers.

Hats are a matter for individual choice and often highly individual in style. Hoods may come attached, or as extras, to jackets, both light and heavyweight. They do prevent the discomfort of rain down the back of the neck, but will restrict hearing and, to some extent, sight. Regarding woolly hats, head-scarves and caps, I would query only why a birder, otherwise suitably dressed in greens or browns, so often wears a brightly coloured woolly hat. Considering that the first thing a bird will see is the top of the head as it is lifted carefully over a seawall, dyke or hedge, it is perhaps surprising how frequently it is topped by a red or white pom-pom.

Other needlessly colourful appendages to birdwatchers can include bright red or blue knapsacks and the recent vogue for rainbow-striped straps for tripods. Birders should also remember that if they strip off their

outer garments on becoming too warm, the white T-shirt that was previously concealed beneath will announce their presence for miles around.

Gloves, when worn, should also be subdued in colour and should not be so bulky that quick focusing of binoculars or telescope becomes difficult. *Damart*, and others, offer mitts with the fingers cut off, which are advertised as suitable for shooters needing to have control of a shotgun trigger; they are just as suitable for birdwatchers' needs.

Last, but certainly not least, one comes to the feet. Footwear falls into three kinds: trainers, walking boots or stout shoes, and wellingtons. Some birders possess all three and wear the most appropriate for the conditions likely to be encountered. Others wear only one kind regardless and, furthermore, may hold strong views as to the suitability of their choice and the equal unsuitability of anything else.

Trainers are probably the commonest footwear in the country, certainly among the younger generations. They are light in weight, comfortable to wear all day every day, not prohibitively expensive if one avoids designer brands, and if, after walking through a bog, they look as if you have just walked through a bog, few eyebrows will be raised when you then wear them in the home, college, or even office. They are not, of course, waterproof, can be uncomfortable over hard ground, and probably wear out more quickly than other footwear. Many birders are quite happy to put up with wet feet, at least temporarily, for the benefits of lightness for all-day wearing and the ability to run in pursuit of the elusive. Except when wet, they are quiet, too.

Leather walking boots need proper breaking-in, but will then protect the feet against hard ground and stones as well as give support to the ankle, will remain comfortable for long periods, and should last for many years. There is an enormous range of makes on the market at equally varying prices, with *Brasher*, *Timberland* and *Scarpa* included among the best known.

Some wearers of walking boots will happily wade through water (the more expensive makes have waterproof linings, nowadays of *Goretex*) but others may prefer to find a way around, which can cause problems in a group in which both tendencies occur. Brightly coloured knee socks between boots and plus-fours are to be avoided, which means I have encountered them.

Occupying a kind of half-way house between trainers and walking boots come trail boots. These have heavy cleated soles suitable for most types of terrain, yet with upperparts that make them look like trainers. They are light in weight and extremely comfortable to wear, but they are not, of course, waterproof. Another hybrid type of boot resembles a rubber shoe but with a light canvas extension laced up the calf. Suede desert boots (or safari boots) come into the same category: lightweight, comfortable, ankle-supporting and cheap.

I have often met birdwatchers who eschew wellingtons in favour of walking boots on the grounds of the weight of the former, and their relative discomfort when worn all day. While this was undoubtedly so

when all wellingtons were comparatively hard and unyielding, they are now available made of much thinner, more flexible rubber, with the green 'Hunter' wellingtons by *Dunlop* widely worn, as are *Barbour's* similar green or dark blue wellingtons.

They are both lighter and fit more closely to the leg than the traditional rubber boot, though the buckle and strap at the top seem fairly pointless, as well as providing an unnecessary jingling accompaniment if left unfastened. They seem not to be noticeably less resistant to brambles and other thorns, perhaps because of their flexibility, but some thin-soled makes are unsuitable for hard ground. Other disadvantages of wellingtons include problems of temperature regulation, so that feet once cold tend to stay cold, while in hot weather they can be a bit hot and sweaty. A major advantage, which outweighs these for many wearers, is that one does not have to bother to look so often where one is putting one's feet and can wade on where others hesitate.

The message which I hope has come through this brief review is to dress comfortably for whatever conditions are likely to be encountered, but do remember also to dress quietly and discreetly. Be more like a Dunnock *Prunella modularis* than a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.

M. A. OGILVIE
Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN

Reviews

The Birds of North-East Scotland. Edited by S. T. Buckland, M. V. Bell and N. Picozzi. North-East Scotland Bird Club, Aberdeen, 1990. 473 pages; 16 black-and-white plates; 200 line-drawings; 258 maps. £19.95.

As the first completed Atlas project for a Scottish area and the first year-around Atlas in Britain, we have here a mine of information and standard of data presentation which will inspire other local-atlas organisers.

Covering Grampian Region, excluding Moray District, it refers to an area of extremely varied habitat and remoteness, ranging from the tops of the Cairngorm Mountains to coastal sand-dunes. To have completed a year-around Atlas in such a region with limited observers must have been a daunting task, and the effort and commitment of the participants cannot be overestimated. It is based on survey work for 1981-84, with many additional data from 1975-88. Even more remarkable than the fieldwork achievement is the depth of analysis and the methods used in presenting the results. Rather than the usual tetrad system, data were collected on homogenous habitat within each of 395 sites (but 10-km square boundaries were used to enable comparison with BTO surveys). This has enabled species maps to be prepared, each one showing distribution (with maximum counts) and the usual three-dot system for breeding categories. There are also histograms illustrating monthly records and bird-days, a circular 'clock' of altitudinal distribution of a species throughout the year, and

bar diagrams which attempt to relate bird distribution to habitat data. All of this information is very clearly presented and does not require the reader to understand fully the statistical analyses involved in data interpretation (which is explained in the introductory text, together with a series of maps of semi-natural habitats and other physical/land-use data). Chapters are included also on some of the important habitats and their associated birds.

This book is a landmark in the presentation of Atlas data. It is a tremendous example of the combination of professional expertise and amateur fieldworkers producing a major work of reference on the status and distribution of birds; it will form the basis for detailed studies of individual species and assessment of the effect of habitat change in northeast Scotland. It must encourage observers that their records, however casual, are—if placed into context and given systematic interpretation—invaluable in providing essential guidance to species and habitat conservation. Anyone interested in Atlas work or bird distributions should read or acquire this work, and it is essential for birdwatchers resident in northeast Scotland or regularly visiting the area.

ALLAN W. BROWN

Shorebird Studies Manual. By John Howes. Illustrated by David Bakewell. Asian Wetland Bureau, Malaysia, 1989. 362 pages; 8 maps, several hundred black-and-white line-drawings, 36 black-and-white photographs, 23 tables. Paperback \$15.00.

This manual has grown out of the wide-ranging shorebird research carried out by members of the Asian Wetland Bureau. While it is aimed primarily at researchers in Asia, its appeal is much wider. The introductory chapters are Asian-oriented, with discussion of the migration and conservation of Asian waders, and a guide to Asian shorebird families. More general chapters follow, which include descriptions of plumage and moult, suggestions for note-taking and field-observation equipment. Further topics include descriptions of methods of the field study of shorebirds and their ecological requirements, including field surveys and censuses, the use of radar to track shorebirds, methods of trapping, ringing and other marking techniques, and studies of feeding behaviour and prey items.

A series of appendices lists organisations involved in shorebird studies worldwide, provides a distributional list of Asian shorebirds, and gives examples of the various recording forms used by AWB.

The newcomer to wader studies will find a great deal of useful information here within one cover, supported by comprehensive sets of references. With the wide range of topics covered, even the most committed of wader enthusiasts must learn from the Manual. It can be recommended to all those who have more than a passing interest in waders.

R. J. CHANDLER

Jim Flegg's Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. By Jim Flegg. Photographs by Eric and David Hosking. New Holland, London, 1990. 256 pages; over 400 colour plates. Hardback £16.95, paperback £9.95.

This collaborative work by influential characters of British ornithology follows the traditional field-guide format. Painted illustrations are, however, replaced by photographs, to produce 'a comprehensive guide' with 'full details of plumage' and 'photographs in typical stance'. How do they fare?

In the introductory chapters on biology and habitat, Jim Flegg's eloquent writing gives a nicely balanced view of our environment. There is, however, a noticeable error in the topography chart of the head.

Eighty per cent of the book is taken up by the species accounts and photographs. Some of the choices of species are eccentric: why are Radde's *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* (both shown as wintering in Turkey!) in the 'regular' accounts, but Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* in the 'vagrants', and Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*, Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* and Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, all European breeders, not mentioned at all? The novel seasonal-abundance indicators have their drawbacks, with Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and Redwing *T. iliacus* being shown as uniformly abundant throughout

the whole year, whilst, according to the maps, Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* is unlikely to be found in Britain.

The most important test of a field guide is whether you can identify birds from the combination of illustrations and text. Sadly, with this book, you can't. Whilst many of the photographs are excellent, in most cases they do not show all the distinctive identification features of the birds. A considerable number of the smaller passerines are shown in flight—technically superb but useless for identification—whilst most raptors, seabirds and gulls are shown perched. For the majority of species, only one photo is included, even if there are age or sexual differences in plumage (contrast this with either the Audubon Master Guides or the Delin/Svensson guide, both of which sacrifice compactness for greater detail, and because of this are of much more value).

The text is sketchy and lacks adequate, up-to-date detail. Try identifying either Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* or Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* from text or photographs. Similarly, the separation of more common species (e.g. the godwits *Limosa* or Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* and Chiffchaff *P. collybita*) is just as unclear, and I'm almost sure the photo of Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides* shows a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*.

The text with good illustrations would have been adequate. The photos, in a coffee-table format, would have been excellent. Together, however, they produce a book of limited value to either the beginner or the more experienced birder.

COLIN BRADSHAW

Population Trends in British Breeding Birds. By John H. Marchant, Robert Hudson, Steve P. Carter and Phil Whittington. British Trust for Ornithology, Tring, 1990. 300 pages; 106 line-drawings. Paperback £12.00.

Knowledge of population trends of birds is essential in a conservation-conscious age. Birds are said to be good environmental barometers. Birdwatchers noticed a decline in the numbers of Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*. This proved to be due to persistent pesticides which were a potential threat to human beings as well as to bird-life. The general idea is that monitoring should detect adverse trends before they are so bad as to be glaringly obvious and perhaps too far advanced to be easily changed. We need to assess the effectiveness of existing conservation efforts and to plan new ones which might include further study of causes of declines. Unless a barometer is read frequently, it will not be much use. When the storm arrives unpredicted, it is rather late to take any precautions.

This book is a reading of the barometer of the fortunes of some British breeding birds. Rare species and seabirds are excluded. For about a hundred species, the text averages rather over a page. Sixty more are included at four to a page. The distinction depends on whether some sort of population index over time can be constructed from British Trust for Ornithology data. The cover blurb claims the first definitive insight into the health of our breeding bird populations. This seems negligent of previous reviews published in 1926, 1944 and 1967-68. Most of this book is also a review of the literature on population changes. The coverage looks good. There are over 600 references, which is nearly twice the number available for all breeding species 20 years ago.

The major new contribution to knowledge derives from the Common Birds Census (from 1962) and its sister the Waterways Bird Survey (from 1974). Each year, breeding birds are mapped and counted by volunteers on some 300 plots. Indices of change are calculated from year-on-year counts on plots recorded in adjoining years. The methods and some of their problems are introduced in three chapters. Some concerns about the meaning of these indices remain. For birds such as Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* or Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, they are based on rather few plots with a bias away from the major habitats or areas of distribution of the species. In other cases, such as Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Raven *Corvus corax*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, there are too few data and the small percentage of plots occupied is plotted against date. Such tenuous data should really carry 'an official health warning'. The text rightly ignores them when other evidence is conflicting, as for the Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*.

Observers chose to start and stop their own plots. They might start on places that were more interesting than the average countryside or be more inclined to stop if their plot

became less interesting. The effects of bias in plot selection are not known. The index for Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* on farmland, for instance, nearly doubled from 1963 to 1970 and then showed a remarkable stability from 1970 to 1985, followed by a decline of about 50% to 1988. Just what does this mean about Lapwing numbers in Britain, or in southeast England from which most of the coverage derives? It could be true that Lapwings are now just slightly scarcer than they were in 1963 (which was just after two cold winters), with increases in northwest England making up for losses elsewhere. I would not like to bet on it.

Not knowing how confident we can be in the different plots is a problem. The book contains no formal statistics to indicate confidence in trend lines or changes inferred from them. I have no doubt that it risks misinterpretation as a result.

Setting aside concern over the meaning of the data plots, there are many patterns which invite further question and investigation. Several species are thought to have been influenced by drought in the Sahel, but they show a wide range of population trends. Why? There is a group of birds for which cold winters are important, but they too show varying long-term patterns. One would like to know whether they have any trends concealed by the effects of winter weather. Suggestions of decline in a group of seed-eating farmland birds is the most obvious adverse trend that requires further investigation, and perhaps action. Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra* seem to be in decline, while Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* and Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* have maintained their numbers.

On the whole, this is an important and interesting book which should be widely, but carefully, read. It is a major tribute to the many volunteers who have contributed so much fieldwork through the BTO. Much of interest could be found by future explorers in the resulting data-banks. At the same time, there is no reason to be complacent about existing monitoring practices. Evidence on the decline of the Peregrine was vigorously challenged by vested interests in the chemical industry. Conservation cannot afford to allow such delaying tactics by providing anything less than a sound case for itself. COLIN J. BIBBY

Protecting Internationally Important Bird Sites: a review of the EEC Special Protection Area network in Great Britain. By David A. Stroud, G. P. Mudge and M. W. Pienkowski. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, 1990. 230 pages. Paperback £17.00.

Picture this: a network of internationally important bird habitats stretches from Ireland to Greece and from Spain to Scotland, specially protected by agreement between the member states of the EEC. These places are safe havens for scarce breeding birds, and migrants in their droves can rely on them as re-fuelling stops in their journeys from country to country. Beyond the core of special sites, all types of birds are boosted by ecologically sound land-use practices.

This image is no mere flight of ornithological whimsy, but the very stuff of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, adopted by the European Council of Ministers on 2nd April 1979. The Directive emphasises the need to conserve bird habitats as a means of maintaining bird populations. This is to be achieved both by the establishment of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds throughout the EEC and by 'wider countryside' conservation measures to complement the network of sites.

Member states are obliged to comply with the Directive, but, although some, such as Denmark and Belgium, were quick to take its principles to heart, others, including the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, still appear to be very reluctant participants in the SPA league. More than 22% of top-performer Denmark's land surface is now included in SPAs, compared with around 1% of the UK and a miniscule portion of the Irish Republic.

This review, from three of the ornithologists in the NCC Chief Scientist's Directorate, was made necessary, say its authors, by the rate of habitat destruction, previous damage and current threats to birds in Britain. It gives a clear explanation of the workings of international legislation affecting birds and provides a detailed account of how the NCC selects sites for nomination as potential SPAs. It then sets out proposals for a greatly expanded suite of SPAs in Britain and describes urgent priorities for conservation action and research.

By listing all the SPA and Ramsar sites proposed and designated in the UK up to the time of publication, the review shows how much the UK still needs to do to meet its bird-protection obligations within the EEC. There are serious shortfalls, for example, in the amount of breeding habitat for Merlins *Falco columbarius*, Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* and Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* currently included in British SPAs.

As the Government prepares to carve up the NCC into bite-sized national chunks (all the easier for ministers to swallow), this publication is a timely reminder of the great value of retaining an *international* perspective in bird conservation.

KENNY TAYLOR

The Kestrel. By Andrew Village. Illustrated by Keith Brockie. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1990. 352 pages; 32 black-and-white plates; 32 line-drawings. Hardback, £18.00.

In this account, Dr Andrew Village deals with the Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* in a series of succinct chapters covering kestrels as a group, diet and hunting, moult, territory and densities, nest sites and breeding, movements and population turnover, mortality and population regulation. These are largely based on his studies in southern Scotland and two farmland areas in eastern England. Some prominence is given to work in the Netherlands, but otherwise there is rather little outside these areas, although the title leads one to expect a more wide-ranging account.

Perhaps those with a major interest in a species are not the best reviewers of books about it. If the author's and reviewer's interests differ (the case here), the reviewer is bound to feel some dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, some sections of this book strike me as disappointing, in particular those on diet, hunting and the energetics involved; although the description of the mechanics of hover-hunting is fascinating. Largely, my reaction resulted from the author's unusual approach in measuring diet, by giving the percentage of pellets containing various items rather than enumerating numbers and weights. Fine, but he does not say how this translates into the actual value of prey taken; nor does he test the probability suggested (Appendix 1) that the percentage calculated, which is presumably open to the same problems that he describes for enumeration, reflects the days on which prey types were eaten. Prey items do not have the same value; lacking some form of conversion, I found it difficult to reconcile many aspects of the discussion of diet, hunting success, the management of hunting ranges, seasonal variations in prey and hunting behaviour and the energetics involved with the data in tables 3, 4 and 6. But much that follows hinges on these observations.

Similar problems emerge with breeding performance. Dr Village devotes two chapters to this and the timing of breeding, which he found closely connected (fig. 61), arguing that they are mainly linked to and vary with food supply. But the relationship between timing, performance and food should have been most sharply defined in the Scottish grassland area and apparently did not exist (table 45). Something here needed greater clarification, for this is one of his major themes.

A striking omission is of any detailed discussion of population changes over the past 40 years, although the literature indicates that these have been marked throughout Europe. Dr Village considers all attempts to quantify Kestrel populations—except his own—unreliable, because of a negative correlation between study area size and population density. So far as the British counts are concerned, I wish I felt more confident that this correlation did not arise from his method of treating the data. Examination of the original papers, however, suggests it was not how their authors used them nor meant them to be used. In addition, while discussing the possible effect of pesticides on breeding densities, Dr Village does not consider that of the major contemporary changes in habitat and cropping in farmland. These were far more likely to affect Kestrels, taking their prey from the ground, than, for example, Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus*. Such changes presumably caused the differences in population density in his two farmland study areas, but he gives very little detail of the actual composition and distribution of the habitat and cropping in these.

Despite my criticisms, this book is a valuable and important reference for the detailed accounts of the author's studies in Scotland and eastern England and his ideas on the population ecology of Kestrels. But it is not a monograph.

MICHAEL SHRUBB

Short reviews

Harriers of the British Isles. By Roger Clarke. (Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, 1990. 24 pages. Paperback £1.95) This is a good introduction to the group. It covers the main points of biological interest and is splendidly illustrated. Hen Harriers receive disproportionate attention, and some aspects of the other two species could have been more thoroughly researched. A section on comparisons between the species would have been a welcome addition to an otherwise well-written account. [JOHN DAY]

The Glorious Grouse: a natural and unnatural history. By Brian P. Martin (David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1990. 224 pages. £17.95) The first half of this book by the features editor of *Shooting Times* is concerned with the background to the Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* as a sporting bird. It quotes verbatim, often at length, from articles in country magazines and old sporting books. The natural history chapter briefly addresses most aspects and is culled mainly from general references and the practical booklet on grouse management by two of the 'boffins' (*sic* p.105) at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Banchory. Sadly, their recently published findings on grouse disease are not mentioned. Strong pleas are made to

estates to respect the law concerning birds of prey, all of which are protected. On the contentious issue of public access to 'grouseland', he favours controls and on p. 212 suggests selling permits stating duration and purpose of visit. The book is liberally illustrated with *i.a.* Thorburn prints and old adverts for Burberrys. The photographs are evocative and often provide interesting social comment. The book presents a reasonably balanced account and should be enjoyed by the lovers of country books and sportsmen at which it is aimed. [N. PICOZZI]

Connecticut Birds. By Joseph D. Zeranski and Thomas R. Baptist. (University Press of New England, Hanover, 1990. 328 pages. £24.70) More than three-quarters of a century after *The Birds of Connecticut* (Sage, Bishop & Bliss, 1913), status and history are given for each species recorded in the state. Species not 'collected', or adequately photographed are treated as 'hypothetical', even if well described by several observers. The current Connecticut list includes 380 species (of which 13 are 'hypothetical' and four are extinct); a further 44 species, not accepted for various reasons, are listed in an appendix.

ALSO RECEIVED:

Whales. By Peter Evans. (Whittet Books, London, 1990. £6.95)

Sea Otters. By John A. Love. (Whittet Books, London, 1990. £8.95)

Behavioural Ecology of the Galah *Eolophus roseicapillus* in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. By Ian Rowley. (Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton (NSW), 1990 A\$39.60)

Announcements

'BB' and National Bird News We are pleased to announce that the telephone bird-news-line organisation set up to support conservation, National Bird News, has offered its help to *BB*. National Bird News currently runs 'Twitch-line', 'BTO News Line', 'ICBP World Bird News' and 'Butterfly Line', profits going to the BTO, the ICBP, the British Butterfly Conservation Society, the RSPB and other conservation bodies.

All bird news which reaches National Bird News is being made available to *British Birds* completely free. Our two organisations also plan to co-operate in other ways in the future.

By phoning these numbers, you not only get the information that you want, but also help conservation:

National Bird News 0898-884 500

BTO News Line 0898-884 503

Butterfly Line 0898-884 505

(44p/min. peak/std; 33p/min. cheap rate, incl. VAT)

Twitch-line 0898-884 501

ICBP World Bird News 0898-884 504

Send in your 1990 records now If you have not already done so, now is the time to submit all your relevant 1990 records. The names and addresses of the County/Regional Recorders were listed last year (*Brit. Birds* 82: 38-40).

Bird Photograph of the Year This year is the fifteenth in the competition's history. We are delighted that 'Bird Photograph of the Year' is once again sponsored by two long-standing friends of *British Birds*, the publishing firms Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd and William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd, both very well known for their high-quality natural history books.

The rules are as follows:

Up to three colour transparencies, each taken during 1990, may be submitted by each photographer. Transparencies should *not* be glass-mounted. They will be judged not only on technical excellence, but also on originality, scientific interest, aesthetic appeal and artistic composition. Preference will be given to photographs taken in the West Palearctic (Britain and Ireland, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East), but those of species on the West Palearctic list taken anywhere in the world are also eligible. Photographs must not have been submitted for publication elsewhere (though, of course, the copyright remains with the photographer and use subsequent to publication in *British Birds* is unrestricted). The photographs by winner and runners-up may be used at the discretion of the judges in or for the promotion of *British Birds* or the competition. A brief account (not more than 200 words) should be enclosed with each, giving the circumstances in which obtained, the method used, technical details (focal length of lens and make of camera and film), locality, date and photographer's name and address. Transparencies will be returned only if accompanied by a suitable SAE. Entries are accepted only on the above conditions.

The judging panel will consist of Dr R. J. Chandler, Eric Hosking, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Don Smith.

Past winners of this competition have been Michael C. Wilkes (1977), Peter Lowes (1978), Dr Edmund C. Fellowes (1979), Don Smith (1980), Richard T. Mills (1981), Dennis Coutts (1982), David M. Cottridge (1983), John Lawton Roberts (1984), C. R. Knights (1985), Alan Moffett (1986), Dr Kevin Carlson (1987), Bob Glover (1988) and Hanne Eriksen (1989 & 1990).

The 1991 awards (cheque for £100 and engraved salver for the winner, cheques for £40 and £25 for the second and third and £25-worth of Collins books and £25-worth of Christopher Helm books for each of the top three photographers) will be presented at a Press Reception in London in May or June. The runners-up will be welcome to attend the award presentation.

The closing date for entries is 31st January 1991. Transparencies should be clearly marked 'Bird Photograph of the Year' and sent to Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the thirty-first annual selection is 31st January 1991. Photographers may submit as many black-and-white prints as they wish.

The following details should be written on the back of each print: photographer's name and address, species, county (or country, if taken abroad), month, year, and technical details, such as make and size of camera, make and focal length of lens, type of film material, exposure and approximate distance from the subject. Prints will be retained in the editorial office as part of the reference collection and for possible use in the journal unless a request for return is noted on the back of each print and a suitable stamped addressed envelope is supplied.

Entries should be addressed to 'Best recent work', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Bird Illustrator of the Year We are delighted that this year's competition will again be sponsored by *Kowa* telescopes.

Amateur and professional artists are invited to submit four line-drawings suitable for reproduction in *British Birds* (pen-and-ink or scraperboard, but not pencil or wash). The subjects should be birds recorded in the West Palearctic (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). *Exact* size is important: drawings should be the following *precise* sizes (width × depth in cm): (a) 18.6 × 20.8, (b) 16.35 × 6.9 and (c) 8.1 × 6.0, for publication at two-thirds of those dimensions (the largest drawing (a) may, if preferred, be submitted at 24.8 × 27.75, for publication at half-size). Each set of four



telescopes

drawings must include at least one each of a, b and c. Entries will be judged as sets. Drawings based on published photographs or drawings are ineligible. The announcements of the previous winners (*Brit. Birds* 72: 403-409; 73: 380-384; 74: 275-278; 75: 304-308; 76: 288-291; 77: 283-288; 78: 317-322; 79: 319-325; 80: 351-361; 81: 299-305; 82: 339-346; 83: 255-261) included suggestions intended to help future entrants. Entries need not be mounted, but should have a generous 'handling margin' around each drawing.

The judging panel will consist of Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris, Keith Shackleton and Dr J. T. R. Sharrock.

The winner will receive £100, a *Kowa* TSN-3 20-60× zoom telescope and an inscribed salver; the second-placed artist £40 and a TSN-1 20× W *Kowa* telescope; and the third-placed artist £25 and a TS-601 20× W *Kowa* telescope (all three telescopes with cases). All three artists will also be invited to attend the award presentation at a Press Reception at The Mall Galleries in London, where a selection of the drawings will be on display. All artists whose work is displayed will also be welcome to attend the reception, which in previous years has provided a very happy occasion for meeting many of our top bird artists. The winners' entries will also be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Crispin Fisher (1979), Norman Arlott (1980 & 1981), Alan Harris (1982), Martin Woodcock (1983), Bruce Pearson (1984), Ian Lewington (1985), Chris Rose (1986), David Quinn (1987), Martin Hallam (1988), John Cox (1989) and Gordon Trunkfield (1990).

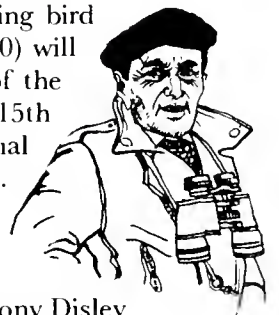
It is one of the main aims of this *British Birds* competition to encourage and advance the careers of bird artists. The Editorial Board and the competition's judges are delighted to note that the previous winners have become highly successful freelance artists or otherwise employed in posts associated with wildlife.

Entries will remain the copyright of the artists, but are accepted on the understanding that they may be reproduced free in, or on the cover of, or for the promotion of *British Birds*. If accompanied by a suitable stamped addressed envelope, all drawings will be returned to the artists, but any selected for possible use by *British Birds* may be retained for up to 12 months after the award presentation. Each drawing must be marked clearly on the back with the artist's name and address (and date of birth if aged under 21, see 'The Richard Richardson Award, below), the identity of the species, and any other relevant information about the illustration.

The closing date will be 15th March 1991; the set of four drawings should be sent to 'Bird Illustrator of the Year', Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

The PJC Award A handsome trophy, the PJC Award, is presented annually, in memory of the late Pauline Jean Cook, to the artist whose single drawing submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition is selected by the judges for its individual merit. The holder of the PJC Award also receives an inscribed book as a permanent symbol of the achievement. The current holder is Andrew Stock (*Brit. Birds* 80: 250-251; 83: 255-261).

The Richard Richardson Award To encourage young, up-and-coming bird artists, a special award (a cheque and a book to the total value of £60) will be presented for the best work submitted for the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition (see above) by an artist aged under 21 years on 15th March 1991. The winner's entries will be displayed in the annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at The Mall Galleries. Previous winners have been Alan F. Johnston (1979), Andrew Stock (1980), Darren Rees (1981), Keith Colcombe (1982 & 1984), Gary Wright (1983), Ian Lewington (1985), Timothy Hinley (1986), Andy Birch (1987), John Cox (1988), Stephen Message (1989) and Antony Disley (1990). This award is in memory of the famous Norfolk ornithologist and bird-artist, the late R. A. Richardson. The rules for entry are exactly the same as for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and entries by persons under 21 will automatically be considered for both awards.



Front-cover designs for sale. The original unframed drawings of the pictures on the front cover of *BB* are for sale each month in a postal auction. The pictures are usually 1½ or two times the published size. These sales help not only the artists, but also *BB*, since the artists

donate 20% to the journal. It is also a way for *BB* readers to acquire—for themselves or as a present for a friend—top-class art at very reasonable prices. During the past year, successful postal bids have ranged from £50 to £155; the average has been £88. Why not send in your bid each month? If you are successful (if your bid is the highest, and it exceeds the artist's reserve price) you will be asked to pay the sum you bid, plus £1.50 for postage and packing. Send your name, address and telephone number and your bid (no money at this stage), to arrive before the last day of the month, to Cover Bid, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Photographs and drawings may be for sale Many of the photographers and artists whose pictures appear in *British Birds* welcome the opportunity to sell their work. Anyone who wishes to obtain either photographic prints or original drawings is welcome to write (making an enquiry about availability, making an appropriate offer, or seeking the price) to the photographer or artist concerned, c/o Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We will forward all such letters, as a service to our readers and contributors.

Free subscriptions for County/Regional Recorders We are pleased, once again, to have been able to give free subscriptions to the County/Regional Recorders, as our way of saying 'Thank you' to them for the hard work which they contribute to British ornithology in their 'free time'.

Free advertising for subscribers For a limited period, individual personal subscribers may use the classified advertising pages **FREE OF CHARGE** for advertisements selling single ornithological items (a pair of binoculars, a telescope, a book, a volume of magazines, etc.). Send your advertisement (not more than 30 words), *quoting your personal BB Reference Number*, to Free BB advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

Books in British BirdShop New this month:

- *Coates *The Birds of Papua New Guinea*
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- *Ejeldsø & Krabbe *Birds of the High Andes*
- *Goodman & Meininger *The Birds of Egypt*
- *Howes *Shorebird Studies Manual*
- *Johnsgard *Bustards, Hemipodes and Sandgrouse: birds of dry places*
- *Johnsgard *Hawks, Eagles and Falcons of North America*
- *Langrand *Guide to the Birds of Madagascar*
- *Lloyd, Tasker & Partridge *The Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland*
- *NCC/RSPB *Red Data Birds in Britain*
- *Newton & Olsen *Birds of Prey*
- *Perrins *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Birds*
- **RAOU *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*
- *Richardson *Birds of the United Arab Emirates*
- *van Rhijn *The Ruff*
- *Warham *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems*

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Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xv and xvi.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Scaly-sided Merganser study The Scaly-sided Merganser *Mergus squamatus*, with a population estimated at only around 1,000 birds, is one of the world's rarest wildfowl. It breeds in the mountainous forests of the Bikin River system in the Ussuri region of

the Soviet Far East, where numbers are believed to have fallen by 90% between 1960 and 1975. The reason for its decline and present rarity are not fully understood, but are thought to include the loss of suitable hollow trees for nesting, poaching and gene-

ral disturbance. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, as part of their Threatened Species Programme, has started to prepare a conservation action plan for the merganser and, to this end, Dr David Bell (on loan from the Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation) visited the Ussurian Taiga primary forest wilderness this year. He accompanied Dr Vladimir Bocharnikov of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the two succeeded in trapping a merganser (the first time this has been done) and fitting it with an artificial transmitter—the aim being to see whether radio tracking could work with this species. The results were very promising and, if funds are forthcoming, David hopes to return next year to set up a full research programme. Sadly, the marvellous unspoilt forests where the mergansers live (alongside the Siberian tiger *Panthera tigris altaica* and many other rare animals and plants) are the subject of provisional logging consents granted to South Korean companies, despite vehement opposition from Soviet biologists. We hope the plan for the merganser will come in time to save the species, but we must wait and see.

Fairer deal for pests We welcome proposals from the Government which would amend the law relating to the shooting of 13 species of bird categorised as 'pests' (listed in Part II, Schedule 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981): Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, Great Black-backed Gull *L. marinus*, 'Feral Pigeon' (feral Rock Dove) *Columba livia*, Woodpigeon *C. palumbus*, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*, Rook *C. frugilegus*, Crow [Carrion and Hooded] *C. corone*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. All species, except Woodpigeon, will be removed from the list, which means that it will be legal to kill them only under licence. Similar conditions apply to Woodpigeons, except that they can be shot (without a

licence) outside the close season, which will be defined as 1st March to 30th November. General licences (which would run for 12 months) would be issued to those individuals who can give good reasons for the control of a species. The sale of dead Feral Pigeons will be prohibited except under licence. Changes to the status of the Feral Pigeon might seem slightly odd-ball to some, but, since it is the scientific name that identifies a species in court, these changes are vital to protect the wild Rock Dove. All the proposals are designed to bring British law into line with the 1979 EC Birds Directive. Good news for these species, many of which are often described as pests without any proper evidence.

Computed wildfowl The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust has recently taken delivery of a new and powerful Digital MicroVax computer. It was purchased with considerable financial help from Digital and the NCC. The main advantage over their old computer will be a saving in time. It formerly took 24 hours to go through 30 years' worth of data to show that Pochards *Aythya ferina* were declining in Britain. The same analysis now takes only a few minutes. The Trust will now be in a position to get to more facts, quickly. It is a vital benefit to conservation in a rapidly changing world and the information gained will help to safeguard both populations of birds and key wetland sites. One new task for the computer will be to use satellite imagery to investigate the effect of climate on some geese. Previous Trust research has shown that if adult geese have good plant growth to feed on in spring they produce more goslings. Past satellite pictures of the breeding grounds will enable the Trust to correlate extent and duration of snow cover with number of young reared. From this information, the Trust then hopes to build up a computer model of the relationship between weather and population growth. All clever stuff; keep the computer busy!

If the caption fits . . .

Can you think of an apt, humorous caption to accompany the photograph of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* in plate 15 on page 40? A small prize will be sent to the winner. Send your suggestions *on a postcard* to If the caption fits, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.



15. IF THE CAPTION FITS . . . Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus*, Netherlands, January, 1988 (Mike Weston)

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 10th November to 17th December 1990
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* Slimbridge (Gloucestershire), 7th-11th December.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Oxford Island, Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh), 8th to at least 12th December.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Belfast Lough (Co. Down), 27th November to at least 12th December.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Whitburn (Tyne & Wear), 9th December.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Exe Estuary (Devon), 7th December.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Barmston (Humber-side), 24th November; adult, Omceigh Island, Connemarra (Co. Galway), 12th December.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* Lerwick (Shetland), 10th December.

Little Auks *Alle alle* Large numbers along the east coast of Britain throughout December, including 1,800 past Sheringham (Norfolk) on 10th December, and 3,500 past Whitburn on 12th December.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* One found dead at The Lodge, Sandy (Bedfordshire), 6th December (had been dead for three to four days).

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* Macroom (Co. Cork), 17th November (potential first for Ireland).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Good numbers, particularly in north of England and Scotland, with up to 100 at Guisborough (North Yorkshire), 50 at Washington (Tyne & Wear), 120 at Dumfermline (Fife), 250 in Aberdeen (Grampian), 270 in Edinburgh (Lothian) and 160 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Tyne & Wear). Small flocks only in Dublin and Bangor (Co. Down), but 39 at Coleraine (Co. Londonderry), 1st December.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Southwold (Suffolk), 29th November to 5th December.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Singles at Lyndhurst (Hampshire), Derwent Dale (South Yorkshire), near Stamford (Northamptonshire), Mundford (Norfolk), Ludlow (Shropshire) and Sandringham.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Good numbers in eastern Britain including up to 11 at Kirkby Moor (Lincolnshire), up to seven at Guisborough, up to 35 at Chopwell Wood, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, up to 12 at Brandon (Suffolk), five in Hamsterly Forest (Co. Durham), two at Stamford, and up to 20 at Market Rasen (Lincolnshire).

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature

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de Schauensee <i>The Birds of China</i> (OUP)	Paperback £19.50	<input type="checkbox"/>
*Downer & Sutton <i>Birds of Jamaica: a photographic field guide</i> (CUP)	£9.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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*Howes <i>Shorebird Studies Manual</i> (Asian Wetland Bureau)	£15.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hume, Wallace, Rees, Busby & Partington <i>Birds by Character: the fieldguide to jizz identification</i> (Macmillan)	Paperback £7.99 <input type="checkbox"/> Hardback £12.95 <input type="checkbox"/>	
*Johnsgard <i>Bustards, Hemipodes and Sandgrouse: birds of dry places</i> (OUP) (COMING SOON)	£65.00	<input type="checkbox"/>
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British BirdShop (continued)

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*Perrins <i>The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Birds</i> (Headline)	£25.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
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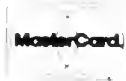
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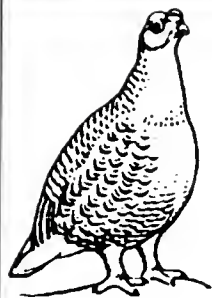
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Recent reports

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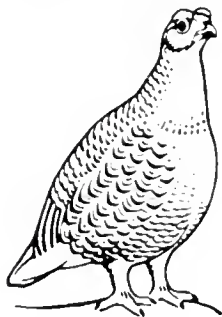
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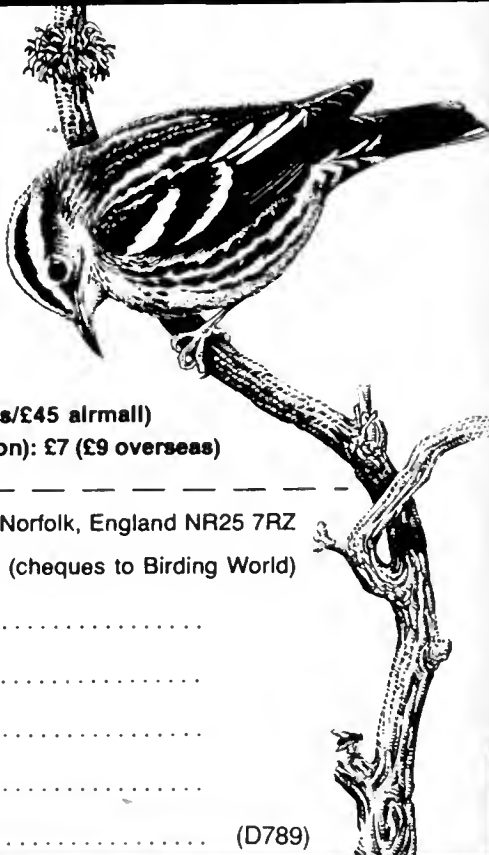
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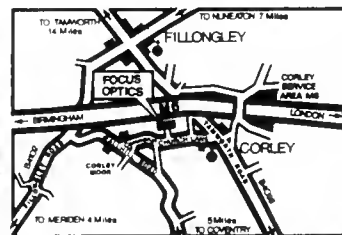
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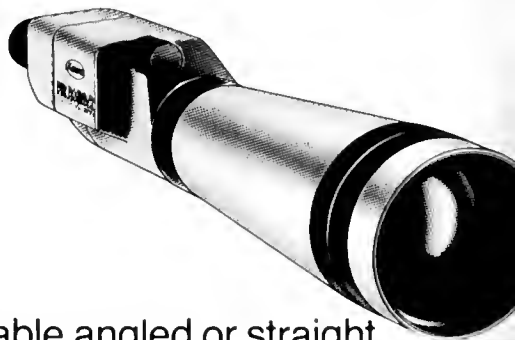


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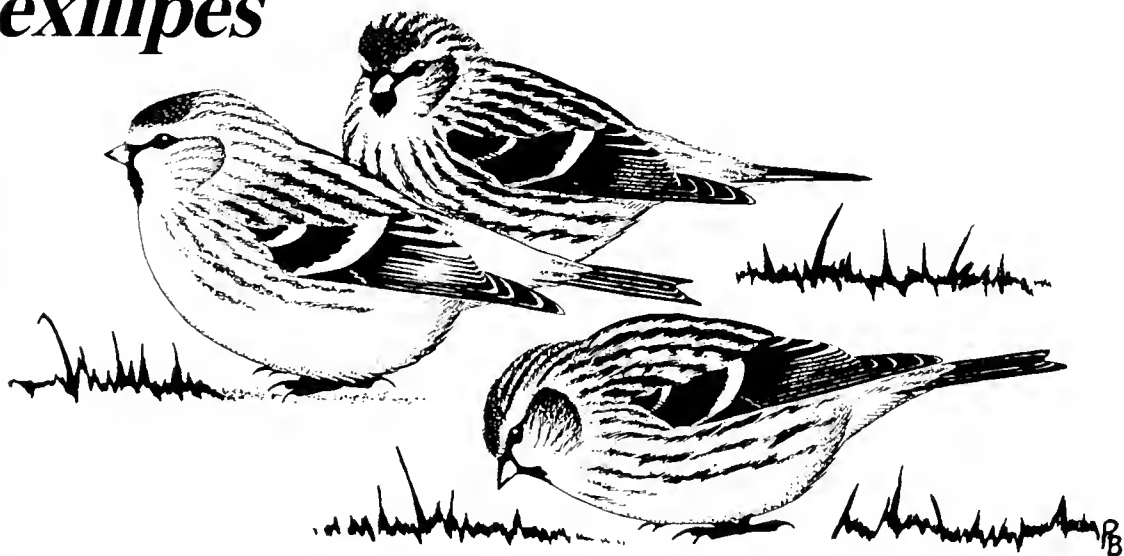
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Identification of Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni exilipes*



Peter Lansdown, Nick Riddiford and Alan Knox

There are two races of Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*: *C. h. hornemanni* from northern Greenland and Ellesmere Island to Baffin Island, and *C. h. exilipes* from the northern extremes of Fenno-Scandia, the USSR, Alaska and mainland Canada. The former is the larger and whiter race and, in the hand, its longer wings (80-91 mm compared with 71-79 mm for the latter) are diagnostic (Knox 1988). There are four races of Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*: *C. f. flammea* (colloquially known as 'Mealy Redpoll') from Fenno-Scandia, northern USSR, Alaska, north mainland Canada and Newfoundland; *C. f. rostrata* from eastern Baffin Island and southern Greenland; *C. f. islandica* from Iceland; and *C. f. cabaret* (colloquially known as 'Lesser Redpoll') from central and western Europe including Britain and Ireland (Knox 1988). *C. f. holboellii*, a synonym of *C. f. flammea*, was previously thought to have been another race, but has been shown to comprise long-billed individuals of *C. f. flammea* (Troy 1985;

Herremans 1987; Knox 1988). *C. f. rostrata* is the largest race, and is generally dark brown, with heavy and extensive streaking. *C. f. cabaret* is the smallest race, and is also dark and heavily streaked. *C. f. flammea* is intermediate in size, though nearer the latter. Compared with *C. f. rostrata* and *C. f. cabaret*, it is generally paler and greyer brown, and is less well marked. *C. f. islandica* is between *C. f. rostrata* and *C. f. flammea* in size, although closer to the former. It has a wide range of plumage variability, from dark individuals with streaked rumps through to pale ones with rumps which are pure white. In Iceland, most individuals can be assigned to either the dark or the pale form (Knox 1988). Away from the breeding grounds, most of the dark individuals are almost indistinguishable from *C. f. rostrata*, and many of the pale ones are not separable from *exilipes* or pale *C. f. flammea*. We wish to stress that identification of most *exilipes* to the positive exclusion of *C. f. islandica* is not recommended. The detailed characters of and variation within *C. f. islandica* are beyond the scope of this paper, but the existence and potential pitfalls of this race should not be ignored.

Excluding *C. f. islandica*, confusion between Arctic Redpoll and Redpoll is likely to occur only between *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea*. Both these races occur in Britain: *C. f. flammea* each year in reasonable, but varying numbers, and *exilipes* almost annually, but rarely exceeding ten in any one year.

In late summer, the adults of both species of redpoll undergo a complete moult, and the juveniles a partial one. This is the only moult each year, and the appearance of all redpolls alters subsequently, as paler feather edges wear and the dark feather centres become more prominent. Selective feather loss also occurs in spring. Progressive darkening, which is often considerable, is particularly obvious on the upperparts, tail, wings and flanks. With some individuals, clear white rumps can become noticeably streaked by the following summer. Pale *exilipes* are at their most visually striking in autumn. The difference in appearance between *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* decreases as feather wear progresses. It is crucial, therefore, that time of year is taken into consideration in the identification process. It is important to note that most of the discussion which follows relates to individuals in fresh plumage in autumn and early winter.

Only typical examples of *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* can be separated in the field, and this is particularly so with lone migrants. Both species are variable in their degree of paleness or darkness, and there is an overlap of most characters on darker *exilipes* and paler *C. f. flammea*. Even some *C. f. cabaret* can be paler than usual and have light rumps. A dark *exilipes* would probably escape detection in a party of *C. f. flammea*; similarly, a pale *C. f. flammea* amongst darker members of the same race and/or *C. f. cabaret* could well be mistaken for *exilipes*. Caution is the watchword, and it has to be accepted that many birds will be unidentifiable. Nevertheless, 'classic' *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* present few identification problems, providing that they are studied closely and carefully, and it is such individuals upon which this paper concentrates.

We present here a summary of the identification and separation

features of *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea*, both in the hand and in the field. The paper would not have been written but for the stimulus engendered by an influx of the two forms into Britain in 1984. Fair Isle, Shetland, particularly produced sufficient records of both species to permit detailed study by NJR. Other sources are the publications of Svensson (1984), Troy (1985), Molau (1985), Knox (1988) and Herremans (1989). AGK has also studied *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* on the breeding grounds in northern Finland and *C. f. islandica* in Iceland during fieldwork studies of redpoll taxonomy. A later section of this paper summarises current views on this subject in more detail.

Distinguishing characteristics

Size and shape

Arctic Redpoll of the race *exilipes* possesses a noticeably larger bulk than *C. f. cabaret*, and is very slightly larger than *C. f. flammea*. It shows a greater tendency to puff out its feathers than *C. f. flammea*, thus exaggerating the rather subtle size difference. At such times, the head looks disproportionately large and broad. As with other redpolls, the feathers of the underparts may cover both the legs and the leading edge of the wing. On *exilipes* especially, this emphasises the birds' roundness and paleness, and gives *exilipes* a bull-necked appearance. On trapped birds, external measurements can separate *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* with a high degree of accuracy (see Appendix and Herremans in press).

Bill

The recommended bill-length measurement is from the feathering to the tip (Svensson 1984). Bill length of *exilipes* is, on average, shorter than that of *C. f. flammea*, though a considerable overlap occurs. Bill length varies not only between males and females, but also between adults and the shorter-billed first-years. Additionally, adults are marginally longer-billed in summer than in winter. Molau (1985), measuring in summer, gave *exilipes* bill length as 7.8-9.5 mm for males and 7.2-9.3 mm for females; for *C. f. flammea* he gave bill lengths as 8.4-12.4 mm and 8.7-11.9 mm respectively. Molau (1985) reported bill depths (measured at the base) as 6.3-7.5 mm for *exilipes* and 5.8-7.3 mm for *C. f. flammea*, so *exilipes* has, on average, a marginally deeper bill. The ratio of bill depth to bill length may be useful: Molau's sample had a ratio of 1:1.25-1.41 for *exilipes* and 1:1.44-1.74 for *C. f. flammea* (see Molau 1985 for further details). Some *exilipes* trapped by NJR on Fair Isle in 1984 had a ratio of less than 1:1.25. Knox (1988), however, gave independent measurements for bill length and bill depth, and the ratios from the original data give no clear-cut distinction between *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* (Knox unpubl.). In the field, many *exilipes* appear to have a tiny bill, which is shorter and more conical than that of *C. f. flammea*.

C. f. flammea often has an upper mandible which is slightly arched near the tip, but some short-billed individuals show only a barely perceptible curve. While there is much variation, *exilipes* normally has a straight culmen, though longer-billed individuals show a slight curve near the tip.



16. Male, probably adult, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



17. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



18. Male, probably first-summer, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



19. Male, probably first-summer, Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

All Finland, May-June 1984 (*Alan G. Knox*)

Furthermore, some *exilipes* display the slight overlap of the upper mandible beyond the lower, which has been claimed to be typical of *C. f. flammea*. We consider that both culmen shape and tip profile are of little use in the identification process.

Any dark on the bill of *exilipes* is normally restricted to a small area on the culmen near the tip and a thin line along the gonys. *C. f. flammea* shares the lower-mandible markings, but the entire culmen often shows a thick, dark line. Bill colour is variable, however, and is unreliable for separation.

Head

It has been suggested that forehead colour differs between the species: whitish or buff-white on *exilipes* (though sometimes buff-brown), and brownish-buff on *C. f. flammea*. Some *exilipes* do show a continuous whitish band from rear supercilium across the forehead to rear supercilium. Most first-years, however, and at least some adults, possess dark grey centres to the forehead feathers, which become quite marked by late spring. Conversely, some *C. f. flammea* possess a white forehead (Enemar & Nyström 1981). So, whilst this feature can be an identification pointer, it should not carry much weight.

The red crown patch is, on average, slightly longer on males than on females, and generally a little longer on *C. f. flammea* than on *exilipes*. The difference is not great, and crown-patch length is of little identification

value. The only exception is the uniquely short crown patch of a few *exilipes*. Neither the intensity of the red in the crown nor the incidence of orange or yellow are of any use in identification. Similarly, the black eye-stripes, lores and chin hold no useful separation characters for the two species, both of which also possess white or whitish supercilia.

Many adult and some first-year *exilipes* look white-headed, being whitish on the sides of the 'face' and neck, usually with no more than a few, isolated pale grey flecks. There is a thin, ghostly pale grey or grey-brown surround to the ear-coverts. The pale grey or grey-brown hindcrown feathers are edged with white, and there is an obvious broad, whitish shawl across the nape, contiguous with the sides of the neck. In fresh plumage, the feathers vary from white with a few grey flecks to grey or grey-brown conspicuously edged with white. It is this shawl that gives many *exilipes* a frosty-headed appearance. On some adult and most first-year *exilipes*, however, the whole head can be buff-white or even quite rich buff. The head pattern rarely approaches that of *C. f. flammea*, which is normally much more contrasting. *C. f. flammea* has a whitish fore-face, gradually darkening to coarse streaking or a grey-brown or brown smudge on the rear ear-coverts and a grey-brown or brown hindcrown and nape. The feathers on the hindcrown are edged with buff or pale brown. The nape is paler and contrasts against the comparatively dark mantle. Although a lighter shawl is noticeable, it is not so conspicuous as on *exilipes*.

Upper body

There is a gradation in the mantle and scapular pattern of *exilipes*. Some are entirely greyish-white with isolated, dark feather centres. Others have the scapulars and sides to the mantle tawny-brown streaked with black which contrasts with a central white panel with two rows of dark streaks. Whilst some *C. f. flammea* can resemble *exilipes* on the mantle and scapulars, and display two broad, occasionally white or whitish braces, the majority are tawny-brown, heavily streaked with black.

The back of *exilipes* is white, buff-white or even buff, with disjointed, greyish-brown streaks, in which the pale is broader than the dark. On *C. f. flammea*, the back is pale buff with heavier marking, in which the streaks predominate because of the broader, dark brown feather centres and narrower pale edgings.

The upper body is one of the areas most affected by wear, and the pale edges of the feathers rapidly abrade, often to leave only dark centres by early summer.

Rump and tail

The most widely quoted character of *exilipes* is its unstreaked, white or whitish rump. Most adult males, a few adult females and some first-year and second-year males have the rump flushed with rosy-pink. The colour is always most intense in summer. Some first-years have a pale grey wash on the lower rump. Many, but not all, adult female and immature *exilipes* have lightly streaked rumps. Out of 147 females and immatures trapped in north Sweden in summer, 59 were marked in this way (Molau 1985). This streaking is most obvious in summer, when abrasion has worn pale

feather edges to expose and emphasise any dark feather centres. These darker feathers tend to be distributed mostly on the upper rump, and are often visible only in the hand. Svensson (1984) recommended at least 10 mm of unmarked rump for an individual to be identified as *exilipes*, but many are in the region of 16-22 mm. *C. f. flammea* has a greyish-white or buffish-white to pale buff rump, usually entirely streaked with grey-brown. In the field, the rump of *C. f. flammea* looks paler than the rest of the upperparts, and can appear white in flight. Rump pattern is variable, however, and some adult male *C. f. flammea* have a completely unstreaked white lower rump, sometimes as deep as 10 mm, with the remainder only sparsely streaked. Certain characters of *exilipes*, such as its greater breadth across the lower back and its habit of drooping its wings and puffing out its feathers, often make the white rump surprisingly conspicuous at rest. Conversely, the rump is sometimes difficult to see on *C. f. flammea*.

The shortest uppertail-coverts of *exilipes* are pale grey, broadly edged with white. The longest are medium to dark grey with greyish-white edgings, which are sometimes tinged buff. All the uppertail-coverts of *C. f. flammea* are dark grey-brown with buff-brown edgings, or buff-brown inner edges and greyish-white outer edges, looking generally brownish.

Both species have very dark, grey-brown uppertails. Fresh tail feathers of many *exilipes* have broad, off-white to greyish-white edges (giving a striped look to the tails of better-marked individuals), whereas those of *C. f. flammea* have narrower, off-white to buffy-white edges. Adult males of both species have paler edgings than those of the respective females and first-years. Tail length is sometimes of value in the separation of the two species, owing to the longer tail (on average) of *exilipes*.

Upperwings

Both species possess very dark, grey-brown to blackish wings, with wing-bars formed by pale tips to the greater and median coverts. They also have pale edgings and tips to the tertials. When fresh, the greater-coverts bar of *exilipes* is broad, widening inwardly from about 3-5 mm, and is white, sometimes with a buff or buffy-white tinge. That of *C. f. flammea* is generally narrower, and widens more perceptibly inwards to its greatest width on the innermost coverts. It is occasionally white, as on *exilipes*, but is normally off-white or pale buff. The shorter median-coverts bar of *exilipes* is about 2 mm wide when fresh, and white with a slight buff tone. That of *C. f. flammea* is very narrow and buffy-white. Occasionally, the median-coverts bar of *exilipes* can be equally inconspicuous. The tertials of *exilipes* are broadly edged and tipped white. Any buff tinge, if present, is confined to the shortest tertial. The tertials of *C. f. flammea* are more narrowly edged and tipped buffy-white. The wing-bars and tertial edgings suffer considerable wear, and may disappear completely by late spring.

Many *exilipes* have conspicuous white outer webs to the primaries and secondaries, and these form a large, white panel on the closed wing. A few *C. f. flammea* possess white or whitish edges to the primaries (and sometimes the secondaries), but these are normally fine and relatively inconspicuous. On neither species do the pale edges of the secondaries



20. Adult female (left) and male, probably first-summer (right), Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



21. Male probably adult, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes* (left) and female, probably first-summer, Redpoll *C. f. flammea* (right)



22. Adult female (left) and male, probably first-summer (right), Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



23. Male, probably adult, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes* (left) and female, probably first-summer, Redpoll *C. f. flammea* (right)



24. Long-billed ('*holboellii*') adult female (left) and more typical adult male (right) Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



25. Male, probably adult, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes* (left) and female, probably first-summer, Redpoll *C. f. flammea* (right)

All Finland, May-June 1984 (Alan G. Knox)

extend to the greater-coverts bar. This results in the better-marked *exilipes* showing a distinct blackish oblong across the base of the secondaries on the closed wing. The pale fringes to the wing feathers are lighter on males of both species than on the females and first-winters.

The wing lengths of *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* are much the same, but for both sexes of both species are greater on adults than on first-winters. The bill/wing-length ratio may, however, be a useful feature in the hand, exceeding 8.0 on all but six of 219 *exilipes* in north Sweden, but being less than 8.0 on all but 48 of 733 *C. f. flammea* (Molau 1985). Outside the



26. Male, probably adult, Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



27. Adult female Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*

Both Finland, May-June 1984 (*Alan G. Knox*)



28. First-winter male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



29. First-winter female Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*

Both Fair Isle, Shetland, October-November 1984 (*K. Osborn*)

breeding season, when the bills of redpolls are a little shorter, this ratio should be applied with caution; the point of distinction will clearly be higher than 8.0.

Underparts

On *exilipes*, the throat is usually white or, occasionally, pale buff. The centre of the breast is whitish, sometimes with a buffish wash or flecked with grey. The sides of the breast are off-white to pale buff, sparsely and thinly streaked with grey. *C. f. flammea* has a buff-white or greyish-white



30. First-winter male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



31. First-winter male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



32. First-winter male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



33. First-winter male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

All Fair Isle, Shetland, October-November 1984 (K. Osborn)



34. Adult male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



35. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



36. Adult male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



37. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



38. Adult female Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



39. Long-billed ('holboellii') adult female Redpoll
C. f. flammea



40. Male, probably first-summer, Arctic Redpoll
C. h. exilipes



41. First-summer male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

All Finland, May-June 1984 (Alan G. Knox)

throat and breast, the latter finely streaked with grey in the middle and heavily marked with broad, dark grey streaks at the sides.

The pink on the underparts of *exilipes* is often confined to the centre of the breast, whereas the reddish colour of *C. f. flammea* is usually more extensive and may cover the entire breast, flanks and cheeks. On all redpolls, the colour becomes stronger in late winter and early spring, as abrasion removes the light feather edges. Any reddish colour on the underparts of *exilipes* is normally a softer, pinker shade than on *C. f. flammea*. All these features show much individual variation.

The sides of *exilipes* are white, with a slight buffy tone on the upper flanks. The central flanks are usually marked with two broken lines of thin, greyish streaks, with isolated flecks on the upper flanks. The streaks do not always lie in neat rows. Some of the most striking *exilipes* are completely unmarked on the upper and central flanks. The lower flanks are normally unmarked and thus join up with the white rump and combine with it to give a 'wrap-around' appearance. The flanks of *C. f. flammea* are buffy-white, sometimes dirty-white. There are usually quite heavy streaks from the sides of the breast to the dark outermost uppertail-coverts. Some individuals, particularly in autumn and early winter, are less well marked and resemble *exilipes*.

Both species possess a white belly. This is unremarkable on most *exilipes*, especially the adults, on which it simply completes the white underparts. On *C. f. flammea*, it contrasts against the buffy or dirty tones of both the breast and the flanks. Individuals of the race *exilipes* often appear to have longer, thicker, shaggier white tarsal feathering than that of *C. f. flammea*.

Both species have white undertail-coverts. On some *exilipes*, they are entirely unmarked, but most show long, narrow, dark grey streaks on the longest feathers. The longest undertail-coverts of *C. f. flammea* have broad, dark, lanceolate central streaks, giving them the appearance of being bordered with white, rather than white with a thin, dark central line. Though an overlap in streak-width occurs, the extremes are diagnostic. In Swedish Lapland, the streaks on the longest undertail-covert averaged a maximum of 1.3 mm wide for 211 *exilipes* and 3.8 mm wide for 636 *C. f. flammea*. Only five *flammea* possessed a streak less than 2 mm wide (Molau 1985).

Though this is normally of use only in the hand, careful field observation of an obliging individual can sometimes enable the undertail-covert pattern to be seen. There must, however, be no doubt that it is the *longest* undertail-covert that is being studied.

General appearance

Some adult *exilipes*, particularly males, and a few first-years and second-years, are indeed the 'frosty snowballs' of the field guides, but only a few *exilipes* can be identified on this alone. The paleness of *exilipes* is heightened in flight, when the back and rump look particularly white. The habit of *exilipes* of puffing out its feathers contributes to the frosty look. *C. f. flammea* is usually darker and more heavily streaked, and is more contrasting. It rarely looks especially pale, except perhaps in flight, when the rump can



42. Adult male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



43. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



44. Adult male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



45. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



46. Adult female Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



47. Long-billed (*holboellii*) adult female Redpoll
C. f. flammea



48. First-summer male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*

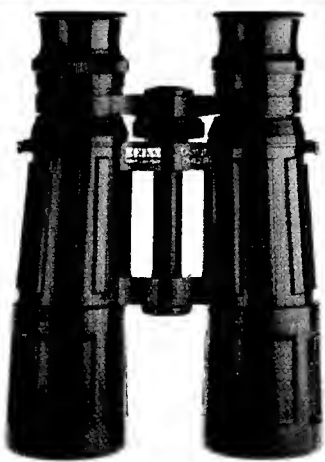


49. First-summer male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

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appear quite white. Both sexes of both species become paler with age. Some first-year *exilipes* are as dark as many *C. f. flammea*. It is worth noting that extralimital occurrences are thought to involve predominantly first-years.

Voice

Arctic Redpolls of the race *exilipes* are less vocal than *C. f. flammea*. Compared with the call of *C. f. flammea*, that of *exilipes* in north Sweden has been described as a coarser 'cherp-cherp' more resembling the call of a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (Molau 1985). One individual on Fair Isle had a distinctly higher-pitched call than that of *C. f. flammea*. Other calls appeared variable, and some could not be differentiated from those of *C. f. flammea*. The calls of some *exilipes* in Britain have been noted as stronger, louder, slower and lacking the tinny quality of *C. f. flammea*. Herremans (1989) found that the flight call of *exilipes* comprised notes which were disyllabic, or nearly so. The call was described as higher-pitched than that of *C. f. flammea* with a less rapid delivery and a narrower frequency range. The flight call of *C. f. cabaret* is higher-pitched than that of *exilipes*. The perching call of *exilipes* was described as 'pwljeeu': hesitating, hoarse and with a descending final syllable. That of *C. f. flammea* (and the similar *C. f. cabaret*) was described as 'pweet': a pure whistle rapidly increasing in pitch (Herremans 1989). This proposed difference requires confirmation. No difference was noted between the alarm calls of the two species.

Behaviour

On Fair Isle, it was noted that *exilipes* moved more actively when feeding than *C. f. flammea*, but more information is needed to establish whether this is a consistent and reliable difference.

Redpoll taxonomy

Over the years, there have been widely differing interpretations of redpoll taxonomy, varying between Coues's (1862) recognition of seven species and Salomonsen's (1951) acceptance of just one. Both the British Ornithologists' Union and the American Ornithologists' Union currently recognise two species: *C. flammea* and *C. hornemanni*.

Four recent papers are at variance on taxonomy. Molau (1985) suggested that *C. h. hornemanni* and *exilipes* evolved independently from *C. f. rostrata* and *C. f. flammea* respectively. He proposed that the first two should be recognised as separate species, *C. hornemanni* and *C. exilipes*, in addition to *C. flammea* and *C. islandica*. Troy (1985) considered that *C. f. flammea* and *exilipes* represented the extremes of a single, highly variable species, *C. flammea*. While agreeing in general with Molau (1985) and Knox (1988), Herremans (in press) has suggested that the redpolls should be split into four species: *C. hornemanni*, *C. exilipes*, *C. flammea* and *C. rostrata*. Knox (1988) recommended that two species should be recognised: *C. flammea* and *C. hornemanni*, in accord with widespread current practice. We follow the latter view here.

There have been many reports in the literature of individuals with



50. Adult male Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



51. Adult male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*



52. Adult female Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



53. Female, probably first-summer, Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

All above, Finland, May-June 1984 (Alan G. Knox)



54. Arctic Redpoll *C. h. exilipes*



55. First-winter male Redpoll *C. f. flammea*

Both Fair Isle, Shetland, October-November 1984 (K. Osborn)

plumage apparently intermediate between that of *C. f. flammea* and *exilipes* (e.g. Payn 1947; Salomonsen 1951; Harris *et al.* 1965). These birds have usually been assumed to be hybrids, and the supposed interbreeding of the two forms constitutes the main argument in favour of the single-species theory. Despite the large areas of sympatry, there are, however, as yet, no reported instances of mixed breeding. The supposed 'intermediates' are now believed to be part of the normal (but overlapping) range of variation in the two species (Molau 1985; Knox 1988). It is for this reason that the darker examples of *exilipes* and the paler examples of *C. f. flammea* present special problems in identification, and it is often only the well-marked individuals of either that may confidently be assigned to species.

Identification summary

All of the characters listed above for the separation of *exilipes* and *C. f. flammea* are variable, but we consider that the following bear closest examination. In the field, the paler examples of *exilipes* will show a generally light appearance; a white-headed look with a pale nape; a white (sometimes buff) background colour to at least the centre of the mantle and to the full width of the back; an extensive, generally unmarked, white rump; a short conical bill; sparsely marked underparts, with only thin streaking on the flanks, rarely extending onto the lower flanks; a lack of strong buff tones to the lower breast and flanks; and a thinly-streaked or unmarked longest undertail-covert. In the hand, *exilipes* can often be identified by a bill depth/length ratio of 1.4 or less; a bill/wing-length ratio of more than 8.0; a white rump, unmarked, or only lightly flecked, for at least 10 mm; and the longest undertail-covert being either unmarked or with a central streak less than 2 mm wide.

Some *exilipes* resemble *C. f. flammea* in the field and many will fail on at least one of these features. Any individuals with only relatively pale rumps are best left unidentified unless other characters are critically examined.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank P. Bristow for his heading line-drawing and for reading and commenting on an early draft of the text; D. A. Christie and Per Alström for translations of Molau's paper; D. J. Britton and P. V. Harvey for reading and commenting on an early draft; and K. Osborn for the series of photographs which he made available. The last two also provided most helpful and active assistance during the 1984 influx on Fair Isle. The study on Fair Isle was part of the work of Fair Isle Bird Observatory. Marc Herremans kindly provided the summary of part of his work which appears as the Appendix to this paper.

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Appendix. Identification of redpolls using biometrics

Although there is broad overlap in the measurements of most redpoll taxa, many Mealy Redpolls *C. f. flammea* can be separated from the smaller pale redpolls (*C. h. exilipes* and pale Icelandic birds) by a function which maximises the differences between several measurements (fig. 1; for further details see Herremans in press). Maximum wing-length (method 3 of Svensson 1984), tail-length (with callipers between central rectrices at base to tip of longest rectrix), bill-length to the feathering and bill-depth at the feathering (both according to Svensson 1984) were used here, but it is likely that analyses using further variables or more critical measurements would result in even better separation. Only measurements from individuals with typical plumage were used; 20 apparent unknowns (3.8% of the total *C. f. flammea* and *C. h. exilipes* sample) were omitted. Their identity is discussed in Herremans (in press).

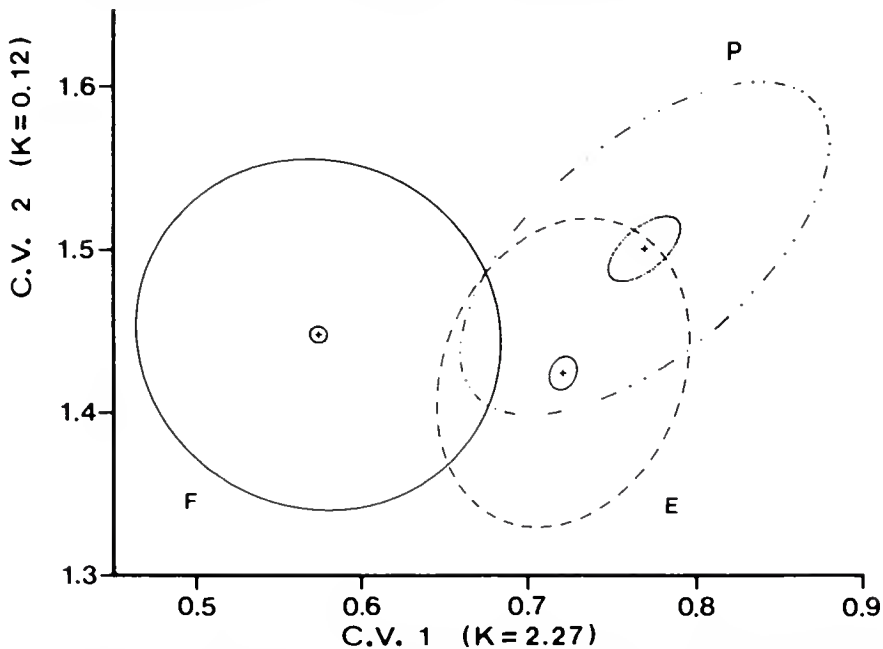


Fig. 1. Plot of separation of redpolls: *Carduelis flammea flammea* (F), *C. hornemanni exilipes* (E) and pale Icelandic redpolls (P), showing sample means (+), centroids (95% prediction for the position of the population mean) and ellipses predicting 95% of the population. Sample sizes: *C. f. flammea*, including 'holboellii', N = 253 males and 185 females; *C. h. exilipes*, N = 47 males and 37 females; P = pale Icelandic redpolls, N = 21 males and 5 females

The first axis, which accounts for 95% of the separation, is derived as follows:

$$CV1 = (-0.00436 \times \text{wing}) + (0.0136 \times \text{tail}) - (0.063 \times \text{bill-length}) + (0.126 \times \text{bill-depth}).$$

For CV1: *C. f. flammea* = 0.45-0.70

$$C. h. exilipes = 0.63-0.81$$

It can be predicted that less than 1% of *C. f. flammea* will have CV1 > 0.68 and less than 1% of *exilipes* (or other pale birds) have CV1 < 0.64; these values can be used as identification limits.

The second axis has little additional power (5%):

$$CV2 = (0.013 \times \text{wing}) + (0.0067 \times \text{tail}) + (0.0146 \times \text{bill-length}) - (0.01 \times \text{bill-depth}).$$

These results show that groups defined on plumage tend to be separated biometrically, which suggests a non-random assortment of genes responsible for the features. The pale individuals tend to be long-tailed and with short, deep bills, and this places them to the right of the figure. Pale redpolls from the north Atlantic (pale Icelandic birds and nominate *hornemanni*) would be located in the upper right, although the large dark birds from Iceland (some looking quite like *C. f. flammea*) would also appear there.

The valid application of these methods for identification depends on the use of similar measuring techniques. Ideally, this should be confirmed by obtaining comparable average values for at least one reference group (e.g. *C. f. cabaret*: males: wing = 71.1 mm, tail = 52.3 mm, bill-length = 9.0 mm, bill depth = 6.0 mm; females: wing = 69.4 mm, tail = 51.5 mm, bill-length = 8.8 mm, bill depth = 5.8 mm).

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Notes

Night Herons and Little Egrets preying on fish while flying

In the late afternoon of 13th June 1987, during a visit to the northern shore of Manyas Gölü, northwest Turkey, Per-Anders Bertilsson, Rolf Simonsson and I observed large numbers of herons catching fish from the surface of the lake while flying. The wind was strong from the north, and about 35 Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, about 30 Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and a few Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* were flying over the water surface against the wind. The Night Herons flew at approximately 10 m above the surface, hovered and then stooped down towards the water; alighting with folded wings for about two or three seconds, they took a fish, which they then swallowed while flying up to a height of 10 m, before repeating the behaviour. Most of their fishing attempts seemed successful. If they came too close to the shore, they would change direction and let the tail-wind sweep them out 200-300 m, before continuing the activity. The Little Egrets flew at only 2-3 m above the surface, occasionally approaching it with stretched necks and picking up a fish while still in flight; we never saw them land on the surface. They did not seem to make so many attempts to catch fish as the Night Herons. The few Grey Herons that were around did not attempt to catch any fish during our half-hour stay at the site. We could not determine the species of fish being caught. According to Hancock & Kushlan (1984, *The Herons Handbook*), Night Herons have been recorded feeding by hovering, diving and swimming, but this behaviour has apparently not previously been recorded for Little Egrets.

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Grey Heron catching, killing and swallowing Hoopoe During the late morning of 9th October 1987, in an open area on Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman, I noticed two Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* with two Hoopoes *Upupa epops* feeding near them in the grass. Suddenly, one of the herons struck at a Hoopoe, catching it from behind and holding it in the tip of its bill. The second heron gave chase and they both flew out to a barren stony area nearby, the Heron-plus-Hoopoe combination making a sadly comic sight as the Hoopoe produced normal flight actions of its wings as though in free flight. I returned quickly to my vehicle, carefully approached the birds, and photographed them from about 15 m (plate 56). The heron at first seemed content to allow its prey to struggle vigorously, the latter thereby damaging itself, occasional shakes of the heron's head contributing to this. As the Hoopoe weakened, the heron became more active, frequently repositioning its victim and shaking it around, often by the neck or the wing-roots. Occasionally, the heron dropped the Hoopoe on the ground and looked at it closely, before picking



56. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* with recently captured Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Sultanate of Oman, October 1987 (Conrad Greaves)

it up again with a striking action. Some ten minutes after the initial capture, the heron flew to a nearby pool and thoroughly soaked the Hoopoe by frequently immersing it. After several minutes of dunking the Hoopoe and repositioning it in its bill, the heron swallowed it head first. Later on the same day, I watched Grey Herons catch and eat a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* and a Redshank *Tringa totanus*. A week earlier, I had photographed a Grey Heron with what I identified as a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* in the soaked stage, prior to being swallowed. All the victims that I observed appeared perfectly fit at the time of capture, but, while feeding, seemed unaware of the danger posed by the herons.

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Grey Herons stealing fish from Cormorants and from Bittern On 4th October 1987, at Ladywalk Nature Reserve, Hams Hall Power Station, Warwickshire, Dave Long and John Price saw a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* fly across the main pool and land on the back of a Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* as it surfaced just ahead with a large fish in its bill; the Cormorant submerged, leaving the heron swimming in deep water. In December 1987 and January 1988, I saw three successful attacks, the heron seizing a large,

senseless fish which appeared on the surface after the Cormorant had submerged; on one occasion, the heron was largely submerged itself before the fish appeared and it released its grip on the Cormorant. The successful herons flew to the bank to swallow the fish, and on two occasions flew from the bank to make their attacks. I can find no reference to kleptoparasitism by Grey Herons on Cormorants. During the period of attacks, up to 38 Cormorants and 16 Grey Herons were present by the main pool.

On 20th February 1988, at the same site, I saw a Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* catch a medium-small fish. Within a few seconds, a Grey Heron appeared in flight from 20-25 m away and briefly hovered over the Bittern, with its legs down. The Bittern dropped the fish and quickly jumped 1 m to one side. The heron landed, threatened it and picked up the fish. By this date, there were only two or three Cormorants daily, compared with an average of over 20 in January, so there were fewer opportunities of stealing from them. If Grey Herons are present in a Bittern territory of limited size, they clearly intimidate and harass the smaller species. At Ladywalk, I have heard of or seen only two instances of a Bittern driving off herons, but the reverse has been seen on about 20 occasions. In addition, this particular Bittern, on at least 15 occasions, emerged from the reeds at a spot where a Grey Heron had been standing until a few minutes previously.

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Talon-linking and cartwheeling display of Booted Eagles In bright, clear weather on the morning of 7th September 1987, some 4 km north of the Doñana reserve in southwest Spain, I was watching a group of seven Booted Eagles *Hieraaetus pennatus* flying above matorral scrub dominated by yellow cistus *Halimium* adjacent to eucalyptus plantations near the marisma edge. There was a minimum of five pale-phase individuals and one, or probably two, dark-phase. Observations earlier in 1987 indicated that a pale-phase pair had attempted unsuccessfully to breed in the area, having abandoned a nest 0.5 km away. From begging calls, I deduced that some of the Booted Eagles were juveniles.

At 11.32 hours (local time), two pale-phase individuals were repeatedly flying very close together. Neither had heavily marked underwing-coverts which can characterise juveniles but their plumage appeared fresh, with no signs of current moult; from a marked size difference, I considered them to be a male and a female. Between passes, the male called, and the female may also have been calling. On three occasions, the female extended both legs to coincide with the male's approaches: on the first, withdrawing them as the male completed his pass, and, on the second, rolling to present her talons while upside-down. On the third occasion, the two individuals linked talons and performed cartwheels with beating wings, wing-beating beginning promptly after talons were linked; disengagement was graceful, and, when the eagles headed off, their wingbeats appeared rapid, with wings incompletely extended. The pair flew off,

initially close together, but soon parted to mix with other Booted Eagles. During the display, loss of height appeared slight.

Before and after this display, Booted Eagle activity in the area was conspicuous. Twenty-two minutes earlier, a dark-phase eagle, circling in low flight, made a number of pecks at its outstretched talons, apparently eating a small prey, and then gave a small dive. Moments before, a pale-phase gave three typical display dives; and, 42 minutes after, a pale-phase eagle made at least 12 consecutive display dives. Fifty-two minutes later, a passing Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* in nearly full-adult plumage was attacked from considerable height by a pale-phase Booted Eagle and, after changing course towards the marisma, was the target of four further dives by the same or another Booted Eagle. It is possible that feeding or mock-feeding on the wing has a display function; it is more conspicuous to the observer than the more usual ground-feeding or perch-feeding. While attacks on Imperial Eagles by Booted in Doñana are commoner than the reverse, Imperial Eagles are often not attacked.

Leg-dangling by Booted Eagles is seen in Doñana in the context of apparent advertisement flights, and such behaviour has been reported for this species in other areas; its occurrence prior to the wheeling display suggests that it may indicate an invitation to link talons. Following display dives involving apparent mates, the pair typically keeps somewhat apart from other Booted Eagles; it is intriguing that this was not the case after the cartwheeling display. Further observations in spring and summer may clarify whether mutual cartwheeling by Booted Eagles involves members of a pair, as is so with some other raptor species. From the absence of previous accounts, this display by Booted Eagles would seem to be uncommon.

These observations were made during tenureship of an honorary research fellowship with Aberdeen University, a post-doctoral fellowship from the Ministerio de Educacion y Ciencias, and with financial support from CAYCIT project 944.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented as follows: 'In compiling the Social Behaviour account for Booted Eagle in *BWP* 2, I found no definite record for what I called "Talon-grasping" and "Mutual-cartwheeling" for this species, only of "Talon-presentation" (by a female)—although Talon-grasping was known for the closely related Bonelli's Eagle *H. fasciatus* and occurs also, with or without Mutual-cartwheeling, among some of the *Aquila* eagles. Whether such behaviour is ever a true display between birds of opposite sexes (paired or pairing) remains, however, to be fully established by much further observation.' EDS

Woodcock mobbing Nightjar At 20.45 GMT on 22nd June 1987, at Bucklebury Common, Berkshire, I was watching a male Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* hunting low over open heath when a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* flying about 10 m above it changed direction, dived and flew at the Nightjar twice, causing it to take evasive action. The Nightjar escaped into some silver birches *Betula pendula*, and the Woodcock landed about 5 m away to join another Woodcock, possibly its mate.

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Stock Doves preyed on by grey squirrels and brooding young squirrel

From 1981 to 1983, I studied Stock Doves *Columba oenas* nesting at Wytham Wood, Oxfordshire. Most nested in wooden boxes with internal dimensions of 45 × 27 × 19 cm, and with a 9-cm-diameter entrance hole in the front. The boxes were 3-8 m above the ground on vertical trunks of large trees. A few nests in natural tree hollows were also studied. Over the three years, a total of at least 25 pairs nested in the study area, laid 69 clutches (134 eggs) and produced 75 fledglings. Hatching success was 67% and fledging success 83%. Most egg losses (19% of 134 eggs) were due to nests being abandoned, possibly as a result of a visit by a predator, but 7% of eggs and 9% of 90 young were directly preyed upon and two incubating adults were killed. Grey squirrels *Sciurus carolinensis* were probably the main predators; they used the nestboxes as dens in winter and some even raised litters in them, but they abandoned the boxes in spring before the doves nested. Characteristic squirrel damage during incubation included smashed or missing eggs, often accompanied by tufts of feathers from the incubating bird (two of which died, but were not eaten). Squirrel predation on nestlings typically involved the eating of parts of the body, especially the head and neck. In all these instances, squirrel hairs were found stuck to the sides of the box and around the entrance hole.

On 1st September 1982, I found an adult Stock Dove on a nest which had held two eggs the previous day; it was in a state of shock, and was incubating the one remaining egg plus a naked, blind, but apparently healthy young grey squirrel aged about one week (calculated from weights given in Shorten, 1951, *Proc. Zool. Soc. Lond.* 121: 427-459). I shifted both the adult dove and the remaining egg to a nearby nestbox and left the squirrel, but on my next visit, three days later, both dove and squirrel were dead. I presume that the adult grey squirrel had been disturbed at its own previous nest, and while searching for a new site had entered the nestbox; the dove had somehow driven it off, leaving the helpless young behind in the bird's nest.

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Nightjar giving contact call after alighting on perch On 24th June 1987, at Snelsmore Common, Berkshire, I saw a territory-holding male Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* land on overhead electricity wires and immediately give the 'co-ic' contact call; it then remained silent for several minutes before flying off. *BWP* (vol. 4) states that this call is usually given only in flight, although it has been recorded just before take-off.

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Bee-eaters taking earthworms on the ground Although pellets and gizzard samples of several species of bee-eater (Meropidae) have revealed flightless prey such as spiders, caterpillars, ground beetles, driver-ant soldiers and the remains of small lizards, most records of wild bee-eaters taking flightless prey are circumstantial or evidential rather than observational (Fry 1984). Airborne spiders and caterpillars are often taken by other aerial foragers, such as swallows (Hirundinidae) and swifts

(Apodidae)(e.g. Fischer 1958; Turner 1981, 1989; Earlé 1985; Herholdt 1987), but flightless prey such as ants and beetles are probably taken from the ground or other surface. Bee-eaters have been seen to come to the ground mainly to ingest grit, and this behaviour might be mistaken for ground foraging (Fry 1984). The following observation is probably the first confirmed record of Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* foraging on the ground.

The Bee-eater is a winter (austral summer) visitor to Bloemfontein, South Africa. In 1987, the first arrivals were seen on 23rd September, when 11 flew over suburban gardens towards the city-centre roost. On 25th September, an unseasonal spell of cold and rainy weather started, and during 25th-28th some 130 mm of rain fell (the long-term mean for September is only 20.8 mm). This cold weather had a depressing effect on the number of aerial insects available during this period, and several other aerial foragers were affected (for instance, several Little Swifts *Apus affinis* were found starving or dying on 28th). At 10.30 hours on 27th September, six Bee-eaters were observed on telephone wires in a suburban garden (itself unusual, as Bee-eaters normally only fly over the gardens to and from roost). After about ten minutes, two of them flew down to the lawn and started pecking at earthworms, which had left their flooded burrows and were crawling about on the lawn. All six Bee-eaters fed on the earthworms for about 30 minutes before returning to the wire and later flying off. The observations were made with binoculars from 15-20 m. Some of the Bee-eaters had difficulty in dealing with the larger worms, which tended to curl around their bills, but most of the worms were easily swallowed. Lea & Gray (1935) listed earthworms as prey of the Rainbowbird *M. omatus*, although they did not mention how these were caught.

Continuous rainy periods can also induce ground foraging by species such as the South African Cliff Swallow *Hirundo spilodera* (Earlé 1985). It seems that only extraordinary circumstances cause Bee-eaters to forage on the ground, but the fact that they can successfully do so indicates that they are quite adaptable.

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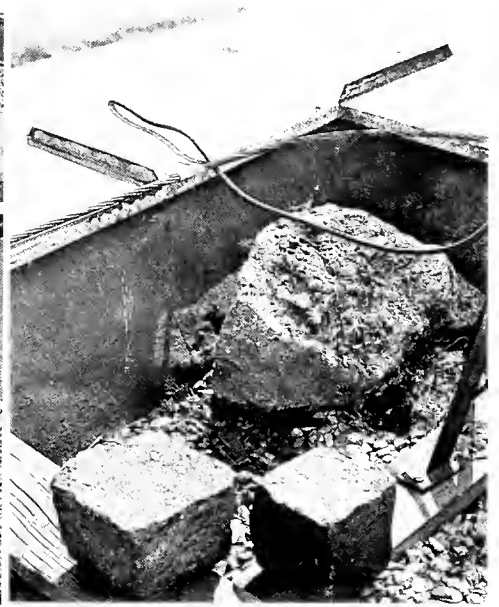
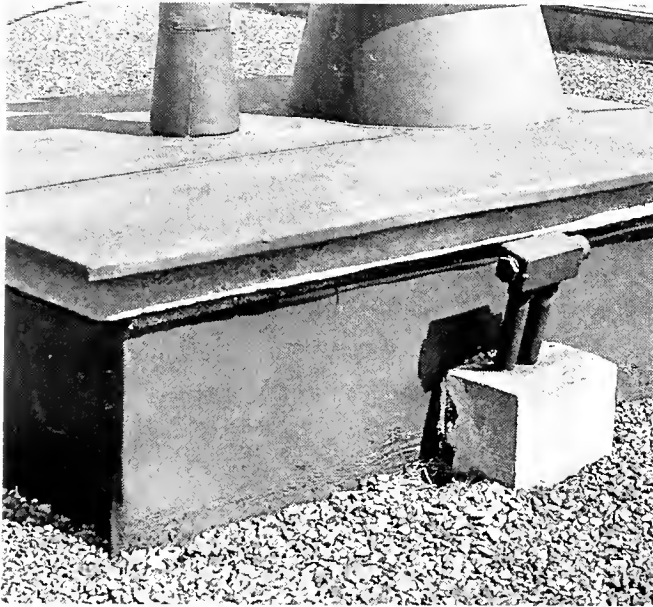
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Crested Larks nesting on roofs In the 1980s, following a long decline, the number of breeding pairs of Crested Larks *Galerida cristata* in Czechoslovakia has increased owing to the species' newly acquired habit of nesting in towns. A minority of pairs continue to nest, as they did before, in open, sparsely vegetated country, on town lawns, by roadsides



57-59. Nest sites of Crested Larks *Galerida cristata* on flat roofs, Czechoslovakia (Josef Chytil)



or along railway tracks, but the majority now nest on roofs of buildings. I have studied these latter since 1984 in Přerov, central Moravia. Nests have been found on various types of flat roofs, all of which were gravelled, on buildings ranging from one-storey warehouses and supermarkets to 14-storey residential blocks (plate 57). In most cases, nests are located against low vertical walls on roofs, such as those of air-shafts, aerial pedestals, lift machine-rooms and so on (plates 58 & 59). Roof nesting would seem to remove the main disadvantage of breeding in towns, namely disturbance by people. An interesting change of diet is connected with this change in nesting sites: I have many times observed fledglings

being fed on remains of bread rolls, biscuits and salami. *BWP* (vol. 5) makes no mention of Crested Larks nesting on roofs, but it does state (page 151) that this species roosts regularly on flat roofs of buildings in East Germany.

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Nuthatch attacking Nuthatch corpse During late February to early March 1988, I watched and photographed the visitors to a bird table and peanut feeder in my parents' garden in Highcliffe, Dorset. On 28th and 29th February there had been very few, brief visits by Nuthatches *Sitta europaea*, but on the next day these increased considerably. At about 08.00 GMT on 1st March, I found a dead Nuthatch on the concrete behind the house about 5 m from the feeder. A short while later, a Nuthatch landed close to the corpse, hopped up to it and began rapidly stabbing at the head with its bill; this continued for a couple of minutes, then it flew off. A few minutes later, the Nuthatch returned and resumed the attack. I moved the corpse on to the grass below the feeder, intending to photograph any subsequent attack. The Nuthatch duly returned, found the moved corpse and continued to stab at its head (plates 60 & 61), flying away and returning again every few minutes. In the meantime, this and another Nuthatch were periodically visiting the feeder, now less than half-full, whereas for the previous two days it had been full and was visited only by tits *Parus* and Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris*. I cannot be sure whether only one or both Nuthatches attacked the corpse, but there was only one at any one time. The corpse was initially in fresh condition, but after four 'attack visits' hardly any feathers were left on the head.

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Several species are known to feed on carrion, such as road-casualty corpses, and sparrows and finches may visit and remain with the corpse of a presumed mate. Derek Goodwin has commented that, in this instance, the Nuthatch was presumably reacting to the corpse as if to a live but helpless rival. EDS

60 & 61. Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* attacking corpse of another Nuthatch, Dorset, March 1988
(Peter Gasson)



Magpie killing Sparrowhawk At 07.20 GMT on 10th May 1988, while observing from 40 m a flock of up to 40 House Martins *Delichon urbica* feeding over a shallow pool at Bough Beech Reservoir, Kent, I was suddenly distracted by a male Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* flying through the flock, having apparently captured prey. Simultaneously, the raptor was chased by two Magpies *Pica pica*, and I then noted a wing with the characteristic hirundine shape droop downwards between his tarsi as he weaved at about 1 m above the grass. The Magpies continued to harry the hawk, and a House Martin flew out of the mêlée as they appeared to close on the raptor. The affray had by now reached a corner of the meadow bordered by 2-m hedgerows, and the raptor was tumbled to the ground by a joint attack. A group of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* joined the affray, which continued on the ground. A single Magpie and up to six Starlings then moved back 1-2 m and watched as the Sparrowhawk remained locked in combat with the remaining Magpie. I mistakenly believed that the struggle was over the Sparrowhawk's prey, having dismissed the possibility that the House Martin was the raptor's victim. The Starlings left the area and the watching Magpie moved about 10 m away. It then became clear that the other Magpie was in fact attacking, and dominating, the hawk, which it finally held to the ground by standing on him, and it continued to strike at the hawk's head with its bill. The latter fanned his tail and made violent efforts to extricate himself, but the Magpie again managed to mount the prone raptor and began pulling small white feathers from his head or neck region. There was another violent struggle, and I thought the Sparrowhawk had released himself, but the Magpie regained its foothold.

I was then joined by R. K. Coles and, as we climbed the fence to try to rescue the hawk, the Magpie flew off. We ran about 80 m to where the raptor lay; he looked moribund, having apparently lost an eye and some blood. RKC gathered the bird, noted a strong heart beat, and hence removed him to a car and wrapped him in a woollen garment with the intention of taking him to a local bird-care specialist; unfortunately, the Sparrowhawk showed no signs of life within a few minutes of being placed in the vehicle.

A. F. J. COX

Domus, Ferndale, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3RU

Derek Goodwin has posed a question relating to human rather than avian behaviour: 'Would they have tried to rescue a crow (Corvidae) being killed by a hawk?' EDS

Jackdaw attacking Woodpigeon At about 12.30 GMT on 26th April 1984, I was sitting in my vehicle at the side of the road watching a loose flock of about 70 Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* feeding with a few Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* on floodmeadows bordering the River Cuckmere in East Sussex. Suddenly, two Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* flew down and landed near a group of pigeons. After a few seconds, one of the Jackdaws hopped rapidly up to the nearest pigeon and tore a beakful of feathers from its neck, near the white neck patch; the pigeon immediately flew off, leaving its assailant to sort through the feathers, which it did by holding each one in turn with its claw and examining it

minutely with its bill. The Jackdaw, perhaps having found no mites or other food items among the feathers, then moved away and began feeding in the grass. After a short pause, an opportunistic Starling collected a large beakful of the feathers and flew off, presumably to add them to its nest lining. It seems unlikely that the Jackdaw intended to kill the Woodpigeon. Had it in fact seen a prey item crawling among the pigeon's neck feathers, or was this perhaps an advanced case of defending a feeding territory?

ALAN BOWLEY

2 Flint Cottages, Jevington, East Sussex

Roosting behaviour of Carrion Crows on ground Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* are well known to roost communally, although normally in trees; little has apparently been published on their general behaviour when roosting on the ground. From October to March during the six winters 1981/82 to 1986/87, I studied the communal roosting behaviour of Carrion Crows in an area of lightly timbered arable farmland near Ringwould, Kent. Crows congregated at some 18 places: one of these was a wood of about 75 ha; the others, all ground sites, were grouped around it, none more than 2 km distant. The wood and two nearby fields were the most regularly frequented. In the first two winters, these central fields appeared to be commonly used for roosting, the others acting chiefly as preliminary gathering sites, although their functions were evidently interchangeable. Latterly, other sites may have been so used. The wood, a conspicuous landmark lying within one angle of a crossroads and near a railway line used as a flight line, seemed to serve as a major assembly point where crows gathered constantly, but whether many, or any, remained to roost there is doubtful.

Crows arrived, singly or in parties, in the central area from about 90 minutes before sunset until some 40 minutes after. In the morning, they had disappeared by first light, but then, as in the evening, they could be heard calling in flight or be discerned against the sky when it was too dark to see them on the ground. Most crows moved to the centre by stages, first alighting at one or more of the outer fields. Initially, they tended to scatter on the ground, a few perhaps foraging. Later, they formed a rough line, side by side, sometimes along the crest of a ridge, always well clear of hedges or other ground cover. More than 100 regularly gathered on each of the central fields in the first winter, and some 230 in the second; incoming individuals, of which some arrived after dark, tended to call once or twice as they approached a group on the ground, the latter always being silent. In later winters, fewer were present, with no more than 90 congregating at any one place: they lined up as described above, but were restless, shifting and reforming the line; eventually they departed, usually in the direction of the wood, sometimes calling as they did so.

On the ground, the crows were sometimes disturbed by people, dogs and so on. In such instances, or when they seemed nervous or restless, they moved to an elevated spot, such as high branches of trees or telephone poles, calling loudly as they rose from their perches (similar behaviour sometimes preceded changes from one assembly place to

another). Afterwards, they dropped back to the ground nearby or flew elsewhere, most commonly to the wood. They circled over this with clamorous cries or called from the treetops. Apart from these noisy displays, they also called as they flew towards the wood, scarcely deviating if anybody was close to their flight path. They left the trees in silence, sometimes as late as 40 minutes after sunset, turning back and calling if anyone was nearby; occasionally they were just visible against the sky, making their way, bird after bird, from one treetop to another, towards that edge of the wood which faced a favourite assembly and, presumably, roosting field. At two other spots, crows rose from the ground when it was too dark to see them, in one case some 30 m away: only their calls as they flew to nearby trees alerted me to their presence, and their cries continued until my departure. Most of the ground near the wood was probably used for roosting at some time. There was never any indication that groups were settling to roost in the wood or in other trees in the area.

With one exception, all my observations were made from outside the wood, where visibility was best. On the only occasion when I followed the crows into the trees, they did indeed fly before me, calling loudly; a Magpie *Pica pica* called quietly, but no other species reacted. Apart from this, there was no apparent regular disturbance or human intrusion.

In Scotland, Picozzi (1975) found that crows of hybrid origin (*C. c. corone* × *C. c. cornix*) also circled over the roost wood; neither calling nor perching prominently are mentioned, but these crows were not apparently subject to disturbance (N. Picozzi *in litt.*). Ground roosting is common in Scotland (Hollom 1962) and has been recorded in Nottinghamshire (Bell 1968), in both instances in the cover of tall vegetation. Ogilvie & Ogilvie (1984) found that Jackdaws *C. monedula* roosted on the sea shore with Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*. Around Ringwould, Carrion Crows were sometimes found on the same bare fields as Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* and Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*. The cryptic coloration of the last three left them barely discernible in poor light, while the crows were still conspicuous. The Lapwings formed a line in the same way as the crows did. The latter, when alarmed, tended to fly away; the other three rose, too, but usually returned to the ground nearby. In complete darkness, the black-plumaged Carrion Crows may have been no more vulnerable than are habitual ground-roosting species such as Skylarks (Green 1985) and many other ground-feeding birds (Bacon 1985).

J. M. STAINTON

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Letters

The introduction of the Chukar In 'Points of view' (*Brit. Birds* 79: 656-657), Derek Goodwin drew attention to the dilution of the British population of the Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa* by hybrids between this and other species of *Alectoris*. In his fears for the survival of a pure British stock of Red-legs he is almost certainly right. Some 30 years ago, those of us who took part in partridge shoots in East Anglia became aware that the 'bags' were beginning to include a number of Red-legged Partridges which were markedly different from the familiar *rufa*, being slightly larger, blue-grey (instead of red-brown) on the back, and with less chestnut on underparts and flanks. It transpired that they were hybrids produced on a game farm by crossing Red-legs with another species of *Alectoris*, probably the Chukar *A. chukar*, as Mr Goodwin suggests, although the exact parentage was not revealed. They had been given the 'trade' name of 'Ogridge'. The object of the introduction was to boost, for shooting purposes, the stock of wild partridges, which had been declining for a number of years. The hybrids have proved to have a number of advantages over pure Red-legged Partridges. They tend to wander less from where they have been turned down and they happily frequent open woodland and its edges, so adding variety to a pheasant shoot; being larger, they are probably somewhat hardier, but they fly no better than pure Red-legs. At first, it was thought that these hybrid partridges could not reproduce themselves nor interbreed with *rufa*, but this seems to be incorrect.

As time passes, more and more of these hybrids are being released on shoots in Britain, and in many places they already outnumber pure Red-legs. Scientifically, this is obviously a sad and bad situation, but it is probably now quite irreversible: many shoots are finding the hybrids quite satisfactory and are increasing the number of them that they turn down each year, even though pure Red-leg stock is still available from game farms. Here in East Anglia, at any rate, the pure Red-legged Partridge stock is being swamped.

W. H. PAVN

River Close, Ixworth, near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 2HT

Reaction of Blackcap to sudden noise Dr A. P. Radford (*Brit. Birds* 80: 249) reported a female Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* on its nest reacting to a sudden noise (a loud shot from a nearby field) by hanging upside-down from the side of the nest. Dr M. A. Ogilvie and Dr K. E. L. Simmons questioned whether the proximity of the observer to the nest (1.5 m) could also have influenced the behaviour, and the editors welcomed further comparable records.

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over 1,000 Blackcap nests during the past 20 years, we are fairly familiar with this species' behaviour (see Berthold & Querner, 1984, *Vogelwarte* 32: 304-305; and Berthold, *Proc. XIX Int. Orn. Congr.*). During the course of our experiments, it became clear to us that Blackcaps are sensitive to strange, rather than to loud, noises. They can easily be kept, for instance, in absolutely healthy condition in climatic chambers with a constant sound level of 75-80 decibels, but they may become extremely nervous upon hearing only a soft scratching noise. We also occasionally observe over-excited behaviour from individuals that are to be trapped in their cages. They sometimes react with 'proteanic' behaviour: they slouch, hang their heads and stretch out their wing and tail feathers; distress calls are occasionally uttered (as described in detail by Howard, 1909, *The British Warblers*).

Our findings suggest that the reaction of Dr Radford's Blackcap could well be due to the fact that he invaded what the bird perceived as a critically safe area. To test this, we did a few simple experiments in which we fired a shotgun (calibre 20/70) in the vicinity of six nests on which Blackcaps were incubating eggs (as in Dr Radford's observation). We chose nests where the sitting adults could be seen from a safe distance (previously checked) before the shot was fired; females were incubating on three nests and males on the other three, and we varied the distance of firing between 10 m and 60 m. All three females that were irradiated acoustically from 10 m, 20 m and 60 m, respectively, remained on their nests and were not disturbed. All three males, however, treated from 15 m, 20 m and 40 m, respectively, left their nests. The first male flew away and began to sing after 20 seconds, and the third entered and remained in the vegetation below the nest. The second male was virtually in shock: when the shot was fired, at 20 m, he 'exploded' off the eggs, but remained hanging, head downwards, on the nest wall; he was motionless for about seven seconds, before flying away. On the next day, this male was seen incubating again.

From these few observations, it is clear that individual Blackcaps can indeed undergo a form of shock upon hearing a sudden noise, but, in a corresponding situation, others may behave as if totally undisturbed. It may also be that males are more sensitive to sudden noises than are females.

P. BERTHOLD and U. QUERNER

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Red-backed Shrikes with white primary patches The note by Harrop (1990) on a male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* with a white primary patch, following an earlier discussion (Doherty 1983) and editorial comments, prompts me to hypothesise on the possible origin of this 'morph', usually regarded as an extreme of individual variation within the species (Dean 1982).

The occasional occurrence of a white primary patch on otherwise

typical male Red-backed Shrikes was recognised by German authors some 90 years ago (Kollibay 1904; Schiebel 1906). As stated by Bub (1981), individuals with an extensive white patch at the base of the primaries have been recorded in many parts of the species' breeding range (e.g. in Greece, Hungary, Germany, on females as well as on males, and Sweden). Such males not infrequently occur also in Finland (K. Mullarney, quoted in A. R. Dean's comment, *Brit. Birds* 83: 123), in Poland (Chylarecki 1988), and probably in the European part of Russia, where otherwise typical males with a white patch have been photographed (e.g. Steinbach 1984).

Rather than describe all such individuals, especially from the eastern part of the species' breeding range, we should instead try to establish the frequency of this feature in breeding populations of Red-backed Shrikes in various countries. In particular, it is possible that individuals with a white primary patch are more frequent in eastern populations, as all the records suggest. Red-backed Shrikes are known to hybridise extensively with white-patched Isabelline Shrikes *L. isabellinus* of the race *phoenicuroides* in Kazakhstan and in Iran (Panov 1983), producing mixed populations with intermediate characters. Although such zones of hybridisation are usually narrow, some genes can penetrate far into populations involved (see Barton & Hewitt 1989 for an excellent review). It is quite possible that genes determining the expression of a primary patch typical of *L. i. phoenicuroides* are present in populations of otherwise typical Red-backed Shrikes, far from the hybridisation zone. Though frustrating to bird-watchers, it is clear that, in cases of closely related and hybridising forms (semispecies) such as *L. collurio* and *L. i. phoenicuroides*, the issue of species boundaries is sometimes controversial (but see Short 1969). Examples of populations of mice (*Mus musculus*/*M. domesticus* complex) having the nuclear genome of one species and mitochondrial genes of the other (Ferris *et al.* 1983) are known. Phenotypic characters produced by only one or two genes may show a more discontinuous pattern, simplifying field identification (Short 1969: page 95). Thus, on the basis of one related set of morphological characters (body colour), we may classify, say, a crow as a 'Hooded Crow' *Corvus corone cornix*, despite the fact that it may actually possess a few per cent of the genome (not expressed in the phenotype) of the closely related Carrion Crow *C. c. corone*.

This does not mean that white-patched Red-backed Shrikes are 'hybrids' in the usual sense, but rather that such individuals may have some genes typical of *phoenicuroides*, though the majority of the genome is *collurio*. The presence of these 'strange' genes in a given population is not a consequence of recent hybridisation events, but rather an outcome of a diffusive process of gene flow. The term 'hybrid' would perhaps be more appropriate for individuals showing a more balanced mixture of morphological characters of both parental species, and originating from the centre of a zone of hybridisation.

It would be interesting to test the hypothesis that the frequency of Red-backed Shrikes with a white primary patch gradually increases eastwards, towards the zone of hybridisation with Isabelline Shrikes of the race *phoenicuroides*.

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Dr Alan Knox has commented as follows: 'The suggestion that the white primary patches seen on some Red-backed Shrikes result from the spread of genes from the zone of hybridisation with Isabelline Shrikes is quite reasonable, though there may be alternative explanations. A similar situation appears to occur with Pied *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Black-eared Wheatears *O. hispanica*: the black-throated form of the Black-eared Wheatear becomes commoner as the zone of hybridisation with Pied Wheatear is approached; on the other side of the zone, the pale-throated form of the Pied Wheatear may be an expression of genes from the Black-eared Wheatear (J. Haffer, 1977, *Bonn. Zool. Monographien* no. 10).' EDs

Jackdaws stealing food from breeding Guillemots and Puffins Hans Olsthoorn (*Brit. Birds* 80: 117-118) recorded Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* stealing fish from breeding Guillemots *Uria aalge* at Bullers of Buchan (not 'Bachun' as stated), Grampian. Similar behaviour has also been documented on Skomer, Dyfed, where Jackdaws rob both Guillemots and Puffins *Fratercula arctica* (Birkhead, 1973, *Nature in Wales* 13: 163-164). Of 175 Jackdaw 'patrols' noted by Dr Birkhead, 161 involved single Jackdaws, with 11 of two individuals and one each of groups of three, four and five. The Jackdaw usually edged forward along the ledge and pounced whenever prey was dropped or mishandled. This strategy succeeded in only three of the 175 attempts; in another ten, Jackdaws gleaned pieces of abandoned fish. The strategies and low success rate are therefore closely in accord with those found by Mr Olsthoorn in Grampian. EUAN DUNN
Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Department of Zoology, South Parks Road,
Oxford OX1 3PS

The best food-plant for birds? Having experimented for many years by planting a variety of shrubs to attract hungry birds, I find by far the best to be the Himalayan honeysuckle or flowering nutmeg *Leycesteria formosa*. The flowering period is July to October. Its long, dangling white-and-purple flower clusters produce a heavy crop of small, dark reddish-purple fruits from September onwards, which are irresistible to finches, thrushes, tits

and warblers. The shrub is very easy to cultivate, grows up to 2 m in height, and will attract far more birds than the usual barberry *Berberis* or cotoneaster *Cotoneaster*.

GUY MOUNTFORT

8 Park Manor, St Aldhelms Road, Poole, Dorset BH13 6BS

This plant is established in the wild in some areas, having been planted by gamekeepers for the benefit of Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*. EDS

Product reports

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Greenkat SGN-3 60mm Prismatic Spotting Scope

First impressions are of a medium-weight (1.2 kg), well-designed telescope, specifically regarding ergonomics and aesthetics. The very attractive finish soon, however, began to show signs of wear and tear. Three eyepieces were supplied: 20×, 30× and 40× (50× and 60× are also available), and a close-focus lens; a camera adaptor is also available.

One immediate attraction of this telescope is the revolving eyepiece, giving not only the choice of two magnifications, but also two viewing angles: straight through and 45°. For most raptor-watching, 45° is preferable, but not everybody will feel comfortable with this viewing angle, so this form of optical pluralism may appeal to many. I found, however, that it involved having to take my eye away from the eyepiece to revolve the lenses (thereby inevitably moving the telescope slightly) and then having to refocus on the distant dot.

I used the 20× as the straight-through eyepiece and, initially, the 40× at 45°. The 40× had such a tiny field of view and depth of field, however, and gave such a striking bright blue outline to nesting White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and yellow trailing edge to Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*, albeit towards the sun, that within a few days I had to change to a combination of 20× and 30×. I am curious as to what the 50× would be like.

The 20× is good, although, since it is a standard eyepiece (not wide-angle), it has a rather narrow field of view; it performed admirably under quite varied conditions, as did the 30×. In direct comparison with a *Kowa*

TS-602 20× WA, I found the *Greenkat* to be the better, although I prefer the *Kowa* because of its wide angle and rubber eye-cup. The *Greenkat* eyepieces are very small and, while no doubt good for spectacle-wearers, I was always conscious of trying not to poke my eye out.

Focusing was relatively easy using the camera-lens-type ring, although on occasions I did find that, after transport, the ring had turned right past infinity through closer focus, giving rise to a confusing and frantic readjustment.

I am extremely dubious about 'stick-on-goodies'. The close-focus lens screws onto the objective lens, using an irritating, time-consuming and easily obstructed fine thread; but it proved to be surprisingly good, focusing down to 3.5 m. Its use does, however, prevent the extension of the sunshade hood.

Retailing at £155, plus £25 for each eyepiece (I can recommend only the 20× and 30×), I have a feeling that this attractive telescope may easily find its niche; indeed it may be the perfect tool for the artist and could even prove to be ubiquitous on bird reserves every Sunday afternoon of the year.

I wish to thank Jan Lontkowski and Tadeusz Stawarczyk for their suggestions and co-operation during the field trials of this telescope.

JAMES T. CULLEN

Sponsored by

Monthly marathon

The black-tailed passerine on the wires (plate 288 in the November 1990 issue) inspired a wide range of answers:

Desert Wheatear <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	(54%)
Blackstart <i>Cercomela melanura</i>	(14%)
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	(12%)

with fewer votes for Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*, Wheatear *O. oenanthe*, Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Ménétries's Warbler *S. mystacea*, Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli*, Arabian Warbler *S. leucomelaena*, Barred Warbler *S. nisoria*, Whitethroat *S. communis*, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, and Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli*.

Most entrants got it wrong. The bird was a Blackstart, photographed in Israel, in January 1990 by David Odell. Amazingly, only two competitors now lead the field, with all of the first four answers right: K. Mauer (Netherlands) and Jouni Riihimäki (Finland).

This fifth competition now progresses to its seventh stage, with plate 62. The winner will be able to choose a SUNBIRD holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.





62. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (seventh stage: photograph number 56). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th March 1991

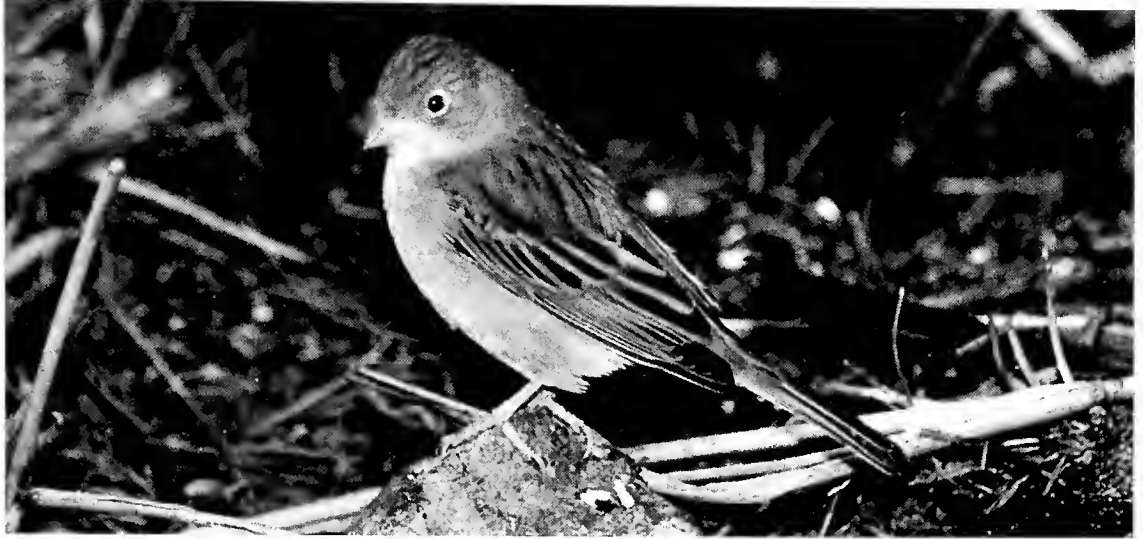
Mystery photographs

163 Judging the size of an isolated bird is difficult, but comparison with the grass leads to the conclusion that last month's mystery bird (plate 6 in colour, repeated here in black-and-white) is 'sparrow-sized', though noticeably slim, small-headed and long-tailed. The bill is conical, which suggests a sparrow *Passer*, finch (Fringillidae), bunting (Emberizidae), or perhaps even a lark (Alaudidae), but the plumage is very bland.

The bird has an obvious eye-ring in an otherwise unmarked 'face'. Its crown is slightly streaked, and there is a suggestion of a hood, with a pale throat. The mantle is heavily streaked with blackish lines, and the wing feathers have dark centres with pale edges of a similar colour to that of the mantle. The underparts are unstreaked, while the tail shows no evidence of white on the outer feathers. All in all, not a lot to go on—but enough to rule out any regular visitor to Western Europe.

Could it be a rare sparrow or lark? The combination of bill shape, the

bird's structure (especially the tail length), the eye-ring, and the streaked upperparts and unstreaked underparts rule out all those found in the Western Palearctic. The only finches that come close to this in general appearance are the rosefinches *Carpodacus*: the structure is just about right, but none has an eye-ring, Sinai Rosefinch *C. synoicus* is not so streaked above, while Great *C. rubicilla*, Scarlet *C. erythrinus* and Pallas's Rosefinches *C. roseus* are all streaked below.



The bill shape, long tail and well-proportioned body suggest a bunting, and this is indeed the case. Only two species show the distinctive features of absence of white on outer tail feathers, a prominent eye-ring, streaked upperparts and unstreaked underparts: these are Red-headed *Emberiza bruniceps* and Black-headed Buntings *E. melanocephala*. All other vaguely similar buntings have white outer tail feathers; Ortolan *E. hortulana*, Cretzschmar's *E. caesia* and Grey-necked Buntings *E. buchanani* also show prominent pale moustachial stripes, while Cinereous Bunting *E. cineracea* is greyer and less streaked above, and paler below, with some greyish-yellow on the throat.

Unfortunately, in this plumage, it is often difficult to progress farther. Both Red-headed and Black-headed Buntings have basically grey-brown plumage, with unstreaked sandy underparts becoming distinctly yellow on the undertail-coverts. Black-headed tends to show chestnut tones on the mantle and rump (though these can be absent, or present only on the mantle), while Red-headed, if anything, shows olive tones. In addition, Black-headed typically shows whitish edges and tips to both the median and the greater coverts, giving it a more distinctive pattern of wingbars than Red-headed, which, as on our mystery bird, usually shows just greater-covert fringes of a similar tone to that of the mantle. I photographed this Red-headed Bunting in Kazakhstan, USSR, in June 1985.

Red-headed Buntings are kept as cagebirds (though not commonly nowadays), but, given their distribution—breeding in Soviet Central Asia and wintering in India—they could conceivably turn up as genuine vagrants in Western Europe.

COLIN BRADSHAW

9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ



64. Mystery photograph 164. Identify the species. Answer next month

Announcement

Books in British BirdShop New this month:

*Birkhead *The Magpies*

*Duff, Hatton, *et al.* *Not BB V*

*Howard & Moore *Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* 2nd edn.

*Voisin *Hérons of Europe*

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xv and xvi.

Reviews

Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland. By J. N. Dymond, P. A. Fraser and S. J. M. Gantlett. T. & A. D. Poyser, Calton, 1990. 366 pages; many maps, diagrams and line-drawings. £19.00.

What value lies in the scores of county bird reports, and reports of the *British Birds* Rarities Committee, which annually list thousands of dates and places relating to occurrences of rare and scarce birds the length and breadth of the British Isles? They are a source of data which need analysis and, without it, are of rather limited interest. Here is a thorough presentation

of facts relating to some 45,000 records of more than 300 species from such sources between 1958 and 1985. The authors must, right away, be congratulated on their meticulous collation of data, which must have been an epic task. I spotted one important omission, the Warwickshire spring male Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* in 1979, but I can't believe much else has escaped the net.

The book combines the scope of two earlier Poyser volumes, *Scarce Migrant Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock 1974) and *Rare Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976), and thus brings such interesting species as Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* into the same volume as the out-and-out rarities. Indeed, this is one of the major plus points of the book, for it is often the status of 'lesser rarities' like these that is most difficult to assess. The authors have, probably wisely, stuck to the officially recorded opinions on all records, although one might guess that they would have liked to have argued with a few decisions.

In appearance, the new book looks much like its 'Rare' predecessor, with similar maps and diagrams and line-drawings. Many of the latter are, in fact, repeated from the earlier book, but there is a fine set of new ones too. The text includes brief details of distribution and a scanty identification summary, with useful pointers towards more detailed references.

But what of the analysis? The presentation (aided by the typically excellent Poyser production) is clear enough, but the text is usually brief and rarely attempts to probe into the underlying reasons for the patterns of occurrence so finely presented. It is an oddly frustrating book, difficult to get into for more than a few minutes at a time, but maybe it is too full of facts to be digestible for much more than that. There is little indication of changing status abroad; little or no link is made between rarity reports and weather conditions that may have had a crucial influence. Such analysis in a comprehensive book would perhaps be asking for too much—but, unless it is attempted somewhere, we return to the original question. What is the point of it all? In fact, with many species revealed as being most often reported in the south (or east) 'as would be expected' for birds from the south (or east), one wonders whether there is much more to be said than such simplistic comments anyway? Perhaps that is often all there is to it? But surely there is a little more to the annual magic of 'expected' semi-rarities, and more surprising vagrants, on the Norfolk coast, or the Isles of Scilly, or Fair Isle?

But rarities have a fascination, a kind of addiction, that makes seeing the records in print—even those that we knew all about before, and especially, perhaps, those we saw ourselves (or narrowly missed)—an end in itself, without the need to delve too deeply into underlying causes. The book is great browsing—dare I say dipping?—material, and as such will be warmly welcomed.

ROB HUME

Where to Watch Birds in Scotland. By Mike Madders and Julia Welstead. Christopher Helm, London, 1989. 368 pages; 70 line-drawings; 48 maps. Paperback £10.95.

I must start by declaring an interest. The authors sent me the draft account on Islay and took full note of comments that I made. They similarly consulted local experts on virtually all the sites described. This is not to detract from their own detailed knowledge and the hard work they have put into writing this book, but to emphasise that, by consulting so widely, they have produced by far the best guide yet written about birdwatching sites in Scotland. It is authoritative, up to date, and full of detailed and helpful information accompanied by clear and equally helpful maps. At the end of the book, there are lists of local recorders, local bird reports, and a complete systematic list of Scottish birds.

I could actually end this review here, coupled with a strong exhortation to buy this book, which I regard as indispensable for birdwatchers, whether visiting or living in Scotland. Instead, I am going to grumble, not at the authors, but at the publisher.

The eight other volumes in Christopher Helm's 'Where to Watch' series cover groups of English counties, from the six of the West Midlands to a mere two, Devon and Cornwall, plus a volume devoted to Wales. An average 60 sites are given full treatment in books of between 245 and 316 pages. Over 450 English and Welsh sites have been described in some 2,200 pages.

Compared with this lavish treatment, Scotland, with an area equivalent to the total of the areas covered by all the other volumes put together, has been allotted 368 pages into which the authors have managed to squeeze 120 birdwatching sites, allowing each barely half the space of more fortunate regions. They have appended nearly 90 additional sites, but merely in tabular form, rather than the full paragraph of other volumes.

And, to add insult to injury, there are numerous almost-blank pages where site accounts end near the top of a page. Line-drawings are scattered through the book, but none is placed in one of these empty spaces. By simply reducing existing line-drawings, or omitting the occasional one, I reckon I could save the equivalent of 30 pages, currently blank, or 10% of the total devoted to site accounts. That's another 12 full accounts. They might be at the expense of some of the quite pleasant line-drawings, but the book would have been that much more informative and useful.

Good birdwatching sites in Scotland are both numerous and rich in species. On a comparison with the volumes on English counties, Scotland should have been covered in at least three volumes. What a pity the authors were not allowed to write the fuller account that the country and its birds deserve.

M. A. OGILVIE

Short reviews

Livre Rouge des Oiseaux Nicheurs d'Alsace. (Centre d'Études Ornithologiques d'Alsace, Bitche, 1989. F120.00) Few regions of France have been as little explored by British birdwatchers as Alsace, but this northeastern corner of the country has a rich and varied avifauna, thanks to a wide variety of habitats, ranging from the Rhine to the mountains of the Haut-Vosges. Some 187 species nest, or nested until recently, in this region, but the *Livre Rouge* concerns itself with only just over 80 species—the declining or vulnerable ones, and those which have already been lost. There are many parallels with Britain—Capercaillie *Tetrao urogallus*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* and Corncrake *Crex crex* losing ground (though not Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*)—making this a fascinating study. A selection of excellent colour plates adds to the appeal.

[DAVID TOMLINSON]

Where to Watch Birds in Catalonia: including Barcelona, Costa Brava, Ebro Delta, Andorra & Pyrénées. Edited by Josep del Hoyo and Jordi Sargatal. (Lynx Promocions S.A., Barcelona, 1989. 308 pages. £16.95) Each of the 15 chapters deals with a specific area, for which several itineraries are suggested. There is very useful information on the habitats and birds to be found, where to go (with maps), how long is needed for each itinerary and even details on where to stay, good places to eat and points of local interest. There is a speciality section, with precise details on sought-after

species such as Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti* and Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*, and complete checklists of birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. An excellent guide to the region.

[STEVE ROOKE]

Mediterranean Wildlife: the rough guide. By Pete Raine. (Harrop Columbus, Bromley, 1990. 376 pages. Paperback £7.95) This guide covers the southern parts of the countries on the northern side of the Mediterranean (southern Portugal to western Turkey), the Mediterranean islands, Morocco and Tunisia. It describes a selection of sites in each country reasonably well, detailing the likely plants, animals and birds at each and providing some notes on access and accommodation, and, often, a map. Most of the information seems reasonably reliable though there are a few misleading statements (e.g. for Angelohóri in Greece 'Slender-billed Curlew is regularly seen in winter and on passage' and for Lake Douyèt in Morocco 'The deeper waters are frequented by ruddy shelduck, gadwall and Cape shoveler!'). Worth consulting prior to a trip, especially for countries lacking more detailed guide books.

[DAVID FISHER]

List of Dutch Bird Species 1990. By A. B. van den Berg. (Van den Berg, Santpoort-Zuid, 1990. 50 pages. Paperback f15) All 428 species recorded in the Netherlands between 1800 and 1st October 1990 are listed in this information-packed typewritten booklet. English (as well as Dutch and

scientific) bird names are given, and there are English translations of Dutch explanations of categories and so on, so this detailed

checklist can easily be used for reference by British birdwatchers.

ALSO RECEIVED:

Three Degrees West: a walk through Britain's local and natural history. By Stephen Sankey. (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1990. 204 pages. Paperback £12.50)

Seventy-five years ago...

'THERE is a polyglot Starling in this garden. Sometimes he rehearses a recitation from memory. At other times he improvises according to his fancy, and now and then he hits an unexpected nail on the head with remarkable success. Thus the other morning I awoke to a reiterated whine, a long shrill splinter of sound, that gave me an odd feeling of discomfort before I could follow the train of memories that it recalled. Then I remembered the alarm note of the Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius l. lapponicus*) on the Lower Yenesei, and the Starling's chance whistle brought up vividly the recollection of long rambles over the tundra, of which it was so frequently the accompaniment.' From Notes on the Lapland Bunting on the Yenesei River. By Maud D. Haviland. (*Brit. Birds* 9: 230, February 1916)

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

British Birdwatching Fair, August 1990

Writing his weekly column in *The Times* before the first national Birdwatching Fair, Simon Barnes cheerfully described the forthcoming event at Rutland Water as 'an amphibian. It walks hand in hand with conservation groups and also swims freely in the capitalistic waters of Britain.' Undoubtedly, in encompassing a wide range of interests and activities, the British Birdwatching Fair meant different things to 9,000 different people. On a baking August weekend, serious birders met serious birders, and new converts easily satisfied their material needs with a plethora of optical equipment, books, clothing and wildlife holidays. Commercial interests raked in tidy sums of money, children rushed about playing WATCH and YOC games, and even conservation talks, debates, and an extensive lecture programme held inside sweltering marquees gained the attention of enthusiastic devotees. Although commerce and sheer enjoyment were much in evidence, the serious purpose of the event should not be forgotten. Raising funds for the protection

of the Coto Doñana was the prime objective and, thanks to generous sponsorship from the In Focus optical company and efficient organisation, £10,000 was raised.

The *British Birds* stand, manned daily by Ali Breach, Sheila Cobban and Erika Sharrock, included a mystery photographs competition with daily prizes of bottles of champagne. The three winners were S. Thomson of Middlesex, J. Harrison of Stafford, and A. Hudson.

ZEISS West Germany, sponsors of the Rarities Committee, instituted their own daily prize draw open to everyone who purchased a pair of their binoculars during the Fair. The three winners of 6 × 20B miniature binoculars were A. Lawson of Kent, Mr Charlesworth of South Humberside and B. Nicholson of Sheffield.

Both organisers, the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation and the RSPB East Midlands Office, worked hard to ensure the success of an event which looks certain to become a permanent feature of the birdwatchers' calendar. If you missed it in 1990, make a note in your diary now for

this year's Birdwatching Fair: 30th August to 1st September 1991. Further details available from the RSPB East Midlands Office, Lincoln (0522) 535596. (Contributed by Derek Niemann)

BIY reception The annual presentation of the Bird Illustrator of the Year awards took

place at a Press reception at the Mall Galleries in London on 26th July 1990 (plates 65-67). The winner and runners-up received not only their engraved salver/inscribed books and cheques, but also telescopes presented by the competition sponsors, *Kowa* telescopes.



65. Bird Illustrator of the Year winner, Gordon Trunkfield, receiving his awards from Keith Shackleton, competition judge and Past President of the Society of Wildlife Artists; London, July 1990 (*Pyser Holdings*)



66. The Richard Richardson Award winner, Antony Disley, receiving his prize from Kamol Komolphalin, President of the Bangkok Bird Club; London, July 1990 (*Pyser Holdings*)

67. BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1990. Left to right, Richard Tilt (*Pyser*), Keith Shackleton (judge), Antony Disley (Richard Richardson Award winner), Robert Gillmor (judge), Mark Hulme (3rd BIY), Gordon Trunkfield (winner BIY), Alan Harris (judge), Nik Borrow (2nd BIY), Andrew Stock (PJC Award winner), Mr Y. Koyama (*Kowa* telescopes), David A. Cook (presenter) and Mr J. Nishi (*Kowa* telescopes), London, July 1990 (*Pyser Holdings*)



Aid for Choughs The 60 pairs of Choughs *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax* which breed on the Isle of Man are to be the centre of attention of a scheme designed to maintain and increase their numbers. The sum of £40,000 has been awarded by Manx Airlines, spread over the next ten years, to a plan devised by the Nature Conservancy Council. The 'Manx Chough Project', as it will be known, will develop work already carried out by the NCC on Islay and Colonsay. The grant will go towards maintaining buildings that are associated with the traditional agriculture (which is based on stock-rearing) so that their otherwise temporary use as nest sites will become permanent. We hope that the project achieves its aim 'to increase significantly the number of breeding pairs of Choughs on the Isle of Man', all thanks to Manx Airlines, the Manx Ornithological Society, the Manx Museum, the WWF and any other sponsors that may help.

No fairer deal for pests No sooner do we acknowledge and indeed welcome an apparent move to bring our 'pest bird' legislation in line with the EC Birds Directive (*Brit. Birds* 84: 39) than the Government, clearly bowing to pressure from landowners, sportsmen and farmers, decides not to proceed . . . They argue, instead, that there are no conservation reasons for changing our laws and, by some twist of logic we fail to understand, that our traditional practices are fully in line with the spirit of the Directive. We beg to differ, and hope this is not the last we have heard on this issue. Meanwhile, we can still kill, say, a Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* because it does damage—which is fair enough; but we can also kill it simply because it is a Carrion Crow—which, surely, is all wrong.

News from Spain Our thanks to David Simpson of Branta Holidays, who has written to tell us that the absurd birdwatching ban imposed by the authorities in the Madrid area (*Brit. Birds* 83: 391) has now been lifted. Writing from the Costa del Sol, Andy Paterson has given us the good news that the ponds at the mouth of the Guadalhorce (between Málaga and Torremolinos)—one of the few standing freshwater sites on the coast of Andalucia—now have reserve status and are rigorously protected. He goes on: 'Entry is now by permit and people without have been turned off . . . Access permits, which should prevent any difficulty with the police, are being

issued free and I have been assured . . . that any ornithologist who writes . . . and mentions my name will be given one.' Andy recommends applying well in advance, and points out that he cannot obtain permits directly for prospective visitors. Permits are obtainable from D. Manuel Romero, Agencia de Medio Ambiente (Málaga), Edificio Málaga, Calle Molina Larios, 29015 Málaga, Spain.

Blue light for wildlife Police officers from 38 different forces and representatives from 14 statutory and non-Government organisations met in Durham during 5th-7th October 1990 to discuss wildlife legislation and the role of the police in enforcing it. The conference, a welcome initiative by the RSPB and the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, was primarily for the benefit of police wildlife liaison officers. Topics discussed included crimes against badgers *Meles meles*, birds of prey persecution, plant protection, wildlife smuggling and the legal protection given to habitats. Acknowledging their prime responsibility for enforcing wildlife laws, the police nevertheless pointed out that the co-operation of other bodies was absolutely essential if 'conservation criminals' are to be brought to justice. Speakers presented a gloomy picture of offences against badgers and birds of prey. Chief Inspector Kevin Degenhardt of the RSPCA spoke of particularly depressing cruelty against badgers, carried out in the name of 'sport' by some psychologically disturbed individuals. Alan Griffiths of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was at least able to strike a more positive note when promising more Government resources for the investigation of illegal poisoning—good news for birds of prey, the frequent victims of this totally irresponsible activity. Addressing the wildlife liaison officers, Assistant Chief Constable Terry Rands described the impact the ordinary bobby could have when he quoted Edmund Burke: 'Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.' *BB* readers can help by reporting suspicious incidents to the police; by pressing Chief Constables for action if the local force has not appointed a wildlife liaison officer; and by knowing and understanding the law—explanatory leaflets are available from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. (Contributed by Andy Jones)

Peter Robinson Our congratulations to the Andy Jones mentioned above, who has

succeeded Peter Robinson as Chief Investigations Officer in the Species Management department of the RSPB. Peter led the RSPB team for 16 years in the difficult and often highly complex investigations field, with vision, more than a little flair and a great dedication—not to mention a lot of success. His friends and his closest colleagues would argue for hours about whether they were most impressed by his work-rate or his (almost) invariable sense of humour, but there is no disagreement about the mark he made. If his professional foes are breathing a sigh of relief, they had better think again: he leaves behind him an efficient and highly motivated team to carry on the good work . . . If we envy him his early and thoroughly well-deserved retirement to the Scillies, we can still wish him well!

British Ecological Society Awards Among the 12 grants awarded by the British Ecological Society and the Coalbourn Trust Fund in November 1990, the former's Small Grants included two of particular ornithological interest. Dr Juliet Vickery, of the School of Biological Sciences at the University of East Anglia, has been awarded £500 towards the study of food piracy by the

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* and its impact on eight species of breeding seabirds on Henderson Island (Pitcairn Islands). Dr T. K. Shrestha has been awarded the same amount for his study of an endemic and declining Nepalese bird, the Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis*.

English bird names Debate may be going on behind closed doors in Britain, following the BOU's attempts to muzzle its own Records Committee (*Brit. Birds* 82: 334-335), but there is no such inhibition on the other side of the Atlantic. The American Birding Association's journal, *Birding*, has devoted a lot of space recently (in its October 1989 and October 1990 issues) to the debate on the proposed new names (*Brit. Birds* 81: 355-377; *Ibis* 130: Supplement), within its 'Point/Counterpoint' opinion/correspondence column. The views expressed are balanced, reasoned and well worth reading, regardless of which side of the fence your own inclinations lie.

New County Recorder B. N. Rossiter, West Barn, Lee Grange, Ordley, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 1SX, has taken over from Mike Hodgson as County Recorder for Northumberland.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th December 1990 to 17th January 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

American Wigeon *Anas americana* Pair, Castle Cauldwell (Co. Fermanagh), 16th January; single males at Ballycotton and Ballintubrid (both Co. Cork) from November 1990 to at least 14th January.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Auchenreoch Loch (Dumfries & Galloway), 13th to at least 16th January.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* Ballycotton, 9th to at least 16th January.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Brighton (East Sussex), 29th December.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Plymouth (Devon), 7th-13th January.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* At least 19 in Ireland and at least 19 in England.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* Adult of North American race *kumlieni*, Galway City Rubbish Dump (Co. Galway), 13th January.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* Adult, Nimmo's Pier, Galway, 6th to at least 13th January.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Adult, Strangford (Co. Down), 6th January; probably same, Millisle (also Co. Down), 12th-16th January.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* Wainfleet All Saints (Lincolnshire), 27th December to 17th January.

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* Peak of 90, Carrickfergus (Co. Antrim), 11th January.

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature

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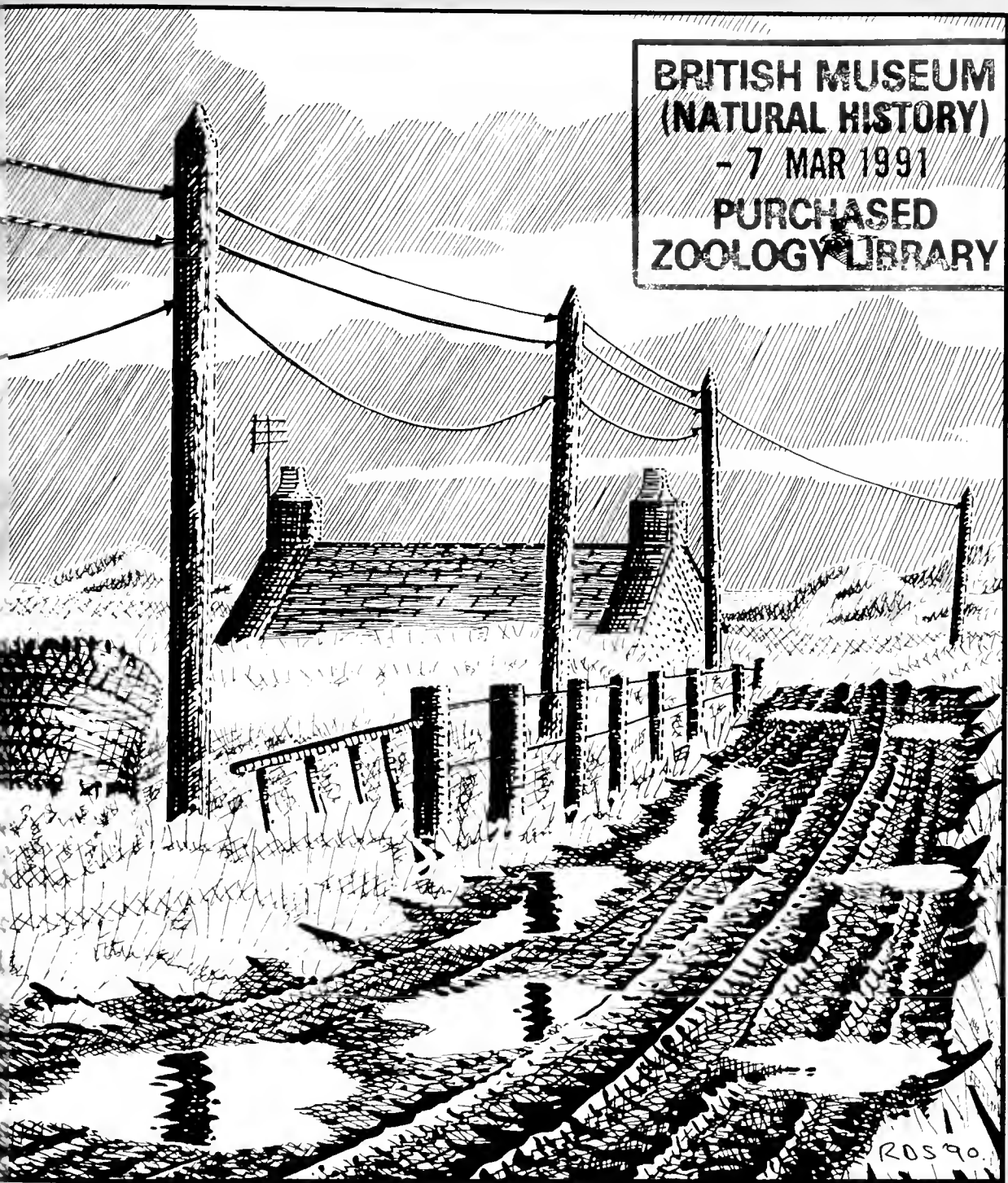
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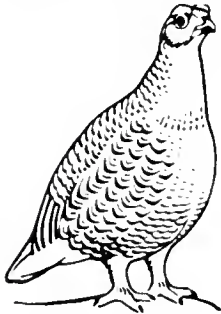
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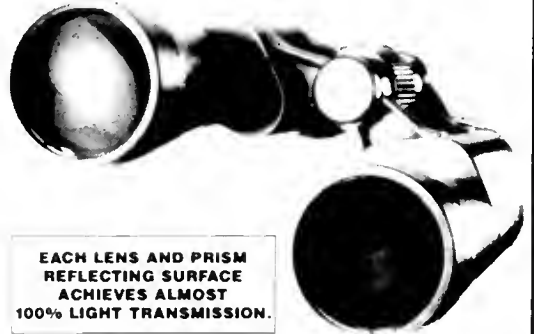
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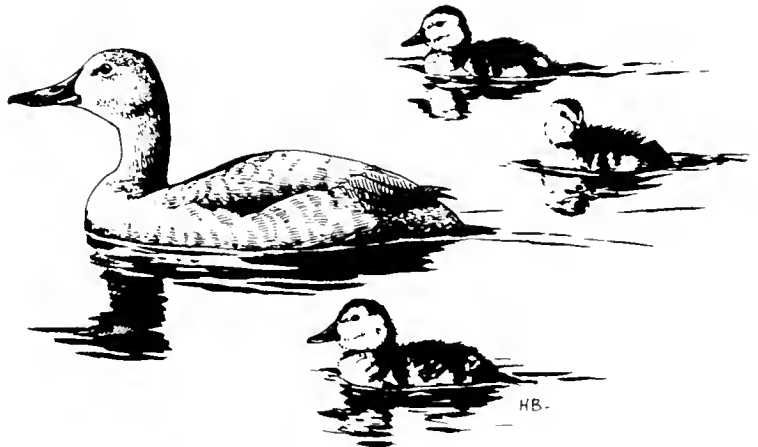
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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 3 MARCH 1991

History of the Pochard breeding in Britain



A. D. Fox

The Pochard *Aythya ferina* is essentially a breeding bird of freshwater habitats of the steppes, where it may nest even in very temporary saline, brackish or soda waters (Cramp & Simmons 1977). In the last 150 years, however, it has expanded its summer range into north and west Europe, this being initiated perhaps by drought in its shallow breeding lakes in Central Asia. Bezzel (1969) mapped the expansion into Sweden and Finland in the middle of the nineteenth century, reaching Denmark, the Netherlands and southern Bavaria at the turn of the century. By the early 1900s, the species had spread to Britain, France, most of Central Europe and the northern USSR, and since the Second World War has extended throughout Germany and the Low Countries. In recent years, the increasing creation of lowland artificial waters, such as gravel-pits and reservoirs, with eutrophic water quality, dense submergent vegetation and emergent flora has further encouraged its expansion and consolidation of the breeding range to the present day.

Intriguingly, the Pochard seems to have been breeding in Britain for many years before the arrival of several other expanding sub-arctic duck species (Sharrock 1976). Up to 1840, its distribution appears to have been largely restricted to East Anglia, but breeding first occurred in Yorkshire

in 1844 and in Hertfordshire about 1850 and the expansion has continued from that time. Even today, however, the species' breeding distribution in Britain remains scattered, confined largely to the south and east. The adoption recently of 300 pairs as the cut-off definition of 'rare breeding' by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel brought information relating to the Pochard into the Panel's annual reports for the first time (Spencer *et al.* 1988, 1989); the 1986 breeding population in England and Wales was reported as 98-139 pairs, and that in 1987 in England, Wales and Scotland as 87-117 pairs.

Methods

The present account extends the countrywide analysis of Sharrock (1976) for Britain; no attempt has been made to assess the situation of Pochard in Ireland, reviewed by Hutchinson (1979) and recently updated (Hutchinson 1989). County avifaunas and annual bird reports were consulted in order to compile a national perspective for the years 1983-86, and this information forms the basis for the estimates of the total number of breeding Pochards presented here.

Since 1954, the numbers of ducks, geese and swans have been counted in every month from September to March at as many coastal and inland localities as possible in Britain and Ireland under the Wildfowl (now Wildfowl and Wetlands) Trust's National Wildfowl Counts scheme (Owen *et al.* 1986). Counts are carried out on the Sunday nearest to the middle of the month, and population trends calculated after the methods of Owen *et al.* (1986). The present analysis is based on the March counts during 1970-88; although count data are available from the 1960s, the small sample sizes in that decade preclude confidence that the trends accurately reflect changes in the population. The March count is thought to represent the breeding population of Britain and adjacent breeding areas of the Continent. The September counts used by Fox (1988) for Gadwall *Anas strepera* are not thought to be such a good reflection of summering Pochard numbers because they are inflated by moulting individuals from often distant breeding areas (Fox & Salmon 1988). Countrywide analysis of count data has been supplemented by analysis of trends for southeast and east and central England (as defined by Owen *et al.* 1986), where the majority of the breeding population occurs.

Results

The distribution of breeding Pochards in Britain is shown in fig. 1. The concentration in the south and east is conspicuous, reflecting the species' stronghold in 'fleet'-type habitats of coastal areas (Sharrock 1976) and the distribution of more-recently utilised nesting habitat on gravel-pits and reservoirs of lowland Britain. This is evident in the percentage of the total March Pochard count that comes from gravel-pits, which has increased from 18% in 1971 to 36% in 1988 ($r = 0.73$, $P < 0.001$). Numbers using reservoirs have fluctuated over the same period and show no general trend. In Britain, local avifaunas suggest a continued but modest increase in numbers, which is reflected in the March trend data from National

Wildfowl Counts (fig. 2). Such slow expansion is in contrast to the stability or slight decline in numbers in midwinter over the same period (Fox & Salmon 1988).

Southwest England and South Wales

In the extreme west of England, the Pochard remains a scarce breeding species, with no records during 1983-86 from Cornwall, Devon or Dorset. There is only one confirmed record from Cornwall, in 1977 (*Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society Annual Reports*), and breeding was suspected from Devon only late last century, at Slapton Ley, with no records since (D'Urban & Matthew 1895; *Devon Bird Reports*). In Somerset, the Pochard was unknown as a breeding species to Smith (1869), who even then wrote of its being pinioned and kept in captivity; the species apparently first bred in 1936 (Witherby *et al.* 1939), but the Avon Reservoirs now form the stronghold of the species in that region, although successful breeding attempts vary from nine broods totalling 38 ducklings (1983) to just one young at Chew Valley Lake in 1986 (*Avon Bird Reports*). In Gloucestershire, the species is a scarce and irregular breeder, nesting on gravel-pits (Swaine 1982; *Gloucestershire Bird Reports*).

In Dorset, the species seems to have bred annually in the vicinity of Poole Harbour at the end of the last century, as well as near Swanage (in 1876) and around Wareham (in 1877) (Mansel-Pleydell c. 1890). Breeding apparently continued until the middle of the present century, and up to three pairs nested at two sites during 1973-77. Nesting attempts in the 1980s were thwarted by flooding at Radipole Lake, and there have been no recent records (Prendergast & Boys 1983; *Dorset Bird Reports*). In Wiltshire, one or two pairs have bred regularly at Corsham Lake since 1978, and one to four pairs at Steeple Langford since 1979; since 1979, the species has also bred at three other sites in the county (Buxton 1981; *The Hobby*).

In South Wales, Pochards are scarce breeders, although pairs often stay late into the summer at Llangorse Lake (*Breconshire Birds*) and breeding has been more or less annual at Oxwich National Nature Reserve in West

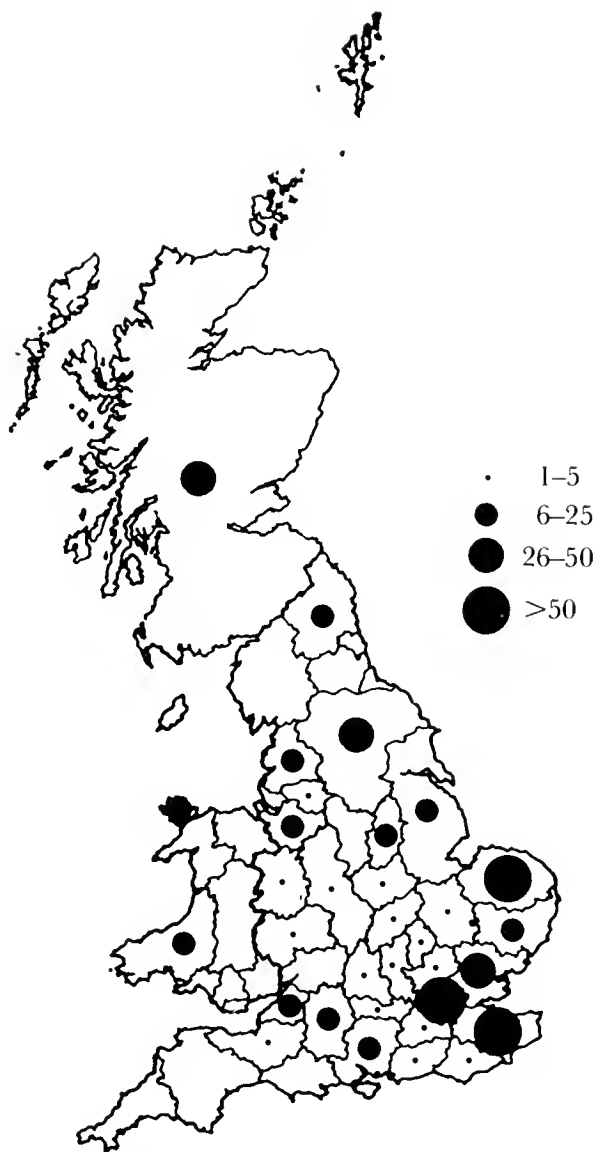


Fig. 1. Minimum numbers of pairs of summering Pochards *Aythya ferina* by county/region/country in Britain, 1986. Data from local bird reports

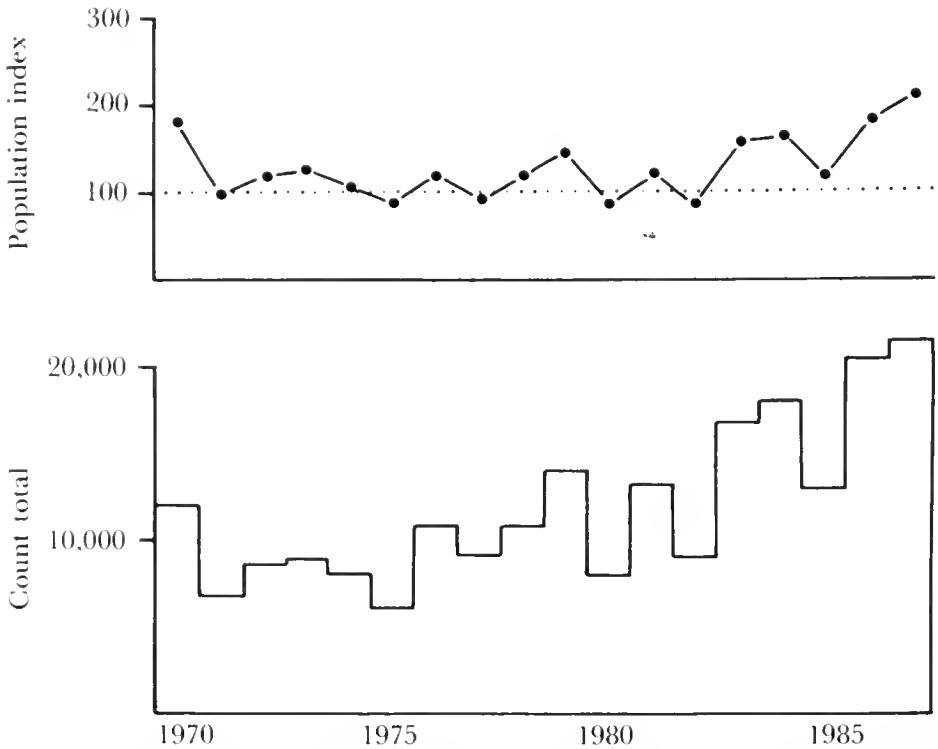


Fig. 2. Population trends (upper) and March count totals (lower) of Pochards *Aythya ferina* in Britain, 1970-87. Trend index is set at arbitrary value of 100 for March 1971

Glamorgan (Lovegrove *et al.* 1980). The most important breeding haunt remains Witchett Pool in Dyfed, where the species has nested since at least 1936. Access to this latter site is limited, making an accurate picture difficult to determine, but one to ten pairs have been present and attempted to breed at least since the early 1970s; during 1986-88, two to six pairs have been present, but no proof of breeding has been obtained,

68. Male Pochard *Aythya ferina*, West Sussex, April 1986 (David Tomlinson)



perhaps owing to predation by minks *Mustela vison*, which has affected the Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, the Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* and other waterfowl populations at the site (D. Roberts *in litt.*). In addition, individuals have summered on and off at Llyn Pencarreg since 1968, and at Tallyllychau, where breeding was proved in 1972 (D. Roberts *in litt.*).

In the 1980s, the species bred with some regularity only at Oakley, Worcestershire (*West Midland Bird Reports*).

Southeast England

March count data for 1970-87, and the population trends calculated from them (fig. 3), suggest little change over this period.

It is unclear when Pochards first bred in Hampshire, but Witherby *et al.* (1939) recorded the species as breeding locally but regularly in the county. 'A handful' have bred since, peaking at 19 pairs in 1966 and 1971 (Cohen 1963; Cohen & Taverner 1972); the majority of these have been in the Test Valley south of Stockbridge, and it has been suggested that this population originates from escaped Pochards from the Leckford wildfowl collection which have reared full-winged young. In Sussex, a few Pochards summer and breed annually (Shrubb 1979); the most regular site is Chichester Gravel-pits, where breeding occurred in almost every year during 1977-84, and has been attempted (but invariably failed through changes in water levels) at Bewlbridge Reservoir (*Sussex Bird Reports*).

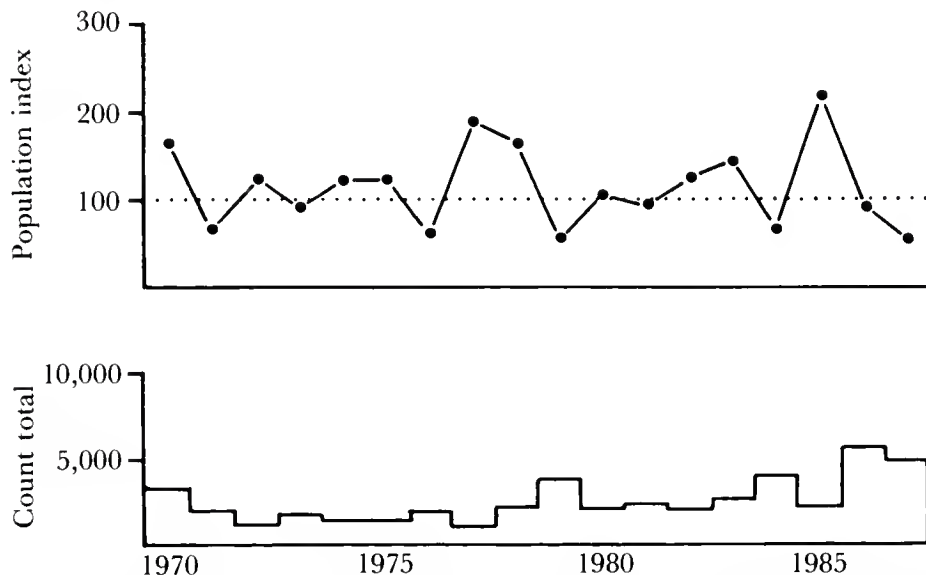


Fig. 3. Population trends (upper) and March count totals (lower) of Pochards *Aythya ferina* in southeastern England (as defined by Owen *et al.* 1986), 1970-87. Trend index is set at arbitrary value of 100 for March 1971

In Surrey, Pochards remain scarce breeders: nesting was first proved at Barn Elms Reservoirs in 1927, and attempts followed there and at two other sites in the 1930s. Pinioned stock in the Inner London parks gave rise to many summering individuals in Surrey, but regular breeding never became established. The species bred at Thorpe Gravel-pits during 1960-68 and regularly nested at Papercourt Gravel-pits in the late 1970s, raising up to three broods in 1976. There were no records during 1982-85 inclusive, but two sites held broods in 1986 (*Surrey Bird Reports*).

In London, a pair of Pochards produced five ducklings in Regent's Park in 1877, and other sites were colonised earlier this century (e.g., Gunnersbury Park in 1931 and Osterley Park in 1932: Glegg 1935). A feral pair was introduced into St James's Park in 1912, a further three individuals were set free there in 1930, and in 1932 a pair bred and its unopinioned offspring disappeared. In 1938, a brood of seven ducklings was reared (Homes 1957), and after that there was a marked increase from 1954, building to ten pairs in Regent's Park in 1967 (Montier 1977). Fifteen pairs were nesting in St James's Park in 1969 and the species began to appear in the outer areas of London, conspicuously using gravel-pit sites (such as six pairs in one stretch of the Colne Valley in 1973: Montier 1977). By 1986, 55 pairs were recorded breeding at 14 different sites, the strongholds remaining St James's Park and Regent's Park, where 27 broods were reported. Also of considerable importance is the Walthamstow Reservoir complex, which, together with other Lea Valley sites, contributes the majority of the remaining broods, including up to 18 in 1981 (*London Bird Reports*).

The Thames Marshes and the valley of the Stour in Kent represent one of the most important breeding areas for the Pochard in Britain. The species is thought to have first bred on the Thames Marshes in 1907, at Walland Marsh in 1908 and in the Stour Valley (at Stodmarsh) in 1934 (Harrison 1953). The county population was considered to number 25 pairs by the early 1940s (Gillham & Homes 1950), and this continued to expand and reached a peak during the mid-1960s, when there were perhaps 60 pairs on the North Kent Marshes; these included maxima of 20 pairs at Stoke in 1956 and 28 between Cliffe and St Margaret's Bay in 1965 (*Kent Bird Reports*). On the Isle of Sheppey, breeding was first proved in 1956, numbers expanding to 24 pairs in 1964, but subsequently showing some decline. South of the Swale, Pochards bred in 1961 and the expansion here mirrored the ensuing decrease on Sheppey. On the Medway, up to 17 pairs have bred at Chetney since 1961, up to four pairs at Kingsnorth from 1969, and up to 18 pairs have attempted to breed (up to eight successfully) at Stodmarsh (Harrison *et al.* 1973; Taylor *et al.* 1981). There is no doubt that the shallow reed-fringed coastal dykes of the North Kent Marshes are of considerable importance for their breeding Pochards, but there is little indication of any change in the last 20 years or so. It has been considered that this population has expanded from the small numbers of irregular breeders present after 1945 (Gillham & Homes 1950; Harrison 1953; Parslow 1973).

Numbers of breeding Pochards in Essex have shown some signs of an increase in recent years. About 15 pairs nested at Old Hall Marshes, Tollesbury, from at least 1886 and these continued to form the nucleus for the species during 1950-67, although breeding had been recorded from seven other sites (Hudson & Pyman 1968). Breeding numbers have since undoubtedly increased, with up to 46 broods reported in 1981, including 20 on Langenhoe Marshes. More recently still, control of access and sympathetic management have greatly enhanced the Old Hall site and numbers there have risen. There seems little doubt that the richly

vegetated fleets of the Essex marshes have always been of considerable importance for breeding Pochards and that numbers there have increased in very recent years. Given the variable observer coverage, which must affect any analysis of past information, assessment of the changes in the breeding population are difficult. The efforts put into the *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) clearly had an influence in Essex (as well as in Norfolk), the years 1968-72, when *Atlas* fieldwork took place, showing inflated numbers of breeding pairs above an otherwise stable or very slightly increasing trend in other years (fig. 4). The most recent increase may therefore result partly from better census information rather than represent a real expansion.

Breeding began at Great Meadow Pond in Windsor, Berkshire, in 1907 and continued until 1915, when modifications to peripheral habitats made the site unsuitable; two pairs bred again at this site in 1957. In 1923, breeding began at Blenheim, Oxfordshire, and reached a maximum of seven pairs in 1935. During 1975-85, there were only six cases of brood-rearing from four different sites in Berkshire and three in Oxfordshire (all from Dorchester Gravel-pits). The Pochard has therefore shown little evidence of any major expansion to the present in counties with increasing areas of gravel-workings (Radford 1966; *Birds of Berkshire*; *Birds of Oxfordshire*).

In Hertfordshire, nesting Pochards have been established at Tring Reservoirs since about 1850 (Mead & Smith 1982), with 50-60 claimed pairs in 1887 (Sage 1959); since then, there has been a dramatic decline, with just three broods raised in 1986 (*Hertfordshire Bird Report*), although several other sites have become established more recently. Breeding in the Lea Valley became regular over 20 years ago, and in the 1980s Mead & Smith (1982) described the species as 'in the process of becoming fully established'. Pochards have certainly increased in Hertfordshire in recent years, with six to eight successful pairs during 1986-88; this is due in no small part to the provision of shallow base-rich waters in the form of gravel-pits (such as at Amwell, Maple Cross and Stockers Lake) and reservoirs (as at Hilfield Park) throughout the county (Mead & Smith 1982).

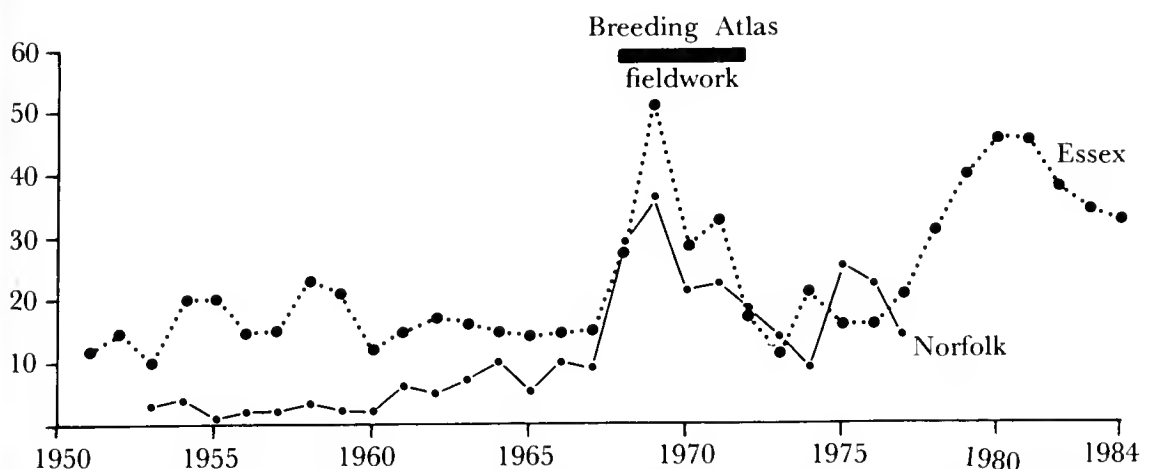


Fig. 4. Numbers of breeding Pochards *Aythya ferina* in Essex (1951-84) and Norfolk (1953-77), based on accounts in local bird reports

East and Central England

Trends and total counts for this region (fig. 5) show some signs of a recent up-turn during 1970-87. This compares well with the pattern in nesting numbers in Essex and Norfolk (fig. 4).

In Suffolk, Pochards have bred regularly at a number of Breckland meres (such as Livermere and Barton Mere), as well as at artificial waters such as Lackford Pits and on the River Lark, perhaps as far west as Barton Mills (Payn 1978). In the late 1930s up to eight pairs nested at Minsmere, and since 1970 the species has bred at an increasing number of coastal resorts, although this expansion may have been overstated (Payn 1978; R. B. Warren *in litt.*). The recorded population in the five seasons up to 1987 stands at four to 13 successfully breeding pairs noted at four to seven sites, although the between-year variation almost certainly reflects observer coverage rather than real fluctuations in the population (R. B. Warren *in litt.*).

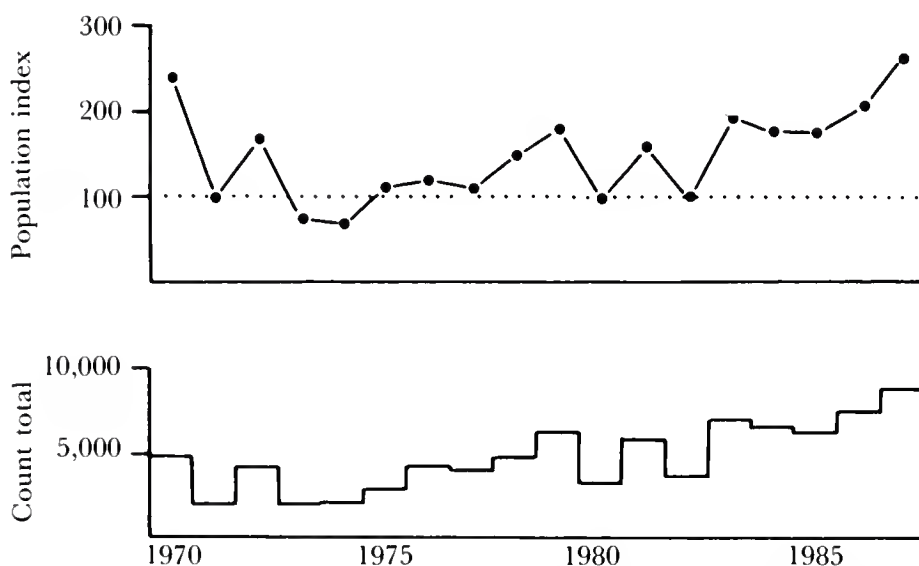


Fig. 5. Population trends (upper) and March count totals (lower) of Pochards *Aythya ferina* in eastern and central England (as defined by Owen *et al.* 1986), 1970-87. Trend index is set at arbitrary value of 100 for March 1971

In Norfolk, the species is known to have bred at Scoulton Mere since 1815, while breeding has occurred at Stanford since 1836 (Seago 1977 and *in litt.*). The Brecklands remain the stronghold of the species, with up to 12 sites occupied since 1977. In the Broads, nesting first occurred in 1928 and has been annual since 1956, having been recorded from 17 different sites since 1977. Up to 49 pairs were present in the Flegg Broads group (Filby, Rollesby and Ormsby Broads) alone in early summer 1984. In the north of the county, Rivière (1930) recorded Pochards nesting at Cley in 1923-24 and 1929, while more recently one or two pairs have bred at Holkham Lake (M. J. Seago *in litt.*). Elsewhere in Norfolk, breeding has occurred at Swanton Morley Gravel-pits (1983-85), Colney/Bawburgh Gravel-pits (1984-85), Sparham and Pensthorpe. The present breeding population is thought to be just under 100 pairs, slightly fewer than the approximately

100 pairs at the maximum during the early 1980s, but breeding at several sites is sporadic, and in recent years some of the most important resorts have not been visited during the appropriate season (M. J. Seago *in litt.*).

In Cambridgeshire, the stronghold of the Pochard is the Ouse Washes, where conditions of flooding have varied greatly in the past. In recent years, the conservation organisations have been able to manage the wetland to offer suitable breeding habitat for this and other species; as a result the Pochard has summered annually since 1975, and has bred successfully in all but five years up to 1987. During this time, breeding has also been recorded from the Nene Washes (one nest with six eggs in 1980).

In Northamptonshire, one or two broods occur in most years, centred on a number of gravel-pits and reservoirs, most regularly summering at Ditchford Gravel-pits (R. W. Bullock *in litt.*). The Pochard remains a rare breeder in Bedfordshire, first recorded nesting in 1896, but with only eight confirmed records between 1945 and 1977; since then, breeding has been proved at five sites (all mineral pits or ornamental waters) in every year except 1984, 1987 and 1988 (P. Trodd *in litt.*).

In the West Midlands, breeding was recorded as far back as 1866 (Norris 1947), but the species has never been common and widespread, with Harrison *et al.* (1982) considering it a regular breeder at only two sites: Alvecote Pools and Chesterton Mill Pool. At the former locality, the species has bred since at least 1950, raising up to nine broods totalling 30 young (1969). Lord & Munns (1970) considered the population to be between two and 20 pairs, while during the *Atlas* work breeding was confirmed or suspected in ten and six 10-km squares respectively, so there appears to have been little change in the status of the species in the last few years (*West Midland Bird Reports*).

A female with three young at Wanlip Gravel-pits, Leicestershire, in 1962 was the first confirmed breeding for the county; this was followed by records from Burley Fishponds in 1974 (Hickling 1978), with two pairs there in 1976. Nesting has occurred at Rutland Water more or less regularly since 1981 (two broods seen in 1984 and 1985), at Swithland Reservoir in 1985 and 1986, and at Groby Pool in 1985 (*Leicestershire Bird Reports*).

In Nottinghamshire, breeding was considered probable occasionally during 1946-49, but in more recent years a regularly nesting population has developed, numbering between three and nine successful pairs in any year (*Birds of Nottinghamshire*). Breeding was recorded in Derbyshire in 1941, but the species is not regular there, with recent nesting records only in 1972, 1976 and 1988 (Frost 1978 and *in litt.*).

In Lincolnshire, Pochards have been recorded breeding at least since the 1950s until the present day at the so-called LNER railway pits in Lincoln (*Lincolnshire Bird Reports*). Between 1981 and 1987, three to six pairs reared young along the South Humber Pits, this constituting the stronghold of a county population raising up to 15 broods (1985)(data from *Lincolnshire Bird Reports*).

Odd pairs bred sporadically in Yorkshire before the turn of the century,

but Hornsea Mere has long been a regular site in the county. By 1980, 32 pairs were proved nesting in the county, 22 broods comprising 87 ducklings (Mather 1986). By 1986, breeding had been reported from a wide range of sites, and, while interpretation of reports is difficult owing to incomplete coverage of all known haunts in any one year, it is considered that the Pochard is increasing in Yorkshire as a nesting species (G. Bennett *in litt.*).

Northwest England and North Wales

The Pochard has not been recorded as a breeding species in North Wales away from Anglesey, where five to 12 pairs nest annually on suitable waters (Lovegrove *et al.* 1980; *Cambrian Ornithological Society Bird Reports*).

In Shropshire, the species regularly attempts to breed at Venus Pool, although success is variable owing to predation. This is the only regular breeding site in recent years, although a female with three young was seen on the Severn at Lower Brompton in June 1986 (J. Sankey *in litt.*).

In Cheshire, Pochards were first proved nesting in 1932, at a mere in the south of the county (Bell 1962). By 1980, the appearance of nine broods at three different sites was considered 'a welcome improvement on past performances', and the present nesting population (after a poor season in 1982) is generally of the order of six to ten pairs, based mainly at the stronghold of Woolston Eyes (*Cheshire Bird Reports*). Breeding occurred at two sites in Greater Manchester in 1985, but not in other recent years (*Birds in Greater Manchester*). In Lancashire, the stronghold of the species is the RSPB reserve at Leighton Moss, where breeding has been regular for many years; generally three to ten pairs (maximum in 1979) have bred since 1969, rearing as many as 25 young. Individuals regularly summer elsewhere in the county, but breeding at other sites remains sporadic, although one brood was seen at Marton Mere in 1978 (*Lancashire Bird Reports*).

The generally oligotrophic waters of upland northwest England provide modest wintering habitat for Pochards, but in most instances are not suitable as breeding areas. The species bred in Cumbria in 1926-27 (Witherby *et al.* 1939), while a pair bred on a water in the southern Lake District in 1979 and another raised four young the following year in the eastern Lakes; there have been no breeding records since (*Birds in Cumbria*).

Tees, Tyneside and Northeast England

In Northumbria, Pochards were said to have bred at a considerable number of places following initial colonisation at the end of the nineteenth century (Galloway & Meek 1978). After 1945, the species was not proved breeding until the early 1960s, when a pair bred at Pallinsburn and two pairs raised young at Gosforth Lake. Two to four waters supported a small breeding population of Pochards in the 1970s. Throughout most of that decade, single pairs nested successfully at Gosforth Park, with two there in 1978. Since 1977, the most consistent site has been Holywell Pond, where between one (1977) and eight broods



69. Pochards *Aythya ferina*, Greater London, December 1982 (R. J. Chandler)

(1980) have been raised in all years except 1982, when there were no breeding records published (*Birds in Northumbria*). Interestingly, a brood of eight ducklings was reduced to a single juvenile by pike *Esox lucius*, a fish species frequently implicated in the poor breeding success of the Pochard. There are also records of one or two broods from other sites, such as Seaton Sluice and Avcot Pond.

A female Pochard raised two ducklings at the Washington Waterfowl Park in 1981, the first proved breeding in Durham since 1963, but there have been no records subsequently (*Birds in Durham*). There appear to be no historical records of Pochards breeding in Teesdale during 1962-73 (*Birds of Teesdale*) or in Cleveland during 1974-86 (*Cleveland Bird Reports*).

Southwest Scotland

In the Solway area, the Pochard was claimed to have bred in considerable numbers at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the population had declined by the 1920s (Berry 1939). The species was first recorded breeding in Dunbartonshire in 1920, and in Ayrshire and Renfrew in 1926 (Baxter & Rintoul 1922; Berry 1939). It first bred at Loch Lomond as recently as 1977 (Mitchell 1984), but remains an occasional and irregular breeder in Dumfries and Galloway, with only one record during 1981-87 at Catle Loch (Shimmings 1987).

The Pochard was known to breed at Loch Bhassapol on Tiree from 1891, with several pairs present until at least 1913, but none since (Boyd 1958; Sheppard *et al.* 1988). It has not been known to nest on Islay (Booth 1981), although two or three individuals often summer there (Elliott

1989), and, although one pair bred in mid Argyll in 1983, it remains a very scarce breeding species (*Argyll Bird Reports*).

Southeast Scotland

The Pochard colonised Perthshire in 1886 and Lindores Loch, Fife, in 1892 (McGowan 1988). In Fife, the species has bred regularly over the last 20 years at Kilconquhar, Morton Lochs and Lochore Meadows (Smout 1986), having abandoned its founder site as a result of disturbance. Berry (1939) knew the species to have bred in the Braes of Donne in 1879, and it spread subsequently to Loch Leven, southern Fife and the Lothians. In the Borders, it was also known from about 1878 (Berry 1939) and was considered to be expanding from the first decade of the present century until the late 1930s. Thom (1986) recorded 26 pairs in 1976 at the two main Perthshire sites, and these areas undoubtedly contribute the major proportion of the 30-40 pairs nesting in Scotland at present.

Northeast Scotland

Pochards were first recorded nesting in Morayshire at Loch Loy in 1848, and by 1885 had spread to Loch Spynie and Loch Nabo. From this nucleus, the species spread to Easter Ness over the following 30 years, establishing nesting pairs at Loch Flemington by 1895 (Berry 1939). In recent years, it has not bred at Loch Flemington and remains scarce in Easter Ness.

On Speyside, the Pochard is a rare breeding species, with records from Loch Inch in 1914 and a female with four young at the same site in June 1978 (Dennis 1984).

In Grampian, the species apparently first bred in 1939 (Berry 1939). In recent years, two pairs have bred at Loch Sand and up to eight pairs bred at Kinnordy, Angus, in 1983 (*Scottish Bird Reports*).

The status of the Pochard in Orkney in the latter part of the last century is unclear, but it is known that it bred on Hoy in 1895 and, by 1927, was believed to breed on Sanday and Mainland, with several pairs involved (Baxter & Rintoul 1953; Booth *et al.* 1984). Lack (1943), quoting G. J. Arthur, stated that a number of pairs had bred on Mainland for at least 20 years and he considered that the species was increasing. Breeding was recorded in only two years during 1973-82, and it would seem that, on the islands, as elsewhere in the Highlands, the Pochard has declined as a breeding species.

Northwest Scotland

The species nested near Achnasheen in 1921 (Berry 1939) and bred in northeast Skye during the *Atlas* period (1968-72) (Sharrock 1976), but, owing to its habitat requirements, it is highly sporadic on the mainland in the Highlands. Harvie-Brown & Buckley (1887) described the Pochard as breeding at many localities in the Tongue area, and the species had colonised Loch Watten in Caithness by 1921 (Berry 1939).

Pochards were considered to have first nested in the Outer Hebrides at

Rodel, South Uist, in 1892, but the birds concerned were thought to have been escapes from Lord Dunmore's wildfowl collection. Millais (1913) stated that they bred on Balranald and North and South Uist, but J. W. Campbell (unpublished MS held at Slimbridge) was sure that the claim of continued breeding made by Baxter & Rintoul (1953) was not correct. Furthermore, apart from an instance of possible breeding in 1911, Cunningham (1983) considered that the species bred only exceptionally in the Outer Hebrides, in spite of the suitability of the habitat there.

Discussion

It would appear that the Pochard colonised Britain in the early part of the nineteenth century, and by 1840 was still rare and perhaps confined to East Anglia; it first bred in Scotland in 1871 and had spread to Caithness by 1921. The species has clearly increased considerably in breeding numbers and extended its breeding range in Britain and Ireland since the middle of the last century, although it remains largely confined to eastern Britain. There are suggestions of a slight decline this century in Scotland, but otherwise the population does seem still to be increasing, albeit at a slower rate than earlier. The more recent continued increases are undoubtedly due to the provision of suitable habitat in lowland Britain. Part of this colonisation has been aided by artificial introductions, a factor thought to be particularly important in Hampshire. Generally, the species is considered to have spread naturally within eastern Britain, and this pattern seems to be continuing. Colonisation is, however, frequently sporadic and breeding productivity low in relation to numbers of summering adults. It is likely that the species' breeding distribution will always be restricted in Britain, since it is rarely found nesting above 300 m and has a clear preference for base-enriched waters with abundant emergent and submergent vegetation (Sharrock 1976).

Considering the recent proliferation of suitable waters in the form of reservoirs and gravel-workings, it is perhaps surprising that the nesting Pochard population has not shown the concurrent considerable expansion described for the Gadwall (Fox 1988). Most *Aythya* species, however, use more stable (i.e. more predictable and perhaps vegetationally stable) wetlands than do dabbling ducks (Johnson & Grier 1988). Generally, the Pochard might not be expected to be opportunistic in colonising newly created sites, but rather to utilise established suitable wetlands to which it becomes site-loyal. Its sporadic breeding is likely to be a result more of fluctuations in breeding success at suitable sites than of dramatic changes in the distribution of the species. Interestingly, some observers have suggested at least four common reasons for the variable nature of breeding at many sites: disturbance, water-level fluctuations, nest-site competition, and predation. The Pochard does appear to be a shy species, intolerant of water-based leisure sports, activities which are often characteristic during the summer of sites which are less disturbed in winter and accordingly hold wintering concentrations of this duck. It has also been suggested (e.g. P. Trodd *in litt.*) that competition, particularly with the aggressive Coot *Fulica atra*, for nest sites within reedbeds and

other emergent vegetation may likewise be a problem. Finally, the picture emerges from many sites that, although broods frequently appear, their subsequent survival rate is poor; several bird reports suggest that pike or mink have been involved in the loss of ducklings, but direct evidence is often lacking (as at Witchett Pool: D. Roberts *in litt.*).

This account of nesting Pochards in Britain is not intended to be exhaustive, but it does highlight areas where our knowledge of its breeding status is scanty. This is particularly true in Scotland, where the actual numbers of pairs nesting are very poorly monitored (a similar situation exists in Ireland). As a result of extensive searches through county bird reports and avifaunas, supplemented by further details provided by correspondents, the total number of nesting Pochards in Britain in 1986 was estimated to be a minimum of 370-395 pairs (about 330 in England, 15 in Wales, and 25-50 in Scotland). Although it is pleasing to see that the numbers are not so low as the figures given by the Rare Breeding Birds Panel may suggest (Spencer *et al.* 1988, 1989), it is nevertheless hoped that the inclusion of the Pochard among species considered by the Panel, together with fieldwork associated with the new 'BTO breeding atlas', will focus attention on this attractive duck. For the meantime, the Pochard remains one of our rarer breeding waterfowl species and, as such, requires an appropriate level of monitoring and protection.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

The Pochard *Aythya ferina* appears to have colonised Britain as a breeding species during the early part of the nineteenth century, and Ireland in the early part of the twentieth century. During the initial stages of colonisation, expansion appeared rapid and may have been assisted by feral and escaped birds. Other authors consider that there was something of a decline during the early part of the twentieth century in Scotland, but during the last 50 years the species appears to have continued to consolidate its position in eastern England, the area of initial colonisation. The minimum total number of nesting Pochards in Britain in 1986 was estimated to be 370-395 pairs (about 330 in England, 15 in Wales, and 25-50 in Scotland). Analysis of National Wildfowl Count data for the Pochard in March suggests that the breeding and near-breeding population in Britain has remained stable over the last 27 years, with some sign of an increase during the 1980s.

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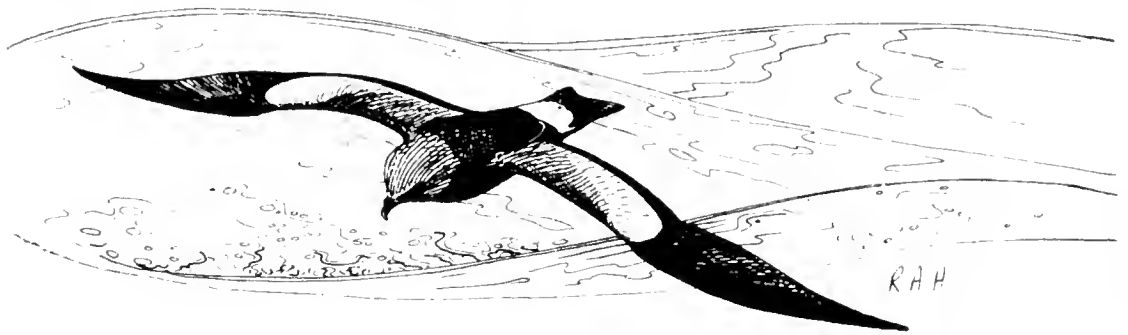
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Seasonal reports



Autumn 1990

Part 1: non-passerines

Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

This summary includes some unchecked reports, as well as authenticated records

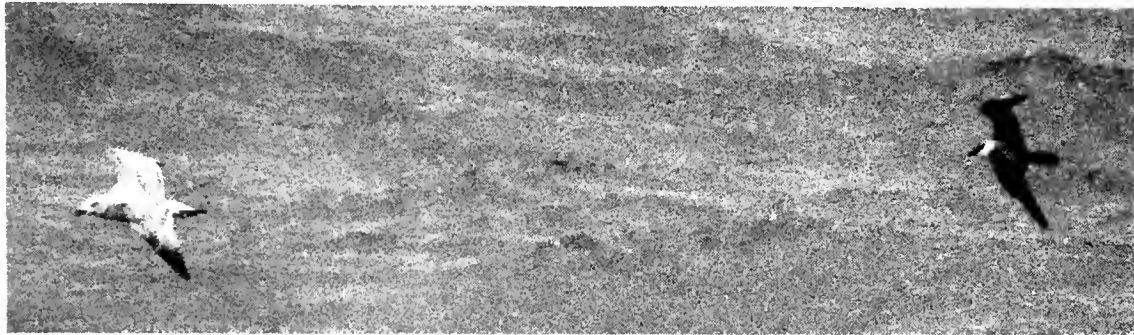
July began cool, with ground frosts reported from several parts of Britain, and for the first ten days the weather was unsettled, with winds mainly from the northwest. The second half of the month was mostly sunny and warm, with below-average rainfall.

The start of August was exceptionally hot, with several places in the first few days with temperatures over 32°C, breaking many long-term records. On 15th, there was a marked change, as a deepening depression moving northeast across Scotland brought rain and strong winds to much of the British Isles.

September was dry and was dominated by northerly winds until 17th, when it became more unsettled and showery, with severe gales in the north.

For much of October, a series of depressions brought westerly winds to most parts, but from 12th the wind veered to the south, and by 17th to the east, remaining so until the last few days of the month, which saw a return to westerlies.

November started with northeasterly winds, but from 8th the winds moved around to the south, with mild temperatures, but by mid month there was a much colder northwesterly airstream, with the first snow of winter in some northern areas.



70. Adult Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (and second-summer Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*), Ramone Head, Portrush, Co. Antrim, September 1990 (Anthony McGeehan)

Whilst, generally, seabird passage was uneventful, the numbers of **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus* (plates 70 & 76) and **Leach's Petrels** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were notable. Eight of the former appeared in July, five between 21st and 31st, followed in August by four at Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare) on 15th and a single the next day at Ramore Head (Co. Antrim). Between 26th and 30th August, a further 26 appeared along the coastline from Humberside to southeast Scotland, whilst inland records included six over Wilstone Reservoir (Hertfordshire) on 17th.

In September, a deepening depression on 5th approached the north of Scotland from the west, bringing strong winds to all northern areas. This promptly brought hundreds of Leach's Petrels to western coasts, including 264 off Co. Clare on 5th, 144 off Co. Donegal and 214 off Merseyside on 6th, and 900 off Co. Antrim on 7th, when there were also 75 off Clwyd and 40 off Dyfed. A second deep depression moved east from Iceland into the Norwegian Sea from 18th to 20th September, bringing with it severe gales in the north, with 100-mph (160-kph) winds recorded in Orkney on 19th. This brought the next wave of Long-tailed Skuas—150 altogether in September, including 42 off Lothian/Borders between 15th and 30th, and seven off Lynn Point (Norfolk) on 19th, when there were 16 off the Irish coasts (plate 70). In fact, numbers in Irish waters this autumn were to double their previous 25-

year total. More Leach's Petrels appeared between 19th and 22nd September, including 1,100 off Merseyside, and there was a very early **Little Auk** *Alle alle* at Cunningsburgh (Shetland) on 22nd.

Other travelling companions were **Sabine's Gulls** *Larus sabini*, with 19 past Bridges of Ross on 5th, nine past Ramore Head on 7th, and ten past St Ives (Cornwall) on 19th, the same day as 150 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* were driven into Scalloway Harbour (Shetland).

Turning inland, July had started in spectacular fashion, with a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* on Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford) on 1st and a **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* at Welney (Norfolk) on 2nd. On 3rd, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was at Sidlesham Ferry (West Sussex) and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia*, to prove quite scarce this autumn, at Farmoor Reservoir (Oxfordshire). News was also received from Cumbria of the first breeding in that county of **Ruddy Duck** *Oxyura jamaicensis*. Summering **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* lingered in Chichester Harbour (West Sussex), and on 8th July an early **Storm Petrel** passed Selsey Bill (West Sussex). A **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* was an unusual visitor to Spurn (Humberside) on 9th, but more typical were 26 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* which passed Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) between 8th and 11th July.

An anticyclone over the English Channel

on 12th July moved northeast into the North Sea. Large numbers of **Common Sandpipers** *Actitis hypoleucos* appeared, including 60 at Anthorn (Cumbria) and 19 at Minsmere (Suffolk) on 14th, and a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco tinnunculus* was seen at Kelling Quag (Norfolk) on 12th. A **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micro-palama himantopus* arrived at Cliffe (Kent) and three **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* showed, with the first on 13th in Cleveland, and there was a second **Pacific Golden Plover**, this time on the Ouse Washes (Cambridgeshire) on 15th. The same day, a **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* arrived at Dungeness (Kent), with another at Sale Water Park (Greater Manchester) the next day. Other good inland records included a **Red-footed Falcon** at Langley Mill (Derbyshire), and a **Great Northern Diver** *Gavia immer* at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 17th; there was another at Grutness (Shetland) on 15th and six off Fetlar (Shetland) by the end of July. With an area of high pressure to the north of Scotland, winds became easterly, bringing an early **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea* to Spurn on 22nd.

Many localities reported the first movements of **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* and **Wood Sandpipers** *T. glareola*, whilst more unexpected were another **Pacific Golden Plover**, at Pilling (Lancashire), and a **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* in Humberside. Sea passage had been unexciting, but six **Pomarine Skuas** flew past Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 22nd July, with reports from seven other East Coast localities between 21st and 26th.

A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* in Humberside on 24th July was the start of an interesting sequence, with it, or another, in Northamptonshire on 27th, and the same in Suffolk on 28th, where it wandered for most of August. July's fourth **Pacific Golden Plover** showed at Stanpit Marsh (Dorset) on 25th, when a count of 1,050 **Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* at Spurn caused much less excitement but was of interest nonetheless.

The showing of the larger shearwaters was disappointing by their own recent standards, but, as a depression to the southwest of England moved closer, 60 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* flew past Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 27th July, with 1,172 past there and 527 past Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) the next day. A **Stone-curlew** on Lady's Island Lake on 28th was a rare Irish visitor, as was a **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Lough Neagh (Co. Armagh) on 29th.

August was quiet for many coastal stations, with little visible movement at sea. At Spurn, the biggest 'auk day' was 30th, with a count of 20, the **Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* maximum was 1,200 on 13th, and, similarly, **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* reached a peak, with 155 on 20th. **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* numbered just over 100 in the whole of the British Isles in August, of which 68 were off Cornwall between 15th and 19th, and 21 off Downpatrick Head (Co. Mayo) on 16th. Seven **Cory's Shearwaters** were seen in the North Sea between 5th and 8th August, with another six between 16th and 19th, and there were 14 off the southwest coast of England between 13th and 19th. **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* were noted in Orkney and at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) on 5th, with others towards the end of August, and there were two more **Pacific Golden Plovers**, in Clwyd on 3rd and at Cley (Norfolk) on 7th. Nearctic visitors included a **Stilt Sandpiper** at Trimley (Suffolk) on the same day, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Frodsham (Cheshire) on 8th (plate 77) and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Oldbury (Avon) on 12th. The same day brought **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* to Burnham Norton (Norfolk) and Portland (Dorset), and **Little Egrets** *Egretta garzetta*, which had numbered 16 in July, increased to 50 in August, including 11 in Brand's Bay (Dorset) on 22nd. The 15th saw a **Cory's Shearwater** off Skokholm (Dyfed) and a **Wilson's Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* off Bridges of Ross, while on 17th a total of 2,796 **Storm Petrels** went west past Cape Clear Island. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Church Wilne Reservoir on 18th was only the second Derbyshire record, but a **Wilson's Phalarope** *P. tricolor* in Cornwall the same day (plate 79) was a more regular visitor to that county.

On 19th August there were 450 **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* passing Dungeness, and a **Black-browed Albatross** *Diomedea melanophrys* went past Skokholm, whilst 100 **Arctic Skuas** went south past Seaton Sluice (Northumberland) on 20th. Meanwhile, on the Duddon Estuary (Cumbria), **Red-breasted Mergansers** *Mergus serrator* had increased to 281. Visitors from farther afield included a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Staines Reservoir on 21st, a **Long-billed Dowitcher** at Draycote Water (Warwickshire) on 23rd and a **Bonaparte's Gull** *Larus philadelphia* at Torpoint (Cornwall). Six **White-rumped Sandpipers** (plates 72 & 73)

were also seen during August, three arriving between 20th and 29th.

Seabirds became more evident from 25th August, with nine **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* of the race *mauretanicus*, 29 **Great Shearwaters**, 10,000 nominate **Manx Shearwaters** and 4,200 **Storm Petrels** off Cape Clear Island, and a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** *Pterodroma mollis* there the next day. **Ruffs** *Philomachus pugnax* were noticeable on this day, too, with a good passage through northwest England, and numbers reaching 117 on Fetlar by the end of the month.

Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* also showed well, with 20 at Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 28th August and 29 at Tynninghame on 24th, a record Lothian count. There was also a strong passage through Shetland, together with good numbers of **Spotted Redshanks** *T. erythropus*, although these were reported as scarce elsewhere. Cape Clear Island recorded 3,196 **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* during August, with 516 on 27th, the same day as a **White-winged Black Tern** in Essex, with another in Kent on 28th. August ended with an **American Golden Plover** on North Ronaldsay (Orkney), a **Black-browed Albatross** off Ramore Head and a **Black Stork** in the Teme Valley (Shropshire/Powys), with the earlier Suffolk individual still showing at Benacre.

The hot, dry summer had caused low water levels and large muddy margins, ideal for **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* and **Curlew Sandpipers**, both of which passed through in good numbers during the first half of September. Of the latter, there were 33 at Rutland Water on 9th, 60 on the Inner Solway (Cumbria) mid month, and 13 **Little Stints** at Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire) on 16th. A **Long-toed Stint** *C. subminuta* also found conditions favourable on South Uist (Western Isles), where it stayed during 4th-7th September. **Purple Sandpipers** *C. maritima* made rare inland appearances in Bedfordshire, only their second ever, and in Derbyshire, and a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** showed at Ogmere Estuary (Mid Glamorgan). Off Cape Clear Island on 11th, 500 **Sooty Shearwaters** mingled with 15,000 **Manx Shearwaters**, the same day that a lone **Cory's Shearwater** was seen from Birsay (Orkney). A total of 13 **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* followed the 15 seen in August, and **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Tryngites subruficollis*, scarcer these last few years, had a better showing, with eight. Five **Baird's Sandpipers** *Calidris bairdii* (plate 71)

scattered throughout September was about an average number, and there were three more **American Golden Plovers**, all in the Northern Isles.

A count of 1,006 **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* on the Leicestershire waters on 16th September was their highest for five years, and 2,187 **Teals** *Anas crecca* on Rutland Water the same day was a site record. The first **Whooper Swan** *Cygnus cygnus* returned to Shetland on 20th and an early **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was on the Calf of Man the next day, followed by a scattering around the coast during the next week. A **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* on the Shannon Estuary (Co. Clare) on 30th September was the first Irish record for seven years.



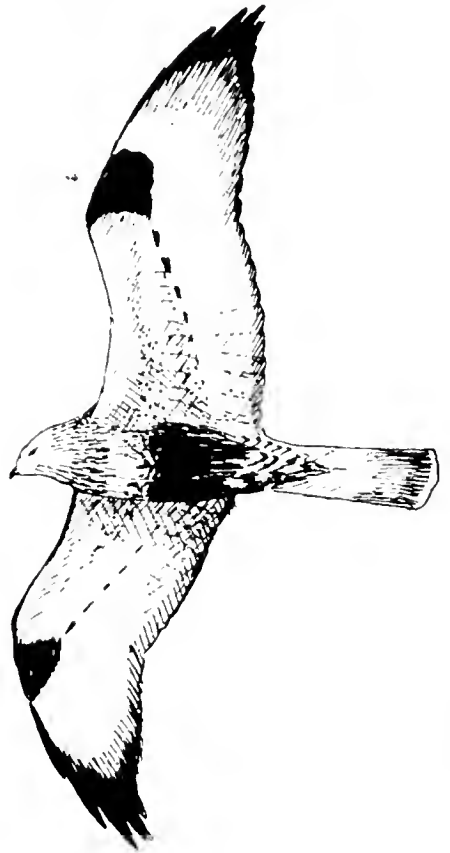
A widespread arrival of **Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* was quite a feature in October, with one at Sandwich Bay (Kent) on 4th, followed by up to four at Southwold (Suffolk) and one at Spurn on 13th. There were singles in Scilly on 17th and at Sandwich again on 19th, two more at Spurn on 21st, with up to seven there on 23rd, three on Fair Isle (Shetland) the same day and one on Lundy on 22nd. **Little Auks** showed well, too, with 12 between 3rd and 7th October, 71 between 20th and 21st, including 53 from North Ronaldsay, and eight between 30th and 31st.

Wader-roost numbers increased as expected, with counts of 10,000 of both **Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* and **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 6th. More surprising on 7th was the return of the **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* to the Blyth Estuary (Northumberland), where it had stayed throughout the previous winter.

A series of depressions, crossing the Atlantic during the first half of October, brought with them several interesting Nearctic visitors, including a **Sora** *Porzana carolina* to Skomer (Dyfed) on 7th. The first

of eight **Long-billed Dowitchers** for the month, in total 14 for the autumn, appeared at Droitwich (Worcestershire) on 9th, an upsurge for this species, whereas a **Solitary Sandpiper** *Tringa solitaria* on North Uist (Western Isles) on 20th lived up to its name and remains a scarce vagrant. A welcome and well-watched visitor to Scilly was the **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda*, which graced the airfield on St Mary's for several days, but a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* at Par (Cornwall) on 9th was more fleeting.

Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* were passing through, with 249 southwest over Eddleston (Borders) on 10th October, 110 on Fair Isle on 12th and eight on Lundy on 14th. A **Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria* appeared at Welney on 15th, staying until 30th. A total of 37 **Woodcocks** *Scolopax rusticola* passed through Spurn between 18th and 21st, there were 100 on Fair Isle on 22nd and 150 there on 29th. There were 7,000 **Brent Geese** passing Landguard (Suffolk) on 21st, on a day when **Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus* counts in Borders/Lothian included 17,500 at Aberlady Bay, 21,000 at Westwater and 10,030 at Hule Moss. A total of 800 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* had gathered on the River Orwell (Suffolk) on 22nd, when 25 **Pomarine Skuas** flew past Hound Point (Lothian). The 23rd October was a good raptor day, with a **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* at Spurn, nine **Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter nisus* at Gibraltar Point, together with four **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus*, with two also at Sandwich Bay. The theme continued with a **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* at Walberswick (Suffolk) on 24th and another ten **Sparrowhawks** at Gibraltar Point on 27th. A **Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*, at Minsmere on 28th, was a Suffolk rarity and coincided with five **Rough-legged Buzzards** *B. lagopus* in Britain between 20th and 27th. At Loch of Harray (Orkney), a wildfowl count on 30th of 9,200 **Wigeons** *Anas penelope*, 2,245 **Pochards** *Aythya ferina*, 1,640 **Tufted Ducks** *A. fuligula*, 1,205 **Mute Swans** *Cygnus olor*, 1,127 **Greylag Geese** *Anser anser* and 679 **Whooper Swans** must have been quite a sight. Requiring fewer fingers, but still impressive, was the count of raptors passing over Spurn on 31st—two **Hen Harriers**, 11 **Sparrowhawks**, 23 **Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus*, a **Buzzard**, two **Merlins** *F. columbarius* and a



Rough-legged Buzzard. Following last year's **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* in Cleveland came another, arriving in Scilly on 1st November, following several days of strong westerlies, and staying until 4th November. The 15,000 **Pink-footed Geese** at Montrose Basin (Tayside) on 2nd November found four **Snow Geese** *Anser caerulescens* in their midst, and there was another at Martin Mere (Lancashire) the same day. The first week of November also saw a remarkable movement of **Little Auks** down the east coast of England, with 232 on 3rd, including 100 at Sheringham (Norfolk), over 1,800 on 4th, including 1,500 off Flamborough Head, and 600 flying past there the next day. Nine passed St Ives on 18th, together with 19 **Black-throated Divers** *Gavia arctica*. On 20th a **Rough-legged Buzzard** was seen over Massingham Heath (Norfolk).

Finally we were left to ponder on the origin of the **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus ruber* which wandered around eastern England during October and November. Does news of a record-breaking year for the breeding population in southern Spain throw any light on the question?

Please note that records for the 'Seasonal report' covering winter 1990/91 (November to March) should be sent to Barry Nightingale by mid April. Thank you.



1. Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Annachie Lagoon, St Fergus, Grampian, September 1990 (S. A. Reeves)



2. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, August 1990 (David Tipling)

3. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Whitburn Steel, Tyne & Wear, August 1990 (Mike Watson)





74. Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, Bridlington, Humberside, September 1990 (Ralph & Brenda Todd)



75. American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, October 1990 (R. J. Watts)

76. Juvenile Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, King George V Reservoir, Chingford, Greater London, September 1990 (Dave Odell)



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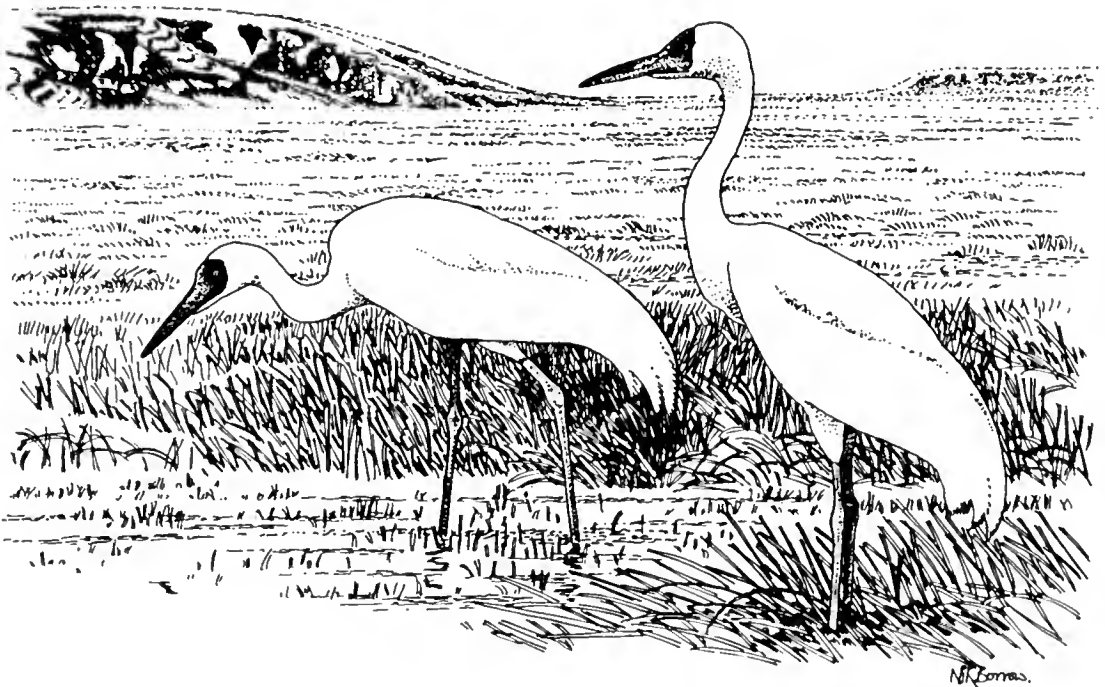
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*By courtesy of EMAP Pursuit Ltd. Quoted from an article BEST BUYS IN BINOCULARS, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Bird Watching*, May 1990. And, BEST BUYS IN TELESCOPES, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Bird Watching*, June 1990.

By courtesy of BBC Publications: JUST THE BEST, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Wildlife*, March 1989.

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77. Adult Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (with Redshanks *Tringa totanus* and Dunlin *Calidris alpina*), Frodsham, Cheshire, August 1990 (Steve Young)



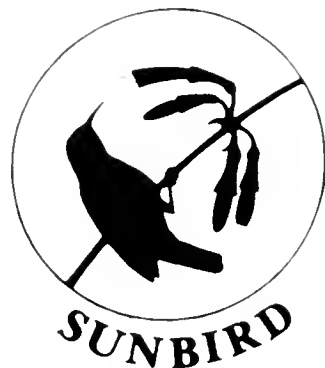
78. Male American Wigeon *Anas americana*, Seaforth, Merseyside, September 1990 (Steve Young)

79. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Hayle, Cornwall, August 1990 (David Tipling)



Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



With the same issue containing a 'Mystery photographs' text and photographs relating to Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (*Brit. Birds* 83: 561-564, plates 302 & 303), was plate 306 a simple problem, or a trap? Clearly, quite a number of entrants thought the latter:

Mediterranean Gull	(59%)
Grey Phalarope <i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	(16%)
Black-headed Gull <i>L. ridibundus</i>	(12%)

with fewer votes each for Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus*, Great Black-headed Gull *L. ichthyæetus*, Laughing Gull *L. atricilla*, Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan*, Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia*, Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*, Common Gull *L. canus* and Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*.

No trap. It was a Mediterranean Gull, photographed by Steve Young in Merseyside in May 1990. Of the two leading competitors (*Brit. Birds* 83: 73), only Jouni Riihimäki identified the bird in plate 306 correctly. He needs to be successful with five more hurdles, without a single stumble, to win the competition and his prize of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday of

80. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (eighth stage: photograph number 57). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th April 1991



his choice in Africa, Asia or North America. If he fails just once, the competitors in the chasing pack will get their chance.

A sadly high proportion of entrants are not taking full account of the detailed rules of this competition (*Brit. Birds* 84: 16). In your own interests, please read them carefully before sending in your entries. We do not want anyone to be disqualified, but in fairness must enforce the rules strictly and impartially. Send each entry in separately; on a postcard; with your name and full address; with your *BB* reference number; and post it in plenty of time, so that it arrives on or before the closing date.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

Notes

Unusual concealment behaviour by Coot On 27th June 1986, while walking along the bank of the Union Canal close to Winchburgh, Lothian, I watched a single adult Coot *Fulica atra* disappear underwater about 1 m from the water's edge and about 20 paces ahead of me. As I walked slowly past the spot where it had submerged, I kept looking for the Coot to reappear, looking behind me and over the whole width of the canal, but it did not show anywhere and I walked back to the same place. There I saw the Coot's bill protruding above the water, with the mandibles open and the nostrils just clear of the surface, every other part of the bird, including the head, being out of sight below water. Aquatic plants were emerging several centimetres above the water surface around the Coot, which may have been able to use its wings or feet to brace against these plants and thus hold itself submerged. The Coot remained in this position as I stood on the bank 1 m away; then, as I leaned closer over it, it jerked right under the water with a sudden audible movement, and moments later resurfaced about 15 m away, from where it swam farther from me, this time on the surface. The Coot had remained concealed and motionless for approximately two minutes before I alarmed it.

Such concealment behaviour has been observed for the Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and is described in *The Handbook*: 'Birds which have dived when startled frequently remain almost submerged, preferably under cover of bank or among plants or surface debris, exposing first beak only, and sometimes little more, or gradually showing head . . . and remaining thus till danger appears to have passed', and there is 'some controversy about whether birds submerge thus by holding onto underwater parts of plants or not.' I have found no record of this behaviour for the Coot; *BWP* (vol. 2) states only that Coots make little use of cover when swimming or diving (p. 600), and that in potential danger they may either seek cover or flee to open water (p. 606).

H. E. M. DOTT

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Winter plumage of Gull-billed Tern *BWP* (vol. 4) states that winter-plumaged Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* have a mainly white head. This is acquired after a post-breeding moult which starts in late July to mid August and is completed by late September to mid October. The crown becomes black again after a pre-breeding moult which normally commences from mid February (a few from late December) and is completed by the end of March.

Small parties of Gull-billed Terns winter around Bahrain and I was surprised to see several with a completely black crown in November and December 1989. Out of 347 individuals, 27 exhibited a completely black 'cap', just as in summer plumage. Out of 15 seen at very close range, one showed a few white feathers admixed in the black forehead, but this was impossible to see more than 75 m away with a 20× telescope.

Apparently, some adults do not moult their head feathers completely during the autumn.

ERIK HIRSCHFELD

c/o IAL, PO Box 144, Manama, State of Bahrain

Erik Hirschfeld's findings are comparable with those concerning wintering hooded gulls (e.g. Black-headed *Larus ridibundus*). His note is of especial value because of the precise statistics quoted. Iain Robertson has commented that 'many (sorry, no statistics) wintering Gull-billed Terns in East Africa have full black crowns in mid December, January and February.' EDS

Skylark using car as refuge from Merlin The notes on a Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* and Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* using human beings as refuges from attacks by Merlin *Falco columbarius* (*Brit. Birds* 79: 592; 82: 179; 83: 427) reminded me of a similar incident a few years ago on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire. A female Merlin was chasing a Skylark over the artillery ranges, climbing and diving in hot pursuit towards where I was standing by the open door of my car. Suddenly, the Skylark dived between my leg and the door and under the car, brushing my leg as it passed; the Merlin sheered off. When I looked under the car, the Skylark was resting on its breast, panting and looking at me with a beady eye. After about five minutes, it flew into a tussock of rough grass.

GEOFFREY L. BOYLE

Strawberry Lee, White Street, West Lavington, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 4LW

Grey Wagtail repeatedly flying at car mirror At 15.30 GMT on 2nd December 1984, at Ibsley, near Ringwood, Hampshire, we watched a Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* fly at a wing mirror of a car parked by the River Avon and fly back to the river, only to return to the wing mirror after about five minutes. During our stay of approximately 30 minutes, the wagtail made about eight visits to the car; it flew not only at the one wing mirror, but also at our own car's wing mirror and at that of a car that drew up alongside the river to park (plates 81 & 82). Similar behaviour was reported for a Grey Wagtail in Dorset, which was apparently 'conditioned to regard a car with a wing mirror as embodying another wagtail' (*Brit. Birds* 58: 222-223, 350).

M. D. SIMMONDS

70 Portchester Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 7JB



81 & 82. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* visiting car wing mirror, Hampshire, December 1984
(M. D. Simmonds)

Instances of birds displaying at their own reflections are not unusual (e.g. the Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* photographed by J. D. Bakewell, *Brit. Birds* 79: 276, plate 152), but the photographs of this Grey Wagtail are valuable documentation. EDS

Starlings using human being as refuge from Sparrowhawk The notes on a Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* and Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* using human beings as refuges from attacks by Merlins *Falco columbarius* (*Brit. Birds* 79: 592; 82: 179; 83: 427) recalled the following. On a wintry day in the late 1940s, when farming in Gloucestershire, I was working near a tractor and trailer by a high hedge and a manure heap when I was suddenly enveloped by a small flock of Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. They descended on my head and shoulders like a swarm of bees, and I had to strike them off in order to protect my face; some landed on the ground at my feet, struggling as though incapable of flight, kicking their legs and seeming completely disorientated. Simultaneously, I noticed a female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* flying away across the field with a Starling in its grasp. Presumably, it had 'hedge-hopped' into the flock, causing them to flee to the nearest available cover, which just happened to be myself. T. O. JAMES
Charity Farm, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 3EQ

Letter

The occurrence of 'Russian' Bean Geese in Britain In reply to Andreas Noeske (*Brit. Birds* 83: 556-560), we should like to comment as follows:

1. We agree that the Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* shows clinal variation and that subspecific identification is difficult. These points were emphasised in our note (*Brit. Birds* 81: 68-70).
2. Our note reported bill shapes and patterns and measurements of three Bean Geese which had been shot in Lancashire. This information was

compared with that published in *BWP*, whose data appear to differ from those quoted by Litzbarski and cited by Noeske.

3. The measurements of one female specimen are typical of *A. f. serrirostris*, but are not at all typical of *A. f. fabalis* or *A. f. rossicus* when compared with *BWP* data (table 1).

4. We agree that one should not claim a lone 'Sibèrian' Bean Goose on the strength of one biometric parameter. In fact, we measured and described several parameters, concluding that the bird was 'closest to *serrirostris* or an intergrade between *rossicus* and *serrirostris*.' On the basis of the information available to us, this finding seems reasonable and certainly not 'dubious' or 'misleading', as claimed by Noeske.

PHILIP H. SMITH and W. D. FORSHAW

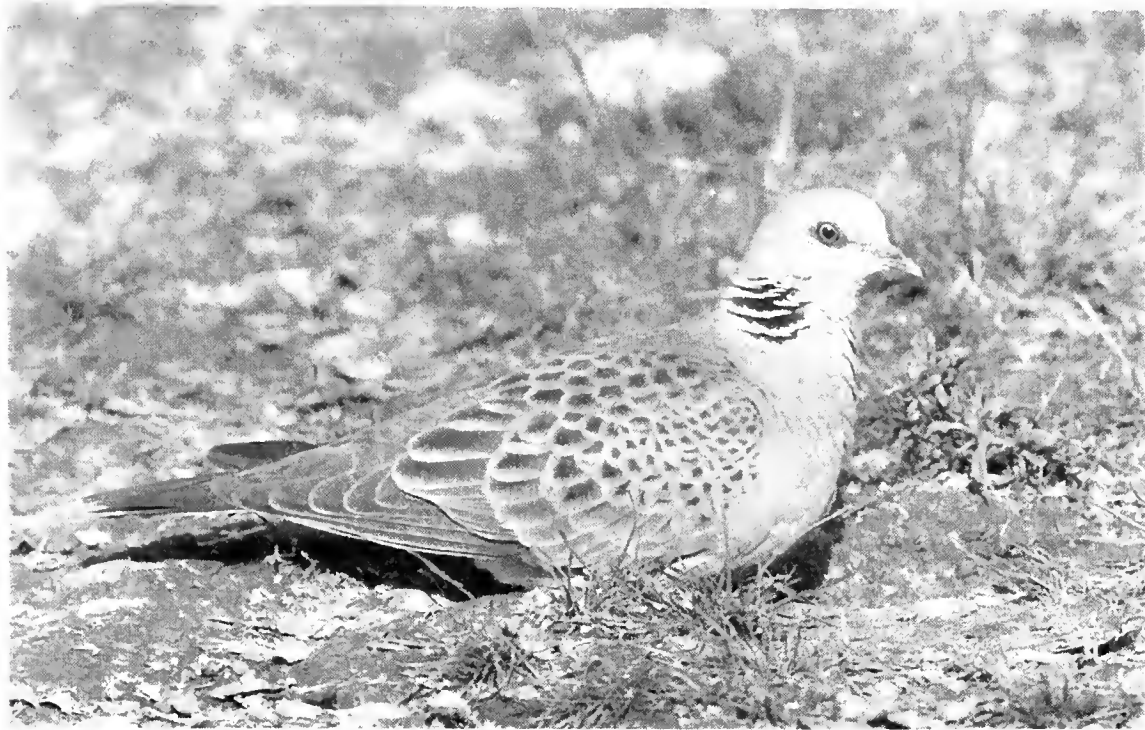
School of Natural Sciences, The Liverpool Polytechnic, Byrom Street, Liverpool L3 3AF

Table 1. Mean measurements (and ranges) in mm of adult female *A. fabalis* ssp. from 'BWP' compared with 'Specimen 3' of Smith & Forshaw (1988)

	<i>fabalis</i>	<i>rossicus</i>	<i>serrirostris</i>	Specimen 3
Wing	460 (434-488)	433 (405-458)	449 (420-491)	440-444
Tail	132 (127-137)	119 (106-130)	—	129
Bill length	60.0 (55-66)	54.6 (49-60)	63.3 (58-69)	63
Bill depth	6.2 (5.3-7.0)	7.5 (6.9-8.6)	9.3 (8.1-11.3)	9
Tarsus	76.7 (73-80)	73.9 (69-79)	—	80
Toe	82.7 (78-84)	74.7 (70-81)	—	80
No. of horny teeth visible on bill	26-27	23	—	23

Mystery photographs

164 The weak bill, small head, short neck, plump body, long tail and (presumably) short legs of last month's mystery bird (plate 64, repeated here) instantly identify it as a pigeon or dove. Most readers will have progressed farther immediately, by noticing the bird's dark-centred wing-coverts, scapulars and tertials and multi-striped neck patch, which narrow the choice to Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* or Rufous Turtle Dove *S. orientalis*. It is an adult, since juveniles of both species lack the neck patch. Separation of Turtle Dove and Rufous Turtle Dove of the East Asian nominate race is straightforward, given good views of an adult at



rest. Some individuals of the West Asian race *S. o. meena* are, however, less easy to separate from Turtle Dove.

The area of bare skin around the eye is quite extensive on Turtle Dove, whilst Rufous Turtle Dove has none or very little. Whereas Turtle Dove has small dark centres to the scapulars and tertials, those of Rufous Turtle Dove are comparatively large. The same applies to the dark centres to the wing-coverts, but, in addition, those of the common species are pointed in shape and generally sharply defined, whilst those of Rufous Turtle Dove are more rounded in shape and less clear-cut against the pale fringes. Turtle Dove's wing-covert fringes are uniformly coloured, but those of Rufous Turtle Dove are thinly tipped with off-white, which creates pale wing-bars. Turtle Dove's primaries are very indistinctly pale-tipped and

84. Rufous Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Sweden, March 1987 (Stefan Lithner)



this is least obvious on the outer primaries, whilst Rufous Turtle Dove's primaries are more clearly pale-tipped and most prominently so on the outer primaries. The extent of the mystery bird's bare skin around its eye, the detailed pattern of its scapulars, tertials and wing-coverts and the insignificant pale tips to its primaries identify it as a Turtle Dove. It was photographed by Dr Kevin Carlson in Portugal in May 1988.

It is not possible, from a single black-and-white photograph, to observe the other important characters with which to separate the two species. Additionally to those covered above, an adult Rufous Turtle Dove can be positively identified by close attention to size and structure, jizz in flight, colour of nape and hindneck, colour of mantle and of lower back and rump, colour of central rectrices, pattern of outer web of outer rectrices, colour of breast and colour of fringes to scapulars and tertials. Other useful features which are not applicable to all individuals are colour of bare skin around eye, number of black stripes in neck patch, colour of pale surround to tail and colour of belly and of undertail-coverts and vent.

The ground colour of the neck patch, once thought of as a major character, is of limited value in the separation process. It is wholly white on most Turtle Doves, but on a number of individuals it is both pale blue and white and on some it is entirely sky-blue. On most Rufous Turtle Doves, the neck-patch ground colour is grey-blue, although some *meena* possess a little white too.

The identification of Rufous Turtle Dove and its separation from Turtle Dove has been discussed in an excellent paper by Erik Hirschfeld and Lars Svensson in the Swedish journal *Vår Fågelvärld* (44: 145-152). This subject is also due to be covered fully in *British Birds* in a forthcoming paper by Mark Beaman and Steve Madge.

PETER LANSDOWN

197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

85. Mystery photograph 165. Identify the species. Answer next month



Announcements

Rarities Committee: new members As previously announced (*Brit. Birds* 83: 413-414), three vacancies will arise on the Rarities Committee* from 1st April 1991. In addition to the Committee's three nominations, two further independent nominations were received by the closing date of 31st December 1990. In consequence, a postal vote has been conducted, each county/regional bird recorder and bird observatory voting for three members (using a 3-2-1 points system). The candidates, and votes cast by the closing date of 15th February, were as follows:

Dr Colin Bradshaw (North Shields, Tyne & Wear)	118
Peter Clement (Wisbech, Cambridgeshire).....	69
Pete Ellis (Sandwick, Shetland)	97
Brian Rabbitts (Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset)	47
Grahame Walbridge (Portland, Dorset).....	60

The three new members elected to serve from 1st April are, therefore, Dr Colin Bradshaw, Peter Clement and Pete Ellis.

*The Rarities Committee is sponsored by ZEISS Germany.

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The photographic guide *North Atlantic Shorebirds* by Richard Chandler (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 83: 248-249) is available for £9.95 (saving £3.00 on the full price), post free via British BirdShop.

NEW THIS MONTH:

*Alerstam *Bird Migration*

*Lovegrove *The Kite's Tale: the story of the Red Kite in Wales*

*Sibley & Ahlquist *Phylogeny and Classification of Birds*

*Sibley & Monroe *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World*

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xiii & xiv.

Seventy-five years ago...

'ARCTIC SKUA SOARING IN PURSUIT OF TERNS. EARLY in September, 1915, I watched an Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) attacking some Common Terns in Blakeney Harbour, in a distinctly unusual manner. The Terns, gradually mounting to a great height in the air, were closely followed by the Skua, till they reached such an altitude that they resembled nothing so much as a flock of Rooks mobbing a Kestrel. Presently, soaring round and round and gradually moving inland, they vanished out of sight. I have never seen a Skua chase Terns at any great height before, and Edward Ramm, the famous gunner, who was with me at the time, was as interested as I was in the sight. CLIFFORD BORRER.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 275, March 1916)

Reviews

The Kite's Tale: the story of the Red Kite in Wales. By Roger Lovegrove. RSPB, Sandy, 1990. 147 pages; 21 colour plates; 2 black-and-white plates; 23 line-drawings; 7 maps; 20 tables. £14.95.

This book provides a popular account of the history of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in Britain, and of the 100-year conservation effort in Wales. It describes how, at the hand of man, the kite declined from being 'the commonest and most familiar bird of prey in Britain' to being one of the rarest, with less than a dozen individuals left in mid Wales in the early 1900s.

We probably owe the continued presence of the kite in Britain to the efforts of a few dedicated people. But, according to the author, kite protection over the years has been plagued by 'bitter divisions, acrimonious clashes of personality, jealousies, intrigue and deception'. One wonders how much this book will add to the acrimony, considering the enormous extent to which it relies upon the work of others, notably the one person in Wales who has collected almost all the hard data. Moreover, readers may have some difficulty in tracing the original sources, because some of the main scientific papers drawn upon are attributed to the wrong journal.

This aside, the book makes fascinating reading. For most of this century, kite protection was dominated by a few individual people, who operated a 'hands-off' policy steeped in secrecy. Practically nothing of significance was learned about the species, and it remained as scarce as ever. Then, from 1960, with the involvement of the Nature Conservancy and the appointment of a scientific field officer, proper record-keeping, observation and scientific study began. Conservation became more firmly based, and, with continued nest protection, the bird began to increase, reaching 69 pairs in 1989. In the environment of mid Wales, Red Kites will probably never achieve a high breeding success. Population increase is all the time being slowed by continued egg-collecting and, more importantly, by the continued use by a minority of farmers of poisoned meat baits. In 1989 alone, ten kites are known to have died in this way.

With the new reintroduction programme for England and Scotland, the Red Kite is again in the limelight, and the publication of this book is timely. It seems to have been prepared hastily, however, and is not without small errors and inconsistencies. Nonetheless, it is nicely produced, enjoyable, and illustrated by some excellent photographs and evocative line-drawings.

I. NEWTON

Birds by Night. By Graham Martin. Illustrated by John Busby. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1990. 227 pages; four black-and-white plates; 56 line-drawings. £18.00.

The subject of this book is quite hard to define. Light levels at any one place can vary about a thousand-fold in daylight and a further million-fold between twilight and a dark moonless night. Modern human beings tend to be rather unaware of true night: it takes about 40 minutes for the eyes to become accustomed to it and few people venture that far from artificial lights.

A lot of birds can and do do various things, from migrating to feeding or singing, in what we would regard as the dark. Such activities may be necessary if there is insufficient time to feed during the day, for instance, among waders, because of tides or disturbance. Occasional night feeders may be less good at night than by day and may have to switch from the use of sight to the use of touch, taste or sound. Such birds tend to avoid flying other than in the open. Night singers in thick vegetation tend to keep still.

Rather few birds are substantially nocturnal, and the book is half read by the time they appear. The author's own subject is the avian eye, but he is interested in other senses. Touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing and echo-location are all discussed. Swiftlets and the Oilbird *Steatornis caripensis* use sonar to get about in totally dark caves, but Oilbirds are no better at it than some blind human beings, and birds cannot compete with bats in acuity of this sense. Contrary to popular belief, the sight and hearing of owls are not much better than are ours. The ability to locate prey or get about by smell and taste is altogether much more foreign to our understanding, and has not been well studied in birds.

A problem with senses is that we are not very good at understanding how we use our own. Knowledge plays an important part. Analogies are drawn with the ability of birdwatchers to learn how to detect birds, and with driving at night. People habitually drive in a way which relies on more information than can be seen. A bird studying us would no doubt find our motorway driving an extraordinary feat. In the same way, it is easy to be amazed about what birds can do with senses that do not seem good enough.

As a whole, this book is a rather miscellaneous collection of examples of birds doing various things at the darker end of the natural range of light levels. The story is mainly descriptive, with few linking ideas. The emphasis is on the senses used. Traditional Poyser buyers will enjoy a quick read, but I suspect that few will return for further study.

COLIN J. BIBBY

Latvijas Ligzdojošo Putnu Atlants 1980-1984. By J. Priednieks, M. Strazds, A. Strazds and A. Petrīns. Edited by J. Vīksne. Latvian Ornithological Society, Salaspils, 1989. 297 pages; 208 line-drawings; 208 maps. Hardback, no price given.

This is the Latvian Breeding Bird Atlas, resulting from fieldwork carried out during 1980-84. The results are plotted, using the standard 10×10 km squares as a basis, and the standard European Ornithological Atlas Committee grades and categories of evidence (as in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*, 1976). The survey was carried out by a total of 130 ornithologists, who achieved a remarkable 95% coverage (although many of the 701 squares which were surveyed were visited only once).

This book, which shows the results of the survey, follows the now-familiar pattern, with, apart from introductory sections, maps of Latvia with unsurveyed squares shown shaded grey, and the three categories of breeding evidence for those which were surveyed being shown with three sizes of dot (in green). There is accompanying text, and a decorative drawing illustrating each species. Throughout the book, the text is given in Latvian, Russian and English. It is, therefore, very easy for British birdwatchers to make full use of this Atlas. Design and layout do full justice to the fieldwork achievements.

Latvia is about one-fifth the size of Britain and Ireland, but includes 12,400 rivers and over 2,250 lakes. Forests (mostly pine *Pinus*, birch *Betula* and spruce *Picea*) make up 40.5% of the area, 38% is agricultural land, and 10% is bogland. This habitat distribution is, naturally, reflected in the bird distributions. Whereas Skylark *Alauda arvensis* was the most widespread species in Britain and Ireland during our 1968-72 survey, that species is third in the Latvian sequence, being exceeded by Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (97%) and Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* (94%). With eight species of owl, nine species of woodpecker, Woodlarks *Lullula arborea* in over 40% of the squares, and 19 species of warbler, for example, Latvia has much to offer the visiting birdwatcher.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

BirdBASE: the information centre of Western Palearctic birds. Compiled by John Tucker & Peter Tucker. (5.25 in. or 3.5 in. computer disc.) Nature Base, Oxford, 1990. £49.95.

This computer database runs on a PC compatible personal computer. It comes on a neatly packaged disc plus a brief eight-page manual, simple installation instructions, a list of alternative English bird names, and card overlays for the function keys on your keyboard. To enter the database, one types the letters 'BB' (!); thereafter one uses function keys, plus a minimum of others.

The claimed 20,000+ items of information on the 867 species in the West Palearctic are certainly very comprehensive. For each species, a first screenful displays such items as World and Euring numbers, British wintering and breeding statistics as appropriate, legal status, whether on British Birds Rarities Committee or Rare Breeding Birds Panel lists, and so on. A single key press produces a second screen, giving page numbers of references to the species in *BWP*, field and identification guides, atlases, *British Birds* back to 1965, and so on.

Lists of species fulfilling selected criteria can be readily compiled, for example those on the BBRC list and in the *British Birds* 'Mystery photographs' series. This search facility is quite powerful; its usefulness depends upon the imagination of the user.

Searching through indexes for particular species, compiling lists of birds and finding information relating to them, rarely takes more than a few seconds, the actual speed depending on the model of computer being used. Information can be called up on the screen or directed to a printer.

One can not add new data to the database, though perhaps updates will be offered when *BWP* volume 6, or a new identification guide, is published. One can, however, compile one's own life, country, county, garden or even ringing list, as well as species lists for two holidays in each of the years 1980 to 1996, and put short entries into ten spare data fields, though, since these cannot be labelled, one would have to keep a note of what each contained.

I am not a great lister, one for Islay and one for my garden is all I keep; both are already on my computer, as I suspect many people's are, but they cannot be transferred directly into this database. Instead, each species has to be called up in turn, for the various ticks or other

information to be added to a possible maximum of 72 items, by scrolling through all 867 looking for those one has seen. Even once all the data are in, adding the latest holiday list still has to be done the same laborious way.

It is a pity that there is not an easier data entry method, so that, by typing in one's holiday list using a simple word-processor, the entries would be added automatically to the database under the required heading. Equally useful would be the ability to export selected lists to a word-processor, for instance using the database to list in Vooous order the English and scientific names, plus Euring numbers, of those species needed for a local bird report. Alas, one can only print out such a list.

Seen purely as a convenient information file on West Palearctic birds, this database has many merits, including those of comprehensiveness and ease and speed of use. As a personal data file, however, I suspect that many users would find the data entry and updating a bit cumbersome, though the lists once compiled can be called up as easily as can any other data.

M. A. OGILVIE

Short reviews

Bird Flight: an illustrated study of birds' aerial mastery. By Robert Burton. (Facts on File Ltd, Oxford, 1990. 160 pages. £14.95) This is a very attractive and accurate presentation of the current propagated theories. This subject, of both popular and academic interest, has, however, not been resourced sufficiently to unlock fully the secrets of slow-speed, unsteady aerodynamics with vorticity control, which the birds efficiently and instinctively manipulate. The true merit of the book is the pageant of superb flight photographs, showing great artistry by both bird and cameraman, again demonstrating the scientific advances achieved in commercial photography.

[KEITH ALLSOPP]

The Curlew. By Gerry Cotter. (Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, 1990. 24 pages. Paperback £1.95) A review of the Curlew *Numenius arquata*, its distribution, breeding, feeding, migration and predators, with maps culled from the BTO atlases. Written in 'essay' style, it will introduce new bird-watchers to one of our familiar waders, but what a shame that the pronounced sexual dimorphism is neither clearly explained nor shown; basic facts such as this make bird-watching so much more enjoyable.

[IAN BAINBRIDGE]

The Red Kite in Wales. By John Evans. (Christopher Davies, Swansea, 1990. 64 pages. Paperback £4.95) A brief history, and where to see Red Kites *Milvus milvus* in Wales. Many curious statements are con-

trary to the evidence: for example, that Spanish-breeding Red Kites are mainly migratory; that loss from many areas was due to severe weather rather than to persecution; and that the relict range is good habitat. Nevertheless, this is a convenient introduction for those wishing to see kites without disturbing them (although a reminder of the illegality of disturbing breeding birds would have been wise). For more information, turn to Roger Lovegrove's compilation (*The Kite's Tale*, 1990), pending a full treatment.

[MIKE PIENKOWSKI]

The Black Eagle: a study. By Valerie Gargett. (Acorn Books, Randburg, RSA, 1990. 280 pages. £35.00) Parts of this classic 21-year study of Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* in Zimbabwe have been published in the literature, but here is the whole story of this remarkable co-operative venture in a single book. Full of data, very well written and superbly illustrated, this is a 'must' for all raptor researchers and enthusiasts—and ought to be read by all field ornithologists. Highly recommended. [MIKE EVERETT]

Hickling Broad and its Wildlife: the story of a famous wetland nature reserve. By Stewart Linsell. (Terence Dalton, Lavenham, 1990. 171 pages. £18.95) This is a fascinating account of the evolution of an internationally famous reserve. Not only is it a natural history, but it is also an intriguing social history of this important wetland. A 'must' for anyone interested in East Anglia.

[ANDY LOWE]

The Golden Eagle. By John Love & Jeff Watson. Shire Publications, Princes Risborough, 1990. 24 pages. £1.95) Yet another valuable mini-monograph in this excellent series. As one would expect from these authors, a concise, authoritative and up-to-date summary, which is easily the best handy reference work available on the Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*. Recommended.

[MIKE EVERETT]

Seabirds of the Northern Hemisphere. By Alan Richards. (Dragon's World, London,

1990. 192 pages. £19.95) This attractive book covers seabirds which breed mainly on either (or both) the Pacific or Atlantic coasts of North America and those which breed around the coasts of Britain and Western Europe, or occur as non-breeding visitors to all or some of these areas. A superb selection of 160 colour photographs and a comprehensive and authoritative text will appeal more to the generalist than to the seabird-identification enthusiast. Pelagic species are poorly represented and most non-breeding species, and some breeding ones, are without any photographs. [B. A. E. MARR]

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

ICBP spells it out When 380 conservation experts from 56 countries met at the 20th World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation (in Hamilton, New Zealand, in November 1990), they made plain some stark facts. Two-thirds of the world's 9,000 bird species are in decline and over 1,000 are threatened with possible extinction.

Habitat loss is the greatest problem, particularly for the birds of wetlands and of tropical forests. Lest anybody should think the problems are confined to birds, the ICBP also pointed out that other immediately threatened taxa include 90,000 insect species, 35,000 plants and 500 mammals. Particular 'hotspots' are identified as Indonesia (126 threatened birds), Brazil (121), China (81) and Peru (71). Further alarming statistics are that longlines, driftnets and the other paraphernalia of modern commercial fishing kill over one million seabirds worldwide every year; and that over half of the 7,000,000 birds caught for the international cagebird trade each year die during capture or transportation. The ICBP calls for international action on a massive scale, involving governments and the 'private sector', if countless further catastrophes are to be avoided. Many of the world's birds face an uncertain future; the truly sickening part about it all is that we have a fairly good idea of how to go about improving things. All that is lacking is the international will.

New RSPB campaigns In early summer 1991, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds will mount a campaign to put a stop to the appalling losses caused by the trade in wild birds within the UK and the European Community: more of this anon. In spring, a report will be published drawing attention to the continuing persecution (through deliberate killing, poisoning and nest-robbing) of birds of prey in the UK—something that all too many landowners, sportsmen, farmers and others deny is even going on. During 1989, the RSPB alone confirmed enough reports to make a nonsense of these complacent statements—292 incidents involving 13 raptor species, of which 167 involved shooting, trapping or poisoning and 125 the theft of eggs or young. The figures surely represent only the tip of an iceberg of illegality. During this campaign, the RSPB will continue to press for a 'cause or permit' clause to be introduced into the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act—already the subject of a Private Member's Bill in the Commons in December 1990. Such a clause would greatly increase the liability of landowners for illegal acts carried out on their land. If some of them were to begin to shoulder some of the blame, we might, at long last, see some moves in the right direction. We shall return to this subject, too.

'BB' trip to NZ As a prelude to the



86. The 'BB'-SUNBIRD trip to New Zealand: Betty Ball, David Bradley, Diana Bradley, Denis Blamire, Bob & Marion Chadwick, David Fisher (leader), Ray Hannikman, Andreas Helbig, I. G. & Fran Kennon, Ev Knights, Pamela Lind and Ken Sutton, watching the world's rarest wader, the Black Stilt *Himantopus novaezelandiae*, from a hillside overlooking its breeding grounds on a braided river valley, November 1990 (J. T. R. Sharrock)

International Ornithological Congress in Christchurch (see below), BB linked up with the bird-tour company SUNBIRD for a two-week trip around New Zealand (plate 86), in search of albatrosses, penguins and endemic species such as Blue Duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus*, Wrybill *Anarhynchus frontalis*, Rock Wren *Xenicus gilviventris* and Stitchbird *Notiomystis cincta*.

IOC in NZ Almost 1,500 delegates attended the XX International Ornithological Congress held in Christchurch, New Zealand, during 3rd-8th December 1990.

The programme of papers was as packed as at other recent Congresses, with from six to nine simultaneous sessions, plus films, poster papers, and short and long excursions from which to choose. Organisation (not least the feeding of the 1,500 in the space of 1¼ hours at lunchtime every day) was immaculate, and our New Zealand hosts could not have been more friendly or helpful.

Even the most dedicated lecture-attender could listen to only a fraction of the material on offer, but the flavour can perhaps be given by the briefest of summaries of a couple of contributions picked at random. Work by M. Eens & Ms R. Pinxten showed that male Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* with long, complex songs, incorporating many phrases

of mimicry, were more successful both at attracting females and at rearing young than were those with shorter, less complex songs. In a completely different field, studies by Dr A. V. Andors suggest that the Eocene fossil Giant Groundbird *Diatryma* was not a fast-running predator related to the cranes, but a slow-moving herbivorous browser related to the ducks, geese and swans. Forget those evocative reconstructions of *Diatryma* munching up miniature, primitive horses!

The poster papers, housed in a giant marquee crowded and filled with deafening animated discussion, were equally varied. As one example: Randall Breitwisch's work in Kenya on oxpeckers *Buphagus* which communicate with zebras (but seldom with giraffes, impala or Cape buffaloes) by a stereotyped display of exaggerated hopping on the animals' rumps. The zebras respond by elevating their tails and also appear to signal their readiness to be cleaned by assuming a rigid stance when the birds land. Shades of cleaner-fish and client-fish.

Fascinating stuff, but the main purpose of the IOC is to provide a legitimate excuse for professional and serious amateur birdwatchers and ornithologists to get together to discuss their work and to make and renew friendships. In that, the XX IOC was a great success.

The next one? Vienna, Austria, during 21st-27th August 1994, with the EGI's

Director, Dr Christopher Perrins, as President. For full details, write to the Secretary, XXI International Ornithological Congress, Interconvention, Austria Center, A-1450 Vienna, Austria.

BTO Annual Conference The 1990 BTO Annual Conference at Swanwick will, unfortunately, probably be best remembered for the weather and its effects on those attending: the sounding of the fire alarm at 3 a.m. on the first night followed by a walk, in nightwear, through the snow to the lecture hall; the power-cuts; the cutting-off of water supplies; the inability of the domestic staff and the milkman to reach the Centre; and the inability of some snow-bound lecturers to reach the Centre.

The main theme of the conference was based on the BTO's various long-term studies: CBC plots, CES ringing studies, and the Waterways Surveys. Each topic was dealt with by a professional BTO staff member and an amateur fieldworker—each short talk being more interesting and informative than many I have heard at previous conferences. Johan Bekhuis summed up similar work in the Netherlands and put all such work into a European context.

More exotic birdwatching was dealt with by John Lawton Roberts in his account of Bulgarian birds and by Gordon Trunkfield, co-opted at the eleventh hour to replace a missing speaker, on the birds of Florida.

Special mention must be made of David Harper, who, on Saturday night, with the aid of Robert Gillmor's quick sketches of Mistle Thrushes, composed a delightful and erudite talk on the relative importance of sex and food availability.

The *British Birds* mystery photographs competition, one of some four or five quizzes at the conference, was won by Tom Cadwallender, who was presented with the traditional bottle of champagne. (Contributed by Erika Sharrock)

YNU Committee Centenary This year, the Protection of Birds Committee of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union celebrates its centenary—100 years of positive action for the county's birds, which actually stemmed from even earlier efforts which had culminated in the very first protective legislation anywhere in the UK to cover birds other than sporting species: the Seabirds Preservation Act of 1869. The Committee's achievements are legion: we cannot detail them here, but we can pay tribute to a

splendid record which deserves to be better known outside Yorkshire. May the good work continue!

Going to Hong Kong? Want to see Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, Nordmann's Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*, Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor*, Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi* . . . ? The WWF Hong Kong Mai Po Marshes Nature Reserve welcomes visitors (avian and human) from around the world. Access to the reserve is, however, restricted.

Permits are *essential*, and can be obtained beforehand from the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, 393 Canton Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong. They are issued free of charge, but applications must be made at least two weeks in advance. When applying give details of the date(s) of your visit, your name, passport number, purpose of visit, and membership of conservation organisations, and so on.

Membership of the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong is a prerequisite for use of any of the birdwatching hides on the reserve. Applications can be made to WWF Hong Kong, GPO Box 12721, Hong Kong, or by signing up in the Peter Scott Field Studies Centre or the Education Centre in the reserve. The minimum membership fee for one year is HK\$120, which goes towards meeting the running costs of the reserve.

Accommodation is now available in the Field Studies Centre just outside the reserve. Charges range from HK\$100 to HK\$250 per night. Simple meals can also be ordered in the centre. There are limited bed spaces (maximum 11), so bookings should be made well in advance, especially for the spring migration. (Contributed by Michael Lau, Mai Po Reserve Manager, WWF Hong Kong)

Asian Waterfowl Census Christian Perennou of the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau has written to thank *BB* readers for offering to help with this regular census. The *1990 Asian Waterfowl Census* report has now been published and is packed with information on counts carried out from the Persian Gulf to the Far East. It is available from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, price £8.00 (including p&p).

More Tristan stamps We were very pleased to hear again from the Administrator of Tristan da Cunha, Mr B. E. Pouncefort, following the short item we wrote last June

(*Brit. Birds* 83: 251). In collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature, the island is to issue a new set of four postage stamps featuring rare and endangered birds: we gather that these will include the Gough Island Moorhen *Gallinula comeri* and the Gough Bunting *Rowettia goughensis*. In view of the considerable time-lag involved in correspondence with Tristan da Cunha, Mr Pauncefort suggests that anyone interested in further details of the new issue should get in touch with WWF, Panda House, Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR, or Colin Freeman at the Crown Agents Stamp Bureau, Old Inn House, 2 Carshalton Road, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4RN. Meanwhile—we thank the Administrator for his and the islanders' good wishes to *BB*, which we warmly reciprocate on behalf of all our readers.

BTO's turn? By a quite extraordinary twist of fate, the discovery of a dead Gray-cheeked

Thrush *Catharus minimus* at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's HQ at Slimbridge last autumn has been followed by the finding of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* which perished at the RSPB's headquarters at Sandy, Bedfordshire, in December 1990. One's first reaction is to say to the BTO 'Beat that!'—but perhaps a more noble sentiment is to hope that they won't!

More sillies Once again, our thanks to all those who have sent us the fruits of their searches for good misprints. We especially liked Honeybuzzers and Grey Phalaropes in the *Jersey Freestyle* newspaper (the latter a good Euronym that the BOU might like to consider?) and Black Tiled Godwits (a race of Marbled, maybe?) in *Bird Watching*. It was good to hear from Erik Hirschfeld in Bahrain again and to learn of the Secret Ibises at the Al Areen Wildlife Park. Come to think of it, that bird on the cover of *Ibis* always did look a bit sinister . . .

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th January to 14th February 1991
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* First-winter, Echnaloch Bay, Burray Isle (Orkney), 9th February.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* Marton Mere, Blackpool (Lancashire), 2nd-13th February.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Hayle Estuary (Cornwall), 8th February; Tanner's Creek, Lymington (Hampshire), 12th February.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* Male, Hillsborough Lake (Co. Down), 27th January to 2nd February.

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* Immature or female, the Wick River, Wick (Highland), 7th-13th February.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* Male, Lower Largo Bay (Fife), 13th February.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Adult, Devils Point sewage outfall (Devon), 8th-10th February.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus* Adult, Wilstone Reservoir, Tring (Hertfordshire),

9th-10th February.

Thayer's Gull *Larus thayeri* First-winter, Galway City Rubbish-dump (Co. Galway), to at least 20th January (from 5th January); first-winter, Auld Bridge and Ayr Harbour (both Strathclyde), 7th-13th February.

Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* Single adults of North American race *kumlieni*, Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 26th January; Killybegs (Co. Donegal), 2nd February.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* Sule Skerry (Orkney), 25th January.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Cobh (Co. Cork), 23rd-24th January (fifth and first winter records for Ireland).

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Two, Farlington Marshes (Hampshire), 24th January to 12th February.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Male, Harwood Forest (Northumberland), 10th February.

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature

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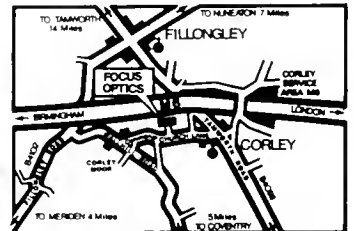
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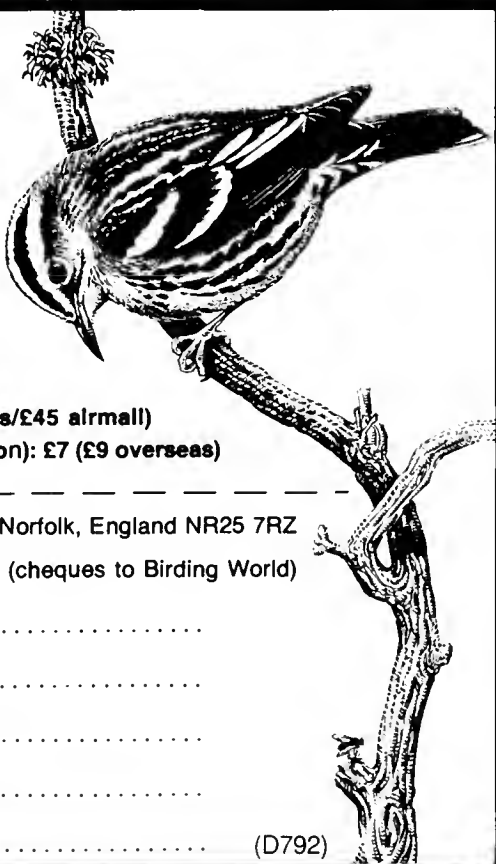
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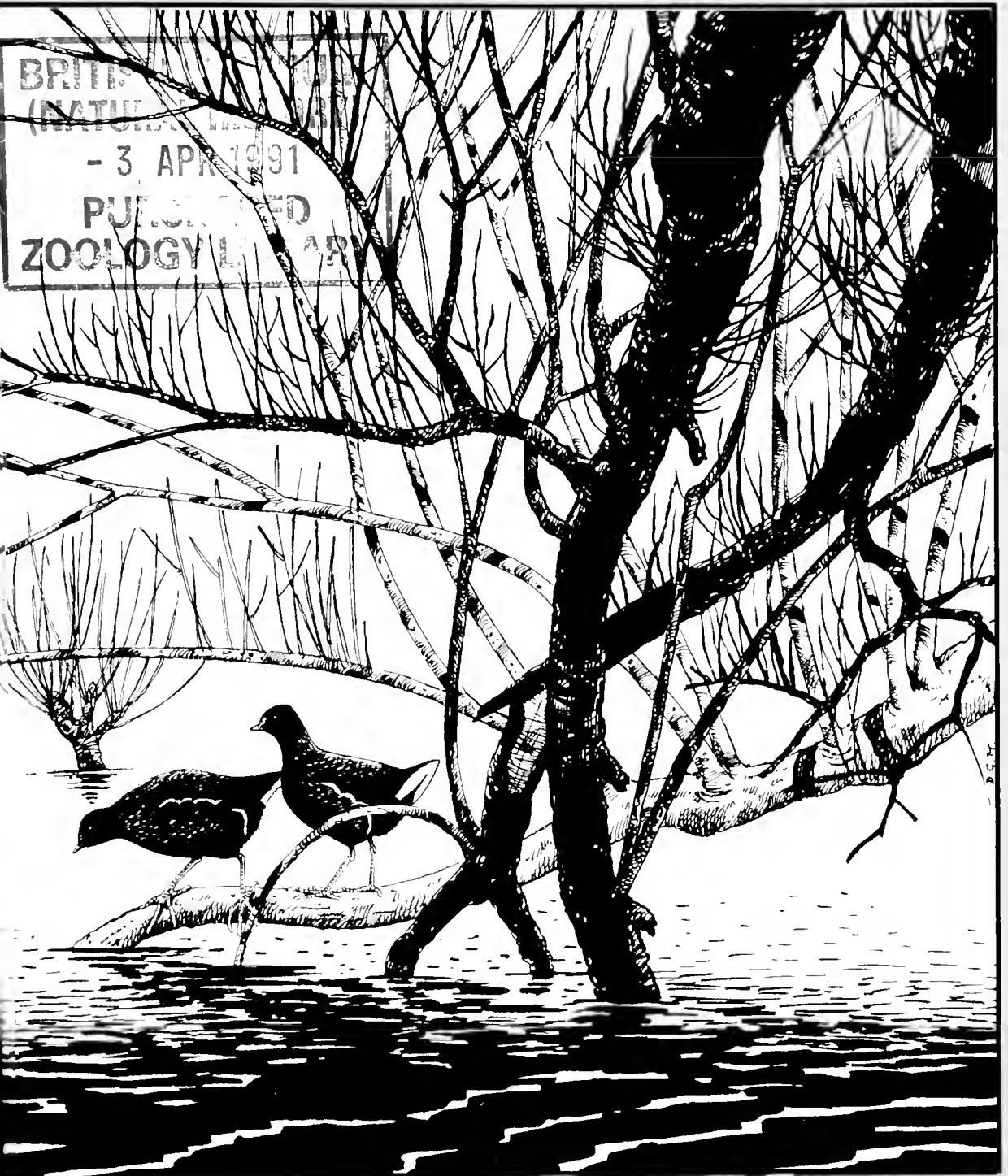
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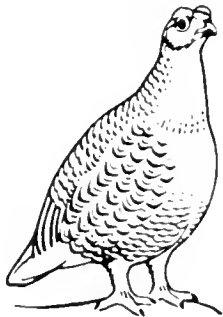
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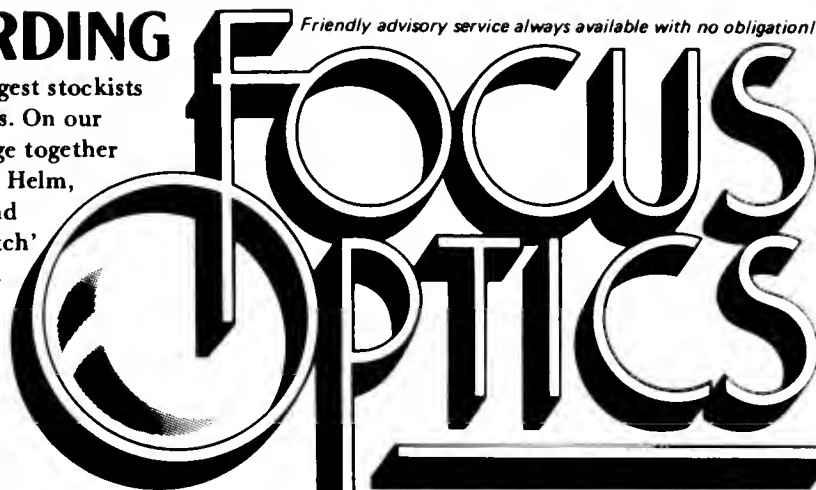
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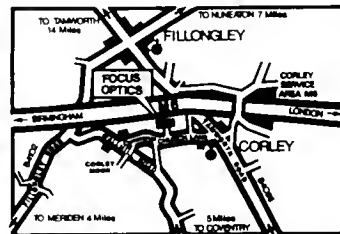
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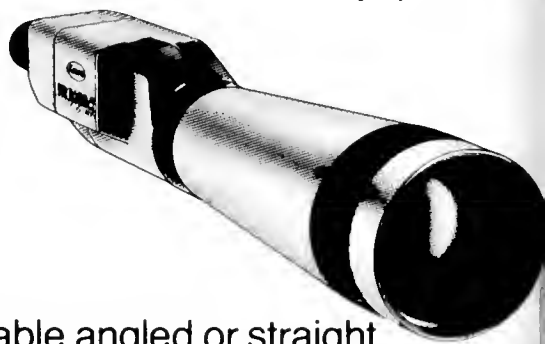


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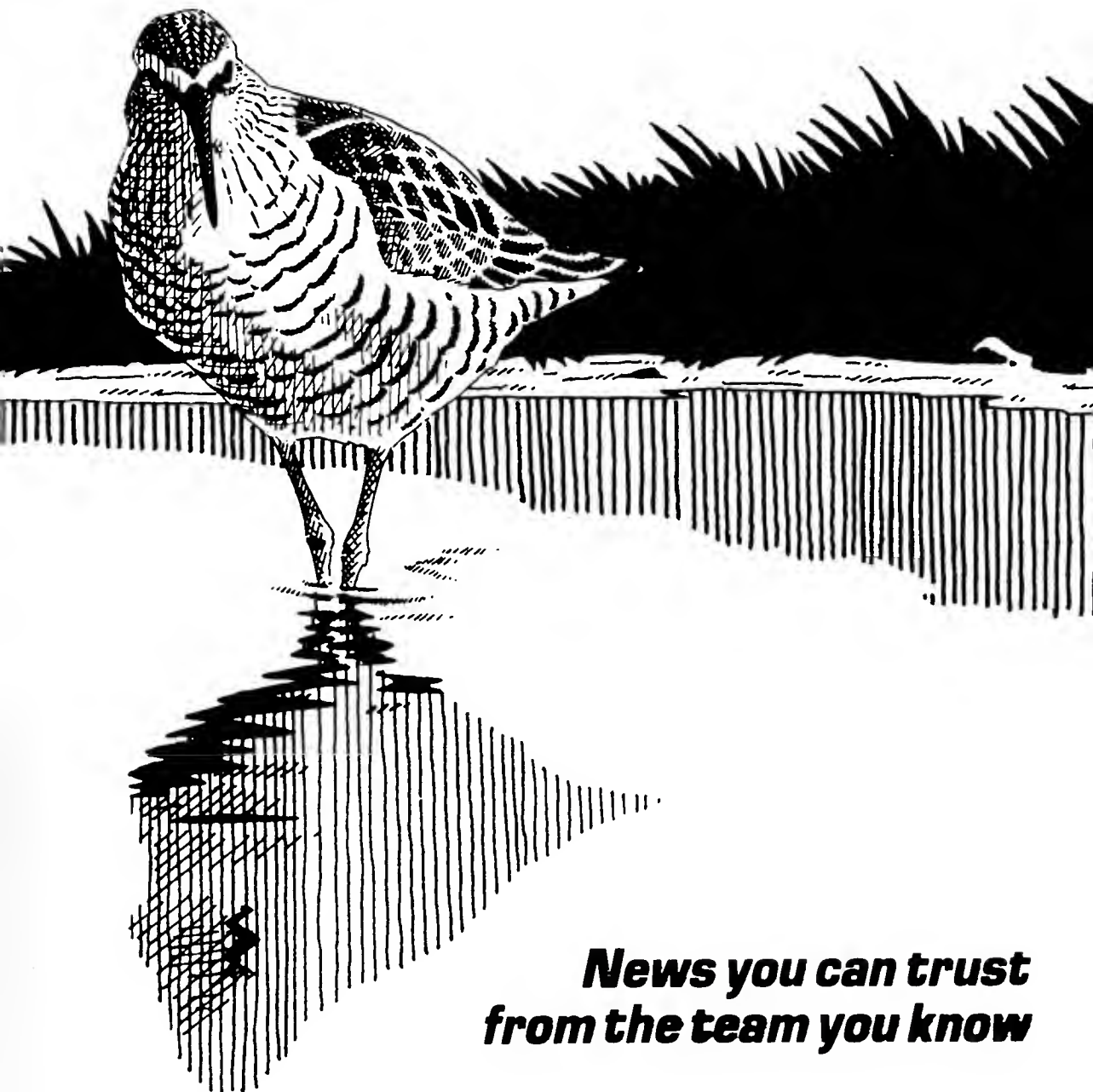
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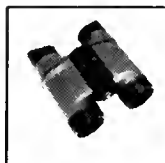
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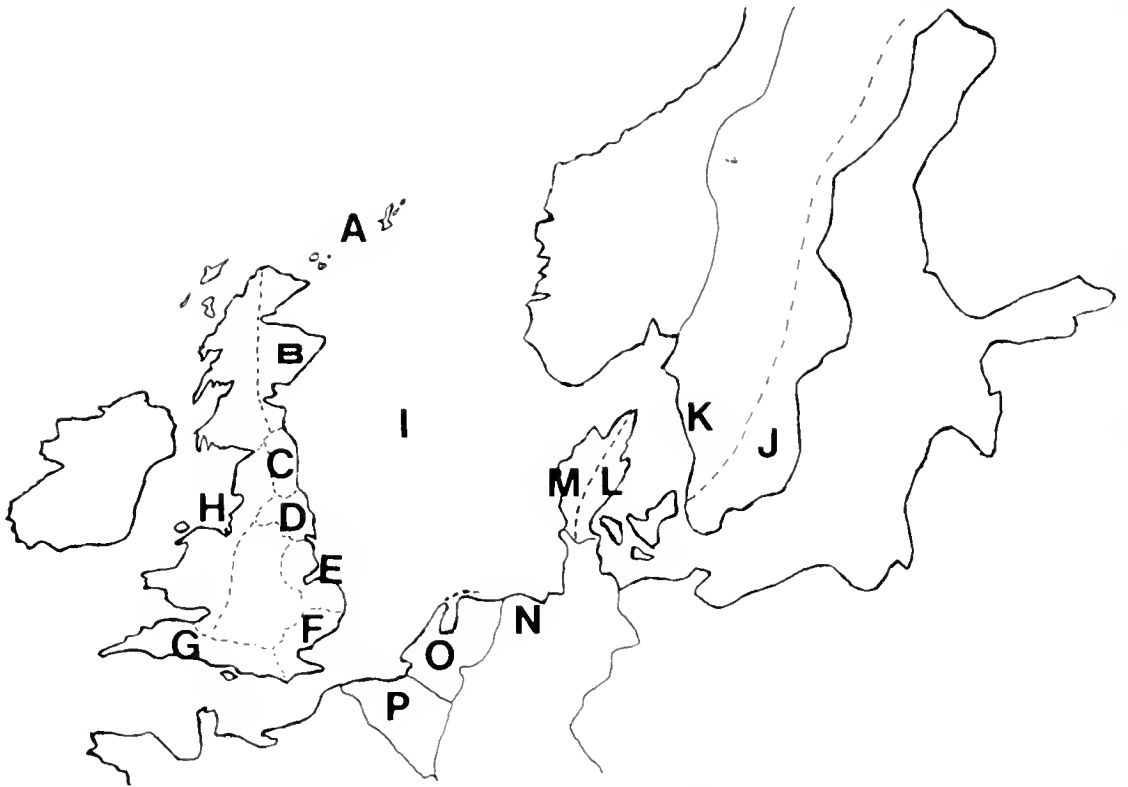
VOLUME 84 NUMBER 4 APRIL 1991

Long-tailed Skuas in Britain and Ireland in autumn 1988

Peter J. Dunn and Erik Hirschfeld



During the late summer and autumn of 1988, many British and European North Sea sites recorded larger-than-usual numbers of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*. The influx was first noted in the northern isles of Scotland and in Denmark, after which a gradual spread occurred into the North Sea. The major movement was between early September and mid October, with a total of at least 2,333 records for dates between 28th August and 2nd November 1988 (the earlier occurrences reflect normal passage and have not been included in the figures, although they are mentioned in the text). Within this total, 1,224 Long-tailed Skuas were seen in British waters, 1,042 around other European coasts, and 67 from offshore North Sea platforms and vessels (fig. 1 & table 1). Just why the influx occurred can only be speculation, as account has to be taken of a particularly complex theory as to why Long-tailed Skuas occur in the North Sea at all.



Code	Area	Total individuals	% adult	No. unaged
A	Shetland/Orkney	248	82%	36
B	Scotland: east coast	126	71%	4
C	Northumberland/Durham/Cleveland	167	86%	0
D	N Yorks/N Humberside	478	47%	29
E	S Humberside/Lincs/Norfolk	98	54%	1
F	Suffolk to Kent	20	15%	15
G	South coast & Cornwall	41	24%	25
H	West coast/Irish Sea	46	63%	7
I	Offshore North Sea	67	—	67
J	Sweden: Baltic coast	27	3%	2
K	Sweden: west coast	221	38%	7
L	Denmark: east coast	162	66%	0
M	Denmark: west coast	464	52%	63
N	West Germany	44	—	44
O	Netherlands	109	66%	3
P	Belgium	16	6%	4

Fig 1 & table 1. Records of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* from main coastal regions or countries, 28th August to 4th November 1988

Records were gleaned from reports and a request in *Birding World*, from material supplied by the 'Monthly reports' team of *British Birds*, and from individual approaches made to the relevant county and European recorders. Most records received were from well-known seawatch sites, although some may have been omitted. Many reports were separated into adults (including sub-adult and adult winter) and immatures.

Breeding, migration and food

The Long-tailed Skua breeds in the Arctic, at both mainland and island sites, mainly within the area bounded by 33°F and 55°F (0°C and 13°C)

July isotherms (fig. 2). The most westerly populations in the Old World are in Norway, where between 1,000 and 10,000 pairs breed, with one to 100 in Spitsbergen, 1,500 or fewer in Finland, tens of thousands in the USSR, and an estimated 10,000 pairs in Sweden; the fluctuations depend on the available food supply (Furness 1987; Cramp & Simmons 1983). Breeding also occurs in Greenland and arctic America, but these populations are not thought to reach European waters in any large numbers.

Breeding success is dependent on the abundance of rodents, with lemmings (*Cricetidae*) forming up to 99% of the diet in Europe, and the skuas may even abstain from breeding in years of low rodent numbers (Andersson 1971, 1976). Lemming numbers fluctuate on an approximate three-yearly cycle; after a peak in 1985 (Fox & Aspinall 1987), 1988 continued the cycle, being an exceptional year (Mills 1988). Long-tailed is the most highly oceanic of all the northern skuas, with a mass departure from the breeding grounds starting in late August, which is usually complete by early September, accounting for the large numbers seen in the North Atlantic from that time (Sharrock 1974). The northern European breeders are joined in the Atlantic by the Canadian and Greenland populations, to follow a common route southwards (Sharrock 1974).

The wintering areas are not fully known, but are thought to be in the Southern Hemisphere, probably with Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* in the southwest Atlantic and perhaps as far as South America, south of about

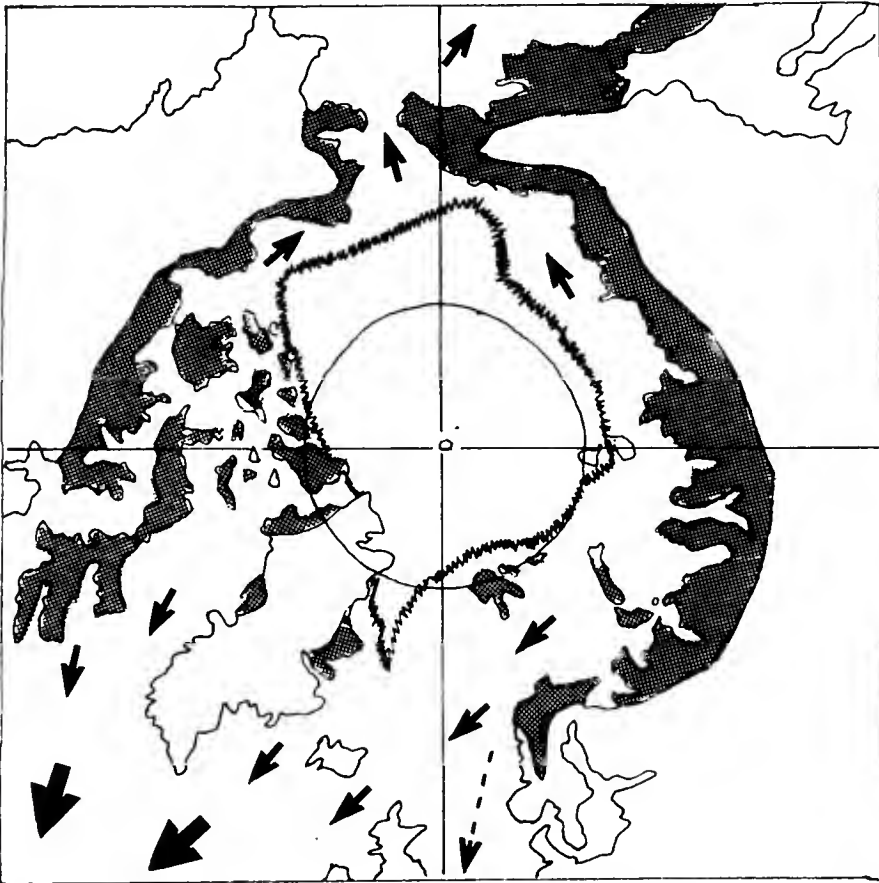


Fig. 2. Breeding range and possible migration routes of Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* (after Cramp & Simmons 1983)



87. Adult Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Merseyside, October 1988 (S. White)

35°S. Another important wintering area was discovered by Lambert (1980), who saw several hundred daily off the coast of Namibia, Southwest Africa.

Long-tailed Skuas are rarely observed feeding during migration, but this is the least piratical of the northern skuas and is thought to obtain its own food by hovering and taking items from the water. On the breeding grounds, its food consists chiefly of small rodents, other small mammals, birds, fish, insects and berries, but the data available suggest that the diet while on passage comprises insects, marine fish, offal and carrion (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Lambert (1980) noted that those wintering off Namibia pirated fish from Arctic *Sterna paradisaea* and Common Terns *S. hirundo* and from Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*.

Normal occurrence in British and Irish waters

Spring sightings of Long-tailed Skuas in Britain and Ireland are virtually confined to the northwest isles of Scotland and the west coast of Ireland, as would be expected (Davenport 1981, 1984, 1987; Hope Jones & Tasker 1982), and very few have been recorded from North Sea sites.

This species' autumn migration has been the subject of much speculation, but is probably best explained by Sharrock (1974). This last author suggested that most Long-tailed Skuas from the western European populations returned to the Atlantic over the north of Britain, but that some delayed their migration to feed in the rich waters of the North Sea; during this period they would venture farther south when rough weather disturbed their feeding grounds, so that those seen off the east coast of Britain may have been positively seeking calmer waters in which to feed, rather than having been windblown. After having fed in the North Sea, these birds would then move back north and enter the Atlantic over the north of Britain. This would explain the paucity of records in the English Channel bottleneck, between the coasts of southern England, Belgium and France, and in the Irish Sea.

On the British east coast, the largest numbers of Arctic, Pomarine *S. pomarinus* and Great Skuas *S. skua* usually occur during strong northeast to northwesterly winds. In contrast, Long-tailed Skuas may be seen along the East Coast in weather ranging from strong winds to (more often) calm conditions; their streamlined shearwater-like structure suggests that they are not windblown so much as their larger relatives.

The first documented 'wreck' of Long-tailed Skuas in British waters occurred off the Yorkshire coast between 7th and 19th October 1879, but only 30 individuals were reported, compared with 5,000-6,000 Pomarine Skuas during the same period, and these were probably weakened birds which had been deprived of food during the stormy conditions (Sharrock 1974).

Autumn 1988 records

The observations received have been divided into those from coastal regions of Britain (fig. 3) and those from neighbouring European coastal countries (fig. 4). The histograms used to illustrate each regional pattern are based on the data available for the period from 28th August to 4th November inclusive, as July and early-August records are not unusual.

It is thought that the main change in physical appearance of September and October Long-tailed Skuas occurs after the October of the second calendar-year (Cramp & Simmons 1983). For the purpose of this paper, therefore, 'adults' include those said to be sub-adult (i.e. 2nd-summer, 3rd-summer and adult), while those termed 'immature' include juveniles and first-summer. These terms are often misused, and it is possible that some immatures were overlooked owing to the difficulty of identifying them in flight, although many were seen with adults.

Britain and Ireland

SHETLAND AND ORKNEY (fig. 3a)

The first autumn records were of single adults off Fetlar, Shetland, and off Stronsay, Orkney, on 16th September. From that date, Long-tailed Skuas were seen regularly around Shetland, numbers varying between one and five per day, with a significant increase of passage on 20th, when approximately 20, mostly adults, were seen off Melly on the west coast of Mainland, with ten off Sumburgh Head the next day. Very few immatures were recorded during the period. Numbers gradually dwindled to ones and twos in late September to early October.

Although no specific figures were received from Fair Isle, 19 bird-days were recorded between 18th and 30th September. None was aged, and the maximum was seven on 24th.

It was Orkney, however, that had the bulk of the early records. On 18th September, approximately 63 individuals were seen throughout the archipelago, including 39 off North Ronaldsay and 20 flying west in two hours at Brough of Birsay, Mainland. This passage continued the next day, with a further 43 off North Ronaldsay and 24 at Brough of Birsay. All but six of the total were aged as adults. By 20th September, the majority had moved on, the last being seven on 27th.

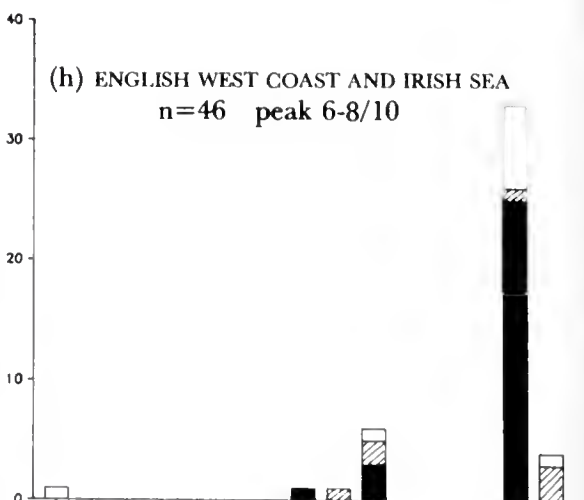
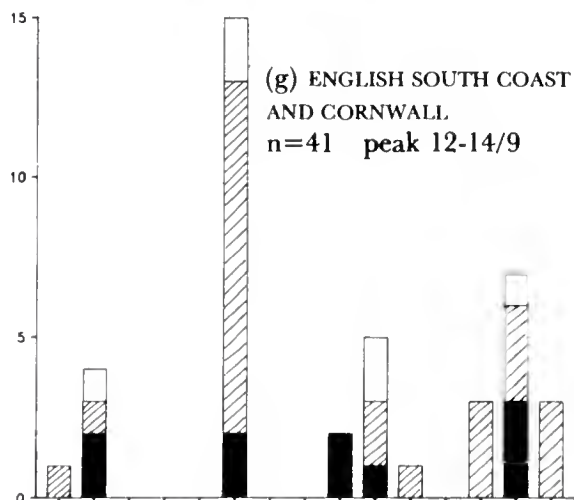
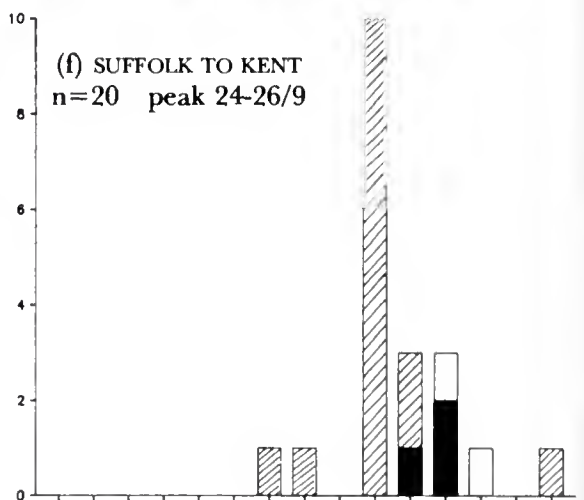
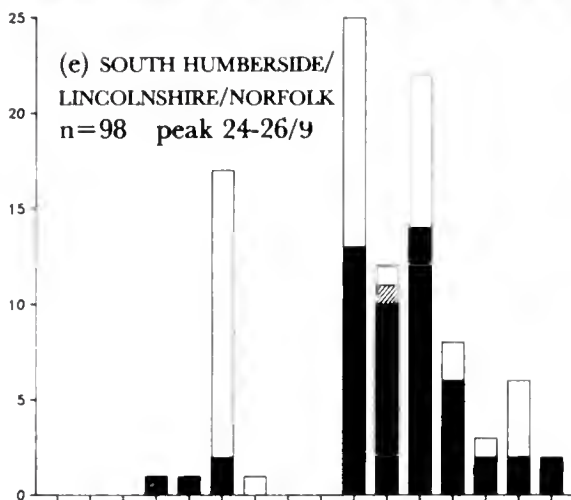
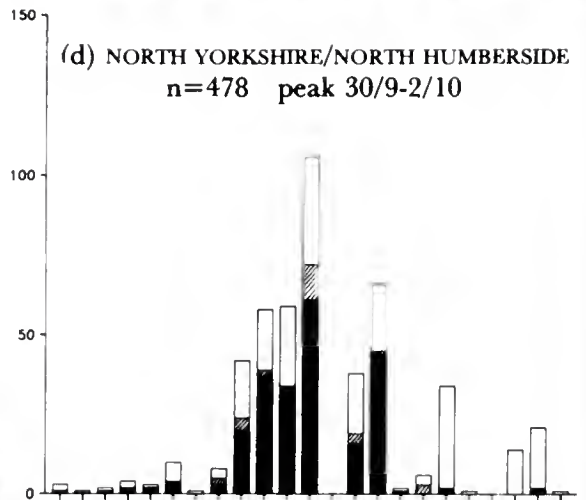
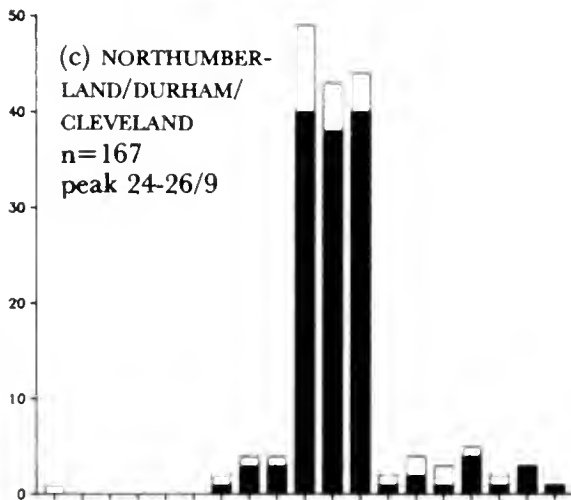
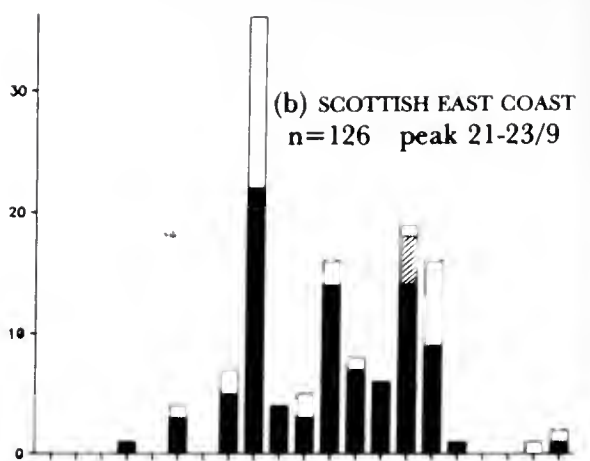
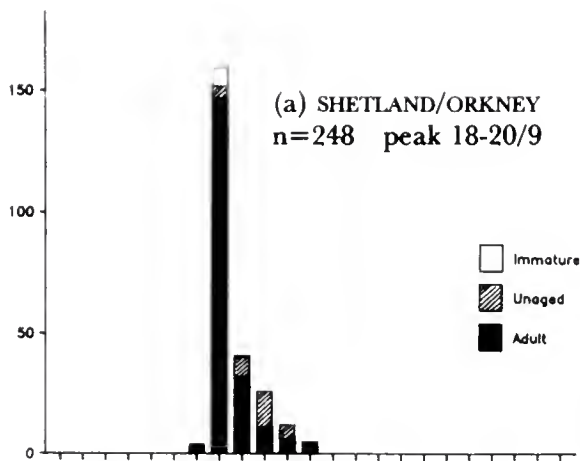
Between 18th September and 2nd October, some 248 Long-tailed Skuas were recorded in the whole region, at least 203 (82%) of which were adults.

SCOTTISH MAINLAND: EAST COAST (fig. 3b)

There were a few early records from the eastern Scottish coast, which came on typical dates: one at Girdle Ness, Grampian, on 7th September and three at Hound Point, Lothian, on 14th. The period from 20th September to early October, however, brought larger numbers than normal.

There were no days with large numbers in Grampian, but there was a scattering of records which were above the annual average. Most came from the seawatch site at Girdle Ness; two adults flying north on 1st October and another three moving north the following day were the highest counts. A team of Dutch scientists, however, came across a remarkable flock of 32 Long-tailed Skuas some 20 miles (32 km) off Aberdeen on 21st September: the flock consisted of 18 adults and 14 immatures, in company with 20 Pomarine, 15 Arctic and 24 Great Skuas (Camphuysen & den Ouden 1988).

Farther south, in Lothian, numbers of Long-tailed Skuas gradually increased from 20th



September, with highest daily counts being seven at Hound Point on 30th September and 12th October and seven at South Queensferry also on 12th. Again, the majority were adults: of approximately 70 recorded in Lothian, only 14 were specifically aged as immatures. The last were two flying past Hound Point on 28th October.

Adults were again predominant in this whole region, comprising 71% of the total of 126 individuals reported. By the middle of October, however, the proportion of adults had declined to 56%.

NORTHUMBERLAND (INCLUDING TYNE & WEAR), DURHAM AND CLEVELAND (fig. 3c)

The first Northumberland record for 1988 was of an adult and an immature some six miles (10 km) off Tynemouth on 17th September. From 23rd September, seawatchers at Seaton Sluice recorded Long-tailed Skuas on most days until the end of the month, with a maximum of five on 24th, 25th and 30th. October records were more scarce, with individuals recorded on 1st, 2nd, 4th, 9th, 16th and finally on 19th, the maximum daily count being three at Seaton Sluice on 2nd. Of the 45 individuals recorded in Northumberland, 34 (75%) were aged as adults.

Two distinct periods of movement were recorded in Durham. At Whitburn, 17 Long-tailed Skuas were seen on 29th and 30th September and four the next day. This was followed by 12 on 11th October. A total of 57 individuals was recorded in the county, of which 44 (77%) were adults.

A Long-tailed Skua appeared in Cleveland on 20th August, when an adult fed in the Tees estuary. The main movement, however, started later, on 24th September at Hartlepool, when 19 adults flew north, followed by singles seen each day until 28th. Another surge, comprising 13-17 probable adults, passed Hartlepool on 29th September. October records consisted of single individuals on nine days and a maximum of three off Hartlepool on 8th, the last being seen on 23rd. A total of 67 was recorded in the county, of which 63 (94%) were said to be adults.

In the region as a whole, most of the total of 169 Long-tailed Skuas recorded were seen between 24th September and 2nd October, with adults accounting for 86% of reports.

NORTH YORKSHIRE AND NORTH HUMBERSIDE (fig. 3d)

Most records came from the seawatch sites of Filey (20), Hornsea (94) and Flamborough Head (367), with other records from Spurn Point (17), Kettleness (eight) and Staithes (two). Most of the Flamborough records were in late September and early October, with the majority between 21st September and 2nd October.

As usual, there were August and early-September records at most sites, with 26 individuals at Flamborough, 17 at Hornsea and three at Filey during that period. The main movement, however, began on 23rd September, when 41 Long-tailed Skuas were seen at Flamborough, followed by 32 on 24th, 12 on 25th and two on 26th. A further 43 were seen on 29th and 31 on 30th September. In October, there were 33 individuals on 1st and 15 on 2nd, but numbers gradually decreased over the next few days until 8th October, when 25 passed the Head, with 15 on 9th. Later peaks comprised 16 on 11th, 22 on 18th, 13 on 29th and 16 on 30th. The last was a late single on 2nd November. Up to 29th September, most were passing south, while those later mostly moved north.

Because of the distance it protrudes into the North Sea, Flamborough Head has a great effect on local seawatching (fig. 5). Not only are larger numbers of seabirds seen from the headland, but its position influences observations at sites both to the north and to the south (Dunn & Lassey 1985). Hornsea is situated south of the headland on the sheltered curving coastline of Bridlington Bay, so southerly movement past Flamborough Head is often deflected out of view from the sea-level watchers at Hornsea. Bridlington Bay itself is a good feeding ground for many seabirds, especially gulls, terns and skuas, and this probably accounts for the 35 Long-tailed Skuas seen at Hornsea between 23rd September and 2nd October, corresponding with the first peaks of birds flying south at Flamborough. Between



88. Adult Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Merseyside, October 1988 (Steve Young)

6th and 31st October, Hornsea recorded a further 45 Long-tailed Skuas, this movement being noted also at Flamborough. Many of the Hornsea skuas, however, were still moving south, unlike those at Flamborough, and may have involved individuals deflected by the headland back into Bridlington Bay to feed.

Numbers of Long-tailed Skuas at Filey were much smaller than at Flamborough Head and Hornsea, but the year 1988 was nevertheless a record one for the site. The passage pattern there is significant, however, because Filey is situated north of Flamborough Head. The peak at Filey came between 23rd September and 2nd October, in accordance with large movements at sites to the north and at Flamborough, but only one individual (an adult lost in fog) was recorded after 2nd October, even though Filey was well watched. This may indicate that the second wave of birds, which were heading north, was deflected out of range of Filey by Flamborough Head.

Singles were seen at Spurn Point on nine days during the period August to October, four of these on normal August dates. The highest daily counts were of two on 26th August and six on 2nd October.

During the period 21st September to 2nd October, approximately 265 Long-tailed Skuas were noted in the region, of which 57% were adults, with similar proportions between 6th and 11th October. In contrast, between 15th October and 1st November, 92% were immatures, mostly seen from Flamborough and moving north. (P. A. Lassey *in litt.*)

SOUTH HUMBERSIDE, LINCOLNSHIRE AND NORFOLK (fig. 3e)

South Humberside and Lincolnshire had a good number of records totalling 67 individuals, compared with previous annual maxima of 13 in 1975, ten in 1979 and 12 in 1985. Again, the first records for the year were not unusual: two on 20th August, followed by singles at three sites on 13th and 14th September. The first large movement was noted at Huttoft on 24th September, when 17 Long-tailed Skuas passed, with a further nine on 29th and five on 1st October. During the first five days of October, 26 were noted along this whole coastline, with a maximum of nine at Mablethorpe on 2nd. The last were six on 11th and two on 12th October at Huttoft. Of the total of 67 individuals recorded, 43 (64%) were adults.

By the time the skuas had reached the north Norfolk coast they seemed to have dispersed into the North Sea, as numbers had dramatically decreased, although still making a record year for Norfolk. There were the usual records of singles from Titchwell, Blakeney and Cley in August and also singles in September, apart from six at the River Ouse mouth on 12th (which flew up the river) and another six at Cley on 16th. October sightings were scarce, with singles at Gorleston on 4th, Cley on 7th and 8th, and three at Blakeney on the last date. A total of 36 Long-tailed Skuas was recorded in Norfolk, of which 22 (61%) were thought to be adults.

The main passage in the region as a whole came between 24th September and 2nd October, 84% of individuals being adults. There was an isolated peak during 12th-14th September which involved a large number of immatures (88%); this corresponded with a similar peak in Cornwall, but did not fit any pattern elsewhere on the East Coast.

SUFFOLK TO KENT (fig. 3f)

Few large numbers were recorded on the southeast coast of England. There was only one report received from Suffolk, a single off Southwold on 25th September.

A number of Long-tailed Skuas were seen flying west up the River Thames, with a maximum of seven at Tilbury, Essex, on 25th September, and singles were recorded at Southend Pier and Canvey Island, also Essex. Kent probably had up to 25 in total, which was estimated to be at least ten times the annual average (D. L. Davenport *in litt.*).

Most records received were of unaged individuals (70%); of those aged, 50% were adults. The peak was between 24th and 26th October.

SOUTH COAST AND CORNWALL (fig. 3g)

Very few Long-tailed Skuas were reported from the English south coast west of Kent: singles at Hope Nose Point, Devon, on 19th and 30th August, another at Durlston Head, Dorset, on 25th September, and three more at Hope Nose Point on 11th October.

The seawatch sites in Cornwall, however, had a record year for this species, with a total of 36 individuals from four sites between 2nd September and 7th October, although some duplication is likely. The largest number were off Pendeen on 13th September, when 11 flew west, but these do not fit in with the pattern on the east coast of Britain. Only those recorded from St Ives were aged: eight (57%) of the total of 14 were adults.

WEST COAST AND IRISH SEA (fig. 3h)

There were scattered records on the west coast of England in late September: singles at Hilbre and Seaforth, both in Merseyside, and at Workington, Cumbria, with two at Fleetwood, Lancashire, on 24th and at Hilbre on 26th.

Largest numbers were in early October, with up to 17 recorded on 7th in the Mersey estuary, seen from New Brighton, Merseyside, and Seaforth; these sites are on opposite banks and some duplication was probable, but the observers were careful to age most birds and this, along with times, separated the records. A single was seen at the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 6th, and two were at South Walney, Cumbria, on 8th October. At New Brighton, three immatures were noted out of a total of 12 individuals, whereas the proportion at Seaforth was four out of 17.

The peak for the region was between 6th and 8th October and involved 33 individuals, 75% being adults.

IRELAND

Exceptional numbers were reported from Ireland during the autumn. Sites such as Bridges of Ross, Co. Clare, had four on 2nd September and seven on 28th, with a further seven on 7th October. Two were seen at Ramore Head, Antrim, on both 12th and 28th September.

INLAND BRITAIN

The earliest inland record was of an individual at Upton Warren, West Midlands, on 13th August. A number of sightings followed during September, probably of birds crossing from the East Coast to the West (thus accounting for the West Coast numbers). Singles were first recorded at two London reservoirs on 15th and 16th September, followed by Northumberland's first-ever inland record of Long-tailed Skuas, two adults and an immature flying west over Kielder Forest on 18th. The largest number seen together was nine, consisting of eight adults and an immature which briefly visited Blackmoorfoot Reservoir, West Yorkshire, on 23rd September.

There were three singles in October: at Drakelow Wildfowl Reserve, Derbyshire, on 9th; one which died at Tring, Hertfordshire, on 15th; and another at Belvide Reservoir, Staffordshire, on 24th.

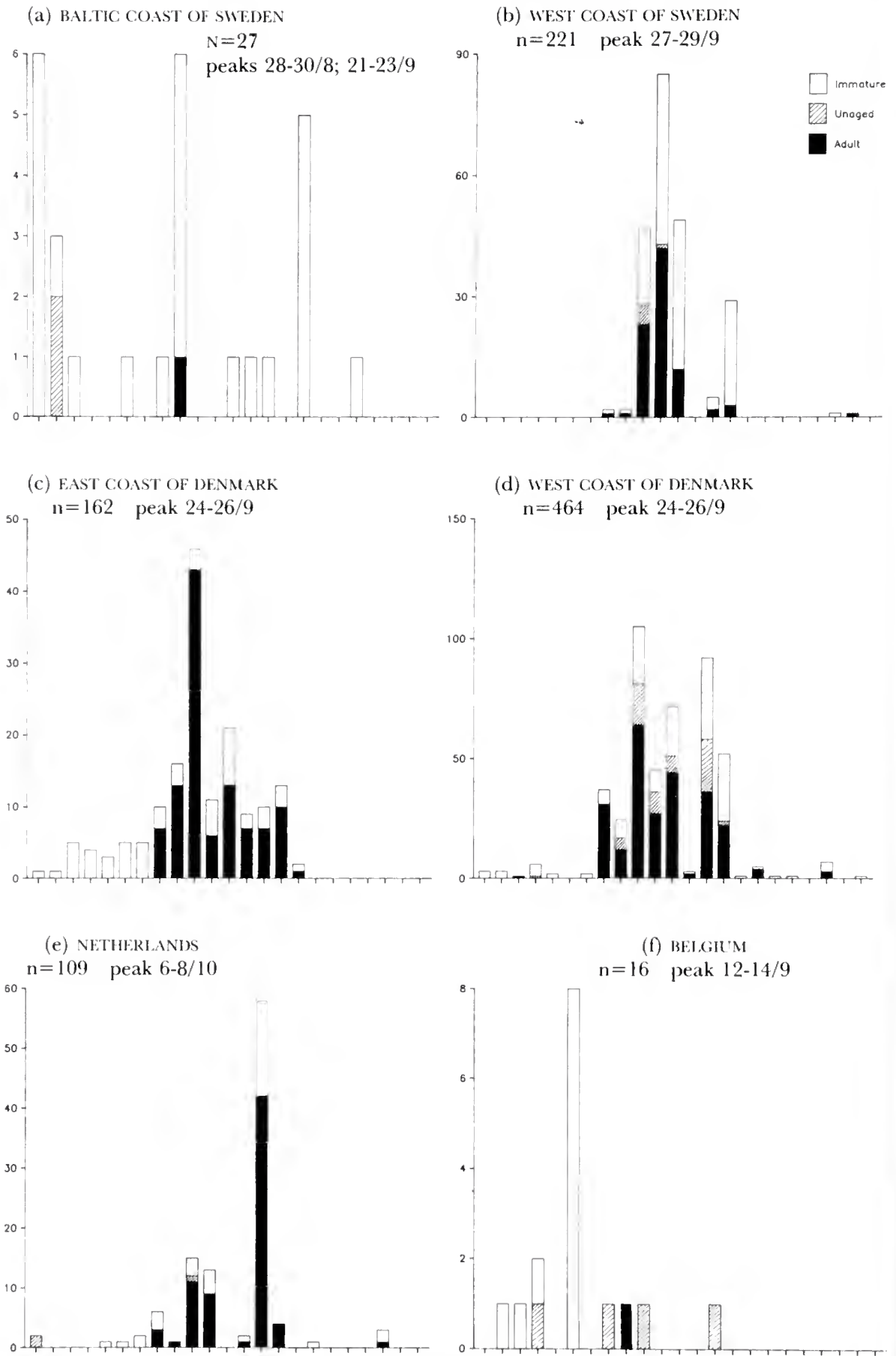


Fig. 4. Numbers of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* in six areas of northwest Europe during 28th August to 4th November 1988, displayed within three-day periods (28th-30th August at left)

Other countries

FINLAND

No exceptional numbers were reported, with only 20 noted in the south (van der Ham 1989).

NORWAY

Although no specific records were obtained, a total of approximately 150 Long-tailed Skuas was noted off southern Norway during the autumn of 1988 (van der Ham 1989).

SWEDEN (figs. 4a & 4b)

Sweden has two distinct coastlines, the Baltic coast and the west coast at the Kattegat; there was a significant difference between the records from these two areas. The Baltic coast (fig. 4a) produced 27 individuals (only one adult) between 30th August and 21st October, far more than in normal years. There were two peaks: 21st-23rd September and 12th-13th October.

The west coast, from the Norwegian border to and including the Kullen peninsula (fig. 4b), recorded 221 individuals between 14th August and 30th October. These numbers built up in four peaks: 24th-26th and 27th-29th September, and 30th September to 2nd October and 7th-11th October. The percentages of adults for each of these peaks were, respectively, 49% and 49% and then decreasing to 23% and 10%.

Most of the skuas were seen from seawatch sites during strong westerly winds, migrating south along the west coast to Kullen, where they headed west to avoid the Öresund, the narrow strait joining the Baltic with the Kattegat. Resting individuals were recorded at several places, but especially in Laholmsbukten, where flocks of up to 36 were seen during late September and early October. Many of the resting skuas were not shy, and in at least two cases they could be hand-fed.

DENMARK (figs. 4c & 4d)

Denmark is best treated as two separate coastlines: the east coast from Skagen to the Baltic, and the west coast bordering the North Sea.

On the east coast, 165 Long-tailed Skuas were recorded between 18th August and 14th October (fig. 4c). Many of the birds seen from the Swedish west coast, however, probably pass Skagen on their way into and out from the Kattegat, and some duplication may occur. Numbers built up during four periods: 21st-23rd and 24th-26th September, and 30th September to 2nd October and 9th-11th October. The proportion of adults were, respectively, 81%, 93%, 61% and 77%.

The west coast had larger numbers, totalling 478 between 17th August and 2nd November (fig. 4d). The first large counts were on dates similar to those in Orkney, with 37 during 18th-20th September, of which 84% were adults. The largest numbers were during 24th-29th September, with 177 individuals seen, of which 60% were adults. The next large movement occurred during 6th-8th October, when 92 were seen, but the percentage of adults had dropped to 39%. The final peak was during 9th-11th October, when 42% of the 52 individuals recorded were adults.

WEST GERMANY

Unfortunately, no detailed records were received, but the influx was recorded along the North Sea coast, with a total of 44 Long-tailed Skuas noted (*Limicola* 2: 239-240).

THE NETHERLANDS (fig. 4e)

A total of 113 Long-tailed Skuas was recorded between 16th August and 15th November. The last record was of a dead bird, the latest live individual being seen on 29th October. Small numbers were present during 15th-21st September; there were then two peaks, during 24th-26th and 27th-29th September, totalling 15 and 13, respectively, of which 73% and 69% were adults. Most of the Dutch records, however, were during the period 6th-8th October and involved 58 individuals, 72% being adults. This latter proportion of adults seems higher than for the same period in Britain and Scandinavia, and may have involved some of the skuas that had originally passed south in the North Sea in late September and were now making their way back north. (van der Ham 1989)

BELGIUM (fig. 4f)

Very few Long-tailed Skuas were recorded from Belgium, probably indicating that they did not pass through the English Channel. There were 17 between 17th August and 8th October, with the largest count of eight, all immatures, during 12th-14th September. The only adult seen was on 22nd August, a normal date.

NORTH SEA, OFFSHORE

During autumn 1988, at least 67 Long-tailed Skuas were recorded in ship-based and platform-based observations, including those seen off Aberdeen, Grampian, which greatly exceeded normal numbers (Blake *et al.* 1984; Tasker *et al.* 1987). Most were in September, with maxima of five at 'Forties D' and at 'Iolair' on 19th (the same individuals?) and five near 'Thistle' on 24th.

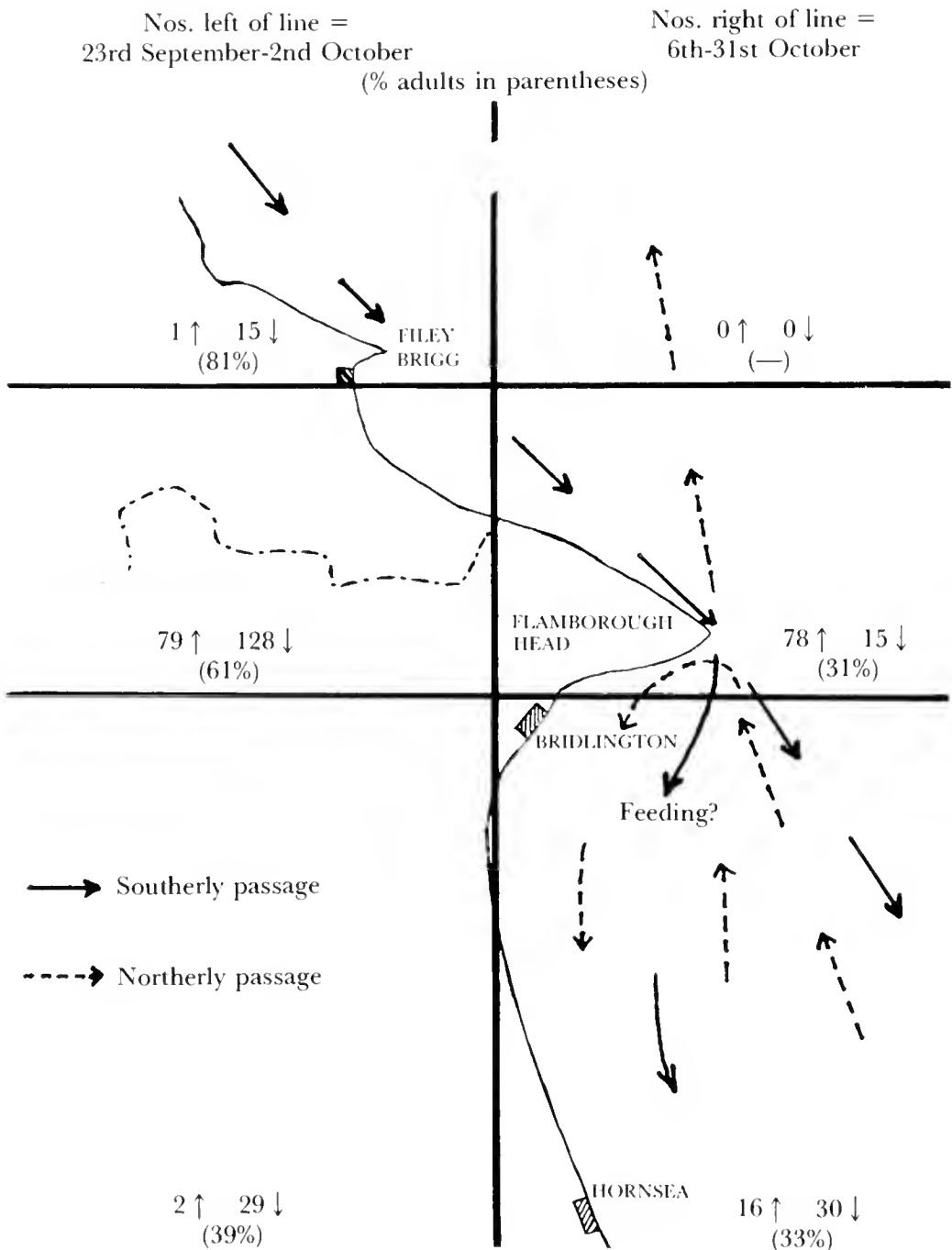


Fig. 5. Suggested pattern of movement of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* past Flamborough Head, North Humberside, during autumn 1988

Weather

As mentioned earlier, the Long-tailed Skua, because of its streamlined shearwater-like structure, is the least affected of the northern skuas by adverse weather conditions, although a period of rough seas which disturb the feeding areas would make it move to calmer waters. The species is recorded at English east-coast sites in any weather conditions, as shown by the following data on wind directions at Flamborough in 1988 on days when large counts were made there:

23 Sep	24 Sep	29 Sep	30 Sep	1 Oct	2 Oct	8 Oct	9 Oct	18 Oct
WSW		NW		NW-S		WSW		SE

Just before the first large numbers reached Orkney (18th September), high pressure was present to the west of Britain and a low lay north of Iceland (fig. 6). Between these two systems, there was a cold front to the north of an occluded front. These fronts began to converge over the northern Scottish isles, bringing rain and 20-mph (32-kph) northwest winds to that area. This would probably help to direct the Long-tailed Skuas, seeking food, down towards the North Sea and away from the wind and rain coming in from the Atlantic. With the fronts passing by 20th September, and the wind dropping to a moderate southwesterly, the skuas in the northern parts of the North Sea would probably have started seeking calmer waters in which to feed, at which time they were seen from the North Sea coastal sites.

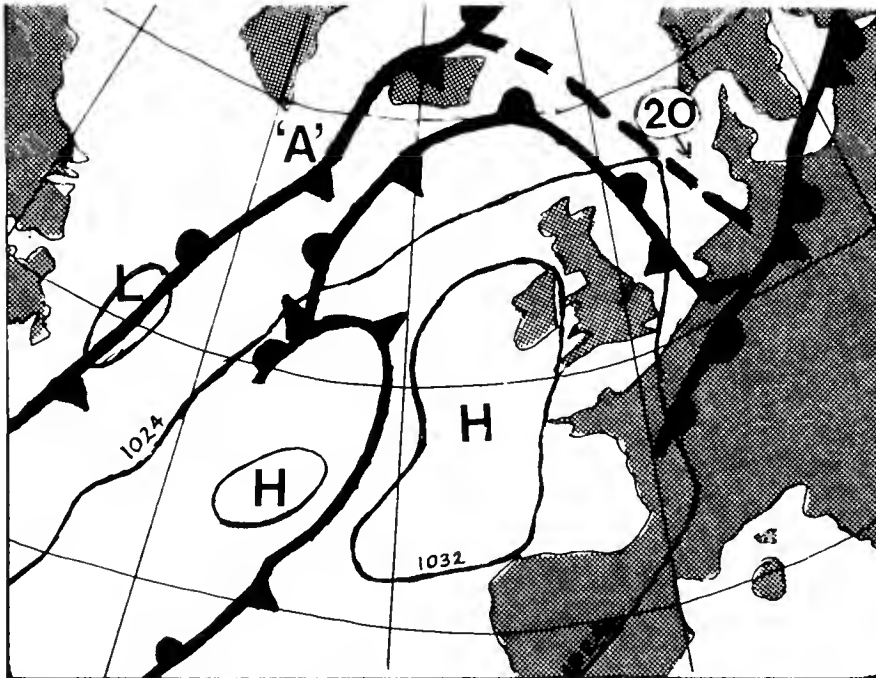


Fig. 6. Weather situation in North Atlantic at midday (12.00 GMT) on 16th September 1988 (from *Yorkshire Post*, 17th September 1988). Broken line indicates position of front 'A' on 17th September

Sandeel situation

Since 1983, there has been a rapid decline in the recruitment rates of sandeels *Ammodytes* around Shetland, and juvenile fish were exceptionally rare in 1988. There has been a reduction in the spawning stock in recent years, but data from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland (DAFS) suggested that stocks in 1988 were similar to those of the



89. Adult Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Merseyside, October 1988 (S. White)

mid 1970s and it was the opinion of the DAFS that overfishing of sandeels had not caused the poor recruitment or the recent reduction in spawning stock. Other suggestions were that the sandeels had changed the times of their breeding season or were not now surfacing in Shetland waters (Allsopp & Dawson 1988; Tasker 1988).

Young sandeels form a large proportion of the diet of Shetland's seabirds when feeding their young. In 1988, the Arctic Tern population in Shetland had failed to breed owing to lack of suitably sized fish. Other species which feed on sandeels were similarly affected, and numbers of young produced by Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Puffins *Fratercula arctica* and Arctic Skuas were also low. By contrast, species with more catholic tastes, such as Gannet *Sula bassana*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Shag *P. aristotelis*, all had normal breeding success in Shetland in 1988 (Allsopp & Dawson 1988).

The low availability of sandeels could have been one of the factors influencing the migration of Long-tailed Skuas as they left their breeding grounds. With a mass departure into the North Atlantic, they would obviously feed at sea, either on sandeels or by parasitising the young Arctic Terns or Kittiwakes. With these being absent or present only in small numbers around Shetland, the skuas may have moved farther south than normal, into Orkney, in search of food; and, after a brief period of three days or so and with the prevailing weather conditions, they then moved into the North Sea.

Discussion

As 1988 was a 'lemming year', the breeding success of most tundra-nesting birds, including Long-tailed Skuas, should have been good. This would have resulted in large numbers of juveniles, and possibly a delay in the departure from the nesting sites because of the abundance of food. In Scandinavia, however, the breeding success of Long-tailed Skuas in summer 1988 apparently was poor (N. Å. Andersson and S. Svensson *in litt.*). Nevertheless, the high proportion of immatures recorded in the Baltic suggests that breeding success must have been good somewhere. Scandinavian Long-tailed Skuas do not migrate through the Baltic to any great extent; rather, they are thought to pass over the fjells direct into the Atlantic (Cramp & Simmons 1983). The Baltic is used as a major flyway for many Siberian tundra species on their way to and from breeding

grounds, and the unusually large number of Long-tailed Skuas in the Baltic parts of Sweden and Denmark during autumn 1988 suggests that eastern populations of the species were involved, although most would probably have left the nesting grounds for the Atlantic via the Barents Sea.

The presence of these eastern breeders in the seas between Iceland and Scandinavia apparently coincided with bad weather, which, together with a lack of food, brought them off course. They poured into the North Sea and the Skagerrak/Kattegat until they were able to leave the area in calmer weather around mid October. The many observations of tired, resting birds in Sweden, despite the weather not being unusually hard, indicate that many of the Long-tailed Skuas experienced a lack of food, possibly a result of the sandeel shortage.

As records from the well-watched areas of the English Channel, the Netherlands and Belgium were comparatively few, it is possible that the majority of the skuas chose to leave the North Sea north of Shetland to disperse normally into the Atlantic. This would account for the late peaks in Denmark and the Netherlands and the subsequent northerly passage at Flamborough Head. Both in Denmark and at Flamborough, these influxes showed a higher proportion of immatures, indicating that young left the breeding grounds later. The high proportion of adults in October in the Netherlands may have involved some of those from the September peaks moving back north away from the Channel.

Some of the late-September skuas were also seen to fly inland, following rivers, and appeared on inland waters in Britain. This indicates that Long-tailed Skuas crossed Britain into the Irish Sea, thus accounting for the record numbers and high proportion of adults on the English west coast in early October. These individuals were probably heading back north past Ireland and back into the Atlantic.

Acknowledgments

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Summary

In late summer-autumn 1988, unusually high numbers of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* were recorded in the North Sea area and to a lesser extent on other British coasts. First indications of an influx were noted in Shetland and Orkney in the third week of September, with numbers building simultaneously on the west coast of Denmark. A few days later, they were also noted on the Scottish and English east coasts and the Swedish west coast as the skuas appeared to move south and east in search of shelter/food. Thereafter, numbers in Shetland and Orkney declined, while several sites in the North Sea and the

Skagerrak/Kattegat experienced new peaks. In most areas, the main peaks occurred during the period 24th September to 2nd October, when adults accounted for at least 80% of records. Numbers then began to decline until 6th October, when some sites recorded a second wave of Long-tailed Skuas as inexperienced immatures appeared in the North Sea. This second wave was noted mainly on the west coast of Denmark and at Flamborough Head, North Humberside, with smaller numbers in Sweden and the Netherlands; apart from in the Netherlands, immatures featured greatly in this latter movement, accounting for 58% of the individuals involved.

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Seventy-five years ago...

'BREEDING-HABITS OF THE WRYNECK. THE following notes of observations made by me on some Wrynecks (*Jynx t. torquilla*) in a garden at Orpington, Kent, may be of interest. In 1913 the Wrynecks arrived on April 15th, as the year before, and almost immediately started to look at a nest-box eight foot up in a birch tree. They laid seven eggs between the 1st and 10th of June, four of which hatched between the 18th and 22nd, and the young flew on July 12th. In 1914 the Wrynecks were first seen on April 13th, and nested in the same box as the year before. Eight eggs were laid about the beginning of June and hatched on the 20th, while the young flew on July 10th.' (*Brit. Birds* 9: 299-300, April 1916)

Seasonal reports

Autumn 1990

Part 2: passerines



Keith Allsopp and Barry Nightingale

This summary includes some unchecked reports, as well as authenticated records

Transatlantic vagrants

July began with unsettled westerly weather until 9th; a change to very warm anticyclonic conditions then occurred, which persisted until 26th, when once more an Atlantic cyclone brought a brief rainy period. The high pressure to the south reasserted its influence by 31st, keeping the south of England anticyclonic throughout August and into September, except for 15th and 19th, when cyclonic weather (which had been regular in Scotland over the same period) intruded from the north. More unsettled westerlies arrived on 5th September, being replaced on 7th by an anticyclone whose centre drifted eastwards from the Atlantic across Scotland, bringing in some warm Continental air on its southern flank. On 18th, a very vigorous depression developed, bringing gales and a blast of cold northerly air. On an associated front trailing back across the Atlantic to North America, wave depressions travelled rapidly across the Atlantic, arriving in the Western Approaches on 20th, 21st and 25th. The discovery of a **Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons* in Kenidjack Valley, St Just (Cornwall), on 20th heralded arrivals of **Red-eyed**

Vireos *V. olivaceus* in Cot Valley (Cornwall) on 21st, Dursey Island (Co. Cork) on 23rd and in the Isles of Scilly on 25th, and an **Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapillus* on Dursey Island on 24th (plates 95 & 96). High pressure cut the front in mid Atlantic on 25th and this anticyclone drifted southeastwards from the northwest into the Continent by 28th, bringing dry, bright weather. Behind it, another transatlantic front had developed, which crossed Shetland and Ireland on 29th and England by 30th. Further **Red-eyed Vireos** were found at Dunquin (Co. Kerry) on 29th, Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) and Spurn Point (Humberside) on 30th and a **Swainson's Thrush** *Catharus ustulatus* on Fair Isle (Shetland) also on 30th. Until 11th October, pressure remained high to the south, and a westerly flow was maintained across Britain and Ireland, with low-pressure systems tracking eastwards close to northern Scotland. Transatlantic fronts again occurred on 5th and 6th, and another on 10th, with discoveries of a **Blackpoll Warbler** *Deudroica striata* at Sumburgh (Shetland) and a **Gray-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* on Cape Clear Island on 6th, another in the Isles of Scilly on 7th, a **Red-**

eyed **Vireo** at Belmullet (Co. Mayo) also on 7th, another **Swainson's Thrush**, on Cape Clear Island on 8th, followed by one in the Isles of Scilly on 10th, together with a **Black-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*. A dead **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was found at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) on 14th. From 12th, an anticyclone to the east over the Continent became increasingly influential and the depressions moving in from the Atlantic became slow-moving across Britain and Ireland as air pushed in from the south and east. On 18th, a large block of easterly air flooded over the North Sea and across Britain and Ireland. The flow continued until 24th, when Atlantic air prevailed and diverted the stream northwards and established westerlies until the end of the month. Conditions for transatlantic crossings were still favourable and further **Red-eyed Vireos** were found on Lundy Island (Devon) on 16th and at Seaburn (Tyne & Wear) on 27th, another **Gray-cheeked Thrush** in the Isles of Scilly on 19th, a **Swainson's Thrush** at Galley Head (Co. Cork) on 21st, a **Blackpoll Warbler** in the Isles of Scilly on 22nd and a **Yellow Warbler** *Dendroica petechia* at Lerwick (Shetland) on 3rd November (plate 97).

Near-passerines

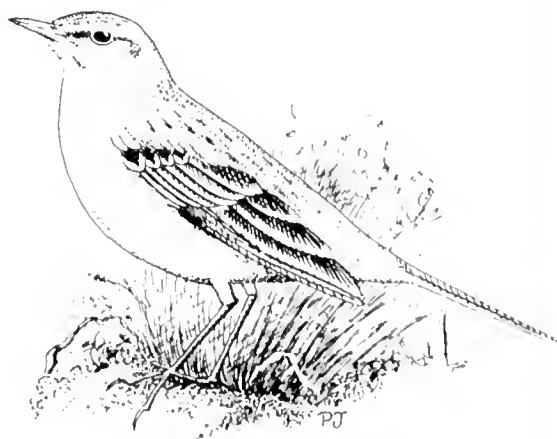
A concentration of 10,000 **Swifts** *Apus apus* at Spurn Point on 1st July was unlikely to have been a migration, but a mass feeding flight near the convergence zones of a small depression nearby in the North Sea. Their departure in early August was unhindered by the weather. Only two **Alpine Swifts** *Apus melba* were reported, on Guernsey (Channel Islands) on 13th August and at St Margarets Bay (Kent) on 4th October. Eight **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* were seen, mainly in hot anticyclonic weather in mid July, but one spent 22nd-31st October in the Isles of Scilly. **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* were relatively scarce vagrants, with some 14 scattered reports, and **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* (plate 103) were also scarce, with only about 25 of the 70 records from the expected East Coast areas, more occurring across southern England.

Larks to wagtails

The ten **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* which arrived between 28th September and 21st October, from Shetland to the Isles of Scilly, all came on southerly winds. A **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* was seen on Great Saltee Island (Co. Wexford) early



in October and five reports of **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* came in the same month on the East Coast from Orkney south to Norfolk, with another in Essex from 11th to 14th November and two together in Co. Down during 7th-9th November, one staying until 18th. An early **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* was found on 21st July on Lundy Island, well before an influx recorded from 16th September on east to southerly winds, predominantly from Norfolk to Shetland, and on through October, with a clutch of records from southwest England, involving 45 birds in all. **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris*, with 11 reports, arrived typically from the south, on frontal systems, with most in southern England. A feature of the autumn was the unusual numbers of **Olive-backed Pipits** *Anthus hodgsoni*, with over 40 involved, eclipsing the 20 seen in 1987. The first arrived on Fair Isle on 23rd September on a band of easterly winds coming from northern USSR. About 15 more arrived on Fair Isle and in Orkney and Shetland until 6th October, during mainly unsettled cyclonic weather, with the centres of the lows close to the islands. From 13th to 16th, several arrived in southwest Britain and Ireland on frontal systems with south-





erly winds, and there were more there and on the Norfolk and northeast English coasts on fronts associated with the easterlies and southeasterlies from 18th to 27th (plate 104). This pattern indicates a very wide dispersal initially into Western Europe, with a concentrating response to move along weather fronts. Three **Pechora Pipits** *Anthus gustavi* were also affected in the same way, with one on St Kilda (Western Isles) on 23rd September, one at Scalloway (Shetland) on 25th, and one at Land's End (Cornwall) on 20th October. An early **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* was found at Red Rocks (Merseyside) on 16th September during anticyclonic easterlies, followed by a further ten reports, mainly from southern England and Ireland, until the end of October, often on anticyclonic southeasterlies. Just three **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola*, from similar origins as the previous three species, arrived: on Fair Isle on 27th August and 11th September and at Quendale (Shetland) on 29th.

Waxwing to flycatchers

The easterlies which swept across the North Sea on 18th October initiated an invasion of **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* (plate 93) along the East Coast from Norfolk to Shetland. There were 40 on Fair Isle, and, by the end of the month, several hundred had been reported, mainly in small flocks, except for 130 at Inverness (Highland) on 3rd November. There was only one **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia*, on Cape Clear Island on 26th October, and only 11 **Bluethroats** *L. svecica*, mainly in September. Two **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina* were found after the mid-October easterlies, in the Isles of Scilly on 18th (plate 100) and at Kilnsea (Humberside) on 21st. A **Pied Wheatear** *O. pleschanka*, part of the same movement, was at Holme (Norfolk) from 19th to 21st; earlier, one had been found at Newhaven (East Sussex) on 7th July (plates 98 & 99). A

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* was another late-October record, on 27th-28th on Galley Head (Co. Cork)(plate 101). The easterly flow out of Russia across Northern Scandinavia probably brought the **White's Thrushes** *Zoothera dauma* to Sumburgh Head on 22nd September, Eyemouth (Borders) on 26th, where one was picked up dead, and Stronsay (Orkney) on 3rd October. A **Black-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) during 26th-28th September and one of the red-throated race *ruficollis* at Easington (Humberside) on 7th October were also fellow-travellers. An **Eye-browed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* on Tresco (Isles of Scilly) on 21st October, however, arrived with the huge influx of **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* and **Redwings** *T. iliacus* arriving after the onset of easterlies on 18th. A **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* on Cape Clear Island on 8th October probably came with the **Lanceolated Warblers** *L. lanceolata* found on Fair Isle on 23rd and 30th, but one on Bardsey Island (Gwynedd) on 18th October belonged to the later movement. About 30 **Aquatic Warblers** *Acrocephalus paludicola* mainly showed their usual early-autumn passage (plate 102), but included two inland in Buckinghamshire on 2nd and 26th August and another at Etwall (Derbyshire) from 29th September to 7th October. Three **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* were reported at Kilnsea on 16th and 17th September, on Dursey Island on 9th October and on the Inner Farne (Northumberland) on 19th. Most of the 37 reports of **Icterine Warblers** *H. icterina* were from East Anglia and the English south coast between 12th August and 23rd October, and all of the 21 **Melodious Warblers** *H. polyglotta* were in the south and west of Britain and Ireland over the same period. A notable record was of a **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* on Whalsay (Shetland) from 3rd to 19th October, after southeasterly winds. From mid August into October, some 60





Barred Warblers *S. nisoria* were found, from Essex northwards on the East Coast, with a good proportion in Orkney and Shetland. **Greenish Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* were early vagrants along the East Coast, most of the 14 reports being in late August to early September, as expected, and three **Arctic Warblers** *P. borealis* were found, on Fair Isle on 26th August, on St Kilda on 26th September and in Shetland on 6th October. Not quite a bumper year for **Pallas's Warblers** *P. proregulus*: they started to arrive on 14th in Shetland and then from 18th on the East Coast north of Spurn Point, with the later of the 24 records being in the south in early November. This was the year of the **Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. inornatus*, with about 200 reported. They began arriving on 11th September on the East Coast, with subsequent records from Kent to Shetland and across to southwest England and Ireland, as they continued to appear during October. **Radde's Warblers** *P. schwarzi* and **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus* mainly arrived together on the East Coast in the strong easterly flow, during 17th-24th October, with 12 of the former and 17 of the latter, three of which were found in November. The three **Bonelli's Warblers** *P. bonelli* were on the Isle of Grain (Kent) on 26th August, in the Isles of Scilly on 19th October and at Porthgwarra (Cornwall) on 25th. **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were not very numerous, with peak counts of 15 on Cape Clear Island and at Dungeness in October. As expected, with regular high-pressure periods in southeast Europe from late September to late October, **Red-breasted Flycatchers** *Ficedula parva* were regular vagrants, with 45 reports scattered around the coasts of England, Wales and Scotland, but only one from Ireland.

Treecreepers to buntings

Short-toed Treecreepers *Certhia brachydactyla* were found in Kent, at St Margarets Bay on 14th October, at Dungeness on 18th and later on 11th November, and at Sandwich Bay on 7th November. A party of five **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* was at Titchfield Haven (Hampshire) on 23rd October, following a single at Cley (Norfolk) on 13th and three on the Isles of Scilly on 17th. Migrant **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* were not very common, only 30 being seen, but the easterlies after 18th October brought some 40 displaced **Great Grey Shrikes** *L. excubitor* on to the East Coast, after two normal wintering individuals had already returned to their commons in southern England by 14th. Apart from two northern records, from Spurn Point on 10th August and Heysham (Lancashire) on 8th October, the other 12 records of **Serins** *Serinus serinus* were on the English south coast. There was a good influx of **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni*, first to Shetland and in the Western Isles, involving about ten from 21st September to 6th October, followed by a further six in North Norfolk and Orkney from 18th to 29th. Starting back in the spring, **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* (plate 91) began arriving from the Continent. The flock sizes increased through the months and, by late August, groups of over 200 were being seen on Fair Isle and in Orkney. Thereafter, the migration declined, with fewer reported arrivals into October. Accompanying them were a number of **Two-barred Crossbills** *Loxia leucoptera* which were discovered in the flocks feeding inland (plate 92). By November, some 16 had been seen, but there were probably many more. **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* became evident later, after the October easterlies from 18th, with small numbers along the East Coast initially and then larger flocks of over 20 being found at inland sites by mid November (plate 90). A singing **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* at Spurn Point on 1st and 2nd July was a late spring vagrant. Typical autumn individuals began to appear on Fair Isle and in Shetland by 20th August, and by early October some 40 had been recorded, latterly in southwest Britain and Ireland. Apart from two records in Scotland, the other 21 **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were in the south of England, including six at Landguard Point (Suffolk) on 23rd September. Of the 13 **Rustic Buntings** *Emberiza rustica* seen,



90. Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*,
Hopwell Woods, Tyne & Wear,
November 1990 (Michael K. Watson)



91. Female Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*,
Isle of May, Fife, July 1990 (H. Riley)

92. Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*
(with Crossbills *L. curvirostra*), Sandring-
ham, Norfolk, October 1990 (Steve Young)





93. Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Guisborough, Cleveland, November 1990 (*M. N. Sidwell*)



94. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Tresco, Isles of Scilly, October 1990 (*Steve Hinton*)



95 & 96. Above and below left, Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*, Dursey Island, Co. Cork, September 1990 (*Anthony McGeehan*)

97. Below right, Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, Lerwick, Shetland, November 1990 (*Dennis Coultts*)



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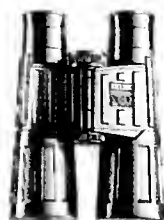
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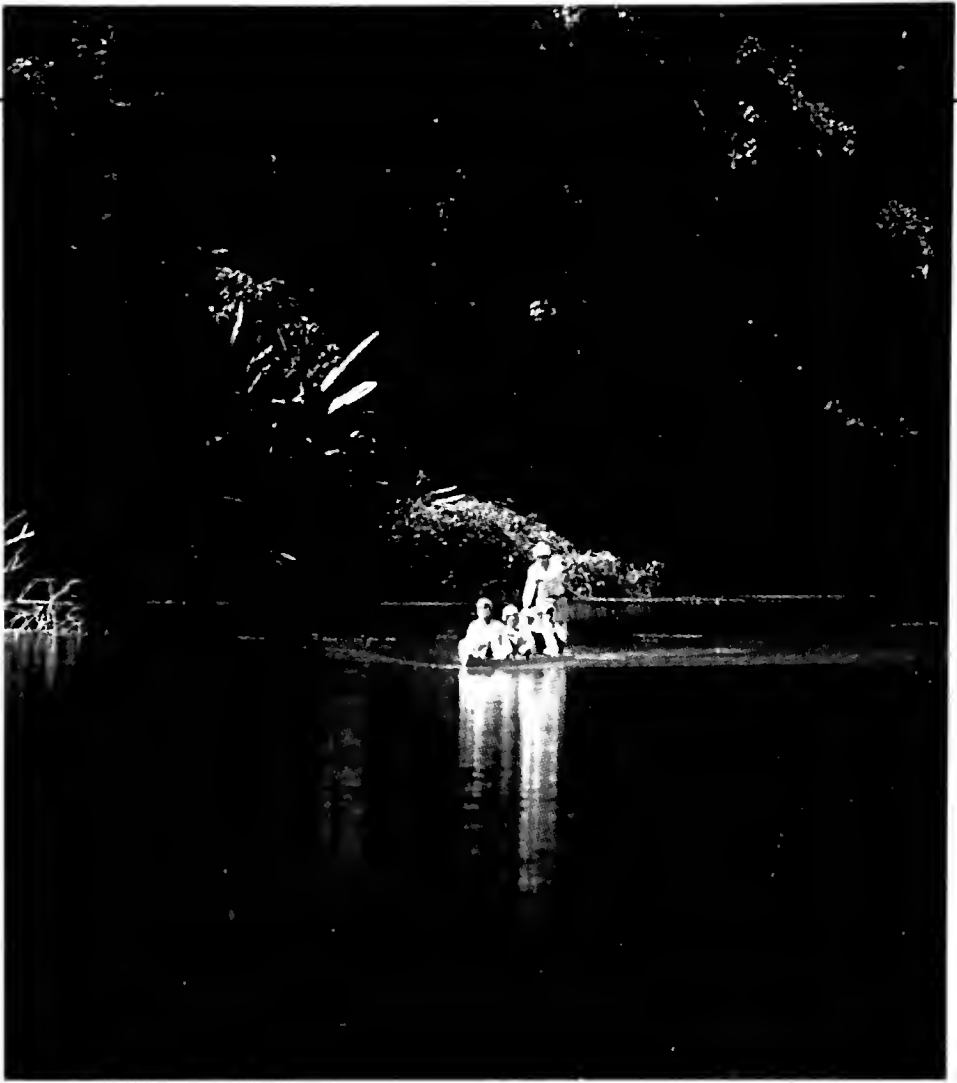


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98 & 99. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Newhaven, East Sussex, July 1990 (*D. Sadler; Tony Croucher*)



100. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 1990 (*Steve Seal*)

101. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Galley Head, Co. Cork, October 1990 (*Richard T. Mills*)





102. Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, August 1990 (David Tipling)



103. Wrenneck *Jynx torquilla*, Peninnis, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 1990 (Alan J. Shearman)

104. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Woodhorne Church, Northumberland, October 1990 (Michael K. Watson)



all in October, nine were in southwest Britain and Ireland (plate 94), in contrast to the 25 **Little Buntings** *Emberiza pusilla* found, of which 12 were in Shetland, on Fair Isle, in Orkney and in the Western Isles, and a further six on the northeast English coast, all from late September to early November. Other rare buntings included a **Pine Bunt-**

ing *Emberiza leucocephalos* at Bamburgh (Northumberland) on 21st and 22nd October and **Yellow-breasted Buntings** *Emberiza aureola* on Lundy Island on 2nd July, on Fair Isle on 27th and 28th August and again on 9th to 14th September and at Spurn Point on 17th October.

Identification pitfalls and assessment problems*

This series, which started in January 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28), is not intended to cover all facets of the identification of the species concerned, but only the major sources of error likely to mislead the observer in the field or the person attempting to assess the written evidence. The species covered are mostly those which were formerly judged by the Rarities Committee*, but which are now the responsibility of county and regional recorders and records committees; other species, both rarer and commoner than those, are also featured sometimes, as in this case.

10. Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Night Herons breed in North and South America, Africa and Asia, but of most interest to British and Irish observers is that they breed, albeit locally, in most central and southern European countries and in the Netherlands. A total of 406 Night Herons has been accepted as having occurred in Britain and Ireland up to the end of 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 443), with 86 during the last five of those years. Individuals have appeared in every month, and the peak period, which accounts for over half of the records, is from early April to mid June. Most spring records have come from central and southern England, whilst most autumn sightings have been made in the eastern half of England.

Night Heron is described and illustrated in all European bird guides, and is a straightforward species to identify, given good views. In such circumstances, in a British context, juvenile and first-year Night Herons are likely to be confused only with Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* or with juvenile and first-year Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, whilst second-year and adult Night Herons are likely to be confused only with Grey Heron *A. cinerea*. The most striking character with which to separate juvenile Night Heron from Bittern or Purple Heron is the prominent whitish spotting on its mantle, scapulars and upperwing-coverts. As Night Heron retains its juvenile wing feathers until the following summer, the whitish spotting on the upperwing-coverts (though not on the fresh mantle feathers and

*This paper, like those earlier in the series (*Brit. Birds* 76: 26-28, 78-80, 129-130, 203-206, 304-305, 342-346; 77: 412-415; 78: 97-102; 81: 126-134), is a publication of the Rarities Committee, which is sponsored by ZEISS Germany.

scapulars) of a first-year individual remains the outstanding feature with which to eliminate the other two species. The most obvious characters for distinguishing second-year and adult Night Herons from Grey Heron are the former's black mantle, the black on the majority of its scapulars, and its uniformly grey wings, though the latter feature is of value only in flight, when Grey Heron's contrasting black primary coverts, primaries and secondaries would be visible.

When a good view is obtained of an adult Night Heron, particular attention should be paid to the extent of white on the forehead and above the eye, which is best recorded by means of a simple sketch. This is the only field character by which to separate the European race *nycticorax* from

105. Juvenile Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Avon, November 1971 (*Brit. Birds* 65: 326)(R. D. Bell)



106. Below, first-summer Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Co. Cork, June 1988 (*Irish Birds* 4: 84)(Richard T. Mills)



the American race *hoactli*. It is usual for *hoactli* to have a greater depth of white on the forehead than does *nycticorax*, but a thinner and less conspicuous spur of white extending over the eye.

Night Herons are quite commonly kept in zoos and bird-gardens, the most famous example in Britain and Ireland being the well-established colony of free-flying birds of the American race *hoactli* in the grounds of Edinburgh Zoo. Thankfully for bird recorders, individuals from this colony do not seem inclined to wander far very often. A juvenile/first-winter in Wiltshire, then Somerset, from late 1987 to at least April 1988 was, however, apparently an Edinburgh bird (*Brit. Birds* 82: 511), and a juvenile in Lincolnshire from November 1988 into 1989 had certainly come from that source (*Brit. Birds* 82: 511). Conversely, a juvenile in Lincolnshire from December 1979 to January 1980 had originated in the USSR (*Brit. Birds* 73: 494). In each case, it was the bird's ring or rings that enabled its origin to be established. A good view of a standing Night Heron will reveal the presence or absence of a ring or rings, any details of which (type, colour, which leg and, if possible, number) should be included in the descriptive notes.

Identification and record-assessment problems usually arise only when poor views are obtained. A Night Heron often spends the daylight hours on a branch of a bush or tree in a densely vegetated marsh, and is observed only in flight at dusk. These mainly crepuscular habits and the generally inaccessible habitat contribute to the higher-than-average

107. Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, Netherlands, December 1977 (P. Munsterman)



number of Night Heron records which involve comparatively poor views and a consequently poor description. This is reflected in the BBRC's acceptance rate of less than 92% during the last decade. This is a low figure considering the ease with which the species ought to be identified and documented.

In the case of a flight view at dusk, when no plumage colour or pattern is discernible, it is, first, essential to establish that the bird is a heron at all, rather than a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, a large gull *Larus*, a crow *Corvus* or whatever. Under such conditions, it is very difficult to judge a bird's size, and attention should be concentrated on its structure. The stout, dagger-shaped bill and projecting toes of Night Heron are sufficient to identify it as one of the herons. These characters, plus the stocky build and short, broad, rounded wings, give Night Heron a distinctive flight silhouette. Grey and Purple Herons are much larger and rangier, with longer bills, longer, more-bowed wings, obvious projection of foot *and leg* beyond the tail, and slower wing-beats. Bittern is also larger than Night Heron, with a more obvious foot-projection, slower wing-beats and a steadier-looking flight. Fortunately, Night Heron is often vocal in flight. The call, a single croak, is not unlike that of a Raven *Corvus corax*.

As with all species, Night Heron is sometimes so imperfectly seen that insufficient objective characters are noted to confirm the record. It is a fact of life that a gap exists between 'knowing' what a poorly seen species was and being able to express on paper enough to convince a records-vetting panel. A careful observer will realise this, demand of himself or herself the standard he or she would expect from others, and acknowledge philosophically that some sightings should not result in firm claims. Acceptance of the principle of 'the one that got away' by both observers and records committees is a vital ingredient in the confidence we enjoy in published bird records.

PETER LANSDOWN

197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

Mystery photographs

165 Last month's mystery photograph (plate 85, repeated here) shows a wader with a long, straight bill and comparatively plain plumage. Only a small number of waders in the Western Palearctic show this combination of features, these being the godwits *Limosa*, the larger *Tringa* sandpipers (or 'shanks'), dowitchers *Limnodromus* and perhaps snipes *Gallinago*. The mystery bird's build is quite distinctive: it is fat, small-headed and extremely long-billed. Compared with snipes, its plumage is fairly plain, especially around the head. This combination leads to the conclusion that we are looking at a dowitcher. The larger



Tringa are slimmer and more attenuated at the rear end, and their bills appear to be shorter and thinner (although they show considerable overlap with dowitchers in bill measurements, *Tringa* sandpipers are bigger, and their bills therefore look proportionately shorter). All Western Palearctic snipes show very prominent head markings and scapular/mantle lines, and all are much darker than the mystery bird. Godwits are larger and slimmer, with stout-based bills and long legs, and, in most stances, appear long-necked.

When identifying waders, ageing is usually a vital part of the process. The bird in the photograph is showing its upperparts and tail feathers to advantage, but is obscuring its underparts, which makes ageing rather more difficult. The broad, pale edges to most of the wing feathers, which look in excellent condition, show, however, that the mystery wader is either a juvenile or a fresh-plumaged summer adult; the relatively small size of the lower scapulars and the broad, bright fringing on the coverts indicate that it is most likely a juvenile.

Without doubt, the most immediately obvious feature is the length of the bill, which is twice as long as the head. According to much of the literature, this ratio is diagnostic of Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus*. Let us, however, look in a little more detail. The bird shows very distinctive patterning on the tertials, scapulars and greater coverts, with pale (although not white) fringes and several zigzag markings in the centres of the tertials—almost tiger-stripes. The tail shows black and white bars, the white bars being noticeably broader than the black ones. These two features lead us to the inescapable, and correct, conclusion that, despite the length of the bill, this is a juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus*. Had the photograph been in colour, this identification would have been made more easily, as the fringes and tiger-stripes are a rich, pale, orange colour, giving the upperparts a very warm look.

Juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher shows very thin, pale and precise

fringes to tertials and greater coverts, producing a much more uniform, greyer appearance than that of juvenile Short-billed. There is a less obvious difference in tail-feather pattern: dowitchers with black bars obviously twice as wide as the white ones are Long-billed, while those with white bars wider than the black ones are Short-billed; individuals with intermediate stages of barring, however, cannot be assigned to one species or the other. Juvenile Long-billed is washed with grey on the underparts, with a hint of buff on the head, neck and breast, while Short-billed is a much brighter orange-buff below. There are also differences in call which are said to be diagnostic: Long-billed has a strident 'keek' or sometimes 'keek-keek', while Short-billed has a mellow 'tu-tu-tu' like Greenshank *T. nebularia*.

In winter plumage, the two species are much more difficult to separate, although both tail pattern and call are constant features. Separation by bill length is fraught with problems (as on this individual) because of the degree of overlap and the difficulty in making accurate assessments in the field.

Asiatic Dowitcher *L. semipalmatus* is far easier to rule out. It is much larger than either of the American species and is more reminiscent of a godwit. It has an all-dark bill, whereas the bird in the photograph clearly has the proximal two-thirds pale. Its upperpart patterning is like that of Long-billed Dowitcher, with fine, pale fringes, and its tail is dull brown with thin white bars.

I photographed this juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher at Point Pelee, Canada, in August 1988.

COLIN BRADSHAW

9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ

109. Mystery photograph 166. Identify the species. Answer next month



Notes



Lesser Kestrel hunting bats Since autumn 1981, I have observed Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* actively hunting small bats, probably *Pipistrellus*, in Torremolinos, Málaga, Spain. The attacks, all apparently unsuccessful, appear to take place only in autumn and spring, when the bats often fly around in broad daylight up to one hour before sunset. Surprisingly, there are no records from the winter period, when small bats can be seen even in the middle of the day. There seem to be two methods of hunting. The first, observed both in the morning and in the evening, is to dive in among bats feeding close against buildings, where insects presumably congregate. The second type of attack, which I have seen on three occasions, all during the same afternoon, involves the falcon approaching from behind a bat that is usually flying higher and straighter (which makes me suspect a different species, though one not appreciably larger); as soon as the falcon gets to within 1 m or so, the bat carries out very swift evasive action, in which the falcon cannot follow. Cases of Lesser Kestrels chasing bats, although scarce and always unsuccessful, have also been recorded at Anteguera, Málaga (M. Rendon *in litt.*).

A. M. PATERSON

Edificio San Gabriel, 2-4°-A, C/. Escritor Adolfo Reyes, 29620 Torremolinos (Málaga), Spain

Kestrels *F. tinnunculus* have been recorded killing a long-eared bat *Plecotus* in North Yorkshire in August 1975 (*Brit. Birds* 70: 499-500) and regularly catching and killing small bats at sunset in Sudan in December-February 1983/84 (*Brit. Birds* 79: 431-432). Eds

A flight characteristic of recently fledged Lapwings Prater, Marchant & Vuorinen (1977, *Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders*) and Cramp & Simmons (1983, *BWP* vol. 3) described field characteristics for distinguishing juveniles from adult Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, the most obvious being the buff fringing on the wing-coverts of juveniles. This feature, however, varies much between individuals, is of doubtful reliability, and cannot be seen quickly in the field when the birds fly off. During studies of breeding Lapwings in Scotland, we noted an additional, previously unreported characteristic useful in identifying recently fledged juveniles. In the last week before fledging, and during the next week or two, the primary coverts of Lapwings are not fully grown and in flight the primary feather sheaths are visible as a broad off-white patch with scalloped edges running transversely across the dorsal surface of the base of the primaries. As soon as fledged Lapwings raise their wings, this patch is conspicuous. Even at several hundred metres' range, one can easily distinguish and count fledged young and adults on the breeding grounds when they fly off, by the presence or absence of the patch. It is absent on older juveniles and adults. Of six recently fledged juveniles in Central Scotland during 1984-86, two lost the white patch by three weeks after

fledging and the rest by six weeks after. This method could be useful for observers comparing the breeding success of different populations.

HECTOR GALBRAITH and ADAM WATSON
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Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Hill of Brathens, Banchory, Kincardineshire

Kingfisher eating reed stem On the morning of 29th September 1987, at Fowlmere Nature Reserve, Cambridgeshire, I noticed a juvenile Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* fishing about 10-15 m away in front of the main hide. Its first attempt resulted in an old reed stem *Phragmites* being lifted from the water, brought back to the perch and being battered on the wood; the Kingfisher finally let the stem fall. About three minutes later, it brought back a small fish, which it battered and swallowed. One minute later, it dived and took out another reed stem 3-4 cm long; it battered this on the perch and proceeded to swallow the whole stem. A little while after this 'meal', the Kingfisher flew off out of view.

GARY PILKINGTON

Chapel Cottage, Welcombe and Marsland RSNC Nature Reserve, Gooseham Mill,
Morwenstow, near Bude, Cornwall EX23 9SP

House Martins roosting in oak trees On 7th June 1987, while watching some of the local breeding population of House Martins *Delichon urbica* above a line of mature oaks *Quercus* in Billericay, Essex, I noticed the following. Shortly before dark, in overcast and windy conditions with a hint of rain in the air, a single House Martin attempted to land on an outer sprig of oak some 10 m up. It soon returned and successfully settled, looking outwards; it assumed a roosting-like posture, fluffing its contour feathers, and, apart from several brief spells of head-scratching and preening, remained motionless. Through a 20× telescope I could detect no parasitic activity or clumsy movements, and I concluded that the martin was fit. It had landed at 19.55 GMT, and total darkness prevailed at 20.30 hours. That night it rained heavily. At 19.30 GMT on 8th August 1987, as darkness was falling on a breezy and rainy night, five or six House Martins dashed low over the oaks (closely followed by several much larger bats) and dived into the treetops, but I could not tell whether or not they settled; minutes later, another House Martin alighted on an outer sprig; 15 minutes after this, darkness had fallen.

JOHN H. SMART

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Previous notes (*Brit. Birds* 71: 89; 73: 414-415; 76: 455) have described House Martins roosting in trees while on passage. EDS

Blue Tit eating frog tadpoles At about 10.00 GMT on 26th March 1988, at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* standing on water vegetation surrounding a mass of spawn of the common frog *Rana temporaria* on a pond. It was investigating the mature spawn and was seen to swallow a small, elongated black object. Through binoculars, I

saw that the tit was attempting to catch young tadpoles in its bill; the tadpoles were just beginning to emerge from the spawn in the free-swimming stage. I saw the Blue Tit swallow at least three mobile tadpoles before it flew off.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Differing reactions of Rooks and Jackdaws to intruding Raven At about 11.00 GMT on 9th April 1988, at West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a Raven *Corvus corax* fly towards and perch at the top of a tree in an active rookery occupied by about 30 pairs of Rooks *C. frugilegus*. The Rooks, many of which had young in the nest, showed no apparent concern at the Raven's presence. This was not, however, so with the local Jackdaws *C. monedula*, five or six of which, giving alarm calls, very soon surrounded and lunged at the Raven, forcing it to fly off; the Raven was followed closely by calling Jackdaws for about 200 m before the mobbing subsided. Jackdaws breed in the area, but not, so far as I know, in the trees of the rookery itself. At this rookery, breeding Rooks readily tolerate visiting Jackdaws, either singly or in flocks, but should, for example, a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* or a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* fly near, the mobbing response of the local Rooks is noisy and belligerent. Similar differing behaviour by Rooks and Jackdaws towards a Raven flying low over the rookery was noted on 10th April 1988, this time at 07.00 GMT. It seems strange that, on both occasions, the nesting Rooks ignored the Raven, in contrast to the aggressive reaction of the smaller Jackdaws.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Migrating Chaffinch repeatedly rising from sea surface to land on boat

At 08.30 GMT on 6th March 1987, from a fishing boat 19.8 km off the coast of Blanes, northeast Spain, we saw a female Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* approach from some distance and then attempt to settle on the cables which attached the dragnet to the stern of our vessel. Instead of landing, however, it dropped into the sea. As the boat continued, we moved farther and farther away from the bird, by now lost in the waves. To our amazement, when we were about 60 m away, it suddenly took off from the water, flew towards the boat, again tried to land on the cables, but once more fell into the water, this time being washed over by a couple of waves. The boat continued its travel, but, after about 80 m, the Chaffinch once again took off from the water and made towards us, at last landing on the deck of our boat. At close range we noticed that its breast feathers were waterlogged. For the next half-hour, the bird stayed with us, eating bread crumbs tossed to it, until it was accidentally disturbed and flew off. The weather was cloudy, with a little fog, and we recorded 88 passerines of 11 different species; six individuals landed on our boat, showing signs of exhaustion.

VICTOR ESTRADA and ENRIC BADOSA
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Letters

Nearctic-wader distribution in Britain Various reasons are often offered for the disproportionate numbers of records of Nearctic wader vagrants in eastern coastal regions of Britain. Dymond *et al.* (1989) treated the subject superficially, missing an opportunity to summarise the possible mechanisms by which rarities arrive in Britain. For two wader species (Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* and Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*) which breed in both northeast Siberia and North America, they followed Sharrock (1971) in indicating the possibility of eastern records being due to arrivals from the east, although these may come on a route taking them close to the North Pole (Elkins 1988). The similar autumn distribution of some of those species which breed only in North America (e.g. White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis*) was explained by the possibility of movements within the Palearctic of individuals which had crossed the North Atlantic in previous years (Sharrock & Sharrock 1976). Increasing evidence is available for this (e.g. many are adults; records are frequent in late summer; and individuals are being observed more often farther east within Europe). There are other species for which the appearance in eastern areas invites no explanation, but these must include wandering and overwintering individuals.

It is likely that some species may travel with north Canadian congeners which normally winter in western Europe and northwestern Africa, and thus may not necessarily make landfall in the expected sites in southwestern Britain. I have already discussed the difficulties in analysing falls of Nearctic waders (Elkins 1988), but would like to offer another theory for the eastern sightings of supposed transatlantic vagrants, and one which apparently has not been put forward previously. With their remarkable endurance and often high-altitude flight, many waders approaching from the west may overshoot the western seaboard of Britain (perhaps invisible below cloud) and make their appearance farther east. This contrasts with exhausted Nearctic landbirds, which probably arrive at very low levels and land at the first possible opportunity (Elkins 1979). It is, however, not easy to explain the abundance of waders on the east coast of Britain compared with the smaller numbers at equally well-watched inland sites.

NORMAN ELKINS

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Peregrine's selection of individual birds as prey I recently commented that '... it is not just the sick, injured, slow or inexperienced birds that attract the attention of a passing Peregrine [*Falco peregrinus*], but also any singularly different, or solitary individuals. This phenomenon may apply also to other raptors, but it seems poorly reported in the extensive literature.' (*Brit. Birds* 83: 552). My final sentence was perhaps unjustified: T. M. Martin has drawn my attention to statements by J. A. Baker in his *The Peregrine* (1967), including 'The bird out of place is always the first to die ... the odd, and the sick, and the lost.'

P. I. MORRIS

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Reviews

The Birdwatcher's Yearbook and Diary 1991. Edited by John E. Pemberton. Buckingham Press, Maids Moreton, 1990. 320 pages; 7 black-and-white plates; 18 line drawings. Paperback £9.50.

As in previous years, this excellent annual is full of useful facts. Although most of the information is available in other publications, here it is conveniently collected together in one volume. The serious birdwatcher will find at least one copy of the yearbook indispensable, but probably will not need to buy a copy every year. At £9.50 (£8 for members of certain clubs and societies), it is, however, excellent value for money.

Most birdwatchers should find something to interest them in the articles, such as 'The birds of the North Sea' by Sandy Anderson, with its stories of some of the birds found at sea: the magnificent white Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* on drilling rig 'Kingswood U.K.' on page 213, the Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*, probably 'Albert' from Hermaness, and a possible Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* on oil platform 'Indefatigable'.

There is a useful up-to-date species list. I recommend the *Yearbook* to everyone interested in birds and birdwatching.

DAVE ODELL

The Birds of the United Arab Emirates. By Colin Richardson. Hobby Publications, Dubai & Warrington, 1990. 204 pages; over 100 colour plates; 280 line-drawings; 79 distribution maps. Paperback £15.00.

This is not a field guide or a handbook, but it is very nearly everything else. Few books on any subject can be so crammed with useful information but also look so attractive.

There is a month-by-month outline of the highlights likely to be seen. Double-page-spread colour photographs of typical habitats give a good idea of the region's variety, and these incorporate notes on the typical birds. A 26-page section, with very clear maps and evocative landscape drawings, gives details of choice sites and what is likely to be seen at each. A checklist gives the English and scientific names and status codes of birds recorded in the UAE.

After all that, we reach the main section of the book: species-by-species accounts of status, with maps showing distribution (in red) and status throughout the year indicated diagrammatically by different shading and easy-to-understand symbols on special charts. Most species also have a line-drawing by Bill Morton, with the bird of the race and in the plumage most likely to be seen in the area. There are also three sections containing 101 colour photographs, showing most of the typical birds, photographed in the UAE.

Design is first class, and this is an easy book to use, with excellent cross-referencing. This guide is full of clever ideas for the display of information visually. It is clearly an essential purchase for anyone interested in or likely to visit the UAE, and future authors of bird guides for other areas would be very foolish not to refer to this volume and use it as a model. Highly recommended.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Short reviews

The Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland. Edited by A. Maitland Emmet and the late John Heath. (Harley Books, Great Horkesley, 1990. 380 pages. Paperback £24.95) This is a paperback version of volume 7, part I, of *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland* (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 83: 34), with minor revisions. This first-class book is, therefore, now available at half its original price.

The Colour Guide to British Birds and their Eggs. By Frances Fry. (Nimrod Press, Alton, 1990. 279 pages. £15.00) Another field guide? Forget it! Species are grouped not in systematic order but as 'Land Birds', 'Waterside Birds' and 'Water and Sea Birds'. Proof-reading must have been carried out by someone unfamiliar with the subject (e.g. Burns for Burn; Gooder for Gooders; Wimbrel for Whimbrel) and even the handwritten labels include 'maler stripe'. Bird names often include wrong use of capitals and hyphens. The paintings give general impressions, rather than detailed plumage; for a field guide, it is unfortunate that the paintings may omit vital field characters which are also not mentioned in the brief texts. The scale may be wrong as well, with, for example, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* shown smaller than Hobby *F. subbuteo*. There are paintings of eggs alongside the birds; and not a scientific name in sight. This is one of those books which should never have been published: the beginner would be confused, at best, and often misled; no-one other than a novice would consider buying it.

A Birder's Guide to Southern California. By Harold Holt. (American Birding Association, Colorado Springs, 1990. 238 pages. Paperback \$9.95) The first in a new series of ABA 'Birdfinding Guides'. Any birdwatcher planning to visit this area would be mad to

do so without acquiring this guide to the prime birdwatching sites, described and clearly mapped, with details of the birds likely to be seen.

Bill Oddie's Colouring Guide to Birds. By Bill Oddie. (Piccolo, London, 1991. 31 pages. Paperback £2.99) Aimed at children aged six years and over. Colour photographs of 14 familiar, colourful birds, with a general, informative text, and the facing page making this bird book 'different': outlines by Bill Oddie for colouring in (the children usually being able to use the colour photograph as reference). A good idea; well executed.

Birds of America. By Frank Shaw. (Dragon's World, London, 1990. 320 pages. £25.00) A big, glossy book, with small painted portraits (usually only adult summer male) and a few short lines of text. Useless for birdwatchers; presumably designed for looking impressive on a bookshelf.

Vogels Nieuw in Nederlands. Edited by Arnoud B. van den Berg, André J. van Loon and Gerald J. Oreel. (Zomer & Keuning, Ede, 1990. 144 pages. Paperback Dutch Guilder 34.90) Unfortunately for British birders, the text is wholly in Dutch (apart from very basic English summaries). This book—'Birds New to the Netherlands' in translation—will, however, be of considerable interest to rarity-oriented readers, since it contains accounts of 41 recent rarities, mostly additions to the Dutch list, accompanied by colour photographs of the individuals concerned. These demonstrate very clearly the improvement in photographic equipment and in rarity-watchers' photographic expertise, in comparison with our own *Birds New to Britain and Ireland* (1982), which covered the period up to 1980.

ALSO RECEIVED

Grasshoppers and Allied Insects of Great Britain and Ireland. By Judith A. Marshall and E. C. M. Haes. (Harley Books, Great Horkesley, 1990. 254 pages. Paperback £15.95) (Reviewed *Brit. Birds* 82: 85)

Managing Waterfowl Populations: proceedings of an IWRB Symposium held at Astrakhan, USSR, 2-5 October 1989. Edited by G. V. T. Matthews. (IWRB, Slimbridge, 1990. 230 pages. Paperback £12.00)

Rainforest Requiem: recordings of wildlife in the Amazon rainforests. Recorded by Richard Ranft. (Mankind Music, in association with the British Library National Sound Archive, London, 1989. Compact disc £11.95; cassette £6.95)

Announcements

Avian Photos On 1st September 1990, three well-known bird-photographers, Dave Cottridge, Tim Loseby and David Tipling, joined forces to form *Avian Photos*. Between them, they aim to photograph almost all the major rarities which occur in Britain, and *Avian Photos* will provide birders with the opportunity to buy prints and high-quality slide duplicates.

Avian Photos also already offers for sale a slide selection entitled 'The Commoner British Passerines', covering over 80 species, and further sets will be made available in due course. For a catalogue or further information, please write (enclosing a SAE) to either David Tipling, 6 The Ridgeway, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4NQ; Dave Cottridge, 6 Sutherland Road, Tottenham, London N17 0BN; or Tim Loseby, 34 Meteor Road, West Malling, Kent ME19 6TH.

We are delighted to announce that *Avian Photos* has offered to provide *British Birds* with prints and transparencies for use in 'Seasonal reports' and the annual 'Report on rare birds', continuing the tradition of support for *BB* given over many years by other professional bird-photographers, such as Eric & David Hosking, Dennis Coutts and many others.

We welcome this co-operation and wish *Avian Photos* every success in their enterprise.

Rarities Committee phone-line The National Bird News phone-line 0898-884-522 features the latest decisions taken by the British Birds Rarities Committee. Phone now! Profits are donated to *BB*.

(33p per min. cheap rate; 44p peak & std rate incl. VAT.)

Binding—new address Chapman Brooks Bookbinders Ltd have asked us to draw attention to their new address and phone number. *BB* issues for binding should be sent to: Chapman Brooks Bookbinders Ltd, 17b Industrial Park, West Horndon, Brentwood, Essex CM13 3HL; telephone: Brentwood (0277) 810722.

'The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds' The first volume of this RAOU/OUP handbook can be ordered now at the prepublication price of £95.00 (POST FREE to *BB* subscribers through British BirdShop), a saving of £30.00 on the full price. This special reduced offer closes on 31st May 1991. Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xiii & xiv.

'Not BB V' The latest issue of this opprobrious, almost-annual, satirical publication is now for sale at a laughable price. Well worth it, though, if you want to know what Melissa really thinks about Giles, or want to 'improve' your rarity descriptions. Available through 'British BirdShop' (see pages xiii & xiv).

Books in British BirdShop The following SPECIAL OFFERS are available for *British Birds* subscribers:

International Bird Identification. Save £1.00

North Atlantic Shorebirds. Save £3.00

Best Days with British Birds. Save £2.00

The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 1. Save £30.00

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xiii and xiv.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Eric Hosking As this issue went to press, we learned of the sad death of Eric Hosking OBE. We send our sympathy and condolences to his widow and family. A full obituary will appear in due course.

Wilf Nelson Rhum Bursary On September 1989, Wilf Nelson suffered a fatal fall while carrying out routine survey work as NCC warden on the Island of Rhum NNR. Wilf had already contributed a great deal to nature conservation, both on Rhum and elsewhere, in his short career, and such was the widespread feeling of loss amongst his many friends and colleagues that a memorial fund was established. This fund, which is still open for donations, now stands at around £6,000 and, with the support of Wilf's widow, Rosemary, it was decided to establish a bursary which will be used to support small research/survey projects centred on Rhum. Applications for financial support can be made for individual projects to be carried out during 1991. Preference will be given to studies on the natural environment of Rhum, particularly its wildlife, but consideration will also be given to projects dealing with conservation management, including education and interpretation. It seems likely that around £500 will be available for dispensing during 1991. A brief summary of the project proposal and estimated costs should be sent to the Chief Warden, Island of Rhum, Highland, and should arrive by 31st March 1991.

Award for Chinese ornithologists On 1st December 1990, Zhang Yin-sun and He Fen-qi were announced as the winners of the 1990 Forktail-Leica Conservation Award. This announcement was made at the AGM of the Oriental Bird Club which was held at the Royal Zoological Society Meetings Rooms, Regent's Park, London. The award, which goes to the best conservation-based study of an oriental bird species or habitat, is worth £500 and is funded by the camera/binocular manufacturers, Leica. Zhang Yin-sun and He Fen-qi, both of the Department of Zoology, Academia Sinica, Beijing, plan to study the breeding ecology of the Relict

Gull *Larus relictus*, which was not recognised until 1971, and is still extremely poorly known. In 1987, Zhang Yin-sun found one of the largest breeding colonies, near Ordos in Inner Mongolia, the only known location for the species in China.

R&M Conference 1991 Over 350 bird-ringers gathered at Swanwick, Derbyshire, over the weekend of 4th-6th January 1991 for the 23rd Annual Ringing and Migration Conference, which produced an excellent and varied programme. Instead of the usual Friday evening travelogue, we had Paul Green's account of ringing in Malaysia, which refreshingly involved detailed studies of a few species of birds rather than just a catalogue of all the exotics he had trapped.

The AGM of the ringing scheme occupied the first part of Saturday morning, when ringers got the chance to quiz the BTO officers and staff on such perennials as mist-net (non-) supplies and ring prices, plus almost-as-long-running topics such as the impending move to Thetford. Perhaps only this last looks like being resolved satisfactorily before the next AGM.

The main overseas speaker was Joe Sultana of Malta. Bird ringing in that country began 25 years ago, when British ringers went there to train Maltese, among them Joe, in the necessary skills. Now in the Ministry of Environment, he gave a somewhat depressing account of the massive trapping and shooting of migrants that occurs in Malta, despite laws to control it. This theme continued after lunch with an account by Graham Tucker of the hunting of migrants throughout Europe.

Things became a little more cheerful with analyses of movements of different migrants at bird observatories, including Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, and further improved with Phil Brennan's description of running a ringing and migration station at Loop Head in Co. Clare. The day concluded with Kevin Baker as part knockabout comedian, part instructor in the finer arts of ageing and sexing birds, an oddly successful combination.

Sunday was devoted to seabirds, includ-

ing ringing studies of Lesser Black-backed Gulls *Larus fuscus* in northwest England and Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* in Cambridgeshire by Ian Spence and Jeff Kew; respectively. Adrian del Nevo had some cautiously optimistic things to say about the numbers of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii*. Pat Monaghan, in her absorbing account of the collapse of the breeding populations of Arctic Terns *S. paradisaea* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* in Shetland, pointed out firmly that our present state of knowledge is far short of being able to *prove* a link with sandeel fishing, whatever one's theories or suspicions. Finally, Robin Sellar made a brave attempt at showing us that Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* are interesting enough to overcome the undoubted hardships and unpleasantnesses of ringing them at the nest.

The *BB* Mystery Bird Photograph Competition was less well supported than usual, perhaps because it turned out to be a difficult one, with no-one succeeding in identifying all five species correctly. Dave Hodson, Paul Roper and Adam Wilson managed four of them, the first-named winning the bottle of champagne on a draw. (Contributed by MAO)

Largest birdwatching hide in Europe? The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust has built at its various centres a number of impressive hides over the years. The latest, at Martin Mere, Lancashire, is the 'Swan Link Hide' designed to give watchers good views of the wintering Bewick's *Cygnus columbianus* and Whooper Swans *C. cygnus* (895 and 472 counted respectively on 4th January 1991). The hide measures 72.8m in length and the

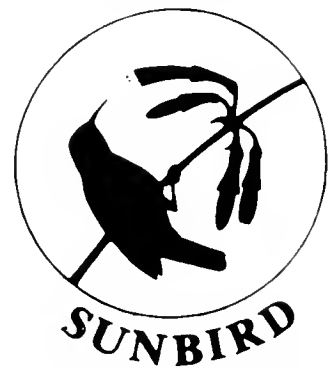
staff at Martin Mere are wondering if this is a record for the largest birdwatching hide in Europe, worthy of inclusion in *The Guinness Book of Records*. If you know of a larger hide, then please write to Sharon Ament, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Martin Mere, Burscough, Ormskirk, Lancashire LA40 0TA.

Storms destroy hide The severe storms which lashed the East Coast on the night of 7th/8th December 1990 destroyed the sea-watch hide of the Filey Brigg Ornithological Group. The hide and its contents were swept out into Filey Bay. The FBOG would like to replace the hide. If you have any thoughts, ideas or any other offers of help, please write to Peter Dunn, 16 Southwold Rise, Southwold, Scarborough YO11 3RB. A short while after the storm, the door of the hide came ashore, complete with new *Yale* lock which had been fitted only the previous week, and the lock still worked! Perhaps *Yale* hold the key to FBOG's problem. Would they like to sponsor a new hide?

New County Recorder Ken Bruce, Mal-laig, Wellington Street, Glencaple, Dumfries DG1 4RA, has taken over from Dr E. C. Fellowes as County Recorder for Dumfries & Galloway (Nithsdale, Annandale & Eskdale).

Changes of address of County Recorders Brian Rabbitts, County Recorder for Somerset, now lives at Flat 4, Osborne House, 15A Esplanade, Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset TA8 1BG; P. W. Ellicott, County Recorder for Devon, now lives at 34 Maple Road, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX4 1BN.

Sponsored by



Monthly marathon

This issue went to press before the closing dates for the receipt of entries relating to the sixth and seventh stages (plates 7 & 62) in the current, fifth 'Monthly marathon'. The answers will be revealed in the June issue.

The ninth puzzle picture appears below. The winner of the 'Marathon' will be able to choose as his/her prize a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

110. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (ninth stage: photograph number 58). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th May 1991



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 15th February to 7th March 1991
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Holyhead, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 24th February to at least 6th March.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Two, Hayle Estuary (Cornwall), throughout period; River Yar (Isle of Wight), 1st March; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), to at least 2nd March; Dungarvan (Co. Wexford), to at least 6th March; River Yealm (Devon), 3rd-6th March.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* Individual of nominate North American race, known as 'Whistling Swan', South Slob (Co. Wexford), late February to at least 2nd March.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* Peterhead (Grampian), 23rd February to 4th March; two, North Slob (Co. Wexford), to 6th March; Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry), 7th March.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* First-winter, River Tyne, South Shields (Tyne & Wear),

20th February; adult, Gipsy Green, South Shields, 20th February.

Waxwing *Bombus garrulus* Steady influx in Ireland, particularly in Northern Ireland where minimum of 250 in early March and largest flock of 90 in Belfast (Co. Down); scattered throughout England, with 110 at Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Tyne & Wear) on 24th February, 60 at Colne (Lancashire) on 27th February, and 80 at Bradford (West Yorkshire) on 5th March.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* Up to three, Wells Wood (Norfolk), to at least 6th March; three, Churchwood RSPB Reserve, Canterbury (Kent), 3rd March, with singles on 4th and 6th March.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Four, Woodhall Spa (Lincolnshire), 3rd March; at least seven, Castle Eden Dene Nature Reserve, Peterlee (Co. Durham), 29th February to at least 6th March.

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature

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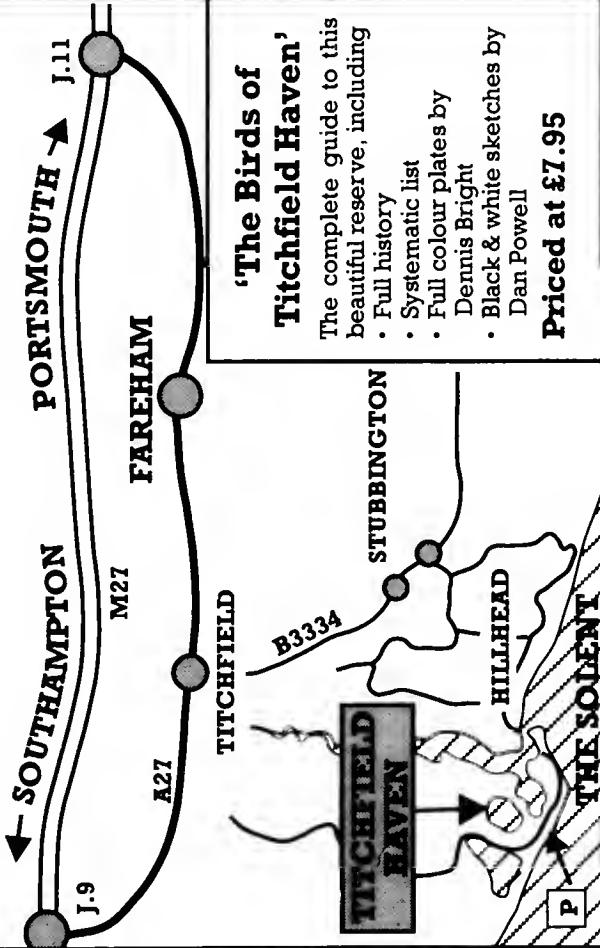
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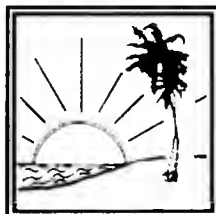
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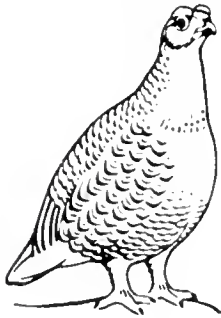
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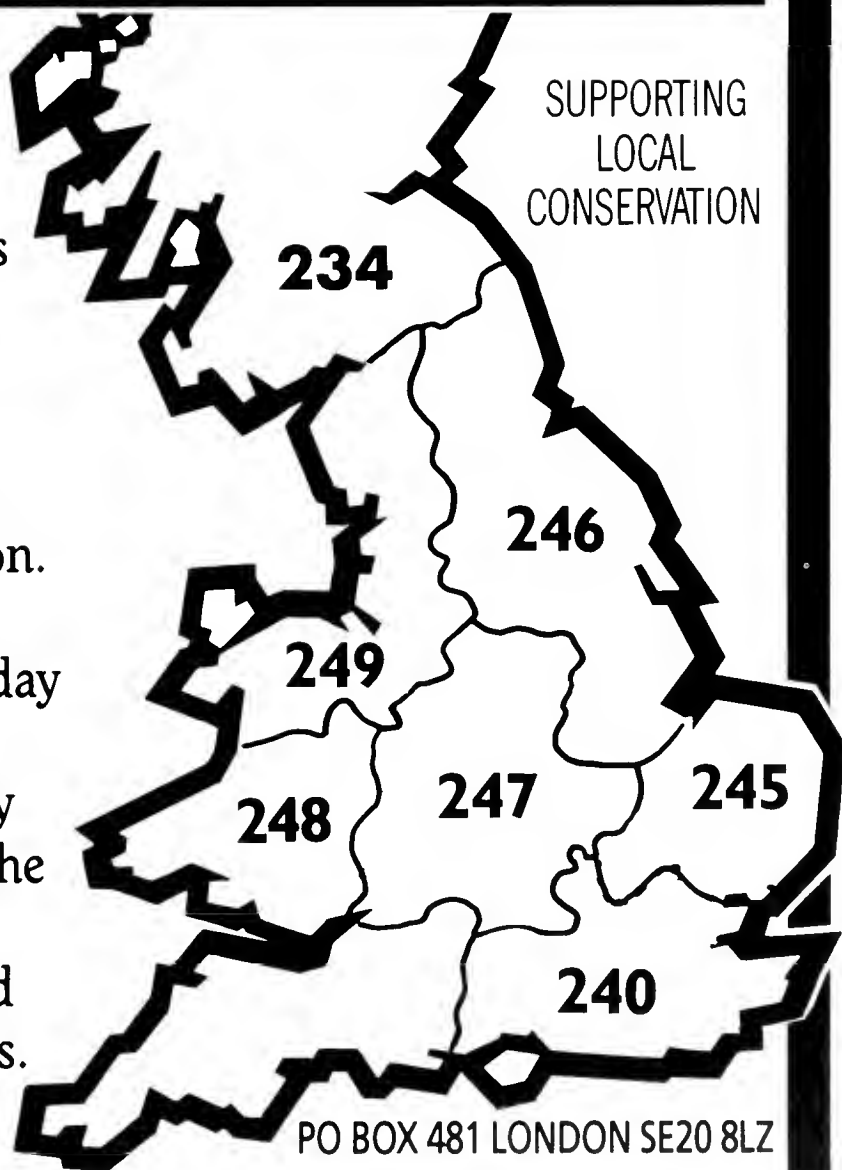
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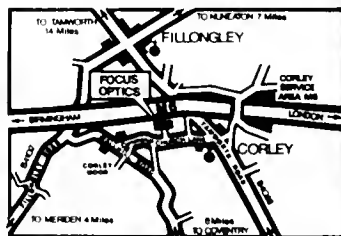
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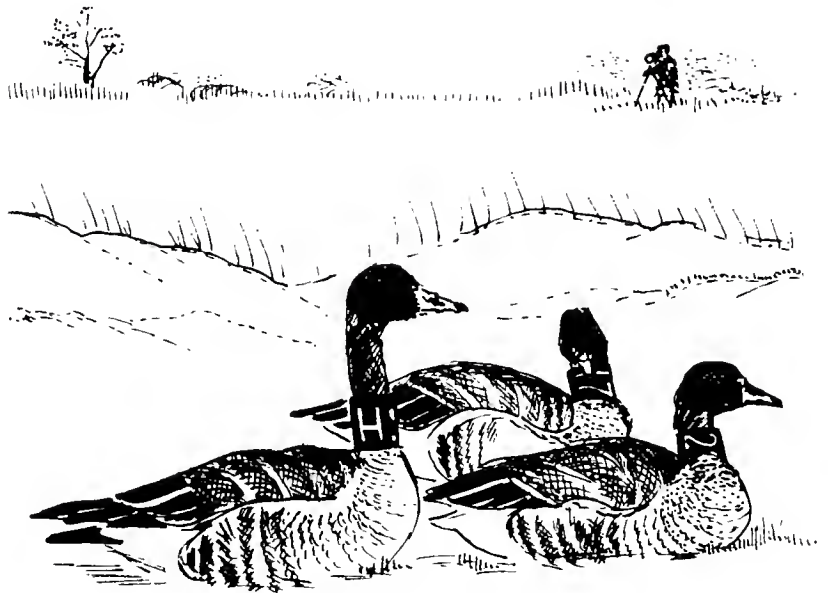
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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 5 MAY 1991

Bean Geese in the Yare Valley, Norfolk



Mariko Parslow-Otsu

The only British wintering grounds for Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* of the western race *fabalis* to have been permanently occupied for many years lie in the Yare Valley, east Norfolk. The discovery of some individuals carrying coded blue neckbands in November and December 1987 provided the first evidence of the origin of at least part of this population. The geese had been banded earlier that year at a moulting site in Västerbotten, Sweden (L. von Essen *in litt.*). This paper puts on record something of the history, recent status and population ecology of the Yare Valley Bean Geese. Winters referred to by a single year figure are dated by their December.

Bean Geese in Britain

The species was evidently common in Britain in the early part of the nineteenth century, but declined in the latter half. In recent times, there have been only two regular wintering localities, both involving the race *fabalis*: the Yare Valley, and the Dee Valley in southwest Scotland (Owen

et al. 1986). Since the 1950s, they have steadily declined at the latter site, and, since 1977, their occurrence has become erratic and numbers have not exceeded 40. Watson (1986) attributed their virtual disappearance to marshland reclamation.

Since about 1980, a new site has gradually become established in the Central Region of Scotland. At least until 1984, the geese were noted only in September-October (Watson 1986), but from 1986 a flock of just over 100 has stayed longer. For example, up to 116 were present from late September 1989 to February 1990 (J. Simpson *in litt.*). None has been seen bearing a neckband, so the flock appears to belong to a different sub-population from the Norfolk geese. It arrives appreciably earlier in the autumn. In December 1987, six had colour rings and were from a captive-breeding/release scheme in south-central Sweden which started in 1974 (C. Mitchell *in litt.*).

These birds apart, the only previous British recovery of a Bean Goose from its breeding range was a first-year shot in Northumberland in January 1954 which had been ringed in Jämtland, Sweden (Höglund 1956). (Höglund, 1962, reported that a second individual from the same brood was shot at Thisted, Denmark, in November 1959, thus providing a first link between the Bean Geese found in England and those in northwest Jutland: see later.) An orange-neckbanded Bean Goose seen in the Yare Valley during cold weather in January 1982 (RSPB Strumpshaw Reserve records) had probably been banded on migration in south Sweden.

Small numbers of Bean Geese, often involving the Russian subspecies *rossicus*, occasionally occur in various parts of Britain, especially following hard weather on the Continent. Maps of the species' recent distribution are provided by Owen *et al.* (1986) and Lack (1986), the latter, though, conveying an exaggerated impression of its normal status in Britain and Ireland.

The Yare Valley population

Maximum numbers of Bean Geese in the Yare Valley in each winter since 1939 are shown in fig. 1. Those up to 1981 are derived from Seago (1977) and the annual *Norfolk Bird Report* and those for 1982-89 mainly from personal observations. From 1957, an attempt has been made to distinguish late arrivals, normally as a result of cold-weather influxes, from the usual (or 'core') population present. It is impossible to compensate for possible bias due to different counters. (In the last few winters, I have noted a tendency by most other observers to undercount the numbers present.) Nevertheless, the general pattern is clear: a decline from the 1940s to a low in the 1960s; and an increase from about 1969 to the present day. It is uncertain whether the blank years of 1947, 1951, 1953 and 1954 were because there were no geese or no observers, but the former seems the most likely. Assuming this to be so, the decadal means were:

1940-49: 159 1950-59: 60 1960-69: 43 1970-79: 104 1980-89: 311

When numbers were low in the 1950s and 1960s, arrivals were frequently as late as January and never earlier than December. From

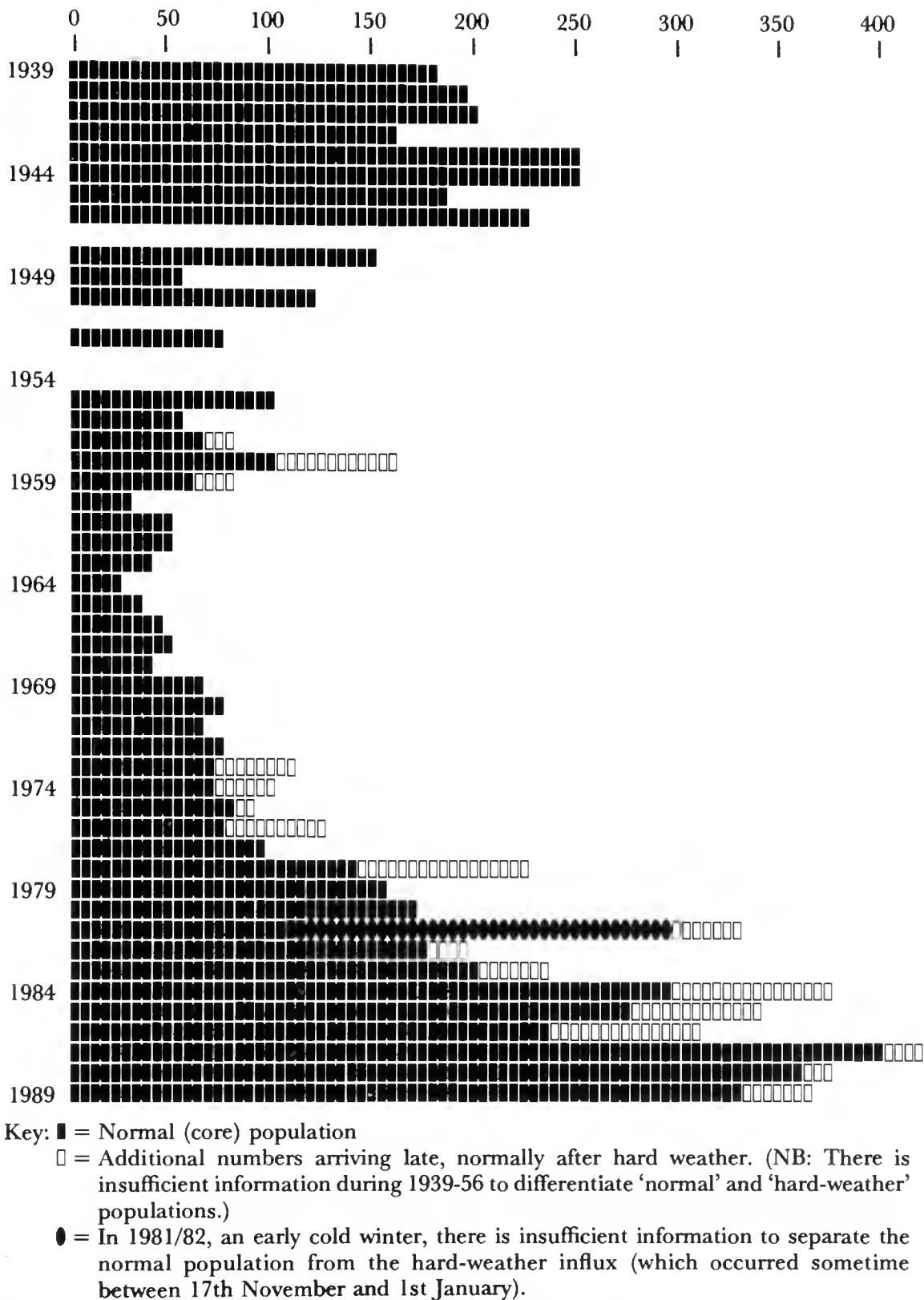


Fig. 1. Maximum numbers of Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* of the race *fabalis* in the Yare Valley, Norfolk, during 1939/40 to 1989/90

about 1971, as the population increased, first arrivals were in late November and became steadily earlier in the month. Over the last eight years, the timing of arrival of the first geese and the main influxes has varied. First arrivals have been as early as 24th October (1982: 18 individuals), and as late as 6th December (1986: three), but were most

frequent around 10th-18th November. The bulk of the population usually arrived in the period from the end of November to mid December. Three arrival-phases are detectable in most years. The first is comprised mainly or wholly of those which have failed to breed~(i.e. no or few families present); the population usually stabilises for a short period and is then followed by a second phase of arrivals (which may include more family groups). A further influx may occur at times of hard weather. Departures are usually completed between 18th February and 8th March, but may be earlier in mild winters (see below).

The marshes utilised by the geese lie between Norwich and the western end of Breydon Water. Three are currently of greatest importance. Cantley Marsh is the preferred site, its slight hollows and more extensive patches of sedge *Juncus* and reed *Phragmites* enabling the feeding geese to remain surprisingly well hidden, and thus feel more secure. Buckenham Marsh, which is contiguous with Cantley, was formerly the favoured, traditional site; but in 1978-79 it was partly ploughed, flattened and re-seeded, and, being too flat and open, is now resorted to mainly when the flock is disturbed from Cantley. Finally, Haddiscoe Island, which lies about 7 km to the east of the other two, tends to be utilised late in the season, when the main flock breaks up into smaller ones prior to departure; its use may also be influenced by the end of the inland shooting season on 31st January. All three are extensive (100-600 ha) grazing marshes. In recent years, sheep have partly replaced cattle and, especially on Buckenham Marsh, more intensive sheep grazing has led to a shorter sward more suited to Wigeon *Anas penelope* (Allport 1989). Other smaller areas of grazing marsh in the valley are used occasionally by the geese.

Up to seven Russian Bean Geese were present in 1987/88; they did not mix with *fabalis* and were otherwise unrecorded. Other wild geese using the Yare Valley in the last three winters included Whitefronts *Anser albifrons* (maxima 250-310 in each year), which frequently mix with the Bean Geese, and Pinkfeet *A. brachyrhynchus* (maximum 60 in 1988/89). Substantial numbers of feral Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* and Greylag

111. Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* in wintering habitat in Yare Valley, Norfolk, January 1990
(M. Parslow-Otsu)



Geese *Anser anser* and up to 12 feral Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* were also recorded.

Disturbance from shooting is absent or light over much of the area most used by the geese. Other human disturbance on the ground is relatively small. The Bean Geese are, however, like other geese, much perturbed by light aircraft, and in recent years flocks were frequently disturbed by regular low-flying helicopter traffic. The main roost of the Bean and White-fronted Geese is a small wooded lake on a private estate. When this freezes or is disturbed by shooting, Surlingham Broad—a Norfolk Naturalists' Trust reserve—provides an alternative.

Numbers and neckbanded individuals from 1987/88 to 1989/90

The numbers of Bean Geese in the Yare Valley in 1987 were the highest for at least 50 years and occurred during a winter which was mild, at least in Britain and the Low Countries (there was a short cold spell in southern Scandinavia in December). Numbers were slightly lower in the next two winters, which were even milder. (All three winters followed a remarkably similar pattern, with brief cold spells in northwest Europe in November or early December, but generally mild weather through the remainder.)

In 1987, the first four Bean Geese (including one neckbanded individual) arrived on 10th November (G. Allport *in litt.*). By 28th, 32 (nine with neckbands) were present, and by 8th December 342 (22 with neckbands). Only 12 juveniles were among those present on that date, and only two (perhaps four) further juveniles were located later in the winter (i.e. only 3.0-3.8% young). Peak counts of *fabalis* Bean Geese were 404 on 14th December, 397 on 18th January, 420 (and possibly an additional 48) on 3rd February, and 400 on 11th February. The main departure appears to have occurred by 18th February, and the last to be seen was a flock of 29 (none neckbanded) which flew off seawards, high to the northeast on 1st March.

In 1988/89, local observers reported that ten Bean Geese had arrived by 18th November and 138 the next day. Of 210 on 7th December, 18 carried neckbands. Numbers reached 356 by 17th December and 370 on 5th January (the season's peak), by which time 21 of the previous winter's neckbanded individuals had been recorded. The one which failed to appear (male H-21) was believed dead, as his mate (H-11), which always accompanied him in 1987/88, returned alone. Incredibly, the pair was seen together again in northwest Denmark on 28th March 1989 (Vejlerne Field Station records). Only one juvenile was present among the first 210 geese to arrive, and a total of only 13 was seen subsequently (3.8% young). The main departure took place early—between 24th and 31st January, with the last 46 in the Yare Valley on 12th February.

First arrivals in 1989 were on 15th November (17), with 101 the next day, 227 by the end of the month, 310 by 15th December and a peak of 360 on 27th January. There were 14 neckbanded individuals, all but one of which had arrived by mid December. As in the previous winter, one particular individual (male H-26) arrived with his unbanded mate much later than the others, on 12th January. All the neckbanded geese had been present in the previous two winters, and, as then, none was accompanied

by juveniles. The total number of juveniles was again low, with a maximum of only 16 (4.4%). After an exceptionally mild winter, departure was again early: there were still 310 on 3rd February, 182 on 5th, and, of the last 120 on 9th, 110 were watched flying off northeast at 07.30 GMT as if migrating. That evening, I followed them via the night ferry to Esbjerg.

Observations in Denmark, February 1990

Having watched Bean Geese departing northeast from Norfolk in spring, Denmark had seemed a possible destination. This was confirmed when 15 of the 22 neckbanded birds noted in the Yare Valley were located at Vejlerne, a nature reserve northeast of Thisted in northwest Jutland, in February and March 1988. At least four of the Norfolk birds plus the 'missing' H-21 were seen there in March 1989 (Vejlerne Field Station records).

From 11th February 1990, I searched all known Bean Goose sites on the Jutland peninsula and in Schleswig-Holstein for the neckbanded birds. Some 2,500 *fabalis* Bean Geese were examined, but the Norfolk geese at first eluded me. One individual, H-26, the independently minded, late arriver in Norfolk, and which had departed on 6th February, was located (with his unbanded mate) in a flock of 500 Bean Geese at Vejlerne on 14th February. By 23rd, he had moved to Lake Vullum, 10 km northwest, where about 700 Bean Geese were feeding and roosting. Suddenly, on 25th, the remaining 13 neckbanded geese which had wintered in Norfolk joined the flock. Where they had been in the interim remains unknown, but there are probably still some areas in Jutland that these geese have found but ornithologists have not. Six other geese from the same neckband series were also found in northwest Jutland, including three of the eight 'missing' individuals which had wintered in the Yare Valley in the previous two seasons.

Population ecology: preliminary thoughts

Thirty-six individuals were caught and neckbanded from among a moulting flock of about 300 non-breeding or failed-breeding geese in Västerbotten on 15th July 1987. At least ten were back at this same remote north Swedish site in summer 1988 and at least eight in 1989, but no additional Bean Geese were banded (L. von Essen & A. Andersson *in litt.*). The Swedish Sportsmen's Association will eventually publish a detailed analysis of results; meanwhile, the following summary and thoughts on the population ecology of the Yare Valley population are based mainly on my own observations on the banded and other Bean Geese in Norfolk and northwest Denmark.

As already mentioned, no fewer than 22 of the 36 wintered in the Yare Valley in 1987/88 (additionally, one was known to have been shot in Denmark, and eight others were recorded in Denmark or southern Sweden, where some wintered). Of these 22, all but one reappeared in Norfolk in 1988/89, while the missing bird was located in northwest Jutland in March 1989. This individual apart, fidelity by the neckbanded geese to the Yare Valley from one winter to the next was total. In 1989/90,



112. Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* in wintering habitat in Yare Valley, Norfolk, January 1990
(M. Parslow-Otsu)

only 14 of them returned, but three of the missing individuals were seen in northwest Denmark in February.

The indications, from this small neckbanded sample, are that the Bean Geese associated with the Yare Valley have a relatively low mortality rate. Of the 22 present at the beginning of the 1987/88 winter, all are known to have been alive 15 months later; 27 months later, in February 1990, at least 17 of them (77%) were still alive. The *annual* survival rate among Bean Geese marked in Finnmark, northern Norway, and wintering in southern Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands was 77%—itself regarded as high among *Anser* populations which are hunted in winter (Tveit 1984).

It seems likely that many of the Yare Valley Bean Geese in these three winters derived from this Swedish moulting flock. Other individuals must have been involved, however, since, at least in 1987/88, total numbers were higher than at the moulting site (and some geese from the same neckbanded group were known to have wintered elsewhere), and a few families occurred. Later, in 1989/90, at least three of the Yare Valley neckbanded birds were known to have wintered elsewhere.

Further evidence that the Yare Valley population is not entirely a closed one is provided by the yearly counts themselves and the proportion of juveniles in the population (table 1). Immigration clearly occurred in 1987, for example, when the increase on the previous year's maximum far exceeded the numbers of juveniles present.

Table 1 indicates that productivity among the Yare Valley population has slumped in the last three or four years. Among the 'core' population in

Table 1. Numbers of juvenile Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* of the race *fabalis* in the Yare Valley, Norfolk, in winters 1983/84 to 1989/90

PHASE 1 refers to first arrivals; *PHASE 2* to main flock (includes *PHASE 1* birds); *PEAK* to maximum count (usually later in winter, often following hard weather, too late reliably to differentiate all juveniles). – denotes no information

Winter	<i>PHASE 1</i>			<i>PHASE 2</i>			<i>PEAK</i>		
	Total	No. juv	% juv	Total	No. juv	% juv	Total	No. juv	% juv
1983/84	175	42	24.0	198	–	–	236	–	–
1984/85	167	17	10.2	297	83	27.9	375	–	–
1985/86	221	7	3.2	275	36	13.1	340	–	–
1986/87	214	18	8.4	237	20	8.4	312	–	–
1987/88	210	0	0	397	12	3.0	420	14–16	3.3–3.8
1988/89	210	1	0.4	356	13	3.6	370	–	–
1989/90	172	4	2.3	326	13	3.9	360	16	4.4

Decembers 1983-86, juveniles totalled 181 out of an accumulated total of 1,007 individuals in the four years (mean 18.0% juveniles p.a.), while in the three Decembers 1987-89 there were only 38 juveniles in a total of 1,079 (mean 3.5% juveniles p.a.). From about January onwards, it becomes difficult reliably to age all *fabalis* Bean Geese in the field. Some yearlings can still be recognised, however, and, at Vejlerne in February 1990, two flocks totalling 575 geese contained a minimum of 67 first-years (11.7%): a much higher proportion than in the Yare Valley.

This suggests that, at least during the last three mild winters, although numbers have been high in the Yare Valley (and the 'core' population at its highest-ever levels), most adults with families have stopped at an earlier stage in their journey.

Discussion

Historically, the Bean Goose population in northwest Jutland has fluctuated in parallel with the Yare Valley one, albeit at a higher level, reaching a similar low point in the 1940s-60s, with a slight increase after 1974 (Møller 1978). The declines in Denmark and Britain coincided with a drastic contraction in the breeding range in central Sweden and Norway, which was possibly caused by increased human disturbance and persecution, but also agricultural change (Melquist & von Bothmar 1984).

Large numbers of *fabalis* Bean Geese winter in eastern Denmark (Madsen 1986), and some of these pass through the Vejlerne area on migration. But, at least in February 1990, they did not mix with the flocks containing neckbanded geese. In Skåne, southern Sweden, up to 25,000 *fabalis* are found in mild winters (and 60,000 pass through on autumn migration, some to Denmark) (Nilsson & Persson 1984). Up to four of the H-series neckbanded geese have been recorded there, but none of those which have visited the Yare Valley. In the last three mild winters, only 800-2,400 *fabalis* have been found in the Netherlands/northwest Germany, and none of these bore blue neckbands (Ganzenwerkgroep Nederland/Belgie 1990; L. van den Bergh *in litt.*).

Bean Geese became fully protected in Britain under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act. Elsewhere in Europe, restrictions have been

introduced to limit spring shooting—in Denmark as early as 1955 (Meltofte 1981)—but the species remains legal quarry in most countries. In Sweden and Denmark, large numbers are shot in autumn and early winter. Jönsson *et al.* (1985), for example, found that, in a sample of 200 Bean Geese shot by rifle in southern Sweden at the end of the local hunting season, 62% of adults and 28% of yearlings carried one to 12 shotgun pellets in their tissues. Mortality from shooting among Bean Geese wintering in these (and other European) countries is inevitably higher than in Norfolk, where, to date, every single neckbanded bird that has arrived in each of the last three winters has made it back at least as far as Denmark the following spring.

Observations of the neckbanded geese have indicated a strong link between the Norfolk and northwest Jutland populations, but none with the Netherlands, while separation between the populations wintering in northwest and eastern Denmark is also probable. In contrast to the large numbers wintering from southern Sweden through eastern Denmark to Poland and eastern Germany, the total numbers of *fabalis* Bean Geese wintering in northwest Denmark and Britain are small.

Vejlerne, one of the main sites for Bean Geese in northwest Jutland, has been a national nature reserve since 1960. In Britain, although the species may no longer be shot, there is little protection of its habitat. Two of the main Yare Valley feeding sites have no protected status, and the welcome low-intensity grazing regimes of the current farmers cannot necessarily be relied upon to continue. The third, Buckenham Marsh, while notified as an SSSI, is a second-choice site, owing partly to topography and partly to overgrazing.

The fortuitous appearance of the Bean Geese carrying neckbands greatly facilitated work in progress on the behaviour of individual geese, as well as establishing the migration link with northwest Jutland and providing additional clues on population structure. The capture of Bean Geese in the Yare Valley would be extremely difficult, and it is much to be hoped that additional neckbanding can be carried out in the same region of northern Sweden in the future. I suspect that a similar exercise slightly farther south in eastern Norway would throw light on the origin of the small Scottish wintering population.

Acknowledgments

For assistance in the Yare Valley, I am most grateful to staff at the RSPB's Strumpshaw Reserve, especially N. Baskerville, for help with dawn counts, and A. T. Prescott, who went so far as to use his annual leave to assist me in Denmark; the RSPB kindly met part of our ferry costs. My thanks are also due to G. Allport; to Bean Goose colleagues throughout Europe whom I badgered by telephone until I at last discovered whose neckbanded birds I was watching, and especially to Å. Andersson and L. von Essen in Sweden, whose birds they were; to the Danish Miljøministeriet and J. P. Kjeldsen and staff of the Vejlerne Ecology Field Station for accommodation and other help; to Dr A. D. Fox for comments on an earlier draft of the paper; and, finally, to my husband, for letting me take the car to Denmark for nearly a month.

Summary

Over the last 50 years, the only permanent British wintering locality for Bean Geese *Anser fabalis* of the race *fabalis* has been the Yare Valley, Norfolk. After declining to a low point in the 1960s, numbers increased, reaching a record high of 420 in 1987/88. In that winter, 22

individuals appeared which had been neckbanded in northern Sweden; of these, 21 and 14, respectively, returned in the next two winters. The occurrence of the same neckbanded geese in northwest Denmark in late winter/early spring, after their departure from Norfolk, and subsequently of some of the 'missing' Norfolk individuals, established a close link between the two regions. At least in part, the population utilising the two areas seems distinct from the much larger one wintering elsewhere in Europe. To date, the survival rate of the neckbanded birds wintering in the Yare Valley has been high compared with other Bean Goose populations. Despite the increased population in the Yare Valley, the proportion of juveniles in the three years from 1987/88 was extremely low (mean 3.5%) compared with the preceding four winters (mean 18%); all three winters were mild and it is possible that most geese with families stopped at an earlier stage in their migration. Although Bean Geese are protected from shooting in Britain, their main feeding sites and roost in the Yare Valley have little formal protection or management.

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Mariko Parslow-Otsu, Orchard Cottage, Cranes Lane, Kingston, Cambridge CB3 7NJ

Seventy-five years ago...

'AN immature example of the White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) was trapped on February 9th, 1916, by a keeper on Manton Warren, not far from the Scawby gull-ponds. . . . A Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo l. lagopus*) was shot in the same locality on November 12th, 1915. I have examined these specimens, which were exhibited, both under wrong names, in aid of the Red Cross Society, in an inn not far from the place of their capture.' (*Brit. Birds* 9: 319-320, May 1916)

World status of the Red Kite



A background to the experimental reintroduction to England and Scotland

Ian M. Evans and M. W. Pienkowski

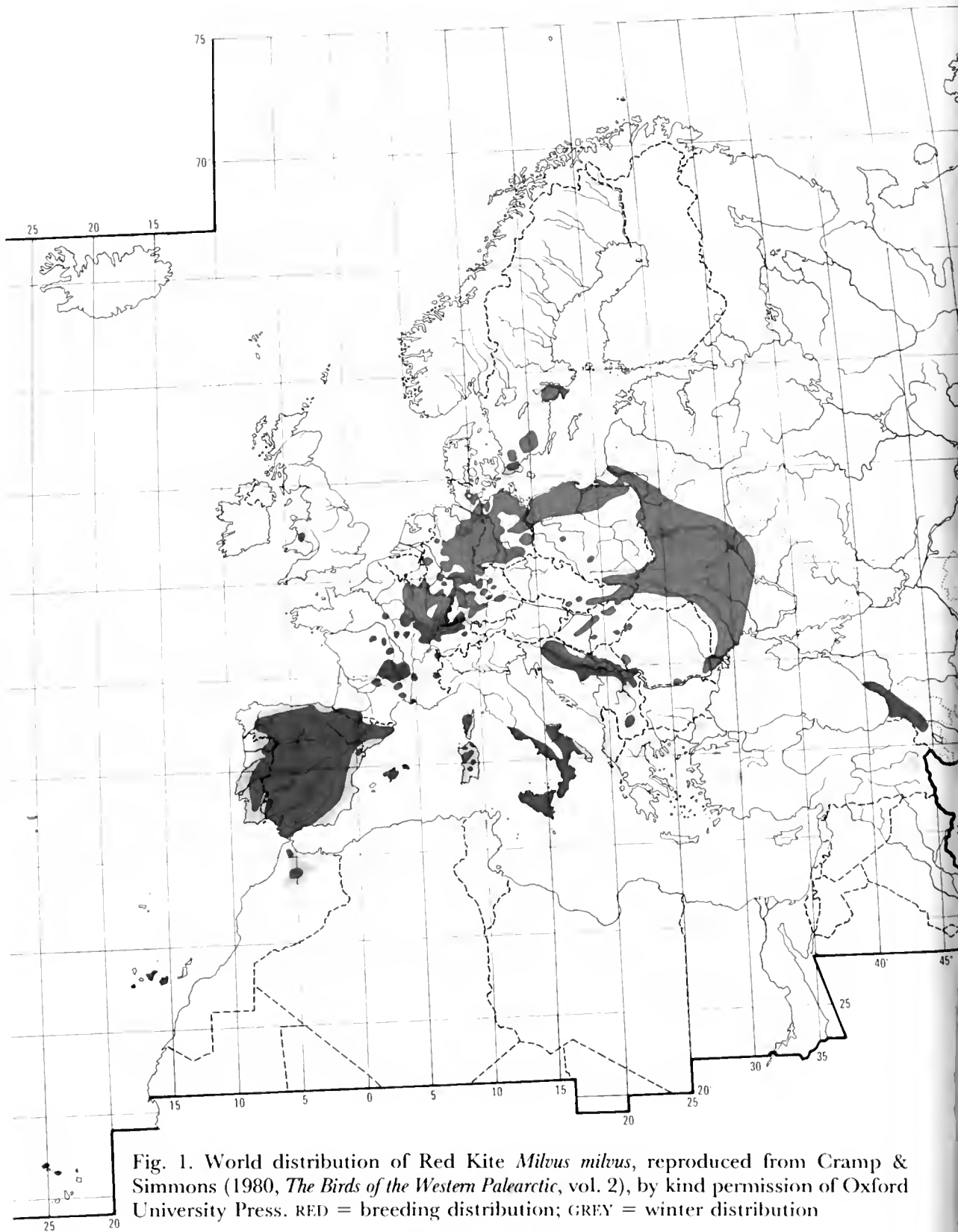
In 1989, the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) started a joint experimental programme to re-establish the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in its former range throughout Britain. This followed a long period of detailed assessment by the NCC and the RSPB as to the desirability and practicality of such a project. It also followed the collaboration of these and other organisations in reintroducing the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* to Britain, a project which has now achieved all its early targets.

The purpose of this paper is to set the context for this programme by reviewing the Red Kite's world status; outline the features to be considered before embarking on a reintroduction programme; and summarise progress so far.

Historical status

The Red Kite was formerly common throughout Europe. During the nineteenth century, it inhabited the area now covered by Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, European USSR, the Netherlands (although rather rare), parts of north Africa, Siberia and 'the greatest part of Asia' (Morris 1904), although the last is perhaps rather sweeping. In Britain, it was said to have 'swarmed in the streets of London' in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (literature quoted by Nisbet 1959) and was protected by legislation on account of the cleaning benefits of its scavenging habit.

More recently, the geographic range (fig. 1) was described by Walters Davies & Davis (1973) as extending north from Iberia, through southern and eastern France and Germany to southern Sweden. It extended eastwards as far as the western Soviet Union, from the Baltic Republics in the north to the Balkans and the Caucasus in the south. Within this range, the distribution was rather fragmented, since it was absent from most of



southern Poland, Czechoslovakia, eastern Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and northwestern Germany. Outside Europe, populations survived in parts of northwestern Africa and in the Canary and Cape Verde Islands. The northern breeding populations (with the exception of those in Britain) are mainly migratory and winter in the Mediterranean area. In recent years, however, increasing

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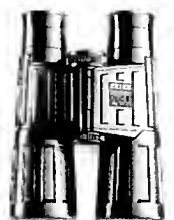
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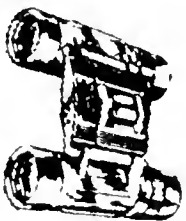
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numbers of individuals have remained in Sweden and Germany throughout the year (see also Cramp & Simmons 1980).

The decline in the abundance of the Red Kite during the nineteenth century has been attributed mainly to human persecution. To some extent, this continues today, despite legal protection. As a consequence, this species is rare over much of its present range, and it is considered vulnerable in world terms. It is one of three British species on the *World Checklist of Threatened Birds* (Collar & Andrew 1988). It has been given protection under Annex 1 of the EEC Bird Directive, Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and the Berne and Bonn Conventions. This legal protection (and in some cases physical protection of nest sites) has been beneficial, since it has halted the decline in several countries and encouraged some recovery of range. In Britain, such measures have allowed the small remnant of British Red Kites in Wales to increase and expand in range slightly. Low breeding productivity, however, partly caused by egg-collecting, and illegal poisoning remain problems in Wales (see below).

Present status

In the past, there have been few attempts to census the entire world population of the Red Kite. Recently, Meyburg & Meyburg (1987) assessed the status of raptor populations in countries bordering the Mediterranean, whilst GÉnsbøl (1986) has covered the Western Palearctic. In a number of areas (e.g. Wales, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark and Corsica), regular monitoring has meant that the population status is relatively well known. In many others (e.g. mainland France and Germany), however, only rough estimates can be made, whilst in the rest (e.g. Morocco and the USSR) quantitative data are lacking.

We sent requests for information to ornithologists in all countries in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East where Red Kites were thought to have bred or wintered in relatively recent years. Contributors were asked to provide recent information on the actual number of breeding pairs in their country as well as recent and past population trends. A literature survey was also undertaken. The results of the review are given below and breeding aspects summarised in table 1. This can be viewed against the distribution map reproduced from Cramp & Simmons (1980) in fig. 1.

In order to aid identification of patterns of change, the review below is ordered approximately geographically. We have tried to minimise breaks in the list where the distribution is fairly continuous. To do this, we start in the northwest, and proceed eastwards across central Europe, southwards to the Mediterranean, and finally westwards to Iberia and the Atlantic islands.

NORWAY There have been no breeding records this century, although apparently there was a very small population in the county of Östfold up to about 1880. The species has remained a rare visitor. There has, however, been a marked increase in the number of records in recent years, with three to four annually. These birds are probably from Denmark or Sweden (Geoffrey Acklam *in litt.*).

SWEDEN Since the early 1970s, the population in the south has increased steadily. By 1980, there were 50 pairs, of which 42 were successful, and, in 1981, 54 pairs, of which 49 were successful (Svensson 1982). By 1986, the population had increased three-fold, to 150 pairs (Sylvén 1987), and, by 1989, to over 200 pairs. Productivity has been estimated at 1.98 young per successful pair and 1.54 per territorial pair (Magnus Sylvén, Roy Dennis *in litt.* and verbally).

DENMARK The large population of Red Kites was exterminated at the turn of this century, but breeding was occasionally attempted between 1920 and 1970. During the 1970s, the species returned as a regular breeder. Only 10-15 pairs have become established, breeding annually during 1980-89, mainly in southeast Jutland (Hans Erik Jørgensen *in litt.*). Breeding success ranges from 53-63% of nests in the core area of southeastern Jutland to more than 50% in other areas. An average brood size of 2.1 young from a total of 54 successful nests has been recorded (Jørgensen 1989).

BRITAIN & IRELAND Formerly bred in every county, but during the nineteenth century relentless persecution exterminated this species from England, Scotland and Ireland. Only a small remnant group of approximately 12 individuals survived in the more remote parts of mid Wales. This population has, as a result of nest protection, increased very slowly up to the record level of 69 territorial pairs (of which 52 actually nested and 32 fledged young) in 1989, and 62 nesting pairs producing 70 fledged young in 1990 (P. E. Davis *in litt.* and verbally).

Before 1980, almost all the known breeding was confined to an area of about 70 × 45 km in mid Wales (Davis & Newton 1981). Since 1981, the population has expanded slightly outside this area. Recolonisation of former haunts is, however, continually hampered by the illegal use of poison baits and to some extent by the destructive practice of egg-collecting.

The productivity during 1951-80 was notoriously poor, with, on average, only 0.54 young per territorial pair. This is equivalent to 0.66 young per nesting pair and 1.34 young per successful pair (n=676). During 1964-80, mean clutch and brood sizes of 2.20 and 1.35 respectively were recorded, and only 40% of all nests fledged young (Davis & Newton 1981). Recent breeding statistics for 1985-89 indicate that productivity has remained around these levels (P. E. Davis *in litt.*).

FRANCE Thiollay & Terrasse (1984) estimated 2,300-2,900 pairs in 1979-82. No more-recent survey has been undertaken for the whole of France. The main breeding areas for the Red Kite in 1982 were Lorraine (740-790 pairs), Franche-Comté (700-1,000 pairs), Champagne-Ardenne (480-550 pairs) and Midi-Pyrénées (800-1,000 pairs). Smaller populations are also found in the Massif Central, Auvergne and Burgundy. Recent estimates are 400 pairs in Franche-Comté (*Atlas du Jura* by Joveniaux *et al.*, cited by Dr J. François *in litt.*) and 100 pairs in the Haute-Loire, Auvergne (Bernard Joubert *in litt.*). In Champagne-Ardenne, the large population appears to have decreased in the last five to seven years; this is thought to be related to habitat loss and increased cultivation. Many winter roosts have also disappeared in this region; this has been attributed to successive cold spells and a decline in refuse dumps. In Champagne, Red Kite productivity of 1.51 young per breeding pair and 1.86 young per successful pair has been recorded from 53 occupied nests in 1971-82 (Christian Riols *in litt.*).

Poisoning, both legal and illegal, is the main form of persecution and can occur on a very large scale. For instance, a plague of voles (*Microtinae*) led to a poisoning campaign over 150,000 ha in southeastern Haute-Marne, one of the best areas for birds of prey in northeastern France. Also, in the western part of Marne department, raptors are still poisoned, trapped and shot despite legal protection: the Red Kite is the most vulnerable species (Christian Riols *in litt.*).

In a recent detailed study of the population of the Red Kite on Corsica, Patrimonio (1990) reported a stable population of 100-180 pairs on the island. The use of strychnine baits against foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, however, poses a threat, although the bird is protected by law. Average clutch size was 2.85 eggs per nest; 46% of eggs produced fledged young. Productivity was, on average, 1.94 young per successful pair and 1.27 per breeding pair (n=22).

NETHERLANDS There have been only two recent breeding records. One was in 1976, when a

pair was said to have reared two young, but the report was not properly documented. Two nests were discovered in 1977: one was successful, probably leading to the rearing of two young, while the other was destroyed at the egg stage (Edward van IJzendoorn *in litt.*; Scharringa 1978). Incidental breeding cannot be ruled out in the future, as individual kites are often seen in spring near the eastern and southern borders, presumably having strayed from breeding areas in Germany or Belgium.

BELGIUM Red Kites ceased to breed from around 1921 until 1973, when breeding was confirmed again. Since then, the population has increased from one to ten pairs in 1973-78 to 15-20 pairs in 1979-89, but has remained stable for several years. The main breeding areas, which are comparatively small, are in the east and southeast. Outside these areas, breeding is irregular and scattered. Productivity is good, with 2.32 young per successful pair ($n=19$) recorded during 1985-88 (René de Liedekerke *in litt.*).

LUXEMBOURG Since the 1940s, numbers increased steadily to 12-15 pairs, with a maximum of 20 recorded in one year. It is now thought that the population has reached its upper limit, although possibly some expansion may still occur (David Crowther *in litt.*).

WEST GERMANY After a decline in the 1960s, the population recovered in the mid 1970s to early 1980s. During this time, Rheinwald (1982) estimated the population at 2,000 pairs. The present population is estimated at 1,700-2,200 pairs, of which the majority are found in Lower Saxony and Hesse (600-800 pairs each), although Bavaria, Baden-Wurttemberg, Rhineland and Westphalia also hold 100-200 pairs each (Alistair Hill *in litt.*). The population is now declining, which Hill associates with changes in rubbish-disposal methods. The substantial reduction in the number of overwintering kites, which were very numerous at tips during that part of the year, has coincided with a reduction in the number of rubbish tips. Increasing numbers of kites are now migrating to wintering areas around the Mediterranean (Alistair Hill *in litt.*).

EAST GERMANY Previous estimates of 1,200-1,400 pairs (Ortlieb 1980) have now been revised to 2,500 pairs in 1986 (Dr Werner Eichstädt *in litt.*). Stubbe & Gedeon (1989) studied a total of 491 pairs in 1988, of which 72% bred. A total of 645 young fledged from 57% of the nests, giving an average productivity of 2.31 young per successful pair and 1.82 per nesting pair. The density of pairs ranged from 0 to 69.2 per 10 km².

POLAND There is currently an estimated population of about 300 pairs, distributed mainly in the west and northwest, the highest concentration probably being in western Pomerania, with about 60 pairs. Red Kites are only scarce breeders in eastern and central Poland, and absent in the mountainous southern regions. Numbers have increased considerably since the nineteenth century. Present trends indicate an increase in some western regions, whilst in others numbers remain stable (Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk *in litt.*).

USSR The Red Kite is included in the Red Data Book of the USSR, but it lacks an accurate population census. In the Baltic Republics, it is a very rare breeder: in Latvia, only two or three pairs are thought to breed, although this has not been documented recently (Dr Janis Baumanis *in litt.*); in Lithuania, there are only one or two breeding pairs; while, in Estonia, it is only an occasional visitor, with two records in 1980-89. Farther south, in Byelorussia, the Red Kite is also rare, breeding in the western and central parts of the region; the exact number of pairs is, however, not known (Vilju Lilleht *in litt.*). On the eastern seaboard of the Black Sea, only a few isolated pairs are thought to survive in the Caucasus. In the USSR as a whole, it is estimated that no more than 100 pairs survive, but this estimate is almost certainly the least reliable of those given here.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA Red Kites have been recolonising western areas (Bohemia and Moravia) since 1975, where they bred in the nineteenth century. The breeding population has now increased to 20-25 pairs in 1989. Southern Moravia is the main breeding area, holding about ten pairs (Dr Karel Štastný *in litt.*).

SWITZERLAND A survey of Red Kites during the breeding seasons of 1985-87 showed a

considerable increase compared with estimates in 1972-76. There was an approximately 40% increase in the number of occupied 10 × 10 km squares, and a corresponding increase in range, especially in the western part of the Swiss Plateau. The breeding population now stands at an estimated 235-300 pairs, an increase of 55-100%. Northern Switzerland remains the principal breeding and wintering area, but Red Kites are also occurring more frequently on the plateau in winter, probably as a result of two new roosts on the southern border of the breeding range, first discovered in the winter of 1987/88 (Mosimann & Juillard 1988).

AUSTRIA After a lack of breeding records in the 1950s and 1960s, Red Kites have returned as regular breeders, probably by immigration from Germany or Switzerland. Numbers are still very small, at only two to four pairs (Hans-Martin Berg *in litt.*).

HUNGARY Last proven breeding was in the early 1970s at Hanság, in the northwest, near the Austrian border. Since then, the species has become extremely rare also on migration (Zoltán Waliczky *in litt.*).

ROMANIA No information since Cramp & Simmons (1980), who referred to about ten pairs, although the population status in the rest of the Balkans suggests that the species no longer breeds in this region of Europe.

BULGARIA There is no recent proof of breeding, and the only breeding-season records were in 1894, 1940, 1960, 1962 and 1969. Persecution and the felling of lowland forest are thought to be the causal factors for this absence (John Lawton-Roberts verbally).

YUGOSLAVIA Red Kites were formerly distributed throughout the north and in Macedonia. There was, however, a marked decline at the turn of the century, and the last record of breeding was in the Sava Valley in 1968. Recent sightings were near Apatin in northwest Serbia in 1979 and near Pančevo, in the Belgrade area, in April 1980 (Vasić *et al.* 1985).

ITALY This declining breeding population was estimated by Meyburg & Meyburg (1987) to be in the region of 150-300 pairs. The population is confined mainly to southern Italy (Marco Gustin *in litt.*), with no more than ten pairs in Molise region, 16 in Abruzzo and some tens of pairs in Basilicata region (Dr Massimo Pellegrini *in litt.*). The most northerly population is found in Monti della Tolfa in central Italy. The breeding status of this small, geographically isolated group of three or four pairs has been particularly well studied in recent years. Productivity is low, with mean clutch and brood sizes of 1.92 and 1.08 respectively, 0.6 young per breeding pair and 0.77 young per successful pair (Arcà 1989). This compares with 2.5 young per breeding pair in Sicily (Massa 1980).

Persecution (illegal hunting and nest robbery) by man is said to be mainly responsible for the decline in the breeding status of this species, although habitat change is another contributory factor. This decline is not confined just to the mainland. In Sicily, a population of 80-100 pairs was the healthiest in Italy ten years ago. Since then, numbers have declined to 40 pairs (Iapichino & Massa 1989), and now 25-30 pairs (Bruno Massa *in litt.*). In Sardinia, some ten to 20 pairs remain (Schenk 1981), but the decline continues. In addition to those breeding, many Red Kites from central Europe winter in the country, with roosts in Sicily of up to 40 individuals (Galea & Massa 1985), and in central Italy of up to 30 in Lazio (Arcà 1989) and 40 in Abruzzo, where rubbish tips are an important food source (Dr Massimo Pellegrini *in litt.*).

ALBANIA No information is available since Cramp & Simmons (1980), but, in view of trends in surrounding areas, it is likely that few if any breeding pairs are left.

GREECE Red Kites were formerly not uncommon winter visitors from October to March in north and central Greece (Lambert 1957). Now, they occur only irregularly during migration and rarely as winter visitors. Extremely few are involved. It is considered unlikely that breeding ever occurred (George I. Handrinos *in litt.*).

MIDDLE EAST There is no recent proof of breeding in Turkey, although a few summer records of individual birds were reported during the late 1970s and 1980s in northern and

northeastern Turkey (R. F. Porter verbally). Red Kites are rare winter immigrants, with a few on passage in Turkey and northwestern Iran. Records from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and northern Arabia do occur, but rarely (H. Shirihi in prep.).

CYPRUS Red Kites are classified as accidental visitors, only two of the 13 claimed records of which have been accepted (C. J. L. Bennett *in litt.*).

ISRAEL Red Kites are extremely rare winter visitors, mainly with flocks of Black Kites *M. migrans*. In the last 40 years, only seven individuals have been positively identified, mostly during 1978-89. One has appeared regularly at Gevulot and one or two in the Hula Valley in the winters of 1983/84-1988/89. The species was described as a very common migrant and winter visitor, and to some extent breeder, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of this century. It is possible, however, that such reports were incorrect (H. Shirihi in prep.).

EGYPT Red Kites occur as rare migrants in very small numbers. For example, the numbers counted at Suez in autumn 1981 and spring 1982 were 11 and five respectively (Mullié & Meininger 1985).

ALGERIA There has been no recent proof of breeding, although Red Kites bred in Ksar el Boukhari and Djebel Dekma in the nineteenth century. The species is now a very rare visitor in both summer and winter (Ledant *et al.* 1981).

TUNISIA During the past 15 years, no breeding pairs of Red Kites were discovered and only one individual was recorded in summer, in an oak forest in the northeast (Khoumirie) on 2nd June 1975 (Thierry Gaultier *in litt.*). Apart from this summer record, the species regularly winters in North Africa in small numbers and is reported annually on spring migration at Cap Bon, where fewer than 20 individuals are seen in any one year.

MALTA The species occurs as a rare and irregular passage migrant. During migration counts in 1969-73, only two individuals (both on autumn passage) were seen, on 19th August 1970 and 27th September 1971 (Beaman & Galea 1974). Up to 1989, only about 15 occurrences have been recorded for the islands (Joe Sultana *in litt.*).

SPAIN Cramp & Simmons (1980) cited estimates of 3,000 and 10,000 pairs, but Meyburg & Meyburg (1987) considered that the population was considerably smaller, at about 1,000 pairs. Current estimates of a stable population of 3,000 pairs are, however, more soundly based (Dr Eduardo de Juana *in litt.*). Within this stability, the number of pairs breeding in any year oscillates considerably (e.g. in Navarra: Aldasoro 1985). There are major regional variations. For instance, in Catalonia in the northeast, Red Kites are resident breeders and scarce autumn and spring migrants (Muntaner 1985). The breeding distribution is rather fragmented and present population trends are unconfirmed, but thought to be stable. The illegal use of poison, forbidden since 1983, is probably the main reason for the species' absence from large areas of this region, although shooting, electrocution and egg-collecting are frequent and must also be detrimental to the population. Muntaner (1985) considered that the Catalonian population is probably buffered by immigrants from Aragon, where the species is considerably more abundant.

The status on the Balearic Islands is not known precisely. On Mallorca, Red Kites were formerly widespread, but within a few years had become restricted to a remote mountain region owing to human harassment, and are now seriously threatened. On Menorca, the population is thought to be stable, but its size has not been surveyed; it is considered to be common on the island (Muntaner 1981), and in 1974 R. J. Prytherch & R. Brock (*in litt.*) estimated at least 100 pairs and possibly twice that number.

PORTUGAL The Red Kite has been one of the most persecuted raptors in this country. This has probably been the main cause of the species' marked decline in the past few decades, although since 1974 the species has been given full legal protection. Other closely related species such as the Black Kite have not been adversely affected, since most raptors are shot in the hunting season and this affects mainly resident species (Palma 1985). The current size

of the breeding population of the Red Kite seems to have stabilised at about 100 pairs according to observations made by CEMPA in 1985-89 (Dr A. M. Teixeira *in litt.*). This compares with population estimates of 100-120 pairs during 1978-84 (Rufino *et al.* 1985).

MOROCCO The Red Kite is one of the raptors on which there is least information. There is, however, no doubt that it still inhabits the forests of the Rif, pre-Rif and western Middle Atlas, albeit in reduced numbers. There have also been several reports of individuals observed in summer in eastern Morocco, the Central Plateau and the central High Atlas (Thévenot *et al.* 1985). The breeding population is estimated at no more than 20 pairs (Bergier 1987) and is probably declining. Breeding has not been proven in the last ten years (Michel Thévenot *in litt.*). A small number of European Red Kites also overwinter. According to migration counts at Gibraltar, 100-200 are seen making the annual trip during the main passage times of late February to early June and mid August to mid October (Bergier 1987).

The future of the Red Kite is rather uncertain. Although, like all Moroccan raptors, it is fully protected by law, this is often ignored, and direct killing (trapping, hunting and destruction of nests) still remains one of the principal causes of decline of many raptor species. The use of toxic chemicals is perhaps the most serious threat to the survival of Red Kites, since strychnine is officially used in massive doses in campaigns against carnivorous mammals, while *Parathion* is used against House/Spanish Sparrows *Passer domesticus/hispaniolensis* and Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* (Thévenot *et al.* 1985).

CANARY ISLANDS Lack & Southern (1949), in their survey of Tenerife, observed several Red Kites, mainly in the mountains and sometimes near the coast. By the late 1960s, however, the species had been exterminated in the archipelago (Aurelio Martin *in litt.*).

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS The Red Kites on these islands have been described as a distinct subspecies, *M. m. fasciicauda* Hartert 1914, which resembles the normal Red Kite except that it has a barred tail (C. J. Hazevoet *in litt.*). Bourne (1955) did not record Black Kite, but described how it resembled *fasciicauda*, which he reported to be abundant everywhere, especially in the towns and along the shore. Black Kites have increased considerably and nowadays *fasciicauda* is very rare, as a result of factors which have not been fully elucidated. Persecution may have been a factor in the decline of *fasciicauda* in the past, but is not a problem nowadays, since there are very few firearms on the Cape Verde Islands. Nest robbery by children may have been another factor, since it is presently proving detrimental to both the Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* (C. J. Hazevoet *in litt.*).

C. J. Hazevoet (*in litt.*), during four prolonged visits in 1986-89, saw only one Red Kite on the island of Santo Antao and occasional individuals showing the rather puzzling characteristics of both Black and Red Kites on the islands of Santiago and Maio. Apart from such birds, only Black Kites were seen. C. J. Hazevoet also received details of birds that were alleged Red Kites, but photographs showed them to be either Black Kites or hybrids. As breeding has not been proved for many years, the population size of the Red Kite is very hard to judge, since *M. m. fasciicauda* may in fact be itself an early sign of interbreeding. C. J. Hazevoet considers that the Red Kite is gravely threatened and, at most, only a few pairs survive, Santo Antao being its last relative stronghold.

Pros and cons of reintroduction projects

IUCN (1987) used the term 'translocation' to define the movement of 'living organisms from one area with free release to another.' This includes introductions, reintroductions and restocking. An introduction is the release of either captive-born or free-ranging wild-born animals into an area outside their original range. Such releases often disrupt natural populations, and the NCC, voluntary conservation organisations and international conservation bodies all discourage these. Reintroduction (a term widely accepted despite its doubtful etymology) is a translocation that releases animals of any origin into an area within their original geographic range. Restocking is a sub-set of this, usually relating to

releases in an area in which some of the original population remains.

Reintroduction schemes are potentially valuable conservation techniques for several reasons:

1. They can restore important elements lost from the wildlife resource.
2. This is particularly valuable in the case of populations of relatively small size and/or distribution. The best way of enhancing the long-term prospects of survival of such populations is by extending their range. Populations of birds of prey are extremely vulnerable to sudden unpredictable changes in the environment. For example, Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* were wiped out across most of the North American continent (as well as large parts of Europe) before the effects of certain agricultural chemicals were realised (e.g. Newton 1979).
3. Re-established populations can act as 'flagships' to encourage land-use and other practices which favour conservation of habitats, but which are difficult to popularise solely in their own right.
4. Such exercises provide important cases of positive conservation measures. These counter the negative image into which conservation bodies tend to be forced when undertaking the crucial role of resisting habitat damage.
5. For similar reasons, such operations tend to draw in partners, and the relationships built up may help in more difficult situations.
6. Such projects tend to draw in tremendous popular support and publicity for conservation and the participating bodies. The public knowledge of the White-tailed Eagle programme is amazingly widespread amongst people with only a passing interest in nature conservation.

There are, however, counter-points. Enthusiasm on the part of individuals or groups with a less rigorous approach tends to generate a plethora of proposals for reintroduction or release schemes. As well as the resource problem, ensuring that such projects are properly managed and monitored, there are more fundamental difficulties. Even for reintroduction and releases, conditions may have become unsuitable. At best, this may mean wasted effort; at worst, releases could severely damage populations still present. In between is a continuum of problems including unreasonable pressures on source populations and poor survival of released birds.

To overcome some of these problems, and to stress the need for careful advance consideration and detailed monitoring, the UK Committee for International Nature Conservation set up a working group on introductions, which reported in 1979. The recommendations of this report have been adopted by both the NCC and the RSPB as a set of criteria to test for suitability of proposed programmes. These criteria have appeared in various forms with slightly different wording. They can, however, be summarised as follows:

1. There should be good historical evidence of former natural occurrence.
2. There should be a clear understanding of why the species was lost to the area. In general, only those lost through human agency and unlikely to recolonise naturally within a reasonable time should be regarded as suitable candidates for reintroduction.
3. The factors causing extinction should have been rectified.
4. There should be suitable habitats of sufficient extent to which the species can be reintroduced.
5. The individual organisms taken for reintroductions should be from a population as genetically close as possible to that of the native population.
6. Their loss should not prejudice the survival of the population from which they are taken.

Newton (1988) considered in detail the question of reintroductions

of raptors. Red Kites are one of the few species of British birds which may fulfil the criteria. There is clear evidence of recent natural occurrence. The factors leading to the loss are well understood, and have largely been corrected by modern legislation and public attitudes. The continued illegal laying of poison baits does, however, raise some concern in certain areas, including the relict range in Wales.

In the assessment of the NCC and the RSPB, there were areas of suitable (and more productive) habitat for reintroduction elsewhere in Britain. Preliminary results (see below) indicate that this was correct, in that young kites have fared well against natural hazards. In the areas chosen, illegal persecution was thought to be low. Despite this, there is a risk in the initial period, when wide wandering by immatures is to be expected. During this period, one kite each in Scotland and England (out of six and five, respectively, released in 1989) was killed by illegally laid poisons. The one from England had unfortunately strayed into the Welsh borders, an area with a high incidence of poisoning, as noted above.

The reintroduced kites are from parts of Europe where the conservation authorities and ornithologists consider that the removal of young will not prejudice the source populations. Until recent human intervention, the range of Red Kites was more continuous, and it is unlikely that there are relevant genetic differences between the Continental and the British stock: they are similarly sized and look the same.

The criteria allowing reintroductions were therefore fulfilled, but is such an attempt worthwhile?

The Red Kite's prospects

The long-term existence of any species is dependent upon maintaining as wide a distribution as possible. Once populations are fragmented or restricted, they become increasingly vulnerable to local pressures which may result in extinction. The geographical review in this paper gives several examples of local extinctions and re-establishments. The more that fragments are isolated, the less likely is recolonisation. The geographical review above indicates, also, that the existing range of Red Kites is even more fragmented than that shown in fig. 1. In particular, the large area marked in the USSR includes few Red Kites, and even the Spanish population is much more fragmented than shown.

The world population of Red Kites, which is currently estimated at between 11,000 and 13,000 breeding pairs (table 1), suffered major declines in range, in continuity of range, and in numbers in the nineteenth century. Today, most of the population, comprising 10,000-12,000 pairs, breeds in Spain, France and Germany. The numbers in these countries appear to have been fairly stable in recent years, although there have been some local declines and perhaps some increases. There have been increases or recolonisations in at least parts of neighbouring countries, including Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Austria. In some of these, available habitat may now be full.

The outlook farther east and south is bleak. There must have been major range losses, fragmentation and declines in numbers in the USSR,

Table 1. Summary of world breeding status of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Under 'Extinction', XIX = nineteenth century.

Productivity per breeding pair is the more useful measure of numbers reared, but is less widely available than the mean number of young per successful pair, which tends to underestimate the real extent of differences, as total failures are not included.

Area	Extinction	ESTIMATED POPULATION (PAIRS)		TREND (+, 0, -)	PRODUCTIVITY per successful breeding (no. pair pair nests)		
		1970s	1980s				
Sweden	*	50	>200	+	2.0	1.5	
Norway	1880s	0	0	0			
Denmark	1910s	return	10-15	+	2.1		(54)
Scotland	XIX	0	0	0			
England	1920	0	0	0			
Wales	—	40	50	0	1.3	0.6	(676)
Ireland	XIX	0	0	0			
Netherlands	1850s	0-2	0	0			
Belgium	c.1921	1-10	15-20	0	2.3		(19)
Luxembourg	—	12-15	12-15	0			
France	—	? 2,300-2,900		- & 0	1.9	1.5	(53)
Corsica					1.9	1.3	(22)
Germany, W	**	2,000	1,700-2,200	0			
Germany, E	—	?	2,500	?	2.3	1.8	(491)
Poland	—	?	300	0 (+ in W)			
USSR	—	?	<100	?-			
Czechoslovakia	—	20-50	20-25	0(?+ in W)			
Switzerland	—	90-150	235-300	+			
Austria	1950	return	2-4	?+			
Hungary	1970s	4-5	0	-			
Romania	?1970s	c.10	?0	-			
Bulgaria	?	0	0	0			
Yugoslavia	1960s	?0	?0	-			
Italy	—	?	150-300	-	0.8†	0.7†	
Albania	1960s	?0	?0	-			
Greece	—	0	0	0			
Middle East (see text)	—	0	0	0			
Cyprus	—	0	0	0			
Israel	—	0	0	0			
Egypt	—	0	0	0			
Tunisia	—	0	0	0			
Malta	—	0	0	0			
Algeria	XIX	0	0	0			
Morocco	—	?	?20	-			
Spain	—	?	3,000	0			
Portugal	—	100-120	100	?0††			
Canary Is.	1960s	0	0	-			
Cape Verde Is.	—	?	?<20	-			

* Formerly extended farther north

** Decline to 1960s

† Productivity figures refer only to northern Italy; productivity 2.5 young per breeding pair on Sicily; most of population is in south Italy

†† Following a large decline

the Middle East and countries bordering the Mediterranean. Continued persecution, and possibly habitat loss, is probably responsible for the

demise of this species in the southern and eastern regions of its range. Breeding has long ceased in Turkey, northern Iran and Syria, and few if any pairs survive in the Balkans. The fact that the Red Kite was said formerly to be a common winter visitor to Greece (Lambert 1957), Israel (Shirihai in prep.) and Egypt (Morris 1904) also suggests that the eastern population was once considerably larger than it is today. The populations in mainland Italy, Sardinia, Sicily, Mallorca and northwestern Africa have been much reduced and continue to decline. The Portuguese population has possibly stabilised, but at a much reduced level. On the Canary Islands, the Red Kite is now extinct, while on the Cape Verde Islands it is gravely threatened and possibly interbreeding with Black Kites. Corsica remains one of the last strongholds in the region (Patrimonio 1990) outside Spain.

To put the world Red Kite population into perspective, it is perhaps worth comparing it with the British population of the Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. This was estimated as 12,000-15,000 pairs by Taylor *et al.* (1988), even though the species is persecuted in some areas. Persecution of Red Kites in their wintering quarters is perhaps of great concern, especially for those breeding in northern Europe, since they may again be migrating to the Mediterranean area in large numbers as a result of changes in the methods of rubbish disposal, especially the decline in numbers of rubbish tips. This will expose them to hunting pressures in southern Europe and may have serious consequences on the north European—and therefore world—population. We should, therefore, not be complacent and assume that the fortunes of the Red Kite will continue to improve in northern Europe; nor should it be forgotten that populations in West Germany and parts of France are now in decline. Furthermore, the political changes in eastern Europe are likely to lead to an intensification of agricultural methods there. Farmland with a high proportion of traditional management appears to be particularly important to Red Kites (and, indeed, other vulnerable birds), notably in eastern Germany. Census and subsequent monitoring of the Spanish, French and German populations would, therefore, be especially valuable.

The survival of the British population in central Wales, and its slow increase this century to over 60 nesting pairs, is a tribute to the sustained efforts of many farmers and conservationists in that area. The slow rate of increase, however, can be attributed to three factors. One is the use of poison baits (Davis & Newton 1981)—which is a threat both in Wales and in other areas, especially around the Mediterranean. In Wales, this is probably not usually directed at kites but against crows *Corvus* and foxes. Being carrion feeders, however, the kites suffer. In 1989, at least 11 kites were killed in Wales by this activity, which accounted also for the failure of at least three nests; many other deaths are likely to have remained undetected.

Secondly, breeding productivity in Wales is one of the lowest recorded, and is coupled with one of the highest nest-failure rates (Davis & Newton 1981). This is thought to be related to the less productive environment than in the habitats used by Red Kites in France, Germany, Sweden,



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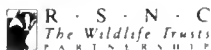


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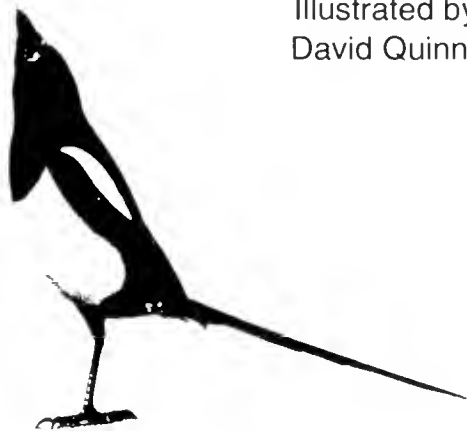
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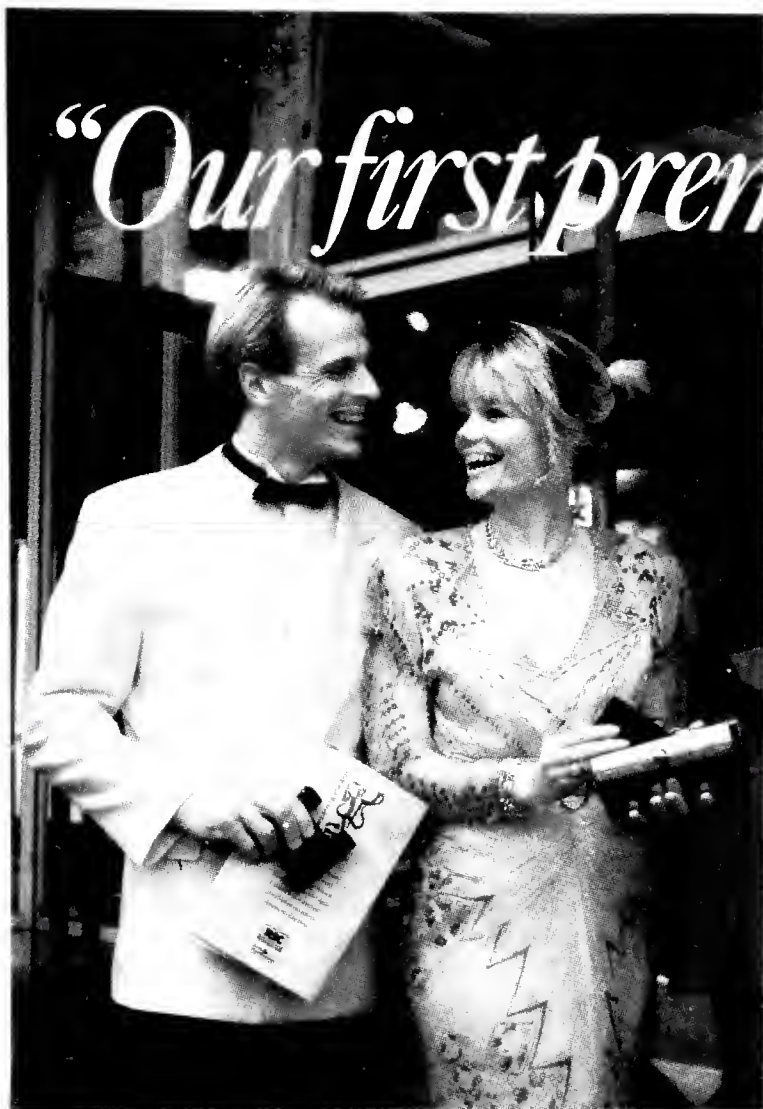
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Denmark, Belgium and Spain. The third factor, egg-collecting, has possibly been reduced by nest-protection schemes, although it remains remarkably persistent.

Although there has been some expansion of the range within Wales, there are no realistic prospects of the kites reoccupying other parts of Britain naturally in the foreseeable future. Illegal poisoning in the area around the kites' range in Wales is probably a major limitation to further spread. The prospects of sufficient of the small number of surplus young moving beyond this area to start a distant re-establishment are very low. So far, it has not happened, apart from unsuccessful nesting attempts in Devon, Cornwall and Cumbria, one of which was 12 years ago and the others over 60 years ago.

There would be major benefits in Britain in re-establishing Red Kites through their former range. These would include the return of a formerly widespread and important element of the wildlife; the opportunity for many people to see this most attractive raptor; the public support generated; and the encouragement of land-use practices sympathetic to wildlife. The most important contribution, however, would be to enhance the chances of world survival of this attractive species. There have been major declines in range and numbers at the other side of its range. In Britain, in collaboration with conservationists elsewhere in Europe, we now have the chance both to contribute to the survival of this rare species, and to benefit from its eventual wider presence in Britain.

Progress to date

In 1987-88, NCC and RSPB work in Wales, in conjunction with Dr Nick Fox, established that some of the many eggs which would not normally result in fledged kites could be incubated artificially. Kites from this source could therefore be used for a reintroduction programme, without any adverse effect on the size of the Welsh kite population. This action depends, of course, on the help and co-operation of Welsh farmers and conservationists. It provides an opportunity to build on their efforts over the years.

Ideally, there would be arguments for providing all the individuals for the reintroduction from within Britain (i.e. from Wales). Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide enough reared birds to do this in the most effective way. In view of the world importance of widening the distribution of this species through its former range, however, Swedish conservationists agreed to supply further young birds from their small but expanding population.

In 1989, ten young kites were collected under special licence from nests in Sweden, transported to Denmark and then flown from Copenhagen to Britain by RAF Kinloss. These kites were reared in Scotland and England at locations being kept secret in order to minimise disturbance to the birds. They were joined by a young kite from Wales. This was fewer than had been hoped, partly because of the disruption caused by the illegal poisoning of kites in Wales in 1989.

All the young developed well and were duly released. They flew

strongly, catching flying insects within a few hours of release. As expected, they eventually dispersed widely, and were tracked using radio-transmitters and wing-tags. As noted earlier, two eventually strayed into areas where illegal poisoning activities were taking place, and died as a result. The case of an English-released kite which had moved to the Welsh borders resulted, in June 1990, in the successful prosecution of five gamekeepers and two suppliers of poison. The remaining kites continued to thrive, returning occasionally to the rearing areas. It is thought that all nine survived the winter.



113. Left, nestling Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Spain, about to be transported to Britain, May 1990 (M. W. Pienkowski)

114. Below, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* being released in England, July 1990 (S. Moore)



In 1990, with the participation of conservation authorities in Spain, 11 young kites from nests in Navarra were imported in late May, with the help of British Airways' 'Assisting Nature Conservation' programme. They were reared in England with two young hatched from Welsh eggs which otherwise would have been likely to die. These were released on

10th and 19th July, after the completion of growth and the quarantine period. A further 19 kites imported from Sweden in June were released in Scotland during 25th July to 2nd August. All these kites were fitted with wing-tags and radio-transmitters. At the time of writing, in September 1990, this year's young have rapidly become independent, and a small proportion have embarked on flights of over 100 km. Most are, however, in the general vicinity of the release areas, and have been joined by some of the one-year-old kites, which have returned after dispersal.

These preliminary results indicate that the Red Kite is a suitable candidate for reintroduction, and that such a scheme is potentially practicable. The team of ornithologists responsible has dealt with the technical and legal aspects of importation, rearing and release. One can divide such a reintroduction programme into several critical stages:

1. Collecting, importing, rearing and releasing the birds;
2. Checking that the birds survive reasonably well on their own;
3. Checking that the birds reach maturity and breed; and
4. Checking that the population becomes self-supporting.

After more than two years of detailed investigation, consideration and planning, and the first two years of importations, we have reached both the first stage, of successfully releasing birds to the wild, and the second stage, of these reaching individual independence. This establishes the potential for the later stages. A much longer programme remains ahead if we are to be successful. If all goes well, we shall need to release enough young birds over several years to establish nucleus populations, and to continue monitoring beyond this time. We need to persist to be successful. Our White-tailed Eagle programme in western Scotland passed the third stage only after more than ten years.

This project illustrates the need to avoid a parochial or nationalistic approach to conservation. For species in which individuals require large breeding or feeding territories, population sizes will always be relatively small and vulnerable. Effective conservation planning needs, therefore, to be at least at a national and often a European scale. We are helping each other to ensure the survival of this species for the long-term future. Large numbers of young kites are required each year for a viable programme. It is because of the importance of widening its distribution through its former range that Swedish and Spanish conservationists have agreed to help.

The young kites move around widely in their first few months. Indeed, sightings of the released individuals may be expected anywhere in Britain. All sightings of Red Kites are useful in helping us to assess the present position, and, therefore, further needs. Details of the birds, their locations, and the colour and markings of any wing-tags are very helpful. Please send (as quickly as possible) any records in England to Dr Mike Pienkowski, JNCC, Monkstone House, City Road, Peterborough PE1 1JY, and in Scotland to Roy Dennis, RSPB, Munloch, Ross & Cromarty IV8 8ND.

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This is a joint NCC/RSPB programme. Apart from the authors, the Project Team has

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Summary

The world status of the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* is reviewed. The species has declined throughout its range over recent centuries. Its range and numbers continue to decline in much of eastern and southern Europe and in north Africa. The total population is now only 11,000-13,000 pairs, mostly in Spain, France and Germany. There have been increases or recolonisations in neighbouring countries. It is likely that the future of Red Kites will depend increasingly on western Europe. Although conditions in much of Britain appear to be suitable again for Red Kites, the productivity of the relict population in Wales is low, and poisoning remains a problem. Natural recolonisation from this source is unlikely. The Red Kite is, however, one of very few bird species which fulfil the conservation criteria for reintroductions. The NCC and the RSPB started an experimental reintroduction programme in England and Scotland in 1989. Preliminary results indicate that conditions are suitable; the young kites rapidly became independent and most survived their first winter. The programme will need to continue for several years.

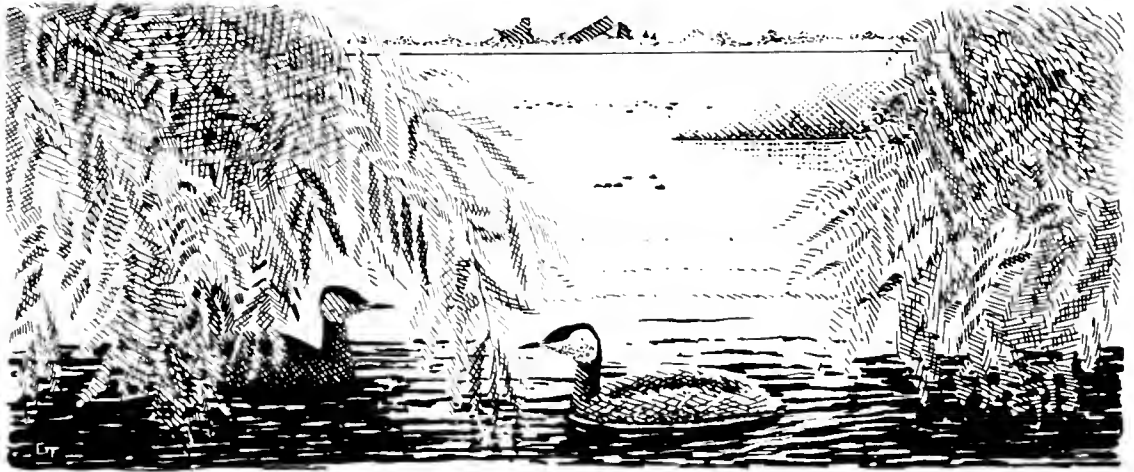
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Red-necked Grebe breeding in England



Mariko Parslow-Otsu and G. D. Elliott

The Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* occurs widely in the Holarctic, breeding from Sweden, Finland and northern Russia, south into Denmark, Germany, the Balkans and the Ukraine, east to the Kirghiz Steppes, and then (as a much larger, longer-billed subspecies) from eastern Siberia, Manchuria and Japan across northern North America (Vaurie 1965).

The northwest European population appears to fluctuate in numbers, but in recent years there have been increasing records of this species summering in western Europe, with breeding records from France in 1978 and Belgium in 1979 (Devillers *et al.* 1988). In Britain, records of summering individuals and pairs increased from about 1980, since when attempts at breeding have been suspected at a site in Scotland on up to five occasions and eggs were laid but failed to hatch in 1988 (Anon 1989; Spencer *et al.* 1990).

A single Red-necked Grebe in breeding plumage was first noted at a site in Cambridgeshire during the summer of 1987. It remained from 7th June until 30th August and defended a territory—part of a bay in a flooded gravel-pit—against Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus*.

The next year, a similar individual, presumed from its behaviour to be the same as in 1987, returned to the same bay on 31st March. From its especially dark face it was nicknamed 'Sooty'. It was joined by a second, whiter-faced individual on 7th April—perhaps the same as one seen on the Ouse Washes, a few kilometres away, from 30th March to 6th April. By 11th April, the pair was already building a platform of aquatic vegetation anchored amongst the upright stems of a partially submerged small willow *Salix* some 30 m from the shore. On 14th, one was watched sitting tightly on the platform throughout a three-hour period of observation and could have been incubating. By the time of the next observations, from 22nd April to 1st May, however, the pair's attachment to the platform was weaker, though they continued to visit, repair and

occasionally sit upon it. During 2nd-5th May, they built a new platform in another small emergent willow 15 m from the first, where copulation took place on 5th. On the morning of 8th May, one grebe was again sitting tight on the original platform. Soon after midday, it was surprised by a passing horse and rider, left the nest hurriedly, and the single egg was taken almost immediately by a Magpie *Pica pica*.

Between 23rd April and 8th May, many birdwatchers and amateur photographers approached close to the nest platforms. The species was not (and surprisingly is still not) on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Acts, so has no legal protection from intentional disturbance. With the co-operation of the owners, the RSPB arranged for the site to be warded from 9th May.

The pair was again seen copulating on 9th, but visited the nest only infrequently after lorries dumped rubble nearby, causing the sitting bird to leave the nest. An egg had possibly been laid, as egg-covering behaviour took place before it departed, but there was certainly one egg on 10th and three by 14th. Observation of the nest contents was difficult, but this appeared to be the final clutch size. (The egg taken by the Magpie was the first of this clutch, not a separate clutch as reported by Spencer *et al.* 1990.) Incubation was shared equally by both birds and the nest was added to daily. On 9th June, 30-31 days after the first of the three eggs was laid, the nest was swamped during a period of high winds, and the eggs were lost. It seems unlikely that they would have hatched after this length of time: the usual incubation period for Red-necked Grebes is 20-23 days and is thought to begin with the first egg (Cramp & Simmons 1977). As they were not recovered for examination, the explanation for the long incubation remains unknown.

Both Red-necked Grebes continued to show some interest in the nest after this failure and in late June even built another platform 600 m away; but activity gradually dwindled. The pair stayed on the flooded pit until 7th July, and 'Sooty' remained until 3rd September.

'Sooty' returned for a third summer in 1989 (20th March to 23rd August) and a fourth in 1990 (29th March to 21st August). In 1989, it built a nest platform, but no mate appeared. In 1990, it wandered more frequently to other flooded pits in the immediate area before settling into and defending its usual territory. It did not, however, build a nest platform until a second bird arrived between 9th and 13th May. Display took place, and a platform was built, but courtship activity soon diminished. On 28th May, the new arrival was reported sick, apparently choking and being pecked at by the other so that it was driven ashore. It swam out again and soon after was noticed dead on the water (R. Frost verbally). The body, partly eaten by a crow, was later recovered by Bruce Martin. A post-mortem examination by the Cambridge Veterinary Investigation Centre failed to reveal the cause of death. The gonads were absent, but the bird was believed to be male.

From its behaviour, 'Sooty' had been considered to be the male. In all four summers, it was aggressively and noisily territorial, frequently threatening and attacking single or pairs of Great Crested Grebes which

tried to enter its part of the bay. Its mate in 1988 occasionally joined in during threat displays, but played only a supporting role. On 14th May 1988, it was involved in a 50-minute battle with a pair of Great Crested Grebes nesting in the same bay, during which it was locked together with one of them for 14 minutes and was held under water for over a minute, during which it must nearly have drowned. Undeterred by the experience, its pugnacious behaviour continued. It once swam 100 m to the Great Crested Grebes' nest, seemingly seeking another fight, and increased its aggression when the latter hatched their young. The following year, when it arrived especially early, it managed, by patrolling the entrance and through persistent aggression, to prevent any Great Crested Grebes at all from nesting in the entire bay—an area totalling some 2 ha. In 1990, it ceased defending the territory on the death of its partner, moving to the centre of the lake to moult, so allowing a late-nesting pair of Great Crested Grebes to move in. According to Cramp & Simmons (1977), intraspecific antagonistic behaviour involves especially the male; inter-specific encounters are not mentioned. Unfortunately, observations of mating were inconclusive in determining the sexes. During copulation in May 1988, 'Sooty' was in the male's position on just three of the five occasions that it was possible to observe the respective positions of each individual. Reversed mounting, at least early in the season, is on record (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

The gravel-pit used by the Red-necked Grebes was large (40 ha) and open, with a limited number of peninsulas forming some small bays. It was a relatively young water (flooded in about 1986) and contained large populations of small fish. Dip-netting in the bay in summer 1988 showed three-spined stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* and many small rudd *Scardinius erythrophthalmus* and roach *Rutilus rutilus* to be present. Small fish seemed to make up most of the birds' diet. To 1990 the lake had not been used by anglers and, so far as is known, has not been stocked with fish, such as large pike *Esox lucius*. The water surface was open, with very limited areas of emergent vegetation comprising a small number of mainly scattered semi-submerged willow bushes and an area of very sparse common reed *Phragmites australis*. Competition for nest sites was intense, with the few willows the only ones available. As well as defending territory against Great Crested Grebes, the Red-necked Grebes were seen successfully to defend their nest platforms from Coots *Fulica atra*, which, however, frequently stole nest material from them and vice versa. Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* nesting in the same bay in 1988 were tolerated.

The Scottish breeding record for 1988 involved nest-building in willow growing in about 1 m of water in a secluded bay in a larger water. The first egg was seen on 19th June and two were present the following day. The grebes were then observed incubating until at least 26th June, but by 30th the nest was empty (Anon. 1989).

It is encouraging that two breeding attempts by Red-necked Grebes should occur in Britain in the same year. Unfortunately, both were unsuccessful, but, if the trend for this species to summer here continues, it seems likely that further attempts will follow. To judge from the sites chosen to date, shortage of habitat will not be a limiting factor.

Summary

During the summers of 1987-90, what seemed to be the same individual Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* defended a territory against Great Crested Grebes *P. cristatus* at a flooded gravel-pit in Cambridgeshire. In 1988, a mate appeared, eggs were laid, but failed to hatch after being incubated beyond the normal period. A different partner appeared in 1990, but died before eggs were laid. The 1988 attempt coincided with one in Scotland (Anon 1989) and together these were the first recorded instances of breeding by Red-necked Grebes in Britain.

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Mystery photographs

166 Two waders feeding: with their bills under water, one of the major identification features of any bird is lacking, making plate 109 (repeated here) an interesting mystery photograph.

So, where do we start? The photograph does not give a good impression of size, and the leg length is almost as uncertain as that of the bill. Fortunately, the plumages are clearly shown. Both birds have an obvious supercilium, and side-by-side comparison leaves little doubt that they are the same species.



The small, neat, unworn upperpart and wing-covert feathers are the mark of juveniles. A more careful look at the pattern of most of the visible feathers shows a further feature: a conspicuous pale edge with a thin dark line forming an inner margin to the pale fringe. This feather pattern is the key to the identification, since it is shared by only three juvenile waders, all species of *Calidris*. It rules out other wader species that have a similar supercilium, such as Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*.

The species having this plumage pattern are Knot *C. canutus*, Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*, and Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*. A vaguely similar pattern, though much fainter, is shown by juveniles of the various ringed plover species in the genus *Charadrius*, but the absence of a white hind-collar is sufficient to rule out that possibility.

So, which one of the three species are they? Temminck's Stint is small, has a virtually unpatterned head, plain white flanks, and proportionately longer tertials, almost reaching to its wing tips. Moreover, Temminck's Stint rarely wades in open water, preferring muddy, vegetated ground. Thus, Temminck's Stint may be ruled out. Curlew Sandpipers and Knots share many plumage characters, and in many ways are remarkably similar at all times of the year. As juveniles, both have fairly obvious supercilia. Apart from size, bill length and shape, the main distinguishing features of the two species are the streaked upper breast and the spots and chevrons on the flanks of Knot (Curlew Sandpiper being nearly unmarked beneath in comparison). Additionally, juvenile Curlew Sandpiper has noticeably darker upperpart feather centres than Knot. Thus the mystery birds are juvenile Knots.

This excellent mystery photograph was taken by Hans Schouten in the Netherlands in autumn 1985.

R. J. CHANDLER



116. Mystery photograph

167. Identify the species.

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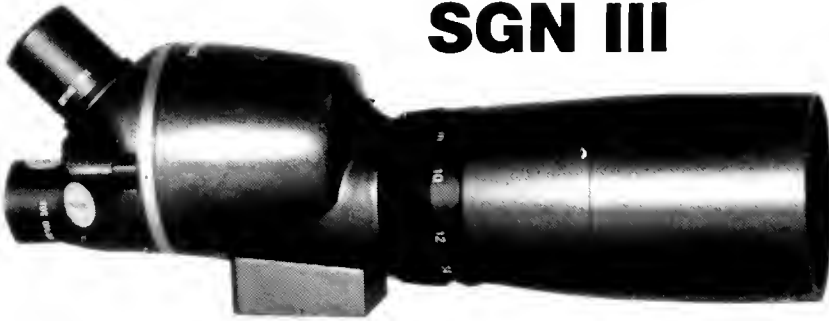
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Monthly marathon

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This issue went to press before the closing dates for the receipt of entries relating to the sixth and seventh stages (plates 7 & 62) in the current, fifth 'Monthly marathon'. The answers will be revealed in the June issue.

The tenth puzzle picture appears below. The winner of the 'Marathon' will be able to choose as his/her prize a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

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117. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (tenth stage: photograph number 59). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th June 1991

Notes

Kestrel concealing and retrieving half-eaten prey At 11.05 GMT on 10th February 1988, at Hemingford Grey, Cambridgeshire, we found a male Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* feeding from a freshly killed Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* on our lawn, 13 m from the house and 2 m from a garden shed. He fed undisturbed until 11.35 hours, then dragged the half-eaten carcass 10 m across the open grass to the edge of a small pond, through some low vegetation, and to the shelter of some small logs and larger bog plants, where he left the remains. The Kestrel then flew to the roof of the shed, surveyed the pond for 30 seconds, and flew out of the garden. At 14.47 GMT, he returned and landed on the shed roof, where he remained for two minutes; he then flew directly to the pond, retrieved the carcass and dragged it 2 m to the water's edge, where he began feeding again. The Kestrel fed continuously from 14.52 to 15.39 hours, when he stopped, flew up towards the shed, over a hedge and out of the garden. I examined what was left of the Starling: both wings (more or less intact), both feet and legs, a small part of the skull and bill, and a quantity of small feathers.

J. F. SIMS and L. M. SIMS

4 Pound Road, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE18 9EF



Caching by Kestrels is well known and well documented, but the interest of this note is that the return visit was seen and timed. EDS

Stone-curlew swimming On 6th June 1988, I was observing Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicanus* at a breeding site near Korba, Tunisia. Walking close to the edge of a saline pool, I was surprised to see an adult Stone-curlew plunge-dive awkwardly into the shallows some 8 m from me. As part of its 'distraction display', and showing no fear, it swam towards me, until, on touching bottom, it submerged, continuing to walk towards me with only head and neck above water, recalling a Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. The Stone-curlew then moved away from me, and, as I approached the water, it moved rapidly to dry land nearby.

P. F. WHITEHEAD

Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Pershore, Worcestershire

Snipe feeding on teasel On 19th March 1988, as I walked along the inner verge of Rochestown Marsh, Glenmore, Co. Kilkenny, I noticed a large bird perched on top of a teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*. Closer inspection showed it to be a Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, which was using its bill to prise out seeds from the teasel head. The bird had great difficulty in manoeuvring its bill while keeping its balance on the teasel head, which was about 1 m high. As I approached closer, the bird took off. On examining the seedhead, I observed holes larger than those which hold the seeds, apparently made by the Snipe trying to force the seeds out. The only other bird species

which I have observed feeding on teasel seeds is the Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, and certainly never any species of wader. BRIAN FORRISTAL

7 Glen Terrace, Waterford City, Ireland

We should welcome reports of any other similar observations of this extraordinary behaviour. The flowerheads and seedheads of the teasel often contain a veritable menagerie of invertebrates; perhaps insects, rather than seeds, were the attraction in this instance. EDS

Cuckoo attacking Woodpigeon At about 04.30 GMT on 5th June 1988, near Triscombe, Taunton, Somerset, I saw a male Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, which had been singing nearby, fly at a Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, which was singing near the top of a Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris*. The pigeon was struck by the Cuckoo and at once flew off; it was closely followed by its aggressor for about 100 m, but then returned to perch on a second pine about 100 m from the first tree, and resumed singing. After about a minute, it was again flown at by a Cuckoo, presumably the same individual. It flew away once again, but this time there was no pursuit by the Cuckoo. The Woodpigeon did not return, but the Cuckoo perched in a nearby silver birch *Betula pendula* and sang for about three minutes.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Derek Goodwin has questioned whether the Woodpigeon's partly grey plumage might have supplied some stimulus suggesting a rival Cuckoo. EDS

Call of migrant Wryneck At 07.30 GMT on 6th September 1987, at Langdown Cliffs, near Dover, Kent, while J. R. Chantler, K. J. Hall and I were watching a migrant Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, I heard a distinctive, yet unfamiliar call: a short, soft trill, best transcribed as 'z-e-e-p', with a decided thrush-like quality. It was with surprise, therefore, that I realised that the Wryneck had made this call, and several subsequent ones, as I was familiar only with that species' falcon-like 'kee-kee-kee-kee . . .' song. *BWP* vol. 5 states that migrant Wrynecks are silent, and also that young in the nest 'give various, clear trilling, tinkling, or bibbering "tsi", "zi", metallic-sounding "sit", or "tsijek" sounds'. These transcriptions are similar to my interpretation of the Dover individual's call, which would suggest that it was a first-year still calling as it would have done in the nest about two months previously.

P. J. CHANTLER

66 Hunter Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent TN24 0RT

Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented that, since post-fledging care is normal for the Wryneck (as it is for all woodpeckers), this may have been an individual from a late-hatched brood still calling 'for its parents'. EDS

Great Spotted Woodpecker exploiting foraging Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers Between 10.40 and 11.18 GMT on 9th December 1987, at Hinchinbrook Country Park, Cambridgeshire, we watched a pair of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos minor* foraging close together through

the lower tree canopy of a plantation of ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. Both were very vocal and showed alarm at the presence nearby of a female Great Spotted Woodpecker *D. major*. One of the Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers started to concentrate its foraging efforts on one particular spot on a branch: almost immediately, the Great Spotted Woodpecker flew over and dislodged it from its position, chipped at the same point previously favoured by the Lesser Spotted, and appeared to extract a prey item; it then flew to another tree, where it perched, but was not seen to forage. The Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers became very vocal and aggressive towards the larger species. After the initial displacement, the Lesser Spotted returned to the same tree and flew around the Great Spotted Woodpecker, calling loudly and making aggressive pecking gestures towards it. Both Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers resumed foraging through the plantation, and one began to chip at a particular position. Again, the Great Spotted flew across, dislodged it, and took over the extraction: this time, both Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers mobbed the Great Spotted, which abandoned the position and flew back to its perch; the Lesser Spotted inspected the branch, but did not resume foraging there. Both Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers flew on to the next tree: once again, as one started to chip at one spot, the larger woodpecker supplanted it, this time extracting a prey item. This exploitation by the Great Spotted Woodpecker was observed on two more occasions that morning. The Great Spotted maintained a discreet distance, following the two smaller woodpeckers as they foraged through the plantation, but it was not seen foraging itself. The day was one of bright sunshine, with a hard overnight frost clearing slowly by midday.

PAUL N. JOHNSON, PATRICK KNIGHT and PETER BONUS
The Stewards House, Sunderland Farm, Docking, Norfolk PE31 8PF

Great Spotted Woodpeckers are normally aggressive towards other *Dendrocopos* species, both in breeding and in winter feeding territories, and at feeding stations will fly at and chase off other birds, including Lesser Spotted and Grey-headed Woodpeckers *Picus canus* (see *BWP* vol. 4). The above observation is of interest in view of the persistent and habitual use of exploitation apparently as a main foraging method. EDS

Great Spotted Woodpecker robbing Nuthatch and being robbed by grey squirrel On the afternoon of 22nd September 1986, near Orpington, Kent, Eric Knowles and I watched a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* with a hazelnut in its bill. It stuck the nut in a crevice in a large branch of an oak *Quercus* and struck it repeatedly, pausing every few seconds to look around nervously. Suddenly, a male Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* flew into my field of view and supplanted the Nuthatch. The woodpecker looked around for a moment and then, with three quick blows, broke open the nut; it was just starting to eat it piecemeal when a grey squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis* rushed up the branch, supplanted the woodpecker and, with its teeth, pulled the nut from the crevice, sat up and ate it.

DEREK GOODWIN
6 Crest View Drive, Petts Wood, Orpington, Kent BR5 1BY

Letters

Shearwaters, sirens and halcyons Dr Bourne's reply (*Brit. Birds* 83: 555-556) to my letter on this subject (83: 334-335) invites further comment.

In referring to Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's book, he might usefully have added that it identified several Greek names (quite different from Halcyon) as referring to shearwaters.

Shearwaters sing by night; Sirens sing by day (further confirmed by the 'earliest representations' referred to by Dr Bourne). Why then should shearwaters have inspired this myth? Dr Bourne avoids this question, but he suggests that rock-nesting seabirds might have provided the (presumably visual) inspiration. Perhaps so, but shearwaters do not sit out on rocks during the day.

In English etymology, we differentiate clearly between the mythical Halcyon and the real Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*. In classical Greek, this was not so: the same basic word was used to denote both. Why should this have been the case if those responsible for creating the myth did not perceive some connection between the two? And is it really conceivable that the Greeks could have used this same word to denote also a third bird—the shearwater—without leaving any discernible trace in the literature? Aristotle may have confused myth with reality, but he certainly was not referring to any shearwater in the three passages mentioned by Dr Bourne (in two of which, incidentally, Aristotle *did* refer to sea-nesting). The scope for confusion between Halcyon and Kingfisher was there from the start and did not arise 'after some 3,000 years of ill-informed comment'. What the Turks may have picked up from the Greeks 2,000 years later seems irrelevant for these purposes, and, in any event, there is no evidence to support, and hard Turkish etymological evidence to refute, Dr Bourne's surmise.

Nor is it true that 'Yelkouan . . . is still . . . the Turkish vernacular . . . name of the species' (i.e. the proposed *Puffinus yelkouan*). The Turkish word means nothing more specific than 'shearwater'. 'Yelkouan Shearwater', therefore, means 'Shearwater Shearwater' in English and 'Yelkouan Yelkovan' in Turkish. Surely, knowing this, we should try to avoid such an inelegancy by considering other possibilities, such as Mediterranean Shearwater (its former association with a different species must now be nearly forgotten), Mediterranean Manx Shearwater (cumbersome but usefully indicating the close relationship), or even Acerbi's Shearwater (commemorating the Italian chap who first applied the scientific name in 1827)?

DOUGAL G. ANDREW

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It is kind of my old friend Dougal Andrew to demonstrate so elegantly that a Scottish lawyer can find almost anything he wishes in a disputable classical text. I would have preferred to avoid the addition of shearwater to the name *yelkouan* as a collective term for the main Turkish species as I tried to explain to him, and to continue to use the names 'Balearic' and 'Levantine' for races recognisable in the field, but I was out-voted.

'Yelkouan Shearwater' is a name designed by a committee; two cheers for Democracy!

W. R. P. BOURNE

RFA Sir Percivale, Gulf of Oman

Correspondence on this subject is now closed. EDS

Cirl Bunting song types K. E. Vinicombe's note on the double song of the Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 240-241) prompts me to record the following. On various visits to France and Spain during the months of April and July-September, I have given more than cursory attention to 26 singing male Cirl Buntings. The majority of these produced both the songs described by Mr Vinicombe. Certainly, most songs were the 'typical' version, but my impression was that the proportion was something like 60% 'typical' to 40% 'variant', although I am unable to back this up with hard data. I have wondered why, in view of its apparent regularity, the variant song is omitted from the standard field guides. I put this down to the difficulties of phonetic transcription and to a general lack of interest in vocalisations among many birdwatchers, but this may be unfair. Perhaps the species is continuing to develop its song?

J. M. PINDER

29 Thick Hollins, Meltham, Huddersfield HD7 3DQ

Trees, gardens and birds Alan Mitchell's letter (*Brit. Birds* 83: 291) spoils a good point by overkill. Introduced trees can be useful to wildlife, and the cypresses that seem to have replaced privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium* as Britain's favourite hedge do provide nest sites; but how does that make them 'the two trees most valuable' for garden birds? Holly *Ilex* provides equally good cover for nests, as well as berries, albeit it is slower-growing. The real worry about Mitchell's letter, however, is that it will be used by landscapers and planners keen to claim their place on the green bandwagon without changing their priorities, which too often involve wasting public money on excessive tidying and gardening to the detriment of birds and other native wildlife.

If Mitchell seriously believes that native trees are useless to our birds because they are not in leaf until May, how have the birds been managing all these years before gardeners planted exotic conifers?

The most important point about gardens as bird habitats is that most of them support only a limited percentage of our native avifauna, though a few species can occur at high densities. Just how limited was brought home to me when I surveyed a variety of urban areas in Lothian in 1986 (*Scot. Birds* 15: 170-177). Post-war housing estates with small gardens, which are the sort of places in which most of us now live, held only five really common breeding species. High-rise blocks without individual gardens were even worse, with an average density of under one pair of breeding birds per hectare. Even Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Gardens—where a total of just under 30 species reached a combined density of nine territories per hectare—had no buntings or warblers and a very limited range of finches, despite lots of cypresses and other specimen trees.

Rather than campaigning for yet more Leyland cypress (\times *Cupressocyparis leylandii*), which is hardly under threat, we should be educating local authorities in the value of those habitats that do hold the birds for which all but the most informal and 'weedy' gardens are unsuitable. Most British towns have places, often where industry has finished, where birch *Betula*, brambles *Rubus*, nettles *Urtica* and willow-herb *Epilobium* have colonised and where a whole range of wildlife, including birds, thrives. Some of these sites will be lost to redevelopment, but some, such as old railways and canals, are ideal for public recreation. If at least some parts of public parks could also be allowed to 'go to seed', we could have more birds as well as butterflies and wild flowers (and reduce the poll tax!).

S. R. D. DA PRATO

38 Carlaverock Grove, Tranent, East Lothian EH33 2EB

'Variety is the spice of life', and also the characteristic of the constituents of a good bird garden. Between them, the suggestions made by Paddy Ashdown, Alan Mitchell and Stan da Prato would provide all the necessary requirements for excellent artificial wildlife-habitat. We also received a letter from P. F. Whitehead emphasising the need for (and listing) a wide variety of trees and bushes. EDS

Reviews

Birds and Forestry. By Mark Avery and Roderick Leslie. Illustrated by Philip Snow. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1990. 299 pages; 38 black-and-white plates; 20 line-drawings. £18.00.

The very title of this book provokes mixed reactions. In a world where natural resources are fast disappearing, we all recognise the environmental benefits of growing trees. Yet none of us approves of the new forests covering a unique habitat such as the Flow Country.

Birds and Forestry attempts to resolve this dilemma. The authors come from either side of the debate, yet manage to find genuine common ground, proposing practical solutions to long-standing conflicts. By doing so, they largely succeed in undermining the entrenched positions taken up by many birdwatchers and foresters.

One thing is clear: the forestry industry in the United Kingdom is not going to go away. That would be uneconomic, impractical, and, from an environmental standpoint, undesirable. So, if forestry is going to continue, we must ensure that the potential harm to our birdlife is minimised.

Avery & Leslie are honest enough to admit to the gaps in our knowledge, especially where the birdlife of mature forests is concerned. It seems that few ornithologists find it worthwhile to study forest avifauna.

This book goes a long way to filling these gaps, with clear, readable chapters on 'Birds in forests', 'Forest management', 'The effects of afforestation on upland birds', and 'Money and power in the uplands', a fascinating look at the vested interests involved.

The heart of the book is a comparison between the relative ecological 'value' of forests, and of the upland habitats they usually replace. To many people, this is a one-sided contest—surely the rich avifauna of a Scottish moor far outweighs the forest ecosystem?

As with most environmental issues, however, the answer is: 'That depends.' A habitat such as the Flow Country is certainly richer than the new forests, but the same cannot be said for all of Britain's uplands. The moral is clear: forestry should not be condemned out of hand—it rather depends where you put it.

A forest may appear to be a sterile, lifeless monolith, yet closer examination reveals surprisingly diverse bird communities. But we need to take a more long-term approach when assessing forest ecosystems. Over a life of 60 years from planting to harvest, they pass through a variety of valuable habitat stages, each suiting different species. Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* and Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* nest in young plantations; Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*

and Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* in more mature forest. In any one year, a forest may appear to support few breeding birds: but, over its whole life, it plays host to a very varied avifauna.

In an intriguing gaze into the crystal ball, the authors suggest potential colonisers for future forests—including the northern owls, Waxwing *Bombus garrulus*, Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, and even Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* (currently extending its range to within sight of the Channel). They lay down a challenge to the dedicated 'forest-watcher'—search the vast plantations for new British breeding species.

In general, Avery & Leslie have done a fine job in cutting through the hysteria and prejudice surrounding the subject. The book might serve as a model for examining other areas where birds and man come into conflict—tourism, farming and industry, for example.

Under its new owners, Academic Press, the Poyser stable appears to be continuing its famous high standards. There is even a minor improvement: brief biographies of the authors. At £18.00, *Birds and Forestry* represents remarkable value for money. A book to read, to debate, on occasions to disagree with, and to re-read, for many years to come. STEPHEN MOSS

Rare Birds in Britain 1989-1990 (video). By Alan Shaw. Alan Shaw, Derby, 1990. 1 hour. £20.00.

This videotape features a total of 50 rarities and semi-rarities in Britain between August 1989 and October 1990. Highlights are, perhaps, sequences of Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* of the nominate race, Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*, Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus*, Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*, Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* and Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*. The standard and length of sequence vary enormously from species to species, as is inevitable with rarities observed in varying conditions. Most sequences have natural sound, this being especially welcome in cases such as Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*. The commentary gives not only the name of the species, the place and the date, but also comments on interesting aspects of behaviour (a very welcome feature) and, increasingly towards the end of the tape, draws attention to identification details (an aspect which could be developed with benefit, to make future tapes even more useful). J. T. R. SHARROCK

Announcements

Has that rarity been accepted? As briefly noted last month (*Brit. Birds* 84: 157), the latest decisions made by the Rarities Committee* are now available on the National Bird News phone-line 0898-884-522†. Updated by the Committee's Chairman, Peter Lansdown, immediately that decisions are made, you now do not have to wait for the annual published report in November to find out the up-to-date accepted records. We are delighted to be able to make this service available to subscribers. Phone in regularly! NBN is donating profits from this line to subsidise *British Birds*.

*The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by ZEISS Germany.

†Calls are charged at 34p per min. cheap rate; 45p peak & std rate incl. VAT.

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News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

'Euro Bird Week' An international meeting for European birders is being organised by *Belgian Birding Magazine*, *Dutch Birding* and the German magazine *Limicola* on the famous bird island of Texel, Noord-Holland, the Netherlands, from Saturday 12th October to Sunday 20th October 1991. The aim of this meeting is to stimulate contacts between European birders for the exchange of knowledge on bird identification. All birders are invited to come to Texel, an island well-known for its geese, shorebirds, migrant passerines and rarities.

During the day, participants will be able to go out birding (there will be walkie-talkies available, plus information boards). During the evening, there will be lectures and a mystery-bird competition. There will also be a small subsidiary meeting, open only to invited delegates, concerned with the work of European rarities committees and identification matters.

For information about accommodation, please contact: VVV Texel, Groeneplaats 9, 1791 CC Den Burg, Netherlands; telephone 010-31-222014741. For general information, please write to: Dutch Birding, Postbus 75611, 1070 AP Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Parish-bashing Sponsored birdwatches—finding as many species as possible in a defined area in a day—are in vogue. Birders in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire can help their local Wildlife Trust on any day in May 1991 in a 'down-market' big-day bash: stick to your own parish, and no cars or other motorised vehicles allowed (only push-bikes, canoes, etc.)—a far cry from the Porsches, helicopters and CB radios of some such events. The money raised will help to fund the Trust's conservation work on Barn Owls *Tyto alba*. Anyone interested in participating or sponsoring should phone Tim Pankhurst on Bedford (0234) 364213. Perhaps other local trusts, clubs and societies will copy this petrol-saving, local-patch-scouring, fund-raising exercise?

News of Jo All those who had contact with Jo Hemmings when she was Natural History Editor with Croom Helm Ltd will be pleased to know that she has written to say that she

is 'now the proud mother of two boys, having given birth to Oliver in September . . .' Jo is now Natural History Editor with the London publishers George Philip Ltd.

'Irish Birding News' The second issue of this new birders' journal (the first was published in September 1990) has just reached us. It is very nice to see an original design for a birdwatching magazine (with—or without—permission, so many seem to be modelled directly on *British Birds*, which is flattering, but soon becomes rather boring); *Irish Birding News* is full of original ideas for layout and design, most of which work, and some of which don't, but all of which make it look lively and new. Apart from 'Recent Reports' compiled by Victor Cashera (nine pages), there are 'Predictions for additions to the Irish list' by Kieran Grace, listing Irish observers' guesses as to what will come next (the top two predictions being Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* and Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, both long overdue); site guides to Moy Valley, Co. Mayo, by Bob Chapman and to the north coast of Northern Ireland (in relation to searching for Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus*) by Anthony McGeehan; rarity write-ups on autumn 1990 Irish rarities: Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*, Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* and Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, and Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* and Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (discovered simultaneously!), Gray-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus*, Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida*, Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* and Olive-backed Pipit on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork; a note on an influx of Little Gulls *Larus minutus* on the north Wicklow coast in early 1990 by Major R. F. Rutledge; and discussion of the identification problems presented by the four Irish divers *Gavia* by Pat Smiddy. This 50-page issue includes a good smattering of black-and-white photographs. The subscription rate for *Irish Birding News* is IR£10.00 per annum for 12 issues (or £11.00 sterling for UK subscribers; £12.00 sterling elsewhere), available from BINS Ltd, 46 Claremont Court, Glasnevin, Dublin 11, Ireland.

Request

Photographs of 1990 rarities needed. Colour prints, black-and-white prints and colour transparencies are needed to illustrate the Rarities Committee's next report. Please send prints or slides (as soon as possible) to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham Bedford MK44 3NJ. Thank you.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 9th March to 11th April 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* Hermaness, Unst (Shetland), from 23rd March.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Lynher Estuary (Cornwall), 30th March.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* White-phase individual at Lough Foyle (Co. Londonderry) stayed to 7th April.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* Two males, Dundrum (Co. Down), 24th March; two males, Skerries (Co. Dublin), 7th April.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Individual acquiring summer plumage, BP Pools, Belfast Lough (Co. Down), 24th March to at least 7th April (perhaps individual which was present prior to Christmas 1990).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Shoreham (West Sussex), 6th April.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* Spring passage of five together at BP Pools, Belfast Lough, 6th-7th April (no change in remainder of Irish total of about ten).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Spurn (Humberside), 10th April.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Monmouth (Gwent), 11th April.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops* Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 14th March.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* Female at Goudhurst (Kent), 23rd to at least 31st March; male at Clocaenog Forest (Clwyd), 13th-26th March; long-staying female at Lynford Arboretum (Norfolk) stayed to at least 10th April.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* Dolgellau (Gwynedd), 5th-9th April.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* Chippenham (Wiltshire), 28th March to 9th April.

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature. For the latest, up-to-date news, phone 0898-884-501 (34p/min cheap rate; 45p/min other times; incl. VAT)

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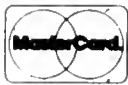
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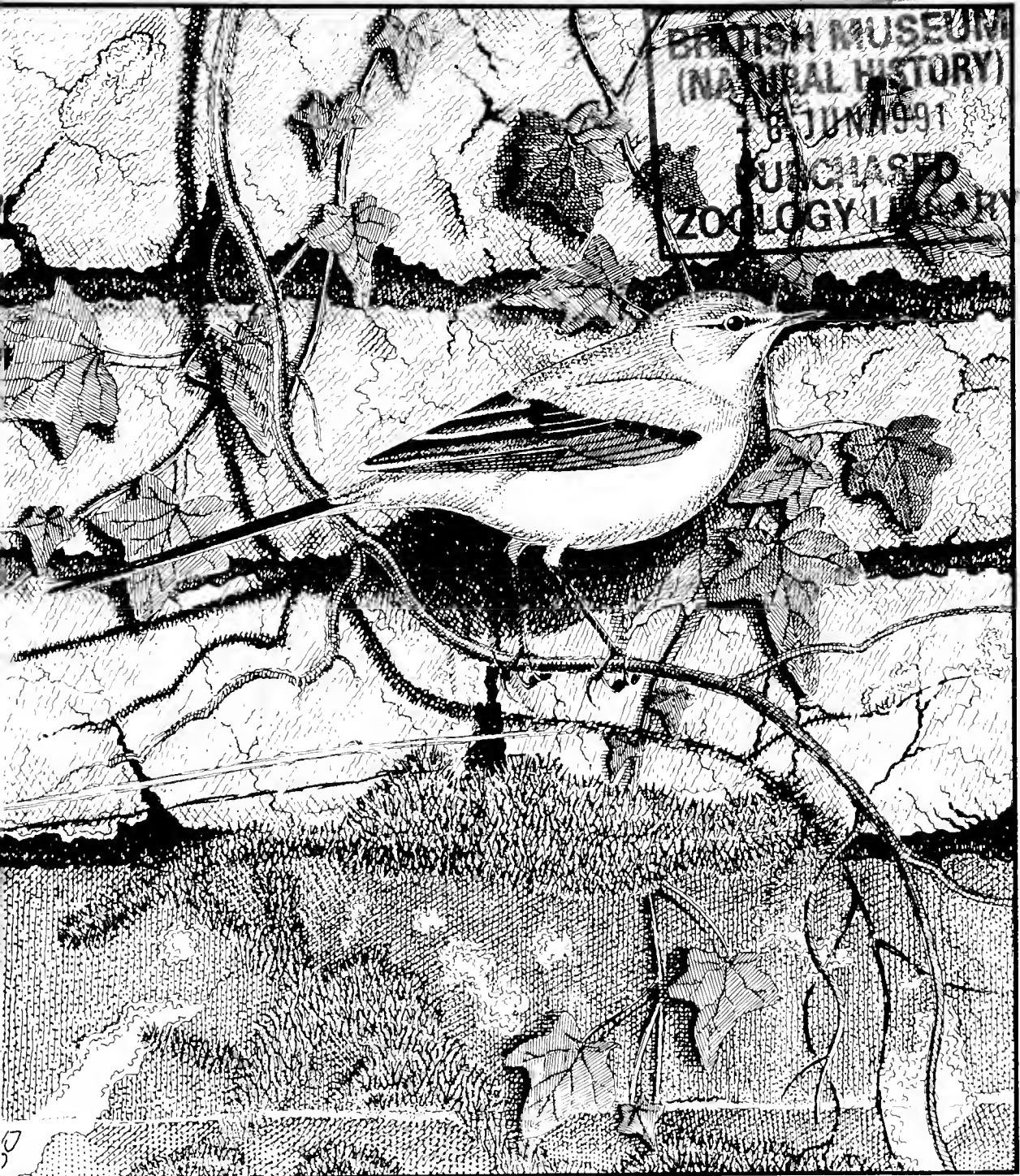
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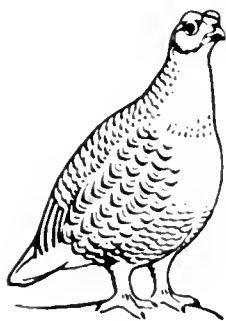
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PAGHAM HARBOUR LOCAL NATURE RESERVE on the A215 into Selsey (near Chichester, W. Sussex) on **SUNDAYS 26th May, 30th June, 7th July and 25th August** (10.30am to 4.00pm approx.)

WARNHAM NATURE RESERVE just off the A24 (northern roundabout for HORSHAM) on the B2237, on **SUNDAYS 2nd June, 14th July, 11th August and 22nd September** (10.30am to 5.00pm)

SEVENOAKS WILDFOWL RESERVE, on the A25 between Riverhead and Sevenoaks Bat and Ball Station, on **SUNDAYS 16th June, 7th July, and 18th August** (10.00am to 4.00pm)

SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST at WOODS MILL, Henfield, W. Sussex (A2037) on **SUNDAY 8th September** (10.30am to 4.00pm)

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(D849)

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(D857)

- 6 JUN 1991

The advent of Spring saw our kestrels
back in their nest box in the ash tree
the moorhens hatched their chicks
the 27th April. The activity of the
moorhens has been absorbing: feeding
in the bird table to our customers'
amusement, nest building, and latterly,
the male bringing offerings to the
young female. It was interesting to note
carefully they cleaned their breasts
when moving on to the nest.
Every attempt by mallards to take up
residence has been thwarted by the
territorial attitude of the moorhens.
Collared doves are now permanent
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6th of April we had our first whitethroat.

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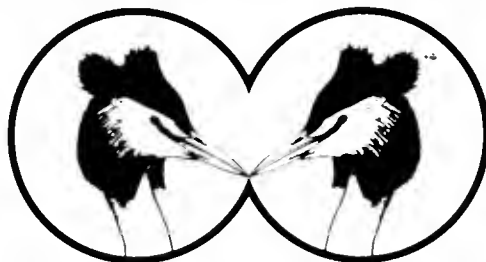
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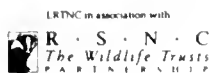
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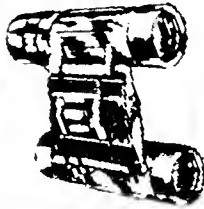
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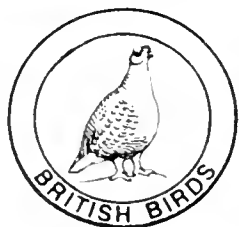
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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 6 JUNE 1991

New Photographic Consultant

In April 1980, Dr Richard Chandler and Don Smith joined the *British Birds* team, as joint Photographic Consultants (*Brit. Birds* 73: 379-380). For the past 11 years, they have combined this voluntary work with their separate, distinguished careers, Richard in practical academia and Don in commerce. In August 1987, Richard joined *BB*'s four-man Editorial Board (*Brit. Birds* 80: 515), but continued also as joint Photographic Consultant.

In 1980, the year in which *BB* became independent of a commercial publisher, we noted that the previous volume of *BB* had included 257 photographs, compared with 100 in 1976. Ten years on, the total in 1990 had increased to 306

(119 of them in colour). The Editorial Board considered that the journal would benefit from a further strengthening of the team. We are delighted to announce, therefore, that Roger Tidman has accepted the Board's invitation to take over Richard Chandler's position as joint Consultant with Don Smith. Richard will, of course, continue his interest in the photographic aspects of *BB*, in his capacity as a member of the Editorial Board.

Roger Tidman describes himself as 'raised in Cambridgeshire', where his interest in natural history was nurtured. After obtaining a degree in ophthalmic optics from Aston University, he moved to Norfolk in 1979, and began a new career as a wildlife photographer. Every year since 1984 he has produced a wildlife calendar featuring his own photographs (printed by *BB*'s printers, Newnorth Print); that planned for 1992 will, appropriately, be entitled 'Birds of Europe'. His work has been featured regularly in natural history books and periodicals, including *BB*, and he won the RSPB/Kodak 'Winter Birds' competition. His one regret at joining the *BB* team is that, as one of the competition's judges, he will no longer be eligible to submit an entry for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.



118. Roger Tidman (Tony Leech)



Birdcraft

The aim of this occasional series is to pass on tips which may improve readers' fieldcraft when birdwatching. For each topic, the authors will have not only drawn on their own experience, but also summarised advice gleaned from other specialists.

4. Recording rare and unusual seabirds*

Despite a slippery, pitching deck, consequent lack of use of a telescope and the smell of 'chum', watching and taking descriptive details of Wilson's Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* in the Southwestern Approaches is not significantly different from observing migrants in bushes. The point is that, more often than not, the bird in question stays in the immediate vicinity for a sufficient time for good views and good notes to be obtained. This is not the case with most other encounters with seabirds, however, whether the observer is on board ship or on dry land. The norm is a single fly-past, and great presence of mind is required to concentrate on the correct characters to facilitate a successful identification and record submission. Quite apart from the comparatively short viewing time, the weather conditions and state of the sea often contribute to the difficulties.

The British Birds Rarities Committee and its Seabirds Advisory Panel (and, no doubt, county and regional recorders and their records committees) recognise the problems, but sometimes can do little more than sympathise with observers that their views were too brief or too poor to clinch the identification to the exclusion of 'confusion species'. Records committees must be as certain that seabirds are correctly identified as they are about landbirds, for uniformity and confidence in the written record to be maintained.

There is no substitute for field experience, particularly with seabirds, but observers can greatly assist themselves before setting out to seawatch by doing some basic homework. Seawatchers should be aware in advance of the species likely to be seen and of their identification characters, and this involves at least some knowledge of confusion species. Also, do keep watching: it is no good relying on others to find and identify a rare or unusual seabird flying past. Having little idea as to what to look for, and suddenly being jerked into action by the shouts of others, severely reduces the chance of seeing such a gem. It might help the 'magic moment' for observers to practise by writing down in the field their perceptions of the flight action of various species. Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* would be useful practice

*This contribution is a publication of the Rarities Committee, sponsored by ZEISS Germany.

species. This could be carried out in varying conditions and it would be instructive for observers to compare their notes with those of others.

Those who submit records of rare and unusual seabirds can help their case by presenting descriptive details as suggested below.

Size and structure

These are usually important characters, but it should be stated how they were assessed. The alternatives are by direct comparison with another species, by indirect comparison with another species seen earlier (how long ago?) or later at similar (or greater, or closer?) range, or from memory. The term 'size' may itself be misleading, in some descriptions signifying bulk, but in others referring to length from bill-tip to tail-tip, and occasionally relating to wing-span, so clarification is required here.

Flight action

This very important character is frequently given too little prominence in descriptions of seabirds. Flight action is multifarious and deserves full treatment and, where possible, stage-by-stage comparison with that of a more familiar confusion species.

Plumage patterns and colours

These should be noted, as for all species, and *positively no attempt* should be made to 'fill in' details on those parts not seen or not studied. Most records committees would find a full description of a fly-past seabird somewhat suspicious.

General approach

Size and structure, flight action, and plumage patterns and colours should each be described carefully and analytically.

Members of records committees put great store in field-notebook extracts, and details gleaned from even the crudest of field sketches often carry more weight than those evident only from a formal description or finished drawing.

Even after the bird in question has passed, and descriptive notes have been completed, seawatchers can record various pertinent details additional to those requested on record forms. Those listed below are amongst the most important of these.

Direction of viewing.

Light conditions, including angle of sun (if any) to the observer.

Wind direction and speed (using Beaufort Scale)(most seabirds fly differently in light and strong winds).

The state of the sea's surface.

Whether or not there was any rain or mist.

Species directly and indirectly available for comparison and how they flew in the conditions.

Approximate distance from the bird (and how this was assessed).

Height of observer above sea level.

Optical aids used.

Start and finish times of the seawatch.

Time and duration of the observation.

Number of seawatchers present at the time of the observation and the number who saw the bird in question.

If on a headland, the observer's seawatching experience at the site.

The observer's usual seawatching locality and the date of his or her most recent seawatch from that point.

An assessment of the number of hours spent seawatching (1) ever, and (2) during the previous 12 months.

For a correct identification and subsequent acceptance of a rare or unusual seabird, an observer requires great concentration and greater attention to detail than he or she does when faced with other species.

As with flying raptors, observers must be prepared to resign themselves to a proportion of observations remaining indeterminate. Even the most experienced seawatchers regularly see birds flying past to which they cannot put a name. In such circumstances, the good observer does not allow enthusiasm to overcome caution.

PETER LANSDOWN and PETER HARRISON
197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

Bird Photograph of the Year

Sponsored by HarperCollins  and Christopher Helm 

This annual competition goes from strength to strength. The number of colour-transparencies which are of an award-winning standard is quite astonishing. Even applying very critical standards, the judges were unable to keep the initial short-list below 50; indeed, it ended up as 56, all of which had the qualities which we look for in our search for the Bird Photograph of the Year.

In the initial selection, six photographers had all three of their entries chosen (David Callan, Paul Doherty, David Kjaer, Tim Loseby, Roger Tidman and Roger Wilmshurst) and a further nine had two chosen (Hanne Eriksen, R. Glover, Tony Hamblin, Chris Knights, Hans Schouten, David Tipling, Ray Tipper, M. S. Wallen and Mike Wilkes). Such consistency is the mark of the expert.

Elimination, even at this early stage in the judging, was exceedingly difficult, but, after a further 23 had been thinned out—to use a garden analogy ('weeded out' would be a most inappropriate phrase)—the second short-list was still 33-strong, and still included the complete three-transparency sets of four photographers: David Callan, David Kjaer, Roger Tidman and Roger Wilmshurst.

After minute examination and much discussion, 13 more transparencies were reluctantly eliminated to give us our final short-list of 20. A vote, each judge independently placing the transparencies in order from 1 to 20, resulted in the following sequence:

1st BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR

MUTE SWANS *Cygnus olor* (plate 119) PHILIP PERRY, Humberside

2nd Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* (plate 120) Chris Knights, Norfolk

3rd Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* (plate 121) David Tipling, Kent

4th Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* (plate 122) Roger Tidman, Norfolk

5th Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (plate 123) Mike Weston, Netherlands

6th Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (plate 124) David Kjaer, Wiltshire

7th Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (plate 125) David Callan, Ayrshire

8th Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (plate 126) Ray Tipper, East Sussex

9th= Crossbills David Kjaer

9th= Dunnock *Prunella modularis* Roger Wilmshurst, West Sussex

11th= Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Ray Tipper

11th= Coots *Fulica atra* Roger Wilmshurst

11th= Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* Roger Wilmshurst

14th Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* Paul Doherty, Kent

15th Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* Mike Wilkes, Worcestershire

16th Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* David Kjaer

17th Sanderling *Calidris alba* W. Richardson, Humberside

18th Crossbills Chris Knights

19th Pygmy Owl *Glaucidium passerinum* Serge Sorbi, Belgium

20th Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Tim Loseby, Kent

Also short-listed: David Callan (Black Grouse; Swallows), Stan Craig (Whooper Swans), A. de Knijff (Hawk Owls), Paul Doherty (Tufted Duck; Curlew), Hanne Eriksen (Squacco Heron; Collared Dove), Jens Eriksen (Spoonbill), Dr Edmund Fellowes (Wigeon), R. Glover (Crag Martin; Jay), C. M. Greaves (Sparrowhawk), John G. Hall (Black Kites), Tony Hamblin (Moorhens; Black-shouldered Kite), Brayton Holt (Ptarmigan), Paul Hopkins (Great White Heron), Gordon Langsbury (Whooper Swans), Dr Harry J. Lehto (Sanderling), Tim Loseby (Blue Tits; Fulmars), Mike McKavett (Tree Pipit), P. Munsterman (Yellow Wagtail), Hans Schouten (Blackbird; Oystercatchers), Roger Tidman (Lammergeier; Knots), David Tipling (King Eider), Norman D. van Swelm (Kestrel), Bernard Volet (Mallards), M. S. Wallen (Spoonbills; Spoonbills), Mike Wilkes (Lapwing), Pierre Yésou (Sanderling) and Steve Young (Little Gull).

The sponsorship of this competition—jointly by Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd and HarperCollins Publishers—enables us not only to include with this account colour plates of the top eight transparencies, but also to invite all the 31 photographers whose work was short-listed, as well as the three winners, to the award presentation at a Press Reception in London.

Now to the winning photograph (plate 119), which was the runaway winner in the judges' independent vote. This may surprise some readers, for the Mute Swan is not generally regarded as a spectacular or exciting bird (we have even heard it referred to as 'hardly a bird at all'), and a pair with its family is a familiar summertime sight on most local rivers, canals, lakes and even urban boating pools. Indeed, Philip Perry himself sounded surprised when we telephoned him with the news of his win. He had,

however, submitted only the one transparency, so he must have sensed its qualities, much admired by all the judges. Just as it is difficult to show detail in the plumage of an all-black bird such as a Raven *Corvus corax*, so too with all-white birds such as swans. This photograph achieves that. In addition, it tells a story. The young cygnets are riding on the pen's back, thereby not only hitching a free ride when the parents swim any distance, but also remaining safely out of reach of predators such as pike *Esox lucius*. The pen has her eyes fixed on her destination (not the photographer, who is clearly not upsetting the birds), but the cob has his protectively on the three cygnets. Thus, this fast-swimming group shows in one picture the close family relationship of a pair of swans with its brood.

Chris Knights' Jack Snipe (plate 120) was part of a small passage through Norfolk in late September 1990. The bird was usually partly concealed by vegetation, but Chris waited in a hide until it moved around into a clear area. Even then, its constant bobbing action while feeding made it far from easy to photograph. The bird's cream-coloured stripes are startlingly conspicuous when it is out in the open, as in this photograph, but the closeness in colour to that of the nearby dead reeds shows how effective they would be as camouflage in cover.

Late summer/autumn 1990 brought an irruption of crossbills *Loxia* of three species to Britain from the Continent (*Brit. Birds* 84: 140). These usually found an appropriate habitat of cone-bearing conifers fairly quickly, but those reaching Fair Isle, Shetland, would have had a fruitless search. The Crossbill depicted by David Tipling (plate 121) did, however, find an apparently satisfying substitute: a thistle-head (others there were feeding on oats and other seeds).

Roger Tidman's alighting Lammergeier (plate 122) was attracted to the vicinity of his hide by baiting with bones; none came on the first day, but three different Lammergeiers came on the second. Apart from the spectacular image presented of this magnificent raptor, the photograph also gives an impression of the bird's mountain habitat and the panoramic view of the valley and the neighbouring hillsides visible from its feeding area. The rules of the competition state that preference will be given to photographs taken in the West Palearctic; this Lammergeier portrait would assuredly have moved up a notch or two in the judging order if it had been taken in the Pyrénées, the Taurus Mountains or the High Atlas, rather than in the Drakensberg Mountains of South Africa.

Various species of heron can be observed sunning on hot days, but the Grey Heron photographed by Mike Weston (plate 123) is shown exceptionally well, its bill parted as it pants heavily, and its wings lowered and spread. Not only is the bird itself well depicted, but so too is the variety of the surrounding vegetation.

David Kjaer must surely be the best bet as a future winner of this competition: all three of his transparencies remained in the judges' reckoning up to the final vote, avoiding all three previous elimination processes; they fill sixth, equal ninth and sixteenth places. Extraordinary consistency! David's top-rated photograph is a perfect portrait of a superb bird: the Spanish Bee-eater in plate 124. The whole picture is crisp: the

bird itself, the tracery of the veins in the wing of the dragonfly and even the protruding branch used as a perch are all sharp.

David Callan's hide, situated on a raft, had been in place beside the Little Grebes' nest for three weeks when this photograph was obtained (plate 125). In torrential rain, the female climbed onto the nest, calling softly to the male, who appeared and started swimming around the nest. After three or four minutes, during which time she continued to utter a soft trill, he made a half-hearted attempt to mate with her. The rain slackened and both birds moved off. For the next 1½ hours, David looked out at an empty, soggy nest. The heavy rain then resumed, the female returned, and climbed onto the nest, calling softly. The male arrived, but again failed to copulate. In the next three hours, she tried to entice him to mate on three occasions—always when the rain was heaviest—by stretching out her neck and calling softly. Finally, she succeeded; and so did he. David Callan was convinced that the pattering of the heavy rain acted as a sexual stimulus to the female.

Ray Tipper's Squacco Heron (plate 126) was photographed at an egretty in a botanical garden in the Malagasy Republic. Like Roger Tidman's Lammergeier, a similar photograph obtained in the West Palearctic might well have been even higher up the judges' lists. In November, many of the egrets and herons had eggs, but were still actively displaying. In this case, the Squacco was raising its crown and scapular plumes, lowering its head below the level of its feet, and slowly lifting each

19. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1991: pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* with three cygnets, North Lumbertside, June 1990 (Nikon F4, handheld; Nikon AF 180 mm f.1.8; Kodachrome 64; 1/500th, f.5.6)(Philip Perry)





120. Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*, Norfolk, September 1990 (Canon 620 EDS; Canon 300 mm & converter; Kodachrome 200 ASA)(Chris Knights)



1. Male Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* feeding on thistle-head, Shetland, October 1990 (Nikon F4; Nikkor 600 mm f.5.6 IFED; Kodachrome 64; 1/250th, f.5.6)(David Tipling)

2. Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* alighting, South Africa, August 1990 (Canon EOS 600; 300 mm; Kodachrome 200; 1/150th, f.8)(Roger Tidman)





123. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* sunning, Netherlands, August 1990 (Canon A1, FD 600 mm f.4.5; Kodachrome 64)(Mike Weston)



l. Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Spain, May 1990 (Pentax SFXN; Pentax A-600 mm f.5.6, EDIF; f.8 on auto; Kodachrome 200)(David Kjaer)



125. Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* copulating, Central Region (Clackmannanshire), June 1990 (Nikon 80-200 zoom & single flash unit; 1/60th, f.5.6; Kodachrome 64)(David Callan)

126. Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* displaying, Madagascar, November 1990 (Nikon FA; 800 mm Nikkor; automatic aperture 1/60th; Kodachrome 200)(Ray Tipper)



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foot alternately (one is in the process of being raised in the photograph) as it was gently swaying from side to side. Ray Tipper commented: 'A performance not unlike one of the pre-fight ceremonial rituals of a sumo wrestler!' As well as its scientific interest, depicting this display, the photograph is also aesthetically enchanting, the heron's plumes appearing to mimic the lacy heads of the papyrus, to form a visually pleasing pattern.

That's the top eight. The next 50 or so were of the same remarkably high standard. Is it any wonder that the judges are already looking forward to next year's feast?

R. J. CHANDLER, J. T. R. SHARROCK and DON SMITH
Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Reviews

Tous les Oiseaux d'Europe [All the Bird Songs of Europe]. By Jean-Claude Roché. Sittelle, 1990. Available from Bird Recording Services, London. Compact discs vols. 1-4. £12.99 per vol.; £49.95 for full set.

Following record and cassette versions, this CD release is Jean-Claude Roché's third sound guide to the birds of Europe. The coverage is greatly expanded and includes many new recordings, three-quarters by Roché himself. The full set of four CDs gives a total of 396 or so species arranged in Voous order. Each CD plays for around 75 minutes, so the average playing time per species is about 45 seconds. For most species, the usual calls are given, as well as one or more songs. The quality of recording varies, but is mostly excellent.

'Roché' is not as comprehensive as the Peterson Sound Guide, which covers 470 species, excluding vagrants. You will not, however, find many species missing (Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* and most of the exotic introduced species are obvious gaps), and there are some real rarities included, such as Andalusian Hemipode *Tumix sylvatica*.

There are some surprises, too. I thought at first that the remarkable call attributed to Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* was a Crane *Grus grus* until, checking in *BWP*, I found that Mute Swan does indeed have a Crane-like call in the east and north of its range, but not apparently in western Europe. And this leads to my only real gripe: the limited data given in the accompanying booklets, with no indication of where and when each species was recorded.

Although less convenient than cassette for use in the field, CD is, in every other way, the medium ideally suited to bird-sound recordings: there are no intrusive announcements, because you can see at a glance which track is playing; you can choose which tracks you want to listen to, and in any order, with instant access—excellent for comparison; and, with many CD players, the random-choice button allows for self-testing. And, of course, there is no unwanted background noise, other than that on the original recordings. More please!

IAN DAWSON

Atlas das Aves que Nidificam em Portugal Continental. Edited by Rui Rufino. Serviço Nacional de Parques reservas e Conservação da Natureza, Lisboa, 1989. 215 pages; 189 line-drawings; 188 distribution maps. Paperback Portuguese \$1500.00.

The breeding birds of nearly every country in Europe have now been surveyed using standard methods, under the aegis of the European Ornithological Atlas Committee. This

'Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Portugal' is the latest addition. The layout is similar to those already available, with a two-colour map (in this case, brown dots on a black outline), a decorative line-drawing (in this case, all by Alfredo da Conceição) and an explanatory text. The species texts in this atlas are entirely in Portuguese, but this hardly matters to the British reader, since there is a two-page English summary describing the project, and the distribution maps are the most important things in every atlas.

The mapping units for this Portuguese survey are 20×32 km rectangles, of which there are 175 in Portugal. A total of 113 observers took part in the survey, which extended over seven years, from 1978 to 1984. A total of 189 species was proved to breed in Portugal; all are mapped in detail, except for Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, for which the number of occupied rectangles is indicated, but not their exact location.

Every atlas is a mine of fascinating information, and this one is no exception. To give just a few examples, Woodlark *Lullula arborea* was found in over 90% of Portuguese rectangles, and proved breeding in three times as many as was Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, which was found in only 50% of the rectangles; the alien Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrild* was found in 30% of Portuguese rectangles; the most widespread species were House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* (found in every rectangle), Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Serin *Serinus serinus* (found in 174), Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (173) and Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (172).

This book is an essential purchase for anyone interested in European breeding distributions or in the birds of Portugal.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

Diary dates

This list covers July 1991 to June 1992

9th July BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. R. E. Scott on 'Birds in Bulgaria.' Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least 21 days before to Hon. Secretary, Mrs Amberley Moore, 1 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB.

2nd-11th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

25th August ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

30th August-1st September BRITISH BIRD-WATCHING FAIR 1991. Eggleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, near Oakham, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton, Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

5th-8th September IZEL SYMPOSIUM OF THE

INTERNATIONAL BIOACOUSTICS COUNCIL. University of Osnabrück. Details from Pat Sellar, 89 Riddlesdown Road, Purley, Surrey CR8 1DH.

6th-8th September SMALL FALCONS CONFERENCE. Organised by the Hawk and Owl Trust. University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent. Details from Fiona Swingland, DICE, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NY.

27th-29th September BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. University of Nottingham. Theme: What DNA fingerprinting has told us about populations that we didn't know before. Details from Dr David Parkin, University of Nottingham, Department of Genetics, School of Medicine, Queens Medical Centre, Nottingham NG7 2UH.

28th September RSPB FILM PREMIÈRE. Royal Festival Hall, London. Details from Kate Berry (Films), RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

5th October RSPB AGM. QE2 Centre, London. Details from Janice Harnett, RSPB.

- 17th October** OBC MEETING. Isles of Scilly. Details from OBC.
- 22nd October** BOC. Dr Robert Cheke on 'Birds of Togo.' Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.
- 1st-3rd November** SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.
- 9th November** BTO/CHESHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Details from BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.
- 22nd-24th November** BTO/SCOTTISH RINGERS' CONFERENCE. Fife Arms Hotel, Braemar. Details from BTO.
- 22nd-24th November** IRISH WILDBIRD CONSERVANCY/BTO AUTUMN FIELD CONFERENCE. The Prince of Wales Hotel, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, Ireland. Details from IWC, Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.
- 26th November** BOC. R. E. F. Peal on 'Birds of NW Morocco'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.
- 30th November** BTO/DYFED WILDLIFE TRUST ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Details from BTO.
- 6th-8th December** BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from BTO.
- 6th-8th December** NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS. National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. Details from Brian Byles, Editor, 'Cage and Aviary Birds', Prospect House, 9-13 Ewell Road, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey SM1 4QQ.
- 14th December** OBC AGM. Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.
- 3rd-5th January** BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from Ringing Office, BTO.
- 25th-26th January** YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB GARDEN BIRDWATCH. Details from YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.
- 31st January** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.
- 31st January** Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.
- 15th March** Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.
- 16th March-17th May** YOC FLIGHTLINE. Migration phone-in. Details from YOC.
- 20th-22nd March** BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. University of Durham. Details from Professor P. R. Evans, Zoology Department, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE.
- 27th-29th March** RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. Warwick University. Details from Janice Harnett, RSPB.
- 27th-29th March** SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE. Kelvin Conference Centre, Glasgow. 'European seabirds.' Details from The Seabird Group, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. Offers of papers to: Dr T. R. Birkhead, Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN.
- 10th-15th May** INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS. Madrid. Details from Julio Gisbert & Fernando Palacios, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Jos Gutierrez Abascal 2, 28006 Madrid, Spain.

Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedfordshire MK44 3NJ

Seventy-five years ago...

'SOME BREEDING-HABITS OF THE SPARROW-HAWK. (1) THE EFFECT OF RAIN. BY J. H. OWEN. When she is satisfied with the way she is covering the young she may not move for several minutes. On the other hand she may, if the rain is very heavy, shake her head now and then or look up as a leaf flutters down from the tree. The look in the eye varies continually and has many "expressions", such as alertness, fierceness, weariness, sheer boredom and calm satisfaction among others.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 2-3, June 1916)

Mystery photographs

167 Picture the scene: it is April, you are standing on the cliff tops of Lake Nasser in Egypt, it is late morning and it will soon be too hot to do any more birdwatching for a few hours. Suddenly, you notice a tight flock of some 20 or so very large birds flapping and gliding along the cliffs towards you. As they come overhead, it is easy to see that they are pelicans *Pelecanus*: they are huge, with massive bodies, wide, fingered wings and ridiculously short tails (without projecting feet); up front, the neck is folded, but you cannot fail to notice the long, protruding bill.

A migrating flock of pelicans seemingly wending their way north towards their Soviet breeding grounds has just passed, and you



hope that some of the photographs will come out satisfactorily. One of these is our subject (plate 116, repeated here), but now we have to decide which of our region's three basically similar species we have seen.

At all ages, the underwing of the very large Dalmatian Pelican *P. crispus* is a relatively uniform pale grey, with a whiter band along the greater coverts; the very tips of the primaries and secondaries are dark grey, forming a narrow and indistinct dark fringe. Overhead, if not too high, the dark feet contrast with the pale rear-end. Although the mystery pelican shows an obvious pale mid-wing band, the leading wing-coverts and the flight feathers (both primaries and secondaries) are too dark, and the feet not dark enough, for the bird to be a Dalmatian.

The most numerous pelican of the region, passing through the Middle East and northeast Africa in spectacular flocks in spring, is the White Pelican *P. onocrotalus*. Unlike the Dalmatian, there is a considerable change in plumage characteristics with age; full adult plumage takes some four years to be attained. We can immediately discount adult White Pelican. In flight, it differs from the other two species in being white, with contrasting jet-black primaries and secondaries from below. Juveniles and immatures, however, have a very different pattern: dusky brown underwing, with broad whitish central band, showing a striking contrast; their flight feathers blacken with age as the brown of the forewing becomes whiter. Immature White seems the most likely solution, but the bill of the mystery bird is distinctly pale (should be darker on young White) and our pelican,

although showing a pattern suggestive of young White, has neither the forewing nor the flight feathers dark enough for that species.

It is in fact a Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens*, which shows cinnamon-grey underwing-coverts and dull greyish flight feathers, contrasting with a paler band up the centre of the underwing. Worn adults can show a contrasting pattern, recalling a diluted version of an adult White, but the flight feathers never become really black, and the white is invariably greyish-white. A close inspection of the primary tips reveals that the outermost 'finger' is distinctly shorter than the longest; it is only slightly shorter on both Dalmatian and White. A view of the upperside would have shown the upperwing to be a dull greyish or brownish-grey, with dull, dark grey secondaries and primaries (more uniform in pattern than on either White or Dalmatian Pelican, which have darker primaries and obscured secondaries), and an off-white or pale pinkish rump, contrasting with a brownish tail and extending farther up onto the back than on either Dalmatian or White. Pink-backed is the smallest of the three, but is still a very large bird, the size difference being apparent only if compared directly with White Pelicans. The combination of wholly pale greyish-flesh bill and legs (both yellower on breeding adults) and more-restricted, bare, fleshy facial skin are further points to check on swimming individuals.

I photographed this Pink-backed Pelican under the circumstances outlined above, in April 1984, near Abu Simbel, Egypt. During our two-day stay there, we found that small flocks of this species, and small numbers of Yellow-billed Storks *Mycteria ibis*, drifted north up the shores of the lake in the mornings and back towards the Sudan in the late afternoon, presumably enjoying a scenic tour on the midday thermals. It seems that this site has become the only place in the Western Palearctic where one is likely to see these primarily African species. STEVE MADGE

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128. Mystery photograph 168.
Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Canada Goose diving to escape attacks by Mute Swan

On 30th June 1984, at Rostherne Mere NNR, Cheshire, I observed a male Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* repeatedly attack a solitary adult Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* which was moulting and flightless. At a time when the swan's mate and two cygnets were about 1 km away at the opposite end of the mere, the swan adopted a threatening posture and finally rushed across the water at the goose. Almost at the point of impact the goose dived; on surfacing, it tried to swim discreetly away, its body almost wholly submerged, but the swan recommenced attack and the goose desperately dived again. After four attacks in quick succession, causing three dives of 16-18 seconds and one of 20 seconds, the goose escaped, very exhausted, into a stand of lesser bulrush *Typha angustifolia*.

MALCOLM CALVERT

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Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented: 'Moulting wildfowl of all kinds—including Mute Swans for that matter—dive to escape danger.' EDS

Brent Geese with white neck bands During observational work on about 1,500 Brent Geese *Branta bernicla* for The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, at the Exe Estuary, Devon, between November 1988 and March 1989, I was struck by several individuals with complete white neck bands resembling the west North American and east Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*.

I saw the first of these on 10th December 1988, amongst a flock of 805 of the nominate, dark-bellied race on the Exminster Marshes. Apart from the rather broad white collar, which completely encircled the neck at the front, this bird was otherwise identical in plumage to the other adults with it.

By 11th February 1989, I had seen at least two others with complete white neck bands and several intermediates with incomplete bands (fig. 1). All were adults and none showed any joining of the white neck patches on the rear of the neck. In addition, there was an adult with an almost completely white head and upper neck and two others with white-speckled heads.

I can find no mention in the literature of Brent Geese of the nominate



Fig. 1. Variation in neck patches of Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla*: front views of individuals in Devon in winter 1988/89 (D. S. Flumm)

race showing complete white neck bands. In fact, *BWP* states 'Triangular white patches at sides of neck, which do not meet in front or behind neck.' I hope this note will warn observers that, faced with a distant Brent Goose showing a complete white neck ring, one should not necessarily assume that it is of American/east Siberian origin.

D. S. FLUMM

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Dr M. A. Ogilvie has commented that the Exe Estuary flock is likely to be fairly self-contained, and there could well be a gene present in this population responsible for the variation in these individuals. This is also another example demonstrating the need for caution (and more than a single character) to be used in the identification of any rare bird, either species or race. EDS

Black-shouldered Kite feeding over ploughed fields in winter The Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* is often recorded feeding during the breeding season over growing cereals (e.g. Collar 1978), but less seems to be known about its winter feeding habitat. During the winters of 1987/88 and 1988/89, I made observations at Pancas, in the Reserva Nacional do Estuario do Tejo, Portugal, and at various typical lowland habitats. I noted Black-shouldered Kites hovering and/or feeding in and around fallow crop fields, ungrazed grassland and close-cropped pasture near groves of olive *Olea europaea* and cork oak *Quercus suber*. On 14th January 1989, a juvenile/first-winter kite was seen hovering and feeding in abandoned, overgrown crop fields with weedy vegetation about 40 cm tall; it hovered frequently, dropping slowly and gently into the vegetation as described by Brown & Amadon (1968). Later that day, it was relocated on a fence post near fields being actively and noisily ploughed: at least five times during 15 minutes' observation, it stooped into the furrows less than 80 m from the moving plough, each time with a rapid and emphatic plunge as described by Collar (1978); one plunge resulted in prey capture.

Differences in stooping behaviour (see Collar 1978) may in this instance have been due to differences in habitat: higher ground vegetation may be linked to the 'gentle' drop described by Brown & Amadon (1968).

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REFERENCES

- BROWN, L., & AMADON, D. 1968. *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* (vol. 1). Feltham.
 COLLAR, N. J. 1978. Nesting of Black-shouldered Kites in Portugal. *Brit. Birds* 71: 398-412.

Two male Kestrels at same nest On 23rd May 1984, in Bagley Wood, Oxfordshire, I was attracted by excited 'ki-ki-ki . . .' calls coming from an oak *Quercus*. The commotion, which lasted at least three minutes, involved two male Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, both of which were carrying prey. One flew to a nearby oak where I had previously found a Kestrel's nest with a brood of five chicks; begging calls were heard, and about four minutes later a male and female left the tree. Immediately, the second male swooped towards the nest and begging calls were again heard; the female dashed back and chased the second male out of sight. I did not see two males near the nest on any of four subsequent visits.

Between 11th May and 3rd June 1987, near Falmer, East Sussex, two male Kestrels were regularly seen feeding a brood of four nestlings. Initially, aggression between the adults was frequent, but, later on, all three often perched amicably on the same tree.

I know of no similar records of two male Kestrels at one nest, but second males have been recorded at nests of Lesser Kestrels *F. naumanni* (BWP) and Merlins *F. columbarius* (Condor 88: 533-534), while an intruding male Hobby *F. subbuteo* has been seen to feed a paired female (BWP).

DAVID HARPER

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Pectoral Sandpiper's reaction when alarmed On 16th September 1987, along with several other birdwatchers in East Hide, Minsmere, Suffolk, I was watching a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* which was busily feeding in the mud; other waders were feeding in the water. Suddenly, ducks and waders rose as one, with the exception of the Pectoral Sandpiper; the latter immediately entered the water and lowered itself until only its head and 'shoulders' were exposed. The other birds returned very quickly to feed in the water, and the sandpiper returned to the mud and fed as before. We could see no bird of prey and did not know what had caused the alarm. I remarked, however, that this behaviour was exactly the same as that shown by a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* when a Merlin *Falco columbarius* passed overhead (*Brit. Birds* 80: 426).

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Spotted Redshank joining pigeon flock David Norman (*Brit. Birds* 71: 461-462) described waders attaching themselves to flocks of pigeons *Columba*, and the editors appended a request for further observations of this practice, especially inland. At 19.20 GMT on 4th September 1987, a Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* was circling and calling over the village of South Witham, Lincolnshire. A flock of homing pigeons *C. livia* was then released for their evening exercise and, as they reached a height of some 30 m, the wader immediately joined them as closely as any other member of the flock; the Spotted Redshank then completed four circuits of the village, calling loudly, before breaking away and flying off.

ERIC SIMMS

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Spotted Redshank evading attack by diving The note on unusual flight-bathing behaviour by Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* (*Brit. Birds* 82: 28) recalled the following. On 26th November 1987, at the Broadwater, Gwynedd, I watched a Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* feeding in a shallow sandy pool. After five minutes, a passing Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* swooped down on the wader three times; each time, the wader evaded attack by briefly 'belly-flopping' under the water with wings outstretched and slightly raised, until only the wingtips remained above the surface.

From the state of the incoming tide I estimated the depth of the pool to be about 22 cm, which would have involved the wader bringing its legs up tight against its underbody. After the attacks, the Herring Gull flew off and the Spotted Redshank continued feeding.

ROGER Q. SKEEN

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Perching habits of Wheatear and Black-eared Wheatear ‘Mystery photograph’ number 138 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 625, plate 310) of a perching female Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* prompted me to read again the notes I made during several memorable spring holidays in Mallorca in the 1970s. My companions and I often saw Black-eared Wheatears and Wheatears *O. oenanthe* on passage north of Puerto Pollensa, in the Boquer Valley, and at Casas Veyas on the Formentor Peninsula.

The male Black-eared Wheatears commonly perched on slender stems and flimsy sticks. Male Wheatears never used such insubstantial perches, preferring to look out from rocks, boulders and low walls. The smaller sample of less-easily-distinguished females showed the same difference in habits.

I consider that the choice of spindly perches is virtually diagnostic of Black-eared Wheatear in comparison with Wheatear.

ALAN HUNTER

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This difference is noted, but not emphasised, in several standard identification works. As with all behavioural characteristics, this habit should be used with caution and no identification should be based wholly (or even largely) upon it. A wheatear making regular use of flimsy herbs as perches would, however, be well worth a second glance: this habit could draw attention to a vagrant Black-eared Wheatear. EDS

Crested Tits hiding nest material On 19th March 1988, in Torre Marimon, Caldes de Montbui, Catalonia, Spain, I observed a pair of Crested Tits *Parus cristatus* carrying moss. They were very excited and called continuously. I then realised that I was standing beside a dead tree with a hole in it, where I suspected the nest must be. Both tits approached the trunk, but did not enter the hole. Suddenly, one of them perched on an open pine cone and lodged the moss in it, and the other did the same in another cone. Some seconds later, the pair came back carrying more moss, which they again stored. I then inspected two of the cones that were accessible, and left the moss in position. The next morning, I returned to the site and saw that the moss had been removed. I have not heard of any bird species hiding nest material, although I have observed birds, particularly tits and warblers (Sylviidae), dropping nest material if disturbed during nest-building.

ABEL JULIEN I VILA

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No doubt the tits' behaviour was triggered by the close presence of the observer. Derek Goodwin has commented: ‘I have seen (rarely) captive Lanceolated Jays *Garrulus lanceolatus* hide nest-lining material when “put off” by my close presence. The only record I know of birds hiding nest material, before the breeding season, for later use is that by F. Lindgren for the Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus* (1975, *Fauna Flora Stockholm* 70: 198-210).’ EDS

Chaffinch giving Nuthatch-like song On 26th April 1988, in Kensington Gardens, London, I heard what sounded like a Nuthatch *Sitta europaea*, a species which had been uncommon there recently. I then saw that it was a finch-like bird, singing frantically from one tree for a minute or two and then dashing off some distance to another to repeat the performance. I got only a poor view and, although the bird looked similar to a Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, I thought that it must be an escaped exotic species, especially in view of its behaviour. When I visited the park again on 10th May, the bird was still performing and proved to be a male Chaffinch. My assistant (now Curator) at the British Library of Wildlife Sounds, Richard Ranft, recorded the song that afternoon and made a sonagram (fig 1.).

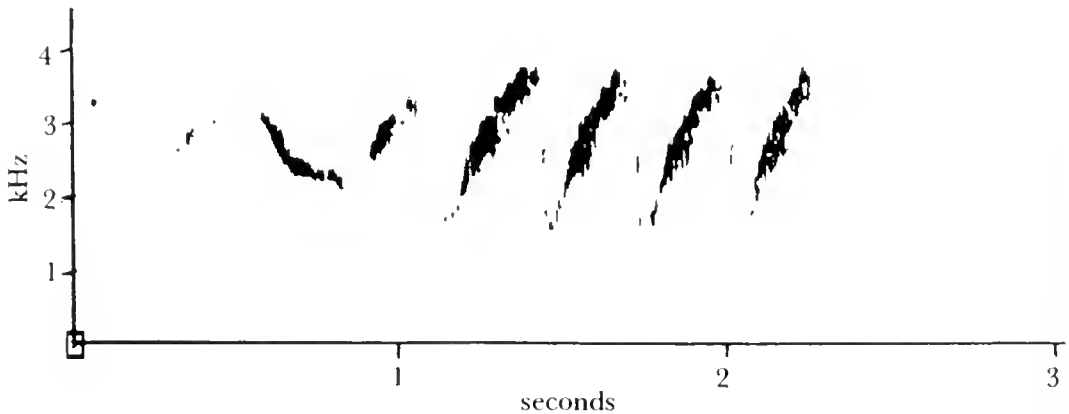


Fig. 1. Sonagram produced on Voiceident RT1000 digital analyser of aberrant Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* song recorded by Richard Ranft, NSA, London, May 1988

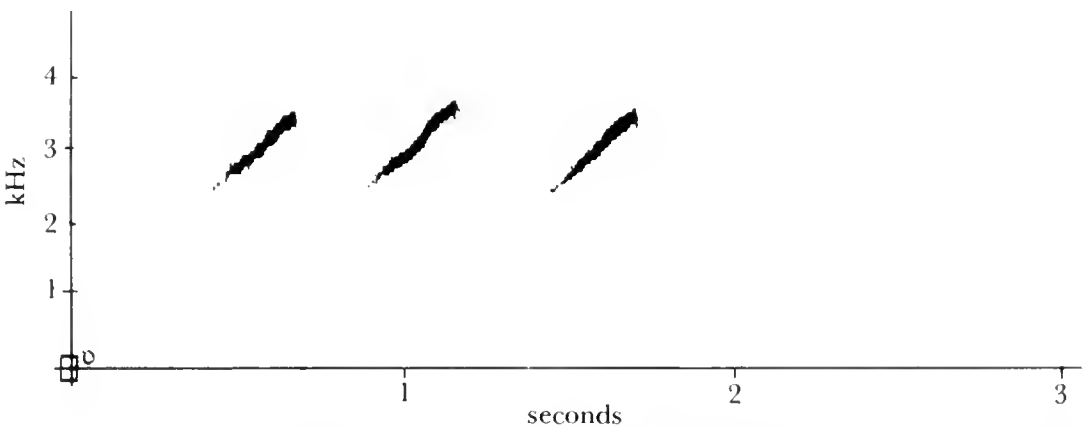


Fig. 2. Sonagram from BLOWS of calls of Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* (similar to those of aberrant Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*) recorded by R. Jervis in Sussex in April 1982

The song consisted of a loud upswept whistle repeated four times, very similar to one of the sounds of a Nuthatch (fig. 2), and was often introduced by a softer, 'wavering' two-syllable phrase; it was very unlike 'normal' Chaffinch song (fig. 3). It is difficult to think of any explanation for this completely abnormal song.

RON KETTLE
British Library of Wildlife Sounds, The National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road,
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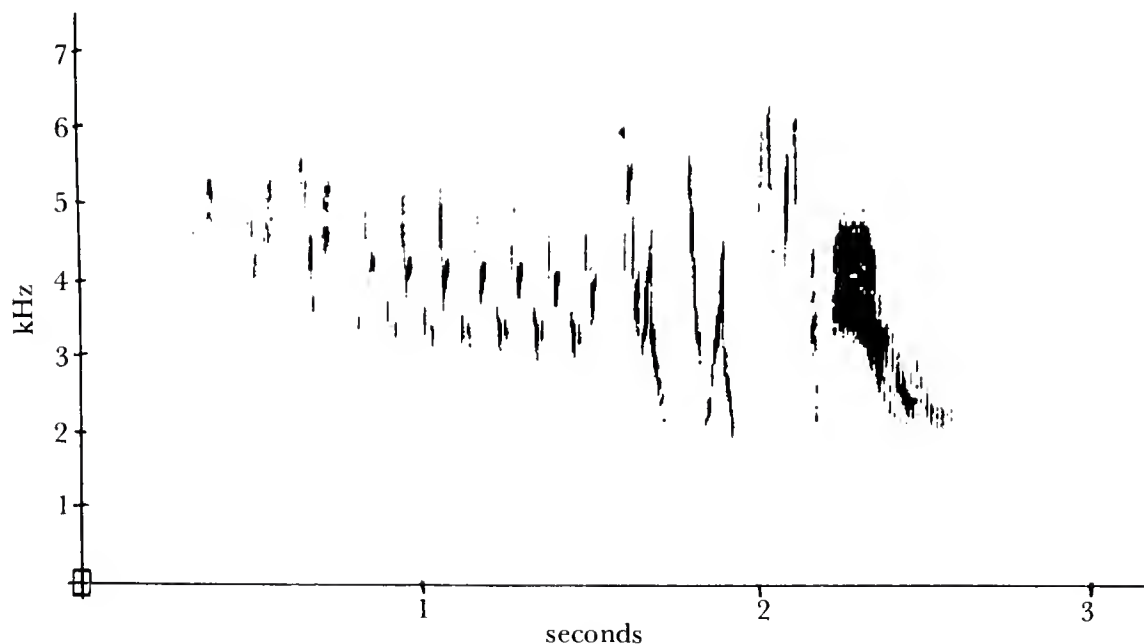


Fig. 3. Sonagram from BLOWS of normal song of Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* recorded by Richard Savage in Somerset, May 1970

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock has commented: 'I have often heard Chaffinches giving Nuthatch-like songs, and seen people unfamiliar with the habit misidentifying the singer. I thought that it was recorded in the literature—I have known about it for over 20 years.' EDS

Letters

Keeping warm In his useful 'Birdcraft' article on clothing for birdwatchers (*Brit. Birds* 84: 27-30), Dr M. A. Ogilvie could have given one more useful tip of which a surprisingly large number of birdwatchers are apparently unaware.

Most farmworkers, especially those of an older school, know that tying a piece of baler twine around one's middle is as good as or better than an extra pullover. Much heat which would otherwise be lost is thereby retained, and bitter winds are prevented from blowing up under the jacket. For those who feel that a piece of string is an inelegant accoutrement, a belt will do equally well, but is more expensive. Since many jackets have no belt or drawstring, this simple addition will enable otherwise frozen birders to remain behind their 'scopes a little longer.

JEREMY D. POWNE

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We hope that those who follow Mr Powne's good advice do not become known as stringers. EDS

A second look I am afraid that Drs Chandler and Sharrock made a slip-up in the March 1990 issue (*Brit. Birds* 83: 115), when, referring to the splendid photo of the Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* feeding its young (plate 59), they said 'as the squab . . .'. In fact, the photograph *clearly* shows that there are *two* squabs. The one with its bill inside the parent's mouth has both wings, with part of each clearly visible, folded against its body, with the tips of its primaries (visible only on near side) below the somewhat raised tail. The top of its head is nearly on a level with the adult's eye and needs a close look to see where it is demarcated from that portion of its sibling's head that is visible.

The other squab's wing is 'embracing' the upperparts of the nearer young bird. The line of its back, rump and tail can clearly be seen as quite distinct, with the tail at a different angle from that of the nearer squab. It is not possible to see from the photo whether this second squab has also got its bill in the parent's mouth or is merely trying to put it there, with the bill obscured by the parent's head.

I believe that one function of the wild flapping and 'embracing' with the wings, in which young pigeons indulge when hungry and begging for food, may be to hinder the sibling from 'getting in first'. DEREK GOODWIN

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RJC and JTRS have replied '*Mea culpa*. When writing the text, we did overlook the second squab, even though Anthony J. Bond, the photographer, had captioned his picture 'Woodpigeon feeding squabs'. Our only excuse is that the text was written when looking at a photocopy of the photograph (the original being with our printers); the clarity of the published photograph is such that our printers deserved (and received) a compliment from us.

'As an aside, we wonder whether such competitive tussling for food by young birds is the origin of the verb to squabble?' EDs

European news

This twenty-ninth report includes records from 25 countries. We are pleased to be able to draw attention to the addition of Lithuania to the list of countries represented. New contacts in unrepresented West Palearctic countries will be very welcome. The official correspondents whose detailed six-monthly reports are summarised here are acknowledged at the end. This feature is intended as a news service; anyone requiring further information or quoting records in other publications should refer to the literature of the relevant country.

If you have made observations in any of the countries included here, and do not know to whom records should be sent, we suggest that you send a copy of your records to the relevant 'European news' correspondent listed at the end of this summary; for countries not included here, we

suggest that you send them to *British Birds*, and we shall do our best to pass them on to the appropriate person.

Records awaiting formal verification by national rarities committees are indicated by an asterisk (*).

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to single individuals

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* FAROE ISLANDS Second and third records (first this century): Akraberg on 19th October 1987 and Hvannasund from 26th June 1990 for several days. MOROCCO Second record this century: El-Jardida on 9th February 1990*.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* GIBRALTAR Correction: first record was on 23rd November (not December) 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 222).

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* SLOVENIA First breeding record: two or three pairs at Cerknica Lake in 1990.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* SWEDEN Continuing decline: fewer than ten pairs bred successfully in 1989.

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* FRANCE Fifth record: two off Les Sables d'Olonne, Vendée, on 22nd August 1990*.

Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* DENMARK Largest influx for many years: peak of 22 passing Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 21st September 1990. NETHERLANDS Influx: more than 15 on coast of Holland, during strong winds, during 21st-23rd September 1990 (only six individuals during 1982-88).

Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* DENMARK Large influx: during September 1990, with peak of 95 at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 19th. LATVIA Fifth record: Pape on 11th October 1990*. SPAIN High mortality: up to 800 corpses along 34 km of beach in Huelva province after gales in November and December 1989.

Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* MOROCCO First records: single at El-Oualidia on 9th February 1990* and three at Cap Rhir on 10th February 1990*.

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* SWEDEN Breeding expansion: total of 4,830 breeding pairs found in nine different colonies, all in southern Sweden, in 1989 (cf. recent increases or range expansions in Austria, Byelorussia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and the Ukraine, *Brit. Birds* 75: 25; 76: 272; 78: 638; 80: 9, 321-322; 82: 14, 321; 83: 223; 84: 2).

White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* FRANCE Influx: adult at Arèze, Gard, on 17th July 1990*, singles at Lannion, Côtes d'Armor (former Côtes-du-Nord), on 10th August 1990*, at Le Collet, Loire-Atlantique, on 4th September 1990*, juvenile at Maissonais s/Tardoire, Haute-Vienne, on 24th-25th September 1990*, and adult at La Ferté-Hauterive, Allier, on 24th December 1990*. POLAND Small influx: five records in southern Poland in July and August 1990 (singles recorded every year recently). (Only other recent possible vagrants reported were in Denmark and Sweden in October 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 331.)

Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* FRANCE Probably second or third record: single (perhaps escape) at Dunkerque, Nord, during mid-September to beginning of October 1990*. HUNGARY Fourth and fifth records this century: two adults near Szeged on 18th May 1989, and five individuals on the Hortobágy during 22nd May to 1st June 1990. (Only other recent possible vagrants reported were in Germany in December 1976 to March 1977 and in Norway in June 1976, September 1977 and May 1978, *Brit. Birds* 72: 275; 73: 257; 75: 25.)

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* SWEDEN Highest number for several years: 213 males booming in 1989.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* NETHERLANDS Decrease: only eight breeding pairs in 1990.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* SPAIN Census: about 1,600 pairs in 1989 (cf. about 1,300 in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 322).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* SPAIN Census: about 400 breeding pairs in 1989 (cf. fewer than 250 pairs in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 322).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* SPAIN Census: about 54,000 pairs in 1989 (range expansion noted previously, *Brit. Birds* 83: 223).

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* BYELORUSSIA First record: adult (shot) in Luninets district, Brest region, in August 1979. SPAIN Increase: about 5,000 pairs in 1989 census.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* SWEDEN
Record numbers: 12, mainly in southeast, in spring and summer 1989.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* SPAIN Increase: about 1,500 pairs in 1989 census (cf. local increase already noted, *Brit. Birds* 83: 223; and recent increases in Italy and Belgium, *Brit. Birds* 78: 639; 82: 322).

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* LITHUANIA First record: adult near Daugai during June-July 1981.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* FRANCE Increase: 119 pairs in 1990, compared with 11 pairs in 1974, 69 pairs in 1988, and 107 pairs in 1989 (cf. decreases in Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, but increases in Austria and Poland, *Brit. Birds* 75: 25, 268; 78: 339; 81: 15; 83: 9; 84: 2).

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* LITHUANIA First record: adult at Žuvintas Nature Reserve in September 1986. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* FRANCE Fourth record: Sainte-Opportune, Eure, 9th October 1990* (first to third were in September 1987, April 1990, now reported to have stayed to September 1990, and May 1990, *Brit. Birds* 83: 9; 84: 2).

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* SPAIN Highest-ever breeding numbers at Fuente de Piedra lagoon: some 12,000 chicks fledged from almost 14,000 pairs in 1990 (cf. good breeding seasons in France/Spain in 1984, 1986 and 1988, *Brit. Birds* 78: 339; 80: 322; 82: 322).

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* AUSTRIA Vagrants: two adults at Seewinkel, Burgenland, during 14th December 1990 to at least 13th January 1991 (very rare away from Lake Constance). BYELORUSSIA Second record: one with Mute Swans *C. olor* at Lake Chernoe, Bereza district, Brest, during December 1983 to February 1984.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* NETHERLANDS Increase: at least 800 breeding pairs in 1990.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* LITHUANIA First record: single in flock of White-fronted Geese *A. albifrons* near Kintai, Šilutė district, on 13th May 1985 (cf. first Norwegian record, two adults during 23rd-26th June 1985, *Brit. Birds* 82: 322).

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* LITHUANIA First and second records: single in Nemunas Delta on 20th April and 1st May 1982 and two (second/third-years) at Lake Kretuonas on 5th May 1984.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* CANARY ISLANDS First record: male and three females on Fuerteventura during January-February 1991. CZECHOSLOVAKIA First record: male near Tovačov, central Moravia, on 10th February 1990.

Teal *Anas crecca* NORWAY Fourth record of Nearctic race *A. c. carolinensis*: adult male at Kurefjorden, Råde, Østfold, on 16th April 1989* (third was in May 1985, *Brit. Birds* 82: 323).

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* ESTONIA Fifth record: male at Lake Soitsjärv, Jõgeva District, on 25th May 1990.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* LATVIA First record: female at Kolka, northwest Latvia, on 24th October 1990*. SWEDEN Record numbers: at least 103 individuals, of which 80% observed in spring, on both coasts, in 1989 (cf. previous peaks of 90 in 1986 and 70 in 1987, *Brit. Birds* 82: 15).

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* LATVIA Second record: two males and three females on west coast of Riga Bay on 20th January 1991* (first concerned two females in April 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224). SWEDEN Highest total for about 50 years: about 285 individuals, of which 98% were seen in the Baltic, in 1989 (cf. previous high totals in 1980, 1985 and 1987, and high numbers in Poland in 1987, *Brit. Birds* 82: 15).

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* FAROE ISLANDS Fourth and fifth records: adult male at Kirkjubøur during May-July 1990 (perhaps 1989 individual, *Brit. Birds* 83: 10) and two adult males at Tórshavn on 11th June 1990.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca* MOROCCO First record this century: two at Merja Zerga on 28th December 1989.

Hooded Merganser *Mergus cucullatus* FRANCE Second record: male (perhaps escape) in Baie de Somme from at least 25th August to 23rd September 1990*. NORWAY Third record: adult female at Åsen, Levanger, Nord-Trøndelag, during 13th January to at least 10th February 1991* (first and second were

in September 1985 and June 1986, *Brit. Birds* 82: 15-16).

Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis* NORWAY Fifth record: adult male at Evjevika, Ringsaker, Hedmark, on 8th and 11th May 1989 (third and fourth were in May 1988 and October 1988, *Brit. Birds* 84: 4).

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* FRANCE Correction: pair raised four (not three) young in Pyrénées-Atlantiques in 1990, adults with one or two young being seen to at least end of year (*Brit. Birds* 84: 4). Migrant: single at Col de Soulor, Haute-Pyrénées (altitude 1,400 m) on 6th October 1990*.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 122 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 16th September 1990, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden, about 25 km to ENE.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* BYELORUSSIA Population estimate: 40-50 pairs, about half in Byelorussian Poozerie (northern lake district). FINLAND Best-ever breeding success: 60 young fledged in 1990 (cf. 42 in 1988 and 52 in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 224).

Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* SPAIN Rapid recovery: 1989 census showed 774 pairs, in 27 colonies (cf. 365 pairs, in 16 colonies, in 1983-84, *Brit. Birds* 80: 323).

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* NETHERLANDS Second record: Molkwerum, Friesland, on 27th October 1959 (one previous record at Oldebroek, Gelderland, in November 1907, and two subsequent, at Wijdenes, Noordholland, on 3rd June 1979, and at Maasvlakte during 8th-9th August 1981; other records now rejected).

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* DENMARK Highest-ever count: 140 at Stevns Klint, Zealand, on 26th August 1990, arriving from Falsterbo, Sweden.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* MOROCCO Only recent confirmed breeding record: adults at nest near Taroudant in early April 1990.

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* SPAIN Population recovery continuing: 126 pairs in 1989 (cf. 104 pairs in 1983-84, *Brit. Birds* 80: 323).

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* SPAIN Census: 751 pairs in 1990.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* SWEDEN High numbers: about 430 individuals, including two

proved breeding, in 1989 (highest number since 1943 or 1947; cf. high numbers in 1989 in Britain and Denmark, *Brit. Birds* 82: 457, 577; 83: 11).

Sora *Porzana carolina* SPAIN First and second records: Traba Lagoon, La Coruña, on 10th April 1988* and Llobregat Delta, Barcelona, on 25th April 1990*.

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* POLAND First record this century: adult at Zakliczyn near Kraków on 24th April 1990.

Corncrake *Crex crex* SWEDEN Increase: in 1989, highest numbers for at least 21 years.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni* FRANCE Third record: immature at Marais d'Olonne, Vendée, during 18th-23rd January 1991* (plates 129 & 130), found dead on 23rd (cf. only other recent records, in Spain in December 1975, Finland in May 1979 and Morocco in April 1985 and January 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 11).

Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo* FRANCE Ninth record: Lac du Cébron, Deux-Sèvres, on 23rd October 1990* (cf. other recent records in Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland, *Brit. Birds* 84: 5).

Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* LITHUANIA First record: adult in Radviliškis district during November 1988 (this is the only Continental European record reported since 'European news' was started in 1977).

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* CZECHOSLOVAKIA Rapid decrease: 13-17 individuals in southern Moravia in 1990 (cf. 30-35 during 1970-82; 20-25 in 1987). LITHUANIA First record for 100 years: Pakruojis district during April-June 1985.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* NETHERLANDS Decrease: ten breeding pairs in 1990. Correction: 22 breeding attempts were in 1989, not 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 5).

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* ESTONIA Fourth record: Abruksa Island, Saaremaa District, on 18th July 1990.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus* SPAIN Second record: first-summer at Ensenada de la Insui, La Coruña, during May to August 1990* (first was in July 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 11).

Kittlitz's Sand Plover *Charadrius pecuarius* MOROCCO Date extension: four adults at Merzouga from 19th January to at least 7th

February 1990, with one staying until 31st March 1990* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 5).

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* SWEDEN Continued decline: only eight or nine pairs bred in 1989.

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* CYPRUS Fourth record: Baths of Aphrodite on 31st March 1990 (previous records were in April 1984, on 3rd June 1984 and in April 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 17). GREECE Second record: Mallia marsh, Crete, on 24th April 1990 (first was in July 1986, *Brit. Birds* 83: 11).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* NETHERLANDS Second and third records: Texel, Noordholland, during 19th to at least 26th October 1989, and Stavoren, Friesland, on 19th November 1989 (first record was a recently discovered museum specimen from November 1900). POLAND First record: adult in breeding plumage at Poraj Reservoir near Czestochowa on 17th July 1990.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* FINLAND Sixth record: Lågskär bird-observatory in Åland archipelago on 6th-7th August 1984 (sixth and seventh records—Siuntio during 18th-20th August 1984 and Hanko on 29th June 1986—become seventh and eighth). Ninth to eleventh records: Fauvo on 13th September 1990, Jurmo for about two weeks from 13th September 1990, two at Närpiö from 15th-21st September 1990 (plate 131). FRANCE First record: Guérande, Loire-Atlantique, on 19th September 1990*. NETHERLANDS Tenth record, first since 1940: single trapped at Abbega, Friesland, on 8th November 1990.

Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* CYPRUS Second breeding record: pair reared two young at Akrotiri Salt Lake in July 1990* (first concerned a clutch of five eggs found on 1st June 1913).

White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura* TUNISIA Third record: Metbasta on 12th January 1991 (second was in November 1986, *Brit. Birds* 84: 6).

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* FRANCE Deletion: first record, in April 1988, now rejected (*Brit. Birds* 82: 18).

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* HUNGARY Second record: juvenile on the Hortobágy on 5th September 1988 (first was in September-October 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 333).

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* NORWAY Fourth record: adult at Kramvik, Vardø, Finnmark, on 27th-28th May 1989* (first to third were in August 1984, May 1986 and June 1986, *Brit. Birds* 82: 18).

Dowitcher *Limnodromus* POLAND Fifth record: adult at Turawa Reservoir on 20th July 1990.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* SPAIN Second breeding record: pair with young at La Nava lagoon, Palencia, in June 1990 (first was at Ebro Delta in 1961).

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* GREECE Nine at Evros Delta on 5th March 1988. HUNGARY One on the Hortobágy on 1st October 1990 and six on 2nd December 1990. ISRAEL First (and only) record: one collected at Nahal Bessor, north Negev, on 4th October 1917. MOROCCO Three at Merja Zerga during 19th December 1989 to 17th February 1990; single at Merja Oulad Khalouf (Briech) on 25th December 1989; three at Merja Zerga from 24th December 1990. (We are publishing all records received of this species.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* POLAND Second breeding record: pair with three young at Wonieść Reservoir near Leszno in July 1989 (first was in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 326).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* HUNGARY Second record: juvenile near Szeged on 26th June 1990 (first was in 1959).

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* LITHUANIA First record: three at Lake Zaltytis on 16th-17th May 1988.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* AUSTRIA First record: Rheindelta, Lake Constance, Vorarlberg, on 20th-21st October. MOROCCO First record: Khnifiss lagoon on 10th April 1990.

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* BYELORUSSIA First record: near Brest on 3rd June 1987.

Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* HUNGARY Second record: one (ringed as nestling in Iceland on 18th July 1987) dead at Balatonfenyves, near Lake Balaton, on 30th August 1988.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* CZECHOSLOVAKIA First breeding in eastern Bohemia: pair with at least one young at Rozkoš water reservoir near Česká Skalice, in July 1989 (regular breeding since 1983 in

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southern Moravia, *Brit. Birds* 77: 237).
NETHERLANDS Increase: 90 breeding pairs in 1990.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*
MOROCCO Date extension for second record: adult in winter plumage at Oued Sous estuary was present from 22nd January to 14th February 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 7).
NETHERLANDS Third record: first-winter at Riithem, Zeeland, during 11th to at least 19th February 1990 (first and second were in August 1985 and June to December 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 327).

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* GIBRALTAR
Third record: one flying west out of the Mediterranean on 31st August 1990 (second concerned two in June 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 12).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* GIBRALTAR
High numbers: 2,246 during 1st July to 30th September 1990, including record count of 820 on 26th August during six-hour watch (fourth consecutive yearly increase, cf. *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* HUNGARY
First record: moulting from first-summer into second-winter plumage on River Danube, near Sutto, on 21st December 1990.

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* LITHUANIA First to fifth records: singles near Klaipėda on 19th December 1982, near Palanga on 27th February 1983, near Juodkrantė on 24th and 31st October 1983, and wintering at Klaipėda Port during January 1988 (cf. first to fourth Latvian records during 1983-86, *Brit. Birds* 79: 288; 81: 334).

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* NETHERLANDS
Second record: first-winter at Stellingdam, Zuidholland, during 9th-19th February 1990 (first was in February 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 18).

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* BYELORUSSIA Third breeding record: four pairs near Dzerzhinsk, Minsk region, in May 1990 (previous two were in 1987 and 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 226).

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* GIBRALTAR High numbers: total of 4,844 in autumn 1990, including 3,303 moving out of the Mediterranean during three-hour period on 31st August 1990.

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus*
NORWAY Date extension: female at Rinnleiret stayed from 20th July until 11th November 1990* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 7).
POLAND First record since 1908: flock of seven at Drozdowo near Łomża on 29th April 1990.

Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* DENMARK
Highest-ever count: 208,000 passing Ishøj Strand, Zeeland, on 8th October 1990 (cf. 70,000 in 1984 and 111,170 in 1985, *Brit. Birds* 78: 343; 79: 288).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba* ESTONIA Third record: female at Puise, Haapsalu District, on 25th May 1990.

Hawk Owl *Surnia ulula* AUSTRIA Vagrant: Seewinkel, Burgenland, on 24th November 1990.

Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*
SPAIN First record: juvenile at Cecebre Reservoir, La Coruña, on 4th November 1990*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* FINLAND Second record: two in Kotka on 5th May 1989 (first was in October 1980, *Brit. Birds* 74: 261).
POLAND Fourth record: at Poznań on 14th September 1990 (third concerned two in July 1986, *Brit. Birds* 80: 326).

129 & 130. Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*, France, January 1991 (page 229) (Mickaël Lambert)



Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* FRANCE First record: Arès Natural Reserve, Gironde, during 29th December 1990 to at least 7th January 1991* (only other recent European record was in Greece in winter 1986/87, *Brit. Birds* 81: 19).

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* NORWAY Huge invasion: in many areas, especially in south, in autumn 1990; around 100 shot illegally at just one locality in Hedmark county.

Middle Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos medius* ESTONIA First record: one trapped at Kabli, Pärnu District, on 13th October 1990.

White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos* SLOVENIA. First breeding record of race *lifordi*: successfully breeding at Kočevski Rog in 1989 and 1990. SWEDEN Continuing decline: one of last strongholds along River Dalälven now hit and only 11 instances of confirmed breeding in the country in 1989; species now on verge of extinction (cf. declines in Finland and Norway, *Brit. Birds* 81: 335; 82: 328; 83: 227).

Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* SWEDEN Unusually high numbers: along north Baltic in September 1990, with daily counts of up to nine at coastal localities such

as Stora Fjäderägg, in Västerbotten, and Järnäsudden, in Ångermanland: eastern origin likely, since species has declined severely in Sweden owing to modern forestry (cf. influxes in Norway and Sweden in 1987/88).

Dunn's Lark *Erenalauda dumii* SPAIN Deletion: 1989 record now rejected (*Brit. Birds* 84: 9).

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* FINLAND First and second records: single males at Joensuu on 24th March 1989 and at Kooppoo, Jurmo, on 8th April 1989 (only other recent European vagrant was in Poland in January 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 20).

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* POLAND Fourth and fifth records: about 20 at Kosienice near Przemyśl on 18th February 1990 and single at Gliwice on 4th September 1990 (third was in January 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 20).

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* MOROCCO First breeding record in Anti-Atlas: male at 2,531 m on top of Jbel Aklim, Igherm, on 20th May 1990 (new southern limit of breeding range).

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* DENMARK Second record: Hammeren and Svaneke, Bornholm, during 7th-11th November 1990* (first was in May 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227).

131. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, one of two at Närpiö, Finland, September 1990 (page 230) (*Jouni Riihimäki*)



Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* LATVIA First record: suburbs of Riga on 8th September 1990*. NORWAY Unusually high numbers in south: at least 45 during September and October 1990.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* FRANCE Fourth record: Ouessant on 2nd-3rd November 1990* (third was in October 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227). SWEDEN Third record: Haparanda Sandskär, Norrbotten, on 6th October 1990* (first and second were in October 1988 and October 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 227).

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* FRANCE Second record: adult at Luçon, Vendée, on 16th September 1990* (first was in April 1987, *Brit. Birds* 83: 14).

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* FRANCE Third record: juvenile in Baie d'Audierne, Finistère, on 2nd September 1990* (first and second were in April 1987 and April 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 14). LITHUANIA First breeding record: Žuvintas bog in 1986 (first record concerned a pair at same locality in 1985). SPAIN Second record: juvenile at Ebro Delta on 23rd September 1990* (first was in April 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 335).

Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus* DENMARK Large irruption: flocks of up to 2,000 in autumn 1990. HUNGARY Large influx in winter 1989/90: many flocks of up to 500 individuals widespread.

Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* CYPRUS First winter record: two at Evretou Dam on 20th January 1990.

Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* LITHUANIA First record: female trapped in Ventės Ragas on 17th May 1987.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* DENMARK Second record: dead juvenile male at Skovlunde, Zeeland, on 20th November 1990* (first was in October 1985, *Brit. Birds* 79: 289). SWEDEN First record: juvenile/female northeast of Slite, Gotland, during 22nd-24th September 1990*.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* CYPRUS Second record: Bishop's Pool on 11th November 1990* (first was in November 1957).

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* CYPRUS Third record: Emba, near Pafos, on 25th October 1990 (first and second were in April 1962 and March 1981).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* MOROCCO Fourth and fifth records: Goulmine on 22nd January 1990* and Merzouga on 27th March 1990* (second and third were in March 1988 and March 1989, *Brit. Birds* 83: 15).

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* GREECE First breeding record: Sithonia Peninsula on 12th June 1989.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* POLAND First spring record: adult female caught at Cahupy, Hel Peninsula, on 4th May 1990 (eighth Polish record).

Siberian Thrush *Zoothera sibirica* SWEDEN First record: first-year male at Ottenby, Öland, on 11th September 1990* (this is the first record reported from Continental Europe since 1984, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14).

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* NETHERLANDS Increase: at least 700 breeding pairs in 1989 in Zuid-Limburg alone and numbers breeding elsewhere (cf. increases and range expansions in Austria, Denmark, France, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia, *Brit. Birds* 74: 262; 75: 279; 81: 20).

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* NORWAY Third record: juvenile ringed at Bjørddal, Østra, More & Romsdal, on 15th September 1988* (first and second were in September 1986 and October 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 350). POLAND First record: immature female caught at Darłówko, Baltic coast, on 12th September 1989.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* FRANCE Third record: Ouessant on 28th October 1990* (first and second were in August 1982 and September 1986, *Brit. Birds* 76: 275; 81: 20).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* GIBRALTAR Second record: 22nd September 1990.

Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* FAROE ISLANDS Second record (and first singing male to take up territory): Torshavn during most of June 1990.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* ESTONIA First record: one trapped at Vaibla, Viljandi District, on 15th July 1990. FRANCE First record: one trapped at Upaix, Hautes-Alpes, on 26th September 1990*. ISRAEL First and second records: two ringed, in Bet

Shean Valley and at Eilat, in October 1990. NORWAY First record: one ringed at Lista Fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 15th October 1990*.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* LITHUANIA Highest number caught at bird-ringing stations: ten in 1988 (cf. two in 1983; four in 1984; four in 1986; and one in 1987; first record was on 25th May 1976). MALTA First record: one ringed in October 1990. NETHERLANDS First record: Lelystad, Flevoland, on 26th June 1990.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* SWEDEN Highest-ever total: 360 singing males in 1989; almost half of Swedish population is at Lake Tåkern, Östergötland (cf. previous highest, 305 in 1988, *Brit. Birds* 83: 228).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* NETHERLANDS Fourth record: Bloemendaal, Noordholland, on 29th September 1990 (first to third were in October 1982, October 1986 and September 1988, *Brit. Birds* 76: 275; 81: 21; 82: 351). NORWAY Third record: one ringed at Orrevatn, Klepp, Rogaland, on 17th August 1990* (first and second were in October 1978 and September 1983, *Brit. Birds* 79: 290). SWEDEN Second and third records: one ringed at Ottenby, Öland, on 8th September stayed until at least 13th September 1990* and one at Landsort, Södermanland, during 25th-27th September 1990*.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* NETHERLANDS First breeding record: Vogelweg, Flevoland, during May-June 1990 (cf. first confirmed breeding in Luxembourg in 1986 and recent increases and range expansion in Belgium, Germany and Switzerland, *Brit. Birds* 80: 14). POLAND Third record: singing male near Czarnków on 28th May and 17th June 1987 (record in May 1990 becomes fourth, *Brit. Birds* 84: 10).

Two-barred Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus* NETHERLANDS First record: Castricum, Noordholland, on 17th September 1990. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* FINLAND Highest-ever total: 46 during 28th September to 19th November 1989. SWEDEN Highest-ever total: about 60, with strong concentrations on Baltic coastline and adjacent islands, in 1989 (mostly in October).

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* CYPRUS Fifth record: Dhekelia on 30th November 1990* (first to fourth were in November 1968, on 16th October 1969, during 18th-29th October 1969 and on 15th November 1970).

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* MALTA First record: one ringed in November 1990.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* ESTONIA Third record: one trapped at Sörve säär, Saaremaa Island, on 11th October 1990 (first and second were in October 1986 and November 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 338).

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* HUNGARY First record of Siberian race *tristis*: near Dinnyés on 10th November 1990.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* NORWAY Invasion: influx in south of at least 62 individuals, involving at least nine different observations, mainly during autumn 1990 (only five previous records).

Coal Tit *Parus ater* SWEDEN Massive south-westerly movement: in provinces of Västerbotten and Ångermanland during 24th-28th August 1990, with more than 10,000 counted in three days at Sönnestgrundet, Västerbotten.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* MALTA Wintering numbers continue to increase: 30 on one day in two localities in February 1990 (cf. *Brit. Birds* 82: 353). NETHERLANDS Increase: at least 130 territories in 1990 (cf. 55 pairs in 1989, *Brit. Birds* 84: 10). NORWAY First record: adult male nest-building at Øre, Fredrikstad, Østfold, during 7th May to 7th July 1989. SWEDEN Explosive increase from 1988 to 1989: breeding confirmed in six provinces in south, with autumn population perhaps as high as 1,000 individuals.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* LATVIA First record: Pape on 5th November 1990*.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* HUNGARY First record since 1981: adult male near Székesfehérvár on 7th September 1990 (bred at Aggtelek in 1981). (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Alpine Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus* HUNGARY Fourth record: two at River Danube, near Nyergesújfalu, on 16th September 1990.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* SLOVENIA Fifth record: about 30 at Ankaran, on 20th June 1988.



132. Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*, Finland, April 1989 (Jari Kostet) (*Brit. Birds* 84: 11)

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* FRANCE Second and third records this century: single males in Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, on 15th June 1990*, and at Leucate, Aude, on 15th July 1990* (previous one was in June 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 21). NORWAY Second record: adult male ringed at Lista Fyr, Farsund, Vest-Agder, on 22nd July 1990* (first was in May 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 354).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* DENMARK Irruption: up to ten at best sites during autumn/winter 1990/91. SWEDEN Increase: more numerous than usual in south during winter 1990/91 (e.g. more than 30 reported in January 1991).

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* BYELORUSSIA Second record: first-year near Maryina Gorka, Minsk region, in September 1990. DENMARK Large influx: more than 100 during October-November 1990, with 30 at Gilleleje, Zealand, on 10th October 1990. FRANCE Fifth and sixth records this century: single at Gambsheim, Bas-Rhin, on 16th December 1990*, and two females in Forêt d'Halatte, Oise, on 27th and 30th January 1991*. (Cf. prediction of eruption from Sweden, *Brit. Birds* 84: 11.)

Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* DENMARK Irruption: several thousands during July-August

1990. FRANCE Irruption: during June to at least October 1990 (probably largest influx since about 1968). GIBRALTAR Irruption: 78 individuals during 7th September-13th November 1990 including 38 on 27th October, largest flock numbering 30 (only four previous records). HUNGARY Irruption: in summer 1990, scattered flocks of mainly 10-20 individuals throughout country. (Eruption from Sweden and irruptions into Faroe Islands and Malta already noted, *Brit. Birds* 84: 11.)

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* DENMARK Irruption: hundreds from October 1990, with peak of 560 at Skagen, N-Jutland, on 14th December 1990. FRANCE Fourth record this century: Noël-Cerneux, Doubs, during 1st-3rd January 1991*.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* SPAIN First record for Balearic Islands: female or juvenile caught on Dragonera Island on 20th September 1990*.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus* FINLAND First record (*Brit. Birds* 84: 11): see plate 132, above.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* DENMARK Small influx: at least five during autumn/winter 1990/91* (first since 1981).

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* FRANCE First record: Ouessant during 9th-15th

October 1990*. (This species has not previously been mentioned in a 'European news' summary.)

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus* SPAIN Third record: first-winter male on Columbretes Islands, Castellón, on 9th October 1989*. SWEDEN Strong passage: largest reported flock was of 250 at Stora Fjäderägg, Västerbotten, on 10th September.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* NETHERLANDS Correction: individual photographed was in November 1987 (not 1988), *Brit. Birds* 82: 12, plate 12. SPAIN First record: male trapped at Llavaneras, Barcelona, in October 1987*.

House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* MOROCCO First confirmed breeding record in Meknès: during spring 1989 (cf. range expansions to Casablanca in 1960s and to Rabat and Fès in 1980s, *Brit. Birds* 79: 292).

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* MOROCCO First winter record: Sidi-Bettache on 13th January 1990.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* CYPRUS First record: Phasouri area on 15th November 1990*. HUNGARY Second record: on the Hortobágy on 22nd October 1990 (first was in November 1988, *Brit. Birds* 82: 354). POLAND First winter record: near Gliwice on 27th January 1989 (tenth record).

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No information was received from Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland or the Ukraine.

Announcements

Young Ornithologists of the Year As in other recent years, entrants had to submit their field notebooks for the judges' perusal. The winners and runners-up in the 1990 competition, organised as usual by the Young Ornithologists' Club and sponsored by *British Birds*, were:

JUNIOR (under 10 years old)

- 1st Tom Fieldsend of Dereham, Norfolk
- 2nd Hazel Eyre of Waterlooville, Hampshire
- 3rd Peter Hully of Retford, Nottinghamshire

INTERMEDIATE (10-12 years old)

- 1st Dominick Spracklen of Huntly, Aberdeenshire
- 2nd Christopher Batty of Blackpool, Lancashire
- 3rd Gavin Paterson of Uphall, West Lothian

SENIOR (over 12 years old)

- 1st Mark Gurney of Stevenage, Hertfordshire
- 2nd Martin Gilbert of Keswick, Cumbria
- 3rd David Anning of Deal, Kent
- 4th Jane Reid of Yarm, Cleveland



The three winners (plate 133) received their prizes at a special award ceremony at the RSPB headquarters at The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, in January 1991.

British Birds wishes to thank Mike Everett, who stepped in as a judge this year, during Tim Sharrock's absence in New Zealand. Mike commented on the high standard, and specifically noted Tom Fieldsend's entry as 'A nice field notebook, full of details of what's happening'; Dominick Spracklen's entry as 'In my view, quite outstanding'; and Mark Gurney's notebook as 'An extremely good and well-presented effort.'

133. YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS OF THE YEAR 1990. Left to right, Mark Gurney, Tom Fieldsend and Dominick Spracklen, Bedfordshire, January 1991 (*RSPB & C. H. Gomersall*)



Followers of this competition will note the satisfying progress being made by several of this year's top young ornithologists. Dominick Spracklen was third in the Junior Section in 1987, and first in the Intermediate Section in 1988 as well as in 1990. Mark Gurney and Martin Gilbert were joint winners of the Senior Section in 1989. David Anning was second in the Intermediate Section in 1987 and fourth in 1988. Jane Reid—'fourth by only a small margin', said Mike Everett—was fourth in the Intermediate Section in 1987. It is very pleasing to see the perseverance and dedication of those who enter for this annual award.

Full details of this year's competition, which will again be sponsored by *British Birds*, will be found in *Bird Life*, the magazine of the Young Ornithologists' Club (write to YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL).

'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle solution The bird left over was a sparrow.

The introduction noted that this puzzle was 'specifically' for *BB* readers, who were advised to use a 'scientific approach'. The specific scientific names paired up as follows: bearded leader = *castro*, big = *major*, little = *minor*, flag = *tricolor*, flowering tree = *magnolia*, girls = *barbara* and *penelope*, news purveyors = *media*, North or South = *carolina*, politician = *senator*, semites = *arabs*, and US organisation = *cia*; which left sparrow unpaired.

The number of entries was the highest ever in this annual competition. After a draw, the winners of the three bottles of *The Famous Grouse* Scotch whisky were R. Duggleby (Harrogate, North Yorkshire), A. Hankin (Reading, Berkshire) and Arthur Westcott (Ipswich, Suffolk).

Autumn 1991 Migration Survey, Israel Experienced birdwatchers willing to watch migration for a minimum of eight hours a day for at least three weeks are invited to participate in the annual Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration Survey in the Northern Valleys of Israel during 10th August to 20th October (pelicans to 15th December) 1991. Participants will have to pay the cost of travel to and from Israel, but the Israel Raptor Information Center will cover the cost of food and lodging in a kibbutz in Israel.

During autumn 1990, over a period of 45 days, some 806,000 migrating birds were counted in the skies above Israel. These included 580,000 raptors of 30 different species, 190,000 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and 36,000 White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. Those interested in the 1991 count should write to Dan Alon, Autumn Survey, Israel Raptor Information Center (IRIC), Har-Gilo, Doar Na Zfon Yehuda 90907, Israel; tel.: 972-2-932383/4, Fax: 972-2-932385.

Additions to the British and Irish List Already accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee, the following four records have now also been accepted by the BOU Records Committee and will be added to Category A of the British List when published in the Records Committee's fifteenth report (*Ibis* in prep.):

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

Shetland Scatness and Pool of Virkie, adult, 15th September 1989.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

Dorset Portland, 10th June 1984.

(One previous record more than 50 years ago, in Nottinghamshire on 20th June 1883, so species will be promoted from Category B to Category A by the acceptance of this Dorset record.)

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 7th October 1987.

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 13th October 1989 to 6th May 1990.

These changes will bring the total of species on the British and Irish List to 541.

Books in British BirdShop A wide range of books is added this month to the list of those available POST FREE to *British Birds* subscribers. Additions to our list and special reduced-price offers are indicated by asterisks(*) on pages xv and xvi.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Timothy Andrews and Michael Entwistle

With great regret, we must report that news from Peru has confirmed that both birders were killed (see previous reports, *Brit. Birds* 83: 515, 567). Tim's mother, Mrs K. M. Leskovych, has sent us a copy of an eyewitness's report.

Tim and Mike were suspected by *Sendero Luminoso* terrorists of being Drug Enforcement Administration agents; one of them was shot and killed when trying to avoid capture, just after crossing the River Monzon by ferry, and the other was taken by truck to Bella and then to Inti, where he was held captive for two days and then shot.

We extend our sympathy to the families of both Tim and Mike.

According to the eyewitness, women selling fruit told them not to cross the river, because there were *Senderistas* on the other side, but Tim and Mike either didn't understand or didn't take the advice seriously.

There is a lesson here which we hope will make all readers more aware of such dangers when travelling in Peru or any of the many other countries where terrorists, bandits or guerilla groups are known to be operating. Be circumspect, and heed local advice.

The cruel nets In mid February 1991, there were more horrific incidents in which hundreds of birds were drowned when they became trapped in synthetic gill nets off St Ives, Cornwall. In two separate incidents, 80 and over 300 drowned birds, mostly Guillemots *Uria aalge* and Razorbills *Alca torda*, were taken from fishing nets. A call by the RSPB for a voluntary ban on the use of these nets in St Ives Bay has been ignored by many fishermen. Such sickening incidents will, perhaps, mean that appropriate legislation will be put before Parliament in order to control the use of synthetic gill nets. But how many more birds will have to die before action is taken?

Welsh Conference 1991. The Welsh Ornithological Society held its fourth annual conference at Aberystwyth on 23rd March 1991. The theme was birds of prey in

Wales, and it proved to be an absorbing, instructive and entertaining day, even if many of the participants would rather have been out in the superb weather looking at the subjects of their interest. Colin Bibby kicked off with the Merlin *Falco columbarius* and explained that, although good heather moors are important for successful breeding, sites where the moor is close to farmland, thus providing a variety of habitats and prey species, are best. Fears that afforestation would be detrimental to the breeding Merlins have proved to be unfounded; they are increasingly using old nests in the trees, with good fledging rates. Peter Davis then presented a review of the recent population increase of that most spectacular of Welsh raptors, the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. Since the 11 to 14 pairs of the 1950s, there has been a steady increase of about 5% per year during the three decades that followed, with an accelerated increase during the last few years. There are now over 80 occupied territories (1990), and this figure could have been even higher but for the attentions of egg-collectors, which have increased during the last 12 years. Problems for the Red Kite are far from over. Next, Peter Dare gave an overview of the non-specialised and highly adaptable Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. Wales holds between 4,000 and 5,000 territorial pairs (about a quarter of the British breeding population), but their productivity is poor. It is sufficient to maintain the population in Wales, but unlikely to provide a surplus which could expand into spare territories in England.

After lunch, Hywel Roderick set a challenging and very entertaining quiz. The Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* situation was then explained by Iolo Williams; the small population in Wales is doing badly because of habitat loss, and the prognosis is not good. Graham Williams (who won the quiz) had a happier tale to tell about the Peregrine *F. peregrinus*, which is now breeding in greater numbers than pre-1940. Interestingly, numbers inland have recovered better than on the coast, and there has even been a record of tree nesting, a habit that offers the species

breeding potential throughout Britain. Nick Fox ended the day with a call for co-operation between falconers and ornithologists. The former have pioneered many of the techniques associated with captive rearing and breeding of raptors, with ultimate benefit to species we now watch, wild and free, such as Red Kites and Peregrines.

A decade of change In March, after ten years in the post, Sir Derek Barber retired as Chairman of the Countryside Commission. During those ten years, we have seen an amazing transformation in the relationship between conservationists and farmers, with a much greater awareness on both sides of the need for co-operation rather than confrontation. Much of this change in attitudes can be attributed to Sir Derek's own persuasive influence.

'Marathon' winner in Kenya 'Ten days gone, and well over 450 species recorded so far', wrote Ralph Hobbs on a postcard featuring East African wildlife sent to *BB* from the most recent 'Monthly marathon' winner on his SUNBIRD-holiday prize trip to Kenya (plate 134). 'Much more to see, and on course for the magical 700 . . .', which, we understand, was achieved. The highlight for Ralph Hobbs was 'all three eagle owls': Spotted *Bubo africanus*, Cape *B. capensis* and Verreaux's *B. lacteus*.

Ngulia, Kenya The autumn 1990 ringing season at Ngulia Lodge in Tsavo National Park was the most successful ever. It is 22 years since the inception of the Ngulia Ringing Group and this year saw the largest number of ringers assisting. Top species ringed were Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (5,627), Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (4,612), Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (4,399), River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (483) and White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* (412). A total of 17,007 birds (of 35 Palearctic species) was ringed, and a record for a night-morning catch was established on 24th November, with 2,432 birds ringed.

Extensive work on the physiology and parasites of the birds was conducted, particularly as many were found to carry immatures of economically important cattle ticks.

Ringers interested in assisting during November-December 1991 should at once contact Graeme Backhurst, Box 24702, Nairobi, Kenya (telephone 010 254 2 891 419) or David Pearson, Brouses, Sibton, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 2JH, England. (Contributed by Stephen Rumsey)

Rye Bay Ringing Group The Rye Bay RG concluded its initial five-year bird-ringing project in East Sussex in 1990. A principal objective was to demonstrate the improvement of habitat for wildlife when some

134. 'Monthly marathon' winner Ralph Hobbs (second from right) with SUNBIRD group, Lake Nakuru, Kenya, January 1991 (Hazel Millington)



coastal marshland, which had been cereal fields and pasture for many years, was encouraged to regenerate as freshwater lagoons, reed swamp, sallow and so on.

Annual ringing totals in the five years 1986-90 were 3,800, 8,400, 19,700, 31,500 and 57,300. In 1990, the top species ringed were Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (24,200), Swallow *Hirundo rustica* (8,620), Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (7,670), Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* (4,737), Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* (1,720), Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* (1,699) and Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (1,553), with other high totals including Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* (251) and Lesser Whitethroat *S. curruca* (245).

Studies will continue in July-November 1991. This will provide a good opportunity for competent trainee and 'C' permit ringers to obtain experience to improve their proficiency. Anyone interested should contact S. J. R. Rumsey, c/o Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd, Ebbgate House, 2 Swan Lane, London EC4R 3TS. (Contributed by Stephen Rumsey)

Euring Expedition to Senegal 1990-91 A bird-ringing expedition to the Parc National du Djoudj in northern Senegal has been organised from December 1990 to April 1991. This has been supported by the BTO, Euring and the ICBP, and about 70 British and French ringers are each spending between two weeks and four months at the Parc. By mid April, about 19,000 birds had been ringed, of 71 Palearctic species. There had been about 320 European controls, of which 213 were from the British Isles, 78 having been ringed by the Rye Bay Ringing Group (see above). Plans are being developed for October 1991 to April 1992, and ringers interested in participating should contact S. J. R. Rumsey, c/o Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd, Ebbgate House, 2 Swan Lane, London EC4R 3TS. (Contributed by Stephen Rumsey)

Thank you We have received a letter from John Fletcher of the Fylde Bird Club asking us to pass on the Club's thanks to all the birdwatchers who visited Marton Mere, Blackpool, on 3rd February 1991, and gave so generously for the pleasure of seeing the American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*. Over £400 was collected and has been deposited in a 'Special Project Fund', which will be used for the benefit of both birds and birdwatchers. Well done, and thanks from us too.

'The most unusual phone-lines' In its feature on British Telecom, the *Observer Magazine* (31 March 1991) highlighted two phone-lines for this title. One was 'Dial-a-Pope' (0839-777705), which provides an inspirational message from the Pope, and the other was the National Bird News 'Twitchline' (0898-884501).

Silly corner Edwin Pierce has sent us an astonishing list of eight media misprints, all in the same article which appeared in *The Boston Sunday Globe* dated 15th July 1990. In just over four column inches, there are 'leaf bitterns', 'city shearwaters', 'curry shearwaters', 'short-billed owatures', one of which was of the 'Hender Sonar Race' (*hendersoni*), 'leaf sandpipers', 'pine siscans' and 'upling sandpipers'. Edwin adds, 'I know Americans have been accused by the British of vulgarising the English language. Perhaps this is how it gets started. At any rate, we do like to be first in anything we do, so I'm confident that . . . you will agree that we do now hold the media misprint record.' We agree Edwin, and should like to thank you for sending this gem to us.

Another silly, of a different kind, has come from Peter Atherton. His cutting is from the *Daily Mail* dated 16th March 1991, in which the Grey-headed Woodpecker is described as one of the four species of woodpecker to be found in Britain, although much rarer than the Green. And . . . all the woodpeckers drum to find food. A pity, since the 'message' of this article is certainly pro-woodpecker. Thanks Peter.

'Birds of Galway' By Tony Wilde, this new book is subtitled *A Review of Recent Records and Field Studies* and covers primarily the period 1988-89. It is not planned to be an annual publication, but there are hopes that it will appear regularly. The report is published by the Galway Branch of the Irish Wildbird Conservancy and is available from Ann Fleming, 62 Devon Park, Salthill, Galway, for £4.50 incl. p. & p.

New County Recorders Geoffrey R. Smith, Church Cottage, Leebotwood, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6NE, has taken over from Jack Sankey as County Recorder for Shropshire; T. Hextell, 49 Cradley Croft, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 8HP, has taken over from R. M. Normand as County Recorder for West Midlands; Chris Jenés, 283 Malpas Road, Newport, Gwent NP9 6WA, has taken over as County Recorder for Gwent from B. J. Gregory.

Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



When Steve Young supplied the transparency of the wader featured as the sixth stage in this 'Marathon' (plate 7), the competition's compiler queried the photographer's identification, since the bird was 'obviously' a Little Stint *Calidris minuta* and not, as labelled, a Dunlin *C. alpina*. (A second transparency of the same bird proved Steve Young to be quite right, of course.) Very many competitors fell into the same trap, however, misled mainly perhaps by the bird's obvious 'braces':

Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	(49%)
Dunlin <i>C. alpina</i>	(37%)
Red-necked Stint <i>C. ruficollis</i>	(6%)

with a few votes each for Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*, Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*, Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*, White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis*, Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* and Pectoral Sandpiper *C. melanotos*.

Steve Young photographed the Dunlin in Merseyside in July 1987.

The leading runner was one of those who fell at this hurdle, and no other competitor had achieved four in a row or three in a row, so those now taking up the running advanced from two to three answers right; just four competitors were in this bunch: C. D. R. Heard (Berkshire), Hannu Jännes (Finland), Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down) and W. R. Tunnicliffe (Buckinghamshire).

The passerine flashing its yellow undertail-coverts (plate 62) was named as follows:

Yellow-vented Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>	(67%)
White-cheeked Bulbul <i>P. leucogenys</i>	(21%)
Common Bulbul <i>P. barbatus</i>	(4%)
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	(2%)

with a few votes each for Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis*, Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* and Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, and one for the non-West-Palearctic Black-headed Bulbul *P. atriceps*.

It was indeed a Yellow-vented Bulbul, photographed by G. P. Catley in Israel in September 1989.

Of the leading group, C. D. R. Heard, Hannu Jännes and Anthony McGeehan all identified this bird correctly, each moving on to achieve four-in-a-row sequences.

The wader featured as the eighth stage (plate 80) was named as:

Semipalmated Sandpiper <i>Calidris pusilla</i>	(60%)
Curlew Sandpiper <i>C. ferruginea</i>	(14%)
Western Sandpiper <i>C. mauri</i>	(10%)
Red-necked Stint <i>C. ruficollis</i>	(8%)
White-rumped Sandpiper <i>C. fuscicollis</i>	(4%)
Baird's Sandpiper <i>C. bairdii</i>	(3%)

with a few votes each for Great Knot *C. tenuirostris*, Little Stint *C. minuta*, Dunlin *C. alpina* and Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*.

The majority of entrants got it right. This Semipalmated Sandpiper was photographed in Canada in September 1989, by Anthony McGeehan. This has created a small problem, for the ultra-ethical Anthony refuses to let his identification of his own photograph count in the 'Marathon' series (despite this contingency being foreseen and specifically allowed in the competition's rules). As one of the leading group of three (see above), however, it would be quite wrong for Anthony to be eliminated because of his firm moral stance; we have, therefore, compromised, and he has sidestepped this hurdle, thereby dropping back one stage in his sequence in relation to his two rivals, both of whom correctly identified the Semipalmated Sandpiper.

The leaders, therefore, are now C. D. R. Heard (Berkshire) and Hannu Jännes (Finland), both with five-in-a-row sequences; closely followed by A. H. J. Harrop (Rutland), Anthony McGeehan (Co. Down), Roderick Mavor (Moray), Pekka J. Nikander (Finland), Brett Richards (Humber-side), Andy Stoddart (Norfolk) and Heikki Vasamies (Finland), all with four-in-a-row sequences.

The first contestant to achieve a longer sequence (of ten or more consecutive photographs correctly identified) than any of his rivals will win the prize of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



135. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (eleventh stage: photograph number 60). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th July 1991

Forthcoming 'British Birds'-SUNBIRD tours The following trips have been arranged, with the itineraries especially designed for *British Birds* readers:

COUNTRY	LEADERS	DATES
ISRAEL	Hadoram Shirihi & David Fisher	11th-25th September 1991
FALKLAND ISLANDS	David Fisher/Rod Martins	2nd-15th December 1991
THAILAND	Phil Round/Kamol Komolphalin & Tim Sharrock	16th February to 10th March 1992
MOROCCO	Bryan Bland & Peter Lansdown	15th-30th April 1992
CENTRAL ASIA	Al Knystautas & Paul Holt	August/September 1992

For full details, write or telephone to SUNBIRD (see address and phone number above).

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 12th April to 9th May 1991
(February to 9th May for common migrants; first date listed is date of first report)

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

- Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Skokholm, 27th-28th April, and Skomer (both Dyfed), 29th April.
- Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Belfast (Co. Antrim), 28th April.
- Garganey** *Anas querquedula* Sandwich Bay (Kent), 7th March; March records from eight other counties.
- Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* Cape Clear Island and Middleton (both Co. Cork), both 18th April.
- Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* Peterborough (Cambridgeshire), 5th March; other March records from Staffordshire, Devon and Cumbria.
- Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* Ballyconneally (Co. Galway), 3rd-10th April.
- Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Same individual: Dunstable Sewage-works (Bedfordshire), 26th-27th April; Groxall Gravel-pit (Staffordshire), 28th April; Tamworth (Staffordshire), 2nd-5th May; Louth (Lincolnshire), 6th May; Blacktoft Sands and Goole (both Humberside) and near Barnsley (South Yorkshire), 7th May; Tamworth, 8th May.
- Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* Drakelow Wildfowl Reserve (Derbyshire), 5th March; other March records from Hampshire, Kent, Suffolk and West Yorkshire.
- Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* Balranald, North Uist (Western Isles), 5th May.
- Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Elmley (Kent), 24th-29th April.
- Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* Adult in winter plumage, Bann Estuary (Co. Londonderry), 6th-7th May.
- Ring-billed Gull** *Larus delawarensis* Belfast Harbour Estate (Co. Down); passage peak in last week of April, with up to eight, including six first-years.
- Sandwich Tern** *Sterna sandvicensis* Cumbria, 15th March.
- Ancient Murrelet** *Synthliboramphus antiquus* Individual from 1990 returned to Lundy (Devon), 14th April to at least 9th May.
- Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* Bedfordshire and Hampshire, 11th April; widespread by 25th.
- Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 3rd May; near Peterhead (Grampian), 2nd-3rd May.
- Swift** *Apus apus* Channel Islands, 15th April; mainland Britain: Greater London, 23rd April; main arrival 25th-28th April.
- Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* Beachy Head (East Sussex), 13th April.
- Great Spotted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos major* Copeland Island (Co. Down), 3rd to at least 5th May (first in Ireland since 1988).
- Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* Fair Isle (Shetland), 28th April; Portland (Dorset), 5th and 9th May; Tyttenhanger Gravel-pits, near Hatfield (Hertfordshire), 7th-9th May.
- Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* Kent, 24th February; Derbyshire, 13th March; main arrival 16th-26th March.
- Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* Cumbria, 16th March; main arrival 8th-13th April.
- Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Scilly, 24th April; Ogston Reservoir (Derbyshire), 5th-8th May.
- House Martin** *Delichon urbica* Cambridgeshire, 16th March; main arrival 3rd-7th April.
- Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* Elmley, 9th May.
- Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* Scilly, 24th April; Portland, 5th May; Durlstone Country Park (Dorset), 8th May.
- Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Lundy, 24th April.
- Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* Suffolk, 14th March.
- Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* Avon, 6th March; main arrival 10th-17th March.
- Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* Derbyshire and Cumbria, 17th March.
- Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* Beverley (Humberside), 14th April; Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 29th April to 6th May.
- Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 26th April; Scilly, 3rd May.
- Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Wexbourne (Norfolk), 27th April.
- Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* Cornwall, 26th March; Avon, 28th March; next arrivals 14th-16th April.
- Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* 12th-14th March; heavy influx 17th-24th March.
- Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* Devon, 15th March; other March records from Wiltshire, Avon and Cornwall; main arrival 6th-13th April.
- Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* Cromer (Norfolk), 25th April; Fair Isle, 28th-30th April.

We are grateful to the National Bird News 'Twitch-line' for supplying information for this news feature. For the latest, up-to-date news, phone 0898-884-501 (34p/min cheap rate; 45p/min other times; incl. VAT)

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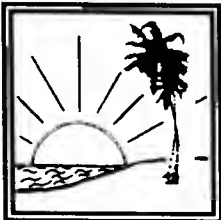
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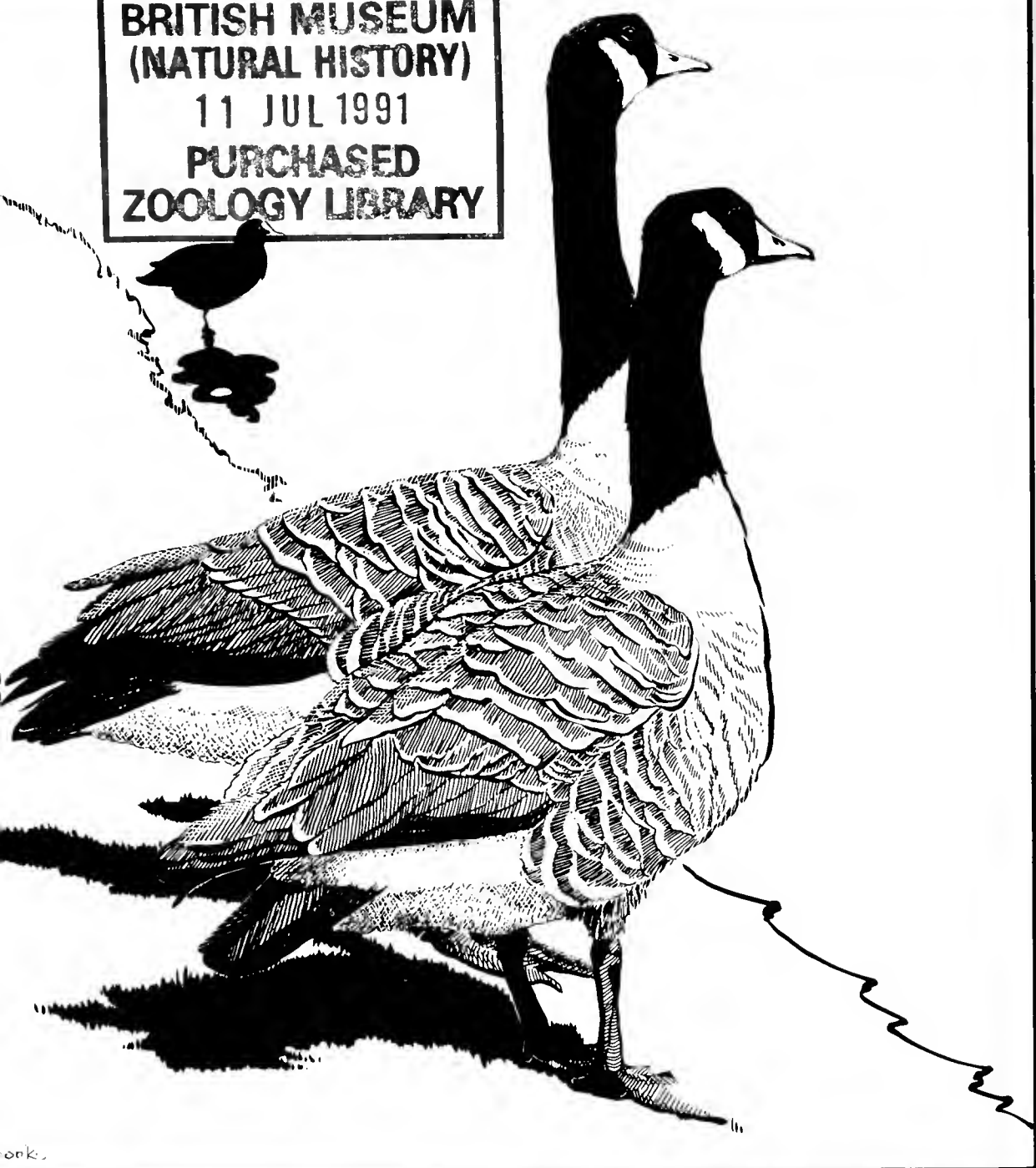
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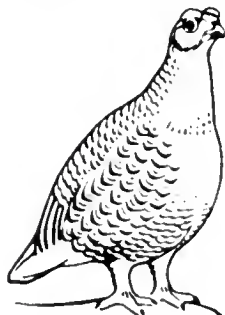
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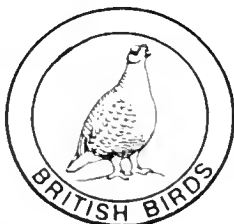
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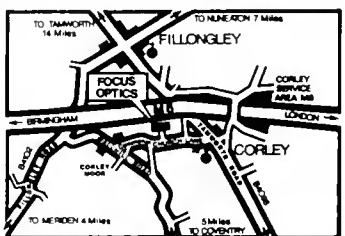
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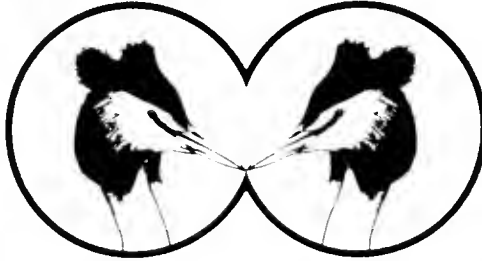
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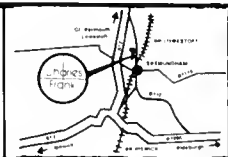
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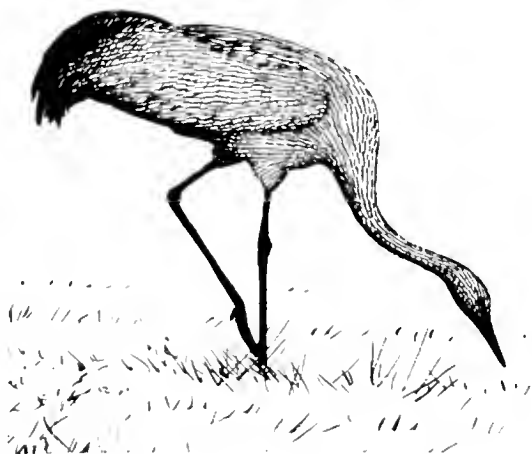
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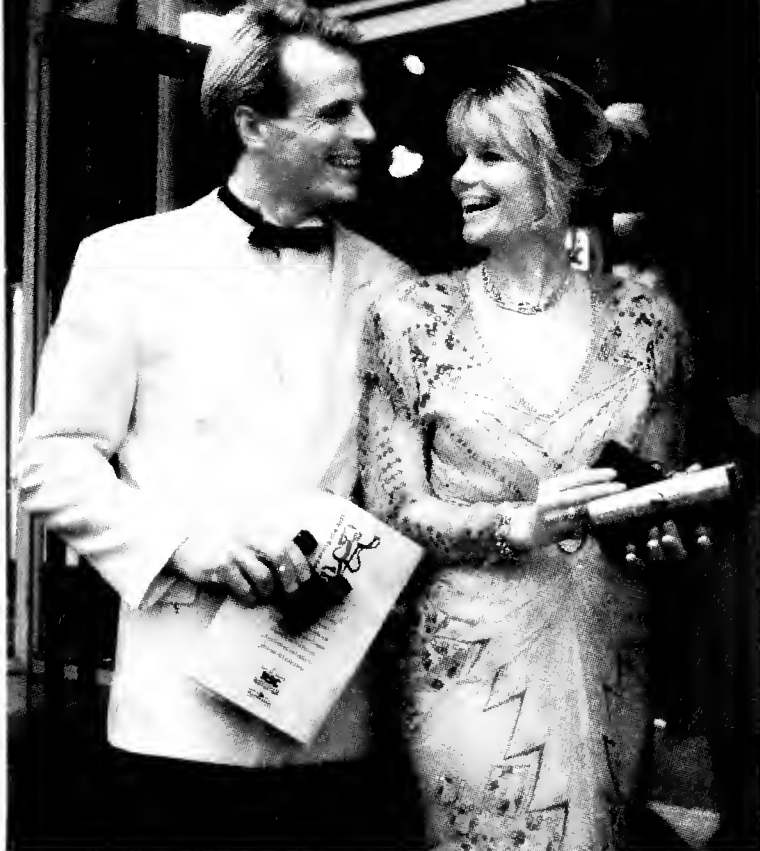
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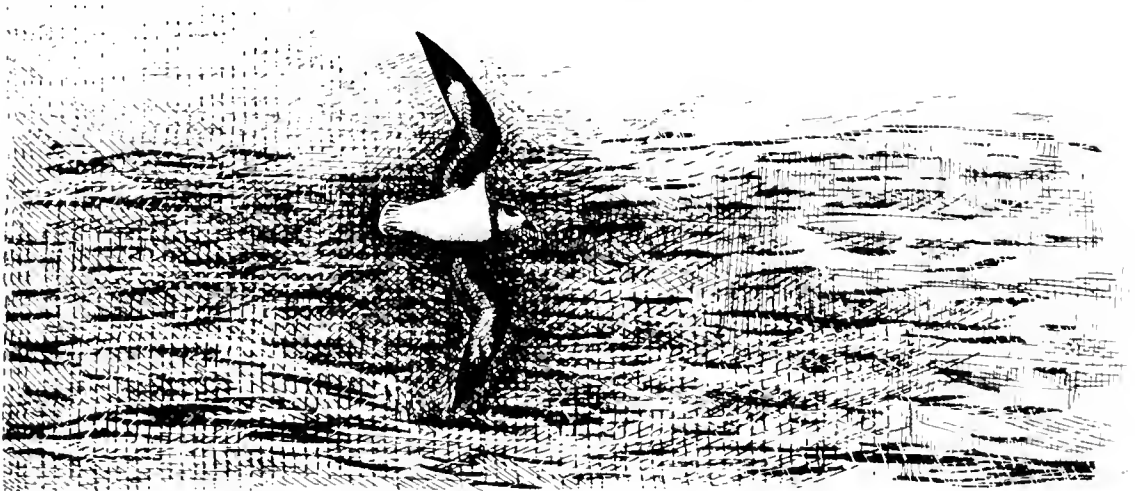
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British Birds

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Identification of Soft-plumaged Petrel



J. W. Enticott

Soft-plumaged Petrels *Pterodroma mollis* are medium-sized gadfly-petrels found in the eastern North Atlantic Ocean, the South Atlantic Ocean, the southern Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. Despite their apparently extensive range, the known breeding islands are relatively few in number and isolated in nature.

The *Pterodroma mollis* complex has, at various times, been separated into numerous subspecies. Cramp & Simmons (1977) described three subspecies, Clancey *et al.* (1981) described four, while Mathews (1934) listed five subspecies. More recently, Bourne (1983a) proposed splitting the complex into three separate species, and this has been followed by Imber (1985) and Zino & Zino (1986). The complicated taxonomy, especially of the eastern North Atlantic populations, is outside the scope of this paper, but relevant publications are included in the list of references. For the purposes of this paper, I have treated the complex as one species and have followed Clancey *et al.* (1981) and Harrison (1983) at the subspecific level: with two subspecies in the Northern Hemisphere (*P. m. madeira* and *P. m. feae*) and two in the Southern Hemisphere (*P. m. mollis* and *P. m. dubia*).

In the Northern Hemisphere, *madeira* breeds only in the interior of Madeira, while *feae* breeds on the Desertas and on the Cape Verde Islands; both these subspecies are now much reduced, for various reasons (de Naurois 1969; Jouanin *et al.* 1969; Bourne 1983a; Zino & Zino 1986). In the Southern Hemisphere, these petrels are more numerous: *P. m. mollis* breeds in the Tristan da Cunha group and on Gough Island (Swales 1965; Williams & Imber 1982; Richardson 1984), while *dubia* breeds at Marion and Prince Edward Islands (Williams 1984), the Crozet Islands (Despin *et al.* 1972) and the Antipodes Islands (Warham & Bell 1979).

With Soft-plumaged Petrels, subspecific considerations include size; length and mass of bill; length of tarsus and middle toe; and colour of upperparts, wings and underparts. Numerous measurements have been published for the various subspecies (e.g. Mathews 1934; Bourne 1957; Swales 1965; Jouanin *et al.* 1969; Clancey *et al.* 1981; Zino & Zino 1986; Fraser *et al.* 1988); although some of these may not be strictly comparable, owing to differing measuring techniques, and some were taken from skins and others from live birds, there is agreement that *feae* is the largest, *mollis* and *dubia* are intermediate, and *madeira* is the smallest. Clancey *et al.* (1981) suggest that *dubia* is slightly smaller than *mollis*, is darker above, is more heavily masked, and has a broader and more dense breast-band. Zino & Zino (1986) give comparative data on *feae* and *madeira* showing that *feae* is, on average, 53% heavier than *madeira* and has a longer wing and a larger and heavier bill; although they could find no constant distinguishing feature in plumage, they do mention differences in call. All these differences are really outside the scope of these notes, but for further discussion see Clancey *et al.* (1981), Bourne (1983a) and Zino & Zino (1986).

While individuals taken from burrows at the scattered breeding sites can safely be assigned to subspecies, those seen at sea, whether in the Northern or the Southern Hemisphere, could refer to either one of the two subspecies found in each hemisphere; in addition, there is now an increasing possibility that some South Atlantic individuals may cross the equator. Extreme examples can probably be told apart at sea, but the vast majority cannot be identified subspecifically with absolute certainty.

Records of Soft-plumaged Petrels at sea, away from their breeding grounds, are widely distributed across the South Atlantic and the southern Indian Oceans, with fewer south of Australia and in the southwest Pacific Ocean. Generally, individuals can be found from about 25°S to about 60°S in the South Atlantic and southern Indian Oceans (Watson *et al.* 1971; *Sea Swallow* reports; Fitzpatrick Institute, unpublished data). Soft-plumaged Petrels are less numerous in the southwest Pacific around New Zealand, and are not found so far north as in either the Atlantic or the Indian Oceans (Harrison 1983).

Records in the North Atlantic are far fewer, and generally refer to single individuals or small groups near to their known breeding localities in Madeira (*madeira*), the Desertas (*feae*) and the Cape Verde Islands (*feae*). Additional records from the Salvages (James & Robertson 1985), at sea near the Canary Islands (Bourne 1955) and off the west coast of Africa



136. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, Desertas, August 1986. Note dark upperwing surface, with paler secondary wedge; pale grey mantle, and darker head with less conspicuous eye-mask; and very white tail (J. W. Enticott)

(Bourne 1965; Bourne & Dixon 1973, 1975) could refer to either of these two subspecies, although most are probably *faae*. There is also a sight record offshore near Jacqueville, west of Abidjan on the Ivory Coast (Thiollay 1985). Some of the older at-sea records in the literature (Bannerman 1914; Murphy 1924) may not be entirely reliable. The discovery of a dead bird on the west shore of the Dead Sea in Israel (Bourne 1983b) is more difficult to explain. It would appear, therefore, that the type specimen of *faae*, collected in October 1768 at 6°50'N, 23°46'W, still represents one of the most southerly records of this subspecies. A more southerly series of records from 2°45'N, 15°45'W to 15°30'S, 2°00'E (Bourne & Dixon 1975) and further records close to St Helena are as likely to be a result of northward movement by the South Atlantic subspecies *mollis* as of southward movement by either of the two northern subspecies.

Bearing this in mind, and noting that individual Soft-plumaged Petrels have been reported off Ireland in 1974 (*Brit. Birds* 67: 528), 1984 and 1989 (K. Mullarney *in litt.*), off North Carolina, USA, in 1981 (Lee 1984), possibly off Kent in 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 38), and off Devon and Cornwall in 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 78), it is appropriate now to look at the characteristics of Soft-plumaged Petrels, and similar species with which they could possibly be confused, with a view to the problems of identification at sea and from headlands. The following notes and photographs have been assembled from personal visits to the Madeiran archipelago and the Salvages (in 1974, 1979 & 1986), numerous voyages in the South Atlantic and southern Indian Oceans (1982-86), and a voyage from Africa to England (1986).



137. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis feae*, Desertas, July 1979. Note brownish-grey head merging into dark eye-mask; paler greyish hindneck, sides of breast and mantle with light brown feather edges; darker brown lower back, scapulars and flight feathers; and brown, grey and white in tail (J. W. Enticott)

Plumage

The *Pterodroma mollis* complex shows slight variations in colour depending on subspecies. This, combined with the apparent variation in colour in different light conditions and distance from the bird, compounds any attempt at a definitive at-sea description. Interpretations can be further complicated by variations in flight with differing wind conditions.

Upperparts

Harper (1973) has already pointed out that 'petrels in the hand look quite different from a bird on the wing some distance away, and *Pterodroma mollis* is no exception'. This is especially true of the upperparts of Soft-plumaged Petrel, which in the hand look a fairly uniform greyish, with various shades of brown, darker grey and blackish (plates 137 & 138). Generally, at sea, the head, mantle, tail and the fore part of the inner wings appear as variable shades of grey; contrasting with this are darker primaries, upperwing-coverts and secondary tips, together forming most of the upperwing area, which may appear anything from brown to almost blackish, depending on light conditions.

At sea, in some lights, the entire upperwing (apart from the grey fore part) appears dark and almost blackish, while in other lights it appears browner with a visible 'M' mark across the whole wing length. This 'M' consists of the dark primaries (invariably the darkest part of the upperwing) and dark wing-coverts, and at sea appears to continue from the primaries onto the carpal joint, then to the inner area of the hindwing to join thinly across the lower back, separating the grey tail from the grey

mantle. The tips of the secondaries can also appear dark, thus enhancing the dark colour of the upperwing, and sometimes producing the impression of a paler wedge or triangle of grey on the secondaries between their tips and the wing-coverts (plates 136 & 147). This pale wedge is not always visible: when not apparent, the dark area of wing is increased;



138. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis mollis*, Gough Island, October 1982. Note grey upper mantle with paler feather edges, darker crown and nape; flight feathers darker than mantle, with brown upperwing-coverts; outer webs of primaries blackish; inner webs dark grey; rump and tail darker than upper mantle; and centre of tail darker than sides (J. W. Enticott)

139. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis mollis*, Gough Island, October 1982. Note dark head, nape and sides of upper breast; extent of dark eye-mask; and whitish scaling above eye, on forehead and on lower crown (J. W. Enticott)



when present, the wedge enhances the effect of the 'M' mark across the wings.

The mantle and hindneck and the fore part of the inner wing are similar in their shade of grey. The head (from the nape forwards), however, usually appears darker in shade than the mantle, and traces of brown may be present, especially on *feae* (plates 137, 140 & 141; see also Fisher 1989); conversely, some *P. m. mollis* show a distinctly paler grey head (plate 142).

A narrow band of brown joins the brown bands on each wing, and below this is a paler grey area on the rump. On *P. m. mollis*, the tail itself is usually a darker grey, contrasting slightly with the rump, though the tail may appear dark-centred with whiter sides, especially at close range. On some *feae*, the tail may look much paler, almost white (plate 136; see also Fisher 1989), but this is not constant. This variability requires further investigation: there may well be subspecific variations here as well, with South Atlantic populations (*mollis*) showing more white on the tail sides than the Indian Ocean subspecies (*dubia*).

The interpretation of grey, brown and blackish tones becomes very subjective at sea, as their intensity depends on light conditions. In some lights, the upperparts can appear distinctly grey; in other lights, they appear uniformly dark, with the 'M' mark scarcely visible. This variability is compounded at sea, with birds from the South Atlantic (*mollis*) looking essentially grey on the mantle, whereas those from the southern Indian Ocean (*dubia*) tend to appear browner on the mantle.

At very close range (about 100 m), some show a narrow subterminal white band on the tail (this is generally noticed only with the sun behind the observer). I have seen one individual in the South Atlantic with about

140. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis feae*, Desertas, July 1979. Note complete absence of breast-band (thus entirely white underparts); slight flecking on sides of lower breast; brownish-grey head merging into dark eye-mask; apparent absence of white above eye; and whitish underwing pattern (J. W. Enticott)





141. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis feae*, Desertas, July 1979. Note absence of breast-band; complete white underparts from chin to undertail-coverts; dark eye-mask merging into browner crown; paler and greyer nape; and whitish scaling on lower forehead with little above the eye (J. W. Enticott)



142. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis mollis*, Gough Island, October 1982. Note greyer aspect to plumage, especially head; darker eye-mask with white above eye; complete grey breast-band separating chin and throat from belly; and whitish underwing pattern (J. W. Enticott)

the outer third of its tail pure white: thus looking like a huge Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*, but with a comparatively larger area of white on the tail.

Individuals moulting the inner primaries occasionally show an area of white on what appears to be the last full primary, and at sea this can be quite conspicuous in flight. Some South Atlantic Soft-plumaged Petrels can show white scalloping along the upperwing-coverts, not dissimilar to that on Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*; although this can also be quite conspicuous, I have not noticed it on many individuals at sea.

Head

The upper forehead, crown and nape are a darker grey than the mantle on Northern Hemisphere subspecies, whereas they are generally paler than the mantle on southern subspecies. This grey on the head/mantle continues around the upper breast to form a variable grey breast-band (see below). The immediate area around the eye is blackish, forming a mask which is generally oval or pear-shaped in appearance; this dark mask can be seen at several hundred metres, and is more conspicuous on the Indian Ocean subspecies (*dubia*).

The lower forehead is white, with variable scaling of white feather edges towards the crown and above the eye. Generally, there is a thin area of white above the dark eye-mask forming a variable white supercilium, which seems to be more noticeable on southern subspecies (plates 142 & 144). Dark facial marks appear to be more distinct and larger on *dubia*, but, again, this may be variable (plates 143 & 144).

The features of the head are difficult to define accurately at sea, the white on the forehead being especially difficult to see. Most individuals seen at several hundred metres show a grey head with a blackish eye-mask, a white throat patch and a variable grey breast-band.

Breast-band

The grey breast-band varies between and within subspecies. While most individuals of the southern subspecies show a breast-band of variable thickness and variable completeness, and most of those of the northern subspecies show little if any breast-band, all subspecies are variable. Thus, the presence of a breast-band, while useful as a field character to identify the species, may have limited use in indicating subspecies, especially at sea.

The Indian Ocean *dubia* has the darkest and thickest breast-band (plates 143 & 144). This, combined with the darker and more extensive head markings, can tend to produce more contrast of light and dark from the head to the upper breast. Even with this subspecies, however, some individuals have incomplete breast-bands, consisting of little more than 'grey smudges' at the sides of the upper breast. At sea, a complete breast-band is noticeable even at moderate range, with its lower edge generally appearing to be in line with the fore edge of each wing. A complete breast-band also separates the white on the chin and throat from the white of the rest of the underparts: this conspicuous white throat patch, as well as the breast-band, is visible at about 500 m range.

On the South Atlantic subspecies (*mollis*), the breast-band may be either complete or incomplete; when complete, however, it is usually not so thick as that of *dubia* (plate 142).

The eastern North Atlantic subspecies (*feae* and *madeira*) do not normally have complete breast-bands (plates 140 & 141). The most I have seen on any one individual at sea is a slight suggestion of the start of a band on each side of the upper breast, somewhat similar to the breast-side marks on Great Shearwater.



143. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis dubia*, Marion Island, April 1982. Note complete dark grey breast-band, nape, mantle and crown; blackish eye-mask; and scalloping above eye to forehead (J. W. Enticott)



144. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis dubia*, Prince Edward Island, May 1982. Note darker aspect of plumage (despite flash photography), especially head, eye-mask, breast-band and underwing; complete dark grey breast-band separating chin and throat from belly; and white above eye joining white on lower forehead (J. W. Enticott)

Rest of underparts

At sea, at a distance, Soft-plumaged Petrels show blackish underwings, contrasting white underparts from chin to undertail-coverts, a variable dark breast-band, and a blackish eye-mask and grey head (plates 145 & 146). Depending on distance and light conditions, other features may become apparent.

The underwing appears blackish at a distance, but at closer range this becomes a dark slate colour with a variable amount of whitish or pale

grey. Some individuals show a wedge of whitish or pale grey on the fore part of the underwing from the wing-join to just short of the carpal joint (plates 140, 142 & 145), thickest near the body and tapering towards the carpal. This is not dissimilar in extent to that found on Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris*, although the latter's is more reflective, more silvery (less white).

Probably more noticeable at close range is a variable area of whitish or pale grey in the centre of the underwing. On some, this is apparent on the undersurface of the primaries only, whereas, on others, it continues along the underwing-coverts to form a faint stripe (plate 145); the greatest light/dark contrast produced by this stripe is between the light primaries and the dark primary coverts.

I have seen two Soft-plumaged Petrels in the South Atlantic with abnormally pale underwings. These, and other occasional odd-looking pale individuals, seem to suggest that colour variation among these petrels can produce paler birds, as well as a uniformly dark phase (Sinclair 1978), which I have not definitely seen. Whatever the true range of variation, however, it is apparent that such variants are extremely rare.

145. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, South Atlantic Ocean, December 1983. Note dark eye-mask; grey head, and grey breast-band separating white chin from white underparts; and distribution of whitish on underwings (*J. W. Enticott*)



Flight

In conditions of comparatively little wind (below force 5 Beaufort scale), Soft-plumaged Petrels do not normally rise more than about 4 m above the sea surface. Usually up to six wingbeats are followed by a period of low gliding, generally without changes of direction or any detectable rise and fall above the sea surface. Such gliding is usually performed with the body at about 40-50° to the sea surface, with the wings held bowed (wingtips held below body level).

Occasionally, the bird may 'rock' rapidly from side to side (to about 70°) without wingbeats, as if unsure of which way to turn next. At other times, the normal low flight can be interrupted by very rapid changes of direction accompanied by very quick deep wingbeats, about five direction changes in about eight seconds, followed by a return to normal low flight. I have seen this erratic flight continue for about 20 seconds, with very deep wingbeats and particularly high upstrokes, and with changes of direction every 2-3 m. Generally, there is no rise and fall in this low flight, which is different from that sometimes employed by Kerguelen Petrels.

Flying into a moderate wind (about force 4), Soft-plumaged Petrels may travel in a semicircular forward direction, without wingbeats and turning in very small arcs. Sometimes they will flap four or five times and then immediately turn into the wind for a brief 'up-and-down' glide, perhaps rising to about 4 m and gliding up to an angle of about 60°, which enables them to continue low over the surface for 10-20 m before having to beat again. This may be the beginnings of the true 'pendulum' flight of *Pterodroma* petrels, and could be termed 'low arc-gliding'. They can also, however, fly in this manner without rising significantly above the surface. Trying to categorise types of flight therefore becomes very difficult.

It is really in winds of force 5 and over that these petrels come into their own, with less flapping and with prolonged periods of gliding during which they may attain heights of about 18 m at the glide peaks, especially in stormy weather. Flight becomes much faster, with more undulations and a tendency to fly in longer zigzag paths using lift obtained from the wind over the sea. Very high glides are usually made with the body at an angle of about 90° to the sea surface, but even these high glides are interspersed with lower glides with the body at about 50° to the surface. Even in this fast flight there is a tendency for the wingtips to be held below body level, and there is an increased angling of the wings backwards from the carpal, while the inner wings, from body to carpal, are pressed forwards slightly. Fast and dashing though these petrels can appear, both Atlantic Petrels *Pterodroma incerta* and White-headed Petrels *P. lessonii* can fly faster and higher, especially in extreme weather, probably because of their greater wing area.

Soft-plumaged Petrels observed around the Madeiran islands appear to fly in a lower, but more regular, zigzag progression, especially in a wind. They rise at the extreme of a flight path, gaining height but losing speed until a peak is reached, whereupon they turn 90° to descend rapidly low over the sea, perhaps with occasional wingbeats, only to rise again, lose speed, turn 90° to continue, and so on. Such a regular progression is not,



146. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, South Atlantic Ocean, December 1983. Note wing shape and length relative to body length; other points as in plate 145 (*J. W. Enticott*)

147. Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, South Atlantic Ocean, December 1983. Note dark primaries, upperwing-coverts and lower back forming 'M' mark; dark secondary tips, with paler wedge of grey along secondaries; grey head, mantle, fore area of inner upperwing, rump and tail; and dark eye-mask and white chin (*J. W. Enticott*)



however, the norm in the Southern Oceans, where the winds are generally stronger and more continuous. Without a wind, the two northern subspecies appear to fly in a similar manner to southern ones.

Comparisons with similar species

ATLANTIC PETREL. *Pterodroma incerta*

The Atlantic Petrel is found commonly in the South Atlantic Ocean from about 20°S to 50°S, with a few records in the western Indian Ocean. This is a large brown petrel, slightly smaller than Great Shearwater, with which it often associates at sea. In fresh plumage, Atlantic Petrels are a fairly uniform dark brown, with darker primaries (plate 148), and an area of white on the belly sharply demarcated from the brown upper breast; the lower belly and undertail-coverts are also brown.

At first glance in bad light, at extreme distance, or to observers unfamiliar with one or the other species, Atlantic Petrels can recall Soft-plumaged Petrels, though there are numerous differences. Atlantic is distinctly larger and darker, without any trace of grey on upperparts or underparts. The underwing, although dark, is brown rather than blackish. The white belly patch is visible at several hundred metres, while at closer range the dark head, throat and upper breast, sharply demarcated from the white belly patch, and the dark lower belly and undertail-coverts are further differences (plate 149). The tail is noticeably comparatively longer

148. Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, South Atlantic Ocean, January 1983. Note uniform brown upper surface with darker primaries; darker brown eye-mask; paler nape; and uniform brown rump and tail (J. W. Enticott)





149. Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, in worn plumage, South Atlantic Ocean, July 1983. Note uniform brown under surface with darker tail; white lower breast and belly sharply demarcated from brown head; and comparatively long-winged and long-tailed 'jizz' (J. W. Enticott)

than that of Soft-plumaged Petrel. In worn plumage, the chin, throat and nape may appear paler than the otherwise uniform brown plumage of Atlantic Petrel (plate 150), and a little more care must be exercised with such individuals, especially at long range.

The flight patterns of Atlantic are generally similar to those of Soft-plumaged Petrel. Atlantic Petrels, however, fly higher and faster in rough weather, with primaries angled back slightly more than on Soft-plumaged (although the wings are also held bowed), and also tend to flap sometimes at the peak of their glides.

Additionally, Atlantic Petrels are rather more inquisitive of ships at sea than are either Soft-plumaged or White-headed Petrels.

150. Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*, South Atlantic Ocean, October 1982. Worn plumage as in plate 149, but with paler forehead, chin and throat (J. W. Enticott)



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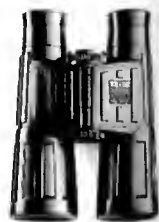
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WHITE-HEADED PETREL *Pterodroma lessonii*

The White-headed Petrel has a circumpolar distribution in the Southern Oceans between 30°S and the Antarctic Continent: it is essentially more of a southern species than either Soft-plumaged or Atlantic Petrels. At sea, White-headed Petrels resemble Soft-plumaged much more than do Atlantic Petrels. They have similar dark underwings, white underparts (but no breast-band), greyish mantle and browner wings, often with an 'M' mark. The head and tail, however, both appear white, thus distinguishing them from Soft-plumaged, and these features are conspicuous, being clearly visible at distances of approximately 1.2 km (plate 151).

At closer range, the head is seen to be very pale grey, and some can show a very pale grey gorget on the lower chin and behind the ear-coverts. As with Atlantic Petrels in worn plumage at long range, one must be aware of such variation, especially in poor light conditions; White-headed Petrels at a distance, however, invariably appear to have white heads.

Perhaps equally conspicuous, especially at close range, is the black eye patch, which stands out against the head colour. The rump and tail are much paler than on Soft-plumaged Petrel, and at close range the tail shows a pale greyish centre with whiter sides (some may even show a thin pure white subterminal band). The pale of the head continues onto the upper mantle, which is paler than that of Soft-plumaged Petrel, but this soon becomes a darker shade of grey (plate 152). The rest of the upperparts and wings are essentially similar in colour to those of Soft-plumaged. The underparts are pure white from chin to undertail-coverts, and contrast with the dark underwings.

White-headed Petrels are extremely striking birds, larger and longer-

151. White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*, southern Indian Ocean, March 1985. Note dark flight feathers, paler grey mantle, and white head and white tail (*J. W. Enticott*)



winged than Soft-plumaged Petrels. Their flight is generally faster and higher, banking during gliding being so steep that the wings and body are usually at 90° to the sea surface at the peaks of the glides. Land-based observations from Gough Island indicate that Atlantic, White-headed and Soft-plumaged Petrels can all be differentiated in the field at distances of over 1.6 km; with ship-based observations, often in less optimum conditions, the distance is reduced.



152. White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*, southern Indian Ocean, April 1984. Note white head, and white underparts to tail; dark eye-mask contrasting with white head; and dark underwing pattern with paler areas (J. W. Enticott)

GREY PETREL *Procellaria cinerea*

The Grey Petrel has a circumpolar distribution in the Southern Oceans northward to about 25°S in the Atlantic. Although a *Procellaria* and not a *Pterodroma* petrel, it superficially resembles Soft-plumaged Petrel in colour, having dark upperparts, white underparts and dark underwings. Further examination, however, reveals clear differences.

Grey Petrels are large (about the size of Great Shearwater and Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*). In dark light and at long range, they can suggest a Cory's Shearwater, especially on the upperparts. With the 'jizz' of a *Procellaria*, they appear 'dumpy-bodied' and, at close range, look large-headed with a pale stubby bill. The outer wing ('hand') appears much broader than on *Pterodroma* petrels.

The mantle and wings are a fairly uniform greyish-brown, with more grey on the mantle and more brown on the flight feathers. The head is darker and browner, and can almost impart a capped effect (especially with a paler nape), while the tail is also a darker brown (plate 153). The



153. Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*, southern Indian Ocean, May 1982. Note dark head, pale bill, pale nape; grey upper surface with darker flight feathers; darker tail; and thick neck with *Procellaria* (not *Pterodroma*) 'jizz' (J. W. Enticott)

underwings are darker than the upperparts, being dark grey-brown, but are not so dark as on Soft-plumaged Petrel; at very close range, a faint whitish area may be visible on the under surface of the primaries and secondaries. The undertail-coverts are dark (white on Soft-plumaged), and the rest of the underparts are white (plate 154).

The flight varies according to wind conditions, but Grey Petrels generally fly with wings bowed and also slightly swept back, and their wingbeats are rapid.

154. Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*, southern Indian Ocean, April 1984. Note dark head, white underparts, dark tail, and dark greyish underwings with traces of whitish (J. W. Enticott)



ADDITIONAL SIMILAR SPECIES

Within the *Pterodroma* complex, there are other species which bear a superficial resemblance to Soft-plumaged Petrels. These are mainly Pacific Ocean species (e.g. Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta*, Providence Petrel *P. solandri*, Phoenix Petrel *P. alba*, and Tahiti Petrel *P. rostrata*), and the likelihood of any occurring in Britain is very remote, but not impossible.

A more likely candidate for consideration is the Trinidad (Herald) Petrel *P. arminjoniana*, which has already been reported in British waters (*Brit. Birds* 82: 41), and has occurred off the east coast of America (Allen 1934; Lee 1979, 1984), as well as at sea in the North Atlantic (Murphy 1936). Trinidad Petrels breed in the tropical South Atlantic Ocean at Trinidad and Martin Vaz (Murphy 1936), as well as in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, but their pelagic range is not well known.

As my experience of this petrel, which has three colour phases, is very limited, I can attempt only a brief comparison with Soft-plumaged Petrel. Trinidad Petrels are larger than Soft-plumaged, but not so large as either Atlantic or White-headed Petrels. While the dark phase is unlikely to be confused with Soft-plumaged Petrel, pale and intermediate phases need more attention. The upperparts are a darker greyish-brown than on Soft-plumaged, imparting a more uniform appearance, especially about the head, where the conspicuous facial marks of Soft-plumaged are lacking. While the underparts vary from white with an ill-defined breast-band to a darker greyish-brown with a whitish belly, Trinidad Petrels have dark undertail-coverts (white on Soft-plumaged). It may also be relevant to add that both Lee (1984) and Bourne & Curtis (1985) have likened the at-sea appearance of this petrel to that of the smaller skuas *Stercorarius*.

Acknowledgments

Numerous people have helped in various ways during the collection of these data. I owe particular thanks to Duarte Bettencourt da Camara and Alex Zino while in Madeira, to Jerry Maul at the Funchal Museum, to Jose Mario Gama for transport to the Desertas, and to the Portuguese Navy for transport to the Salvages. I also thank Professor Roy Siegfried, Director of the FitzPatrick Institute, and friends and colleagues at that establishment; the captains and crews of MV *SA Agulhas* and RS *Africana*; as well as Dr J. T. R. Sharrock for the motivation to write this paper, Caz Thomas for typing and critical comment, and Dave Cottridge for slide duplication.

Summary

The identification at sea of Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* (here treated as one species with four subspecies: *P. m. madeira* and *P. m. feae* in the North Atlantic, and *P. m. mollis* and *P. m. dubia* in the Southern Hemisphere) is discussed, and compared with that of other species. Light conditions and distance are important in interpretation of plumage colours and patterns, and flight varies with wind conditions. Generally, at sea at a distance, Soft-plumaged appears variably grey above, with darker primaries, upperwing-coverts and secondary tips. The upperwing can appear almost entirely blackish with grey inner forewing, or, in some lights, dark brown with an 'M' mark joining in the centre across the lower back. The head shows a dark eye-mask and a white throat, the pale lower forehead being visible only at close range. The underparts are white with a highly variable dark breast-band; the underwings appear blackish, at closer range showing a variable amount of pale, particularly in the centre of the underwing (sometimes forming a faint stripe). Flight is generally low (up to 4 m above sea) and with much gliding, sometimes interrupted by rapid changes of direction. In stronger winds prolonged periods of gliding are common, rising to about 18 m

at peak of glides, and flight becomes faster, tending to proceed in longer zigzag paths. The main confusion species at sea are Atlantic Petrel *P. incerta*, White-headed Petrel *P. lessonii*, Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea* and possibly Trinidade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*.

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Mystery photographs

168 From its general demeanour, this mystery bird (plate 128, repeated here) must be a partridge. The striking head-and-neck pattern further points to one of the *Alectoris* partridges. This narrows the choice in the Western Palearctic to four. The Barbary Partridge *A. barbara* can quickly be discounted, having a grey-white face and throat and a white-spotted chestnut collar. The remaining three, Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa*, Rock Partridge *A. graeca* and Chukar *A. chukar*, have basically similar patterns, with white, or slightly off-white, throats bordered by broad black collars running through the ear-coverts and eyes to, or above, the bill. It is worth noting, at this point, that the statement in *BWP* (vol. 2), repeated elsewhere, that the Chukar has slight speckling on the lower throat just inside the collar, is incorrect. The only one, however, to have a necklace of streaks below and behind the collar is the Red-legged. This feature should quickly lead us to identify the mystery bird as a Red-legged Partridge.



Unfortunately, partridges are no longer necessarily what they seem, because of the presence of very large numbers of released, and much smaller numbers of wild-bred, Chukar × Red-legged Partridge hybrids.

Fortunately, however, there are a number of pointers that can be used to establish whether this bird is a pure-bred Red-legged Partridge. The face pattern and lores are one such pointer. On Chukar, the black streak through the eye starts as a thick line on the forehead above the bill, leaving the lores white; on Red-legged, the black on the forehead is only a thin line, which passes through the upper lores to the eye and often, but not always, extends narrowly around the base of the bill, leaving much less obvious white on the lores. The mystery bird has only a thin black line through the lores, quite consistent with Red-legged.

The black collar is, however, noticeably deep, with the necklace starting below the throat crease. On Red-legged, this could normally be expected to start at or near the throat crease, and the depth may be a sign of the influence of Chukar, on which the collar extends lower on the throat.

The clinching feature, however, is the flank feathers. Red-legged has only a single black bar on each flank feather, while Chukar has two thick black bars separated by a cream band. The flanks of this bird show clearly defined, regular lines against a pale background, unlike the generally broken lines and darker background produced by the single bars of Red-legged. Obligingly, at least two individual flank feathers can be seen, clearly revealing the twin bars that produce the pattern, thereby proving the bird's hybrid origin. It is, in fact, a Chukar \times Red-legged Partridge hybrid, photographed by Nicholas Wingate near Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire, in September 1988.

A further feature, not distinguishable in the photograph, but which should always be checked, is the colour of the upper ear-coverts. On Chukar, this is rufous, while on Red-legged it is a much paler, straw colour. On hybrids, it is usually a brown, mid-way between the two.

Sustained commercial breeding and some intermingling in the wild has resulted in hybrids which are now rather variable. Those with reduced streaking are most readily identifiable: the bird depicted is well towards the Red-legged end of the spectrum, and could easily have been passed off as pure Red-legged. Equally, some birds are very close to pure Chukar, but are often betrayed by a thin or broken inner bar, pure birds having a thick inner bar. It is a sad reflection on Man's irresistible urge to tamper



with nature that a species successfully introduced many years ago should now be at risk from the introduction of hybrids.

PETER J. WILKINSON
42 Dale Avenue, Gustard Wood,
Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire AL4 8LS

156. Mystery photograph 169. Identify the species. Answer next month

Reviews

Man and Wildfowl. By Janet Kear. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1990. 288 pages; 103 black-and-white plates; 65 line-drawings. £17.00.

Man has had an involvement with wildfowl since he first collected a few eggs and took them back to his cave for supper. This excellent and thorough account begins by describing how the Chinese and the Egyptians domesticated ducks and geese over 4,000 years ago. In the eighteenth century, thousands of geese would take the long road from the Fens to markets in London, travelling at no more than one mile an hour, and wearing specially made boots to protect their feet. In France, geese are still force-fed to produce the much-desired foie gras.

If man was not domesticating wildfowl, he was trapping them in specially built duck-decoys and shooting them, originally for food, latterly for sport. Duck-decoys have now virtually disappeared, except for a few preserved for catching and ringing. Wildfowling continues, however, though much better regulated than it once was, even if British wildfowling still fiercely defend night-shooting, a practice that has long since been banned in North America and almost every other European country for the obvious reasons that quarry identification is at the very least suspect and disturbance of roosts inevitable.

Conservation, research and education are the three main planks of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's work and these are covered in the detail they deserve. Aviculture has played an important part in the conservation of some species, and this, too, is treated thoroughly. A more contentious outcome of aviculture has been the release or escape into the wild of alien species, including the Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*, Mandarin Aix *galericulata* and Ruddy Duck *Oxyura jamaicensis*.

Not all associations of wildfowl with man are benign, and among conflicts discussed in a separate chapter are those of geese and agriculture (though I was disappointed that the story seemed to end nearly 20 years ago). To describe some incidents of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* eating unharvested carrots in Lancashire in the 1970s as 'one of the most serious allegations of crop damage' is to ignore what Barnacle Geese *B. leucopsis* and Brent Geese *B. bernicla* have been doing on a far larger scale over the last decade or more.

The chapter on legend, language and art is a delight, with wonderfully apposite illustrations throughout, as indeed is true of the whole book, with many by one of my favourites, Thomas Bewick. Wildfowl turn up in myth and legend all over the world and have been the subject of poetry, literature and superb paintings. There is also a rather turgid ballet score. I do have one quibble here, which is that to consult just *The Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names* is to ignore the equal riches that would have been found in a book on Scottish place-names. The Gaelic, too, produces plenty of examples, it being quite appropriate that the RSPB now owns Loch a'Gheoidh (Loch of the Geese) on Islay.

There is a final thought-provoking chapter looking into the future, not all of it rosy. This rounds off a thoroughly readable book, full of interest, often charmingly anecdotal, and as complete a survey of its subject as one could wish for.

MALCOLM OGILVIE

Bird Songs of Israel and the Middle East. By Krister Mild. Two cassettes, explanatory booklet and check-list of Israeli birds. Bird Recording Services, London, 1990. £26.95.

This neat package scores over most compilations by 80 pages of small print in a booklet, giving details of each recording (the kind of vocalisation, place, date, whether analogue or digital, and recordist) and a description of what you hear, together with brief notes on the species' status and habitat. This is a clear and helpful discussion, for which average field guides have insufficient space. The phonetic renderings of calls are carefully considered (and only rarely, compared with some translations, does the attempt fail in English, while no doubt being more successful in Swedish). The tapes themselves are thorough and good, with few notable omissions (Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* is one), and many previously unpublished species. The bands are introduced by an unfortunately dull voice in English; with 114 species on four sides of tape, it takes a while to find what you want (compact discs with their skip-find facility beat cassettes easily at this). The recordings are mostly very good, some with a noticeable 'halo' of faint sound around the bird's voice. There is a justifiable plea not to copy the tapes for a friend—'spare a thought for a birdwatcher with meagre financial resources trying to recover his costs'—but the price is rather high.

ROB HUME

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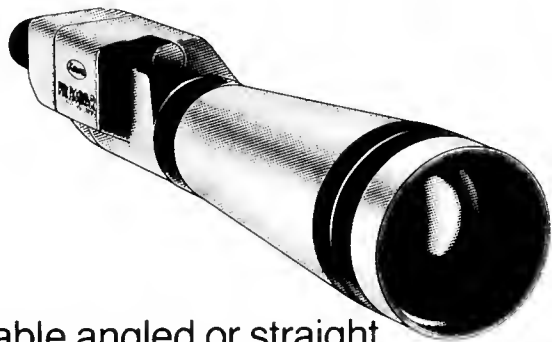


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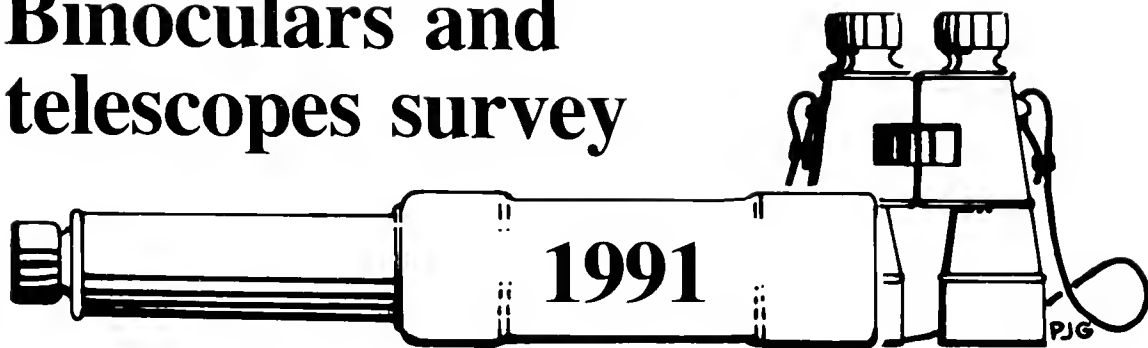
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	Elite 10 x 42 BGA	1389	RUSSIAN (TENTO)			30 x			
OPTICRON	Custom 10 x 40 Rubber	1329	7 x 35 ZCF	SCOPE		40 x			
MCF 7 x 24 Compact	CARL ZEISS EAST	1329	10 x 50 ZCF	TSN 1 Body	1119	20-60 x Zoom			
MCF 8 x 24 Compact	Deltrium 8 x 30	1329	12 x 50 ZCF	TSN 2 Body	1119	BAUSCH & LOMB			
Roof Prism 10 x 25	Janopiem 7 x 50	1329	20 x 60 ZCF	TSN 3 Body	1119	Elite c/w 22 x			
DWCF 8 x 24 Compact	Janopiem 10 x 50	1329	TSN 4 Body	TSN 4 Body	1119	Elite c/w 15-45 x Zoom			
Vega 10 x 40	Dekeam 10 x 50	1329	20 x WA	SWAROVSKI	1119	20-60 x Zoom			
Vega 10 x 50	Notarem B x 32 BGA	1329	25 x WA		1119				
Dioptron 8 x 32 B	Notarem 10 x 40 B	1329	40 x		1119				
Dioptron 7 x 42 B	Notarem 10 x 40 B	1329			1119				
Dioptron 8 x 42 B	Notarem 10 x 40 BGA	1329			1119				



SECONDHAND ALL with 6 months 1 year - most with case

BINOS	Optolyth 8 x 40 Alpin	1170	BUSHNELL	Spacemaster c/w 20-60 x Zoom	1190
	Leitz 7 x 42 Trinovid	1249	800mm Mirror Lens/Scope	1279	
	Leitz 10 x 40 8 Trinovid	1189	GREEN KAT	20 x 50 Scope	175
	Zeiss Fasti Dodecaem 12 x 50	1189	SWIFT	Viewmaster c/w 15-60 x Zoom	
	Minolta 8-16 x 32 Roof Prism Zoom	1129	Viewmaster c/w 15-60 x Zoom		
	Swift Osprey 7.5 x 42	1196	Fieldscope c/w 20 x		
	Pentax 16 x 50 ZCF	123	Fieldscope c/w 20-45 x		
	Swirl Skippy 7 x 50	1279	Fieldscope c/w 20-45 x		
	Panorama Mallard 8 x 40	1173	EDII c/w 20-45 x and FREE		
	Panorama Merlin 8 x 40	1339	Nikon 7 x 20 Compact Binos	1349	
	SCOPES		OPTICRON		
	Bushnell Spacemaster c/w 15-45 x	169	HR 60 Str c/w 22 x and case	1159	
	Bushnell Spacemaster II	1149	HR 60 Str Rubb c/w 22 x	1169	
	Bushnell Spacemaster II	1149	and case	1169	
	Greenkai 20 x 40 x 60 Scope	1149	Classic FF 60 c/w 18-40 x	1158	
	Optolyth 30 x 75 Drawscope	1189	Classic FF 75 c/w 22-47 x	1196	
	Optolyth TRC 80 c/w 22-60 x	1189	Classic 22 x Eyepiece	123	
	Kowa TSN-2 c/w 25 x	1279	Classic 25 x HEP Eyepiece	1279	
	Kowa 20 x 48 x 50 Mini Scope	1279	Piccolo ED Mark II c/w 22 x W	1355	
	Kowa TSN 20 x 48 x 50 Mini Scope	1279	OPPOLYTH		
	Kowa TSN 25 x Eyepiece	1279	785 80 Body	1350	
	Opticron 22 x W Eyepiece	133	TRC 80 Body	1350	
	Opticron 25 x Eyepiece	139	20 x W	1100	
	Nikon 30 x Eyepiece	139	30 x	1100	
		139	40 x	1119	

Binoculars and telescopes survey



J. T. R. Sharrock and L. W. Sharrock

This is the fifth periodic report on the views—likes and dislikes—of their optical equipment by the readers of *British Birds*. Previous reports were published in 1978, 1982, 1985 and 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 71: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160).

The readers of *British Birds* probably comprise the most knowledgeable and demanding of all binocular and telescope users, certainly amongst birdwatchers. The wide range of interest of *British Birds* readers creates an equally wide range of uses to which they put their optical equipment, and wide range of conditions in which they are used: from the twilight of dawn and dusk on murky British winter days, or in the drizzle and seaspray of coastal seawatching for passing seabirds, to the glaring brilliance and dry heat of midday in Middle Eastern deserts; and from distinguishing seabirds or raptors at great range, to reading numbers on the rings on the legs of waders or the close-range perusal of primary positions on the wingtips of warblers.

Finances allowing, the *British Birds* birdwatcher will own the best available optical equipment. Our successive survey reports have shown the readiness of birdwatchers at this high level of competence to change to the newest, better model. On average, 12% of *British Birds* readers buy new binoculars and 12% buy a new telescope each year, so, on average, each individual *British Birds* reader buys new binoculars or a new telescope every four years ('Readership survey', *Brit. Birds* 81: 203-205). Thus, the trends in ownership quickly follow improvements made by manufacturers.

Optical equipment can be judged by a wide variety of tests, usually in the laboratory. The results of such exercises are published elsewhere, such as in the consumer magazine *Which?* We consider, however, that the best test of the suitability for birdwatching of binoculars or telescopes is the performance during months and years of use (and misuse!) in field conditions, as rated by expert, critical birdwatchers. Like its predecessors, this report is based upon a cut-out/pull-out questionnaire published in *British Birds* (October 1990 issue, p. xviii, repeated overleaf). A total of 832 questionnaires was returned. We are aware that this is not the random sample recommended by statisticians. It will contain disproportionate numbers of those who are dissatisfied with what they own and wish to complain, and of those who are impressed by what they own and wish to praise; the owner who is 'fairly satisfied' will have less incentive to bother to complete and mail a questionnaire. With this bias always in mind, however, the results do reflect the opinions of a large number of the

world's top birdwatchers, and, by comparison with our earlier surveys, reveal trends in ownership and in perception of the good and bad qualities of the various makes and models currently available.

One point does need stressing. The people reporting on their optical equipment are all experienced and critical birdwatchers. They will not own poor-quality binoculars or telescopes. The optical equipment named in this report will comprise the top makes and models; even the lowest-rated is in the top two or three dozen available. 'High Street stores' often contain a multitude of poor-quality binoculars, and telescopes useless for birdwatching; such items are not included in this report.

In this survey, a few questionnaires contained answers to some but not all questions. In consequence, the totals are not necessarily the same in each table.

Binoculars

Most popular binoculars

The binocular most frequently owned by *British Birds* readers is the *Zeiss West** Dialyt 10×40B (table 1). It has maintained its top position, at just over 28%, despite stiff competition, and is still around 20% clear of its closest rival. The fastest-rising star is the *Zeiss West* 7×42, leaping from thirteenth place three years ago into a clear second place this time. Also of note are two newcomers, the *Bausch & Lomb* Elite 10×42B and 8×42B, each making up less than 2% at present, but likely to rise up the table from their current eleventh and twelfth positions.

Most popular makes of binocular

Some manufacturers produce only a few models, but others make several suitable for birdwatching. The latter, with ownership 'split' many ways, are potentially (and unfairly) under-represented in table 1, so ownership by make rather than model is shown in table 2. The most popular make of binocular is the *Zeiss West*, which has improved its position from just over 30% to only just under 40%, with more than three times as many owners as

Binoculars and telescopes survey, V

BINOCULARS

What binoculars do you use? Make Power x

How do you rate their general performance? (TICK ONE BOX)

EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	SATISFACTORY	POOR	VERY POOR
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	------	-----------

If you purchased a new pair, which would you choose?

Make Power x

Do you wear spectacles when birdwatching? Yes No

If 'Yes', do you: put your binoculars up to them? or raise or remove your spectacles?

TELESCOPES

Do you own and use a telescope? (TICK ONE BOX)

Always or nearly always Regularly	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
1	2	3	4

Do you use a tripod with it? (TICK ONE BOX)

Always or nearly always Regularly	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
1	2	3	4

What telescope do you own? Make & model Power x

Do you rate its general performance as (TICK ONE BOX):

EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	SATISFACTORY	POOR	VERY POOR
1	2	3	4	5	6

If you purchased a new one, what telescope would you choose to buy? Make & model Power x

If you own and use more than one telescope, please enter most-used one above and list others) here:

x x x

Return before 10.11.90 to: *B & T Survey, Foreman, Park Lane, Blenheim, Oxford OX4 1JY*
The large number of replies to our previous surveys (*Brit. Birds* 21: 429-439; 76: 155-161; 78: 167-175; 81: 149-160) provided very interesting and useful information on birdwatching trends. We hope that *BB* subscribers will again help us by completing and returning this form to us. Thank you.

*Formerly known as *Zeiss West Germany*, this manufacturer is now called *Zeiss Germany*.

Table 1. Most popular binoculars

The binoculars most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1990

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	28.8	28.4
2nd	(13=)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	1.2	8.8
3rd	(3)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	7.0	6.0
4th	(5)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	4.4	5.5
5th	(6)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	3.7	4.9
6th	(4)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	4.8	4.2
7th	(2)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	8.7	3.7
8th	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	2.5	2.8
9th	(10)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10×40	1.7	2.4
10th	(9)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	2.2	1.9
11th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	—	1.7
12th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	—	1.4
13th=	—	LEICA 10×42	—	1.3
13th=	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	—	1.3
13th=	—	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	—	1.3
16th	—	LEITZ Trinovid 7×42	—	1.2
17th	—	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 8×30	—	1.1
		All others	27.6	22.4

Table 2. Most popular makes of binocular

The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1990

Position	(1987 position)	Make	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST	30.8	39.7
2nd	(3)	OPTOLYTH	10.4	12.9
3rd	(4)	LEITZ/LEICA	10.3	12.8
4th	(2)	ZEISS JENA	16.4	8.4
5th	(5)	SWIFT	9.5	6.7
6th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB	—	3.7
7th	(6)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	2.3	2.9
8th	(7)	OPTICRON	1.7	2.5
9th	—	ADLERBLICK	—	1.4
10th	(11)	NIKON	0.8	1.3
		All others		7.7

its nearest rival. *Optolyth* rises to second position, with 2.5% more owners than three years ago. Although *Zeiss West* shows by far the largest increase, the appearance of *Bausch & Lomb* in the listings should be noted, taking sixth position, with 3.7% of the market already.

We predicted in 1988 that 'By the early 1990s, we expect that well over half of the most knowledgeable birdwatchers will own either a *Zeiss West* or a *Leitz* binocular.' By 1990, the total was 52.5%.

Most highly rated binoculars

All owners were asked to rate their binoculars on a six-category scale, as Excellent, Very good, Good, Satisfactory, Poor or Very poor, and these categories were scored from 6 to 1 during analysis of the survey results (table 3). Although owners' assessments were subjective, and will have

Table 3. Most highly rated binoculars

Performance of binoculars as rated by their owners

Performance rating: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	Performance rating					Average performance rating	
			6	5	4	3	2		
1st=	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	12	.	.	.	.	Excellent	6.00
1st=	—	LEICA 10×42	11	.	.	.	.	Excellent	6.00
1st=	—	OPTOLYTH 9×63	5	.	.	.	.	Excellent	6.00
4th	(1)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	68	4	.	.	.	Excellent	5.94
5th	(4)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	20	3	.	.	.	Excellent	5.87
6th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	12	2	.	.	.	Excellent	5.86
7th	(3)	LEITZ Trinovid 7×42	8	2	.	.	.	Excellent	5.80
8th	(5)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	40	9	1	.	.	Excellent	5.78
9th	(2)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	187	52	1	.	1	Excellent	5.76
10th	—	LEICA 8×42	3	1	.	.	.	Excellent	5.75
11th	(13)	NIKON 8×30	5	2	.	.	.	Excellent	5.71
12th	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 12×50	3	2	.	.	.	Excellent	5.60
13th	—	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 8×30	6	2	1	.	.	Excellent	5.56
14th	(6)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10×40	13	5	1	1	.	Excellent	5.50
15th	(7)	OPTICRON Elite 9×35	4	2	1	.	.	Very good	5.43
16th=	(23=)	OPTICRON Classic 10×42	3	2	1	.	.	Very good	5.33
16th=	—	ADLERBLICK 10×42	1	2	.	.	.	Very good	5.33
16th=	—	ADLERBLICK MC 10×50	1	2	.	.	.	Very good	5.33
16th=	(14)	ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8×30	1	2	.	.	.	Very good	5.33
20th	—	ZEISS WEST 10×50	2	1	1	.	.	Very good	5.25
21st	(10)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	17	22	6	1	.	Very good	5.20
22nd	(11)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	12	23	5	.	1	Very good	5.10
23rd	(12)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	2	8	1	.	.	Very good	5.09
24th=	(15)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	.	7	.	.	.	Very good	5.00
24th=	—	ADLERBLICK 8×42	1	3	1	.	.	Very good	5.00
24th=	—	OPTICRON 8×42	.	3	.	.	.	Very good	5.00
24th=	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×30	.	3	.	.	.	Very good	5.00
28th	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	6	21	6	2	.	Very good	4.89
29th=	(16=)	PENTAX 8×40	.	3	1	.	.	Very good	4.75
29th=	(9)	SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	.	3	1	.	.	Very good	4.75
31st	(18)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	3	19	7	2	.	Very good	4.74
32nd	(25)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	2	8	3	1	1	Very good	4.53
33rd	—	OPTOLYTH Touring 10×40	1	1	.	.	1	Good	4.33
34th	(22)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	.	4	6	1	.	Good	4.27

taken into account a very wide range of different features, they will have been made independently by the 832 owners, giving a very good indication of the quality of the different models, based upon well over a million hours of intensive use in the field.

It should be noted that even the most lowly model, listed in thirty-fourth position, is still rated as 'Good' by its owners; as stated in the introduction, *British Birds* subscribers would not be using poor binoculars, and readers of this report should bear that in mind.

The three top-rated models are all owned by relatively few birdwatchers at present, though that is likely to change now, as a result of this survey and word-of-mouth recommendation. The *Bausch & Lomb* Elite 8×42B, the *Leica* 10×42 and the *Optolyth* 9×63 all have a 100% record, with every owner considering them to be 'Excellent'. The more-widely owned models are less likely to achieve a 100% record, but another 11 models come pretty close. The *Zeiss West* 7×42 is the most highly rated of the popular models, with only marginally less than the 100% record which it achieved three years ago. The *Leitz* Trinovid 8×40B is close behind, in fifth place. Indeed, there are only marginal differences between the top dozen or so models. It is noteworthy, however, that half of the top-rated models are newcomers to this table. *Bausch & Lomb* will be well pleased to see their

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17 x 42 BGA/T (P)	589	Fieldscope II 20 x 60	(270) 304	10 x 42 (HRII)	150	SGN-III 60mm scope body	165
20 x 40 BGA/T (P)	599	Fieldscope II 20-45 x 60	(340) 379	10 x 50 (HRII)	167	20x, 30x, 40x 50x or 60x EP	25
25 x 60 BGA/T	1,190	ED II 20 x 60	(485) 555	7 x 42 (HRII)	143	Close-up lens	24
33 x 56 BGA/T (without case)	669	ED II 20-45 x 60	(557) 630	8 x 32 Dioptron	110	Photo tube	23
BAUSCH & LOMB		30x, 40x or box eyepieces	76	8 x 42 Dioptron	110	Padded nylon case	15
13 x 42 BA Elite	599	Camera adaptor	168	10 x 42 Dioptron	115	OBSERVATION	
20 x 42 BA Elite	599	Mod. for other cameras	18	10 x 50 Dioptron	127	Vixen 20 x 100	750
Custom 8 x 36 B	193	Quality filter	13	7 x 35 Elite	147	Vixen 30 x 80	375
Custom 10 x 40 BGA	239	Rubber hood	8	9 x 35 Elite	186	Greenkat 20 x 60	150
22 x 60 B Elite	275	Spotting scope 20 x 60 GA	204	7 x 40 Minerva	168	Greenkat 20 x 80	215
22 x 60 BGA Elite	293	Spotting scope 20-45x GA	271	9 x 35 Minerva	169	MONOCULARS	
25-45x B Elite	315	KOWA		8 x 40 Minerva	170	8 x 20 RP with micro.	80
25-45x BGA Elite	332	TSN-1 (45°) body	295	10 x 40 Minerva	175	8 x 30 GA RP	80
SWAROVSKI		TSN-2 body	295	7 x 24 MCF	77	10 x 30 GA RP	81
7 x 30 SLC	321	TSN-3 body	555	HR 80mm scope body	249	NIGHT VISION	
13 x 30 SLC	331	TSN-4 body	555	30x (WA) eyepiece	32	Redscan infra-red scope, complete	705
10 x 40 Diana (290)	372	25x or 40x eyepiece	63	27-80x zoom eyepiece	76	Mains charger	71
AT80 scope (body)	535	20x (WA) eyepiece	96	HR 60mm scopes:-		Sentinel 70mm image intensifier	1,790
22x (WA) eyepiece	70	30x (WA) eyepiece	119	Std w/zoom & case	160	SOLIGOR	
20-60x zoom eyepiece	160	20-60x zoom eyepiece	139	GA w/22x & case	170	Camera lenses etc. stocked	
AT80 case	91	60x eyepiece	96	GA w/zoom & case	210	ROSS	
LEICA		77x eyepiece	99	45° w/22x & case	200	8 x 42 ZCF Regent	174
13 x 20 BC Trinovid	199	Camera adaptor 800mm	107	45° w/zoom & case	230	10 x 42 ZWCF Kensington	184
13 x 20 BCA Trinovid	226	Camera adaptor 1200mm	179	HR Photokit	62	QUESTAR	
10 x 25 BC Trinovid	226	Kowa case	22	Classic IF, 60mm & 75mm	phone	Phone for quotation. Used scopes may be available.	
10 x 25 BCA Trinovid	239	Weathershield case	38	Piccolo body	130	TRIPODS etc.	
17 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	Spare OG cover	5	Zoom eyepiece	77	Slik D2	75
13 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	27x (WA) eyepiece (Screw fit)	59	Other eyepieces, from	20	Slik SL67	107
10 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	Eyepiece dust dome	15	Nylon padded case	15	Manfrotto 144/200	105
ZEISS (Jena)		VIEWMASTER		BUSHNELL		Manfrotto 144/128	100
13 x 32 BA Notarem	115	45° scope with zoom EP	199	Spacemaster body	148	Manfrotto 190/200	93
SWIFT		OPTOLYTH		15-45x zoom EP	72	Soligor 550	40
7 x 35 roof prism	329	8 x 30 Alpini	205	22x (WA) EP	32	Universal clamp	22
3 1/2 x 44 HR5 Audubon	205	8 x 40 Alpini	225	25x or 40x EP	30	Hide clamp II	38
FUJINON		10 x 40 Alpini	230	Photokit	62	Car window mount	22
13 x 40 BFL	179	10 x 50 Alpini	241	Nylon padded case	15	Shoulder pod	30
NIKON		12 x 50 Alpini	247	REDFIELD (waterproof)		Shulmann hide clamp	50
13 x 23 waterproof	157	9 x 63 BGA Royal	450	7 x 30 RA roof prism	290	T-mounts, from	8
10 x 25 waterproof	157	TBG80 telescope body	350	10 x 50 RA roof prism	310		
13 x 20 F roof prism	143	TBS 80 (45°) body	350	15-45 x 60 RA scope	299		
10 x 25 F roof prism	158	30x, 40x eyepieces	64	FALCON			
13 x 30 roof prism	248	20x (WA) eyepiece	100	8 x 42 RA roof prism	110		
		22-60x zoom eyepiece	150	10 x 42 RA roof prism	110		
		TB nylon case	35				

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★ **SEVENOAKS WILDFOWL RESERVE**, on the A25 between Riverhead and Sevenoaks Bat and Ball Station, on **SUNDAYS 7th July, and 18th August** (10.00am to 4.00pm)

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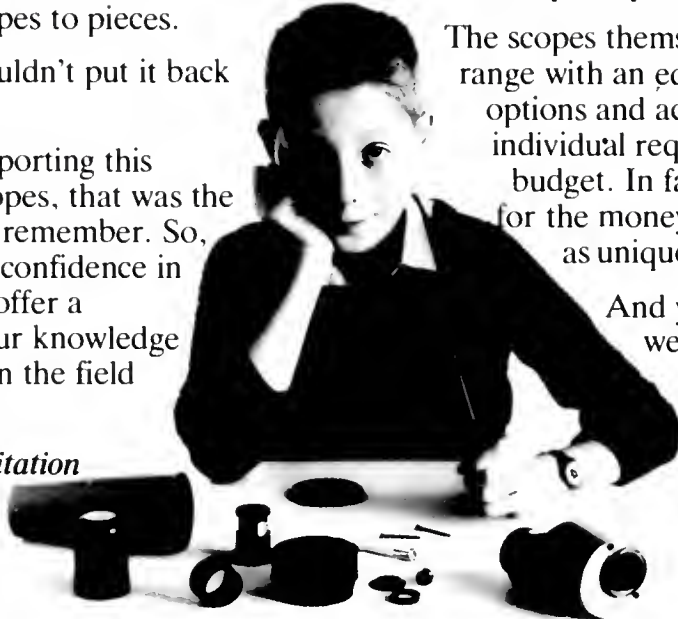
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8×42B and 10×42B models occupying joint first and sixth places, respectively, and these two models, as well as the traditional *Zeiss West* and *Leitz/Leica*, are likely to be looked at closely by birdwatchers planning to buy binoculars in the next couple of years. Other models rated as 'Excellent' were the *Leitz Trinovid* 7×42 and Trinovid 10×40B, the *Zeiss West Dialyt* 10×40B and 8×30, the *Leica* 8×42B, the *Nikon* 8×30, the *Optolyth Alpin* 12×50 and the *Swarovski/Habicht Diana* 10×40.

Some models were more highly rated (or less highly rated) in this survey than in the one carried out three years ago. How is that possible? In some cases, users' opinions may have changed through experience (a model may have developed a fault) or through changing requirements (increased use of telescopes leading to less need for higher-powered binoculars: 7×, say, being preferred to 10×) or through comparison with a new, even-better model showing up previously unrecognised inadequacies; in others, changes may have been made to existing models, making them more (or less) suitable for birdwatching.

One trend to which we have drawn attention in past reports is the increasing tendency for spectacle-wearers to put binoculars up to their spectacles rather than wasting time (and losing the optical benefits) by lifting their spectacles first. In the current survey, 38.9% of owners wear spectacles for birdwatching. Of these, 29.2% lift them and 70.7% do not. The comparable figures three years ago were 37% and 63%; and eight years ago were 41% and 58%. Thus, there is evidence that the trend towards the sensible practice of keeping spectacles in place has continued. It is likely to accelerate, through the less-skilled and less-knowledgeable birdwatchers copying those who recognise the advantage. In consequence, binocular models with a large field of view are even more in demand for birdwatching nowadays than they were in the early 1980s, and this requirement will further increase in importance in the future.

In addition, over 95% of *British Birds* subscribers now own and use a telescope as well as binoculars (see page 274). In consequence, as noted in the previous paragraph, high magnification is now less important than it was even a decade ago. It is noticeable that more than half of the models rated as 'Excellent' have a magnification of 7×, 8× or 9×; this compares with the position in 1978, when 10×50 was the most popular combination, and 12× and 15× were still in regular use.

The most satisfactory binoculars

Perhaps one of the best accolades that can be given to a product by any purchaser is to say, after extended use, 'I'd buy the same again.' Table 4 shows the proportion of current owners who say that they would buy the same make and model next time if they needed to replace their current binoculars. Readers perusing table 4 should note that some of the sample sizes are very small.

All four owners of a *Leica* 8×42B would buy the same again, giving that model a table-topping 100% record. The second-placed *Bausch & Lomb Elite* 8×42B has almost as high a proportion of delighted owners. Of the popular models, *Zeiss West* 7×42 and *Zeiss West Dialyt* 10×40B both score highly. It is noticeable, however, that only eight models please more than

Table 4. The most satisfactory binoculars
 Proportion of current owners who would buy the same binoculars again
 (1987

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	No.	(%)
1st	—	LEICA 8×42	4/4	100.0
2nd	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	11/12	91.7
3rd	(1)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	61/73	83.6
4th	—	LEICA 10×42	9/11	81.8
5th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	11/14	78.6
6th	(2)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×30	2/3	66.7
7th	—	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	154/236	65.3
8th	(11)	NIKON 8×30	4/7	57.1
9th=	(17=)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10×40	10/20	50.0
9th=	—	OPTICRON Classic 10×42	3/6	50.0
11th	—	OPTOLYTH Alpin 12×50	2/5	40.0
12th=	—	ADLERBLICK 10×42	1/3	33.3
12th=	(9)	OPTOLYTH Touring 10×40	1/3	33.3
14th	(7)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	15/46	32.6
15th	(4)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	13/41	31.7
16th	(5)	LEITZ Trinovid 7×42	3/10	30.0
17th	(17=)	OPTICRON Elite 9×35	2/7	28.6
18th	(13)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	3/11	27.3
19th	(6)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	8/31	25.8
20th	(3)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	9/35	25.7
21st	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	12/50	24.0
22nd	—	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	5/23	21.7
23rd	—	OPTOLYTH 9×63	1/5	20.0
24th	(12)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	2/11	18.2
25th	(15)	ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	1/7	14.3
26th	—	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 8×30	1/9	11.1
27th	(16)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	1/16	6.3
		All others	15/136	11.0

half their owners sufficiently for them to be first choice in the event of replacement, and that six of those top eight are new entries since the last survey three years ago, all with relatively few current owners.

The manufacturers of five makes—*Leica*, *Bausch & Lomb*, *Zeiss West*, *Optolyth*, and *Nikon*—will be heartened by the prospects predicted by table 4; all other manufacturers have half or fewer of their purchasers happy enough to stay loyal.

The top binoculars for the future

Combining the numbers of birdwatchers who plan to buy the same model again next time (table 4) with those who plan to switch to that model, we can obtain a prediction of the proportions likely to buy each model. This will, of course, be modified by the advent of new models and by advertising, but table 5 does give a good indication of current intentions.

Top binocular for the future remains the *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10×40B. Storming into second place comes the *Zeiss West* 7×42, just as we predicted (*Brit. Birds* 81: 153). The 10×40B has actually dropped a few percentage points since 1987, but these have been more than taken up by the 7×42, so it seems that the trend in favour of a larger field of view, even at the expense of a lower magnification, is the major influence. Two new entries occupy third and fourth spots: the *Leica* 10×42 and the *Leica* 8×42.

The reliable *Swift* Audubon 8.5×44 maintains the high position, just below the leaders, which it has held for a number of years. Two more newcomers deserve mention: the *Bausch & Lomb* Elite 10×42B and 8×42B currently in joint seventh spot, which may underestimate their potential impact on the birdwatching scene.

Table 5. Top binoculars for the future

The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a pair of binoculars

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	36.8	28.5
2nd	(3)	ZEISS WEST 7×42	4.1	13.8
3rd	—	LEICA 10×42	—	8.8
4th	—	LEICA 8×42	—	4.2
5th=	(2)	LEITZ Trinovid 10×40B	11.4	2.8
5th=	(7)	SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	2.1	2.8
7th=	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	—	2.6
7th=	—	BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	—	2.6
9th	(5)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	3.2	2.3
10th	(10)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10×40	0.8	1.9
11th	(4)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	3.9	1.8
12th	—	LEICA 7×42	—	1.4
13th	(6)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	2.6	1.0
14th=	(8)	LEITZ Trinovid 8×40B	1.0	0.8
14th=	(18)	OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	0.2	0.8
16th	—	SWIFT Audubon 7×35	—	0.7
17th	—	NIKON 8×30	—	0.6
18th=	—	OPTOLYTH Touring 10×40	—	0.5
18th=	(9)	ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	0.9	0.5
18th=	(11)	ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	0.6	0.5
18th=	—	ZEISS WEST Dialyt 8×30	—	0.5
		Others or don't know		20.4

Top makes of binocular for the future

Zeiss West has strengthened its position as the birdwatchers' most-desired make. In second position, *Leitz/Leica* has also increased in this respect, and *Optolyth* remains third. Next is *Bausch & Lomb*, fourth with over 5% at its first appearance. The increase in the score for *Swarovski/Habicht*, from 0.9% to 2.4%, may also be significant.

By comparing the percentages of current owners of each make (table 2) with the percentages who want to own each make (table 6), the ownership of only three makes seems likely to increase in the next few years: *Zeiss West* (+5.4%), *Leitz/Leica* (+5.1%) and *Bausch & Lomb* (+1.7%). This same comparison looks like bad news for *Optolyth* (−6.8%), *Zeiss Jena* (−5.9%) and *Swift* (−3.2%).

In every survey since our first, it has been clear that predicted trends actually become exaggerated. Popularity breeds popularity. Sales, fuelled by advertising, bring a model into public awareness; then, provided that it is good, word-of-mouth recommendation swiftly leads to wide ownership, and it becomes fashionable to own the model currently regarded as the best available. Sales increase with this snowball effect; continuing that analogy, even large snowballs can melt away, as seems to be happening

with several good and well-known makes in the face of the present-day *Zeiss West-Leitz/Leica* domination. It is well to remember that, in the 1950s, the two most highly regarded names were *Ross* and *Barr & Stroud* . . .

Table 6. Top makes of binocular for the future

The makes which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a pair of binoculars

Position	(1987 position)	Make	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	ZEISS WEST	41.3	45.1
2nd	(2)	LEICA/LEITZ	12.8	17.9
3rd	(3)	OPTOLYTH	7.2	6.1
4th	—	BAUSCH & LOMB	—	5.4
5th	(5)	SWIFT	2.4	3.5
6th	(4)	ZEISS JENA	4.5	2.5
7th	(6)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.9	2.4
8th=	—	NIKON	—	1.0
8th=	(7)	OPTICRON	0.5	1.0
		Others or don't know		15.1

Telescopes

Back in 1978, less than two-thirds of *British Birds*-reading birdwatchers ever used a telescope as well as binoculars, and the proportion amongst less-knowledgeable birdwatchers would have been very much lower. The percentage has risen steadily: 64% in 1978, 81% in 1982, 86% in 1985, 91% in 1987 and, now, 95% in 1990. The proportion using a telescope 'Always' or 'Regularly' increased in an equally startling fashion (*Brit. Birds* 81: 154), but has apparently now reached a plateau at around 85%. Constant tripod use has increased similarly, rising from a mere 22% in 1978 to 50% in 1982, 55% in 1985, 70% in 1987 and 73% in 1990. Only 7% of telescope owners now do not also own and use a tripod.

Thus, from being a habit of only a few, elite, top birdwatchers, carrying a telescope-and-tripod combination has now become the norm amongst *British Birds*-reading birdwatchers. The practice will doubtless continue to spread 'downwards', so that increasing numbers of even the less-skilled and less-dedicated birdwatchers feel that a telescope is an essential part of their equipment.

The most popular telescopes

The meteoric rise in popularity of the *Kowa* TSN-1/TSN-2 has continued, and this telescope is now the most frequently owned model (table 7). It appeared on the scene for the first time in the 1987 survey, when it leapt into third place with 11%; ownership has now increased to over 16%. That 'old faithful' the *Bushnell* Spacemaster has been ousted from first place, but is still owned by almost one in every eight birders. Two new telescopes are vying for third place, each with over 7%: the *Kowa* TSN-3/TSN-4 and the *Optolyth* TBS/G80. The *Nikon* Fieldscope EDII is also a significant new arrival, in sixth place, but the *Optolyth* 30×75GA, the leader in 1985 and second in 1988, has now fallen to fifth place, at least two-thirds of its 1985 owners having now replaced it with a different telescope.

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BAUSCH & LOMB		Telescope Case 75mm	£15.95
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Swift Audubon 85 x 44	were £199	£169.90
Kowa 8 x 42 Roof Prism	were £250	£169.90
Pentax 7 x 20 Compact	were £79	£59.90
Pentax 9 x 20 Compact	were £89	£59.90
Opticron Piccolo Telescope inc. Zoom	was £152	£119.90

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Table 7. Most popular telescopes

The telescopes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1990
wce = with changeable eyepieces

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(3)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 ×77 wce	11.0	16.2
2nd	(1)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	14.9	12.2
3rd	—	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 ×77 wce	—	7.7
4th	—	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80 wce	—	7.5
5th	(2)	OPTOLYTH 30×75 GA	13.1	6.9
6th	—	NIKON Fieldscope EDII ×60 wce	—	5.8
7th	(4)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	6.9	4.7
8th	(9)	NIKON Fieldscope ED ×60 wce	3.0	4.5
9th	(13)	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	1.5	3.6
10th	(5=)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	5.7	3.2
11th	(5=)	OPTOLYTH 30×80 GA	5.7	2.1
12th=	—	KOWA TS-601/TS-602 ×60 wce	—	1.9
12th=	—	QUESTAR (mirrrolens) wce	—	1.9
14th	—	HERTEL & REUSS (all models)	—	1.8
15th	—	NICKEL Supra (all models)	—	1.2
16th	(8)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	3.3	1.0
17th=	—	MIRADOR Merlin ×75 wce	—	0.9
17th=	(11)	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	1.7	0.9
		All others		17.3

The most popular makes of telescope

With each make having different numbers of models, a fair assessment of popularity can be made by considering ownership only by make (table 8). *Kowa* leads, as it did in 1987, and, indeed, has strikingly increased its lead. *Optolyth* remains a very popular choice, as does *Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb*. Both, however, show evidence of small declines since 1987. The fastest

Table 8. Most popular makes of telescope

The makes most frequently owned by knowledgeable birdwatchers in 1990

Position	(1987 position)	Make	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA	24.0	35.1
2nd	(2)	OPTOLYTH	21.3	19.2
3rd	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	20.6	16.4
4th	(7)	NIKON	3.0	10.8
5th	(4)	OPTICRON	7.8	6.4
6th	(6)	MIRADOR	3.3	2.7
7th	(16)	QUESTAR	0.3	1.9
8th	(5)	HERTEL & REUSS	5.1	1.8
9th	(8)	NICKEL	2.8	1.2
10th	(10)	OPTIMA	1.4	0.9
11th=	(12)	CHARLES FRANK	1.0	0.6
11th=	(9)	SWIFT	1.6	0.6
13th=	—	ADLERSCOPE	—	0.4
13th=	(13)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.7	0.4
15th=	(11)	SCHMIDT & BENDER	1.3	0.3
15th=	(15)	TAMRON	0.4	0.3
15th=	—	ZEISS JENA	—	0.3
		Others		0.7

climber is *Nikon*, increasing its share more than three-fold in the past three years, and seemingly likely to rise even higher in the table. There is also a significant rise in *Questar* ownership: still a tiny percentage of birdwatchers, but five times as many in this survey as in the previous one.

The most highly rated telescopes

Questar is unquestionably the tops in quality, every one of its owners giving it the highest rating of 'Excellent'. It achieved this same unanimous accolade in the previous survey. Very close behind are the *Kowa* TSN-3/TSN-4 and the *Nikon* Fieldscope EDII and ED, followed by the *Nikon* Fieldscope and the *Optolyth* TBS/G80, all of which also achieved an average rating of 'Excellent' (table 9).

Table 9. Most highly rated telescopes

Performance of telescopes as rated by their owners

Performance: 6 = excellent, 5 = very good, 4 = good, 3 = satisfactory, 2 = poor, 1 = very poor

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	Performance rating					Average performance rating	
			6	5	4	3	2		1
1st	(1)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	15	.	.	.	.	Excellent	6.00
2nd	—	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 ×77 wce	55	4	.	.	.	Excellent	5.93
3rd	—	NIKON Fieldscope EDII	36	4	.	.	.	Excellent	5.90
4th	(2)	NIKON Fieldscope EDI	32	4	.	.	.	Excellent	5.89
5th	—	NIKON Fieldscope I & II	5	2	.	.	.	Excellent	5.71
6th	—	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80 wce	39	18	3	2	.	Excellent	5.56
7th	(4)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 ×77 wce	62	59	3	1	.	Very good	5.46
8th	(5)	OPTOLYTH 30×80 GA	7	8	1	.	.	Very good	5.38
9th=	—	ADLERSCOPE 25×80	1	2	.	.	.	Very good	5.33
9th=	(3)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30×75	1	2	.	.	.	Very good	5.33
11th	(6)	OPTOLYTH 30×75 GA	20	23	7	2	.	Very good	5.17
12th	—	KOWA TS-601/TS-602 ×60 wce	5	6	4	.	.	Very good	5.07
13th=	(9)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	8	20	8	.	.	Very good	5.00
13th=	(7=)	OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	1	2	1	.	.	Very good	5.00
15th	(10)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	14	57	19	4	.	Very good	4.86
16th	(18)	OPTIMA ×60 wce	1	3	2	.	.	Very good	4.83
17th	(12)	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	3	14	11	.	.	Very good	4.71
18th	(15)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	2	14	5	3	1	Very good	4.52
19th	(22)	HERTEL & REUSS ×60	1	4	6	2	.	Good	4.31
20th	—	OPTICRON Classic ×75 wce	.	3	.	2	.	Good	4.20
21st=	—	MIRADOR Merlin ×75 wce	.	2	4	1	.	Good	4.14
21st=	(20)	OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	.	1	6	.	.	Good	4.14
23rd	(16)	MIRADOR ×60 wce	.	1	6	1	.	Good	4.00
24th	(21)	CHARLES FRANK (all models)	.	1	2	2	.	Good	3.80
25th	—	OPTICRON Classic ×60 wce	.	.	2	2	.	Good	3.50
26th	(24)	NICKEL Supra ×60	.	2	1	5	1	Satisfactory	3.44
27th	(19)	SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	.	.	2	.	2	Satisfactory	3.00

The most satisfactory telescopes

Almost 80% of owners of a *Kowa* TSN-3/TSN-4 are so pleased with their telescope that they would buy the same again. Only two other telescopes beat the 50% barrier, with more owners planning to repeat than to replace. These other well-loved 'scopes are the *Nikon* Fieldscope (ED and EDII) and the *Questar* (table 10).

The top telescopes for the future

The telescope most desired by today's top birdwatchers is the *Kowa* TSN-3/TSN-4, which has completely ousted the *Optolyth* 30×80GA from first place (table 11). In second place lies the *Nikon* Fieldscope ED. Also moving up the table are the *Optolyth* TBS/G80 and the *Questar*; the latter,

Table 10. The most satisfactory telescopes
Proportion of current owners who would buy the same telescope again
(1987)

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	No.	(%)
1st	—	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 ×77 wce	47/59	79.7
2nd	(1)	NIKON Fieldscope EDI & II	58/76	76.3
3rd	(2)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	11/15	73.3
4th	—	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80 wce	31/62	50.0
5th	—	NIKON Fieldscope ×60 I & II	3/7	42.9
6th	(4)	OPTOLYTH 30×80 GA	6/16	37.5
7th	—	ADLERSCOPE 25×80	1/3	33.3
8th	(5)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 ×77 wce	37/125	29.6
9th	(12)	OPTOLYTH 30×75 GA	13/53	24.5
10th	(9)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	19/94	20.2
11th=	(18)	CHARLES FRANK (all models)	1/5	20.0
11th=	—	OPTICRON Classic ×75 wce	1/5	20.0
13th	—	KOWA TS-601/TS-602 ×60 wce	2/15	13.3
14th	(15)	KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	4/36	11.1
15th	—	HERTEL & REUSS ×60	1/14	7.1
16th	(13)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB Discoverer 15-60×60	1/25	4.0
17th	(6)	OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	1/28	3.6
		All others	14/140	10.0

Table 11. Top telescopes for the future

The make and model which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a telescope

Position	(1987 position)	Make & model	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	—	KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 ×77 wce	—	20.5
2nd	—	NIKON Fieldscope ED ×60 wce	6.9	19.3
3rd	—	OPTOLYTH TBS/G80 wce	—	9.2
4th	(2)	KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 ×77 wce	14.5	8.8
5th	(8)	QUESTAR (mirrorlens) wce	1.3	3.5
6th	(5)	BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	6.7	3.2
7th	—	KOWA TS-601/TS-602 ×60 wce	—	2.7
8th	(3)	OPTOLYTH 30×75 GA	9.1	2.3
9th	(1)	OPTOLYTH 30×80 GA	18.3	1.6
10th	—	NIKON Fieldscope	—	0.9
		Others or don't know		28.0

even though in the sights of only a small percentage of (presumably pretty rich) birdwatchers, has been becoming progressively a serious target: even 3.5% of birders is quite a lot of telescopes.

The top makes of telescope for the future

Kowa—still the make of telescope most wanted by experienced birdwatchers—has increased its lead at the top (table 12). Rising swiftly into second place is *Nikon*. On the other hand, *Optolyth* and *Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb* have both dropped to levels less than half of those enjoyed a mere three years ago. Birdwatchers' desires or whims are swiftly changed when a new and better (or perceived to be better) instrument enters the market: optical manufacturers dare not rest on their laurels.

A comparison of current ownership (table 8) with desired ownership (table 12) produces very good news for *Nikon* and *Questar*, with twice as many birdwatchers wanting to own one of their telescopes as actually do own one. There is not such good news, however, for *Bushnell/Bausch & Lomb*: their new binoculars are gaining many admirers, but at least three-quarters of their current telescope owners want to change to another make. *Optolyth* and *Opticron* also have little cause for celebration.

Table 12. Top makes of telescopes for the future

The make which experienced birdwatchers intend to purchase next time that they buy a telescope

Position	(1987 position)	Make	1987 (%)	Now (%)
1st	(1)	KOWA	34.9	38.4
2nd	(4)	NIKON	6.9	20.9
3rd	(2)	OPTOLYTH	28.6	14.2
4th	(6)	QUESTAR	1.3	4.0
5th	(3)	BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB	8.1	3.9
6th=	(5)	OPTICRON	2.3	0.4
6th=	(7=)	SWAROVSKI/HABICHT	0.3	0.4
8th=	—	ADLERSCOPE	—	0.1
8th=	—	CHARLES FRANK	—	0.1
8th=	(7=)	HERTEL & REUSS	0.3	0.1
8th=	(7=)	TAMRON	0.3	0.1
8th=	—	ZEISS JENA	—	0.1
		Others or don't know		17.3

Eyepieces

Some telescopes have a single eyepiece which is an integral part of the instrument. Many nowadays, however, have changeable eyepieces, so that it is possible to use one and carry a replacement, for use in different conditions. Some still need time-consuming screwing into place, but others have a bayonet fixture, so can be substituted very quickly.

Currently, most telescope-owners use just one eyepiece: 56.8% have one, 34.7% two, 7.8% three and 0.7% four. The proportion owning more than one is, in our view, likely to increase, as the advantages become widely recognised.

Most eyepieces are fixed focus, but 43% of telescope users own a variable (zoom) eyepiece, and, of them, 78% usually use their zoom eyepiece more than any other (some telescope-users will, of course, own *only* a zoom eyepiece). The current practice, therefore, is for two-thirds of birdwatchers to make most use of a fixed magnification eyepiece and one third generally to use a zoom. Of those owning at least one other eyepiece in addition to a zoom, however, 61% choose to use the zoom most often.

By far the commonest magnifications chosen for fixed magnification eyepieces are 20×(42%), 30× (29%), 22× (10%) and 25× (9%), with an extraordinary variety of other magnifications between 15× and 60× making up the remainder. Special wide-angle eyepieces are currently used by 31% of telescope owners, a figure that is likely to increase. The commonest eyepiece choices are currently 30× (25%), 20× (23%), 20×

WA (19%), 25× (8%), 22×WA (5%), 22× (5%), 30×WA (4%), 27×WA (3%) and 40× (2%).

The lower magnification of zoom eyepieces owned in the survey varies from 14× (in a 14×-45×) to 25× (in a 25×-60×), and the upper magnification varies from 30× (in a 15×-30×) to 62× (in a 28×-62×). Four ranges, however, make up over 86% of those owned. The commonest is 20×-60× (38%), followed by 20×-45× (18%), 15×-60× (18%) and 15×-45× (12%).

Those with more than one eyepiece may choose to have, say, one low-power wide-angle for normal use and one high-power (which inevitably has a smaller field of view) to bring into play when required; others will choose to take advantage of the versatility of a zoom for normal use and have a low-power wide-angle eyepiece to hand for substitution in closed habitats such as woodland. Of these alternatives, the latter is the more flexible. We predict increasing sales of zoom eyepieces, and of relatively low-power wide-angle eyepieces to augment them.

Angled or straight-through?

Most telescopes have eyepieces aligned horizontally with the objective lens. Some, however, are positioned at an angle of about 45°, which has many advantages (especially for viewing birds in flight or in treetops) and only a few disadvantages.

The owners of the *Kowa* TSN series can make the choice (TSN-1 and TSN-3 are angled, whereas TSN-2 and TSN-4 are straight-through), thereby giving us the opportunity to assess today's preference. With both pairs of models, the straight-through version has been chosen by 55% of purchasers. Considering that this is the 'traditional' form, and that choosing the angled-eyepiece version is, therefore, a bit of a gamble for birdwatchers not used to using one, the direction of this bias is not unexpected, but the percentage is surprisingly close to that of the more adventurous design. Assuming that both are still equally available, we hazard the guess that our next survey, in two or three years' time, will show a preference for the angled version.

Counting the cost

Given no financial constraints, most birdwatchers would choose to own *Zeiss West* Dialyt 10×40B binoculars, or perhaps a *Zeiss West* 7×42, a *Leica* 10×42 or 8×42, a *Bausch & Lomb* Elite 8×42B or an *Optolyth* 9×63 (tables 5 & 3); and a *Kowa* TSN-3/TSN-4 telescope, or a *Nikon* Fieldscope EDII (tables 11 & 9), with a couple of eyepieces, perhaps a 20×-60× zoom and a 20×WA. With a tripod, this combination would cost about £1,100-£1,400; if today's ultimate telescope, the *Questar*, was selected, then the cost would rise to over £2,500. Not everyone can afford such sums.

To facilitate the selection of 'Best Buys' at each price level, we have summarised the opinions gleaned in this survey and arranged the choices of binocular and telescope in order of price (table 13). By looking at the approximate price which you can afford, you can pick the instruments which have the lowest numbers (highest up the 'league tables') and which

are, therefore, those graded by *British Birds* subscribers as being the best for birdwatching purposes.

This, however, is the time to remind readers that *every* binocular and telescope named in this report is among the top two or three dozen available; none is less than satisfactory and most have been rated as excellent, very good or good by their users. Some makes or models that are not named may also be satisfactory (or better), but are not owned in sufficient numbers to feature in our survey; others, however, will be poor: a high price in a 'High Street store' is no guarantee of excellence.

Table 13. Prices of binoculars and telescopes and summary of league positions

Not all retailers stock every model, and prices vary from one to another; the prices of telescopes are particularly variable, and depend on whether the lens required is fixed magnification or variable (zoom); in general, the price quoted is the average of the choices available. Some of the models listed in earlier tables are now discontinued, so are not included here.

Make & model	Approx. retail price in January 1991 (incl. VAT)	Currently most popular (tables 1 & 7)	Most highly rated (tables 3 & 9)	The most satis- factory (tables 4 & 10)	Top models for the future (tables 5 & 11)
Binoculars					
BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 10×42B	£599	11	6	5	7=
BAUSCH & LOMB Elite 8×42B	£599	12	1=	2	7=
LEICA 7×42	£559	—	—	—	12
LEICA 8×42	£559	—	10	1	4
LEICA 10×42	£559	13=	1=	4	3
ZEISS WEST Dialyt 10×40B	£495	1	9	7	1
ZEISS WEST 7×42	£489	2	4	3	2
OPTOLYTH 9×63	£450	—	1=	23	—
ZEISS WEST Dialyt 8×30	£419	17	13	26	18=
OPTOLYTH Touring 10×40	£398	—	33	12=	18=
SWAROVSKI/HABICHT Diana 10×40	£349	9	14	9=	10
SWIFT Audubon 7×35	£329	—	—	—	16
OPTOLYTH Alpin 12×50	£247	—	12	11	—
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×50	£241	6	28	20	11
NIKON 8×30	£230	—	11	8	17
OPTOLYTH Alpin 10×40	£230	5	22	15	9
OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×40	£225	13=	23	24	14=
OPTOLYTH Alpin 8×30	£205	—	24=	6	—
SWIFT Audubon 8.5×44	£199	4	21	14	5=
ADLERBLICK MC 10×50	£189	—	16=	—	—
OPTICRON Elite 9×35	£186	—	15	17	—
ZEISS JENA Notarem 10×40B	£179	10	32	27	18=
SWIFT Osprey 7.5×42	£149	—	29=	—	—
OPTICRON 8×42	£145	—	24=	—	—
ADLERBLICK 10×42	£139	—	16=	12=	—
ADLERBLICK 8×42	£129	—	24=	—	—
BRESSER Linear 10×42	£124	—	35	—	—
PENTAX 8×40	£99	—	29=	—	—
ZEISS JENA Dekarem 10×50	£99	—	24=	25	—
OPTICRON Classic 10×42	£95	—	16=	9=	—
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 10×50	£80	7	31	19	13
ZEISS JENA Deltrintem 8×30	£65	—	16=	—	—
ZEISS JENA Jenoptem 8×30	£45	13=	34	18	18=

Potential purchasers will wish to peruse all the tables in this report carefully for themselves before buying binoculars or a telescope, but we can give some pointers, based on table 13.

Binoculars

At under £50, the best choice is the *Zeiss Jena Jenoptem 8×30*.

In the £50-£100 range, three models appear to be good value for money: *Zeiss Jena Deltrintem 8×30*, *Zeiss Jena Jenoptem 10×50* and *Opticron Classic 10×42*.

Just under £200, the *Opticron Elite 9×35* and the *Swift Audubon 8.5×44* are well regarded.

In the £200-£250 range, the *Nikon 8×30* looks like a very good buy, and two *Optolyth* models also stand out: the *8×30* and *8×40*.

A price jump of at least £200 is needed to improve on these ratings. The £450-£500 range includes the *Optolyth 9×63*, the *Zeiss West 7×42* and the *Zeiss West Dialyt 10×40B*.

Within the highest bracket, £500-£600, there is the *Leica 8×42*.

Table 13. (continued)

Make & model	Approx. retail price in January 1991 (incl. VAT)	Currently most popular (tables 1 & 7)	Most highly rated (tables 3 & 9)	The most satis- factory (tables 4 & 10)	Top models for the future (tables 5 & 11)
Telescopes					
QUESTAR (mirrorkens) wce	£1900	12=	1	3	5
KOWA TSN-3/TSN-4 ×77 wce	£614	3	2	1	1
NIKON Fieldscope EDII ×60	£475	6	3	2	2
SWAROVSKI/HABICHT 30×75	£469	—	9=	—	—
OPTOLYTH TBS/G80 wce	£450	4	6	4	3
OPTOLYTH 29×80GA	£380	11	8	6	9
KOWA TSN-1/TSN-2 ×77 wce	£354	1	7	8	4
OPTOLYTH 30×75GA	£340	5	11	9	8
ADLERSCOPE 25×80	£300	—	9=	7	—
NIKON Fieldscope II ×60	£285	—	5	5	10
SWIFT Telemaster 15-60×60	£270	—	27	—	—
BUSHNELL/BAUSCH & LOMB					
Discoverer 15-60×60	£270	10	18	16	—
KOWA TS-601/TS-602 ×60 wce	£235	12=	12	13	7
OPTOLYTH 22×60GA	£225	—	13=	—	—
KOWA TS-1/TS-2 ×60 wce	£200	7	13=	14	—
OPTIMA ×60 wce	£190	—	16	—	—
HERTEL & REUSS ×60	£180	14	19	15	—
OPTICRON High resolution ×60 wce	£180	9	17	17	—
BUSHNELL Spacemaster ×60 wce	£175	2	15	10	6
OPTICRON Classic ×75 wce	£160	—	20	11=	—
OPTICRON Piccolo ×60 wce	£160	17=	21=	—	—
OPTICRON Classic ×60 wce	£140	—	25	—	—
MIRADOR Merlin ×75 wce	£120	17=	21=	—	—
MIRADOR ×60 wce	£100	16	23	—	—

Telescopes

The two *Mirador* models, $\times 75$ and $\times 60$, are clearly good value at around £100.

In the £150-£200 range, purchasers should consider the *Opticron Classic* $\times 75$, but that 'old faithful' the *Bushnell Spacemaster* $\times 60$ stands out as exceptionally well regarded and good value for money.

At £200-£250, the *Kowa TS-1/TS-2* and *TS-601/TS-602* are good choices. The *Nikon Fieldscope II* $\times 60$ is the obvious buy in the £250-£300 range.

Within the £300-£400 range, the *Optolyth 30 \times 80 GA and the *Kowa TSN-1/TSN-2* $\times 77$ stand out.*

Over £100 more, the *Nikon Fieldscope EDII* $\times 60$ is the best buy in the £450-£500 range.

Top price among standard telescopes—but clearly worth it if you can afford it—is the *Kowa TSN-3/TSN-4*, at over £600. There is then a giant leap to the *Questar*, at over three times the price of its nearest rival.

Take your choice! But remember, selection of binoculars and telescope is very much a personal matter. What suits one person may not suit another. Try as many models as possible in the field before you make your final decision.

Acknowledgments

We thank the 832 *British Birds* subscribers who went to the trouble to fill in the questionnaires and to the expense of posting them to us. We are also most grateful to the optical retailing company *In Focus* (204 High Street, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 5SZ), which supplied to us and checked the prices shown in table 13.

Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Ms L. W. Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

Appendix

Reviews of the following models have appeared in our 'Product reports':

- Aico International* 8 \times 40 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 152-153)
- Bushnell Explorer* 10 \times 50 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 75: 574-575)
- Bushnell Explorer II* 8 \times 40 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 203-204)
- Bushnell Spacemaster II* 20-45 \times 60 prismatic telescope (*Brit. Birds* 75: 282-283)
- Greenkat 'Eyas'* 7 \times 40 ZCF binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 79: 396-397)
- Greenkat SGN-3* 60 mm Prismatic Spotting Scope (*Brit. Birds* 84: 72-73)
- Kowa TS-602* telescope (*Brit. Birds* 82: 70-71)
- Kowa TSN-3* (*Brit. Birds* 82: 256-258)
- Mirador* 7 \times 42 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 79: 428)
- Mirador SSF60* 25 \times 60 mm telescope (*Brit. Birds* 79: 496)
- Optolyth 30 \times 75 GA prismatic telescope (*Brit. Birds* 76: 134-135)*
- Swarovski/Habicht SL* 10 \times 40 (also SL 7 \times 42) binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 243-245)
- Swift Audubon HR* 8.5 \times 44BWCF binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 80: 53-54)
- Swift* 7 \times 35 HCF Audubon binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 83: 146)
- Swift Osprey* 7.5 \times 42 binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 77: 348)
- Swift Telemaster* 15-60 \times 60 Zoom Spotting Scope (*Brit. Birds* 75: 359-360)
- Zeiss West* 10 \times 40BGAT* binoculars (model 9901) (*Brit. Birds* 77: 465-467)
- Zeiss West* 7 \times 42BGAT* binoculars (*Brit. Birds* 79: 282)

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8 x 42 HR.....	£145
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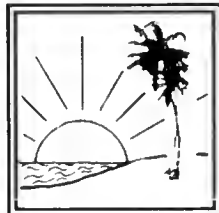
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The bird flying towards us (plate 110)—not a view we often get—was named as 32 different species:

Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	(32%)
Houbara Bustard <i>Chlamydotis undulata</i>	(10%)
Collared Pratincole <i>Glareola pratincola</i>	(8%)
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	(7%)
White-tailed Plover <i>Chettusia leucura</i>	(5%)
Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>	(4%)

with a few votes each for Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, Gannet *Sula bassana*, Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis*, Little Egret *E. garzetta*, Great White Egret *E. alba*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus*, Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*, Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum*, Black-winged Pratincole *G. nordmanni*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Roller *Coracias garrulus*, and Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*.

It does have to be admitted that a bird which can be named both as a Calandra Lark and as a Magnificent Frigatebird must have been difficult to identify. Despite Osprey being the most-named species, it wasn't even a raptor; despite Houbara Bustard being the second-commonest selection, it wasn't a bustard; nor, despite three pratincole species being named, was it even a wader. The entrants who opted for one of the nine species of heron listed above got the closest, but nobody identified the bird in plate 110 correctly. Indeed, good reasons can be given for the bird not being each one of the listed species. It was a Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, its black crown not visible, but its white forehead and dark lores both plain to see. This individual, which occurred on Coll, Strathclyde, in April-June 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 542), was photographed in May by Sue Anderson.

With the unexpected elimination of all competitors, this fifth 'Monthly marathon' recommenced with everyone back on the start-line and plate 117 as the new first hurdle. The third hurdle is provided by plate 157, below. The competition to win a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America is wide open again.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

157. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (twelfth stage: photograph number 61). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th August 1991



Notes



Bewick's Swan resembling Whooper Swan On 19th February 1989, J. A. McGeoch informed me of the presence of an interesting immature Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* near Wells, Somerset. On the following day, I obtained a photograph of the bird (plate 158). This shows the angular head and long bill typical of a Whooper Swan *C. cygnus*. Although not seen so well in the photograph, the bird also appeared to have a long neck and body, again resembling a Whooper Swan. The bill pattern, however, was definitely that of a Bewick's Swan. We decided that the bird in question was a Bewick's Swan, perhaps one of eastern origin (formerly separated as the race *jankowskii*) from its long bill, angular head and generally large appearance, more reminiscent of a Whooper Swan than the familiar round-headed, short-billed Bewick's Swan of western origin.

JAMES STEPHEN

27 New Street, Wells, Somerset BA5 2LE

The differences between western and eastern Bewick's Swans are now thought to be purely clinal, so the extremes are not separated as different races. Two similar large-billed Bewick's Swans (both adults) were recorded by the late Bernard King in Somerset in February 1956 (*Wildfowl Trust Annual Report for 1958-59*: 156-159). It should be noted, however, that a Bewick's × Whooper hybrid has been reported in Iceland (Dr M. A. Ogilvie *in litt.*). EDS

158. Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* with long bill, angular head and large neck and body recalling Whooper Swan *C. cygnus*, Somerset, February 1989 (*James Stephen*)



Blue-winged or Cinnamon Teal? Having seen many Blue-winged *Anas discors* and Cinnamon Teals *A. cyanoptera* in North America as well as 'wild' female Blue-winged Teals and captive examples of both species in Britain, I consider that the bird shown in colour in the November 1985 issue of *British Birds* (78: plate 274) seems to show characteristics closer to Cinnamon Teal than to Blue-winged Teal.

The bill has fairly distinct flanges overlapping on either side and, although difficult to judge from one photograph, the bill is very 'long' looking. The whole facial pattern is rather uniform, with an obscure, lightly streaked loreal spot, an indistinct eye-stripe, which is barely visible in front of the eye, and the broken eye-ring is mottled buff and unstriking. There is little contrast between the lower part of the foreneck and the upper breast, and the fringes of the flank and mantle feathers are perhaps marginally thinner than on most Blue-winged Teals and are a warm creamy-buff colour. The general plumage tone appears a warm buff-brown, with little contrast throughout, and most notably the head pattern is rather unstriking.

On a typical female/immature Blue-winged Teal, one would expect perhaps a slightly shorter, more-compact bill; a larger, bright white, unmarked loreal spot; bolder, unmarked white broken eye-rings; a distinctly marked, blackish eye-stripe, particularly through the lores, further highlighting the loreal spot; greater contrast between the lower foreneck and upper breast; a generally colder plumage tone, with a distinctly grey component, more contrasting throughout; and, particularly, a well-marked facial pattern.

Clearly, there is much overlap between the two species, and many authorities acknowledge that they can be notoriously difficult to separate in the field. Even allowing for possible colour distortion in the photograph, however, the bird seems to show characteristics which weigh far more heavily on the side of Cinnamon than Blue-winged Teal.

Cinnamon Teals are commonly kept in captivity and do escape infrequently. Perhaps this individual is a candidate for the first transatlantic vagrancy of Cinnamon Teal?

I may be completely wrong and the British Birds Rarities Committee may know of other information which assert this bird's identity, but I certainly feel that it is a long way from being a confirmed Blue-winged Teal, at least on the photographic evidence. MARTIN S. GARNER
Wilson Carile College of Evangelism, 27 Vanbrugh Park, Blackheath, London SE3 7AG

The bird in question was present at Wester Loch, Unst, Shetland, from 3rd to 23rd September 1983. The record, in the form of a full account and a detailed description (but without photographs), was submitted to the BBRC by the finder, P. J. Heath, as a Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*. It was accepted as such on first circulation of the Committee and published in the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1983' (*Brit. Birds* 77: 515).

A year later, a photograph of the bird was published in the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1984' (*Brit. Birds* 78: 567, plate 274). As a consequence, the identification was queried by several readers, including some members of the Rarities Committee, and this resulted in the

record's recirculation around the BBRC. This provoked a strong debate, a not unsympathetic reaction to the case for identification as Cinnamon Teal *A. cyanoptera*, and a general call for sight of the full range of transparencies. These were kindly provided by J. N. Dymond, a quick skin check of both species was carried out by a BBRC member at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring, and the record was given a third circulation of the Committee. The file gathered a most useful discussion, but no firm conclusion was reached, the consensus of opinion being that an appraisal of the record should be sought from the USA.

Detailed comments were forthcoming from a consultant in North America, though neither he nor a colleague was prepared to offer a firm identification. The fourth BBRC circulation contained a general plea for a detailed skin examination, and this was carried out by the Committee as a whole at its Identification Meeting at the British Museum (Natural History) in July 1989. This resulted in the confirmation of recent comments made within the file by Dave Britton and Steve Madge, and a fifth circulation of the BBRC enabled a unanimous decision to be reached to accept the record once more as Blue-winged Teal, though with a revision to the previously published age and sex of the bird (*Brit. Birds*: 83: 450).

The key characters in the ageing, sexing and identification of this individual are the generally buff coloration, especially that of the breast; the upperwing pattern, particularly the broad, white bar across the tips of

159. Adult male Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* in eclipse plumage, Shetland, September 1983
(J. N. Dymond)



the greater coverts; the bright metallic-green secondaries (the speculum); the mahogany-brown eyes; and the dull, pale yellowish legs.

Juvenile and first-winter Blue-winged and Cinnamon Teals both have dull, dark greenish secondaries and greyish legs. Palmer (1976), however, stated 'By sometime in fall, all soft-part colors approximate those of older age-classes at the same season', a view not upheld by Cramp & Simmons (1977) or by Madge & Burn (1988), both of whom gave the change in leg colour as coinciding with the attaining of first-summer plumage. Bearing in mind that it was a September sighting, the bird is thus an adult. Females of both species at all ages have only a narrow white bar across the tips of the greater coverts, so the bird in question is a male. A drake Cinnamon Teal in non-breeding (eclipse) plumage is noticeably quite rufous-brown, and is particularly chestnut on the breast. It also has orange to scarlet eyes (even a young Cinnamon Teal attains this eye colour within about eight weeks of hatching). The Unst bird is, therefore, an adult male Blue-winged Teal in non-breeding (eclipse) plumage.

The age and sex may explain what some readers considered to be a suspiciously long bill (Palmer, 1976, for males and females respectively, gave average bill lengths as 42.3 mm and 40.0 mm for Blue-winged Teal and 45.5 mm and 42.8 mm for Cinnamon Teal) and also the bird's rather buff plumage (Madge & Burn, 1988, stated that a drake in eclipse has 'general tone of plumage a warmer buff' than a female).

PETER LANSDOWN

197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

REFERENCES

- CRAMP, S., & SIMMONS, K. E. L. (eds.) 1977. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*. vol. 1. Oxford.
 MADGE, S. C., & BURN, H. 1988. *Wildfowl: an identification guide to the ducks, geese and swans of the world*. Bromley.
 PALMER, R. S. (ed.) 1976. *Handbook of North American Birds*. vol. 2. New Haven.

The time spent assessing this one record has been well worthwhile in determining the ageing, sexing and full identification criteria for the separation of the two species concerned. We are most grateful to those, including Martin Garner, whose critical questioning of the identification prompted the detailed BBRC investigations. EDS

Identification of juvenile Verreaux's Eagle In his solution to 'Mystery photograph 150' (*Brit. Birds* 83: 20-21, plate 7), Iain Robertson commented that '... there is only one species of *Aquila* eagle which is heavily streaked on the breast: an immature Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca*.' While this is certainly true for those species which have major parts of their breeding range in the Western Palearctic, it may be worth pointing out that caution is required to exclude juvenile or first-winter Verreaux's Eagle *A. verreauxii*, which in the Western Palearctic occurs (and occasionally breeds) only in Sinai, Saudi Arabia and exceptionally in Jordan (*Brit. Birds* 84: 5). As the accompanying photographs of a juvenile, taken in Nairobi National Park, Kenya, in August 1989, demonstrate (plates 160 & 161), this species has the entire throat and breast blackish brown with pale brown shaft streaks, giving the breast a streaked appearance. From a distance, it is difficult to decide whether this is pale streaking on a dark background or vice versa. Other characters, of course, make separation from young Imperial Eagles not too difficult: crown and nape are pale golden brown; belly and



160 & 161. Juvenile Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxi*, Kenya, August 1989 (A. J. Helbig)



'trousers' are white with some rufous feathers intermingled; and there is a lot of white on the lower back, rump and in the upperwing-coverts. In flight, the extensive pale bases to all primaries resemble those of the adult plumage and are very different from the narrow 'window' formed by the pale inner primaries of Imperial.

I have not seen any handbook or field-guide illustrations accurately portraying this juvenile plumage of Verreaux's Eagle. Apparently, the pale streaking on the dark breast is gradually lost during the course of the first winter, and the crown and nape become more rufous brown, thus resembling illustrations in Brown *et al.* (*The Birds of Africa*, vol. 1, plate 25), BWP (vol. 2, plate 25) and Maclean (1985, *Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa*, 5th edn, plate 13).

A. J. HELBIG
Zoologisches Institut, University of Frankfurt, Siesmayerstr. 70, D-6000 Frankfurt am
Main 11, Germany

Letters

The introduction of the Chukar We were very interested to read Major W. H. Payn's letter (*Brit. Birds* 84: 68). The Game Conservancy agrees with him that the release of Chukars *Alectoris chukar* on shoots in Britain is, in effect, swamping the Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* stock. We feel, however, that the situation is reversible, which is why we have, for many years, campaigned to rectify the situation. As a result, the practice of releasing Chukars and Chukar hybrids, licensed under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, is now being phased out. There will be no more licenses, and the current one expires at the end of 1992.

G. R. POTTS
Director Designate, The Game Conservancy, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 1EF

A flight characteristic of recently fledged Lapwings The white wing patch on recently fledged Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* is at the bases of the secondaries, not the primaries as Hector Galbraith and I stated in our note (*Brit. Birds* 84: 151-152).

ADAM WATSON
c/o Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Banchory, Kincardineshire AB31 4BY

Dr Watson has supplied a photograph of a fledgling Lapwing's wing showing this feature.
EDS.

Seventy-five years ago...

NEARLY every recent book on British birds mentions Wiltshire as one of the counties in which the Common Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) breeds, but I am of opinion that this is one of those errors which get copied from one work to another. I know no part of the county which is really suited to the requirements of the bird, and very much doubt if it ever breeds here, and I believe that all records are based on Stone-Curlews (*Burhinus oediacnemus*) which are fairly common.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 44-45, July 1916).



Rarities Committee news and announcements

P. G. Lansdown and the Rarities Committee

Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page. Following a postal vote by county and regional bird recorders and bird observatories, Dr Colin Bradshaw, Peter Clement and Pete Ellis started their terms of membership on 1st April 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 113). The first two were already serving on the Committee, in a co-opted capacity, and Pete Ellis replaced Keith Vinicombe, who retired as the longest-serving member after a nine-year term. Keith's identification expertise in all areas, and especially in the field of wildfowl, his frequently detailed, perceptive and instructive comments, and his humorous asides and general cheerfulness, which have been features of his work on the Committee will continue to benefit *British Birds*, as he has agreed to join the Identification Notes Panel.

The following points of interest arise mainly from the Committee's annual meeting at Blunham, Bedfordshire, on 6th April 1991.

Photographs and the assessment of records of rarities

The Committee has on several occasions sought to encourage the submission of photographs of rare birds in Britain so that they can be used during the Committee's deliberations (*Brit. Birds* 80: 489, 518; 81: 537; 82: 507; 83: 441). It has been decided that, commencing with the 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1990', each accepted record supported *during the assessment process* by one or more photographs will, when published, have added the term 'photographed'. The equivalent will apply for a written record supported by a video or by a tape recording. The photograph (or video or tape recording) does *not* have to be submitted by the finder or identifier of the bird; we hope that anyone with relevant material will send it to us for consideration at the same time as the written evidence.

Rarities Committee Newslines

Since March 1991, the Committee has had its own telephone information line on 0898-884522. Callers hear details of the latest accepted records of rare birds in Britain. Information permitting, the Rarities Committee Newslines is updated twice a week.

Election of new member

A vacancy will arise in the ranks of the Committee from 1st April 1992 as a result of the automatic retirement of the longest-serving member. The Committee is acutely aware that it lacks a voting member from southwest

England, and ideally would like the Cornwall-Hampshire-Gloucestershire triangle to produce its next new member. Though there are, inevitably, other areas of Britain without regional representation, none is so large and so rarity-productive. This year, we have taken the unusual step of not proposing a nominee; as is our normal practice, we invite nominations, which should be sent to me by 31st December 1991, and we particularly encourage the Southwest to respond. If more than one nomination is received, a postal election will take place, in which county and regional recorders and bird observatories will be invited to vote.

P. G. Lansdown, 197 Springwood, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, South Glamorgan CF2 6UG

Announcements

'BB' in Israel 1991 The special 'BB'-SUNBIRD trip during 11th-25th September 1991 (announced *Brit. Birds* 83: 246-247) is already well supported, but there are still a few places remaining. The trip's itinerary provides a unique opportunity to combine spectacular raptor-watching, searches for passerine migrants (almost anything is possible) and local specialities such as breeding Sooty Falcons *Falco concolor*, with a five-day pelagic trip on the Red Sea looking at seabirds. There will be a qualified instructor on board to give tuition to those wishing to snorkel or dive. The leaders will be Hadoram Shirihai and either David Fisher or Steve Rooke. For full details, ring SUNBIRD on Sandy (0767) 682969.

'BB' trip to Thailand Friendly, small-group trips to Thailand in January, February or March are arranged annually for *BB* subscribers, jointly with the bird-tour company SUNBIRD. *BB* subscribers automatically obtain a 10% discount on the usual price.

With West Palearctic rarities, such as Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* and Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, almost guaranteed (and Thailand's perfect birdwatching weather, superb food and friendly, helpful people as bonuses), it constantly surprises us that the groups on these trips remain small. That, however, is ideal for birding on the narrow jungle trails. We shall also visit the mountain ranges of the north, as well as coastal mudflats and mangroves.

Several *BB* subscribers have already returned in two or three consecutive years on these *BB* trips, with quotes such as 'The best birding holiday I've ever had.'

Our 1992 trip, led by Kamol Komolphalin and Phil Round, will be during 16th February to 10th March.

For full details, write or phone to David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas at Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

Princeton titles British BirdShop is pleased to announce that stocks of the following books are now always available, and can be purchased by *British Birds* subscribers at new low prices:

Beehler *et al.* *The Birds of New Guinea* £22.95

de Schauensee *A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela* Paperback £22.95, hardback £46.00

Flint *et al.* *A Field Guide to the Birds of the USSR* Paperback £16.50, hardback £45.30

Hilty & Brown *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia* Paperback £26.50, hardback £60.00

Ridgeley & Gwynne *A Guide to the Birds of Panama* £27.50

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xxi & xxii.

'Seabirds': SPECIAL OFFER The 1985 revised edition (identical to the 1989 revised edition) of the classic *Seabirds: an identification guide* by Peter Harrison is available exclusively to *British Birds* subscribers through British BirdShop at the price of £19.95 (see page xxi).

PREPUBLICATION OFFER

'The Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe'. By Per Alström & Peter Colston; illustrated by Ian Lewington. This new HarperCollins identification guide can be ordered by *British Birds* subscribers through British BirdShop at the prepublication price of £12.95 POST FREE. This offer, giving a saving of £2.00 on the usual price, will remain open only during July-September. Please use the British BirdShop form on page xxi.

Books in British BirdShop Please note this month's SPECIAL OFFERS (see page 291 and above). The following books have been added this month:

*Alström, Colston & Lewington *The Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe* SPECIAL PREPUBLICATION OFFER

*Brown & Amadon *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World* SPECIAL ONE-VOLUME EDITION

*Norman & Tucker *Where to Watch Birds in Devon and Cornwall* New, 2nd edition

*Perrins *The Hamlyn Photographic Guide to the Birds of the World*

*Roberts *Birds of Pakistan* vol. 1

*Saunders *Rare Birds of the British Isles*

Please order these recommended books by using the British BirdShop form on pages xxi & xxii.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Ecuador tragedy We were saddened to hear of the tragic death of John Mullins in a car accident in Ecuador in March. The vehicle concerned rolled some 200 m down a steep hillside: John was killed instantly. Of his three travelling companions, Rod McCann was worst hurt, with a spinal injury—not, we understand, causing paralysis; Jack Bailey broke a leg and his jaw, and Dave Clugston suffered a badly cut thigh (later sewn up with some glass left inside). Dave passed this news on to us—omitting to mention that, despite his injuries, he climbed out of the wreckage and walked several kilometres to find help. John Mullins was reckoned to be one of the foremost nest-finders in the UK, a man whose birding activities went up several gears with the start of each new breeding season. He did extensive fieldwork in his native Wirral for the first *Atlas* and was a regular contributor to the BTO Nest Records Scheme. He added Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* to the list of British

breeding birds in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135), during one of his regular trips to the Scottish Highlands. Our sincere sympathies go to his family.

Maltese farce The Maltese company 'Sphinx Tours' specialises in tours for hunters. Some of these have involved visits to Egypt, resulting in the killing of many protected species. Thanks to the actions of the International Council for Bird Preservation, the Malta Ornithological Society and the Ornithological Society for Egypt, the Egyptian authorities moved in, an Egyptian tour guide was jailed, 'catches' were confiscated, and Sphinx Tours (and Maltese hunter-tourists generally) were shown up for what they are. Now, in an amazing move, they are suing the MOS for loss of revenue. At the same time, a Maltese court has frozen the assets of the MOS. The ICBP is appealing for money to keep the MOS going meanwhile, and to pay its legal fees; the RSPB has already loaned £20,000. We await

developments—it does seem ridiculous that Maltese entrepreneurs should not only be able to export their barbarism and contempt for laws overseas, but also then take their critics to court . . .

Canford reprieve One of the best pieces of news we received in March was that Environment Minister Michael Heseltine had revoked permission to build 200 more houses on Canford Heath, a Dorset SSSI and a Special Protection Area under EC rules. This brings to a successful end the five-year campaign by conservationists to save the heath—and, perhaps, gives just a tiny glimmer of hope for other SSSIs threatened by development.

Calf Wardens Ruth Caine of the Manx Museum and National Trust has informed us that Norman McCanch took up his duties as new Warden at the Calf of Man Bird Observatory on 8th April 1990. His wife, Monica, is the new Assistant Warden. We wish them both well.

More Spanish nonsense David Simpson has written to tell us of the latest developments in the Madrid area, where the ban on birders has reached a new and even more ridiculous level. According to Carlos Martin of the Sociedad Española de Ornitología, 'protected species' can be watched only from a distance greater than 200 m. Special permission to watch birds can be obtained from the Agencia de Medio Ambiente, Calle Princesa no. 3, Madrid; perhaps the Agencia should be bombarded with letters telling them how stupid and counter-productive the new rules are . . .

'BB' trip to Colombia Well almost! All four members of the Colombia '91 Cambridge Rainforest Expedition, which will be spending ten or more weeks at La Plañada in southwestern Colombia during July-September 1991, are *British Birds* subscribers. The leader is Paul Salaman (who was senior Young Ornithologist of the Year in 1987, *Brit. Birds* 81: 138, 195, plate 104), and the other members are Jonathan Newman, Anthony Payne and Carl Downing. Fieldwork, which will be carried out in collaboration with three colleagues from the Colombian University of Valle, will include bird and mammal surveys and attempts to assess the attitudes to conservation of the local people and glean from them information on uses of forest products, especially plants. By

the time this appears in print, the team will be active in the field, but contributions towards the expedition's expenses will be very welcome; all contributors will receive a copy of the expedition report. Cheques payable to 'Colombia '91' should be sent to Jonathan Newman, Trinity Hall, Cambridge CB2 1TJ.

'Essex Birds' We have in the past praised this news-filled biannual magazine of the Essex Birdwatching Society. It is of interest not only to those resident in or visiting the county. For instance, it has included profiles of artists such as John Cox, George Brown and Gary Wright, 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'/'Richard Richardson Award' prize-winners all; and articles on birdwatching elsewhere in the Western Palearctic (not just Essex) are regular. It is a very professional-looking publication. Write for information to the EBS, 48 Woodway, Hutton, Brentwood, Essex CM13 2JR.

John Cox on view The work of Bird Illustrator of the Year winner in 1989, John Cox, will be exhibited at The Wildlife Art Gallery, 70-71 High Street, Lavenham, Suffolk, during 1st-16th July 1991.

New bird art competition Co-sponsored by the Wildlife Art Gallery at Lavenham, Suffolk, and *Bird Watching* magazine, the 'Young European Bird Artist Award' aims to promote the work of young artists. Paintings (in any medium), collages or original prints are eligible, and this competition is intended to complement rather than compete with our 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'Richard Richardson Award' competitions, which are for black-and-white illustrations suitable for publication.

The closing date for this year's entries (35-mm transparencies of up to three paintings) has now passed (it was 30th June), but the winning paintings will be displayed at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water, Leicestershire, during 30th August to 1st September. Details of the rules can be obtained from The Wildlife Art Gallery, 70-71 High Street, Lavenham, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 9PT; phone Lavenham (0787) 248562.

Polish owl stamps The Polish Post Office has just published a series of six stamps featuring portraits of owls (*Little Athene noctua*, Tawny *Strix aluco* brown phase and grey phase, Short-eared *Asio flammeus*, Long-eared *A. otus* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba*). A mint

set can be obtained for US\$5 from Z. Lewartowski, the Editor of 'For Bird Protection', Park Dyrekcyjny 4, 17-230 Białowieża, Poland, or by transferring this sum to Bank Account No. 1247783 in the name of Z. Lewartowski at the Bank Polska Kasa Opieki SA, Białystok, Poland.

SEBA 'Seawatching and Birding Alternatives' is what this new acronym stands for. It has just produced an intriguing booklet entitled *Seabirds of Biscay—90*, an account of the species seen during crossings between Plymouth and Santander, Spain, last year. Seagoing birders will find this a useful source of reference: it is available for £3.50, including postage (cheques payable to SEBA), from Ian McNamee, West Lodge, Puddington, South Wirral L64 5ST.

Is ringing/banding on the way out? A news release from AVID (UK) Ltd announces that 'chip implantation through a needle under the bird's skin causes no more pain than an ordinary vaccination. Once the microchip is in place, the bird will not even be aware of its existence. The system works efficiently for the duration of a bird's life and because the chip is passive it does not require batteries and cannot break down. Neither accident nor injury to the bird will prevent the reading of the identity tag.

'The tag is capable of 70 trillion unique identification code combinations and each tag is manufactured and programmed under computer control to ensure against duplication of codes. Once implanted, the number can never be altered.

'The chip is contained within a tiny bio-compatible glass capsule about the size of a grain of rice, and is programmed with a unique 10-digit identification code which can be identified by a hand-held tag reader. The tag reader combines portability and optimum performance in a lightweight functional design and is capable of more than 25,000 read operations on a single set of

batteries. It has manual, remote or computer controlled operational capability and is practical for use in both field and clinic environments.'

AVID (UK) Ltd suggests use for 'rare and tropical birds', so has clearly been aiming its marketing at the cage-bird trade.

But what about the marking of wild birds? This method might be especially useful for long-lived species which tend to lose their rings, or marine species on which ring numbers may become illegible through contact with seawater. Together with a long-lasting marker (e.g. non-corroding colour ring), microchip tagging could even replace the traditional numbered ring/band altogether. What, we wonder, does Chris Mead think?

The address of AVID (UK) Ltd is 89a Church Road, Hove, East Sussex BN3 2GH.

OBC award The Oriental Bird Club and Leica UK have announced the third Forktail/Leica Award, which will be given to the best project in one of the following categories: a habitat survey useful to bird conservation; a survey or study of a globally threatened bird species; a study of a little-known protected area; or conservation education with an emphasis on birds. The award has been raised to £1,000. The closing date for applications is 1st October 1991. More information from Carol Inskipp, Conservation Officer, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Money for Thailand During March, ICBP was pleased to announce that Swarovski UK had helped to raise £4,500 to build a Conservation Information Centre at Khao Noi Chuchi in southern Thailand. They have also provided binoculars at the site. The Khao Noi Chuchi rainforest holds 25 pairs of Gurney's *Pitta pitta gurneyi*—its only known site—and the new Centre (completed in January) is the centrepiece of a three-year rainforest-protection project run by the ICBP and the Royal Thai Forestry Department.

162. The 'BB'-SUNBIRD group in Thailand 1991, relaxing at Khao Noi Chuchi: back, left to right, Tharnatep Pintusan (Educational Travel Center), Phil Round (leader), Sonapa Wongrattana and Uthai Treesucon; front, left to right, Alan Ball and Stephen Rumsey (J. T. R. Sharrock)

163. Kamol Komolphalin (leader), 'BB'-SUNBIRD trip to Thailand, February 1991 (J. T. R. Sharrock)

164. Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata*, Krabi, Thailand, March 1991 (Alan Ball). Note wings distinctively folded loosely over back



'BB' in Thailand 1991 The small group visiting Thailand during 18th February to 10th March (plates 162 & 163) had a very successful time. Highlights among the total of 401 species recorded included stunning, prolonged views of Masked Finfoot *Heliopais personata* (plate 164) and Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi*; close encounters with flocks of Great Knots *Calidris tenuirostris* and Nordmann's Greenshanks *Tringa guttifer* (feeding with Greenshanks *T. nebularia* for useful comparisons); unusually frequent observations of White's Thrushes *Zoothera dauma* and Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus*; and a scattering of rarities such as Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*, White-throated Rock Thrush *Monticola gularis* and Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis*.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 10th May to 13th June 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 10th-12th June; Corballis (Co. Dublin), 11th June.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* St Margaret's Bay (Kent), 23rd May.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Elmley RSPB Reserve (Kent), 12th May; Skomer (Dyfed), 24th May; Dungeness (Kent), 1st June.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* Orkney, 27th May.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco tinnunculus* Two females, Connemara (Co. Galway), 23rd May; Titchwell RSPB Reserve (Norfolk), 26th May; Scilly, 31st May; Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 31st May; Rainham Marsh (Kent), 8th-13th June.

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* South Uist (Western Isles), 9th June.

Corncrake *Crex crex* All-Ireland census of breeding birds in 1991 reveals continuing decline, except in Shannon Valley.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Isle of Sheppey (Kent), 18th-20th May; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 21st-23rd May; Frampton (Gloucestershire), 8th-10th June.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Frodsham (Cheshire), 22nd May.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* Yell (Shetland), 25th May; Downham Market (Norfolk), 4th June.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Massive passage: over 1,400 during 12th-31st May, including 1,300 past North Uist (Western Isles).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* Stennes (Orkney), 16th-18th May.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* South Nesting (Shetland), 27th May.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Titchwell, 27th May; Landguard Point (Suffolk), 28th May; Reclamation Pond, Teesmouth (Cleveland), 5th June.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* West Thur-

rock (Essex) and Hanningfield Reservoir (Essex), 2nd June.

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* First report: Norfolk, 3rd May.

Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus* Wierton Hill Reservoir, Maidstone (Kent), 26th May; Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire), 1st June; near Lerwick (Shetland), 11th June.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* Swindon (Wiltshire) 14th May; Southwold (Suffolk), 16th May; Ilford (Greater London), 30th May.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Five, Beachy Head (East Sussex), 22nd May; five, Dungeness, 31st May; four, Portland Bill (Dorset), 3rd June.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* Male black-headed Yellow Wagtail (*M. f. feldegg*) Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 31st May (first Irish record of this race); two ashy-headed Yellow Wagtails (*M. f. cinereocapillus*), Inistrahull (Co. Donegal), 2nd June.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Eyebrook Reservoir (Leicestershire), 18th May; Hauxley (Northumberland), 15th-16th May.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 22nd May.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 8th June.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* First report: Bedfordshire, 28th April; generally scarce.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Fetlar (Shetland), 10th June.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscipapa striata* Very few reports.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Marsh Benham (Berkshire), 19th May.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Two, Cape Clear Island, 31st May.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus* Waxham (Norfolk), 15th-17th May.

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We are grateful to National Bird News for supplying information for this news feature. 'Flightline' (RSPB) supplied data on common migrants. For copies of 'Flightline' report for 1991, send 1st-class stamp to Joan Childs, YOC Project Manager, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

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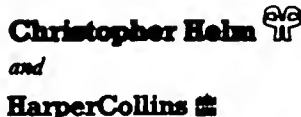
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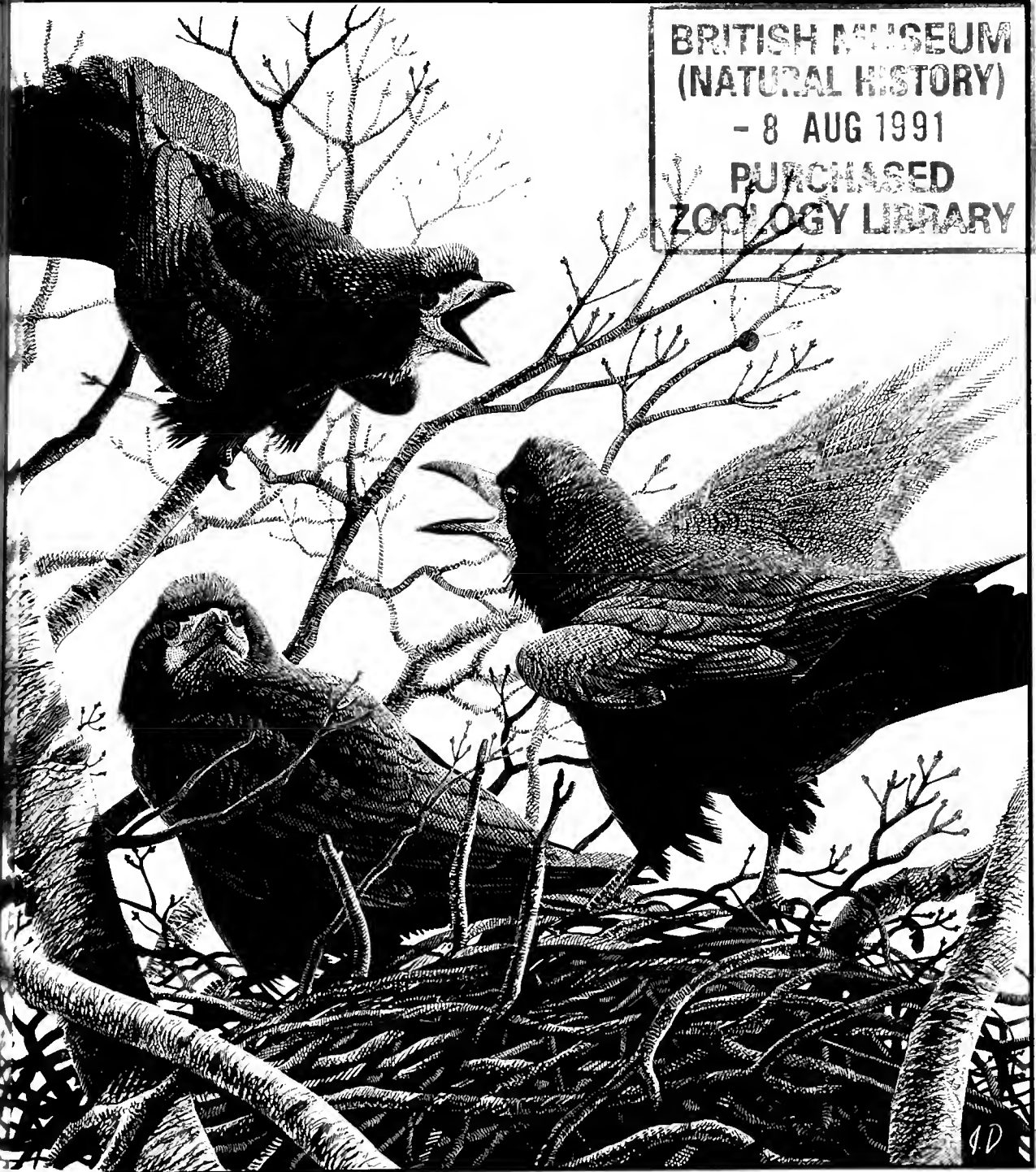
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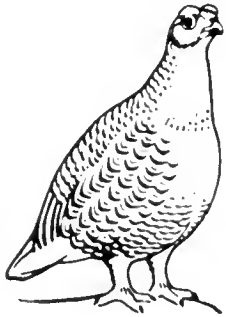
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				HR GA, 20-60x & Case	214.95	15x-45x Zoom	49.00
				HR 45, 20-60x & Case	234.95	22xWA	32.00
				25x or 40x	31.00	Case	15.00
				Classic IF60	110.00	Photo kit	30.00
				18xWA	24.00		
				25x	24.00	VELBON	£
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				18x-40x Zoom	61.00	D500	59.95
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				30x	27.00		
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				Piccolo	128.00	Hide Clamp	49.95
				Eye Pieces from	29.00	Shoulder Pod	24.95
				Piccolo ED 20x60	355.00	Q/R System	9.95
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				Cases for Scopes	15.00	SLIK	£
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				MIRADOR	£	MANFROTTO	£
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				7x42	112.00	190B Base	45.00
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				Case for Merlin	15.00	ACCESSORIES	£
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with the **W & WT SLIMBRIDGE** Gloucestershire (M5, Jct 13)
Sunday 6th October

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10 x 42 Dioptron£117
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8 x 32 HR£139
7 x 42 HR£143
8 x 42 HR£145
10 x 42 HR£150
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8 x 40 Minerva£170
9 x 35 Minerva£165
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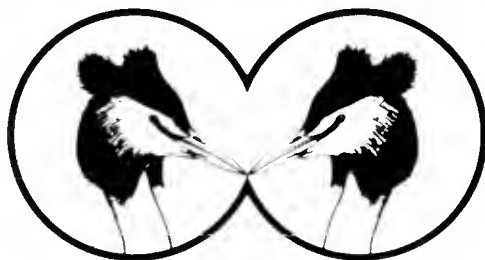
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		Quality filter	13	8 x 42 Diopttron	110	Padded nylon case	15
		Rubber hood	8	10 x 42 Diopttron	115		
		Stay-on-case	45	10 x 50 Diopttron	127	OBSERVATION	
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3 x 42 BA Elite	629	Spotting scope 20-45x GA	271	9 x 35 Elite	186	Vixen 30 x 80	375
10 x 42 BA Elite	629			7 x 40 Minerva	168	Greenkat 20 x 60	150
Custom 8 x 36 B	229	KOWA *		8 x 40 Minerva	169	Greenkat 20 x 80	215
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22 x 60 BGA Elite	309	TSN-3 body	555	HR 80mm scope body	249	8 x 30 GA RP	80
15-45x BGA Elite	349	TSN-4 body	555	30x (WA) eyepiece	32	10 x 30 GA RP	81
		25x or 40x eyepiece	63	27-80x zoom eyepiece	76	NIGHT VISION	
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LEICA		Spare OG cover	5	Piccolo Mk II ED, with case:		10 x 42 ZWCF Kensington	184
8 x 20 BC Trinovid	199	27x (WA) eyepiece (Screw fit)	59	20 x 60	355		
8 x 20 BCA Trinovid	226	Eyepiece dust dome	15	20-60x 60	399	QUESTAR	
10 x 25 BC Trinovid	226	VIEWMASTER				Phone for quotation.	
10 x 25 BCA Trinovid	239	45° scope with zoom EP	199			Used scopes may be available.	
7 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	OPTOLYTH *					
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10 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	8 x 40 Alpin	225	Spacemaster body	148	Slik D2	75
		10 x 40 Alpin	230	15-45x zoom EP	72	Slik SL67	107
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8 1/2 x 44 HR5 Audubon	205	9 x 63 BGA Royal	450	Photokit	62	Manfrotto 190/200	93
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8 x 40 BFL	179	TBG/TBS 80 Fluorite	549	7 x 30 RA roof prism	290	Hide clamp II	38
		30x (WW) new eyepiece	119	10 x 50 RA roof prism	310	Car window mount	22
NIKON *		40x (WA) new eyepiece	65	15-45 x 60 RA scope	299	Shoulder pod	30
8 x 23 waterproof	157	30x, 40x eyepieces	64			Cullmann hide clamp	50
10 x 25 waterproof	157	20x (WA) eyepiece	100	FALCON		T-mounts, from	8
8 x 20 F roof prism	143	22-60x zoom eyepiece	150	8 x 42 RA roof prism	110		
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***WARNHAM NATURE RESERVE** just off the A24 (northern roundabout for HORSHAM) on the B2237, on **SUNDAYS 11th August and 22nd September** (10.30am to 5.00pm)

***SEVENOAKS WILDFOWL RESERVE**, on the A25 between Riverhead and Sevenoaks Bat and Ball Station, on **SUNDAYS 18th August, 15th September and 20th October** (10.00am to 4.00pm)

***SUSSEX WILDLIFE TRUST at WOODS MILL**, Henfield, W. Sussex (A2037) on **SUNDAY 8th September** (10.30am to 4.00pm)

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(D881)

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10x42 8CA	226.00
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10x42 8	320.00
10x42 8	365.00
10x42 8	395.00
10x42 8	440.00
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T8S 80 body	350.00
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25x40x	63.00
20x 60x zoom	139.00
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Skue case for TSN	39.00
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Eyepiece dome for TSN	14.95
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Dioptrom 10x42	115.00
Dioptrom 10x50	127.00
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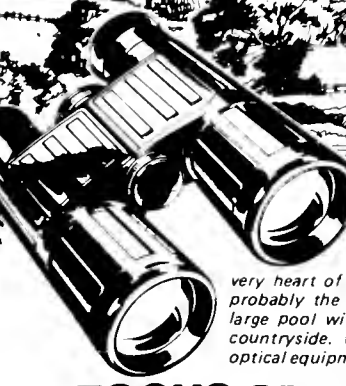
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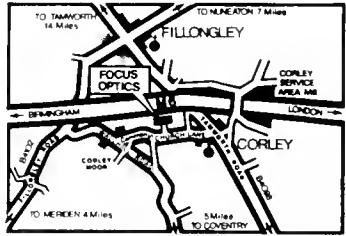


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Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, sponsored by Kowa Telescopes



Red-breasted Mergansers displaying.

Nik Borrow's award winning 1990 BIY Competition entry

Attracting entries from the very best British artists, the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, sponsored by Kowa Telescopes, provides both an opportunity to display their undoubted talent and, for some, an introduction to a new and satisfying career in the world of illustrating the vast number of ornithological books published today.

Kowa are delighted to sponsor, for the fourth successive year, this most prestigious competition and to congratulate John Davis of Hunstanton near Chichester, the winner of the 1991 competition.

Visitors to Birdfair '91 at Rutland Water from 29th to 31st August 1991, who purchase a Kowa telescope, will each receive a copy of the Kowa 1992 BIY calendar as a continuing reminder of the excellent standard of entries in the BIY competition.

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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 8 AUGUST 1991

The 'British Birds' Award for The Best Annual Bird Report



Entries are invited for this new annual award, open to all clubs and societies in Britain and Ireland which publish an annual bird report.

The aim of the award is to provide public acknowledgment of the high quality of publications which may generally be seen only locally, and to encourage and promote high standards in all regional bird reports.

The five judges—who will comprise three members of *British Birds*' Editorial Board, one Photographic Consultant and one Art Consultant—will be looking at scientific accuracy and usefulness, comprehensive treatment of common as well as rare species, layout and design, printing quality, usefulness of illustrative material, originality, and general quality of the report in both content and production. Account will be taken of the size of the club or society, and a lavish report published by a large, rich club will not necessarily win at the expense of a lean but high-quality report produced by a smaller club.

We hope that every local bird club and society in Britain and Ireland will submit a copy of their annual report for consideration by the judges.

The senior editor of the winning report will receive an inscribed book of his choice as a permanent personal memento of the award, and the club or society publishing the winning report will be authorised to use the logo of the Award on their reports and in their advertising and promotion.

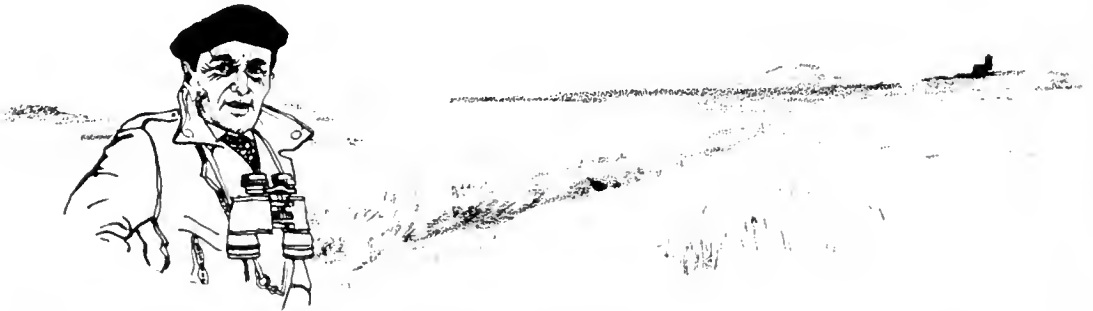
Entries, which need consist only of a copy of the club or society's 1990 report and a covering note stating the number of members, should be submitted at once if available (the closing date for entries is 15th December 1991) to Bird Report Award, British Birds, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award'

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The day of judging the 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition is one to which we all look forward with anticipation, and once again we were not disappointed. This is the fourth year of sponsorship of the competition by *Kowa* telescopes, and we are grateful to them for their financial assistance and for providing the splendid prizes. The winners were as follows:

BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR, 1991

1st **John Davis (Chichester, West Sussex)**

2nd Andrew Hutchinson (Guisborough, Cleveland)

3rd Andrew Shaw (Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire)

THE RICHARD RICHARDSON AWARD

1st= **Andrew Birch (Southampton, Hampshire)**

1st= **Peter Leonard (Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey)**

RUNNERS-UP Keith Andrews (Kinlochbervie, Sutherland) and John Wright (Nether Hall, Leicester)

With 67 artists taking part, we were back to the high totals of 1988 and 1989, with 268 drawings to consider. After long discussions, we finally whittled the numbers down to a short list of ten, which included, in addition to those listed above, Nik Borrow, Dan Powell and Gordon Trunkfield.

John Davis, the eventual winner, had been placed third in 1986 and 1988, and both Andrew Hutchinson and Andrew Shaw have submitted work of quality in the past without having got into the lists of winners before.

At ten, the number of entrants for the Richard Richardson Award for artists under the age of 21 was two down on last year, but the general standard was encouragingly high. So much so, indeed, that we could not separate Andrew Birch and Peter Leonard, and decided to make them joint winners. Andrew had previously won this award, at his first attempt, in 1987. The two runners-up, Keith Andrews and John Wright, were also runners-up last year.

David Cook's imaginative creation of an award in memory of his wife Pauline, the PJC Award, gives the judges an opportunity to find a drawing of individual merit and to draw attention to the work of artists not necessarily among the prize-winners. We considered six. Peter Leonard's drawing of Goosander *Mergus merganser* reflected on the water has all but the darkest tones removed, to create the effect of birds seen on a still, misty morning. One of the two Coots *Fulica atra* in Michael Webb's fine cover design (to be seen on a future issue) did not work as well as the other, and Anthony Smith's almost Vorticist drawing of a Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* split the judges as to its merits as a design for *British Birds*. We also

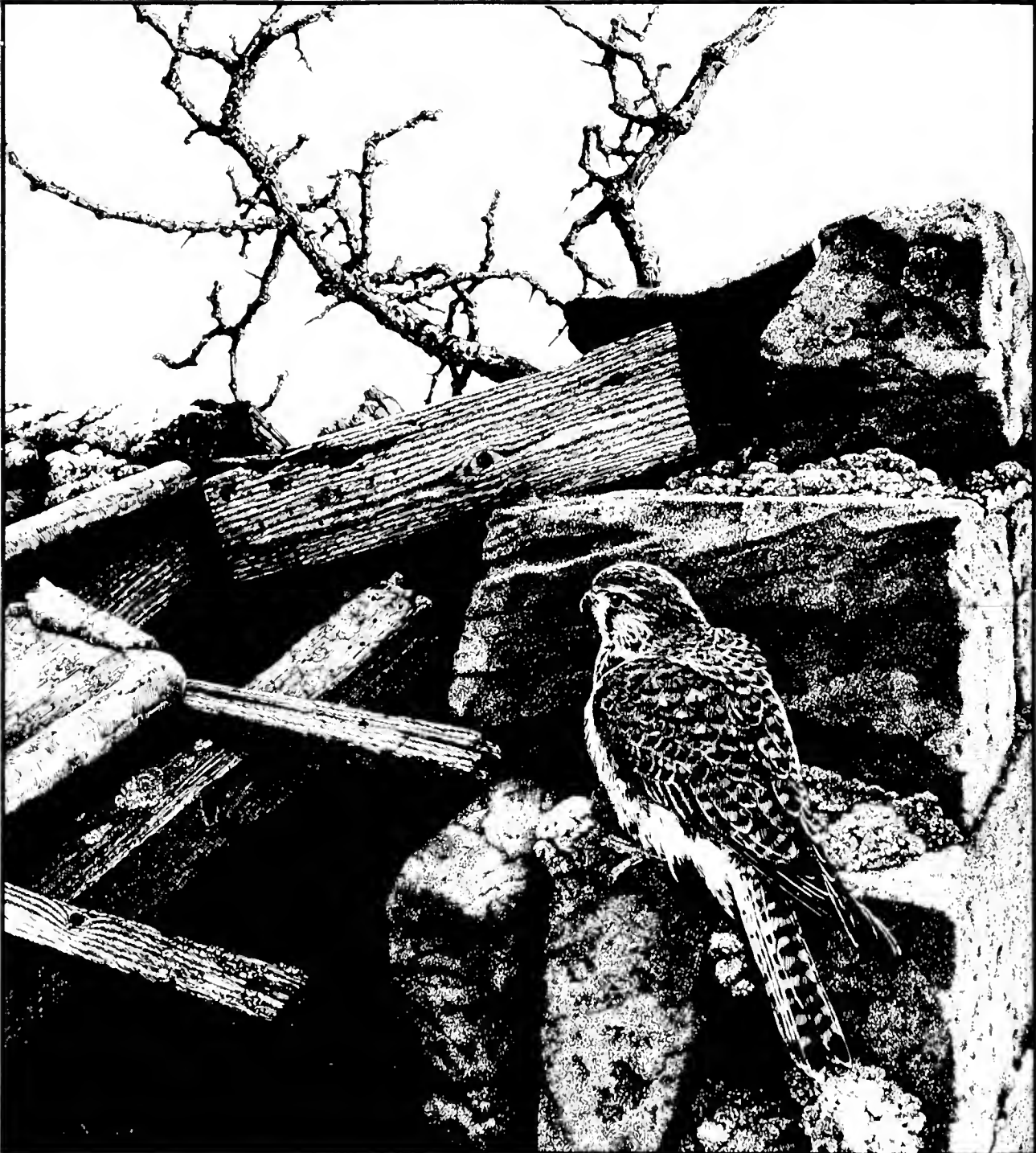
Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* in winter (John Davis)



considered Andrew Stevenson's Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* and Gary Wright's Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (both to be used in the next twelve months), but it was Dafila Scott's unpretentious but beautifully drawn and composed group of Coots that appealed to us all and wins this prize.

For the first time, the main competition winner had submitted four drawings of the same species. Had John Davis's fine quartet of Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* not been so rich in diversity, this approach may well have worked against him in the eyes of the judges. He had, however, chosen four quite different aspects of Rook life, each drawing full of careful

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Poplar Park Farm, Guisborough, January 1991 (Andrew Hutchinson)





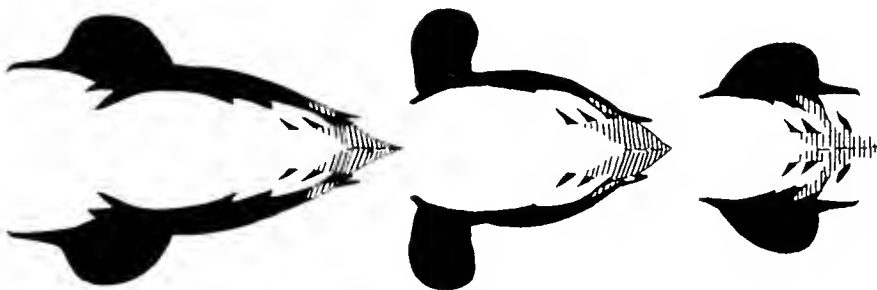
Andrew Shaw

Female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* and young at nest (*Andrew Shaw*)



White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Eilat (*Andrew Birch*)

Dawn Goosanders *Mergus merganser*, Queen Mary Reservoir (*Peter M. Leonard*)





Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (Andrew Shaw)

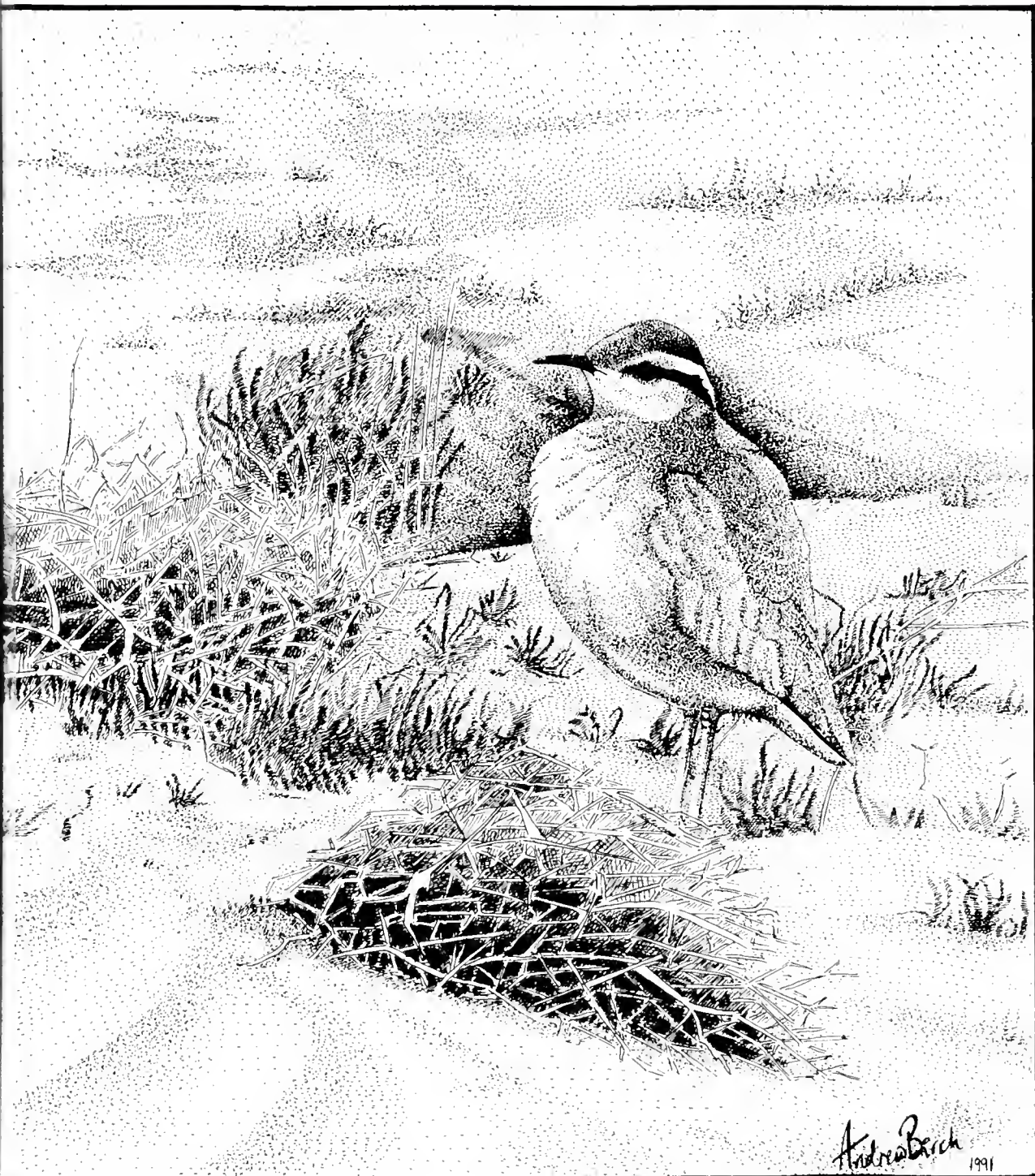
Limed Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*
(Peter M. Leonard)



Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, Garten, Scotland,
1990 (*Andrew Hutchinson*)



Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*
(*Andrew Birch*)



Andrew Birch
1991

observation and done in his splendid scraperboard technique, rich in tone and texture. Clearly, he has been studying this species, and his enthusiasm and interest shone through. We were unanimous in selecting his as the winning set.

Andrew Hutchinson also has superb control of his medium, producing immaculate black-and-white drawings. We particularly noted his duck Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, sitting tight on her eggs and almost buried in



Young Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, early May
(John Davis)



Quail *Coturnix coturnix* on migration
(Andrew Birch)



Roosting Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* (Peter M. Leonard)

Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* bathing in farm pond (John Davis)



the surrounding vegetation. Andrew Shaw has a fine mastery of pen and ink, but his work is not so rich in tone as that of the others. For instance, we felt that his nestling Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* might be rather too grey in general tone for a strong cover, but considered his Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* at the nest to be a particularly successful drawing.

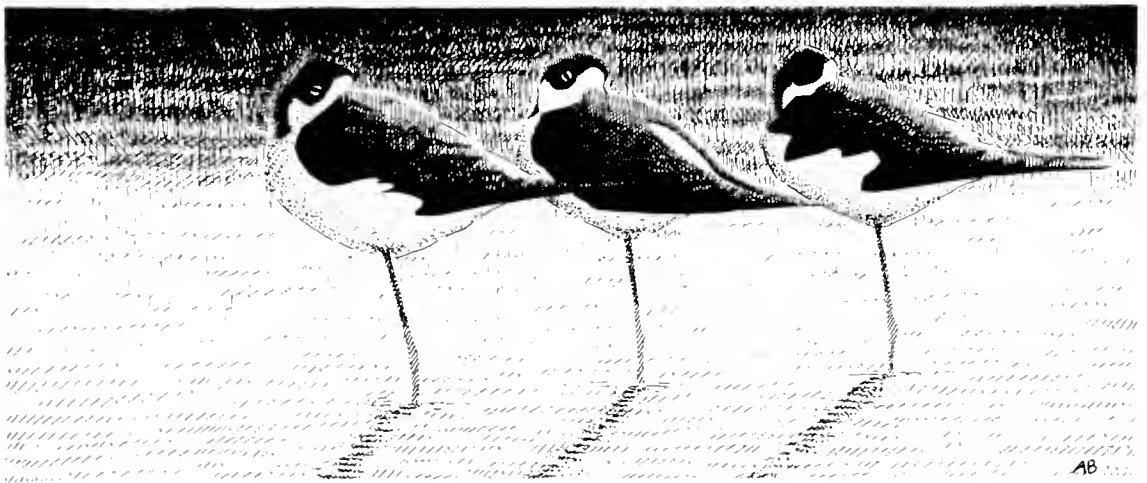
Each of the BIY winners, and eight others, will provide forthcoming cover designs from their entries, and many other drawings will appear



Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* on nest at Kinlochbervie (Keith Andrews)

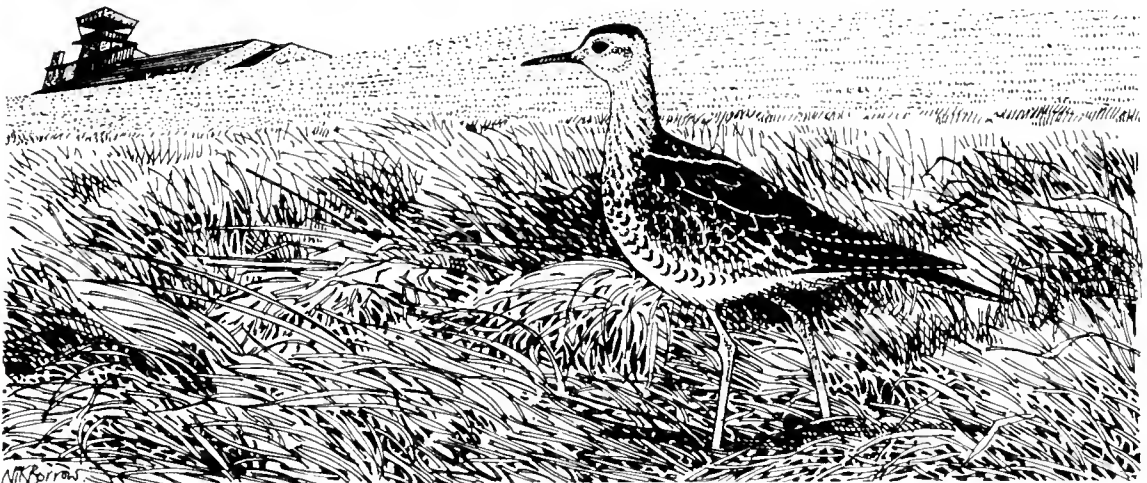


Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, Queen Mary Gravel-pits (Peter M. Leonard)



Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* (Andrew Birch)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, St Mary's Airfield, Isles of Scilly, October 1990 (Nik Borrow)



Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (distraction display), Salthouse, Norfolk, May 1990 (John Wright)



within the magazine in coming months. Nearly one-third of the 268 drawings, by 55 of the artists, have been selected for display throughout the 28th Annual Exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the Mall Galleries from 2nd to 11th August 1991.

Apart from passerines (77), the most popular subjects this year were birds of prey and owls (34), followed by seabirds (33), displacing waders (31), which had been the top group in the previous two years. They were followed by wildfowl (30). Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* appeared in eight drawings, more than any other single species.

Unfortunately a few drawings were not drawn strictly to the specified sizes and were automatically disqualified. A few drawings, done in ballpoint pen, or with shading which would not be reproduced adequately in line, were also unsuitable.

There were many excellent drawings which gave us pleasure, such as the flock of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* dropping into a marsh, drawn by Tim Manolis of Sacramento, USA. Gerald Driessens of Belgium sent an immensely detailed, richly tonal drawing of a Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* among reed stems, and Richard Allen had made a particularly attractive drawing of an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* brooding its chicks in a rainstorm. Richard Jarvis sent an excellent batch of small birds, while Richard Fowling made good use of black-and-white in his somewhat stylised and decorative drawings. Richard Thewlis's small drawings, particularly one of a Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, were also tonally satisfying and made attractive use of surrounding vegetation. Mike

THE PJC AWARD WINNER: Coots *Fulica atra* at Welney during the cold spell, February 1991 (Dafila Scott)



Pollard's drawing of Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis* was another we lingered over, and Ernie Leahy's admirable Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* was a small masterpiece. As usual, we much enjoyed John Hollyer's drawings. Many more artists and drawings could be mentioned. Do go to the Mall Galleries during 2nd-11th August 1991 to see not only the best in black-and-white bird-illustration, but also a remarkable array of wildlife art in all media. ROBERT GILLMOR, ALAN HARRIS, KEITH SHACKLETON
and J. T. R. SHARROCK

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

Tripod Tamer strap

This simple, black, webbed strap is well designed for birdwatchers' requirements when carrying a tripod. The two ends can be fitted by a loop to anywhere on the tripod. The length is easily adjustable to any position between taut and as long as anyone is likely to require, enabling the tripod to be carried in a wide variety of positions, according to personal whim. A quick-release locking catch enables any entanglement or twisting acquired during use to be eliminated quickly. In short, this is an ideal addition to the scope-and-tripod carriers' equipment. The price (£8.50) is comparable to that of other straps, such as those designed for cameras. The colour is appropriately dark, though the manufacturer may like to consider producing a khaki version for those who prefer this traditional camouflage colour. KAMOL KOMOLPHALIN

[If any reader would like further details of this product, please send a SAE to Sandra Barnes, BB Advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.]

Seventy-five years ago...

'ON July 6th, 1916, at the University of St. Andrews, Mr W. Eagle Clarke received the honorary degree of LL.D. We congratulate Mr Eagle Clarke on this well-earned reward for his many years of valuable scientific work, especially in connexion with the migration of birds, which he has studied continuously since 1884.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 72, August 1916).

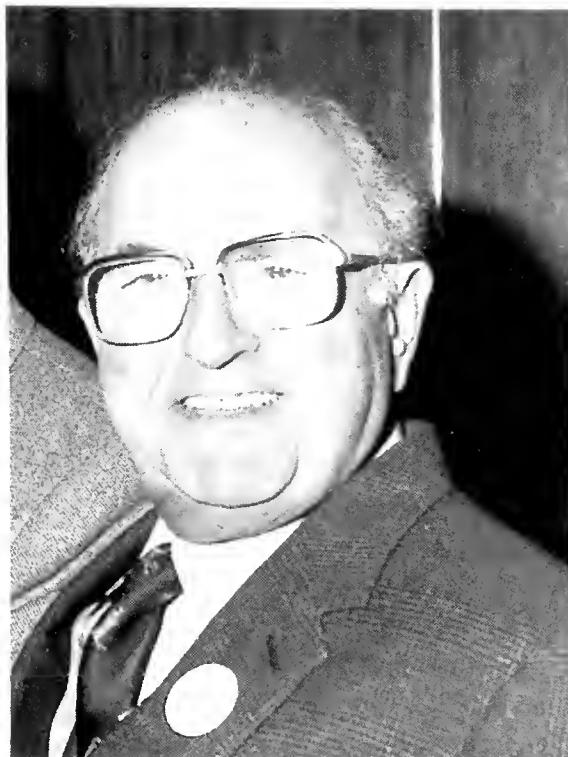
Obituary

Eric Hosking OBE, Hon. FRPS (1909-1991)

The death of Eric Hosking on 23rd February, at the age of 81, robbed Ornithology and the general public of a much-loved and much-admired figure. His work was a major contribution to ornithology and he leaves a priceless legacy in his pictures. He was the first truly professional bird photographer, and his pictures appeared in some 800 books and countless periodicals throughout the world. He succeeded in photographing no fewer than 1,800 different species and had only just returned from an African photographic safari when he died peacefully at his home in north London.

Eric's dedication to bird photography began at the tender age of eight, when he took a picture of a Song Thrush at its nest, with a box Brownie. His first plate camera was a wood-framed Sanderson with a bellows extension and an f8 lens, which he bought for 30 shillings. With this, he sold his first picture—of a baby elephant-seal taken at the London Zoo. Many years later, the German and Japanese camera makers were competing for his endorsement. He finally settled on the Olympus OM2, with a variety of different lenses. He was one of the pioneers of flash photography for birds, first with powder, then with bulbs and finally with electronics, inventing a bird-operated electronic triggering mechanism for ultra-high-speed photography of the subject in flight. For this, he was honoured by the Royal Photographic Society, which awarded him its highest honour, the Progress Medal. Nevertheless, he was suspicious of all new camera developments, declaring that they took away the fun of calculating the correct diaphragm and shutter speeds. Although he made many excellent cine films, he preferred portraiture. If he had a weakness, from a serious ornithological viewpoint, it was a lack of interest in photographing the related habitat of a species, on the grounds that another bird urgently awaited his attention. He was quick to criticise the erection of a hide too near a nest or the 'gardening' of a site in order to expose the nest, and would always painstakingly tie back an intruding branch rather than cut it off. The safety of the bird was paramount and it is no exaggeration to say that he loved his birds and always put their interests first. He lectured about them with enthusiasm and had no difficulty in attracting a packed audience to the London Festival Hall on one occasion. His autobiography, *An Eye for a Bird* (1970), included a whole chapter on 'Lecturing', written with great humour, which ought to be compulsory reading for all budding speakers. Although he disliked writing, he produced a number of books (often with co-authors) which sold well, all illustrated with his superb pictures.

I had the privilege of knowing Eric for nearly 50 years. He was in charge of photography on nine of my wildlife expeditions to various countries, and was a delightful companion. Good-humoured, hard-working and eager to help his colleagues, he was invariably popular. He had never been



165. Eric Hosking OBE, Hon. FRPS (1909-1991)(Don Smith)

abroad until the first Coto Doñana expedition in 1956, but thereafter he never ceased to travel—to Asia, Africa, South America and Australasia. He even accompanied me to the Antarctic and the Falkland Islands. Formality was anathema to him. Proud of his Cockney background, he treated all men as equals, be they primitive tribesmen, Bedouin chieftains or Muslim heads of state. He addressed Field Marshal Viscount Alanbrook as 'Brookie' during the Coto expedition, and did not hesitate to call HRH Prince Philip 'Old boy' when the three of us spent a weekend together photographing waders on Hilbre Island. His personality was so likeable that nobody could take offence.

For 16 years, Eric was Photographic Editor of *British Birds* and of the New Naturalist series of books published by Collins. He was a severe critic, of his own work as much as of other people's, but revelled in looking at good bird photographs. He enjoyed the annual judging of Bird Photograph of the Year, entertaining his fellow judges with relevant stories and enlivening the occasion with his ever-youthful enthusiasm.

He was elected and served as President of the Nature Photographic Society, Vice President of the BOU, Vice President of the RSPB, Vice President of the British Naturalists' Association, Hon. Vice President of the London Natural History Society and Hon. Fellow and Vice President of the Royal Photographic Society. Among many honours and awards, he received the RSPB's Gold Medal in 1974, and was admitted to the Order of the British Empire in 1977. His extensive collection of ornithological books, pictures and memorabilia is valuable and deserves preservation.

He was survived by his charming wife and companion on his travels, Dorothy, and by a daughter and two sons, one of whom, David, is also a highly skilled bird photographer and now manages Eric's worldwide agency for bird pictures.

GUY MOUNTFORT

Mystery photographs

169 A small passerine perches on a dead reed and causes instant consternation. Its seed-eating bill and prominent malar stripe, but otherwise drab plumage, and the suggestion of white outer-tail feathers confirm that it is a bunting *Emberiza*. No European sparrow *Passer* has either white outer-tail feathers or a prominent malar stripe. Vagrant American 'sparrows' do not show white outer-tail feathers, and the ones with prominent malar stripes—



Savannah *Ammodramus sandwichensis*, Fox *Zonotrichia iliaca* and Song Sparrows *Z. melodia*—all have their underparts heavily streaked (noticeably unstreaked on this bird). Whilst many finches (Fringillidae) show white in their tails, the only species in the Western Palearctic that has white outer-tail feathers—Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*—shows strong plumage features totally lacking on this bird. Most finches also lack the malar stripe.

A critical examination of the bird in the photograph produces the following features. It is a dumpy bunting, rather big-headed and small-billed, with a straight or slightly down-curving culmen. It has an indistinct 'facial pattern'. There is a dull cap, without any dark lateral crown-stripes, a supercilium lacking in contrast, though more obvious behind the eye, and an indistinct eye-ring. The ear-coverts are fairly uniform, with an isolated dark spot on the lower rear corner. There is a large black triangle on the side of the neck, with a small extension upwards as a malar stripe, though this does not reach the bill. The upperparts show distinct, dark-and-pale parallel lines on the mantle. There are distinct pale tips to the greater coverts, and to a lesser extent on the median coverts, forming two wing-bars. The underparts are pale, and show indistinct streaking on the flanks and across the breast.

With the exception of Little Bunting *E. pusilla*, adult male buntings have very distinctive plumages in spring, whilst in autumn they usually resemble females or immatures, many of which show either very strong head patterns or a very prominent eye-ring, both lacking on this bird. We can, therefore, narrow the field down to Little Bunting and autumn male, female or immature Rustic *E. rustica*, Reed *E. schoenichus*, Pallas's Reed *E. pallasi* and Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala*. But which is it?

All but one of the above show a dark border to the 'cheek-patch' starting from behind the eye, sweeping around the back of the ear-coverts, and extending as a moustachial stripe either to the eye (on Little Bunting and some Rustics) or to the base of the bill (on Reed and Black-faced Buntings). Another common feature of the last three is a malar stripe

reaching to the bill; it is, however, rarely as wide on the side of the neck as is shown by the mystery bird. Both Little and Rustic have prominent supercilia, submoustachial stripes and lateral crown-stripes. In addition, Little Bunting has a prominent eye-ring and is heavily streaked below, while Rustic usually shows an obvious breast-band and large, if diffuse, chestnut flank-streaks. Reed Bunting also shows a good submoustachial stripe, and is more heavily streaked below, whilst on Black-faced Bunting the broad off-white submoustachial stripe and heavy streaking below are perhaps the best field-marks on a fairly drab bird. In addition, Little, Rustic and Black-faced all have quite long, conical bills, unlike the stubby bill of the mystery bird.

The bird in plates 156 & 166 is an adult female Pallas's Reed Bunting. This is the only one of the five possible species that has cheek-patches with no border and an isolated dark spot on the rear corner. It also displays the heavy dark triangle at the base of the malar stripe. The structure of the bird, the subdued head pattern, and the parallel lines on the mantle are also recognised features of this species. Not visible on this photograph, but useful extra identification points, are cold-grey lesser coverts (shared with Little and to a certain extent Black-faced Bunting), a pinkish lower mandible (again shared with Black-faced Bunting) and a sparrow-like 'chirrup' call. This individual is very similar to those adult females described by Kitson (1979) and Broad & Oddie (1980), but shows several differences from the 1981 Fair Isle bird (Riddiford & Broome 1983), which was a first-winter female. That individual differed in showing quite extensive streaking below, a dark loreal 'blob', a thin dark moustachial stripe and lack of parallel lines on the mantle. It was noted to have 'a long-tailed appearance', which was not a feature of the bird in our photograph, or others present at the time.

Pallas's Reed Buntings also show a pale rump, although on the southern race *E. p. pallasi* this is a warm buff and does not stand out as does the grey rump of the northern race *E. p. polaris*, which is more likely to occur in Western Europe. I photographed this individual in China in May 1990. It and others present at the time were surprisingly warmly coloured, with rich rusty brown tones to cap and 'cheeks'. Structurally, they looked more like small sparrows, with big heads and comparatively short tails, and were noticeably paler than most other buntings, although eastern races of Reed Bunting (e.g. *E. s. parvirostris*) can also be very pale and show pale rumps. The underparts were virtually unstreaked, except for some indistinct chestnut streaks on the flanks and breast. They also showed a peculiar dark line from the base of the upper mandible extending onto the moustachial area, but stopping abruptly below the eye: a feature which has not been noted in other accounts.

COLIN BRADSHAW

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- RIDDIFORD, N., & BROOME, T. 1983. Identification of first-winter Pallas's Reed Bunting. *Brit. Birds* 76: 174-182.



167. Mystery photograph 170. Identify the species. Answer next month

Review

Bird Recorder: personal computer bird records system (World version). Computer disc. Wildlife Computing and Photographic Services, Colchester, 1990. 360K 5.25" or 720K 3.5". £50.00. (West Palearctic list version £37.50)

Tested on a 368 Elonex PC with a 40mb hard disk.

With the growth in ownership of quality personal computers comes the potential for computerising the individual's own personal records. *Bird Recorder* is one product aimed at this market.

It is primarily a piece of software to maintain lists; bird records are entered in a batch for one place on one date and stored in a file for the relevant year. Other files store 'places' (as the package calls sites), and a list of the world's species and their indices.

A species name can be retrieved through searching three indices, as follows: first, English names, secondly, scientific names, and, thirdly, an index which follows the taxonomic order of species. Thus, Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* could be retrieved using the strings 'les sca' when interrogating the English name index, the string 'affin' for the scientific index, or '270' to look at the family Anatidae. The species list follows *A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* by Howard & Moore. The retrieval time from the indices is impressively fast, although alternative English names are not indexed (e.g. Japanese Green Pigeon *Treron sieboldii* is called White-bellied Pigeon by the package, and the specific name is spelt *seiboldii*—this was, however, the only error that I found in the scientific names.

The species in daily records can then be added to any lists which have been defined by the user. Lists can be simple to define (e.g. a county/state or country, all of which are entered in each place record), or more complex (e.g. as an aggregation of places, counties or countries over time). Lists can be displayed or printed explicitly or in summary form, and, again, are calculated with impressive speed.

In general the package is easy to use and performs well the functions for which it has been designed. It deals with lists a great deal better than records for an individual species, which can be viewed only one year at a time within the geographical area defined by the list currently being interrogated. I would not, therefore, recommend this package to those who wish to undertake detailed species analysis. For those who have a keen interest in keeping their personal records from around the world on a database and maintaining a variety of lists, however, I can thoroughly recommend the package.

There are some design features which I find awkward. There are too many key depressions to perform when entering a new site between batches of records. Using the 'Return key' to save records came as a bit of a shock to someone who is used to using it to move from field to field within other databases. Finally, a chunk of the manual *must* be rewritten to enable computer illiterates to install the package. The package is fast and good value for what it sets out to do. I shall be using it myself to keep my world list and details of foreign trips.

P. A. FRASER

[Since this review was written, the authors have released an upgraded version, which, this reviewer is assured, removes the one-year limit on the records available to the user at any one time; this should greatly improve the package's reporting facilities. The manual has also been rewritten. PAF]

Short reviews

Birds of the Outer Hebrides: a guide to their status and distribution. By Peter Cunningham. Drawings by Roger Lee. (Mercat Press, Edinburgh, 1990. 243 pages. Paperback £8.95) Revised and updated edition of pocket-sized book reviewed previously (*Brit. Birds* 76: 600).

A Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World. Second edn. By Richard Howard & Alick Moore. (Academic Press, London, 1991. 622 pages. £22.50) This classic world list has been updated to include amendments resulting from publication of the last two volumes of J. L. Peters's *Checklist of the Birds of the World*. As before, races are listed, with a brief note of range, under each species. The invaluable indexes to scientific names and English names comprise a total of 80 pages.

The Good Birdwatchers Guide. By Peter Jennings. (Ficedula Books, Llandrindod Wells, 1991. 482 pages. Paperback £9.95) Some 2,500 birdwatching sites in Britain get three to ten lines each. Access information uses grid references, making OS maps essential. Bird information lacks any indication of quality: e.g. Ouse Washes, Welney—'winter wildfowl and raptors, summer and passage waders', and Coate Water Country Park, Swindon—'passage waders and terns; passage and winter wildfowl; summer warb-

lers'. Addresses of Tourist Bureaux and places to stay (e.g. Youth Hostels and hotels and B&B) are given by area. Islay rates a page, containing three factual errors and two wrong and three misleading grid references out of eleven; and of three recommended hotels, one is closed and one I would not endorse. There are lists of county recorders and advice on binoculars, telescopes, and so on. The *Kingfisher Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* and the *Mitchell Beazley Birdwatchers Pocket Guide* are listed as two of 'the three best field guides'. A checklist and a chronological listing of rarities seen in 1990 both include, without comment, as-yet-unaccepted species. This brave attempt at a countrywide birdwatching guide should perhaps be entitled *The Only-Fairly-Good Birdwatchers' Guide*. [MAO]

Monitoring Bird Populations: a manual of methods applied in Finland. By Pertti Koskimies & Risto A. Väisänen. (Finnish Museum of Natural History, Helsinki, 1991. 144 pages. Paperback £12.00) This manual is an updated and more lavish version of a book first published in Finnish in 1986. It presents the standard instructions for bird censuses and other monitoring projects in Finland, ten in all, and illustrates the use of 31 different recording forms. The authors hope that publication in English will promote international evaluation of the methods

used in Finland, and lead towards the integration of monitoring across Europe. They admit, however, that modifications will be necessary to suit more southerly conditions. The Finnish programme is to be envied in that all the schemes are administered by the same national body, giving maximum opportunity for integration and record-sharing between them. It can be recommended as a model for new studies elsewhere, and may prove an important step towards better co-operation across Europe. [JOHN MARCHANT]

The Art of Bird Illustration: a visual tribute to the lives and achievements of the classic bird illustrators. By Maureen Lambourne. (Collins, London, 1991. 192 pages. £19.95) The opening sentence reads 'This book is a pictorial introduction rather than a comprehensive survey of bird illustration through the centuries.' It is the author's personal selection, from artists who decorated ancient Egyptian tombs to Archibald Thorburn. One twentieth-century artist is represented: Charles Tunnicliffe, born in 1901. Lear and Richter have a dozen plates each, Audubon ten. This handsome volume, with 147 well-reproduced plates, covers all the great bird illustrators, chronologically, in seven chapters. An appendix discusses print-collecting. Each artist is introduced, with his life history and main contribution to the story of bird illustration, in a readable and interesting text. Mrs Lambourne traces the development of printing techniques and the changing styles of illustration this made possible. Although several of the plates are familiar, she succeeds in her aim of introducing 'to many newcomers some of the hidden treasures of the art of bird illustration.' [ROBERT GILLMOR]

Birds of the World: songbirds. By John P. S. Mackenzie. (Swan Hill, Shrewsbury, 1990. 144 pages. £19.95) '*... of the World?*' Less than 10% of the species covered are not American (publishers in England and printers in Italy, but author is Canadian). This book will be bought by those who like big, glossy, beautiful pictures of brightly coloured (usually male) birds.

Birdscape. By Bruce Pearson & Robert Burton. (HarperCollins, London, 1991. 160 pages. £15.95) 'The book of the TV series' is not always a justified publication, but it most certainly is in this case. The book stands up solidly on its own, and is an

absolute 'must' for anyone who enjoys bird art or natural history art. Again, unlike some other such books, Robert Burton's text augments, explains and enhances Bruce Pearson's paintings: his touch with the pen (or these days the word-processor key) is as deft, subtle and telling as is Bruce Pearson's with the brush. This is an exceptional book: a delight to read and a delight to look at. It is also hard-hitting, when needs be (e.g. the desecration of the Flow Country, depicted both in words and in pictures).

Let's Look at Thailand: an Ornitholidays guide. By Michael Shepherd. (Ornitholidays, Bognor Regis, 1991. 76 pages. Paperback £4.00) This is basically a checklist for holidaymakers. Half the text provides general information, while the balance gives a view of some of the best-known birdwatching sites. A first-time visitor to Thailand would find this helpful.

Any serious birdwatcher, however, will find the frequent errors, in both the text and the checklist, annoying. It is a pity that the bibliography refers to eight travel guides, but does not mention the excellent checklists which are available for Khao Yai and Doi Inthanon. [S. J. R. RUMSEY]

The Enchanting Owl. By Connie Toops. (Swan Hill Press, Shrewsbury, 1990. 128 pages. £16.95) Glossy, with some nice photographs, and the sort of text suitable for those who are casually interested in birds and who (don't we all?) like owls.

Raptors in Israel: passage and wintering populations. Edited by David Yekutieli. (International Birdwatching Center, Eilat, 1991. 64 pages. Paperback \$10.00) Five major papers cover raptor migration at Eilat; and at Kefar Kassem; migration of soaring birds in the Northern Valleys; wintering raptors; and a detailed guide on where to watch raptors in Israel. With numerous figures and tables, these well-presented and eminently readable texts contain a wealth of data and thought-provoking discussion. Six black-and-white and 27 colour photographs include some marvellous shots (e.g. of a migrating juvenile Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* gliding past at eye level, presumably taken from a motor-glider). Essential for raptor enthusiasts and visiting birdwatchers.

[DAC]

Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



Competitors found the eye-level, rear view of the flying raptor (plate 117) far less of a problem than the previous month's front view of the flying Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (plate 110), which knocked everyone back to the start line. Answers were as follows:

Short-toed Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	(66%)
Lesser Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila pomarina</i>	(7%)
Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>	(7%)
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	(6%)
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	(5%)
Spotted Eagle <i>A. clanga</i>	(4%)
Imperial Eagle <i>A. heliaca</i>	(3%)
Booted Eagle <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	(2%)

with a few votes each for Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Red Kite *M. milvus*, Steppe Eagle *A. rapax*, Bonelli's Eagle *H. fasciatus* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*.

It was indeed a Short-toed Eagle, photographed in Israel in April 1988 by W. van der Waal. Those who got this one right have now negotiated the first hurdle in the present competition. The first contestant to identify at least ten in succession and who also exceeds all other contestants' sequences will win the prize of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. The next stage appears as plate 168.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

168. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (thirteenth stage: photograph number 62). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th September 1991



Seasonal reports

Winter 1990/91



Barry Nightingale and Keith Allsopp

This summary includes some unchecked reports, as well as authenticated records

After the wet, stormy end to October 1990, the weather in November quietened down considerably, and the month as a whole was dry and unusually sunny, particularly in the south and west of England. From 9th, fronts from the Atlantic brought rain in slowly from the southwest, and the weather stayed unsettled until the end of the month. December started rather dull and, as a low formed quickly over central England on 7th, heavy rain, turning to snow, fell in many areas, lasting until 10th: the first touch of real winter. The second half of the month was very unsettled, dominated by strong westerly winds, with tornadoes reported from western counties of England.

This pattern continued for the first 12 days of January, with more snow falling in Scotland and northern England. The weather in the second half of January was mainly anticyclonic, with temperatures below average and a lot of cloud cover. February started very cold over much of Britain and during 3rd-14th there was always some part of England or Wales where daytime maximum temperatures remained below freezing. The 7th in particular was believed to be the coldest February day of this century in some places. Snow also fell heavily during 7th-9th, and many waterways froze over. On and after 15th, milder air from the west brought a rapid thaw to all parts, bringing flooding to areas in the north of England. The mild weather continued into March, with temperatures reaching 15°C during the middle of the month. On the whole, the winter was slightly colder than usual, relatively sunny and with rainfall below normal.

There were two ornithological features of this winter which will remain significant. First, there were many long-staying rarities which gave plenty of time for observers to catch up with them. Secondly, as in any winter period, the effect of a hard spell of weather, as experienced in February, provided opportunities to see some species in unusual numbers.

Although the influx of **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni*, **Two-barred Crossbills** *Loxia leucoptera* and **Parrot Crossbills** *L. pytyopsittacus* all started in October, peak numbers arrived during the period now under review.

Over 60 **Arctic Redpolls** were involved, nearly all in flocks of Redpolls *C. flammea*. Numbers started to increase during January, perhaps as a result of growing observer confidence, with a group of up to 12 in Holkham Pines (Norfolk). By the middle of March, nearly 40 were present

Fig. 1. Arctic Redpoll
Carduelis homemanni

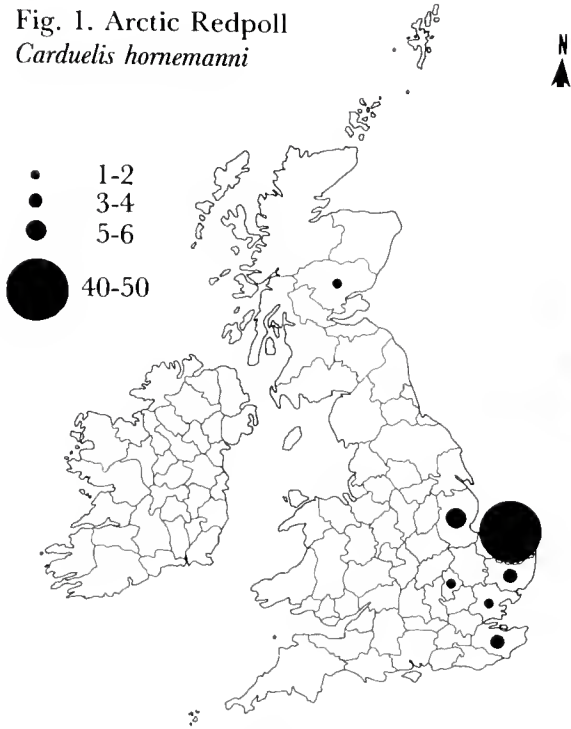


Fig. 2. Two-barred Crossbill
Loxia leucoptera

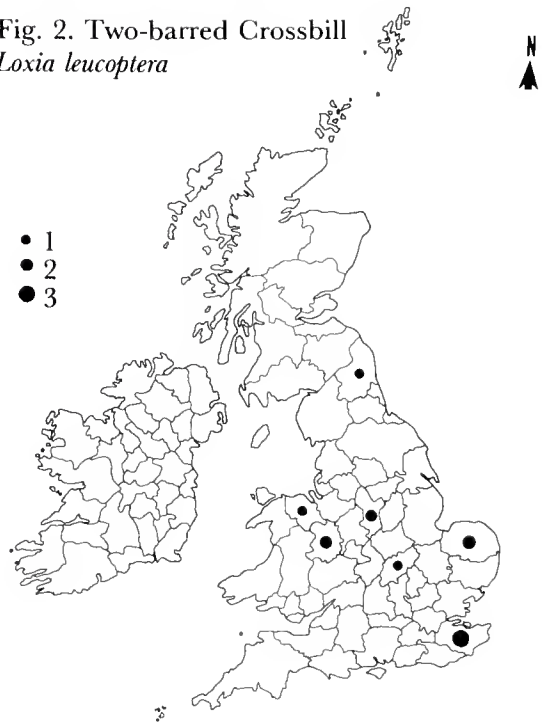
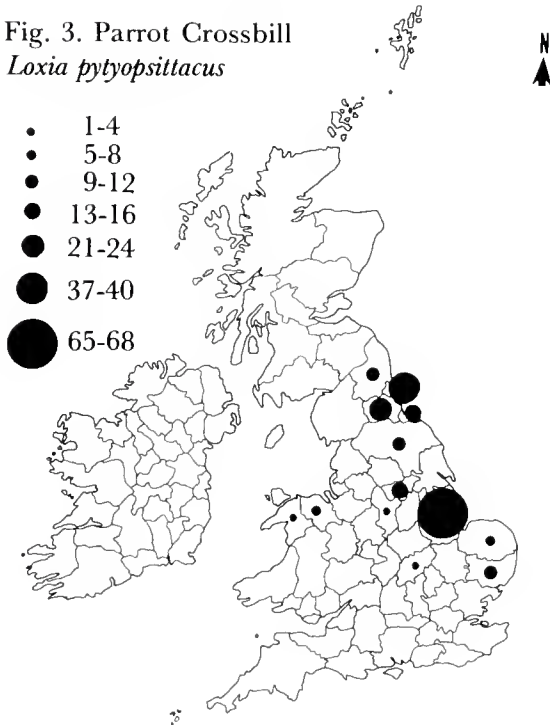


Fig. 3. Parrot Crossbill
Loxia pytyopsittacus



Figs. 1-3. Occurrences in winter 1990/91. Not all records have yet been assessed by the Rarities Committee

in Britain, half of which were in a flock at Mousehold Heath (Norfolk). Ones and twos were scattered elsewhere, although very few were found away from the East Coast (fig. 1).

A smaller number of **Two-barred Crossbills** (plate 179) was involved, probably 11 or so, fewer than in the influx of 1986, but more widespread. There was less of an East Coast bias (fig. 2), and some individuals were remarkably site-loyal, a female staying at Lynford Arboretum (Norfolk) from 25th November for the rest of the winter, and a male at Harwood Forest (Northumberland) from 24th December to at least 20th February.

Parrot Crossbills repeated their invasion of 1982/83. By the end of March, over 200 had been reported: unprecedented numbers. The largest

flocks were at Kirkby Moor (Lincolnshire), with a maximum of 44 in mid November, and at Chopwell Wood (Tyne & Wear), with 38 at around the same time. The peak, which occurred later than in 1982, was during the last three weeks of November, with further increases at the start of January. In contrast to the other two species featured here, most Parrot Crossbills were found north of a line between the Severn and the Wash, centred in Lincolnshire and the northeast of England (fig. 3).

The harsh spell of weather in February displaced normally secretive species into atypical situations. A **Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* fed around a small garden pond in Oadby (Leicestershire) and there were many records of **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyptes minimus* and **Woodcocks** *Scolopax rusticola* sheltering in gardens. The latter clearly arrived in good numbers during the cold spell at the end of January, and large shooting bags were reported. A total of 50 was found on one moor near Bolton (Greater Manchester), despite 56 being shot there earlier, and 50 were found in Saltfleetby Dunes (Lincolnshire) on 3rd February. From Leicester, interesting observations highlighted the attractiveness of fast-flowing rivers when still waters freeze over. On a stretch of the River Soar in the city, up to 83 **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* concentrated around the weirs, and eight species of duck used the river, including **Scaup** *Aythya marila* and **Pintail** *Anas acuta*.

Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena* were reported from just a few inland counties, but one on Lundy (Devon) during 17th-24th February was only the second ever there; as usual, Lothian attracted the highest numbers, with 27 in Gullane Bay on 24th March. More impressive were the concentrations of **Great Crested Grebes** *P. cristatus* which gathered on the few waters left free of ice, reaching 1,038 at Rutland Water (Leicestershire), perhaps the highest-ever count at a British site, and 313 on 18th February at Stewartby Lake (Bedfordshire). The high total of 550 **Brent Geese** *Branta bernicla* journeyed up the River Thames to Rainham (Greater London) on 8th February, and a good local record was the 56 **Barnacle Geese** *B. leucopsis* at Sudbourne (Suffolk) on 17th February.

The largest count of **Scaups** received was of 2,120 at Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria) in January, whilst 131 on the River Orwell on 23rd February was the highest in Suffolk for five years. The hard weather affected this species, with over 20 on the London reservoirs after 8th February, and also the **Smew** *Mergus albellus*, with over 50 in the



Wraysbury pits complex (Berkshire) on 17th February, as many as in the whole of Britain during the previous winter. Other good counts of this species were of 26 flying south past Dungeness (Kent) on 11th February and 26 flying past Landguard (Suffolk) during 10th-12th February. Nearby, on the River Deben, 74 **Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were found dead along a 1½-mile (2.4-km) stretch on 17th February.

Divers to grebes

The regular **White-billed Diver** *Gavia adamsii* returned to Whalsay (Shetland) on 23rd November for its twelfth successive winter and was one of three that could be seen around Shetland this winter. Two others visited Orkney during 9th-21st February, and from 24th February one was present in Holyhead harbour (Gwynedd)(plate 169). **Red-throated Divers** *G. stellata* were seen in about-average numbers, typical reports including 100 daily off Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire).

Great Northern Divers *G. immer* seemed scarcer this winter, with 24 off Quendale (Shetland) on 11th November and 60 off Burray (Orkney) on 10th February the only large concentrations noted.

Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* are already a regular sight in most inland areas, but 525 leaving the roost on Queen Elizabeth II Reservoir (Surrey) on 15th November was impressive, as was the influx of **Shags** *P. aristotelis* into the London area after 8th December, with probably 13 involved, increasing to 20 in early January, and then up to 30 at Rainham until mid February. Britain's third **Double-crested Cormorant** *P. auritus*, an immature, was at Bridgnorth (Shropshire) from 3rd-18th December. Equally sought after was a showy **American Bittern** *Botaurus lentiginosus* which stayed at Marton Mere (Lancashire) from 24th January to the end of March (plates 173 & 176).

Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* seem to be part of the resident scene now, at least in

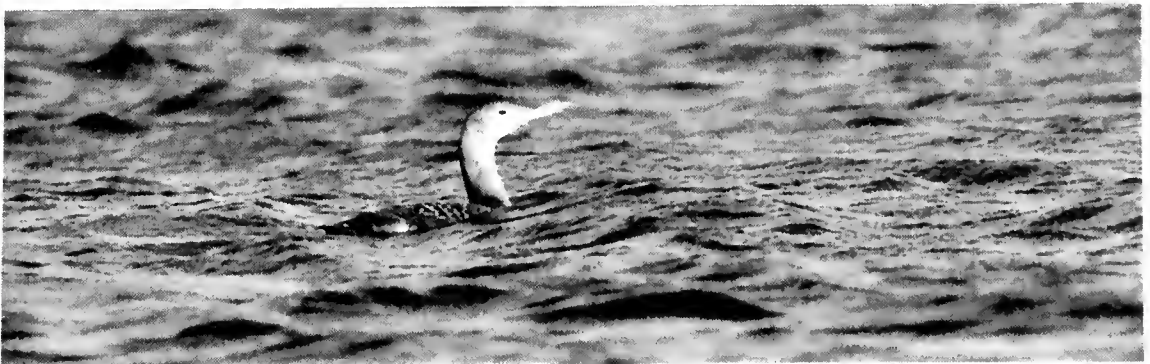
southwest England, and about 22 were reported during the winter. The majority were from the south coast from Cornwall to West Sussex, but there were two records from Wales, two from Ireland, three on Jersey and one in Buckinghamshire.

Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus* were early to arrive, 1,046 at Martin Mere on 7th November probably being the highest-ever Lancashire count, whilst the maximum at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) was 362, about average for the last few winters. Welney (Norfolk) held 4,050 in December, and about 5,000 in January, whilst an individual of the nominate North American race, colloquially known as 'Whistling Swan', stayed on the South Slob (Co. Wexford) from late February to early March.

Whooper Swans *C. cygnus*, in contrast, arrived later than usual, and there were 473 on 16th December at Martin Mere, and 554 during January at Welney. The regular November count in Shetland revealed 213, lower than in previous years, although probably affected by the late passage; the proportion of juveniles (18%) in the flock indicated an average breeding season. In Orkney, 927 were counted on Loch of Harray on 27th November, alongside 1,046 **Mute Swans** *C. olor*.

Up to nine **Snow Geese** *Anser caerulescens* were found in November, some staying all winter, and included up to four in Grampian where, at Lossiemouth, a **Ross's Goose** *A. rossii* of unknown origin stayed from 23rd

169. White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii*, Holyhead, Gwynedd, February 1991 (David Tipling/AVIAN PHOTOS)



March to the end of the month (plate 170).

Six or seven **Brent Geese** showing the characters of the North American/Siberian race *B. b. nigricans*, colloquially known as 'Black Brant', were reported, but the only **Red-breasted Goose** *B. ruficollis* was one at Lutton Marsh (Lincolnshire) on 20th March. Numbers of that much-unloved bird, the **Canada Goose** *B. canadensis*, reached 2,660 on Leicestershire waters during January.

Generally, numbers of **Wigeons** *Anas penelope* were low, but up to 18 **American Wigeons** *A. americana* were reported, including long-stayers at Stenhouse Reservoir (Fife), two in Co. Cork, and a drake at Loch Leven (Tayside). **Teals** *A. crecca* reached 4,000 at Chew Valley Lake (Somerset) before the freeze. Over 20 of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis*, colloquially known as 'Green-winged Teal', were reported, including two at Chew Valley Lake.

Shovelers *A. clypeata* seemed to be present in good numbers, with 330 at Staines Reservoir (Surrey) on 28th November worth a mention, and 552 **Goldeneyes** *Bucephala clangula* in Leicestershire during February, including 504 on Rutland Water, were also notable. About 14 **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were found, including three females, and were mostly long-stayers, but a small increase during January and February was noted. Seven **Ferruginous Ducks** *A. nyroca* were seen in November, with three more arriving in February, widely scattered, but the six **King Eiders** *Somateria spectabilis* were restricted to Scottish waters. The latter were mostly returning individuals, as was the **Lesser Scaup** *A. affinis* in Co. Down, staying from 7th December to 24th February, with another in Dumfries & Galloway from 29th December to 25th January.

There were good counts of **Goosanders** *Mergus merganser*, with 125 at Foremark Reservoir (Derbyshire) and 110 on Queen Mary Reservoir (Surrey), both in February, and 110 on Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 2nd December. Reports of at least 20 **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata* came in, with ten in Scotland, five in Ireland and four in Wales, but the most-sought-after duck of this winter was the **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* at Wick (Highland), which stayed from 6th February into April (plates 174, 177 & 178).

Finally in this section, there were impressive gatherings of **Ruddy Ducks** *Oxyura jamaicensis* at their three most important wintering sites, with 528 at Chew Valley

Lake on 2nd February, 750 on Rutland Water in the same month, and over 1,000 at Blithfield Reservoir on 30th December.

Raptors

It was another quiet winter for raptors. Following the glut of **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* during 1990, a late straggler was seen in Devon on 16th November, and the only record outside Scotland of **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla*, no longer a cause of major excitement, was from the Norfolk Broads during 5th November to 14th December. Several **Red Kites** *M. milvus* were reported, including some from the release programme. There were clear indications of a widespread influx from 22nd December, however, when there were reports from both Wiltshire and Suffolk, until 5th January, with up to a dozen involved, and then another, smaller influx during March.

Up to six **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* wintered in the Minsmere (Suffolk) area, with one or two records from elsewhere, including one at Golborne (Greater Manchester) on 23rd-24th February. Two **Hen Harriers** *C. cyaneus*, at Bursdon Moore (Devon) and Pennington Flash (Greater Manchester), were wing-tagged and were traced back to Pitlochry (Tayside). Reports of a total of up to 12 **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* came from widely scattered localities.

Cranes to waders

Cranes *Grus grus* flew over Wilstone Reservoir (Hertfordshire) on 18th November and Dungeness on 1st December, and one on Guernsey in November was the first there since 1963.

Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* gathered at Iken (Suffolk), with 577 on 8th January, and there was one at Staines Reservoir on 1st December, two near Bristol (Avon) on 3rd February, and one at Shepperton (Surrey) following the snow on 10th February. One on the estuary of the River Kent on 22nd-23rd December was Cumbria's first since 1983. Flocks of up to 7,000 **Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* were reported from the midland counties of England during December, and **Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis apricaria*, with 2,500 in Leicestershire and 2,300 in Suffolk in November, were in good numbers before the hard weather. One or two **Little Stints** *Calidris minuta* overwintered, and single **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* were seen, at Auskerry (Orkney) on 21st January and flying south past Gibraltar Point on 24th



170. Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*, Lossiemouth, Grampian, March 1991 (Steve Young)



171. Adult Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Hayle, Cornwall, March 1991 (A. M. Folwell)

172. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoïdes*, Gosport, Hampshire, March 1991 (Dominic Mitchell)





173. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Marton Mere, Lancashire, February 1991 (*Martin S. Garner*)



174. Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, Wick, Highland, February 1991 (*David Tipling AVIAN PHOTOS*)

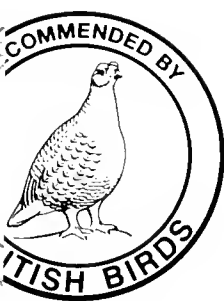
175. Adult Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis* (with Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*), Uxbridge, Greater London, February 1991 (*Peter Gasson*)



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By courtesy of BBC Publications; JUST THE BEST, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Wildlife*, March 1989. Fieldscope II, Fieldscope EDII and 8 x 30 ECF have been recommended by *British Birds*.

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176. American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*, Marton Mere, Lancashire, February 1991 (Jack Levene)



177 & 178. Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, Wick, Highland, February 1991 (above, David Astins; below, Jack Levene)



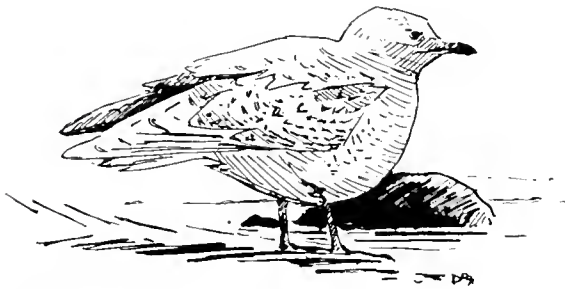


179. Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, Round Green, Goudhurst, Kent, March 1991 (Tim Loseby/AVIAN PHOTOS)

180. Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* of black-bellied nominate race, Burnham Market, Norfolk, March 1991 (G. P. Catley)

181 & 182. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Southwold, Suffolk, December 1990 (David Cottridge/AVIAN PHOTOS)

February. Iken also attracted 368 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* on 8th January, and, among scarcer species, a **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* stayed at Ballycotton (Co. Cork) from 7th January to 21st February and five scattered **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* resided for most of the winter.



Gulls to auks

Of the rare species, three **Bonaparte's Gulls** *Larus philadelphia* were reported, from Scilly, Devon and Merseyside, a single **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* (Northamptonshire), an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* (Shetland), a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* (Devon and, probably the same, East Sussex), and two **Ross's Gulls** *Rhodostethia rosea* (Humberside in November and Co. Galway in December-January).

In contrast, **Little Gulls** *L. minutus* reached 244 at Heysham (Lancashire) on 6th January and **Mediterranean Gulls** *L. melanocephalus* 30 at Copt Point, Folkestone (Kent), on 29th January.

Sizeable numbers of **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* were seen (plates 172, 183 & 184), with about 16 in November, over 30 in December and about 70 in January. These included one on Jersey from 31st January (only the third record there and the first for 52 years: plate 183), seven at Lerwick (Shetland) on 16th January, 20 at Galway (Co. Galway) on 20th January, and nine at Ullapool (Highland) on 27th January. Numbers increased again in February, to 90, and on many inland reservoirs they outnumbered Glaucous Gulls *L. hyperboreus* by three or four to one. In Banff Harbour (Grampian), an individual of the North American race *L. g. kumlieni* returned on 5th January, staying for the rest of the winter, another adult was at Galway during 13th-26th January, another at Killybegs (Co. Donegal) on 2nd February, and one in Dublin (Co. Dublin) in March. Reports of **Ring-billed Gulls** *L. delawarensis* included a mixture of old faithfuls and newcomers (plates 171 & 175), with a total of 15 in November, a sharp increase in December to about 34, another

183. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Jersey, February 1991 (M. Dryden)





184. First-winter Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides*, Shoreham, West Sussex, January 1991
(D. Sadler)

18 arrivals in January and then a further 13 in February. There was a marked increase away from the Southwest, both northwards and to the east, including sightings in Hertfordshire, Greater London, Norfolk and Orkney. Clearly, this species is now likely to be encountered anywhere in Britain and Ireland.

Not so **Forster's Terns** *Sterna forsteri*, which stick to traditional sites: one reappearing at Strangford (Co. Down) on 6th January and then at Millisle (Co. Down)

from 12th January to the middle of March (plates 185 & 186).

Enormous numbers of **Little Auks** *Alle alle* were blown to our coasts in two influxes. The first wave, in November, followed a few days of northwesterly winds, when an anti-cyclone moving south from Iceland settled over Scotland on 6th. It was in this period, during 3rd-5th, that peak numbers occurred, with 1,500 flying past Flamborough Head (Humberside) on 4th, and 600 there on 5th. Most were seen along the east coast of



185 & 186. Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*, Millisle, Co. Down, January 1991 (Anthony McGeehan)





England, with smaller numbers between Kent and Cornwall. Inland records included one at Staines Reservoir on 23rd November.

The second major wreck came as a low developed over England on 7th December, and, with high pressure to the north of Scandinavia, the resulting storms pushed many thousands to within sight of our coasts. A total of 2,300 passed Girdleness (Grampian) on 9th, 1,800 passed Sheringham (Norfolk) on 10th and 3,500 flew past Whitburn (Tyne & Wear) on 12th. On 13th 1,800 went past Flamborough Head and, farther south, 567 went north past Southwold (Suffolk). One rescued near Kendal (Cumbria) on 7th December was released on the estuary of the River Kent, only to be promptly shot by a 'wildfowler'. On New Year's Day, another auk wreck, in Shetland, involved mainly **Guillemots** *Uria aalge*, but included some numbers of **Little Auks** and **Puffins** *Fratercula arctica*, and Orkney, too, experienced a 'considerable wreck' during early January, in which Puffins in particular were involved.

Doves to woodpeckers

Three species which are rarely mentioned in this report perhaps deserve an entry. **Ring-necked Parakeets** *Psittacula krameri* reached 60 at their Wraysbury roost in November. A **Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* on North Ronaldsay during 2nd-4th March caused a stir, since it was only the fourth Orkney record. Equally rare was a **Green Woodpecker** *Picus viridis* at Macroom (Co. Cork) on 17th November: the first Irish record this century.

Also unexpected, and a newcomer to Bedfordshire's list, was a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus*, found at The Lodge, Sandy, on 6th December. It had been dead for three or four days and, knowing this species' poor survival rate, was perhaps a fresh arrival in Britain.

Short-eared Owls *Asio flammeus* were scarce this winter, probably outnumbered by **Long-eared Owls** *A. otus*, as several

reports of the latter mentioned high roosting counts. A good local record was of a **Little Owl** *Athene noctua* at Selkirk (Borders) on 11th December, but undoubtedly the star of the winter for many was the long-staying **Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca*. It arrived in Humberside on 13th December, then settled near Wainfleet (Lincolnshire) from 24th December into March, visited Gibraltar Point on 17th March, and then moved southeast across the Wash into Norfolk between 23rd-25th March before returning to Humberside on 30th March.

Passerines

Two migrant **Woodlarks** *Lullula arborea* were reported in early November: one at Barrow-in-Furness on 4th, Cumbria's first since 1959, and one at Landguard the next day. Only 24 **Shore Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were found, with 16 of those in February, including six at Saltfleetby on 4th, and a rare Cornish record on 31st March.

An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* at Cobh (Co. Cork) on 23rd-24th January was a notable Irish record, and 130 **Rock Pipits** *A. petrosus* at Skidbrooke Marsh (Lincolnshire) on 3rd February signified a distinct cold-weather influx.

An influx of a more widespread nature was that of **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus*, which had begun in October with over 500 reported, mainly from Scotland, and which continued with new arrivals during November and December. All the large flocks were in Scotland and northeast England, unlike the last invasion in 1988/89, when flocks were more scattered. There were 300 in Scarborough (North Yorkshire) on 12th November and 380 in Edinburgh (Lothian) on 2nd January. From the middle of January, the largest concentrations were in North Yorkshire, with 100 at Copmanthorpe and 120 at Norton, and there was evidence of a southerly dispersal, with small groups of usually fewer than 20 in the English midland and southern counties.

Some went west to Ireland, with 90 in Carrickfergus (Co. Antrim) on 11th January, and in Northern Ireland the influx continued into March, with a minimum of 250 present, the largest flock being 90 in Belfast (Co. Down). Elsewhere, as February progressed, numbers dwindled, and by March no more than 200 were reported in any one week.

Also from across the North Sea came five **Dippers** *Cinclus cinclus* of the nominate Continental black-bellied race, including a long-staying female near Burnham Overy (Nor-



folk) which was present for the whole winter (plate 180).

There were two **Desert Wheatears** *Oenanthe deserti*—a traditionally late vagrant—one at Southwold from 29th November to 4th December (plates 181 & 182), and one at Beeley Moor (Derbyshire) on 2nd November.

Good numbers of **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* and **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* were reported, including 22 of the latter at Marazion Marsh (Cornwall) in January. Three **Lesser Whitethroats** *S. curruca* lingered, the last at Dagenham Chase (Greater London) on 9th December, and a **White-throat** *S. communis* stayed at Sandwich Bay (Kent) until 24th December, with a **Willow Warbler** *P. trochilus* there until 27th December. Eight **Yellow-browed Warblers** *P. inornatus* were found, including two of the race *humei*, and an unusual garden visitor was a **Barred Warbler** *S. nisoria* which fed on peanuts in Kendal on 24th December. **Firecrests** *Regulus ignicapillus* were widely reported, particularly from the second half of November onwards, and there were 'possibly several hundred' on Jersey during December. Two **Penduline Tits** *Remiz pendulinus* stayed at Farlington Marsh (Hampshire) from 26th January to at least 23rd March.

Over 40 **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were seen, half of them already in residence during November, and eight newcomers arriving in December, but new reports tailed off thereafter, as the winter progressed.

There were more **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* this winter compared with 1989/90. On a wholly different scale, however, there was a massive irruption of **Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra*, particularly into Scotland and the north of England. There were 750 around Peebles (Borders) in December; the species was present in nine out of ten spot-counts in the Tweed Valley (Borders); and an estimate for the Kielder Forest (Northumberland) was in excess of 30,000. The main southerly movement seems to have taken place in November, when there were 200 near Brandon (Suffolk), 230 at Derwentdale (Derbyshire), over 300 passing through the Leigh area (Greater Manchester) and hundreds in Shropshire.

A flock of 1,200 **Yellowhammers** *Emberiza citrinella* near Wilnecote (Staffordshire) in December deserves a mention. **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* were somewhat thin on the ground, but three **Little Buntings** *E. pusilla* were found, in Hampshire in November, Jersey in December and Wiltshire in March.

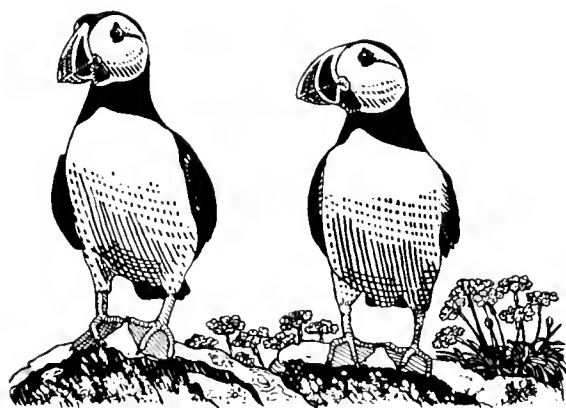
Acknowledgments

As usual, we are most grateful to all the county and regional recorders and individual observers who supplied details of the records summarised in this report, and to the artists and photographers who submitted their work for consideration. We should also like to thank National Bird News for sending us all the information received by their 'Twitch-line'.

Please note that records for the next 'Seasonal reports', covering March to June 1991, should be sent to Barry Nightingale by mid August. Thank you.

Status of seabirds in northern Norway

T. Anker-Nilssen
and R. T. Barrett



The seabird breeding populations in the western Barents Sea and the northern parts of the Norwegian Sea are among the largest in the world. Recent baseline studies indicate that at least half the species occur in numbers of international importance and thus have a special conservation value (Barrett & Vader 1984; Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988a). Of the 6-7 million individuals which breed within these Norwegian territorial waters (fig. 1), over 90% are Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla*, Brünnich's Guillemots *Uria lomvia*, Little Auks *Alle alle* and Puffins *Fratercula arctica*. The importance of the area for seabirds is reflected in the fact that all but

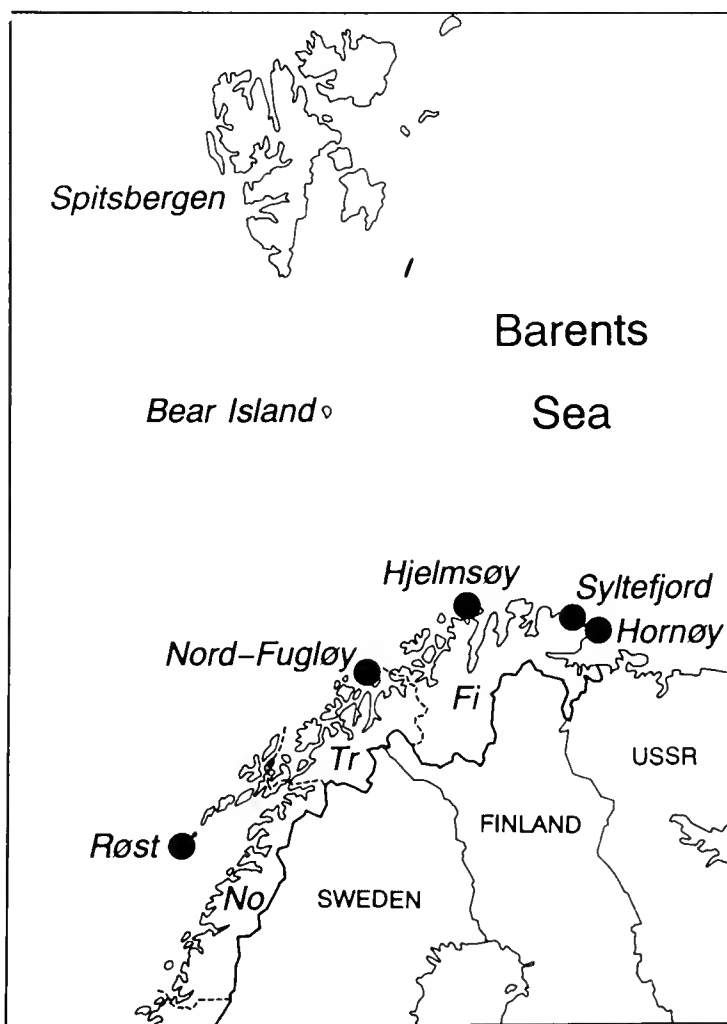


Fig. 1. Map of western Barents Sea and northern parts of Norwegian Sea. County borders of Nordland (No), Troms (Tr) and Finnmark (Fi) and locations of some colonies mentioned in the text are indicated. Spitsbergen = Svalbard

three of the more than 40 major (>10,000 pairs) bird cliffs in Norway and Svalbard are north of the Arctic Circle. Also, in winter, there are several million seabirds in the southern Barents Sea, although the diversity of species then is much less than in the breeding season (Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988a).

Various studies (e.g. Brun 1979; Barrett & Vader 1984) and, since 1979, the Norwegian National Monitoring Programme for Breeding Seabirds (Røv 1984) have revealed that several important seabird populations in this region have recently declined dramatically. In some cases, this has been attributed to collapses in fish-prey stocks, especially those of the Atlanto-Scandian herring *Clupea harengus* and the Barents Sea capelin *Mallotus villosus* (fig. 2)(Vader *et al.* 1990a). Herring and capelin are both key species in the ecosystem of the southern Barents Sea (Loeng 1989; Røttingen 1990) and constitute some of the most important prey for pelagic foraging seabirds in North Norway (e.g. Myrberget 1962; Røv 1984; Furness & Barrett 1985; Barrett *et al.* 1987; Barrett & Furness 1990).

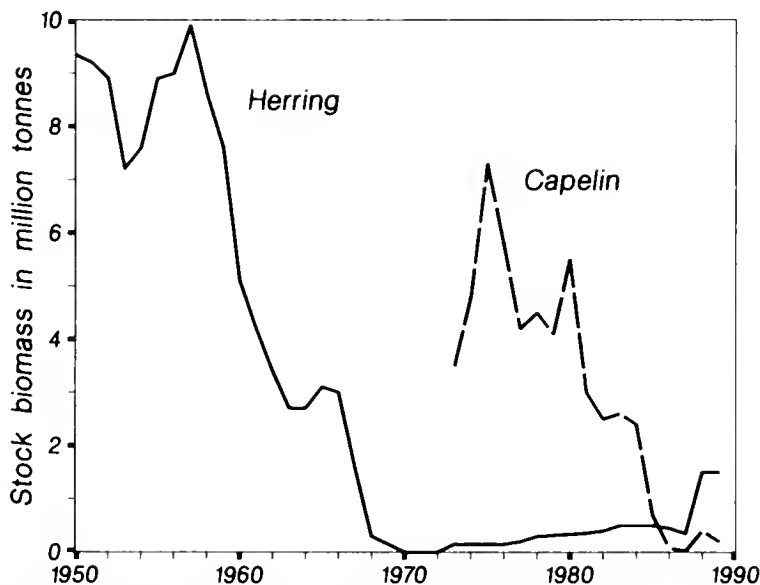


Fig. 2. Estimated stock size (in million tonnes) of Barents Sea capelins *Mallotus villosus* in autumn 1973-89 and spawning Atlanto-Scandian herrings *Clupea harengus* in spring 1950-89 (after Anon. 1990)

The Puffin/herring problem

The Atlanto-Scandian herring stock spawns off western Norway in early spring, and the larvae then drift northwards with the coastal current towards the main nursery grounds in the Barents Sea (e.g. Jakobsson 1985; Anon. 1990). On their way northwards, the fry reach northwestern Norway in the first half of July (by which time they are 5-6 cm long), where they dominated the diet of Puffin chicks in the 1950s (Myrberget 1962).

Since the collapse of the huge herring stock in the late 1960s, as a result of overfishing (Jakobsson 1985), the stock has remained at an extremely low level for nearly two decades (Anon. 1990; fig. 2). As a result, insignificant numbers of 0-group* herrings have been available to breeding Puffins in the Lofoten area since 1969.

*'0-group' fish are those in their first calendar year.

The Røst archipelago, at the southern tip of the Lofoten Islands, holds one of the largest Puffin colonies in the world (e.g. Harris 1984). In 1964, the population was estimated to be about 700,000 pairs, representing about 25% of the total seabird population in Norway at the time (Brun 1979). More recent monitoring data (fig. 3) and a new census in 1990 suggest that Brun's (1979) figures were underestimates and that there were more than 1 million breeding pairs on Røst at the end of the 1970s (TAN unpubl. data). Since the collapse in the herring stock, the Røst Puffins have suffered severely through the lack of 0-group herrings, and during 1969-90 they bred successfully in only five seasons (1974, 1983, 1985, 1989 and 1990). In the other years, they were unable to provide their young with sufficient food, and in most years nearly all chicks starved to death (Lid 1981; Anker-Nilssen 1987; TAN unpubl. data). An intense study of Puffin breeding success along the whole Norwegian coast during 1980-83 showed that other colonies in the region also suffered to an equal or lesser extent (Barrett *et al.* 1987).

Concomitant with the slight recovery of the herring stock in recent years (Anon. 1990) has been an improvement in food conditions for Puffins, and 0-group herrings fully accounted for the breeding successes recorded on Røst in 1985, 1989 and 1990, and partly for that in 1983 (Anker-Nilssen 1987; TAN unpubl. data).

Most Puffins are faithful to their natal breeding colony (Harris 1984). It is, therefore, not surprising that the long-term reproduction failure of the Røst Puffins has caused the population to decrease by as much as 10-15%

187. Puffin *Fratercula arctica* carrying herrings *Clupea harengus*, Røst, Norway, summer 1989
(Tycho Anker-Nilssen)



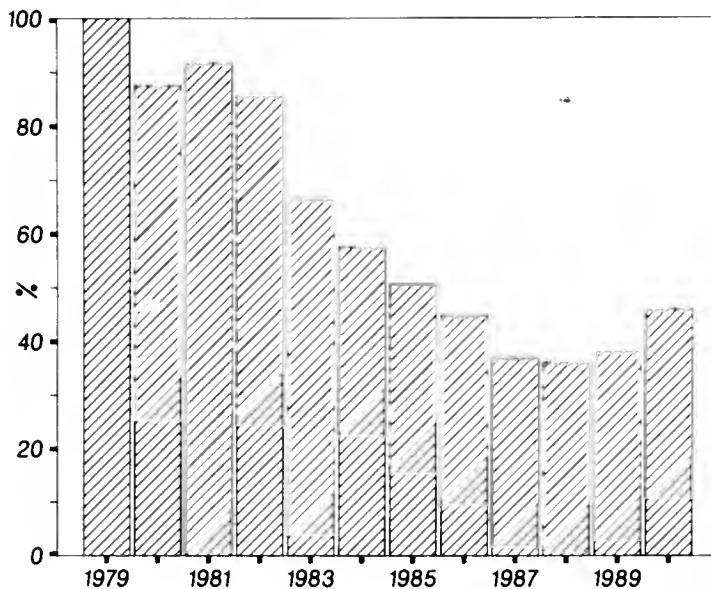


Fig. 3. Changes in number of apparently occupied burrows of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on Hernyken, Røst, in 1979-90 (after Anker-Nilssen & Røstad in manuscript and unpubl. data). Population size expressed as percentage of maximum (in 1979)

annually during most of the last decade (fig. 3; Anker-Nilssen & Røstad in manuscript). Although a substantial recruitment of individuals which fledged in 1983 and 1985 seems temporarily to have stabilised the population, a further decrease can be expected before the 1989 and 1990 chicks join the breeding population. In the long term, the recovery of the Puffin population in the region will depend on the recovery of the herring stock.

In contrast, the Puffin populations in southwestern Norway (Runde) and in Finnmark (Hornøy, fig. 1) seem to have remained stable during the 1980s (Nat. Monit. Progr. unpubl. data). In these areas, Puffins feed their chicks on other prey, mainly spratts *Sprattus sprattus* and haddocks *Melanogrammus aeglefinus* in the south and capelin and sandeels *Ammodytes* in the northeast, and breeding success has normally been high (Barrett *et al.* 1987; Barrett & Furness 1990).

The Guillemot/capelin problem

As typical long-living seabirds, auks mature at three to six years of age and have a low annual reproduction capacity (most species lay only one egg). For species with such a life history, even small changes in adult mortality may have major consequences for population development. A text-book example of this is the recent decline in the population of the Guillemot *Uria aalge* during the recent capelin crisis in the Barents Sea.

Since 1980, the capelin stocks steadily declined from about 5.5 million tonnes until they collapsed to 20,000 tonnes in 1987 (Anon. 1990; fig. 2). The exact causes of this collapse were not so clear cut as for the herring, but were probably a combination of heavy predation pressure by cod *Gadus morhua*, competition with herrings, sea-temperature changes and overfishing (Gjøsæter 1990; Røttingen 1990). Until 1985-86, the numbers of Guillemots breeding in East Finnmark were relatively stable (Syltefjord) or increasing (Hornøy), but by 1987 the numbers breeding in both

Table 1. Estimated number of pairs of Guillemots *Uria aalge* breeding in the largest colonies (i.e. those where at least one estimate exceeds 5,000 pairs) in northern Norway and on Svalbard in 1964-90

Data are rounded values from Lütken (1965), Brun (1969, 1979), Tschanz & Barth (1978), Bakken (1989), the National Monitoring Programme (unpubl.) and K.-B. Strann (*in litt.* for Hjelmsøy 1985-90)

Year	Vedøy (Røst)	Nord-Fugløy	Hjelmsøy	Syltefjord	Hornøy	Bear Island
1960-63	11,900	—	—	—	—	—
1963/64	—	15,000	110,000	—	730	—
1964/66	—	—	—	12,300	—	—
1964/68	7,100	—	—	—	—	—
1966/67	—	9,000	95,000	—	—	—
1974	5,000	—	70,000	9,000	500	—
1975	—	4,000	—	—	—	—
1980	4,700	—	—	—	4,100+	—
1983	3,300	—	—	—	5,200	—
1985	—	100	14,500	13,000	5,000	—
1986	—	—	6,500	10,600	—	245,000
1987	—	—	1,500	1,800	1,100	36,000
1988	670	—	6,000	2,200	1,000	80,000
1989	900	100	6,000	2,400	1,300	95,000
1990	830	—	5,200	—	1,400	—

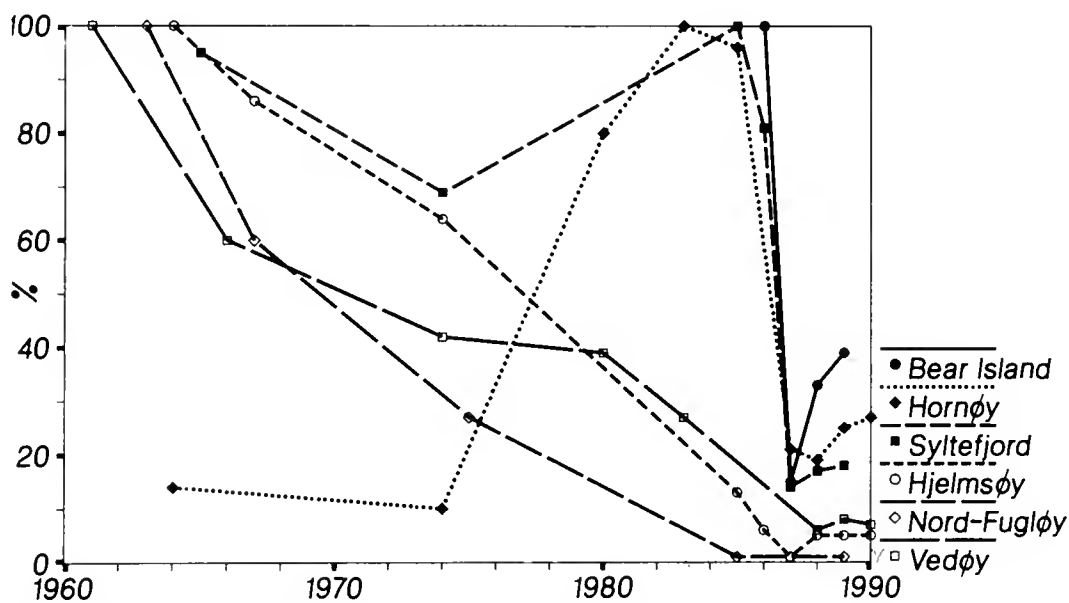


Fig. 4. Relative changes in the numbers of Guillemots *Uria aalge* breeding in the largest colonies (i.e. those where at least one estimate exceeds 5,000 pairs) in northern Norway and on Svalbard in 1964-90 (data from table 1). For each colony, population size expressed as percentage of maximum

colonies suddenly dropped by about 80% (table 1; fig. 4). Also, on Bear Island, where an estimated 245,000 pairs bred in 1986, the numbers crashed by 85% to 36,000 pairs in 1987. Now, after three seasons (1988-90) during which breeding success of all species (including the Guillemot) has been good (Barrett & Furness 1990; RTB pers. obs.), we can infer that the drop in Guillemot numbers was mostly due to adult mortality and not a result of adults simply not breeding that year (fig. 4). This is corroborated

by an unusually high mortality of adult Guillemots during winter 1986/87, when thousands were washed ashore in Troms and Finnmark (Vader *et al.* 1990b). On Bear Island, however, it seems that part of the population did skip breeding in 1987 and 1988, as the population did recover somewhat between 1987 and 1989 (fig. 4). The overall loss of more than half the population in 1986/87 has been attributed to the Guillemot's dependence on the one prey species, capelin, during the non-breeding season (Vader *et al.* 1990b).

In contrast to the long-term problems faced by the Puffins in Lofoten, this recent Guillemot decline spanned only a couple of years. Even by 1988 and 1989, when the capelin stocks were still low, the Guillemots that survived the crash found sufficient food (sandeels and capelins) for successful breeding attempts (Barrett & Furness 1990; RTB pers. obs.), and, with a near full recovery of the capelin stock already documented (Gjøsæter 1990), we can hope for a recovery, albeit slow, in Guillemot numbers.

The long-term Guillemot decline

Unfortunately, the lack of capelins has not been the only negative factor which has hammered the Guillemot populations. Since the first censuses in the mid 1960s, there has been a long-term decrease in the largest colonies of Guillemots in northern Norway, by as much as 70-90% prior to the capelin crisis (fig. 4) (Brun 1979; Barrett & Vader 1984; Røv 1984; Bakken 1989). There are probably several reasons for this decline, but drowning in fishing gear (especially salmon nets and cod nets) seems to be the most important, with thousands or tens of thousands of birds being caught annually (Brun 1979; Vader & Barrett 1982; Strann *et al.* in press).

Low breeding success resulting from food shortages has, however, also affected Guillemots. At Røst, all the breeding seasons during 1970-82 were poor, such that a combination of long-term low recruitment, the short-term capelin crisis and adults drowning in nets was probably the main cause of the more-than-90% decrease in the largest colony (Vedøy) between the early 1960s and 1988 (fig. 4) (Tschanz 1978; Tschanz & Barth 1978; Bakken 1989).

Another negative factor is oil, although its effect on the northern Guillemot populations is unclear. Morphometric studies have indicated that significant numbers of Guillemots from the northernmost colonies winter in the North Sea (Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988b), where oil pollution is a chronic problem hitting particularly this species. For example, at least 60,000 Guillemots were killed in the Skagerrak oiling incident of January 1981, of which an estimated 19,000 (3,500 adults and 15,500 immatures) could have originated in northern Norway (Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988b).

Other seabird populations in the Barents Sea region

Our knowledge concerning the status of other seabird populations breeding in this area is much more limited. The monitoring programme, which is a joint effort of governmental bodies, research institutions and ornithological societies, has been running only since 1979 (1986 on

Svalbard) and is continually short of funds. Apart from the three main target species—Puffin, Guillemot (Brünnich's Guillemot on Svalbard) and Kittiwake—Gannet *Sula bassana*, Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Shag *P. aristotelis*, Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* and Brünnich's Guillemot (on the mainland) are included in the programme.

GANNET

This species is a newcomer to northern Norway. The four existing colonies—the first of which was established in 1961—have all been increasing rapidly and now total about 2,000 breeding pairs (Brun 1979; Montevecchi *et al.* 1987; RTB unpubl. data). This increase is partly due to extensive immigration from British colonies (Montevecchi *et al.* 1987; RTB pers. obs.).

CORMORANT AND SHAG

Populations of the two *Phalacrocorax* species have been more variable, and the capelin crisis seems to have had little effect on either of them. In Norway's largest Shag colony, on Lille Kamøy in western Finnmark (about 2,500 pairs), no Shags nested in 1986 or 1987, but all returned in 1988 (Vader *et al.* 1987, 1990b). Although coincidental with the collapse in the capelin stock, their absence could equally have been caused by a shortage of sandeels also recorded in 1987 (Vader *et al.* 1990b). Sandeels are a common food item for Norwegian Shags, and capelins have yet to be recorded in their diet (Barrett *et al.* 1990). While the populations of Cormorants have fluctuated up and down in Finnmark during the last 20 years (Røv & Strann 1987; Røv 1988), there is no evidence to suggest that any of the declines registered were caused by food shortages. On the contrary, recoveries of ringed individuals show that a substantial proportion of young Cormorants drown in fishing gear (Røstad 1982). We also suspect that many Cormorants and Shags have been persecuted at salmon farms in recent years and that this direct loss from the population, plus those drowned in fishing gear, is more important than any negative effect of food shortage.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

The population of the North Norwegian subspecies *L. f. fuscus* has decreased during this century (Soot-Ryen 1941; Røv 1986). In Finnmark, it is now virtually absent as a breeding species (Strann & Vader in press), and the colonies in Troms and Nordland, which have had low reproductive rates for many years, are decreasing rapidly (Røv 1984; Strann & Vader in press). Severe changes in food resources, including the collapse of the herring stock, are the most probable explanation for the decline (Strann & Vader in press).

KITTIWAKE

This species is less specialised in its food choice than are the auks, and, in winter, individuals are spread over most of the North Atlantic (Norderhaug *et al.* 1977). Although the capelin crash did not lead to any known

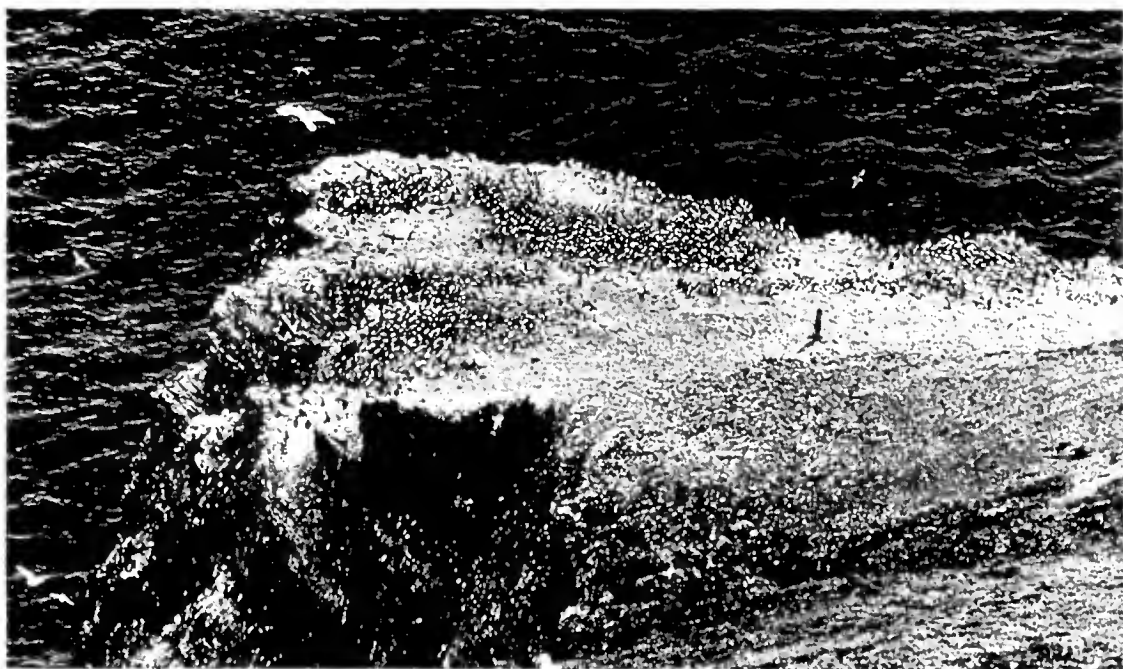
population declines in northern colonies, Kittiwakes all but gave up breeding in the largest Finnmark colony, at Syltefjord, in 1986 (Vader *et al.* 1987).

BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOT

Problems such as those described for Puffins and Guillemots have not been registered for other auks in the Barents Sea region. The population of Brünnich's Guillemots on Bear Island was fairly stable, varying from 105,000-125,000 pairs during 1986-89 (Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988a; V. Bakken, Norw. Polar Res. Inst. unpubl. data). This is possibly due to their being less dependent on capelins than are Guillemots, and to their being



188 & 189. One of major nesting ledges for Guillemots *Uria aalge*, Bear Island, summer 1986 (above) and summer 1987 (below), showing disastrous reduction in breeding numbers (Norwegian Polar Research Institute)



able to feed on other prey, particularly crustaceans, in winter (Bakken 1990; Erikstad 1990; Vader *et al.* 1990b). The comparatively small mainland population may, however, be more dependent on capelins, since it did decrease in numbers during the capelin crisis, but to a much lesser extent than did the Guillemots (Vader *et al.* 1990b).

RAZORBILL AND LITTLE AUK

Owing to their concealed nesting habits, numbers of Razorbills *Alca torda* and Little Auks have not been monitored, and their status in North Norway and on Svalbard is unknown. In the case of Razorbills, this is particularly unfortunate, because their dependence on small, pelagic fish such as herrings, capelins and sandeels (Norderhaug *et al.* 1977; Furness & Barrett 1985; Barrett & Furness 1990) could have caused difficulties in the various colonies during periods of low fish stocks. Furthermore, their susceptibility to drowning in fishing nets (Strann *et al.* in press) may also be having negative consequences. For Little Auks, potential population changes are more doubtful, since they are mostly planktivorous and, therefore, less vulnerable to fluctuations in fish stocks. As a minor threat, oil may constitute a problem for both Little Auks and Razorbills wintering in the North Sea (e.g. Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988b).

FULMAR

Another plankton-feeder is the Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, the most numerous tubenose in the Barents Sea, with the largest colonies on Bear Island. On the mainland, only a few tens of pairs breed in the north and, although it is increasing in the south of the country, there are no conclusive signs of any recent population change north of the Arctic Circle (Barrett & Vader 1984).

EIDER

Although not a seabird in the traditional sense, the Eider *Somateria mollissima* is one of the most characteristic birds of the Norwegian coast and is totally dependent on the sea for its food. Despite this, we know very little about population trends in North Norway. Among potential threats are increasing predation by gulls and crows on the outer islands (where the age-old tradition of 'domesticating' Eiders for their eggs and down has virtually come to an end), oil spills (e.g. Anon. 1974; Anker-Nilssen & Røstad 1982; Røv 1982), the spread of feral minks *Mustela vison*, and a recent increase in drowning incidents in fish nets set for lumpsuckers *Cyclopterus lumpus* along the coast of Troms and Finnmark (Bustnes & Erikstad 1988; G. Henriksen *in litt.*).

What are the prospects for these seabird populations?

With some exceptions, this short summary of the status of seabirds in North Norway and on Bear Island highlights yet again the conflict between declining fish stocks, commercial fisheries and seabirds as being critical in seabird population dynamics (see, e.g., Furness & Ainley 1984;

Nettleship *et al.* 1984). Closer to home for British readers is the continuing sandeel problem around Shetland (Heubeck 1989) and its dire consequences for Guillemots (Heubeck *et al.* in press).

In recent fisheries management policies, we have repeatedly seen commercial interests overruling advice given by fisheries scientists, to the ultimate detriment of the fish stocks involved. Admittedly, fisheries scientists need to refine their methods, and workable multi-species models are still futuristic dreams. The often apparent total disregard for advice based on fisheries research by the politicians and fisheries industry is, however, unreasonable. One must, of course, keep in mind the gradual shift during this century in fisheries practice, from one targeting mainly predatory fish (cod, haddock, etc.) to one targeting both predatory fish and their prey (capelin, herring, etc.). Inherent in this is the possibility for changes in prey availability for seabirds and, hence, their populations.

The spawning stock of Atlanto-Scandian herrings is still less than 20% of its mean level in the 1950s, and 40% below the minimum considered by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to ensure satisfactory recruitment (Anon. 1990). The present stock is even expected to decrease again in the coming years, owing to poor recruitment after 1983 (Anon. 1990). Nevertheless, pressure from the fishing industry has prevented a complete ban on the herring fishery, and, although limited and quota-regulated, the present level of cropping will slow down the stock build-up.

In sharp contrast to that of the herring, the Barents Sea capelin stock is already close to its pre-collapse level, and the capelin fishery was reopened, after only three years' closure, in 1991. This rapid recovery is due to the capelin maturing much more quickly than the herring, good recruitment to the stock in 1988 and 1989, and an unusually rapid somatic growth of individual fish during the last few years (Gjørseter 1990). I-group* fish, however, totally dominate (in number) the present stock. The fact that adults die after spawning means that today's managers need to be very careful to avoid excessive cropping of young fish before they have a chance to recruit into the spawning stock over the next few years.

Long-term decreases in Guillemot numbers in the north before the capelin crisis have, however, shown that other environmental constraints on these populations are serious. The life history and often extreme site fidelity of auks severely limit their ability to recover their numbers, and, in the colonies with the longest history of population decrease (e.g. Røst or Hjelmsøy), it is wishful thinking to hope for any rapid population increases, despite the recent ban on the use of salmon drift nets.

Still fresh in our memories is the seabird disaster following the *Exxon Valdez* incident in Alaska in 1989, which, yet again, illustrated the enormous damage-potential of oil spills in cold waters. In Norwegian waters, the offshore industry is constantly moving farther north, and exploratory drilling has started in many parts of the southern Barents Sea. The threat that this imposes on the millions of seabirds that reside in

*'I-group' fish are those in their second calendar year.

these waters throughout the year is enormous (Anker-Nilssen *et al.* 1988a).

Our children and grandchildren have a right to inherit all the splendours of the coastline, but, unless we take the present situation seriously, they may never see it as we do. The recent declines in Guillemot and Puffin numbers are alarm signals which cannot be ignored. The destiny of all seabirds is our common responsibility, and we must not fail to do what we can to ensure that they remain an integral part of our natural heritage.

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Summary

This is an updated overview of the present status for some of the most important seabirds breeding along the coasts of North Norway and Svalbard. Many of these populations have recently declined dramatically owing to collapses in the stocks of the Atlanto-Scandian herring *Clupea harengus* and the Barents Sea capelin *Mallotus villosus*, two of their most important prey. The long-term lack of first-year herrings has brought about repeated reproductive failures for Puffins *Fratercula arctica* breeding along the Norwegian Sea, while the capelin crisis caused a transitory but extensive mortality of adult Guillemots *Uria aalge* in the Barents Sea. The recent history and the future prospects for the seabirds in this region are discussed in the context of food shortage, oil pollution and drowning in fishing gear.

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Notes



Alert posture of Yellow-billed and Great White Egrets Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* occur in winter in West Africa alongside Yellow-billed Egrets *E. intermedia*. While a close view of the head and facial structure will serve to separate them, the two species show a similarity of bare-part colour in non-breeding plumage and can be more difficult to identify at a distance. Observations in the Gambia during the winter of 1986 suggested that the alert posture of the two species is sufficiently different to separate them at a considerable distance (fig. 1). While the Great White Egret

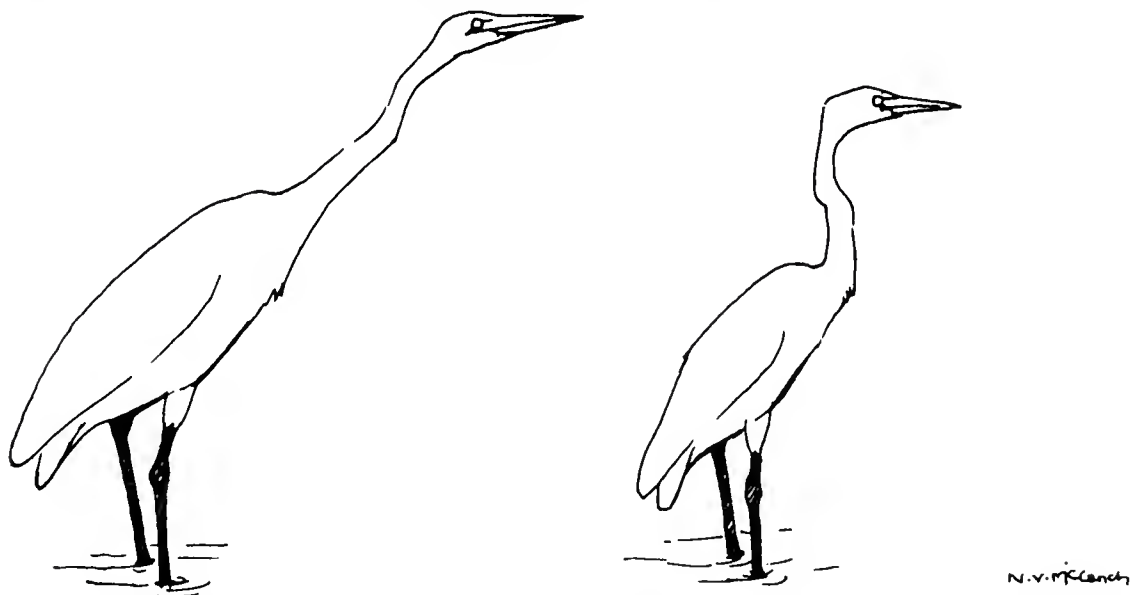


Fig. 1. Alert postures of Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (left) and Yellow-billed Egret *E. intermedia* (right) (N. V. McCanch)

adopts a very elongated stretched-neck pose, head, neck and body being inclined forward at approximately 45°, the Yellow-billed Egret raises its neck vertically from an upright body stance in an extended 'S' shape, with the head and bill parallel to the ground. The silhouette presented is significantly different and serves to help to separate the two species before bare-part colour or more subtle structural differences can be scrutinised.

In addition, Great White Egrets showed a preference for feeding in open water, wading to mid-tarsus depth, while Yellow-billed Egrets tended to feed in more secluded creeks and ditches along the margins of rice paddies.

N. V. MCCANCH and M. MCCANCH

*Calf of Man Bird Observatory, c/o Juan Clague, Kionslieu, Plantation Hill,
Port St Mary, Isle of Man*

As in all cases of the use of behaviour or posture in identification, stance and other jizz characteristics may be very helpful in attracting an observer's attention to 'something different' and may support other identification characters, but should be used with caution. In this instance, photographs suggest that Great White Egret may sometimes adopt the posture depicted for Yellow-billed Egret; it seems possible, however, that Yellow-billed Egret does not adopt that shown for Great White Egret. EDS

Common Gulls with pale irides G. Groot Koerkamp (*Brit. Birds* 80: 628-629) recorded an adult winter Common Gull *Larus canus* in December 1983 in the Netherlands with pale yellowish-white irides. On 26th November 1989, at the Leigh-on-Sea Cocklesheds, Essex, I noted a great variation in the iris colour of the 250 or more adult Common Gulls present. Most were quite normal, with dark brown irides and black pupils; some had completely dark irides, with no colour being apparent; while six had bright golden-brown eyes, which appeared almost yellowy in the good light conditions. One, however, had distinctly yellow eyes, and, furthermore, its head spotting was far more distinct and extensive and its red orbital ring more noticeable; nevertheless, the rest of its plumage, together with its 'jizz', were typical of adult winter Common Gull. This observation emphasises the fact that a 'Common-type' gull with pale irides is not necessarily a Ring-billed Gull *L. delawarensis*.

HOWARD VAUGHAN

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An editorial comment on G. Groot Koerkamp's earlier note pointed out that, as well as the occasional individual of the race *canus* of Common Gull, the Nearctic race *brachyrhynchus* often has noticeably pale irides. Mr Vaughan's note is a helpful reminder to observers that this pitfall exists and that identification of Ring-billed Gull should not be based on just one or two characters. EDS

Yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Essex, 1973-74 A dramatic increase in the number of sightings of yellow-legged Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* spp. in Britain has taken place in recent years, probably reflecting both a real increase in the number of such individuals visiting Britain and increased observer interest in gulls (see Devillers 1983; Grant 1983). Between October 1972 and December 1974, counts of gulls were conducted at a number of refuse-tips and associated roosts in southeast

Essex by the Department of Trade and Industry Ornithological Survey Unit (Deans 1982). Observers regularly scrutinised as many gulls as possible for colour rings, and during the course of this work all yellow-legged Herring Gulls seen were recorded. Small numbers of the latter were noted quite regularly in late summer and autumn (fig. 1). All were adults, except one in 'fourth-year' plumage on 10th July 1973, on which date an adult was also seen with orange (rather than yellow) legs; all had noticeably darker mantles than most of the accompanying pink-legged Herring Gulls, and all of those which were examined closely (the majority) had deep red orbital rings.

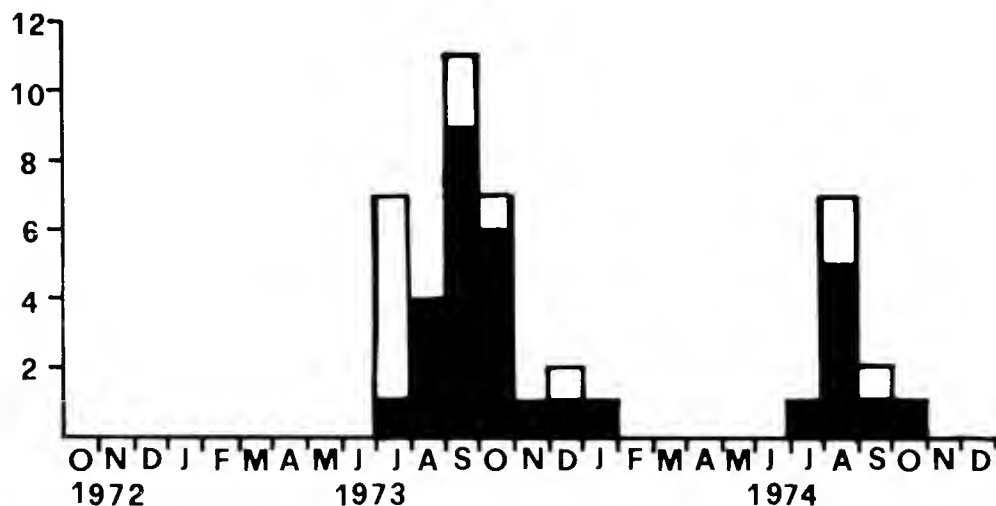


Fig. 1. Monthly totals of yellow-legged Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* ssp. in southeast Essex, October 1972 to December 1974

■ = recorded on weekly census □ = casual observations

There were no reports of yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Essex prior to July 1973, but the above records indicate that such individuals were not uncommon in 1973-74, and before that time had almost certainly been overlooked. There have been records of yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Essex in most years since 1973 (Cox 1984), but reduced observer coverage of major gull haunts since the disbanding of the DTI survey unit probably accounts for the smaller number of sightings.

DAVID S. MELVILLE

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- COX, S. 1984. *A New Guide to the Birds of Essex*. Essex Bird Watching and Preservation Society.
 DEANS, I. R. 1982. *The Maplin Airport Project. Final Report of the Ornithological Survey Unit (1975)*. Stansted Airport Public Enquiry Paper, MAFF 43.
 DEVILLERS, P. 1983. Yellow-legged Herring Gulls on southern North Sea shores. *Brit. Birds* 76: 191-192.
 GRANT, P. J. 1983. Yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Britain. *Brit. Birds* 76: 192-194.

As recently as 1971 (BOU, *The Status of Birds in Britain and Ireland*), there were no definite British or Irish records of subspecies other than *L. a. argentatus* (which then included *argenteus*), so this note demonstrates that yellow-legged individuals were, and probably still are, overlooked in many areas. Yellow-legged Herring Gulls are, however, expanding their range (see, e.g., Devillers 1983) and a real increase in British records seems fairly certain, although the timing of this increase is less clear. Mr Melville's note is of value as it is based on regular statistical observations. Further contributions will be published only if they throw light on the timing of the increase in occurrences of yellow-legged Herring Gulls in Britain. EDS

Wren excavating nest On 5th May 1987, in Lewes, East Sussex, I saw a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* fly from a hanging-basket in a porch, with a beakful of moss. Hoping to locate its nest, I watched it fly to a fence and, to my disappointment, drop its load. It returned to the basket and collected more moss. This excavation work continued for about 25 minutes, interrupted only by snatches of song from the porch roof and the fence. On 10th May, I returned and found a large cavity in the moss (which had originally filled the basket). By 17th May, the cavity had been lined, and on 28th I found a warm clutch of six eggs. Soon after, the householder filled in the hole. *BWP* (vol. 5) makes no mention of Wrens excavating cavities.

DAVID HARPER

School of Biological Sciences, University of Sussex, Falmer, East Sussex BN1 9QG

Wood Warbler's nest invaded by wood ants At about 11.00 GMT on 11th June 1988, in woodland near Triscombe, Taunton, Somerset, I inspected the nest of a pair of Wood Warblers *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* which contained five young about ten days old. I noted that the nest was swarming with wood ants *Formica rufa*. One of the nestlings had about 15 of the ants crawling over it and, not surprisingly, was making vigorous attempts to shake free of them. I inspected the nest again on 13th June, also at about 11.00 GMT. On this occasion, I could not see any wood ants in or around the nest, and the young, which were well nourished and ready to leave, were apparently free of them.

A. P. RADFORD

Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

It is of interest that the nestlings survived this potentially lethal invasion. EDS

Letter

Flight calls of Two-barred Crossbill Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* has three main flight calls which are, in the vast majority of field situations, clearly distinct from those of other crossbills.

Crossbill *L. curvirostra* and Parrot Crossbill *L. pytyopsittacus* possess a wide, partly overlapping spectrum of flight calls, and separating these species on call is frequently problematic. Crossbill's 'chip-chip' is usually like rapidly repeated calls of Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, whilst Parrot Crossbill's 'kip-kip' is rather more like a repeated woodpecker call (between those of Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* and Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus* in quality).

Two-barred Crossbill's most common call is a high-pitched, liquid, bouncing, quite long 'glip-glip', reminiscent of part of the main call of Quail *Coturnix coturnix* or the 'pwit' flight note of Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*. A second call is a rather harsh 'chuch-chuch', very similar to that of a Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*. Two-barred Crossbill sometimes utters a very distinctive, nasal 'eeaat' in flight, a note which may also be heard as part of its song. It bears a strong resemblance to the subdued song-note of Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*.

All three flight calls of Two-barred Crossbill lack the metallic tone of those of other crossbills and the emphatic, woodpecker-like quality of that of Parrot Crossbill. Whilst the first, most common call may infrequently approach the 'chip-chip' of Crossbill, the other two calls can hardly be confused with any call from Crossbill or Parrot Crossbill.

My sincere thanks are due to Lars Edenius, Krister Mild and Lars Svensson for useful criticism of an earlier draft of this letter.

JOHAN ELMBERG
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Announcements

'BB' goes to Morocco Morocco—one of the most exciting ornithological countries in the Western Palearctic—is the destination for a *British Birds*-SUNBIRD trip in April 1992. The leaders will be SUNBIRD Director, Bryan Bland, and Rarities Committee Chairman, Peter Lansdown. The group will travel extensively along the length of the spectacular High Atlas mountain range and venture into the northern edge of the Sahara, seeking all of the Moroccan specialities, such as Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*, Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* and Desert Sparrow *Passer simplex*, and all of the country's many species of lark (Alaudidae) and wheatear *Oenanthe*. April is the peak month for spring passage and amazing concentrations of grounded migrants are likely to be encountered.

For full details, write or phone to David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas at Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

Drawings and photographs for sale Anyone wishing to purchase drawings or photographs (prints or transparencies) by the artists or photographers whose work appears in *British Birds* can send a letter requesting details of availability or price to the person concerned c/o *British Birds*, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ. We will forward the letters as a service to our contributors and our readers.

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

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- *Chandler *North Atlantic Shorebirds* (save £3.00)
- *Harrison *Seabirds: an identification guide* Revised edition 1985 (save £5.04)
- *Ogilvie & Winter *Best Days with British Birds* (save £2.00)

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xiii & xiv.

Requests

Entangled seabirds A one-year project has been commissioned by the Tidy Britain Group to study six-pack and four-pack can-carriers in the marine environment. The study is concerned with the probability and methods of entanglement of seabirds by can-carriers in relation to other similar debris. Any records (or dead specimens) of entangled seabirds will be gratefully received by Chris Onions, Tidy Britain Group, Farnborough College of

Technology, Boundary Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6SB; phone Farnborough (0252) 391278. (Any expenses incurred will be refunded, and further information is available on request.)

Breeding birds of Madagascar For the preparation of an atlas of the breeding birds of Madagascar, unpublished observations, copies of published literature and information on any Madagascan birds in small museums and private collections is requested. All contributions, which will be fully acknowledged, should be sent to Steven M. Goodman and Thomas S. Schulenberg, Field Museum of Natural History, Roosevelt Road at Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois 60605, USA (phone 312-922-9410); or to Olivier Langrand and Lucienne Wilmé, WWF Aires Protégées, B.P. 738, Antananarivo (101), Madagascar.

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

British Birdwatching Fair 1991 The Fair is set to take place over the weekend of 30th August to 1st September and is expected to attract thousands of birdwatchers from all over the country. The event, sponsored by 'In Focus' of Barnet, is run jointly by the RSPB and the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation (LRTNC) at the Trust's Egleton nature reserve beside Rutland Water.

The Fair offers a unique chance to see the widest range of interests that make up the contemporary birdwatching and wildlife conservation scene. There is everything from optical manufacturers to the Bird Stamp Society, from new and second-hand books to computer databases; from wildlife holidays to wildlife gardening. The Art Exhibition will contain works from most of the leading wildlife artists, many of whom will be at the Fair working alongside their paintings. *British Birds* will be there: come and visit our stand (number MI/27).

This year, funds raised at the Fair will be used to help the Danube Delta project. The Fair organisers have joined forces with the ICBP, which will oversee the project, ensuring that the monies raised will go directly to assist bird conservation.

Admission to the Fair will be £5.00 for adults, but children will be admitted free. Group bookings of ten or more before 31st July receive a £1 discount.

For further information about the British

Birdwatching Fair, please send a stamped addressed envelope to Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8AB.

Wildlife art The annual exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists will be held as usual at the Mall Gallery (Trafalgar Square end of the Mall, London SW1) during 2nd-11th August 1991. It will, also as usual, display a wide selection, including the winning entries, of *BB's* 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' competition. Over 500 works, in all media, will be on show. The Gallery is open every day, including Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

1992 wildlife calendar Work by members of the Society of Wildlife Artists is also featured on the Wild Europe 1992 calendar. Measuring 12 × 17 inches (30 × 43 cm), the calendar reproduces 12 new paintings, by Priscilla Barret, Keith Brockie, John Busby, Robert Gillmor, Matthew Hillier, Lars Jonsen, Bruce Pearson, Darren Rees, Chris Rose, Keith Shackleton, Simon Turvey and Donald Watson. This is a limited-edition calendar, sponsored by Lloyds Bank Offshore Banking Group, and any sold will benefit the SWIA, now a registered charity. Copies are available at £10 each, including post and packing, from Wild Europe Calendar, 58 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7HQ. Cheques should be made payable to the Society of Wildlife Artists.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel membership

The membership of the Panel has been strengthened by the addition of two new members, proposed by the present members and—as required by the Panel's constitution—unanimously supported by the Editorial Board of *British Birds*, and the councils of the BTO and the RSPB. The two new members are Dr J. J. D. Greenwood and Dr D. A. Stroud.

Migrants in Normandy Fancy a few days, or more, in Normandy this autumn looking for migrants? The Groupe Ornithologique Normand is inviting British birdwatchers to visit the nature reserve at Carolles, Manche Department, between 9th September and 7th November 1991, during which time they hope to have continuous coverage. This site, which is 10 km south of Granville near the Mont St Michel, is important for autumn migrants, hundreds of thousands of which pass through each year. Regular visitors include Tawny Pipits *Anthus campestris*, Lapland Buntings *Calcarius lapponicus*, Snow Buntings *Plectrophenax nivalis* and Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana*, as well as unusual warblers, seabirds, butterflies and perhaps dolphins. Further information can be gained by writing to the Groupe Ornithologique Normand, Université de Caen, 14032 Caen, France.



Bulgarian announcement The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB) was founded on 3rd June 1988. Its main aim is to preserve and restore the diversity and richness of Bulgarian birds through disseminating knowledge about birds and nature conservation in general and through cooperation with local, governmental and international agencies dedicated to the protection of birds and their habitats. The BSPB will also carry out projects of its own in this respect, with special emphasis on rare and endangered species. The Society will publish an information bulletin in *Neophron*. The

BSPB is an independent, privately funded organisation and the biggest ornithological society in Bulgaria. The BSPB will appreciate any advice and help from other organisations or individuals. The address of the BSPB and of the Bulgarian National Section of the ICBP is: 8 Blvd Dragan Tzankov, 1421 Sofia, Bulgaria; telephone 72 06 30; fax 0113592 705498.

'Irish Birds' The latest issue (volume 4, number 2, 1990) includes the 37th Irish Bird Report (covering 1989, and running to 27 pages) and papers on the breeding biology of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* in Co. Wicklow, by Micheál Ó Briain and Pádraig Farrelly; on bird communities of two short-rotation forestry plantations on cutover peatland, by Brendan Kavanagh; on the Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* in Dublin, by Richard Collins and John Whelan; on the distribution of breeding waders in relation to habitat features on the River Shannon callows, by I. J. Herbert, S. Heery and C. R. M. Meredith; and on the breeding gulls and terns of the islands of Lough Derg, by J. V. Reynolds. This 140-page issue costs £5 plus £1 postage, and is available from the Irish Wildbird Conservancy, Ruttledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

'Ny Vorona eto Madagasikara' This book, *The Birds of Madagascar*, by Lalao Rakotondrabesa, David Cemmick and Paul Thompson, was produced for distribution to schools in Madagascar, since there were no books in the Malagasy Republic on the island's birds, and little teaching material about the environment. In order to raise money to help fund free distribution of the book (32pp, A4 format, with many colour and black-and-white illustrations beautifully prepared by David Cemmick), a limited edition of 100 with a short English summary and frontispiece line-drawing by David Cemmick is available at £10 incl. p. & p. per copy. Cheques should be made payable to Madagascar Environmental Research Group and sent to The Secretary, MERG, c/o The Conservation Foundation, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

More sillies We received a short note from Brian Bentley: 'Heard in the hide recently . . . "There's another one over there—it's pruning itself".' A typing error on another note sent to us told of 'unused warblers' and a bright spark in the office suggested *Phylloscopus immaculatus* as their scientific name.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 14th June to 11th July 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* Tacumshin and Lady's Island Lake (both Co. Wexford), 6th-7th July.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* Stiffkey (Norfolk), 16th-17th June; presumably same individual wandering Suffolk and Norfolk during 2nd-7th July; two over Northampton (Northamptonshire) town centre, 5th-7th July; Epping Forest (Essex), 7th July.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Barton-le-Clay (Bedfordshire), 16th June.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* Eswick (Shetland), 15th June; Thornton Reservoir (Leicestershire), 28th June; Wilstone Reservoir, Tring (Hertfordshire), 28th-29th June.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Trimley Nature Reserve (Suffolk), 7th-11th July.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* Druidge Pool, Cresswell (Northumberland), 22nd-23rd June.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Bann Estuary (Co. Londonderry), 16th June.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* Stanley, 30th June to 2nd July; Welbeck Nature Reserve, Wakefield (both West Yorkshire), 4th-5th July.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* Reclamation Pond, Teesmouth (Cleveland), 19th-23rd June; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 30th June.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Radipole Lake (Dorset), 30th June; Benacre Broad (Suffolk), 5th July; Breydon Water, 6th and 10th-11th July (all probably same individual).

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* Summering individual returned to Northumberland/Cleveland, spasmodically from 5th June to 1st July; Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 16th June.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba*, Lamorna Cove, Penzance (Cornwall), 6th July; Landguard Point (Suffolk), 11th July.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* Scarborough (North Yorkshire), 26th June; Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 27th June; two, Reculver (Kent), and single, Priory Country Park, Bedford (Bedfordshire), 29th June; three, Ravenscar (North Yorkshire), 29th-30th June; three, Flamborough Head (Humber-side), 1st July; four, Frinton-on-Sea (Essex) and single, Spurn (Humber-side), 1st July; Littlehampton (West Sussex), 4th July; Benacre Broad, 5th July; Spurn Point (Humber-side), 10th July; Stronsay (Orkney), 11th July.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* West Wittering (West Sussex), 26th June to 4th July.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Grove, Canterbury (Kent), 15th-17th June; Portland (Dorset), 17th June.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* Sum-burgh (Shetland), 14th June.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Spurn, 20th June; Scarborough, 22nd-23rd June (probably same individual)

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Dungeness (Kent), 20th June.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* Scarborough, 22nd-23rd June; Shoeburyness (Essex), 23rd-28th June; Lundy (Devon) 27th-28th June; Walton-on-the-Naze (Essex), 30th June to 1st July.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* Shannon Airport (Co. Clare), 5th July.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* June influx continued: Flamborough Head, 16th June and 1st July; up to five, North Ronaldsay, and single, Hoy (both Orkney), mid June; three, Cromer (Norfolk), 15th-16th June; Minsmere (Suffolk), 17th June; two, Fair Isle (Shetland), 18th June; Wells (Norfolk), 22nd June.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Tarbet (Highland), 29th June.

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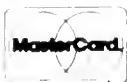
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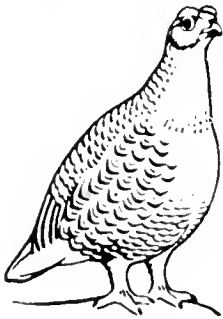
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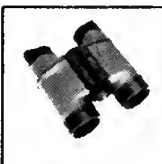
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David M. Coltridge

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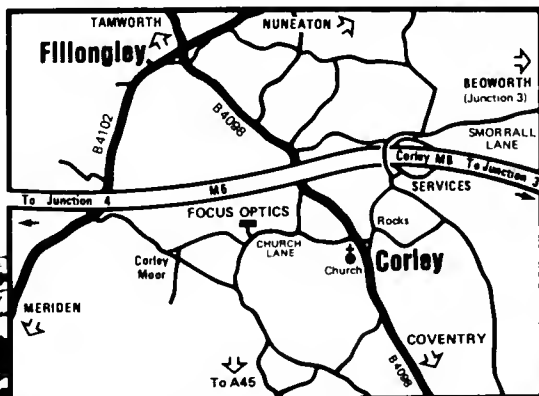
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British Birds

VOLUME 84 NUMBER 9 SEPTEMBER 1991



Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1989



Robert Spencer and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the seventeenth annual report published by the Panel; the sixteenth report, for 1988, was published last year (*Brit. Birds* 83: 353-390). It is, as usual, based on material submitted by county or regional recorders, supplemented by data extracted from Schedule 1 licence returns to the NCC, and from letters from observers reporting directly to the Panel. The support which the Panel has received has been most encouraging: of the more-important contributing counties in a normal year, only Devon is missing. Some Devon data are included, drawn from sources outside the recording network.

[The publication of this report has been subsidised by a donation from the RSPB]

Thanks to the publicity of bodies such as the RSPB, the NCC, the WWF, Greenpeace and the ICBP, we are all made aware of threats to rare or declining species. Scarcely a month passes without the attention of the public being drawn to some newly assessed danger. 'There are now only 10,000', we are informed about the black rhinoceros *Diceros bicornis*, and maybe that sounds abundant until we are also told that 30 years ago the figure was 100,000. We must not forget that the extinct Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* at one time existed in such vast numbers that a single flock is said to have taken a whole day to fly past. Clearly, if such stupendous declines can take place, it is essential to attempt to measure numbers, however approximately, and it is even more essential to examine the ecology and prospects of species which appear to be declining. Just as a stitch in time saves nine, so does an early start to ecological investigation offer the best chance of preventing that decline from becoming terminal. In a migratory population, unless pair formation occurs in winter quarters or on spring passage, the chance of isolated males and females locating each other without the aid of some far-reaching pheromone can be little greater than that of a jackpot win on the football pools. Such must be the position of any Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* now reaching Britain. Its ancestors may have bred with us for thousands of years, for its fossil remains date back to the last Ice Age. In 1989, for the first time in millenia, no pair is known to have nested with us. Do we bear a responsibility?

In compensation for the loss of the Red-backed Shrike there has been one extraordinary addition to the British list of rare breeding species: in the years since 1981, a still-tiny community of Cranes *Grus grus* has established a base here, after an absence of nearly 400 years.

Some years ago, the Panel, when asked what it meant by 'rare', proposed a figure of below 300 pairs. Second thoughts showed this to be too simplistic a definition, ill suited to species such as the Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, whose numbers each spring are much influenced by the preceding winter's weather. In 1979, for example, there were fewer than 120 pairs, whereas for 1989 the figure was 522 pairs. To meet the situation posed by such volatile species, the threshold was redefined as 'species normally with fewer than 300 pairs'. It was, perhaps, fortunate that no absolute ceiling was thought necessary, for of Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, not adopted by the Panel until 1986, more than 1,600 were recorded in 1989. Doubtless, the 1990 population will be well below 300 again.

Threats to our breeding birds, rare and common alike, fall into three broad categories, which may be defined as follows: (i) 'acts of God', (ii) concomitants of legal, unavoidable or innocent activity, and (iii) deliberate acts. In the first category come such happenings as spontaneous heathland fires, the floods which too often wash out the nests of Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, the freak storms which kill young in open nests, winter's severe cold, and the spring tides when they sweep away the eggs of gulls and terns. Even in these cases, however, the hand of man may be at work, as a result of habitat fragmentation, altered drainage arrangements or rising sea levels caused by the greenhouse effect.

The second category of threats is in some respects the most difficult to reduce, yet potentially the most serious one in its effects. It is probably now a consensus view that legal, commonplace farming activities in the past 30 years have done much to degrade the landscape, reduce available habitat, and sometimes to harm wildlife directly. But is the harvesting of a wood in which a pair of Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivorus* is nesting any different in principle from mowing the meadow where Corncrakes *Crex crex*, Curlews *Numenius arquata* or harvest mice *Micromys minutus* are nesting? Provided that they know of the existence of nesting birds, many farmers, foresters (the Forestry Commission has its own Wildlife and Conservation Research Branch) and road engineers have often been most considerate in rescheduling their work until the young have flown.

A new, inadvertent, threat is mentioned in this report: the promotion of long-distance footpaths. How can one object to an activity which fosters an appreciation of the countryside and promotes health? Yet long-distance mountain footpaths, many of which grow wider by the year with the tread of thousands of boots, pass by summits where not long ago Dotterels *Charadrius morinellus* were the only higher form of life present. And, as with mountains, so waters. Few are immune to the magic of following the sea's edge, and the long-distance coastal footpath runs through prime, occupied, Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* habitat. Habituation is the process which enables motorwayside bird populations to ignore the constant traffic, provided that the vehicles do not stop. Dare we assume that rare breeding bird species through whose territories our footpaths lead will gradually learn to accept people passing by? And will the price of their doing so be that we are not free to stop?

The third category of threat, deliberate activity, is one which the majority of observers and recorders dread most, and let us candidly admit that, in terms of numbers, though not of intention, thoughtless birdwatchers are potentially among the conservation problems. Not long ago, the indiscreet publishing of the locality of a long-established pair of Honey Buzzards meant that special arrangements had to be made to protect them from excessive visitation. Yet sometimes there is needless apprehension about intrusion by birdwatchers, and the supposed role which this report can play in bringing unwelcome attention. Bearing in mind that a report is not published until two years after the end of the season it covers, there is, perhaps, no good case for requesting that the county name be suppressed in reporting the breeding of—say—a Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, for which suitable breeding habitat is widely distributed. Where habitat requirements are specialised (e.g. reed beds, in a county with few such areas), the Panel is certainly sympathetic towards requests for secrecy. Too much secrecy, however, can be as harmful as too little: the suppression of one Honey Buzzard site (even from the landowner) resulted in the nest-tree being felled when it would otherwise proudly have been retained. Collectors remain an anachronistic threat from Victorian times. As these lines are being written, our television screens have shown pictures of camouflaged Gurkha troops brought into Wales to defend nesting Red Kites *Milvus milvus* from egg-thieves. Here is a species

which suffers, too, from poisoning. It matters not that the poison was sold legally, for use in a prescribed manner against legitimate pest species. The crime is that it was deliberately used in a manner which could not ensure that all other species were safeguarded.

In the long term, conservation research resources must always go towards the internationally important, and to established species with small, declining populations. Newcomers, and those of spasmodic presence, may sometimes be given temporary wardening, but for the most part they have to take their chance. There were more than usual of these shooting stars in 1989: Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* and Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*, only one of which seems a likely coloniser. The Spoonbill could well become established here and might then achieve a population of international importance, for it is rare and vulnerable elsewhere in Europe. Almost as scarce was the Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, featured after a gap of eight years.

There are two disturbing accounts. The first is the continued decline of the Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, a decline so severe one wonders whether all regular waters were checked and reported on. Should more birds come to light, details will be included in the next report. The second concern is for the Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, whose numbers continue to increase in a most satisfactory manner, but whose 1989 breeding success in some colonies was at a pathetically low level.

In contrast, the report lists many modest successes: a good year for Garganeys *Anas querquedula* and Honey Buzzards, Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* at a new high level and apparently still increasing, Purple Sandpipers *Calidris maritima* discovered nesting on a second mountain range, Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris* just exceeding their previous highest total, Firecrests thriving in Wales, and a detailed survey revealing that, if only in their stronghold county of Devon, there are still more Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* than had been feared.

The Panel

The membership of the Panel remained unchanged in 1989: Dr L. A. Batten, R. H. Dennis, Richard Porter, Dr J. T. R. Sharrock and Robert Spencer (secretary). Although they reflect the interests and needs of the Panel's sponsoring bodies, the NCC, the RSPB, the BTO and *British Birds*, the individual members each serve on the Panel in a personal capacity.

The Panel's work was commissioned by the NCC as part of its programme for nature conservation. The Panel's other sponsoring bodies, the BTO, the RSPB and *British Birds*, also supported the work financially.

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Systematic list Part 1. Non-passerines

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Six localities in six counties: two pairs built nests.

England, E* Three localities: (1) male, at site where breeding attempted in 1988, built nest, but no female joined him; (2) one from 11th March to 29th August, with two present on 2nd April, and nest-building activity noted on 13th May; (3) pair from 22nd May to 7th June, with courtship behaviour, one remaining until 26th June.

England, N One locality: probably same individual, in breeding plumage, at adjacent localities on 24th and 25th April.

Scotland Two localities: (1) pair from 14th May to at least 14th July, built two platforms and nest, but presumably did not lay; (2) adult at regular site from 29th March to 20th April.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	5	10	8	6
No. individuals	1	4	2	2	3	1	4	5	9	12	9
No. pairs	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	3	3

Summer occurrences continue to be widespread. Although events in 1989 were not quite so encouraging as those in 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 188-191; *Scot. Birds* 15: 133), there must still be a good prospect that the species will soon breed successfully in Britain.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

39 localities: 70 pairs, 62 of which attempted breeding, and 21 of which reared a total of 49 young.



Scotland, S One locality: one from 18th April to early May. Site also occupied in 1987 and 1988.

Scotland, Mid Three localities: (1) adult from 18th April to 28th June; (2) adult on 7th June; (3) one summered, and in winter plumage by 7th September.

Scotland, N 35 localities: (1)-(35) 70 pairs and four singles summered. 62 pairs bred, 21 of which succeeded in fledging a probable total of 49 young.

*Geographic regions are as in previous years (see, e.g., *Brit. Birds* 83: 356-357).

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	27	36	35	25	44	26	40	43	39	22	39
Confirmed (pairs)	58	53	52	51	41	39	63	68	33	31	70
Possible (pairs)	19	27	19	8	38	21	18	19	6	6	8
Max. total (pairs)	77	80	71	59	79	60	81	87	39	37	78

The high figures in 1989 are the result of detailed survey work, and the Panel is much indebted to Colin Crooke of the RSPB and Malcolm Harvey. Some regularly used sites appear to have been abandoned, and a programme to safeguard sites is urgently required.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

19 localities in 15 counties: 25-40 pairs breeding.

England, SE & E Six localities: (1) one on 4th, 5th and 7th May; (2) pair on 13th June had two juveniles on 29th July, one juvenile until 31st August; (3) one in full breeding plumage on 11th and 12th June at site which has formerly attracted pairs; (4) three, in breeding plumage, on 22nd May and pair on 29th May; (5) adult on 3rd-4th June; (6) two in breeding plumage on 4th June. (Sites (4)-(6) are only 20 km apart and movement between them is not ruled out.)

England, Central Three localities: (1) up to four in spring, five to 12 from mid July to the end of the year, but no juveniles reported; (2) pair bred at hitherto unreported site, where breeding also occurred in 1987 and 1988; (3) pair probably bred.

England, N Four localities: (1) two pairs produced eight young from three broods, at least four of which fledged; (2) one in suitable habitat on 9th and 10th June; (3) pair plus presumed male from 3rd May to at least 1st June; (4) 17 pairs hatched 28 young at the single most important site in Britain.

Scotland Six localities: (1) one from 29th April to 4th May; (2) pair on 15th June; (3) three adults from April to July, two broods, one young fledging from each; (4) singles on 14th June and 22nd September; (5) two pairs, but no young seen; (6) two pairs and two singles on 27th March, four pairs and single on 17th April and 5th May, three pairs with broods, of 1, 2 and 3, on 18th July.

1987 England, Central One locality: pair bred.

1987 England, N One locality: adult from 4th-16th June.

1988 England, Central One locality: pair bred.

1988 England, N One locality: pair from at least 30th May to 4th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	6	9	7	13	19	17	17	15	19	22	19
Confirmed (pairs)	12	11	5	11	11	17	9	11	27	15	25
Possible (pairs)	2	10	7	12	21	13	13	22	12	20	15
Max. total (pairs)	14	21	12	23	32	30	22	33	39	35	40

This rare breeding species at present is more than holding its own. Whilst the total is much influenced by numbers at one key water, the species is now quite widespread in its distribution. It shows a preference for small, eutrophic, reed-fringed waters, and over the years has bred successfully even on a sewage-farm and a beet-factory settling-pond. The fact that the species is most successful on private waters suggests that disturbance (angling is mentioned in some reports) is a key factor.

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

14 localities: 3-35 pairs bred.

England, SW One locality: single flew into reed-bed on evenings of 31st July and 1st August.

England, E 12 localities: (1)(2) two males booming at each; (3)-(8) single males booming; (9) pair fledged young; (10) eight males booming in April; (11)(12) combined total of about eight males booming during breeding season.

England, N One locality: six or seven males booming, and two nests found.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	21	19	16	15	18	18	15	12	17	14	14
Confirmed (pairs)	1	4	1	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	3
Booming males	51	48	47	35	44	36	28	23	22	30	33

Recent research by the RSPB has revealed that a male may boom from places considerably farther apart than had previously been appreciated. The figures for booming males in the table may, therefore, suggest a population bigger than it really is.

Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

One locality: one pair.

England, E One locality: pair started to build nest in early July.

This is the first time that this species has featured in the Panel's reports. As it is well established in the Netherlands, colonisation of Britain is, perhaps, a realistic possibility.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

Five localities: 2-9 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S One locality.

BORDERS One locality: single present at least during 25th June to 3rd July.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: two feral pairs, one rearing a single young to at least December and the second with a weak cygnet which had disappeared by 4th June.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

ARGYLL Two localities: (1) two summered, separately; (2) nine summered, only three of which were capable of flight; one consorted with a Mute Swan *C. olor*.

SHETLAND One locality: one incubated an infertile egg in a nest about 10 m from a Mute Swan's nest with five eggs; it apparently associated with the male Mute Swan.

These are the highest numbers so far reported, but they represent 'much ado about nothing'.

Pintail *Anas acuta*

16 localities: 11-39 pairs breeding.

England, SE Four localities.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) female on 9th July and two females on 17th July; (2) single on 7th June; (3) single during July.

KENT One locality: pair almost certainly bred at site also occupied in 1987.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) brood in July; (2) pair in spring prospecting for nest site.

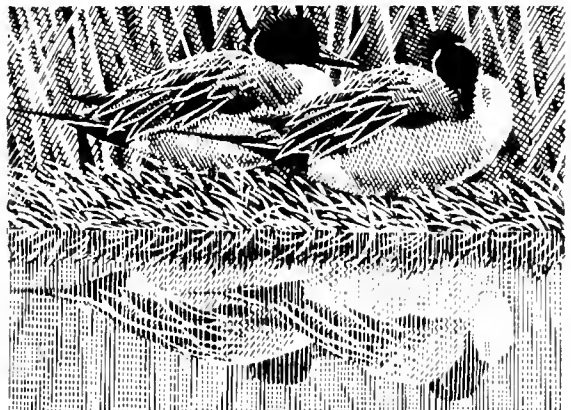
England, N Three localities.

CHESHIRE Two localities: (1) female from 20th June to 7th July; (2) two males and a female from 12th-25th June.

YORKSHIRE One locality: female with four young in early July (the first breeding in Yorkshire since 1983).

Wales Two localities.

DYFED Two localities: (1) female with six ducklings at end of May; (2) three pairs fledged broods of 3, 3 and 4, and fourth female thought to have nested.



Scotland, S One locality.

BORDERS One locality: pair from 16th-24th April, not seen thereafter.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ARGYLL One locality: four to six pairs bred, four broods recorded, and possibly a fifth.

ORKNEY Three localities: (1) up to six pairs, but no broods seen; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) at least ten pairs.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	19	15	16	18	23	15	17	14	16	20	16
Confirmed (pairs)	10	9	8	7	12	5	9	6	7	14	11
Possible (pairs)	31	16	23	25	20	13	12	12	14	15	28
Max. total (pairs)	41	25	31	32	32	18	21	18	21	29	39

The second highest maximum total since the Panel started keeping records in 1973.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

81 localities: 18-98 pairs breeding.

England, SW Four localities: 0-4 pairs breeding.

England, SE 23 localities: 5-28 pairs breeding.

England, E 33 localities: 11-43 pairs breeding.

England, Central Eight localities: 0-8 pairs breeding.

England, N Ten localities: 2-13 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S Three localities: 0-2 pairs breeding.



In every respect, 1989 was the best year for this species since the Panel started collecting data about it in 1980. The individual county totals are listed in the Appendix.

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	34	48	66	59	46	32	42	36	37	81
Confirmed (pairs)	4	8	10	15	4	4	8	8	11	18
Possible (pairs)	50	50	84	55	53	36	47	37	40	80
Max. total (pairs)	54	58	94	70	57	40	55	45	51	98

Pochard *Aythya ferina*

116 localities: 260-336 pairs breeding.

England, SW Seven localities: 10-11 pairs breeding.

England, SE 37 localities: 90-119 pairs breeding.

England, E 31 localities: 67-86 pairs breeding.

England, Central Ten localities: 16-19 pairs breeding.

England, N 20 localities: 70-77 pairs breeding.

Wales Three localities: 1-2 pairs breeding (one pair moved to a new site).

Scotland, S Six localities: 4-10 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid Two localities: 2-12 pairs breeding.

1988 England, SW Two localities: two pairs breeding.

1988 England, Central Two localities: 1-6 pairs breeding.

1988 England, N Two localities: two pairs breeding.

	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	68	63	138	116
Confirmed (pairs)	126	130	185	260
Possible (pairs)	59	44	162	76
Max. total (pairs)	185	174	347	336

This species was not added to the Panel's list until 1986 and it is likely that, for the first two years, some recorders were not aware of the addition. The detailed county totals, which appear in the Appendix, reveal a marked easterly bias in the distribution which does not seem to be related solely to the presence or absence of suitable, eutrophic waters.

In a recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 84: 83-98), Dr A. D. Fox estimated the British breeding population at 370-395 pairs in 1986, considerably higher than the total suggested by the records reported to the Panel.

Scaup *Aythya marila*

Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

England, E One locality.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: two females, one to at least 5th August, with first-summer male from 22nd May to at least 5th August.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

ANGUS One locality: two males and a female present from 28th May to 22nd June.

DUNBARTONSHIRE One locality: female with three young during last week of July.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) pair from 14th-16th May; (2) three males and a female on 16th-17th May, two males on 18th May, one male on 20th May.

The Lincolnshire record of this northern duck should be seen in the context of successful breeding in Anglesey in 1988.

Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

FIFE One locality: female present from 14th April to 22nd November (and summered again in 1990), but made no attempt to pair with a drake of any species.

This is the first report to the Panel of a summering Long-tailed Duck. Campbell & Ferguson-Lees (1972, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*) noted that eggs were reported to have been taken in Shetland at least three times in the nineteenth century and in Orkney in 1911 and probably 1912, and that nesting was suspected in the Outer Hebrides in 1969.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Seven localities: 8-40 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality: two pairs at regular site, but breeding not proved.

Scotland, N & W Six localities.

ARGYLL One locality: maximum of 14 pairs plus two additional males, three nests known and two broods seen.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Three localities: (1) 14 males and eight females on 26th April, female with a recently-hatched brood of 6 on 1st August; (2) ten in May and two nests in June; (3) male on 28th May.

ROSS-SHIRE One locality: pair on 31st May.

SHETLAND One locality: five males and two females throughout, two broods, of 3 and 5 ducklings, on 18th July.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	17	10	6	17	6	9	25	35	15	36	7
Confirmed (pairs)	98	7	5	14	10	17	2	8	29	14	8
Possible (pairs)	30	106	77	98	75	52	72	92	33	76	32
Max. total (pairs)	128	113	82	112	85	69	74	100	62	90	40

The population of this species has been declining for some time, but the

exceptionally low figures for 1989 arise partly because at least two important areas have submitted no data. Holidaying ornithologists seeing Common Scoters between May and early August are urged to report their observations to the relevant recorder, or, failing that, to the Panel.

Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Breeding mainly confined to one extensive nest-box scheme.

England, SE Three localities.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two females summered.

ESSEX One locality: male from June to September.

KENT One locality: one or two from 19th June throughout the summer.

England, E One locality.

LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: up to three males and nine females to late April, a male and female to 10th May, and a female to mid August.

England, N Eight localities.

CHESHIRE Six localities: (1) female on 1st June; (2) female on 17th June; (3) female from 8th-16th July; (4) female on 13th July; (5) female from 14th-26th August; (6) male on three dates between 5th June and 11th July.

DURHAM One locality: male on 20th May.

LANCASHIRE One locality: three feral pairs had eggs stolen from nest-boxes.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS One locality: female summered to at least 21st July.

LOTHIAN One locality: single on 3rd June.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

ANGUS Two localities: (1) two females to 21st June; (2) one adult and five immature males on 3rd June, four individuals on 25th June, breeding not attempted.

PERTH & KINROSS Two localities: (1) pair on 5th May; (2) 'present' on 7th May, with singles on 11th June and 22nd July.

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

CAITHNESS One locality: pair on 13th April.

NAIRN One locality: male and female present intermittently between 8th April and 10th July.

HIGHLAND REGION ELSEWHERE One extended locality: 85 nests occupied, 67 clutches incubated, and at least 460 ducklings hatched from 55 successful nests.

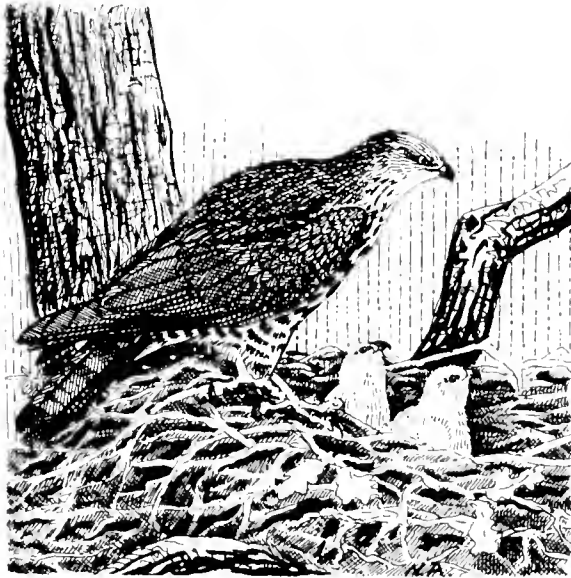
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Confirmed (pairs)	22	26	29	27	47	53	67	77	80	90	88
Young hatched	110	165	286	220	209	311	336	390	332	427	455

The main nest-box population is steadily increasing, but, as yet, is showing few signs of colonising areas farther afield by leap-frogging in the way that the Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* did. The tendency of a few individuals, not all of them immature, to summer far to the south of the breeding range in Scotland continues unabated. The Panel is grateful to Roy Dennis and his RSPB colleagues for the detailed information on breeding in Scotland.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

20 localities in 11 counties: 2-20 pairs breeding.

Great Britain 20 localities: (1) pair fledged two young, and two immatures present in vicinity; (2) pair seen several times, and displaying once; (3) single, displaying on 27th and 29th May, at new site; (4) single on 31st July; (5) single on 15th May, two, one displaying, on 29th May, singles on 17th June, and 19th and 28th August; (6) singles on 20th and 28th May, and 23rd and 29th July, with soaring and display on May dates; (7) single soaring on 3rd June and over woodland on 24th June; (8) one, possibly two, on 17th August; (9) pair on 27th and 29th May, two calling on 6th June, pair on 30th July, and singles on three dates to 28th August; (10) single on 7th August; (11) one soaring on 7th August; (12) male displaying regularly from late May to early September; (13) records from late May, with pair displaying



in early June: may have bred successfully as juvenile present nearby on 21st August; (14) pair in breeding season; (15) single on 16th June; (16) single on 27th August; (17) Honey Buzzard present, but nest claimed as that of Buzzard *Buteo buteo*; (18) single on several occasions between 18th June and 10th August; (19) single throughout summer, previous nest having been destroyed by winter storms; (20) pair in breeding season.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
Max. total (pairs)	4	5	9	3	5	2	4	6	7	10	20

These are the highest numbers which the Panel has been able to report. Data from two areas are being withheld, on the grounds of security, but six of the sites noted above do lie in those two key areas.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

69 pairs and at least another 58 unmated birds.

England, SW One locality: single throughout the year, joined by a second for one day only, on 21st May.

Wales 69 localities: (1)-(69) 53 pairs attempted breeding, and 33 of them reared a total of 48 young, 16 other pairs mostly confirmed as non-breeding, but three or four may possibly have laid and failed early. April population was at least 195 individuals, and August population estimated at about 232.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Total pairs	42	42	46	47	46	46	54	58	59	67	69
Breeding pairs	30	29	32	38	33	33	43	40	44	48	53
Successful pairs	14	21	18	19	20	13	19	23	27	27	33
Young reared	18	27	21	23	24	21	25	29	39	38	48

Another very successful season, with increases in each category. Set against this, no fewer than eight individuals, including two breeding males from pairs with eggs, were poisoned by illegally used *Fenthion*. This series of poisoning incidents is by far the worst recorded in any one year this century. As usual, the Panel is indebted to Peter Davis, the NCC contract worker on Red Kites, for much detailed information.

The background to the current programme aimed at reintroducing Red Kites to England and Scotland was outlined in a recent paper by Dr Ian M. Evans and Dr M. W. Pienkowski (*Brit. Birds* 84: 171-187). These recently released individuals could breed in any suitable habitat in Britain, so the Panel requests that all summer records of this species should be submitted, preferably via the relevant county recorder.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Reintroduction.

Scotland At least six pairs nested, two pairs each rearing two young and one pair rearing a single young.

This is the most successful year to date, but it is still too early to be sure that the long-term future of the species in Scotland is secure.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

64 nests: at least 172 young reared.

Great Britain Of 64 known nests, eight failed, and the result from two was not known. The remaining 54 successful nests produced 172 fledged young (average 2.8 per nest where result known, 3.2 per successful nest), which was, once again, the highest number of nests and young in any year this century. Eight males were bigamous. The reason for nest failure was not known in most cases, but one nest was flooded out and three were possibly affected by human disturbance. Despite the rapid increase in the population of this species in recent years, most nests were still in traditional strongholds in East Anglia, and few bred outside this region.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Breeding males	11	16	17	19	21	27	29	26	40	42	58
Breeding females	16	20	20	24	28	32	31	32	46	56	66
Fledged young	38	44	48	59	71	66	86	82	126	145	172

When Marsh Harriers are nesting close together, it is not always easy to know when a male is paired with two females. Hence statements such as '47 young reared from 21 nests', whilst making clear how many females were involved, give no indication of the number of males. 1989 again beat previous records, the species again benefiting from much protection work, and sympathetic farmers. The possibility of a long-distance coastal footpath does represent a threat to a species which is not tolerant of disturbance.

The panel is grateful to John Day for providing the summary.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

15 localities: 7-15 pairs breeding.

England, SW Five localities: (1) pair at regular site, outcome not known; (2) 'ringtail' at two adjacent sites on 27th May, but reports may refer to same bird; (3) 'ringtail' on 29th May; (4) immature male on 21st June; (5) first-summer male on 3rd-4th June. (Note that localities (2)-(4) are in the same county.)

England, SE Three localities: (1) 'ringtail' on 17th July, the first record for the county concerned since 1975; (2) male, displaying and defending territory from 5th-16th May, did not attract a mate; (3) female near recently used breeding site in early May, but did not remain.

England, E Seven localities: (1) pair hatched five eggs, but only one young fledged; (2) up to two females and an immature male on six dates between 25th May and 4th July, wandering extensively; (3)-(7) single females at each, these five females paired with three males, four pairs successful, fledging combined total of 13 young.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	4	8	8	7	8	2	9	10	10	14	15
Confirmed (pairs)	2	2	2	3	6	1	3	7	6	6	7
Possible (pairs)	2	6	7	5	4	1	6	3	4	8	8
Max. total (pairs)	4	8	9	8	10	2	9	10	10	14	15
Fledged young	7	4	4	4	9	3	7	13	15	17	14

The general trend since the low levels of 1974-82 has been upwards. This has not happened without careful wardening, and the sympathetic

attitude of the farmers in whose crops the species is nesting. As with the Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, the projected long-distance coastal footpath poses a threat to the continued recovery of this, the rarest of our nesting raptors.

The Panel is grateful to R. A. Image for supplying information about numbers and breeding success in eastern England.

Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

153 localities: 112-166 pairs breeding.

England & Wales 124 localities involving 18 counties: (1)-(124) 91 pairs known to have attempted breeding, hatching at least 101 young, with a further 27 pairs probably attempting breeding and 19 pairs possibly doing so.

Scotland 29 localities in five regions: (1)-(29) 21 pairs known to have attempted to breed, hatching about 52 young, with a further two pairs probably attempting breeding, and another six possible pairs.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. counties*	22	22	28	17	19	22	20	31	31	31	23
Confirmed (pairs)	25	17	17	24	34	36	36	57	54	108	112
Possible (pairs)	20	33	36	19	27	42	39	59	40	68	54
Max. total (pairs)	45	50	53	43	61	78	75	116	94	176	166

*Regions in Scotland

Reports reaching the Panel indicate that this is possibly the most persecuted raptor in Britain. Eggs and young disappear from nests, and there is strong inferential evidence of killing by keepers. Against this background, it is perhaps not surprising that those attempting to monitor Goshawk breeding success tend to be uncommunicative. Thus, there are reasons for thinking that this report falls appreciably short of a full documentation. The Panel is particularly indebted to S. J. Petty of the Forestry Commission Wildlife and Conservation Research Branch and his colleagues for invaluable help in making the picture as complete as it is.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

54 pairs: 36 pairs hatched 78 young.

England, SE One locality: one on 27th-28th March, 20th, 21st and 29th April, and 7th and 9th May, with three on 15th and 16th May, including a displaying pair which remained until 27th May, one on five dates during 28th May to 11th June, with two on 12th June.

Scotland, S Three broad localities: (1) singles on 4th and 25th April, and 14th-16th May, with one found shot on 8th April; (2) one from 4th July to 3rd August and one on 25th August; (3) one seen in 'May/June'.

Elsewhere in Scotland A total of 54 eyries known to be occupied by pairs, an increase of one on 1988. Two nests held single adults. Two new eyries found, but two first used in 1988 were not occupied. Clutches laid in 49 nests, the same number as in 1988; 36 successful pairs reared a total of 78 young, both figures being a little down on those for 1988. The mean brood size was also lower, at 2.17 young, and productivity, at 1.44 young per occupied nest, was also on the low side. Cold weather at peak hatching time is believed to have caused chick losses, and nine nests were robbed of eggs despite efforts to protect them.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Pairs	25	25	25	30	30	31	34	42	50	53	54
Successful pairs	16	19	20	21	20	21	22	24	30	39	36
Young reared	30	41	42	45	45	47	53	48	56	81	78

Despite the events listed above, it remains unlikely that Ospreys will

nest in southern England in the foreseeable future. The boundaries of this species' terrain in Scotland are, however, edging southwards, a process which is likely to accelerate as more Scottish-bred Ospreys reach breeding age.

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

384 localities: 140-390 pairs breeding.

England, SW 45-97 pairs breeding, 60 young reported.

England, SE 37-176 pairs breeding, 39 young reported.

England, E 35-77 pairs breeding, 67 young reported.

England, Central 18-29 pairs breeding, 31 young reported.

England, N 2-4 pairs breeding, 4 young reported.

Wales 3-7 pairs breeding, 4 young reported.

1988 England, SW One locality: pair fledged 3 young.

1987 England, Central One locality: pair with 2 young in September.

1988 England, Central Same locality as in 1987: pair with 2 young at nest.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Confirmed (pairs)	80	64	51	97	80	93	98	91	108	103	140
Possible (pairs)	52	91	109	105	182	116	148	202	164	226	250
Max. total (pairs)	132	155	160	202	262	209	246	293	272	329	390
Young reared (minima)	72	86	89	63	104	91	117	126	160	133	205

The population reported has more than doubled in ten years, and so has the number of young being reared annually. Some of the increase may be attributed to a growing awareness that the Hobby is not confined to southern heaths, but there can be no doubting that a genuine extension of range is occurring. With few potential enemies, the possibility of a milder climate as a result of the 'greenhouse effect', and ample suitable breeding habitat, we may expect the upward trend to continue, and perhaps the eventual removal of the species from the Panel's list. Detailed county totals are given in the Appendix.

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

904 localities: 27-1,655 pairs breeding.

England, SW 123 localities: 2-454 pairs breeding.

England, SE 81 localities: 3-123 pairs breeding.

England, E 109 localities: 3-197 pairs breeding.

England, Central 199 localities: 3-279 pairs breeding.

England, N 164 localities: 9-285 pairs breeding.

Wales 58 localities: 1-99 pairs breeding.

Scotland, S 111 localities: 4-159 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid and N & W 59 localities: 2-59 pairs breeding.

1987 England, SW One locality: pair on 23rd June.

1987 England, N Four localities: (1) one singing on 6th-7th May; (2) one singing during 13th-18th May; (3) one singing on 3rd-4th June; (4) pair heard and seen on 17th June.

1988 England, N Five localities: (1) two males from 2nd June to early July; (2) one singing from 20th-27th July; (3) one on 1st August; (4) one from at least 31st May to 5th June; (5) pair seen and two singing throughout July and August.

1988 Scotland, S Two localities: (1) one singing during June to August; (2) one singing in May and June.

Only by setting out the four years for which the Panel has data can the truly remarkable size of the 1989 'invasion' be made clear. It seems likely that even these figures greatly understate the true scale of the influx. For

example, the Shropshire recorder commented 'This large response (150 maximum total) was due to appeals for information in county newspapers.' Not every county will have gathered in such information from public sources. The individual county totals for 1989 are listed in the Appendix.

	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	84	152	130	904
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	5	27
Possible (pairs)	110	245	158	1,628
Max. total (pairs)	111	246	163	1,655

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

14 localities: 0-21 pairs breeding.

England, E Seven localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Four localities: (1) one to three singing from 25th April to 5th May; (2) maximum of six singing and at least four sites occupied from 10th May to mid June, occasionally heard in July; (3) one singing from 29th April to 2nd May; (4) two singing on 30th April.

NORFOLK Three localities: (1) one singing from 13th-15th April; (2) one singing from 9th-14th June; (3) one singing from 8th-13th July.

England, Central One locality.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: pair from 10th June to 18th August.

England, N One locality.

CLEVELAND One locality: single present from 5th August, joined by second (perhaps a juvenile) on 10th August.

Scotland Five localities.

ARGYLL One locality: one singing from 14th-20th June.

GRAMPIAN Three localities: (1) one singing on several days, 'probably a regular site'; (2) one singing on several dates at another site thought to be used regularly; (3) single, at site thought not to be used regularly.

HIGHLAND One locality: one singing from 1st-13th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. counties*	2	1	3	1	3	3	2	3	4	5	7
No. localities	4	3	4	2	6	4	2	3	7	6	14
No. singing	8	4	9	3	12	10	3	4	18	10	21

*Regions in Scotland.

The best year to date for this species, with an encouraging spread of counties.



Corncrake *Crex crex*

16 localities: 0-16 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

AVON One locality: one singing on 21st June.

England, E Two localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: one singing on 20th June.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: one singing from 16th-20th June.

England, N Two localities.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: one singing on 22nd May.

YORKSHIRE One locality: one singing from 11th-30th June, and two juveniles about 1km away on 26th-28th July.

Scotland, S Three localities.

BORDERS One locality: single for at least a week prior to 13th July, said to have been very agitated during hay-cutting.

LOTHIAN Two localities: (1) one singing from 13th-25th May and on 11th June; (2) one singing from hayfield on 4th June.

Scotland, Mid Two localities.

TAYSIDE Two localities: (1) one singing in hayfield from mid June to mid July; (2) two seen in suitable terrain on a number of occasions in April and May.

Scotland, N Six localities.

CAITHNESS Six localities: (1) one heard, on a golf course, on 12th and 26th May and in July; (2) one singing from field of oilseed rape from 13th-17th May; (3) one seen on 1st June; (4) one heard on 5th June; (5) one heard on 27th-28th June; (6) one heard on 25th May.

At present the Panel is collecting records of Corncrakes only away from the Northern and Western Isles.

Crane *Grus grus*

Data have been supplied to the Panel over the past several years with the strict instruction that no information should be published in our annual reports. The book *Red Data Birds in Britain* has, however, included the following entry for this species: 'The Crane is a rare breeding resident in Britain. It formerly bred in East Anglia until about 1600 when it became extinct, possibly due to hunting. At least one pair has bred or attempted to breed every year since 1981, a total of four young being raised up to 1988. Due to the need for large, undisturbed wetlands, Cranes will at best always be scarce as a breeding bird in Britain. Protection from disturbance and ground predators is essential if a colony is to be established. The breeding of Cranes in Britain has not been publicized in the past as adequate arrangements for their protection were not then in existence.'

There were two breeding attempts in 1989, both unsuccessful. It is of great interest that this northerly breeding species is also attempting to breed in France.

**Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta*

24 localities: 521-526 pairs reared at least 150 young.

England, SE & E 24 localities: (1) 29 pairs bred with good success; (2) four pairs simmered;

(3) 24 pairs fledged 37 young; (4) 13 pairs on 42 eggs on 10th June, trampled by cattle; (5) 18 pairs fledged 12 young; (6) pair defending territory on 21st May; (7) five on 31st May and a pair mating on 2nd June, but no further evidence; (8) Havergate: 64 pairs reared only 7 young; (9) Minsmere: 91 pairs reared about 40 young; (10)-(17) total of 106 pairs reared about 22 young; (18) 35 pairs 'fared very badly'; (19) one pair, which failed; (20) 45 pairs reared 20 young; (21) three pairs failed in breeding attempts; (22) 15 pairs bred, but fledged few young; (23) 75 pairs bred, but only about 12 young fledged; (24) one pair laid twice, but failed on both occasions.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	3	5	5	9	9	11	14	15	18	27	24
Confirmed (pairs)	147	168	201	190	238	237	269	255	341	389	521
Young reared (minima)	99	101	155	150	192	118	245	227	315	136	150

The large increase in the population may in part be a reflection of the good breeding season in 1987, for Avocets do not breed until they are two, or even three, years old. Whilst some numbers of chicks could have been overlooked, it is clear that breeding success in 1989 was very low. One assumes that a warm, dry spring should assist breeding, but, in parts of East Anglia, hatching coincided with the lagoons drying out. The chicks had to visit the tide's edge to feed, but were unable to get back up the bank on to the saltings and high numbers drowned.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicanus*

Ten counties: 126-143 pairs.

England, SW Three counties: 40-49 pairs, 14 young known.

England, SE Three counties: 3-10 pairs, no young reported.

England, E Four counties: 83-84 pairs, 65 young reported.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Confirmed (pairs)	34	8	10	8	20	19	68	103	137	126	126
Possible (pairs)	47	37	43	59	76	52	47	12	0	3	17
Max. total (pairs)	81	45	53	67	96	71	115	115	137	129	143

Stone-curlews often choose to breed in areas where the county boundaries wander across rather featureless open country. In some instances, when map-references were not supplied, it has been difficult to ensure that there has been no duplication in reporting. There are no grounds for believing that the species is increasing in numbers, and the high figures result from extensive survey work on behalf of the RSPB.

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Seven localities: 4-7 pairs breeding.

England, N Two localities.

CUMBRIA Two localities: (1) male with one chick on 24th June; (2) male with two chicks on 24th June.

Isle of Man One locality: single on 9th May, the third record at this site in three consecutive years (but probably merely on passage).

Scotland, S Four localities.

BORDERS Four localities: (1) male with three eggs on 28th May, two males with three eggs each on 3rd June, but no birds present on 14th June; (2) one, possibly two, on 5th May; (3) two males and a female on 7th May; (4) two males and three females on 10th May.

In recent years the NCC field teams have discovered that the main Scottish population of this species may exceed 800 pairs. The records listed above relate only to the area south of the central lowlands of



Scotland. It is probable that most such records will be of passage birds, but attempted breeding does occur annually in Cumbria. We shall publish the available details of the main Scottish population in 1989 in next year's report.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

One locality: two young fledged.

Scotland, N One locality: four or five adults on 22nd May, thereafter five. Three nests found and at least two young fledged from four broods.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	4	5	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	2	1
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	2	2
Possible (pairs)	4	5	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1
Max. total (pairs)	6	6	1	3	2	1	2	3	5	4	3

It is fortunate that the site, which is used year after year, is relatively secure, but a species which is based on a single site must always be particularly vulnerable.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

Two localities: 2-4 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Two localities: (1) adult with one downy chick on 18th July, at completely new locality, well away from main breeding area; (2) pair hatched four eggs and at least one young fledged, and two other pairs in same general area.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	0	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	2
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	3	2	2
Possible (pairs)	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	2
Max. total (pairs)	0	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	3	2	4

It is encouraging to learn that this species has bred successfully on a summit well removed from the scene of the first-known nest.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

15 localities: 1-17 females nesting.

England, SE Six localities.

ESSEX Four localities: (1) female and two males from April until early June, the males remaining until July, one 'very young' individual was present in late June and July; (2) two males and two females in May and June; (3) two males and two females in May, one of each sex in June; (4) a male and two females during June.

KENT Two localities: (1) five on 30th April, one displaying, 20 on 7th May, two or three from 21st May to 2nd June; (2) 41 on 1st May, reduced to eight by 6th May, five from 27th-30th May.

England, E Three localities: 1-3 females nesting.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) nine lek sites, one nest incubated for three weeks, but no young seen; (2) one lek site, but no nesting proved.

NORFOLK One locality: male and female present during breeding season.

England, N Six localities.

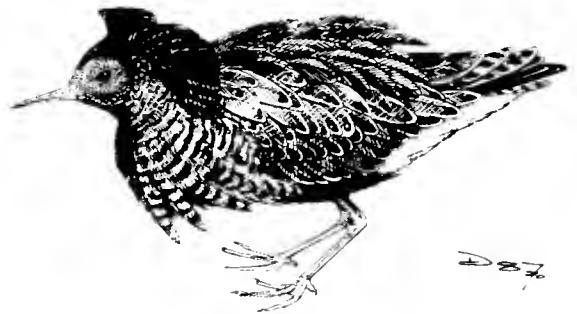
LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) two males and one female from 12th-27th May, an additional 19 females on 22nd May, lekking on 26th May; (2) three males and up to seven females from 25th March to 26th May, lekking observed several times.

YORKSHIRE Three localities: (1) lekking at three sites and breeding thought to have been attempted at at least one; (2)(3) one to four males throughout June and July, but not thought to have attempted breeding.

UNNAMED COUNTY One locality: 'this species summered once more'.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	12	10	10	13	8	6	8	7	16	14	15
Nests	3	3	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1
Max. no. females possibly nesting	22	13	13	23	32	6	8	9	69	11	17

There were probably few breeding birds amongst the numbers listed, and arbitrary minimum values have been given to obtain an indication of the number of females possibly nesting. The text takes precedence over the table.



Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

14 localities: 34-56 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

SOMERSET One locality: breeding pair from 15th March, but no nest found.

England, SE Three localities: (1) three pairs attempted breeding, but all failed during incubation; (2) pair present in May and June, in area occupied in 1988, with third individual present on two June dates; (3) up to five in May, at a traditional site.

England, E Five localities.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 21 pairs, and 15-20 young fledged from 12 broods; (2) nine pairs, four broods, three of 2 and one of 3, and nine young fledged.

NORFOLK Two localities: (1) three pairs breeding; (2) eight pairs breeding.

ELSEWHERE One locality: one or two pairs showing territorial behaviour in May.

England, N Two localities: (1) 'small flock' summered; (2) four displaying on 18th May, and said to have nested at this site in 1988, the eggs being taken by a collector.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

ANGUS One locality: four on 4th May, two on 6th, one on 13th May and two on 9th-10th June, habitat described as being very suitable for breeding.

Scotland, N Two localities.

ORKNEY One locality: pair with two young about five days old on 30th May, pair still showing aggression on 7th June.

SHETLAND One locality: pair reared two young.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	13	11	5	13	10	12	11	19	13	17	14
Confirmed (pairs)	39	52	22	38	32	55	22	23	28	36	34
Possible (pairs)	25	25	4	31	12	25	17	24	12	28	22
Max. total (pairs)	64	77	26	69	44	80	39	47	40	64	56

There is very little evidence of any consistent trend in the 1980s.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One locality.

Scotland, N One locality.

CAITHNESS One locality: one holding territory on 24th June.

The Panel collects records of breeding-season Whimbrels only away from the Northern Isles.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Six localities: 2-6 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N Six localities.

HIGHLAND Six localities: (1) single on 6th May, two on 25th May, three or four on 13th May, two regularly in June, with young at the end of the month; (2) pair from late May to June, agitated on 4th June; (3) two on 3rd June and single on three July dates; (4) one singing on 15th June; (5) one flushed, calling, on 17th July; (6) pair on 15th June with at least two chicks two or three days old.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	3	4	1	4	3	4	3	2	3	4	6
Confirmed (pairs)	2	7	1	3	1	4	2	2	3	3	2
Possible (pairs)	2	5	0	3	4	1	1	1	1	1	4
Max. total (pairs)	4	12	1	6	5	5	3	3	4	4	6

A good year, in that the species occurred in more localities than in any year since 1978, when seven were occupied and 4-10 pairs bred.

Red-necked Phalarope

Phalaropus lobatus

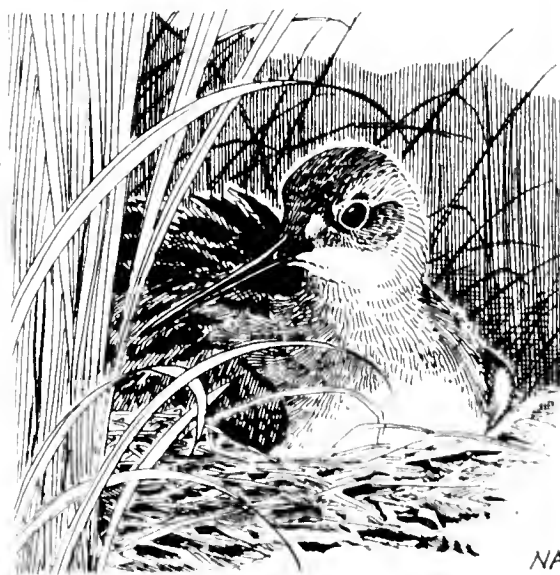
Four localities: 13-17 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W Four localities.

ARGYLL One locality: pair fledged two or three young.

SHETLAND Three localities: (1) 12-14 pairs, but only six broods recorded; (2) pair reared three young; (3) male on 16th July.

It is good that at least one pair is still nesting away from the species' last, lingering stronghold in Shetland.



Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

Five localities: 6-9 pairs breeding.

England, SE Four localities: (1) two pairs attempted breeding and hatched eggs, but no fledged young seen; (2) two adults, on different nests, outcome not known, adult and first-

year later seen together; (3) pair attempted nesting, outcome not known; (4) two pairs, first clutches of one and two eggs, both washed out, and one replacement clutch of two also washed out, single second-summer individual also present.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: adult in breeding plumage displaying to a Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* on 24th May. (In addition, adult ringed in East Germany summered at Felixstowe, far from any suitable breeding habitat.)

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	3	5	4	2	6	4	3	5	3	9	5
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	5	6
Possible (pairs)	1	4	3	1	6	1	5	4	2	10	3
Max. total pairs	3	5	6	3	8	5	8	5	3	15	9

More pairs attempted breeding than ever before, but their success was poor.

Little Gull *Larus minutus*

Three localities: no known pair.

England, SE Three localities: (1) ten present throughout June; (2) four from early May to early June; (3) four in early June.

Four instances are known of this species nesting in Britain, with eggs being laid in Cambridgeshire/Norfolk in 1975, Norfolk and North Yorkshire in 1978 and Central England in 1987, but no young have ever been reared.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*

One locality: one bird reared hybrid young.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: single 7th May to 1st July (*Brit. Birds* 83: 468), displaying to Sandwich Tern *S. sandvicensis* from 1st May, single egg located 30th May, hatched 19th June, adult and chick seen regularly until 1st July. (Adult and juvenile hybrid in Lothian in August and early September presumed to be these individuals: *Brit. Birds* 83: 468.)

1984 Northumberland One locality: single from 4th-13th August (*Brit. Birds* 79: 556), posturing with Sandwich Terns.

1985 Northumberland One locality: single on 20 days between 16th May and 18th July (*Brit. Birds* 79: 556); brooding an egg, identical to Sandwich Tern's, on 29th June, 2nd and 6th July.

1986 Northumberland One locality: single on 14th, 15th and 20th May, 1st June and 8th and 10th July (*Brit. Birds* 81: 567); on the July dates, it was associating with a chick in the Sandwich Tern colony.

1987 Northumberland One locality: single from 18th May to 20th June (*Brit. Birds* 82: 531), and by 25th May was apparently paired with a Sandwich Tern and incubating two eggs, but nest was flooded and one egg was lost, bird sat on other until 11th June.

1988 Northumberland One locality: single on 15 dates from 5th May to 5th June, and again on 13th July (*Brit. Birds* 82: 531); no nesting attempt made.

Had the Farne Islands site not been regularly warded, one wonders whether even the presence of the adult female would have been detected.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougalli*

17 localities: 172-177 pairs breeding.

England, SW Five localities.

CORNWALL & ISLES OF SCILLY Two localities: (1) pair reared one young; (2) two pairs, and two young seen.

DORSET Three localities: (1) present regularly at an otherwise deserted tern colony; (2)

present in a tern colony, but no sign of breeding; (3) present all summer, but no tern colony known.

England, SE Two localities: (1) two pairs bred and some young thought to have fledged; (2) pair failed in breeding attempt.

England, N Three localities: (1) 25 pairs reared 21 young; (2) 12 pairs bred, 11 thought to have hatched eggs; (3) five pairs reared seven young.

Wales Three localities: (1) 75 pairs, of which 70 laid eggs, mean clutch size 1.41, no information about fledging; (2) 19 pairs laid 33 eggs in 21 clutches, from which 23 young hatched and 18 fledged; (3) 12 pairs settled to breed, but reduced to seven as a result of predation by Jackdaws *Corvus monedula*, at least one young reared.

Scotland Four localities: (1) five nests and three chicks ringed, more were perhaps hidden in dense vegetation; (2) 13 young on 4th August; (3) 12 pairs reared at least 14 young; (4) one pair hatched two young within a colony of Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*.

This is a particularly threatened species, and it is helpful—and encouraging—to learn of isolated pairs and small colonies, such as those along the south coast of England.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*

One locality: two females.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

SHETLAND One locality: on Fetlar two females throughout year, both of which made scrapes, and one of which laid at least one, infertile, egg. A first-summer male, found exhausted on an oil platform, was released from care on 7th April, but stayed only until 9th before moving elsewhere in Shetland. (*Brit. Birds* 83: 470.)

The release of the migrant male did not change the solitary status of the Fetlar females, at least until 1989.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Eight localities: 1-8 pairs nesting.

England, Central One locality.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: single singing in suitable breeding habitat from 13th-16th May.

Scotland, N & W Seven localities.

HIGHLAND Seven localities: (1) two on 26th May and song to mid June, one visiting old woodpecker holes; (2) one on 19th May; (3) one singing on 20th-21st May; (4) single on 22nd July and 4th August and juvenile on 6th August; (5) one singing on 14th and 21st May and 16th June; (6) two singing on 3rd June, three on 27th June; (7) pair singing on 23rd May.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	7	11	2	9	14	9	9	9	10	9	8
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Possible (pairs)	8	13	2	10	15	10	8	8	9	9	7
Max. total (pairs)	9	14	2	10	15	10	9	9	10	10	8

A better position than might at first appear, for three of the records involve pairs, and a juvenile was seen at a fourth site.

(Continued on pages 379-392)

Overseas bird tours survey

If you have participated in a trip organised by a bird tour company, please complete this form and send it by 15th October 1991 to: *Bird tours survey, British Birds, Freepost BF955, Blunham, BEDFORD MK44 3BR.*

Number of bird tours in which you have participated

Please fill in, below, details of the most recent tour in which you have participated during 1986-91 (if you have accompanied more than one, please use additional photocopy(ies) of this form or blank sheet(s) to supply details of all those in which you have participated).

Destination (country or countries)

Dates Month Year 19 Length of trip days

Name of tour company

Were the company's travel arrangements Excellent Very good Good Adequate Poor Very poor
(tick one)

(We are asking you to assess the arrangements made by the company, and *not* the standard available in the country. Some good bird areas have only poor-quality roads, or unreliable drivers, or poor accommodation. It is the performance of the travel company in making appropriate arrangements that we ask you to comment upon.)

Were the company's accommodation arrangements Excellent Very good Good Adequate Poor Very poor
(tick one)

Do you consider that the company's choice of areas visited included a representative selection of the region's habitats, and gave a satisfactory bird list? Yes No

Including any couriers and leaders, how many people were in your group?

For enjoyable birdwatching, was the size of the group Too large Acceptable Perfect Too small

Did an ornithological tour leader accompany the group? Yes No
(If more than one ornithological leader accompanied the group, please enter number here)

Would you rate the leader's* ornithological ability Excellent Very good Good Adequate Poor Very poor
(tick one)

Was the leader's* ability to cope in a crisis Excellent Very good Good Adequate Poor Very poor
(tick one)

Were the leader's* efforts to be flexible, and to ensure that the whole group enjoyed the trip Excellent Very good Good Adequate Poor Very poor
(tick one)

**We guarantee not to try to identify the individual leaders; we are assessing whether the tour companies choose appropriate leaders, not whether individual leaders were good or bad.*

Taking into account possible faults in a leader*, such as selfishness when a good bird was found, or unwillingness to organise early starts on the one hand or excessive zeal on the other, did you personally find the leader's general attitude

Excellent	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	----------	------	-----------

Did you find the leader* (tick one)

Too fanatical	About right	Too relaxed (or even lazy)
---------------	-------------	----------------------------

Did the leader* show genuine concern for environmental matters and behave appropriately?

Yes	Not Noticeably	No
-----	----------------	----

Did a courier (dealing with administrative arrangements) also accompany the tour?

Yes	No
-----	----

(If the ornithological leader acted as courier, please answer 'No' to this question)

Would you rate the courier's services as

Excellent	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	----------	------	-----------

Was it helpful to have a courier present?

Yes	No
-----	----

As a whole, would you personally rate the trip as

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	------	-----------

In 'value for money' terms, was it

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	------	-----------

Was any written advice and other information supplied before the tour

Excellent	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	----------	------	-----------

Did the leader* arrange a meeting each evening to compile a daily bird list including participants' observations?

Yes	No
-----	----

Was any written summary (bird list, etc.) sent to you after the tour (tick one)

Excellent	Very good	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor or none
-----------	-----------	------	----------	------	-------------------

Do you think that the advantages of joining this bird tour group outweighed any disadvantages (compared with visiting the same region independently)?

Yes	No
-----	----

Do you plan to join another bird tour at some time in the future?

Yes	No
-----	----

If 'Yes', and the bird tour company which you named above were to run the appropriate tour, would you choose to book with them again?

Yes	Perhaps	No
-----	---------	----

If you are currently saving money and holiday-time in order to join another bird tour, which country do you plan to visit next?

Unless you wish to remain anonymous, please give your NAME and ADDRESS and PHONE NUMBER (to be used in the event of a query, but will NOT be published, nor revealed to anyone other than *British Birds* editorial staff).

Name

Address

Phone No.....

Please return this form by 15th October 1991 to Bird tours survey, British Birds, Freepost BF955, Blunham, BEDFORD MK44 3BR.

Morocco



Text by David Fisher

Photographs by Lionel Maumary

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Morocco was a very popular spring destination for North European birdwatchers. In recent years, its popularity has been eclipsed somewhat by that of Israel. While the two have many species in common, Morocco holds a good number that Israel does not, some of which are Northwest African endemics and others isolated populations of sub-Saharan species. Perhaps surprisingly, a comprehensive two-week trip to Morocco will produce an even larger list of species than a similar trip to Israel. The aim of this article is to re-awaken interest in Morocco, particularly in the spring.

Lying at the southwestern corner of the Western Palearctic and forming the northwest corner of Africa, Morocco's avifauna reveals origins in both faunal zones. Such species as Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*, Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, Double-spurred Francolin *Francolinus bicalcaratus*, African Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*, Brown-throated Sand Martin *Riparia paludicola* and Black-headed Bush Shrike *Tchagra senegala* are all of African origin, and most are widely distributed south of the Sahara. In addition, various African vagrants, such as Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*, Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* and Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryla alleni*, have been found in Morocco, and doubtless more will be discovered in years to come.

Owing to the wide altitudinal variation and a number of fairly isolated mountain ranges, a few Northwest African endemics have evolved, most of which can be found in Morocco. Even common Western Palearctic species, such as the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* and the Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, are represented by attractive and distinctive races that enliven each day's birdwatching. Some of the forms present are clearly still evolving into separate species, an example of which might be Levaillant's Green Woodpecker *Picus vaillantii*, whose taxonomic status has varied from species to subspecies and back again in recent years. Fortunately, certain birds have undoubtedly gone all the way, and these include such delightful species as Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* and



190. Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae*, Morocco, April 1990 (Lionel Maumary)

Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* (plates 197-199). In the breeding season, Tristram's Warbler is to be found on the scrub-covered slopes of the Atlas Mountains, mostly above 1,000 m. In the autumn, it moves down to lower altitudes, mainly to the south, and can be found in low scrub in semi-desert areas on the Saharan fringe. Superficially like a Dartford Warbler *S. undata*, it is also reminiscent of a Whitethroat *S. communis*, perhaps owing to its chestnut-edged wing feathers. Another attractive North African endemic is the Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara* (plate 201). While this species' range stretches as far east as western Egypt, Morocco is perhaps the easiest place to see it.

One of the most striking features of Morocco's avifauna is the diversity of larks: no fewer than 14 species breed in Morocco. Many of these do not occur in Europe, being North African and Middle Eastern specialities. The Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* is fond of rocky hillsides and slopes, while its relative, the Bar-tailed Desert Lark *A. cincturus*, prefers flat sandy desert. The two are not nearly so close in appearance as most field-guide illustrations would have us believe, the former being stocky and almost thrush-like, with a heavy bill, while the latter is much more like a small, lightly built lark. The aptly named Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* (plates 200 & 203) can be found in the desert fringes in southern Morocco, where its high-pitched, ascending whistle can be heard over considerable distances. The song is given just prior to a spectacular display flight, in which the male hurls himself vertically into the air, becoming momentarily a twisting ball of black-and-white feathers (see plate 202). Memories of cool early morning in the desert, listening to the songs of Hoopoe Larks and Bar-tailed Desert Larks, are very much part of the legacy of a spring trip to Morocco.

Another early-morning singer is Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*—so early in fact, that it often gives up by dawn. Many a birder has listened to



191. Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)



192 & 193. Temminck's Horned Lark *Eremophila bilopha*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)





194-196. Thick-billed Lark *Rhamphocoris clotbey*, Morocco, April 1990 (Lionel Maumary)



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197-199. Male Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*, Morocco, April 1990 (Lionel Maumary)





200. Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)

201. Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)





202 & 203. Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* in flight (below) and in songflight (right), Morocco, April 1990 (Lionel Maumary)



its song, which recalls that of the Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, just prior to day-break, then only to spend frustrating hours trying to locate one on the ground. Another unique lark is the Thick-billed Lark *Rhamphocoris clothey*, accorded a genus of its own. A bird of stony deserts, it ranges widely south and east of the Atlas Mountains. Plates 194-196 show its massive bill, typical of a seed-cracker, though apparently it swallows most of the seeds it eats whole and does not have the strength that the bill size suggests.

Another North African speciality is the Thekla Lark *Galerida theklae* (plate 190). This species is so similar to its close relative, the Crested Lark *G. cristata*, that many birders visiting Morocco end up putting down the numerous larks in this genus that they see each day as 'Creklas'. With care, however, they can be told apart, the best features being the size and shape of the bill and the heaviness of the black markings on the breast.

The Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* is another species represented by a distinctive subspecies (plate 191). Those that breed in the High Atlas

Mountains have a pinky-brown crown and nape that sets them apart from the more familiar North European Shore Larks that we see in Britain. In the desert areas to the south, the Temminck's Horned Lark *E. bilopha* is of even more striking appearance. Its pale sandy upperparts contrast strongly with its black facial pattern, and the length of its black 'horns' has to be seen to be believed (plates 192 & 193).

There is much more to Morocco than just the larks of course. It is a country of ever-changing scenery, with a wider range of habitats than any other Western Palearctic country. From the sand dunes of Merzouga, with their much-sought-after Desert Sparrows *Passer simplex*, to the alpine peaks of the High Atlas, home to Alpine Choughs *Pyrrhocorax graculus* and Crimson-winged Finches *Rhodopechys sanguinea*, the backdrop to one's birding is always spectacular. Morocco is a country well worth exploring and a very different place from anywhere else in our avifaunal region.

David Fisher, 56 Western Way, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DU
Lionel Maumary, Grand'Rue 8, CH-1095 Lutry, Switzerland

This article by David Fisher was inspired by Lionel Maumary's superb photographs. A special 'BB'-SUNBIRD trip to Morocco, led by Bryan Bland and Peter Lansdown, is planned for 15th-30th April 1992 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 345); for further details write or phone to David Fisher/Jennifer Thomas at SUNBIRD, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; phone Sandy (0767) 682969. For anyone planning to go birdwatching in Morocco, we recommend Bergier & Bergier (1990), *A Birdwatchers' Guide to Morocco*, available through British BirdShop (see pages xix & xx). EDS

Fieldwork action

BTO news

Are Nightjar numbers still on the way down? The first sign of a decline in numbers of Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* was in 1952, and, since the BTO Nightjar Survey of 1957-58, the trend has been one of a continuing decrease, especially in the North and West. The second BTO Nightjar Survey, in 1981, recorded only 1,784 males, with over 60% of the British population concentrated in Dorset, Hampshire, West Sussex and Surrey, and a further 20% in Norfolk and Suffolk. Most of the remainder is thinly scattered, although there are some other local concentrations. The time is ripe for a new survey, which will take place in 1992, and will be run in conjunction with the RSPB.

This survey has two main objectives. First, to count and map the locations of all breeding Nightjars in Britain, and secondly to make detailed descriptions of the habitat at Nightjar breeding sites. This time, the survey will include staff from both organisations, as well as volunteers. During 1991, the BTO and RSPB are evaluating techniques, as well as making a start with surveying those counties with large populations. The survey will be organised through the BTO's Regional Network, in close co-operation with county and regional bird clubs and Nightjar Groups. This autumn, the BTO will distribute site lists to local organisers, so that observers can be allocated sites and sent survey maps and recording forms well in advance of the 1992 season.

For more information, contact your local BTO Regional Representative, or write to Dr Paul Green, BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU. If you are not already a member, why not join the BTO and subscribe to *BTO News*?

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1989

(continued from page 370)

Systematic list Part 2. Passerines

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

156-210 pairs breeding.

England, SW 4-55 pairs breeding.

England, SE 13-31 pairs breeding.

England, E 5-120 pairs breeding.

England, Central 3-4 pairs breeding.

This is a classic case where, for good reasons, the concept of 'locality' or 'site' is used inconsistently. It makes ornithological sense to think of a heath, or an even larger unit such as the New Forest, or the Brecks, as an ecological whole, but it is not helpful to equate a unit of two with a unit of—say—fifty. It would be useful to know in how many different places the species is to be found breeding, but there are no accepted guidelines for defining a 'place'.

County totals are shown in the Appendix. It does appear that there has been no marked change in numbers, perhaps only changes in the amount of fieldwork.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

One locality: one individual.

England, SE One locality.

ESSEX One locality: male of the white-spotted race *L. s. cyanecula* singing at a flooded gravel-pit from 9th-15th June.

The damp reed-scrub fringing some gravel-pits is very reminiscent of the habitat where the white-spotted race is to be found nesting in the Netherlands.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

56 localities: 36-82 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: 0-1 pairs breeding.

England, SE 24 localities: 16-31 pairs breeding.

England, E 20 localities: 13-33 pairs breeding.

England, Central Five localities: 4-11 pairs breeding.

England, N Six localities: 3-6 pairs breeding.

1988 England, SE One additional locality: 6 pairs bred.

	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	92	77	70	56
Confirmed (pairs)	81	46	54	36
Possible (pairs)	38	63	58	46
Max. total (pairs)	119	109	118	82

This is a difficult species to monitor thoroughly, for it often frequents places to which the public have no access, such as power stations, or urban industrial areas which offer little appeal as places to go birdwatch-

ing. The year table—published for the first time since the Panel reinstated the species (it was monitored up to 1976, but not during 1977-85)—gives the impression that a decline is occurring. Considering that the species first nested in Britain as long ago as 1923, the progress of colonisation has been painfully slow. All breeding-season records are important if a proper assessment is to be made, and we commend the species as being worthy of further study. The individual county totals in 1989 are listed in the Appendix.

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*

12 localities: 3-13 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

BERKSHIRE One locality: adult from 24th July to 11th August, four on 14th August and eight on 17th August.

KENT One locality: single on 11th June.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: one, feeding with Mistle Thrushes *T. viscivorus*, on 20th June.

England, Central Three localities.

DERBYSHIRE Three localities: (1) one, carrying food, on 28th and 30th May; (2) one on 1st June; (3) one with bad leg, hopping impaired, date(s) not reported.

England, N One locality.

NORTHUMBERLAND One locality: one collecting food on 20th June.

Isle of Man One locality: one, very agitated, on 19th April, and flock of about nine on 5th August, several of which were judged to be juveniles.

Scotland, S Two localities.

BORDERS Two localities: (1) one in full song on 17th May, but not seen thereafter; (2) one on 14th May, and alarm-calling nearby on 5th June, but no other indications of possible breeding.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

FIFE One locality: single, in suitable habitat for breeding, on dates between 7th June and 14th July.

Scotland, N & W Three localities.

BANFFSHIRE One locality: one carrying food into a dense plantation of Sitka spruce *Picea sitchensis*, and alarm-calling on 25th June.

INVERNESS-SHIRE Two localities: (1) two in late June; (2) territorial adult in late April and May.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	6	5	6	7	10	4	3	2	7	7	12
Confirmed (pairs)	1	1	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	3
Possible (pairs)	5	4	6	5	9	4	3	0	6	5	10
Max. total (pairs)	6	5	6	7	12	4	3	2	7	7	13

The best year recorded in the Panel's files, although four pairs were confirmed breeding in 1977. Berkshire might not be the first county to come to mind as a likely breeding area, yet in 1988 there was a report of a party of four fledged young there. The Panel's reports for 1982 and 1984 gave cases of Fieldfares associating with Mistle Thrushes. The assessment of this species' status is complicated by the presence of late winterers/late migrants in May and the occurrence in Britain, as early as July in some years, of juveniles reared on the Continent.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

38 localities: 12-51 pairs breeding.

England, SE One locality.

KENT One locality: single on 26th July.

England, Central One locality.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: juvenile on 27th July.

Scotland, S One locality.

BORDERS One locality: pair, male singing and then alarm-calling on 18th May, but not found thereafter.

Scotland, N & W 35 localities.

HIGHLAND 33 localities: (1) nest and eggs on 31st May; (2) one alarm-calling on 14th July; (3) pair feeding young in nest; (4) pair with clutch of two on 2nd May, eggs taken by predator by 7th May; (5) nest with young on 17th June; (6) adult carrying food in June, and two fledged young in July; (7)(8) single pairs feeding young; (9) nest with young; (10) adult carrying food; (11)-(33) sightings of singles, some thought to be breeding.

ORKNEY One locality: one singing from at least 14th May to end of June.

SHETLAND One locality: pair reared two broods.

1988 England, SW GLOUCESTER One locality: single from 28th May to 5th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	6	18	6	42	65	58	35	32	39	22	38
Confirmed (pairs)	2	7	4	30	17	31	12	20	9	10	12
Possible (pairs)	7	25	7	32	51	48	23	26	41	30	39
Max. total (pairs)	9	32	11	62	68	79	35	46	50	40	51

The numbers do doubtless vary from year to year, possibly being influenced by the weather in the previous winter (there is no evidence to show where Scottish Redwings winter), but much of the annual variation in the year table may be attributable to variations in the amount of fieldwork, or in the diligence with which the results are collected and collated.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

74 localities: 12-208 pairs breeding.

England, SW 43 localities: 5-158 pairs breeding.

England, SE Five localities: 4-7 pairs breeding.

England, E 22 localities: 2-39 pairs breeding.

Wales Four localities: 1-4 pairs breeding.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. counties	14	11	16	12	13	13	13	11	14	14	15
Confirmed (pairs)	46	19	56	29	90	78	59	4	31	24	12
Possible (pairs)	117	179	106	173	157	238	190	175	156	174	196
Max. total (pairs)	163	198	162	202	247	316	249	179	187	198	208

Unfortunately, no figures have been received for Devon, which in 1988 had eight localities and a maximum of 37 pairs. Thus, it would seem that two consecutive mild winters allowed the population to return to something like the peak level which had been reached prior to the severe cold of February 1986. It is noticeable that Kent, which carried a maximum of 61 pairs in 1984, has not been recolonised, yet there has been a further increase in East Anglia. The individual county totals for 1989 are listed in the Appendix.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

13 localities: 0-17 pairs breeding.

England, SW Two localities.

DORSET One locality: one singing from 22nd April to 9th May.

HAMPSHIRE One locality: one singing on 6th May.

England, SE Three localities: (1) one from 2nd-5th May; (2) one from 22nd April to 12th May, with two on 29th April; (3) one singing on 30th April.

England, E Six localities.

NORFOLK Five localities: (1) first arrived 19th April, and thereafter four singing males summered; (2)-(5) singles singing.

ELSEWHERE One locality: one singing from 21st April to 5th May, and two singing from 17th June to 8th July.

England, N Two localities.

YORKSHIRE One locality: one in full song from 23rd May to 5th July, but 'very doubtful if it bred'.

ELSEWHERE One locality: single from at least 24th May to 2nd June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	15	14	8	11	12	10	12	9	16	10	13
Confirmed (pairs)	6	2	5	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	24	27	10	18	15	12	14	11	20	13	17
Max. total (pairs)	30	29	15	18	17	12	15	12	20	13	17

It seems likely that, except in eastern England, most of these birds were typical overshoots on spring migration, but that a very few individuals do return to breed in successive years.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Ten localities: 11-22 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality.

ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: one singing on 13th May.

England, SE Six localities: (1) one singing on 10th and 11th June; (2) up to three males present; (3) eight pairs, all of which appear to have bred successfully; (4) two successful pairs and one additional male which may have attracted a female; (5) one successful pair; (6) one singing from 29th May to 3rd June, at a site occupied in 1988.

England, E One locality.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: one singing on 29th May.

England, Central One locality.

WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: one male, colour-ringed elsewhere in 1988, failed to attract a mate.

England, N One locality.

YORKSHIRE One locality: male from 18th-21st June, second male on 19th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	15	8	3	8	10	12	10	13	9	10	10
Confirmed (pairs)	1	2	0	2	3	4	2	5	7	4	11
Possible (pairs)	22	10	3	7	9	9	9	14	10	12	11
Max. total (pairs)	23	12	3	9	12	13	11	19	17	16	22

The records for Worcestershire, for so long the British headquarters of the species, have traditionally been omitted from the table, but, now that the centre of gravity of the population has moved elsewhere, the single Worcestershire record has been included. The Marsh Warbler is thriving in adjacent areas of the Continent, and it seems that a more vigorous population may have established a bridgehead in England.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

HIGHLAND One locality: one singing from 5th-10th June.

Nesting has been reported in 1907 and 1970, the clutches, of 3 and 3, being collected or taken by a predator, respectively, before hatching (*Brit. Birds* 19: 311; 83: 381).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

One locality: one individual.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: one singing in suitable breeding habitat on 28th June, but not located again.

This species has not previously featured in the Panel's reports. Eggs of this species or Icterine Warbler *H. icterina* were collected in Sussex and Surrey in the late nineteenth century (Campbell & Ferguson-Lees, 1972, *A Field Guide to Birds' Nests*).

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Five counties: 23-522 pairs breeding.

England, SW 24 localities.

DORSET 15 localities: (1) five or six males; (2) two pairs; (3) about 40 pairs and at least 30 young reared; (4) two pairs; (5)-(7) two males at each; (8)(9) one male at each; (10) 28 pairs; (11) 37 pairs; (12) two pairs; (13) 'several' pairs; (14)(15) one pair at each.

HAMPSHIRE Eight localities: (1) New Forest: 375 pairs or singing males located during survey, but one area not covered: 'a total of c. 400 pairs is indicated'; (2) seven pairs or singing males; (3) four to six pairs or singing males; (4) pair bred; (5) singing male; (6) pair with one juvenile; (7) pair feeding young on 9th and 14th May; (8) at least one pair.

ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: pair fledged three young about 5th June.

England, SE 12 localities.

SURREY Eight localities: (1) three pairs bred; (2)-(5) single pairs bred at each; (6) 42 pairs; (7) three pairs; (8) pair reared two young.

ELSEWHERE Four localities: (1)-(3) single pairs bred; (4) pair possibly bred.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. counties	6	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	8	6	5
Confirmed (pairs)	15	19	50	8	14	11	26	15	8	26	23
Possible (pairs)	101	258	69+	304	134	429	368	293	239	616	499
Max. total (pairs)	116	277	119+	312	148	440	394	308	247	639	522

Unusually thorough surveys were carried out in Dorset and Hampshire, resulting in high figures. Unfortunately, no report has been received from Devon, which in 1988 held six, possibly 13, pairs. The high population indicates again that this volatile species is able to make good its numbers very quickly, given mild winters.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

52 localities: 19-131 pairs breeding.

England, SW 16 localities.

DORSET One locality: two adults with six recently fledged young on 15th August.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: two pairs probably bred and nine pairs possibly bred, in the best year since 1982.

HAMPSHIRE 11 localities: (1) 13 singing on 14th May; (2) two or three singing on 30th May, and pair with one juvenile on 5th August; (3)(4) single singing at each on 5th May; (5) one singing on 28th March and 3rd April; (6) one singing on 16th April, and on 11th June, when second individual seen; (7) one singing on 3rd June; (8) one singing on 20th May; (9) two singing on 21st April and one on 13th May; (10) one on 11th May; (11) pair bred successfully.

SOMERSET One extended locality: 11 singing, first song on 11th March.

WILTSHIRE Two localities: (1) song from 21st April to 13th May, with two singing on 6th May; (2) one singing on 14th and 16th May.

England, SE 29 localities.

BEDFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1) two males from 21st-23rd March and one on 4th May; (2) male on 5th May.

BERKSHIRE One locality: two or three singing in May.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Three localities: (1) 14 males holding territory, one brood of seven; (2) one singing on 3rd May; (3) one singing on 26th May.

ESSEX Three localities: (1) one singing from mid May into June; (2) one singing in suitable habitat on 29th May; (3) singles, thought to be one individual, singing in two areas on 13th May.

HERTFORDSHIRE Six localities: (1) pair fledged young, and second male on 9th June; (2) pair during May; (3) one singing on 6th May; (4) one singing throughout June; (5) one singing on 13th-14th June; (6) one singing from 13th-21st June.

KENT One locality: two from 29th May to end of June.

MIDDLESEX Two localities: (1) male on 2nd May; (2) one singing on 28th March.

SURREY Ten localities: (1) one singing from March to June; (2) one singing in May and June; (3) two singing on 29th April; (4) one singing on 11th May; (5) one singing on 16th May; (6) four singing and two more calling on 18th May; (7) one on 18th May; (8) male on 2nd May; (9) male on 1st June; (10) one singing in March and April.

ELSEWHERE One locality: single, but no further details supplied.

England, E One locality.

SUFFOLK One locality: male collecting food on 14th May.

England, Central Two localities.

LEICESTERSHIRE One locality: pair from beginning of year until 25th March, but not located thereafter.

WORCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs breeding, one carrying faecal sacs on 17th June, one carrying food on 2nd July; (2) one singing during March.

Wales Four localities.

DYFED One locality: one singing in mid April.

GWENT Two localities: (1) 21 singing males in territory, with 11 pairs known to have bred, five with two broods each, and at least 75 young fledged; (2) different singing males on 1st April and 7th May.

MONTGOMERY One locality: pair, but no further details supplied.

1988 Gloucestershire One locality: two pairs probably bred, one pair possibly did.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	25	30	35	21	75	47	24	19	37	44	52
Confirmed (pairs)	9	7	15	4	6	4	5	1	8	11	19
Possible (pairs)	64	71	87	40	169	78	41	28	74	72	112
Max. total (pairs)	73	78	102	44	175	82	46	29	82	83	131

Not only the largest population for six years, but the best-ever record for proved breeding. The Gwent population, first commented upon in the report for 1988, is clearly making a major contribution to the national total, but the fact that at least 75 young are known to have fledged is indicative of much careful fieldwork, without which lower numbers would obtain.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

29 localities: 15-37 pairs breeding.

England, SW One locality: female seen on 9th June, and heard to utter cat-like calls on 10th June.

England, SE Six localities: (1) male on 21st May, with possibly a female nearby; (2) male from 24th May to 17th June; (3) pair nested, and possibly laid, but deserted, a female and two males on 28th May; (4) pair bred and three males on 13th May; (5) male calling on 14th May; (6) male singing on 30th May.

England, E 19 localities: (1) pair on many dates in breeding season, but no nest found; (2) two males singing in May, but no evidence of breeding; (3)(4) pairs each fledging at least two young; (5) pair fledged at least one young; (6) two pairs bred, one of them fledging two or three young; (7) pair present until at least mid July, probably bred; (8) pair nested, but probably failed; (9) pair bred, but outcome not known; (10) pair present from 11th May to 24th June, probably bred; (11) family party seen with at least two young; (12) pair bred; (13) individuals present throughout May and June, probably one pair bred; (14) three pairs bred, young fledging from at least one nest, an additional male present on 3rd and 10th June; (15) individuals present throughout the season, and one pair probably bred; (16) male singing on 4th May; (17) pair probably bred; (18) pair bred; (19) singing male.

England, Central One locality: heard calling on one day.

England, N One locality: pair seen and heard on several dates between early and mid June.

Scotland, Mid One locality: male on 25th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	17	17	13	12	14	11	12	13	22	35	29
Confirmed (pairs)	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	5	11	16	15
Possible (pairs)	27	26	22	18	19	14	11	11	20	25	22
Max. total (pairs)	30	28	26	21	21	18	15	16	31	41	37

Once again, the Panel is much indebted to the Golden Oriole Group, which monitors annually all known sites in East Anglia.



Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Five localities: six individuals, but no known pairs.

England E Three localities.

NORFOLK Three localities: (1) male from 18th to 21st June, at the site where breeding took place in 1988; (2) male on 10th May; (3) two females on 2nd July, one remaining until 1st August.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

ANGUS One locality: male, far inland, on 24th May.

Scotland, N & W One locality.

HIGHLAND One locality: male from 14th to at least 23rd July at site occupied in previous years.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. counties	10	5	6	2	3	4	7	3	8	6	3
Confirmed (pairs)	14	23	11	5	11	6	6	4	2	1	0
Possible (pairs)	38	8	29	3	1	4	6	2	11	6	6
Max. total (pairs)	52	31	40	8	12	10	12	6	13	7	6

A decline spanning at least 150 years has brought this fine species to extinction as a breeding bird in England. Climatic change, habitat

degradation and the use of farm chemicals have all been suggested as causes. Certainly, it is not a purely English phenomenon. Suitable habitat still remains in plenty (in Essex in the 1950s, the species nested in hawthorn scrub in a railway siding), and doubtless Red-backed Shrikes will turn up irregularly in spring, but the problems of a male attracting a female when so few individuals are present seem, awesome.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

One locality: one individual.

England, Central One locality.

STAFFORDSHIRE One locality: male in area of oak *Quercus* and birch *Betula* scrub from 24th June to 2nd July.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	3	3	1	10	8	10	3	1	3	2	1
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Possible (pairs)	3	4	0	8	7	8	3	1	2	1	1
Max. total (pairs)	4	4	1	10	8	9	3	1	3	2	1

Tiny though the presence is, it is worth noting that no Bramblings at all were reported in summer in the three years 1974-76.



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Serin *Serinus serinus*

One locality: 0-1 pair breeding.

England, Central One locality.

SHROPSHIRE One locality: pair on 1st May, the male singing, but no subsequent sightings.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	0	1	3	5	7	4	5	2	4	6	1
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	2	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	0	1	4	6	5	3	5	3	5	9	1
Max. total (pairs)	0	1	6	7	7	5	6	3	5	9	1

No records were received from Devon, normally the key county, but, even allowing for that, 1989 was a very poor year for this species. It is interesting that, for the second year in succession, a pair is reported from the very inland county of Shropshire: most records come from localities close to the coast.

Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Three localities: three individuals.

Scotland, Mid One locality.

FIFE One locality: female with brood patch, trapped on 25th July and still present next day (coastal locality, so perhaps most likely to be migrant).

Scotland, N & W Two localities.

HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) one singing in late May; (2) one singing on 8th June.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	5	3	1	3
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	5	2	1	3
Max. total (pairs)	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	5	2	1	3

Scarlet Rosefinches have now been present in the breeding season every year since the first recorded breeding in 1982 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 133-135). It is certainly occurring more frequently in summer and the possibility of its breeding should be borne in mind.

Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W One locality: female on 27th July.

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
No. localities	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Confirmed (pairs)	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible (pairs)	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Max. total (pairs)	14	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

A token return after all too long an absence.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

31-52 pairs breeding.

Scotland, Mid, N & W 11 localities: (1) pair feeding young in nest on 18th July and four fledged young nearby; (2) male with a juvenile and one or two other juveniles or females nearby; (3) male singing on 11th June and two fully grown young on 18th July; (4)-(10) single males; (11) three or four on 19th July. In addition to the above, with the possibility of some duplication because sites are not named with adequate precision, are the following statements: (a) 'five pairs, all fledged'; (b) '13 pairs, only two nests visited, both fledged', and (c) 'broods ringed from 20 pairs'.

Annual comparisons are meaningless because of the great variation in the amount of fieldwork on the high tops favoured by this species, and the difficulty of eliminating overlap observations.



Girl Bunting *Emberiza citrulus*

36-119 pairs breeding.

England, SW

CORNWALL. Four localities: (1) male singing on 16th January and 7th April; (2) male singing on 20th April; (3) pair nest-building on 12th April and male on 13th June; (4) pair in April and May, and probably to end of year.

DEVON 50 tetrads: (1)-(50) 35 pairs were proved to have bred, a further 63 pairs were probably breeding, and there were another 16 possible pairs.

SOMERSET For the first time, there were no breeding-season records from this county.

England, SE One locality.

ESSEX One locality: pair in suitable habitat on 5th-6th May.

The Panel is indebted to Dr Andy Evans for very precise details of the Devon population, arising from his study for the RSPB. It is sad to record the disappearance of the species from Somerset. *A New Guide to the Birds of Essex* (1984) gives the status of the species in that county as 'Now a very rare visitor: has bred'. France might be a nearer origin than Devon for the Essex pair, but the French Atlas indicates that the species becomes scarce to the northeast of the Cherbourg peninsula.

Rare Breeding Birds Panel, Iredale Place Cottage, Loweswater, Cockermouth, Cumbria

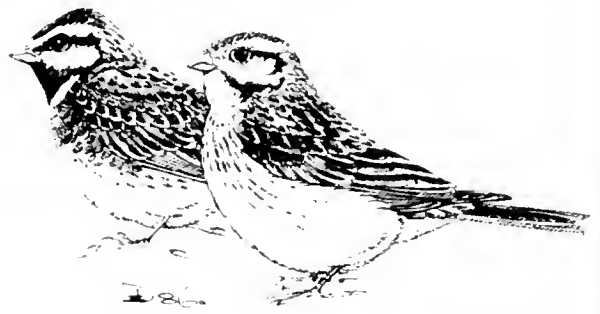
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Appendix. Individual county totals (pairs) for 1989 for selected species

For each species, the counties are arranged in alphabetical order within the regions (see *Brit. Birds* 83: 356-357).

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	2	0	0	2	2
Cornwall	1	0	0	1	1
Hampshire	1	0	0	1	1
Bedfordshire	4	0	0	4	4
Essex	5	0	2	6	8
Hertfordshire	2	1	0	0	1
Kent	6	0	1	4	5
Cambridgeshire	5	10	0	5	15
Lincolnshire	2	0	0	2	2
Norfolk	18	1	0	17	18
Northamptonshire	3	0	1	2	3
Suffolk	5	0	0	5	5
Leicestershire	4	0	2	2	4
Nottinghamshire	2	0	0	2	2
Shropshire	1	0	0	1	1
Worcestershire	1	0	0	1	1
Cheshire	5	0	3	4	7
Greater Manchester	2	1	0	1	2
Lancashire	2	0	0	2	2
Yorkshire	1	1	0	1	2
Lanarkshire	2	0	1	0	1
Lothian	1	0	0	1	1



Pochard *Aythya ferina*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Dorset	1	1	0	0	1
Hampshire	2	4	0	0	4
Somerset	1	0	0	1	1
Wiltshire	3	5	0	0	5
Buckinghamshire	1	6	0	0	6
Essex	17	37	16	1	54
Hertfordshire	4	9	1	0	10
Kent	6	11	5	0	16
Middlesex	7	26	0	5	31
Surrey	2	1	0	1	2
Cambridgeshire	2	4	0	0	4
Huntingdonshire	1	1	0	0	1
Lincolnshire	2	6	0	6	12
Norfolk	15	49	0	0	49
Northamptonshire	1	3	0	0	3
Suffolk	10	4	7	6	17
Derbyshire	1	1	0	0	1
Leicestershire	3	0	0	3	3
Nottinghamshire	4	8	0	0	8
Warwickshire	2	7	0	0	7
Cheshire	2	8	0	4	12
Cumberland	1	1	0	0	1
Greater Manchester	1	10	0	0	10
Lancashire	2	5	0	0	5
Northumberland	2	5	0	0	5
Yorkshire	11	41	1	2	44
Dyfed	3	1	0	1	2
Borders	5	4	0	5	9
Lothian	1	0	1	0	1
Angus	1	1	3	7	11
Fife	1	1	0	0	1

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	5	3	1	1	5
Cornwall	1	0	0	1	1
Devon	3	2	0	1	3
Dorset	25	16	0	9	25
Gloucestershire	6	1	0	7	8
Hampshire	14	14	0	0	14
Somerset	15	4	1	10	15
Wiltshire	25	5	9	12	26
Bedfordshire	10	5	1	4	10
Berkshire	5	0	2	3	5
Buckinghamshire	18	9	6	4	19
Essex	8	1	3	5	9
Hertfordshire	47	6	8	33	47
Kent	20	1	0	19	20
Middlesex	3	2	1	0	3
Surrey	43	13	28	2	43
Sussex	20	0	20	0	20
Cambridgeshire	20	8	6	6	20
Huntingdonshire	7	3	3	1	7

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* (continued)

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Lincolnshire	13	7	2	4	13
Norfolk	3	3	0	0	3
Northamptonshire	21	6	11	4	21
Suffolk	13	8	0	5	13
Derbyshire	4	2	0	2	4
Leicestershire	5	5	0	0	5
Nottinghamshire	5	3	2	0	5
Shropshire	2	1	1	0	2
Staffordshire	3	1	1	1	3
Warwickshire	3	3	0	1	4
Worcestershire	6	3	1	2	6
Cheshire	2	1	0	1	2
Yorkshire	2	1	0	1	2
Glamorgan	1	0	0	1	1
Gwent	6	3	3	0	6

Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	5	0	0	22	22
Cornwall	31	0	3	54	57
Dorset	6	0	0	108	108
Hampshire	7	0	0	67	67
Isles of Scilly	4	0	0	5	5
Isle of Wight	1	1	0	0	1
Somerset	37	0	0	64	64
Wiltshire	32	1	39	90	130
Bedfordshire	12	0	1	14	15
Berkshire	1	0	0	4	4
Buckinghamshire	20	2	8	24	34
Essex	7	0	5	7	12
Hertfordshire	9	1	4	9	14
Kent	20	0	0	30	30
Sussex	12	0	0	14	14
Cambridgeshire	15	1	0	45	45
Huntingdonshire	12	0	17	10	27
Lincolnshire	21	0	0	53	53
Norfolk	39	0	2	37	39
Northamptonshire	18	2	0	22	24
Suffolk	4	0	6	2	8
Derbyshire	2	0	0	29	29
Leicestershire	10	0	0	10	10
Nottinghamshire	4	0	2	2	4
Shropshire	112	3	43	104	150
Staffordshire	29	0	15	18	33
Warwickshire	15	0	2	13	15
West Midlands	3	0	2	1	3
Worcestershire	24	0	23	12	35
Cheshire	35	2	0	48	50
Cleveland	5	0	0	16	16
Cumbria	30	2	0	36	38
Durham	18	1	2	47	50
Isle of Man	3	0	0	25	25
Lancashire	28	0	0	50	50
Yorkshire	45	4	0	52	56
Breconshire	7	1	4	7	12

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (continued)

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Dyfed, Cardigan	20	0	0	41	41
Dyfed, Carmarthen	2	0	2	1	3
Gwent	8	0	5	11	16
Gwynedd	17	0	0	23	23
Mid Glamorgan	2	0	1	1	2
South Glamorgan	2	0	1	1	2
Borders	68	2	1	86	89
East Lothian	27	1	8	32	41
Lothian, Mid & West	17	1	2	26	29
Angus	4	0	0	4	4
Argyll	2	0	0	2	2
Caithness	6	0	1	5	6
Grampian	39	1	0	38	39
Tayside	8	1	0	7	8

Woodlark *Lullula arborea*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Dorset	6	4	6	3	13
Hampshire	13	0	40	0	40
Wiltshire	2	0	2	0	2
Berkshire	3	1	0	3	4
Surrey	15	11	8	5	24
Sussex	1	1	2	0	3
Lincolnshire	2	5	0	2	7
Norfolk	39	0	39	0	39
Suffolk	74	0	74	0	74
Nottinghamshire	1	3	0	1	4

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Dorset	1	0	0	1	1
Berkshire	1	0	1	0	1
Essex	4	2	2	2	6
Hertfordshire	1	1	0	0	1
Kent	4	8	0	1	9
London/Middlesex	5	2	0	3	5
Surrey	7	2	5	0	7
Sussex	2	1	0	1	2
Huntingdonshire	2	0	0	2	2
Lincolnshire	4	3	0	3	6
Norfolk	7	3	0	4	7
Suffolk	7	7	8	3	18
Derbyshire	1	1	0	1	2
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	2	2
West Midlands	5	3	3	1	7
Lancashire	2	0	0	2	2
Yorkshire	4	3	0	1	4

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

County	Localities	Breeding confirmed	Breeding probable	Breeding possible	Maximum total
Avon	1	1	0	0	1
Cornwall	7	0	0	12	12
Dorset	11	0	31	0	31
Hampshire	12	0	93	0	93
Isle of Wight	1	0	0	1	1
Somerset	9	3	1	13	17
Wiltshire	2	1	2	0	3
Berkshire	2	2	0	1	3
Hertfordshire	2	0	1	1	2
Sussex	1	2	0	0	2
Norfolk	19	0	35	0	35
Northamptonshire	2	0	0	2	2
Suffolk	1	2	0	0	2
Dyfed	2	1	1	0	2
Gwent	2	0	1	1	2

Mystery photographs

170 The bird in the mystery photograph (plate 167, repeated here) has, proportionately, a small, narrow head; very long, broad wings with fingered primaries; and a full but short tail. Although there is



nothing in the photograph against which to estimate the bird's size, its basic structure confirms the initial impression that it is obviously a large raptor.

Sharp-eyed readers may feel that they have seen this photograph recently. Indeed, it does bear a close resemblance to mystery photograph 155 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 237-238), of a Black Vulture *Aegyptius monachus*. Could this be a vulture, too? A close look at the bird's head enables its rather pointed profile to be seen, with the slender neck emerging from a ruff. This is confirmation that it is indeed one of the vultures, five species of which breed in the Western Palearctic, where a further two have been recorded as vagrants.

Two of the breeding species, Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* and Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, may be discounted immediately as each possesses, amongst other characters, a long, wedge-shaped tail. Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* may also be disregarded at this stage. Its proportionately shorter, broader wings, with an altogether straighter trailing edge, give this rare visitor to the Western Palearctic a more compact wing-shape than our mystery bird, with its bulging secondaries and concave inner primaries.

Our vulture lacks the pointed, spiky-looking tail feathers so characteristic of Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, and it also lacks that species' pointed secondaries, a feature shared with Black Vulture, which also has a broader neck and somewhat longer and usually rather more pointed tail than our bird. With these two Western Palearctic breeding vultures thus eliminated, we are left with Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* and Rüppell's Vulture *G. rueppellii*, the former a breeding bird of the region and the latter a vagrant.

These two species are very similar structurally, so it is necessary to resort to plumage contrast to identify the mystery vulture. This has been ignored so far because of the uncertainties of whether the bird's dark areas of plumage are genuinely so or just the product of its being silhouetted against a light sky. A close examination of the mystery photograph reveals the suggestion of a pale head and the barest hint of pale lines across the underwing-coverts. These characters are common to both species, but the pattern of the pale lines on the underwing-coverts of the mystery vulture (a short, relatively distinct line in front of a longer, broader, less contrasting band) is diagnostic of adult Griffon Vulture. (If these features—which are hardly discernible on the original photographic print—are absent from the printed version shown here, readers can count themselves as successful if they settled for Griffon/Rüppell's.)

Griffon Vultures are gregarious birds that hunt in flight 'squadrons', with the flock flying in the same direction and spreading out over the same area. At the excellent Gamla Reserve in Israel, where I photographed this Griffon Vulture in December 1989, we saw a flight of over 30 Griffons slowly hunting in their distinctive manner, with their heads down, constantly scanning for carrion. As they flew, the wings were held in a shallow V.

DAVE ODELL

74 The Links, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7LT



205. Mystery photograph 171. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Black-throated Diver attacking Great Crested Grebe

On 29th December 1984, on the Egleton reserve at Rutland Water, Leicestershire, we watched a Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* dive close to a Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* which was swimming past, and apparently attack the grebe below the water. Once the diver surfaced, it lifted its breast out of the water, with wings outstretched, and attacked the grebe fiercely, stabbing with its bill. The grebe was left looking injured, lying with its neck at or below surface level and its left leg waving in the air. The diver then swam away. Some ten or so minutes later, the Great Crested Grebe regained an upright posture, though it still swam with its neck bent. The attack appeared unprovoked, and no further interaction between the grebe and the diver was noted.

J. B. HIGGOTT and A. J. MACKAY
26 Link Road, Anstey, Leicestershire LE7 7BW



Great Crested Grebe in winter plumage in mid April On 18th April 1986, at Stodmarsh NNR, Kent, I was watching Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*, several pairs of which were displaying and indulging in territorial confrontations. At 10.17 GMT, my attention was drawn to a pair displaying with particular vigour, demonstrating false preening, head-shaking and a typical weed dance. Although one bird of this pair was in

normal breeding plumage, the other was still in typical winter plumage; prolonged observation confirmed that the two were paired, but no nest was observed.

N. V. MCCANCH

*Calf of Man Bird Observatory, c/o Juan Claque, Kionslieu, Plantation Hill,
Port St Mary, Isle of Man*

Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: 'Great Crested Grebes often display during the winter, when in winter plumage. The interesting point here is that one of a pair was still in winter plumage as late as 18th April. One would have liked to know whether (and when) it acquired its head plumes. Perhaps it was a first-year bird?' EDS

Rooks attacking Oystercatcher in water At 14.30 hours on 18th March 1984, at a small lake near Newburgh, Aberdeen, Grampian, A. Håland, M. Ugelvik and I watched an Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* being attacked by two Rooks *Corvus frugilegus*. The wader was preening at the water's edge, about 30 m from a flock of seven other Oystercatchers, and was easily recognisable by marked differences in plumage characteristics; in addition, it appeared to be exhausted and unable to fly. Suddenly, the Rooks approached and chased it into the water, where they both proceeded to peck at it. The Oystercatcher 'dived' at every attack, and resurfaced not far away. This continued for about five minutes, until the Rooks, probably because of our presence, flew to a vantage point a short distance from the lake. The Oystercatcher then swam away and disappeared into dense vegetation.

ODD W. JACOBSEN

*Department of Animal Ecology, Zoological Museum, University of Bergen, N-5000
Bergen, Norway*

Letters

Roosting behaviour of seabirds It is human nature to avoid raising even obvious questions when no answer appears to be in sight. I nevertheless raise such a question here. Birds of the open ocean, far from land, must not only roost but also sleep on the surface of waters that contain sharks or other predatory fish. Surely they have some means of escaping death from undersea attack, but what can it be?

LOUIS J. HALLE

Place de la Taconnerie 1, CH-1204 Geneva, Switzerland

Reaction of human beings to sudden noise and needless disturbance of Blackcaps May we express our sympathy with the Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* recently shocked by the experimental discharge of firearms by German scientists (*Brit. Birds* 84: 68-69)?

First, we have to admit that, just like Blackcaps, we are both upset and frightened by sudden noise. Secondly, we wish to express our total disquiet that caged and sitting Blackcaps should be tested routinely with unnatural phenomena (including constant noise of 75-80 decibels). Thirdly, we want to record our astonishment that you should have

effectively canvassed the fusillade and published it without so much as a blush.

We shall be saving up our biggest paper bags, and hoping that we will be in good puff, should Prof. Dr Berthold and Herr Querner stage another 'acoustic irradiation' exercise near either of us.

D. I. M. WALLACE and R. A. HUME
Elton House, Chapel Lane, Newborough, Burton upon Trent, Staffordshire DE13 8SQ

The letter by Prof. Dr P. Berthold and U. Querner (*Brit. Birds* 84: 68) is an intriguing combination of thoughtless ornithology and bad science which I find very difficult to comprehend.

Whilst it is obviously quite proper to record reactions to alarming stimuli obtained serendipitously, how on earth can the authors justify discharging shotguns near *nesting* birds which were *incubating eggs*? Six highly dubious experiments represents much too small a sample from which to make any meaningful deductions.

I can guarantee that, if such experiments were carried out near six adult human females and their offspring, an equally wide variety of responses would be obtained.

All I have gained from this letter is a lesson in the use of euphemism. Any people who can describe a shotgun blast from 10m as 'acoustic irradiation' must truly be experts.

HUW EDWARDS
Itchen College, Middle Road, Bitterne, Southampton SO9 3AX

Announcements

Rare Breeding Birds Panel The work of the Panel has been supported since its inception in 1973 by *British Birds*, the BTO, the NCC and the RSPB.

In April 1991, however, the NCC ceased to exist, its functions being taken over by three separate bodies: English Nature, the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland, and the Countryside Council for Wales. Each of these is nationally oriented, so, for the purpose of a United Kingdom oversight, a Joint Nature Conservation Committee has been established. The JNCC will be replacing the NCC as the Panel's chief provider of financial support, and a member of its staff, Dr David Stroud, currently serves on the Panel. The relationship between the Panel and the NCC was a happy and fruitful one, lasting 18 years. The Panel regrets the demise of the NCC, but now looks forward to a productive future working with, and supported by, the JNCC.

Overseas bird tours survey In 1986, we canvassed readers' opinions of the overseas bird tours in which they had participated. The results (*Brit. Birds* 79: 622-641) showed that eight tour operators were all highly rated by *BB* readers: Birding, Birdquest, Caledonian Wildlife, Cygnus Wildlife Holidays, the Field Studies Council, Ornitholidays, Sunbird and Tom Gullick.



Since the last survey, participation in overseas bird tours has increased, and, in particular, the number of commercial companies offering tours has mushroomed. We are, therefore, repeating the survey of *BB* readers' opinions. This is with the encouragement of the major companies concerned, all of whom feel that they have improved their service to birdwatchers.

If you have participated in one or more commercial overseas bird tours during the past five years (since June 1986), please help to make our survey comprehensive by completing the form on pages xi & xii (between pages 370 and 371). You can send it to us POST FREE (though you will save *British Birds* the money if you do use a stamp). Please send in your form (plus photocopied extra forms if you have taken part in more than one tour), to arrive by 15th October 1991, to Bird tours survey, British Birds, Freepost BF955, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3BR.

Senegal expedition 1991/92 There are still some places available for participants (qualified ringers and also those interested in bird-survey work) in this year's international expedition, which is sponsored by Euring and ICBP. Costs (including air fares): £450, plus £25 per week for food. Departures from London Gatwick fortnightly from 5th November. Anyone interested should contact S. J. R. Rumsey, BZW, Ebbgate House, 2 Swan Lane, London EC4R 3TS.

Addition to the British and Irish List Already accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee, the following record has now also been accepted by the BOU Records Committee and will be added to Category A of the British List when published in the Records Committee's sixteenth report (*Ibis* in prep.):

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

Greater London Chingford, first-year ♂, *T. n. naumanni*, 19th January to 9th March 1990.

The nominate race was not previously recorded in Britain and Ireland. There are several records of the only other race, *T. n. eunomus*.

Italian Congress The sixth Italian Congress of Ornithology will be held in Turin during 8th-11th October 1991, organised jointly by the GPSO (Gruppo Piemontese Studi Ornitologici), the Regional Museum of Natural Sciences and the CISO (Centro Italiano Studi Ornitologici). The programme will be divided into the following sections: Population studies, Systematics, Conservation, Biogeography, and Alpine ecology. For further details, write to Segreteria VI Convegno Italiano di Ornitologia, Museo di Scienze Naturali di Torino, Via Giolitti 36, 10123 Torino, Italy.

Books in British BirdShop The following books have been added this month:

*Brooke & Birkhead *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ornithology*

*Jobling *A Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names*

*Lekagul, Round, Wongkalasin & Komolphalin *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand*

*Parmenter & Byers *A Guide to the Warblers of the Western Palearctic*

Please use the British BirdShop form on pages xvii & xviii.

Seventy-five years ago...

'A PAIR of Hobbies (*Falco s. subbuteo*) nested and reared a brood of young in a wood not far from Leicester in the summer of 1915. I saw both parents as well as the young. The female was unfortunately shot in August 1915, and came into my possession in the flesh. It has been submitted to the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who states that it is an immature bird, having the feathers of the mantle and wings edged with pale rusty brown. Early this year [1916] a pair again arrived at the same wood, but apparently the female was trapped in May, for a wing found in a trap corresponded with the skin in my collection. For a few days after the male was seen flying about in the neighbourhood, but then disappeared. Early in August it was reported that four "blue hawks" were living in a plantation some distance away, and on August 15th the keeper brought me a splendid adult male Hobby and a young female, which could not have left the nest long. He had, I regret to say, killed all four birds in four shots.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 95, September 1916).

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Definitely a record After an astonishing total of 37 years, Mrs N. D. Blamire will no longer be compiling the annual index of *British Birds*. Diana started way back in 1953 (for the first three years as Miss N. D. Giffard) and each year since has provided her detailed and accurate indexes. Many readers use these on a regular basis and know that they are a reliable reference to the contents of *BB*. Heartfelt thanks from us all to such a dedicated supporter. In recognition of this long service, the Editorial Board has presented to Diana an inscribed copy of her choice of book: the Best Bird Book of the Year in 1989, *Owls of the Northern Hemisphere* by K. H. Voous.

New bird group A recent public meeting of birdwatchers in Northern Ireland resulted in the formation of a new group, to be known as the Northern Ireland Birdwatchers' Association (NIBA). The first objective of the NIBA is to publish a Northern Ireland Bird Report covering the years 1986-90. All birdwatchers are requested, as a matter of urgency, to send all records for those years to the Records Secretary: George Gordon, 2 Brooklyn Avenue, Bangor BT20 5RB. The NIBA will be working closely with 'Flightline', the telephone recording service for rare or interesting sightings in Ireland (listen on 0247 467408 and report your own sightings). For further information, please contact the Secretary Diana Blamire, 3 Cranmore Gardens, Belfast BT9 6JL; phone Belfast (0232) 669286. So now we know what Diana will be doing with her spare time.

More on madness in Malta The Maltese tour company 'Sphinx Tours', which specialises in trips for shooters and other bird-hunters, claimed to have lost revenue as a result of intervention by the Malta Ornithological Society (MOS) with the Egyptian government (*Brit. Birds* 84: 292-293). They are suing the MOS for £52,000. When the case came to court recently, the representative of Sphinx Tours did not turn up in court. A sign, perhaps, that they do not intend to pursue the matter? Let us hope so. If you would like to help the MOS with money or want further information, please

contact Georgina Green at the ICBP on Cambridge (0223) 277318.

Bonelli's Eagle The Fund for Birds of Prey (FIR) is very concerned about the future of Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus*. It is appealing to interested ornithologists to help with the formation of an International Bonelli's Eagle Group to safeguard the eagle. If you are interested write to FIR, BP 27, La Garenne Colombe, France 92250.

The new NCCs As the new national versions of the old NCC slowly establish their organisations, we may be able to provide some morsels of information about their structure and activities. In Scotland, the new body is to be called the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland. A Main Board, a Science Research & Development Board and four Regional Boards will direct the activities of the NCCS. It gives some encouragement to note that well-known ornithologists (professional and amateur) have been appointed to each of the Boards. As well as Magnus Magnusson, who is Chairman of the NCCS, there is Professor George Dunnet, Dr Pat Monaghan and Professor Chris Smout on the Main Board (the first two also on the SR & D Board, of which George Dunnet is Chairman); Findlay McQuarrie and Dr Malcolm Ogilvie (South West Region); John Arnott and Dr John McManus (South East Region); David Lea and N. J. O. Graham (North East Region); and, finally, Roy Dennis and Peter Peacock (North West Region). Congratulations to them all.

Under the influence? A piece in *The Observer* in July has probably brought us more 'misprint reports' than any other published piece that we have seen recently. Describing how barley grain left-overs from an Islay distillery are used as bulk feed for cattle on the RSPB reserve at Loch Gruinart, it makes the point that this '... has turned traditional farming upside down'. That's not all that has happened, it seems. After some comments on Barnacle Geese, the piece ends: 'The reserve encourages other species of birds, particularly white and green

fronted geese, choughs, greenshank and grey clover. Rather than draining some fields there are flooded areas managed as wild pastures for juncos.' Hic!

Surprise dip We have received a note from G. Carr of Ossett, West Yorkshire, in which he says that, following an unsuccessful twitch to the Yorkshire coast, he noticed a

roadsign at North Cave (see plate 206) which brought no comfort whatsoever. On another occasion later in the year, this time after a successful day's birding, he noticed that the roadsign had been removed. A coincidence? Or maybe there were dark forces at work? Now, we hear, the roadsign is back . . .



206. The roadsign that G. Carr should have seen on his way to an unsuccessful twitch. See 'Surprise dip' (G. Carr)

Sponsored by

Monthly marathon

'A nice easy one for a change.' That, we suspect, is what many contestants thought as they hastily wrote 'Shore Lark' on their postcards. The votes were as follows:

Shore Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	(50%)
Temminck's Horned Lark <i>E. bilopha</i>	(50%)

with a few votes for Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*.

The entrants who looked that little bit longer and more closely at plate 135, and identified it as a Temminck's Horned Lark, were right; this one was photographed by Dave Odell in Morocco in February 1989.

The winner of this monthly competition will be able to choose a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. The next stage appears as plate 207.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.





207. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (fourteenth stage: photograph number 63). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th October 1991

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 12th July to 15th August 1991
These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Gosford Bay, 31st July, and Aberlady Bay (both Lothian), sporadically, 4th-14th August.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 30th July; between Cornwall and Scilly, 8th August.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Sheringham, 29th July; one off sea, Horsey (both Norfolk), 2nd August; Broadstairs (Kent), 3rd August.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* Pale-phase in off sea, North Foreland (Kent), 14th August (potential first for Britain and Ireland).

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Fair Isle (Shetland), 15th August.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 14th-16th July, another 8th-9th August.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Kilnsea (Humberside), 28th-29th July.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* Kilnsea, 2nd August; Cley (Norfolk), 3rd-7th August; Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 4th to

at least 13th August; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 13th August.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* Stithians Reservoir (Cornwall), 7th August.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* Hornsea (Humberside), 13th July; Burnham Norton (Norfolk), 14th July; Cullercoats (Tyne & Wear), 24th July; New Passage (Avon), 7th August.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* Holkham Meals (Norfolk), 29th July; near Fishguard (Dyfed), 8th August.

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* Lowestoft (Suffolk), 19th-20th July.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* Trapped, Youghal (Co. Cork), 6th August (potential first for Ireland).

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Waxham (Norfolk), 14th August.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* Male, Loop Head (Co. Clare), 17th-18th July.

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We are grateful to National Bird News for supplying information for this news feature.

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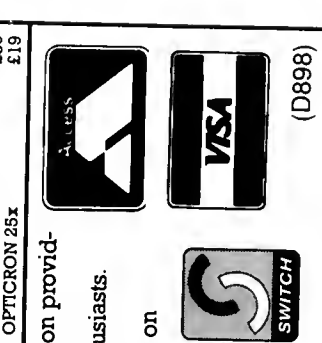
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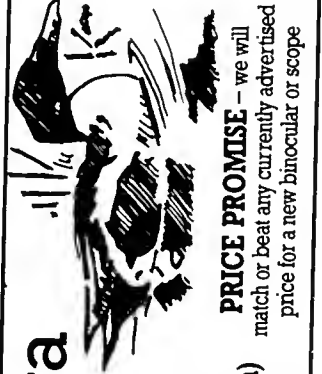


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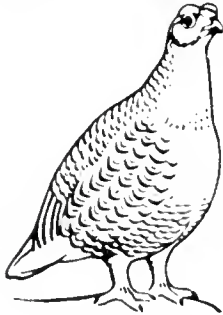
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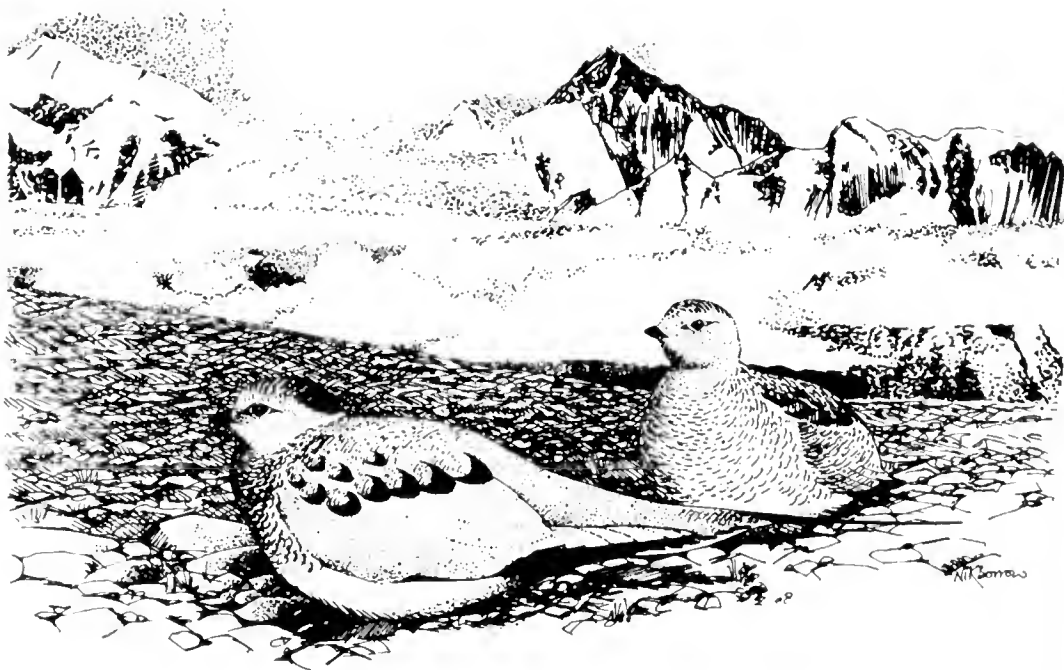
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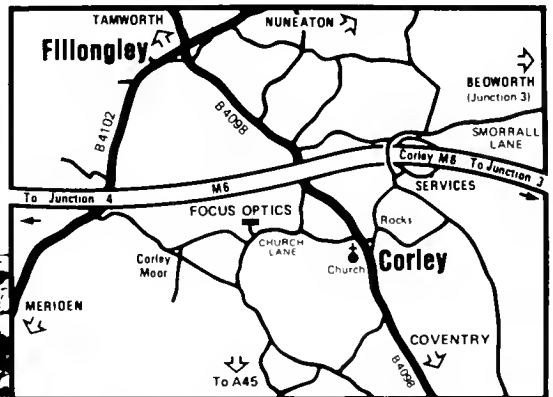
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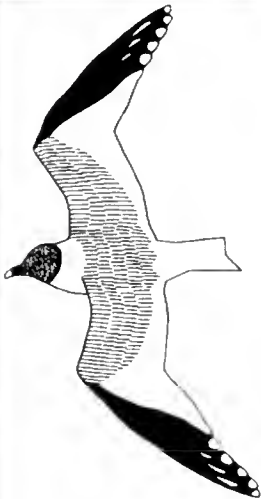
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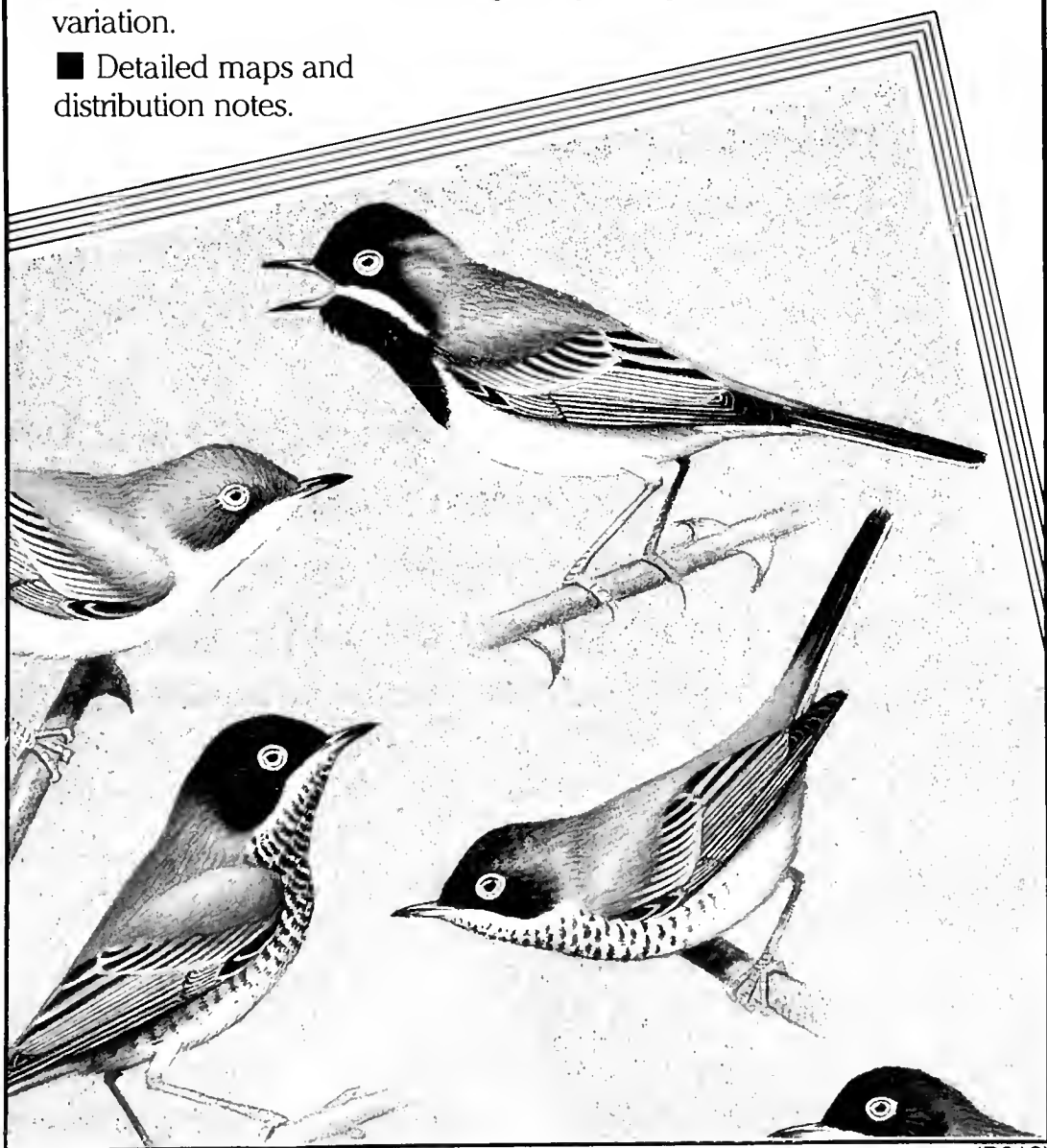
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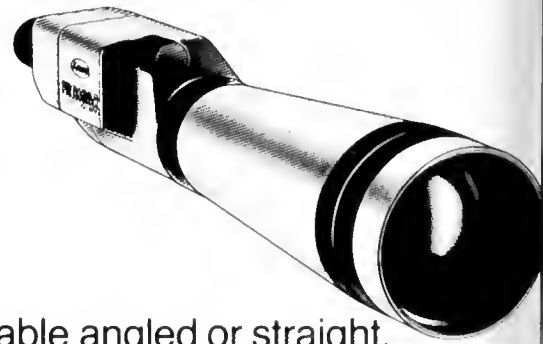


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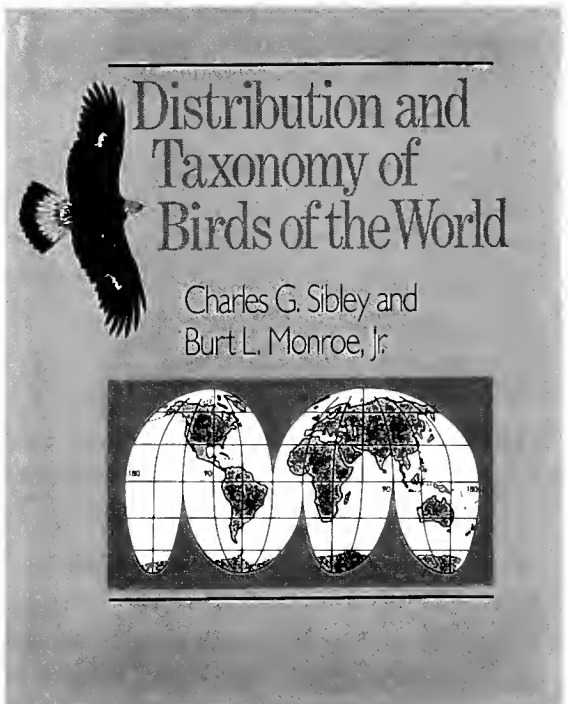
The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year



For the benefit of those who may wish to acquire (or give as a present) just one of the many bird books published each year, *British Birds* selects annually its choice of the 'Best Bird Book of the Year' from those reviewed in the journal during the previous 12 months. The winner may, in one year, be an important, erudite scientific treatise and, in another, a lighter, less academic work, but it will always be reliable, well produced and thoroughly worthy of inclusion in any birdwatcher's library.

Our choice for BEST BIRD BOOK OF 1991 is

Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. By Charles G. Sibley & Burt L. Monroe, Jr. Yale University Press, New Haven and London. £75.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 84: 417-419)



Three other books were close contenders and are also recommended by us:

Birds and Forestry. By Mark Avery & Roderick Leslie. T. & A. D. Poyser. £18.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 84: 199-200)

Red Data Birds in Britain: action for rare, threatened and important species. Edited by L. A. Batten, C. J. Bibby, P. Clement, G. D. Elliott & R. F. Porter. Illustrated by Ian Willis. T. & A. D. Poyser. £18.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 84: 415-416)

Population Trends in British Breeding Birds. By John H. Marchant, Robert Hudson, Steve P. Carter & Phil Whittington. British Trust for Ornithology. £12.00. (Review: *Brit. Birds* 84: 32-33)

Eastern vagrants in Britain in autumn 1988

Norman Elkins



The autumn of 1988 was remarkable for the arrival of eastern Palearctic vagrant passerines in Britain (Rogers *et al.* 1989), and second only to 1982 in numbers (see Howey & Bell 1985). Of those central Asian passerines whose breeding range is no closer to Europe than the Urals, approximately 100 individuals were recorded (excluding Richard's Pipits *Anthus novaeseelandiae* and Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus*). The two commonest Asian vagrants in 1988 were Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus* (64 individuals) and Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* (21).

Meteorologically, October 1988 over central Asia was characterised by an intense anticyclone which extended much farther west into Europe than normal, and which created a strong mean easterly airflow on its southern flank as far west as the Black Sea. Low-level easterlies were also more frequent as far west as the mid Atlantic between 40°N and 55°N. At higher altitudes, this corresponded with a much weaker westerly airflow than normal between central Asia and the Caspian Sea in September, and central Europe in October.

With the presence of such a strong easterly wind flow, it is not surprising that large numbers of central Asian passerines were drifted towards Europe. The precise orientation mechanism is not clear, but meteorological and other evidence must now be overwhelmingly in favour of most vagrants being birds of the year (first-winters and juveniles) on non-oriented exploration movements. The arrivals in Britain occurred in two discrete periods: 12th-15th October and 20th-25th October, with no records on 18th and 19th. Only two occurred prior to 12th, and a few after 29th.

The first fall began on 12th in northeastern England, with later records from farther north. These were associated with an occlusion moving north over the North Sea and eastern Britain, with the arrivals on its northern side. Back-tracking calculations of bird flight pose inherent difficulties, and many assumptions must be made, but I carried out such a calculation assuming that the vagrants which arrived on 12th had travelled non-stop at an altitude below 1 km at a flight speed of 10 m/s. The calculation showed a route across Europe with a flight-time of 30 hours, having moved across, or departed from, the Crimea at around 00.00 hours on 11th. The route along which they are likely to have travelled was one taking them west over or just to the north of the Caspian and Black Seas, and then across central Europe through a weak frontal zone which farther west began to move north into the North Sea (see figs. 1 & 2).

An easterly airflow is frequently induced or strengthened in the region of the Black Sea by a trough of low pressure or a depression forming to the lee of the Caucasus mountains, funnelling any birds westwards to the north of the range. In October 1988, such a feature was present on all days except 7th-9th, 23rd-25th and 30th-31st. These periods coincide well with breaks in the main arrivals in Britain, but, of course, a connecting flow from this region across Europe must also be present. Such a flow formed during 11th-12th, 14th-21st and on 26th. The period from 9th-12th October was particularly notable, with a depression over the Black Sea developing on 9th-10th. On 10th and 11th, an anticyclone built eastwards over the Baltic with a strong southeast airstream below 1.5 km altitude becoming established from central Europe to Britain from early on 11th to late on 12th, veering southerly by 13th (see fig. 1). The next fall also occurred ahead of northward-moving fronts in the period from 19th, with the airflow veering west of south by 26th. It is likely that the latter fall included many migrants already in Europe, unlike those arriving earlier, which probably made a faster and more direct crossing of the continent.

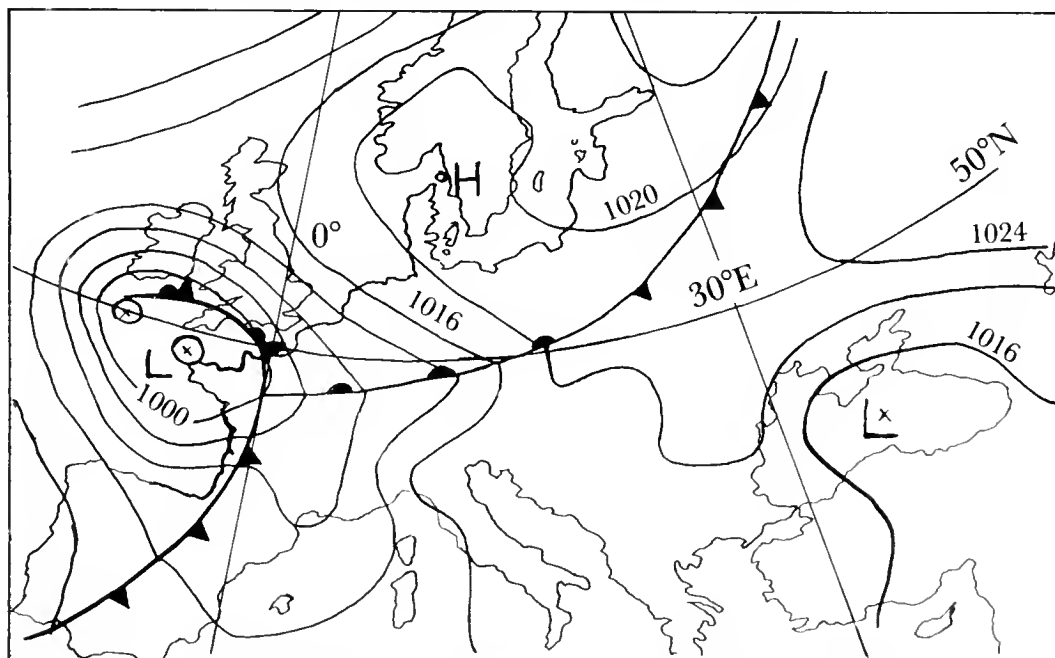


Fig. 1. Synoptic chart for 12.00 GMT on 11th October 1988

Previous accounts of far-eastern-vagrant arrivals in northwest Europe (Baker 1977; Howey & Bell 1985; Elkins 1988) have all drawn attention to the presence of easterly winds in central Asia as a mechanism for initiating westward movements. With the bulk of land south of 50°N in central Asia at an altitude of well over 1,000 m (900 mbar), sea-level atmospheric-pressure patterns may not always be representative of low-level winds. More realistic indicators of such wind directions are surface streamlines. A streamline is a line parallel to the surface-wind vector at all points, but streamline charts are not readily available. Bryson (1986) produced mean monthly streamline charts for Asia, and showed that in September easterly surface winds exist south of 50°N westwards from 100°E, which, apart from a short break or two, reach as far west as 30°E by October (see fig. 2). During these two months, the latitude of 50°N

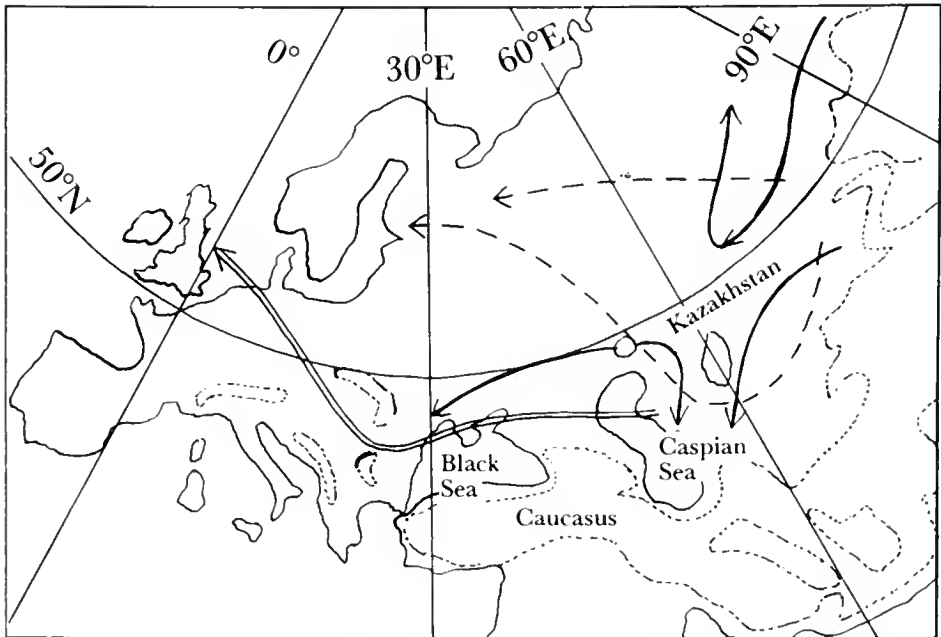


Fig. 2. Routes of vagrants: *double-line arrow* = route of vagrants in mid October 1988 as inferred from low-level winds; *dotted-line arrows* = routes of vagrants in October 1982, from Howey & Bell (1985); *single-line arrows* = October mean streamlines, from Bryson (1986). Land over 1,000 m above sea level enclosed by dotted line

between central Europe and central Asia marks the approximate southern boundary of southwesterly surface winds.

Provided that European airflows are suitable for assisting vagrant passerines towards Britain and northern Europe, I would theorise that central Asian airflows are such that non-oriented migrants dispersing downwind normally funnel around the mountain ranges and across Kazakhstan and thence into the Ukraine. This route has already been shown by Howey & Bell (1985) to have been implicated in the vagrant movements of October 1982, although in that case they appear to have been deflected northwestwards over Kazakhstan to arrive from a more eastern point than those in 1988 (see fig. 2). The winds in southwest Asia must also be those utilised by the many migrant populations of Asia which winter in Africa.

It is of interest that, in autumn 1988, multiple arrivals of some of these passerines were recorded from Yugoslavia and Hungary (*Brit. Birds* 82: 349-355), supporting this theory of a southern approach to Britain. Unlike 1982, few were recorded from the Scandinavian region.

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Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs

In recent years, it has become clear that most bird-photographers work in colour, and, as a consequence, the number submitting prints for consideration for this feature has fallen. There still remains a number of aficionados, however, who enjoy working in the medium and are attracted by the total control over their work that they can obtain by carrying out their own processing of the film, and then printing their own enlargements. There is, too, considerable aesthetic satisfaction to be obtained from the tones and degrees of contrast obtainable in black-and-white work, and in the manipulation of these to achieve the photographer's desired result.

As will be seen from the following, we have again been able to make an interesting and varied selection of black-and-white bird-photographs for this thirty-second annual display. There may be fewer workers in the medium, but the quality of the prints which they produce is well up to the standard of previous years. The work of five photographers is represented: Harold Grenfell and Tony Hamblin have both had four prints selected, and there are three examples of Tony Bond's work, two of Dr Kevin Carlson's and one of Mike Weston's. From the two extremes, Mike Weston's work appeared for the first time only last year, while Kevin Carlson is represented for the nineteenth occasion.

As our readers will know, we try—other factors being equal—to add further bird species that have not previously featured in this series. This year we are able to include no fewer than five 'new' species: Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*.

The first photograph (plate 208) is of one of these new species: two Spoonbills at the nest. The off-duty bird is preening, a task that should be awkward with that long, spatulate bill, but which is in fact carried out with great dexterity. This photograph represents quite an achievement by the photographer, Kevin Carlson, who installed the hide in 2 m of water.

The end of summer is epitomised by the next photograph (plate 209), which Harold Grenfell took by stalking, using a monopod to support his camera. The result is an attractive and instructive group of Sandwich Terns: four adults with a juvenile for comparison. The preoccupation of the terns with preening—or simply just roosting—and their obvious lack of concern at the presence of the photographer displays all that is best in this type of bird-photography.

Kevin Carlson's Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* (plate 210) was photographed from a hide, but, since the bird is not carrying food, we guess that the hide was set up for wait-and-see work, perhaps close to water. This can be an exciting and rewarding form of bird-photography, and we commend the method to other photographers.

Waders, too, lend themselves to wait-and-see photography. Tony Hamblin's Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* (plate 211), taken in

Menorca, Spain, is another attractive example of the genre, the shells providing an indication of the very small size of this wader.

We like Mike Weston's Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* (plate 212), because the bird in the photograph seemed so typical of the species: cautious and wary, taking great care to ensure that it is safe for it to venture beyond the pear tree in which it is perched. Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis* are not difficult to photograph, providing you can get a good view of their nesting ledge, but Tony Bond's shot (plate 213) is a particular delight, the birds allopreening, pigeon-like. An added attraction of the photograph is the flower heads of thrift *Armeria maritima*, just in the frame at the top of the picture.

Another striking photograph is provided by Tony Hamblin's Lapwing (plate 214): a female, feeding in calm water, with one of the most striking reflections that we can remember seeing. The circular ripple adds an ephemeral touch to what might otherwise almost be a still-life pose. Two wildfowl follow, both the work of Tony Bond. We much admired the Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (plate 215); it is all too easy to burn out the feather detail on white birds, but Tony has retained this, while at the same time providing action in the form of ripples and a dribble of water from the bill as the bird raises its head after a bout of feeding. The pair of Gadwalls (plate 216) is most attractive, particularly the drake, whose vermiculated flanks show the considerable detail that Tony has managed to achieve in this shot.

We also enjoyed Harold Grenfell's Mallard (plate 217), another photograph which is improved so much by the reflection. This is another result of Harold's wait-and-see hide work, other examples of which we have shown in the past. A similarly watery photograph, with yet another engaging reflection, is provided by Tony Hamblin's bathing female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* (plate 218). Though many raptors bathe regularly, they are not often photographed doing so. There are many bird-photographers who will envy Tony this well-composed shot.

In July, adult Greenshanks *Tringa nebularia* reappear in southern Britain as they move southward towards their wintering grounds. At this time of the year, their plumage is worn, and, as a consequence, they look considerably darker than the juveniles that will follow two or three weeks later. One of these adults has been well caught by Harold Grenfell (plate 219) at his wait-and-see hide; this type of shot makes the sometimes interminable waits of this type of photography well worthwhile.

Wait-and-see photography at wetland localities often results in Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* appearing in front of the hide; this juvenile (plate 220) was particularly obliging for Harold Grenfell, paddling vigorously to maintain its position against the falling tide in an estuary stream whilst it fed from the water surface.

In recent years, a number of photographers have exploited the ability of wide-angle lenses to show birds in their habitat. We particularly liked the example, by Tony Hamblin, showing a winter Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* in a woodland area (plate 221), taken using remote control with a 28-mm lens.



2208. Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Portugal, May 1990 (Kevin Carlson)(Nikon FE; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford FP4)

2209. Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Dorset, September 1990 (Harold E. Grenfell)(Nikon; 300mm Nikkor with 1.4× converter; Ilford XP1)





210. Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, Portugal, June 1990 (*Kevin Carlson*)(Nikon FE2; 600mm Novoflex; Ilford FP4)

211. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*, Menorca, May 1990 (*Tony Hamblin*)(Canon T90; 500mm Canon; Ilford XP1)





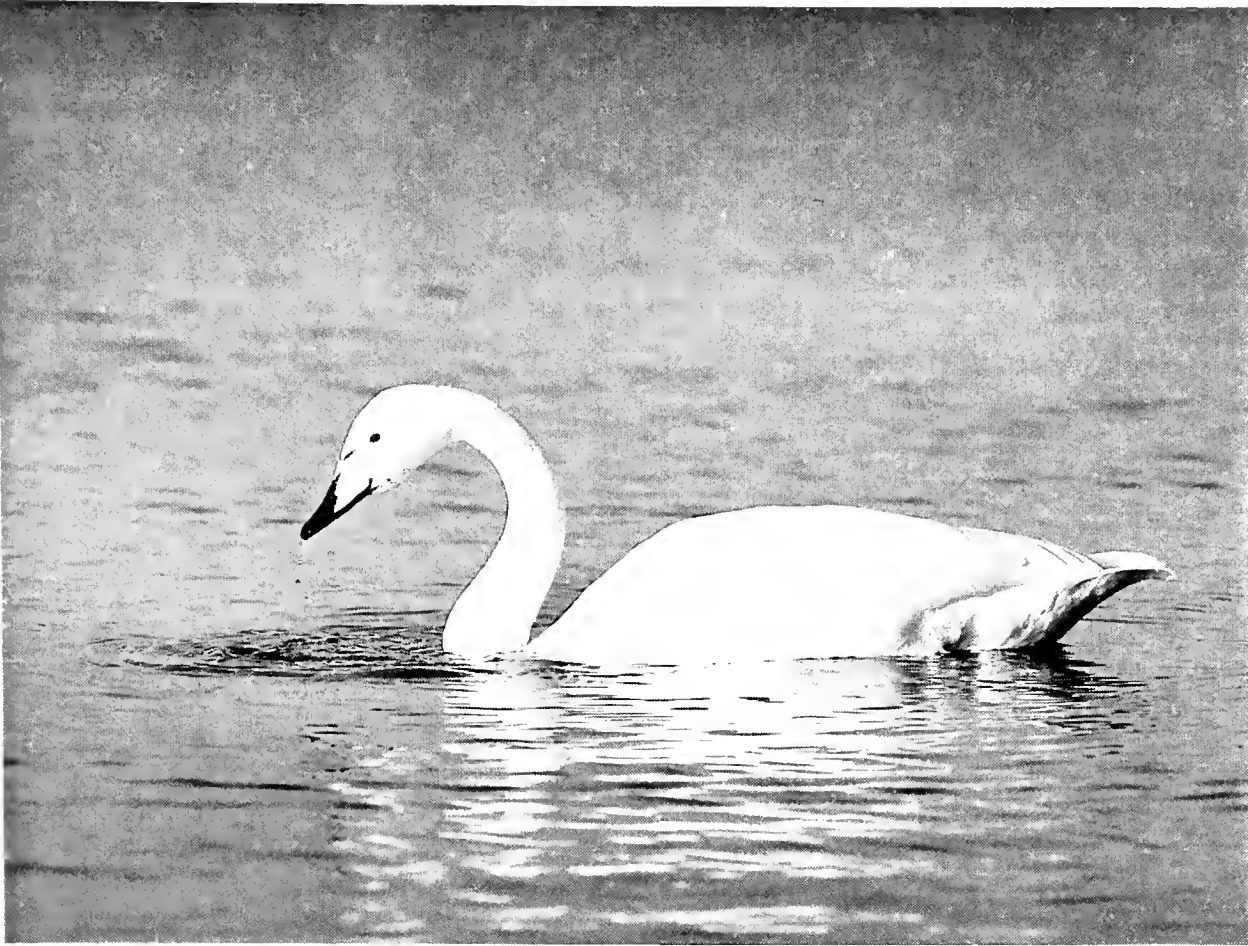
2212. Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Netherlands, August 1990 (Mike Weston)(Canon A-1; 600mm Canon; Ilford XP1)

2213. Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, Islay, June 1990 (Tony Bond)(Canon A-1; 500mm Canon; Ilford XP2)



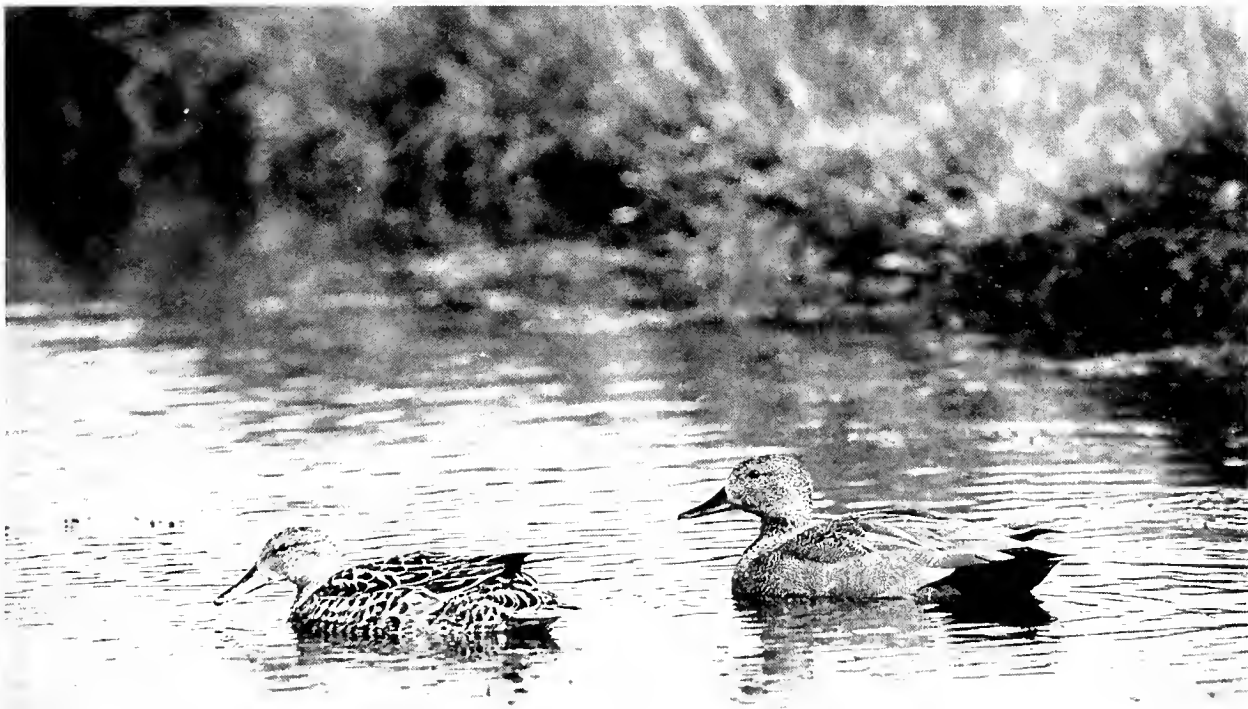


214. Female Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Derbyshire, May 1990 (Tony Hamblin)(Canon T90; 500mm Canon with 1.4x converter; Ilford XPI)



215. Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Lancashire, January 1990 (Tony Bond)(Canon A-1; 500mm Canon; Ilford FP4)

216. Pair of Gadwalls *Anas strepera*, Norfolk, May 1990 (Tony Bond)(Canon A-1; 500mm Canon; Ilford FP4)

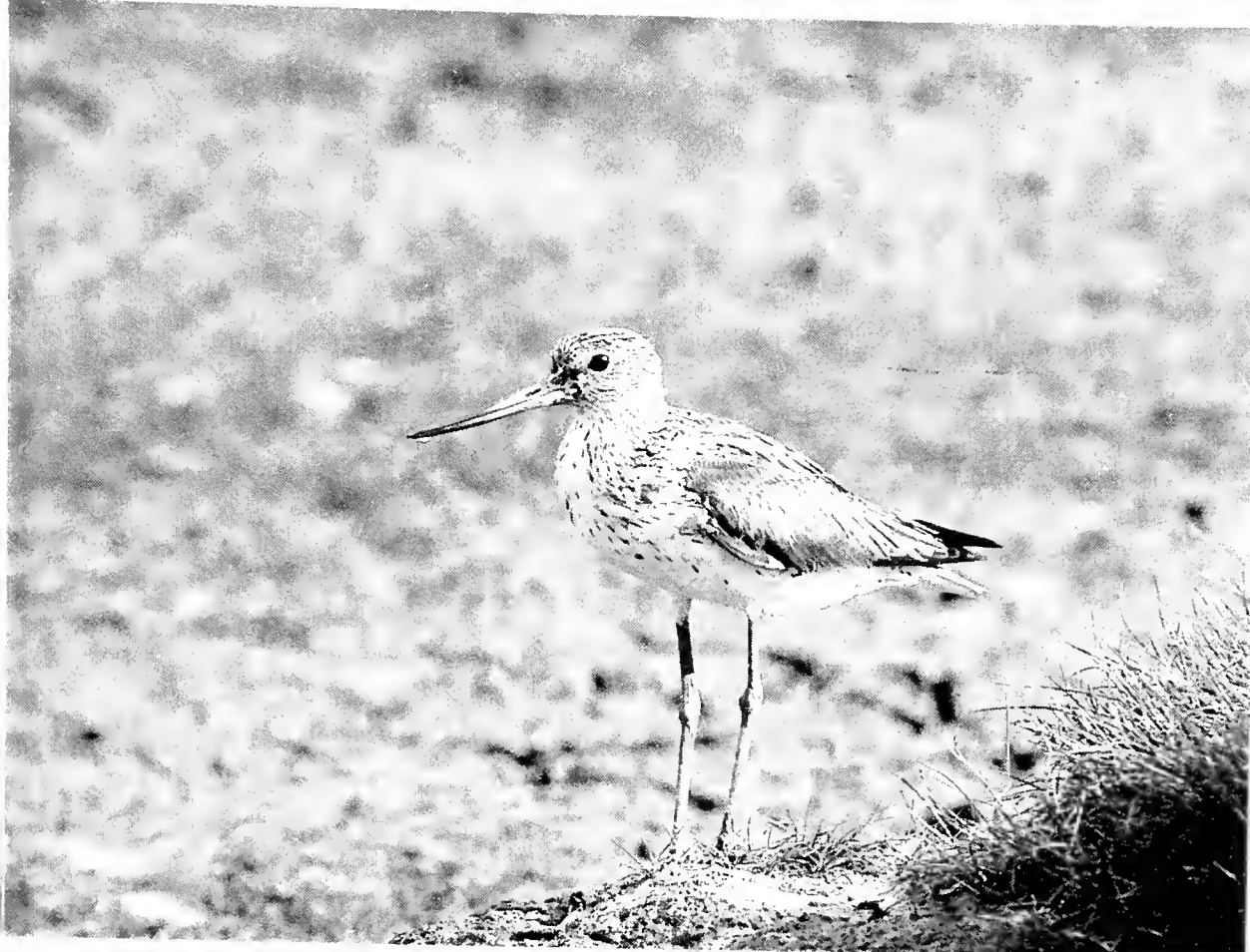




217. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, West Glamorgan, August 1989 (*Harold E. Greyfell*)(Nikon; 300mm Nikkor; Ifford XP1)

218. Female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* bathing, Warwickshire, July 1989 (*Tony Hamblin*)(Canon T90; 500mm Canon; Ifford XP1)





219. Adult Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, West Glamorgan, July 1990 (Harold E. Grenfell) (Nikon; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford XPI)

220. Juvenile Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*, West Glamorgan, August 1989 (Harold E. Grenfell) (Nikon; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford XPI)





221. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, Warwickshire, March 1988 (Tony Hamblin)
(Olympus OM2n; 24mm Zuiko; Ilford XP1)

We look forward to selecting next year's photographs, and hope that there will be a nucleus of black-and-white bird-photography enthusiasts who will let us pick examples from their recent work. We also take this opportunity to remind photographers of the need to respect the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) when attempting nest-photography.

R. J. CHANDLER, J. T. R. SHARROCK and DON SMITH

Reviews

Red Data Birds in Britain: action for rare, threatened and important species. Edited by L. A. Batten, C. J. Bibby, P. Clement, G. D. Elliott & R. F. Porter. Illustrated by Ian Willis. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1990. 348 pages; 24 black-and-white plates; 118 line-drawings. £18.00.

As sure as Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* have white rumps, you can tell a title from the Poyser imprint by its air of quiet authority—well designed, but not flash; fact-filled, but not turgid; and excellent value for money. It was almost a shock to find that a book which exudes these admirable qualities was written in response to an EC command.

A series of Red Data books has been published since the mid 1960s, listing species of invertebrates, plants, birds and animals which are threatened with extinction on a global scale. Because of the wide scope of these books, produced to the specifications of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), many countries have also compiled their own Red Data books. These give detailed information on vulnerable species and their needs on a national, rather than a planetary scale, and are a useful stimulus to local conservation effort.

The EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, adopted by the European Council of Ministers in April 1979, sets its sights on such local action by obliging member states to prepare and keep under review national lists of threatened bird species. A primary aim of the 'Birds Directive' is to maintain bird populations at least at their current numbers, distribution and breeding performance throughout the EC. So, in this European context, downturns in these parameters might indicate a species which is 'threatened' at a regional or national level.

Leo Batten and his team of co-authors, in a joint NCC/RSPB venture, have met one of our Birds Directive obligations by homing in on 117 species from the 520 or so on this century's British list to describe in detail as our Red Data birds. The geographical scope of the detailed texts for these rare, threatened or internationally important species, from Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* to Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirrus*, is limited to Britain. Ireland and the Channel Islands are excluded because of differences in nature conservation laws and administration.

The bulk of the book comprises texts in a standard format which describe the status, ecology, distribution, population and conservation needs of each of these species. The accounts are succinct and up-to-date, with good cross-references to major papers on each species. Relevant references are listed at the end of each text, rather than in a mega-list at the end of the book—a simple but very practical touch.

Several short chapters and appendices follow the species texts. These considerably enhance the book's value as a reference work, for example by giving an illustrated summary of the major bird habitats in Britain and (in an excellent chapter by Stuart Housden on bird conservation) by explaining the salient points of national and international conservation laws, conventions and designations. If you have ever yearned for a neat summary of the Berne Convention, or wondered about the difference between a Ramsar site and an LNR, this book should be a boon.

The authors say that they intend the book to be subject to future revision, expressing the hope that another edition in five or ten years' time will be 'better informed', partly on the basis of comments and factual information prompted by this edition.

That is a very modest statement for such a well-researched book. But it is also another challenge. I trust that many British ornithologists will rise to it by purchasing this book and using it as a working tool for bird conservation.

KENNY TAYLOR

Phylogeny and Classification of Birds: a study in molecular evolution.
By Charles G. Sibley & Jon E. Ahlquist. Yale University Press,
 Newhaven & London, 1990. 1,000 pages. £60.00.

Taxonomy is the practice of classification, and systematics is the study of the relationships among organisms. Since before Linnaeus, it has been appreciated that birds could be arranged into groups—wagtails, falcons, spoonbills, etc.—and Charles Darwin showed us how the similarities among the members of such a group indicate their common origin. It is now widely believed that an accurate understanding of the affinities of species could inform us, not only of their relationships, but also of their evolutionary history.

The majority of evolutionary biologists think that a species is a group of organisms that can actually or potentially interbreed, and that is reproductively isolated from other such groups. This means that there is no mixing of the groups, and genetical differences can arise between them. The traditional use of morphological traits in avian taxonomy has served us well for generations, but the use of anatomical similarities and differences does not easily lend itself to an objective assessment of taxonomic status (and has led to the old joke that a species is a species if a competent taxonomist says so). Nor does it allow the estimation of evolutionary time since the divergence of particular groups. Small wonder that avian (and other) systematists have turned to alternative, more quantitative, measures of affinity: numerical taxonomy, egg-white proteins, polymorphic enzyme systems, and so on.

When two groups of animals are reproductively isolated, however, differences in structure will arise and spread through them: they will diverge, and the longer they have been isolated the greater will be this divergence. At a genetic level, these differences are located in the DNA which exists as a series of very long, filamentous molecules, each of which comprises two closely adjacent parallel strands. Chemical bonds normally hold these strands together, but high temperature causes the bonds to break, the strands to separate, and the DNA to 'melt'. If the strands are very similar in composition, the bonds will be more frequent, and melting will not occur until a higher temperature than is necessary for less similar strands.

It is possible to juggle with the conditions in a test tube so that single strands are produced by dissociation of the DNA from two separate individuals. Relaxing the conditions allows the strands to reassociate and form a hybrid molecule. If the individuals are taxonomically diverse, the strands will be sufficiently different for alignment to be poor and the melting point to be lower than for organisms more closely related. Thus, by analysing the melting points of hybrid DNA from a wide diversity of species, it is possible to estimate their similarities based upon the structure and composition of their DNA.

This book reports upon a massive programme of research based upon this technology. It presents a truly awesome amount of data that is almost entirely the product of the two authors. It consists of two parts. The first gives a detailed but clear description of the molecular biology and historical background necessary to understand the second, leading up to a coarse-grained classification of modern birds into Orders, Families, Tribes, and so on. The second part deals with the analysis of most of these groups in detail, through 400 pages of text and over 350 graphs and dendrograms to show the relationships of the species involved. These, in turn, are used to produce a completely new order or list of the birds of the world based upon the gross genetic similarity of their DNAs. This classification is described in detail in the companion volume, but is very different from the Voous list to which we have all become accustomed. There are some startling relationships postulated. For example, gannets and cormorants go alongside penguins, flamingos and condors.

Is it right, and will it be accepted? One of the problems with any taxonomy stems from the perceived need to produce a list with a beginning and end, whereas the true relationships are much more akin to the twigs around the crown of a tree, with a series of branches merging

back towards a central trunk. This is an inevitable consequence of a two-dimensional page, and is a constraint rather than an error. Its general acceptance will depend more upon the speed with which succeeding studies confirm or refute its conclusions. For, already, a more sophisticated technology is on stream. Instead of analysing the behaviour of 'total' DNA, it is now possible to identify the chemical bases that comprise the linear strand of DNA itself. Thus, it is possible to select a fragment of DNA that is present in a wide range of species, and determine its base sequence in each species. A comparison of the proportion of bases that differ gives an alternative measure of genetic divergence. Furthermore, the careful comparison of the sequence in different species allows the potential for reconstructing the order in which the substitutions occurred, and hence the evolutionary history of the group. Finally, and most excitingly, there is evidence that in some regions of the DNA this rate of substitution is pretty uniform, so that differences can be related directly to evolutionary time. A comparison of the relationships postulated here by Sibley & Ahlquist with those produced from direct sequence analysis will be very interesting and informative, and the most contentious components will no doubt be analysed first.

This is a large, difficult, expensive and very important book. It will stir up debate concerning the taxonomic ordering of birds for years to come, and may also be of great significance to the editors of field-guides and handbooks for even longer.

DAVID T. PARKIN

Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World. By Charles G. Sibley & Burt L. Monroe, Jr. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990. 1,111 pages; 25 maps. £75.00.

This revolutionary world list uses the results of DNA-DNA hybridisation studies as its basis. This technique (described in Sibley & Ahlquist, 1990, *Phylogeny and Classification of Birds*) is a biochemical method that measures the degree of genetic similarity between different species. Readers who are familiar with 'conventional' taxonomic lists, such as Voous's (1977) *List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species*, will be thoroughly confused initially by the sequence and content of families: the work starts with the Ostrich *Struthio camelus*, as usual, but from then on there are few similarities with other lists. The Passeridae contains not only sparrows, but also wagtails, and the Corvidae embraces nearly 650 species, including such morphologically dissimilar groups as bushshrikes and fantails.

The book contains accounts for every species, with brief habitat details and fairly lengthy distribution information. The latter is supplemented by 25 pages of maps and a 32-page gazetteer, which includes all place-names mentioned in the species accounts.

The authors have adopted a very liberal approach to species limits, based on 'potential or actual reproductive isolation'. No explanation is given of the methods used to determine the applicability of these criteria in individual cases, but notes in the species accounts often provide references as a basis for their decisions. They recognise 9,672 species, compared with 9,022 in Morony *et al.* (1975), 8,721 in Gruson (1976), 9,147 in Walters (1980), 9,198 in Clements (1981), 9,311 in Edwards (1982-86) and 'over 9,200' in Howard & Moore (1991). The differences in numbers are due partly to the addition of newly described species, and partly to different views on the inclusion of extinct species, but mainly to different degrees of 'splitting' and 'lumping'. Sibley & Monroe include 77 'splits' which affect Voous's Holarctic list, 30 from the Nearctic and 47 from the Palearctic. The latter include 19 which occur in the Western Palearctic, of which six are on the British and Irish List. All of these, except Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura* (which according to Vaurie meets the Common Stonechat *S. torquata* without intergrading), have been agreed or discussed by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee. Some of the other Western Palearctic splits seem to be rather arbitrary (e.g. the Black-eared Kite *Milvus lineatus*, which is separated from the Black Kite *M. migrans* based on an undefined 'pers. comm.' suggestion). In one case, a split taxon deviates from widely accepted practice: the Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* is split into three species, African Tawny-Eagle *A. rapax*, Eurasian Tawny-Eagle *A. vindhiana* and Steppe Eagle *A. nipalensis*. The subspecies *orientalis*, usually associated with the Steppe Eagle, is here included with *vindhiana*, without any discussion. Most of the other relevant splits are discussed in *BWP*. Those which are not are Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma (mollis) feae* and Madeira Petrel *P. (m.) madeira* (see

Bull. Brit. Orn. Club 103: 52-58); Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (arundinaceus) griseldis* (see *Brit. Birds* 81: 171-178); Oriental Reed Warbler *A. (a.) orientalis* (see *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 48: 428-443); and Tenerife Goldcrest *Regulus (regulus) teneriffae*. Other potential Western Palearctic splits, such as Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus (inornatus) humei*, recently discussed by Svensson (*Brit. Birds* 80: 580-581), are not even mentioned, despite the claim that 'unproven species' such as these are accorded intraspecific 'group' status.

Another innovative feature of this list is the attention given to the selection of English names for all species. A group of regional correspondents helped to choose the most appropriate names, generally adopting the name selected in the primary part of the bird's range, and avoiding disruption of established names wherever possible. Other world lists that have included English names have not had a systematic approach to the choice of names and are therefore potentially confusing for international use. Of the names used for Western Palearctic species, 304 differ from those used in the latest version of *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984). Of these, 122 would, however, be brought into line if the BOURC's suggested name changes (*Brit. Birds* 81: 355-377; *Ibis* 131: suppl.) were to be adopted. Some of the other names are not, in my view, very appropriate, but discussion is taking place on all English bird names over the next four years, under the auspices of the International Ornithological Congress, and Western Palearctic views will be better represented than they were in former discussions. The English names adopted for birds elsewhere in the world largely follow recent standard works for each region so far as endemic species are concerned. Compromise in the choice of names is evident for widely distributed species: Brent Goose rather than Brant for *Branta bernicla*, but loons rather than divers for *Gavia* species and jaegers rather than skuas for the smaller *Stercorarius* species.

Much potential confusion in the various world lists has arisen through usage of different taxonomy and nomenclature. One example serves to illustrate the problem. The species known currently as the Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis* in the Western Palearctic is of only marginal occurrence in the region. It extends to southwest Asia and, depending on taxonomy, to east Africa. It has no yellow on the throat, and Sibley & Monroe have adopted the name Chestnut-shouldered Petronia. They treat the east African population as a separate species, Yellow-spotted Petronia *P. pyrgita*, giving a reference for this decision. *P. pyrgita* is lumped by Morony *et al.* (1975), Walters (1980) and Howard & Moore (1991), but the last of these called the species Yellow-spotted Rock Sparrow *P. xanthosterna*. Gruson (1976) and Edwards (1982-86) both adopted the same taxonomy as Sibley & Monroe, but called *xanthocollis* the Yellow-throated Sparrow and Yellow-throated Rock-Sparrow respectively. Clements (1981) called *xanthocollis* the Chestnut-shouldered Sparrow, but apparently omitted *pyrgita* completely. Sibley & Monroe's work is the only one to define clearly and accurately the relationships between these two taxa.

This is not to say that the work is free from errors. Given the vast amount of information that is contained in the book, it is likely that it would be impossible to eliminate all errors. The accounts for Western Palearctic species that I have checked have been reasonably accurate and I would expect the New World species to be dealt with even more precisely. I did, however, uncover quite a number of errors in the accounts for less-well-known areas, such as Asia, particularly with regard to the distribution of Himalayan species. The worst mistakes for one species concern the entry '*Lophura haitensis* Vo Quy 1975. VIETNAMESE FIREBACK', which should read '*Lophura hatinhensis* Vo Quy and Do ngoc Quang 1965. VIETNAMESE PHEASANT'. The species should follow the closely related Edwards's Pheasant *L. edwardsi* in the list because it is not at all similar to the firebacks. It is, however, a welcome surprise to find this species in the list at all: every other world list, except Howard & Moore (1991), has overlooked it completely.

Despite the high cost of this book, I thoroughly recommend it as the most reliable one-volume work on the nomenclature and distribution of the world's birds. TIM INSKIPP

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Short reviews

Les Oiseaux de Provence (An Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Provence). By Patrick Bergier, Frank Dhermain, Georges Oliosio & Philippe Orsini. (Conservatoire—Études des Écosystèmes Provence-Alpes du Sud, Aix en Provence, 1991. 38 pages. Paperback. No price given) Checklist with French, scientific, English and German names, and status (absent, rare, fairly common or very common) in winter, spring, the breeding season and autumn, shown by easily understood code of black/white boxes.

Strangford Lough: the wildlife of an Irish sea lough. By Robert Brown. (The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast, 1990. 228 pages. £15.00) This lavishly illustrated book gives a comprehensive account of the natural history of this beautiful sea lough, only a few kilometres from Belfast, and easily accessible to large numbers of people. It has a remarkable diversity of wildlife which is recognised internationally for its importance, but in Northern Ireland there is only belatedly a developing awareness of its value. Bob Brown makes a plea for an integrated approach to its management and protection, long overdue. [B. A. E. MARR]

Where to Watch Birds in East Anglia. By Peter Clarke & Margaret Clarke. (Christopher Helm, London, 1991. 260 pages. Paperback £10.95) Second, revised edition. All the elements that one would expect in such a book are included, but, as noted in the original review (*Brit. Birds* 81: 79-80): 'The extensive and very readable habitat accounts . . . make this book far more than a simple account of what birds to find where . . . a fascinating and thoroughly absorbing account of the history and changes that have occurred in recent years . . .' Recommended.

A Guide to the Birds of Nepal. By Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp. (Christopher Helm, London, 1991. 400 pages. £35.00) Second edition (first reviewed *Brit. Birds* 79: 102), fully revised, and now with the high

quality of production which the contents deserved in the first place. Indispensable for anyone interested in the birds of Nepal or bird distributions in Asia.

The American Crow and the Common Raven. By L. Kilham. (Texas A & M University Press, Texas, 1989. 255 pages. Paperback \$18.95) Members of the crow family are special because they share an important characteristic with ourselves: apparent intelligence. Kilham's philosophy is that special birds require special methods of study, and to get inside the corvid mind he has observed hand-reared individuals and tame, but wild birds. To avoid frightening his wild birds (and jeopardising the validity of his results), he never visited their nests. Neither did he catch or ring birds; instead, he relied on subtle plumage and behavioural characteristics to distinguish different individuals. The results were tame and trusting birds which allowed the author to see and document aspects of their complex social behaviour which are often so difficult to observe. Not unexpectedly, this is, as a result, an unusually detailed and sometimes inspiring account of the lives of the American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos* and the Raven *C. corax*. [T. R. BIRKHEAD]

Bird-Parasite Interactions: ecology, evolution and behaviour. Edited by J. E. Loye & M. Zuk. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991. 406 pages. £37.50) Basically, a symposium volume, with ten of the 21 'chapters' being papers presented at a 1988 AOU meeting on 'Avian responses to parasitism'. Thus, this is not an integrated textbook or a popular explanation of the subject, but a collection of specialist papers.

Die Singdrossel. By Manfred Melde & Falco Melde. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 611. A. Ziemsen Verlag, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1991. 120 pages. Paperback DM24.80) This amazing series continues, with this monograph on the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*. As usual, entirely in German; as usual, an essential reference for anyone studying the species.

Cold Weather Movements of Waterfowl in Western Europe. By S. C. Ridgill & A. D. Fox. (International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Slimbridge, 1990. 89 pages, many illustrations. Paperback £10.00) This detailed analysis of cold-weather movements of waterfowl is of considerable interest, and is of value at two levels. First, international census information together with ringing recoveries show that, for example, of the species examined (eight *Tadorna*, *Anas* and *Aythya* ducks, and Coot *Fulica atra*), recovery distances were greater in cold spells, the only exceptions being Shoveler *Anas clypeata* and Coot. Secondly, the value of co-ordinated international studies is amply demonstrated, though it follows that this type of analysis is required in order to demonstrate how, in particular, the census methodology might be improved. Anyone with an interest in waterfowl cannot fail to learn from this very thorough study. [RJC]

Der Steinkauz. By Siegfried Schön, Wolfgang Scherzinger, Klaus-Michael Exo & Rottraut Ille. (Die Neue Brehm-Bücherei 606. A Ziemsen Verlag, Wittenberg Lutherstadt, 1990. 240 pages. Paperback DM35.20) This fine monograph should soon become the primary reference on the Little Owl *Athene noctua*. The text covers the role of the Little Owl in history, origins of place names, anatomy, taxonomy, physiology, habitat selection, breeding biology, hunting methods and diet, dispersal, mortality and population turnover. Distribution is covered by maps for Germany, plus a worldwide appraisal country by country. Excellent col-

our plates show adult and immature plumages, and monochrome illustrations of habitats, feeding behaviour, prey and pellet types are of especial interest. There are extensive series of sonagrams and allied text describing the full vocabulary, and line-drawings showing feather types, aspects of behaviour, stages in the growth of young, cross-sections of nest chambers and nestbox designs. The section on nesting habits and behaviour is based extensively on a local study in Germany during 1974-84, but includes supporting details from countries throughout this owl's range. There are 15 pages of references. As usual in this series, the text is in German throughout.

[DAVID GLUE]

Field Guide to Birds of Britain and Northern Europe. By Detlef Singer. (The Crowood Press, Swindon, 1991. 384 pages. Paperback £8.99) First, note the subtly different title from the better and more comprehensive 'Fitter' guide. The similarity ends there; this is a 'nice' photographic guide to about 300 species which have been more fully illustrated in other similar works. The photographs, although generally good, show only adult(s), often at or near the nest. The text is useful so far as it goes, but there are no distribution maps and 'Occurrences' appears to deal only with Britain. Introductory chapters cover feathers and droppings identification and, quite unnecessarily, nest and egg identification. The short section on 'Bird protection' avoids any mention of the law. All in all, nothing new and it's been done (much better) several times before. [PETER CLEMENT]

ALSO RECEIVED:

- I-Spy: Nature.** (Michelin, Harrow, 1991. 48 pages. Paperback £0.99, hardback £1.99)
Ornithologie: 2. völlig neubearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage. By Einhard Bezzel & Roland Prinzing. (Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart, revised edn 1990. 552 pages. DM88.00)
Deer. By Norma Chapman. (Whittet Books, London, 1991. 136 pages. £6.95)
Mammals. By Michael Clark. (Hamlyn, London, 1991. 128 pages. Paperback £5.95)
Seashores. By Andrew Cleave. (Hamlyn, London, 1991. 128 pages. Paperback £5.95)
The Owl on the Teapot. By Joan Grant. (Whittet Books, London, 1991. 138 pages. £10.95)
Owl Light. By Jon Hadwick. (Kyle Cathie, London, 1991. 157 pages. £12.99)
Die Vögel Baden-Württembergs. Band 7: Bibliographie. By Jochen Hölzinger. (Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart, 1991. 386 pages. DM42)
Collins Gem Guide: Pond Life. By Richard Manuel. (Collins, London, 1991. 240 pages. Paperback £2.99)
Butterflies and Insects. By Paul Sterry. (Hamlyn, London, 1991. 128 pages. Paperback £5.95)
Pfäffchen: Finkenammern Mittel- und Südamerikas. By Karl Sabel. (Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart, 1990. 165 pages. Paperback DM38.00)
Between Earth and Paradise. By Mike Tomkies. (Jonathan Cape, London, 1991. 2nd edn. 224 pages. £12.99)(1st edn reviewed *Brit. Birds* 74: 407)
Wildcats. By Mike Tomkies. (Whittet Books, London, 1991. 108 pages. £6.95)

Mystery photographs



171 Our mystery bird (plate 205, repeated here) is obviously a fairly large raptor, flying with wings held up in a shallow V. This posture is highly suggestive of either the true buzzards *Buteo* or the harriers *Circus*, both of which are noted for their tendency to soar and glide with wings raised. This individual's long tail and relatively long, slightly tapered wings do not fit the former, but are right for the latter. Clearly, we are looking at a harrier.

The combination of strongly barred underwing and white rump eliminate Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, and also adult males of the other three: Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus*, Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* and Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus*. We are left, therefore, with the possibility of a female or immature of one of these three, a so-called 'ringtail' harrier.

This individual does not have the hefty, broad-winged appearance of particularly the female Hen, neither is it obviously tern-like or gull-like, descriptions often applied to Montagu's and Pallid, especially males. If the outermost (tenth) primary is ignored, however, only the next three are clearly fingered, with the sixth primary appreciably shorter. This creates a more tapered look to the wing and is a feature of Montagu's and Pallid, but not Hen. Even with a side-on view such as this, one would expect a more extensive, clearer white patch on the uppertail-coverts on a Hen Harrier, and, for that species, our bird's facial markings are too contrasting, more of which anon.

Although the black-and-white plate denies us the opportunity to check for the rusty underparts of Montagu's and Pallid in fresh juvenile plumage, the conspicuous dark neck is indicative of immaturity. Unlike Montagu's, juvenile Pallid is said never to have dark shaft streaks on the underparts, and the mystery bird certainly does appear to have a significant degree of streaking on the breast. Are we, therefore, looking at a young Montagu's Harrier?

A glance at the underwing shows a general darkening across the secondaries despite which it is quite easy to determine at least two dark

bars, in addition to the dark trailing edge, so that the hindmost pale bar across the secondaries is fairly narrow. These features, clearly illustrated in Delin & Svensson's *Photographic Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* (1988) are in fact diagnostic of Pallid Harrier, which, females especially, tends to have a slightly broader wing base and shorter hand than Montagu's.

Returning to the age question, it is helpful now to know that the picture was taken in spring, by which time a young female Pallid would, as in the photograph, show some dark (rufous-brown) shaft streaks on the throat and breast as a result of post-juvenile body moult. Young males, of both species, should by this time show an obvious infiltration of grey in the plumage.

The evidence now points heavily towards a female Pallid in its second calendar year and, for final confirmation, we can turn to what is frequently regarded as the best method of separating the two species, views permitting: the facial markings. Our bird displays an obvious white area beneath the eye, bordered by a striking dark crescent which, in turn, is separated from the prominent dark neck side by a clear white ruff. A dark line through the eye is just discernible. These characters, especially the last two, clinch the identification as Pallid Harrier, an accidental visitor to Britain and Ireland, with only three occurrences, and none since 1952.

This individual glided past my camera at the famous sandgrouse drinking pool at Sharm el Sheik in the southern Sinai desert on 20th April 1981. Subsequently, Richard Porter was kind enough to examine the photograph and make helpful comments.

SIMON COX

754 St John's Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO16 8BN



223. Mystery photograph 172. Identify the species. Answer next month

Seventy-five years ago...

'A pair of Hoopoes (*Upupa e. epops*) nested near Taplow in 1916. They were noticed by Mr and Mrs W. R. Dunstan frequently in a rather secluded garden, and towards the end of the third week in May a single young bird was seen accompanying its parents.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 122, October 1916).

Identification of Spectacled Warbler



Hadoram Shirihai, Alan Harris and David Cottridge

The British Birds Rarities Committee has recently re-assessed all previously accepted records of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* in Britain. None remains acceptable after review, although some recent claims are still being considered. An explanation of these re-assessments follows this paper (*Brit. Birds* 84: 431-432). Past claims of Spectacled Warbler have resulted from confusion with, or non-positive elimination of, first-winter female Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* showing an unusually rufous wing panel, or Whitethroat *S. communis* in both spring and autumn plumages. This paper, rather than embracing all aspects of Spectacled Warbler identification, deals instead with these specific problems.

224. Adult male Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Portugal, May 1989 (*Kevin Carlson*)





225. Above, first-winter female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Portugal, September 1987
(Hadoram Shirihai)



226. Above, first-winter female Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Corsica, September 1988 (Hadoram Shirihai)



227. Above, first-winter female Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Portugal, September 1987
(Hadoram Shirihai)

228. Opposite page, top left, first-winter female Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Portugal, September 1987 (Hadoram Shirihai)

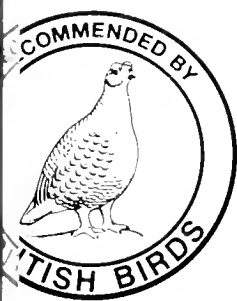
229. Opposite page, top right, first-winter female Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Corsica, September 1988 (Hadoram Shirihai)

230. Opposite page, bottom, first-winter female Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (left) and first-winter female Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* (right), Portugal, September 1987 (Hadoram Shirihai)

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By courtesy of BBC Publications; JUST THE BEST, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Wildlife*, March 1989. Fieldscope II, Fieldscope EDII and 8 x 30 ECF have been recommended by *British Birds*.

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7 x 35 roof prism	329	10 x 50 Alpin	241	25x or 40x EP	30
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
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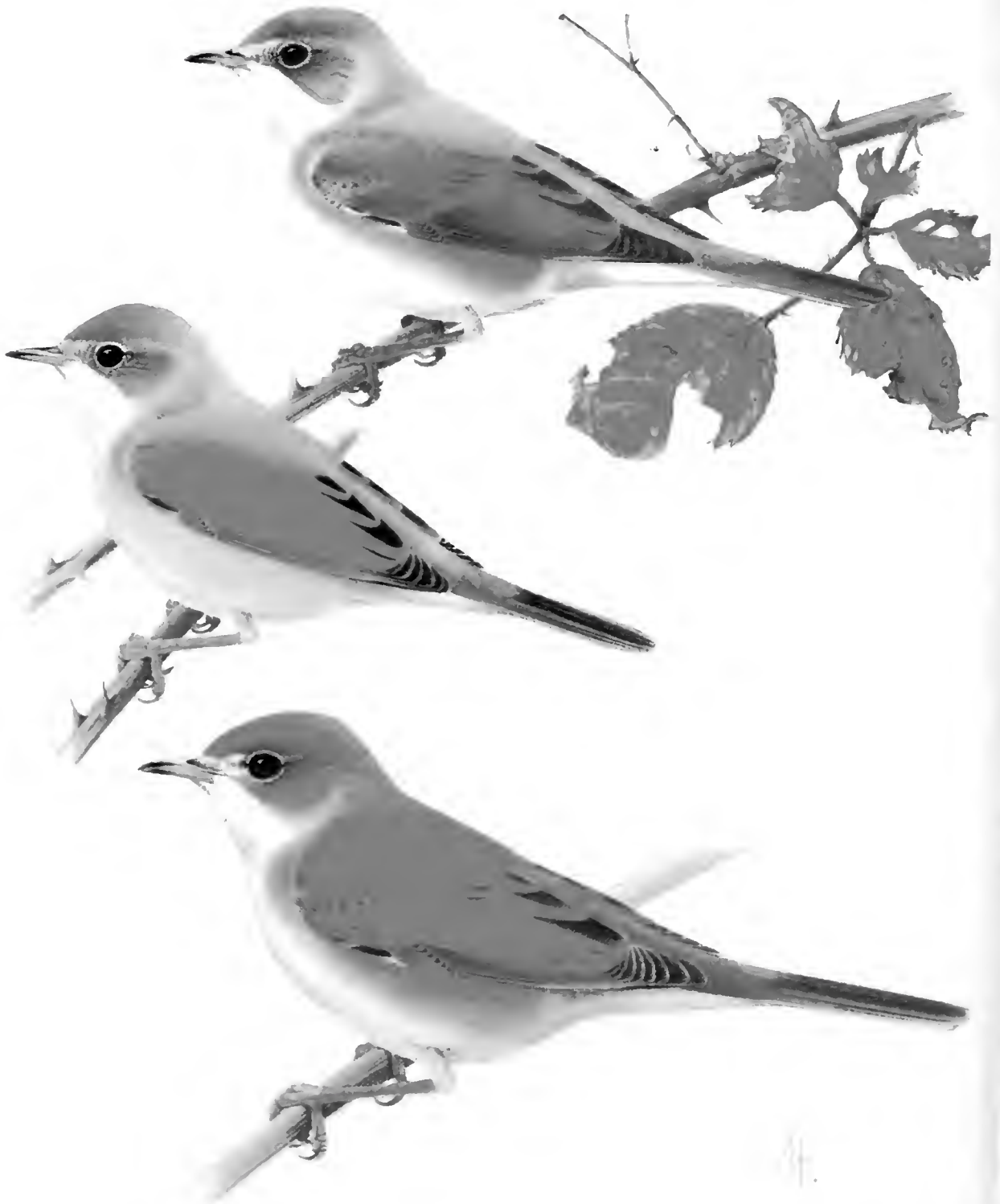


Fig. 1. First-winter female *Sylvia* warblers in autumn: Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* (top), Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* (centre), Whitethroat *S. communis* (bottom). Note Spectacled Warbler's short primary projection, with fewer primaries visible beyond tertials; thinner bill; eye-ring thicker above than below eye; dark, clean 'arrowhead' pattern of central tertial; uniform pale buff underparts posterior to throat; and paler legs: see text for precise details (Alan Harris)

The confusion which has occurred between Spectacled and Subalpine Warblers and between Spectacled Warbler and Whitethroat may surprise observers familiar with these species; both in the field and in the hand, they each have plenty of distinctive features. The problem may well have arisen from the lack of good descriptions of Spectacled Warbler in the various field guides.

Spectacled and Subalpine Warblers in first-winter and first-summer plumages

Structure and behaviour

Spectacled Warbler is usually smaller than Subalpine (total length 115-123 mm, compared with Subalpine's 120-130 mm). In structure, it is closer to those *Sylvia* warblers with relatively short, rounded wings and a short primary projection (on Spectacled averaging 8 mm: about one-third the length of the tertials), and only four or five primaries are visible beyond the tertials. Measurements indicate a short tail, but it actually appears long in comparison with the wings and body size. The bird itself is small and delicate, with a rounded head shape and steep forehead; in general, its body structure is closest to that of Desert Warbler *S. nana*. Subalpine, in comparison, has a more solid body structure than Spectacled (although still rather delicate), with a relatively short tail and a longer, sharper wing and primary projection (average 12 mm: about half or slightly over half of the length of the tertials), with five or six primaries easily visible beyond the tertials; its head is flatter and less rounded, and its general structure is closest to that of Rüppell's Warbler *S. rueppelli*, but on a smaller, more delicate scale. Both species have a similar bill length, but Spectacled's bill is thinner and sharper and therefore gives the impression of being longer than Subalpine's.

In general, Spectacled Warbler prefers low, sparse bushes and frequently hops along the ground in a manner similar to Desert Warbler, as well as raising its tail and vigorously wagging it from side to side. In contrast, Subalpine prefers taller, denser vegetation and trees, and does less tail-wagging. Although Subalpine can be seen on low bushes, Spectacled is very seldom seen on tall bushes or trees.

Head pattern

In first-winter plumage, the two species have a fairly similar head pattern (fig. 1), but most first-winter female Subalpines have a paler line along the upper edge of the lores. The eye-ring is similar on both, and not, as some field guides imply, larger on Spectacled (in fact, it can be slightly broader and more noticeable on some individuals of Subalpine). The major difference in this feature between the two species is that the eye-ring on Spectacled appears thicker and wider above the eye than below it, which causes the eye-ring pattern to stand out in the field, whereas on Subalpine it looks uniform in width throughout.

Wing pattern

Spectacled Warbler has fairly extensive rusty edges to the outer webs of the secondaries and inner primaries, and the tips of the median coverts and edges of the greater coverts and tertials have large, wide rusty areas, forming a prominent, very rusty wing panel on the closed wing. The pattern of the middle tertial is most important: Spectacled Warbler has a sharply demarcated central area of dark brown or black, wide at the visible base and tapering cleanly to a sharp point along the feather shaft, showing from above as a clean 'arrowhead'. Subalpine Warbler lacks the obvious

rusty wing panel of Spectacled, having narrower pale edges (sandy or rusty-brown in colour) to the greater coverts and tertials and narrower rusty margins to the outer webs of the secondaries; the dark tertial centres are not clear-cut, but diffuse, and end in a more rounded shape.

General body plumage

The coloration and pattern of nape, mantle, back, scapulars, rump and uppertail-coverts can be similar on both species. Apart from head and wing patterns described above, there are also some differences in underparts colour. First-winter female Spectacled has slightly pale buff underparts, which appear fairly uniform and pale. Subalpine's breast-sides, flanks and vent are buff, and clearly contrast with the whitish throat and centre of belly; occasionally, a clearer white submoustachial stripe contrasts with the dingier throat centre.

Tail pattern

The two species show very different patterns to the spread tail (when comparing the original juvenile tail feathers, which are normally retained during post-juvenile and first pre-breeding moults). The rectrices of Spectacled Warbler generally have a contrasting pattern, with black base and centre and a large area of white on both inner and outer webs of the outer feathers; the next-to-outermost pair has clear white tips and edges to the outer webs. When perched with tail closed, this produces a fairly white tail when seen from below; in flight, the contrasting pattern is apparent. The spread-tail pattern of Subalpine Warbler up to and including first-summer plumage is much poorer and lacks strong contrast: the outer and next-to-outer tail feathers have only relatively small sandy tips and edges, which merge into the centres of the feathers; from below, the tail is almost uniformly brown-grey, with no distinct pattern. There is also considerable difference between the two species' tails when seen from above: Spectacled's closed tail appears very dark and contrasts with the rest of the upperparts, whereas Subalpine's tail is brown and almost uniform with the upperparts.

It should be noted that Subalpine may occasionally lose its original tail feathers in an accident and will grow new feathers more like those of the adult. Their pattern is then somewhat similar to that of Spectacled, but again the tail feathers are not black, the white tips and edges merge into the darker centres, and the total pattern still remains different.

Bare parts

Up to and including first-summer, Spectacled Warbler has a pale fleshy yellowish-brown tarsus, whereas Subalpine's is a much darker fleshy-brown. In general, there is no difference between the two species in bill and iris colours. Some first-winter female Subalpines, however, already show a reddish tone to the orbital ring, while Spectacled's orbital ring is black or brown.

Call

The two species have very different calls. Spectacled has a drawn-out,

even 'tchhh, tchhh'. Subalpine gives a 'tak tak'; hard, ticking calls; and a more bubbly rattle like that of a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* or a Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*: a fast rattling 'terr', 'turrurr' or 'prrrt'.

Spectacled Warbler and Whitethroat

It is perhaps surprising to find that a fair number of experienced observers misidentify first-winter individuals of these two species in the field in autumn, and difficulties have been known to occur with females and males in both spring and autumn.

Structure and behaviour

Whitethroat is larger and more robust than Spectacled Warbler, and its bill is longer, thicker and heavier. An excellent distinguishing mark in the field is the primary projection: Whitethroat's is quite long, just over half the length of the tertials (six or seven primary tips visible beyond tertials), whereas on Spectacled it is about one-third the length of the tertials (only four or five primary tips visible).

Spectacled Warbler raises its tail and wags it from side to side, and appears quite excitable, whereas Whitethroat moves its tail very little.

Upperparts and underparts

Apart from wing and tail patterns (see below), the plumages of (mainly) first-winter individuals of these two species are generally very similar. The distinctive head patterns are present only on males, primarily in spring. Almost all first-summer and adult male Spectacled Warblers show an area of dark blackish on the lores and forehead, which also emphasises the white eye-ring; this feature is more noticeable in spring, when the pale feather tips are worn off to reveal the blackish bases. Adult male Whitethroats always lack this darker forehead: their head pattern thus corresponds to that of most first-winter and a very few first-summer male Spectacled Warblers, which also lack the darker forehead, and appear to have a uniform head pattern. Some male Spectacled, chiefly in spring and mainly second-winter or older, also have a darker grey throat and breast, and often a clear submoustachial stripe bordering the grey throat.

Wing pattern

Spectacled Warbler has broader rusty edges to the tertials and greater coverts, producing a more complete rusty wing panel, with the dark centres of the greater coverts being almost invisible; the edges of the median coverts are also broad and rusty, causing the wing panel to cover a greater area, and only the centres of the tertials appear sharply demarcated black, and are small in extent. The rusty edges to Whitethroat's greater and median coverts are less broad, and some dark centres to the feathers are usually visible, this breaking up the rusty wing panel and reducing its impact; the rusty tertial edges are also thinner and cover a smaller area, and the dark centres are more rounded in shape and not sharply demarcated as on Spectacled.

Tail pattern

Whitethroat's tail is generally light brown and more uniform in colour with the upperparts, and its tail pattern is poorly defined: the edges of the outer tail feathers, of a faded sandy tone, merge into the centres and cover only a relatively small area, virtually just the 'outer webs'. Spectacled Warbler has a dark tail contrasting with the upperparts, and shows more clear white on the edges of the outer tail feathers (see description above).

Bare parts

In general, the bare parts are similar on both species, although Spectacled Warbler's tarsus usually appears more pinkish-yellowish, with a slight reddish tone, whereas Whitethroat's tarsus is slightly darker, more yellowish-brown. Spectacled usually has less black at the tip of the bill and on the culmen, so that the pale pinkish-yellowish of the rest of the bill includes the relatively large base and the centre of the lower mandible; the black tip is quite small. On Whitethroat, however, the entire upper mandible is dark and the dark area at the bill-tip is larger.

Call

Whitethroat's usual call is a long drawn-out 'chchh', 'chuck' or 'chc', very different from the call of Spectacled (described above).

Acknowledgments

Our thanks are due to Steve Madge, who commented on an earlier draft of this paper; to Peter Lansdown, who provided us with information regarding the deliberations of the British Birds Rarities Committee; and to Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, for encouraging us to publish our thoughts on Spectacled Warbler in these pages. Special thanks are due to Glenis Vowles for cheerfully allowing us to invade her house and property in Portugal in the course of our studies into these species, and to Jason Bishop for typing the early drafts of this paper.

Summary

Difficulties have been experienced in the field-separation of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* from first-winter female Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* in autumn, and from Whitethroat *S. communis* in both spring and autumn. The primary reason for these identification problems is the lack of good descriptions of Spectacled Warbler, together with a failure to realise the extremes of first-winter female Subalpine Warbler's wing colour. This paper treats only the separation of Spectacled Warbler from these two other species. The most important features which must be checked in the field are wing pattern, primary projection, tail pattern, and structure, size and actions.

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Status of Spectacled Warbler in Britain*


At one time there were three accepted records of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* in Britain: Spurn, Humberside (then Yorkshire), 21st-31st October 1968, trapped 21st (*Brit. Birds* 62: 479; 71: 53-58); Porthgwarra, Cornwall, male, 17th October 1969 (*Brit. Birds* 63: 286; 71: 84-85); and Fair Isle, Shetland, male, 4th-5th June 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 73: 523).

During 1980 and 1981, the Rarities Committee received three significant records, all accompanied by either colour photographs or transparencies, each of which was subsequently accepted as involving a first-winter female Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans*: Reay, Highland, 8th-29th September 1979, trapped 8th (*Brit. Birds* 74: 485); St Mary's, Scilly, 24th October to 2nd November 1980, trapped 28th (*Brit. Birds* 75: 521; 76: 515); and Low Hauxley, Northumberland, 26th-27th October 1980, trapped 26th (*Brit. Birds* 75: 521). In each case, at least some of the original observers were of the opinion at first that they were looking at a Spectacled Warbler. This confusion between Spectacled Warbler and first-winter female Subalpine Warbler was the result of much of the literature available not accurately describing the colour, contrast and extent of the paler fringes to the greater coverts and tertials of Subalpine Warbler nor describing a white eye-ring for any age or sex of this species. The Rarities Committee considered that it should review the past-accepted British Spectacled Warbler records in the light of this first-winter female Subalpine Warbler pitfall. The necessary research was carried out by Roy Dennis and the late Peter Grant at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring and by Brian Little, and the three records were then recirculated to the Committee.

On the colour and pattern of the greater coverts and tertials, the outer rectrices and the underparts, and on leg colour, it was clear that the warbler at Spurn in October 1968 was indeed a first-winter female Subalpine Warbler and it was formally accepted as such (*Brit. Birds* 78: 575).

It was equally obvious that the Porthgwarra bird of October 1969 was not a first-winter female Subalpine Warbler, as it had a bluish-grey head and mantle and a wing which resembled that of a Whitethroat *S. communis*. A lack of detail within the descriptions, particularly regarding the wings, and the transcription of this individual's call, led, however, to the Rarities Committee's decision that the identification as Spectacled Warbler could no longer be upheld.

The first-winter female Subalpine Warbler pitfall did not, of course, apply to the report of a male on Fair Isle in June 1979. Following the non-acceptance of the Spurn and Porthgwarra Spectacled Warbler records,

 *This is a publication of the Rarities Committee, the work of which is sponsored by Carl Zeiss—Germany.

however, this remained the sole British record, and, as such, required to be reconsidered by the Rarities Committee and circulated for the first time to the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee.

The submitted descriptions quite naturally varied in detail and content, but, in general, the following points in combination were considered to count against conclusive identification as Spectacled Warbler: lack of a predominantly pale lower mandible, lack of a prominent blackish area around the front half of the eye and on the lores (in most descriptions), the completeness of the eye-rings and their drawn-out horizontal 'spurs', the comparative narrowness of the rufous fringes to the greater coverts and tertials, and the lack of a broad, grey centre to the throat. Unfortunately, the bird did not call. It must be emphasised that neither committee was unanimous in its decision that the record should no longer stand, and that no individual amongst the 22 voters during the record's six circulations of the BBRC and single circulation of the BOURC was of the opinion that an error had been made. It was simply a matter of a significant number of the members considering that the descriptions were not sufficiently watertight to permit positive acceptance as Spectacled Warbler.

To summarise, all three previously accepted British records of Spectacled Warbler have been found unacceptable following research and reconsideration. Spectacled Warbler is no longer on the British and Irish list (*Brit. Birds* 83: 482-483; *Ibis* 133: 219-223).

PETER LANSDOWN and THE RARITIES COMMITTEE
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Viewpoint

Birds and some political influences

Derek Barber

Both the public and the private agencies concerned with the countryside and the protection of birds and their habitats have a good—even brilliant in parts—record over the past decade or so. Every advantage has been taken of the full flooding of the tide of public opinion on environmental issues. The voluntary members and their money have come rolling in to buttress funding by the State. The bird interest has prospered.

During 15 consecutive years at two of the main 'coalfaces' of conservation, first as Chairman of the RSPB Council and then, overlapping, at the helm of the Countryside Commission for England and Wales, I saw, from 1976 to 1991, a lot of the scene from both private and public standpoints. Although wisdom is by no means the automatic derivative of

such an experience, these two posts do allow an intimacy on a day-to-day basis with what is actually happening, and judgments can therefore be made on practical knowledge.

With the benefit of this hindsight, I offer three or four thoughts to those attempting to play their conservation hands with as much effect as possible. It is an offering born of humility and a recognition of the complexity of the issues facing the conservation camp, in a world which is undergoing rapid change.

In the field of bird protection—and wildlife and landscape generally—there is a large, amorphous area rarely discussed in any open, detailed and enlightened way. It is an area where battles have frequently been lost because those who entered the fray did so with unseeing eyes and wearing heavy hobnailed boots. It is the area which embraces politics in general, party politics, the parliamentary process, public relations and diplomacy. Not least, it includes the relationships which the agencies can, and should, be forging with Ministers of the Crown in whose hands often resides the sole power of decision as to whether the mudflats should be spared the rubbish-dumping, and the Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus* the bungalowoid growth.

Take, for example, the component of political beliefs. In conservation circles this is a subject either regarded as a matter of no account or brushed delicately under the nearest carpet. Very properly, an individual's choice at the ballot box is his or her business and no one else's. Appointment boards are put in peril if such discreet topics are aired, whilst charitable bodies steer well clear of the minefield.

Yet should this always be the case? For the simple fact is that here is a *management* problem demanding sensitive action to enable practical environmental protection to be achieved. Many of those who work in conservation believe that the politics of the right, the market economy and *laissez-faire*, indeed capitalism generally, cannot adequately deliver environmental objectives. When they see something precious being lost on which they place their own highest values, be it parts of the Flow Country going to commercial trees, or the unchecked rampagings of some new and arrogant land-occupier, they yearn, not unnaturally, for more severe, State interventionist policies. To many of these men and women suffused with admirable, evangelical zeal, the perceived public interest must prevail *in all circumstances* over the private.

In practical terms, the mix of tenth-generation landowner and 22-year-old ecology diplomate cannot always be labelled as *cordon-bleu* when important land and bird managements are to be discussed. Both may hold perfectly laudable bred-in-the-bone beliefs and judgments, yet may be totally unable to communicate with each other. If these rigidities, which stem, let us not be mealy-mouthed about it, from differing political postures more often than not, had been more bravely tackled head on, many deep and divisive troubles might have been avoided. Because of default by managements, the tensions continue to the detriment of the cause of wildlife protection. The House of Lords Hansard for July 1991 provides the evidence.

Another area of confused and unimaginative thinking concerns both the voluntary bodies and the statutory agencies whose duty it is to advise governments. It can be demonstrated in a question and answer. It is simply: 'When urging a conservation course of action, to what extent, if any, should account be taken of the *other* interests involved, the consequences to *them* of the birds winning the battle, and the dilemma of the Minister responsible?'

A majority of those asked would, I am sure, respond by arguing that their job is to set out their case singlemindedly. It is then for the Minister to make his political decision in the light of all the information at his disposal. I disagree vehemently with the majority. Ministers are grossly overworked creatures, always anxious to be loved, and not infrequently faced with problems that are virtually insoluble. More overt sympathy and an understanding of the difficulties, replacing hostility and belligerence, together with an acknowledgment of 'Where on earth *do* you put the installation displacing the birds?', might work wonders. And some covert horse-trading sometimes would also work wonders.

But the protection bodies tend to adopt a holier-than-thou attitude, and the opportunities are lost. Also lost, all too often, is the benefit arising from Government and Ministers being *warmly* congratulated on some beneficial action they have taken. When the praise comes, it is nearly always grudging and uttered in words of surprise and implying that there must be some catch, as yet undiscovered, in the good news. Here, surely, must be a case of prejudice, if not naïveté, bludgeoning effective public relations?

There is a connecting link with the operational style of the societies and agencies. Is it still good politics and practice in 1991 to convey messages which appear to be totally doom-laden? In view of the manifest success of the voluntary bodies in recruiting resources, it is almost an impertinence to address the question to them. But are times changing and with them public perceptions? Is it still good business for the conservation cause to portray, almost exclusively, the disaster scenario?

At a meeting in summer 1991 of the great and the good in conservation, a senior official of a major body spent a wearisome time on a catalogue of apocalyptic woe: the countryside was fast disappearing; the estuaries were weighed down with human sludge, marinas and oil spillages; the Lesser Sprogbwort was all but gone. The audience departed in thoroughly depressed mood, not necessarily because of the catalogue, but because it sensed that, without a better-balanced intake of profit and loss, an increasingly sophisticated public, fed on a daily diet of environmental care in the media, may become restive.

The time may come when to keep crying 'Wolf!' when only a rabbit is involved will incur penalties in reduced faith in the integrity of conservation bodies. It is not as though there were insufficient wolves to attack. In the case of the international trade in wild birds and the slaughter of migrants associated with the perfidy of some Mediterranean governments, the obscenities are impossible to exaggerate.

The 'Wolf syndrome' is seen at its worst in sloppy advertising. Two

different bodies ran 'disaster' advertising this year for the purpose of membership recruitment. Both included statements which were palpably untrue or unsubstantiated. In each example, when the inevitable criticism arrived, staff, and, in one instance, members of the governing body, shrugged off the matter as being of slight account. This is no way to preserve the dignity, authority and effectiveness of any organisation. It is putting its political clout in jeopardy and is indulging in poor management practice.

Two further political issues need to be addressed. The first is the developing and, as yet, not fully recognised conflict of interest between the countryside-access voluntary bodies and the bird institutions. Some leaders of the former seem to be keen on rubbishing the thought that there can be any undesirable impacts on birds resulting from their programme of establishing freedom of access everywhere. The latter are bereft of good, hard evidence and data on the varying susceptibility of species to human disturbance. Action to be taken, surely, 'this day'?

But the final item is the most basic of all: to what extent is it desirable, practical and politically possible to adopt strategic planning for the land surface of these islands? At long last, the Common Agricultural Policy is about to be re-cast, with consequences for farmland and birds that cannot be properly perceived. But a fundamental upheaval is clearly on the cards, of a kind that is simply so big that its ramifications cannot yet be plotted. On farms, on urban fringes, in cities and elsewhere, we need to think through the degree to which a land-use strategy might be applied. What a pity that, at this momentous stage, we do not have the necessary understanding to ensure that Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and cereals, Snipes *Gallinago gallinago* and bungalows, Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* and industry, and conifers and Merlins *Falco columbarius* might somehow manage to live and prosper together in a better-designed world.

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Submission of short texts on any subject relating to birds, bird conservation or birdwatching is open to any *British Birds* subscriber for publication in our feature 'Points of view'. This feature, 'Viewpoint', however, is devoted to longer articles, which are generally submitted by invitation. EDS

Fieldwork action

BTO news

Did you know that 20% of wintering Redshanks *Tringa totanus* at a site on the East Lothian coast are eaten by raptors each year? Or that some birds hunt by smell? That owls can breed in baskets, and Merlins *Falco columbarius* in places you wouldn't think? Find out more from exciting speakers such as Dr Ian Newton, who gives the low-down on what keeps

raptor numbers down, and hear what the Game Conservancy has to say on the effects that Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* have on Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* populations. Roy Dennis can be heard talking about Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, but, if raptors aren't for you, wader-man John Goss-Custard talks about the importance of scale in the lives of birds. Where does all this take place? In Derbyshire, in December, at the annual Birdwatchers' Conference, where you can go on guided birdwatching trips, try out and buy optical equipment, buy books, paintings, wildlife sounds, bird-food and feeders, and enter any of several competitions to test your expertise. You can go to discos, music sessions, workshop sessions, see posters, chat to BTO staff as well as fellow birdwatchers, hear about the latest fieldwork projects, and much, much more. Write to Dr Paul Green at the BTO for a programme, but hurry: there are only 350 places. The date, 6th-8th December 1991. British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU; phone Thetford (0842) 750050.

Monthly marathon

This monthly competition to win a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North Africa goes from strength to strength, with more and more entries being submitted. The number of postcards naming the bird in plate 157 was an all-time record. Answers given were:

Shore Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	(77%)
Lapland Bunting <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	(7%)
Snow Bunting <i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	(4%)

with a few votes for Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*, Indian Sand Lark *C. raytal*, Temminck's Horned Lark *Eremophila bilopha*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*, Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Chestnut-sided Warbler *Dendroica pensylvanica*, Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Cinereous Bunting *E. cineracea*, Rustic Bunting *E. rustica* and Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola*.

It was indeed a Shore Lark, photographed in Norfolk in March 1988 by Dave Odell. The next hurdle in this fifth Marathon is provided by plate 231.

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

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231. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (fifteenth stage: photograph number 64). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th November 1991

Notes



Partial albinism of Storm Petrel The notes on leucism and partial albinism of Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 235-236; 83: 22-23) have prompted me to send a rather poor photograph (plate 232) of a partially albinistic Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* which was caught for ringing on Filfla Islet, Malta, on 1st July 1978. Two to three ringing

232. Partially albinistic Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Malta, July 1978 (Joe Sultana)



expeditions have been organised annually to the islet since 1968, and over 15,000 Storm Petrels have been handled for ringing, but only this one bird was partially albinistic.

JOE SULTANA

3 Sciberras Flats, Fleur-de-Lys Junction, B'Kara, Malta

The white patches might perhaps have been mistaken for pale covert-bars during a brief 'fly-by' observation, creating an identification pitfall. Further similar records will be filed for reference purposes. EDS

Dark-morph Marsh Harriers in western France W. S. Clark (*Brit. Birds* 80: 61-72) gave the first proper description of the dark-morph plumage of the Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, and suggested that this morph may be more frequent in eastern Europe and western Asia, with only one west European record known to him (an adult male collected in Sussex in 1867). It is therefore useful to mention some records of dark-morph individuals breeding in western France.

One male, breeding from 1987 at least in Baie d'Audierne, Brittany (Bargain, in Bavoux *et al.*, *Alauda* 56: 246-260, and pers. obs.), was identical to the adult males described by Clark. Another, breeding in 1989 at Noirmoutier, Vendée, was also identical, with very limited rufous streaking on the nape and back, visible only at close range, and yellow irides standing out in the all-dark 'face'. Its three offspring were also melanistic, with more rufous streaks than there were on the adult and a small whitish patch on the nape; it must be stressed that their general appearance was very much darker than that of occasional 'all-brown' juveniles. Another adult male, observed in May 1990 at Noirmoutier, was remarkable, as its dark brown head, body, upperwing-coverts and underwing-coverts contrasted with its black primaries, a contrast not mentioned by Clark. On the underwing, the patch at the base of the primaries was tawny, not contrasting markedly, and apparently not extending to the bases of the secondaries. The tail was grey, with a brownish cast.

Bavoux *et al.* observed at least seven dark-morph individuals (three males and four females) among the breeding population which they are studying in Charente-Maritime, but have given no description. Although infrequent, the dark morph is obviously not so rare in western Europe as was suggested by previously published reports.

MICHEL FOUQUET and PIERRE YÉSOU

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Further similar reports will be filed for eventual summary, not published individually. EDS

Melanistic Montagu's Harrier On 26th May 1982, I saw a curious, all-dark harrier *Circus* over an area of open barley fields near Papworth Everard, Cambridgeshire. At first sight, it looked like an immature Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, but its light build and easy flight, plus several plumage features, showed it to be a dark-phase female Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus*. Such birds are relatively rarely seen in Britain and, since it

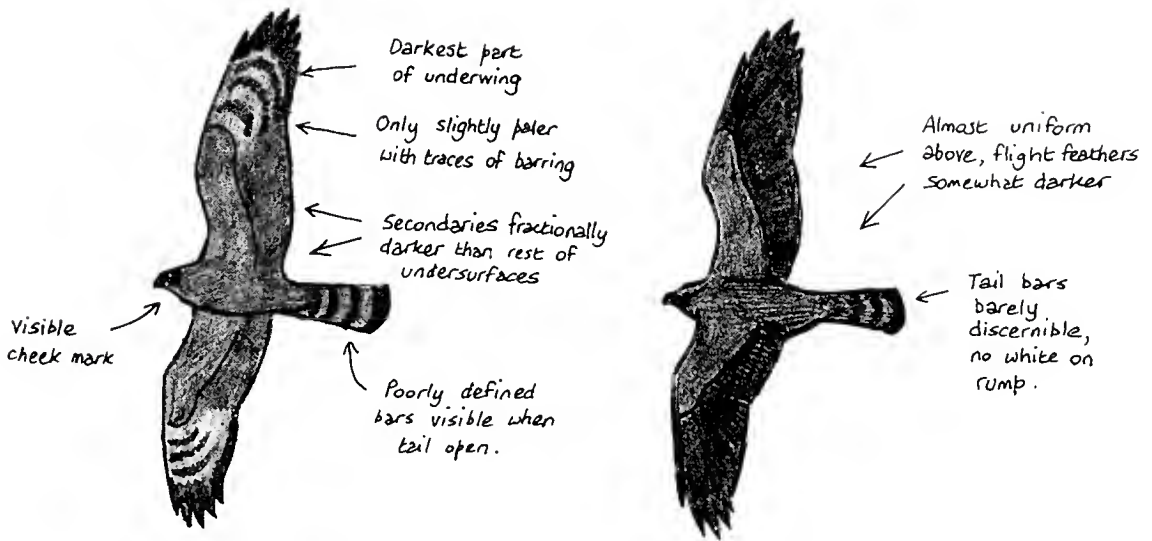


Fig. 1. Plumage features of dark-phase Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, Cambridgeshire, May 1982. Redrawn from original field sketches, using outlines in Porter *et al.* (1981) (M. J. Everett)

differed in several respects from those described and illustrated in Porter *et al.* (1981), it is described below and illustrated (fig. 1).

The harrier was almost uniformly dark above and below, with slightly darker flight-feathers, but was certainly not as dark around the head and breast as the bird shown in Porter *et al.* (pp. 94-95): indeed a very much darker cheek-crescent was clearly visible, even at quite long range. The upperside of the tail was only slightly paler brown than the mantle and rump (which showed no white at all), with only barely discernible dark bars; the undertail was similar, contrasting hardly at all with the general colour of the underparts, but the dark tail bars were slightly more conspicuous, especially when the bird banked away. The third difference from illustrations in Porter *et al.* related to the pale area around the base of the primaries visible on the underwing, which was smaller in extent and light brown rather than greyish-white; it was not particularly conspicuous. There were clear traces of dark barring, which is a variable feature and may be absent altogether on more 'normal' dark-phase females.

Within reasonably defined limits, there is considerable variation in plumage details among normal female Montagu's Harriers, especially on the underparts and underwing. The same may be true of the dark phase. To what extent intermediate forms occur, if at all, is not clear.

M. J. EVERETT

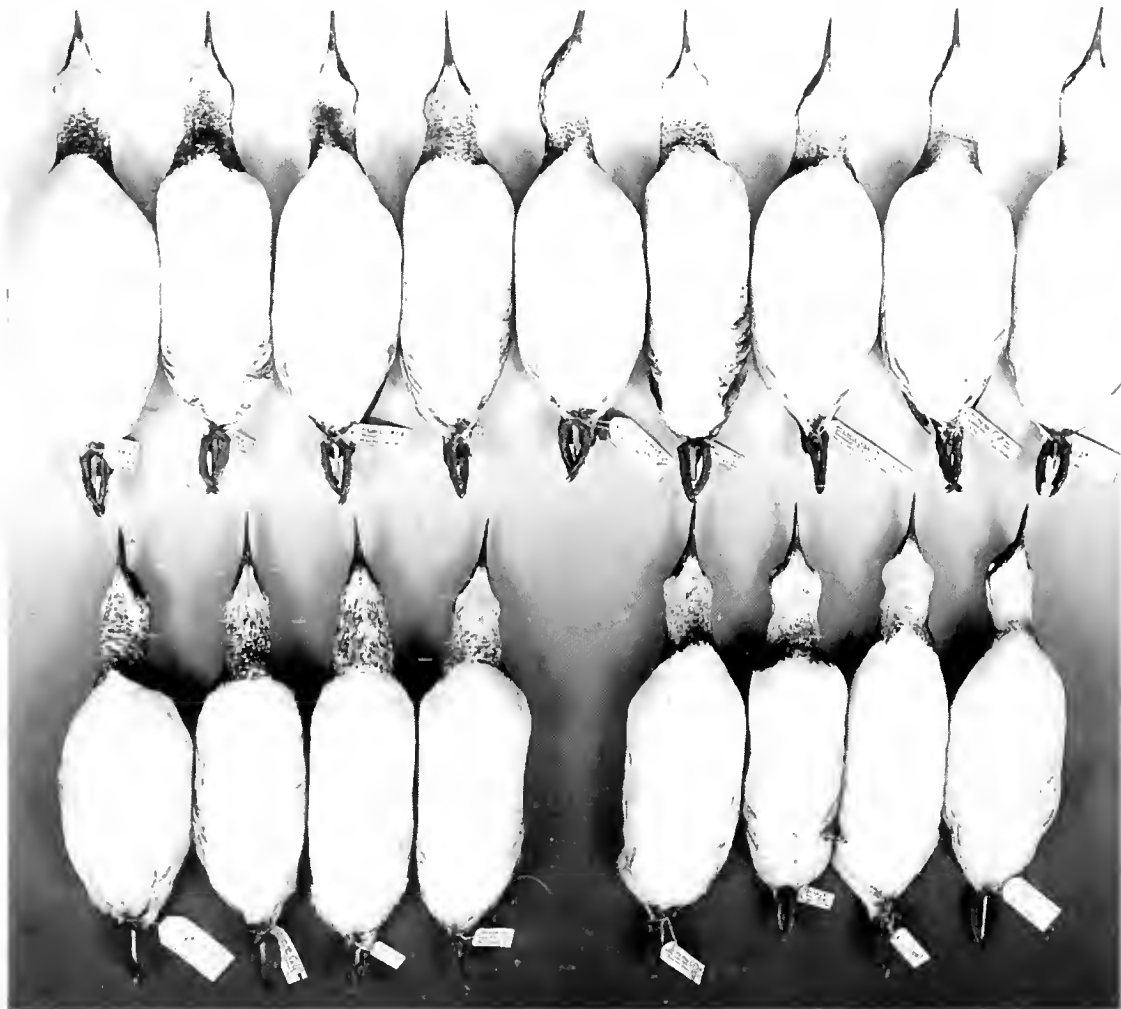
7 Burlington Way, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE18 9BS

REFERENCE

PORTER, R. F., WILLIS, I., CHRISTENSEN, S., & NIELSEN, B. P. 1981. *Flight Identification of European Raptors*, 3rd edn. Calton.

Guillemots with dark neck bands The note, photographs and sketches of Guillemots *Uria aalge* with dark neck bands (*Brit. Birds* 82: 271-274, fig. 1 and plates 175-178) prompted me to examine my collection of skins of this species. In my experience, quite a large percentage of those in winter

plumage shows some neck band, and, of the 40 winter-plumage skins examined, only three showed none at all. The majority had the normal dark area at each side of the neck, as does Razorbill *Alca torda*, but joined across the neck by dark-tipped feathers producing neck bands of varying intensity, a character also exhibited, albeit faintly, by one of 20 winter-plumaged Razorbills. The feature was more pronounced in the northern race *U. a. aalge*, although four specimens of the southern race *U. a. albionis* showed bands as pronounced as those on some northerns (see plate 233).



233. Guillemots *Uria aalge*, illustrating variations of dark neck bands, all except one (Merioneth, November 1965) found dead on Yorkshire beaches. Top row: *U. a. aalge* in winter plumage. Bottom row: left four *U. a. aalge* adults moulting to summer plumage, right four *U. a. albionis* in winter plumage. Of the 13 birds illustrated in full winter plumage, 12 show the most prominent neck bands of the 37 skins which possessed this feature, the top right-hand bird being one of only three which had no band at all. Top row, left to right: 1st-winter ♂, Feb. 1981; adult ♀, Dec. 1960; 1st-w. ♀, Sep. 1968; ad. ♀, Mar. 1964; 1st-w. ♂, Jan. 1979; 1st-w. ♂, Jan. 1964; 1st-w. ♂, Dec. 1967; ad. ♀, Mar. 1968; 1st-w. ♀, Feb. 1983. Bottom row, left to right: ad. ♂, Feb. 1983; ad. ♀, Mar. 1966; ad. ♀, Feb. 1964; ad. ♀, Feb. 1964; ad. ♀, Nov. 1965; 1st-w. ♂, Jan. 1964; 1st-w. ♀, Nov. 1965; 1st-w. ♂, Feb. 1983 (Tennant Broxton Photography)

The neck band is formed by dark tips to the white feathers of winter plumage, and should not be confused with the early stages of moult to summer dress, in which the new feathers are all-dark and the neck appears mottled or patchy, as opposed to the smooth, graded effect of dark-necked winter-plumaged individuals. On two specimens of *U. a. aalge*, one adult

and one first-winter, some feathers on the sides of the breast and on the lower flanks also had dark edges at their tips.

There appears to be no correlation between dark neck bands and age, both adults and first-winters showing the character. It would seem that the feature is less unusual than was supposed, and it should cause no significant identification problems in the field.

JOHN R. MATHER
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With Mr Mather's useful and authoritative statement, this subject is closed. EDS

Willow Warbler attacked by hawker dragonfly At about 11.30 GMT on 1st August 1988, by a pond near West Quantoxhead, Somerset, I saw an adult Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* feeding among the leaves at the end of a branch of a common sallow *Salix atrocinerea*. A mature male southern hawker dragonfly *Aeshna cyanea*, which was flying and hovering over the water nearby, suddenly flew at and buffeted the Willow Warbler, which quickly retreated into the centre of the sallow. The dragonfly resumed its flights over the water, and the warbler gradually returned to investigate and feed from invertebrates on the leaves of the same sallow branch. When the warbler had reached the end of the branch, almost above the pond water, it was again flown at directly by the dragonfly; although it was not struck on this occasion, it flew away, and had still not returned five minutes later. The dragonfly was clearly guarding a territory. It is interesting that the southern hawker, with a length of about 70 mm, was able to displace the intruding Willow Warbler, which was, presumably, about 105 mm in length; at that stage of the summer, however, the bird probably had a declining urge to maintain a breeding territory.

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R. A. Frost has also sent us details of an observation in July 1987, in Dorset, in which a Willow Warbler reversed the roles and twice pursued, for several seconds, a southern hawker which was carrying a crane fly *Tipula*; the dragonfly managed to evade the warbler's attacks. A letter on warblers fleeing from attacks by a swallowtail butterfly *Papilio papilio* appears on pages 444-445. EDS

Magpie nests composed of metal During a study of the ecology of urban Magpies *Pica pica* in Zielona Gora, Poland, a number of nests has been found either wholly or partly constructed of wire and other metal objects, from fencing material to light securing wires and even a bed spring. The bowls of the nests were composed of a normal clay layer. The nest shown in plate 234 was built in spring 1988 and lacks a dome. The same nest was photographed in September 1988, when the bowl and all other organic materials had been removed by natural weathering (plate 235); as can be seen, the metallic portion of the nest is extensive. These metal nests were all found in close proximity to human habitation where natural materials such as twigs are also readily available. Of a total of 22 Magpie nests examined in the suburbs of Zielona Gora in 1988, five (22.7%) had metal objects in their construction; four of these were renovated from previous seasons, the fifth being newly built that year. Metal nests have been



234 & 235. Nest of Magpie *Pica pica* composed largely of metal wire, Poland: above, spring 1988, below, September 1988 (L. Krutulski-Krechowicz)

observed in this area since 1984 (LJ, personal observations), though they may have existed before this.

Rags, tissue paper and threads have been found in Magpie nests in other areas of Poland (Kulczycki 1973), but nests with metal have been reported only from northern Norway (Nagy 1943) and Poland (Michalak 1988); in studies in Dublin, Ireland (Kavanagh 1986), and in South Yorkshire (Birkhead 1989), no nests containing man-made objects were recorded.

The colonisation of the urban environment by Magpies has resulted in a number of adaptive developments, such as the use of man-made nesting sites (Kavanagh 1987), an increased tendency to renovate old nests

(Tatner 1982), and an increase in the incidence of open nests (LJ in prep.); these may be a response to a change in predation pressure in urban areas compared with the more traditional rural habitats. The extensive use of man-made materials in the construction of nests is viewed as yet another adaptive development in response to environmental opportunities.

We would be grateful for any information on the occurrence of man-made objects in urban or non-urban Magpie nests in other areas.

LESZEK JERZAK and BRENDAN KAVANAGH
ul. Sportowa 12/1, 65-177 Zielona Gora, Poland

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland

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Previous notes (*Brit. Birds* 63: 36-37; 64: 77-80) have recorded wire nests built by feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Raven *Corvus corax*, Brown-necked Raven *C. ruficollis*, and Black Crow *C. capensis*, with second-hand reports concerning Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Rook *C. frugilegus* and Magpie. EDS

Letters

The death of a Hume's Short-toed Lark In Hadoram Shirihai and Per Alström's recent paper (*Brit. Birds* 83: 262-272), it was stated that a Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris* was held captive and subsequently died. This unfortunate incident holds parallels with the shooting of uncommon birds for identification in the nineteenth century. Must we go back 100 years in time solely to obtain a 'tick' for the Western Palearctic?

If the bird could eventually be identified by comparisons in skin collections, then there should also have been a fair chance of identification without the corpse, by using detailed plumage notes and photographs. If a bird cannot be identified in the field or in the hand without having to resort to having it 'sent' (first-class or otherwise) to an institution for further studies, then so be it. Surely the welfare of the bird comes first?

J. C. WOOD

199 Hough Fold Way, Harwood, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 3LR

We also received letters expressing the same views from P. Boobyer, Peter K. Dedicoat, David Emley, Stuart Jobbins, Brian H. Stone & Karen Stone, Edward Towne, and James Wilde & Peter Wilson. All the correspondence was passed to Hadoram Shirihai, whose reply is published below. EDS

In response to the letters from J. C. Wood and others on the matter of the Hume's Short-toed Lark at Eilat, I wish to express my regret at the bird's death and to clarify a few points. The purpose of sending the bird alive to the Tel Aviv University Zoological Garden was for identification and observation; its death was an unfortunate accident.

During the years when I was in charge of the ringing station in Eilat, up to 1986, I was under constant pressure from my superiors, at the Tel Aviv University and at the Israel Nature Reserves Authority, to collect specimens, of rare or unusual species caught at the station, for the University skin collection. I refused on principle to do this, and the sending of the lark alive to Tel Aviv was an unsuccessful attempt to take some of the pressure off. This situation led to arguments and even reached a stage where scientists demanded the closure of the ringing station because of our refusal to collect specimens. The staff of the International Birdwatching Center were unanimously against such practices, and in some cases we were forced to 'excuse' our not killing birds on the grounds of the probable response of visitors and tourists.

Tel Aviv University, like most scientific institutes, strives to enlarge its collection for scientific purposes; at the same time, the University takes an active role, together with the Nature Reserves Authority, in conserving nature, and many successes stand to their credit (e.g. the conservation of the Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* and other rare breeding birds).

As your readers will probably be aware, many museums in Britain and elsewhere have extensive sets of skins of birds from Israel, collected by visiting ornithologists. Despite the existence of zoological collections in Israel, many noted British, European and American ornithologists preferred to take the bird specimens home with them, and this is one reason for the incompleteness of the Israeli national collections. Nevertheless, the IBCE and the Israel Rarities Committee are against collecting rare bird specimens. We regret the accidental death of the Hume's Short-toed Lark.

A couple of further matters for thought arise from the subject: most of the field guides which we all use are based on the study of skins; and all ornithological research, including ringing, has some impact on birds.

I commend J. C. Wood and the other correspondents on their conscientious approach, which should be an example to all those involved in bird conservation on a large or small scale.

HADORAM SHIRIHAI
PO Box 4168, 88102 Eilat, Israel

Warblers fleeing from attacks by swallowtail butterfly B. D. Harding's note (*Brit. Birds* 81: 239) provided evidence that the swallowtail butterfly *Papilio papilio* pursued *Acrocephalus* warblers, but not that the warblers fled from it. Observation of almost any reedbed in East Anglia during the summer will show that warblers of this genus behave in the manner described, whether butterflies are present or not. It is illogical to assume

that, because *B* follows *A*, *A* is fleeing from *B*. Cattle will often follow a human being walking across the field in which they are grazing, but only in exceptional circumstances will the walker be 'put to flight'.

JOHN PARKER

Clavering House, Oxborough, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE33 9BL

We have also received an observation from D. S. Flumm describing how, on a hot, sunny day in April 1974, in West Sussex, a peacock butterfly *Inachis io* pursued in flight, successively, a bumble bee *Bombus*, a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris* and a Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*; in each case, the butterfly had been sunning itself before suddenly responding to the passing bee or bird, all of which were pursued for some distance. A note on a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* being attacked and dislodged by a southern hawk dragonfly *Aeshna cyanea* is published on page 441. EDS.

Announcements

Addition to the British and Irish List In its forthcoming fifteenth report (*Ibis* in press), the BOU Records Committee will publish its recognition—following the recommendations by Bourne *et al.* and Yésou *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 306-319; 83: 299-319)—of Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* and Mediterranean Shearwater *P. yelkouan* as separate species (*P. yelkouan* including the races *yelkouan* and *mauretanicus*, of which only the latter has certainly been recorded in Britain and Ireland; *P. puffinus* being monotypic). When the Records Committee's report appears in print, Mediterranean Shearwater will officially be added to the British and Irish List, bringing the total to 542 species.

Books in British BirdShop Please check the forms on pages ix and x for new books and special offers, such as *A Field Guide to the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe*, *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand* and *A Guide to the Warblers of the Western Palearctic*.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

The oldest bird We hear from a Royal Society press release that Professor Sankar Chatterjee, a palaeontologist working at Texas Tech University in the USA, has discovered a new fossil 'protobird' which predates *Archaeopteryx* by at least 75 million years. The new find also gives new insight into the origins and early radiation of birds, their links to early dinosaurs and the tempo and mode of bird evolution. Previously, *Archaeopteryx lithographica*, discovered in 1863, was regarded as the oldest known bird; it has been the subject of much debate on

evolutionary links with reptiles and the development of flight. Named *Protoavis texensis*, the new bird has been described from two fossil skeletons found side by side in a Texas quarry in Late Triassic deposits estimated to be 225 million years old. It was apparently a predatory protobird, about the size of a modern pheasant, with many advanced avian features placing it closer to the ancestry of today's birds than *Archaeopteryx*. The latter, indeed, seems to have been pushed into a side-branch in bird evolution—a 'living fossil' in its own lifetime, perhaps.

For more of this fascinating story, read Prof. Chatterjee's paper in Series B of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* (obtainable from The Publications Sales Department, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG).

A fine attitude Readers will need no reminding of the continuing threats to southern heathland and its wildlife, so they will not be particularly surprised to hear that Egdon Heath, in Dorset, is now at risk. Egdon, made famous in Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native*, looks like losing part of its area to English China Clays, who want to extract some 250,000 tonnes of gravel there. What will happen remains to be seen. What particularly annoyed us, though, was the attitude of the ECC spokesman reported in *The Observer* in July: he said 'The not-so-pretty parts of Dorset have all been worked out. Now the prettier parts must be worked.'

Tim Andrews Memorial Appeal Readers will have noted the reports in previous issues of the tragic deaths of Tim Andrews and Mike Entwistle, whilst birdwatching in Peru last year (*Brit. Birds* 83: 515, 567; 84: 239).

Tim moved to Ware, in Hertfordshire, at an early age, and spent his formative years as a birdwatcher in the Lee Valley. In his early teens, he was a very active member of the local YOC group, based at the RSPB's Rye House Marsh Reserve. Latterly, he developed a taste for foreign birding trips, and travelled widely abroad.

Tim's mother, Mrs Katie Leskovych, would like to provide a memorial to Tim, preferably in the form of a birdwatching hide, somewhere in the Lee Valley. Anyone wishing to make a donation to Tim's memorial should contact Tony Aberdein at Georgian Cottage, High Street, Cley, Norfolk NR25 7RG; phone Cley (0263) 741044.

Gurney's Pitta latest 'Children's Tropical Forests UK' has raised more than £15,000 towards the ICBP Gurney's Pitta Project. The money, raised by schoolchildren as well as given by hundreds of CTF's supporters, is funding the construction and equipping of the Children's Tropical Forests Protection Centre in the heart of the Khao Noi Chuchi reserve, providing essential accommodation and equipment for the park wardens. The response to the appeal has so far been very encouraging. 'The support of Children's Tropical Forests UK is a major step forward for the project', said ICBP's Mike Parr.

British birders visiting Khao Noi Chuchi will now see real results of the considerable efforts being made to save the site. Thanks to CTF UK, the future for Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* is looking brighter, but further funds are still needed to reach the final target of £35,000 to complete the protection centre. To help the project, please send donations to Children's Tropical Forests UK, c/o Tina Joliffe, The Old Rectory, 13 Church Street, Market Deeping, Peterborough PE6 8DA.

Seychelles Magpie Robin With only 23 individuals left (July 1991), all on the island of Fregate, the Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum* is one of the rarest birds in the world. It is insectivorous, its food including ants and cockroaches, and it feeds around and even inside buildings; this renders it very susceptible to insecticide poisoning, so it was good to hear from the International Council for Bird Preservation in July that two new, safe, tested pest-control compounds are being brought into use: methoprene and hydroprene. The ICBP has been working on the robin since 1978 and, with funding from the RSPB, has been running a full-scale recovery programme since last year. The programme involves habitat restoration, the provision of nest-sites and supplementary feeding, as well as concern over insecticide use, but the chemicals problem is an important one to solve since it appears that robins feeding around human habitations have experienced greater mortality than those in forest. The new compounds have been developed at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Central Science Laboratory. Along with the manufacturers, the Zoecon Corporation, the MAFF have given generous support to the Seychelles project, as have AgriSense (BCS), Killgerm Chemicals and the British Agrochemical Association.

First conservation stamp At the *Sunday Times* Environment, Wildlife and Conservation Exhibition at Olympia in July, Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Tony Baldry, launched the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust's new conservation stamp programme, the first of its kind in the UK. Support for the scheme has already been expressed by, among others, the Department of the Environment, English Nature, the International Wildfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau and the Prince of Wales. The inaugural stamp shows a pair of Wigeons *Anas penelope*, painted by American

award-winning artist Daniel Smith. The stamps are on sale at all WWT centres and the monies raised will be used for its conservation work.

SWLA awards At its 28th Annual Exhibition, at the Mall Galleries in August, the Society of Wildlife Artists announced its major award winners. The *World Magazine* Wildlife Artist of the Year Award went to Bruce Pearson for his remarkable underwater scene 'The Old Cortina', while the *Natural World Art Award* was won by Andrew Haslen for his watercolour of a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*. Two awards are made by the RSPB and the WWF for paintings which can be reproduced on their Christmas cards. This year's winners were John Davis, with his Red Kite *Milvus milvus* in a snowstorm and James Williamson-Bell for his painting of two giant pandas *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*, also in snow. John, of course, also won the *British Birds* Bird Illustrator of the Year competition this year, the title won by Bruce Pearson in 1984.

Bird Photograph of the Year 1991 Over 90 photographers, members of the Press and guests were present at the Artworkers Guild, Queen Square, London, for the 1991 award presentation to Philip Perry (plate 236), whose portrait of a family of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 119) won this year's award. The presentations were made by Mrs Dorothy Hosking, maintaining the

link between this *British Birds* competition and the Hosking family which has existed since its inception.

Wildfowl Counters' Conference The Wildfowl Counters' Conference will take place during 29th November to 1st December 1991 at the Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries, Scotland. Details are available from Joanne Ferns, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BR; telephone Dursley (0453) 890333.

'Birding South West' A new, independent telephone information service has been formed, giving a brief summary of the latest national rarities and up-to-date news of rare, interesting and migrant birds in the Isles of Scilly, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Wiltshire, Somerset, Avon and Gloucestershire. The number to phone to find out the latest news is 0898-884500; the number to call to report your own sightings is 0736-331222.

All profits from 'Birding South West' are being donated to conservation in the South-west.

More sillies Although we have had a fairly large post, the misprints brought to our notice since the last issue went to press have been few and far between. The best were Black-tailed Gods (*Liverpool Daily Post*), Sudden Golden Sparrow (*Bird Watching*) and Shuffler ducks (*The Times*).

236. BIRD PHOTOGRAPH OF THE YEAR 1991. Award presentation at Press Reception in London, June 1991: left to right: Chris Knights (2nd), Dorothy Hosking (Guest Presenter), Philip Perry (Winner, with salver), David Tipling (3rd) (R. J. Chandler)



'Essex Birds' In our recent piece on this excellent publication (*Brit. Birds* 84: 293), we gave an incorrect contact: for more information, you should actually get in touch with M. A. Adcock, 53 Victoria Drive, Great Wakering, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS3 0AT.

New County Recorder Rob Young, 28 Tring Road, Long Marston, Hertfordshire

HP23 4QL, has taken over from Peter Walton as County Recorder for Hertfordshire.

Change of address of County Recorder R. W. Bullock, County Recorder for Northamptonshire, now lives at 81 Cavendish Drive, Northampton NN3 3HH; phone Northampton (0604) 27262.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 16th August to 12th September 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* St John's Point (Co. Down), 20th August; two, Flamborough Head (Humberside), 6th September.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Two, Havergate Island (Suffolk), 25th August.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Don Estuary, Aberdeen (Grampian), 18th-19th August.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* Adult, Douglas Estuary (Co. Cork), 25th August to 3rd September.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* Landulph Marsh, near Saltash (Cornwall), 25th August.

Baird's Sandpiper *C. bairdii* Hayle Estuary (Cornwall), 16th August; Southport (Merseyside), 12th September; Fair Isle (Shetland), 5th to at least 12th September.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Three in Co. Cork: Cape Clear Island, 18th-19th August; Youghal, 7th-9th September; and Ballycotton, 7th September.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* Massive inshore movements during 5th-12th September, with most on British east coast, and unusual numbers on east and south Irish coasts.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Bacton (Norfolk), 1st September.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucop-terus* Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 1st September.

Roller *Caraciacs garrulus* Orford Ness (Suffolk), 8th to at least 12th September.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* St

Martin's (Scilly), 27th August to 8th September.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Waxham (Norfolk), 12th September.

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* Fair Isle, 12th September.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Spurn (Humberside), 2nd-6th September.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Fair Isle, 25th August-2nd September; Brownsman Island (Northumberland), 22nd August; Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 1st September; Newburgh (Grampian), 1st-2nd September.

Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* Hartlepool Headland (Cleveland), 31st August to 2nd September; two, Fair Isle, 12th September.

Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* Crookhaven (Co. Cork), 1st-2nd September; Great Saltee (Co. Wexford), 2nd-3rd September.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Dungeness (Kent), 26th August.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Potter Heigham (Norfolk), 1st-8th September.

Woodchat Shrike *L. senator* Juvenile, Cape Clear Island, few days from 18th August; adult, St Mary's (Scilly), 22nd-24th August; immature, Marazion Marsh (Cornwall), 26th-28th August; Nanquidno (Cornwall), 10th-11th September.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* Juvenile, Cape Clear Island, 20th August to at least 8th September.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* Fair Isle, 6th September, three on 12th.

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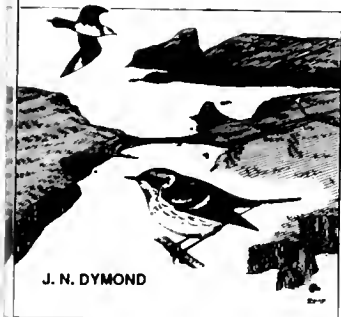
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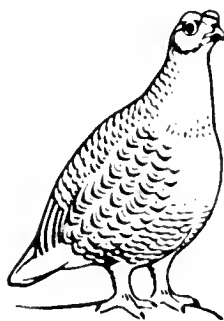
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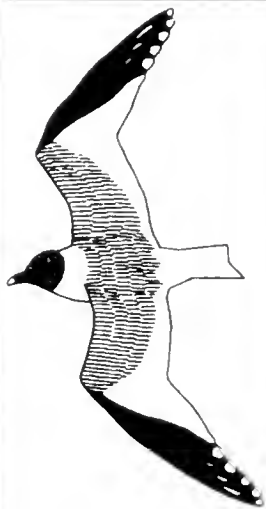


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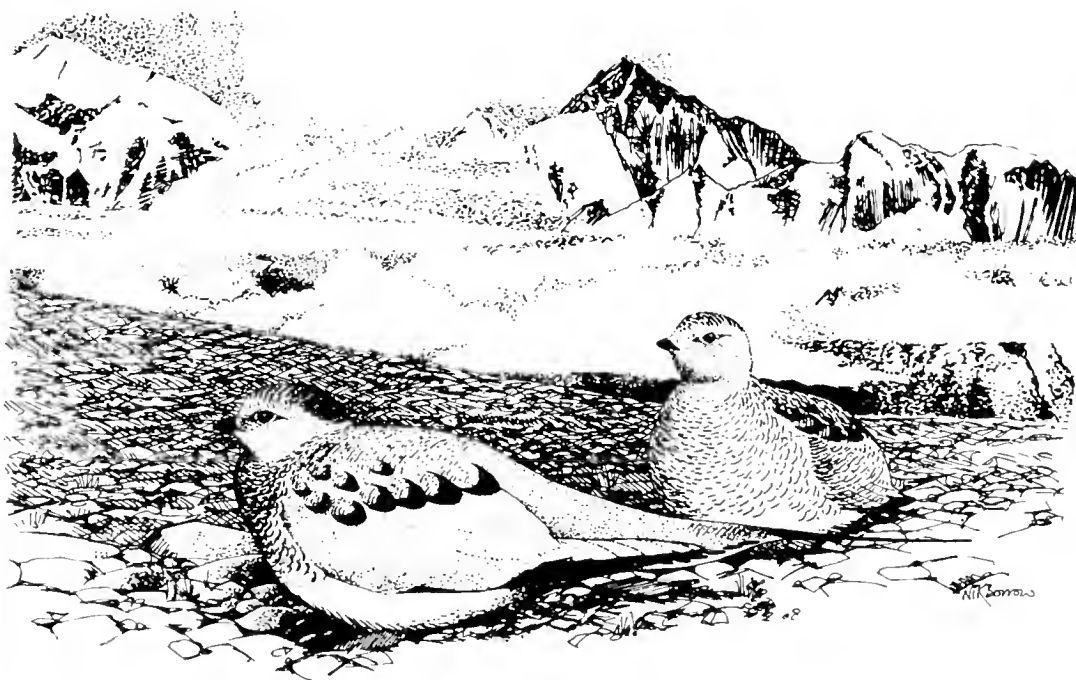
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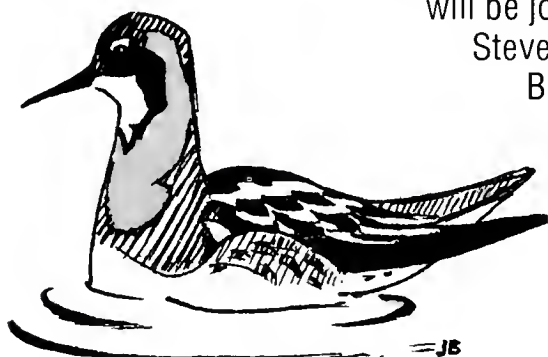
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“Such a change I thought, to meet a man so well equipped for the great outdoors.”

With acknowledgements to the RSPB and Severn-Trent Water.

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British Birds

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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1990

Sponsored by



*Michael J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee
with comments by C. D. R. Heard and R. A. Hume*

This is the thirty-third annual report of the Rarities Committee, and for the ninth consecutive year *Carl Zeiss-Germany* has sponsored the Committee's work. We are most appreciative of this financial assistance, which allows us to continue to process thoroughly each individual record submitted, to publish this report in its familiar, detailed format, and to include within it so many photographs and drawings of rarities. The interest in rare birds in Britain continues to grow, and the workload of the Committee increases as a consequence, so this very welcome support from *Carl Zeiss-Germany* becomes even more important each year.

Rarities Committee membership is listed on the inside front cover each month, and on the back of the title page in each volume. Points of interest arising mainly from the Committee's annual meeting in April 1991 have been published already in 'Rarities Committee news and announcements' (*Brit. Birds* 84: 290-291).

Details of the Committee's constitution and operation have been published in 'Rare birds: the work of the British Birds Rarities Committee' (*Brit. Birds* 80: 487-491) and are contained in a fact sheet, a copy of which may be obtained from the Secretary, Michael J. Rogers, whose address is at the end of this report. Also available from the Secretary is a list of the species considered by the Committee, and copies of the Rarities Committee Record Form, which should be used (or its format followed) when submitting reports. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope of suitable size when requesting any of these items. All reports of any species on the Committee's list should be sent to the Secretary or, in the case of a trapped and ringed rarity, to the BTO Ringing Office, both preferably via the appropriate county or regional recorder.

1990 and earlier years

The Committee has already processed 947 records for 1990, 87% of which have been accepted. A total of 303 records for 1990 and earlier years is still under consideration for various reasons. The Rarities Committee is currently engaged upon reviews of American Golden Plovers *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola*, Olivaceous Warblers *Hippolais pallida* and Arctic Warblers *Phylloscopus borealis*.

Of most interest to readers are those records which involve potential 'firsts' for Britain and Ireland or birds which have not been recorded here for at least 50 years and are thus candidates for upgrading from Category B to Category A of the British and Irish list. Such records in England, Scotland and Wales are considered, in turn, by the British Birds Rarities Committee and by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee. This report contains four such highlights: Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* at Scatness and Pool of Virkie, Shetland, on 15th September 1989, Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, on 7th October 1987, and Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* at Holkham Meals, Norfolk, from 13th October 1989 to 6th May 1990, each of which is new to Britain and Ireland, and Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* at Portland, Dorset, on 10th June 1984, which is Britain and Ireland's second, the first having been in 1883. All four will be added to Category A of the British and Irish list when published in the BOURC's Fifteenth Report (*Ibis* in prep.). Those pre-1990 records with which the BBRC is currently involved concern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli/giganteus*, White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, Matsudaira's Petrel *O. matsudairae*, Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*, South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*, White-cheeked Tern *Sterna repressa*, Least Tern *S. (albifrons) antillarum*, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Gray Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis* and Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*. Excluding very old records which are under reconsideration, those pre-1990 records being investigated by the BOURC concern Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchus*, Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*, Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*, Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*, White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*, Mottled Swift *Apus aequinoctialis*, Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*, Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus*, Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*, Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*, Pallas's Rosefinch *Carpodacus roseus*, Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*, Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris* and Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*.

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank most sincerely all observers and county and regional recorders, bird observatory wardens and reserve wardens and their committees for their continued co-operation, upon which the day-to-day work of the Rarities Committee and this report's

accuracy and completeness are entirely dependent. We are grateful also to the Irish Rare Birds Committee and its secretary, Patrick Smiddy, for permission to include in the report all accepted records of rare birds in Ireland and for supplying the details which enable us to provide a complete review of all rare bird records and running totals of all rare species in the geographical unit of Britain and Ireland.

In addition, we are indebted to many individuals and organisations for assistance during the past year. Once again, Mike Rogers has carried out the enormous task of compiling the report. As with the 1989 report, the species comments have been written jointly by Rob Hume (non-passerines) and Chris Heard (passerines), and the running totals for each species have been compiled by Peter Fraser and Dr John Ryan. Since the previous report, the recent statistics have been checked for all species and some, mainly minor, adjustments have been made to the totals for past years. The Seabirds Advisory Panel, whose members are Peter Colston, Bill Curtis, Jim Enticott, Steve Madge and Tony Marr, continued to provide the Committee with specialist advice, as have Per Alström, Jon Curson, Richard Porter, Ian Sinclair and Lars Svensson. The BTO, the NCC, the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, the RSPB and the British Museum (Natural History) have liaised over various matters.

Photographs and transparencies, whether or not of sufficient quality for publication, always greatly assist the record assessment process. For the first time, this is being acknowledged within the report, with each accepted record supported during assessment by one or more photographs having the term 'photographed' added. We continue to encourage the submission of photographs and transparencies, though not as substitutes for the written record, and thank all photographers who have sent us pictures of rarities, a selection of which enhances this report. We should like to draw attention to the newly instituted 'The Carl Zeiss Award' (see Announcement next month), which we hope will encourage even more photographers to submit prints or transparencies to the Committee. We are grateful also to those observers who included drawings of rarities in their record submissions. Field sketches, regardless of the level of artistic merit, are also of great value to the Committee. Finished paintings, unless accompanied by the draft field sketches, are of no value to the Committee, since all drawings and paintings need to be representations of the bird in question and not of the species in general. Some of the drawings submitted with records are included in this report.

PGL

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1989 report (83: 439-496). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled.

(i) The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed, trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (5) date(s); and (6) observer(s) up to three in number, in alphabetical order.

(ii) In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the case of the very similar Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopaceus* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. grisetus*, however, we are continuing to publish indeterminate records, and this also

applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata*.

(iii) The sequence of species, English names and specific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic* (1984). Any sight records of subspecies (including those of birds trapped and released) are normally referred to as 'showing the characters' of the race concerned.

(iv) The three numbers in brackets after each species' name refer respectively to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain and Ireland (excluding those 'At sea') (1) to the end of 1957, (2) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (3) the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult and

rather arbitrary, but the consensus of members is indicated by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in totals), or 'the same' when the evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of the same species recurring at the same locality after a lapse of time, including those which occur annually at the same or a nearby site. In

considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee, usually requires firm evidence before more than one is counted in the totals. A detailed breakdown of the figures for previous years is held by the Honorary Secretary.

(v) The world breeding range is given in brackets at the beginning of each species comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 117, 3)

Orkney See 1989 Orkney below.

Scilly Off Bryher and Samson, first-summer, 6th May (F. K. Hammond, Dr M. E. Witherick *et al.*).

Shetland Whalefirth, Yell, near-adult, 16th-23rd June (W. Stoopendaal, T. Vernoooy per T. Prescott *et al.*). Whalsay, adult, since 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 441) to 20th April; again, 23rd November to 1991 (Dr B. Marshall, N. D. Poleson, W. Simpson *et al.*).

Western Isles Balranald, North Uist, adult, 20th May (R. J. Arnfield, N. J. Hallam, R. Riddington).

1988 Humberside Bridlington, adult, 14th March (P. Piringer), presumed same as Filey, North Yorkshire, 11th-12th (*Brit. Birds* 82: 508).

1989 Orkney Rousay, adult, 28th November to 16th February 1990 (J. B. Ribbands *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) A remarkable May record from Scilly; the returning Shetland individual is now on some seen-from-window lists.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 24, 0)

Shetland Hermaness, Unst, individual last recorded 2nd July 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 539), 27th March to 7th April (M. G. Pennington *et al.*), 26th, 31st May, 10th June (N. & Mrs L. Pleass *et al.*).

(Southern Oceans) The loneliness of the long-staying albatross continues; the only worse possibility for it would be the sudden appearance of another of the same sex.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* (5, 75, 3)

Cleveland Hartlepool, 7th September (S. J. Hinley, G. Joynt, S. Ryan).

Lothian Musselburgh, showing characters of *P. a. baroli*, dead, 9th December, now at Royal Scottish Museum (M. Griffin, B. A. Hickman *et al.*).

Western Isles Butt of Lewis, 29th July (K. D. Shaw).

(Atlantic south from Madeira and Caribbean, southern Pacific and Indian Ocean) Other reports of this difficult species keep the Committee collectively scratching its head for another year.

Wilson's Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 10, 1)

(Southern Oceans) None in Britain. In Ireland there was one at Bridges of Ross, Co. Clare, on 15th August.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus* (50, 8, 1)

(North America) None in Britain. In Ireland, one was killed by a dog at Killag, Co. Wexford, on 21st January.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 163, 2)

Dorset Hinton Parva, ♀, 18th May (Dr G. P. Green).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australia) In Ireland, a female was found exhausted, and subsequently died, at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 16th March.

Another poor year for a species that, not so long ago, seemed set to be an intermittent breeder here.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 240, 46)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, second-summer, 4th May (J. A. Rowlands, R. Spowage).

Cornwall Copperhouse, Hayle, adult, 20th March (L. P. Williams). Loe Pool, first-summer or second-summer, 20th-21st March (S. Bury, A. R. Pay, M. J. Southam). Par, adult, 24th March to 7th April; probable second-summer, 26th March to 10th April (S. M. Christophers, G. R. & M. White *et al.*). St Austell, adult or second-summer, at least 29th March (S. M. Christophers *et al.*). St Clement, Truro, adult, 29th March to 13th April (J. A. Jane, W. A. R. Wolfenden *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, adult, 16th March (A. Gibson, A. M. Jewels, J. Steer). Radford Park, Plymouth, adult, 17th March to 13th April (J. F. Babbington, R. W. White *et al.*). Barnstaple, adult, 5th-6th April, dead 7th, photographed (M. Preston, M. Williams, M. Woollacott).

Dorset Portland, adult, 4th April (M. Cade, P. Howlett *et al.*).

Dyfed Bosherton Ponds, adult, 15th March (C. J. Orsman), possibly same, Westfield Pill, 16th-17th (A. J. Hansen *et al.*), probably same, Rosemarket, 15th April (A. & A. J. Hansen).

Two white crown plumes

White forehead, ear coverts,
clun and throat

Pale grey underparts

Black mantle and
scapulars



Black crown and nape

Dark eye, black bill

Mid grey wings

legs and feet yellow

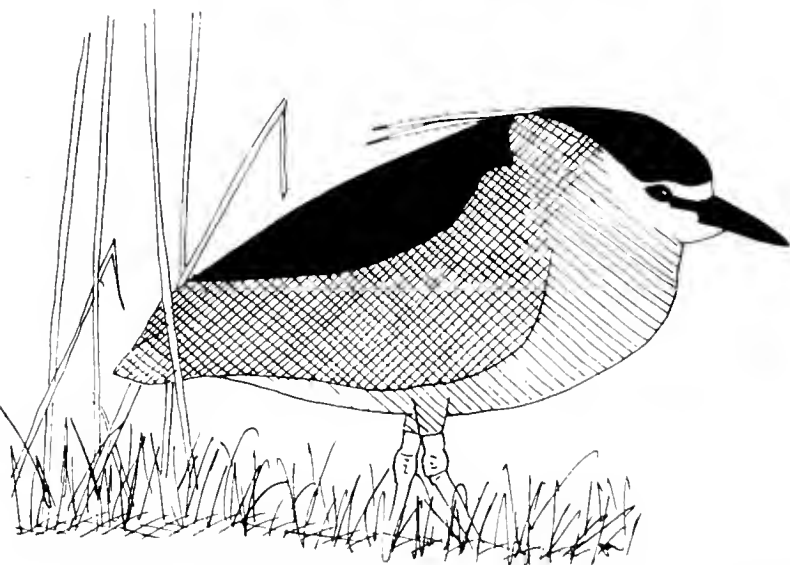


Fig. 1. Adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Cley, Norfolk, May 1990 (John R. Williamson)

Skomer, adult, 17th March, found dead, killed by gulls, 21st (A. C. & S. J. Sutcliffe, H. A. Williams *et al.*). St Ishmaels, adult, three days in late March (P. & Mrs M. Edgington). Trecwn, age uncertain, 21st March, photographed (J. R. Hadfield, R. Harris). Near St Nicholas, adult, 29th March (R. Poole). Teifi Marshes, three adults: two 20th March, two and one dead 6th April, two 29th April (M. E. Baines, J. Thomas *et al.*). Ffairfach, adult or second-summer, 16th-21st July (J. Friese, N. R. Matthew, P. Metcalfe *et al.*).

Essex Holland Haven, adult, 7th May (C. Atkins).

Glamorgan, West Wern Halog, Gower, first-summer, 26th March (W. E. Jones, K. R. Lloyd). Oxwich, adults, 21st April, presumed same, 4th-7th May, two, 6th (K. Burdett, W. Howard, R. Jarman).

Hampshire Near Ibsley, adult, 24th-25th February (J. M. Clark, J. A. Eyre).

Kent Dymchurch, adult, 25th March (H. Goodwin, D. Walker). Dungeness, adult, 16th April (P. Wells *et al.*); two adults, 29th (D. Sydall, R. R. Thomson, G. Thomson), same, 1ade, 29th (N. R. Davies *et al.*).

Lancashire Heysham Harbour, first-summer, 18th March (W. Cross, P. J. Marsh *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frampton, 25th March to 4th April (A. McKeenan, R. Nowicki).

Norfolk Cley, Salthouse and Kelling, adult, 10th-11th May (J. R. Williamson *et al.*).(fig. 1).

Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, juvenile or first-winter, 28th August (E. K. McMahan).

Suffolk Southwold, adult, 13th-20th May (P. H. Wilkinson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Rye, adult, 27th April to 1st May (D. J. Funnell, H. M. J. Taffs, Dr B. J. Yates *et al.*), two, 2nd May (A. F. & Mrs S. J. Burtenshaw *et al.*); adult, 23rd June (D. J. Funnell, Dr B. J. Yates *et al.*).

Sussex, West Littlehampton, adult, 15th-16th April (R. Butler, A. S. Cook, R. J. L. Kemp *et al.*).

West Midlands Hay Head Wood, Walsall, adult, 16th-22nd April, photographed (J. Hollian, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Wight, Isle of Porchfield, adult, 26th-28th March (A. Atrill, D. J. Hunnybun, J. W. Willmot).

Wiltshire Coate Water, adult, 7th May (G. A. J. & P. A. Deacon *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Denaby Ings, adult, 15th June to at least 5th August (K. A. Dutton, T. Feltham *et al.*).

Yorkshire, West Angler's Country-park, Winterset, juvenile, 25th July (D. Grist, Miss V. Holmes, G. J. Speight *et al.*).

1988 Somerset Cheddar, adult, 16th to at least 19th September (*Brit. Birds* 82: 510), relocated February 1991, apparently ringed Berger Zoo, Arnhem, Netherlands, not Edinburgh as previously reported (per B. Rabbits).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas) In Ireland, there were three at Carrigrohane on the River Lee, Co. Cork, on 19th March.

One in Northumberland in July was proved to be a free-flyer from Edinburgh Zoo, and some published here could have been escapes, too. The 1988 Somerset record implicates at least one more zoo in the plot. Nevertheless, there was a clear influx in the southwest and south of England and Wales in spring, with some spill-over farther north.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 25, 5)

Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, 20th June (M. & S. F. Davies, G. R. & Mrs H. Welch).

Devon Near Dartmouth, at least 6th-24th June, photographed (D. Howard, P. Sanders, K. & Mrs C. Stone).

Kent Elmley, 7th-14th May, photographed (P. K. J. Chun *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 20th March to 9th April, photographed (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*)(plate 258).

Bryher, 15th May, presumed same, St Martin's, 16th to 1st June (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa) With only two others since 1983, there is perhaps as yet no great cause for optimism that this declining heron is likely to reverse its long-term downward trend.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 49, 2)**Norfolk** Walpole St Andrew, 25th April (G. M. Kirwan).**Wight, Isle of** Calbourne Mill, 12th April (K. Lover).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeders in south of France) A minor revival, after the decline in 1988 and absence in 1989.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (23, 589, 113)**Avon** Chew Valley Lake, 10th-21st October (R. Higgins *et al.*), also in Somerset.**Cambridgeshire** Fen Drayton, 7th May (R. I. Allison, J. S. Hargreaves, Miss J. Morrow).**Clwyd** Oakenholt Marsh, 11th May (Dr N. T. Man, G. E. Morris), probably same, 23rd (H. Birch, I. Higginson).**Cornwall** About six from 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 443), about 32 additional: Lynher and Tamar Estuaries, St John's Lake, one from 1989 to at least 14th January, another 3rd March to 28th April; 15th July to end of year, two, 21st July to 17th August, end October onwards, three, 28th August to end October, four, 18th-27th August (S. C. Madge *et al.* per S. M. Christophers). Fowey Estuary, one from 1989 to 18th March, another, 28th January to 18th March; two, 10th October to 1991, another, 21st December (per S. M. Christophers). Fal Estuary: Devoran, since 1989 to 23rd April, three, 12th-15th March, presumed one or other, Ruan Laniorne, 4th January, Tresillian, 14th March, Penryn, 31st (per S. M. Christophers); Ruan Laniorne, 9th August to 11th September, three, 13th-14th October, one, 1st-27th November, two, 23rd December; up to three, Truro River, intermittently, 19th August to 18th December, presumed same (per S. M. Christophers). Hayle Estuary, three since 1989 to 30th January, another, 1st January, one found dead, two to 2nd May, one to 5th; two, 5th July to 31st August, another, 26th July; one to end of year, another, 30th September (D. S. Flumm, L. P. Williams *et al.* per S. M. Christophers). Gannel Estuary, two since 1989 to 22nd April; one, 25th October to 1991 (S. M. Christophers *et al.*). Camel Estuary, 8th March to 15th April; two, 26th July to 1st August, one to 30th (per S. M. Christophers). Helford Estuary, 21st March. Poldhu and Gunwalloe, 21st April. Croft Pascoe, 27th July. Rame Head, 4th August (all per S. M. Christophers). Par, two, 30th September (D. Jackson). Drift Reservoir, 8th September to 6th October (M. Southam *et al.*), probably from Hayle.**Cumbria** Duddon Estuary, 19th-20th July, photographed (R. I. Kinley, D. Thexton *et al.*).**Devon** Three from 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444), about 11 additional, but one also in Cornwall: Kingsbridge Estuary, since 1989 to at least January. Avon Estuary, 8th February (K. Goatly); 17th August (J. C. Lowen). Erme Estuary, 16th April, 5th May, 14th August (A. S. C. Barker, A. J. Pomroy); at least four, possibly six, 18th August to 7th September, one, 4th October (J. F. Babbington, J. C. Lowen, V. R. Tucker *et al.*); one, 21st October (A. J. Pomroy). Tavy Estuary, 6th to at least 23rd May, presumed same as Erme, two from 11th, three, 23rd (P. Edmonds), one presumed also in Cornwall, presumed one of same, Plym Estuary, 7th May (M. Simmonds). River Yealm, two, 15th December to 1991 (A. J. Pomroy). River Otter, 16th January to at least 4th February (J. F. Capper, G. H. Gush *et al.*), probably 1989 Exe Estuary individual; 28th-29th June (E. Brooks, K. Pellow); 10th-21st August, four, 12th, three, 15th, two, 21st (K. Pellow *et al.*). Exe Estuary, 25th August to 22nd September, two, 25th-27th August, 16th September, three, 20th-22nd September, six, 9th September (M. D. Elcoate, R. H. Montgomery, R. C. Thornett *et al.*); one, 29th September (T. H. Smith). Teign Estuary, 10th, 13th August (S. E. Barbato), presumed same as Exe. Taw and Torridge Estuaries, since 1989 to at least June; 5th August; two, 1st September, three, 3rd (D. Churchill, D. Davies, C. Snook *et al.*).**Dorset** One since 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444), about 14 additional: Poole Harbour, principally Brand's Bay and Studland, monthly maxima: four, January; three, February to May; one, June; four, July; 14, August to October; 11, November; seven, December (S. J. Morrison *et al.*). Christchurch Harbour, 2nd, 6th May, 21st July, 11th August, 12th, 24th October, six, 28th August (I. Rabjohns, D. N. Smith *et al.* per M. Cade). Abbotsbury, 19th, 29th June, 12th, 15th-17th, 20th July (S. A. Groves *et al.*). Langton Herring, 8th July, 23rd September (per M. Cade). East Fleet, 15th-16th June (P. M. Harris *et al.*). Radipole, 16th June, photographed, 9th-11th, 30th September (B. Spencer *et al.*). Portland, 22nd September (per M. Cade). All presumed Poole Harbour individuals.**Dyfed** Teifi Marshes, 3rd-5th April (M. E. Baines, J. Higgins, W. Lee *et al.*), probably one or other of 1989 Dyfed individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444, and 1989 Dyfed below). Gann Estuary, 14th April to 10th May (J. W. & Mrs J. E. Donovan, A. H. Hansen), possibly same, West

Williamston, 6th May (P. Howe *et al.*). Pen-clawydd, 6th August to at least 29th September, two from 8th August, four, 9th-18th, five, 13th, three, 23rd to 6th September, two, 8th (M. C. Powell, A. Richardson, B. Stewart *et al.*). Kidwelly, 24th November (F. B. Jenkins), presumed same, Dale Pools, 27th (J. W. & Mrs J. E. Donovan).

Essex Old Hall Marshes, 2nd May (M. & Mrs J. Stott). Fingringhoe Wick, 29th July (J. A. Norgate *et al.*).

Glamorgan, West Landimore Marsh, 16th December to 1991 (H. E. Grenfell).

Gloucestershire Cotswold Water Park, three, 6th May (R. G. Baaisén, G. C. Clutterbuck, N. R. Smart *et al.*).

Hampshire Timsbury, 4th February (D. A. Thelwell), probably since 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444-445). Farlington Marshes and Langstone Harbour, 13th May (T. D. Codlin, P. M. Potts *et al.*). Pennington Marsh, 23rd-24th June (M. C. & P. Combridge *et al.*). Northwest Solent from Hurst Spit to Sowley Shore, up to four, 5th August to 28th October (M. C. & P. Combridge *et al.*). Tanner's Creek, Lymington, 21st November (S. G. Keen).

Kent Dungeness, 13th April (W. Gorst, T. Strudwick, C. Thain *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Kirkby-on-Bain, 6th May (P. A. Hyde).

Merseyside Leasowe, 21st May (M. R. Gough), same, Red Rocks, 21st (Dr J. E. & M. G. Turner *et al.*), presumed same as Clwyd.

Norfolk Welney, two, 7th-9th May, one to 10th (J. B. Kemp, D. Revett, K. Warrington), presumed same, Denver Sluice, 7th-9th (Dr J. Lines, M. Rae).

Northamptonshire Stanwick, 12th-13th May (J. I. Blincow, R. W. Bullock, S. Layton *et al.*).

Northumberland Bamburgh, 23rd June (D. G. Bell, G. Russell *et al.*), same, Budle Bay, 24th, 1st-11th July (D. McKeown *et al.*), same, Tweed Estuary, 18th (J. R. Irving, W. T. Logan, E. Slack).

Orkney Loch of Banks, 14th June to end July, same, Loch of Hundland, 9th August to at least 4th September (C. J. Booth, R. Cryer, P. Reynolds *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, 17th-25th December (D. J. D. Hickman, R. Symmons, W. H. Wagstaff).

Somerset West Sedgemoor, at least 13th March (B. D. Gibbs, R. L. Musgrove, S. Rogers). Cheddar Reservoir, 7th to at least 8th October (T. A. Box, B. Rabbitts *et al.*), also in Avon.

Strathclyde Danna, Argyll, 28th May (J. Blatcher, Ms C. Pollock).

Suffolk Minsmere, 16th-17th May (C. Seagrave). Havergate, 2nd to at least 30th August (N. Green *et al.*).

Sussex, East Pett Level, 12th May (C. H. Dean, J. A. B. Gale).

Sussex, West Chichester Harbour, 13th January, presumed since 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 445), 15th February, 4th March, 30th April to 3rd May (C. B. & Mrs M. A. Collins *et al.*), presumed same, Pagham Harbour, 28th April (C. R. Janman); 18th August, 5th September to 6th October, two, 11th, 23rd September, 5th October; 4th November to at least 28th December, two, at least 4th-5th November, 4th-5th December (C. B. & Mrs M. A. Collins *et al.*), presumed one of same, Pagham Harbour, 13th, 15th August, 10th, 25th November (A. F. & Mrs S. J. Burtenshaw, C. M. & Mrs B. James, C. R. Janman *et al.*).

Wight, Isle of Lakeside, 16th August (P. J. Barden, K. Lover), presumed from Hampshire.

Yorkshire, North Southwold, 9th May (P. J. Dunn), possibly same as Lincolnshire.

1989 Cambridgeshire Sacrewell, at least one, at least 26th August, probably mid August to mid September (C. Leon, D. K. J. Withrington *et al.*).

1989 Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm and Burton Marsh, Cheshire, 9th-11th May (S. P. Lloyd, C. J. & S. R. Williams *et al.*), presumed same, 18th-20th (G. H. Rhodes *et al.*), probably same as 1989 Gwynedd (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444).

1989 Dorset Abbotsbury, two, 23rd May (S. A. Groves *et al.*); 14th, 21st-29th July, two, 21st, 20th August, 9th December (S. A. Groves *et al.*), both probably from Poole Harbour (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444).

1989 Dyfed Capel Bangor, 12th December (E. Moore), same, Aberystwyth, 16th December to mid January 1990, photographed, Dyfi Estuary to about mid March 1990 (P. A. Gregory, P. M. Miles *et al.*), probably one or other of Nevern Estuary individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444). Gwendraeth Estuary, Cardiganshire (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444), locality is in Carmarthenshire.

1989 Hampshire Langstone Harbour, 24th May (C. J. Glover, C. J. Tyas).

1989 Kent Dungeness, 13th August intermittently to 6th September (D. Walker *et al.*), same as East Sussex, Lade, Kent, individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 445). Elmley, 14th August (R. L. Morgan *et al.*), presumed same as Stodmarsh, 17th (*Brit. Birds* 83: 445).

1989 Norfolk Salthouse, 20th September (E. T. Myers), same as Blakeney Point, 21st (*Brit. Birds* 83: 445).

1989 Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, 16th to at least 18th August (D. L. Buckingham, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

1989 Sussex, West Knepp Millpond, Shipley, 26th October (M. Hulme, C. W. Melgar, S. C. Richardson).

1989 Wight, Isle of St Helen's Millpond, up to two, intermittently, 5th-13th August (E. J. & M. Crinage, J. C. Gloyn, D. & J. Nurney *et al.*). Newtown Estuary, 9th-13th August, two 13th (J. W. Willmott *et al.*). Wootton Creek, 11th-15th September (J. C. Gloyn, G. R. & M. S. Sparshott). All probably from Hampshire (*Brit. Birds* 83: 444-445).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australia) In Ireland, there was one at Clonakilty on 25th March (probably the same as the late report of one there on 25th December 1989); one at Castletownsend on 19th March, joined by a second individual on 31st March; two at Carrigaline on 11th April, one remaining until 24th; two at Ballycotton on 11th May; one at Ballymacoda during 19th June to 25th November, joined by a second on 30th September; one at Roscarbery from 29th September until late October; one at Lough Beg on 1st October; and one in Cork Harbour from 2nd December into 1991 (all Co. Cork); one at Ballray, Co. Louth, on 8th April; one at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down, on 23rd July, joined by a second from 31st July to 18th August; one at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 5th May.

The occasional misidentified distant gull or paper bag probably has little statistical significance in the recent flood of records of this species. It is, however, a lovely bird, so don't knock it. Little Egrets also remain good finds inland and Avon, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Somerset records are noteworthy among the plethora of coastal reports.

From the start of 1991, records of Little Egret, recently our most numerous rarity, will no longer be considered by the Committee, though records should continue to be submitted to county recorders.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 35, 5)

Cleveland Scaling Dam Reservoir, 19th July (M. A. Blick).

Highland Near Maryburgh, Cromarty Firth, 4th June (A. S. & J. A. Sweetland).

Kent Dungeness, 8th August, photographed (Miss P. Miller, T. Strudwick). Stodmarsh, 23rd August to at least mid October (D. Feast *et al.*), presumed same as Dungeness individual, also in Sussex, below.

Leicestershire Rutland Water, 26th May (D. J. S. Gamble, A. H. J. Harrop, A. J. Mackay *et al.*).

Norfolk Welney, 2nd July (J. B. & L. Kemp, D. Revett); presumed same, 23rd-24th (J. Arbon, J. B. Kemp). Hickling, 15th July (J. H. Marchant, Dr M. J. Proven). Joist Fen and Decoy Farm area, 4th August, possibly since late July (P. J. Dolton, J. M. Garner), all presumed same individual, also in Suffolk, below.

Suffolk Northwest, 27th and 29th July (E., J. & R. Secker), same as Norfolk.

Sussex, West Pagham Harbour, 5th August (N. A. Driver *et al.*), presumed same as Kent and Isle of Wight.

Wight, Isle of Newtown, 6th August (C. Burland, K. Lover, J. Willmot *et al.*), also in West Sussex and Kent.

1989 Yorkshire, West Bretton Lakes, 10th May, photographed (J. B. Baxter, M. Tunmore, M. J. Watson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 82: plate 297).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) Wandering individuals probably exaggerate the impression, but this was another good year for this eye-catching heron.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (26, 48, 8)

Dorset Radipole, juvenile, 14th-15th September, photographed (B. Spencer, D. Wilson *et al.*).

Essex Old Hall Marshes and Hamford Water, juvenile, 25th-26th August (M. Stott, R. Turner *et al.*), also in Suffolk.

Greater London Kennington, 25th August (G. C. Davey, H. S. & Mrs B. J. Jolliffe), also in Essex and Suffolk.

Hampshire New Forest and Avon Valley area, adult, 7th April to at least 17th June (D. J. Burges, M. C. & P. Combridge, M. J. Mockler *et al.*).

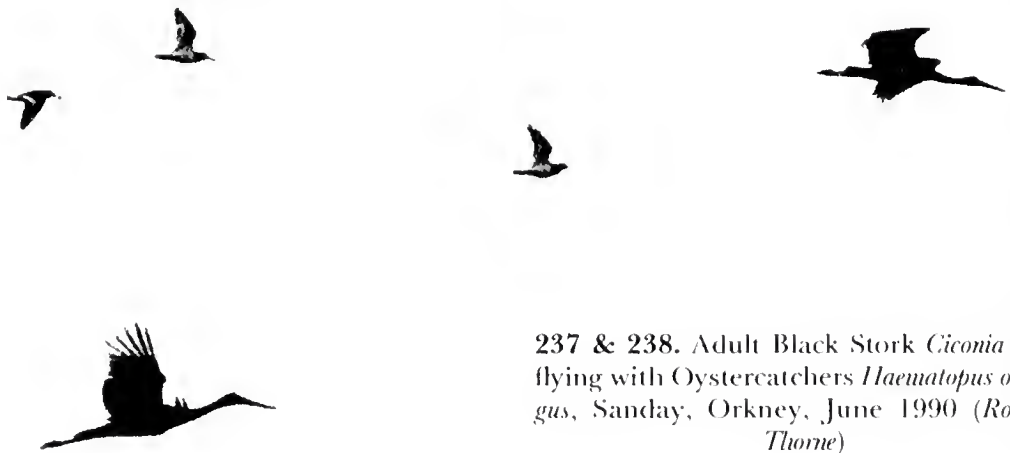
Hertfordshire Tyttenhanger Gravel-pits, adult, 16th April (R. Evershed), presumed same, near Hemel Hempstead, 2nd May (R. Nye), also in Surrey.

Lancashire Leighton Moss, adult, 21st June (M. S. Hill, G. Taylor), possibly also in Orkney.

Norfolk Fritcham, probably first-summer, 6th June (E. Cross).

Northamptonshire Barnwell Brook, juvenile, 27th-28th July, photographed (M. Duerden, J. W. W. Metcalfe *et al.*), also in Suffolk.

Orkney Sanday, adult, 23rd-24th June, photographed (F. Muir, R. Thorne)(plates 237 & 238), possibly same as Lancashire.



237 & 238. Adult Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, flying with Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, Sanday, Orkney, June 1990 (Roderick Thorne)

Powys/Shropshire Upper Teme Valley area, adult, 30th August to 6th September, possibly since 9th August (P. P. Jennings, Dr R. H. Townsend *et al.*).

Shropshire See Powys/Shropshire.

Suffolk Ellough and Sotterley area, juvenile, 28th-29th July (C. A. Buttle, M. Parker, R. Walden *et al.*), same, 16 further localities, various dates to at least 1st September (per P. W. Murphy), also in Essex and Northamptonshire.

Surrey Pirbright Common, 2nd May (P. M. Troake), also in Hertfordshire.

(Eurasia and Southern Africa) Another species of which individuals are likely to be seen in a number of localities, even perhaps several counties, but which is clearly enjoying a minor boom.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 55, 2)

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, 30th November to 2nd December (A. Davenport, J. A. Rowlands *et al.*), also in Norfolk.

Kent Stodmarsh area, 1989 individual (*Brit. Birds* 83: 417), 1st January to mid March, intermittently May to end August, regularly to end of year; same, Sheppey, 20th April (per T. Hodge). Brookland, 14th May (N. R. Davies, M. Tickner), presumed not Stodmarsh individual.

Norfolk Ouse Washes, 19th December, same as Cambridgeshire.

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeders Balkans) There is a continuing trickle of reports considered not to refer to the regular Kent individuals.

Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus* (0, 6, 1)

(Northern Holarctic) In Ireland, there was an adult showing the characters of the nominate North American and Siberian race at the North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 29th December.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 76, 0)

1989 **Tayside** Menmuir, adult, at least 13th-14th December, photographed (M. Andrews *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) The only report for 1989, but the species still took 1990 as a year off.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* (1, 46, 5)

Individuals showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* were recorded as follows:

Essex Kirby-le-Soken, adult, 15th-20th January (Dr S. & Mrs P. A. Cox, M. Hutchings), same, Hamford Water, 1st February (B. D. Gee).

Essex/Greater London King George V Reservoir, adult, 18th March (A. J. Gray, P. J. Vines *et al.*).

Greater London See Essex/Greater London.

Hampshire See West Sussex.

Norfolk Breydon Water, adult, 6th November to at least 22nd December (P. R. Allard, J. Oates *et al.*).

Sussex, West Thorney Deeps and Pilsey Island, Chichester Harbour, adult, 12th October to 1991, also Hayling Island, Hampshire (C. B. Collins *et al.*), presumed returning individual (*Brit. Birds* 83: 448).

1985 **Norfolk** Thornham, adult, 19th November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 525), Thornham/Holme area, 12th-13th December (V. Eve).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia) In Ireland, there were single adults at Killough on 18th March; at Dundrum Bay on 15th-16th March, and again from 18th December to 19th January 1991 (all Co. Down); at Rogerstown, Co. Dublin, from mid April until 30th April; and at the Bann Estuary, Co. Londonderry, on 30th September. Also, a belated record of an adult at Faughanvale, Lough Foyle, Co. Londonderry, on 25th October 1988, and again at the same site on 3rd-8th October 1989.

An expected pattern, with no particularly noteworthy events.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 195, 17)

Borders Coldstream, ♂, 4th-5th May (R. R. Elliot, J. F. McConnell *et al.*).

Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, ♂, 30th November to 26th December (I. Higginson *et al.*).

Cleveland Hartlepool, first-winter ♂, 11th-16th March (G. Joynt *et al.*).

Clwyd See Cheshire/Clwyd.

Cumbria Leven Estuary, ♂, 13th to at least 25th February (D. Jewel, C. Raven *et al.*).

Devon Exmouth and Dawlish Warren, ♂, 24th December to at least 5th January 1991 (B. B. Heaseman *et al.*).

Fife Stenhouse Reservoir, ♂, ♀, 12th to at least 13th November 1989, first-winter ♂, 13th, same three, Lochgelly Loch, 24th to 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 448), same three, Stenhouse Reservoir, to 19th January, ♂, 27th, first-winter ♂ to 4th February; ♂ returned 12th October, all three by 21st November, ♂, ♀ to 19th December (J. S. Nadin *et al.* per D. E. Dickson).

Gloucestershire Dudgrove, Cotswold Water-park, ♂, 16th December to 24th January 1991 (N. Pleass *et al.*).

Highland Handa Island, ♂, 19th May (M. Self).

Humberside Messingham, ♂, 14th September intermittently to 1st December (G. P. Catley,

J. T. Harriman, C. Nimick *et al.*), same, Kirton Lindsey, 4th October, photographed (J. T. Harriman).

Lancashire Martin Mere, ♂, 11th February to 24th March; another, 4th-8th March; first-winter ♂, 20th February to 8th March (G. R. Clarkson, T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby *et al.*).

Lothian Gladhouse Reservoir, ♂, 3rd February to 18th April, presumed same, Rosebery Reservoir, 10th-27th February, Musselburgh, 18th March; Bavelaw Reservoir, 24th-27th March; presumed same, Gladhouse and Rosebery Reservoirs, 17th October to 1991 (T. Gillies, A. O'Connor *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, ♂, 14th-18th March (T. R. Dean *et al.*). Berney Marshes, ♂, 10th April (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Northumberland Fenham-le-Moor, Lindisfarne, ♂, 3rd-15th October (M. Parsons, S. Percival, R. M. Ward *et al.*).

Yorkshire, South Wath Ings, ♂, 6th September (J. M. Turton *et al.*).

1987 Dorset Stanpit Marsh and Brownsea Island, 3rd-5th May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 449), 2nd (S. E. Barbato).

(North America) In Ireland, there were returning males at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, from 12th October 1989 to March 1990, and again from 6th October 1990 into 1991; at Ballintubbrid, Co. Cork, from 2nd October 1989 to 1990 and again from 1st November 1990 into 1991; and at Greysteel, Lough Foyle, Co. Londonderry, from 4th to 19th November 1989. Also a male at Sligo Harbour, Co. Sligo, on 24th November 1990.

An intriguing trio in Fife enlivens an otherwise fairly standard (but quite widespread) list here. There have been occasional ageing difficulties with 'immature' males showing 'adult' white forewings, which do not fit the established pattern of moult, in which the wings should be the last to change.

Teal *Anas crecca* (13, 295, 19)

Drakes showing the characters of the North American race *A. c. carolinensis* were recorded as follows:

Avon Chew Valley Lake, 3rd February, presumed same, 29th September to 23rd February 1991 (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*), presumed returning individual last recorded 7th December 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 449).

Central Loch Lubnaig, 13th February (D. Garratt, R. Saville).

Cornwall Copperhouse Creek, Hayle, 12th-15th February (D. S. Flumm, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, 2nd February (G. Richards *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, to 4th March, same, Farlington Marsh to at least 2nd January (*Brit. Birds* 83: 449).

Kent Sevenoaks, 6th February to 4th March (P. Larkin, T. Laws *et al.*).

Lancashire Martin Mere, 28th October to 1991 (T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby *et al.*), also in Merseyside; first-winter, 2nd-17th November (J. & T. P. Drew, D. J. Rigby), also Merseyside.

Merseyside Marshside Marsh, 13th January (P. I. Holt *et al.*), presumed same 25th-28th March, 29th December to 1991 (B. McCarthy *et al.*), also in Lancashire; first-winter, 29th December to 1991 (Miss S. Gullane, P. I. Holt *et al.*), also in Lancashire.

Norfolk Welney, 15th-16th March (J. Arbon, L. Butler, J. B. Kemp). Berney Marshes, 17th-22nd March (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Northamptonshire Daventry C. P., 15th January (G. Pullan).

Northumberland Holywell Pond, 8th-22nd May (T. J. Tams *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Lound, 1st-9th April, photographed (G. & P. Hobson *et al.*).

Shetland Trondra, 12th-17th March (P. Barry *et al.*). Scatness, 16th December to at least January 1991 (D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Somerset Wet Moor, 9th March (D. J. Chown). Durleigh Reservoir, at least 4th November (J. G. Hole, S. Rogers *et al.*).

Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, 11th November to at least 26th January 1991 (W. J. Low *et al.*).

Strathclyde See 1989 Strathclyde below.

Warwickshire Draycote Water, 4th February (A. R. Dean *et al.*).

1989 Cheshire Rostherne Mere, 28th January to 12th February (M. Bailey, T. P. Drew *et al.*).

1989 Fife Cameron Reservoir, 22nd October (T. C. Smout *et al.*), presumed same as Eden Estuary individual, 16th February 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 515).

1989 Lancashire Martin Mere, 29th September discontinuously to 2nd March 1990 (E. J. Abraham, G. R. Clarkson, D. J. Rigby *et al.*), presumed returning individual last recorded Marshside Marsh, Merseyside, 8th-16th April 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 449), presumed same also in Merseyside, above.

1989 Northumberland Castle Island, River Wansbeck, 17th December (J. R. Todd).

1989 Strathclyde Easter Ellister, 31st March to 3rd April (*Brit. Birds* 83: 450), presumed same Ardnave Loch, Islay, 25th December, Easter Ellister, 24th-25th January 1990, Loch Indaal, 30th (P. Cashman, Dr M. A. Ogilvie, C. Smout *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there were two males at Lough Beg, Co. Cork, on 19th January.

Within a typical sort of list, there are still surprises, such as the Northamptonshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire records in areas where this race is still exceptionally rare.

American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 16, 1)

Shetland Loch of Spiggie, ♂, 4th February to 29th April (R. L. Howells, M. Mellor *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, a late acceptance concerns a female at North Slob, Co. Wexford, during 21st February to 13th March 1989.

Remaining unpredictable and rare, this is one of the harder wildfowl to get to grips with in years when the occasional long-stayers fail to show up.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 146, 2)

Norfolk Cley, ♂, 22nd June to 12th July (M. A. Golley *et al.*), probably same, Titchwell, 20th-30th August, 20th to at least 29th September (J. B. Kemp, R. Q. Skeen, K. Warrington *et al.*).

1988 Berkshire See 1989 Berkshire.

1988 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton, ♀ paired with Shoveler *A. clypeata* (*Brit. Birds* 83: 359), 6th August to 8th October, possibly since June; male-type hybrid, 17th December (R. M. Patient *et al.*).

1989 Berkshire Theale, ♂, 19th May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 450), was in 1988.

1989 Warwickshire Brandon Marsh, ♀, 20th August to at least 12th November (F. Stokes, J. Walton, T. W. Willey *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there was an adult male at Ballymacoda, Co. Cork, from 16th November into 1991.

Whether escapes are more likely in June, or more likely than true vagrants to pair up with Shovelers *A. clypeata*, are matters for speculation with no firm evidence. We leave you to draw your own conclusions.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (1, 272, 24)

Cornwall Drift Reservoir and Marazion, first-winter ♂, last recorded 28th December 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 451), again, Marazion, 20th January, 20th February, Drift Reservoir, 19th February, 4th-5th March (S. M. Christophers, Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Drift Reservoir, ♂♂, 4th-27th December, two, 5th-27th (Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*), one of same, Marazion, 28th December to 1991 (R. Hathway *et al.*). Loe Pool, two ♂♂, 29th September to 23rd October, two, 18th November to 1st December, one to 6th, same as Drift Reservoir/Marazion individuals, ♀ or juvenile, 29th September to 19th October (S. Bury, Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*). Stithians Reservoir, first-winter ♂, 24th-27th September (F. H. Honeychurch, Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

Devon Huntsham Barton, ♂, 18th December 1989 to at least 3rd March (*Brit. Birds* 83: 451). Kitley Pond, ♀, 10th-24th March, photographed (A. J. Pomroy).

Dorset Poole Park, ♂, 10th to at least 22nd November (Mrs J. V. Bale, Dr G. P. Green *et al.*),

presumed returning individual of 9th December 1989 to 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 451); same, Littlesea, 16th-17th December (S. J. Morrison).

Durham Shibdon Pond, 31st May (per T. Armstrong), also in Tyne & Wear.

Dyfed Llyn Fanod, ♀, 13th January intermittently to early March (P. E. Davies, P. A. Gregory, L. James *et al.*).

Hereford & Worcester Lower Bittell Reservoir, Worcestershire, ♂, 28th March (K. G. Clifford, G. J. Mant, S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Highland Loch Pityoulish, ♂, 18th February (N. A. Bell, I. Crowther, C. P. Musgrave).

Lancashire Camforth, ♀, 26th October to 1991 (R. Homan, P. J. Marsh, T. Wilmer *et al.*), same, Leighton Moss, at least 13th November (per P. J. Marsh).

Northamptonshire Pitsford Reservoir, ♀, 16th, 22nd-23rd September (D. J. Burges, R. D. Gossage *et al.*), same, Billing Gravel-pits, 30th September (R. W. Bullock, M. L. Overton, A. J. Whitehouse).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, ♀, 6th January (A. D. McLevy), same, Holywell Pond, intermittently, 10th March to 3rd May (P. A. Buskin, J. R. Todd, K. W. York *et al.*), also in Tyne & Wear.

Nottinghamshire Clumber Park, ♂, 26th April intermittently to 14th May (R. Overton *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, ♂, 8th-17th October (B. Orr *et al.*).

Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, ♂, 8th March (T. A. Box, J. G. Hole, B. Rabbitts). Westhay Moor, ♂, 28th May (B. Rabbitts).

Strathclyde Bogton Loch, Dallmelington, Ayrshire, ♂, 9th-10th October (E. M. Hissett *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear Marden Quarry, ♀, 28th January to 18th February, intermittently 29th May to 17th October; same, Tynemouth Park, 24th-29th September (C. & T. K. Bradshaw, M. S. Hodgson *et al.*), presumed returning individual last recorded Druridge Ponds, Northumberland, 1st August 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 452), also in Durham. Marden Quarry, ♂, intermittently 28th January to 18th February (C. Bradshaw, A. Hutt *et al.*), presumed same as Northumberland individual last recorded 29th November 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 452), also in Durham and Northumberland. Marine Park Lake, South Shields, ♂, intermittently, 11th April to 7th May, 31st October, 11th-12th December (plate 257) also in Durham; ♀, intermittently, 25th February to 12th April (T. I. Mills *et al.* per T. Armstrong) (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 190), also in Northumberland.

Western Isles Liniclate, Benbecula, ♂, 11th April (P. S. Read).

Yorkshire, West Swillington Park Lake, ♂, 31st March (M. J. Hobbs, J. C. Lowen, A. J. Musgrove). Angler's Reservoir, Winterset, ♂, 31st August to 11th September (J. M. Turton *et al.*).

1986 Dyfed Skokholm, ♀, 12th October (J. Hayes, S. J. Sutcliffe *et al.*).

1989 Derbyshire/South Yorkshire Rother Valley Country Park, ♂, 8th-28th September (D. Hursthouse), presumed returning individual, last recorded Catcliffe Flash, South Yorkshire, 8th June to 9th November 1988 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 453).

1989 Shetland Loch of Collaster, Sandness, ♀, 22nd January to 13th February (M. Mellor, D. Suddaby).

1989 Yorkshire, South See Derbyshire/South Yorkshire.

(North America) In Ireland, there are belated records of four juveniles at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 17th October 1987; a male at Inch Lake, Co. Donegal, on 28th May 1989; and a female at Vartry Reservoir, Co. Wicklow, from 8th January to 26th February 1989. In 1990, there were an adult male and four females at Carrigadroghid Reservoir, Co. Cork, from 10th February to 19th March, joined by a second adult male from 25th February; a male at The Gearagh, Co. Cork, from 5th April to 10th May and again on 22nd November (these possibly involving one of the Carrigadroghid birds); a female at Rostellan, Co. Cork, from 27th December to 2nd January 1991; a female at Blanket Nook, Co. Donegal, on 7th April; and an adult male at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 14th January.

One or two of these were sometimes rather tame, but associated with perfectly wild Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula* and Pochards *A. ferina*, which came for bread with the local Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* (as Ring-neckeds do in the USA), and could not logically be ruled out on that score.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 2, 1)

Nottinghamshire Lound, ♂, 22nd-23rd April, photographed (G. & P. Hobson *et al.*).

(Western North America) In Ireland, the returning male was present at a number of sites in Co. Armagh and Co. Down from 13th February until 14th April 1988; from 4th September 1988 to 3rd May 1989; from 13th December 1989 to 27th April 1990; and again from 7th December 1990 to at least February 1991.

After the first in 1987, this neat duck is becoming almost expected in these listings, but noticing one and then settling its identity remains a creditable achievement.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 149, 4)

Fife Tayport, ♂, intermittently to 31st March (N. Mann per D. E. Dickson), same as Ythan Estuary, Grampian, individual, 25th November 1989 to at least January (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454), same, 28th November (R. McCurley per D. E. Dickson), also in Grampian, below.

Grampian Ythan Estuary, ♂, first recorded 25th November 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454) to 25th February (S. A. Reeves *et al.*), presumed same, Donmouth, 8th March to 15th April (per K. D. Shaw), 23rd December to 1991 (I. Carter, A. Webb *et al.*), also in Fife, above. Additional ♂, last recorded 6th June 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454), 1st April to 10th June, photographed (B. J. Stewart *et al.*), presumed same, 19th July to 13th October (K. D. Shaw *et al.*); further ♂, 19th to at least 25th May, photographed (P. Larkin, I. Merrill *et al.*) (plate 256), probably one of Donmouth individuals below. Donmouth, two ♂♂, 2nd April (S. Holloway). Murcar, ♂, 6th June, 16th July (K. A. & K. D. Shaw), probably one of Donmouth individuals above; possibly same, Girdleness, 2nd-31st August (I. M. Phillips, S. A. Reeves *et al.*); ♂, 6th October to 5th November (M. G. Pennington, J. L. & M. Swallow *et al.*), probably other of Donmouth individuals above, probably same, Donmouth, 22nd November to 3rd December (G. M. Buchan).

Orkney Deerness, ♂, 27th to at least 29th May (Mrs Manson, E. R. Meek *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, 19th July to at least 13th December (P. V. Harvey *et al.*), presumed returning individual last recorded 5th November 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454).

1988 Highland Loch Fleet, ♂, 23rd March (C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*).

1989 Gwynedd Aber Dyssini, ♀, 13th August (S. N. G. Howell, J. P. Martin *et al.*), presumed same as Black Rock Sands, 28th January to 23rd September 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 454).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Returning and wandering individuals weave a difficult maze, through which careful observers manage to tread a moderately clear path, but there is inevitably some risk of duplication. Shetland observations show some tricky characters when it comes to ageing immature males.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra* (0, 6, 0)

An individual showing the characters of the North American and East Siberian race *M. n. americana* was recorded as follows:

1989 Dumfries & Galloway Loch Ryan, ♂, 16th February (P. M. Hill, J. M. Mottishaw).

(Northern Holarctic)

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata* (75, 274, 14)

Cleveland Hartlepool, ♂, 17th September (D. Cowton, M. N. Diswell).

Clwyd Llandulas, first-winter ♂, 2nd-15th December (R. D. Corran, C. Rowley *et al.*).

Dyfed Skokholm, ♂, 25th October (M. Betts).

Fife St Andrew's, two ♂♂, at least 16th, 19th, 25th February; first-winter ♂, at least 16th, 19th February; ♀, at least 16th, 19th February (G. M. Cresswell, J. S. Nadin, D. R. Stewart per D. E. Dickson *et al.*). Largo Bay, ♂♂, two, 25th March, four, 19th April, three, 21st, 26th; ♀♀, two, 19th April, one, 21st, 26th (J. S. Nadin, M. Ramage per D. E. Dickson). All adults presumed returning 1989 Fife and Lothian individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 455-456).

Grampian Murcar, first-winter ♂, 28th April to 3rd May (K. D. Shaw, M. G. Watson *et al.*); ♂, 2nd-4th June (K. D. Shaw *et al.*). Culbin Bar, ♂, 6th November to 16th December (A. Mee, D. M. Pullan, I. J. Rowlands). Burghead Bay, ♂, 13th-16th December (P. Coulson, R. J. Evans, D. M. Pullan). Latter two presumed returning 1989 Grampian and Highland individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 455).

Humberside Flamborough Head, ♂, 21st January (M. Newsome, B. Richards, P. J. Willoughby *et al.*).

Lothian Gosford Bay, ♂♂, 30th March to 14th May, two, 7th-8th April; first-winter ♂, 28th March to 14th May, probably same as Fife individual, February, above; ♀, 30th March to 14th May (A. Brown, P. R. Gordon *et al.*). Musselburgh, ♂, ♀, 5th-7th May, probably from Gosford Bay (P. Bould *et al.*). Fisherrow and Musselburgh, two ♂♂, ♀, 15th-28th December (A. Brown, J. O'Connor, J. Peters *et al.*). Prestonpans, two ♂♂, 23rd December, probably from Musselburgh (I. Gordon, D. J. Kelly). All adults presumed returning individuals (*Brit. Birds* 83: 455-456).

Northumberland Holy Island, ♂, 18th April (P. Howlett, F. M. Hunter). Seaton Sluice, ♂, 3rd-4th November (R. Fairhurst, K. W. Regan *et al.*).

Shetland Voe of Cullingsburgh, Bressay, ♂, 31st May to 7th June (D. Suddaby, D. G. & Mrs J. C. Wellings *et al.*), presumed same Noss Sound, 15th-28th August (A. F. Silcocks *et al.*).

Strathclyde Loch Indaal, Islay, ♂, 11th-13th May (Dr M. A. Ogilvie *et al.*).

Tayside Lunan Bay, ♂, 12th September (K. D. Shaw).

(North America) In Ireland, there are belated records of two males and one female at Mountcharles, Co. Donegal, on 5th November 1988 and a female at Broad Strand, Co. Cork, from 1989 until 25th March 1990. Other 1990 records involve an adult male at Bundoran, Co. Donegal, on 10th November; two males at Dundrum Bay, Co. Down, on 30th November, one remaining to 19th December; and a male at Tyrella beach, Co. Down, on 16th December.

Alan Brown suggests that the cautious treatment of all the 1990 Fife and Lothian adults, as returning individuals, reflects the minimum of ten adults in the Forth in 1989 and the known movements of those in that area. Both 1989 and 1990, however, saw new first-years arrive and the general picture is impossible to assess with certainty.

Records of this species after the end of 1990 will no longer be considered by the Committee, but will continue to be welcomed by the county recorders.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 131, 11)

Cornwall Buryas Bridge and other localities, west Cornwall and Land's End area, 2nd October to 17th November (Dr J. F. Ryan, M. P. Semmens *et al.*)(plate 239).

Devon Haldon Forest, 3rd May (R. Khan). Kenton, 16th November (D. Smallshire).

Dorset Yetminster, 26th March (B. J. Matthews, R. Newton).

Dyfed Skokholm, 20th May (M. Betts *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, 21st May, same, St Mary's, 21st May to 4th June, photographed (D. J. D. Hickman, J. Pellow *et al.*)(plates 240 & 241). St Mary's, 13th-14th July (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

Suffolk Benacre, 29th April (R. Walden). Wantisden, 6th May (M. C. Marsh, S. H. Piotrowski). Reydon and Easton Broad, 16th June (R. Walden).

Sussex, East Pett and Icklesham area, 7th July (D. P. Butterfield, I. D. Hunter, S. J. R. Rumsey *et al.*).

1988 Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 17th April (D. R. Bromwich, P. M. Troake).



239. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Buryas Bridge, Cornwall, October 1990 (David Tipling/*Avian Photos*)



240 & 241. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 1990 (left, Jack Levene; right, K. Pellow)

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australia) Early (Dorset), late (Cornwall and Devon) and average ones are all here, although numbers eased off a little after the 15 in 1989.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* (many, 18, 3)

Humberside Sammy's Point, Kilnsea, immature, 23rd October (B. Richards, R. Winspear *et al.*).

Kent St Margaret's, immature, 22nd October (A. J. Greenland, I. P. Hodgson, R. S. Kelly *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Wyberton, immature, 27th October (J. Wheldon), Frampton Marsh, 27th (P. A. Hyde per G. P. Catley).

Norfolk King's Lynn and Messingham Heath area, immature, 1st January to 1st February (H. Birkbeck, R. G. Dawson, J. B. Kemp *et al.*), same, Titchwell, 10th January (F. Strudwick), Haddiscoe Island and Halvergate Marshes area, 10th February to 15th March (K. & M. Robertson *et al.*), also in Suffolk. Hickling Broad area and northeast Norfolk, immature, 30th October to 14th December (D. Herrieven, J. R. Williamson *et al.*) (plate 242), presumed same as Humberside and Lincolnshire.

Suffolk Minsmere, 4th, 15th February, 12th March (I. Robinson *et al.*), Walberswick, 11th March (A. Gooding), same as Norfolk.

1985 Norfolk Titchwell and Brancaster, 16th-19th November (*Brit. Birds* 80: 531), Holme, 16th (per V. Eve).



242. Immature White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Hickling, Norfolk, November 1990 (*Jack Levene*)

(Southwest Greenland, Iceland and northern Eurasia) As observers' descriptions of individual birds can differ considerably, the Committee is not always confident that it can trace wanderers from county to county, but there are obvious possibilities here. Remember that, to some extent arbitrarily, Scottish reports 'don't count' because of likely confusion with the introduced stock now breeding north of the border.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (11, 11, 0)

1989 Kent Dover, ♂, dead, 20th April (R. Jacobs, C. Matthews per I. P. Hodgson).

(South Europe, West-central and East Asia and Northwest Africa) The first since 1987 and only the second since 1983, this individual was recorded in strange circumstances, being found dead in a building at Dover Castle. The date is surprisingly early (June and late autumn being more typical), but pre-1958 records include a February report.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 352, 17)

Cleveland Seal Sands, ♂, 10th May (S. D. Keightley *et al.*).

Cornwall Croft Pascoe, first-summer ♀, 27th-28th May, photographed (Dr J. F. Ryan, M. Southam, R. Wilkins *et al.*).

Derbyshire Unstone, ♀, 21st-27th May, photographed (M. A. Beevers, J. Bradbury, Miss J. E. Foulkes *et al.*)(plate 243), presumed same, Langley Mill Flashes, near Stoneyford, 16th-17th July (Dr P. Bagguley *et al.*).

- Dorset** East Stoke, Wareham, ♂, 7th-8th May (J. H. Blackburn, Dr J. F. Wright *et al.*).
- Essex** Bradwell-on-Sea, ♀, 27th May (G. Smith *et al.*). Sandon, Boreham and Little Baddow area, first-summer ♀, 19th June to 10th July (J. R. Ekins, J. Miller *et al.*). Hadleigh Downs, ♀, 12th August (C. Todd). See also Greater London/Essex.
- Greater London/Essex** Rainham Marsh, first-summer ♀, 31st May to 17th June, photographed (S. Connor *et al.*).
- Hampshire** Fernycrofts and Beaulieu Road, first-summer ♂, 30th May (B. & R. J. Small).
- Lincolnshire** Gibraltar Point, ♀, 4th-15th June, photographed (P. R. Davey, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).
- Norfolk** Cley, ♀, 20th May (D. C. Davies, M. A. Golley, S. Harris *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 23rd June (M. A. Golley).
- Northamptonshire** Kislingbury Gravel-pits, first-summer ♀, 6th May (D. A. Campbell, D. A. Christie).
- Shetland** Sand, ♂, 29th July (D. & Mrs R. K. Suddaby).
- Somerset** Wet Moor, ♀, 5th May (D. J. Chown, J. Porter), probably same, Westhay Moor, 13th-14th (A. R. Ashman).
- Sussex, East** Balsdean, ♀, 20th May (G. A. Sutton *et al.*).
- Wiltshire** Cotswold Water Park, first-summer ♂, 27th-29th May (M. & N. Bronless, R. Simpson *et al.*).
- Yorkshire, North** Bransdale Moor, ♀, 29th June (A. McDermid, A. D., Mrs J. & Miss L. Watson).
- 1989 Berkshire/Hampshire** Mortimer and Mortimer West End, ♂, 4th June (J. A. Lucas).
- 1989 Cambridgeshire** Little Paxton, first-summer ♂, at least 28th-30th May (R. A. Hume, L. Rose *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 82: plate 296).
- 1989 Hampshire** See 1989 Berkshire/Hampshire.
- 1989 Kent** Warehorne, ♀, 9th May (N. R. Davies); Brookland, first-summer ♀, 12th-14th May (N. R. Davies, M. Tickner *et al.*).
- 1989 Norfolk** Sheringham, ♀, 23rd May (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(East Europe to central Siberia) A sub-adult male at Lough Money, near Downpatrick, Co. Down, on 4th-8th June 1989 was only the fifth record for Ireland.

A typical spread. This species has a strange tendency to reappear at particular sites, such as Cotswold Water Park (after one in 1988 and two in 1989) and at Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire, where the 1989 male duplicated a 1987 occurrence by being discovered during an RSPB 'community birdwalk' before breakfast. There were noteworthy spring influxes in Denmark and France in 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 5).



243. Female Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*, Unstone, Derbyshire, May 1990 (J. Bradbury)

Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 93, 2)

Orkney Hoy, 24th May to at least 7th June (M. Barker, M. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Trondra and Tingwall, 16th-17th April (P. M. Ellis, J. D. & Mrs G. Okill *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Two big white ones—the easy sort.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 145, 23)

Devon Buckland Beacon and Haytor, Dartmoor, 25th to at least 27th March, photographed (R. J. Campey, J. & Mrs D. Llewellyn). Taw Estuary and Northam Burrows, 31st March to 3rd April (L. P. & S. D. Bruce, D. Churchill, F. A. Dobinson), possibly same as Dartmoor individual. West Charleton Marsh, 27th April (D. A. Cope), possibly same as above.

Dorset Burton Mere, at least 31st March to 1st April, photographed (M. Cade, R. Lambert, P. Seagrave).

Dyfed Penally, 19th to at least 27th March (J. Friese *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 294). Skokholm, 7th-8th May, photographed (M. Betts, Mrs E. Gynn *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell, first-winter, 5th November (N. Sills, R. Q. Skeen).

Scilly Tresco, 18th March to 16th April (R. Gleadle, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australia) In Ireland, a remarkable influx involved at least 15: six at Ballycotton on 17th March; two at the Douglas Estuary on 24th-25th March; three at Rostellan on 19th March, with two there on 25th-30th March; one at Bateman's Lake on 1st April and two at Garretstown on 7th-8th April (all Co. Cork); one at Aughrus Point, Co. Galway, on 17th-20th March; one at The Cull on 17th March to 8th April and one at Lady's Island Lake/Tacumshin on 7th-8th April (both Co. Wexford).

The November report from Norfolk is more unexpected than the early ones in spring. In the Netherlands, the year 1990 was the fourth best this century for breeding pairs (*Brit. Birds* 84: 5), with 22 breeding attempts.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (30, 46, 0)

1977 Leicestershire Rutland Water, 3rd July, photographed (T. P. Appleton, C. Park, T. Pridmore).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa) The photograph was presumably a long time at the chemist's, but it is better to record the occurrence late than not at all.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (3, 137, 8)

Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 29th October to at least 10th November (R. J. & Mrs B. G. Lowe *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Frampton-on-Severn, first-winter, 9th-20th April (A. Jayne *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 30th August to 2nd September, photographed (P. D. Bloor *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, juvenile, 11th-13th October (plate 75), same, St Martin's, 13th-17th (R. Boatsen, S. Langsbury, N. Pleass *et al.*).

Shetland Fetlar, adult or first-summer, 7th-14th May (I. Hawkins *et al.*). Foula, adult or first-summer, 1st-2nd September (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill *et al.*). Scatness, juvenile, 20th September (P. M. Ellis, M. Mellor).

Strathclyde Barassie, juvenile, 7th October (R. H. Hogg, P. P. McEwan, G. Mitchell).

1987 Cornwall Davidstow Airfield, adult, 17th-22nd October (*Brit. Birds* 81: 556), 23rd (H. R. Harrop *et al.*).

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia) There were no spring reports during 1958-68, but then 12 during 1969-88; the Gloucestershire and Fetlar, Shetland, records are therefore not altogether exceptional, but certainly unusual.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 9, 3)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, adult, 25th-27th July, photographed (G. Armstrong, E. J. King *et al.*).
Norfolk Cley, adult, 7th-8th August (S. J. M. Gantlett, M. A. Golley, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(North and Northeast Asia) In Ireland, there was one at Ring Marsh, Co. Wexford, on 1st-2nd July.

Alternate identification papers tend to come up with new ideas and dire warnings about the wisdom or ease of separating this species from the previous one. The late-summer peak may now be obscuring occasional late-summer Americans if people tend towards exaggerating the importance of date.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* (5, 27, 1)

Cambridgeshire See Norfolk.

Norfolk Welney, first-winter, 15th-30th October, photographed, also, intermittently, at nearby Cambridgeshire localities (Mrs L. Butler, J. B. Kemp, K. Warrington *et al.*).

(Southeast Russia and West-central Asia) A classic date for this visitor: unpredictable, but, when it does come, usually conforming to a definite late-autumn pattern.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* (0, 1, 0)

1989 Shetland Scatness and Pool of Virkie, adult, 15th September (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia, wintering in India, China, Australia) Many wader-watchers will be disappointed as another chance of potential glory has gone, with one more species added to the British List by someone else. The lucky few who saw this bird, though, will remember it until the lifetime guarantees on their *Carl Zeiss* binoculars finally run out. What a bird!

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 58, 2)

Avon Oldbury-on-Severn, adult, 12th-14th August (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Glamorgan, Mid Ogmore Estuary, juvenile, 6th-17th September (D. A. Hunter, C. Hurford *et al.*).

1989 Cornwall Camel Estuary, juvenile, 1st-4th September (G. Day, J. R. Smart *et al.*).

1989 Norfolk Cley, 14th-17th May (R. H. Chittenden, S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*).

(North America) More good birds, well studied and carefully reported, as this challenging species always demands.

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 298, 12)

Cleveland South Gare, adult, 13th July (M. A. Blick, I. Boustead).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 3rd-14th August (M. A. Golley, Ms B. Veevers, Ms P. F. Walton *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 14th September (I. Fisher, A. D. Mitchell *et al.*).

Scilly St Agnes, juvenile, 17th September, photographed (R. Fletcher, J. Wilson *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 24th-30th August (S. Gillings *et al.*).

Sussex, West Sidlesham, adult, 20th-26th August (A. S. Cook, D. J. Smith *et al.*)(plate 72).

Tyne & Wear Whitburn, adult, 15th-27th August (G. K. Gordon *et al.*)(plate 73).

Yorkshire, West Blackmoorfoot Reservoir, adult or first-summer, 19th-20th July (M. L. Denton, T. Duckworth, J. M. Pinder *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there was an adult at Tacumshin and Lady's Island Lake during 21st-28th July (both Co. Wexford); an adult at Ballycotton on 8th-13th August; a juvenile there on 14th-19th October; and a different juvenile at Lough Beg on 14th October (all Co. Cork).

(North Eurasia) In Ireland, there was an adult at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 5th May.

In the 1987 report, comment was made that this used to be a July/August bird, rather than the late-spring one of recent years. Here we may have a tendency towards a reversion to the older pattern—or was it just a single wandering individual involved in those two months?

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 21, 1)

Suffolk Trimley St Mary, adult, 7th-19th August, photographed (S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*)(plate 260).

(North America) A normal sort of date for this elegant Nearctic shorebird.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 65, 0)

1989 Humberside Sammy's Point, 28th-29th May (D. Dean, R. S. Smith, D. Sneap *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia) Numbers fluctuate quite a lot with this difficult (in every sense) wader, but it is rare that a year fails altogether, as did 1990.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 138, 10)

Cheshire Frodsham, adult, 8th-13th August (R. Gordon, W. S. Morton, Mrs A. J. Smith *et al.*)(plate 77).

Devon Braunton, at least 22nd October (L. P. & Mrs S. D. Bruce *et al.*).

Hereford & Worcester Westwood Great Pool, Droitwich, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 9th-20th October (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Norfolk Lynn Point, juvenile, 25th September to 16th October, photographed (J. B. Kemp *et al.*)(plate 261).

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 14th-15th September (C. Donald, S. Jackson, C. J. Wilkins *et al.*).

Strathclyde Sliderry, Arran, juvenile, 15th-17th September, photographed (J. Rhead *et al.*).

1989 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, since 6th December 1988 to 29th April (*Brit. Birds* 82: 526).

(North America and Northeast Siberia) In Ireland, there was a juvenile at Garretstown, Co. Cork, on 14th October; a juvenile at Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, on 14th October; a juvenile at North Slob, Co. Wexford, on 29th October to 13th November; and a first-winter at Belfast Harbour Estate, Co. Down, on 27th October to 31st December.

Of these, the inland, Hereford & Worcester record is the most unexpected by far.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (15, 26, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 10th-24th October, photographed, same, St Agnes, 15th, Tresco, 20th (I. Gardner *et al.*)(fig. 3, plate 259).

(North America) A 'typical' late-autumn island-hopper in Scilly, although even there it is a very rare bird.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 52, 7)

Cheshire Sandbach, 20th-21st May (A. M. Broome, D. Norbury, Mr Swallow *et al.*).

Devon Bantham, 5th May (D. J. Astins, J. F. Babbington, D. E. Balmer *et al.*).

Dyfed Pen-clacwydd, 19th May, photographed (B. Stewart *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, adult, 5th August (T. Strudwick).

Norfolk Lakenheath Flash, 16th May (G. Talbot, R. J. Walker). Burnham Norton, 22nd-24th May (V. Eve, D. Henshilwood, M. E. S. Rooney).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, adult, 30th June to 9th July (D. Howie, C. R. Janman *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe, West and East Asia) This is a slight surge above the usual two or three per year, although the pattern is more or less predictable.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 170, 4)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 15th June, photographed (P. R. Davey, P. Palmer, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Surrey Staines Reservoirs, adult, 21st August to 8th September (D. J. Morris *et al.*).

1989 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, juvenile, 30th September to 4th October (A. Harris, F. H. Honeychurch *et al.*), presumed same, 5th, 8th-9th November (M. K. Ahmad *et al.*), presumed same, Hayle, 5th October to 7th November, 10th-20th November (per S. M. Christophers).

(North America) In Ireland, there was one at Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 12th-20th October, and a juvenile at Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow, on 7th-12th November. Also, a late record for 1989 of a juvenile at Strand Lough, Co. Down, on 9th-14th September.

June is one of the least likely, although not quite unprecedented, months in which to find one of these elegant waders.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 21, 1)

Western Isles Malaclete, North Uist, juvenile, 20th October (T. J. Dix, W. D. Oldham).

(North America) Just the one, of course, but way out of the usual range in southern Britain and Ireland.

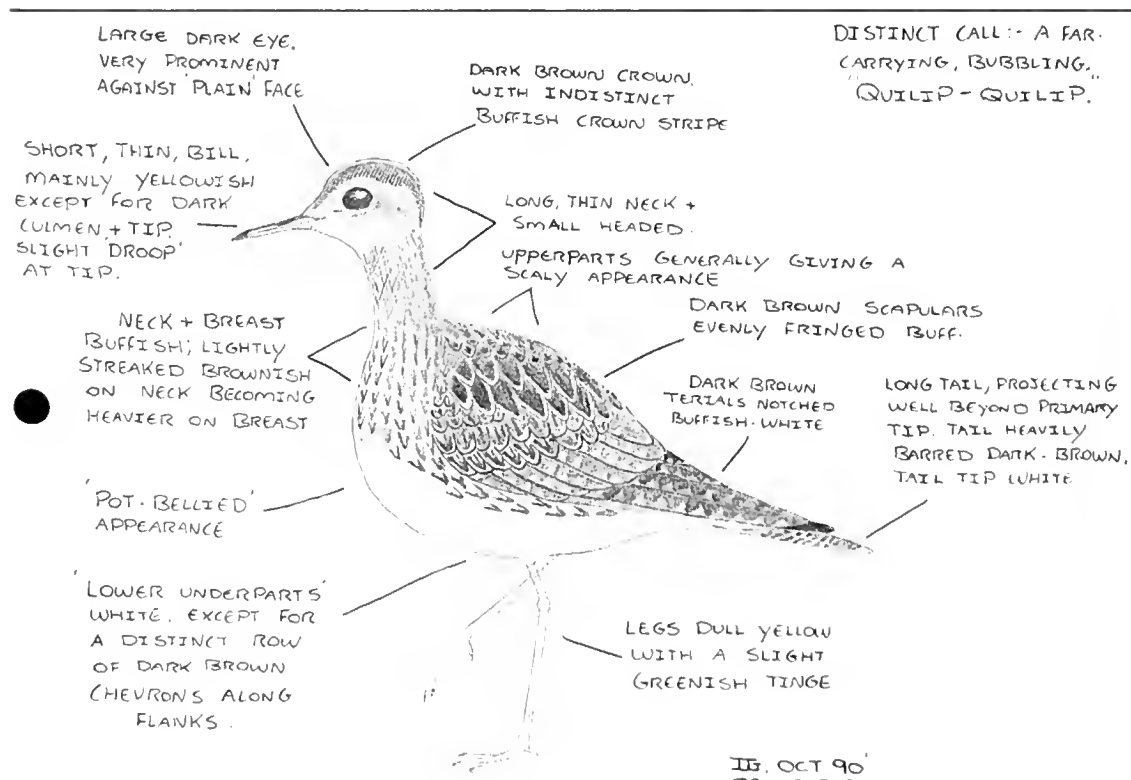


Fig. 3. First-winter Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (Ian Gardner)

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 32, 1)

Norfolk Breydon Water, 30th-31st May (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Northumberland North Blyth, adult, 22nd-29th November 1989, January to at least April 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 464), 11th January to 13th May, same, Castle Island, River Wansbeck, 9th May (per B. N. Rossiter), Shankhouse, near Cramlington, 17th (L. J. McDougall), Blyth Estuary, through September (A. M. Bankier *et al.* per B. N. Rossiter), through December to at least 5th January 1991 (H. Garrod *et al.* per B. N. Rossiter).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia) No-one would really have predicted a long-stayer, hopping from place to place, although wintering had happened before.

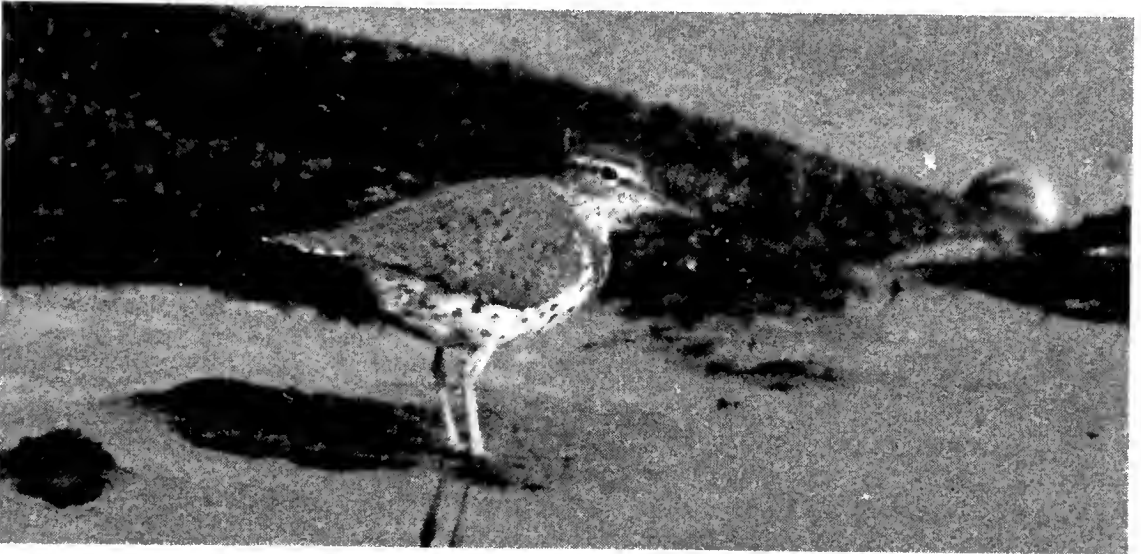
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 89, 3)

Cumbria See 1989 Cumbria.

Oxfordshire Farmoor Reservoir, adult, 3rd-4th July (N. J. Hallam, S. Heath, P. Townsend).

Yorkshire, West Elland Gravel-pits, adult, 31st May to 25th June (N. C. Dawtrey, A. Zabukas *et al.*).

1989 Cumbria Barrow-in-Furness, adult, 3rd November to 1st May 1990 (C. Raven *et al.*)(plate 244).



244. Adult Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in summer plumage, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, April 1990 (Mike K. Watson)

(North America) In Ireland, there was one on Mid Calii Island, Co. Cork, on 11th July.

Recent years, with wintering, then autumn appearances, and now summer ones, have shown an erratic, unpredictable 'pattern'.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 227, 4)

Cornwall Hayle, adult, 18th-28th August (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*)(plate 79).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, ♀, 7th-10th June, photographed (T. J. Davis *et al.*).

Lancashire Bank's Marsh, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 23rd September (P. Abrams, R. Lambert). Martin Mere, juvenile moulting to first-winter, 27th September to 1st October (G. R. Clarkson, D. J. Rigby, A. Shaw *et al.*), presumed same as Bank's Marsh.

1988 Shetland Norwick, Unst, 11th-19th October, photographed (*Brit. Birds* 82: 527), now considered juvenile moulting to first-winter.

1989 Gwynedd Glan Conwy, 4th October, believed present 22nd September to 31st October, late November to 8th December (P. G. Lansdown *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there was one at Duncrue Street Marsh, Co. Antrim, on 9th-11th September.

No particular resurgence for this wader that showed signs of a

considerable increase in the 1970s and 1980s, but which has since slumped somewhat.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 54, 1)

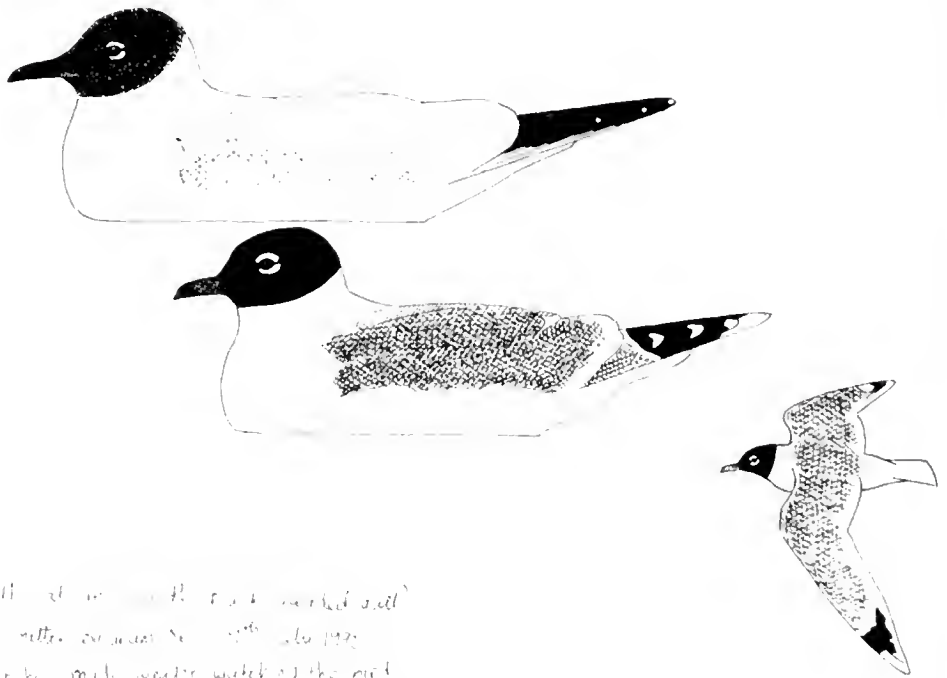
Cornwall Polperro, adult, 7th May (D. G. Morrison), presumed same, Mount's Bay, 8th-19th, photographed (M. Southam *et al.*).

(North America and Caribbean) With its jet-black hood and slaty back, this is a beautiful gull in summer plumage; surprisingly, the southwest of England is not a great place for the species, which has a rather odd, more northerly distribution across the middle of Britain.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 15, 3)

Shetland Lochs of Spiggie and Hillwell, second-winter/second-summer, 10th-11th May (P. M. Ellis, Dr C. F. Mackenzie *et al.*).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, adult, 9th-10th July (D. J. Chown, N. Grace *et al.*)(fig. 4).



Franklin's Gull at rest with Black-headed Gull
 and a Black-headed Gull at rest with Franklin's Gull
 Notes from Chown's field notes dated 9th July 1990

Fig. 4. Adult Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Sutton Bingham Reservoir, Somerset, July 1990, shown at rest, with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* for comparison, and in flight (D. J. Chown)

Sussex, East Brighton Marina, adult, 29th December (M. Kenefick, T. J. Wilson).

(North America) Previous records have been totally unpredictable, and these follow that random scatter in both date and place.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 52, 10)

Cheshire/Clwyd Inner Marsh Farm, adult, 2nd December (C. & D. Roberts).

Clwyd See Cheshire/Clwyd.

Cornwall Marazion, first-winter, 8th February (B. Cave), same or another, 15th (M. Southam), same or another, 7th-25th March (Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*)(plate 245); another first-winter, 11th-17th (S. M. Christophers, Dr J. F. Ryan, M. Southam *et al.*). Sennen, first-winter, 14th January (D. S. Flumm, M. R. Kenefick), presumed later at Marazion above. Gunwalloe, first-winter, 22nd February (A. R. Pay). Loe Pool, first-winter, 15th March (B. Cave). Swanpool, Falmouth, first-winter, 20th-21st March (B. Cave). Cornish records listed above probably refer to three individuals. St John's Lake and Millbrook, first-summer, 4th May,

presumed same, as second-winter, 22nd July to 9th September (R. W. Gould, S. C. Madge, K. Pellow *et al.*), also in Devon.

Devon Plymouth Hoe, 21st February, presumed same, Erme Estuary, 24th-28th (D. J. Astins, D. E. Balmer *et al.*), presumed same, Plym Estuary, 4th-7th April, 17th April to 8th May (M. K. Ahmad, P. A. St Pierre, R. W. White *et al.*), same as St John's Lake, Millbrook, Cornwall, individual.

Merseyside Seaforth, adults, 6th-17th April (S. A. Rothery *et al.*)(plate 246); 12th April to 1st May (J. & J. Oates *et al.*). New Brighton, adult, 22nd, 24th, 29th April (E. J. Abrahams, A. M. Broome, Dr J. E. Turner *et al.*), probably same as second Seaforth individual.

Warwickshire Kenilworth, first-winter, 10th-28th March (M. J. Mason *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plates 198, 202 & 203), same, Draycote Water, four dates, 18th-29th March (A. R. Dean *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there was a first-winter at Nimmo's Pier, Co. Galway, on 22nd April, and another at Lady's Island Lake, Co. Wexford, on 10th June.

With six in 1988 (but just two in 1989), there has been a slight sign of increase for a few years, but 1990 sees an entirely new scale of occurrence. At least one more remains under consideration, and there are several noteworthy reports listed here. The Warwickshire individual, found by a young birdwatcher on his local park lake and then, equally creditably, looked for and discovered at a huge reservoir roost, was perhaps the most unusual.



245. First-winter Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, Marazion, Cornwall, March 1990 (Mike K. Watson)

246. Adult Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia*, Seaforth, Merseyside, April 1990 (Steve Young)



Iceland Gull *Larus glaucooides* (0, 9, 1)

(Baffin Island and northwest Ungava Peninsula, Canada) In Ireland, adults of the North American race *L. g. kumlieni* have been accepted for Galway dump, Co. Galway, on 12th January to 18th February 1989, and Ballycotton, Co. Cork, on 25th February 1990.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 33, 2)

Gloucestershire Frampton Sands, first-winter, 30th December to 1st January 1991 (G. R. & Mrs M. Avery, R. T. Philips, N. R. Smart).

Shetland Lerwick Harbour, first-winter, 10th-20th December (G. Petrie *et al.*).

(Arctic) Lerwick we can take, but the Severn estuary? See how it cleverly stayed to get onto two year-lists.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (52, 185, 1)

1968 Lothian Aberlady, 22nd March (*Brit. Birds* 62: 473), now not considered acceptable.

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony Denmark) In Ireland, there was one at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, on 30th June to 2nd July.

A somewhat negative report. It seems this really *is* a very rare bird, after all.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 170, 6)

Greater Manchester Sale Water Park, 16th July (J. Baldwin, I. & R. McGeorge, K. Parker *et al.*)

Kent Dungeness, 15th July (J. R. Hopkins, A. D. Hughes, D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley, 22nd July (M. A. Golley, R. G. Millington).

Strathclyde Martnaham and Kerse Lochs and Doonfoot, 4th-6th August (D. Given, B. Orr, J. & J. Woods *et al.*).

Sussex, East Hastings, 31st March (A. S. & M. R. Grace).

Sussex, West Weirwood Reservoir, 19th August (S. B. Rix).

1988 Norfolk Holme, 26th May (W. Rutherford).

(Almost cosmopolitan, everywhere local) There are one or two others still being considered, but this is already a reasonable year, following the familiar pattern.

Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* (0, 4, 0)

Cleveland Hartlepool, 10th June (C. Bielby, A. McLee), Reclamation Pond, 9th-11th July (J. B. Dunnitt *et al.*), Seaton Snook, 12th, 13th July, photographed (M. A. Blick *et al.*), all presumed same as Northumberland.

Northumberland Farne Islands, ♀, 30th April to 19th August, presumed returning 1989 individual (*Brit. Birds* 83: 468), paired with Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, one young hatched, not reared to fledging stage (A. P. Cotton, D. C. Richardson *et al.*).

(North and East Africa, east to Australia) A few years ago, one of these would have had everyone heading for the coast overnight, but now it has become a fixture in this annual report, although the numbers in brackets have not moved on.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 17, 1)

Cornwall Par, 9th October (R. Lane *et al.*).

(North America) In Ireland, there were two in Wexford Harbour, Co. Wexford, on 18th October 1987, and both birds were present from 21st January into May 1988 (this corrects previous statements, *Brit. Birds* 81: 567; 83: 468).

One lonely newcomer, almost as usual; another species now treated annually but not long ago quite unexpected.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* (3, 9, 1)

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 18th October (R. H. Appleby).

(Caribbean, West Africa, Red Sea, Indian and Pacific Oceans) There were November records in 1931 and 1953 and October dates in 1958 and 1982, but October still seems late, somehow, for this long-distance wanderer.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* (16, 9, 0)

1966 Norfolk Scolt Head Island, 14th-19th June, 11th July (*Brit. Birds* 60: 332), now considered probably same as Suffolk individual below.

1966 Suffolk Minsmere, 11th June (*Brit. Birds* 60: 332), see 1966 Norfolk above.

(Subtropical and Tropical Oceans) The 1966 reports were long considered by some people to relate to one individual and this clarifies the position for the record.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 516, 6)

Avon Aust, 3rd May (P. J. Chadwick), also in Somerset.

Cornwall Landulph, 21st April (R. M. Belringer).

Essex West Thurrock, juvenile, 27th August to 6th September (T. W. Broom, M. K. Dennis, S. R. Pickering *et al.*), same, Tilbury, 30th-31st August (A. J. Kane, C. Rose *et al.*).

Orkney North Loch, Sanday, 24th May (C. Freeborn).

Somerset Burnham-on-Sea, 2nd May (B. J. Hill), also in Avon.

1980 Norfolk Titchwell, juvenile, 20th to at least 31st October (*Brit. Birds* 74: 477), same, Holme, discontinuously, 17th October to 3rd November (per V. Eve).

1987 Leicestershire Rutland Water, 9th June (M. Lester, D. J. Odell, M. J. Palmer *et al.*).

(Southwest Europe, West and East Asia) In Ireland, there was a juvenile at Charleville Lagoons, Co. Cork/Co. Limerick, on 28th October, and an adult at Tacumshin, Lady's Island Lake and Ring Marsh, Co. Wexford, on 21st-24th July.

Another poor year, with an especially unproductive autumn, as this species makes a very strong bid to retain its place on the list of species considered by this Committee. At one time, it risked being knocked off through being too common, but late 1960s and late 1970s peaks were both followed by marked recessions.

Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* (many, 6, 1)

Shetland Hillwell and Quendale area, ♂, 19th May to 4th June, Spiggie, 22nd, photographed (M. Heubeck, M. Mellor, K. Osborn, D. Suddaby *et al.*) (plate 262).

(Central Asia east to Manchuria and China) The first of several major rarities to occur during a magical purple patch in late May/early June, it was subsequently overshadowed by such astonishing vagrants as Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus* and Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor* (both still under review).

The majority of the nineteenth-century irruptions occurred during May and the last British record was in May 1975 (on the Isle of May!).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 24, 2)

Devon Lundy, age uncertain, 24th February, photographed (C. Bray, M. Gade, A. Gibson *et al.*).

Sussex, West Shoreham Airport, first-summer, 4th April to 1st May, photographed (R. J. Fairbank, R. A. Ives, D. I. Smith *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 297).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa) The Lundy individual is the earliest-ever record for Britain and Ireland.

Black-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* (4, 8, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 10th October, dead 11th (L. Amery *et al.*).

(North America) Five of the nine since 1958 have been found dead or dying. This one survived just long enough to find its way onto many life-lists.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 31, 1)

Bedfordshire Sandy, recently dead, 6th December (M. Kemp, W. E. Oddie, I. Pruden *et al.*), skin retained by M. Kemp.

(North America) An odd record in several ways, this is only the second in December since 1958 and the first to turn up so far inland.

Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 17, 1)

Dorset Caught aboard fishing vessel about 2.4 km off Portland Bill, taken to Portland Bird Observatory, ringed and released, 20th March (M. Cade, M. Rogers *et al.*)(plate 265).

(South Europe, Russia, West Asia and Northwest Africa) Recovered sufficiently close inshore to avoid becoming a 'Category E' record, this is the earliest ever.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 95, 3)

Humberside Thornton Curtis, first-winter ♂, 13th December, photographed (D. A. Robinson *et al.*), also in Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire Wainfleet and Froskney area, 24th December to 1991 (J. Atkinson, P. R. Davey, M. Worth *et al.*), same as Humberside.

Shetland Fetlar and Unst, two ♀♀, from 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 470) through most of year (per D. Suddaby). Fair Isle, ♂, 12th-18th May (P. V. Harvey, S. Thomson Jnr). Scatness and Sumburgh area, first-winter ♂, 22nd September (P. J. Heath, H. Loates *et al.*), presumed same, Virkie, 25th November to end of year (J. McKee *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) The Lincolnshire/Humberside individual was the first to be recorded in England since 1981 and consequently attracted much attention from the media as well as from birders.

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* (1, 1, 0)

1984 Dorset Portland, 10th June (G. Walbridge).

(Africa and Southwest Asia) Flushed several times at close range and in daylight; the good fortune of the above observer will be widely envied. The only previous record was also in June: in Nottinghamshire in 1883.

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 0, 0)

(Asia from Kamchatka west to northern India) The above statistics correct those published previously (*Brit. Birds* 76: 503-504); since the individual concerned was caught on an offshore gas platform, and reached land only with human assistance, this constitutes a 'Category E' record and so should not be counted in the statistics.

Alpine Swift *Apus melba* (150, 282, 7)

Cornwall The Lizard, 29th April (Dr J. F. Ryan).

- Dorset** Rope Lake Head, 26th March (S. J. Morrison, P. Williams *et al.*).
Hertfordshire Hilfield Park, 30th April (G. D. Goater), same, Watford, 30th (R. L. Harris).
Kent Sandwich Bay and Kingsdown, 26th April (P. W. J. Findley, W. E. Fletcher, R. A. Morton).
Lancashire River Brock, near Preston, 4th June (M. Bennett).
Lincolnshire Stamford, 20th-21st March (J. & N. Murray, P. J. Precey).
Sussex, East Crumbles, Eastbourne, 25th March (D., J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper *et al.*).
1989 Highland Thurso, 20th-21st July (D. Omand), possibly same as Boat of Garten, 24th (*Brit. Birds* 83: 470).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa) Another three March records, following those in 1988, but not unexpected in this remarkably early spring.

Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* (154, 312, 12)

- Devon** Hartland Point, 14th July (M. Darlaston, A. Rennells).
Essex Great Wakering, 19th July (A. R. Perkins).
Humberside Spurn, 23rd May (T. Collins, B. R. Spence *et al.*), probably same, 29th (J. Cudworth).
Merseyside Red Rocks, at least 25th April (Dr J. E. & M. G. Turner).
Scilly St Mary's, 22nd May (C. I. Bushell *et al.*); presumed another, 27th (P. Pearson, A. S. Rhodes *et al.*). Bryher and Tresco, adult, 23rd October to 9th November (D. R. Collins, H. Taffs, P. Trodd *et al.*), same, St Mary's, 31st October, 2nd November, St Agnes, 24th October (per W. H. Wagstaff).
Shetland Vidlin, two, 9th-21st May (D. Coutts, K. Pearson, D. Suddaby *et al.*).
Suffolk Aldeburgh, 26th May (J. A. Davies).
Sussex, East Pett Level and Icklesham, 20th May (C. H. Dean, I. D. Hunter).
1986 Surrey Milford, 11th May (Dr E. F. J. Garcia).
1988 Norfolk North coast localities, juvenile, 3rd-4th September (*Brit. Birds* 82: 535), Holme, 4th (per V. Eve).
1989 Shetland Kergord, 24th May (*Brit. Birds* 83: 472), observers were P. R. Flint *et al.*; another, Scalloway, 21st-22nd July (*Brit. Birds* 83: 472), observers were L. Dalziel *et al.*

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Northwest Africa) In Ireland, there was one at Murrinstown, Co. Wexford, on 26th May.

The late stay of the adult in Scilly recalls that of the juvenile there in 1985, though the 1990 individual stayed eight days longer, to become the second-latest ever. From the start of 1991, records of this species will no longer be considered by the Committee and should be submitted to the relevant county recorders.

Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 80, 2)

- Bedfordshire** Near Arlesey, 3rd May (N. Blake).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa) In Ireland, one at Duncormack, Co. Wexford, on 2nd July.

The Bedfordshire individual is the earliest since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (40, 311, 12)

- Cornwall** Predannack, 6th May, photographed (A. R. Pay *et al.*). Treen, 23rd October (D. J. Rigby *et al.*), possibly same, St Just, 24th-25th (Dr J. F. Ryan, M. Southam *et al.*).
Norfolk Blakeney Point, 7th-10th May (M. I. Eldridge, M. Kavanagh, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, 3rd October (P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray *et al.*); 5th-12th October (A. E. Duncan, M. Gray).
Scilly St Agnes, 14th October (E. Jones, C. J. McNery, C. R. Wills *et al.*). St Mary's, 21st October (P. I. Holt).

Shetland Fair Isle, 9th May (C. Donald, R. Proctor); 27th May to 6th June (R. J. Arnfield, T. M. Baldwin, C. Donald *et al.*). Whalsay, 1st October (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett *et al.*).
1983 Shetland Fair Isle, 2nd-5th October (J. M. Dickson, D. Suddaby, T. J. Toohig *et al.*).

(South Eurasia and North Africa) In Ireland, there was one at Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, on 19th-21st May.

Another unremarkable year for this species.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 182, 28)

Cornwall St Erth, 8th April (T. Polglase, P. A. & Mrs J. Rutter *et al.*). The Lizard, 10th April (D. & Mrs R. Powell), presumed same, Kynance Cove, 10th (R. A. Ford), possibly same as St Erth individual.

Devon Coryton, 2nd-3rd April (J. Hale).

Dorset Swanage, 11th-12th November (G. & J. Barnes, S. J. Morrison).

Dyfed Skokholm, 30th April (H. Morgan).

Essex Gunner's Park, Shoeburyness, 11th May (J. Miller, J. Saward, R. Young). Hadleigh, 2nd October (A. R. Mead). Layer-de-la-Haye, 11th-17th November (J. H. Smith, A. P. Thompson *et al.*).

Highland St John's Loch, Caithness, 18th May (J. Smith *et al.*).

Humberside Spurn, 5th May (N. A. Bell, C. P. Musgrave).

Kent Stodmarsh, 14th-22nd April, photographed (D. Sydall, R. R. Thompson *et al.*). Dungeness, two, 22nd April (S. J. Colsell, A. Stroud *et al.*); 4th May (R. Gomes, D. Walker *et al.*). Thanet, 28th April (K. D. Lord).

Lothian Tynninghame, two, 27th October (D. Brown, D. Garratt, T. Piggott *et al.*).

Norfolk Cromer, 4th May (S. C. Votier). Cley, 11th May (R. Aberdein, S. J. M. Gantlett). Overstrand, 25th October (B. J. Murphy).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 18th October (M. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Pool of Virkie and Sumburgh, 2nd-4th May (K. Osborn, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, 13th-14th April (D. R. Newton *et al.*), same, Walberswick, 13th (C. S. Waller *et al.*). Reydon, 8th May (D. R. Eaton).

Sussex, West Selsey Bill, 29th April (C. R. Janman, O. Laugharne).

(South and East Eurasia and Africa) In Ireland, there was one at Firkeel, Co. Cork, on 13th October, and two juveniles at Newcastle, Co. Down, during 9th-11th November.

The second-best annual total, notably boosted by the nine in April.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 71, 42)

Cleveland Boulby Cliffs, 20th October (M. A. Blick, I. Boustead).

Dorset Portland, two, 14th October (M. Cade, R. Newton, E. T. Welland *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 18th-20th October (G. P. Catley *et al.*). Skegness, trapped, 20th October, photographed (A. G. Ball, N. Vessey).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 18th October (G. M. Cresswell, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

Northumberland Low Hauxley, trapped, died, 18th October, photographed (S. W. Anderson, A. M. Bankier, M. Davison). Newbiggin, 21st-23rd October (A. H. Banks, P. R. Jones, J. G. Steele *et al.*)(plate 104, fig. 5).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 29th September to 5th October, trapped 29th (A. E. Duncan, M. Gray, Dr K. F. Woodbridge *et al.*). Stronsay, 1st October (J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway).

Scilly Tresco, 13th October (L. Lock *et al.*). St Mary's, 15th October (R. A. Hargreaves, D. Nurney); two, 24th (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*); presumed another, 26th (B. D. Gee); 2nd-5th November (S. Nichols *et al.*). St Agnes, 19th October (J. D. Geeson, P. J. Milford); presumed another, 24th-25th (D. Bradshaw, B. Wooton *et al.*). St Martin's, at least 1st-2nd November (W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd September to 1st October (T. G. Francis, D. Page *et al.*); 25th-28th September (H. R. Harrop, R. Proctor, J. J. Sweeney *et al.*); 26th September to 1st October (P. V. Harvey, D. Page *et al.*); 1st-2nd (D. Suddaby *et al.*); 16th (I. Fisher *et al.*); 18th (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 20th (I. Fisher *et al.*); 24th-28th (K. Bowey, I. Fisher, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 24th-31st (K. Bowey, I. Fisher, P. V. Harvey). Sumburgh, 26th-30th September (J. M. Dickson *et al.*); 27th October (Dr C. F. & R. Mackenzie). Whalsay, 3rd-4th October (D. Suddaby *et al.*);

29th (J. L. Irvine). Kergord, 3rd-7th October, two, 3rd-4th, one trapped 4th (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett, A. F. Silcocks *et al.*). Vidlin, two, 3rd-5th October (S. J. Huggins *et al.*). Geosetter, 6th October (P. J. Heath, D. Suddaby).

Yorkshire, North Kettlewell Point, 21st October (T. J. Barker, R. S. Slack, A. Wilson). Whitby, 21st (T. J. Barker, R. S. Slack, A. Wilson).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia) Ireland received its second, third and fourth records during 1990: at Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 14th October, and on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 14th October, with another there on 29th October.

This unexpected avalanche is twice as many as in any previous year and more than half the previous British and Irish total; it is all the more remarkable when one considers that Sweden, for instance, managed only its third-ever record around this time.

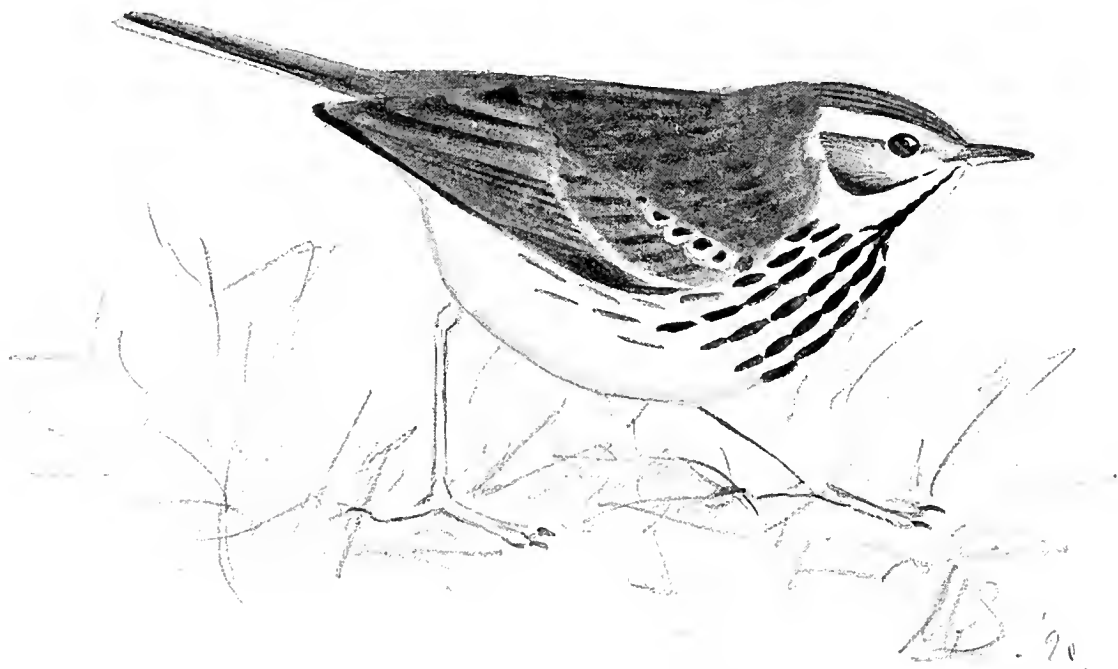


Fig. 5. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Newbiggin, Northumberland, October 1990 (J. G. Steele)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (13, 19, 1)

Shetland Scalloway, 25th September (I. Sandison, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia, Central and East Asia) Somewhat surprisingly, this is only the second Shetland record away from Fair Isle. Several other 1990 records, away from Shetland, are still in circulation.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 191, 8)

Cornwall Treen, 28th October (P. H. Aley, P. J. Bawden, S. J. Cox).

Devon Chelson Meadow, Plymouth, 13th-14th October (R. W. White *et al.*).

Merseyside Red Rocks, 16th-18th September (Dr J. E. & M. G. Turner, E. Williams).

Scilly St Mary's, 16th-20th October, photographed (G. K. Gordon, P. Higson *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 29th May (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 2nd October (P. Bristow, H. R. Harrop, J. P. Hunt *et al.*).

1989 Norfolk Cley, 2nd-3rd May (S. J. M. Gantlett, R. G. Millington *et al.*).

(Arctic Eurasia) In Ireland, there was one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 13th October, and one on Fota Island, Co. Cork, on 2nd November. Also, an additional Irish record concerns one at Hook Head, Co. Wexford, on 5th-6th November 1988.

As with the last species, several other claims for 1990 are still to be processed.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 48, 3)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 27th-30th August (C. Donald, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); first-winter, 11th-13th September (P. V. Harvey, S. C. Votier *et al.*). Quendale, first-winter, 29th-30th September (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett *et al.*).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia) The Quendale individual is the fourth Shetland record away from Fair Isle. Grey-and-white forms of Yellow Wagtail *M. flava*, some of them with harsh calls resembling Citrine (and perhaps involving birds of an eastern race), continue to be a major hurdle for claims of this species.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 6, 2)

Cornwall Rough Tor, 4th November (B. & Mrs A. Boothroyd).

Wight, Isle of The Needles, 27th May to 6th June, photographed (R. P. Attrill, S. R. Colenutt, D. J. & M. Hunnybun *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 296).

(Mountains in Iberia and Northwest Africa, the Alps east to Japan) The Isle of Wight individual was the first British record for 12 years, so caused a major pilgrimage across the Solent. The Cornish record is only the second in autumn since 1958.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 89, 2)

Fife Isle of May, first-summer, 19th-20th May, trapped 19th, photographed (I. English *et al.*).

1989 Cleveland Hartlepool, 23rd May (M. J. Gee, G. Joynt *et al.*).

(Scandinavia, East Europe and West Asia) The second record for Ireland occurred on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 26th October—at the same site and almost as late as the first Irish record there in 1989; these are far and away the latest records for Britain and Ireland.

May is the usual month.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* (0, 1, 1)

Dyfed Skokholm, ♀, 27th-30th May (M. Betts, J. W. Donovan, D. A. Thelwell *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 295).

(Turkey to Iran) At most other times, a second record for Britain and Ireland would be major news, but this one was somewhat overshadowed by several other major rarities that hit the headlines around this time.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (1, 124, 10)

Individuals showing the characters of one or other of the eastern races *S. t. maura* or *stejnegeri* were recorded as follows:

Cornwall Kenidjack, ♂, 18th-19th October (Dr J. F. Ryan *et al.*).

Grampian Cruden Bay, ♀ or immature, 21st October (S. Cable, M. G. Pennington *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Skegness, ♀ or immature, 21st-25th October, photographed (K. Durose *et al.*); another, 23rd-25th (K. Atkin *et al.*).

Northumberland St Mary's Island, ♀ or immature, 18th October (G. P. Bull, M. P. Frankis, A. S. Jack).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-summer ♂, 28th-30th April, trapped 28th (C. Donald, P. V. Harvey, R. Proctor); first-winter ♂, 26th-28th September (S. J. M. Gantlett *et al.*). Scatness, ♀ or immature, 18th-21st October (M. Mellor *et al.*).

Tayside Carnoustie, ♀ or immature, 22nd October (M. S. Scott).

(White Sea, eastwards across Siberia, East Caucasus and Northern

Iran) In Ireland, there was one at Galley Head, Co. Cork, on 20th October.

A welcome return to form by this pallid wanderer.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 4, 1)

Humberside Kilnsea, first-winter, 21st-23rd October (J. Grist, J. McLoughlin *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe east to Mongolia) The third to be found in October. The well-watched individual on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, during October is still under consideration.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 17, 2)

Norfolk Holme, first-winter ♂, 19th-21st October, video-taped (R. L. K. & R. Jolliffe *et al.*).

Sussex, East Newhaven, ♂, 7th-9th July (C. J. Fox, C. R. Janman, Dr A. B. Watson *et al.*)(plates 98 & 99).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia) The one in Norfolk was discovered on a typical date and place, but the Sussex individual is the first July record for Britain and Ireland; one cannot help wondering by what route it arrived here and where it went after such an apparently short stay.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 31, 2)

Western Isles Howmore, South Uist, ♂, 23rd April (T. J. Dix, R. J. & Mrs A. Evans).

Wight, Isle of Brighstone, ♂, 21st May (J. C. Gloyne, D. J. & M. Hunnybun, I. Ridett *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Northwest and Southwest Africa) This species gets no commoner here, even though its close congener Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* shows a steady increase in the number of observations.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 22, 3)

Suffolk Easton Bavents, age/sex uncertain, 29th November to 14th December, probably since 27th, photographed (D. Eaton *et al.*)(plates 181 & 182).

1989 Greater London Barn Elms Reservoirs, first-summer ♂, 13th-14th April, photographed (B. Aris *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 82: plate 290).

(North Africa, Northwest Arabia, east to Mongolia) The first and second records for Ireland involved a first-summer male at Carnsore Point, Co. Wexford, during 11th-21st March and an adult male at Red Strand near Galley Head, Co. Cork, during 27th October to 2nd November (*Brit. Birds* 84: plate 101).

The year 1990 thus becomes the second-best-ever after 1989, which leads with five.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (29, 12, 2)

Orkney Stronsay, 3rd October, photographed (J. Cooper, J. F. & Mrs S. M. Holloway *et al.*)(fig. 6).

Shetland Sumburgh, 22nd September, photographed (L. Dalziel, I. Sandison, D. Suddaby *et al.*)(plate 247).

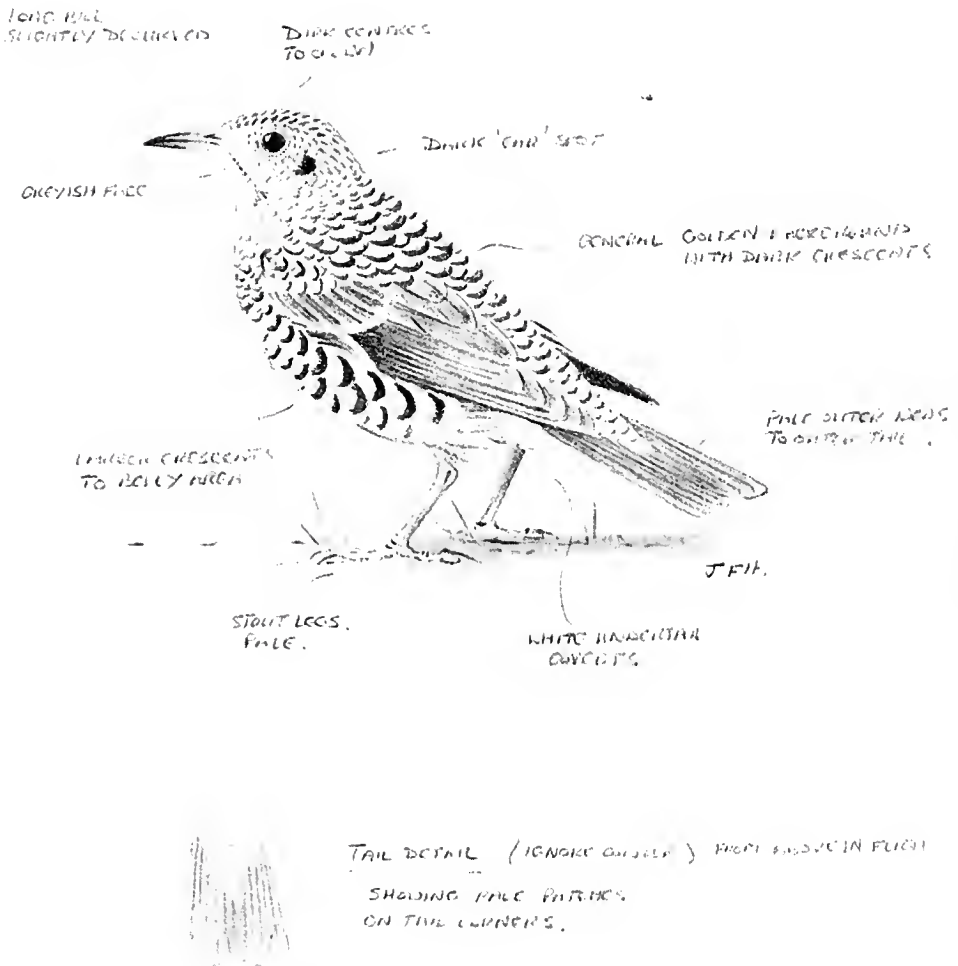


Fig. 6. White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Stronsay, Orkney, October 1990 (J. F. Holloway)



247. The one that nearly got away: White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, Sumburgh, Shetland, September 1990 (L. Dalziel)

(Northern and Central Siberia) Two typically short stays by this tantalising thrush. This is the first time since 1958 that more than one has occurred in any year, which could provide a ray of hope for those who tried and failed to see this species in 1990. The fact remains, however, that this is one rarity that appears to be getting rarer in real terms.

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina* (0, 1, 0)

1987 Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 7th October (P. A. Dukes, R. McCann *et al.*).

(North America) The last of the not-predominantly-Mexican North American thrush species to be recorded here, this one was seen by only a comparatively few of the Scilly regulars. The severe weather at the time—which elsewhere in the country produced an unprecedented influx of Sabine's Gulls *Larus sabini*—meant that no bribes could persuade the St Mary's boatmen to venture across the narrow strait to St Agnes (a road-bridge seems the only answer).

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 12, 4)

Scilly St Mary's, 10th-24th October, photographed (S. J. Broyd *et al.*)(plate 264), another 13th-17th, 23rd (P. T. Bell, R. G. Mielcareck *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 30th September to 6th October (H. R. Harrop, J. P. Hunt *et al.*)(plate 267).

(North America) In Ireland, there was one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 8th October.

The sixth and seventh records for Scilly, but the first for Fair Isle.

Gray-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (1, 33, 4)

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, found dead, 14th October (B. Hughes, G. Richards *et al.*), skin retained by Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust.

Scilly St Agnes, 7th-8th October, photographed (P. D. Hyde *et al.*). St Mary's, 19th-25th October (S. M. Whitehouse *et al.*).

(North America and Eastern Siberia) In Ireland, there was one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 6th-7th October. All records have been in October apart from one, found dying, in Morayshire on 26th November 1965.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* (0, 11, 1)

Scilly Tresco, ♀ or first-winter ♂, 21st October (S. J. Broyd *et al.*).

(Siberia and eastern Asia to Japan) The fifth record for Scilly, four of which have been in October; the other Scilly record was on 5th December 1964. Most of the British records have been one-day jobs.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* (1, 7, 1)

Greater London Woodford Green, ♂, showing characters of nominate race, 19th January to 9th March (K. Murray, P. Vines *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 195; 84: plate 263).

(Northern and Central Siberia) The first British and Irish record of this attractive race did in fact attract huge numbers of admirers during its long stay.

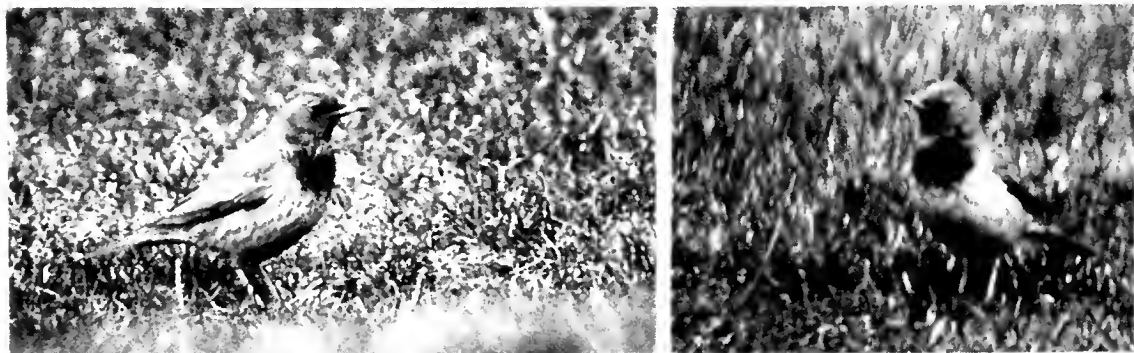
Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (3, 17, 2)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 26th-28th September, trapped 26th, photographed (A. D. Mitchell *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Kellington, ♂, probably first-winter, 28th January to 4th February, photographed (Mrs J. Harrison *et al.*)(plates 248 & 249).

(Central Asia) Yorkshire gardens appear to have a special attraction for

this species—this is the third such record since 1986 and they have all been in January. The North Ronaldsay record is the first for Orkney (whereas Shetland has had eight).



248 & 249. Male Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis*, probably first-winter, Kellington, North Yorkshire, February 1990 (per J. Harrison)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (3, 9, 1)

(Western Siberia and Central Asia to Japan) None in Britain. In Ireland, there was one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 8th October. The only previous Irish record was at Rockabill Lighthouse, Co. Dublin, on 28th September 1908.

FACING PAGE

250. Top left, Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Cot Valley, Cornwall, September 1990 (Mike K. Watson)
251. Top centre, Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Isle of Grain, Kent, August 1990 (David Tipling)
252. Top right, Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Dungeness, Kent, November 1990 (Jack Levene)
253. Centre, Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*, Kenidjack Valley, St Just, Cornwall, September 1990 (Ren Hathway). THIS RECORD IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE BOU RECORDS COMMITTEE.
254. Bottom left, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (David Cottridge/Avian Photos)
255. Bottom right, Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (David Cottridge/Avian Photos)

CENTRE SPREAD, LEFT-HAND PAGE

256. Top, male King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Ythan Estuary, Grampian, May 1990 (K. B. Wills)
257. Centre, male Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, South Shields, Tyne & Wear, March 1990 (Mike K. Watson)
258. Bottom, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, St Mary's, Scilly, March 1990 (R. J. Watts)

CENTRE SPREAD, RIGHT-HAND PAGE

259. Top left, first-winter Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (Jack Levene)
260. Top right, adult Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Trimley Marsh, Suffolk, August 1990 (Jack Levene)
261. Centre, juvenile Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Lynn Point, Norfolk, October 1990 (G. P. Catley)
262. Bottom, male Pallas's Sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus*, Quendale, Shetland, May/June 1990 (L. Dalziel)





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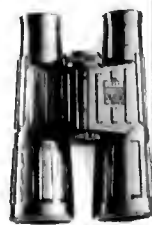
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Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 38, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd September (C. Donald, I. J. Hawkins, T. Prescott *et al.*); first-winter, trapped, 30th September (P. V. Harvey, R. B. & Mrs L. H. Hastings *et al.*)(plate 269).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to North Japan) During the 1970s there were many who predicted that this species would be more widely discovered in the future. If so many had appeared on Fair Isle, they argued, then there must be plenty passing elsewhere through Britain and, surely, the expanding corps of birders would start digging them out? Well, there have subsequently been two fished out of nets (in Hampshire and in Tyne & Wear) and also a single on the Isle of May. Fair Isle, meanwhile, maintains its virtual monopoly on this species.



269. First-winter Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, Fair Isle, Shetland, 30th September 1990 (Alan Roberts)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 8, 0)

1989 Orkney North Ronaldsay, trapped 4th October (A. E. Duncan, J. Vaughan *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, across Asia to Lake Baykal) The six records during the 1980s were all of trapped individuals, and the last accepted sight record was in 1975. Any finder of this species, without a net, will need to submit meticulous field notes.

FACING PAGE

263. Top left, Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni* of nominate race, Chingford, Greater London, February 1990 (Jack Levene)

264. Top right, Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (Jack Levene)

265. Centre left, Scops Owl *Otus scops*, caught on fishing vessel 2 km off Portland Bill, Dorset, March 1990 (Martin Cade)

266. Centre right, Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*, St Mary's, Scilly, June 1990 (Jack Levene). THIS RECORD IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE BOU RECORDS COMMITTEE.

267. Bottom left, Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1990 (David Tipling)

268. Bottom right, Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Sumburgh, Shetland, May 1990 (Jack Levene)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 133, 5)

Humberside Sammy's Point, Kilnsea, 6th-9th May (A. J. Booth, N. Stewart *et al.*).

Lothian Aberlady, in song, 17th May (J. R. W. & P. R. Gordon, A. Mathieson).

Northumberland Caistron, in song, tape-recorded, 12th-20th June (E. J. Steele *et al.*).

Suffolk Iken, in song, 14th June (G. C. Backhurst, D. J. Pearson).

Tyne & Wear Big Waters, trapped 24th October (M. P. Frankis, A. J. Johnson, D. McKeown).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa) The Tyne & Wear individual is only the third ever in October and the first such record for 12 years (the only later record was one at Thurlestone, Devon, on 15th November 1972).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (2, 12, 1)

(Iberia and Northwest Africa, discontinuously east to Kazakhstan) One on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 17th October was the third for Ireland. There have been no accepted records in Britain since 1985.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 29, 1)

Northumberland Inner Farnes, 19th October (G. W. Allison *et al.*).

(Northwest Russia, east to Mongolia and south to Iran) This is the first for Northumberland, although there have been previous East Coast records from Norfolk and Lincolnshire, and Yorkshire has had four.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 239, 9)

Cornwall Caerthillian, ♂, 30th March to at least 1st April (B. Cave, J. A. Jane, J. E. Millett *et al.*).

Dyfed Skomer, ♂, 3rd May (J. W. & Mrs J. E. Donovan, Mrs A. C. Sutcliffe, C. & S. Wye *et al.*); ♂, 26th May (C. J. Orsman *et al.*). Skokholm, ♀, 11th May (M. Betts *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, ♂, 20th-21st May (M. I. Eldridge *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀, trapped 28th May (A. E. Duncan, Dr A. M. Hanby *et al.*).

Scilly St Mary's, ♀, 10th May (R. E. Innes, C. D. R. Jones).

1987 Devon Lundy, ♂, 31st May to 4th June (R. J. Campey, K. E. Mortimer).

1989 Lancashire Lancaster, ♂, 9th May (D. Carter, A. Dawson).

1989 Scilly St Mary's, 2nd-5th October (P. Maker, J. P. Martin, S. Rogers *et al.*).

(South Europe, West Turkey, Northwest Africa) In Ireland, there was a female at Killough, Co. Down, on 20th May and a male on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, during 2nd August to 17th September.

The above list includes the third to occur in March, but is otherwise a predictable set of records.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 18, 4)

Cornwall Stratton, ♂, 8th-22nd March (G. Day *et al.*). Cot Valley, ♂, 16th October (B. F. Forbes, O. Mitchell, D. I. Smith); probably same, near Treen, 23rd-25th (J. D. Bryden, B. J. Robinson *et al.*).

Sussex, East Icklesham, ♀, trapped 3rd July (J. Willsher *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Scarborough, 27th October (J. M. England, R. Hopper *et al.*).

1988 Devon Lundy, ♀, 8th June (P. Campbell, R. J. Campey *et al.*).

(South Europe, Middle East and North Africa) The years 1988 and 1990 become the best, with five and four respectively; the latter total includes the first for March.

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Whalsay, ♂, 3rd-19th October, trapped 3rd (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall, M. Williamson *et al.*).

(Coastal regions of east Mediterranean) Only the third British record, and the first to occur in autumn, it proved to be a welcome consolation prize for those who had travelled north hoping to see the White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* in Orkney.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 178, 8)

Dorset Portland, 15th-16th June, trapped 15th (M. Cade, M. Rogers *et al.*).

Dyfed Skomer, 19th June (C. J. Orsman, H. A. Williams).

Kent Reculver, 25th August (M. J. Baldock, T. N. Hodge *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 25th August (M. I. Eldridge).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 16th August (C. Donald, J. N. Dymond, P. V. Harvey *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, first-winter, trapped 27th August (P. M. Ellis, M. G. Pennington, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Suffolk Between Minsmere and Sizewell, 27th-30th August (D. R. Newton, I. Robinson, B. Small *et al.*)(fig. 7).

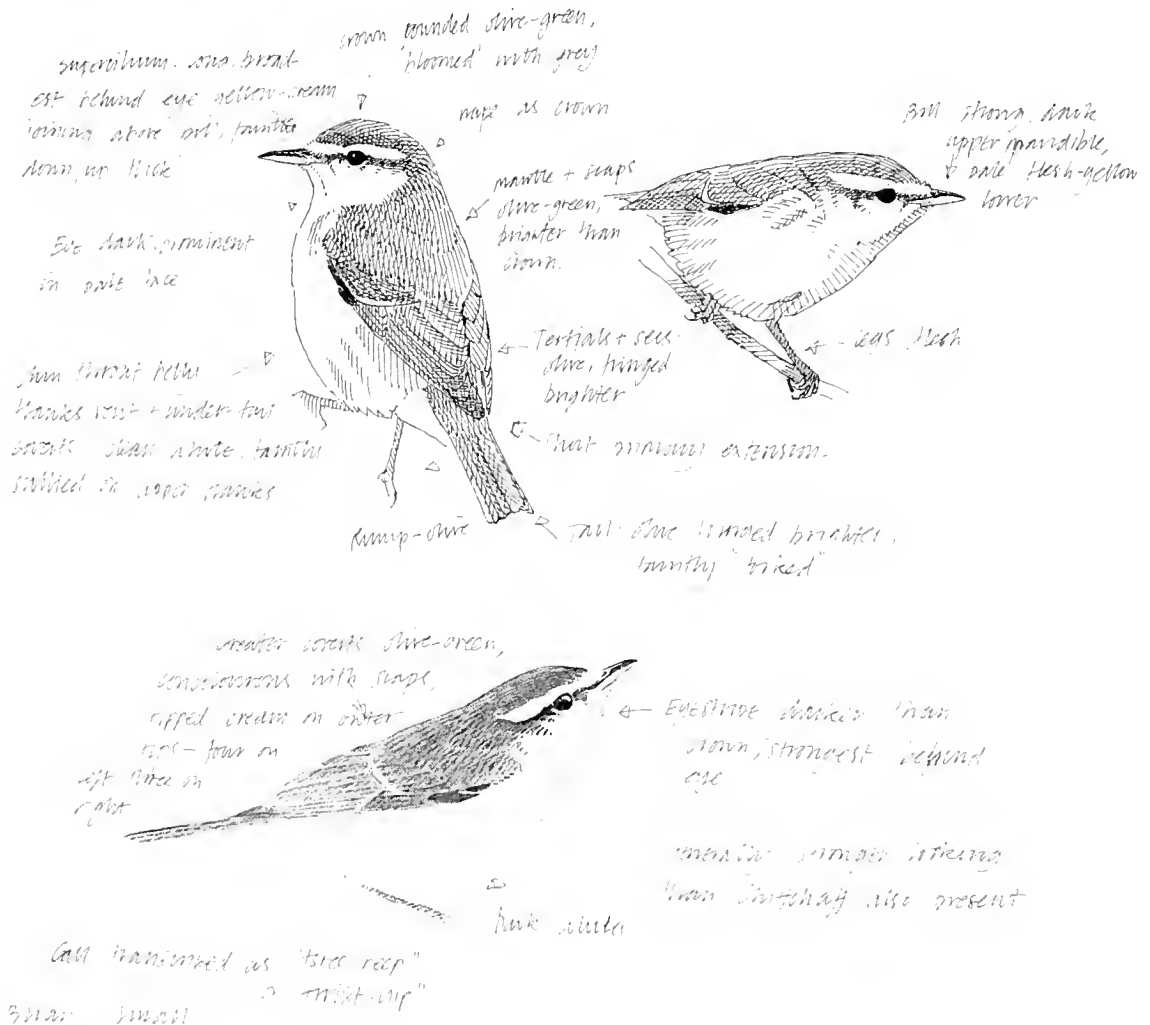


Fig. 7. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, between Minsmere and Sizewell, Suffolk, August 1990 (Brian Small)

Yorkshire, North Port Mulgrave, near Staithes, 9th September (N. R. K. Askew, I. Bousted *et al.*).

(Eurasia, east from Northern Germany) Typical dates.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 142, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 26th-27th August (C. Donald, P. A. Gregory, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Northdale, Unst, 6th-9th October (K. Osborn *et al.*).

1989 At sea Sea area Humber, 53° 49' N 02° 45' E, 26th September (J. F. Babbington).

(Northern Fenno-Scandia, east to Alaska) Another poor showing, following the two in 1989. Unlike Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*, this species shows no sign of any increase in the number of records and has still never been recorded here earlier than July.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* (3, 508, 27)

Borders Coldingham, ♀, trapped 19th October, photographed (D. Patterson).

Essex Gunner's Park, Shoeburyness, 11th November (I. J. & P. C. Burfield, J. D. Pilgrim, D. F. Walsh *et al.*).

Fife Crail, 22nd-26th October (T. C. Smout *et al.*).

Grampian Muchalls, near Aberdeen, 21st October (K. A. Shaw, J. L. & Mrs M. Swallow). Cruden Bay, 22nd October (T. W. Marshall).

Highland Dornie, Skye & Lochalsh, 29th October (B. S. Neath).

Humber-side Kilnsea, 20th October (V. A. Lister *et al.*).

Kent Foreness, two, 7th November (M. H. Davies, K. D. Lord, F. Solly).

Lothian Skateraw, ♀, 21st-23rd October, trapped 21st, photographed (C. Hill, C. C. McGuigan, A. O'Connor *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, 24th October (J. F. Holloway). Stromness, 26th October (M. Gray).

Scilly St Mary's, 23rd October (D. J. D. Hickman, D. Hutton, P. G. Lansdown *et al.*).

Shetland Whalsay, 14th October (Dr B. Marshall). Eswick, 15th-16th October (T. D. Rogers *et al.*). Sumburgh, 21st-22nd October, trapped 21st (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill, G. W. Petrie *et al.*).

Suffolk Dunwich, ♀, trapped 4th November, photographed (Sir A. G. Hurrell *et al.*). Benacre, 1st-2nd December (B. Botwright, R. C. Smith).

Sussex, East Balsdean, 12th November (M. H. Port, J. Reaney, G. A. Sutton).

Tyne & Wear Prior's Park, 19th-22nd October, trapped 19th (C. Bradshaw, M. P. Carruthers *et al.*).

Wight, Isle of Alum Bay, 27th October (S. R. Colenutt, M. Hunnybun *et al.*). St Catherine's Point, 28th October (S. R. Colenutt, D. Swensson).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 19th October (P. J. Dunn). Filey Brigg, 19th (R. S. Baker, P. M. Scanlan, I. S. Williams *et al.*); 19th-23rd (D. J. & P. M. Scanlan *et al.*); 28th-29th November (S. Cochrane, P. J. Dunn *et al.*). Scarborough, 18th October (R. H. Appleby).

1989 Fife Fife Ness, 29th-30th October (N. Mann *et al.*).

1989 Scilly St Agnes, 18th-23rd October, photographed (G. C. Bond, R. Butts, the late J. C. Eyre-Dickinson *et al.*).

1989 Surrey Windlesham, 18th October (S. Abbott).

1989 Wight, Isle of St Catherine's Point, 12th November (S. R. Colenutt, J. C. Gloyn, G. C. Stephenson *et al.*).

(Central, East and Southern Asia) The Highland individual is only the second record for the west coast of Scotland. Although exceptional inland, the Surrey individual does recall the one on Wandsworth Common, Greater London, on 29th October 1985. It might be sad to see the end of this species as 'a BB rarity' (see *Brit. Birds* 83: 411-412), but, in truth, it is no longer the rarity that it once was.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 92, 8)

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, first-winter, 21st-22nd October, photographed (A. H. J. Harrop, J. Walton *et al.*). Theddlethorpe Dunes, trapped 24th October (M. & Mrs F. E. Boddy).

Lothian Barn's Ness, 15th October (A. Brown).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 19th October (A. Bloomfield, M. E. S. Rooney).

Northumberland Craster, 27th October (T. R. Cleeves, M. Hepple *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 8th October, photographed (D. Jefferies, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*); 26th-28th October, photographed (A. P. Goddard, J. Miller *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia) In Ireland, there was one at Ballagan Point, Co. Louth, on 21st October.

Another species which is becoming expectable: it has now been found annually on the Isles of Scilly for the last seven years.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 76, 15)

Humberside Easington, 23rd October (D. Hursthouse, C. Slator).

Lincolnshire North Cotes Point, 19th October (H. Bunn). Saltfleet, 19th-20th October (G. P. Catley, S. Routledge *et al.*).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 19th-20th October (M. E. S. Rooney). Wiveton, 24th-27th October (E. T. Myers *et al.*). Burnham Norton, 7th November (M. E. S. Rooney). Holme, 5th-11th November (S. C. Harrap *et al.*).

Northumberland Inner Farne, 18th-19th October (G. W. Allison, N. B. Baskerville, S. R. Wotton *et al.*). Druridge Bay, trapped 20th October (M. L. & T. A. Cadwallender, B. Little).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 30th September (P. V. Harvey, B. A. Ryan, D. J. Tipling *et al.*); 19th October (I. Fisher, J. Hunter, J. McKee *et al.*). Frakkafield, 29th October to 1st November (A. McCall, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Tyne & Wear St Mary's Island, 18th October (P. Hartley, J. Todd *et al.*).

Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, first-winter, 20th-21st October (C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

(Central and Northeast to Southern Asia) The second-best yearly total and including only the second-ever in spring: one in Ireland on Great Saltee, Co. Wexford, on 8th-9th May. Interestingly, the first spring record, on the Calf of Man in May 1970, was found dying in Ireland, near Limerick, in the following December.

Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 104, 2)

Kent Isle of Grain, 26th-27th August, photographed (P. Larkin, K. J. Thornton *et al.*)(plate 251).

Scilly St Agnes, 19th October (J. F. & Mrs D. R. Cooper *et al.*).

(Central, West and South Europe, Levant and Northwest Africa) If migrants of this species called more often, we might have a chance of discovering whether the wide span of occurrence dates reflects their racial origin.

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis* (0, 1, 0)

Norfolk See 1989 Norfolk.

1989 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 13th October to 6th May 1990 (R. & Mrs J. Aley, D. Hatton, P. Varney *et al.*)(*Brit. Birds* 83: plates 92-94, 196).

(North America) A classic example of the mixed blessings at a big 'twitch'—the large number of observers meant that, when it disappeared, it was often quickly relocated, but then there was a desperate squeeze as one arrived at the scene of the latest sighting.

Though widely assumed to have been a male, there was in fact nothing to suggest that it was not a bright female.

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 7, 3)

Kent Reculver, ♀, trapped 29th July (C. Hindle *et al.*). St Margaret's Bay, trapped 14th October (J. R. H. Clements, I. P. Hodgson *et al.*)(plate 270). Dungeness, 18th-24th October, 6th November to 16th January 1991, trapped 18th, 20th October, 6th November (D. Boyle, D. Walker *et al.*)(plates 252, 271 & 272).

(Central and South Europe, Asia Minor and North Africa) Several past records may be held up in the adjudication process, but these three were all conclusively established.

270. Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, St Margaret's Bay, Kent, October 1990 (*I. P. Hodgson*)



271 & 272. Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Dungeness, Kent, December 1990 (*left, D. Walker; right, David Tipling/Avian Photos*)



Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 35, 4)

Cambridgeshire Ely, at least two, including one first-winter, 13th October (R. D. P. Milwright, Dr M. Stahl).

Norfolk Cley, adult, 13th October (R. Aberdein, S. Chidwick, R. Robinson).

Suffolk Minsmere, adult, 4th April (M. Forbes, N. Gartshore, R. J. Price *et al.*).

(Western Europe to Manchuria) The first breeding attempts are, surely, not far off?

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 29, 1)

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, first-winter, showing characters closest to *L. i. phoenicuroides*, 14th-15th October, photographed (G. P. Catley, C. A. Ellis, S. C. P. Williams *et al.*).

(South Asia to China) With continued worries about the possibility of hybrids with Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*, this can be a difficult species to describe conclusively; in the past, even photographs have left members unconvinced.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 103, 3)

Essex Old Hall Marshes, ♂, 26th June to 5th July (J. Miller, R. Price, M. Stott *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Kirton Marsh, ♂, 12th May, photographed (R. & Mrs K. Heath, S. Keightley, G. M. Orton *et al.*).

Shetland Whalsay, sex uncertain, 26th September to 20th October (J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).

(South and East Europe and Southwest Asia) This species moves towards its third decade of at-least-annual occurrences.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* (101, 460, 20)

Cornwall Morvah, 8th-12th April (S. G. Rowe, Dr J. F. Ryan, V. A. Stratton *et al.*).

Predannack, 13th-14th May (S. Bury, A. R. Pay, S. Pilbeam).

Devon Jennycliff, Plymouth, 17th March to 7th April, photographed (C. J. Vines *et al.*). Thurlestone, 19th-20th March (H. & Mrs J. Huggins, P. Sanders *et al.*). Hope's Nose, at least 22nd March, photographed (D. W. Greenslade *et al.*). Prawle Point, 7th May (S. M. R. Young *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, 17th March to 8th April, trapped 19th March (M. Cade, M. Rogers, P. Seagrave *et al.*).

Dyfed Skokholm, 12th June (H. Morgan, M. Westland *et al.*).

Essex Foulness, 7th May (Mr & Mrs A. W. Ellis).

Humberside Spurn, 29th-31st May, trapped 29th, photographed (I. Crowther, R. Gilbert *et al.*).

Orkney Flotta, 8th-9th June (Miss S. Ellis, K. Fairclough, M. Gray).

Scilly St Martin's, adult, 21st August to 7th September (D. J. D. Hickman *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, trapped 11th September (J. N. Dymond, P. V. Harvey, R. Proctor *et al.*).

Sussex, West Littlehampton, 22nd April (R. M. Shaw *et al.*). Thorney Island, 11th May (C. B. & Mrs M. A. Collins, C. J. Tyas). Rackham Marsh, adult, 14th September (R. J. & Mrs A. Sandison).

Yorkshire, North Filey, 25th May (P. J. Dunn); juvenile, trapped 27th August, photographed (P. J. Dunn, R. E. Harbird *et al.*)(plate 273).

1988 Cornwall The Lizard, 6th May (E. Grace per S. M. Christophers).

1989 Berkshire Theale, 21st May, photographed (B. T. Bennett, R. Crawford, P. Hickman *et al.*).

1989 Oxfordshire Near Little Wittenham, 24th May (I. Lewington, D. Wells *et al.*).

(West, Central and South Europe, Southwest Asia and North Africa) In Ireland, there was one at Clonea, Co. Waterford, on 18th March and one at Howth Head, Co. Dublin, during 17th to 31st March.

There are no previous March records, so the above six, from Devon, Dorset and Ireland, are particularly noteworthy.



273. Juvenile Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Filey, North Yorkshire, August 1990 (P. J. Dunn)

County recorders will continue to welcome records of this species though, with effect from the start of 1991, it is no longer 'a BB rarity'.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* (45, 352, 0)

1971 **Borders** Near Eddleston, five, 28th August (*Brit. Birds* 65: 340), now considered not acceptable.

(Eurasia from Scandinavia and the Alps to Kamchatka and China)

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 193, 5)

Cornwall Illogan, Redruth, adult, since 26th October 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 487) to 30th March. Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, 15th-17th September (M. J. Barlow, D. A. & Mrs I. M. E. Conway, S. W. Holmes).

Dorset Portland, adult, since 30th August 1989 to at least February (*Brit. Birds* 83: 487).

Dyfed Skomer, juvenile, 28th September (C. Orsman, S. J. Sutcliffe, H. A. Williams).

Fife Crail, juvenile, 27th October to 2nd November, photographed (D. E. Dickson *et al.*).

Orkney Stronsay, adult, 12th July, photographed (J. F. Holloway, K., N. & Mrs K. Kent).

1989 **Devon** Torcross, juvenile, 29th September to 2nd October (per P. W. Ellicott).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) In Ireland, there was a juvenile on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 8th October. Also two additional records for 1989 concern an adult at St John's Point, Co. Down, during 24th June to 8th July and a juvenile at the Old Head of Kinsale, Co. Cork, on 25th October.

There have been several previous records on isolated winter dates, but the above Portland and Redruth individuals are only the third and fourth to be proved to overwinter successfully here.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 56, 8)

Cornwall Cot Valley, 21st-30th September (H. & M. Frankham, E. Walker *et al.*) (plate 250).

Devon Lundy, first-winter, 16th-18th October, trapped 16th, photographed (T. J. Chinn, I. Smith *et al.*).

Humberside Kilnsea, 30th September to 1st October, trapped 30th, photographed (A. Dixon, B. R. Spence *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 29th September (B. Cave).

(North America) Ireland had its best-ever year for this species, with individuals on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 23rd September; on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 30th September; at Dunquin, Co. Kerry, on 29th-30th September; and at Belmullet, Co. Mayo, on 7th October.

The Humberside individual is the first for that region and only the second in the Northeast.

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus* (0, 2, 0)

(North America) The individual on Tresco, Scilly, from 10th to 13th October 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 81: 588) can no longer be regarded with certainty as a first-winter, ageing in the field in autumn being considered unsafe, as it is for Red-eyed Vireo *V. olivaceus* (*Brit. Birds* 82: 555).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 142, 25)

Essex Tollesbury Wick, 16th-17th December (A. Beardswell, J. Torino, C. Undrill *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 18th-21st October (G. P. Catley).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 18th October (G. M. Cresswell, S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*); 18th-21st October (M. S. Cavanagh, P. J. Heath, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*); 20th October (M. S. Cavanagh, M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Cley, 29th October (M. A. Golley). Holkham Meals, 30th November to January 1991, two, 2nd to at least 15th December, three, 7th-8th, 15th and 29th (A. Bloomfield, D. Foster, M. E. S. Rooney *et al.*); four, 8th December, three to at least 15th (M. I. Eldridge, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Syderstone Common, two, 24th December (A. Bloomfield, J. R. McAllum).

Orkney Stronsay, 21st October, at least one other, 23rd (J. F. Holloway).

Shetland Fair Isle, 23rd April (P. V. Harvey). Fetlar, 28th September, photographed; two, 6th October (I. Hawkins). Whalsay, 30th September to 4th October (P. M. Ellis, A. Heavisides *et al.*); another, same dates (A. F. T. & G. J. Fitchett *et al.*); another, same dates (P. J. Heath, D. Suddaby *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, three, 6th October (K. Osborn).

Suffolk Southwold, 26th November (M. Forbes, A. Riseborough, T. Shields *et al.*).

1989 Tayside Carnoustie, 27th December 1988 to at least 19th April (*Brit. Birds* 82: 555) to 30th (per M. S. Scott).

(Circumpolar Arctic) This bumper influx is second only to the 33 during 1984. Observers can be a little more confident in the identification of this species, following the publication of the paper by Peter Lansdown, Nick Riddiford and Dr Alan Knox (*Brit. Birds* 84: 41-46). A number of old, unaccepted, sight records have been reviewed, but no grounds emerged for changing their status.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 50, 15)

Kent Bedgebury, juvenile or first-winter ♀, 7th October to 11th November, photographed (K. R. Burch, C. Hindle, K. A. & Mrs M. A. Hook *et al.*).

Norfolk Lynford Arboretum, ♀, 24th November to at least April 1991, photographed (C. G. R. Bowden, P. J. Dolton).

Northamptonshire Wakerley Great Wood, ♂, 21st-29th November (M. H. Rodgers *et al.*); ♀, 24th December (M. C. Hall, S. M. Lister).

Orkney Hoy, ♀, 31st July to 6th August (M. Gray *et al.*). Evie, two juveniles, 18th August, photographed, three, 19th-21st (C. J. Booth, P. Reynolds *et al.*). Sandwick, juvenile, 26th-27th August, photographed (Miss A. Cook, E. R. Meek, Miss L. F. Thomson *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♂, ♀, 25th-31st July, photographed (C. Donald, P. V. Harvey, R. Proctor *et al.*); juvenile, 16th August, photographed (Miss J. Estaphanos, R. Schofield, C. M. Sharples); juvenile, 23rd August (C. Donald, P. V. Harvey *et al.*); ♀, 20th October (P. V. Harvey). Kergord, juvenile, trapped 22nd September, photographed (G. W. Petrie *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern North America and West Indies) This represents the second-best year (after 1987), and this time England shared in the influx.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 221, 106)

Cleveland Lockwood Beck Reservoir, at least six: three ♂♂, first-winter ♂, two ♀♀, 11th November to 1991 (M. A. Blick, G. Boyce *et al.*).

Humberside Humberstone Fitties, ♀, 20th-23rd October, photographed (K. Atkin, H. Bunn, G. P. Catley).

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, five, including at least one ♂ and two ♀♀, 18th October, ♂, ♀, 19th-20th (G. P. Catley, S. Routledge). Gibraltar Point, ♂, two ♀♀, 19th-25th October, ♀ photographed, two ♀♀, 26th (M. R. Briggs, K. M. Wilson *et al.*). Kirkby Moor, four, 4th November, forty-four, 11th, up to thirty-five to end November, up to twenty to 1991 (S. P. Botham, K. Durose *et al.*). Willingham Forest, fourteen, 2nd, 20th December, sixteen, 4th, seventeen, 16th, at least nine to at least 10th January 1991 (S. P. Botham, K. Durose *et al.*). Loughton Forest, ten ♂♂, nine ♀♀ or immatures, 2nd December to at least 1st March 1991 (W. Gillatt, J. T. Harriman *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme, two ♂♂, two ♀♀, at least 21st October (R. Burrows, D. J. & T. Girling *et al.*). Holkham Meads, ♀, 4th November (A. Bloomfield, D. Foster). Lynford Arboretum, ♀, 5th December (P. J. Dolton).

Northumberland Brownsman, Farne, ♀, 20th October (P. J. H. Bush, A. P. Cotton, J. W. Dodds).

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 23rd-24th September, trapped 24th, photographed (P. V. Harvey, R. Proctor, N. J. Riddiford *et al.*). Whalsay, ♀, 14th October (Dr B. & Mrs L. Marshall).

Yorkshire, **South** Hollingdale Plantation, two ♂♂, 4th November (D. Hursthouse, T. Rogers).

At sea Sea area Humber, 53° 50' N 00° 26' E, 32 km east of Spurn Point, Humberside, ♂, ♀, 19th October (A. F. Johnson).

1982 At sea Sea area Forties, 57° 35' N 02° 03' E, first-winter ♂, first-winter ♀, both dead, 14th October, now at British Museum (G. P. Crossland).

(Northern Europe from Norway east to Russia and south to Estonia) These records are the first to be accepted since 1987 and also represent far and away the biggest influx yet recorded. Perhaps what is most intriguing, though, is that, for the first time, this coincided with an influx of Two-barred Crossbills *L. leucoptera* and also an influx of Arctic Redpolls *Carduelis hornemanni*.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Helendale, Lerwick, ♂, 3rd-4th November (Mrs M. Leslie, D. Suddaby *et al.*)(plate 97).

(North America) The previous record, 26 years ago, was from Bardsey Island, Gwynedd, in late August (*Brit. Birds* 58: 457-461), so for the second to appear in November was most unexpected; its sudden departure on 4th also came as a shock to many.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 26, 2)

Scilly St Mary's, 22nd-25th October (J. M. & Mrs H. C. Gardner, K. Pellow *et al.*)(plate 254).

Shetland Sumburgh, 6th October (S. J. Dodgson, G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

(North America) The Shetland individual was only the second for

Scotland; the first was on Whalsay, Shetland, during 30th September to 3rd October 1985.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* (0, 3, 1)

(North America) None in Britain. In Ireland, there was one on Dursey Island, Co. Cork, on 24th-25th September (plates 95, 96, 274). The only previous live one was on Out Skerries, Shetland, in 1973.



274. Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus*, Dursey Island, Co. Cork, September 1990 (Anthony McGeehan)

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 14, 0)

Dorset Portland, ♂, since 3rd December 1989 (*Brit. Birds* 83: 490, plate 193) to March.

Hampshire Church Crookham, ♂, since 26th December 1989 to 7th March (*Brit. Birds* 83: 490, plate 192).

(North America) The only previous long-stayers were in April-May 1975 at Haresfield, Gloucestershire, and on Bardsey, Gwynedd; any who missed the above birds could be in for a long wait.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 16, 1)

Northumberland Bamburgh, ♂, 21st October (I. Chadwick, M. K. & M. S. Hodgson).

(Urals across Asia to Sakhalin) The problem of eliminating the possibility of a non-yellow Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* has been highlighted by the presence of an apparent female Pine Bunting at Big Waters Nature Reserve, Tyne & Wear, during 1990; that bird is still under review.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 189, 14)

Cleveland South Gare, ♂, 26th April, photographed (D. Barlow, D. J. Britton *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, first-winter, trapped 9th October (J. B. Kelsall, J. M. B. King, B. Stewart).

Fife Isle of May, 24th-25th September (J. Calladine).

Kent Kingsgate, 25th-28th October (K. C. Evans, C. Hindle *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin, 18th-21st October (C. Bradshaw, T. R. Cleaves, L. Hall).

Scilly Tresco, at least 19th October (G. C. Bond, J. Miller, L. Steward *et al.*); another, 20th-22nd (S. J. Broyd, J. Miller *et al.*)(plate 94).

Shetland Sumburgh, ♀, 28th May, same, Grutness, 29th-30th (H. Loates, D. Suddaby *et al.*).

Sumburgh, ♂, 30th May, photographed (D. Suddaby *et al.*)(plate 268). Fair Isle, 3rd-5th October (R. B. & Mrs L. H. Hastings *et al.*).

Western Isles St Kilda, ♀, 10th-11th June, photographed (S. Holloway, P. M. Walsh).

Yorkshire, North Filey Dams, ♂, 9th-10th May, photographed (J. Harwood, I. Robinson *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia) Continuing Ireland's recent run of the species, there was one on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, on 22nd-25th October and one at Toe Head, Co. Cork, on 28th-30th October.

One of the best-ever years for this species—even St Kilda got in on the act.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* (93, 409, 21)

Cleveland South Gare, 19th October (S. J. Hinley, D. A. Illingworth *et al.*).

Devon Dawlish Warren, 13th April (P. J. Hopkin). Lundy, trapped 12th October (J. Arnold, J. M. B. King, B. Stewart *et al.*); another, 12th-14th, photographed (Dr S. F. Tanner, N. R. Wall *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, trapped, 29th April (D. Walker *et al.*).

Northumberland Brownsman and Staple Island, Farne Islands, 18th-26th October (D. C. Richardson *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 3rd October (P. J. Donnelly, M. Gray). Stronsay, 5th October, photographed (J. F. Holloway, E. R. Meek).

Scilly St Mary's, 13th-18th October (G. Etherington, P. I. Holt *et al.*); 20th (M. Deans, R. A. Walthew *et al.*)(plate 255). St Martin's, 23rd-26th October (D. M. & Mrs L. F. C. Love, P. Trodd).

Shetland Fair Isle, 15th May (C. J. Cox, R. Proctor *et al.*); 22nd September; 18th-19th October; 19th-25th October (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 19th-20th October (P. V. Harvey, B. H. Thomason, A. S. Wilson *et al.*). Out Skerries, 22nd September (R. Fowling, A. Grace *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 24th September (M. J. Pennington).

Yorkshire, North Filey Brigg, 28th-29th October, photographed (D. J. & P. M. Scanlan, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

1989 Humberside Sammy's Point, 17th September (R. C. Hart, J. C. Lowen). Beacon Ponds, Kilnsea, 28th-30th October, trapped 30th (J. Cudworth, S. Lindop *et al.*).

1989 Scilly Tresco, 11th-13th October (N. W. Addey, C. Dobson, R. A. Filby *et al.*); another, 13th (H. M. J. Taffs *et al.*).

(Northeast Europe and North Asia) In Ireland, two at Loop Head, Co. Clare, on 13th October.

The long-term trend is towards a definite increase in the number of records, which, with this species in particular, is no doubt strongly linked to observer-awareness.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 137, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, ♀♀ or immatures: 27th-29th August (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); 9th-14th September (J. N. Dymond, G. Oldroyd, R. Proctor *et al.*)(fig. 8).

(Northeast Europe across North Asia) The poorest showing for 20 years.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 78, 1)

Dyfed Marloes, ♂, 28th-30th May, photographed (Mr & Mrs E. Deakin, J. W. Donovan *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) Late May is the peak time for this species. While an increasing number of species seem to be vexed by the escape problem, the recent occurrences of this bunting all seem to support a wild origin.

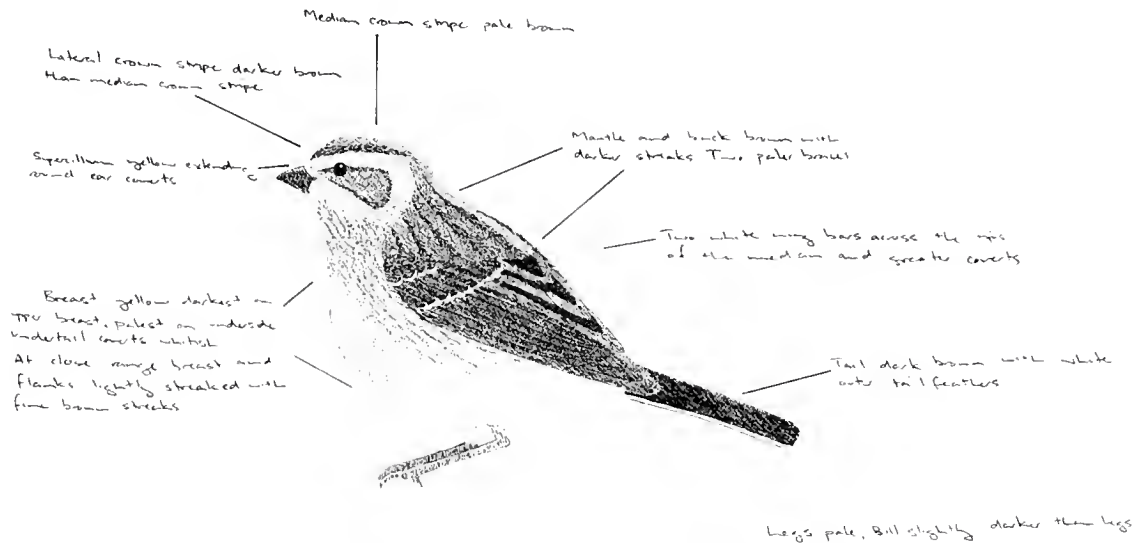


Fig. 8. Female/immature Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1990 (R. Proctor)

Appendix. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include (a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Honorary Secretary; (b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; or (c) those mentioned in the monthly summaries in this journal, if full details were unobtainable. Birds considered to be certain escapes are also omitted.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced, on the evidence before us, that the identification was fully established; in only a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

1990

White-billed Diver Haverigg Point, Cumbria, 19th October. **Black-browed Albatross** Dungeness, Kent, 25th April. **Little Shearwater** Lossiemouth, Grampian, 20th September; Pendeen, Cornwall, 21st September. **Night Heron** Hull, Humberside, 10th May. **Great White Egret** Exe Estuary, Devon, 12th August. **Black Stork** Bratton Clovelly, Devon, 14th March; Kirkambeck, Cumbria, 15th May; Almondsbury, Avon, 3rd September. **Lesser White-fronted Goose** Poole Park, Dorset, 17th January. **American Wigeon** Titchwell, Norfolk, 12th September; Belper, Derbyshire, 22nd October. **Blue-winged Teal** Logan, Dumfries & Galloway, 1st September. **Ring-necked Duck** Chew Valley Lake, Avon, 4th February. **King Eider** Fife Ness, Fife, 21st April. **Black Kite** Yetminster, Dorset, 29th March; Newton Abbott, Devon, 2nd April; Compton Dando, Avon, 7th May; Apuldram, West Sussex, 10th May; Barnwell, Northamptonshire, 25th June; Aston Abbotts, Buckinghamshire, 25th July; Sompting and Steyning area, West Sussex, 18th August. **White-tailed Eagle** Great Maplesford, Essex, 31st January; Cley, Norfolk, 15th May. **Lesser Kestrel** Cheddleton, Staffordshire, 18th January-24th April; Cley, Norfolk, 20th March; Longford, Gloucestershire, 10th July. **Red-footed Falcon** Rye, East Sussex, 18th April; Witham Mouth, Lincolnshire, 13th May; North Chideock, Dorset, 20th May; St Osyth, Essex, 7th June; Scolt Head, Norfolk, 23rd June; Foreness, Kent, 27th June; Great Wakering, Essex, 11th July; Snettisham, Norfolk, 13th July; Tregardock, Cornwall, 17th July-10th August. **Gyrfalcon** Isle of May, Fife, 1st October; Howford, Highland, 10th October; Grutness, Shetland, 11th October; Strumble Head, Dyfed, 12th October. **Little Crake** At sea, Sea area Humber, 18th October. **Pratincole** Kegworth, Nottinghamshire, 7th October. **American Golden Plover** Lydd, Kent, 28th-29th May. **Pacific Golden Plover** Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 25th July. **Killdeer** St Agnes, Scilly, 6th August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Great

Yarmouth, Norfolk, 3rd November. **Baird's Sandpiper** Whiteholme Reservoir, West Yorkshire, 12th July; Hartland Point, Devon, 26th-28th October. **Stilt Sandpiper** Landguard Point, Suffolk, 17th August. **Great Snipe** Balmedie, Grampian, 22nd October. **Dowitcher** South Mills, Bedfordshire, 5th-8th November. **Marsh Sandpiper** Rudyard Lake, Staffordshire, 5th July; Eden Estuary, Fife, 27th-28th August; Hodbarrow, Cumbria, 11th September. **Greater Yellowlegs** Easington Lagoons, Humberside, 16th May. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Arundel, West Sussex, 4th May. **Bonaparte's Gull** Portreath, Cornwall, 26th January; Oakenholt Marsh, Clwyd, 27th January; Newlyn, Cornwall, 15th February; Loe Bar, Cornwall, 18th February; Bowness-on-Solway, Cumbria, 28th February, 5th March; Oldbury-on-Severn, Avon, 23rd June. **Grey-headed Gull** Folkestone, Kent, 14th July. **Slender-billed Gull** Northam Burrows, Devon, 16th July. **Ross's Gull** Fingringhoe, Essex, 26th October. **Gull-billed Tern** Selsey Bill, West Sussex, 10th April, two, 27th; Scolt Head, Norfolk, 8th July; Cley, Norfolk, 23rd July; Deben Estuary, Suffolk, 29th September. **Forster's Tern** Gosford Bay, Lothian, 17th March. **Whiskered Tern** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 30th June; Keyhaven Marsh, Hampshire, 8th September; Elton Reservoir, Greater Manchester, 17th September; Strumble Head, Dyfed, 3rd October. **White-winged Black Tern** Cley, Norfolk, 27th August; Colwick, Nottinghamshire, 29th August; Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 2nd September. **Brünnich's Guillemot** At sea, North Sea, 9th January. **Great Spotted Cuckoo** Hope Cove, Devon, 23rd February. **Black-billed Cuckoo** Bryher, Scilly, 14th October. **Red-necked Nightjar** Brampford Speke, Devon, 26th March. **Pallid Swift** Holme, Norfolk, 14th October. **Alpine Swift** Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, 29th May; Colliford Reservoir, Cornwall, 20th June; Haldon, Devon, 11th July. **Bee-eater** Moor Green, Gloucestershire, 17th June; Ipswich, Suffolk, 20th July. **Short-toed Lark** Meall Dearg, Highland, 12th June; Lamba Ness, Shetland, 19th August. **Red-rumped Swallow** Winterton, Norfolk, 30th April; Cippenham, Berkshire, 1st May; Sidlesham Ferry, West Sussex, 18th May; Lydney, Gloucestershire, 31st August. **Olive-backed Pipit** Stronsay, Orkney, 24th October. **Pechora Pipit** Skomer, Dyfed, 20th May. **Red-throated Pipit** Motcombe, Dorset, 23rd August; Greshornish, Skye, Highland, 28th August; Holyport, Berkshire, 27th-30th October. **Black-headed Yellow Wagtail** King's Lynn, Norfolk, 23rd May. **Citrine Wagtail** Eyebrook Reservoir, Leicestershire, 9th April; Sandwich Bay, Kent, 13th May; Hodbarrow, Cumbria, 1st August. **Alpine Accentor** At sea, North Sea, 22nd October. **White-throated Robin** Pensarn, Clwyd, 8th September. **Siberian Stonechat** Llanfairfechan, Gwynedd, 17th-18th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Rossendale, Lancashire, 30th June. **American Robin** Newquay, Cornwall, 9th February; Ardargie, Tayside, 6th December. **Olivaceous Warbler** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 9th September. **Greenish Warbler** Cromer, Norfolk, 24th August; Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 9th September. **Arctic Warbler** Radipole, Dorset, 1st September; Haverhill, Suffolk, 11th October. **Dusky Warbler** Theddlethorpe Dunes, Lincolnshire, 23rd October; St Abbs, Borders, 24th October; St Mary's, Scilly, 24th October. **Bonelli's Warbler** Holkham Meads, Norfolk, 9th September; Sheepwash Urban Park, West Midlands, 12th September. **Isabelline Shrike** Frodsham, Cheshire, 13th November. **Rose-coloured Starling** Coulsdon, Surrey, two, 28th March. **Citril Finch** Near Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan, four, 27th November. **Parrot Crossbill** Balephetrish, Tiree, Strathclyde, 5th September; Theddlethorpe Dunes, Lincolnshire, 26th October. **Pine Grosbeak** Torridon Forest, Highland, 17th July. **Little Bunting** Cley, Norfolk, 11th February; Upchurch, Kent, two, 27th-30th March; West High Down, Isle of Wight, 29th April.

1989

Soft-plumaged Petrel Dungeness, Kent, 12th March; Prawle Point, Devon, 18th August. **Bulwer's Petrel** Towan Head, Cornwall, 23rd July. **Wilson's Petrel** Holmpton, Humberside, 8th October; St Mary's, Scilly, 24th December. **Ring-necked Duck** Crowan Reservoir, Cornwall, 26th December. **Canvasback** Glan Conwy, Gwynedd, 2nd October. **Black Scoter** Alnmouth, Northumberland, 19th February. **Baillon's Crake** Cley, Norfolk, 21st May. **Baird's Sandpiper** Frodsham, Cheshire, 6th-7th September; River Lynher, Cornwall, 14th November. **Stilt Sandpiper** Croxton Pond, Humberside, 20th July. **Marsh Sandpiper** Rhyl, Clwyd, 22nd August. **Laughing Gull** Portland, Dorset, 20th November. **Gull-billed Tern** Weymouth, Dorset, 17th September. **Whiskered Tern** Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 17th June. **Alpine Swift** Water End, Hertfordshire, 4th September. **Bee-eater** Dungeness, Kent,

28th August. **Isabelline Wheatear** Burry Port, Dyfed, 6th May. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Skokholm, Dyfed, 25th September. **Bonelli's Warbler** Harlyn Bay, Cornwall, 8th April; Sevenoaks, Kent, 12th August. **Arctic Redpoll** Towyn, Clwyd, 16th April. **Little Bunting** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 22nd April; Sanday, Orkney, 24th September. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** Cot Valley, Cornwall, 13th November.

1988

Albatross At sea, North Sea, two, 26th May. **Bulwer's Petrel** Meols/Moreton, Merseyside, 9th October. **Hooded Merganser** Ixworth, Suffolk, 7th May. **Gyr Falcon** Bembridge, Isle of Wight, 8th March. **Great Bustard** Heacham, Norfolk, two, 1st May. **Cream-coloured Courser** At sea, North Sea, 21st September. **Pallid Swift** Reculver, Kent, 13th November. **Bee-eater** Lochinver, Highland, 31st May. **Crag Martin** Oldbury, West Midlands, 9th August. **Olivaceous Warbler** Kelling, Norfolk, 4th May. **Subalpine Warbler** Bognor Regis, West Sussex, 5th September. **Orphean Warbler** Benington Marsh, Lincolnshire, 16th October. **Nutcracker** Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, two, 29th September.

1987

Gyr Falcon Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, 3rd February. **Black-winged Stilt** St Mary's, Scilly, seven, 27th April. **Terek Sandpiper** West Kirby, Merseyside, 5th April. **Pallas's Warbler** Durlston, Dorset, second individual, 21st-22nd October. **Bonelli's Warbler** Hengistbury Head, Dorset, 21st June. **Song Sparrow** Point of Air, Clwyd, 17th December.

1986

Ivory Gull Cley, Norfolk, 2nd or 3rd October.

1985

Black-winged Stilt Plymouth Hoe, Devon, 2nd July.

1984

Sooty Tern Spurn, Humberside, 30th September.

1983

Lesser Golden Plover Barbrook Reservoir and Middleton Tailings-lagoon, Derbyshire, 6th August; Ogston Reservoir, Derbyshire, 29th October.

1982

Rufous Turtle Dove Barn's Ness, Lothian, 2nd October.

1981

Whiskered Tern Scotsman's Flash, Greater Manchester, 10th August.

1978

Isabelline Wheatear Cley, Norfolk, 12th September.

1976

Desert Warbler Crowle Moors, Humberside, 27th August.

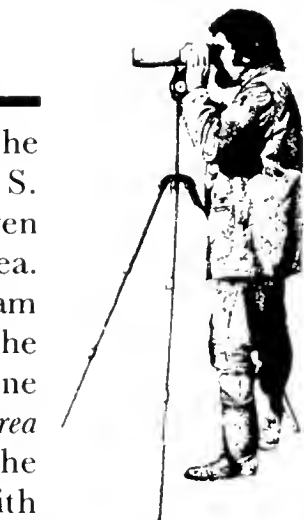
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Seventy-five years ago...

'MR W. J. E. Dawson states that he discovered a pair of *Lanius collurio* near Athlone about the end of April, 1916. Mr Dawson has kindly sent us further details of the birds he saw and we feel sure from what he says that he was mistaken in his identification of these birds as Red-backed Shrikes.' (*Brit. Birds* 10: 145, November 1916).

Notes

Hérons alighting on sea On 31st August 1985, from the *Zuluf* offshore oilfield in the Persian Gulf, N. J. S. Drummond and I observed a migrating flight of seven Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea* flying very low over the sea. One of them suddenly alighted on the sea surface, swam for a few seconds, and then took off and rejoined the others. On 30th September 1985, at the same site, one individual from a flock of 12 Grey Herons *A. cinerea* migrating low above the water behaved in exactly the same way. On both occasions, the weather was fine, with good visibility and a slight sea running. There are no shoals in this area, and the average water depth is over 45 m; the bottom is therefore invisible. There are, however, numerous platforms and wellheads close at hand, which the herons could have interpreted as small islets indicating possible wading depths. We wonder if, in each case, one individual was 'elected' to sound out the water depth.



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Derek Goodwin has commented: 'I feel sure that no "election" was involved. Grey Heron usually alights on land and then walks to, and often into, the water when seeking food . . . but it would be interesting to know why the individuals "fell out" and alighted. Perhaps they were investigating *for themselves*.' EDS

Insect-feeding by Marsh Harriers The Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* usually hunts near ground level (Brown 1976; Cramp & Simmons 1980) and takes few insects (Thiollay 1968; Schipper 1973). The following account documents what we believe to be the first record of Marsh Harriers catching insects in flight, and relates this to information on insects in winter prey remains from Doñana, southwest Spain.

Shortly before midday on 6th February 1987, in fine weather following several rainy days, approximately 2 km from the Palacio of Doñana, a female Marsh Harrier at 15-30 m altitude was watched from some 40 m. Within seven minutes, she abruptly extended her talons three times; twice, she subsequently passed her talons forward to her bill, apparently to feed. The prey must have been small because, despite ideal observation conditions, we could not see it. At about the same time, from the same vantage, single female and male Marsh Harriers, a Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and a Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* were seen nearby; we suspect that these, and a loosely circling group of kites about 1 km away, were also catching flying insects.

Of 210 prey items identified from Marsh Harrier pellets collected at a Doñana roost in February 1984, five (2.4%) were insects. In a larger sample of 685 identified prey items from pellets collected in November, February and March, 29 (4.2%) were insects, of which 12 (41.3%) were ants (Formicidae)(JLG, unpubl.).

Insects seem to be more important in the diet of raptors in Doñana and southern Spain than at higher latitudes (see Herrera & Hiraldo 1976; Valverde 1984). Ants are well known to swarm after periods of rain, and, although we have no precise information on the emergence of such swarms in Doñana in 1987, the harrier we observed may have been exploiting such a temporarily abundant food source. Rain can reduce prey availability for raptors, and marked Red Kites in Doñana show reduced hunting activity and food intake in rainy weather (F. Hiraldo verbally). Insects which swarm after rain may be of particular importance as a food source.

The capture technique used, snatching with talons, and feeding in circling flight are similar to methods described for other raptors and noted by us for Red Kites, sometimes at greater heights, in winter in Doñana (see also Blanco *et al.* 1987).

Fellowships from the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias and financial support from CAYCIT project 944 are gratefully acknowledged. Observations were made during tenureship by AMJ of an honorary research fellowship from Aberdeen University. We are particularly grateful to Fernando Hiraldo and the staff of the Biological Station of Doñana for support.

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Great Skua killing Brent Goose On 18th October 1988, at Spurn Bird Observatory, North Humberside, I watched a Great Skua *Stercorarius skua* chasing a Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* and then forcing it down into the water. The skua then made repeated attacks at the goose's head, at the rate of one or two every minute. Although the goose made attempts to fend off its attacker, it did not try to fly again. In one attack, the Brent Goose was all but lifted clear of the water by its head. Finally, the skua, with wings raised, straddled the goose's back and drowned it. The skua was not seen to feed on its victim, and 15 minutes later it flew off out to sea. The whole episode lasted 20-30 minutes.

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The Great Skua's behaviour described here is fairly typical. *BWP* (vol. 3) includes Greylag Goose *Anser anser* and Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* among a long list of species killed by Great Skuas, so Brent Goose is not an unexpected victim. EDS

Feeding association of Slender-billed Gulls with Greater Flamingos

At midday on 5th May 1988, a day with bright sunshine and no wind, there were about 200 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*, 20 Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna*, ten Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, 70 Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei*, 50 Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus* and about 300 Little Gulls *L. minutus* in a saltwater lagoon at the salines of Aigues-Mortes on the Mediterranean coast of France. About 30 of the flamingos were feeding in deep water, with a group of 25 Slender-billed Gulls swimming close behind, 'picking' individual food items from the surface of the water. I presumed that the flamingos, while feeding on brine-shrimps *Artemia*, were making this food available to the gulls on the surface (the lagoon was rich in brine-shrimps).

As well as this instance of 'collective commensalism', other Slender-billed Gulls were feeding similarly on a one-to-one basis: one feeding flamingo being followed by one gull. I saw no other instances of commensalism in the remaining parts of the salines that I visited.

Feeding aggregations of flamingos, Shelducks, Avocets and other waders and gulls often occur on windy days, and usually close to the windward shore; under these conditions, brine-shrimps are brought to the surface or concentrated against the shore, and are therefore available to all species present. On such occasions, it is unlikely that one species is benefiting from the presence and feeding method of another.

As there are no references to this particular behaviour by Slender-billed Gulls in Glutz & Bauer (1982) or in Cramp & Simmons (1983), I asked other ornithologists to watch out for similar instances. Two months later, M. Smart informed me (*in litt.*) that on 13th July 1988, at Rades in northern Tunisia, he saw a group of ten adult Slender-billed Gulls feeding in association with about 40 Greater Flamingos, in exactly the same manner as those at Aigues-Mortes.

It seems likely that the feeding behaviour described above is not unusual. The breeding population of Slender-billed Gulls on the Mediterranean coast of France has increased in recent years, to about 300 pairs; as a result of this increase there are now more opportunities for observing their feeding behaviour in this region. JOHN G. WALMSLEY

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Sand Martin and Kingfisher nesting in peat-cuttings *BWP* gives no records of either Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* (vol. 5) or Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (vol. 4) breeding in the vertical faces of peat-cuttings. Details of Sand Martins exhibiting such behaviour, in Yorkshire, Somerset and Ireland, have, however, been summarised recently (*Naturalist* 108: 107), while Sand Martin nests in stacked peat have been recorded in Ireland (Sharrock, 1976, *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland*).

In 1974, in the South Yorkshire part of Thorne Moors, fish bones were found outside a hole bored into a 1.5-m-high face of cut peat, and a Kingfisher was seen to leave the hole on 3rd June. On 4th May 1975, there were remains of fish bones and fins in the hole, and fragments of white eggshell beneath it, but no evidence of young birds. On 26th June 1976, a Kingfisher was flushed from a second hole alongside the first, and later in the year an adult and juvenile were seen along the perimeter drain (Limbert, Mitchell & Rhodes, 1986, *Thorne Moors: Birds and Man*).

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Although peat-cuttings are not mentioned specifically as nesting sites of Kingfisher and Sand Martin, it should be noted that *BWP* deliberately does not list *all* aberrant nest sites for any species. EDS

Sand and House Martins eating whitewash flakes On 14th June 1988, while driving through Ballyporeen, Co. Tipperary, I saw several Sand Martins *Riparia riparia* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* on the ground beneath a whitewashed wall. At first, I thought that they were feeding on insects, but on closer inspection I noted that they were eating flakes of whitewash that had fallen from the wall. I assumed that they were taking advantage of a convenient supply of calcium for egg-shell production.

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Derek Goodwin has commented: 'I have seen Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus* in a public park aviary, where they were given no source of calcium, desperately fluttering up to the smooth whitewashed back of an open cage inside the aviary, pecking at the whitewash and eagerly eating any small flakes that they managed to dislodge: a proceeding, since they could not cling to the whitewashed surface, very costly in energy.' EDS

Redstarts attacking and wounding Little Owl On the evening of 14th June 1988, while carrying out a census of breeding Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* in the Bosley area of Cheshire, I was watching a pair of adult Redstarts feeding three recently fledged young among the lower branches of an old oak tree *Quercus* when I noticed a Little Owl *Athene noctua* some 20 m away on a fence post, taking a similar interest in the family party. At a time when all three fledglings were close together on one branch, the owl glided off its perch, flew straight at the family group and scattered the young as it landed among them, although failing to make contact with any individual. Both adult Redstarts immediately, and very noisily, attacked the owl with such ferocity that not only was the latter forced face down on the ground, but, with a further male Redstart from the neighbouring territory joining in, at one point two male Redstarts were actually perched on the back of the prostrate owl and delivering substantial pecks to its back and head. Within 10-15 seconds, the owl had recovered sufficiently to turn over, presenting its claws and bill, whereupon the Redstarts retreated noisily back into the tree canopy. After a further half minute, the owl took flight, landed back near its original perch and commenced vigorous preening. I could see from its plumage and displaced feathers

that it was bleeding from several wounds on its back and head. I have watched owls and raptors being mobbed by prey species and by other birds, such as crows *Corvus* or gulls *Larus*, but I have never observed a physical attack of such force on a bird of prey. It is also of interest that the male Redstart from the adjoining territory joined in the attack, the routine territorial behaviours forgotten in the attempt to drive off a common antagonist.

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Calls of Wood Warbler in response to probable ground predator The note by Vic Lewis on an unusual form of song by a Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* in the presence of a Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* (*Brit. Birds* 81: 646-647) prompts me to record the following. At about 04.00 GMT on 10th June 1987, in mature mixed woodland near West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset, my attention was drawn to two Wood Warblers which were fluttering, diving and calling over a patch of low, dense brambles in a glade. Almost certainly, a ground predator, probably a stoat *Mustela erminea* or a weasel *M. nivalis*, was present, but was well concealed from me by vegetation. Two types of call were heard from the Wood Warbler pair. The first was the normal anxiety note, sounding like the plaintive call of a Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, while the second was a repeated, hissing rasp. These urgent, rasping cries were given only in flight; if one of the warblers perched briefly on a nearby branch, it uttered the plaintive call. After a few minutes, the warblers ceased their fluttering and calling and started to feed their well-grown young in a nest a few metres away; presumably, the ground predator had left the area. The rasping cries, which had distinct hissing qualities, were sounds I had not heard previously from Wood Warblers. I was able to tape-record these calls, and a copy of the tape has been deposited at the British Library of Wildlife Sounds (reference number 18602).

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Interactions between Goldcrest and Firecrest On 29th November 1979, in mixed deciduous woodland at the Welsh Mountain Zoo, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd, I found a Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus* being pursued by a Goldcrest *R. regulus* through a thicket of rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*. Both birds were initially located by their calls, more frenzied than usual, and the Goldcrest was showing signs of agitation. The two passed by at surprising speed, the Goldcrest following the Firecrest relentlessly. On 30th November 1987, in mixed deciduous woodland at Aberogwen, Gwynedd, I again identified a Firecrest by its calls, and found an agitated Goldcrest in close attendance. On 10th November 1988, along a shrubby border in Chester Zoo, Cheshire, I came across a trio of Goldcrests behaving in an agitated manner and soon discovered a silent Firecrest to be the centre of their attention. In each instance, the Goldcrests' behaviour consisted of wing-flicking, tail-spreading and, most obvious of all, flaring of the crown feathers. The Firecrests' only apparent reactions

to the harassment were to move along at a sharper pace, although, in the final observation, the individual concerned appeared distinctly larger in size than the accompanying Goldcrests, as if fluffed out in a gesture suggestive of threat. In none of these encounters did I see any physical contact between the two species.

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Blue Tits with deformed bills The note by Geoffrey T. Newton on Blue Tits *Parus caeruleus* with bill deformities (*Brit. Birds* 81: 648-649) recalled observations which I made in my garden at Hinckley, Leicestershire, in 1969 and 1971 and recorded in my notebooks at the time.

During March 1969, a rather dirty-looking Blue Tit with a deformed bill occasionally visited my garden. It had both upper and lower mandibles extended in an upwards curve, the extension being thin and appearing rather flat in end-on views; the upper-mandible extension looked broad, flat and rounded at the tip, and the bill was thin at the juncture between normal bill tip and extension. The tit's behaviour seemed mostly normal, although it appeared timid in the presence of other Blue Tits, but it avoided peanuts and preferred to feed from a ball of food containing a mixture of nut chippings, fat, sunflower seeds and so on, suspended in a plastic net bag. It had some difficulty in dealing with larger pieces of food; sometimes it knocked off a small piece with the tip of its bill and caught this in the more normal basal part of its bill. After feeding, it wiped its bill on a twig, when the extension appeared strong and showed no signs of breaking. During 17th-18th March, I watched the tit closely as it fed on the food mixture: it turned its head to the left while dropping its right cheek, as if to see the food better; sometimes, when it caught a portion of food near the thin part of its bill, it flew to a perch in a lilac tree and carefully let the food down into the basal part of the bill, where the morsel was more easily cracked and eaten. On 31st, it attacked the food pudding as before, but this time it took pieces into the lilac tree and placed them under its toes; the lower-mandible extension was allowed to pass under the twig, while the food was pecked by the upper mandible and base of the lower. That Blue Tit was not seen again.

During January-November 1971, an adult Blue Tit visiting my garden had a bill about twice the normal length and with a slight gap between the mandibles. The tip of the upper mandible was curved sideways and downwards, while the lower mandible was slightly longer than the upper and slightly upturned at the tip, the two mandibles thus crossing at the tips. Its plumage was normal and it preened in the usual way. It made off from the feeder with quite large lumps of nut or biscuit. On 3rd January, it carried a peanut into the lilac, holding the nut in the middle of its bill; it then clasped the nut firmly between its toes and hammered at it rapidly with its bill, while performing very frequent bill-wiping. The tit seemed to have little difficulty in picking up suitably sized shelled peanuts, which it held between its mandibles with the curved tips wrapped around the nut.

It always took the nut into the lilac tree and held it firmly beneath its toes; it then gouged away at the nut, with its head slightly turned. The working part of the bill seemed to be the point where the mandibles crossed; as the tit worked, the squashed nut would move to the bill tip, so frequent bill-wiping occurred. In early September, this Blue Tit picked up tiny pieces of food from concrete slabs on the ground by turning its head to one side and using the side of its bill as a scoop; this may possibly not have allowed it to see the food, unless with the eye just above the ground. It also hung on the side of a wire peanut-feeder and took morsels of nut; it once took a piece to a twig in the lilac, placed it beneath its toes and pecked at it with head on one side. When feeding on potato, it used its bill in the normal manner, wiping it afterwards on the wood of a nestbox. On 3rd October, I placed a few peanuts on a sawn-off stump of the lilac, and the tit grasped a nut with its crossed mandible tips and flew off with it. This Blue Tit was not seen again after the end of November.

D. E. Pomeroy (*Brit. Birds* 55: 49-72) remarked that such bill deformities probably grow slowly, thus allowing the bird time gradually to learn adaptive ways of feeding. The 1969 Blue Tit must have been nine or ten months old, while the 1971 adult would have been at least 19 months old.

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Dr Ian Newton has commented as follows: "The interest of these observations is that, given an odd bill, birds can learn to feed in novel ways. This is instructive on how normal feeding behaviour develops—i.e. morphology predisposes the development of particular feeding methods. Without these odd bills, it would be hard to separate this from the alternative view, that the feeding actions of each species are wholly "instinctive".' EDs

Treecreepers foraging away from trees K. Peter's note on a Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* foraging on a treated larch fence (*Brit. Birds* 81: 649) prompts me to record three occasions, in Cricklade, Wiltshire, when I have seen this species feeding away from trees. On 25th February 1984, I watched a Treecreeper searching for food on the sides and under the eaves of our garden shed, and then on our garden fence (no Treecreepers are normally seen within 275 m of the garden). On 9th January 1985, one was seen 'wallcreeping' on the side of an old stone bridge, where it apparently found small food items among the patches of moss. These two sightings were during periods of cold weather in winter, but the third occurred during the breeding season: on 2nd June 1987, I watched a Treecreeper foraging on the side of a stone wall beside the River Thames; after a minute or so it caught a large insect resembling a mayfly (Ephemeroptera) and flew off, presumably to feed young.

Subsequently, on 27th July 1990, I have also observed a Treecreeper foraging on rocks at Scarlett Point, near Castletown, Isle of Man, many hundreds of metres from any trees.

ROBIN GRIFFITHS

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Treecreeper foraging on churchyard wall At 13.30 GMT on 1st March 1986, at Weston-under-Lizard, Shropshire, I saw a Treecreeper *Certhia*

familiaris foraging on a churchyard wall. It climbed in a zigzag within a vertical section about 40 cm wide until it reached the stone coping, before flying down diagonally to the bottom, each time moving along about 3 m. I watched this behaviour pattern 11 times, before the Treecreeper flew off over the highest part of the wall, which varies in height from 1.2 m to 2.7 m. The wall is of red brick and has many nooks and crannies in its surface. There was no lack of natural habitat in the area, with a wide variety of mature trees within only a few metres.

KEITH VERRALL

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The above two notes confirm the fact that Treecreepers will forage on surfaces other than trees. Any further notes or correspondence will be held on file for reference, but not published separately. EDS

Magpies nesting on television aerials The note by Brendan Kavanagh on Magpies *Pica pica* nesting on telegraph poles (*Brit. Birds* 80: 383) recalled the following. In July 1971, in the small fishing village of Scarsvåg at the North Cape, Norway, I noted that all the wooden houses had old-fashioned television aerials fixed to the roof-ridge, sticking up in an 'H' shape. I was surprised to see that three or four of the houses had Magpie nests built in their aerials, and recorded in my notebook that 'one nest was built under the gable end of a house and partly supported by the TV aerial'.

WILLIAM H. PAYN

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Letter

Identification of Meadow and Red-throated Pipits In a 'Mystery photographs' text (*Brit. Birds* 79: 34-40), the late P. J. Grant discussed the identification of Meadow *Anthus pratensis* and Red-throated Pipits *A. cervinus*, prompted by a series of photographs taken in Switzerland. The conclusions remained a little unclear, but most features fitted Meadow Pipit, although a 'cream-coloured breast' was mentioned as a contradictory point in favour of Red-throated. I have, however, in examining a series of 200 skins at the Universitets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark, found one March individual which in all aspects, including measurements and plumage features, matched Meadow Pipit, but showed a contrasting cream-coloured breast, clearly standing out against an otherwise normal greyish ground coloration to the rest of the pale parts on the underparts. Such a bird could easily be misidentified as Red-throated Pipit, but, on this individual, the breast coloration was less strikingly reddish than on an adult Red-throated. Nevertheless, it was the only individual that showed any clear contrast in underparts coloration: all other Meadow Pipits showed more-uniform pale (greyish brown, yellowish brown or pale grey) underparts.

Another feature on the Swiss 'Mystery photographs' bird clearly pointing towards Meadow Pipit is the rather pale ear-coverts, in slight contrast to the darker eye-stripe and traces of supercilium. Most Red-throated Pipits lacking red show more solidly brown ear-coverts, *darker* (on most, either more olive-tinged or warmer rusty-tinged) in coloration than the greyish brown, often rather pale ones found on Meadow Pipits, which have reminded at least one observer (Q. L. Slings, *Dutch Birding* 1: 119-120) of the ear-coverts of Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*. Many Meadow Pipits, however, show rather uniform ear-coverts.

Other head features may prove to be of value. Meadow Pipit often shows a rather 'clean' 'face', with only a hint of a paler supercilium. On the individuals showing a more prominent supercilium, it is usually pale greyish brown along its whole length, often matching the coloration of the palest part of the ear-coverts, making the darker eye-stripe stand out (see *Brit. Birds* 79: plates 38 & 39). On Red-throated, there is more often a clear supercilium, somewhat more warmly coloured (creamy-white to white, often with a rusty tinge) and usually paler behind the eye.

The moustachial stripe is variable on both species, but is often rather thick. Although there may have been some variation, photographs and skins reveal that on a number of Red-throated Pipits it penetrates towards the lores, creating a diffuse half-moon-shaped spot (see, e.g., *Brit. Birds* 79: plate 42).

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At our invitation, David Britton has commented as follows: 'Peter Grant's text, and much of Klaus Malling Olsen's discussion, concerns winter-plumaged birds. As Olsen indicates, the darker ear-covert feature applies only to 'non red' individuals. By March, when Olsen's cream-breasted Meadow Pipit was obtained, Red-throated Pipits have already acquired their breeding throat and upper-breast coloration as a result of their unusually early pre-breeding partial moult. In extreme cases, breeding-plumaged Red-throated Pipits have very pale ear-coverts, almost concolorous with throat and supercilium. The speculative moustachial/lores point also relates only to winter plumage, but, as the strength of loreal and malar-stripe markings varies with angle (compare *Brit. Birds* 79: plates 38 and 40), this may be of limited value.

'Meadow Pipits with throat, and sometimes upper breast, even more strikingly marked than Olsen's bird, and strongly recalling Red-throated Pipit, occasionally occur in northeast England in March and early April. They often coincide with small influxes of "Scandinavian" Rock Pipits *A. littoralis petrosus*. This suggests Scandinavian origin, but nominate *A. p. pratensis* populates the species' entire European range (excluding that of *A. p. theresae* of Iceland) and differences between English and Scandinavian Meadow Pipits are slight and clinal.

'An extreme example of a "red-throated" Meadow Pipit was photographed by chance at Greenabella Marsh, Cleveland, in March 1990. The photographs were later examined by birders and initially identified as Red-throated Pipit in full summer plumage. It has a remarkable apricot or pale-brick-red throat extending patchily onto the entire breast, which is well covered with Meadow-Pipit-like dark spots and short streaks. These do not form the long lines characteristic of Red-throated Pipit, the crown is quite pale and the supercilium and submoustachial areas are white. It was photographed, facing the camera, perched on a tall plant, suggesting the holding of territory (both species perch above ground far more in breeding territory than on passage). This, and the date, provided the initial clues as to its true identity. Great caution is clearly required when identifying Red-throated Pipit early in spring.'

Colour prints of the extreme Cleveland individual were supplied for our perusal, but were not suitable for publication. EDS



ICBP news

In response to a request from the International Council for Bird Preservation, we shall be publishing a regular short feature on international bird conservation topics, in addition to those which we have always included in 'News and comment'. EDS

Vietnam—rich in birds, poor in protection Vietnam is full of excitement for an ornithologist, the pleasure of which is dulled by the current status of, and prospects for, the wildlife. The once-widespread forests, with their very diverse avifauna, have been devastated by both war and human pressures, and there are now 34 bird species that are classified as threatened.

Aware of the situation, the Vietnamese government has plans for a network of protected areas, and has formed a Forest Birds Working Group (FBWG) which, in collaboration with the ICBP, has been gathering crucial information on the country's little-known birds. This spring, Jonathan Eames and Craig Robson from the ICBP returned to Vietnam for the third time to work with Dr Nguyen Cu and Truong van La of the FBWG. The team focused its efforts on surveying threatened species and identifying areas for inclusion in the proposed protected-areas system.

Possibly the most important discovery was of three displaying White-shouldered Ibises *Pseudibis davisoni* in Nam Bai Cat Tien National Park. This little-known species was once widespread in Southeast Asia, but has declined or disappeared from much of its range, and the only recent records were from Kalimantan, Indonesia.

The ibises were found in the same area as that in which the team last year found White-winged Duck *Cairina scutulata*—the first record of the species in Vietnam for nearly 60 years. Although clearly of great international significance and within a national park, these wetlands are severely threatened by disturbance from fishermen. Conflict between the park staff and the fishermen is intense, and earlier this year led to a shoot-out in which a park guard and a fisherman were killed. Such incidents demonstrate only too well the complex difficulties frequently facing conservation in inhabited areas.

Another exciting find was an undescribed fulvetta *Alcippe*, on a previously unexplored mountain in forest near Da Lat. The area has the greatest degree of avian diversity in Indo-China, with four endemic species and perhaps 40 endemic subspecies. The taxonomic status of the team's discovery awaits confirmation. The expedition was also able to locate Black-hooded Laughingthrush *Garrulax milleti* and Pale-capped Pigeon *Columba punicea*, and to confirm the presence of Crested Argus *Rheinartia ocellata*. Fortunately, these highland forests are not imminently threatened, but it is vital that a protected area is established on the plateau as soon as possible.

News of Edwards's Pheasant *Lophura edwardsi* is not so encouraging. Endemic to central Vietnam, the species was originally collected from lowland forest in the coastal plain of the country. Sadly, during two weeks of searching, the team did not find any habitat suitable for the pheasant, and concluded that it has almost certainly become extinct in the southern part of its range.

Results of the surveys will be used by the FBWG and the ICBP to recommend to the Vietnamese government areas of highest priority for birds, and those most in need of protection.

GEORGINA GREEN

ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ

Fieldwork action

BTO news

Regional Development Officers During 1992-93, the BTO will be setting up a new regional network. This will consist of BTO members keen to promote the BTO at the local level in a systematic way. The new volunteers will be called Regional Development Officers (RDOs)

and will work alongside the existing network of 133 Regional Representatives. The RDOs will take the pressure off the RRs, who will be left to concentrate on organising the survey work co-ordinated by the BTO. The RDOs' main task will be to maintain the interest of existing members and to recruit new ones. They will do this by organising a local programme of events, raising the Trust's profile, liaising with the local press and other media, and forming a local cell of BTO activists. RDOs do not need to be expert birders, but they will be very enthusiastic about the work of the BTO and be extrovert characters who get on well with other people. A small handful of Regional Reps will retain both functions. We shall be starting to recruit in a few key areas, but if you are keen to start on this work, to promote the BTO and to increase its profile then contact Paul Green at BTO HQ to see if there is a vacancy in your region.

PAUL GREEN

BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU

Mystery photographs

172 A brief glance at the bird in plate 223 (repeated here) and the brain whirrs into action. Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*? No; what about a Siberian vagrant? It looks a bit like that Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* on Fair Isle (*Brit. Birds* 82: 607, plate 366), but no, it's not that either. How about a Nearctic vagrant? Plenty of choice there. Or an escaped cage-bird? The possibilities are endless.



When confronted by a strange bird, there is the temptation to try to put a name to it at once, or at least instantly to narrow the choice to a handful of species. Better by far, however, to look at it slowly, carefully and analytically.

The bill and general structure of this bird and its posture should have led you firmly towards the finches (Fringillidae). Apart from its white head, there is something horribly familiar about the rest of the bird's plumage, such as those distinctive white wing-bars. Yes, it is one of the UK's commonest birds: the humble Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*. This individual was photographed by Eddie Franklin in Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland, in April 1990.

An albinistic individual such as this can create all sorts of identification problems and the most dreadful howlers, especially if views are brief on a wet, windy day with migrants around and every oddity a potential vagrant. There is less problem at the garden birdtable, but even there such birds create problems for *BB* readers, as evidenced by the small but regular flow of descriptions, drawings and photographs of problem birds sent in by puzzled observers seeking advice.

There is one lesson from this atypical mystery photograph: not every exotic-looking bird is a rarity.

DAVE ALLEN

c/o RSPB, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 4QT, Northern Ireland



277. Mystery photograph 173.
Identify the species.
Answer next month

Announcements

To Thailand with 'BB' There are still spaces available on the one-week/two-week/three-week trip to Thailand during 16th February to 10th March 1992. Guaranteed no more than eight people in the group, to be led by Thailand's top birders: *A Guide to the Birds of Thailand* author Phil Round and artist Kamol Komolphalin, together with *BB*'s Tim Sharrock. Write or telephone for details to David Fisher, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

Books in British BirdShop New books this month are: Alerstam *Bird Migration*, Bolund *Nest Boxes for the Birds of Britain and Europe*, Clements *Birds of the World: a check list*, Dean *The Natural History of Walney Island*, Dymond *The Birds of Fair Isle*, Finlayson *Birds of the Strait of Gibraltar*, Skerrett & Bullock *A Birdwatcher's Guide to Seychelles* and Warham *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems*.

Please make use of the British BirdShop order form on pages xv & xvi.

Requests

New computer, new labels, longer reference number The staff in *BB*'s circulation department can work more efficiently and speedily if you can quote your *BB* reference number (printed at the top right-hand side of your address label). Our new computer generates longer reference numbers (e.g. 'BBSEAC 9010A06' instead of 'EAC 9010A6'). It does not matter whether you quote your old number or your new one, but it is a big help if you give us one or the other. Thank you.

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Red Kite Reintroduction Project A further 20 Swedish Red Kites *Milvus milvus* were released in Scotland from 27th July 1991. These birds are in addition to the previous releases of six in 1989 and 19 in 1990. The 1991 individuals are carrying yellow wing-tags with letters from E to Z (excluding I and O); 1989 wing-tags are orange; and 1990 tags blue. The RSPB would be grateful if observers would report all sightings by telephone, with location and, if possible, wing-tag colour and letter, to either Dr Tim Stowe or Duncan Orr-Ewing at the North Scotland Regional Office (0463 81) 496, so that the information can be followed up immediately.

Wing-tagged Hen Harriers As part of a population study of the species, young Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* were again wing-tagged this summer on their breeding grounds in Scotland and Wales. Each bird is fitted with two tags, one on each wing, and these are distinctly coloured and bear a number or letter. Any report of tagged harriers, however scanty the details, would be gratefully received by Brian Etheridge, RSPB, Munloch, Ross-shire IV8 8ND.



Reviews

Bird Migration. By Thomas Alerstam. Translated by David A. Christie. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. 420 pages; two black-and-white plates; 137 line diagrams; 31 tables. £55.00.

The seasonal comings and goings of migrant birds are among the most stimulating events of the ornithological calendar. Although aware of the consequences of such activity, how many

of us stop to think how or why these events occur? Why do some species migrate by day and others by night? Why do so many summer migrants scrape a winter existence in the inhospitable Sahel zone when just a few hundred kilometres to the south lie lush West African rainforests? This book provides a fascinating insight into the varied lifestyles of migrant birds, explaining how migration is an inevitable consequence of the ecological constraints imposed upon them and its relationship with other aspects of life history, such as reproductive rates, sexual maturity and moult.

This book was first published in Swedish in 1982. Population estimates have been updated and extra paragraphs inserted to report on the most important research findings made in the intervening period. The book is split into three sections. The first covers the ecology, life history and migratory habits of selected species of birds, all well known to British birdwatchers and each chosen to illustrate a different migration strategy. After reviewing methods used to study migration, the next section investigates flight behaviour, fuel economy, flocking and the influence of wind and weather, including a discussion of wind drift and vagrancy. The final section deals with orientation and navigation, currently the subject of intensive research, but results are conflicting and much remains to be discovered. The use of numerous line-diagrams facilitates understanding of more technical aspects of the book.

The book is packed with information, fascinating facts abound: the intestine of a Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* doubles in weight in winter when its diet is switched from insects to seeds; individual Nutcrackers *Nucifraga caryocatactes* store up to 30,000 Cembra pine seeds in caches for winter food; Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonora* breeding in the Mediterranean and north west Atlantic kill two million migrants each autumn. There are few factual errors, but I suspect that some of the author's ideas, particularly in those areas where research remains inconclusive, will be challenged. I would like to have seen more discussion on the movements undertaken by tropical species.

Throughout, the author conveys a great passion for his subject matter, and the book is very readable and can easily be dipped into. There is no comparable work currently available, and I thoroughly recommend this book to anyone fascinated by the spectacle of migration. Unfortunately, the cost seems a trifle steep for what is a comparatively slim volume, and I suspect that many will opt to borrow a library copy rather than purchase their own.

PAUL V. HARVEY

The Birds of Japan. By Mark A. Brazil. Illustrated by Masayuki Yabuuchi. Christopher Helm Ltd, London, 1991. 466 pages; six colour plates; 65 line-drawings; 174 distribution maps. £35.00.

This book documents the status and range of Japanese birds and is the first attempt to treat the subject since *The Birds of Japan: their status and distribution*, by O. L. Austin and N. Kuroda (1953). The area examined comprises all territories presently administered by Japan, from northern Hokkaido to the Senkaku Islands in the westernmost Nansei Shoto (the chain of islands between Kyushu and Taiwan) and the Ogasawara and Iwo islands in the south. Pelagic waters are included, but the Soviet-occupied southern Kuriles are not. A total of 583 species, including ten which are either extinct or extinct within Japan, and 11 established exotics, are treated.

The main aim has been to review contemporary status and distribution, but historical changes are treated in detail, where appropriate. Happily, the somewhat hypnotic series of dates and locations, which are necessarily central to any work on status, are frequently relieved by a text which provides much to capture the reader's interest.

General sections provide brief introductions to the customary topics: situation, topography, seasonal climate, notable weather phenomena, habitats, sketches of Japan's ten best birding areas and background ornithology. The last category comprises sections offering broad 'ornithological orientation', treating the complex zoogeography of the Japanese avifauna, trends in regional distribution, changes in status, migration and the history of Japanese ornithology. These accounts are especially valuable, since such information has long remained largely unavailable to most non-Japanese ornithologists. The species accounts, comprising most of the book, are extremely detailed and extensively referenced.

They examine breeding and non-breeding distribution, the timing, frequency and volume of movements, specific records, and trends. Issues inadequately understood and topics requiring further research are spotlighted and discussed. Endemic, scarce and threatened species are extensively treated. The expansive species-accounts summarise almost everything that a visiting birder might need to know to locate the species. The texts include information on a wide range of subjects, such as breeding biology, habitat, ecology, behaviour and vocalisations, taxonomy, migration routes, and the symbolic role played by certain species in Japanese culture and mythology. Distribution maps depict seasonal ranges, record locations for most vagrant and accidental species and migration routes. Possible additions to the Japanese list and currently unestablished exotics are mentioned in appendices.

The emergence of birdwatching as a popular leisure pastime in Japan has enabled a much-improved understanding of patterns of occurrence, especially amongst scarce migrants. The perceived status of a large number of species has changed dramatically in recent decades, particularly over the last ten years. A few examples best illustrate how badly an update of the Japanese avifauna was needed. The fate of populations has ranged from catastrophic decline (e.g. Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* and Japanese Quail *Coturnix japonica*) to vigorous expansion (e.g. White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*). The apparent status of some transient or wintering waders (e.g. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Euryorhynchus pygmeus*, Wandering Tattler *Heteroscelus incanus*), certain wintering gulls (e.g. Saunders's Gull *Larus saundersi*) and numerous scarce migrant passerines has been entirely revised over the last decade. Certain vagrants unknown as 'Japanese' birds in 1953 have now been recorded a surprising number of times (e.g. Savannah Sparrow *Ammodramus sandwichensis*). Many new developments are so recent that more-extensive series of records will be required before a clear picture can emerge. Notable events include the discovery of Okinawa Rail *Gallirallus okinawae*, described as a species new to science in 1981, and widespread recognition that Amami Woodcock *Scolopax mira* is a good species, quite different in structure, plumage and behaviour from Woodcock *S. rusticola*. Populations of several scarce seabirds (e.g. Red-faced Cormorant *Phalacrocorax urile*, Spectacled Guillemot *Cephus carbo*, Tufted Puffin *Lunda cirrhata*) have undergone alarming declines. Recent taxonomic studies propose Ryukyu Serpent Eagle *Spilornis perplexus*, Ryukyu Scops Owl *Otus elegans* and Amami Thrush *Zoothera amami* as good species, while Owston's or Amami Woodpecker, currently treated as a race of White-backed Woodpecker *Dendrocopos leucotos owstoni*, endemic on Amami-oshima, apparently has good credentials, but awaits attention. Even a previously unknown flyway—an autumn passage of Chinese Goshawk *Accipiter soloensis* from the Korean Peninsula through Kyushu and the Nansei Shoto—has been discovered.

The text is thorough, comprehensive and extensively referenced, while 60 black-and-white drawings, scattered throughout the book, and beautifully executed colour paintings of 35 Japanese/East Asian specialities by Masayuki Yabuuchi, make it most attractive. The paintings are, I believe, the finest collection of illustrations of these species available.

If reviewers are expected to point to faults and shortcomings, then I should mention that introductory lines relating to Redwing *Turdus iliacus* reappear, two species later, under Stub-tailed (or Short-tailed) Bush Warbler *Cettia squameiceps*. Consequently, an unknown amount of text for the latter is absent. An erroneous bird name, surrounded by a blank area, positioned in the centre of the map for Black-tailed Gull *Larus crassirostris*, presumably results from an errant map-label becoming caught up in the production process. Taken together, these points invite speculation that the final proofs received hasty treatment, but there are apparently no other major examples of associated errors. My only other quibble concerns the lack of a summary of extralimital range for each species. One might not expect to need to turn elsewhere for information on: from where endemic breeders such as Japanese Night Heron *Gorsachius gossagi* are migrating into the region, or where the (somewhat misnamed) Japanese Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon*, which has perished in Japan, remains extant. Many beginners using the book, especially, I suspect, in Japan itself, would have found it helpful if vagrants from North America had been distinguished from those of Eurasian origin. Similarly, it is difficult to achieve the best interpretation of mapped vagrant record distributions without information on broad continental ranges.

These points are, however, of little significance, given that this book justly deserves the title 'milestone' or 'landmark'. It will be a compulsory reference for anyone interested in the birds of Palearctic Eastern Asia for the foreseeable future.

ROD MARTINS

The Natural History of Walney Island. By Tim Dean. Faust Publications, Burnley, 1990. 304 pages; 48 colour photographs; 100 line-drawings; 2 maps. Paperback £20.00 (now £11.99).

This excellent publication reviews all that is known about the natural history of this varied and fascinating island, one of England's largest. Many groups, ranging from the intertidal invertebrates and seaweeds through to beetles, plants and fungi, are covered, but, as might be expected, coverage of birds takes up almost two-thirds of the book. Records for the island are painstakingly documented right back to the last century, with some fascinating details of tern *Sterna*, gull *Larus* and Eider *Somateria mollissima* breeding populations. Other species are fully documented, drawing on the 26 years of records of the South Walney Bird Observatory to indicate population trends and occurrences. One interesting and commendable feature is a short, but stimulating explanation of how and why the available counts and records are presented, an example that could usefully be copied by other checklist authors. Besides an introduction to the island and the two Cumbria Wildlife Trust reserves, there are two very readable accounts covering the ornithological year: one details the whole island and the other the well-watched South Walney Reserve. Details of ringing totals and occurrences of rare birds are all included, even the trapping and sighting times of rarities, which leads the author to suggest, surprisingly, that late morning or early afternoon is the time to visit Walney for rarities. Maps of the island are included, but the one for South Walney would be more useful if a key and the visitor route had been included. The author is to be congratulated on producing such a well-researched and exhaustive account. Well produced, with some attractive black-and-white sketches and excellent colour photographs, it is a must for all visitors to Walney, and deserves a wider readership. All those with interests in migration, seabirds and rarities will find it a worthwhile buy.

JOHN WILSON

The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems. By John Warham. Academic Press, London, 1990. 448 pages; 31 black-and-white plates, many graphs and line-drawings. Hardback £28.50.

The petrels (which in the context of this book means the Procellariiformes) must be regarded as one of the most successful groups of birds on the planet. In their various forms, they can survive in almost all parts of every ocean, and breed in locations ranging from hot deserts to the interior of Antarctica. Little is known about several species, including, in some instances, where they nest. Others are more familiar, and have attracted long-term studies. John Warham has spent much of his life studying the petrels, and the first part of this splendid book summarises the characteristics of the group, genus by genus, followed by a more detailed account of their breeding biology. The book does not cover in any detail the many arguments that taxonomists have about this group, but I am sure those who are worried about such aspects will find something to criticise in the classification used. Although summaries are presented in this book, a future volume will apparently cover such subjects as energetics, food, distribution and conservation. As with much of the rest of the Academic imprint, this book is aimed at the serious amateur or professional ornithologist. Scientific and English names are used interchangeably throughout the book, perhaps a little disconcerting until the reader has learned the former thoroughly.

This book is not one to read through from cover to cover, but will prove very useful for reference. The author has assembled a vast volume of information (as shown by the 40-page bibliography) and distilled it into the various categories covered by each chapter. Many aspects of their biology relate to the ability of the petrels to exploit a patchy and mobile food resource found in a hostile environment. Many readers will know of the petrels' ability to manufacture stomach oil, a relatively light and energy-rich food-storage medium, but how many know that petrel body temperatures are on average 3°C lower than that of other groups? This feature has the advantage that less energy is needed to keep the bird alive, but the disadvantage that it takes a comparatively long time to incubate the single egg. Contrasts and comparisons are drawn between various aspects of petrel breeding biology. I found this aspect most interesting, especially when the author allows himself a little speculation and suggests reasons behind various patterns or anomalies. I found the book hard going in places, but am pleased that there is now an extremely accessible, comprehensive volume on this fascinating group. I recommend it to all serious seabird ornithologists or those wanting a good summary of petrel biology.

MARK L. TASKER

News and comment

Robin Prytherch and Mike Everett

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'

Birdwatching Fair The third British Birdwatching Fair, held at Rutland Water from 30th August to 1st September 1991, was a resounding success, with over 9,000 people attending during the weekend. The five marquees were filled with the stands of societies such as the BTO and the Oriental Bird Club, magazines such as *Bird Watching* and ourselves, bird-tour companies such as 'Birdquest', 'Cygnus', 'Ornitholidays' and 'Sunbird', manufacturers such as the optical firms 'Carl Zeiss', 'Kowa' and 'Swarovski', booksellers, art displays, photographic agencies, individual artists, and everything that you can imagine connected with birdwatching. The throngs of people attending included most of the well-known names in British ornithology, from the suited organisers (Tim Appleton and Martin Davies) to the shorted Ian Lewington and the killed Ian Wallace. A splendid day out, and, if you didn't go this year, there will be another in 1992—put 4th-6th September in your diary now.

The *BB* stand was manned by Sheila Cobban, Ali Gathercole, Sue Holden, Erika Sharrock, Bonny Shirley and Sarah Shirley. The winners of bottles of champagne in our daily mystery photographs competition were Mrs E. L. Darling, Andrew Daykin and Philip Gibson.

Rarities Committee identification meeting

The BBRC* holds an annual meeting at which policy and other general matters are discussed (e.g. see *Brit. Birds* 84: 290-291). In most years, a second meeting takes place to research identification problems related to the Committee's current and anticipated work. The 1991 identification meeting was held on 3rd August at the British Museum (Natural History) at Tring. The BBRC is much obliged to the British Museum for this facility, and for allowing a wide sample of all relevant skins to be made available for study.

Discussion took place on Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* and Grey-

headed Albatross *D. chrysostoma* (and their separation when sub-adult and adult), Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* (compared with Gannet *S. bassana*), 'Black Brant' *Branta bernicla nigricans* (compared with Brent Goose *B. b. bernicla*), American Wigeon *Anas americana* (first-winter males), Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* (the separation of first-winter females and adult females), Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* (tail-pattern variation), Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (upperparts in summer), Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (ageing), Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (ageing of first-years and second-years), Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (identification of adult females), Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (females of the race *melanoleuca* in autumn and their separation from Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*), Red-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis* (identification of other than adult males), Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* (separation of the races *pallidirostris* and *homeyeri*), Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis home-manni exilipes* (compared with 'Mealy Redpoll' *C. flammea flammea*), Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (compared with Crossbills *L. curvirostra* with wing bars) and Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (compared with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*).

The Committee also looked at transparencies of rarities in 1990 and earlier years submitted since the previous identification meeting. Understandably, a number of these had not arrived in time to be circulated with the record. The meeting's mixture of studying skins, viewing transparencies and exchanging views on numerous topics, including identification, ageing and various matters of policy, resulted in a productive and thoroughly absorbing day. (*Contributed by Peter Lansdown*)

Falconry to be outlawed? Last July, the League Against Cruel Sports called for the abolition of falconry, branding it an ancient bloodsport. The League used a report into falconry which it commissioned from Peter

*  The work of the Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss—Germany

Robinson to support its opinion. Peter Robinson, formerly the Senior Investigations Officer of the RSPB, did not make a recommendation for abolition, but he did make a number of serious criticisms of how the Department of the Environment is handling the Government's Bird of Prey Registration Scheme. Peter used information provided by the RSPB to substantiate his thorough and detailed report, which made 13 recommendations to improve the present legislation. Unfortunately, some people have attributed calls for abolition of falconry to Peter Robinson and/or the RSPB. It is a pity that they take more notice of hearsay than of the written accounts.

Gill-net phone-in In view of a possible continuing toll of seabirds which unintentionally get caught up and die in synthetic gill nets, the RSPB is undertaking an investigation of their use around the coasts of England and Wales. A previous study into the use of gill nets around the southwest coast of England revealed that at least 1,800 birds had been drowned during 1988-91. If anyone has information about the use of gill nets and their effects on birds and other marine life, or witnesses an incident, they are urged to ring Sandy (0767) 680551 and ask for the Gill Net Hot-Line, or write to Dr Nancy Harrison, RSPB Marine Policy Officer, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL. All information received will be treated in the strictest confidence.

East Anglian conservation In summer 1991, 'Birdline East Anglia', which is run by Robin Chittenden and Dave Holman, made donations towards a new CB system at Cley Norfolk Naturalists' Trust Reserve, towards farmers setting aside part of their fields to create habitat for Stone-curlews *Burhinus oediacnemus*, and towards the University of East Anglia Talibu Expedition. East Anglian organisations which would appreciate a donation are invited to send written details of conservation projects in the East Anglian region (Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Essex and Bedfordshire). The money is raised by callers phoning in bird news to BEA's 24-hour answer-phone hot-line on Norwich (0603) 763388; if the information is then used on the main East Anglia Birdline message (0898 700245), BEA makes a donation to the conservation fund. Written requests should be made to Robin Chittenden at 65 Sandringham Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 3RZ.

Poisoning at bay In September, the Department of the Environment, in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, launched a new campaign to stop the illegal poisoning of wildlife. Increasing illegal use of pesticides is making a serious impact on many species — the Red Kite *Milvus milvus* being a sad, but classic example. Most of this activity stems from outdated, ingrained attitudes to predators, and the campaign hopes to bring a greater awareness of the problems and truths to the public and also to gamekeepers. Perhaps the campaign will also especially target landowners, who are, surely, the most important people to be made aware? This campaign deserves every support and we wish it all success.

Jackdaws may spread infection David Howes has sent us details of an interesting note in *The Lancet* of 12th May 1990. It gives an account of the occurrence of 58 cases of campylobacter enteritis, identified over a three-month period in Gateshead. Most of the victims could remember, in the week before onset of symptoms, drinking cold milk from bottles whose tops had been pecked by birds, and, furthermore, milk was the only common food in all cases. Subsequent observations revealed that Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* were attacking the milk bottles. Damaged bottles were inspected by the Public Health Laboratory, and *Campylobacter jejuni* (the most commonly reported cause of acute diarrhoea in the UK since 1981) was isolated. Undamaged bottles were not contaminated. Wild birds constitute an extensive reservoir of *C. jejuni*. The full reference, for those who wish to know more, is: HUDSON, S. J., SOBO, A. O., RUSSEL, K., & LIGHTFOOT, N. F. 1990. Jackdaws as potential source of milk-borne *Campylobacter jejuni* infection. *The Lancet* (1990): 1160.

New Chairman of JNCC On 5th September, the Earl of Selborne, KBE, FRS, took over from Professor Sir Frederick Holliday as the new Chairman of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

This is a key position for conservation in Britain, since the JNCC co-ordinates the work of the three national conservation bodies created when the Nature Conservancy Council was hung, drawn and quartered (or, rather, 'thirded') to form English Nature, the Nature Conservancy Council for Scotland and the Countryside Council for Wales (*Brit. Birds* 82: 629-630; 83: 36; 84: 396).



New Guernsey stamps The Guernsey Post Office has published new sets of 1st and 2nd class stamps which will promote the interests of nature conservation in the Bailiwick. The stamps show some plants and birds of L'ere Shingle Bank, Guernsey — a nature reserve on the west coast of the island, and the best surviving example of a shingle bank on the island. The designs of both values are of particular interest as they spread across a strip of five stamps and yet each stamp, when separated, is a satisfying design in itself; they have been designed by Wendy Bramall. The 1st class (21p) stamps show typical vegetation and the 2nd class (15p) stamps five species of bird, all waders. The latter are, left to right, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, all of which can be seen at L'ere Shingle Bank and either breed or occur commonly on Guernsey. Turnstone numbers in winter are of international importance. The stamps were issued in October, in sheets of 20.

New IWC Director The Irish Wildbird Conservancy has appointed Dr Micheal O'Briain as Director, in succession to the recently appointed Jenny Haines (*Brit. Birds* 83: 340), who resigned for personal reasons in June. We send Dr O'Briain our best wishes for a satisfying and successful time at the reins of the IWC team.

New 'IWC News' Editor Long-time friend of *BB*, Bobbie Reeners has given up the editorship of *IWC News*. We feel sure that her enthusiasm and energy will by now have been harnessed somewhere in ornithology or conservation. Her successor is Coilin MacLochlainn. The IWC address is Rutledge House, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland.

Top repellent In tests on nearly 50 insect repellents, 'Wildlife Stick', produced by BCB International Ltd, was awarded a 'Best Buy' accolade by the Consumers' Association in its magazine *Which?* Repellent sticks were reported to have the longest staying power, as well as being the easiest to carry around. 'Wildlife Stick' contains a high concentration of diethyltoluamide, said by *Which?* to give the most effective protection against midges and mosquitoes. 'Wildlife Sticks' retail for around £1.30 for 20g and are available from many retail and camping shops. Scotland, Iceland and Canada, here we come!

Who has been subscribing to 'BB' the longest? The late Horace Alexander (obituary: *Brit. Birds* 83: 160-162) had subscribed to *BB* since vol. 1 no. 1, achieving a record (we think) of 82 years four months. Who is now our longest-standing supporter? Is it you? Please write and tell us. There must be quite a number of readers who started with *BB* in the 1930s. Are there any who have subscribed continuously since the 1920s or even the 1910s?

Silly corner A. J. Welch has drawn our attention to a letter published in *The Independent*:

'Sir: I write as a puffin from Skokholm who was made aware of your recently published photo by Ian Ball (10 July), under which the caption read "the birds catch eels in their serrated bills as they fly just above the water".

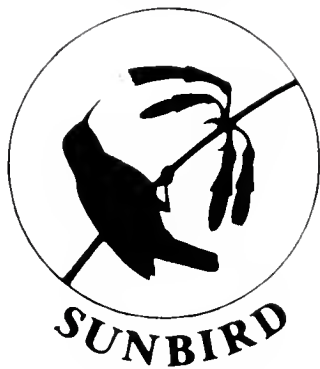
'Unfortunately, the eels do not jump out of the water for us, we actually catch them under water. Perhaps you could advise your readers of this; otherwise we might be inundated with visitors looking for flying sand eels and aqua-batic puffins.'

The letter was signed by 'Mr Fratercula arctica', with the address of Dyfed Wildlife Trust, Haverfordwest, Dyfed.

Well done Dyfed Wildlife Trust, and *The Independent*.

Monthly marathon

Sponsored by



That blotchy-breasted passerine (plate 168) was named as a whole range of blotchy-breasted passerines:

Cyprus Warbler <i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>	(25%)
Thrush Nightingale <i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	(18%)
Black/Red-throated Thrush <i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	(13%)
Gray-cheeked Thrush <i>Catharus minimus</i>	(10%)
Veery <i>C. fuscescens</i>	(6%)
River Warbler <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	(5%)
Barred Warbler <i>S. nisoria</i>	(4%)
Fieldfare <i>T. pilaris</i>	(3%)

with a few votes each for Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Rock Pipit *A. petrosus*, Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni*, Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* and Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*.

Although the majority of entrants got it wrong, the most-frequently named species was the correct answer. This Cyprus Warbler was photographed by Michael Tarrant in Israel in March 1987.

This was the thirteenth hurdle in the current, fifth 'Marathon', but nobody has yet achieved better than four correct identifications in a row*, so we are still some way from finding the next winner of a SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. The next hurdle appears on plate 278. Have a go!

For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.



278. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (sixteenth stage: photograph number 65). Identify the species. *Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue*, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th December 1991

*Fourteen contestants are currently tied on four-in-a-row sequences: G. P. Catley (Lincolnshire), P. A. Clark (Hertfordshire), A. R. Dean (West Midlands), R. J. Fowling (Cambridgeshire), Axel Halley (Germany), Roy Hargreaves (Hertfordshire), C. D. R. Heard (Berkshire), Martin Helin (Finland), Erik Hirschfeld (Bahrain), Hannu Jännes (Finland), P. G. Lansdown (South Glamorgan), Pekka J. Nikander (Finland), Dave Nurney (Isle of Wight) and Jouni Riihimäki (Finland).

Special announcement

The Peter Grant Memorial Award In celebration of the life and work of the late Peter Grant, who was Chairman of the Rarities Committee during 1976-82 and a member of the *British Birds* Editorial Board during 1979-87, the Trustees of the Peter Grant Memorial Trust have announced a new award which aims to 'stimulate birders to produce articles of a high standard on matters of identification.' Prizes will be awarded for the best papers or other articles (of any length, but written in English) published during the year, in two categories: (1) Palearctic, with prizes of £500 and £150, and (2) Nearctic, with prizes of \$1,000 and \$300. Entries will be submitted on the authors' behalf by the editors of the journals in which the papers or articles are published, and the first awards will be made in March 1993, relating to those published in 1992. The Award is sponsored by the American bird-tour company *Wings*, with which Peter Grant was associated. For further information, and for a copy of the guidance notes for prospective authors and editors, write (enclosing a SAE) to Mrs D. Grant, 14 Heathfield Road, Ashford, Kent TN24 8QD.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 13th September to 17th October 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* Loch Inbhair (Central), 14th October.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* Martins Mere (Lancashire), 4th-5th October.

Sora *Porzana carolina* St Mary's (Scilly), at least 15th-16th October.

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* Exnaboe (Shetland), 17th September to 2nd October.

Sociable Plover *Chettusia gregaria* Chatteris/Somersham (Cambridgeshire), 6th-7th October.

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* Clonakilty/Rosscarbery (Co. Cork), 19th September.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* Dursley Island (Co. Cork), 18th-25th September.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* Found dead, North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 25th September.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* At least ten during 10th-15th October.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* North Ronaldsay, 14th-15th October.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Gugh, St Agnes (Scilly), 15th-16th October.

Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* Sumburgh, 9th-12th October; Lerwick (Shetland), 17th.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* Port Henderson (Highland), 26th September; Portland Bill (Dorset), 9th-12th October; Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), 10th-13th; Lowestoft (Suffolk), 12th.

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* Brora (Highland), 27th-29th September.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* St Mary's, 8th October.

Gray-cheeked Thrush *C. minimus* St Agnes, 22nd-26th September and 16th October; Loop Head (Co. Clare), 13th.

Eye-browed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* St Mary's,

12th-13th October; Tresco (Scilly), 15th-16th.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle, 28th-29th September, 2nd-3rd, 5th and 10th October; Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 29th September.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* Freshly dead, Galley Head Lighthouse (Co. Cork), 13th October.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* St Mary's, 23rd-24th September.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* Flamborough Head (Humberside), 13th-16th October.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* At least seven during 12th-16th October.

Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi* At least 18 during 5th-15th October, including one inland, trapped at Priory Country Park (Bedfordshire), on 12th.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Blakeney Point, 10th October; Flamborough Head, 13th-16th.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Priory Country Park, 18th-19th September; two, Sandwich Bay (Kent), 9th-10th October; two or three, Chapel St Leonards (Lincolnshire), 14th-15th October.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* Dungarvan (Co. Waterford), 22nd-24th September.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* At least 11 during 3rd-17th October.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* At least six during 22nd September to 16th October.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* Fair Isle, 30th September.

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* North Ronaldsay, 12th-13th October; female, Flamborough Head, 13th.

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Soar Warren (Devon), 17th-23rd September; St Agnes, 8th October; St Mary's, 12th-14th.

For the latest, up-to-date news, phone 'Twitchline' on 0898-884-501

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We are grateful to National Bird News for supplying information for this news feature.

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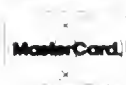
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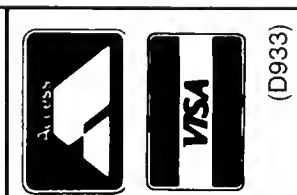
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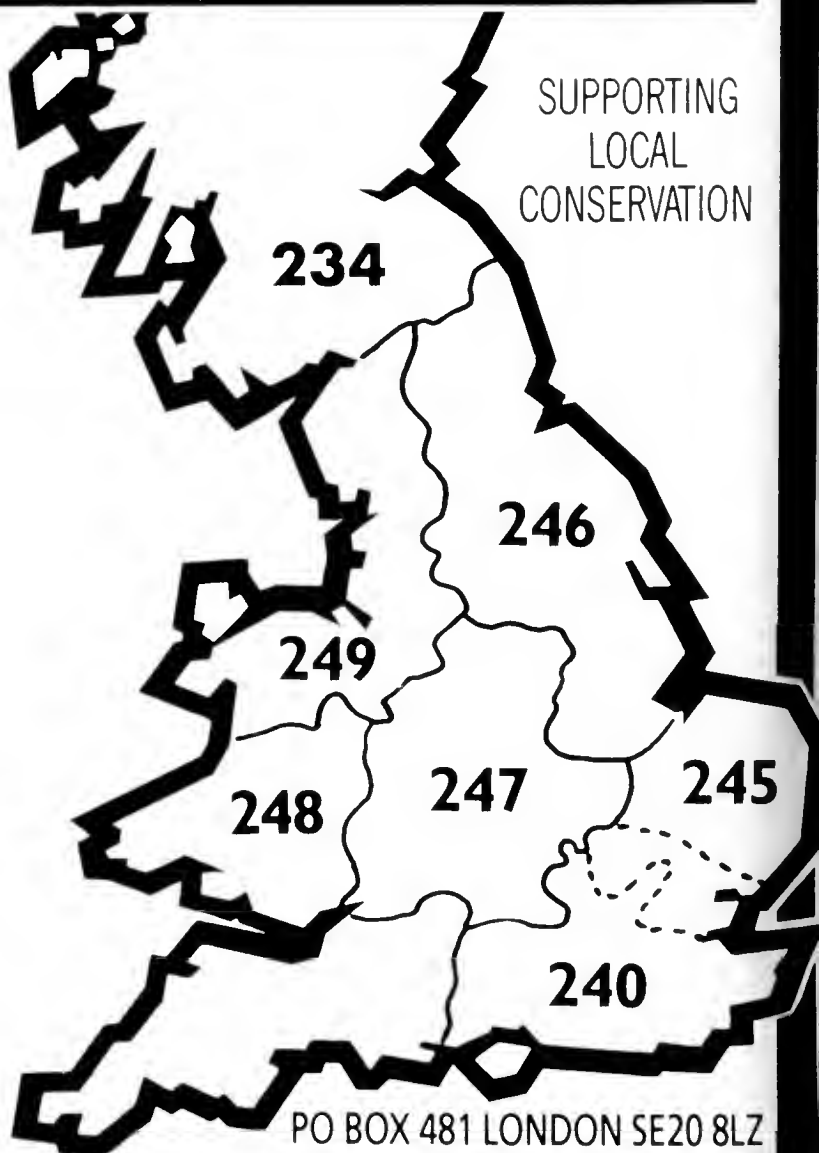
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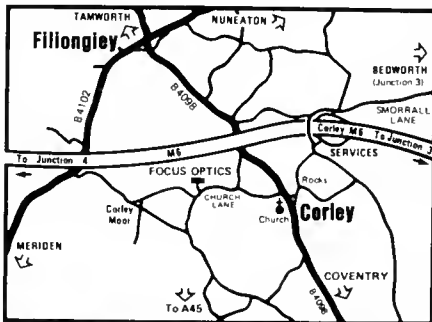
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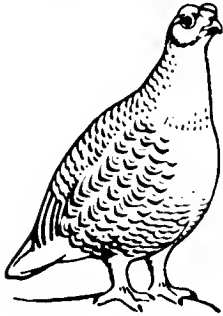
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<p>BOWLING GREEN MARSH, EXETER SAT 4th & SUN 5th JAN.</p>	<p>BARONS HAUGH MOTHERWELL SAT 18th & SUN 19th JAN.</p>	<p>ADUR ESTUARY SHOREHAM SAT 25th & SUN 26th JAN.</p>	<p>GRAFHAM WATER CAMBS. SAT 1st & SUN. 2nd FEB.</p>

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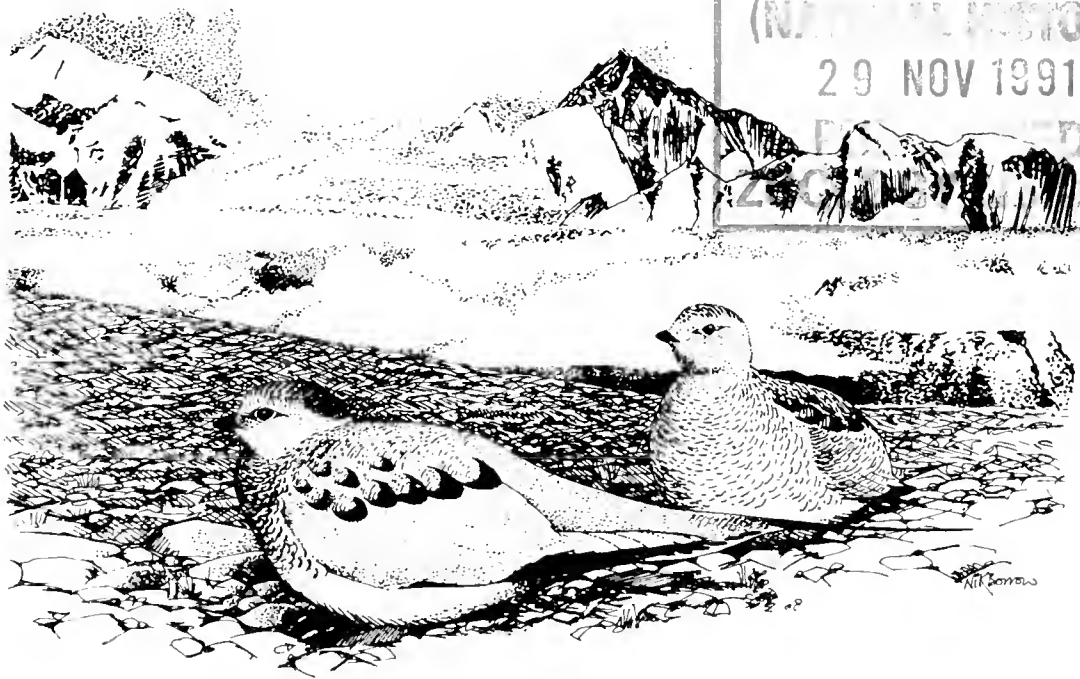


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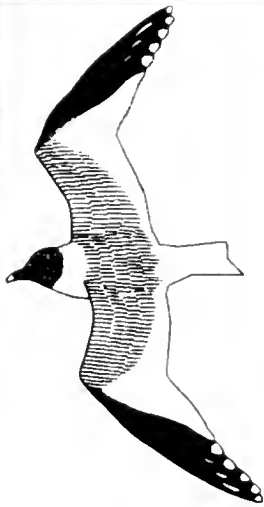


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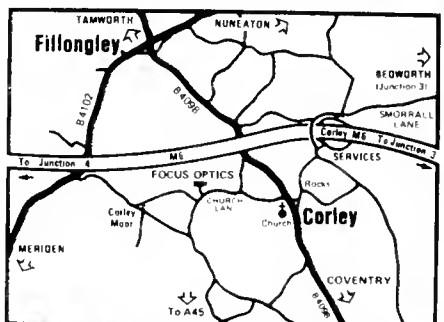
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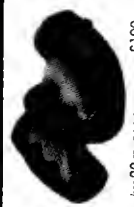
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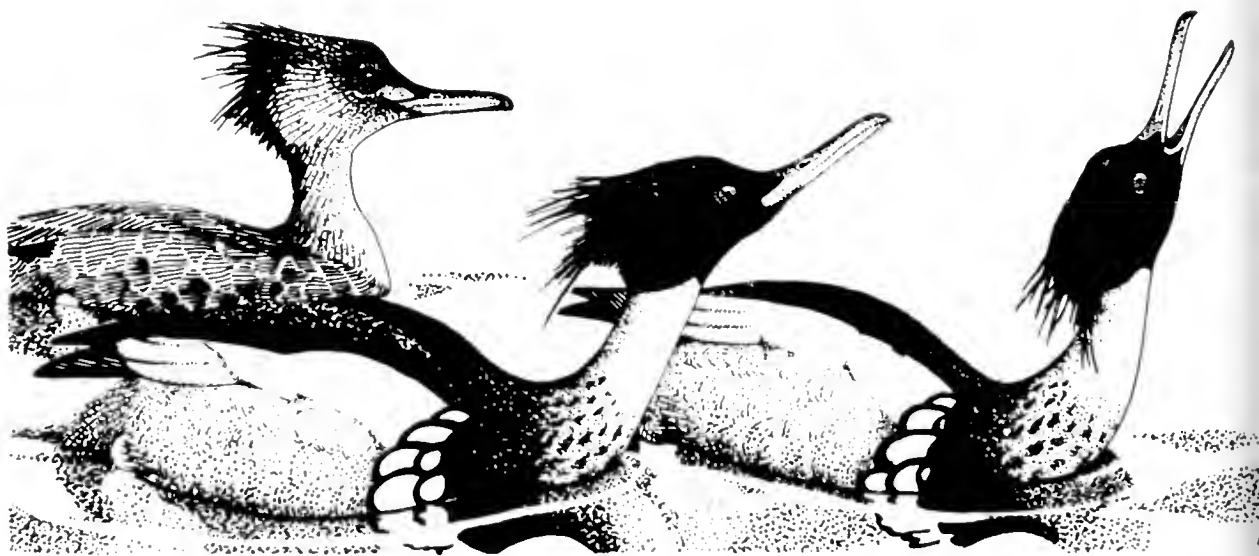
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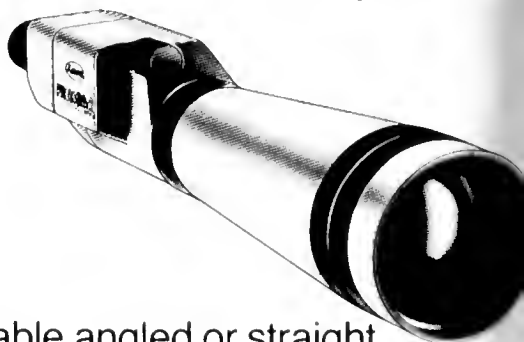
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Identification of brown flycatchers

C. Bradshaw, P. J. Jepson and N. J. Lindsey

The genus *Muscicapa* contains a group of brown flycatchers which consists of the familiar Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and three species that have not yet occurred in Britain, but which have been predicted as potential vagrants (Wallace 1980): Brown Flycatcher *M. dauurica* (formerly *latirostris*), Siberian Flycatcher *M. sibirica* and Grey-streaked Flycatcher *M. griseisticta*. The Brown Flycatcher has been reported in the Faroes (Williamson *et al.* 1951), Norway (Hyatt & Mylne 1952) and Denmark (Christensen 1960), although Nisbet & Neufeldt (1975) considered that none of these records was adequately documented. Subsequently, Brown Flycatchers have been trapped and photographed on Heligoland, Germany, in August 1982 and in Sweden in September 1987 (Fleet 1982; Douhan 1989). One old specimen and two sight records of this species in Britain have been rejected (BOURC 1963, 1971).

Despite the possibility that these species may occur in Western Europe, there is very little detailed information on their identification in the literature. King *et al.* (1975) summarised the main points, and Nisbet & Neufeldt (1975) and Svensson (1984) provided useful information on the identification of Brown Flycatcher; while this paper was in typescript, the same topic was surveyed in Swedish by Alström & Hirschfeld (1989).

Taxonomy and distribution

The subfamily Muscicapinae contains a large and diverse group of Old World flycatchers, which is split into a number of genera. The status of some of these is rather questionable, but all authors place the four species

This paper has been in proof since July, and we apologise to the authors for the delay in publication. EDS

under consideration in the genus *Muscicapa*. The taxonomy of Brown Flycatcher is complicated. There are several races which are short-distance migrants. One, *M. d. williamsoni*, is regarded as a separate species by some authors. The nominate race is the only long-distance migrant and is the only race likely to occur in Western Europe; our discussions will, therefore, consider only this race.

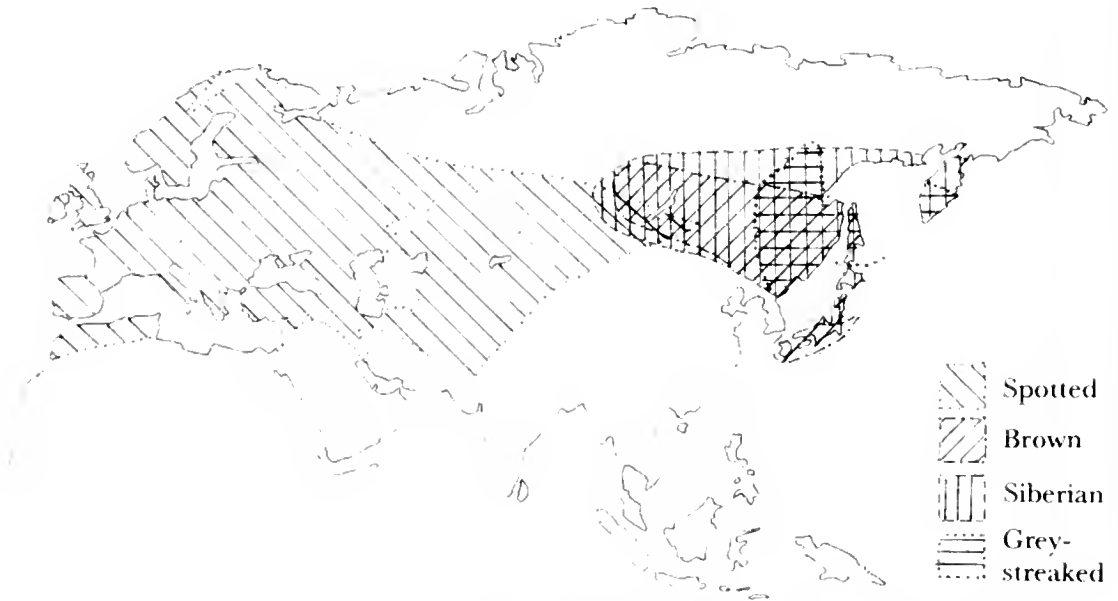


Fig. 1. Breeding distributions of Spotted *Muscicapa striata*, Brown *M. dauurica*, Siberian *M. sibirica* and Grey-streaked Flycatchers *M. griseosticta*. Ranges of non-migratory Himalayan races of Brown and Siberian not shown. Spotted winters in Africa; Brown and Siberian winter in southeast Asia, Philippines and west Indonesia; Grey-streaked winters in Philippines, east Indonesia and New Guinea (after Voous 1960, Harrison 1982, and Wild Bird Society of Japan 1982)

Brown and Siberian are largely sympatric (fig. 1), but are separated ecologically. When breeding, Brown is found mainly in broad-leaved forest, whilst Siberian is normally found in conifers (Dementiev & Gladkov 1954). Flint *et al.* (1984) described Grey-streaked as uncommon in the USSR. On the wintering grounds, all species inhabit a variety of forest and woodland types. Brown also being found commonly in parks and gardens (King *et al.* 1975).

Moult

In fresh plumage, all four species show pale fringes to the wing-coverts, tertials and secondaries, which wear off with time. This creates variations in plumage at different times of the year, so an understanding of moult patterns is pertinent to identification.

There is usually a complete moult after the birds arrive in their winter quarters. This is certainly the case for Spotted and Siberian, but no information is available for Grey-streaked. Brown is exceptional in that it undergoes a complete moult prior to the autumn migration. Thus, in winter and spring, Brown looks more worn than the other species. During the autumn migration, all Brown Flycatchers are in fresh plumage, unlike the adults of the other three species.

Identification

These four species comprise a remarkably uniform group of brown flycatchers, all with pale underparts. Given the difficulty of putting subtle colour variations into words, we feel that it is better to use a combination of plumage pattern and jizz to separate them.

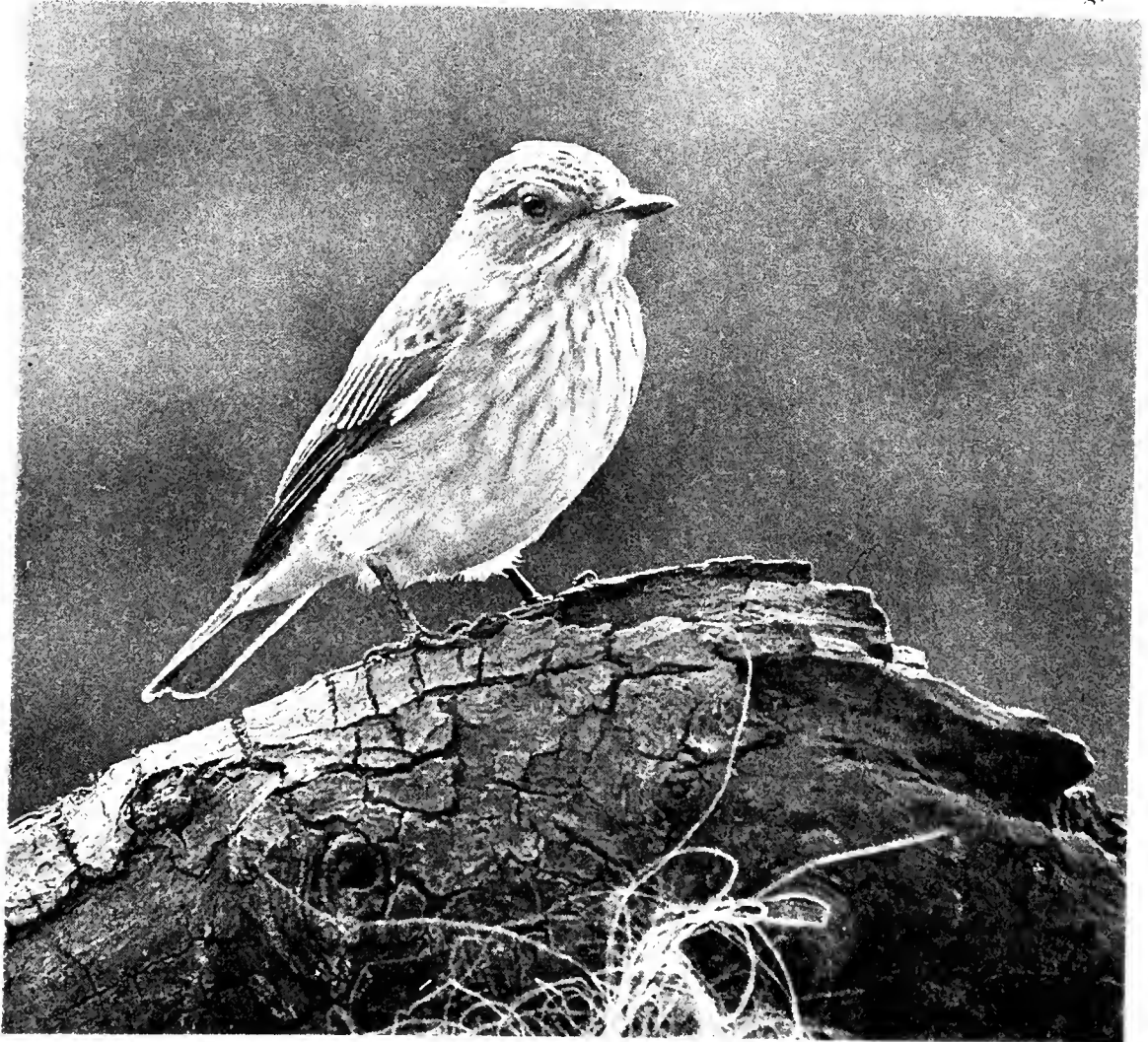
Species pairs

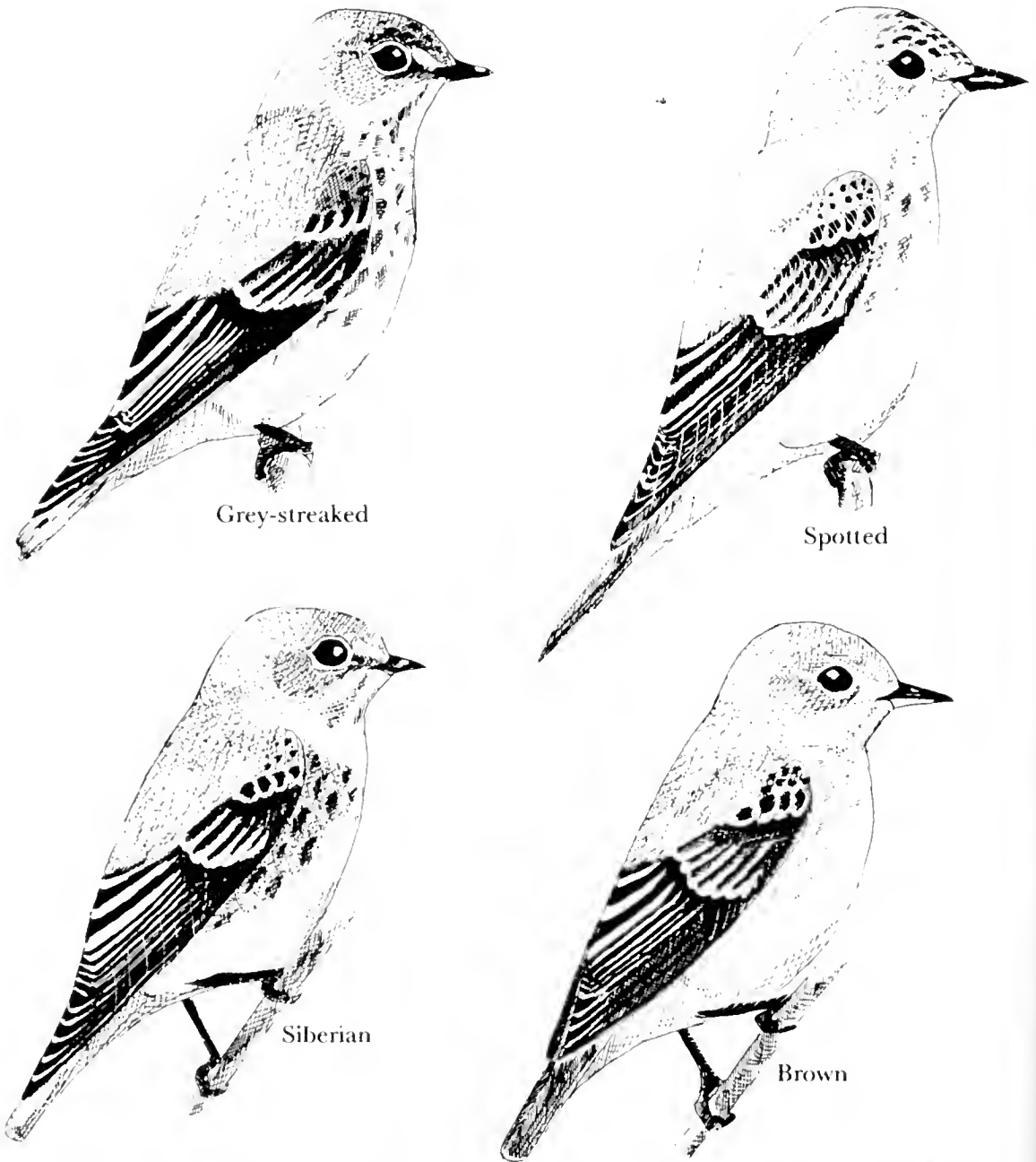
For identification purposes, the four species fall rather neatly into two species pairs: Spotted and Grey-streaked, and Brown and Siberian (table 1). Each pair shares a number of field characters, and it is perhaps best to place any member of this group into a species pair before attempting specific identification.

Spotted and Grey-streaked are both rather elongated flycatchers, with slim outlines. They have conical-shaped bills, which show only a small amount of yellow at the base of the lower mandible. The most important shared feature is the clearly defined streaking on the breast and forehead.

In contrast, both Brown and Siberian are smaller, and look plumper, with a more-rounded head shape. They both have a noticeably broad base to the bill. Except in extremely close views, the crown and forehead appear unmarked.

279. Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Suffolk, June 1930/31 (David & Eric Hosking)





Figs. 2 & 3. Four brown flycatchers *Muscicapa*: Grey-streaked *M. grisisticta*, Spotted *M. striata*, Siberian *M. sibirica* and Brown *M. dauurica* (Colin Bradshaw)

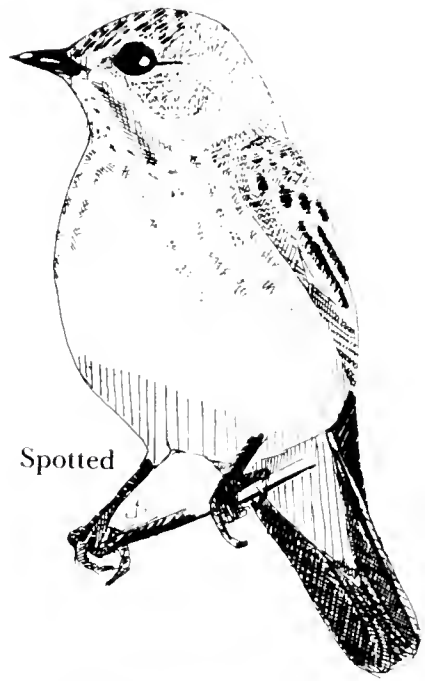
Specific identification

SPOTTED AND GREY-STREAKED FLYCATCHERS

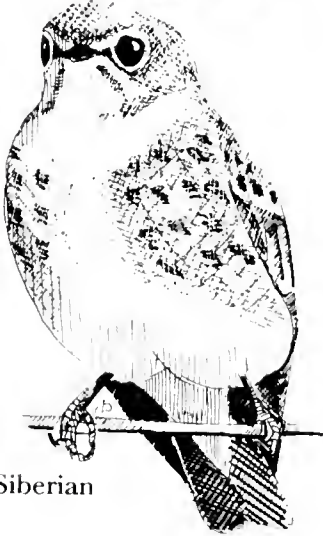
Although they are very similar, the familiarity of Spotted to European observers should enable these two species to be separated without much difficulty. The main structural difference between them is the wing-to-tail ratio. The wings of Grey-streaked are noticeably long, extending almost to the tip of the tail, whereas those of Spotted extend to no more than halfway down the tail. Although the brown upperparts of Grey-streaked are darker than the grey-brown upperparts of Spotted, it is the 'face' and underparts pattern to which particular attention should be paid. Grey-streaked shows a triangular, clear, white throat patch, which extends from the bill to the well-demarcated line of streaks on the upper breast; Spotted



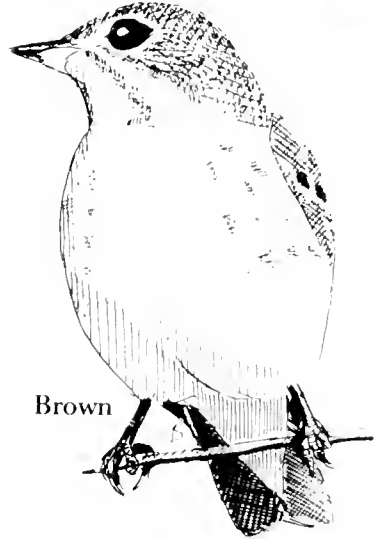
Grey-streaked



Spotted



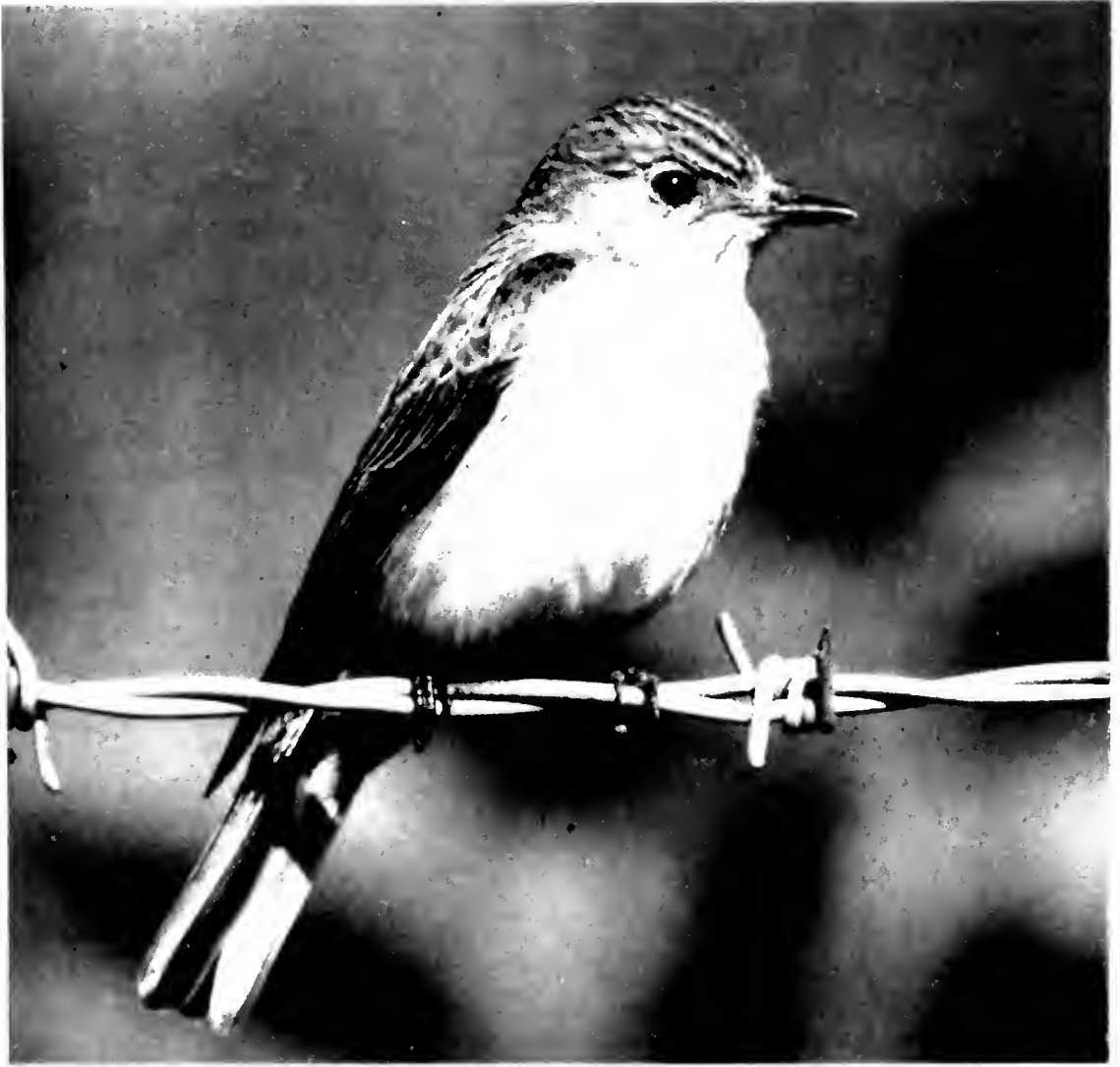
Siberian



Brown

does not show this feature, since the throat is covered by fine, brown streaking. A malar stripe is present on both species, but is much finer on Spotted. The breast streaking is darker brown and broader on Grey-streaked. Both species have streaking on the flanks. On Grey-streaked, the white of the belly extends to a point, creating a well-defined inverted V, which is absent on Spotted. Spotted frequently shows a pale-buff wash across the breast, becoming richer on the flanks, unlike Grey-streaked, which has a clear, white ground colour to the breast and a greyish wash to the flanks.

The head pattern provides more identification features, the most striking being the clear white eye-ring and loreal patch of Grey-streaked. This contrasts with the fine, ill-defined, greyish-buff colour of these features on Spotted. The streaking on the crown is usually less extensive on Grey-streaked, being confined to the forehead and forecrown, whereas it extends on to the nape of Spotted. Spotted shows fine streaking in the submoustachial region, unlike Grey-streaked.



280. Spotted Flycatcher *Musciapa striata*, Berkshire, July 1971 (Gordon Langsbury)

281. First-winter male Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Musciapa griseosticta*, Japan, September 1983
(Takao Baba)





282. Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Warwickshire, July 1986 (Mark Hamblin)



283. First-winter male Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*, Japan, September 1983 (Takao Baba)



284. Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa griseisticta*, Japan, October 1980 (Takao Baba)

BROWN AND SIBERIAN FLYCATCHERS

The separation of these two species is complicated by the subtle differences between them and the alterations in appearance caused by variations in wear and light intensity. The safest characteristics are structural. First, the wing-to-tail ratio differs. On Siberian, the wing extends at least three-quarters of the way along the tail, and sometimes reaches the tip—whereas on Brown the wing does not extend more than halfway along the tail. The general effect is to make Siberian appear short-tailed. Secondly, the bill shape and bill colour differ. Siberian has a broad-based, short bill, and, although there is some yellow, this is rarely visible

285. First-winter Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Thailand, October 1988 (P. D. Round)



in the field. Brown has a longer, broad-based, vertically compressed bill, of which at least the proximal half of the lower mandible (and sometimes all but the tip) is yellow. The underparts of Siberian show a sooty-grey suffusion across the breast and down the flanks, with a well-defined, but narrow, white, inverted V extending from the belly to the centre of the



286. Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Thailand, March 1987 (Protpimol Sukhavanija)

287. Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, Thailand, April 1981 (P. D. Round)





288. Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, Thailand, April 1981 (P. D. Round)



289. Adult Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Thailand, October 1988 (P. D. Round)

lower breast. While Brown shows a basically similar pattern, the suffusion is never so dark, and the inverted V is, therefore, never so well defined. Both species show blurred streaking on the breast, which is often obvious in fresh plumage, but which wear may eliminate completely. Both species show a white throat, but on Siberian the broader and darker malar stripes make it appear narrower and more contrasting than on Brown.

The head patterns of the two species are also similar, both showing a



290. Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, China, 1986 (*M. Turton*)



291. Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Thailand, March 1986 (*Protimol Sukhavanija*)

white eye-ring and loreal patch. On Siberian, both features are narrower and more distinct, the latter being due to the slightly darker colour of the rest of the head. On Brown, the loreal patch extends to the top of the broader eye-ring, and both features are more diffuse along their margins. Both species show a pale submoustachial stripe, which is often bisected by an upturn in the brown malar stripe.

In autumn plumage, the presence, absence, or relative extent of the



292. First-winter Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Thailand, October 1988 (P. D. Round)



293. Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Hong Kong, September 1986 (Ray Tipper)

wing-bars are in our opinion of no value as specific identification features. In spring plumage, however, there is a marked difference. Siberian has broad, off-white fringes to the tertials and wing-coverts, giving a noticeable, pale wing-bar. The pattern recalls that of Spotted Flycatcher. On Brown Flycatcher, all the pale fringes to the wing feathers have been lost through abrasion, and it has, at best, only very diffuse markings. The upperparts of Siberian are a darker sooty-brown, compared with the mid to pale brown of Brown. This difference is, however, not always marked.



294. Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, China, 1986 (M. Turton)



295. Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, China, 1986 (M. Turton)

Other useful pointers to Brown include its more rotund appearance, noticeably larger-looking eye, and more-rounded crown.

The recent Swedish paper by Per Alström and Erik Hirschfeld (1989) has drawn attention to the problem of separating unusually streaked Siberian from Grey-streaked. They suggested a number of points for

Table 1. Summary of plumage and other identification features of four flycatchers

	<i>Muscicapa</i>			
	Spotted <i>M. striata</i>	Grey-streaked <i>M. griseisticta</i>	Brown <i>M. dauurica</i>	Siberian <i>M. sibirica</i>
Crown	Grey-brown, forehead pale brown, feather shafts forming clearly visible streaks, which become broader and more diffuse on nape	Brown; streaking on forehead only	Pale-brown; some mottling on forehead visible at very close quarters	Sooty-brown; mottling on forehead slightly more extensive than on Brown
Lores and eye-ring	Narrow, diffuse, pale eye-ring; white or pale-buff loreal patch	Distinct white eye-ring; triangular, white loreal patch	Conspicuous pale (white to buff) eye-ring; triangular, whitish loreal patch	Whitish eye-ring; thinner, pale loreal stripe, an extension of eye-ring
Throat and ear-coverts	Sub-moustachial area white to buff, finely streaked brown; thin, dark malar stripe; throat off-white with variable amount of streaking	Broad white sub-moustachial stripe, finely dotted brown at front; broad, brown malar stripe, curving upwards to ear-coverts; throat clear white from bill to upper breast	Off-white sub-moustachial stripe; brown malar stripe, which sometimes curves upwards like that of Grey-streaked	Similar to Brown, but malar stripe usually broader and whitish throat patch narrower
Underparts	Breast and flanks streaked brown; often shows buffish wash on flanks	Like Spotted, but streaking darker and broader; well-defined demarcation between white throat and start of streaks; ground colour clear white, with grey wash on flanks; white of belly extends to centre of lower breast, producing ill-defined, inverted V	Variable, from clear white to pale-brown wash across breast and flanks; fades to white from centre of breast to belly	Well marked, with heavy, sooty-grey suffusion along flanks and across breast; white of belly extends to centre of lower breast, to produce obvious, narrow, white, inverted V
Undertail-coverts	White to pale buff-brown	White	White	White, occasionally with dark crescents

	Spotted <i>M. striata</i>	Grey-streaked <i>M. griseisticta</i>	Brown <i>M. dauurica</i>	Siberian <i>M. sibirica</i>
Mantle and rump	Grey-brown, with some streaking on mantle; first-years often have uppertail-coverts tipped white	Grey-brown	Grey-brown	Mid-brown; sometimes shows white tips on sides of rump
Tertials	Brown, with pale inner web and narrow pale fringes in fresh plumage	Darker than Spotted, with well-defined, narrow, white fringes	Brown, slightly darker than mantle; white fringes broader than on Spotted or Grey-streaked	Like Brown (see text for separation in spring)
Wing-coverts	Grey-brown; extent of pale fringes dependent on amount of wear; in fresh plumage, pale tips create wing-bar, although this disrupted by fringes; on worn adults, uniform grey-brown	Similar to Spotted, but more contrasting, owing to darker ground colour	In fresh plumage, shows narrow wing-bar on greater coverts, but this lost with wear; indistinct, fine fringes to median and greater coverts often not visible in field	Like Brown (see text for separation in spring)
Remiges	In fresh plumage, pale fringes to secondaries form wing-panel, which is lost with wear; primaries dull brown	Like Spotted, but whole wing darker	Primaries darker brown than secondaries	Like Brown
Lower mandible	Pale yellowish base, extent of which varies, but always less than half length of bill	Like Spotted, but, on average, pale base less extensive	On average, has the most extensive pale-yellow base; frequently appears to be dark only at tip	Small amount of pale yellow, usually not visible in field

separating them. First, although Siberian is streaked, this is never so distinct or extensive as on Grey-streaked; furthermore, the streaking on Siberian is against a brown background as opposed to a white one on Grey-streaked. Secondly, Grey-streaked is larger, with a larger bill. Thirdly, the submoustachial stripe is less distinct on Grey-streaked. Fourthly, Siberian has dark crescents on the undertail-coverts, a characteristic exclusive to this species; this is, however, not always visible in the field, and its apparent absence does not eliminate Siberian.

Acknowledgments

We should like to thank Tony Baker, Alan Dean, Simon Harrap, Chris Heard, Tim Inskipp, Steve Madge, Tony Marr, Phil Round, Graham Speight and Mick Turton for supplying information and advice.

Summary

The identification of four species in the genus *Muscicapa*—Spotted *M. striata*, Brown *M. dauurica*, Siberian *M. sibirica* and Grey-streaked Flycatchers *M. griseisticta*—is discussed. The main criteria for separating the species are the patterns of streaking on the breast and the wing-to-tail ratios. The characteristics of the four species are listed in table 1.

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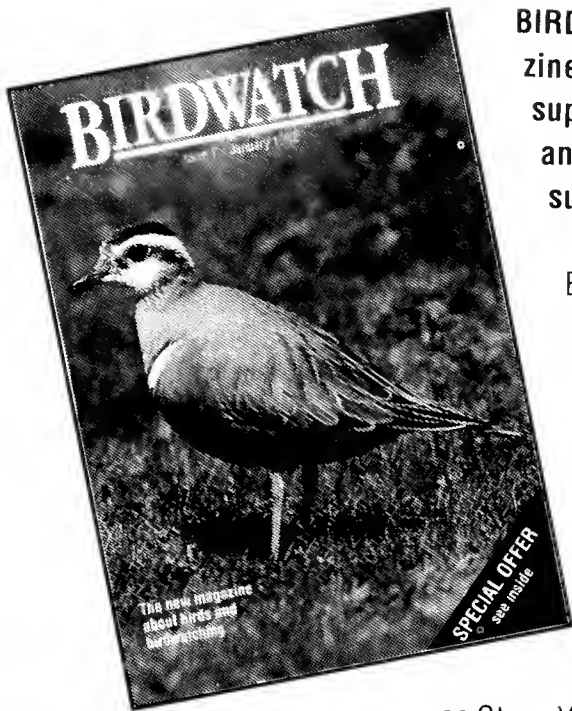
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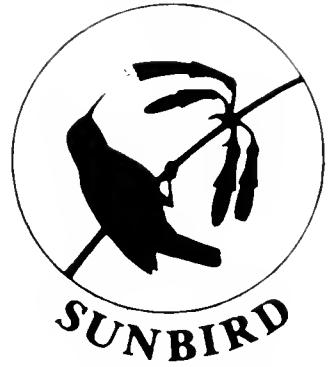
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That streaked passerine atop the hedge (plate 207) was named by contestants as:

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* (33%)

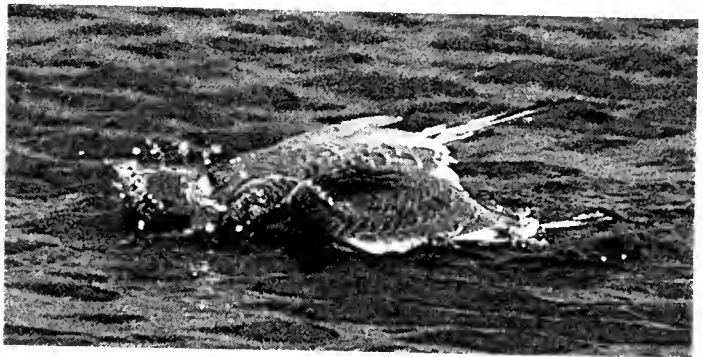
Little Bunting *E. pusilla* (25%)

with a few votes for Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi*, Meadow Pipit *A. pratensis*, Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*, Serin *Serinus serinus*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Linnet *C. cannabina*, Redpoll *C. flammea*, Scarlet Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, Cirl Bunting *E. cirlus*, Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana*, Rustic Bunting *E. rustica*, Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*.

It was indeed a Yellowhammer, photographed by Graham Catley in the Western Isles in April 1989. This takes a dozen contestants on to five-in-a-row sequences, halfway towards winning that SUNBIRD birdwatching holiday in Africa, Asia or North America. The next stage in the competition appears in plate 296.

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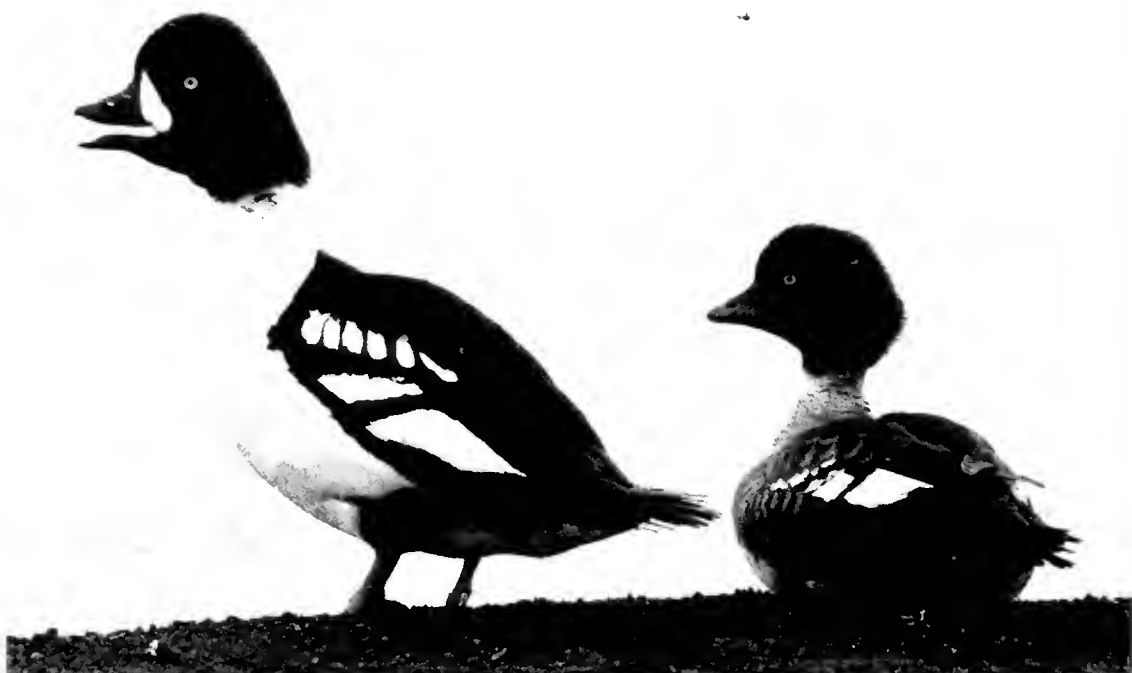
296. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (seventeenth stage: photograph number 66). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1992



Mystery photographs

173 Obviously a duck, with its long boat-shaped body and 'duck bill', last month's mystery bird (plate 277, repeated here in full) also has a noticeably large head, stiff, prominent, though fairly short tail and unfeathered, deep bill base: pointing to the tribe Mergini—the sea ducks. With that peculiar lumpy head, neat triangular bill and pale iris, we have a choice of Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* or Barrow's Goldeneye *B. islandica*.

The full photograph (reproduced overleaf), with resplendent male Barrow's in attendance, seems to leave little room for speculation. Beware: Barrow's Goldeneye and Goldeneye occur in mixed flocks, and



297. Captive pair of Barrow's Goldeneyes *Bucephala islandica*, Netherlands, June 1981 (Hans Schouten)

hybridisation between the two has occurred, albeit rarely. So, assumption aside, let us identify our bird on its own merit.

In goldeneye identification, the two basic, most consistent features are bill and head shapes. Here, the bill is short and stubby, with quite a steep upper mandible in profile. The forehead rises almost vertically from the bill base to a peak above the eye, and the crown to rear crown looks squarish and flat-topped, dropping down at the rear crown/nape and forming a rather shaggy 'mane' at the lower nape. These features strongly indicate Barrow's Goldeneye. Goldeneye normally shows an obviously longer bill, with less steep upper mandible in profile; its more gently sloping forehead forms a slightly concave curve continuous with the bill, up to a high, rounded mid-crown peak above and behind the eye, and the rear-head feathers are shorter, thus lacking the maned effect of Barrow's. The whole head shape of Goldeneye appears vaguely triangular, somewhat recalling a Pochard *Aythya ferina*. Note, however, that these features can be subtle and must be checked carefully. A diving bird can lose the integrity of its head shape, appearing more flat-crowned; and the skulls and bills of first-year birds are still developing, so they may not show such definitive head and bill shapes as adults.

Ageing and sexing are therefore also important factors in goldeneye identification. This bird's uniformly dark head, scapulars and flanks indicate a female or an eclipse or immature male, and the inner upperwing pattern (sufficiently well shown here) further helps to age and sex this individual, as well as being species-distinctive. Differences in upperwing pattern between the two species can be marginal and difficult to observe, with adult and immature females being most similar. The following tendencies, however, can be noted.

All Barrow's have four to six white secondaries, while Goldeneyes have seven to eight. Adult males have extensively white forewings throughout

the year, Goldeneyes showing an almost continuous white inner wing, which on Barrow's is broken by a black bar (visible bases of greater coverts). Adult female Barrow's shows white speculum and white greater coverts separated by a broad black bar, formed by tips to the greater coverts (as here); this bar is usually obviously broader and more uniform in width than on female Goldeneye. The forewing of Barrow's varies, from being wholly unmarked grey-brown to having (as here) the lower row of lesser and some median coverts broadly tipped grey-white. Adult female Goldeneyes show more extensive white on some lesser and median coverts (dark bases obscured), forming a conspicuous dingy-white patch across the forewing.

First-year individuals (up to first wing moult, in their second autumn) show poor examples of adult-type patterns. The hindwing tends to have completely unmarked white secondaries and greater coverts, with at most only a thin, faint black bar. Forewing markings are similar to those of adults, though much sullied and reduced, with median and lesser coverts often appearing wholly dark on females.

The mystery bird's combination of head and bill shapes and upperwing pattern therefore indicates an adult female Barrow's Goldeneye. The slight difference in head shape between the sexes apparent in plate 297 is caused partly by the elongated 'mane' feathers running on the male from the forecrown and on the female from the rear crown.

298. Adult female Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica*, Martin Mere, Lancashire, December 1978 (C. F. Oldershaw)



Two other pro-Barrow's features in the mystery photo are the extent of head colour (extending slightly farther down the neck than on Goldeneye) and the apparently slightly larger-looking nostril: The neck-ring, normally an obvious bright white ring on adults, is unusually sullied on this bird (as on first-years). In real life, Barrow's shows a subtle darker velvety 'plain-chocolate' brown head, which is slightly paler 'milk-chocolate' on adult female Goldeneye (less useful in eclipse and immature plumages). Both sexes of Barrow's average slightly larger and heavier than Goldeneye, though this is of little use except in mixed-species groups. In addition, a head-on view of this bird should reveal the bill tapering somewhat towards the tip; on Goldeneye, the bill is rather uniform in width with a more rounded tip.

Finally, also on the bill, two particularly helpful features can be the extent of yellow colouring and the shape and size of the black nail. Adult female Barrow's normally have bicoloured bills (with more yellow than on Goldeneye) or all-yellow bills (except nail), this yellow becoming duskier in summer; the black nail is larger, being conspicuously raised, and longer and more elliptical in shape than on Goldeneye (an understated aid in identification: see plate 298). The bill of our mystery bird, however, allowing for photographic effects, appears all-dark and the nail not really discernible. From limited investigation, it seems that Icelandic Barrow's vary mostly from adult females with classic bills and large raised black nails (plate 298) to those with all-dark bills and sometimes a less raised black nail (e.g. the mystery bird). Nevertheless, the *apparent* shape and conspicuousness of the nail is likely, on both species, to be influenced by the extent of yellow near the bill-tip.

Further, most literature states that Barrow's Goldeneyes with all-yellow bills occur only in the western Nearctic. Palmer (1976, *Handbook of North American Birds*, vol. 3), however, noted individuals in northeast North America with essentially all-yellow bills, and Di Labio & Pittaway (*Birding* 19: 20-22) pointed out that all of 50 adult female Barrow's seen in eastern North America had 'mostly orange bills'; while in the Lake Mývatn area of Iceland, where about 800 pairs of Barrow's breed, Dr Arni Einarrson (*in litt.*) noted the number of all-yellow-billed females in the late winters and springs of 1981-83 to be somewhere between two and five. In addition, a few female Goldeneyes have been observed with almost entirely yellow-orange bills (Tobish, 1986, *Birding* 18: 17-27). Can anybody throw more light on these points?

There seems much still to be learned about Barrow's Goldeneye, and it does not help when we consider that Goldeneyes have hybridised in the wild with Scaup *Aythya marila*, Pochard, Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Barrow's Goldeneye, Smew *Mergus albellus*, Hooded Merganser *M. cucullatus* and Goosander *M. merganser*.

This vivid photograph of a pair of captive Barrow's Goldeneyes was taken by Hans Schouten in the Netherlands in June 1981.

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299. Mystery photograph 174. Identify the species. Answer next month

PhotoSpot

32. Marsh Owl

The Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* is the African counterpart of the Short-eared Owl *A. flammeus*, sharing similar (though often wetter) habitat: marshy ground and swamps.

The Marsh Owl is widely distributed in southern Africa, but in the Western Palearctic it occurs only in northwest Morocco, where the population is very small and locally distributed. This individual was photographed in midwinter at Merja Zerga, where it and five others were roosting in eucalyptus trees. They showed little concern for human presence and seemed quite tame, allowing a close approach.

The bird's dark eyes and eye-ring, contrasting with its white face, produce a sad expression, while the plain, dark brown body is unique among Western Palearctic owls. The Marsh Owl has similar habits and flight action to those of the Short-eared Owl, though it seems to be more strictly nocturnal. In winter, in Morocco, both species can be seen together, the Marsh Owl easily distinguishable by its more contrasting, orange patch on its wing, and its dark body.

The status of this owl in Morocco is uncertain. Apart from a few isolated protected areas where it breeds regularly, its traditional habitat is subject to change, and human pressure leaves little place for this beautiful and phantasmal bird.

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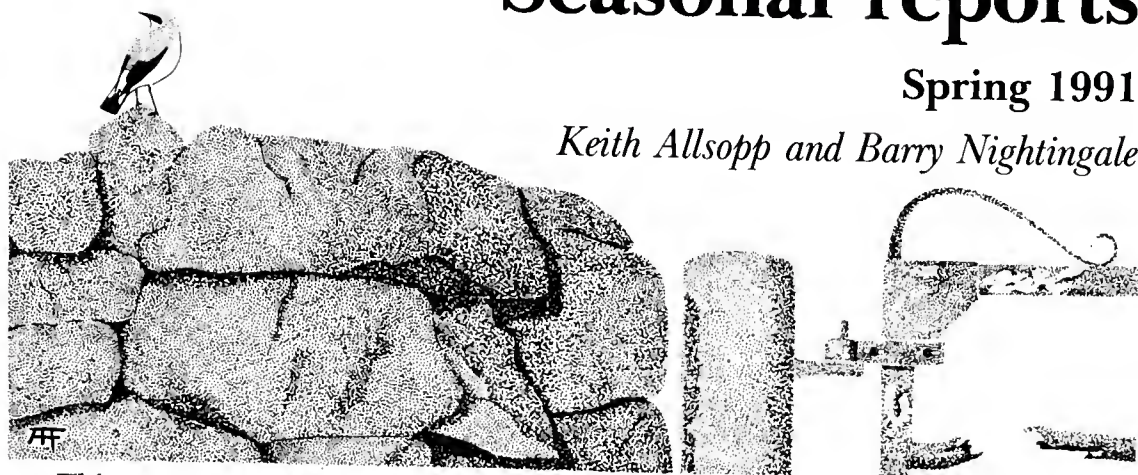
300 & 301. Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*, Morocco, January 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)



Seasonal reports

Spring 1991

Keith Allsopp and Barry Nightingale



This report includes some unchecked reports as well as authenticated records

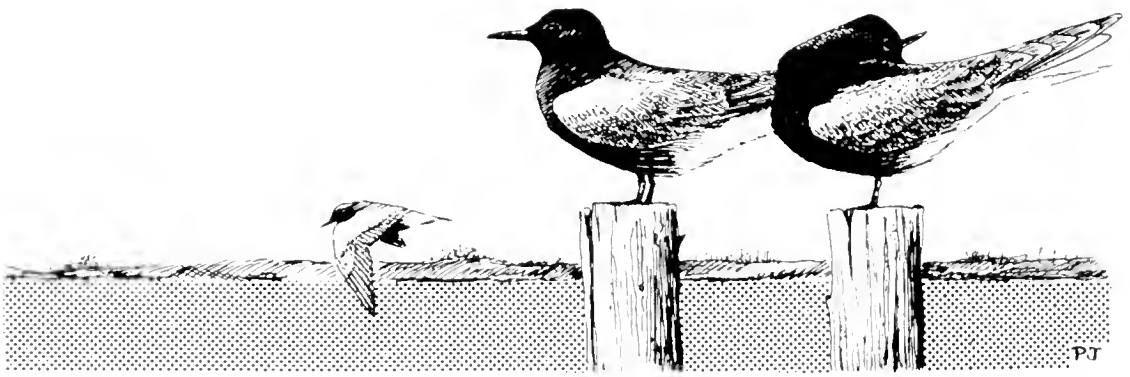
General weather pattern and spring movements

Less is known about spring migration than autumn, mainly because far fewer birds are involved after the normal very high mortality of first-year birds. The consequent competence of the surviving population in successfully achieving the return to breeding sites also shows in less susceptibility to adverse weather. An ideal spring migration for the birds would, however, induce a severe depression amongst many watchers. Fortunately for them, some birds, like human beings, can go mad.

Comments this spring have generally been 'Where are all the birds?', and indications are that there has been a significant reduction in our summer visitors and also a bad breeding season for the resident birds.

March, after a cool first three days, had above-average temperatures, as unsettled southwesterlies brought mild Atlantic air until 20th. **Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* started to arrive on 4th along the South Coast and **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* on 6th, both species being noted in small numbers subsequently farther north. An anticyclone developed to the west, dragging southward cold Arctic air on 21st but, as the centre of pressure moved to the north by 25th, warmer easterlies followed to 30th. Wintering passerines had many opportunities to leave during March, and some local concentrations were reported on the British east coast, 2,125 **Chaffinches** *Fringilla coelebs* at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 10th being exceptional, and flocks of 1,000-2,000 **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris* collected in Northumberland during the adverse easterlies late in the month. **Water Pipits** *Anthus spinoletta* were reported widely during March and

early April. With the high pressure drifting off to the southwest, unsettled westerlies returned at the beginning of April, with vigorous depressions tracking slowly eastwards bringing in cold northwesterly air until 8th. The Azores anticyclone then moved over France for four days, and temperatures rose as warm air arrived from the southwest and conditions were good for migration to the northeast. **Garganeys** *Anas querquedula* had arrived in good numbers, and, as expected, few birds were grounded until 12th, when a developing wave depression crossed England, and Spurn (Humber-side) had one of its few 'fall' days. By 13th, high pressure to the northwest began to dominate the weather, winds turned to north-easterlies, 1,000 **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus* were estimated to be on St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, and noticeable increases of this species had been reported from 12th north to Derbyshire and Lancashire. Temperatures began to drop quickly as Arctic air spilled southwards over western Europe, these very cold northerlies predominating until 24th, when southeasterlies developed as pressure rose on the Continent. Temperatures were still low from this air mass and the summer visitors arrived, but in noticeably lower-than-usual numbers, and by 1st May the cold northerlies had returned, and persisted until 10th. Returning Icelandic migrants showed some signs of being held up: **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa*, 550 having collected at Elmley (Kent) and 400 at Marshside (Merseyside) during April, paused at Midland reservoirs, with 55 being an exceptional flock at Rutland Water (Leicestershire) on 24th; **Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla alba* of the nominate race first started to arrive along



the South Coast in early March, and were noted generally throughout April in western coastal areas, 150 being at Shotwick (Cheshire) on 21st. Greenland **Wheatears** *O. o. leucorhoa* were also noted on passage, but many April records do not distinguish the subspecies. **Arctic Terns** *Sterna paradisaea*, passing overland, called in at Midland reservoirs over this cool period: 104 were seen at Draycote Reservoir (Warwickshire) on 20th April, 300 at Pitsford Reservoir (Northamptonshire) on 30th, and 280 at Eye Brook Reservoir (Leicestershire) on 5th May. A few **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were also seen inland after the southeasterlies of 25th April. With pressure remaining high to the west until the end of May, westerly to northerly winds predominated, temperatures slowly increased as air from this warm anticyclone was pulled across Britain and Ireland, but western Europe remained cold, 2° to 3°C below average. An intrusion of this colder air on 22nd grounded migrants at Spurn Point, including 90 **Wheatears** with most of them being 'Greenland', and a further 41 were also recorded at Gibraltar Point on the same day. The arrival of summer migrants was further inhibited, and probably many had lost the urge to travel north. **Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* appeared to be particularly affected, with their dependence on flying insects. The Atlantic high stayed farther south during June, but so did the jet-stream, marking the division between the polar air and the warm southerly air mass and steering the depressions across Britain and Ireland, with consequent dull cloudy weather and temperatures 2°C below average, prolonging the poor weather for breeding. The occasional **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* hung around, including

a male at a former regular site (plate 302), but remained lonely.

In May, the jet-stream had been farther north, crossing northern Scotland before turning southward across the North Sea. On several days, the polar weather front spanned the Atlantic, west to east, with wave depressions travelling eastwards at 50 knots. Crossing in two days, hitching a ride, came hundreds of **Long-tailed Skuas** *Stercorarius longicaudus*, arriving off Aird an Runair, North Uist (Western Isles), with 424 on 12th, 60 on 18th, 502 on 19th, 67 on 20th and 180 on 21st, with 107 also on 21st off Shetland. A **Lark Sparrow** *Chondestes grammacus* at Waxham (Norfolk) on 15th to 17th (plates 306 & 307) probably got all the assistance from the wind it needed to cross the Atlantic. So, too, could have a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* at Brancaster Golf-course (Norfolk) and a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Aberlady Bay (Lothian) on 12th May. Nearctic gulls appearing in the same period were **Laughing Gulls** *Larus atricilla* in Orkney on 16th to 18th and at Musselburgh (Lothian) on 26th, and a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* in Shetland on 27th. **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* started to arrive inshore earlier, from 19th April: 129 were seen in the Solway Firth (Cumbria) from 23rd to 15th May, 38 off Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) from 26th to 29th April, and over 250 in the English Channel between 21st April and the end of May, with 99 off Seaford (East Sussex) on 21st May. Totals of 622 were seen in the skua movements at Aird an Runair, between 11th and 22nd May, 93 off Shetland between 14th and 23rd May and 19 off the northeast coast of England during May and early June.

302. Male Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Santon Downham, Norfolk, June 1991 (*Jack Levene*)

303. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Seaford, East Sussex, June 1991 (*B. R. Mitchell*)

304. Male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, June 1991 (*Steve Young*)







Birds of prey

Nine sightings of **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* were reported from April to June, about normal in spite of adverse weather. **Red Kites** *M. milvus* were on the move earlier, with 16 reports in the east of England and Scotland in March and April. **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* had departed by the end of April, after seven sightings, but **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus* lingered over England, Wales and Ireland: after five in March, 36 were seen in April, 50 in May and 20 in June. In spite of the lack of insects, six **Red-footed Falcons** *Falco vespertinus* were reported from late May through June.

Waders

With persistent adverse winds, a build-up in numbers trying to fly north was to be expected, and **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii*, being one of the smallest, was the most likely to be affected. Arriving in late April, a total of 75, an above-average spring number, was logged by early June. Flocks of up to 200 **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* were found along the South Coast, and flocks collected in East Anglia during April and in northwest England into early May. Normally sparsely distributed in spring, **Wood Sandpipers** *Tringa glareola* were widespread across the northern half of England at the

305. Top, Needle-tailed Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Wierton Hill Reservoir, Kent, May 1991 (Don Taylor)

306 & 307. Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*, Waxham, Norfolk, May 1991 (centre, Steve Young; bottom, Jack Levene)

end of May, and 15 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were reported over the same time and into June.

Late-staying winter passerines

With their breeding season beginning in early June, **Waxwings** *Bombycilla garrulus* were in no hurry to leave, and 400 were still present in the eastern half of England in early March, after which departures increased, but with a few remaining into early May. **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were still in their winter quarters during March, but on the move in April, and with a few stragglers remaining through May and into June. Of the exceptional number of wintering **Arctic Redpolls** *Carduelis hornemanni*, 40 still remained in March, but few stayed into April.

Late drift-migrants

Twelve **Red-throated Pipits** *Anthus cervinus* were found from the middle of May to early June (plate 303), from the Isles of Scilly to Shetland, with most on North Sea coasts, and including an exceptionally early one on Lundy (Devon) on 24th April. Most of the 15 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* seen in May to early June were also on the East Coast, and all were of the red-spotted race *L. s. svecica*, but a late-March record at Flamborough (Humberside) was of the central European, white-spotted form *L. s. cyanecula*. Of the nine **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* in late May and June, five were in Orkney and Shetland, but two in Norfolk were in song in June, as was a **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* at Dungeness (Kent) on 20th. Most of the 35 reports of **Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* over the same period were distributed along the East Coast and on Orkney and Shetland.

Exotic vagrants

Exciting vagrants continue to grab the news and fuel the fantasies. The list included eight **White-winged Black Terns** *Chlidonias leucopterus*, all—except one in Highland and another in Gwent—were in southern England at the end of May into June. A mercurial **Needle-tailed Swift** *Hirundapus caudacutus* displayed at Wierton Hill Reservoir (Kent) on 26th May (plate 305), swept through Blithfield Reservoir (Staffordshire) on 1st June and appeared hauntingly at the Noup of Noss (Shetland) on 11th and 14th. Five **Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* at Beachy

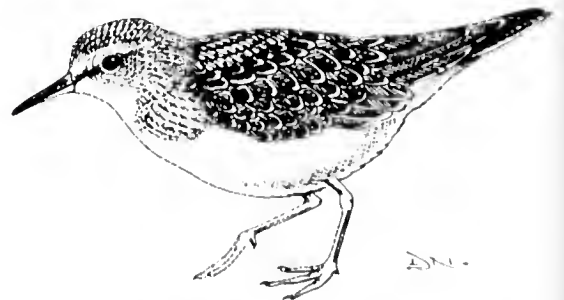
Head (East Sussex) on 22nd heralded a small influx, with a further 19 seen north to Yorkshire through June. **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* arrived in southern areas of Britain and Ireland from early March and were subsequently logged north to Shetland by June, with a grand total of 35 for the spring. Another will-o'-the-wisp species, the **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica*, also tantalised watchers, 12 being glimpsed between mid April and mid June. Finally, a resplendent male **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* brightened 20th June at Spurn Point, where it was caught and ringed, after which it disappeared, but was later found at Scarborough Castle (North Yorkshire) on 22nd, leaving on 23rd (plate 304).

Acknowledgments

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Request

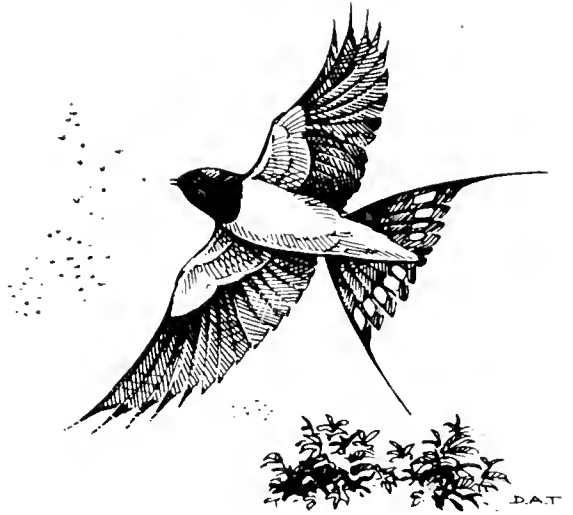
We seek to make these quarterly summaries as comprehensive as possible. Please send all reports to us at the address below, or telephone BN on the numbers listed each month on the inside front cover.



Studies of West Palearctic birds

190. Swallow

Angela K. Turner



Traditionally a bearer of good fortune, a sign of the coming of spring, and generally admired for its swiftness and elegance, the Swallow *Hirundo rustica* is one of the most welcome and well-liked of birds. It has been dubbed a selfless and virtuous bird: 'inoffensive, harmless, entertaining, social and useful', as Gilbert White (1789) wrote. In many legends, it features as a bird that helps human beings, and that consoled Christ on the cross (its Swedish name, *Svala*, means 'to console'). It is said to have gained its forked tail, for example, as a result of stealing fire from the gods to bring to people: a wrathful god fired an arrow or firebrand at the bird, hitting and destroying the middle tail feathers. As scientists delve into its habits, however, a more prosaic and selfish aspect is being unearthed: an aspect featuring such behaviour as cuckoldry, egg-dumping, deception and infanticide.

Distribution, habitat and migration

The Swallow has a broad geographical range, breeding in Asia, Europe, North Africa and North America, and wintering in southern and southeastern Asia, northern Australia, Africa, and Central and South America. There are six subspecies, varying mainly in the intensity of rufous colour on the underparts and the extent of the blue breast band (Turner & Rose 1989). Our British Swallows, in common with others from Europe and northern Asia, have creamy underparts, but those in North Africa, central Asia and North America have these areas rufous-cinnamon or chestnut. There is also a decline in size, with the largest birds in the north and smaller ones in the south and east of the range.

Swallows favour open habitats—such as farmland with pastures, meadows and parkland—with water close by, over which they can hunt insects, and with buildings, in which to nest, and trees or wires, on which to perch. Forested and wooded areas are generally avoided. They breed at altitudes of up to 1,800 m in the Alps and 3,000 m in the Caucasus. A wide variety of artificial structures, such as houses, sheds, outhouses and barns, culverts and bridges, are used as nest sites, as well as the occasional mine shaft, well, underground depot or vehicle. Consequently, Swallows have

benefited enormously from the widespread clearance of forests by human beings, and now usually nest in close proximity to us. They were once, probably, restricted to coasts and upland areas or grasslands, where caves and rocky crags or banks and hollow trees would provide natural sites for nesting. Swallows usually leave the more densely populated towns and cities to the House Martin *Delichon urbica* and the Swift *Apus apus*, but they will construct their nests under the eaves and in the porches of houses, in villages. In some places, such as Honshu in Japan, they are much more urban than in Britain. Before the advent of centrally heated homes, they would frequently nest on the ledges of large chimneys in old houses (Forster 1817). The Swallow's European names, such as *Rauchschwalbe* in Germany and *Hirondelle de cheminée* in France, its North American name of 'Barn Swallow', and even a former name in Britain, 'House or Chimney Swallow', attest to its liking for human habitation.

Swallows are common in Britain (with about 500,000 to 1 million pairs) and the rest of Europe, although population levels fluctuate widely and have declined recently in some areas, including Britain (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1985; Cramp 1988). Numbers are particularly influenced by the weather. Since there are few or no flying insects for them to catch in such conditions, they can be hard hit by a sudden snap of cold, wet weather. Bad weather during migration has also led to large-scale mortality. Pesticides can be a problem, and a decline in the population in Israel in the 1950s was attributed to this cause.

Being so conspicuous and fearless, the Swallow has long attracted the attention of European scholars, naturalists and scientists. Its disappearance in autumn and reappearance in the spring were once regarded as particularly mysterious events. The opinion of many, including Pliny and Linnaeus, was that Swallows crept into crevices in rocks or into the mud at the bottom of ponds and lakes to spend the winter in a torpid condition. Even Gilbert White was equivocal on the subject. The idea was probably given credence by the habit of Swallows of huddling together inside crevices in walls and buildings in cold weather, early in spring for example. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the possibility of Swallows migrating came into favour, when records of their being seen out at sea built up (Forster 1817).

Extensive ringing has now, of course, provided a detailed picture of the movements of Swallows. The main passage south is in September and October, with the return to the breeding grounds in April and May. Those from western and continental Europe winter mainly in Central Africa, while those from more northern and easterly areas migrate to Central and East Africa and eastern South Africa (Zink 1970). Some of the populations do mix, however, with west, central and east European birds all wintering in Namibia and Botswana (Loske 1986). Swallows from Britain, together with those from Russia and Central Europe, winter in eastern and southern South Africa. Since the winter of 1962/63, British Swallows have extended their winter range west into Cape Province (Rowan 1968; Mead 1970). Small numbers winter in the southern parts of the breeding range, and a few aberrant individuals will hang about even as far north as Britain.

Feeding behaviour and diet

When feeding, Swallows typically skim low, only some 7-8 m above the ground or water surface (Waugh 1978), frequently banking and turning to pursue an insect. They fly fast, averaging 10 m per second, using mainly flapping rather than gliding flight (Waugh 1978; Turner 1980). Swallows are particularly fond of feeding around grazing animals because these both attract flies and disturb other insects from the vegetation. The saying that Swallows feeding low presage bad weather is only partly true: in fine weather, they feed both close to the ground, chasing the large flies found there, and high in the air, to intercept, say, a swarm of aphids, whereas in cold, wet weather they must keep low, particularly over water, as small insects tend to fly lower as the humidity increases. In very bad weather, they will even hover over, or perch on, foliage to pick off insects and spiders from the leaves, or feed from the ground. Very rarely, they will take plant material, such as berries (see, e.g., von Vietinghoff-Riesch 1955). I have also recorded them taking caterpillars, such as those of the small moth *Ypsolopha parenthesesella*, which hang down on a thread from a leaf when disturbed; the Swallows may have brushed the foliage, thus disturbing the insects and facilitating their capture (Turner 1981).

Swallows feed close to their nest site, usually within 200 m when feeding nestlings, as they then have to return to the nest frequently, but often up to 600 m or even farther earlier in the season and when the weather is bad (Bryant & Turner 1982). Where they feed depends largely on the weather and food supply, as insects are often confined to local bodies of water in cold, wet weather and to behind trees and shelterbelts in windy weather, restricting the Swallows' feeding options (Waugh 1978). Although several pairs may forage over a common area, they feed singly (or in pairs during the egg-laying period). When feeding nestlings, the Swallows at my study site, near Stirling in Scotland, collected 18 bluebottle-sized insects on average per trip, but would bring back small loads containing lots of small prey, such as midges, in bad weather, when large insects were not flying (Bryant & Turner 1982). In fine weather, they selected large flies in preference to small ones, but when small insects, such as swarming plant bugs, were abundant, particularly when relatively more abundant than other insects, they also took large numbers of these (Turner 1982).

A lot of sifting through droppings has revealed that, during the breeding season, the adults eat medium-sized to large flies themselves, but also take a lot of beetles as well as smaller flies, parasitic wasps, ants, bees and moths (Waugh 1978; Turner 1980). In their wintering quarters, however, it is ants and similar insects that are the chief food, forming half of the diet, with smaller numbers of beetles, termites, grasshoppers, plant bugs, moths and flies (Waugh 1978). The change in diet is probably simply the result of differences in availability of ants and flies in the breeding and wintering areas.

The diet of my Scottish nestlings consisted principally of large flies, such as hoverflies, horseflies, robber-flies and blowflies. Plant bugs, such as aphids, made up nearly a quarter of the diet, and other small flies, beetles, parasitic wasps, caterpillars, mayflies, caddisflies, dragonflies,



308. Swallow *Hirundo rustica* feeding fledgling, Dumfries & Galloway, September 1969 (Robert T. Smith)

grasshoppers and lacewings were also taken. The nestlings are fed larger insects than the adults catch for themselves (Waugh 1978; Turner 1980). Throughout the breeding range, the nestlings' diet is similar, with large flies predominating (e.g. Wang 1959; Kozena 1979, 1980). Moths were sometimes taken in late summer in generally poor weather, or at dusk when they were attracted to lights around the farms, but they were difficult for the birds to handle and I often saw escaped moths below the nest. Swallows have been accused of depredating bee-hives: in his *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer called the Swallow a 'murderer of the fowles small/that maken honey of flowers fresh of hue'. I found, however, that most of the bees caught were stingless drones, not workers.

Breeding biology

Although Abraham Cowley, in his poem 'The Swallow', considered it a 'tuneless serenade', the male's song is more usually described as a melodious twittering or babbling mixed with a grating rattling. It is sung during flight or when the male is perched, and lasts 3-15 seconds, serving mainly to attract females. Males continue to sing, however, once they have a mate, until the eggs are laid and incubation has started, perhaps as a warning to keep intruders away from the female (Møller 1991a). Swallows have a number of other calls (Cramp 1988), including a chirping contact call used to keep the members of a pair, or later the family, together; a wheezing enticement call, used by males to attract a female; an 'it it it' call used during pair-bonding; a whine, uttered during copulation; a stuttering 'witt titititi', used as a threat; and a variety of harsh alarm calls, usually a disyllabic 'tsi wit', used particularly when a potential predator is about. Females do not sing the full song of the male, but both will twitter gently in the same contexts as that in which the contact call is given.

The male arrives first at a nest site. Once he has laid claim to a nest or a site for a new nest, he is aggressive to other males entering his territory and he displays to attract passing females (Löhr 1962). He sings while circling high above the site, with his tail fanned out, then flies down to land at the nest site. He entices females to come close with a wheezing 'wi-wi-wi' call, then resumes his singing. Once the female has landed, he shows her the nest or nest site by pecking towards it.

Both sexes build the nest, spending about two hours a day and taking a week or so over it, but the female generally does more work than the male, and she adds the lining of dry grass and feathers. The nest is constructed of mud pellets and straw or other vegetation, forming a deep, open bowl, usually attached to a projection on a wall or beam, or under eaves, most often a few metres above the ground. It is strong enough to last many years, with a little repairing and building-up taking place each season. Swallows arriving early usually re-use an old nest, although they avoid nests infested with parasites (Møller 1990a); late-comers, the younger birds, generally make a new one, which is often quite shallow (Turner 1980).

The timing of breeding is determined by the weather and the food supply. The availability of flying insects depends a great deal on the weather; few insects, particularly the large ones favoured by the Swallow, fly when it is cold and wet, and a sudden spell of bad weather can reduce their numbers considerably. Insects become gradually more abundant during the spring, and the likelihood of bad weather occurring decreases as the season advances. At my study site, the risk of bad weather was considerably less after the first half of May than before, so Swallows laying eggs and incubating at that time were reasonably certain of having a good food supply during this critical period. It did not always turn out like this, of course. As chance would have it, my first summer at Stirling, in 1977, although it started fine, turned out to be very cold and wet, with snow in June. The Swallows laid at the usual time, but during incubation were forced to spend unusually long periods away from the nest, searching for food.

In Britain, the female lays an average of four or five eggs, but can lay up to seven. Older females have larger clutches than first-years. The eggs are laid one a day, with sometimes a gap of a day if the weather is bad and food, therefore, scarce. There is often a second clutch, somewhat smaller than the first. Clutch size also decreases with increasing latitude (Møller 1984). The second clutch may be smaller because there are fewer daylight hours available later in the season for feeding the nestlings. In extreme northern latitudes, there may be time for only a single clutch; but elsewhere the female occasionally manages a small third clutch. The eggs are white, with reddish or purplish-brown speckles and some lilac or grey. The markings are variable, differing between clutches. The female incubates the eggs for 14-16 days, covering them for about 80% of the daylight hours and going out to feed only a few minutes at a time. The male has occasionally been seen on the nest. I have seen two males, on one occasion each, sitting on the nest for less than a minute each time. In



309. Male Swallow *Hirundo rustica* feeding nestlings, Surrey, July 1974 (Michael W. Richards)

contrast, once, when I had caught and temporarily detained an incubating female, her mate just peered at the eggs, went away, and returned with another female! On this side of the Atlantic, the male makes no serious contribution to incubation. Indeed, he does not have a brood patch with a rich blood supply, so could not warm the eggs as the female does. His North American counterpart, however, will do up to a quarter of the incubation (Ball 1983). Once the nestlings have hatched, the female broods them for considerable periods for the first few days while the male helps to collect food for them.

After the first week, the male and female feed the nestlings about equally when the weather is fine and insects abundant, although males take a smaller share in feeding small broods than large ones. When feeding is difficult, however, the male acts more selfishly: the female spends as much time feeding her brood as she does looking after herself, whereas the male puts relatively more effort into seeing to his own needs (Turner 1980; Jones 1988).

The young Swallows leave the nest 18-23 days after hatching. Their parents split the brood between them, the male feeding some nestlings and the female the others (Møller 1991c). They may stay near the nest site for a month or so, at first sometimes roosting in the nest, but the adult male chases off the first brood when starting on the second one.

Breeding success is usually high (Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1985; Cramp 1988). Typically, over 90% of eggs hatch, and 70-90% of eggs laid produce fledglings. Most adults live only a few years, the annual mortality being 40-70% for adults and 70-80% for first-years.

During the breeding season, the adults and juveniles roost in the nest or close by. After breeding, they gather in communal roosts, sometimes of hundreds or thousands of individuals, in reedbeds, crops or other tall vegetation. In the winter quarters, roosts can hold up to 1 million birds. These can be in natural sites or, more rarely, in urban areas, such as the famous one in Bangkok, Thailand (*Brit. Birds* 78: plate 12; 82: 282). Swallows have a spectacular pre-roosting display, bunching together and passing to and fro over the roost site before sweeping down into the vegetation.

Adults usually come back to their nest site of the previous year, and often to the same nest. First-years, particularly males, often return to within 3 km of where they were hatched, and nearly all return to within 30 km (Davis 1965; Christensen 1981). Females breed in their first year back, but males occasionally remain without a mate until their second year (Møller 1988c).

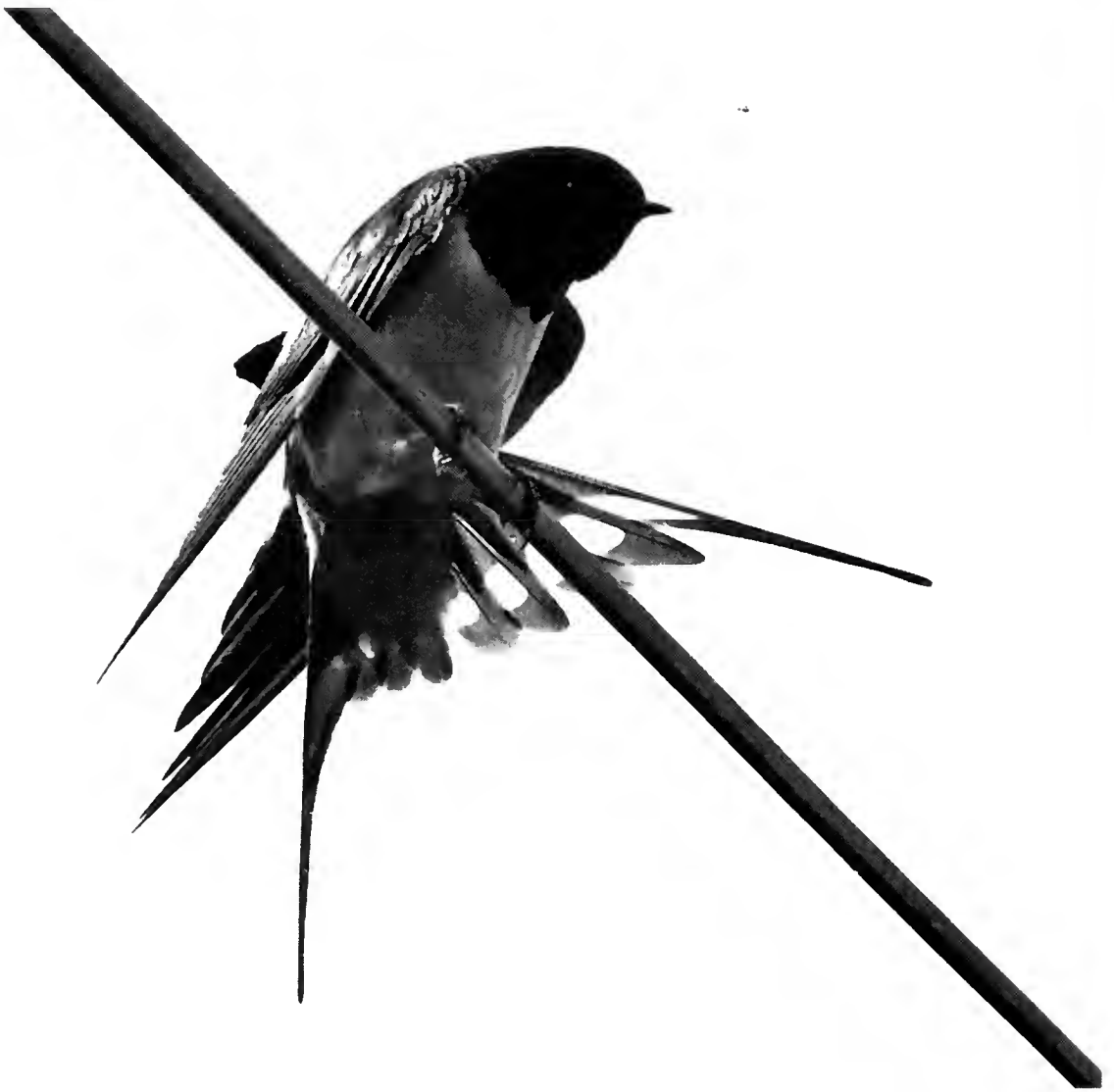
Swallows often breed in solitary pairs. Where several potential nest sites are situated close to each other, however, in a large barn for example, at a site where insects are plentiful, Swallows will nest in loose aggregations of several pairs or even tens of pairs. At my own study site near Stirling, the average number was only four pairs per farm. Von Vietinghoff-Riesch (1955) recorded a group of 120 pairs at one site and 280 at another, but such numbers are exceptional. Unlike the truly colonial House Martin, whose nests are built touching each other, a Swallow prefers to keep several metres between its nest and that of a neighbour.

Both male and female are aggressive at the nest, chasing away intruders; threatening, with feathers sleeked, wings raised and bill open; or even fighting fiercely. Females are particularly aggressive towards other females who may be looking for a nest in which to dump an egg (see below). Males attack other males interested in their females, but will court females approaching the territory. Some intruders are also infanticidal: Anders Møller (1988c) found that 5% of broods in his Danish population suffered from this.

For a few days after the nestlings have hatched, unmated males are frequent visitors to the nest. One way that such males can acquire a mate is to kill the young nestlings, break up the established pair bond, and then pair with the females who have to start a new family. Møller (1988c) recorded several instances of males killing nestlings of 1 to 4 days old. At three nests, unattended by their owners, he watched a male remove a whole brood, by picking up each nestling, flying some distance away and then dropping it on the ground. Infanticide was suspected at 11 other nests during the study. In all 14 cases, an unattached male seen visiting the nest, and apparently responsible for the deaths of the nestlings, paired with the female; 12 of them successfully reared a brood with their new mate. Møller attributed one-third of the deaths of nestlings to such infanticide.

Mate choice

How a female chooses which male to visit, and eventually pair with, has



310. Swallow *Hirundo rustica* with tail fanned, Worcestershire, August 1980; note white spots and long outer tail feathers (Charles Robinson)

been elegantly demonstrated by Møller (1988a). The male Swallow has much longer outer tail feathers than does the female (the male's averaging 105 mm, compared with the female's 95 mm). When Møller artificially increased the length of the outer tail feathers of some males, he found that they attracted females sooner than short-tailed males. Naturally long-tailed males arrive early in the spring, attract a mate and start breeding early (Møller 1990c). Since they mate earlier, they are also more likely to have the time to rear a second clutch. In addition, long-tailed males are more likely to survive to the following breeding season (Møller 1991e). In general, therefore, long-tailed males are more successful than short-tailed males.

Adult male birds often have ornaments such as an elongated tail. The ornament may indicate that its owner is a high-quality male who is in good condition; females mating with such a male will benefit by producing high-quality offspring, who will themselves be successful at breeding. Growing a long tail or other ornament is likely to be costly, however, diverting energy from other uses, so only the best males will be able to afford to grow one.

One indication of the ability of a male Swallow to grow a long tail is the degree of symmetry of the tail. The outer tail feathers are normally the same length as each other, but if a male in poor condition tries to grow a long tail he will not have the resources to grow a perfectly symmetrical one: one side or the other will be short. Short-tailed males are, thus, more likely to have asymmetrical tails. Møller (1991d) designed an experiment to test the manoeuvrability of male Swallows with tails differing in their symmetry. By cutting the tail feathers, he made the tails more (or less) asymmetric; he then dyed the front edge of the wings with a slow-drying ink and released the Swallows in a room with barriers made of netting. Swallows brushing the barriers left a clear, inky, mark. Møller found that asymmetrical tails impaired the Swallows' ability to fly without touching the barriers. The males with naturally short tails were also less adept at manoeuvring than naturally long-tailed ones.

The Swallow's forked tail is not merely an ornament, of course. The fork makes the bird more manoeuvrable, allowing it to follow the twists and turns of its insect prey (Waugh 1978). A square-tailed hirundine, such as the Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, is less able to catch large, fast prey, and concentrates on small, weak-flying insects, such as midges. The female Swallow's tail is ideal for hunting insects, but, as already noted, the long tail of the male has the extra function of attracting females; its primary function of improving manoeuvrability is thus compromised. Perhaps as a result of this, males bring back smaller loads of prey to their chicks than do females (Jones 1987). Møller's Swallows with experimentally lengthened tails became less efficient at capturing large prey and brought smaller prey back to the nestlings; they seemed to be less able to feed themselves adequately than were the short-tailed individuals, and in the next moult they could grow only short tail feathers (Møller 1989).

Good-quality male Swallows, it seems, have the ability to grow long, symmetrical tails, while still being good at hunting insects. Poor-quality males that tried to grow a more attractive long tail would be unable to grow a symmetrical one, and their ability to catch insects would suffer.

A long, symmetrical tail is a general advertisement of high quality and good condition. There are several reasons why a female should choose a long-tailed male. The tail could, for example, indicate that the male is a good hunter of insects (and, thus, potentially a good provider of food for the offspring) or that he is healthy, in particular free of debilitating parasites (and thus he would pass on his genetic resistance to parasites to his offspring as well as avoiding infecting his own nest, mate and offspring with the parasites).

Swallows have a variety of parasites living in the nest and in their plumage. A common parasite is the blood-feeding mite *Ornithonyssus bursa*, which feeds on both the nestlings and the adults. The mites reproduce quickly, passing through some ten generations during a single breeding cycle of their hosts, with numbers sometimes building up to several thousands. Møller (1990a) added mites to nests to see what effect a heavy infestation would have. The mites harmed the nestlings, which did not put on as much weight as nestlings in nests free of mites. Nestlings from nests

with large numbers of mites were also more likely to die in the nest or soon after they fledged. Thus, adults whose nests were heavily infested produced fewer independent fledglings from their first clutches and had smaller and less-successful second clutches as well. The adults are also directly harmed. The mites make their hosts anaemic, which might affect their stamina; infected males, for example, cannot sing for long (Møller 1991a). Males breeding in heavily infested nests were also restricted in the length to which they could grow their tails during the next moult (Møller 1990b). Thus, it pays a female looking for a mate to avoid a male infected with mites. An infected male is likely to be in poor condition himself, the pair will be unable to rear as many offspring as they otherwise could, and the offspring will also suffer, when adults, from the attentions of parasites.

In an experiment in which he cross-fostered nestlings between broods, Møller (1990b) found that the number of mites on the nestlings was related to the number on their true parents rather than to the number on their foster parents, indicating a genetic resistance to the mites. Long-tailed males also had offspring with fewer mites. A female choosing an uninfected male is thus likely to be choosing one that is naturally resistant to these parasites. She can choose a healthy, uninfected male by choosing one with a long tail; he will have proved his vigour and resistance to parasites.

Mate-guarding and cuckoldry

Although Swallows breed monogamously (males pairing with two females are rare), a certain amount of promiscuity goes on. Males want to sire as many offspring as possible and, potentially, they can sire more than just the clutch laid by their mates. They therefore gain by copulating with other females and letting them and their mates rear the chicks. A female

311. Male Swallow *Hirundo rustica* collecting nest material from roadside, Northumberland, June 1987 (A. R. Hamblin)



might also sometimes want to copulate with a male other than her own mate; for example, she might not have the pick of males when she arrives at a nest site because some males (the older, high-quality males that arrived first) have already got partners. By copulating with the older birds, while pairing with another male, her offspring will benefit from the good genes of the former while she still has her own mate to help rear the chicks. A male Swallow may thus end up rearing nestlings that have been sired by another male. On average, about one-quarter of the chicks are sired by a male other than the one feeding them (Møller 1987a, 1989).

Understandably, therefore, male Swallows try to protect their interests by guarding their mates from the attentions of other males (Møller 1987a, 1987b). A male need not guard his mate for the whole season, but just when she is carrying developing eggs that can be fertilised, from some five days before she starts laying until the day before she lays her last egg. The male Swallow guards her for about a fortnight over this period, for both first and second clutches. He shadows her movements, keeping within a few metres of her, both around the nest and while away foraging. When she goes to fetch some feathers to line the nest, he follows, but does not help with her chores. Any approaching males are quickly seen off. Sometimes, an intruding male will get close enough to a female to try to mount and copulate with her, but if her mate is close by he will interfere and chase off the interloper. If a male does lose sight of his mate during the egg-laying period, he has another trick to stop her copulating with other males: he gives an alarm call, apparently warning of the presence of a predator, but in the absence of any such threat (Møller 1990d). He flies around the site where the group is nesting, calling intensely, which causes all the other Swallows in the vicinity to fly out into the open; any surreptitious mating attempts are thus curtailed.

Males are, however, sometimes successful at extra-pair copulations. They take note of when a male temporarily leaves his mate, perhaps to chase off another rival, and take the opportunity to copulate with her. After such an extra-pair copulation, the female's mate copulates with her frequently, to dilute the rival's sperm and so increase his chances of being the father of her offspring (Møller 1987c). Most of the extra-pair copulations are by neighbours of the female and occur in her fertile period, when they are most likely to be successful.

The female also benefits from being guarded by her mate because she is disturbed less by other males at a critical time when she has to find extra food for the developing eggs. She may thus actively encourage him to guard, so that any unwanted male suitors are kept away. To see how well the guarding male protects his female from harassment from other males, Møller (1987a) temporarily removed some males from a group of Swallows. He found that females without guarding mates were involved in more chases and copulations by other males than those being guarded, so mate-guarding is effective.

Following the female in this way is costly, since it interferes with other activities, such as feeding. The male can feed at the same time as the female, but not so efficiently. She is likely to frighten off insects before the



312. Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Cheshire, August 1983 (Anthony J. Bond)

male has a chance to catch them, and he is restricted to feeding where she has already fed. As a result, only males in good condition can continue to guard for a long time, and even they lose weight at this time (Møller 1987b, unpublished data, cited in 1991e).

Males also cannot both guard their females and partake in copulations with other females. When their mates are no longer fertile, however, and are occupied in incubating their eggs, the males can go off in pursuit of other females. Thus, it is usually old, early-breeding males whose mates are already incubating, and young, late-breeding females at the laying stage that are involved in extra-pair copulations (Møller 1985). This may explain why the females do not always reject the intruder: an early-breeding male is likely to be a better-quality one than her own mate and may, therefore, be a welcome copulation partner.

Once the eggs are being incubated, the male Swallow can do nothing more about protecting himself from cuckolders. He still, however, need not waste time and energy looking after offspring that are not his. It is unlikely that he knows which offspring are his and which are the result of other illicit unions, but there may be clues to indicate that some chicks are not his own. Thus, if he saw his mate being chased by another male, or if he lost contact with her during her fertile period, then he may be uncertain whether he was the father of the chicks. In such a case, he might spend less time and energy wearing himself out feeding his mate's brood,

perhaps thereby remaining in good health and so improving his prospects of surviving to the next breeding season.

This is just what does happen. Møller (1991b) temporarily detained some group-breeding male Swallows during their females' fertile period and recorded how willing they were, later, to defend their brood against a potential predator, a stuffed Little Owl *Athene noctua*. While their mates were absent, the females were involved in more extra-pair copulations than other females whose mates were present. The experimental males subsequently engaged in less alarm-calling and mobbing and refrained from approaching the stuffed predator as closely as did other males. Males also varied in how much effort they put into feeding the brood, depending upon how unfaithful their partners had been (Møller 1988b). The more often a male copulated with his mate, the more feeds he brought to the chicks. The more often she was chased by other males (and presumably copulated with them), the less food he brought. The experimental males that had been detained during their mates' fertile period also fed the chicks less, and some of their chicks died of starvation.

Female Swallows can also be uncertain of whether they are the true mothers of the eggs they incubate because some females dump eggs into the nests of other females, leaving the latter to incubate them and rear the chicks (Møller 1987d). Swallows lay only one egg per day, but occasionally two turn up in the nest on the same day; Møller found that the markings of these extra eggs did not match those of the rest of the clutch, but, in 42 out of 47 cases, did match the eggs of the nearest female neighbour. Alien eggs added before the nest-owner has laid are ejected, but those laid during egg-laying and incubation are kept, perhaps because the female cannot identify which eggs are hers and which belong to another female. Møller found that 16% of nests were parasitised in this way. Females breeding in large groups, and therefore with lots of neighbours, not surprisingly suffered the most from such parasitism. Parasitised females ended up with small broods of their own, fledging an average of only three young, whereas parasitic females did well by rearing their own broods as well as having chicks reared in other nests, and thus having 4.5 fledglings on average.

Group-living

Breeding in a group can be a severe disadvantage for a male Swallow, particularly a young male, because of the increased opportunity for his mate to copulate with other males. Chases, copulations and extra-pair copulations, as well as territorial intrusions, are all more frequent in groups than for solitarily breeding Swallows (Møller 1985, 1987e). Accordingly, a group-breeding male has to guard his mate for a few days longer than does a solitarily breeding male, and he stays with her for longer during each day as well (within 5 m for 77% of the time, compared with 63%: Møller 1987b). The male who is part of a large group also spends more time singing, perhaps to deter intruders (Møller 1991a). For both males and females, there are also other costs resulting from being in a group, such as greater risks of food shortage and of suffering from mites, egg-dumping and infanticide (Møller 1987e).

So, why do Swallows bother to breed together? They do not benefit from any advantages of group foraging, since they feed alone or in pairs and there is less food available per bird for Swallows breeding in groups (Turner 1980; Møller 1987e). They also gain little from improved defence, since predation tends to be low anyway, although any predator such as a cat or Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* may be spotted more quickly by a group (Møller 1987e). Some individuals do benefit, however (Møller 1987e): males that arrive early, for example, have the opportunity to copulate with more partners than if they bred solitarily; unmated males may obtain some copulations in a group, from widows or by killing chicks and inducing the female to desert her current mate; females can dump eggs in the nests of other females; and young females can copulate outside their pair bond with older, better-quality males.

As with many other aspects of their lives, the abundance of insects probably influences how close together Swallows breed. Groups are large when insects are locally abundant (Møller 1987e) and when the population density of Swallows is high (Møller 1991d). A good food supply may thus attract and maintain a large number of Swallows. Swallows that arrive early may be able to choose the best site for food and for a nest, but late-comers may be more limited in where they can find suitable feeding sites, nest sites and mates. Thus, they might have to go to those places where some pairs are already established.

A group of Swallows on a farm may thus be a sign not only of good fortune, but also of a healthy insect population.

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Notes



Treetop hunting by Hen Harriers On 14th February 1988, we observed an adult male Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* hunting for about 15 minutes through the top of the canopy of a belt of mature Scots pines *Pinus sylvestris* bordering a Breckland communal roost site of this species in Suffolk. The trees were about 15 m tall and the canopy was mostly closed. The harrier foraged carefully, flying slowly along the belt among the treetops with his head lowered. PH observed the same behaviour at this site by a male Hen Harrier on 12th March 1988, when two unsuccessful strikes were seen; and for eight minutes by two males on 21st March, after one had been observed hunting over a conifer plantation 1 km away. This slow, quartering type of bird-hunting is in contrast to the fast, ground-level flight described by Wassenich (1968), Schipper *et al.* (1975) and N. Picozzi (in Cramp & Simmons 1980), which we, too, have observed, but both methods seem to be practised mostly by the smaller and more agile male Hen Harrier.

Analysis of pellets from winter roosts of Hen Harriers in Breckland and in the New Forest, Hampshire (proportions of grey males ranging from 41% to 69%), revealed that woodland species such as Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Coal Tit *Parus ater*, Blue Tit *P. caeruleus*, Great Tit *P. major*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra* and Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* feature in the prey taken in these well-wooded areas (Clarke & Palmer 1987; Clarke *et al.* 1988; Clarke unpubl.). Our observations suggest that these may be captured by quartering of treetops.

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Swallow aggressively attacking Common Sandpiper On 30th August 1988, at Hay-a-Park Gravel-pits, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, I was watching a Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* flying low across the water towards me when a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* suddenly came into the field of view of my binoculars, apparently chasing the wader. The Swallow rapidly came closer and swerved directly at the sandpiper, which took evasive action; this was repeated, and on the second occasion the Swallow hit the

wader's tail. As the birds approached the shore, the Swallow pulled away and allowed the sandpiper to land unmolested.

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This attack by the Swallow, involving actual contact, appears to have been unusually aggressive. See the editorial comment to the note by Michael Hamzija below. EDS

Swallow chasing Kingfisher On 23rd August 1982, at high tide at Llandulph, Cornwall, I watched a Swallow *Hirundo rustica* chasing a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* over water, near the water's edge, beneath the sea wall. Several times, the chase passed right below me over a distance of approximately 50 m, the Kingfisher diving beneath the water on a number of occasions in an effort to escape its pursuer; each time that the Kingfisher surfaced, the Swallow continued the chase, before both birds disappeared from view. *BWP* (vol. 5) states that Swallows commonly chase birds of various other species, especially food competitors, in late summer and autumn. I would be interested to learn whether there have been any previous records involving Kingfishers.

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Dr K. E. L. Simmons has commented: 'In *Brit. Birds* 44: 369-371, I recorded what I termed "interspecific flight-reactions" in autumn by a number of species, including the pursuit by Swallows of Kingfisher (two records) and of Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (one record); in one instance, a Swallow followed a Kingfisher's course "low down, straight and fast over the water for about 150 yards". I interpreted such behaviour as a type of "exaggerated social response" triggered automatically by the sight of a flying bird close by. The incidents described by Mr Hamzija, and Mr Root involving Common Sandpiper (above), however, seem to involve rather more than mere following.' EDS

Swallows feeding in company with Starlings On 1st September 1988, at Northam Burrows, Devon, I watched about 20 Swallows *Hirundo rustica* apparently feeding on flying insects immediately above a flock of at least 100 Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*. The Starlings were feeding as they moved across short grazed grass in a tight flock facing into a strong (force 6-7) southwest wind. The Swallows made frequent laboured flights into the wind about 0.5 m above the Starlings; on reaching the front of the Starling flock, they drifted with the wind to the rear and repeated their feeding flights. During 20 minutes' observation, the Swallows kept immediately above the Starling flock. On 2nd September, in similar wind conditions, at a site 300 m away, ten Swallows were attending a feeding Starling flock and behaving in the same way. Since the Swallows kept in very close proximity to the Starlings, it would seem that they were feeding on insects disturbed by the latter. The only reference in *BWP* (vol. 5) to Swallows taking advantage of insects disturbed by other birds concerns their feeding around a party of Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*.

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Dr Angela Turner (1989, *A Handbook to the Swallows and Martins of the World*) stated that Swallows often catch insects disturbed by other birds and mammals, including man, and Swallows have been recorded persistently following man for this purpose (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 52: 164, 269). This behaviour is not, therefore, uncommon, but Mr James's observations provide an excellent example of it. EDS

Juvenile Swallow in Channel Islands in April On 16th April 1988, while attempting to ring migrant hirundines at St Ouen's Pond, Jersey, Channel Islands, David Buxton succeeded in catching two of the ten or so Swallows *Hirundo rustica* then feeding in the area. One was a normal adult. The other, however, was in complete juvenile plumage, with pale forehead and throat lacking the chestnut coloration, a distinct absence of gloss on the upperparts, generally paler underparts than those of the adult, and a tail of normal length for a juvenile; it had no extended gape, and DB, from his experience of ringing thousands of Swallows, reckoned that it had fledged at least one month beforehand. Juvenile Swallows have been reported on 17th May in Yorkshire and Jersey (*Brit. Birds* 62: 282-284) and on 10th May in Kent (*Brit. Birds* 70: 122). This occurrence in the Channel Islands was nearly a month earlier; if the same explanation is invoked as for the previous records (namely, that juveniles fledged by mid April in southern Spain get caught up in the passage of more northerly populations), it would require a remarkably early breeding date somewhere to the south.

R. LONG

Ozarda, St John, Jersey, Channel Islands

Philadelphia Vireo in Scilly: new to Britain At about 16.00 GMT on 10th October 1987, with the farmer's permission, Dick Filby and I entered the fields on Borough Farm on the northeastern side of Tresco, Isles of Scilly, and began to walk down the main track towards the pines at the bottom, flanked on our right-hand side by a hedge of sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. As we moved slowly downhill, checking the small fields and their hedges, I noticed a small bird hovering low by the main hedge about 75 m ahead. I raised my binoculars to identify the expected Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* when another bird appeared in my field of view, again in the main hedge, but much closer. Refocusing, I immediately realised that I was looking at a member of the North American family Vireonidae, and

313. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Scilly, October 1987 (*Pete Wheeler*)





314. Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*, Scilly, October 1987 (Pete Wheeler)

exclaimed 'Vireo!' twice. DF joined me for brief views before the bird moved into the hedge. 'Philadelphia?', he said. We then obtained prolonged views at a range of about 30 m, the bird feeding along the edge of a small orchard bathed in direct sunlight. Having built up a description of its salient features, we were able to confirm its identity as a Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus* with the aid of *The National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds of North America* (1983), which we happened to have with us. The bird was eventually seen by over 1,000 people during its four-day stay, and was last seen at about 16.00 GMT on 13th October, by me, in the same spot in which Dick Filby and I had found it.

BEHAVIOUR Stayed mostly in sycamore hedges and, occasionally, trees. Moved 'purposefully' when feeding, similar to *Sylvia* warblers, rather than actively like *Phylloscopus* warblers, picking food (mainly caterpillars) from branches and leaves. Hung upside down fairly frequently, picking off prey below itself. Occasionally 'flycatched'. In common with many North American birds, it was very approachable and unperturbed by close human presence. No calls heard.

SIZE AND STRUCTURE Slightly longer than a Chiffchaff *P. collybita*, but with quite different jizz from any European warbler. Rather robust, deep-bellied and short-tailed, with stout, shortish, broad-based, dark, pointed bill (grey with a black tip: P. G. Lansdown *in litt.*). Relatively 'strong' bluish legs and feet. Tail short in relation to body length, noticeably notched.

PLUMAGE General appearance: green upperparts, yellowish underparts, with relatively

bold head pattern and contrastingly dark flight feathers. Crown and forehead matt greyish blue (darker and greyer at the sides: P. G. Lansdown *in litt.*). Short dark line through bold dark eye. Supercilium white, thicker behind eye. White line below dark eye-stripe, thickest below eye itself, giving rise to unique face pattern. Lower cheeks, mantle, rump, basal two-thirds of uppertail and wing-coverts cold green (with greyish-olive tone: P. G. Lansdown *in litt.*). Primaries, primary coverts and secondaries almost matt black, with very fine pale edgings, more prominent on secondaries. Lower third of uppertail almost as dark. Tail feathers very finely pale edged and tipped, forming very fine, pale tip. Undertail dark. Throat and upper breast deep yellow, with lower breast and flanks much paler yellow/off-white, and belly white. Vent pale lemon yellow, brighter than flanks and lower breast, but not so bright or deep as throat and upper breast.

The bird seemed to be in good health and appeared to have settled into a daily routine. We presume that it had arrived on Tresco before 10th

October, since several other Nearctic vagrants had been discovered in southwest England during the previous week, after a number of particularly fast-moving weather systems had crossed the Atlantic.

Pyle *et al.* (1978, *Identification Guide to North American Passerines*) stated 'Juv. (Jun-Aug) is generally drabber with a brownish wash to the plumage and more distinct wing bars. Otherwise, no reliable plumage criteria known.' We have, therefore, been unable to determine whether the Tresco individual was an adult or in first-winter plumage.

This is the first accepted record of the species for Britain, but the second for the Western Palearctic, the first having been in Ireland in October 1985 (*Irish Birds* 3: 327).

JOHN BRODIE GOOD
Park House, 101 High Street, Portishead, Avon BS20 9PT

The Philadelphia Vireo has a much more restricted North American breeding range than the Red-eyed Vireo *V. olivaceus*, which is the most frequent transatlantic landbird vagrant; it is also generally rather uncommon throughout its range (whereas Red-eyed is often abundant). It overwinters in Mexico, Central America and Colombia.

In 1980, Chandler S. Robbins predicted Philadelphia Vireo as the thirty-second most likely candidate for autumn transatlantic vagrancy among species which had not, at that time, been observed in Britain or Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 73: 448-457). Since then, six of his higher-rated species have been noted here, as have several which were lower-rated (e.g. Wilson's Warbler *Wilsonia pusilla*).

Philadelphia Vireo has no close confusion species and the British Birds Rarities Committee had no hesitation in accepting the bird's identification on a single circulation of the Committee. EDS

Letters

Iris colour of hybrid Tufted Duck × Pochard In the discussions about 'Mystery photograph 97' (*Brit. Birds* 78: 40-41; 81: 650-652), no real attention was given to the iris colour of the depicted male hybrid *Aythya*.

315. Male *Aythya* hybrid (thought to be Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* × Pochard *A. ferina*), with female Tufted Duck, Netherlands, February 1986 (*Arnoud B. van den Berg*)



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By courtesy of BBC Publications; JUST THE BEST, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Wildlife*, March 1989. Fieldscope II, Fieldscope EDII and 8x30 ECF have been recommended by *British Birds*.

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Thanks, however, to the possibility of making direct comparisons with the iris colour of the also-depicted Tufted Ducks *A. fuligula*, this feature is easy to see in the photograph. The picture shows clearly that the hybrid has a darker iris colour than Tufted Duck, and this is one of the best reasons why the bird should be regarded as a cross between Tufted Duck and Pochard *A. ferina*, since Pochard is the only British/Dutch *Aythya* species in which the male has a distinctly darker iris colour than Tufted Duck.

It seems useful to note that colour photographs of the mystery bird show that its iris was more orange than the yellow iris of accompanying Tufted Ducks, and that the mystery bird's head gloss was brown-purple.

Gillham (1988) suggested that in November, when the mystery photograph was taken, the 'tuft' is not always fully developed.

A photograph of what was probably the same bird, at exactly the same locality, though three months later in the season, in February 1986 (plate 315), might be worthwhile for comparison.

ARNOUD B. VAN DEN BERG
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REFERENCE

GILLHAM, E. H. 1988. The identity of 'Mystery photograph 97'. *Brit. Birds* 81: 650-651.

Aythya hybrid identification I should like to comment on the identity of the male *Aythya* hybrid in 'Mystery photograph 97' (*Brit. Birds* 77: plate 254; 78: plate 19), having seen three hybrids of this type in recent years in the London area. All three showed a faint reddish-chestnut tinge to parts of the head and a red or orange-red iris, making Pochard *A. ferina* parentage a near certainty. The shape, size, plumage and bill-pattern were otherwise the same as those of the mystery bird. Like the mystery bird, they also showed the white flanks and vestigial tuft which point towards Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* parentage. I do not believe that the head-shape is necessarily an indication of Ring-necked Duck *A. collaris* parentage, rather that it is a predictable intermediate shape between the peaked crown of Pochard and the rounded head of Tufted Duck, with the expected vestigial tuft.

The bill of the mystery bird shows the broad, curved black tip and black basal patch strongly reminiscent of male Pochard and also appears slightly paler in the middle than those of the accompanying Tufted Ducks. Furthermore, the flanks are clearly too pale for a male Ring-necked Duck, with no suggestion of the distinctive white vertical band at the fore end of the flanks or the white upper border to the flanks.

In my view, the mystery bird is a male hybrid of a male Tufted Duck × female Pochard, as stated by K. C. Osborne (*Brit. Birds* 78: 40-41).

MARK G. TELFER
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Long-tailed Skuas in 1988: an update Since the publication of the paper on the autumn 1988 influx of Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 121-136), a number of alterations and additions have been pointed out, mainly in the southeastern counties. It has become clear that

some requests for information did not arrive or were sent to the wrong people. I made the error of treating 'no replies' as negative reports, and referred to some records sent by individuals and by the Bird Information Service which subsequently proved to be unacceptable. I wish to thank John Miller for pointing out the discrepancies.

The numbers for southeast England now include a further 13 records, and the relevant section (*Brit. Birds* 84: 129) should be revised to read:

SUFFOLK TO KENT

Numbers on the southeast coasts of England were not large, consisting of six in Suffolk, nine in Essex and 19 in Kent. The counts were, however, significant, as Essex had only two previous records this century, and the Kent total for the period 1976-87 was only 31.

Most of the sightings (24 out of 34) came during the seven-day period 24th September to 1st October, with the majority being seen in a 'wide funnel' of the Thames estuary. The most westerly individuals were four adults at Allhallows, Kent, and one immature at Southend Pier, Essex, all on 25th September. The seven birds originally reported from Tilbury Docks on 25th cannot now be confirmed. Only three were seen from the Channel coast of Kent, all at Dungeness, on 27th September (two) and 5th October (one).

Ageing can now be more precise, but with a similar result, of approximately 50% adults, as 17 of the 34 recorded were of this age.

P. J. DUNN

16 Southwold Rise, Southwold, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO11 3RB

Implications of implants The compilers of 'News and comment' wondered (*Brit. Birds* 84: 294) what I think about the chip implants which are on offer from AVID (UK). This system was demonstrated to us by another company some years ago. The chip is a transducer which responds to an interrogatory signal by sending out its unique hexadecimal code. The problem is that the signal sent out (by the chip) is very weak and the reader has to be within a few centimetres of the chip. Fantastic for cage birds, wild birds entering nestboxes or on a particular perch on a specially designed feeder, or as a tamper-proof covert way of marking dogs, cats, ponies and so on.

Our simple method of bird-ringing, however, using a stamped ring with an easily understood return address and unique number for each bird, has as its greatest strength the billions of literate people in the world, all of whom are potential reporters of a ring. Transducer implants could be reported only by the handful of people with the necessary equipment. The technique clearly has a restricted niche in some detailed research applications, but is several orders of magnitude less powerful than that in the dream I had some 15 years ago. When I first found out about the technology, I had hoped that a directional interrogator might be able to find out who (i.e. which individual marked Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) was where over the whole of a substantial reedbed—so plotting territories and logging survival from the comfort of a VDU. The power of the signal from the transducer, or the sensitivity of the receiver, will have to improve about a million-fold for this dream to come true.

My personal favourite for hi-tech bird-tracking is the use of miniature transmitters and satellite receivers. At the moment, the transmitters are too big for anything much smaller than an albatross or swan, but the technology for miniaturisation is steadily developing. The French work on

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* (Jouventin & Weimerskirch, 1990, *Nature* 343: 746-748) logged adults making feeding trips to come back to their nestlings of a minimum of 3,600 km and a maximum of more than 15,000 km. Equally interesting results will be obtained, from studies of small numbers of individuals of smaller and smaller birds, in the future.

I cannot, however, see ringing being replaced as the best method of keeping track of the movements and survival of whole populations of birds. The analytical techniques being developed by the BTO to integrate the information gathered by census workers, nest recorders and ringers—the Integrated Population Monitoring Programme—is much more significant to the study of wild birds than any possible current use of transducer chips. Ringing remains the cheap, safe and reliable way to mark birds, and it attracts a dedicated army of skilled volunteers who find it a fascinating pursuit.

CHRIS MEAD

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Reviews

The Magpies: the ecology and behaviour of Black-billed and Yellow-billed Magpies. By Tim Birkhead. Illustrated by David Quinn. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1991. 270 pages; one colour plate; 31 black-and-white photographs; 28 line-drawings. £18.00.

The most predictable question at any general talk on birds will be about Magpies *Pica pica*. It is delivered with evident dislike of the creatures. Are they guilty of such widespread slaughter that many gardens have no songbirds left? What is the speaker, or the RSPB, or the Government, or somebody, going to do about it? Reading Tim Birkhead's splendid book would be good advice.

Two species of Magpie are recognised. The Black-billed *P. pica* occurs throughout much of the northern hemisphere. The Yellow-billed *P. nuttalli* has a rather small range in California. The book draws extensively on work by Birkhead and students in the Sheffield area, but also makes comparisons with studies from elsewhere. American Black-billed Magpies are in many ways more like the other American species than the European one with which they are currently grouped. A recurring theme is the question of whether, and how, differences in behaviour and ecology are related to environmental factors.

In Britain, Magpies breed in dispersed territories, but flocks of various sizes are frequent. One of the lures of starting a study 15 years ago was the possibility that they might breed cooperatively, as several other crows do. This turned out not to be the case. The non-breeding segment is one of the great unknowns in populations of most birds. Non-breeding Magpies are conspicuous and are probably now better studied than is the case for any other species. Young Magpies live in flocks as they struggle to gain a breeding territory. Dominant individuals are most likely to succeed, and dominance comes with time in the flock, so it pays to join early. Flocks constantly test the breeding birds to find gaps or weaknesses in their territory defences.

There is plenty in this well-written and well-researched book. Many ideas are explored with careful observation and experiment. Unsupported myths about the Magpie get short shrift. Magpies are great hoarders of food, but they recover most hoards within a day or two, unlike some crows which lay down long-term stores. They may be able to detect food and recover hoards by smell, which would be useful for a scavenger, as carrion is unpredictably available. Notwithstanding their use in police advertising campaigns, there is no evidence that Magpies steal or hoard anything other than food. This slur on their character merely reflects their low popularity rating.

So what of the poor songbirds? After careful search, no evidence has been found of songbird populations being depressed as Magpies have increased in numbers in the last 30 years. The problem appears to be that their predation is conspicuous and rather gruesome. But what about the cats? There may be 25 cats in the territory of a suburban Magpie. Cats eat adult birds in winter, which would be much more likely to reduce breeding numbers than would the Magpie's predation of eggs and chicks.

I strongly recommend this attractive and readable book. Maybe it will improve some people's view of the Magpie. Actually I suspect that prejudice is deep (and many Magpie-haters are probably cat-owners). Other readers will frequently find their attentions drawn to topics of possible investigation. For instance, is it really true, as one study found, that Magpies may move eggs from their nests into those of other pairs by way of parasitism?

COLIN BIBBY

The Hamlyn Photographic Guide to Birds of the World. Edited by Andrew Gosler. Octopus Publishing Group, London, 1991. 384 pages; 1,300 colour plates. £20.00.

This splendid tome is an obvious sister to the recently published, and much-acclaimed, *Photographic Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe*. It contains over 1,300 colour photographs, depicting more than one-seventh of the world's total number of bird species. A general introduction is followed by interesting notes on each family, including key features and numbers belonging to each group, and the book concludes with a full list of the world's species (based on Howard & Moore's *Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World*). The bulk of the work, however, consists of good-quality, very-well-reproduced photographs, divided into the six main geographical regions of the world, and these will be the main reason for purchasing the book. On the whole, the few below-par illustrations are those of the species which are more difficult to photograph. Some of the cropping leaves a little to be desired, occasional wings or tails being missing from the frame, and the photographs are comparatively small in order to accommodate the great number included, but, even so, they are more than acceptable, again closely mirroring the format of the European version, averaging 11 per page. These are accompanied by a brief, but adequate text for each species covered. A further small detraction from the general success of the book is the absence of picture credits accompanying the photographs, these instead being lumped in an unhelpful way at the back of the book. Overall, however, I can thoroughly recommend this work, with its refreshingly honest price tag of £20, instead of the accepted normal confidence trick of £19.95: perhaps the publishers know that birders are not easily conned. Very good value for money.

ROGER TIDMAN

A Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names. By James A. Jobling. Illustrations by Richard Fowling and the author. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991. 272 pages; 24 line-drawings. £19.95.

Every now and again, along comes a book which fills such an obvious gap in one's library that purchase is automatic and immediate. This is one such book. Anyone with an interest in bird names will probably already own two or three (e.g. Macleod 1954; Jackson 1968; Gotch 1981; Lockwood 1984). This one deals only with scientific names, but it is by far the most comprehensive, covering the generic and specific scientific name of every one of the world's bird species.

The meanings of names fall into nine categories, based on appearance (e.g. *Recurvirostra*), the name of a real or fictional person (e.g. *amherstiae*), the native name (e.g. *pleschanka*), geographical range (e.g. *europaeus*), classification relationship (e.g. *Tyrngites*), habitat (e.g. *Monticola*), behaviour (e.g. *pendulinus*), food (e.g. *viscivorus*) or voice (e.g. *Upupa*). The meanings and derivations are explained clearly and succinctly.

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This book's clear typography and good design make it a pleasure to use. It is an essential addition to every serious ornithological library. As well as using this book for reference purposes, many birdwatchers will find it pleasurable and intriguing for browsing in during idle moments.

J. T. R. SHARROCK

A Guide to the Birds of Thailand. By Boonsong Lekagul & Philip D. Round. Illustrated by Mongkol Wongkalasin & Kamol Komolphalin. Saha Karn Bhaet, Bangkok, 1991. 457 pages; 135 colour plates. No price given.

The appearance of this book has been long awaited, and the wait has certainly been worthwhile. The book follows the format of the second edition of *Bird Guide of Thailand* by Boonsong Lekagul & Edward W. Cronin (1974). That work has been long out of print and, though extremely useful, it had become rather out of date, especially the sections on distribution and status. In this new book, there are 133 more pages, including 23 more colour plates, than in the *Bird Guide of Thailand*. Some useful features have been kept, such as the 'Quick Reference' key inside the front cover, with thumbnail colour vignettes representing all the families and other major groups.

The introduction includes sections on the climate, physiography, habitats and zoogeography of Thailand. There is a short but welcome section on conservation, and an excellent chapter on 'Birdwatching in Thailand', which includes a map of the most interesting areas for the birder as well as details of the more important birdwatching sites. An appendix lists a few species which were recorded for the first time in Thailand too late for inclusion in the main text, as well as an interesting section on possible future additions to the Thai list.

The main part of the book is the identification section, which follows the familiar plate-opposite-text layout, with colour distribution maps for each species alongside the text. Inevitably, in some cases, the text overlaps onto the following page, but is never very far away from the illustration, and the numbered cross-referencing makes the book very easy to use. The sections on vocalisations are rather short, but the phonetic descriptions come across well to me. Some new English names have been coined, such as 'Flameback' rather than 'Goldenback', for the *Chrysocolaptes/Dinopium* woodpeckers, but the more traditional names are given in parentheses. Some new splits and lumps have appeared: Buff-breasted Babbler *Stachyris ambigua* is lumped in Rufous-fronted Babbler *S. rufifrons*, while Tawny-flanked Prinia becomes Pale Prinia *Prinia inornata*, separated from the African *P. subflava*. The Thai name is given along with the English and scientific names, and I hope that it will not be too long before a Thai-language edition of the book is published. The plates are well set out and are not crowded, and the two Thai illustrators are to be congratulated on an excellent job. All 915 species are illustrated in colour, and there are figures representing the more distinctive subspecies as well as female, immature or non-breeding plumages where appropriate. There is generous use of flight illustrations for raptors, seabirds, hornbills and other groups where this is important. Although, for the purpose of comparison, the figures are drawn in similar postures and are rather stylised, the jizz of the bird is conveyed well for many (though not all) species. The colour printing is somewhat bold, which tends to make the more colourful species appear rather garish, but considerable attention has been paid to detail, and the level of accuracy is good. European birders would find the illustrations of species which occur in Europe only as vagrants from Siberia (but which overwinter or occur as migrants in Thailand) extremely helpful, especially those of warblers, chats and flycatchers.

Inevitably, this book will be compared with *A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia* (King, Dickinson & Woodcock 1975). Although it covers a much smaller area, the quality of the illustrations and the immense value of having every species illustrated in colour, together with the easy-to-use format, will mean that this book will become a standard work, not just for Thailand, but also for other areas of the region. In Thailand, it is THE book to use: in surrounding countries, it will be a most useful complement to King *et al.* In the 16 years since the publication of King *et al.*, there have been many advances in field ornithology, as well as many changes in status and distribution. Birders who visited Thailand in the late 1970s or early 1980s may find that they need to 'de-tick' Indochinese Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina polioptera*, and perhaps one or two other species, in the light of new information about their identification characters.

This book has a laminated cover, and is well bound, though I am not sure how long the binding will stand up to prolonged field use in the tropics; the size is also a little awkward, being rather larger than either King *et al.* or Lekagul & Cronin, though smaller than the Christopher Helm *Shorebirds/Seabirds* format.

All concerned are to be congratulated on an excellent production, which will do much to promote interest in the birds of Thailand among visitors and residents alike. Thailand has justifiably become the most popular birding destination in Southeast Asia, and the appearance of this new guide will ensure that this popularity increases and, with it, that there is also an increased awareness of the conservation problems in the region.

IAIN ROBERTSON

The Status of Seabirds in Britain and Ireland. By Clare Lloyd, Mark Tasker & Ken Partridge; illustrated by Keith Brockie. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1991. 355 pages; 30 black-and-white plates, 32 line-drawings; 29 distribution maps. £20.00.

This book is the most comprehensive account of the status of seabirds in Britain and Ireland to date. It is packed full of data gathered during 1985-87, when all coastal seabird colonies around Britain and Ireland were counted. This mammoth task has been written up to be both very readable and extremely useful.

The Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) and the Seabird Group set up the 'Seabird Colony Register' in 1984, a computerised data base which includes counts of coastal seabird colonies dating from the first pioneering attempt at a complete survey of coastal seabird colonies in Britain and Ireland, 'Operation Seafarer' (1969-70), and including almost all counts since. During 1985-87 they organised a repeat survey of all coastal seabird colonies in Britain and Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands, which involved not only professionals from many organisations, but also a veritable army of amateur seabird-counters. It is the data from this survey, together with relevant information from the BTO Ringing Scheme, the NCC 'Seabirds at Sea Team' (SAST) and monitoring studies by the RSPB, the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) and others, that are presented in this book. These data have been expertly collated and analysed and used to put our seabird populations into an international context, so highlighting their worldwide importance. For example, Britain and Ireland holds 70% of the world population of Gannets *Sula bassana* and Manx Shearwaters *Puffinus puffinus* and at least half of the world's Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* and Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*.

Part 1 covers general issues, such as seabird biology, an outline of the Seabird Colony Register, including modern survey methods, and reasons for changes in seabird numbers. Part 2 gives an account for each of the 24 regular breeding species. This is tremendously detailed without being dull. It includes information on the British and Irish population and estimates of the European and World populations of each species, and discusses reasons for changes in numbers. Each species account includes a map of the British and Irish distribution and county totals. There is also a section on rare breeding species, such as the Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. The list of references is exhaustive, and there is a comprehensive gazetteer of seabird colonies.

With so many data, there are bound to be a few minor inaccuracies, such as the distribution map of Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* which shows colonies in Shetland, where they have not nested since 1960. Inevitably with such a book, some items are out of date almost as soon as it is printed. For example, some theories now suggest that the decline in sandeel stocks around Shetland may have been due to an influx of Atlantic water washing the planktonic larvae south, away from the islands. This effect may have been compounded by the local sandeel fishery, which, fortunately, has recently been banned by the Government. One significant criticism is that some of the distribution maps are rather clumsy, and some species would have been better presented by including maps of particular areas; for example, the distributions of Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* and Great Skua would have been better illustrated by larger-scale maps of colonies in Orkney and Shetland.

Keith Brockie's line-drawings are up to his usual excellent standard and make this book not only immensely informative but also extremely attractive. This has to be one of the best books so far in the Poyser series. For those with a serious interest in seabirds this will become the bible on British and Irish seabird populations, and for anyone with even a passing interest in our seabirds it is a 'must'.

PETE ELLIS

Handbook of Australian, New Zealand & Antarctic Birds. vol. 1: Ratites to Ducks (Part A: Ratites to Petrels; Part B: Australian Pelican to Ducks). The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (Co-ordinators: S. Marchant and P. J. Higgins). Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990. 1,400 pages; 96 colour plates; numerous black-and-white line-drawings; 265 distribution maps. £125.00.

As recently as the early 1960s there were very few books about Australian birds in print. Fortunately, the situation has changed over the last 25 years with the appearance of three different field guides, a number of photographic books and the RAOU's *The Atlas of Australian Birds*. Until now, however, no detailed handbooks of Australian birds have been produced. Greatly inspired by volume 1 of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic* which was published in 1977, the Australians began work in earnest on their own handbook in 1980. As the project evolved, their area of coverage was expanded to include New Zealand, the Antarctic and various scattered islands in that region and finally, after ten years of comprehensive research and compilation, this, the first volume of five, has hit our shelves.

When I opened up the box containing the first volume, I was surprised to find two books inside, both sizeable tomes. It turns out that volume 1 comes in two parts: A and B. This, of course, explains the very high price of £125.00. I must admit that, when the prepublication advertisements reached me, the high price put me off buying this book. Even the prepublication offer of £99.00 seemed very high for one volume. Had it been stressed that this was really for two sizeable books, £49.50 each might not have seemed too bad. I wonder how many other potential purchasers were discouraged by this, and whether it was a sensible marketing ploy for OUP? Would it not, perhaps, have been better to advertise it as a ten-volume series, with volumes 1 and 2 being published simultaneously for the bargain price of £99.00?

Given that *BWP* was the inspiration for this handbook and that OUP is the publisher for both, it comes as no surprise to find that the layout of the latter greatly resembles that used in the former. As a consequence, owners of *BWP* will find that this book feels very familiar and is immediately easy to use. After 46 pages of contents, introduction and acknowledgments, the *Handbook* then deals with 196 species from Emu *Dromaius novaehollandiae* through to Auckland Merganser *Mergus australis* (sadly extinct). Each order and each family is introduced with a paragraph containing a description of the birds within it, often with some useful comments on the taxonomic treatment followed, which differs in some cases from common usage elsewhere (e.g. the genus *Egretta* is merged with *Ardea* throughout the family, hence '*Ardea garzetta*' for Little Egret).

The species accounts start with the scientific and English names, which are then followed by an interesting explanation of the derivation of the scientific name, a list of alternative English names and a well-argued explanation of why a particular English name has been chosen, rather than the various alternatives. The bulk of the text is subdivided into field identification, habitat, distribution and population, movements, food, social organisation, social behaviour, voice, breeding, plumages, bare parts, moults, measurements, weights, structure, sexing, ageing, and geographical variation, in much the same way as *BWP*. Two maps are given for most species, the first showing the world range and the second the range within the area covered by the *Handbook*. Where a species occurs only within this area, the world map is omitted.

The wealth of information and the detail included are quite superb. The amount known about each species varies considerably, of course, and so, consequently, does the amount of text. Thus, the 'Social behaviour' section for the Adélie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*, a well-studied species, runs to nearly four double-column pages, whereas that for the poorly known Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti* occupies just eight lines. It would seem that most of the information that was available on each species has been included in this book, thus providing a wonderfully detailed reference work. Clearly, a vast amount of research has gone into producing this volume and it is hard to see how anything else is likely to compete with it in the near future.

On the negative side, I have two main criticisms of the *Handbook*, and these both relate to wasted space: surely a matter of concern when dealing with such lengthy, expensive volumes. First, for captioning the plates, the authors have adopted a similar system to that used in *The Birds of Africa*, this being that alongside each colour plate they reproduce a

reduced image of the plate in black-and-white on which the index numbers are placed. Then, below this, there are the captions. The reduced image takes up a full quarter-page in each case. With 96 plates in the first volume, 24 pages could have been saved if the *BWP* system had been followed instead (i.e. the numbers printed on the colour plates, with the captions alongside). I appreciate that aesthetically this is not quite so pleasing, but this is, after all, a scientific text and not a work of art.

Secondly, a lengthy list of references is given at the end of each species account. As some of the books are referred to in many of the accounts (e.g. Peter Harrison's *Seabirds*) the reference for some books appears repeatedly throughout the *Handbook*. In *BWP*, all the references are listed at the back of each volume, and consequently take up a lot less space.

The colour plates are all by J. N. Davies, and are of a high standard. The illustrations are large, with usually just one or two species per plate. A varying number of illustrations are given for each species, and these cover adult, immature and juvenile plumages, subspecies, morphs and fresh and worn plumages, as relevant. It is wonderful to have the various plumages of 21 species of *Pterodroma* petrel illustrated in colour in one volume. My only criticism of the plates concerns scale. On some plates, illustrations of the same species are painted in several sizes, which is rather misleading unless one studies the captions carefully. Plate 52, for example, illustrates two species of storm-petrel that are approximately the same size. There are four larger illustrations (two of each species) and seven slightly smaller ones (two of one species and five of the other). Surely, it would have been better to illustrate them all at the same size?

These few small niggles aside, I have nothing but praise for the volume, and recommend it to anyone with a serious interest in the birds of the region. It will undoubtedly remain the major reference work for many years to come.

DAVID FISHER

Bird Life of Mountain and Upland. By Derek Ratcliffe. Illustrated by Chris Rose. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. 256 pages; 24 black-and-white plates; 25 line drawings; 15 distribution maps. £19.50

This book introduces CUP's new 'Bird Life' series, which aims to describe and analyse the bird habitats of the British Isles, with particular emphasis on conservation and ecology. It is an excellent start. The book deserves a design award, and it is beautifully illustrated in the text, especially by Chris Rose's evocative line-drawings.

No-one is better qualified to write about British upland birds than Dr Derek Ratcliffe, lately Chief Scientist of the NCC, one of our most accomplished all-round naturalists, and a greatly respected ecologist. His Cumbrian upbringing left him with an abiding enthusiasm and affection for the uplands and their birds, which 'gain in charm and fascination from the wild and beautiful places in which they live.'

The book is well organised and lucidly written; rather complex ideas become easily intelligible to the general reader. Introductory sections define the uplands and describe the influences—climate, geology and topography, the activities of Man—which brought the habitats and their avifauna to their present condition. Sixty-six species qualify as 'upland' birds; the distribution, life history, and requirements of each of them are summarised. (A small quibble here: details of distribution are a little dated in parts, too heavily dependent on the 1968-72 *Atlas*. The situation of Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, or Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*, in Wales, for instance, is now very different from what it seemed to be in 1972.) Six meaty chapters deal with the major subdivisions of the upland habitats: Sheepwalks, Grouse Moors, Deer Forests, The Flows, Maritime Hills, and High Tops. To avoid excessive repetition, key species which occur in several habitats are discussed mainly under the most relevant heading (Raven *Corvus corax* in Sheepwalks, Merlin *Falco columbarius* in Grouse Moors).

A later chapter looks in detail at the geographical aspects of the upland bird fauna, and the background to present numbers and distribution. The final section, 'Conservation of Upland Birds', provides the climax and perhaps the main justification for the book, since this has been the writer's consuming interest for the past 40 years. He reviews with authority the impacts of upland afforestation (over one million hectares since 1945), game management,

nest robbery and acidification. He urges the need for a vigorous conservation strategy, deploring the often obstructive and obfuscating attitudes of politicians. 'Further development in the uplands matters hardly a fig to the national economy. It benefits only local, sectional, or individual interests, and is mostly heavily dependent on public funds. Against this must be set the interest of a much larger number of people, concerned to protect, cherish, and enjoy the natural heritage of wild nature.' Well said!

PETER DAVIS

The Birds of Pakistan. Volume 1: Regional studies and non-passeriformes. By T. J. Roberts. Oxford University Press, Karachi, Oxford, New York & Delhi, 1991. xli + 598 pages; 15 colour plates; 8 black-and-white plates; 68 line-drawings; 285 distribution maps. £40.00.

Although the birds of Pakistan have been included in a number of regional works covering the Indian subcontinent, this is the first time that the country has had its own complete avifauna. The publication of this first volume of a two-volume handbook thus represents a major landmark in the ornithology of Pakistan. It has been written by the acknowledged authority on the birds of Pakistan whose impeccable qualifications include residence in the country for no less than 38 years.

This volume covers all the non-passerines, 347 species out of a total of 660, and the second volume is expected next year. As one might expect with such a tome, the book commences with numerous lists of plates, illustrations, figures, distribution maps and a systematic checklist of the species included in volume 1. These are followed by 46 pages of introductory chapters, packed with fascinating information and covering such topics as 'Ecological factors in bird distribution', 'Zoogeographic aspects of bird distribution', 'Bird migration in Pakistan', 'The problem of species' (always a thorny and controversial subject), 'The contribution of early ornithologists' and 'Birds as pests and beneficial agents'. The detailed descriptions of the various habitat types usefully include lists of typical bird and plant species, but readers unfamiliar with scientific names of the birds will have to look up the English names. The major habitats are also illustrated by colour photographs, of variable quality, together with a selection of useful maps. The chapter on bird migration gives a thoughtful insight into the complex migration patterns which Pakistan enjoys as a result of its geographic location.

The bulk of the book inevitably comprises the species accounts, with an average of almost 1½ pages per species and including a distribution map for the majority of them. The maps are some of the best I have seen for a country which is still comparatively little known—clearly drawn (without use of colour), of a reasonable size, and obviously painstakingly researched. The species accounts are divided into sections covering: 'Description', 'Habitat, distribution and status', 'Habits', 'Breeding biology' and 'Vocalisations'. The information presented demonstrates a thorough research of the literature, but a considerable amount is based on first-hand experience. The style is very readable—indeed almost chatty, in the style of the great handbooks of old. A minor weakness concerns the measurements, which, as the author clearly recognises in the introduction, are of limited value for comparison purposes given that they are taken from many different sources.

Apart from a generous smattering of pleasant line-drawings, the main bird illustrations are the nine colour and four black-and-white plates, all executed by the author. Although effective and reasonably accurate, they do not show much artistic flair, and some of the birds look like museum specimens. The colour reproduction is generally quite good, but the green pigeons and the 'green' woodpeckers look too yellow. Curiously, the pigeon plate was used in the advance publicity for the book, yet I think this is one of the worst. The black-and-white plates include three of raptors in flight, but why are the larger eagles shown only from above? The book concludes with a glossary, a comprehensive bibliography and a gazetteer. The whole work is well produced, using good-quality paper and containing few typographical errors.

This book is a monumental effort and a tribute to the experience and dedication of the author. Despite the fairly high price, it deserves to find its way onto the shelves of all those with an interest in the region.

NIGEL REDMAN

Rare Birds of the British Isles. By David Saunders. Patrick Stephens, Sparkford, 1991. 224 pages; 90 colour plates; 5 pages of field-sketches. £15.99.

One has only to read part of the short Preface to feel at one with the author. For many years, David Saunders has been excited by rare birds. He has felt the ups and downs that are experienced by all of us who share his passion: the ecstasy of discovering a rare bird (one of his finds being the Western Palearctic's first Blackburnian Warbler *Dendroica fusca* on Skomer in 1961), the agony of missing a rarity, and the thrill of seeing one found previously (such as the White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* on Skokholm in 1990, cheekily sandwiched between starting and completing the book's Preface). The author's enthusiasm for his subject continues to shine through on every page of the book, and one suspects that even those who are uninterested in rare birds would find it infectious.

The Introduction touches upon a myriad of rarity-related topics: the evolution of the interest in rare birds in Britain, the definition of a rarity, the regions of origin of some species seen in Britain, the BOURC and the BBRC and their workings, the IRBC, the categories within and outside the British and Irish List, the BBRC record form, assisted passage, escaped cage-birds, established feral breeding species, 'The Hastings Rarities' and predictions from *British Birds* of future new birds for Britain and Ireland.

Over 300 rarities are dealt with in the 17 main chapters, most of which cover birds from a particular area of origin (e.g. 'Arctic Birds' and 'Desert and Steppe'). The norm is for each species to be allocated two paragraphs. The first one contains general information on the species, such as appearance and identification characters, habits, habitat and range. The second only is concerned with the pattern of records in the British Isles, listing all records for major rarities and, for other rare birds, documenting the first one or two records and summarising the remainder with regards to date and location. It is clear that the annual reports of the Rarities Committee have been a major source of information. The author describes the book as a personal survey, but this is a thoroughly researched work, full of statistics and dates, yet eminently readable. The 'personal' refers to the choice of species. Included are not only several recently recorded species that await formal acceptance and admission onto the British and Irish List (e.g. Ancient Murrelet *Synthliboramphus antiquus*), but also a number of species claimed in the nineteenth century and the early years of this century, yet not officially accepted (e.g. Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*). These latter claimed occurrences make particularly fascinating reading.

The 32 pages of colour plates contain numerous mouthwatering photographs, many of which have not been published elsewhere.

Appendix 1 lists all of the book's rare birds, with, for each, the year first recorded, whether or not seen in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the number of individuals recorded up to the end of 1957 and the number seen from 1958 to 1988. Appendix 2 lists the locations mentioned in the text with, for each, the county (old and new) and a grid reference. Appendix 3 lists suggestions for further reading.

It is a pleasure to recommend *Rare Birds of the British Isles* to all who are interested in rarities. It is both a reference book and a reading book. I imagine, however, that it will most often be used simply for dipping into to re-live treasured memories and to dream of what the future may have in store.

PETER LANSDOWN

The Ruff: individuality in a gregarious wader. By Johan G. van Rhijn. Illustrated by Ian Willis. T. & A. D. Poyser, London, 1991. 209 pages; 15 black-and-white plates; 11 line-drawings; 24 tables. £18.50.

In his introduction, the author states that this is not a handbook on the Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* but that the main theme of the book is the function and evolution of the Ruff's behavioural dimorphism. Some may be disappointed in the bias of the book, but the author has concentrated on his own personal view of the species, and this is entirely justified by the outcome of his efforts. The arguments and discussions read well, and the frequent summaries help to bring things together and are useful for reference purposes. His enthusiasm for his subject is evident from the text, which begins with a description of the lek and lekking behaviour and the manner in which the males of different status are concerned in this.

Whilst most resident males spend more time on their territories (residences) than the satellite males spend on the lek, they have the same reproductive success. Marginal males have never been observed to copulate on the lek, though they spend more time in the presence of females than either the resident or the satellite males. A male will leave the display area with a female, but it seems unlikely that any copulations take place away from it.

In some cases, the male may help to defend a nest against predators, but sexual activity appears to be confined to the lek, despite the contention of some previous authors to the contrary.

There is an interesting and extensive discussion of plumage variation of males, and evidence is provided that there are some geographical differences, white-plumaged males increasing from the southwest to the northeast of the range. It is not only the polymorphism of the males that characterises the difference between the Ruff and its near relatives. Unusually among Calidridine sandpipers, the male is bigger than the female, the male plays no role in the breeding activities after copulation, and, uniquely, the adult male moults three times a year.

The Ruff is undoubtedly a fascinating bird, and this is a fascinating book. It is full of ideas and interesting opinions and I found it very readable. I was, however, disappointed by the quality of the photographic reproduction, which is poor compared with the earlier Poyser books. With such a spectacular bird, much more could have been done to improve the presentation of the book, and better photographs could have been found. The drawings are much better than the photographs, but the general presentation of the book is not up to Poyser standards. For anyone interested in waders it is a must, despite these minor faults, which are to be laid at the door of the publisher rather than the author.

W. G. HALE

Short reviews

Coastal Birds of East Dorset. By Seabirds-at-Sea Team: Simon Aspinall and Mark L. Tasker. (Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, 1990. 48 pages. Paperback £8.00) Comprehensive survey of the sea-birds, wildfowl and waders of east Dorset, identifying sites and species vulnerable to oil-related developments there. Essential reading for conservationists involved with the oil industry in Dorset, and handy reference for local and visiting birdwatchers.

[MARTIN CADE]

Etogrammi Nel Cielo, I Gabbiani E la Citta. (Ethograms in the Sky, Gulls and the City.) By Luisella Carretta. (Arti Grafiche Sobrero, Genova, 1990. 68 pages. Paperback ItL 38,000) This, the second book featuring the work of contemporary Italian fine artist Luisella Carretta, follows the first (reviewed *Brit. Birds* 83: 514) closely in style and presentation, and is once again dual language (Italian and English). The first 20 pages detail the work of this artist from around 1968, through her time at the Gruppo studio working in collages and sculptures to the graphic-art approach of her present work. She is clearly fascinated by the problems of presenting flying creatures' pathways through the air and how to relate them to invisible points along that

path. The remainder of the book deals mainly with her detailed observations of flying Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* over Genoa between 1977 and 1990, mapping flight routes and observing the effects of both physical and meteorological changes on their chosen pathways.

[ALAN HARRIS]

Encyclopaedia of Animals: birds. Consultant Editor Joseph Forshaw. (Merehurst Press, London, 1991. 240 pages. £25.00) This coffee-table book follows Peters's sequence and has over 200 stunning photographs of representative species. The texts on each group are authoritative, written by many of the world's most eminent ornithologists, but it is for the photographs that this book is likely to be purchased. Of the genre (big, glossy, well-illustrated books for 'bird lovers'), this is a classic. Everything about it—contents, design, reproduction—is top class.

Birds of Israel: computerised bird identification system and ornithological database/encyclopedia. Disk editors: Ron Frumkin, Noah Rotary & Tzila Ahariv. (Published by and available from: A. Sapir, 19 Dov Hoz Street, 44356 Kfar Saba, Israel, 1990. £35.00) This database comes on a 5¼-

inch (13¼-cm) disc plus a 20-page manual. It has two main components: a database of 464 species occurring in Israel, with up to 70 items of information about each, including distribution, movements, breeding biology and appearance and a search facility using these items in combination in order to help to identify a species, the program responding with a steadily reducing list of possible species as new items are entered. The straightforward key-presses take little learning, though the screen is sometimes less user-friendly than it could be. The brief manual is helpful, with worked examples. I remain to be convinced, however, of the usefulness of this program, or others like it. The relatively crude use of plumage characters is no substitute for a good book: for the same price, one could buy *Birds of Israel*, by Uzi Paz, plus a couple of field guides.

[MAO]

Wildings: the secret garden of Eileen Soper. By **Duff Hart-Davis.** (H. F. & G. Witherby, London, 1991. 143 pages. £14.99) Eileen Soper, the illustrator of Erid Blyton's 'Famous Five' stories, died in March 1990, leaving a vast treasure trove of her own wildlife art and her father's paintings and drawings of horses, discovered by Robert Gillmor when, at the request of her solicitor, he visited the overgrown, yet magnificent 'Wildings', the family home. An intriguing biography of this eccentric, talented artist. Read it just to share in Robert Gillmor's astonishment and delight at his discoveries.

Atlas of the Bryophytes of Britain and Ireland. vol. 1: Liverworts (Hepaticae and Anthocerotae). By **M. O. Hill, C. D. Preston & A. J. E. Smith.** (Harley Books, Colchester, 1991. 351 pages. £22.50) Biological Records Centre 10 × 10 km square maps of all 289 British species, with interesting two-line to 20-line explanatory texts, describing the habitat, distribution outside Britain and Ireland, and reproduction details. The results of 30 years' work by British and Irish biologists, but every field naturalist can now make a contribution by filling some of the gaps (two common garden species, *Conocephalum conicum* and *Marchantia polymorpha*, at Blunham proved to be new records for the 10-km square TL15). A well-produced volume, as one expects from this publisher. (The mosses will be covered in volumes 2 and 3, due for publication in 1992 and 1993.)

The Birds of Sumatra and Kalimantan. By **Derek Holmes & Stephen Nash.** (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990. 83 pages. £6.95) A popular introduction to rather less than one-fifth of the huge and richly diverse avifauna of the two largest islands of Indonesia. The informative and useful text describes in simple language 148 species, with brief reference to a further 129, while colour plates portray 133 species. The planned Indonesian language edition will be especially valuable in a country where the conservation problems and pressures on habitats and birds are immense and where the general level of interest in and knowledge of birds needs considerable nurturing and encouragement. [NICK DYMOND]

Die Birkhühner. By **S. Klaus, H. Bergmann, C. Marti, F. Müller, A. O. Vitović & J. Wiesner.** (Die Neue Brelun-Bücherei 397, A. Ziemsen Verlag 1990. Paperback 288 pages. DM37.60), German paperback duograph on the Black Grouse *Tetrao tetrix* and the Caucasian Black Grouse *T. mlokosiewiczii*. Extensive studies, especially in Continental Europe, have enabled the authors to compile an impressive tome which includes sections on systematics, breeding biology and ecology for the two species. Useful photographs, especially of habitat, with numerous text drawings and figures, and an extensive bibliography. A very valuable reference work. [PETER HOPE JONES]

Birdwatching for the Under Tens. By **Bill Oddie.** (George Philip, London, 1991. 48 pages. £6.99) Sound advice, set at the right level, without 'talking down'.

A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. By **Herbert A. Raffaele. Illustrated by Cindy J. House & John Wiessinger.** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989. 254 pages. Hardback \$39.50, Paperback \$15.95) This revised edition by a new publisher illustrates 284 species in 41 plates (one new), 24 in colour (most landbirds) and 17 in black-and-white. Plate figures are now page-referenced to species accounts that provide details of identification, local name(s), voice, distribution, and a comment section often expanded with intriguing details. Introductory sections present local biogeography and conservation, and the book concludes with a bird-finding guide (with maps and checklists) to seven prime birding areas. This

edition improves what was already a fine guide to the region.

[CAMERON B. KEPLER]

Vulnerable Concentrations of Marine Birds West of Britain. By **Seabirds-at-Sea Team: Mark L. Tasker, Andrew Webb, Nancy M. Harrison & Michael W. Pienkowski.** (Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, 1990. 48 pages. Paperback £8.00) Summarising research, 1986-90, for Scottish and Irish waters (southwest England is omitted—currently under investigation), this A4 production is primarily aimed at the marine oil and gas industries. Informative text accompanies 12 maps identifying seabird (and shorebird) concentrations most at risk for each calendar month. Useful reference, deserving wider target audience.

[DAVE FLUMM]

Migrations: travels of a naturalist. By **Bobby Tulloch.** Illustrated by **John Busby.** (Kyle Cathie Publishers Ltd, London, 1991. 151 pages. £17.99) Bobby Tulloch's book is definitely the sort of reading material for a winter's evening. His descriptions of his travels, almost from Pole to Pole, conjure up images of exotic birds and places: a log of his island-hopping from the Faroes and the remote St Kilda island group to the Seychelles and Falkland Islands. Bobby's love and

understanding of ornithology come across, as well as his concern for the environment. Unfortunately, however, many of the photographs are not of the quality that we have grown to expect in modern wildlife publications, though one notable exception is a delightful picture of a bearded seal. It is a pity that the designer has intermixed photographs unrelated to the text, such as Norwegian fiords in the Falklands chapter. John Busby's pen-and-ink drawings, however, are a delight, and the designer has used these to good effect throughout the book. If you are interested in island wildlife on a worldwide scale this book is for you.

[DAVID HOSKING]

The Lakeland Eagles. By **D. G. Walker.** (D. G. Walker, Penrith, 1991. 52 pages. £3.00) Very much one man's account, following a long stint as senior RSPB protection warden and extensive personal observations subsequently—a pity, perhaps, that it is privately published. Despite restricted nature of breeding observations, a valuable and concise account; rather more conjectural on 'away from the nest' information, where fieldwork is very difficult in the absence of radio telemetry, and speculative regarding the birds' future. Nevertheless, many comments ring true.

[MIKE EVERETT]

Product reports

Items included in this feature have been submitted by the manufacturers or their agents. The reviews are the personal opinions of the reviewers; they are not the result of technical tests, but are assessments made after use in appropriate conditions (e.g. in the field). Neither *British Birds* nor the individual reviewers can accept responsibility for any adverse consequences of opinions stated, and items are accepted for review on this understanding. We aim, however, to be helpful both to our readers and to manufacturers of goods used by birdwatchers. EDS

Swift Trilyte 7 × 42 DCF binocular

In the days, long ago, when my sandwiches, ringing pliers and a battered copy of 'Svensson' were the only occupants of my binocular case (and my binoculars stayed under my bed), someone lent me a pair of *Swift* binoculars. They were diabolical. It was, therefore, with a little trepidation that I took on the task of reviewing the *Swift* Trilyte 7 × 42 DCF. I can happily report that *Swift* binoculars have taken on a remarkable transformation.

This binocular has many of the features now expected of a birdwatching binocular: it is fairly lightweight; is designed optically to be suitable for those who wear spectacles as well as those who do not; has fold-down

rubber eye-cups; and has the body coated in matt-slate-coloured rubber armour. It is of the now-familiar roof-prism H shape. There are some clear influences of higher-priced instruments (down to the 'White-spotted Swift' on the body).

I used them for about six weeks. I found them comfortable to wear all day. The lanyard is long enough for a giant, but easily adjusts for those of lesser stature, and is broad around the hindneck for additional comfort.

These binoculars have good light-gathering qualities and performed well in all lighting conditions; there is no 'flare' when looking indirectly towards a setting sun. The full focal range is travelled in less than one revolution of the focusing wheel (that is about three finger pushes), and the binoculars focus down to around 4 m. This short 'tracking' from 4 m to infinity has one drawback. Whilst, in theory, it provides for quick focusing, finding the exact focus for any point along that 'track' is critical. It should follow that a binocular with a longer 'track' would take longer to focus, but this does not seem to be so, as it need not be so accurately positioned, since the length of focus (that is to say, the distance actually in focus) is greater. This was a minor annoyance when watching gulls on a roost flight-line, or fast-flying ducks: time was lost in the precise focusing, and I often went past it a few times. In all other situations, I was pleased with a clear, crisp image, with no distortion.

During the period of testing, there were no problems through condensation within, or rain penetration, and they were kicking about in the boot of my car to no ill-effect.

This instrument currently retails at about £135 (the other models in the *Swift* Trilyte range include 8 × 42 and 10 × 42, both slightly more expensive). It is one of several good binoculars in the £130-£160 price range, and well worth testing against the competition if you are considering buying binoculars at around this price.

This binocular comes with four lens caps, an explanatory booklet and a soft carrying case with velcro fastener (for the quick draw).

ALAN HARRIS

[If any reader would like further details of this product, please send a SAE to Sandra Barnes, BB Advertising, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.]



ICBP news

Campaigning across Europe Campaigns for the protection of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are now under way in 14 countries across Europe, managed and co-ordinated by Miriam Langeveld at the ICBP Secretariat.

The European-wide IBA campaign was launched following the publication of *Important Bird Areas in Europe* (1989), to try to gain protection for the 2,444 sites identified in the book as being critical for the continent's birds.

Each national IBA campaign has a full-time or part-time co-ordinator, whose job it is to spread information on IBAs—where they are, why they are important and what threats they are facing—to decision-makers and to the general public, and to lobby for their protection.

Central to this aim is the publication of national IBA inventories in each country, which make the information more accessible to a wider audience. Written in the native language and attractively presented with illustrations, they cover just the IBAs in that country and stress the responsibility that each nation has to protect its sites. National editions have now been produced in Turkey and Spain, will soon be published in Czechoslovakia, Italy, Greece, France and the UK, and are due in 1992 in Poland, Romania and Hungary.

GEORGINA GREEN

International Council for Bird Preservation, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ

Announcements

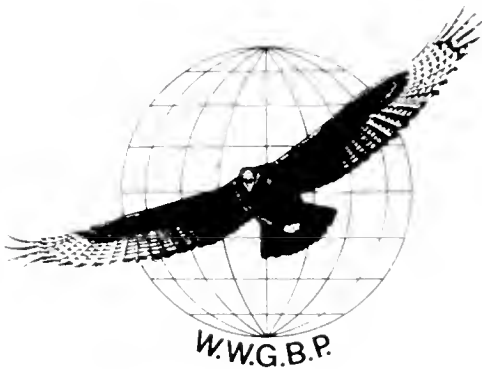
'The Carl Zeiss Award' *Carl Zeiss—Germany*, sponsor of the Rarities Committee, is offering an annual prize of *Carl Zeiss* 10×40 B/GAT Dialyt or 7×42 B/GAT binoculars to the photographer who supplies 'the most helpful, interesting and instructive' photograph of a rarity, taken in the field in Britain. The photograph (a colour print, black-and-white print or transparency) must have been submitted (in the usual ways, via the relevant county bird recorder or directly to the Rarities Committee) with a description or set of descriptions which circulates to the Committee (or in time to circulate to the Committee with descriptions submitted by others). The winning photograph may be big, bright, sharp and beautiful, or be small, dull, fuzzy and admired only by the Committee, but it will have included details which helped to clinch the identification of the bird in question and it may well have added to ornithological knowledge of the species' identification, ageing or sexing criteria. The winning photograph will be picked by the Chairman of the Rarities Committee and the Managing Editor of *British Birds* from a short list selected during the year by the ten members of the Committee. The first Award will be made from among 1991 (and earlier) photographs of birds accepted for inclusion in the 1991 report. The winner will be announced in November 1992.



The aim of this award is to encourage the submission of potentially useful photographs to the Rarities Committee, for record assessment, as subsequent reference material, and for possible publication. Runners-up in the competition, and photographers whose rarity photographs have been selected for publication during the year (in the rarities report itself or in 'Seasonal reports'), will each receive a sew-on woven badge incorporating the Carl Zeiss Award logo, in recognition of their contributions to the rarity assessment process.

Each year, the winning photograph will be published in *British Birds*. The winner will be able to choose which *Carl Zeiss* binoculars he or she would prefer as a prize.

'BB' trip to Yemen In recent years a number of British ornithologists have visited Yemen, adding considerably to the knowledge of the country's avifauna. The Ornithological Society of the Middle East's two-month expedition in 1985 established Yemen firmly on the map of exciting birdwatching destinations. In 1992 we shall be offering *BB* readers a chance to explore this exciting Middle Eastern country for themselves with leaders Rod Martins and Jon Dunn. Highlights should include all nine of the true Arabian endemics, many African species and, hopefully, Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs* and Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*. The tour will run from 27th November to 14th December 1992 and will be organised by the bird-tour company SUNBIRD. As usual, *BB* readers will qualify for a 10% reduction on the tour cost. Full details are available from David Fisher or Jennifer Thomas at Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DE; phone Sandy (0767) 682969.



4th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls This conference will be held during 10th-17th May 1992 in Berlin. Up to 31st December 1991, the registration fee is US\$110.00 (£75.00), and thereafter US\$135.00 (£90.00). For further information, apply to the World Working Group on Birds of Prey (15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL, or Wangenheimstr. 32, 1000 Berlin 33, Germany).

'British BirdShop' subsidises 'BB' Please order all your bird books by using the British BirdShop order forms which are included in *BB* each month (pages xvii & xviii, between pages 578 and 579 this month). All the profits received by *BB* go directly towards funding extra pages, extra photographs and the use of colour illustrations within *BB* itself. By using the POST FREE service provided by British BirdShop, you not only receive the quickest and most efficient mail order bird-book service, but also help to improve the contents of *BB*, and hold down the subscription price, to everyone's benefit. Thank you for supporting us.

Binding your 'BB' Standard book-binding of *BB* issues costs £17.45 per volume. Use the form on the back of the index, and send yours in to arrive *before* one of the four annual deadlines: 15th January, 15th March, 1st July and 1st October. The binders' address is: Chapman Brooks Bookbinders Ltd, 17b Industrial Park, West Horndon, Brentwood, Essex CN13 3HL; telephone Brentwood (0277) 810722.

Loose binders are also available, as usual, through British BirdShop, at £6.95 (see page xviii).

Bird Photograph of the Year In 1992, this annual competition will again be sponsored jointly by Christopher Helm Publishers and HarperCollins Publishers. The rules will be the same as those this year (*Brit. Birds* 84: 36), but the photographs must have been taken during 1991. The closing date is Friday 31st January 1992. Please send your transparencies in early to avoid a last-minute administrative rush.

Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs The closing date for submission of prints for the annual selection is Friday 31st January 1992. The rules will be the same as those this year (*Brit. Birds* 84: 36).

Bird Illustrator of the Year The closing date for this competition, which will again be sponsored by Kowa telescopes, is Friday 15th March 1992. Required dimensions of entries will be the same as this year (see *Brit. Birds* 84: 36-37).

January issue Whereas all other issues are despatched at the end of the month prior to the cover date, the January issue will, as usual, not be posted until mid January, owing to our (and our printers') holidays, and the end-of-the-year rush of resubscriptions.

With 'BB' to Thailand The relaxed trip with the small, friendly group, led by Thailand's top birdwatchers (Phil Round and Kamol Komolphalin): there are still spaces for any one, two or three weeks during 16th February to 10th March 1992. Ring Sunbird for details: Sandy (0767) 682969.

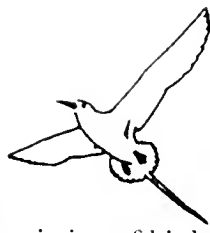
Books in British BirdShop New books this month include:

- *Forshaw *Encyclopaedia of Animals: birds*
- *Holmes & Nash *The Birds of Sumatra and Kalimantan*
- *Oddie *Birdcatching for the Under Tens*
- *Raffaele, House & Wiessinger *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*
- *Ratcliffe & Rose *Bird Life of Mountain and Upland*
- *Fulloch & Busby *Migrations: travels of a naturalist*

Please make use of the British BirdShop order form on pages xvii & xviii.

Announcements

ABA Periodically, we mention the American Birding Association, its bimonthly journal, *Birding*, or its monthly newsletter, *Winging It*. Like British Birds Ltd, our sister organisation is also a non-profit-making company (the American phrase is 'a not-for-profit corporation'), with goals very similar to *BB*'s: 'to promote recreational birding, to contribute to the development of bird identification and population study, and to help foster public appreciation of birds and their vital role in the environment.'



With these shared aims, and a similar philosophy, we are pleased to be able to have the same links with the ABA as those which we have with the RSPB, the BTO, the BOU and the IWC.

If you would like details of the ABA, its work and its publications, write to PO Box 6599, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934, USA.

Thank you to our sponsors The Editorial Board would like to give special thanks to the firms and organisations which have helped *BB* with sponsorship during 1991:

HarperCollins Publishers.....	sponsorship of Bird Photograph of the Year
Christopher Helm Publishers Ltd.....	sponsorship of Bird Photograph of the Year
'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky.....	sponsors of our Christmas puzzle
Kowa telescopes.....	sponsors of Bird Illustrator of the Year
Sunbird.....	sponsorship of 'Monthly marathon' competition
Carl Zeiss—Germany.....	sponsors of the Rarities Committee and colour plates for several identification papers and notes

Requests

Laying times There are few published data on the hour of egg-laying of passerines and other small altricial birds. Anyone with unpublished records on laying times is requested to supply these for a forthcoming review of the topic. Records should include species name, locality, date, estimate of hour of laying, and type of time used (e.g. GMT or BST in the UK, Eastern Standard Time or Eastern Daylight Time in North America). All contributions will receive acknowledgment within the review. Please write to Professor David M. Scott, Department of Zoology, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5B7.

Colour-marked birds: a reminder Although colour-marking may be used in purely local studies (e.g. of behaviour), the majority of studies of marked populations depend upon co-operation from all observers who sight the marked individuals. Only in exceptional instances do we publish separate requests on this subject (there are far too many such studies to include them all). If you see a bird marked in some way (other than with ordinary BTO rings), please report it as follows:

CORMORANTS: Colour-ring sightings, Dr Robin Sellers, Rose Cottage, Ragnall Lane, Walkley Wood, Nailsworth, Gloucester GL6 0RU.

SWANS AND GEESE: Colour-ring sightings, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT.

WADERS: Wader Study Group, PO Box 247, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 5SN.

GULLS: Gull sightings, Peter Rock, 32 Kersteman Road, Redlands, Bristol BS6 7BX.

ALL OTHER SPECIES: Kevin Baker, BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

Drawings of rare breeding birds Artists may care to note that we include line-drawings within the report on 'Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom' every year, and always welcome the submission of drawings of appropriate species for possible selection. Sizes should be those specified for the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition: 16.35 cm wide × 6.9 cm deep, or 8.1 cm wide × 6.0 cm deep, for publication at two-thirds of those sizes. Please send drawings to the *BB* Editorial Office.

News and comment

Mike Everett and Robin Prytherch

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of 'British Birds'



316. After the fire at the *BB* office, Blunham, September 1991 (*J. T. R. Sharrock*)

Fire! If you received a subscription renewal reminder in September, you may have wondered why it was blackened. On 4th September, one room at the Subscription Department office was destroyed by fire, but, thanks to prompt work by officers from the Sandy and Bedfordshire Fire Brigades (plate 316), summoned via a 999 call from Ali Gathercole, some paperwork—including most of those reminders—was saved. All part of the exciting work of the stall of a monthly magazine—which, we hope you noticed, still came out on time.

YNU centenary history It is a great pity that so little is written about the history of ornithology and the people involved in it, especially at grass-roots and county level. Avifaunas and bird reports abound—but the story generally stops there. All the more reason, then, to commend Clive Varty, who has just published (privately) the centenary account *Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. Protection of Birds Committee. 1891-1991*. This copiously referenced and nicely illustrated 73-page booklet makes fascinating reading, with its insights into the trials and tribulations of protection matters in the county over the years. All who are interested in conservation and ornithology in northern England ought to buy this valuable little history: it is available, price £5.50 plus 52p p&p, from Clive Varty, 26 Cragwood Terrace, Horsforth, Leeds LS18 4PB.

Swale Lakes birds Congratulations are also due to Nick Morgan for *The Birds of the Swale Lakes*, an account of a group of gravel-pits in North Yorkshire which are, among other things, important for their wildfowl numbers. Two major gravel companies, Steetlev Construction Materials and the RMC Group, made donations which enabled Nick to produce the booklet. We learn that profits from its sales will go to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, which has recently purchased the most important pit, Bolton-on-Swale Lake. If there ought to be more histories written, there should certainly also be more local avifaunas like this one. Copies are available, price £2.50 including p&p, from Nick Morgan, Linden, Church View, Underby Steeple, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 9PU.

Hong Kong 1989 In case you feel we are lavishing too much praise on Yorkshire, we should mention that we have also received the superb 1989 *Hong Kong Bird Report*, published by the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society and available for £7.00 (including p&p) from Sebastian Anstruther, Barlavington Estate, Petworth, West Sussex GU28 0LG. It contains interesting short papers on status and identification, as well as the year's annotated bird list, and will be useful to anyone interested in the birds of the region. Among a number of excellent colour photographs, we particularly liked some of more

than passing interest to western birders, such as Two-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus*, Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus humei* and Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*.

Reports: a plea . . . We like, where possible, to mention new area reports and similar publications, or those which are significantly different from the normal run of annual or local avifaunas—but *please* tell us where to obtain them and how much they cost. A number have come our way during the past year minus this most important information.

. . . and a reminder The closing date for submission for The 'British Birds' Award for The Best Annual Bird Report, announced in August (*Brit. Birds* 84: 297), is 15th December. We hope that every county and regional bird club or society will enter for this new award.

All change? The new book *Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World* (Sibley & Monroe 1990), with its fundamental revision of bird relationships, as indicated by DNA-DNA hybridisation experiments (Sibley & Ahlquist 1990), lists the world's birds in a sequence quite different from the familiar order (Voous 1973, 1977) which we have followed for the past 15 years.

Will the new sequence be adopted? If so, when? We hear rumours that the American Ornithologists' Union will do so for its next checklist. One quote was 'I'd rather use a classification that *may* be 25% wrong than one that I *know* is 75% wrong.'

How about the UK? No whispers yet from the BOU, but surely they must be thinking about it . . .

Those dark-rumped storm-petrels There are now almost a score of reports of dark-rumped, fork-tailed storm petrels, with prominent white primary shafts, seen or caught in the North Atlantic, including several north to Britain. The BOU Records Committee still has these under consideration. A paper in the BOU's journal (*Ibis* 133: 351-356), however, concludes that they refer to 'Swinhoe's Storm-petrel' and that this form is best regarded not as a separate species but as a distinct race of Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa monorhis*. The authors, V. Bretagnolle, M. Carruthers, M. Cubitt, F. Biorret and J.-P. Cuillandre, surmise that this race may breed in the Azores or Cape Verde Islands.

To join the BOU, write c/o British Museum (Nat. Hist.), Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP.

Congratulations! To Debbie Felts, *BB*'s designer and paste-up queen, and to her husband, Nigel, on the birth on 8th September of their son, Ollie Jake.

Mazal tov! And congratulations, too, to regular *BB* author/photographer, Hadoram Shirihai, and his wife, Lilly, on the birth of their daughter, Eden, on 19th August.

Recorder's change of address Paul Trodd, County Recorder for Bedfordshire, has moved to 17 Northall Road, Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire LU6 2DQ; phone Eaton Bray (0525) 222389.

Diary dates

This list covers January to December 1992

3rd-5th January BTO RINGING AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from Ringing Office, BTO, The Nunnery, Nunnery Place, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

21st January BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB. Mrs A. M. Moore on 'Ornithology in the search for the course of the Niger.'

Central London. Non-members should write (enclosing SAE) at least 21 days before to Hon. Secretary, Mrs Amberley Moore, 1 Uppingham Road, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6JB.

25th-26th January YOUNG ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB GARDEN BIRDWATCH. Write to YOC, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Bird Photograph of the Year'.

31st January Closing date for entries for 'Best recent black-and-white bird-photographs'.

18th February BOC. Dr David Harper on 'Why is Robin behaviour so variable?' Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

7th March JOINT SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB/BTO ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Gartferry Hotel, Ayr. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

14th March BTO/CUMBRIA BIRD CLUB ONE-DAY CONFERENCE. Newton Rigg Agricultural College, Penrith, Cumbria. Details from John Callion, The Cherries, Scawfield, High Harrington, Cumbria CA14 4UZ.

15th March Closing date for entries for 'Bird Illustrator of the Year'.

16th March to 17th May YOC FLIGHTLINE. Migration phone-in. Details from YOC.

20th-22nd March BOU ANNUAL CONFERENCE. 'Territory, site fidelity and philopatry.' University of Durham. Details from Professor P. R. Evans, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Durham, South Road, Durham DHU 3LE.

26th March BFO/LINNEAN SOCIETY ONE-DAY MEETING. 'Understanding bird distributions.' Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. Details from BFO.

27th-29th March RSPB MEMBERS' WEEKEND. Warwick University. Details from Events Department, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

27th-29th March SEABIRD GROUP CONFERENCE. Kelvin Conference Centre, Glasgow. 'European seabirds.' Details from Dr R. W. Furness, Seabird Group, Department of Zoology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ. Offers of papers to: Dr T. R. Birkhead, Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, The University, Sheffield S10 2TN.

28th March WELSH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Aberystwyth. Details from Peter Walters Davies, Alltgo, Caemelyn, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 2HA.

7th April BOC. Dr Carlo Violani on 'The 18th Century Italian naturalist Giovanni Antoni Scopoli and his influence on Italian ornithology'. Central London. Details from Hon. Secretary.

10th-12th April ROYAL SOCIETY FOR NATURE CONSERVATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE. University of Warwick, Coventry. Information from Sarah Haine, Conference Organiser,

Warwicks Nature Conservation Trust, Montague Road, Warwick CV34 5LW.

13th-17th* April WADER STUDY GROUP ODESSA CONFERENCE. 'Migration and international conservation of waders.' Odessa, USSR. Details from Hermann Hötter, WSG Co-ordinator, c/o WWF Wattenmeerstelle, Norderstr. 3, 2250 Husum, Germany.

May 'IN FOCUS' BIRDTRACE. County bird-watch. In association with International Council for Bird Preservation and county Nature Conservation Trusts. Details and entry forms from David Tomlinson, Windrush, Coles Lane, Brasted, Westerham, Kent TN16 1NN.

10th-15th May INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON THE PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS. Madrid. Details from Julio Gisbert & Fernando Palacios, Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Jos Gutierrez Abascal 2, 28006 Madrid, Spain.

10th-17th May IV WORLD CONFERENCE ON BIRDS OF PREY AND OWLS. Berlin. Details from World Working Group on Birds of Prey (15b Bolton Gardens, London SW5 0AL, or Wangenheimstr. 32, 1000 Berlin 33, Germany).

17th-24th May XVIII ICBP CONTINENTAL SECTION CONFERENCE. Berlin. Details from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ.

30th July to 14th August SOCIETY OF WILDLIFE ARTISTS' ANNUAL EXHIBITION (including display of winning entries in 'Bird Illustrator of the Year' and 'The Richard Richardson Award' competitions). The Mall Galleries, The Mall, London SW1. Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission £2.00 (free to SWLA members).

30th August ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB MEETING. Blakeney Village Hall, Blakeney, Norfolk. Details from OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

4th-6th September BRITISH BIRDWATCHING FAIR 1992. Egleton Nature Reserve, Rutland Water, near Oakham, Leicestershire. Enquiries to Tim Appleton, Fishponds Cottage, Stamford Road, Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 8AB.

5th-11th September IX INTERNATIONAL WATERFOWL ECOLOGY SYMPOSIUM. Hajdusoboszo, Hungary. Details from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BN.

13th-16th September INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AVIAN INTERACTION WITH UTILITY

STRUCTURES. Theme: integration of conservation, engineering and economics. Information from Dr J. Huckabee, Ecological Studies, Electric Power Research Institute, 3412 Hillview Avenue, Palo Alto, CA 94303, USA.

13th-17th September IV INTERNATIONAL WETLANDS CONFERENCE. Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA. Details from William J. Mitsch, School of Natural Resources, Ohio State University, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA.

14th-18th September INTERNATIONAL BIRD CENSUS COMMITTEE/EUROPEAN ORNITHOLOGICAL ATLAS COMMITTEE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. Noordwijkerhout, The Netherlands. Details from Conference Secretariat: Van Namen & Westerlaken, Congress Organisation Services, PO Box 1558, 6501 BN Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

17th-20th September BOU AUTUMN SCIENTIFIC MEETING. University of Liverpool. 'The history of ornithology.' Details from Miss Clem Fisher, Curator of Birds and Mammals, Vertebrate Zoology Department, Liverpool County Museum, William Brown Street, Liverpool L3 8EN.

October (date to be arranged) OBC MEETING. Isles of Scilly. Details from OBC.

November (dates to be arranged) SCOTTISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB ANNUAL CONFERENCE. Marine Hotel, North Berwick. Details from SOC, 21 Regent Terrace, Edinburgh EH7 5BT.

4th-6th December BTO ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Details from BTO.

December (date to be arranged) OBC AGM. Zoological Society meeting rooms, Regent's Park, London. Details from OBC.

Sheila D. Cobban, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ

If the caption fits . . .

The portrait by J. H. Johns of the Cornish Belted Kingfisher *Ceryle alcyon* shown in last December's issue (*Brit. Birds* 83: plate 305, repeated here) prompted a large pile of postcards with suggested captions. We particularly liked:

'Beware, I have the black belt!'

(Lars Nørgaard Andersen, Denmark)

'Cornwall, ENGLAND? Do they speak American here?'

(Jillian Bale, Dorset)

'I enjoy a dip, but that's the last time I'll preen on a high-voltage wire!'

(A. Gill, Bedford)

'That's the last time I try to catch an electric eel.'

(Paul M. Harris, Dorset)

'Say, is that an Olympus OMI and 300 Tamron, John?'

(S. C. Hutchings, Cornwall)

'Hair on end, eyes popping, mouth open! So would you be if you had this thing sticking in your soft parts.'

(A. P. Josephs, West Yorkshire)

'Like my hair-do? These jet-stream updraughts are just the thing!'

(Jimmy Maxwell, Strathclyde)

'Whilst I may rise to the occasion of an audience, I categorically refuse to go fishing for compliments.'

(P. F. Whitehead, Worcestershire)



We picked Jimmy Maxwell's caption as the winner. His book prize has been despatched.

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary covers the period 18th October to 7th November 1991

These are unchecked reports, not authenticated records

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* Two, Flamborough Head (Humberside), 19th October.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Kingsmill Lake (Cornwall), 1st November.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus* Swords (Co. Dublin), 19th-22nd October.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* First-winter female, white-phase, flew into window, Port Charlotte, Islay (Strathclyde), 3rd November; released and flying freely around Loch Gruinart RSPB reserve, 4th November.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 30th October.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Copperhouse Creek (Cornwall), 22nd October.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* Penmon, Anglesey (Gwynedd), 22nd October.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* Stanford Reservoir (Northamptonshire), 21st October.

Little Auk *Alle alle* Large movement during 19th-21st October, including 1,735 past Flamborough Head on 20th.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Thornton Loch (Lothian), 27th-30th October; Penare

(Cornwall), 1st-5th November.

Desert Wheatear *O. deserti* Fair Isle (Shetland), 26th October; Fleetwood (Lancashire), 5th to at least 7th November.

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* Foreland (Isle of Wight), 27th October to 4th November; Sea Salter (Kent), 3rd-5th November; Flamborough Head (*Brit. Birds* 84: 526) present to at least 5th November.

Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus protegulus* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 27th October, two 28th October; Old Head of Kinsdale (Co. Cork), 27th.

Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* Flamborough Head, 26th-31st October; Southwold (Suffolk), 26th October; Beachy Head (East Sussex), 27th-30th October; Dunwich (Suffolk), Inner Farne (Northumberland) and Holkham (Norfolk), 27th October; Hengistbury Head (Dorset), 28th-29th October; Spurn, 1st-2nd November.

Bonelli's Warbler *P. bonelli* Spurn (Humberside), 24th October.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Cocknage Wood (Staffordshire), 17th October to at least 7th November.

For the latest, up-to-date news, phone 'Twitchline' on 0898-884-501

(36p/min cheap rate; 48p/min other times; incl. VAT)

We are grateful to National Bird News for supplying information for this news feature.

Corrections

VOLUME 79

659 ABNORMAL CLAW LENGTHS OF MEADOW PIPIT. Tarsus length of each leg should read '22.0mm'.

VOLUME 83

374 RARE BREEDING BIRDS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM IN 1988 Mediterranean Gull. 1985 England, SW. After 'colony', insert 'on 3rd April; (2) one in Black-headed Gull colony'.

VOLUME 84

258 IDENTIFICATION OF SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL Unlike the individual in plate 150, the Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta* in plate 149 is not in worn plumage.

266 REVIEWS *Bird Songs of Israel and the Middle East*. Price should read '£24.95' not '£26.95'.

280 BINOCULARS AND TELESCOPE SURVEY 1991 Table 13. Optolyth Alpin 8 × 40: final column, '4' should read '14='.

'The Famous Grouse' Scotch whisky Christmas puzzle



Can't see where to start?
Just take a shot at it . . .

P	F	E	E	N	C	E	R
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K	U	A	N	H	U	E	S
W	W	A	T	T	F	R	I
O	L	C	L	H	O	R	I
S	O	O	H	T	G	K	N

Nine species, including one featured prominently in this month's issue, are hidden in this block of letters. All nine are single words. Spell them out, in an unbroken line, by skipping from letter to letter. In each case, the next letter is to be found adjoining an adjoining square (i.e. next but one; touching a neighbouring square). All 64 letters are used; none is used twice. Beware of false trails.

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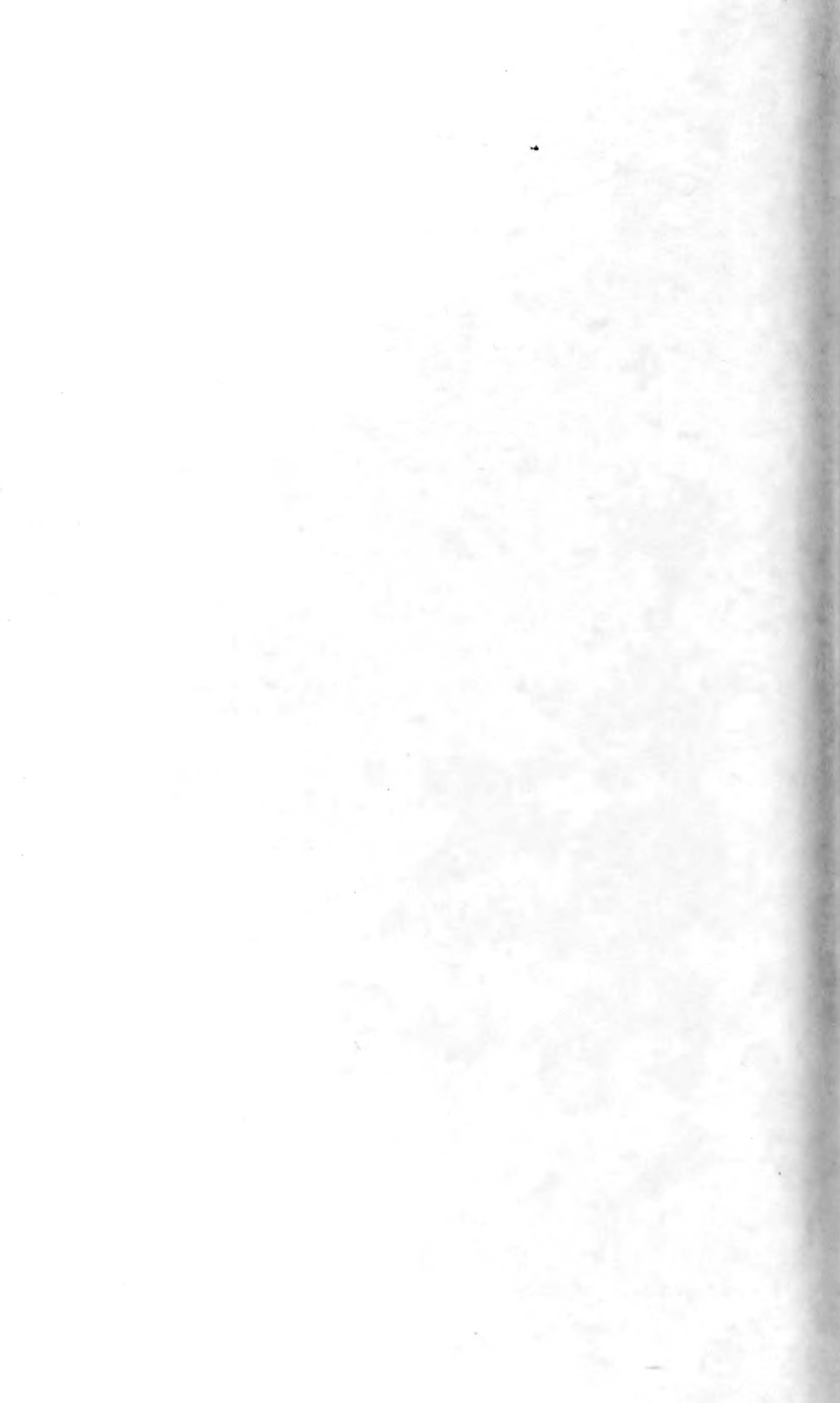
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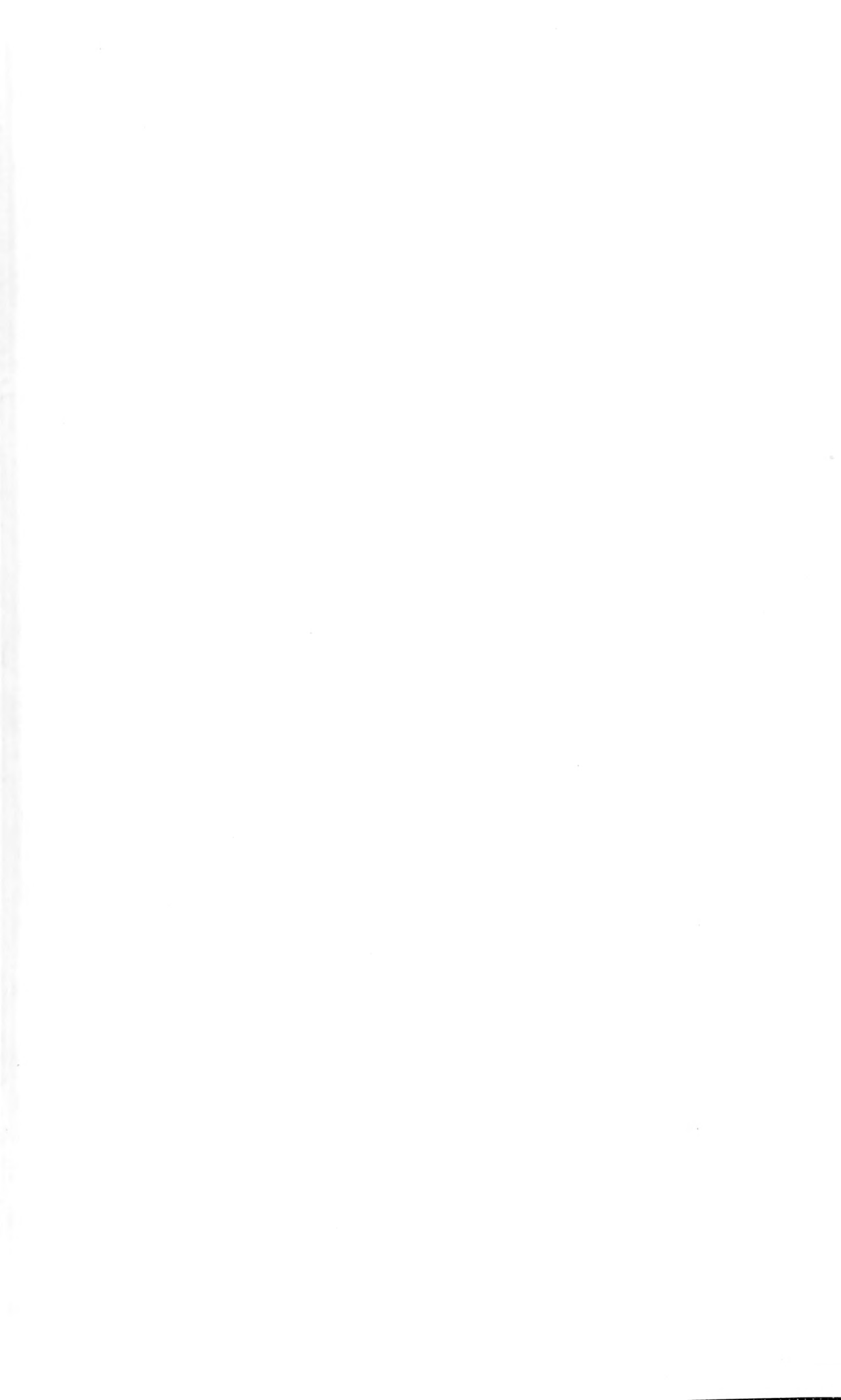
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Front cover: Shelducks (*Robert Gillmor*): original drawing of this month's cover design measuring 18.6 × 20.8 cm, is for sale in a postal auction (see pages 37-38 in January issue procedure)









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