



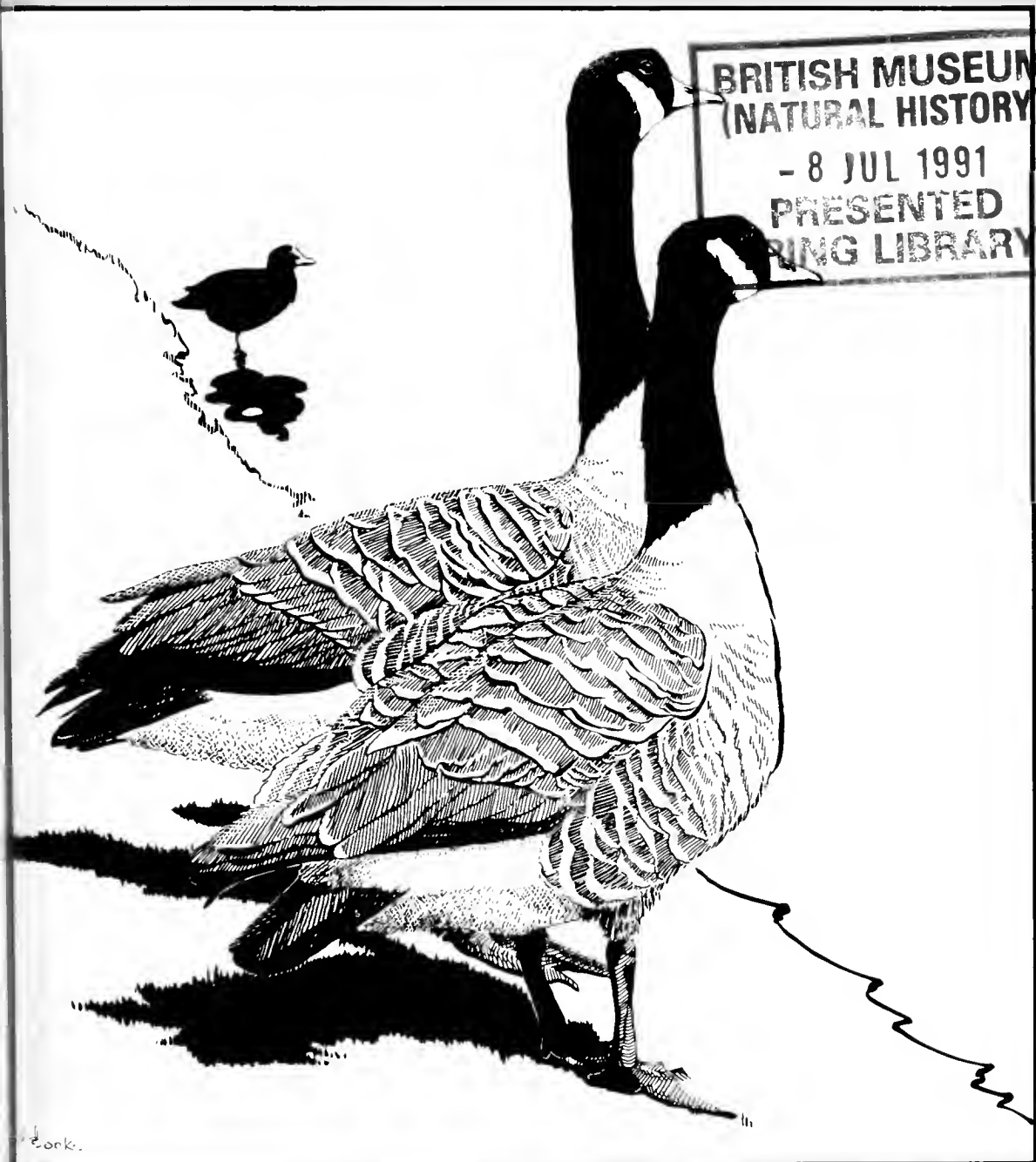






British Birds

Volume 84 Number 7 July 1991



**Identification of Soft-plumaged Petrel
Binoculars and telescopes survey 1991**

Rarities Committee news and announcements

**Mystery photographs · Reviews · Monthly marathon
Notes · Letters · News and comment**

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British Birds

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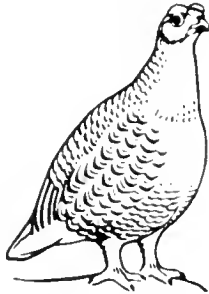
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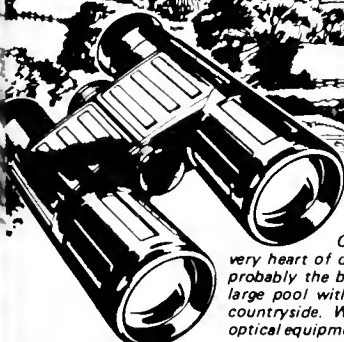
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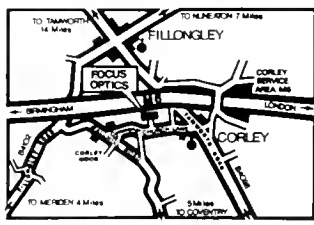
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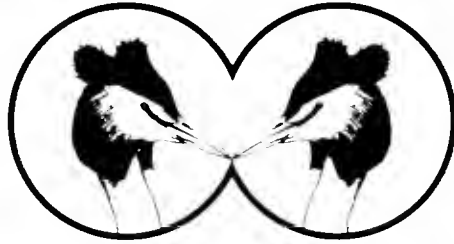
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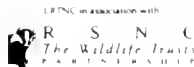
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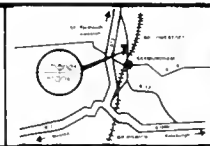
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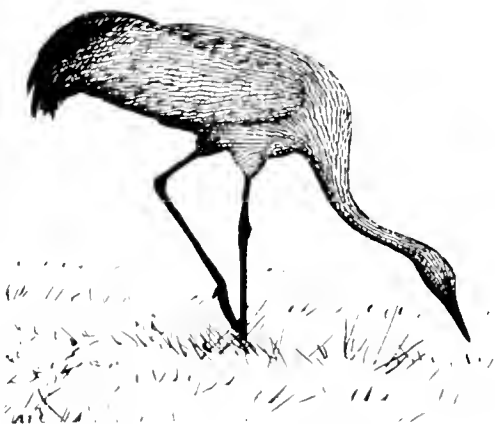
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Paul Morrison is a professional wildlife photographer, naturalist, radio presenter and Author of Bird Habitats of Great Britain and Ireland which won a literary award in the Sir Peter Kent Conservation Book Prizes – a national award. A respected authority, Paul writes an environmental feature for The Guardian newspaper each month and travels worldwide extensively, photographing and preparing articles for wildlife features in magazines (including Birdwatching magazine), books, and television programmes.

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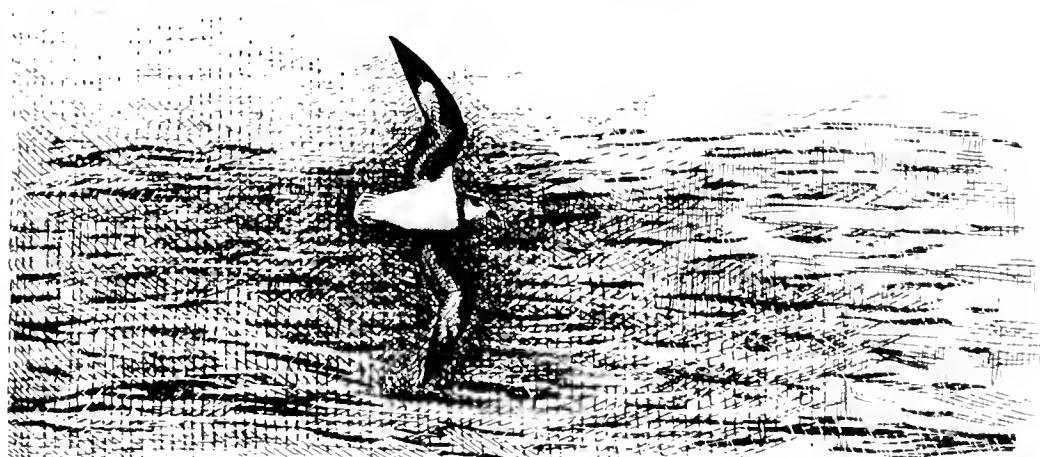
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Identification of Soft-plumaged Petrel



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 *faeae*. There is also a sight record offshore near Jacquville, 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 *faeae*, 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 *faae* (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 *faae*, 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 faae*, 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 (*fae* 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. Enticoll)





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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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. Obliging, 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.

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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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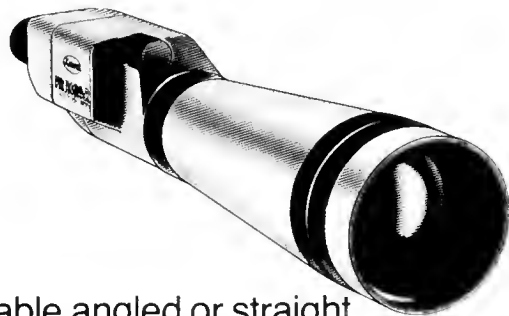


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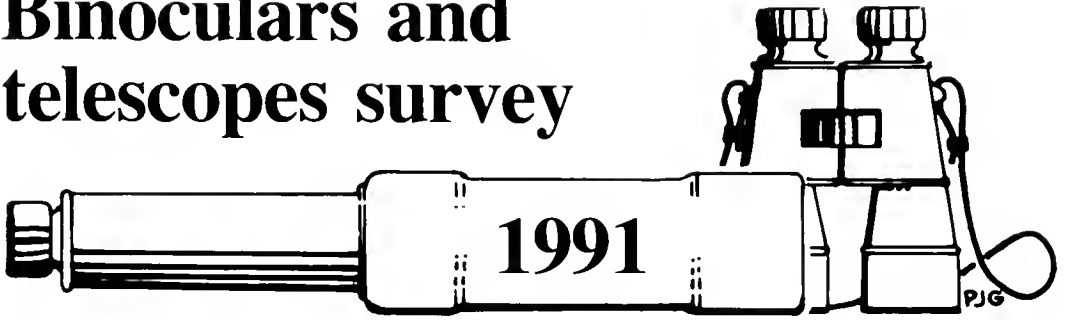
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Binoculars and telescopes survey



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)

POOR	VERY POOR	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	5

Do you use a tripod with it? (TICK ONE BOX)

Always or nearly always	Regularly	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
1	2	3	4	5

What telescope do you own? Make & model Power x

Do you rate its general performance as (TICK ONE BOX):

POOR	VERY POOR	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 eyepiece, please enter most-used one above and list others here:

x x x

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The large number of replies to our previous surveys (*Brit. Birds* 71: 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		1	
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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10 x 25 B Dialyt	259	8 x 30 ECF porro WF	229	8 x 32 (HR11)	139	8 x 40 RA VISTA	56
8 x 30 BGA/T (P)	509	10 x 35 ECF porro WF	249	8 x 42 (HR11)	145	10 x 42 RA VISTA	56
7 x 42 BGA/T (P)	589	Fieldscope II 20 x 60	(270) 304	10 x 42 (HR11)	150	SGN-III 60mm scope body	165
10 x 40 BGA/T (P)	599	Fieldscope II 20-45 x 60	(340) 379	10 x 50 (HR11)	167	20x, 30x, 40x 50x or 60x EP	25
15 x 60 BGA/T	1,190	ED II 20 x 60	(485) 555	7 x 42 (HR11)	143	Close-up lens	24
8 x 56 BGA/T (without case)	669	ED II 20-45 x 60	(557) 630	8 x 32 Dioptron	110	Photo tube	23
		30x, 40x or box eyepieces	76	8 x 42 Dioptron	110	Padded nylon case	15
BAUSCH & LOMB		Camera adaptor	168	10 x 42 Dioptron	115	OBSERVATION	
8 x 42 BA Elite	599	Mod. for other cameras	18	10 x 50 Dioptron	127	Vixen 20 x 100	750
10 x 42 BA Elite	599	Quality filter	13	7 x 35 Elite	147	Vixen 30 x 80	375
Custom 8 x 36 B	193	Rubber hood	8	9 x 35 Elite	186	Greenkat 20 x 60	150
Custom 10 x 40 BGA	239	Spotting scope 20 x 60 GA	204	7 x 40 Minerva	168	Greenkat 20 x 80	215
22 x 60 B Elite	275	Spotting scope 20-45x GA	271	9 x 35 Minerva	169	MONOCULARS	
22 x 60 BGA Elite	293			8 x 40 Minerva	170	8 x 20 RP with micro.	80
15-45x B Elite	315	KOWA		10 x 40 Minerva	175	8 x 30 GA RP	80
15-45x BGA Elite	332	TSN-1 (45°) body	295	7 x 24 MCF	77	10 x 30 GA RP	81
SWAROVSKI		TSN-2 body	295	HR 80mm scope body	249	(WA) eyepiece	32
7 x 30 SLC	321	TSN-3 body	555	30x (WA) eyepiece	32	NIGHT VISION	
8 x 30 SLC	331	TSN-4 body	555	27-80x zoom eyepiece	76	Redscan infra-red scope,	
10 x 40 Diana	(290) 372	25x or 40x eyepiece	63	HR 60mm scopes:-		complete	705
AT80 scope (body)	535	20x (WA) eyepiece	96	Std w/22x & case	160	Mains charger	71
22x (WA) eyepiece	70	30x (WA) eyepiece	119	Std w/zoom & case	200	Sentinel 70mm image	
20-60x zoom eyepiece	160	20-60x zoom eyepiece	139	GA w/22x & case	170	intensifier	1,790
AT80 case	91	60x eyepiece	96	GA w/zoom & case	210	SOLIGOR	
LEICA		77x eyepiece	99	45° w/22x & case	200	Camera lenses etc. stocked	
8 x 20 BC Trinovid	199	Camera adaptor 800mm	107	45° w/zoom & case	230	ROSS	
8 x 20 BCA Trinovid	226	Camera adaptor 1200mm	179	HR Photokit	62	8 x 42 ZCF Regent	174
10 x 25 BC Trinovid	226	Kowa case	22	Classic IF, 60mm & 75mm	phone	10 x 42 ZWCF Kensington	184
10 x 25 BCA Trinovid	239	Weathershield case	38	Piccolo body	130	QUESTAR	
7 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	Spare OG cover	5	Zoom eyepiece	77	Phone for quotation.	
8 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	27x (WA) eyepiece (Screw fit)	59	Other eyepieces, from	20	Used scopes may be available.	
10 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	Eyepiece dust dome	15	Nylon padded case	15	TRIPODS etc.	
ZEISS (Jena)		VIEWMASTER		BUSHNELL		Slik D2	75
8 x 32 BA Notarem	115	45° scope with zoom EP	199	Spacemaster body	148	Slik SL67	107
SWIFT		OPTOLYTH		15-45x zoom EP	72	Manfrotto 144/200	105
7 x 35 roof prism	329	8 x 30 Alpine	205	22x (WA) EP	32	Manfrotto 144/128	100
8 1/2 x 44 HR5 Audubon	205	8 x 40 Alpine	225	25x or 40x EP	30	Manfrotto 190/200	93
FUJINON		10 x 40 Alpine	230	Photokit	15	Soligor 550	40
8 x 40 BFL	179	10 x 50 Alpine	241	Nylon padded case		Universal clamp	22
NIKON		12 x 50 Alpine	247	REDFIELD (waterproof)		Hide clamp II	38
8 x 23 waterproof	157	9 x 63 BGA Royal	450	7 x 30 RA roof prism	290	Car window mount	22
10 x 25 waterproof	157	TBG80 telescope body	350	10 x 50 RA roof prism	310	Shoulder pod	30
8 x 20 F roof prism	143	TBS 80 (45°) body	350	15-45 x 60 RA scope	299	Cullmann hide clamp	50
10 x 25 F roof prism	158	30x, 40x eyepieces	64	FALCON		T-mounts, from	8
9 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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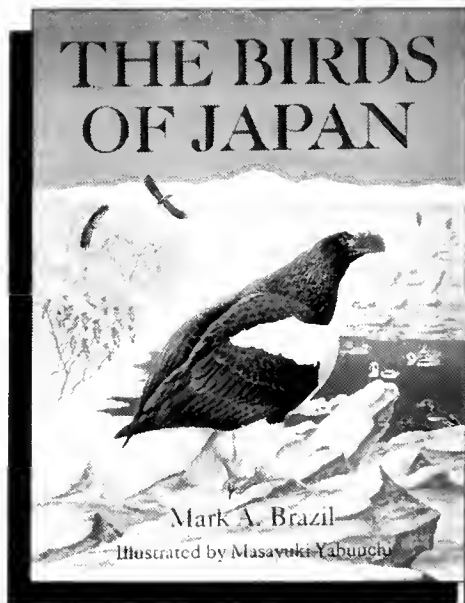
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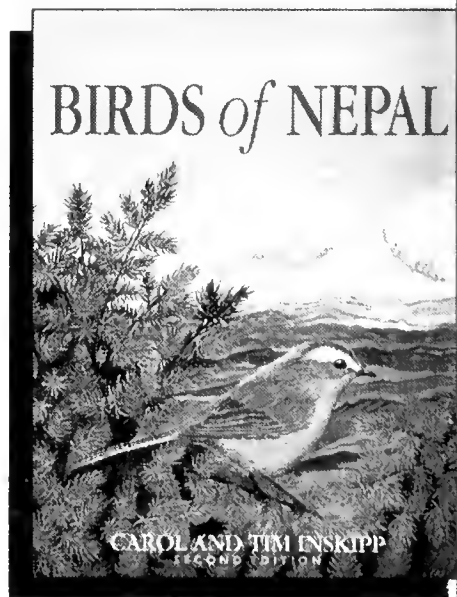
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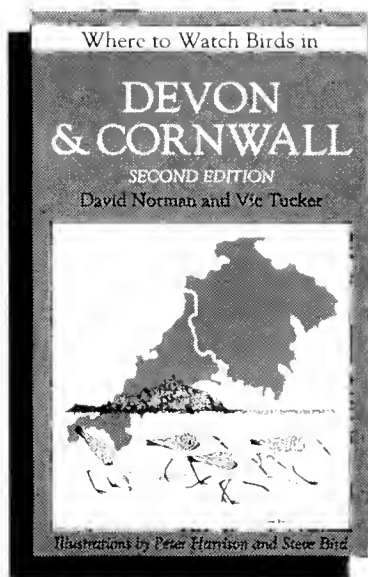
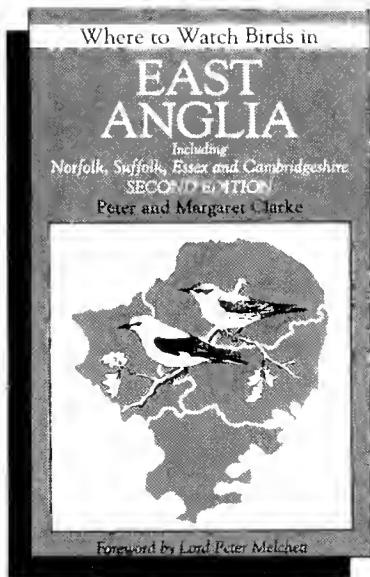




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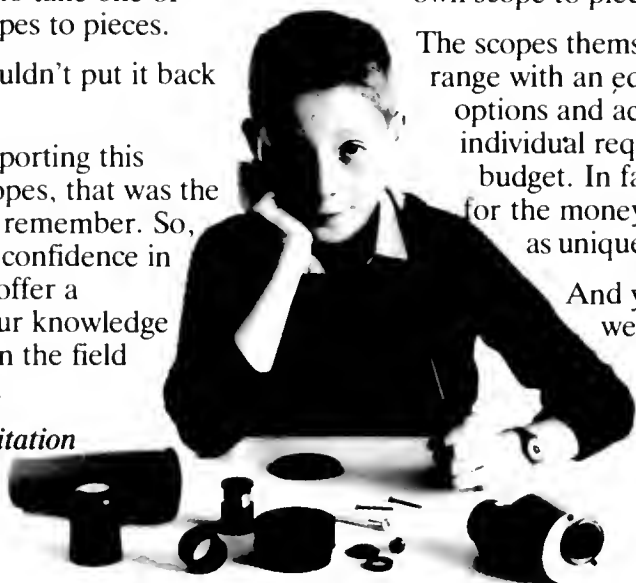
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8×42B and 10×42B models occupying joint first and sixth places, respectively, and these two models, as well as the traditional *Zeiss West* and *Leitz/Leica*, are likely to be looked at closely by birdwatchers planning to buy binoculars in the next 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)

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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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 Picollo 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 (mirrorlens) 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 telescopesProportion 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 (mirrorkens) 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 All others	1/28 14/140	3.6 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 (mirrorkens) 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 Others or don't know	—	0.9 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	4
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 satisfactory (tables 4 & 10)	Top models for the future (tables 5 & 11)
Telescopes					
QUESTAR (mirrorlens) 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 80GA 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 75GA 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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10 x 40 BGA Touring.....	£398
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TBG body (straight).....	£350
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8 x 40 Minerva.....	£170
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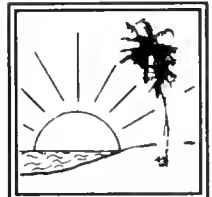
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Collared Pratincole <i>Glareola pratincola</i>	(8%)
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	(7%)
White-tailed Plover <i>Chettusia leucura</i>	(5%)
Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>	(4%)

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 oedicednus*, 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 Carlile 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 verreauxii*, 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 oedicnemus*) 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

Ridgely & 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, Białyłstok, 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.

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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 vespertinus* 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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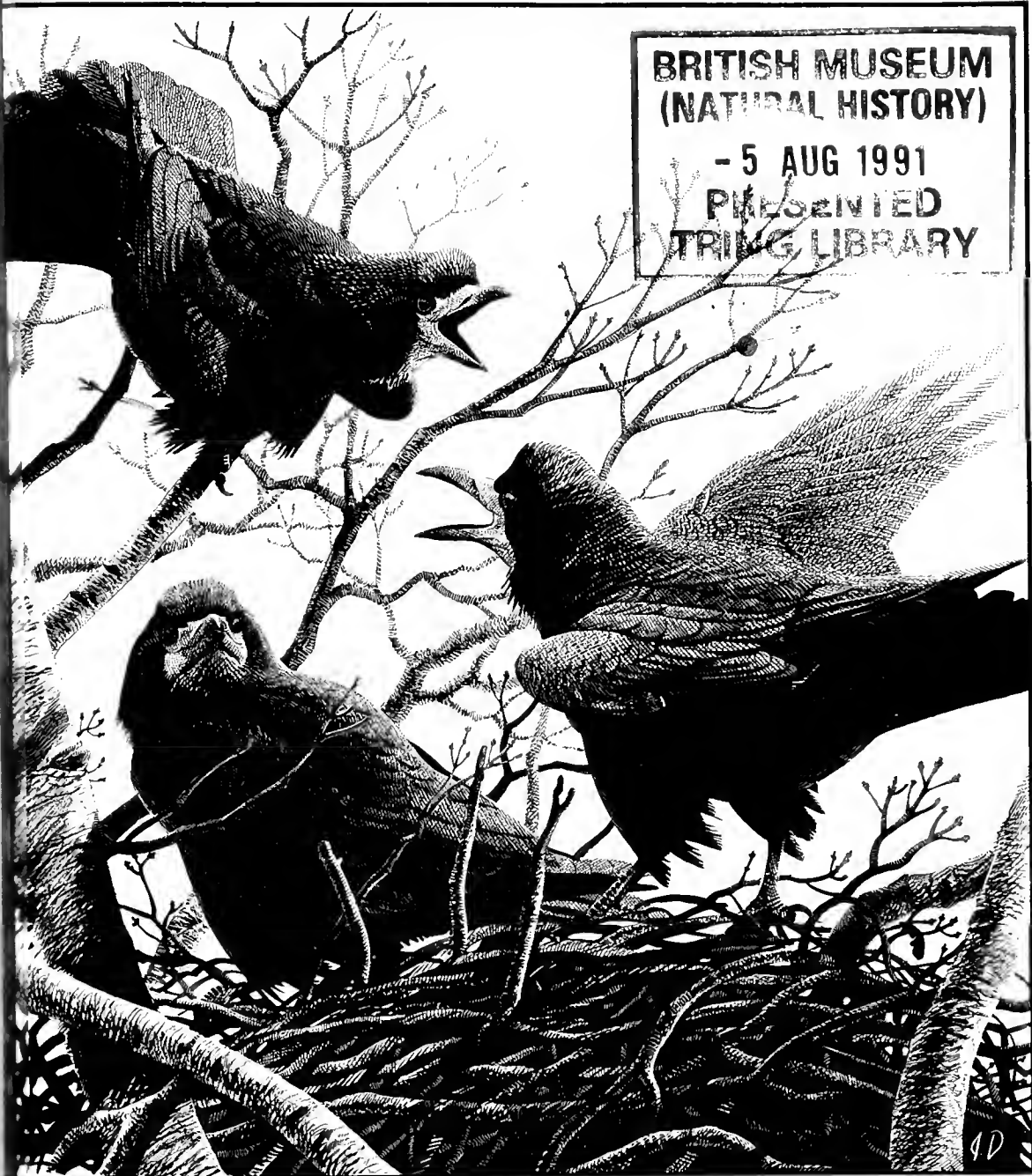
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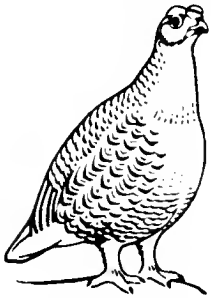
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(D881)

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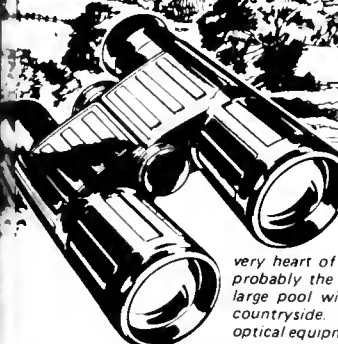
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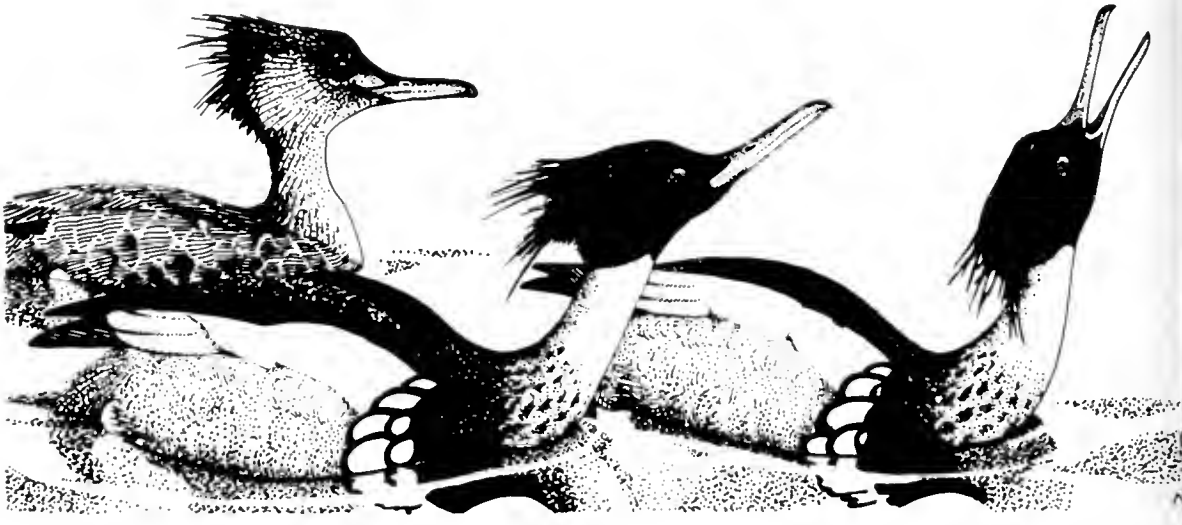
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Bird Illustrator of the Year competition, sponsored by Kowa Telescopes



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.

Kowa A superb image

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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'

Sponsored by

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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

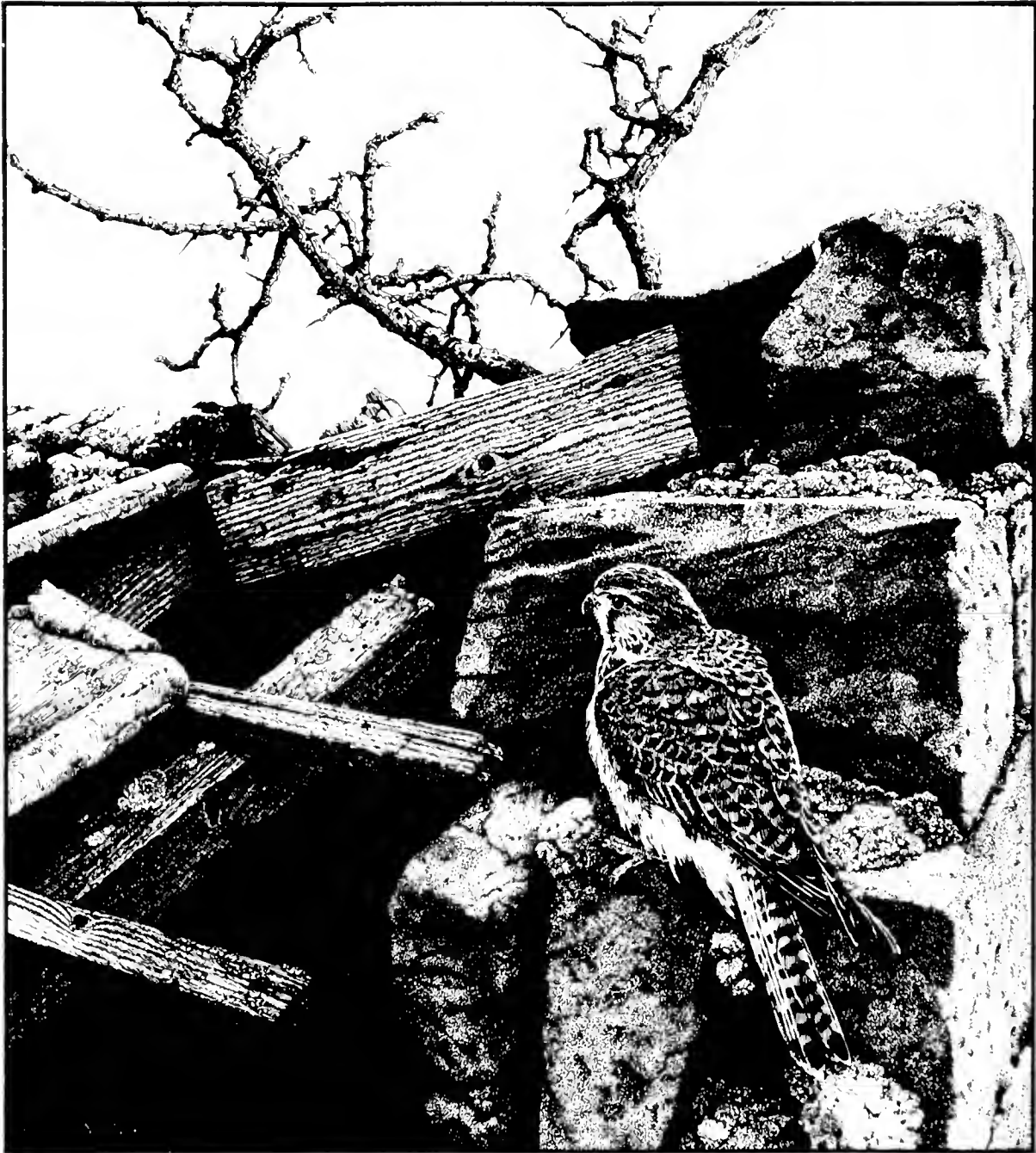
Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* in winter (John Davis)



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)





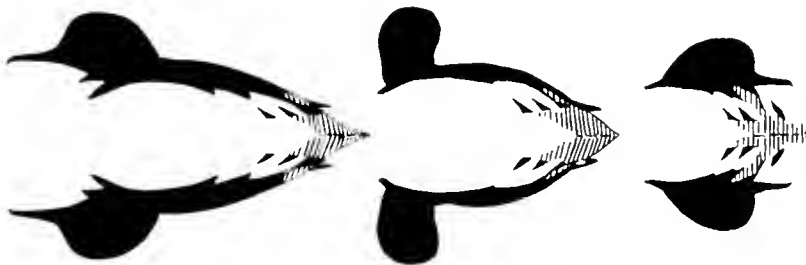
Andrew Shaw

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)

Lined 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)

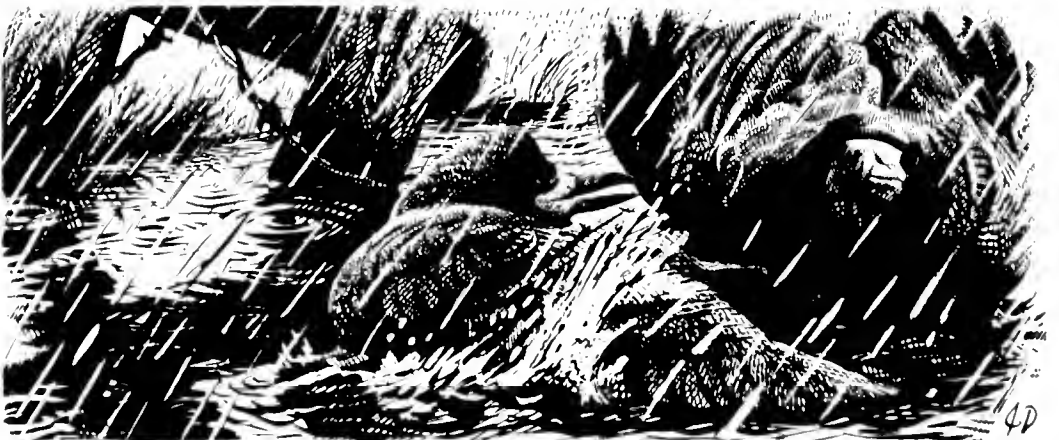


Quail *Coturnix coturnix* on migration
(Andrew Birch)



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.

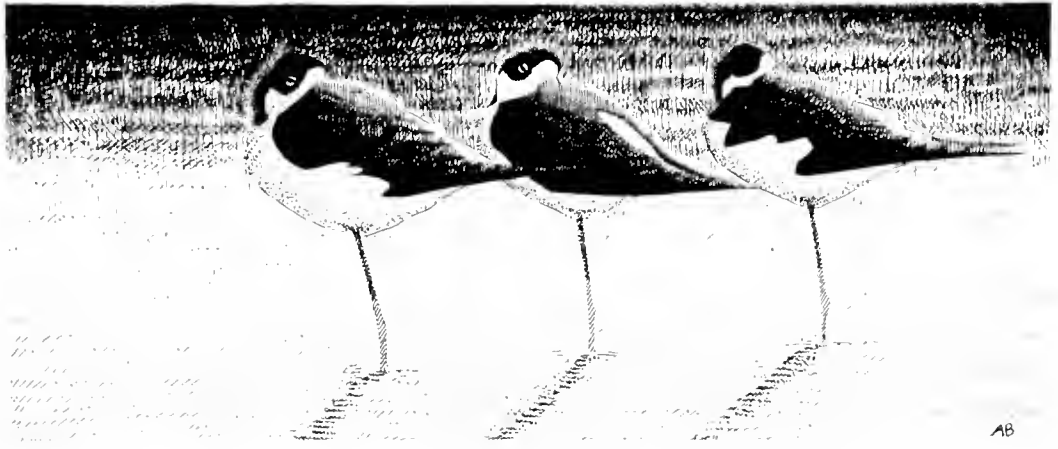
Each of the BIY winners, and eight others, will provide forthcoming cover designs from their entries, and many other drawings will appear



Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* on nest at Kinlochbervie (Keith Andrews)

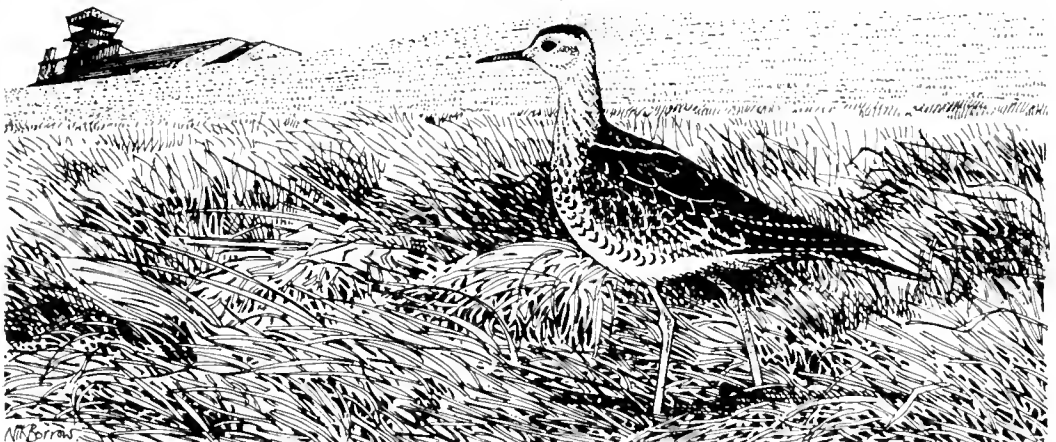


Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, Queen Mary Gravel-pits (Peter M. Leonard)



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)

JW

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. schoeniclus*, Pallas's Reed *E. pallasi* and Black-faced Bunting *E. spodocephala*. But which is it?

All bar 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 *sciboldii*—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 Yekutiel**. (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 *Pemis 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.

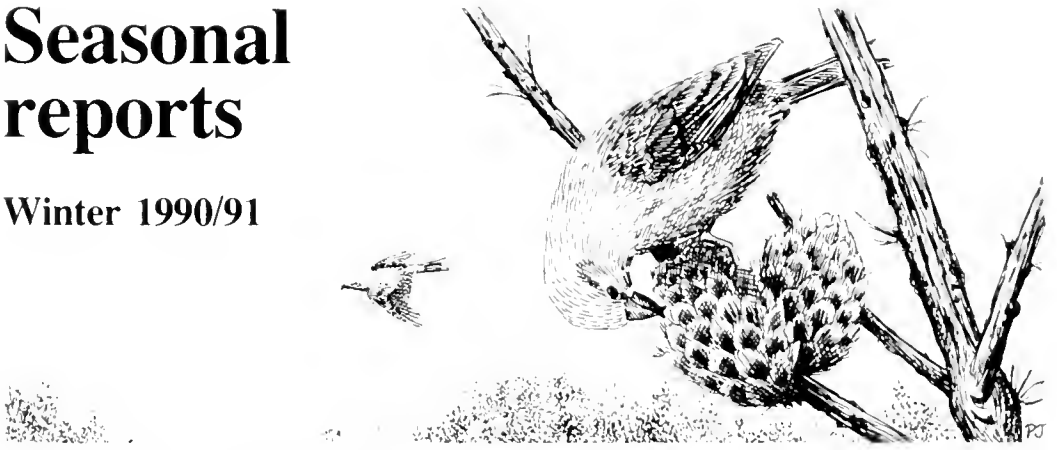
For a free SUNBIRD brochure, write to PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF; or telephone Sandy (0767) 682969.

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 hornemanni

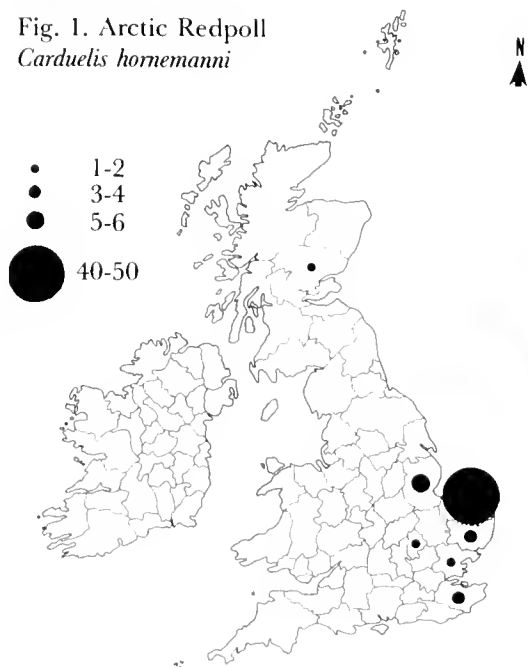
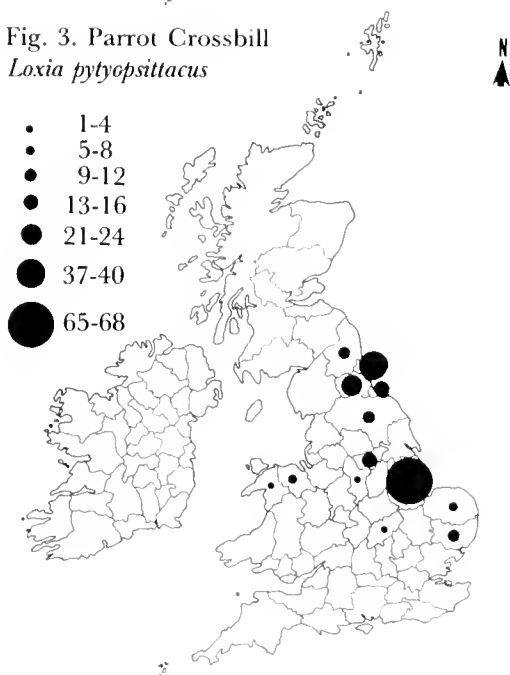


Fig. 2. Two-barred Crossbill
Loxia leucoptera



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. chipeata* 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 glaucooides*, 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 WIAN 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 1990. Fieldscope II, Fieldscope EDII and 8×30ECF have been recommended by *British Birds*.

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40 x W	£66		
TBS 90 Body	£350		
TBS 80 Body	£350		
20 x W	£100		
30 x W	£64		
40 x W	£66		
TSN 2 Body	£295		
TSN 3 Body	£295		
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
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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)



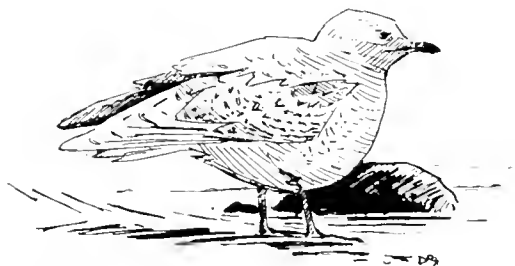


179. Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, Round Green, Goudhurst, Kent, March 1991 (Tim Loseby/AVIAN PHOTOS)

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

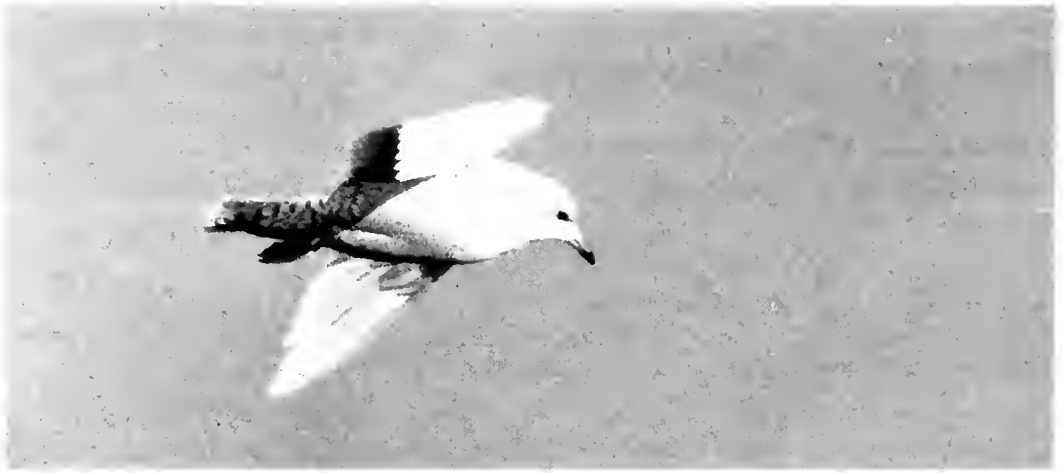
Of the rare species, three **Bonaparte's Gulls** *Larus philadelphia* were reported, from Scilly, Devon and Merseyside, a single **Laughing Gull** *L. atricilla* (Northamptonshire), an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* (Shetland), a **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* (Devon and, probably the same, East 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 McGechan)





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 Wraybury 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 **Whitethroat** *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.

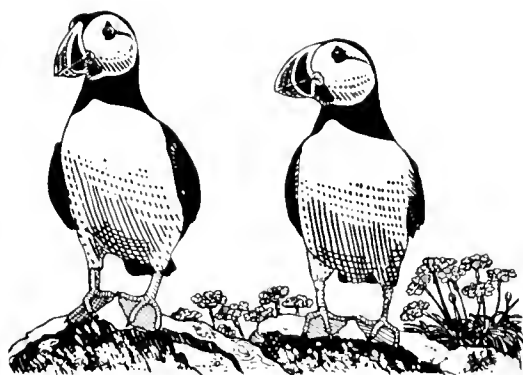
Acknowledgments

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

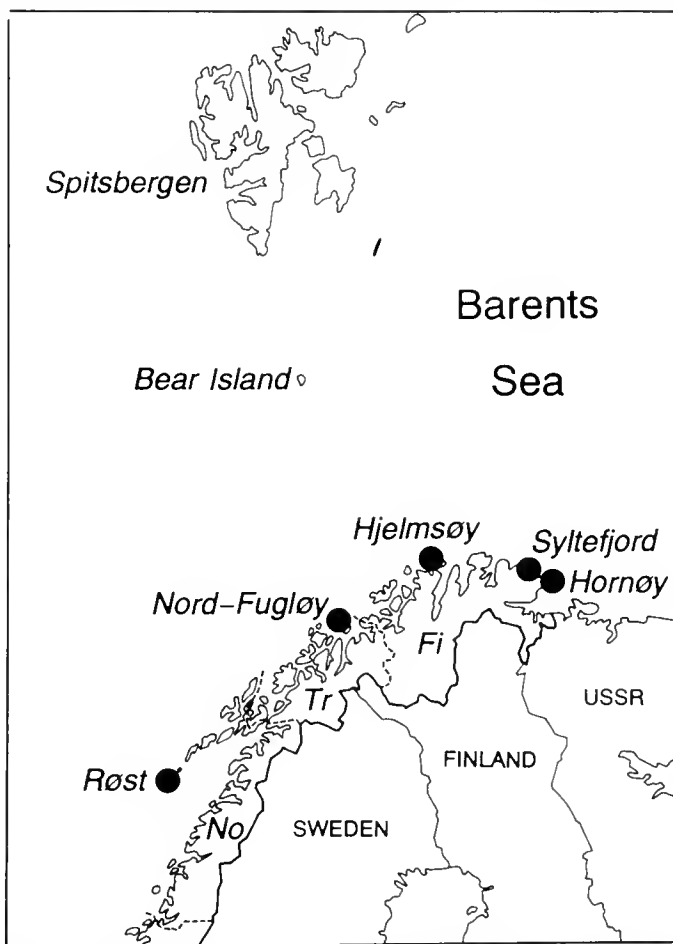


Fig. 1. Map of western Barents Sea and northern parts of Norwegian Sea. County borders of Nordland (No), Troms (Tr) and Finnmark (Fi) and locations of some colonies mentioned in the text are indicated. Spitsbergen = Svalbard

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).

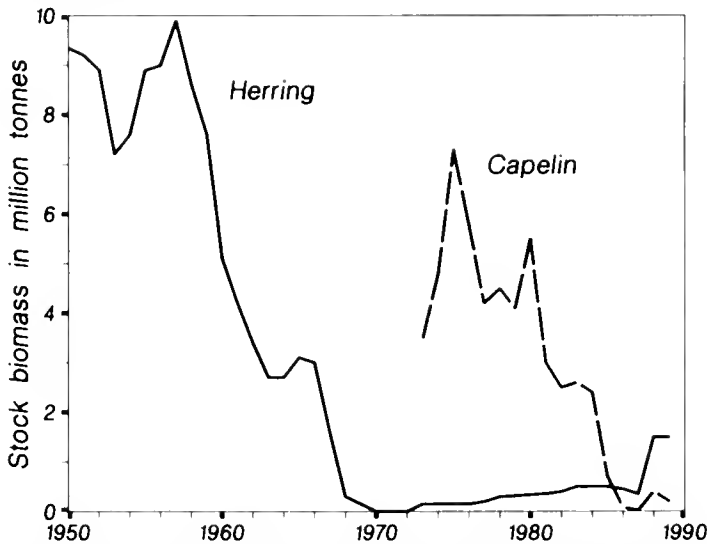


Fig. 2. Estimated stock size (in million tonnes) of Barents Sea capelins *Mallotus villosus* in autumn 1973-89 and spawning Atlanto-Scandian herrings *Clupea harengus* in spring 1950-89 (after Anon. 1990)

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)



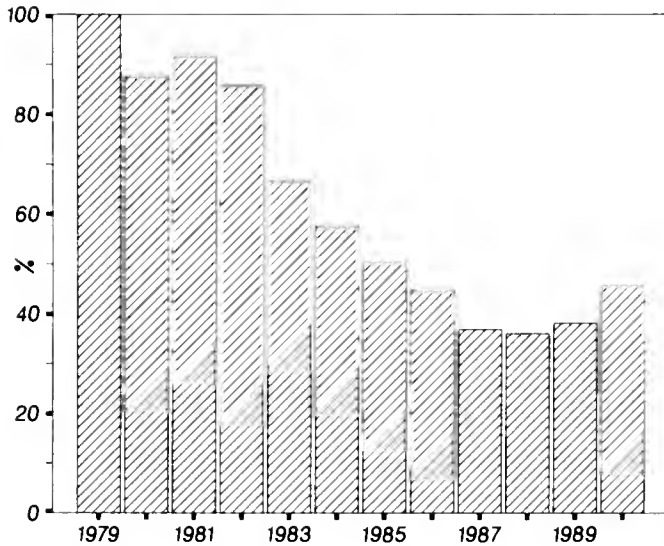


Fig. 3. Changes in number of apparently occupied burrows of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* on Herynken, Røst, in 1979-90 (after Anker-Nilssen & Røstad in manuscript and unpubl. data). Population size expressed as percentage of maximum (in 1979)

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 sprats *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 (Gjørseter 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	—

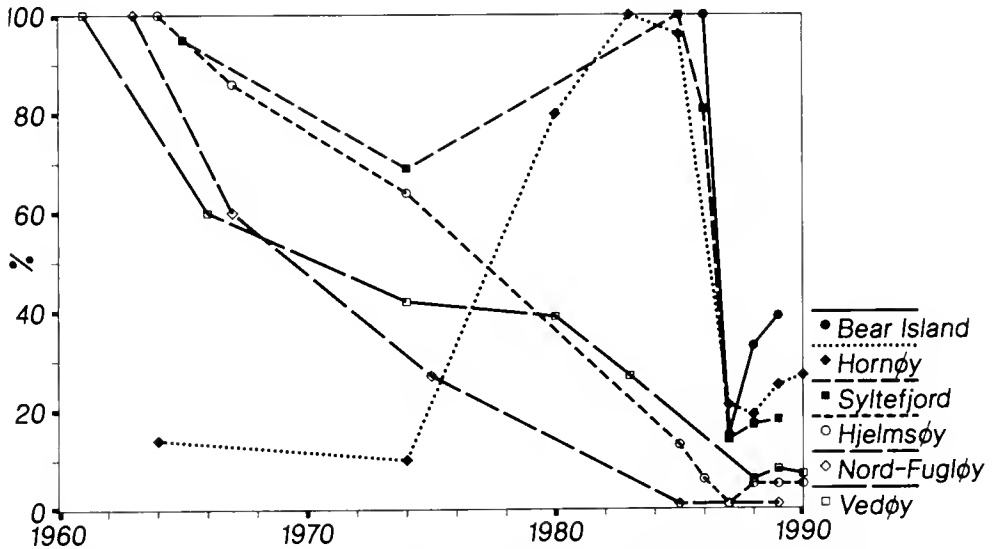


Fig. 4. Relative changes in the numbers of Guillemots *Uria aalge* breeding in the largest colonies (i.e. those where at least one estimate exceeds 5,000 pairs) in northern Norway and on Svalbard in 1964-90 (data from table 1). For each colony, population size expressed as percentage of maximum

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).

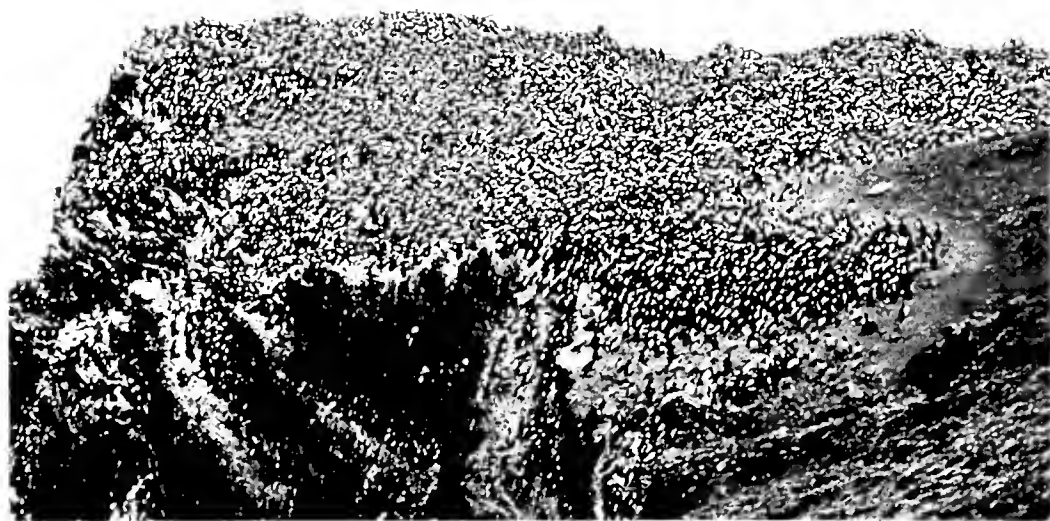
KITTIWAKE

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). 1-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

*1-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.

Acknowledgments

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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

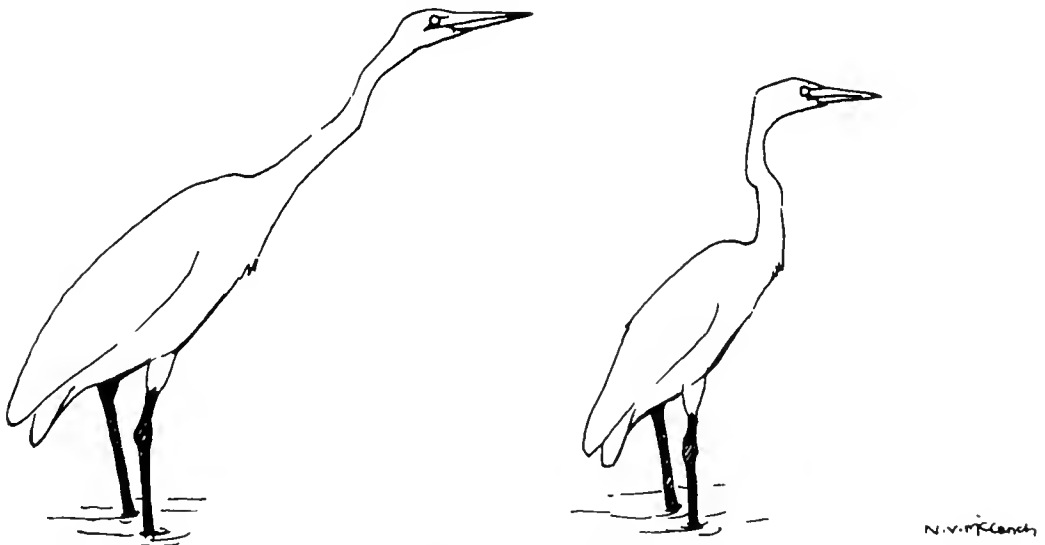


Fig. 1. Alert postures of Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (left) and Yellow-billed Egret *E. intermedia* (right)(N. V. McCaughy)

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*.

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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* ssp. 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.

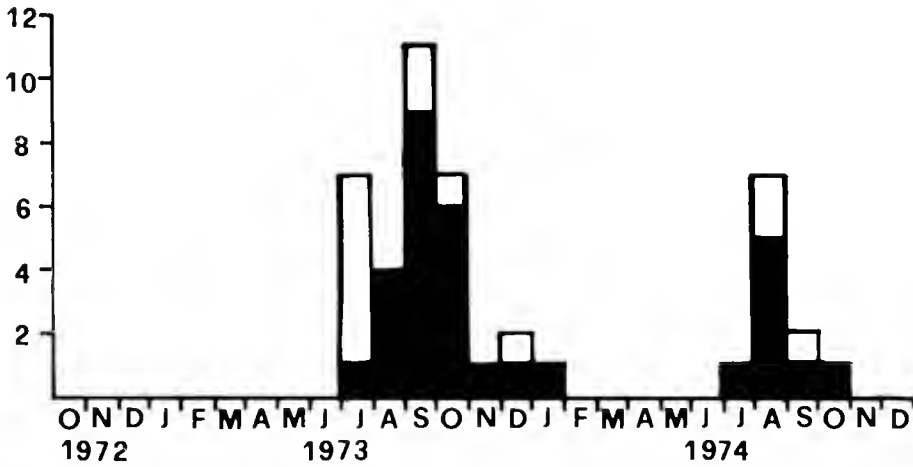


Fig. 1. Monthly totals of yellow-legged Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* ssp. in southeast Essex, October 1972 to December 1974

■ = 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

WWF Hong Kong, GPO Box 12721, Hong Kong

REFERENCES

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 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 'ceecat' 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

Biologigränd 47, S-90241 Umeå, Sweden

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.

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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 Jons-son, 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 SWLA, 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 co-operation 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, Rutledge 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 tinnunculus* 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* Sumhurgh (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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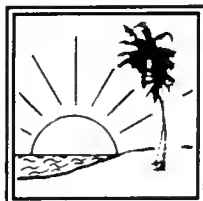
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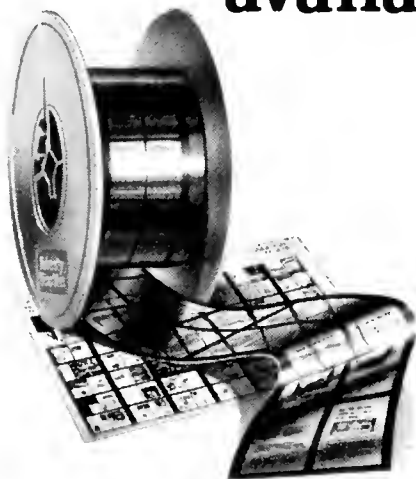
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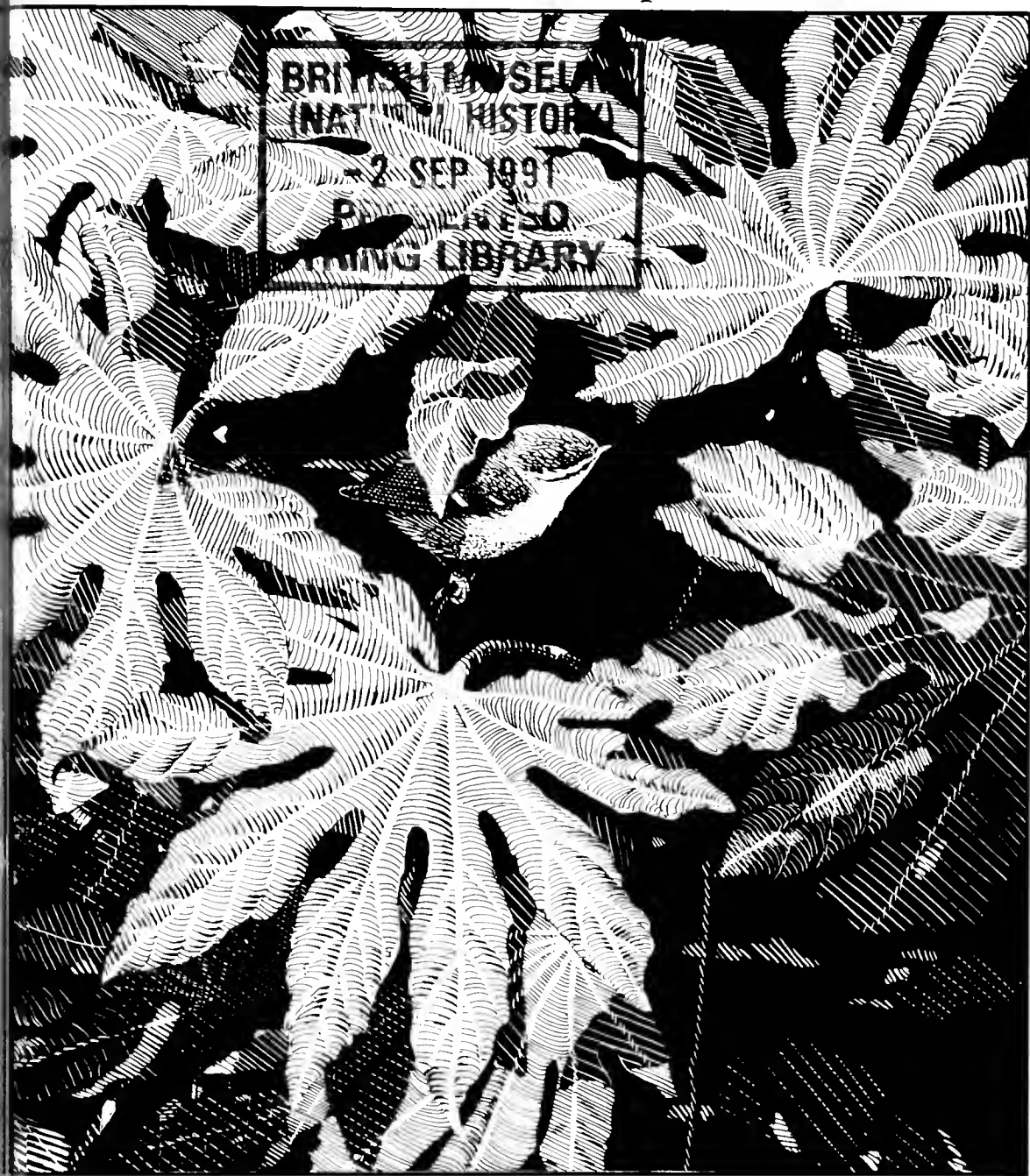
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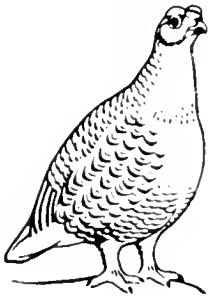
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AT80 case	91	Camera adaptor 800mm	107	GA w/22x & case	170	Mains charger	71
		Camera adaptor 1200mm	179	GA w/zoom & case	210	Sentinel 70mm image intensifier	1,790
LEICA		Kowa case	28	45° w/22x & case	200		
8 x 20 BC Trinovid	199	Weathershield case	34	45° w/zoom & case	230		
8 x 20 BCA Trinovid	226	Spare OG cover	5	HR Photokit	59	ROSS	
10 x 25 BC Trinovid	226	27x (WA) eyepiece (Screw fit)	59	Filter	62	8 x 42 ZCF Regent	174
10 x 25 BCA Trinovid	239	Eyepiece dust dome	15	Rubber hood	5	10 x 42 ZWCF Kensington	184
7 x 42 BA Trinovid	628			Piccolo Mk II ED, with case:			
8 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	VIEWMASTER		20 x 60	355	TRIPODS etc.	
10 x 42 BA Trinovid	628	625° scope with zoom EP	199	20-60x 60	399	Slik D2	75
		OPTOLYTH *				Slik SL67	107
SWIFT		8 x 30 Alpin	205	BUSHNELL		Manfrotto 144/200	105
7 x 35 roof prism	329	8 x 40 Alpin	225	Spacemaster body	148	Manfrotto 144/128	100
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10 x 25 F roof prism	158	30x, 40x eyepieces	64			T-mounts, from	10
9 x 30 roof prism	248	20x (WA) eyepiece	100				
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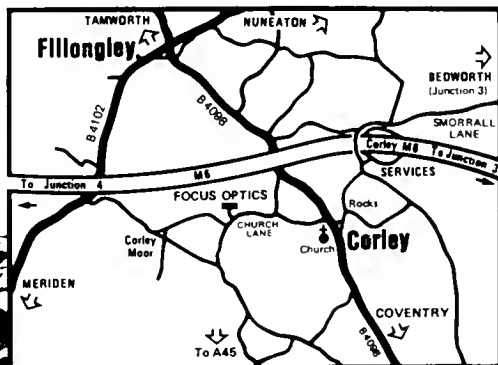
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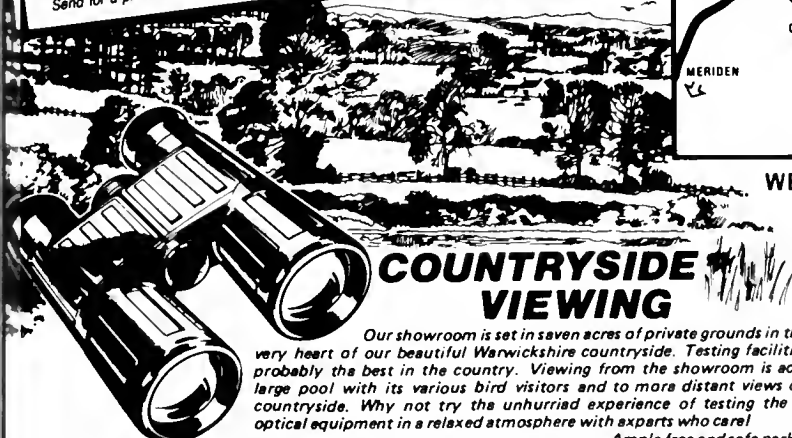
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British Birds

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]

[*Brit. Birds* 84: 349-370, 379-392, September 1991]

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.

Acknowledgments

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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.

LANGASHIRE 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, fledged 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 Crane *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 summered;

(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 oedicnemus*

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.



NA

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. sandwicensis* 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 dougallii*

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

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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 Maunary)



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197-199. Male Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*, Morocco, April 1990 (Lionel Maumay)





200. Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maunary*)

201. Barbary Partridge *Alectoris barbara*, Morocco, April 1990 (*Lionel Maunary*)





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 clotbey*, 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 *Pyrrhonorax 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.



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.

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	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 cirius*

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.



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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



205. Mystery photograph 171. Identify the species. Answer next month

Notes

Black-throated Diver attacking Great Crested Grebe

On 29th December 1984, on the Eggleton 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, Simbird 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, I0123 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 'Flight-line', 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)

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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:

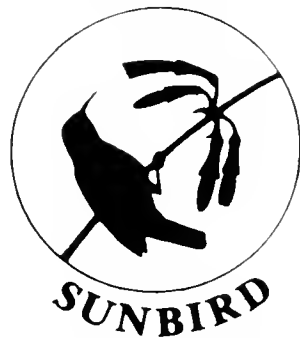
Shore Lark <i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	(50%)
Temminck's Horned Lark <i>E. bilopha</i>	(50%)

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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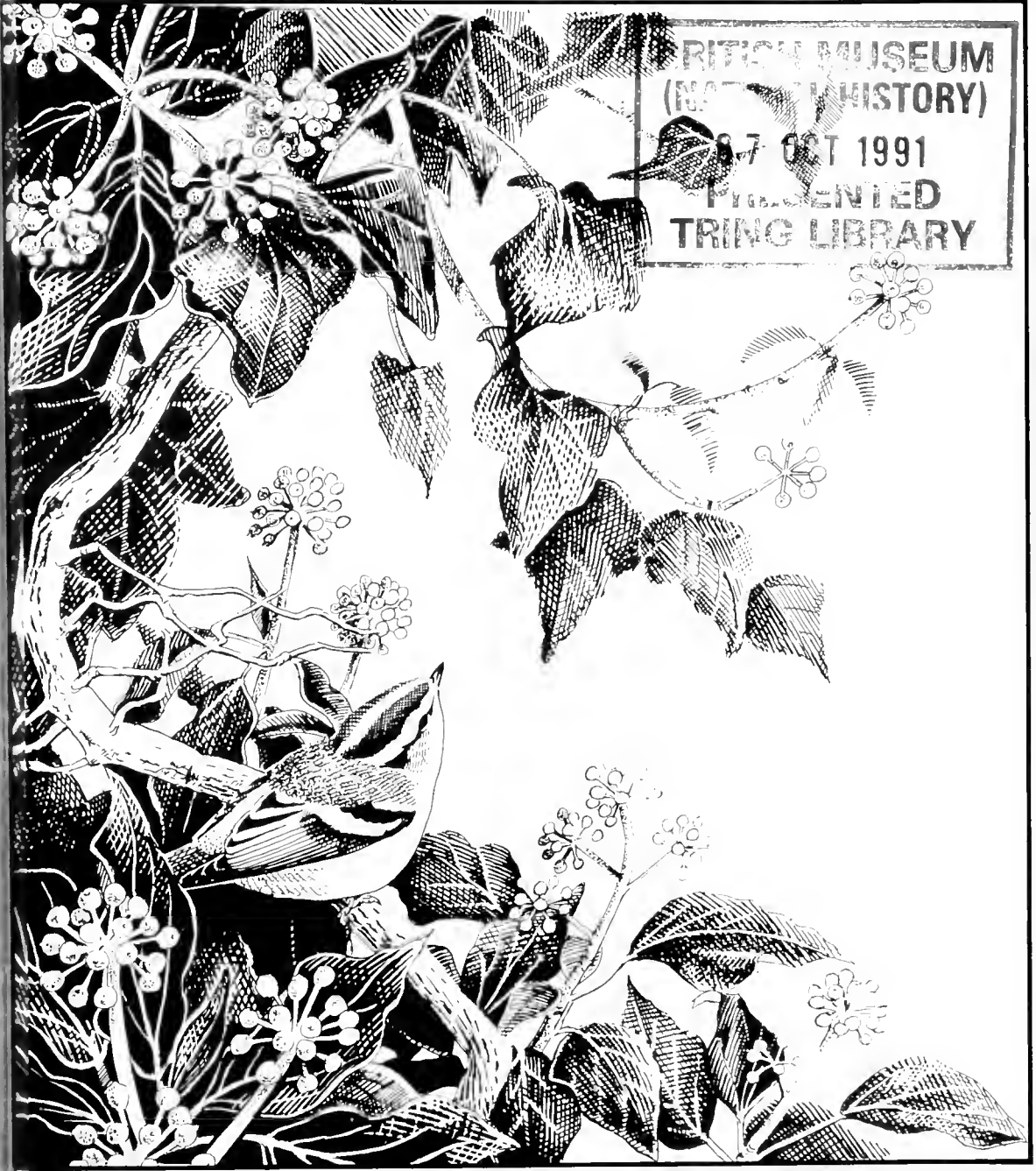
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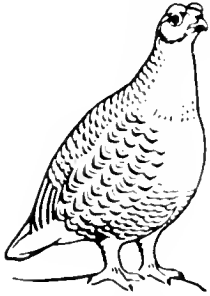
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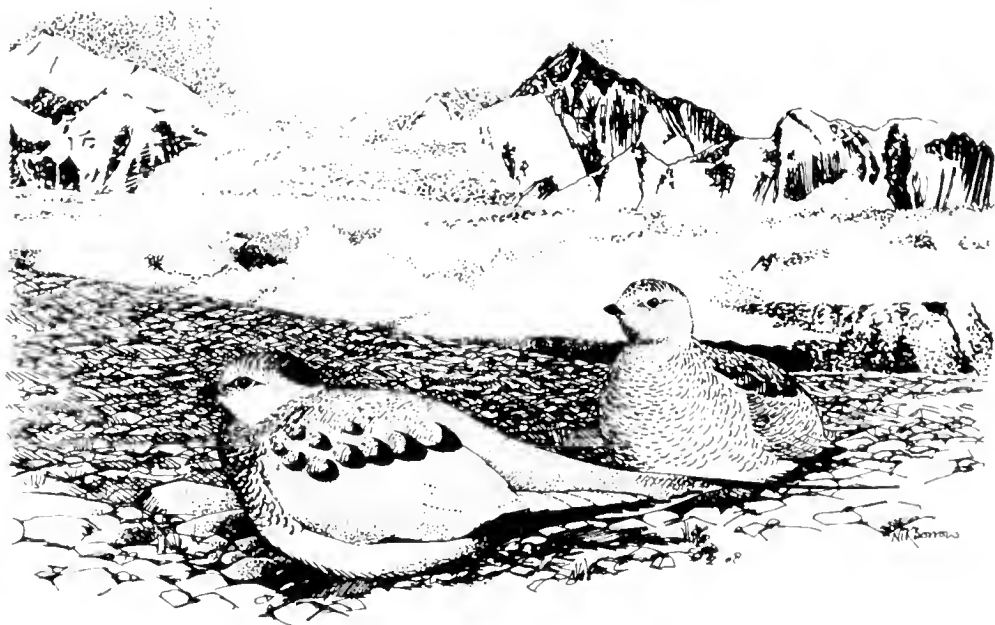
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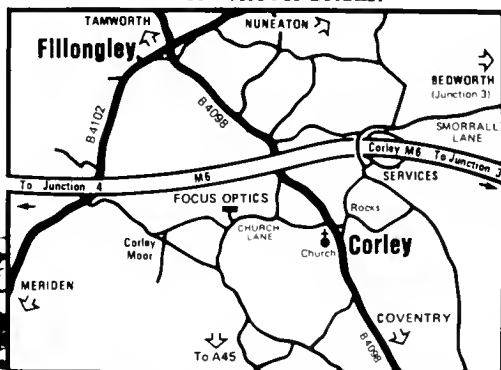
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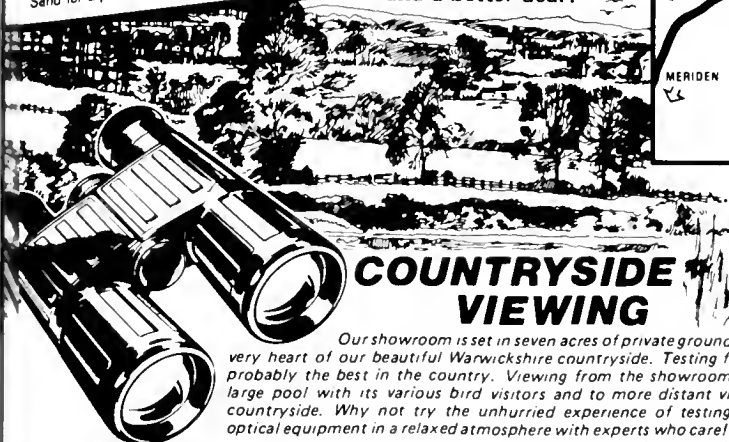
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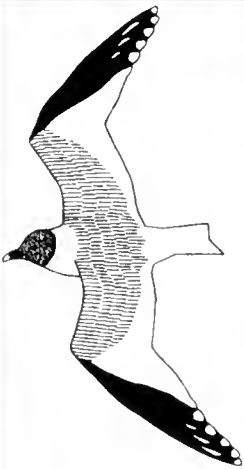
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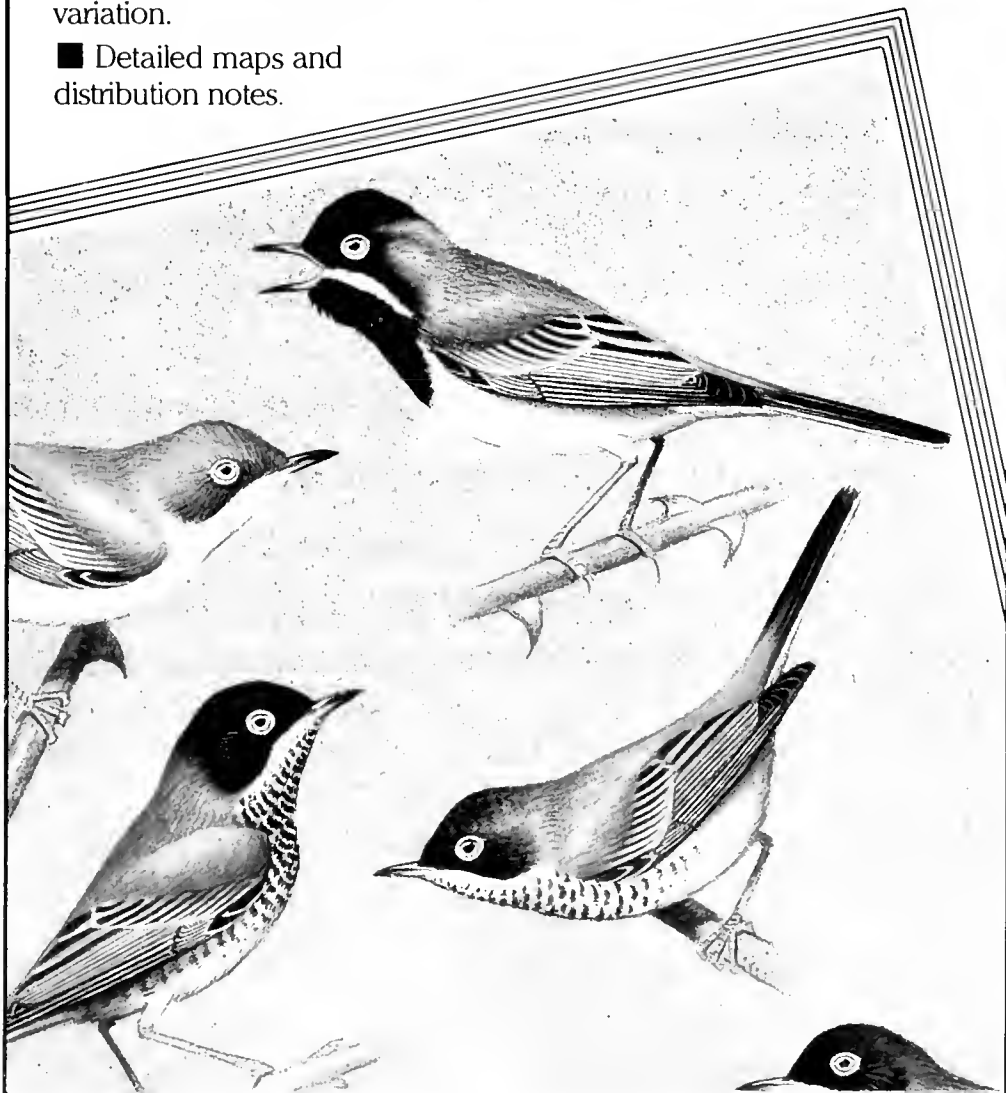
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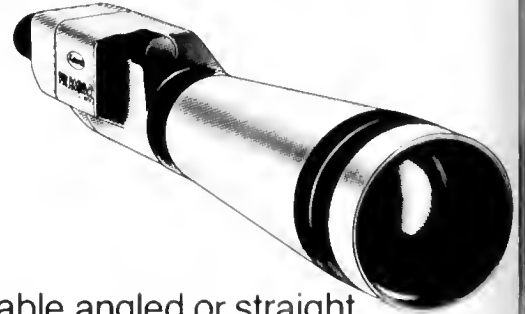
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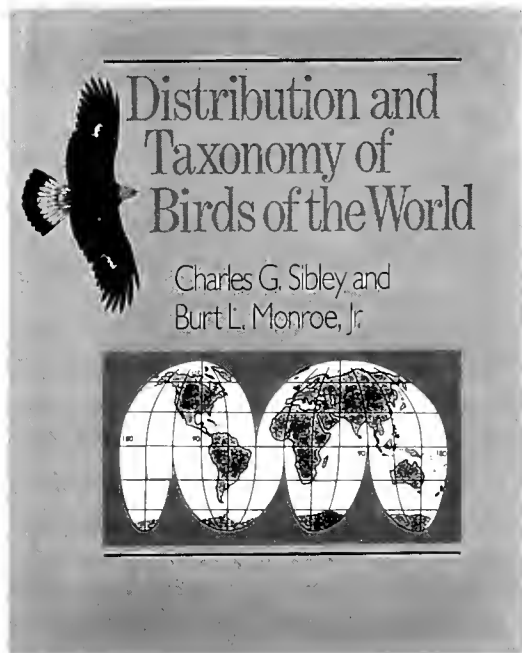
The 'British Birds' Best Bird Book of the Year



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.

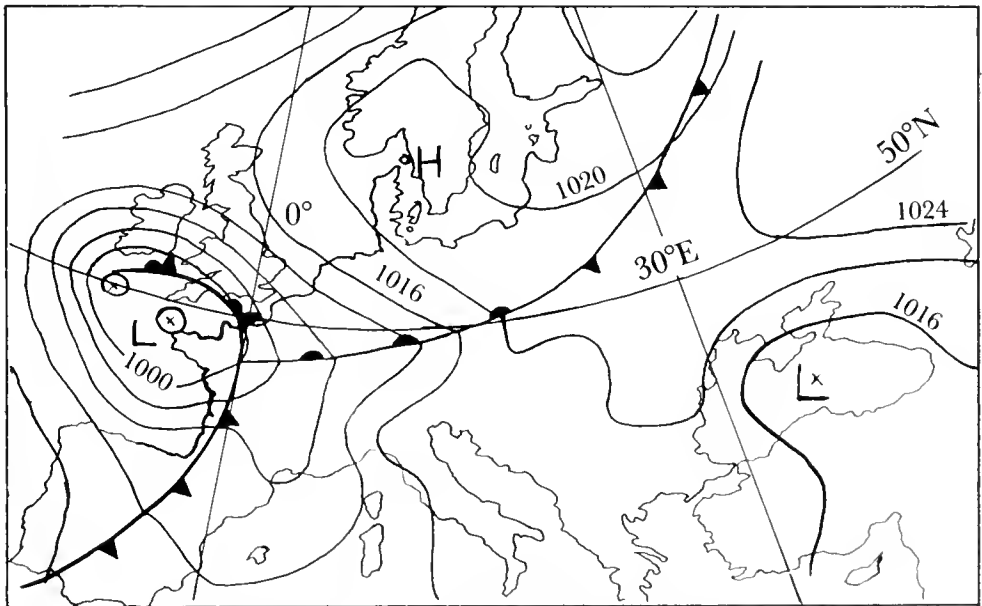


Fig. 1. Synoptic chart for 12.00 GMT on 11th October 1988

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

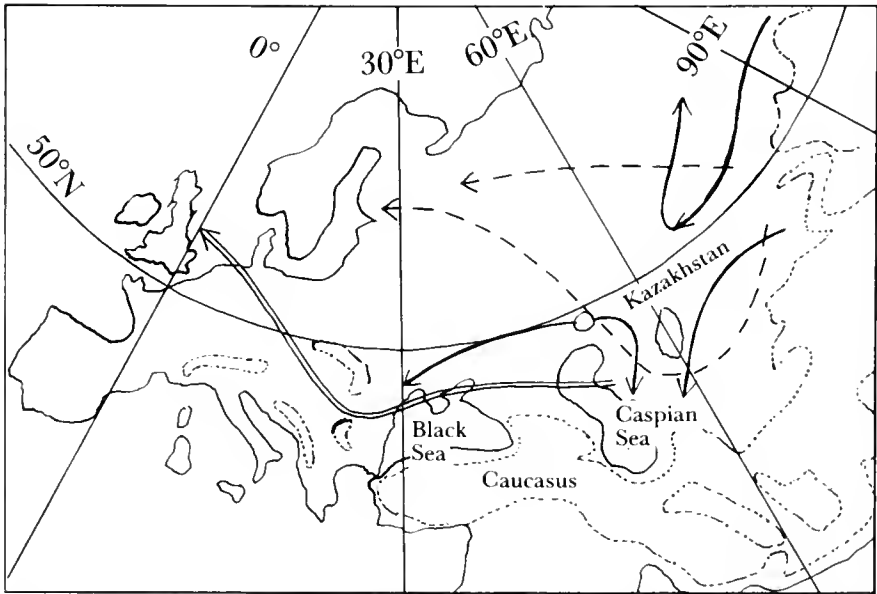


Fig. 2. Routes of vagrants: double-line arrow = route of vagrants in mid October 1988 as inferred from low-level winds; dotted-line arrows = routes of vagrants in October 1982, from Howey & Bell (1985); single-line arrows = October mean streamlines, from Bryson (1986). Land over 1,000 m above sea level 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 Linnets *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.



2008. Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Portugal, May 1990 (Kevin Carlson)(Nikon FE; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford FP4)

2009. Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis*, Dorset, September 1990 (Harold E. Grenfell)(Nikon; 300mm Nikkor with 1.4x 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 Haublin*)(Canon T90; 500mm Canon; Ilford XP1)





212. Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Netherlands, August 1990 (Mike Weston)(Canon A-1; 600mm Canon; Ilford XP1)

213. Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialis*, Islay, June 1990 (Tony Bond)(Canon A-1; 500mm Canon; Ilford XP2)



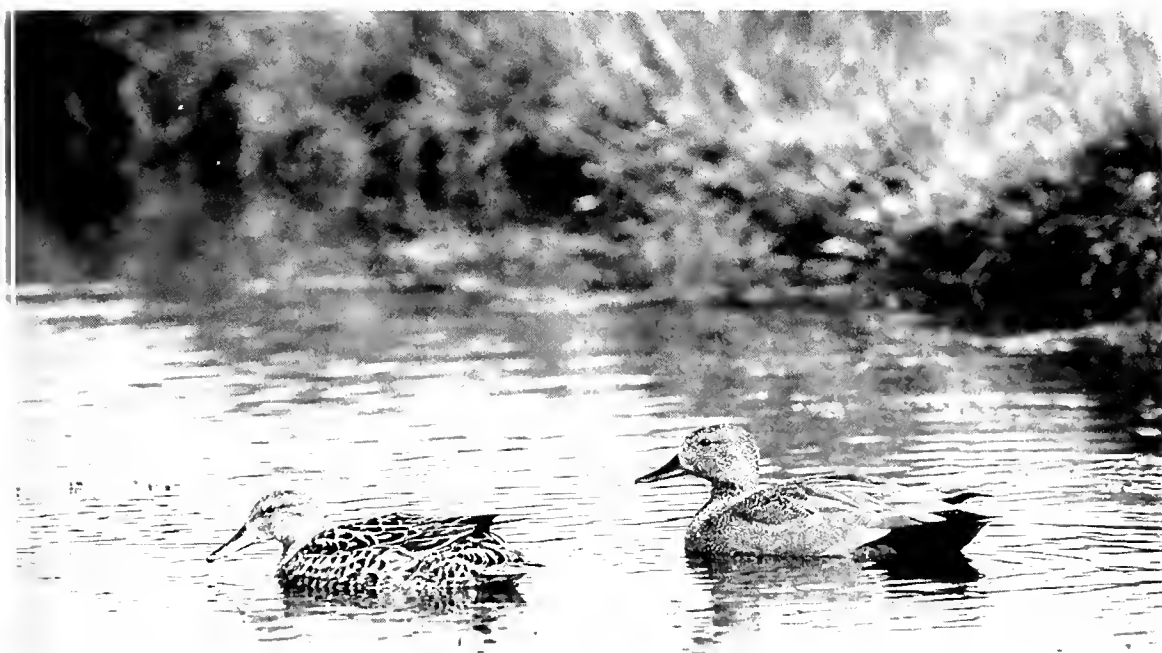


214. Female Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Derbyshire, May 1990 (Tony Hamblin)(Canon F90; 500mm Canon with 1.1x converter; Ilford XPI)



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. Grenfell*)(Nikon; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford XP1)

218. Female Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* bathing, Warwickshire, July 1989 (*Tony Hamblin*)(Canon F90; 500mm Canon; Ilford XP1)





2219. Adult Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, West Glamorgan, July 1990 (Harold E. Grenfell) (Nikon; 300mm Nikkor; Ilford XPI)

2220. 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 NP1)

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 cirius*, 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 Voons 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 *BIIP*. 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 ENSKIPP

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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—Etudes 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. [R.J.C.]

Der Steinkauz. By Siegfried Schönn, 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 Prininger. (Eugen Ulmer, Stuttgart, revised edn 1990. 552 pages. DM188.00)
Deer. By Norma Chapman. (Whittet Books, London, 1991. 136 pages. £6.95)
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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

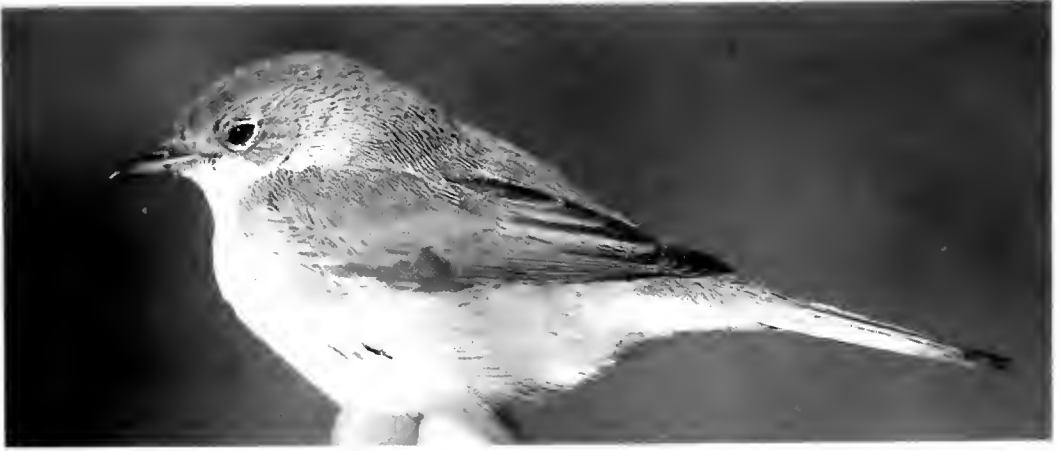


Hadoram Shirihai, Alan Harris and David Cottridge

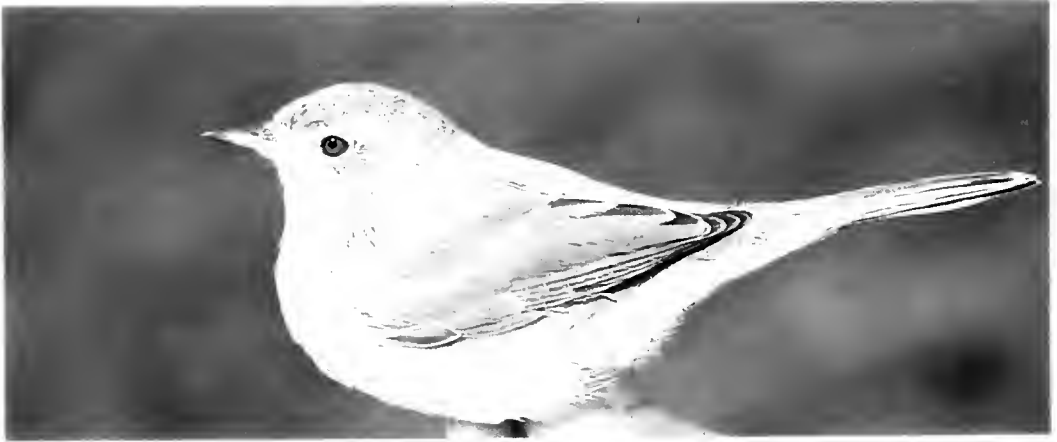
The British Birds Rarities Committee has recently re-assessed all previously accepted records of Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* in Britain. None remains acceptable after review, although some recent claims are still being considered. An explanation of these re-assessments follows this paper (*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)

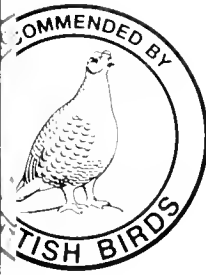
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By courtesy of BBC Publications: JUST THE BEST, by Chris Harbard and Ian Dawson, *Wildlife*, March 1989. Fieldscope II, Fieldscope EDII and 8×30 ECF have been recommended by *British Birds*.



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
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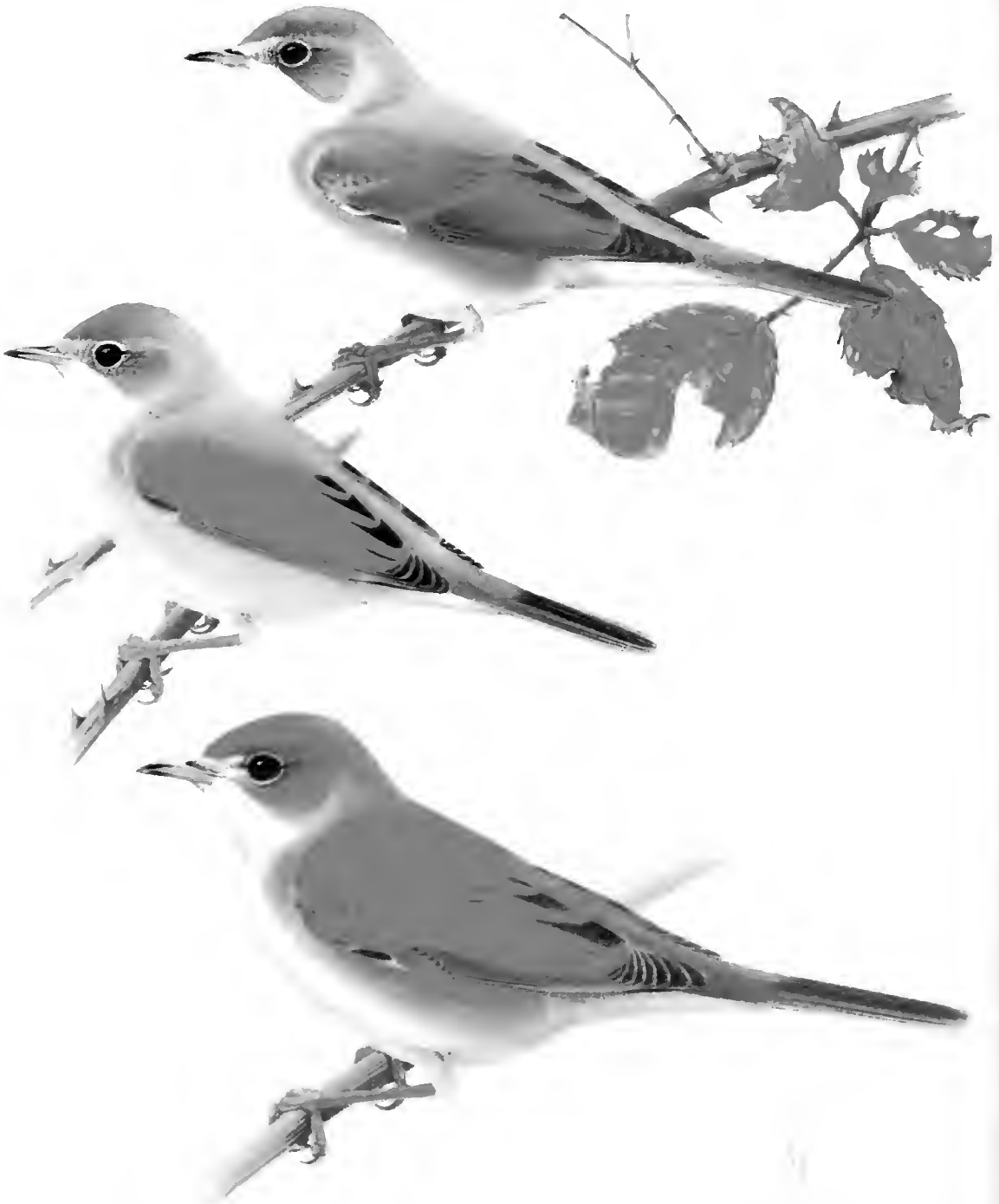


Fig. 1. First-winter female *Sylvia* warblers in autumn: Subalpine Warbler *S. cantillans* (top), Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* (centre), Whitethroat *S. communis* (bottom). Note Spectacled Warbler's short primary projection, with fewer primaries visible beyond tertials; thinner bill; eye-ring 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 'terrr', 'turrrr' 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 Sprogwort 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.

Sponsored by





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.

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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

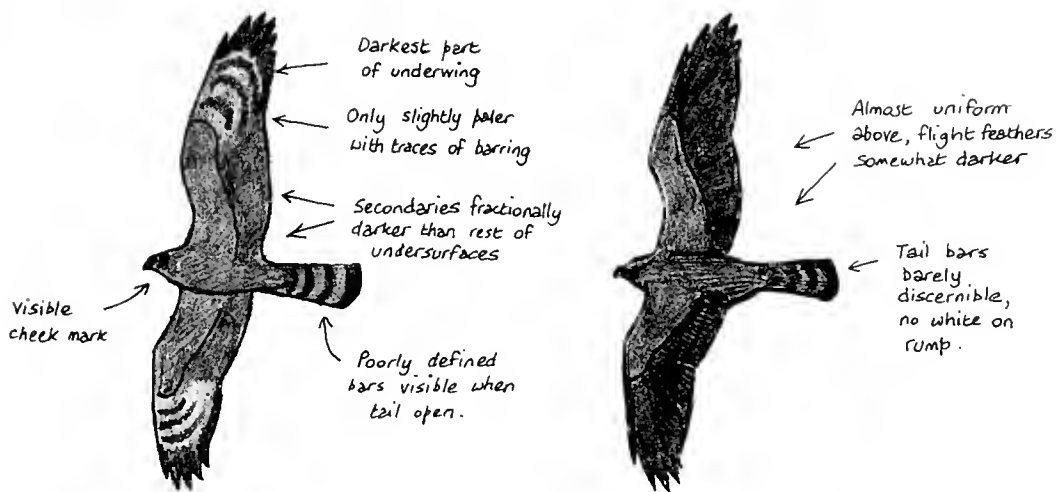


Fig. 1. Plumage features of dark-phase Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, Cambridgeshire, May 1982. Redrawn from original field sketches, using outlines in Porter *et al.* (1981) (M. J. Everett)

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

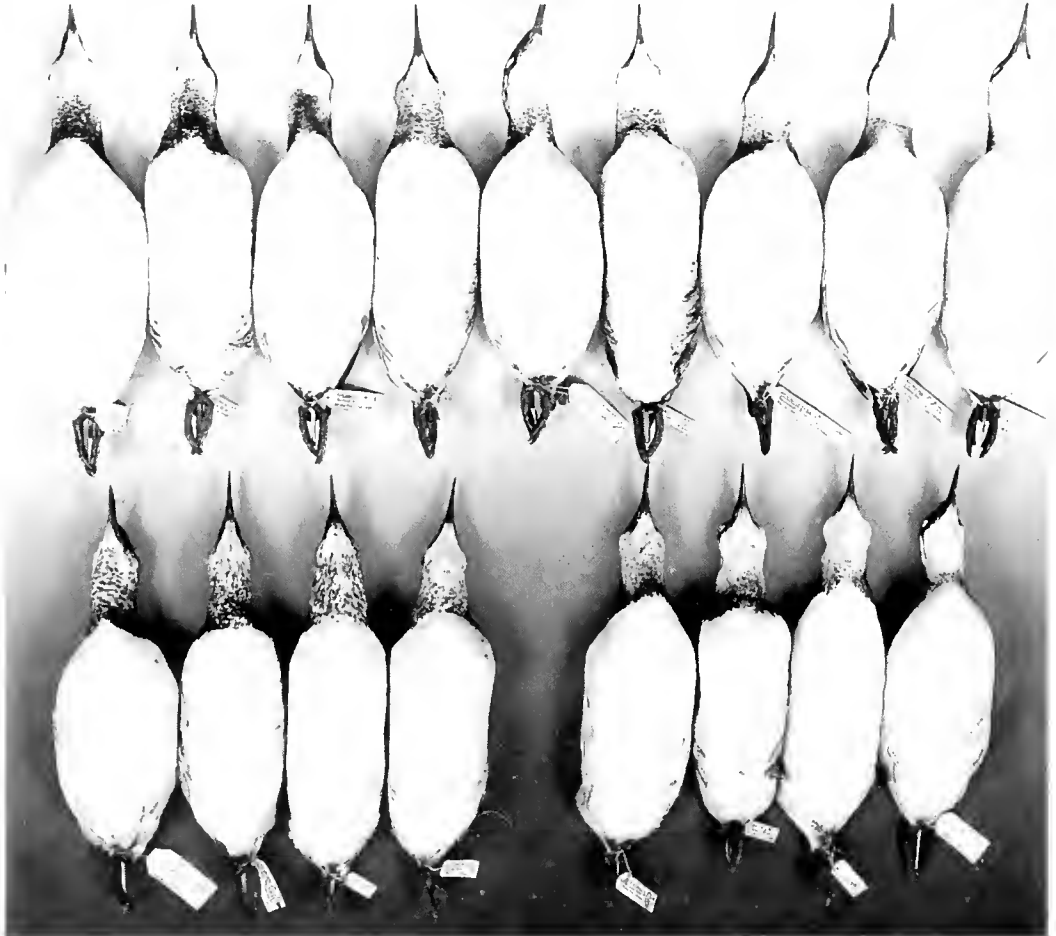
7 Burlington Way, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdon PE18 9BS

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 Brown 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 hawk 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 hawk 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 hawk, 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.

A. P. RADFORD

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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 hawk 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.

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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 Shirihi, 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.

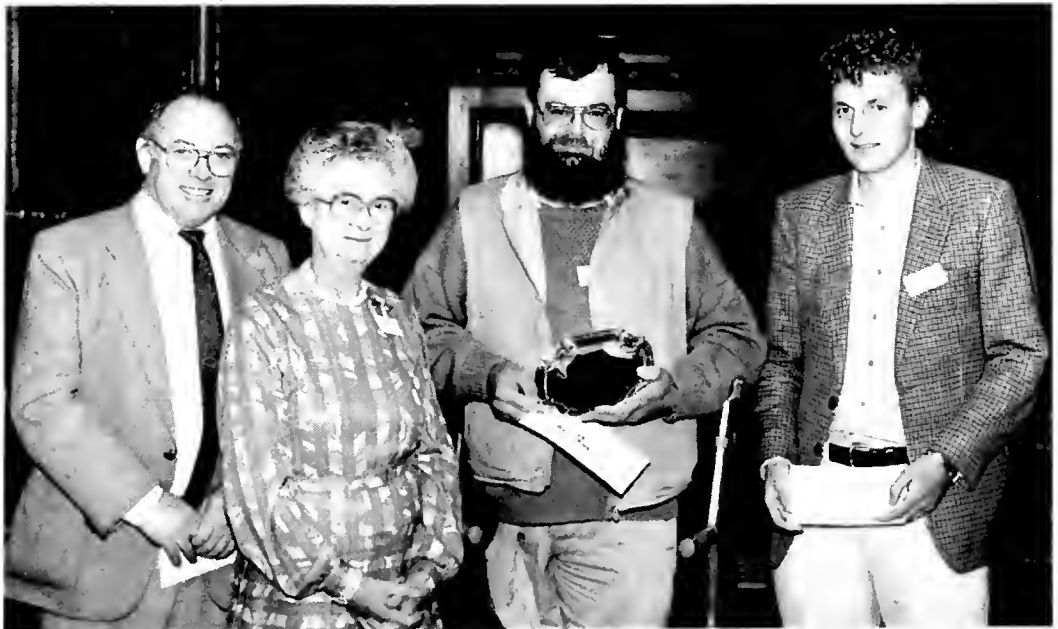
Wildfowl Counters' Conference The Wildfowl Counters' Conference will take place during 29th November to 1st December 1991 at the Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries, Scotland. Details are available from Joanne Ferns, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BR; telephone Dursley (0453) 890333.

'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 3HL; 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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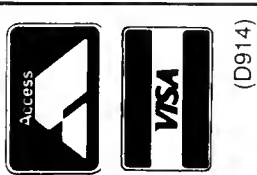
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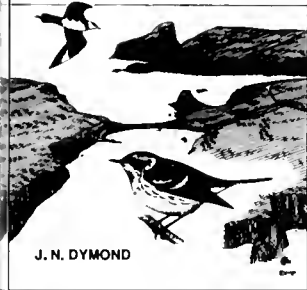
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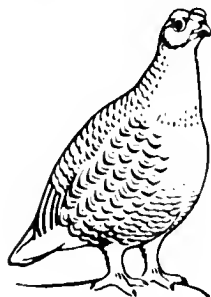
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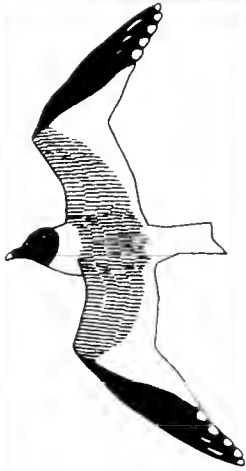
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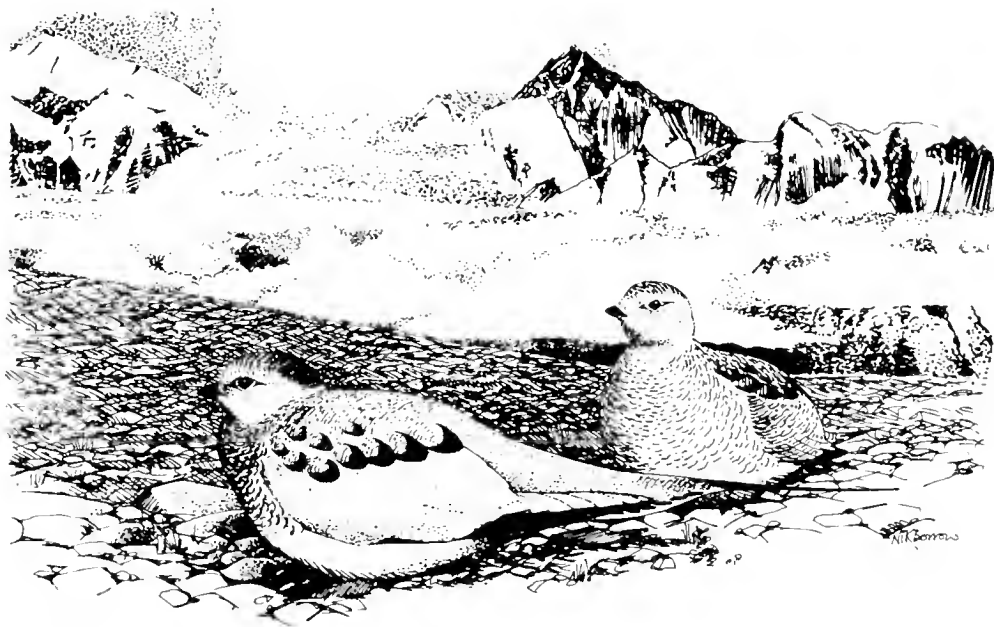
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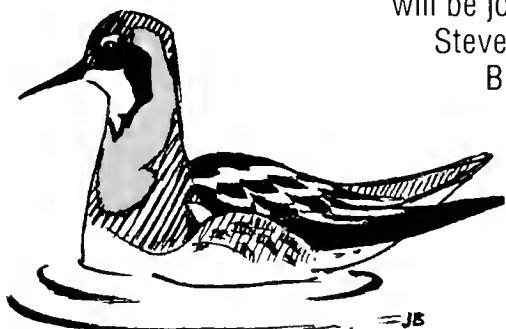
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1990

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 *Zenaida 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. griseus*, 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 the 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. Vernooy 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. Piringler), 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

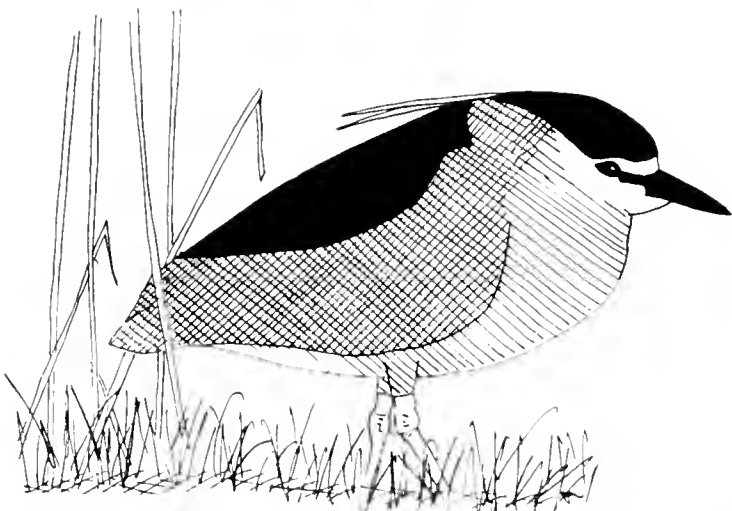


Fig. 1. Adult Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Cley, Norfolk, May 1990 (John R. Williamson)

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, Lade, 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. McMahon).

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. Attrill, 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. Chum *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, 4th August (R. I. 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.*).

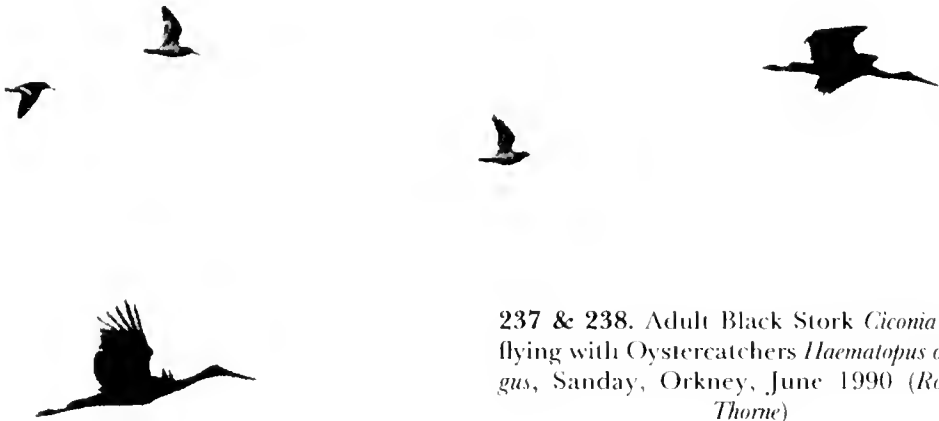
Hertfordshire Tyttenhanger Gravel-pits, adult, 16th April (R. Evershed), presumed same, near Hemel Hempstead, 2nd May (R. Nye), also in Surrey.

Lancashire Leighton Moss, adult, 21st June (M. S. Hill, G. Taylor), possibly also in Orkney.

Norfolk Flitcham, probably first-summer, 6th June (E. Cross).

Northamptonshire Barnwell Brook, juvenile, 27th-28th July, photographed (M. Duerden, J. W. W. Metcalf *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: 447), 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). Durlleigh 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 Carnforth, ♀, 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. Rabbits). Westhay Moor, ♂, 28th May (B. Rabbits).

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 Liniolate, 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 (T. 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. Bradbmy, Miss J. E. Foulkes *et al.*)(plate 243), presumed same, Langley Mill Flashes, near Stoneyford, 16th-17th July (Dr P. Bagnley *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)

Gyr Falcon *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 (I. 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 Ogmores 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 Sliddery, 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 (F. J. Dix, W. D. Oldham).

(North America) Just the one, of course, but way out of the usual range in southern Britain and Ireland.

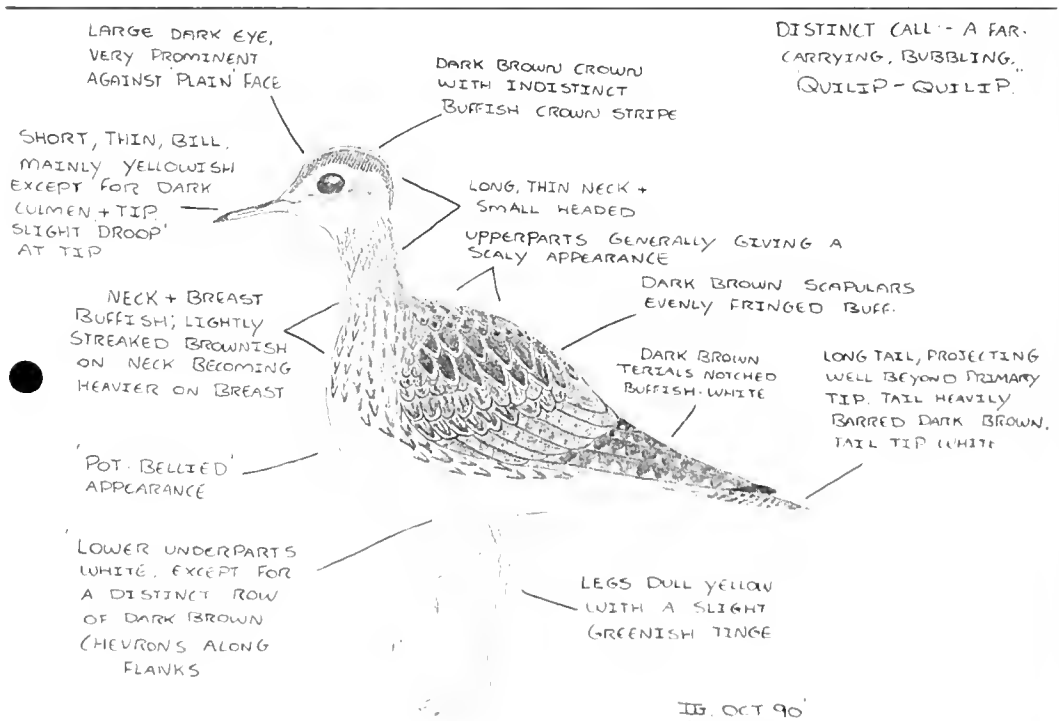


Fig. 3. First-winter Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (Ian Gardner)

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.

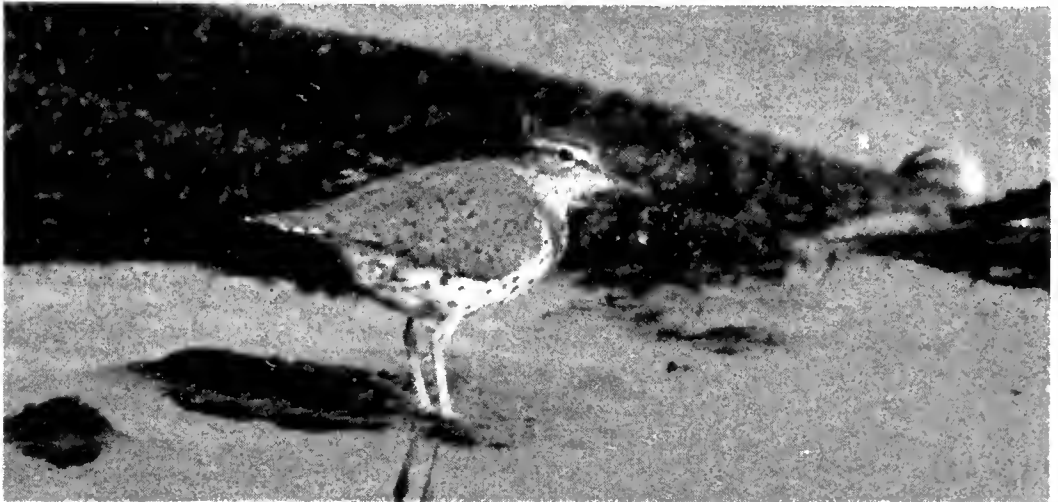
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 89, 3)

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 Calf 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).

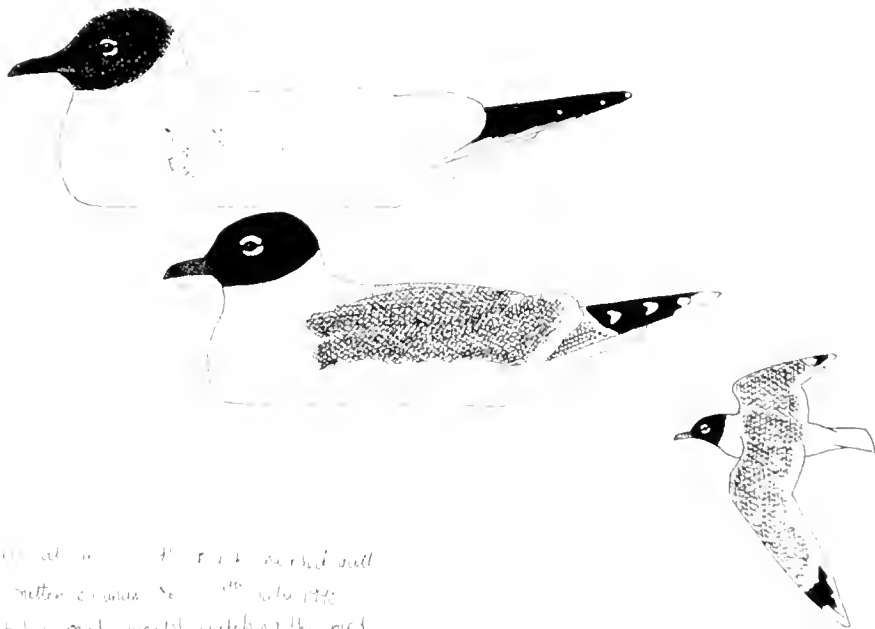


Figure 4. Franklin's Gull at rest (top) and in flight (bottom right), with Black-headed Gull at rest (middle) for comparison. See also plate 245. Newer birds make the most wretched watches of the mist.

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.*). Semen, first-winter, 14th January (D. S. Fimm, 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. Dunnett *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)

Silly 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. Darlston, 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. McInery, 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 Fresco, 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. Millford); 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.

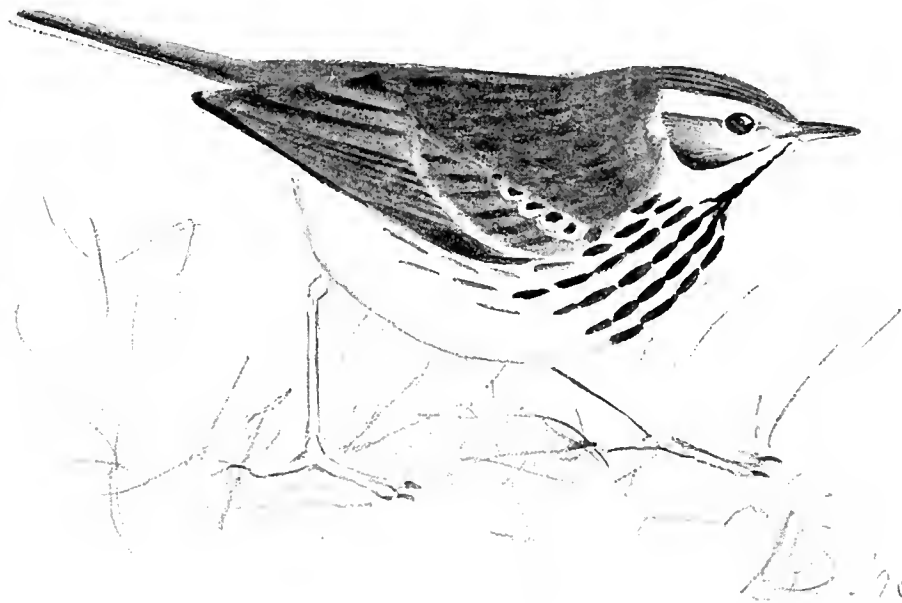


Fig. 5. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Newbiggin, Northumberland, October 1990 (J. G. Steele)

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 Brighthstone, ♂, 21st May (J. C. Gloyn, 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).

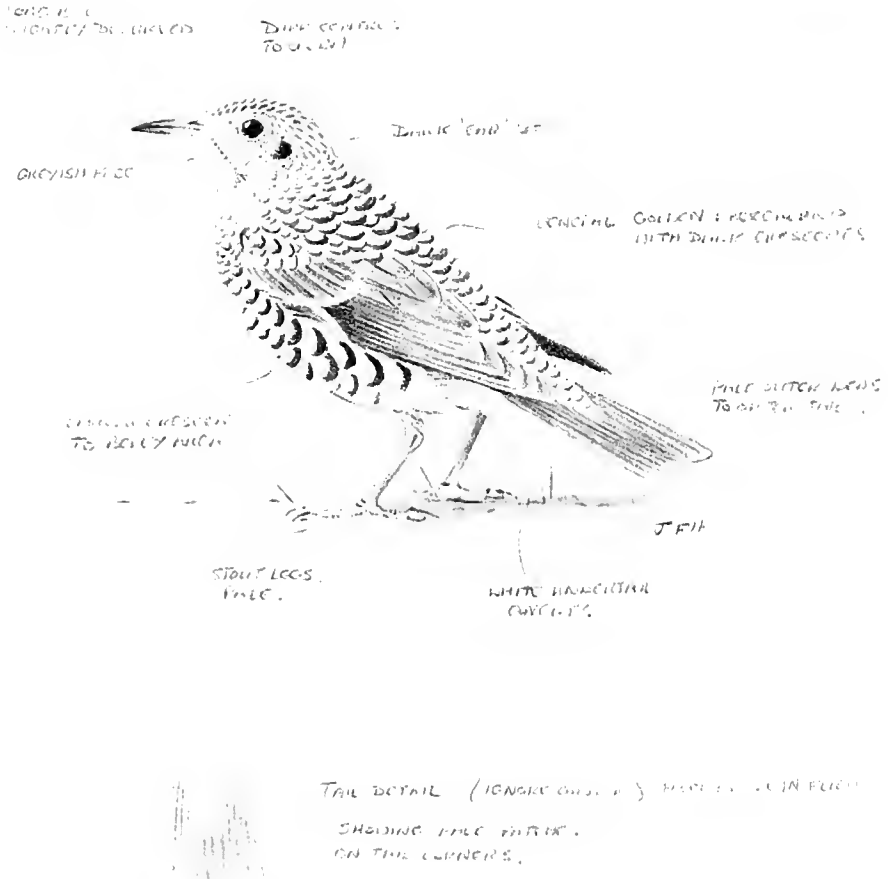


Fig. 6. White's Thrush *Zosterorhina dauma*, Stronsay, Orkney, October 1990 (J. F. Holloway)



247. The one that nearly got away: White's Thrush *Zosterorhina 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. Mielcarek *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 BOURNEMOUTH RECORDS COMMITTEE
254. Bottom left, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (David Coltridge/Avian Photos)
255. Bottom right, Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 1990 (David Coltridge/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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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 Castron, 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 Farnie, 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.*).

(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).

Humberstone 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.*). Sumhurgh, 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. Cleaves, 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)

Humburside 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 Craill, 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.*). Laughton 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.

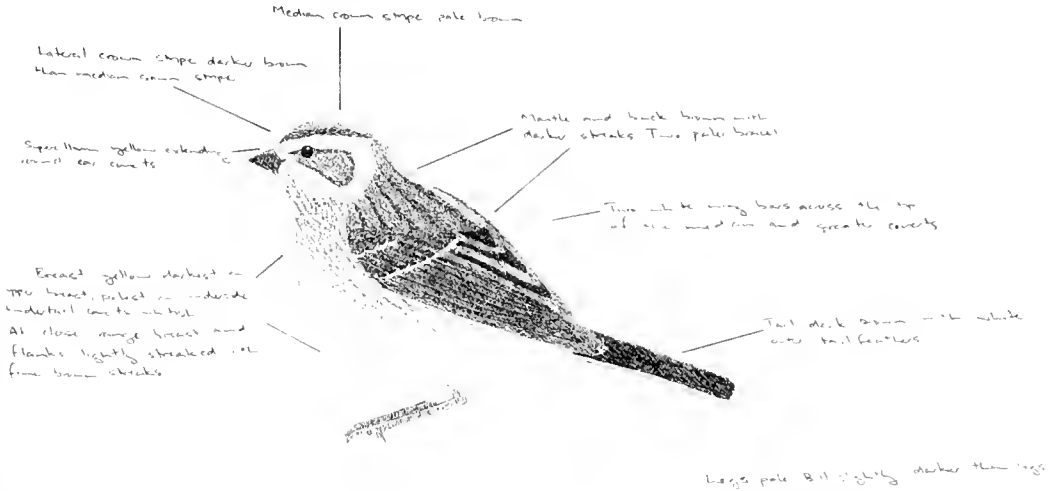


Fig. 8. Female/immature Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Fair Isle, Shetland, September 1990 (R. Proctor)

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 Abbots, 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** Rhyll, 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. **Gyrfalcon** 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

Gyrfalcon 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.

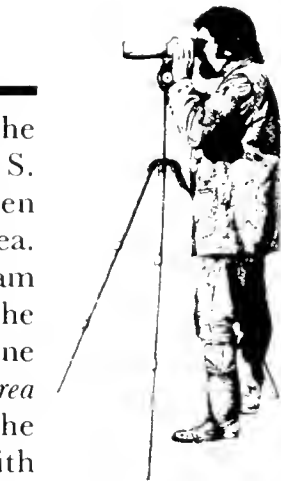
M. J. Rogers, Bag End, Churchtown, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

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 (Limberty, Mitchell & Rhodes, 1986, *Thorne Moors: Birds and Man*).

MARTIN LIMBERT

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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.

KEVIN COLLINS

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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.

A. HUGH PULSFORD

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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).

A. P. RADFORD

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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.

P. I. MORRIS

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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'.

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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

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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

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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 eleonorae* 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 *Eurynorhynchus 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 *Scelopax 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 *Cepphus 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 goisagi* 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 Bird-watching 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 bird-watching. 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 kilted 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. flammula flammula*), 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 oedicnemus*, 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 Bird-line 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'erec 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'erec 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 Coilín 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".

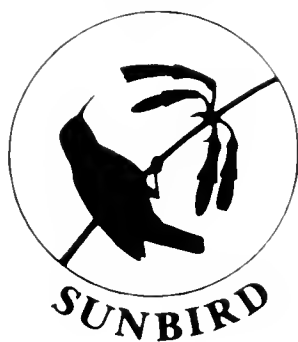
'Unfortunately, the eels do not jump out of the water for us, we actually catch them under water. Perhaps you could advise your readers of this; otherwise we might be inundated with visitors looking for flying sand eels and aqua-batic puffins.'

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-checked Thrush** *C. mmmus* 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** *Ippolais 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. schuazzi* 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

(36p/min cheap rate; 48p/min other times; incl VAT)

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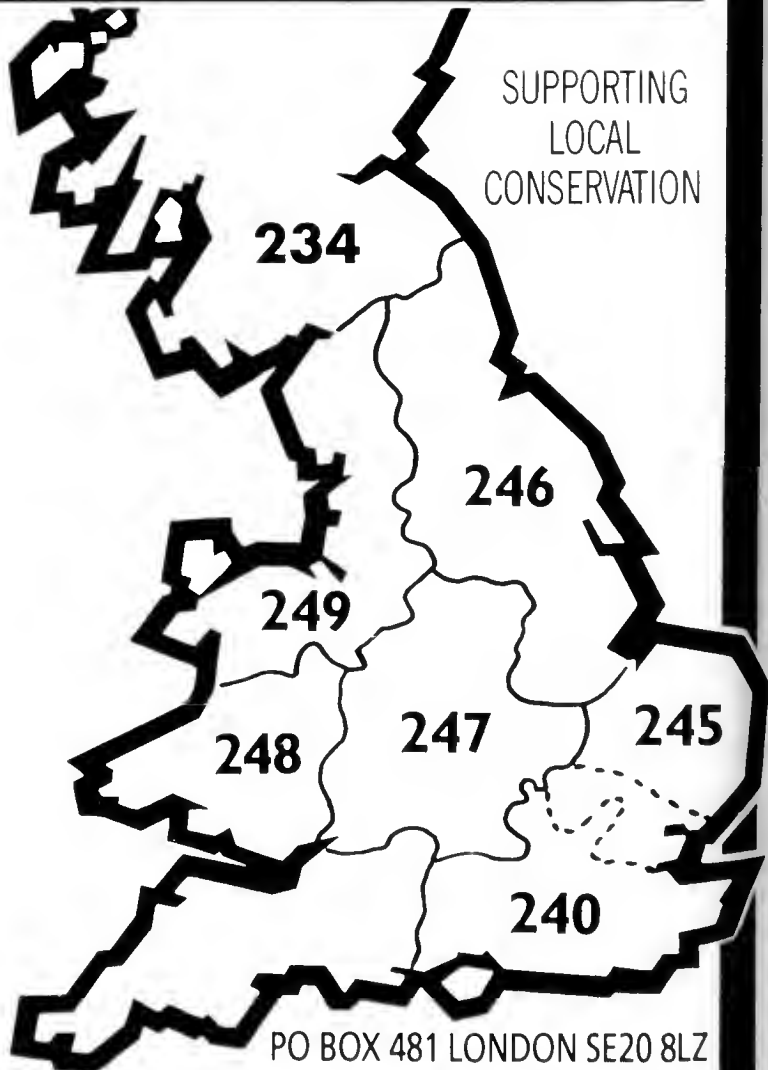
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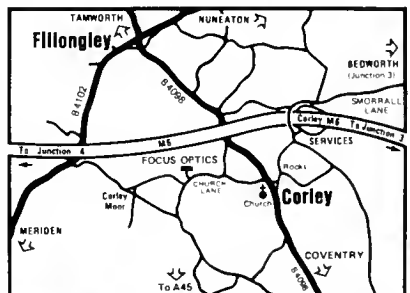
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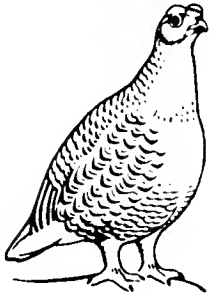
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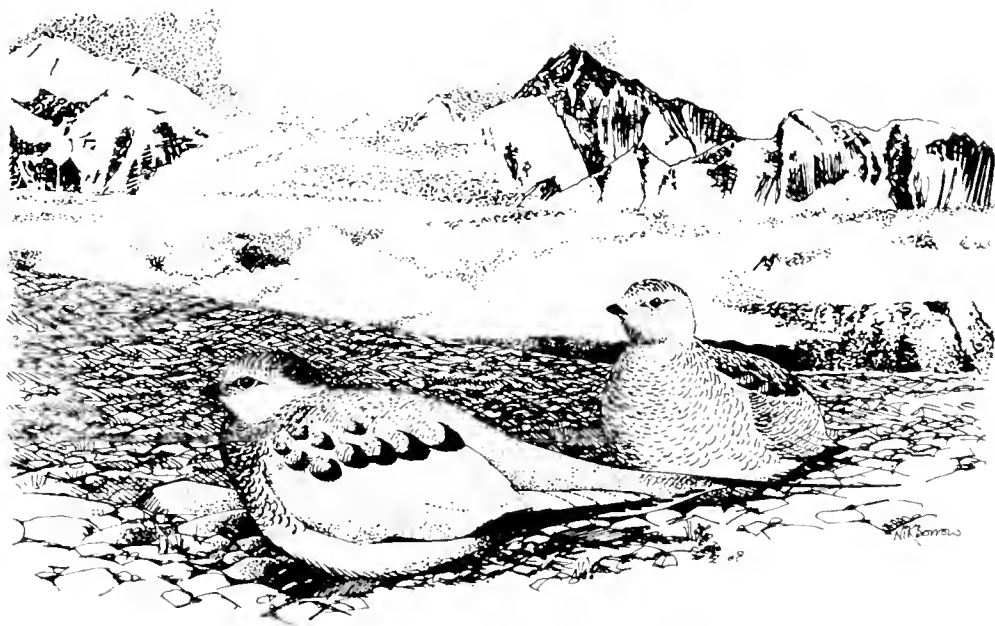
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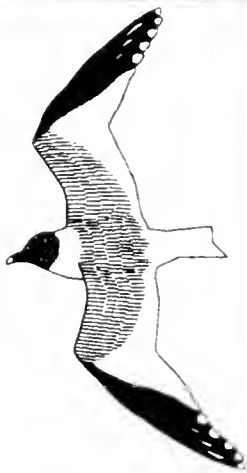


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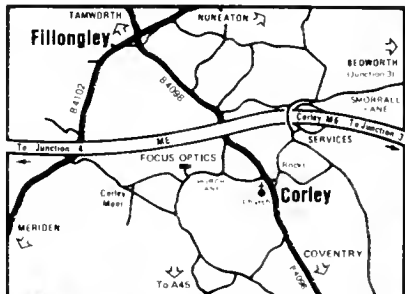
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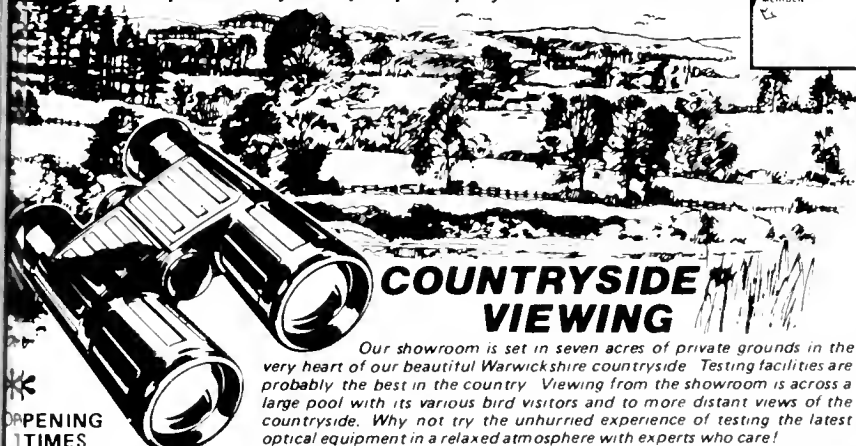
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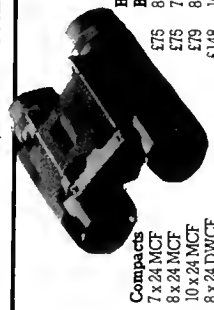
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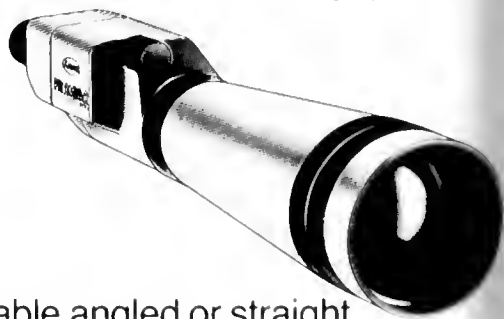
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Identification of brown flycatchers

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.

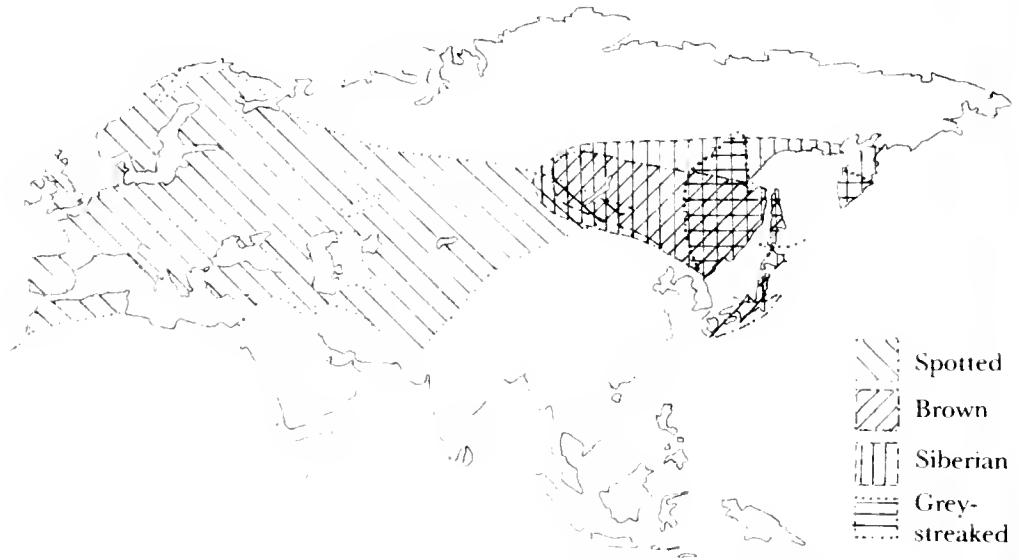


Fig. 1. Breeding distributions of Spotted *Muscicapa striata*, Brown *M. dauurica*, Siberian *M. sibirica* and Grey-streaked Flycatchers *M. griseisticta*. Ranges of non-migratory Himalayan races of Brown and Siberian not shown. Spotted winters in Africa; Brown and Siberian winter in southeast Asia, 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

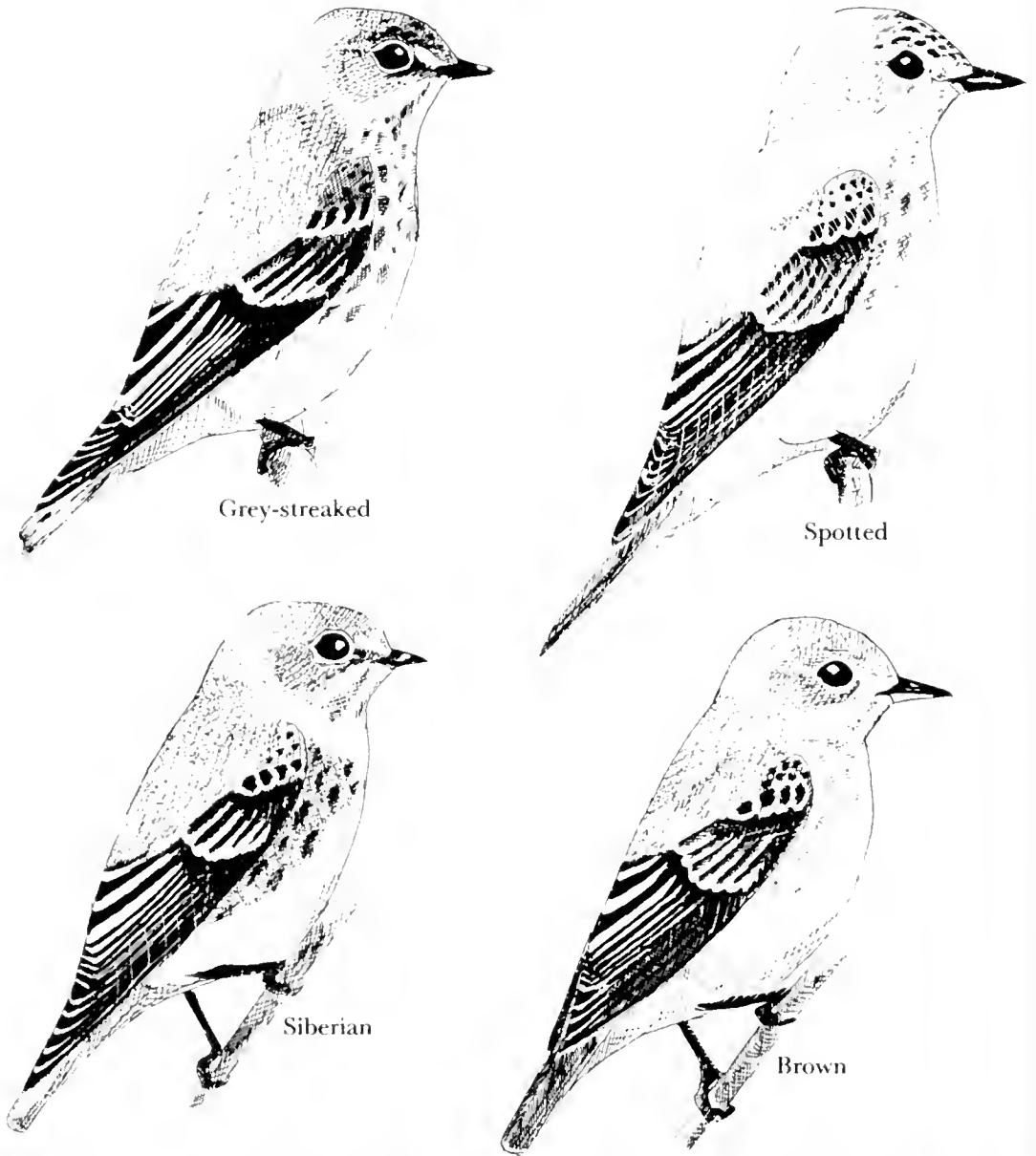
For identification purposes, the four species fall rather neatly into two species pairs: Spotted and Grey-streaked, and Brown and Siberian (table 1). Each pair shares a number of field characters, and it is perhaps best to place any member of this group into a species pair before attempting specific 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. griseisticta*, Spotted *M. striata*, Siberian *M. sibirica* and Brown *M. dauurica* (Colin Bradshaw)

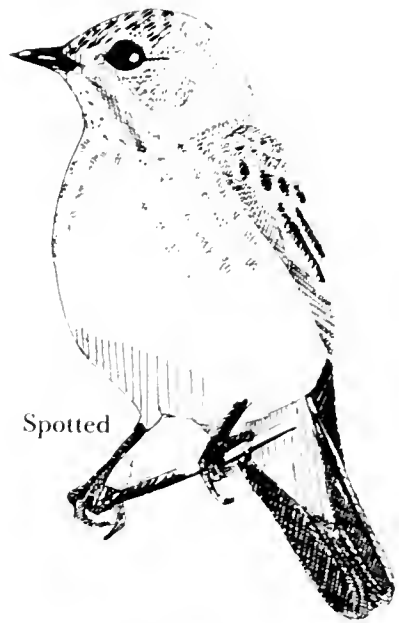
Specific identification

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



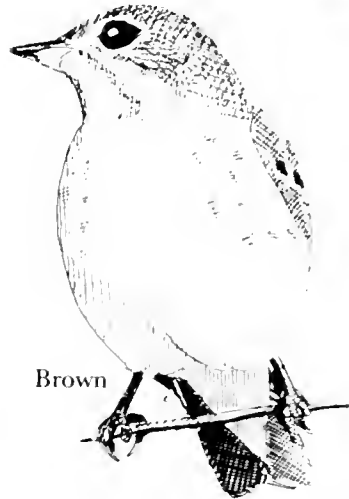
Grey-streaked



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 *Muscicapa striata*, Berkshire, July 1971 (Gordon Langsbury)

281. First-winter male Grey-streaked Flycatcher *Muscicapa grisesticta*, 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 (Protpimol 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. Tutton)



295. Siberian Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*, China, 1986 (M. Tutton)

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

	Spotted <i>M. striata</i>	<i>Muscicapa</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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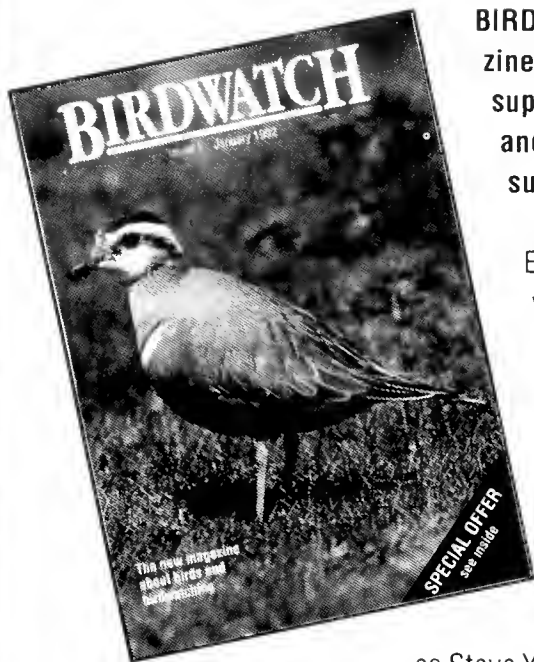
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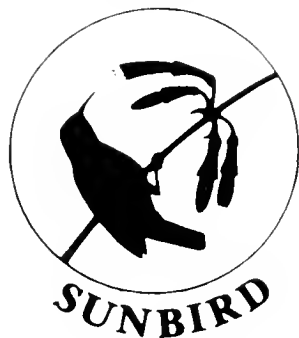
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That streaked passerine atop the hedge (plate 207) was named by contestants as:

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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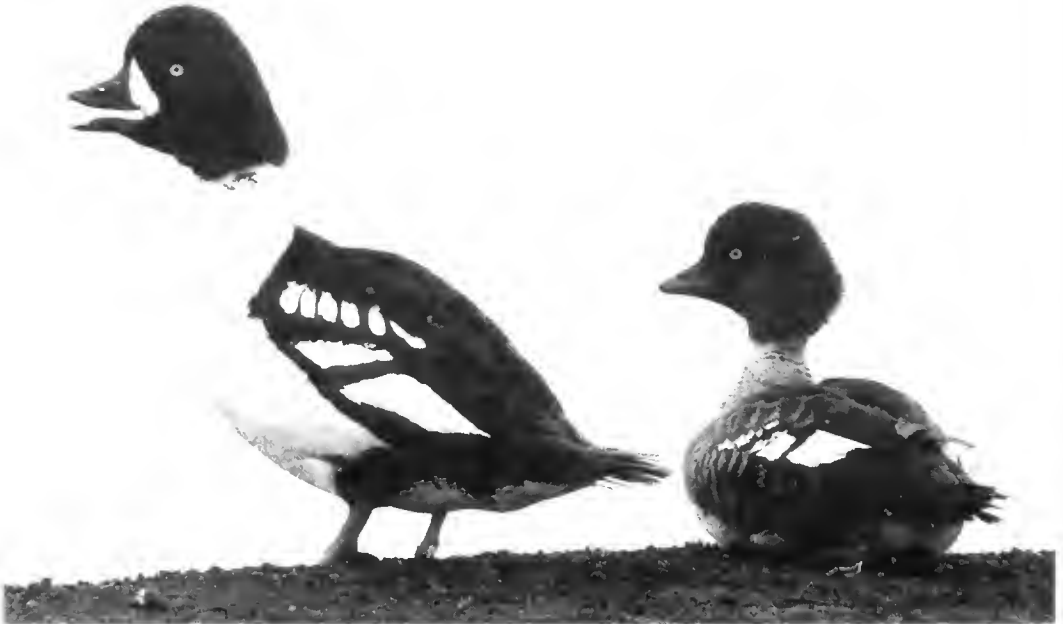
296. Fifth 'Monthly marathon' (seventeenth stage: photograph number 66). Identify the species. Read the rules on page 16 of the January 1991 issue, then send in your answer on a postcard to Monthly Marathon, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, to arrive by 15th January 1992



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. Adultmales 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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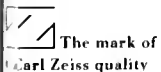


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299. Mystery photograph 174. Identify the species. Answer next month

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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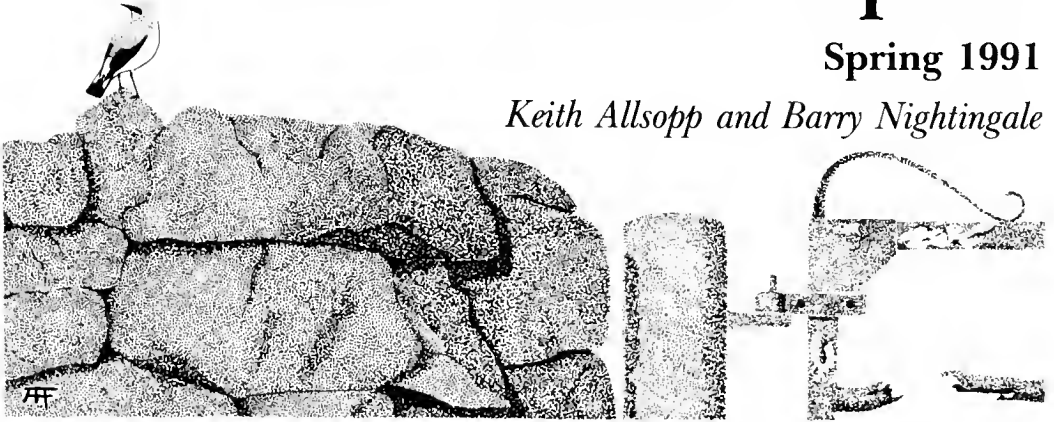
300 & 301. Marsh Owl *Asio capensis*, Morocco, January 1990 (*Lionel Maumary*)



Seasonal reports

Spring 1991

Keith Allsopp and Barry Nightingale



This report includes some unchecked reports as well as authenticated records

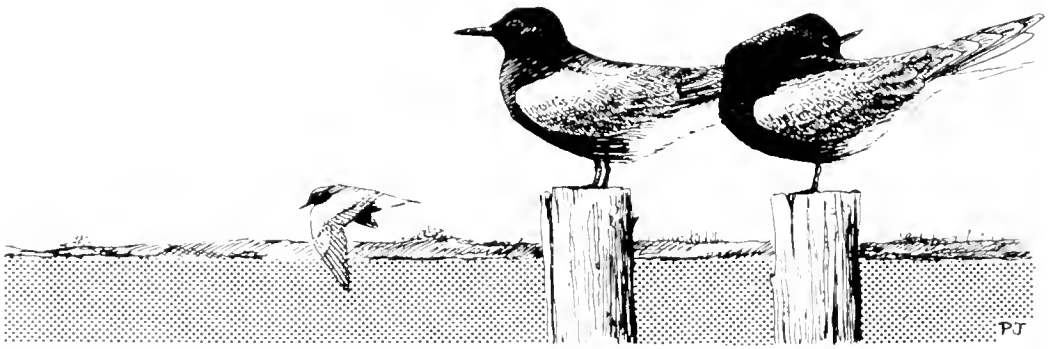
General weather pattern and spring movements

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

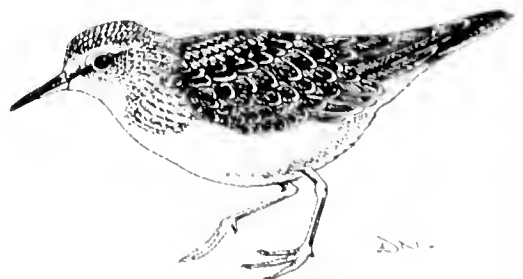
Head (East Sussex) on 22nd heralded a small influx, with a further 19 seen north to Yorkshire through June. **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* arrived in southern areas of Britain and Ireland from early March and were subsequently logged north to Shetland by June, with a grand total of 35 for the spring. Another 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

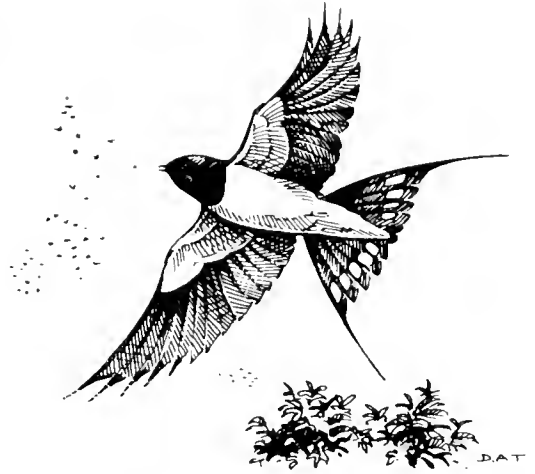
We seek to make these quarterly summaries as comprehensive as possible. Please send all reports to us at the address below, or telephone BN on the numbers listed each month on the inside front cover.



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 (Löhrl 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. STEPHEN M. ROOT
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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 Hamzij 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 Hamzij, 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 Goldercrest *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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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

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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 co-operatively, 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. *Tinygites*), 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.

JAIN 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 (Coordinators: 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 pycroftii* 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 seabirds, 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]

Etoigrammi 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 (13 $\frac{1}{3}$ -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 Enid 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. Vitovič & J. Wiesner.** (Die Neue Brehm-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. mlokosiewiczzi*. 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 Wiessenger.** Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989. 254 pages. Hardback \$39.50, Paperback \$15.95) This revised edition by a new publisher illustrates 281 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 check-lists) 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 2,414 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 1DT; 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 *Birdwatching for the Under Tens*
- *Raffaële, House & Wiessinger *A Guide to the Birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*
- *Ratcliffe & Rose *Bird Life of Mountain and Upland*
- *Tulloch & 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 GESE: 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 staff 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 Craggwood 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, Steelley 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, Ainderby Steeple, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 9PT.

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, Perworth, West Sussex GU28 0TG. 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. Bioret and J.-P. Cullandre, 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 4LZ.

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 DH1 3LE.

26th March BTO/LINNEAN SOCIETY ONE-DAY MEETING. 'Understanding bird distributions.' Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. Details from BTO.

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 Hötcker, WSG Co-ordinator, c/o WWF Wattenmeerstelle, Norderstr. 3, 2250 Husum, Germany.

May 'IN FOCUS' BIRDRACE. 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. Hajdusoboszló, Hungary. Details from IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX.

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 EH17 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.

Gyrfalcon *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 *Chlidomas hybridus* Stanford Reservoir (Northamptonshire), 21st October.

Little Auk *Alca 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 proregulus* 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 PIPT. 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 PETREI 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 TELESCOPES 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
P	C	I	N	S	R	I	E
F	C	U	U	P	E	H	G
N	I	E	S	R	H	C	E
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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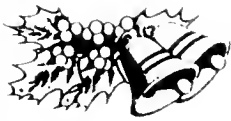
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