

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN



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EDITORIAL

This Bulletin is almost entirely devoted to aspects of the spring migration of 1952, and it may seem to many that it is rather late in making its appearance. That fact is regretted, but the urgent demands of field-work on an ever-increasing colony of Arctic Skuas, followed by the collection of numerical data on the island's Wheatear population, have left little time for desk-work during the summer months.

It would be tedious to attempt a full analysis of the 1952 spring migration, and indeed impossible without access to more information than we are able, through the kindness of several collaborators, to put on record in this Bulletin. There are, however, two brief periods of such exceptional interest as to warrant a careful examination, since they throw interesting light on the character of migration in Britain. A discussion of their nature, and of some of the problems involved, serves to stress the value of close co-operation and exchange of records between even widely separated observatories, and shows how potentially valuable the statistical treatment of weights and measurements is to migration research. One feels there must be innumerable facets of this study, as yet unrevealed, which co-operation and the application of such techniques will help to explore, and may ultimately solve.

April 9th and 10th saw the development of a large-scale migration out of western and northern France, and perhaps also northern Spain. The anticyclonic conditions responsible for the movement prevailed over the whole of western Europe, but the Atlantic side of Britain was under the influence of a depression centred a good way to the west of the Hebrides. Its wind-system, SSW. in the approach to the Irish Sea, turned a very large number of migrants towards the Irish Sea observatories. Among them were a Short-toed Lark Calandrella brachydactyla which arrived at Skokholm at 1400 hrs. April 9th, and the first Irish record of a Red-rumped Swallow Hirundo daurica rufula at Great Saltee next day. The first Redstarts appeared at these two stations on 9th, and at Great Saltee there was a peak of Chiffchaff and Willow-warbler passage (see paras. 72 and 78).

During the night of 9th/10th the warm sector of this low moved across England, with the result that on 10th some drift was noticeable at the east coast observatories in the SSE. airstream ahead of the warm front. The first Redstarts and Chiffchaffs reached the Isle of May and Fair Isle, and Blackcaps and Willow-warblers were noted at the former observatory. The most remarkable arrivals at Fair Isle were three Turtle Doves Streptopelia turtur, on an extraordinarily early date. These, like the Irish Sea rarities of the previous day, seem to be birds that had far overshoot their normal breeding area, due perhaps to the continuance of anticyclonic conditions preventing inhibition of the migration urge.

Much the most spectacular feature of the spring migration in north-east Britain was the

tremendous migrational drift of May 5th-6th. It is also, from the complexity of the weather at the time, and certain inconsistencies in the falls of migrants at the Isle of May and Fair Isle, a difficult movement to interpret satisfactorily. To deal with this point first, the peak day in the Forth was May 5th, and the predominant species were the Willow-warbler and the Common Whitethroat. At Fair Isle, migration was most intense on 6th, and the main species were Tree Pipit and Redstart, with an unusual number of Reed and Ortolan Buntings, and comparatively few Willow-warblers. Thus, the migration recorded at each of these places would seem to have had a different area of origin on the Continental coast, the first day's drift being concentrated at the May with only the outer fringe of it reaching Fair Isle, and the second day's drift reaching the northern isles alone.

Prior to this period a complex depression centred off south-western England covered the British Isles, France and Spain, and although a gradual improvement took place in west central Europe, the general situation seems to rule out the possibility of France and the Iberian Peninsula as the source of this movement. Further, it is clear from the observations at Saltee (especially in relation to the Willow-warbler - see para.72) that normal immigration into the home area via this south-western approach was virtually over by the end of April.

During May 3rd there was a zone of high pressure over Italy, the Aegean and central Mediterranean, and we can safely assume that

considerable migration was going on into and through the col of fine weather connecting this high with one situated over the Baltic States. Late on 4th a small centre of low pressure over southern England began to expand, and the overnight drift of 4th/5th was undoubtedly brought about by the easterly airflow across the North Sea, from the west German and Danish coasts, on the northern side of this low.

During the 5th the anticyclone expanded, enveloping central and west-central Europe, and the low moved to north-western Scotland, leaving SW. winds prevailing over the southern half of the North Sea in its rear. There was still a marked easterly component in the winds in the Skaggeiak and southern Norway, and sea-arcs Forties and Fair Isle, and there was a certain amount of fog on both sides due to the passage of a warm front. The unusual numbers of two migrant species which have a south-eastern approach to Scandinavia, namely *Ortolan Bunting* and *Wood-warbler*, and the fact that the only *Flava* wagtail at Fair Isle was a Grey-headed, *Motacilla f. thunbergi*, are in keeping with this interpretation. It might be added that the invasion of Tree Pipits at Fair Isle was phenomenal, and none of the local bird-watchers can remember movement of this species on such a scale before.

A few days previously - April 30th to May 2nd - there had been a westwards drift of summer visitors, but this was of a more normal pattern and the arrivals took place simultaneously at Fair Isle and the Isle of May, the same species and subspecies being observed at both places.

70. Early April Movements on the Isle of May.

Except at the beginning of our stay (March 31st - April 2nd) and at the end (late 8th - 9th) this was a period of westerly weather, anticyclonic at first judging by the cloud-formations and absence of frontal disturbances. During the early days, with the wind slightly west of North, there was practically no migration. During the middle and late phases the migration was coastal, except in the case of the COMMON GULL.

MEADOW PIPIT. Anthus pratensis. During the northerly phase there was virtually no passage. None was seen on March 31st (force 5 wind), one bird only next day (force 4), and six on April 2nd (force 2). When the wind backed to SW. on 3rd, at moderate strength, a marked passage took place, increasing next day to over 100 birds, heavier on 6th with over 200, and culminating on 7th with 300 plus. Passage abated somewhat on 8th although the wind had moderated from the force 5 of the previous day. Migration continued on 9th with the wind locally SE. at force 3-4, but it was very weak during the early part of the day when visibility was poor owing to sea-fog.

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. The first was a 1st-summer male late on 4th and there was some diurnal movement on 5th. There were 3 or 4 birds only in the early morning but by noon a considerable influx was apparent and 40 plus were noted for the day, - mainly 1st-summer males, but including a few females. This coasting must have commenced on 4th in eastern England, which was on the fringe of an anticyclone centred over western Germany and north France, giving moderate

SSW. winds late in the day. Movement was very much less on the followings days, perhaps as a result of the disappearance of anticyclonic weather further south; but on the afternoon of 9th, after visibility cleared, there was a small influx together with coasting LINNETS. This new movement also followed an improvement over east and south England, with a rising barometer and calms in the west and light SW. breezes on the east coast. See the Great Saltee notes.

RING OUSEL. Turdus torquatus. The first appeared on Ruff Green on the afternoon of 8th, and there was a movement of 8 birds next day, not apparent until the late morning. Although it took place on a SE. wind there is no reason to suppose that it was not coastal: the breeze was local, and the general situation was as outlined above for the Wheatsar. Other Turridae in the movement were 4 SONG THRUSHES, which close examination convinced us were of the British race, 8 FIELDFARES and 2 REDWINGS.

COMMON GULL. Larus canus. During the westerly and SW. phase evening passage was in progress from about 1700 hrs. Birds were first heard passing on 5th but were not located for a time, until we realised they were passing high overhead. Two singles and a group of 8 were watched heading out to sea NNE. at 1845 hrs., with a force 3 surface wind from WSW. Next evening parties of 5, 5, and 4 passed between 1700-1900 hrs. going NE. on a west 3 wind. On 8th we saw one and 7 going NE. at 1800 hrs., wind south 2. The Weather charts for these evenings show that these gulls were using a cyclonic approach to the Norwegian coast round the base of a depression which was moving from

the west towards Shetland. The birds went over quite high, at about 500 ft., and their passage was detected by their callnotes. Perhaps many were leaving the Forth area, and we saw only those whose path happened to cross the island, where not the slightest deviation was noticeable. On the evening of the 8th, with the surface wind SE. but the upper air-mass definitely moving in from SW. the gulls were flying much higher than usual, at least 700 ft. There was no passage on the 9th, when North Sea winds were south to SSE. and less favourable for cyclonic migration to Norway.

OTHER SPECIES. A Canada Goose Branta canadensis rose from rocky ground near the Altarstones on the early morning of April 5th. This is the second record for the Isle of May (two flew over the island, October 3rd 1935). As it rose a MERLIN stooped at it audaciously. The first SAND MARTIN, the earliest Isle of May record by two days, was watched on 9th, and we trapped two CHIFFCHAFFS (also the earliest recorded) before leaving on the morning of 10th.

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71. Bird Ringing at Fair Isle.

The season's total of ringed birds at August 20th 1952 was 1301, about 150 better than at this date in 1951, but slightly below the corresponding figure in 1950. Included in the 64 species ringed are WHEATEAR 337, STARLING 203, MEADOW PIPIT 138, BLACKBIRD 110, ROCK PIPIT 102, TWITE 57, ARCTIC SKUA 45 and WILLOW-WARBLER 34.

72. Comments on the Willow-warbler
Migration of Spring 1952.

G.B. Ticehurst, "A Systematic Review of the Genus Phylloscopus" 1938, pp. 31-2, shows it is possible to segregate the sexes of a large majority of Willow-warblers on the criterion of wing-length. He gives for males 64-71.5 mm., mostly 67-70 mm., and for females 61-65 mm., mostly 62-64mm., in the case of spring birds of the typical race Phylloscopus t. trochilus in Britain. He adds: "Central European birds (wing, males 64-72.5 mm., mostly 67-70 mm.) average a trifle larger ... but there is an 85% overlap ... the very few males with wing under 66 mm. may be wrongly sexed." The German and south Swedish populations, north to the great lakes Vänern and Vättern, have been identified by some workers with the form Ph. t. fitis described by Bechstein (see F. Salomonsen in Arkiv för Zoologi 1945, vol. 36 A, no.1), but in view of the large overlap in measurements noted above and the lack of any constant plumage differences Ticehurst regarded fitis as a synonym of trochilus.

At Great Saltee, south-east Ireland, the Willow-warbler migration was characterised by three peaks, (A) a sharp one on April 9th, (B) a diffuse one on 15th extending to 18th, and (C) a more definite one on 24th-25th. At the Isle of May and Fair Isle the peak of Willow-warbler migration did not fall until early May and culminated in the big "rush" of May 5th.

1. Great Saltee. The wing-lengths of the birds trapped during these three periods are distributed as follows:-

Wing Length in mm.	Number trapped in Period		
	A	B	C
60	0	2	2
61	0	7	7
62	1	21	22
63	1	21	18
64	1	15	15
65	5	6	9
66	9	1	3
67	11	3	3
68	14	1	2
69	15	1	0
70	5	0	0
71	0	2	0

The sharp peak of April 9th (A) occurred under meteorological conditions described in the Editorial: birds entering Britain from N. France at this time were subject to some westwards drift, and a very large number could be expected to make their entry via the Irish Sea. The great majority of these Willow-warblers were obviously males. The other two peaks occurred under anticyclonic conditions with calm, clear weather suitable for migration existing over Britain and France. The birds captured during these later peaks were predominantly females, arriving about a week later than the males. Following April 25th there were no well-marked waves of migration at Great Saltee and we may conclude that these three waves, which were not experienced in the east and north of Britain, represent the normal immigration of the British breeding stock.

2. Fair Isle. As neither weights nor measurements are available as yet from the

Isle of May consideration of the peak of May 5th will be confined to Fair Isle. Apart from two birds which were referable to the northern race Ph. T. acredula the Willow-warblers taken at Fair Isle fall into two distinct groups: (D) those captured between May 5th-11th, and (E) those taken after the latter date. Their wing-lengths are distributed as follows:

Wing Length in mm.	Number trapped in Period	
	D.	E.
62	0	1
63	1	1
64	0	3
65	0	0
66	2	1
67	2	0
68	4	0
69	5	0
70	4	0
71	0	0
72	2	0

Despite the smaller numbers, we have the same clear-cut distinction between males and females as at Great Saltee. The slightly longer wings for Fair Isle males as against the same sex at Saltee is consonant with the view that this invasion represents migrational drift of a stock of Willow-warblers moving into the "fitis" area of Germany and south Sweden. The weather conditions responsible for this drift are described in the Editorial.

We have therefore the interesting situation that the central European "fitis" stock in 1952 moved into its breeding-grounds, almost certainly from south-eastern Europe, a month

after the trochilus breeding-stock, approaching from the Iberian Peninsula, had entered the British Isles. It seems unlikely that this later arrival can be due entirely to a difference in past weather conditions along their respective routes, and it is tentatively suggested that a physiological divergence of the two stocks as regards migration-time may be concerned, the "fitis" populations having developed a later migration in response to the more severe climatic conditions in the Baltic area in the spring.

Many of the drift arrivals of May 5th-11th remained "off passage" at Fair Isle for some days: one bird, M.2839, was with us 15 days, the longest stay for which we have any record for this species. Only one bird out of eleven for which one or more retrapping records is available showed a drop in weight on its initial capture. All the others made good gains, and there can be no doubt that this recuperation was assisted by the weather at the time - warm, misty conditions with the ground always wet, promoting a flush of minute insect life. Willow-warblers were to be found wherever the grass was close-cropped, moving about in the open and feeding in a pipit-like fashion. The mean weight in gms. of the recaptured birds is as follows:

Days after initial capture	Number of records	Mean Weight (Gms.)
0	13	8.51
1	3	8.81
2	4	9.84
3	3	9.85
4	4	9.00
Subsequent	5	9.71

It would therefore appear that, under these favourable conditions, most birds recovered their migration loss in three or four days. Some of the more interesting records are given in detail below:

Ring.	Date	Time GMT.	Weight
M 2832	May 5th	0700 hrs	8.5 gm
	6th	0630	8.9
	7th	1415	10.0
M 2839	May 5th	1100 hrs	8.01 gm
	10th	0715	9.40
	20th	0530	9.56
	20th	1830	9.93
M 2861	May 6th	0500 hrs	8.45 gm
	9th	1130	10.47
M 2865	May 6th	0530 hrs	8.80 gm
	8th	1000	9.80
	9th	0715	9.90
	10th	0900	10.10
M 2867	May 6th	0530 hrs	7.10 gm
	10th	0530	8.32
	10th	1030	8.50
M 2881	May 6th	1500 hrs	8.17 gm
	3th	0900	9.19
	12th	0700	9.73
	13th	0630	9.92
M 2887	May 7th	0930 hrs	9.60 gm
	8th	0900	9.85
	9th	1130	10.56

73. Selected Notes on Spring Migrants
at Fair Isle.

ROOK. Corvus frugilegus. Over two dozen daily from mid-February to mid-March, up to nine daily to 19th and fewer afterwards to the end of April. There were five on May 1st-2nd, with at least two CARRION CROWS C. corone. The unusual abundance in the early spring was quite general in Shetland, and resulted in a new breeding-record for the area (see para. 76).

JACKDAW. C. spermologus. Four to mid-February, then seven each day to 22nd, five daily to March 3rd, and two or three to 19th, with 7 on 20th. There were one or two during the first part of April and five with the Rooks on May 2nd. Two British Jackdaws Corvus m. spermologus came on May 24th and stayed in the crofting area well into June, and perhaps two birds seen on the northern cliffs on July 6th and 11th were the same.

SISKIN. Carduelis spinus. A pair trapped May 10th were still here 13th, and the female was seen alone on 18th. Two others were noted on 10th.

YELLOW-HAMMER. Emberiza citrinella. One or two, April 5th-15th. One sang at Busta on May 26th.

ORTOLAN. E. hortulana. One of the prominent species in the early May drift. Two males on 4th were followed by several next day, and there were at least 15 on 6th. They remained at this strength till May 9th, dropping to five

on 11th-12th, and to one only on the next three days. There were two males on 21st and one on 26th. Only a single female was seen on 8th-9th, and occasionally odd males delighted us with short snatches of song. They were very conservative in their choice of fields and seldom strayed from the Taft-Midway-Shirva region, where they fed in company on the newly-sown oat and turnip riggs.

REED BUNTING. E. schoeniclus. A few were about at the beginning of May and these increased to over ten on 5th and to more than 30 on 6th. They remained common until 11th, numbers falling to a few only afterwards. Like the Ortolans, they had their favourite fields, but they were more widely dispersed in small groups about the crofting area, the biggest lot however usually feeding alongside the Ortolans in the Shirva region. Unlike the Ortolans, the greater part were females.

LITTLE BUNTING. E. pusilla. One Apr. 14th

SNOW BUNTING. Plectrophenax nivalis. The numbers fluctuated through February and March (there were 110 on March 22nd) and movement was over by April 6th. The only birds in May were two males and a female on 30th after a NW. gale. A cock in full breeding plumage haunted the stony north slope of the Ward Hill at the end of June.

TREE PIPIT. Anthus trivialis. A few appeared at the beginning of May, and there was an immense rush on 6th estimated at some 500 birds. These dropped away considerably on 7th-8th but at least 100 remained till 11th, and 50 or so to 14th. The last were single birds on May 21st and June 3rd.

RED-THROATED PIPIT. Anthus cervinus. See para. 82.

FLAVA WAGTAILS. Motacilla flava. A male Yellow, flavissima, May 2nd-3rd, and a pair on 9th. A female Blue-headed trapped at North Haven on 4th was found dead two days later. Another on 8th was succeeded by a male flava on 9th, and a male Grey-headed, thunbergi, was identified on 5th. Others, not racially determined, were single birds on 12th and 21st, and two on 17th. The last bird was a female Blue-headed from June 2nd-4th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Muscicapa striata. Singly May 5th-6th, 9th, 26th. One on 22nd was succeeded by two next day, and in June they occurred singly on 4th, 6th and 11th.

PIED FLYCATCHER. M. hypoleuca. One or two daily at the beginning of May; two of each sex on 5th succeeded by six males and a female on 6th. They recurred with four males and a female on 9th, and there was a male on the isle for six days afterwards. Females, May 21st and June 3rd.

CHIFFCHAFF. Phylloscopus collybita. One or two on April 10th-12th and one May 2nd.

WILLOW WARBLER. Ph. trochilus. A few at the end of April and beginning of May but no significant numbers until the big migrational drift of May 5th, when over 60 were recorded. A further influx took place on 9th (50 plus) and numbers rose again on 12th (21). After May 15th there were a few only each day to 23rd and thence none until three appeared on June 3rd.

NORTHERN WILLOW WARBLER. Ph. t. acredula. Trapped examples were identified by comparison with skins on April 29th, May 13th and 15th.

WOOD WARBLER. Ph. sibilatrix. Singly on May 2nd, 3rd and 5th and four birds (an unusual number for Fair Isle) on 6th.

SEDGE WARBLER. Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. One, May 1st; one, 8th-10th; one or two from 12th-14th. The peak occurred on 18th when four were trapped and three others seen. One or two were seen daily from 22nd-27th.

GARDEN WARBLER. Sylvia borin. Two, May 23rd, and one on 26th.

BLACKCAP. S. atricapilla. Singly, May 5th-6th, 10th, and two on 15th. Females, June 2nd-3rd and 11th.

WHITETHROAT. S. communis. Four on May 1st and one or two on 2nd-3rd. There were six on 5th-5th and again 10th, then few only until 5 were seen on 21st. One, June 2nd-3rd.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. S. curruca. Singly almost daily from May 5th-15th, four 18th, one 21st. In June there were birds on 3rd, 5th and from 22nd-24th.

FIELDFARE. Turdus pilaris. Over 100 on April 11th and 180 next day. Few in May until forty arrived on 6th, to be increased to ninety on 8th. Last bird, May 16th-17th.

SONG THRUSH. T. ericetorum. Two trapped April 29th, and a bird in full song early next morning. Two on May 6th-7th.

RING OUSEL. T. torquatus. First, April 10th. Eight on May 1st, a female 8th-9th, and a late male 18th.

WHEATEAR. Oe. oenanthe. First on April 7th. The first big influx was of 23 on April 11th followed by sixty or so daily for several days. A single GREENLAND WHEATEAR Oe. oe. leucorhoa was trapped May 12th and there were some 20 of this race next day. A minor passage of leucorhoa took place on 25th.

WHINCHAT. Saxicola rubetra. Three on May 1st and two males on 4th: there were ten on 5th increasing to 15 next day. There were again ten on 10th and a smaller influx on 12th, and the last were two on 17th. A very late example on June 5th.

REDSTART. Ph. phoenicurus. The first was a female on April 10th. Slight passage occurred at the beginning of May, and on 5th an invasion of 200 or more took place, increasing to over 300 next day. They had decreased to a tenth of this figure by 7th and continued to decline, except for a further very small influx on 12th. The last was observed on May 23rd-24th.

BLACK REDSTART. Ph. ochrurus gibraltariensis. A female was trapped on June 2nd.

HEDGE SPARROW. Prunella modularis. Six on May 1st and one on 12th.

SWALLOW. Hirundo rustica. The first were ten birds on May 1st; there were six on 5th and forty next day, a dozen on 8th, 10th, 12th, and renewed passage on 15th-16th. A few were seen

most days to the end of the month and sporadic migration continued until well into June, with six birds on 3rd and 13th, and four on 7th and 24th. There were four on July 15th.

HOUSE MARTIN. Delichon urbica. Regular throughout May and the first fortnight in June with peaks on May 12th (35), 16th (14), 19th (20) and 27th; also June 2nd-3rd (over 20 each day), 7th (20), 21st (20 plus) and finally on 24th (6). One was seen July 9th.

SAND MARTIN. R. riparia. One, April 30th to May 2nd, three on 6th and a few daily to 11th. Three on May 18th and one on July 1st.

SWIFT. A. apus. One only, May 23rd. Movement was evident on June 28th-29th (six on the latter date) and again on July 2nd and from 9th-12th.

NIGHTJAR. Caprimulgus europaeus. One May 10th, - a very rare species at Fair Isle.

WRYNECK. Jynx torquilla. One May 5th and two next day.

CUCKOO. Cuculus canorus. Singly May 1st 10th, 12th, 17th, 19th-20th, 22nd-23rd and a young bird on July 20th (see para.76).

OWLS. Long-eared Asio otus singly May 1st, 5th, 23rd and 30th; Short-eared A. flammeus May 5th.

MERLIN. Falco columbarius. One May 1st One or a pair of KESTRELS F. tinnunculus were seen daily, but it is believed they are now nesting on the west cliffs.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. Buteo lagopus. One, May 26th-27th, casting covetous eyes on the Midway chickens.

SPARROW-HAWK. Accipiter nisus. Females on May 1st and from 10th-12th; males on 4th, 5th, 7th and 17th. Two were seen on 8th and four birds were trapped during the period. Their regularity nowadays is in marked contrast with their scarcity in Eagle Clarke's time.

DUCKS. Extremely scarce this spring. Apart from an occasional MALLARD and TEAL (two pairs of Anas crecca on May 6th) there were one or two WIGEON Anas penelope, occasional Mergus serrator and a COMMON SCOTER drake Melanitta nigra seen near Sheep Craig on June 9th.

RINGDOVE. Columba palumbus. Three on May 2nd and five from 4th-6th. There were five STOCKDOVES C. oenas on April 7th.

TURTLE DOVE. Streptopelia turtur. Three on the extraordinarily early date of April 10th. One on May 24th-25th.

CURLEW. Numenius arquata. Small numbers only, - five on May 1st, 12th and 15th. There was renewed passage in mid-July.

WHIMBREL. N. phaeopus. Peak dates were May 1st and 25th-26th with 15 or so each day - otherwise there were one or a few daily into mid-June. A pair haunted the Sukka Moor during the early summer.

SNIPE. Capella gallinago. One in the Vaadal Trap on April 30th was the typical race. There

were a few May 5th and again on 8th. A pair in all probability nested in the marshy area between the Church and Schoolhouse. The same or another pair haunted the Gilsetter Field in late June and July, but no proof of nesting was obtained. The "drumming" flight was frequent at both sites.

WOODCOCK. Scolopax rusticola. One on May 2nd. An exceptionally late bird was found freshly-killed beneath telephone wires on June 11th.

COMMON SANDPIPER. Actitis hypoleucos. One or two on most days between May 3rd and 28th but no marked passage.

GREEN SANDPIPER. Tringa ochropus. Singly on May 5th, 9th-10th and 12th.

SPOTTED REDSHANK. T. erythropus. One May 7th.

GOLDEN PLOVER. Charadrius apricaria. Flock of 20 May 1st-2nd, two from 19th-21st, and two or three during the last week of the month.

BLACK-HEADED GULL. Larus ridibundus. Some passage May 1st (30), 7th, 15th, 24th and June 28th. There were 50 COMMON GULLS L. canus on May 1st, 20 on 7th, a dozen 22nd, and a few on 24th and 27th.

CCRNCRAKE. Crex crex. First on May 9th, two on 12th, and song first heard on 18th.

MOORHEN. Gallinula chloropus. See para.81.

QUAIL. Coturnix coturnix. One May 1st. At least two pairs summered on the island.

74. Selected Notes on Spring Migrants
at the Isle of May.

The more important of the spring observations from the Isle of May are offered for a comparison with the foregoing notes from Fair Isle. We are grateful to the Isle of May Bird Observatory and Field Station Committee for permission to use these records, which were kindly abstracted by Dougal G. Andrew.

REED BUNTING. Seven birds on May 1st and two on May 6th.

ORTOLAN. One was recorded on May 2nd.

TREE PIPIT. Passage was very slight and extended from April 29th (one) to May 13th (2), being renewed with two or three birds on 18th-19th. In this period the peaks were from May 1st-3rd and on May 5th, with half-a-dozen each day.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL. Two on May 2nd; a Metacilla f. flavissima was seen May 10th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. First on May 5th. One 13th-14th, and eight on 17th, three 19th.

PIED FLYCATCHER. Slight passage May 5th-7th and 9th-12th.

WILLOW-WARBLER. The first peak was on April 26th, increasing 27th: twice as many arrived May 1st and these went up to 35 on 2nd and 3rd. Over 500 were recorded on 5th with a decline to 100 next day and 20 on 7th. Small influxes occurred on 14th and 17th.

WOOD WARELER. One May 5th and another 16th-17th.

SEDGE WARBLER. Three May 1st. Four on May 5th, and a peak on 7th with 25 birds. A minor peak of eight birds occurred on 17th.

GARDEN WARBLER. One only on May 7th. BLACKCAPS singly on April 27th and May 6th.

WHITETHROAT. Six on April 30th and 16 next day. There were over 100 on May 5th, and small influxes on 9th, 11th, 14th and 17th.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. Four each day, May 1st and 7th.

FIELDFARE. A small movement May 1st-2nd and another 5th-6th, increasing 8th and numbering 32 birds on 9th-10th. Further small influx on 12th. There were five REDWINGS on 9th.

RING OUSEL. Four May 1st, six 2nd. The last were two birds on 9th.

WHINCHAT. Peak of 15 birds May 1st, and half-a-dozen from 5th-7th.

REDSTART. Peak of 15 birds May 1st; no increase from 5th-7th.

NIGHTINGALE. One arrived 16th, - see para. 77.

HIRUNDINES. Seven Swallows May 1st and 6th and eight on 18th. Few House Martins 10th 12th and from 17th. One Sand Martin 5th and four 12th; one 15th and three 19th.

75. Spring Observations in Dunrossness,
south Shetland.

May 5th brought in a period of damp, misty weather with winds east to south-east. It was the start of a good movement of small birds in which Willow-warblers were common; Reed Bunting, White Wagtail, Pied Flycatcher, Whitethroat, Blackcap and Redstart were fairly well represented, and the following species were rather rare:- Chiffchaff, Spotted Flycatcher, Redwing, Fieldfare; Brambling, Dunnock, Mealy Redpoll, and Swift. Hirundines were common: by May 11th there were 70 Swallows and several House Martins at Hillwell alone. This movement was just about over by May 13th.

A large influx of House Martins took place on May 16th, and there were also a few Redstarts, Willow-warblers, Whitethroats, Fieldfares and Whimbrel. Martins were still numerous on 18th and an influx of Swallows occurred that day. A few of both species were present throughout the rest of May. Following an easterly gale with heavy rain at the beginning of June more House Martins arrived, with a few Swallows and Sand Martins. A Swift was seen on June 3rd. On 6th and again on 9th there were still some 20-30 House Martins and some Swallows; and another Swift was seen on the last date.

Other migrants of note were three Tree Pipits and a Garden Warbler on May 6th, a dead Corncrake about April 28th (our earliest date no "song" was heard until May 12th), a Green Sandpiper on May 4th, male Kestrels on May 6th and 7th, a female Bullfinch on 20th, a Turtle Dove on June 6th and three Sanderlings on 7th.

The most outstanding rarities were a male RED-HEADED BUNTING Emberiza bruniceps at the Sumburgh landing-field on April 28th, and an AVOCET Recurvirostra avosetta at the Pool of Virkie from May 12th to 18th. The first RUFF we have seen in full breeding dress in Shetland was here on May 8th.

The following are the most important of our notes on waterfowl at Loch Spiggie and Brow during the spring. A flock of eleven Whooper Swans were seen flying north on April 25th. A Grey-lag and a dark-billed Bean Goose stayed together on the Spiggie-Brow marsh from April 29th to May 7th. Four pairs of Shoveler were here May 11th-12th, two males on May 16th, and one pair next day. A pair stayed on Hillwell from May 23rd-29th: they were seen again on June 5th-6th and 8th, and two pairs were there on 7th. Pintail were recorded on April 24th and May 2nd (pair), May 11th (three pairs), 16th (two pairs) and June 8th (two drakes and a duck). Pochard drakes were seen on April 24th and May 11th. There were 20 Tufted Ducks on the last date and 17, with 5 Goldeneye, on 26th. Six Long-tailed Ducks were calling and displaying on Loch Spiggie on May 13th, and a single Garganey appeared on Hillwell on 19th.

An unusual amount of song was heard from migrants this year. Willow-warblers sang on at least seven days between May 10th and 21st. A Common Whitethroat sang in our garden at Noss on May 12th, and a White Wagtail was singing at Spiggie Voe on 17th. Reed Buntings sang at Hillwell on May 19th and at Spiggie on June 8th. On the last two days of May a Cuckoo was heard. A Sedge Warbler sang at Hillwell on June 5th-7th and was indulging in song-flights on 9th.

76. Notes on Breeding Birds in Shetland
in 1952.

The local Spiggie-Brow marsh Reed Buntings were building on May 8th and feeding young by June 3rd. The first young Starlings were out of the nest by June 6th. The first Shelduck chicks were observed on the water at Boddam Voe on June 5th. A Song-thrush nested at Lerwick, the first Shetland record for some years.

TUFTED DUCK, present throughout the spring, bred for the first time in Shetland, a duck and six ducklings being seen on Hillwell on June 2nd. A young CUCKOO, found with an injured wing at Noss Hill, Scousburgh, on July 7th, must have been bred locally. It was skinned by K.W. who reports that it was a male with the juvenile plumage not fully developed: the specimen was sent to the Royal Scottish Museum. In this connection, the occurrence of a juvenile Cuckoo at Fair Isle on July 20th is of interest.

When we visited Kergord Plantations in company with K.W. on April 29th we found to our surprise that a small rookery had been founded there. We estimated that nine pairs had established the colony (though probably eight pairs finally nested) and found the remains of sucked eggs beneath a damaged nest. Hatched shells were found on May 22nd and adults seen flying into the larch and spruce trees with food. A fuller note on this first Shetland rookery, which represents a range-extension of 100 miles to the north, has been sent to the journal British Birds. A small colony of JACKDAWS has bred for some years in this same area.

When visiting Fethaland in the north of Mainland on June 1st we saw over 50 GANNETS circling over and sitting on the outermost of the Ramna Stacks. A later visit with Mr. G.T. Kay in his yacht The Soldian confirmed that a new gannetry, the third in Shetland, has been established there, with not less than about 20 breeding pairs. The colony may be several years old. Three SWALLOWS' nests, each with eggs, were found in a shed on the Out Skerries during this voyage.

L.S.V. and U.M. VENABLES.

77. A Nightingale at the Isle of May.

Dr. H.J. Eggeling, who visited the Isle of May following a fortnight's stay at Fair Isle, arrived there on May 19th, "taking over one NIGHTINGALE from the returning party. This bird stayed six days, putting on 3.9 gm. (21.1 gm. to 25.0 gm.) in four days.

"Barring this exotic, there were few birds of note about. But when the mist dispersed on 20th there was quite a flow of warblers and Spotted Flycatchers, and odd Whinchats and Redstarts. On that day we trapped 48 birds, including 19 Willow-warblers, 11 Sedge Warblers, 9 Whitethroats and 5 Spotted Flycatchers.

"Thereafter there was little doing and migration is now over (May 30th). We had one other thrill, - a QUAIL, also on 20th, and like the Nightingale the fourth Isle of May record."

78. Spring Migration (1952) at the
Great Saltee.

The island was manned from April 1st to May 17th, the following observers taking part: M.D. Alexander, P.W.P. Browne, H.G. Brownlow, M. Clarke, B.H. Hawley, G.C. Johnson, J.A. Petch, R.F. Rutledge, P.F. Verschayle; John Weaving and his sister Mrs. Sullivan, J.L. Webb and R.J. Wheeler.

Weather. April commenced with moderate northerly winds, then SW. or thereabouts from 3rd to 7th. On 8th, after a night of moderate variable wind the day was one with NE. to SE. Southerlies of no great strength prevailed till 12th, in the night of which the wind backed to east and remained between NE. and SE. until 18th. South and SW. winds, often fresh, set in on 18th, reached force 7 for a while on 21st, and lasted till 25th. From 26th-28th there was light SE. or SSE. wind, increasing to force 5 on 29th-30th.

In May, up to 4th, anticyclonic conditions existed. A light NW. wind on 5th was followed by winds generally SSE. till 10th, reaching force 7 on 9th and moderating slowly next day. From 11th to 14th we had light-south-westerlies, succeeded by light S. by E. with fog on 15th and light or moderate ESE. on 16th-17th.

Days were hazy at the end of April and in early May, with some drizzle, and there was fog on May 3rd-4th, clearing at noon. In a period of brilliant weather generally from May 5th to 17th there was heavy fog on 14th and 15th and some haze at other times.

Migration. The following notes are selected from observations on the migrant species seen. Notable occurrences were a RED-RUMPED SWALLOW, a RED-BACKED SHRIKE, LESSER WHITETHROAT, WRYNECK, and acredula - like WILLOW-WARBLEDERS.

CARRION CROW. Corvus corone. Four of these birds - so uncommon in Ireland - were seen on April 6th.

STARLING. Sturnus vulgaris. About 100 each day, April 1st-8th, peaking at over 150 on 4th. Slow decline in daily numbers to 19th, closing with 6 daily up to 23rd.

GOLDFINCH. Carduelis carduelis. April 20th-24th, one. April 28th, one.

LESSER REDPOLL. C. flammea cabaret. A female was trapped on May 4th. A redpoll (sp.) was seen in flight on April 25th.

LINNET. C. cannabina. Intermittent passage from April 3rd to May 1st, largest numbers being 6 on April 8th and 28th, and 5 on 17th and 29th. Singly May 6th and 17th. Thus passage virtually terminated much earlier than in 1951, when a thin passage continued to May 18th.

CHAFFINCH. Fringilla coelebs. April 2nd, 4 or more. Two on 3rd and 4th, a female until 7th, and one from 15th-20th.

BRAMBLING. F. montifringilla. Female, April 13th.

CORN BUNTING. Emberiza calandra. Singly, April 8th and May 6th.

TREE PIPIT. Anthus trivialis. One, possibly 2, April 17th.

MEADOW PIPIT. A. pratensis. Movement of very small numbers up to April 13th. On April 3rd a flock of 13 left the island flying NW.

ROCK PIPIT. A. spinoletta petrosus. A careful scrutiny of those present disclosed one only with a ring, so it would seem that the majority of the 13 ringed last autumn were migrants.

PIED WAGTAIL. Motacilla alba yarrellii. Singly on April 5th and 30th. Alba wagtails not identified sub-specifically appeared on 16th-17th and again 25th-27th.

WHITE WAGTAIL. M.a.alba. One, April 18th.

Single Motacilla flava, not identified subspecifically (but in all likelihood flavissima) were seen on April 17th, 25th and 28th and May 1st.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE. Lanius collurio. A female on May 15th is the eighth record for Ireland and the first in spring. It was trapped and ringed.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Muscicapa striata. Singly, April 29th, 30th, May 2nd and 4th. There were 5 on May 5th and thereafter a few daily (with 7 on 12th) to May 17th. Some passage was still in progress at the end of May (C. Holt, A. Nesbitt).

GOLDCREST. Regulus regulus. One or more on April 11th; singly 12th and 13th. One found injured on 9th was thought to be of the Continental race: a skin was made and awaits critical examination.

CHIFFCHAFF. Phylloscopus collybita. April 5th to 18th, from 5 to 10 daily. Peak on 9th (200) but only 15 on 10th rising to 50 on 11th. One May 2nd.

WILLOW WARBLER. Ph. trochilus. One on April 3rd, otherwise daily (except April 4th, 7th and 19th) to May 8th. Stragglers, May 12th, 13th and 17th. Peaks were April 9th (ca. 400), 15th (ca. 200), 24th-25th (ca. 100).

Particular attention was paid to Willow-warblers trapped and observed because of the observations made last spring (see Bull. No.3, para. 22), in which birds showing a marked affinity with Ph.t. acredula, the Northern Willow-warbler, were concerned. Full details were noted of any birds which varied markedly from birds that were clearly Ph. t. trochilus. On and after April 30th birds were seen that were, if nothing more, quite obviously a different stock from those seen before that date, and from others present with them. These birds had affinity with acredula, in some cases to a marked degree. Two trapped on April 30th were compared with two obvious trochilus captured at the same time, and were considered referable to acredula. Of six Willow-warblers watched by G.C. Johnson and R.F. Ruttledge on May 6th, feeding on rocks on the shore, two were in strikingly different plumage from the others. These two had characters typical of acredula; and the other four were as clearly trochilus. It is perhaps significant that these ten birds, one of which was ringed, remained throughout the following day, all trochilus Willow-warblers having left by the evening of May 6th. Birds trapped or observed and having affinity with acredula were recorded for April 30th (4), May 1st and 15th (one each day), May 5th (3), 6th (2) and 7th-8th (3)

Compare the willow-warbler occurrences at Rhinns of Islay (para. 79) and Little Ross (para. 80)

SEDGE WARBLER. Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. Main arrivals were on April 27th and 28th, May 8th and 15th.

GARDEN WARBLER. Sylvia borin. Singly April 30th. May 3rd-5th and 11th and 17th. Two, May 2nd.

BLACKCAP. S. atricapilla. Male, April 15th and female, May 8th.

WHITETHROAT. S. communis. Single birds, April 9th and 15th. Two to 6 daily, April 15th-19th, then none until 26th (one). Daily from April 27th to May 17th, with peaks on April 30th (150), May 5th (50), 8th (60) followed by a decline except for a minor peak on 15th (35).

LESSER WHITETHROAT. S. curruca. One on May 4th.

FIELDFARE. Turdus pilaris. Less than 10 daily, April 13th-22nd. One REDWING on April 17th.

RING OUSEL. Turdus torquatus. Male and female, April 16th; more than 5 on 17th; 3 on 18th. A male on 27th, female on 28th.

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. Small numbers each day throughout the period except for April 12th, 15th-16th. Passage most marked April 4th-6th, 9th-10th, 17th and 29th, May 7th, 10th-11th and 15th. From 10 to 20 were seen on most days.

GREENLAND WHEATEARS. Oe. oe. leucorhoa were in the traps on May 6th and 9th.

WHINCHAT. Saxicola rubetra. One or two, May 3rd to 9th. One male on May 16th.

STONECHAT. S. torquata. No migration. A pair bred on the island this year.

REDSTART. Phoenicurus phoenicurus. Single males April 9th, 18th and 30th, May 1st and 9th. Three males on April 17th. Females singly April 28th, May 6th and 17th.

ROBIN. Erithacus rubecula. Singly April 1st and 9th, except on 2nd and 6th. One on April 27th.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW. Hirundo daurica rufula. One which was present on April 10th-11th was fully identified by P.W.P. Browne and B.H. Hawley. They had good views of the bird both in flight and whilst perched in a tree. Full details are recorded in the "Saltee Field Record Book". This is the first record for Ireland and the sixth for the British Isles.

HIRUNDINES. Passage was similar in pattern to last spring (see Bull. No.3, para.22). Swallows Hirundo rustica and House Martins Delichon urbica were rather more numerous at the end of April than in 1951. Much more time was spent in feeding and purposeful migration was not so much in evidence this year.

SWIFT. Apus apus. Migration was much less marked than last spring and very few were seen in the early morning. Swifts so often appeared in the afternoon that it seems possible they were wide-ranging foragers from the mainland and not true migrants. The first was seen on April 26th. There were 7 next day, and most on May 15th (10).

WRYNECK. Jynx torquilla. One was ringed, April 29th: it was still present next day. The 10th Irish record and the second for spring.

CUCKOO. Cuculus canorus. One, April 27th, then single birds irregularly to May 7th, three on 5th and one on 15th.

WOOD PIGEON. Columba palumbus. One, April 28th.

TURTLE DOVE. Streptopelia turtur. Eight on May 15th, more than 12 on 16th, and 3 on 17th.

WHIMBREL. Numenius phaeopus. One, April 4th. From April 20th to May 9th regular passage of up to about 10 daily, with 140 on May 4th and 40 next day. The biggest movement took place in fog and flocks were flying east, though one flock of 21 went NNE.

SNIPE. Capella gallinago. Intermittent passage of very small numbers up to May 7th.

TURNSTONE. Arenaria interpres. Passage throughout the period, numbers fluctuating daily.

DUNLIN. Calidris alpina. From 2 to 7 on some days early in May.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. C. maritima. Singly April 7th, 10th-11th and May 15th; two on May 3rd.

GOLDEN PLOVER. Pluvialis apricaria. Two on April 13th and singly on 14th, 18th and 26th. Those on April 13th were identified as P. a. apricaria.

A NORTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER P. a. altifrons came in on May 9th and was joined by another on 11th. They remained in one field during their stay and took off in thick fog on May 15th, flying north.

GREY PLOVER. P. squatarola. One, April 2nd-5th.

DOTTEREL. Eudromias morinellus. One, moulting from winter to summer plumage, on April 17th. There are only about 20 previous Irish records.

BRITISH LESSER BLACKBACK. Larus fuscus graellsii. Arrival at breeding sites: April 1st, two; 2nd, four; 3rd, 27, slowly increasing to 40 on 21st.

CORNCRAKE. Crex crex. Single birds on about six days from April 17th to May 8th, two on May 12th and one on 16th.

WATER RAIL. Rallus aquaticus. Singly April 6th, 8th, 11th and 15th.

QUAIL. Coturnix coturnix. One on April 29th.

Trapping. During the period 696 birds were caught, examined and ringed. Thirty-one species and sub-species were represented. The biggest totals were Willow-warbler 339, White-throat 98 and Chiffchaff 76.

A male whitethroat ringed in the Garden on May 16th 1951 was retrapped in the Bramble Trap, about half a mile from the Garden, on May 11th 1952. It was again caught on May 12th and 15th, and is thought to be a breeding bird.

A male Blackbird ringed in its 1st year on September 23rd 1951 was caught on May 13th 1952.

A Robin ringed on November 3rd 1951 showed a gain in weight of 2.36 g. over the initial weighing when retrapped on May 5th 1952.

ROBERT F. RUTLEDGE.

79. Spring Observations at the Rhinns
of Islay Lighthouse.

More birds were seen passing this station in the spring of 1952 than in any previous spring season, possibly due to the weather, the winds being mainly easterly.

The first terns arrived on May 11th (3), and a large number were here next morning. They remained at the nesting-site until June 3rd, but this is the first year that no birds have nested on the island. Perhaps their usual food-supply failed them.

February. A Redpoll on 2nd, and a Reed Bunting on 15th. On 20th a Bullfinch and two alba wagtails were seen in the village of Port Wemyss. That night a Starling, Blackbird and 3 Redwings were at the light, wind south 4, haze. On the last night of the month there were 4 Blackbirds, 6 Redwings, 3 Skylarks, a Starling and a Song-thrush at the light, wind south 3, cloudy.

March. One Brambling on the 5th; two Mallard and 15 Lapwings on the 11th. There was a Tree Creeper next day and larks were numerous - wind east 4. The Creeper spent the afternoon feeding among the lichen on the rocks in one of the gullies and was approached to within 4 yds.

There were ten Wheatears on the night of 23/24th with a NE. 2 wind, cloudy. The first Wheatears seen were 4 on the grating at midnight, and they had increased to 10 by 3 a.m. There were a few on the island next day.

Two Chiffchaffs were seen in the village on March 24th and that night a Goldcrest was

at the light. On the next night, 26/27th, there were 26 Skylarks, 2 Redwings and 3 Blackbirds - wind NE. 2, overcast.

April. A flock of between 70-80 geese, probably Brents, passed on April 7th. Larks and Wheatears were numerous from 10th-13th, and on the night 13/14th the first Willow-warblers appeared (4), accompanied by 3 Redwings and a Wheatear, wind South 3. On the following night there were 6 Willow-warblers and a Goldcrest, wind NE.2. A few more Willow-warblers and the first Redstart, a male, were at the light the night of 17/18th, wind SW.2, and on 20/21st a dozen Golden Plover - of which one was killed were flying in the rays.

Three White Wagtails were seen on April 25th and during that night two flocks of some 30 Golden Plover, about 8 Snipe, some smaller waders and a flock of 10 Oyster-catchers were flying in the rays. Five of the Golden Plovers were killed. Smaller birds on the grating included 5 Willow-warblers, 2 Wheatears and a Stonechat.

Pied Wagtails were seen on 26th and 27th and a Redstart on the former date. On the night of 28/29th three Corncrakes were killed and a drake Eider also struck the dome, wind SE. 4. Male and female Redstarts, a Sedge Warbler, 4 Willow-warblers and 3 Wheatears were noted on 29/30th, with SE. wind and an overcast sky; and on the last night of the month a Fieldfare and 3 small waders (believed to be Little Stints) were here, wind E. 4, haze.

May. 9 Golden Plover were seen on 1st.

LESLIE ANDERSON.

80. Notes from Little Ross Lighthouse,
Kirkcudbrightshire.

The first signs of spring movement came on February 16th when four Skylarks were taken. They were also at the lantern on 21st, 25th, 27th and 29th, a dozen birds being ringed. Blackbirds were present singly on 21st and 22nd and on 29th eleven males and two females were caught and ringed.

Many Blackbirds and Song-thrushes were on the island throughout March 1st, with a few Fieldfares and three Snipe, and in the early hours I caught six Blackbirds, eight thrushes, and a few Starlings and larks. Lapwings and Curlew were seen in the rays. Redwings first appeared on March 3rd and 4th, and there was further Starling movement on 18th and 19th. Two Meadow Pipits and a Goldcrest were at the light on 18th and a Goldcrest also on the 19th. The first Wheatears were seen on the island on March 13th and 14th.

In April Willow-warblers were the most important species, appearing on 14th (six), 26th (four), 27th and 29th (four). There was a Chiffchaff on 14th and Whinchats on 26th. A big movement took place on the night of 27/28th, numbers of Willow-warblers, Whitethroats, Redstarts and Wheatears passing through. Three KNOTS were also caught and ringed that night.

Whitethroats continued to pass on the first and second nights in May, and later on 18/19th and 20/21st. Eight Willow-warblers were present on 1st and two Sedge Warblers

were ringed. A CUCKOO was caught on the night of 20/21st (one had been seen in the rays on 18/19th) and a Sedge-warbler killed.

A male Blackbird ringed at the lantern on February 29th was found dead near Stavanger, NORWAY, on April 4th.

IAN WALKER.

81. Behaviour of Two Moorhens at Fair Isle.

A Moorhen, which in all probability had been on the island since May 2nd, was trapped on May 5th. After ringing, it was released at North Haven, where it took up its abode under one of the Observatory huts. This was after a preliminary reconnaissance of the buildings had ended ingloriously in its eviction from a lady's bedroom!

A second Moorhen was trapped on May 9th and was given a red ring to distinguish it from the first. For days the two birds fed in the ditches and on the grassland near the Observatory, taking shelter under their hut when need arose, and eating bread put out for them. Each night they left the hut and went to a disused and partly flooded boiler-house nearby, where they roosted floating on the water. Only one bird, the first ringed, was in the boiler-house on the night of 14th/15th and we presumed the other had departed. The remaining Moorhen continued in nightly occupation of the boiler-house until May 31st.

K.W.

82. Late Spring Occurrence of a
Red-throated Pipit.

As I came away from the Blue Fulmar Cliff on the morning of May 31st 1952 a small bird flew across my path uttering a callnote which, whilst it was clearly the note of a pipit, was entirely new to me. I followed the bird and got excellent short-range views of it as it walked to and fro on the heathery moor. It was a Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus, in very bright plumage. Later in the morning Miss Peggy Condliffe and my wife also watched the bird with me for an hour or more: we tried to bring it into the area served by the Gully and Double-Dyke Traps, but it was very loath to leave the open heather-grown moorland.

Plumage. The bird was about the size of a Tree Pipit but looked stockier, less slender; it was a darker, richer brown on the back and more coarsely streaked than either Tree or Meadow Pipits. This bold streaking extended to the rump, a point which could be determined easily since the bird often walked with the wing-points carried at either side of the tail. The head showed some olive, finely streaked with brown, and from behind was very like the head of the commoner pipits. Except for the crown, and a greenish-olive patch on the lores and ear-coverts, the head was the same rich chestnut colour as the breast. This chestnut showed above the greenish-olive patch as an irregular but well-marked supra-ocular stripe, and a little of it even invaded the sides of the crown. The depth of the chestnut colour on face, throat and upper breast was much richer than in any of the specimens figured in The Handbook of British Birds (vol.1, plate

21) and was more nearly matched by the brighter of the birds figured in H.E. Dresser's Birds of Europe (vol.3, plate 136), an adult male. The throat was immaculate, the breast being lightly streaked with dark brown, this streaking being more pronounced on the sides and lower breast, where the chestnut gradually merged with the buffish belly plumage. The under tail-coverts, though not well seen, appeared to be pinkish-buff. The outer tail-feathers were white, a feature which was especially noticeable when the bird rose and passed with low, undulating flight to a new position. The bill appeared to be horn colour, and the legs had much the same coloration as those of the Meadow Pipit, - a yellow-brown in dull light, but with a tinge of flesh-colour in bright sunlight. My wife and I got the impression that the bird had a shorter tarsus than the commoner species, but I think this may have been due to its bulkier, less slender appearance, and the fact that it did not usually move as actively as other pipits do. Occasionally, however, it made swift runs to the side or rear if some insect prey caught its eye, and its actions at such times were more characteristically pipit-like.

Callnote: The only call-note heard was a clear and strident (for a pipit) "pee-ez", faintly but quite decidedly disyllabic. This note was sometimes uttered singly as the bird rose in alarm, but on other occasions it was repeated three or four times. It is without doubt the note recorded in The Handbook (vol. 1, p.200) as "skeez", although this rendering does not give the impression of a disyllabic note. In this, and the clear ringing tone, the call was sufficiently distinct from that of the Tree Pipit to attract immediate attention.

Occurrence. The Handbook gives some twenty British records of the Red-throated Pipit, but only four of these are for the spring. Several of the records are from Fair Isle. The most recent concerns six birds seen on the isle on May 8th 1936. The present occurrence supplies the latest spring date on record, the nearest being two at Hooe in Sussex on May 22nd 1913.

83. The Flight History of a Homing Pigeon

On June 5th Douglas Stout, of the Fair Isle Post Office, caught a racing pigeon with the registration number "NORGE" (51) 4640". I sent the details to Hr. Holger Holgersen, Konservator of Stavanger Museum, asking if he would kindly ascertain particulars of its release and - in the event of its return - the date of arrival at the home loft. He replied as follows.

"Pigeon no. 4640 belongs to a Hr. Martin Hansen, of Drammen, and is a young bird from 1951. It has flown from distances of 10, 20, 40, 60 and 100 km. and earlier this year from Frederikshavn in Denmark. Together with other pigeons from Drammen, Tonsberg and Larvik, it was released at Randers, Denmark, on June 1st at 1445 hrs. The weather was fine between Norway and Skagen, but there was fog with rain over Denmark, and the pigeons were let off after noon instead of at 0700 hrs. as planned. The pigeons were seen to have parted in three flocks, one of which took a very westerly course. Many pigeons, that had earlier travelled even longer distances, were lost. The wind was easterly.

"Some of the pigeons from Drammen and other eastern towns have gone to Kristiansand or even

Bergen when they have been released in Denmark with easterly winds. It has also occurred, but very rarely, that one has reached England." Randers, the release point, is in north Jylland and Drammen is in south-east Norway some 200 miles to the north.

The "Daily Weather Chart" of the Meteorological Office for noon and 1800 hrs. June 1st shows the warm front of an active secondary depression crossing Denmark and the Skaggerak, - hence the fog and rain in Denmark early in the day, as the front moved across the country. The wind ahead of the front was south-easterly in Forties and more easterly in the sea-area Fair Isle during the afternoon. No. 4640 and other pigeons, especially perhaps these which made off in a westerly direction, seem to have been unable to make accurate orientation on the training line owing to the heavy cloud conditions. Once over the sea these birds would continue their westwards drift before the wind, as I have sought to explain in a recent paper (Scot. Nat. 64, pp. 1-18) in the case of migrant birds. The weather conditions were very similar to those which bring our "rushes" of small migrant birds from Denmark and the Skaggerak in spring and autumn.

No. 4640 may or may not have reached Fair Isle in its first flight: it could have been a day or two resting on the island before its capture on June 5th. It is perhaps more likely however, that it came to land somewhere south of Fair Isle on June 2nd and moved northwards on the following days, when anticyclonic conditions were building up over the north of the country. It remained at Fair Isle, consorting with several British racing pigeons, until July 13th.

84. Some Ringed Bird Recoveries

TWITE. Carduelis flavirostris. Two birds ringed in August and September 1950 were recaptured in mid-June 1952. Both are adult males, though only one was adult when ringed.

MEADOW PIPIT. Anthus pratensis. Two birds, ringed as adults in April and August 1951 from the Vaadal and Gully Traps, were recaptured in the same traps in late spring 1952, suggesting a return to their former territories following spring migration.

ROCK PIPIT. Anthus spinoletta. One ringed on August 5th 1950 as an adult was found dead beneath telephone wires at North Haven on June 13th 1952. Two birds ringed as juveniles in late summer 1951 were recaptured, in heavy moult, on August 1st and 2nd 1952.

REDWING. Turdus m. musicus. A bird with wing-length 114 mm., ringed from the Gully Trap on October 21st 1950, was found with a broken wing at Gnesta, Sodermanland, SWEDEN, on April 14th 1952. This locality is not a breeding area.

BLACKBIRD. Turdus merula. A ring which was placed on a migrant female on November 6th 1950 was found in a Peregrine Falcon's pellet at Minniegarff, Newton Stewart, KIRKCUDBRIGHT-SHIRE, on April 8th 1952.

A male caught in the Double-Dyke Trap at 1400 hrs. on March 28th 1952 was recovered at Fana, near Bergen, NORWAY, seven days later. (250 miles east).

An adult male taken in the Gully Trap on October 23rd 1950 was recovered at Hareid, in Aalesund, NORWAY, on April 2nd 1952 (320 miles north-east.)

An adult male trapped at the Gully on November 3rd 1951 was recovered at Karevik, Stord (an island half-way between Bergen and Stavanger) NORWAY, on March 28th 1952 (250 miles east).

WHEATEAR. Oenanthe oenanthe. There were six recaptures during the spring and summer of birds ringed as young in 1951. The remains of another 1951 juvenile were found on the Vaasetter moorland in July.

A very interesting retrap, on August 10th, was that of an adult male F.0544. This bird was ringed as an adult male on May 5th 1950, so was then at least two years old.

A tantalising recovery is that of M. 2294, marked as a 1st winter bird on August 23rd 1951, the day of the big "rush" of passage Wheatears reported in Bull. No.6, para.56. The remains of this bird were found on a peat-stack at Brettabister, parish of Nesting, SHETLAND, on April 27th 1952 by Mr. Thomas Gray, who thought it had been killed by a bird of prey. The date does not preclude the possibility that the bird was still on northward migration when killed.

FULMAR. Fulmarus glacialis. An adult which was taken from its egg at a site near Shaldi Cliff on July 5th 1951 was again caught whilst incubating an egg at the same place on June 9th 1952.

85. Fleas and Flatflies

Fleas were much commoner on the spring migrants than on the bodies of local juvenile birds trapped from the beginning of July, but in making this comparison it should be emphasised that different species of birds were concerned, - mainly warblers and chats in the first category, and pipits and wheatears in the second. Nevertheless, one is left with the impression that the spring is a period of dynamic activity among adult fleas which, having overwintered in old nests, now go forth in search of hosts who will provide the nourishment - and the new nests - essential to the fulfilment of their life cycle. James Waterston once remarked that in a life so precarious as a flea's speculative jumping must play a very large part, and in our small lab. in the month of May it was very evident that the fleas were jumping to some purpose!

A few breeding adult Starlings and Wheatears in the June-July period continued to show some flea infestation, and one adult male Starling trapped on July 8th set up a new record for the Observatory by dropping 20 fleas into the chloroform jar. The record, however, was short-lived, for a young Starling of a second brood gave up 22 fleas when captured just after leaving the nest on August 12th. Two others believed to be from the same nest yielded 8 and 10 fleas respectively. Theirs must have been a most uncomfortable nursery! In their New Naturalist book "Fleas, Flukes and Cuckoos" Miriam Rothschild and Theresa Clay state that the maximum number of fleas

ever recovered from a single bird is 25 from a House Martin. This book, incidentally, is an eminently readable survey of our knowledge of all kinds of bird parasites, and I confidently recommend it to all who are interested in this fascinating yet rather neglected aspect of bird study.

No specimen of a Hippoboscid fly was encountered during the spring migration period, but a very high percentage of the juvenile Starlings, pipits and wheatears trapped from early July were again infested with Ornithomyia fringillina, a number of which were observed to be carrying either Mallophaga or mites. Much more material was collected than in 1951 (see Bull. No.6, paras. 65-66) and over 500 specimens are awaiting examination. Mr. Ron Edwards, who is undertaking this research, spent a fortnight at the Observatory during the summer. A few experimental releases of "ringed" flatflies were made, mainly to explore the possibility of developing some research on their habits in future years, and one fly marked with aluminium paint and put aboard a juvenile Rock Pipit was recovered from the same host seven days later.

A number of the fleas collected from the spring migrants were Ceratophyllus borealis, a species which has a "fringing distribution" on small islands round the western and northern coasts of Britain and in Scandinavia, being replaced by the closely-related C. garei on the mainland of Britain (see Bull. No.6, para 64). In view of this it would seem likely that a large proportion of the infested warblers and other small birds, which were drift-migrants

from the Continent, became infested soon after their arrival on the island. This view is further supported by the fact that two Willow-warblers and a Redstart showed re-infestation, the fleas in this case being Dasypsyllus g. gallinulae. A Northern Willow-warbler gave a female flea when first trapped on May 13th, and three further specimens when re-captured two days later. Another Willow-warbler of the typical race yielded a single flea on May 19th and two more when re-examined on 23rd. The only Willow-warbler carrying examples of C. borealis is known to have been on the island at least five days - quite long enough to have acquired them here - at the time they were collected.

C. borealis was also found on a Redwing (a natural host of this flea in Finland) on May 3rd, Whitethroats on May 5th and June 3rd, a Redstart on May 6th, a Cuckoo on May 17th, and a Common Sandpiper on May 23rd. Another sandpiper caught at the same time had a single Dasypsyllus g. gallinulae, and these comprise the first British records of fleas from this bird. D. g. gallinulae was the commonest flea on Tree Pipit and Redstart, Whitethroat and Willow-warbler, C. gallinae being also present in a fair number on the last two. On the other hand the Wheatears had more C. borealis than any other species, and indeed the wheatear is a host for which this flea seems to show a preference. It is well-known that newly-arrived and also passage-migrant Wheatears are fond of investigating burrows, and those C. borealis which over-wintered in old Wheatears' nests would stand every chance of survival even if they were more sedentary in the spring than

other fleas. It is easy to see how, through the course of time, natural selection might favour a sedentary habit in this species and a degree of host specificity result. The fact that juvenile Wheatears trapped in July 1951 yielded very few C. borealis but a good many specimens of the other two species is suggestive of a closer bond between C. borealis and the nest.

Spring Wheatears gave a high number of negative records - about half of the examinations - in comparison with other birds. Greenland Wheatears gave examples of all three species, and there were two positive and two negative examinations. In the Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler six out of nine examinations were productive. The only one of five Tree Pipits with a nil record for fleas was a bird heavily infested with the mite Leio gnathus sylvarum Carr and Franz 1877, kindly determined by Dr. Evans of the Brit. Museum (Nat. Hist).

One flea taken from a female Reed Bunting on May 5th apparently belongs to a new species. The specimen was a female, and scientific description of the new form will have to await the capture of a male.

I am grateful to the Hon. Miriam Rothschild, who made the determinations of the fleas collected, for information and advice in preparing this note.

K.W.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory, August 20th 1952.

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

THE WORK OF THE OBSERVATORY

The purpose of the Bird Observatory is to provide facilities for visitors to carry out scientific research on the island, not only in the sphere of ornithology, but in every aspect of Natural History. Work will be mainly concentrated however on ornithology under the supervision of the Director.

TERMS

Full board, including service, is *Six Guineas per Head per week*. Reduced terms are available for parties of students from schools and universities.

APPLICATIONS

Priority in bookings will be given to "Friends of Fair Isle," and to *bona fide* naturalists prepared to take part in the scientific investigations of the station under the leadership of the Director, and to help with such other duties as may be necessary from time to time in connection with the station or hostel. Anyone else wishing to visit the island will be made welcome, provided room is available. Those who are not keen ornithologists are asked to book for the summer months—June, July, and August—so that more accommodation will be available in the spring and autumn for students of bird migration. Application should be made as follows:—

- (1) *If made between 1st April and 31st October.*
To the Director, Fair Isle Bird Observatory,
by Lerwick, Shetland. Telegraphic address:
"Migrant, Fairisle." Telephone: Fair Isle 8.
- (2) *If made between 1st November and 31st March.*
To the Director, Fair Isle Bird Observatory
Trust, 17 India Street, Edinburgh.
Telephone: Edinburgh CENTral 4532.

PROSPECTUS

Prospectus giving details of transport to and from Fair Isle, and other information, will be sent on application.

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

0 100yds. 440yds. 880yds. 1mile
Roads == Bird Trap \triangle ^{TRAP} Boundaries

