

# **FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN**



Edited by  
**KENNETH WILLIAMSON**  
Director

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**Issued to the Friends of Fair Isle**

**Subscription, £1, 1s. per year**

E D I T O R I A L

With the "Good Shepherd" delayed from the Wednesday to the Friday on the first of her August sailings, and now delayed again in the second week, it looks as though our brief summer is at an end. But we are grateful for the weather we have had, - by our visitors' accounts we have fared much better than many districts in the south.

Whether or not it is due to the fine, warm and windless spells, or to the scarcity of Hooded Crows and Ravens, the ground-nesting birds have enjoyed a better breeding-season than any since we came to the isle. The Arctic Skua figures are quite remarkable (para. 141); the Eider Ducks, which did very poorly in 1952, have been taking young to the water constantly since the end of May; and never have the Oyster-catchers been so numerous on Bunes and the moorlands east and south of the Ward Hill.

On the other hand, it has seemed to all of us with knowledge of the ground that wheatears have been less abundant than in 1951-52. True, we managed to ring 140 nestlings, but the quest occupied more time than in former years and extended over a wider area. Meadow Pipits were also scarcer than in 1952, which was, however, a quite exceptional year. It is difficult to explain the decrease in these species in 1953 other than by assuming heavier migration losses either last autumn, or returning in the spring.

140. At Sea on June 6th 1953.

The most interesting bird seen at sea on June 6th 1953, on a journey from Torshavn to Kirkwall in the Norwegian ship M.V. BRAND V, was a Long-tailed Skua which flew overhead at no more than mast-height. The long tail-streamers - almost as long as the body - and dark cap were very noticeable, and the white breast merging into a greyish-white belly suggests that the bird belonged to the typical race inhabiting northern Europe, and not to the Greenland form Stercorarius longicaudus pallescens. It was seen at 1130 hrs G.M.T. when we were roughly equidistant from Faeroe, Shetland and Orkney; our noon position was given as 60 10 N., 4 15 W. The bird flew off to join a flock of about 150 Kittiwakes which were feeding on the sea a short distance to port: it did not harry them, but settled among them without creating any alarm.

During that morning occasional Gannets, mainly immatures, were seen, and between 1400 and 1500 hrs these became more frequent, and small parties, including adult birds, passed us flying northwards. Kittiwakes, singly or a few together, were seen throughout, and they too increased in mid-afternoon and were mostly flying to east or NE, towards Shetland. The parties of Guillemots were similarly distributed and their afternoon flights were also to the eastward. Fulmars were few, up to ten following the ship until we came near Shetland waters. A school of Caain' Whales Globicephala melaena passed us, going north at 1000 hrs., and with them were a number of White-sided Dolphins Lagenorhynchus acutirostris, the commonest dolphin in these waters.

K.W.

141. Report on the Arctic Skuas, 1953.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

It is usual for young pairs of the Arctic Skua Stercorarius parasiticus to have one egg only in their first year at the colony, and not infrequently they fail to rear their first chick. In some cases, a pair will establish and defend a territory in their first year, but will not nest until the next. In 1952 no less than 7 new pairs joined as breeders, and although several of these had occupied ground in '51 there were at least two pairs (Valstrass North, which had two eggs, and Homisdale North, with one) which had not occupied the same territories previously. An eighth pair, Breidpiece, did not lay in 1952: they, together with an entirely new mating on Vaadal Moor, were the only one-egg nesters in the present season.

The Colony in 1953

We could hardly expect an increase of the 1952 magnitude this year, but on the other hand were hardly prepared for the fact that there was to be no increase at all! The total breeding-strength proved to be 31 pairs, one less than in 1952. The two gains recorded above were offset by the loss of three of the 1952 nestings. A late and unsuccessful dark pair in Vaadal failed to return, the Svey Middle pair did not nest (although they reoccupied last year's territory), and the Svey North pair broke up, the colour-ringed female going to Brae East.

Breeding Success

In 1953 the colony had greater success even than in 1952, which was by far the best

season they had enjoyed up to that time. The 31 pairs laid a total of 60 eggs, of which 56 were hatched: none was lost as the result of predation, 3 proved to be infertile, and in one case the chick died after breaking the shell. Ultimately 54 young flew and a check shows that these are still alive in mid-August: this is 96.4% of the number hatched, or 90% of the eggs laid, - surely a remarkable record for a ground nesting bird.

Pairs rearing the full brood were 90% as against 69% in 1952 and 42% in 1951. Fledging data are available for 26 of the 54 chicks, and the average period was 28.8 days as against 28.7 in 1952, 29.2 days in '51 and 31.7 days in '50.

#### Pale Phase Percentages.

There was a further marked rise in the number of white-bellied individuals in the nesting population. Appropriate data for the past four seasons are compared in the table for (A) adults of the actual nesting stock, (B) their offspring reaching the fledging stage, and (C) the matings containing a white-bellied bird or birds.

	<u>1950.</u>	<u>1951.</u>	<u>1952.</u>	<u>1953.</u>
A. <u>Adults.</u>				
n.	7	8	13	15
Total	44	52	64	62
%	16	15	20	23
B. <u>Fledglings.</u>				
n.	No	5	12	18
Total	data	23	43	54
%		22	28	33
C. <u>Matings.</u>				
n.	6	7	11	13
Total	22	26	32	31
%	27	27	34	42

It will be seen that there was again a high percentage of youngsters of the pale phase type, with an abundance of rufous tips and edges on the feathers of head, neck, mantle and wing-coverts, and the white of the underparts barely (if at all) concealed by dark tips to the belly feathers. But whereas in 1952 a number of the pale phase young were produced by dark x intermediate matings (see Bull. No. 8, para. 86), in the present season there were only two cases of this kind, the majority of the pale young being born of mixed matings. In past years, such pale x intermediate (i.e. dark individuals having a light collar and the belly and breast paler than the dark brown mantle and cap) birds have always given one pale and one intermediate young in a full brood; but in 1953, for some inscrutable reason, no fewer than three such pairs reared two pale phase chicks apiece!

#### Productivity of the Pairs

Of those pairs which have nested, so far as we know without change, since 1949 (perhaps earlier), Eas Brecks East and Homisdale East have the best record with full clutches each season and a total of 8 youngsters each. Eas Brecks North and Airstrip North have fledged 7 youngsters from full clutches, but the former had the misfortune to lose a youngster in each of the years '50 and '52 during the post-fledging time. Homisdale West and Sukka Moor North have also raised 7 young, and although the Brae East site shows the same figure from 7 eggs laid in this period we know that this mating has changed twice during the five years. There are eight pairs which have reared 6 young apiece, and these include the Jarms Cup intermediates which first came to the colony in 1951.

### Distribution of the Pairs.

**EAS BRECKS.** This area of moorland, close to the Observatory, is bounded on the north and east sides by the road to the North Lighthouse, on the north-west by the valley of the Burn of Furse, on the west by the depression known as Jams Cup, and on the south by the shallow vale of the Vatstrass Burn. In the middle of this moorland a pair of Bonxies has been established since 1948 or earlier, and the Arctic Skuas are allowed only the fringe. The South and East pairs hold their ground throughout the season; the mixed North mating has its nest on the NE. edge of Eas Brecks, but loses no time, once the young are active, in taking the family across the Lighthouse Road to a vacant piece of moor on the opposite side. Here the young stay for the remainder of the season, some 300 yards from the nest in which they were hatched. The NW. pair also nest annually on the edge of Eas Brecks but take their young downhill, away from the Bonxies, to a pool at the entrance to Furse some 150 yards away. In 1953 all these pairs successfully reared two young except the South pair, which had only one fertile egg.

**BURN OF FURSE.** In the valley are two pairs usually nesting so close together that there is continual bickering between the adults, especially vigorous during human disturbance. The North female, a partial albino (see para. 142), reared a partial albino intermediate chick in 1953, her second egg failing to hatch. The South pair raised two intermediate youngsters.

**JAMS CUP.** This hollow, between Eas Brecks and Homisdale, has been tenanted by a pair of intermediates since 1951. Both birds

had been colour-ringed as non-breeding visitors to the Byerwall bathing-pool in the previous year. They maintained their unbroken record in 1953 by rearing two young.

**HOMISDALE.** The area of low and rather wet moorland at the head of Vatstrass now has four pairs. The East and West pairs are 1949, or earlier, and both reared two young (one dark and one intermediate). To the north, between Furse and Homisdale, is a double-pale mating which first arrived and nested with one egg in 1952. They have now reared three pale phase young in the two seasons. Close to the Plantacrubs, - stone-walled enclosures in which the islanders raise their cabbage seedlings, - at the head of Vatstrass is another 1952 pair, a pale female x intermediate male, and they have reared a single chick in each season, the second chick in 1953 dying in the shell.

**VATSTRASS.** On the south side of the wet ground beside the Burn, nesting on the dryer heather moorland since 1948 is a pair of intermediates one of whose young was drowned in a ditch when about 10 days old. On the northern slope rising to Eas Brecks is a mixed mating, now in 1952, and these reared two pale phase youngsters, making a total of three of this kind in the two years.

**BYERWALL.** Between Vatstrass and Vaadal is a flattish plateau of moor, bounded by the Airstrip region in the north, which was held by a dark x intermediate pair until 1951. In that year a young pale phase female who had been colour-ringed at the Byerwall pool as a non-breeder in 1950, supplanted the original dark



bird at the beginning of the season. In the same year a pair of Bonxies arrived on the moor and the Arctic Skuas nested late, and farther to the west, but lost their young. In 1952 and the present season they have nested at the same place but have taken their two chicks over the western ridge of Byerwall on to the Vaadal slope beyond, and have successfully reared them. One of the 1952 young was pale phase, but in 1953 both were intermediates.

**AIRSTRIP.** The landing-strip runs due east and west, beyond a slight depression which separates it from Byerwall. The old Fair Isles name of this flat area is Breidpiece "the broad piece") and on its northern side a slope called Peerie Brae ("the little brae") rises to the hill-ground of Swey. On either side of the strip are the pale x intermediate North and pale x dark South pairs, both of which have been here since 1949 and probably before. They raised two very rufous chicks apiece in 1953, the North youngsters being markedly pale beneath and so similar that it was impossible to tell them apart other than by reference to their rings. Until last year this pair kept their young close to the nesting-site throughout the fledging-period, but in 1952 and again this season they took them over the Peerie Brae and on to the Brunt Brae nesting-site (vacated by the latter family), where they remained after fledging, some 200-250 yards from their nest. Airstrip South have a wider territory and keep to it: one of the two 1953 youngsters is a pale bird and the other is something of a border-line case between this and the paler intermediate type.

In 1951 Airstrip East took territory in the SE. corner of this area: they are dark x

intermediate and two young of the parental types were reared, as in 1952. Last season a similar pair staked a claim off the eastern end of the strip, at the foot of Peerie Brae. This year's nest was only 70 yards from Airstrip East's and there was constant bickering between the adults (as between the Burn of Furse birds) during the incubation period. This was not so noticeable later, despite the fact that one of the Airstrip East chicks spent a good deal of its fledging-period on and near the Peerie Brae nest-site. Two young, similar in type to the parents, flew at Peerie Brae.

The pair named Breidpiece took an area between the Airstrip North and Sukka Moor North grounds in 1952, but did not nest until this year, when a single egg was laid. The youngster was safely fledged on the Airstrip North nest-site 100 yards away. This mating was pale x dark in 1952 and throughout the incubation period in the present season; but during the later part of the fledging-period the rather pale intermediate chick was guarded in turn by the dark and an intermediate bird. This is the first time we have known a pairing undergo change late in the breeding cycle, and what became of the pale adult is not known.

**SUKKA MOOR.** There are two widely-separated pairs on the wet ground of Sukka Moor, a dark x intermediate in the north which reared one chick out of two hatched, and a mixed pair close to pools at the south-west side, beneath Burrashield, which reared pale and intermediate young. Between Sukka Moor and Vaadal, on much dryer heather-covered ground, a new pair attempted to breed in 1953 but their single egg was infertile. This pair comprises a dark male

and an extremely white-bellied female which was often seen wandering about the colony as a non-breeder in 1952.

**SWEY.** There are several pairs on the hill ground north of the Airstrip. A dark x intermediate pair has a nesting-ground on the flat between the top of Peorie Brae and the slope of Brunt Brae, which leads up to Svey proper. (The last two place-names are both derived from the practise of heather-burning or "sweeling" Svey being the essentially Nordic version). Brunt Brae was a new pair in '51 but until this year had not succeeded in rearing chicks.

North-west of Brunt Brae, running away to Ward Hill, is the Mire of Vatnagard, an area of scattered pools with one pair of Arctic Skuas, a very white-bellied female and a pale male, with a dusky brown breast-band. They were new (but unsuccessful) in 1951, but in the past two years have raised four pale phase youngsters. This is a very undemonstrative pair, never attacking, and seldom bothering to perform distraction-display, but the chicks in both seasons have been precocious and reluctant to settle down again when disturbed. The junior one held the record in 1953 by getting airborne in 26 days, the senior chick taking 28 and making his first flight only a few minutes before the younger one.

Eastwards from the Mire are the Svey West, East (overlooking Homisdale) and Middle pairs. The first two are dark x intermediate, and had two young each. Svey Middle, pale x dark, was new last year with one infertile egg: this year the pair was present at the same site and although copulation was seen no eggs were laid. Last year a new pair, after one season's prospecting, came to Svey North, but this is

best dealt with under the group of birds nesting between the Brae of Restingsgeo and the region immediately NE. of Ward Hill.

**BRAE OF RESTINGS GEO.** From Swey in the west to the southern edge of "the Brae" in the east there were five pairs in '52, now reduced to four. Nearest the Hill we have Brae West, formerly rather dark intermediate types, but in 1953 one of the original pair mated with a pale phase. Two young, both pale phase, were reared. Last year Swey North held territory immediately east of this ground, but in 1953 no birds occupied this site, and the female of the Swey North pair was mated with the male at Brae East. She is a rather pale-looking intermediate and is colour-ringed, but whether as a non-breeder in 1950 or as a young bird in 1949 we do not know, as it is clear she has lost one or more of her plastic rings. Two young, a pale phase and a rather pale intermediate juvenile, were reared at Brae East in 1953. Brae Middle, an old-established pale x intermediate pair, also raised two young of similar kinds. Tow down on the hill-slope is the Furse Hillside 1950 pair, dark x intermediate: both eggs hatched, but only one youngster (pale phase) was later found and ringed during several long searches. Nevertheless, the second youngster survived and subsequently fledged, apparently on or near the Brae East nesting-site.

**VAASETTER.** Lastly, there is the isolated pair on the Vaasetter moorland, dark x intermediate and believed to be the same individuals as in 1949, which may have been their first year (one egg). In 1952 they were forced out of the old breeding-area by a pair of Bonxies and they

moved to the Heathery Park of Thione about 500 yards south, nesting late in the season near the wreck of the Heinkel bomber. They returned to this site in 1953 (though the Bonxies which had taken the original site did not come back) and again nested late. There was an unusually long interval between the hatching of the eggs, at about midday July 2nd and 0500 hrs. July 6th. The interval between the fledging of the two youngsters was even longer and unprecedented in our experience, the elder flying on July 30th at 28 days old and the younger one a full week later at 31½ days old. This bird was killed in mid-August, apparently by one of the Peregrines.

The number of non-breeders in 1953 leads us to hope for a further increase in the nesting stock next year. These are most in evidence in the Airstrip region and on the northern part of Svey. Several of the birds have aluminium rings on the left leg and must therefore have been marked as young in previous years, but it is disappointing that in all cases where a good view has been obtained one or more of the plastic colour-rings put on for individual identification has been lost.

oOo

M.Y. TEREORA (Little Ship Club), owner - skipper Mr. Thomas Graham Marr, lay in the North Haven on July 22nd-23rd, and visits were exchanged. Mr. Marr, a well-known Falkirk solicitor, was accompanied by his two sons and daughter-in-law. They were enjoying a North Sea cruise to Bergen, which they reached in 19 hours from here.

142. Notes on Some Mutations in Faeroe  
Bird Populations.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

During a walk along the eastern cliff of Nolsoy on May 19th 1953 I saw two "blue" Fulmars, one being the darkest bird I have yet seen but the other a paler example and similar to the dark breeding-birds at Fair Isle which I described in Scot. Nat. 64 (1952): 139. Such birds are abundant in some winters at sea to east of Nolsoy: of six specimens which I saw in Niels a Botni's collection none belonged to the Small-billed Fulmar Fulmarus glacialis minor, of Baffin Island and NW. Greenland (see Wynne-Edwards, Scot. Nat. 64 (1952) : 84-101, and the presumption is that they are from Spitsbergen seas. There is an unusually high percentage of dark birds at this cliff in early spring, though I think it very unlikely that this reflects a similar percentage remaining to breed. A Nolsoy fowler told me that out of 150 birds caught in his fleyg in late winter and early spring three were of the "blue" type. Niels a Botni has a completely white female **Fulmar** in his collection, taken at the Nolsoy east cliff on March 22nd 1948.

He also showed me a remarkable example which he received from the most westerly isle, Mykines, in early May. It is a normal bird in every respect except that the crown feather are raised on end in a quaint, irregular tuft about an inch high, a condition due to the scalp being folded or crinkled. It would seem to represent an extremely rare mutation, since an identical bird was reported from the Westmann Islands by Faeroese fishermen some years ago.

The Rock Dove Columba livia population seems to have declined. Only a few birds were seen during visits to the islands of Nolsoy, Sandoy, Fugloy and Svinoy, and in the Torshavn area, and all these had typical plumage, there being none with the black-speckled wing-coverts of the mutant form which is fairly common in Faeroe in years of Rock Dove abundance (see Petersen a Botni and K. Williamson, Ibis 91 (1949): 17-23).

Whilst watching birds at Sandsvatn on May 21st I saw two dark phase Arctic Skuas Stercorarius parasiticus bathing on the lake. One of these had patches of white at the leading edge of the wing, on the lesser coverts, and a small white patch in the centre of the belly. A similar partial albinism occurs among our own birds at Fair Isle and has been described in previous Bulletins (see in particular Bull. No. 8, para. 86). At least three adult individuals have been seen (one an immature non-breeder in 1952) and one of these birds, the female at Burn of Furze North, produces a chick with similar markings every year.

This mutation is also known from the more northerly islands of Shetland, and a photograph of a pale phase bird of this kind, taken by S.C. Porter appeared in Bird Notes 24: 287. I saw no other examples among many Skuas watched in Faeroe, but Niels a Botni has a mounted specimen of a pale phase bird taken at Nolsoy which has white feathers among the lesser wing-coverts and a chin noticeably whiter than the cream-flushed underparts.

Tallies of dark and pale phase birds

were made at the two neighbouring islands of Fugloy and Svinoy, the most north-easterly of the group, on May 27th and 28th. A total of 85 birds on Fugloy gave 16.47% pale, and at a very large colony which I estimated at 250-300 pairs on Eysturhovdi, east of Svinoy village, I got very nearly the same result, - 16.44% pale in a count of 298 birds. It is remarkable that these counts give a much lower figure than we have at Fair Isle, but it is probable that a random count of this nature does not bear comparison with the accurate census which it is possible to make at Fair Isle.

On both Fugloy and Svinoy scattered pairs of Arctic Skuas were nesting on Grimmia moss and loose stone on the highest parts of the barren hills at 500-600 metres.

Niels a Botni showed me a mounted specimen of an adult male Starling Sturnus v. faroensis obtained in Torshavn in the spring of 1953, with a bill more than twice the normal length. I remember seeing such a bird on a number of occasions in Torshavn during the late years of the war. Unlike the long-billed mutation which crops up from time to time in widely separated localities in Britain (for full details, see British Birds 44 (1951): 60, 349-50; 45 (1952): 402 and 46 (1953) 254 and plate 43), the beak in the Faeroe examples is straight and not down-curved. There are bare patches of hard skin at the gape which suggest that, in common with the Long-billed Edinburgh bird now in the Royal Scottish Museum, Niels a Botni's specimen took most of its food by laying the beak sideways along the ground and picking it up at the gape.



143. Report on the Great Skuas, 1953.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

The history of the Great Skua Catharacta s. skua at Fair Isle, so far as it is known to us, was outlined in Bull. no. 8, para. 95, and the results of the 1952 breeding-season were summarised there. It was a poor season, and the Bonxies fared no better in 1953. Bonxies are impressive and in many respects fascinating birds, but in view of their predatory habits this failure to increase their numbers on our small island must be regarded as highly satisfactory.

9. Last year there were 10 pairs, this year Two wholly unsuccessful pairs, first nesting in 1952, failed to return: these were at ward Mill NE., where both eggs were infertile, and the Howans, where the single chick was blind. One new pair occupied territory between the western end of the Airstrip and the Sukka Moor in 1953, but they were unsuccessful. The nine pairs laid 15 - possibly 16 - eggs, from which 8 young were subsequently reared.

The old-established pair in the middle of Eas Brecks, unsuccessful in 1952 for the first time since we came to the isle, had two eggs by May 10th and the youngsters were flying well by the fourth week of July. Vaasetter East completed their clutch on May 17th and reared two young, one dark brown, the other a reddish bird.

At Vaasetter West the pair must have changed early in the spring, since the remains

of a Bonxie, with a ring put on the female of this pair in the 1951 season, were found in the Reeves on May 20th. The nest, in the marshy SE. corner of the North Park of Thione as in 1949, contained a single egg on that date. On June 19th we found a dead chick lying on the nest alongside broken shells: the single adult present attacked very strongly when we were close to the nest, but on 21st this same bird, far from attacking, showed almost no interest in our presence.

Byerwall had one egg on May 17th and two on 20th. Misfortune befell this nest, but how is not quite clear. In mid-June the bird was sitting in a new nest ten feet away from the original one, on a single cracked shell from which all life had long since drained away. It is thought that Ravens Corvus corax, the only birds crafty and powerful enough to outwit a pair of Great Skuas (whose nests we have known them despoil in previous years), stole the first egg and tried to make off with the second, but were forced to drop it. Hence its condition, cracked from stem to stern, and the newly-made nest where it had fallen, ten feet away from the old. The female sat on this hollow shell and protected it vigorously until mid-July, when there was a noticeable slackening of interest.

At Brae of Ierness there was one day-old chick and an infertile egg on June 21st. The Wirvie Brecks nest contained one egg on May 18th: it is not known if a second was laid, and in any event no young were reared at this site. Dronga East and West both had two eggs, the latter as early as May 7th, and the

nests were in the same marshy area and only 40 yards apart, - a proximity which no two pairs of Arctic Skuas would tolerate, but which I found by no means exceptional among the Great Skuas of Unst. The East pair had one chick, considerably smaller than their neighbours' pair, when the young were ringed on June 21st.

We did not expect the new pair, named Airstrip West, to nest, since young Bonxies - like Arctic Skuas - usually spend the first summer on their chosen ground without breeding. However, coition was observed on June 15th and on 20th a single egg had been laid, - at a time when other Bonxies were tending week-old chicks. The egg, unfortunately, was sterile. We hope this pair will return, for they afford an interesting contrast in plumage, the female being an extremely dark brown bird and the male one of the reddest examples I have seen. It would be interesting to follow up their career and note the frequency of "red" and "brown" characteristics among their progeny,

#### 144. At Sea on July 18th 1953.

At a point very nearly half-way between Faeroe and Shetland at 1745 hrs G.M.T. on July 18th I observed a solitary Great Skua Oetharcta s. skua flying near the ship M.V. TJALDUR. About two hours later two further Bonxies were seen, in an area of sea probably well outside the cruising range of the birds of either Foula or Hermaness, which would have been some 35-40 miles distant from the ship.

E.W.

145. Nordic Names of the Great and Arctic Skuas.

KENNETH and ESTHER WILLIAMSON.

The origin and history of the Shetland name of the Great Skua Catharacta skua, which is "Bonxie", has always puzzled us; but after a discussion with Niels a Botni of Nolsoy, Faeroe, we are satisfied not only that the name is of Nordic origin, but that it was formerly held in common by both the Faeroese and Shetland Norn languages.

In the Faeroese bird-ballad Fuglakvaedi which is said to date from the late fifteenth century, the name "Bansi" is given to a large sea-bird. No description of it is given, but the owner of the name is associated with the Greater Blackbacked Gull Larus marinus. Dr. Salomonsen (Aves, Pt. 64 "Zoology of the Faeroes", 1935) regarded "Bansi" as one of the half-dozen names in Fuglakvaedi which are now "impossible to identify", and he quotes from Svabo (MS., 1783), who held the same view. Its affinity with "Bonxie" is unmistakable, however. A difficulty may have arisen in its interpretation because the Great Skua is mentioned again in the ballad under the name of "Skuvur" - of which the modern Faeroese is "Skugvur". There were, however, alternative names for this bird in Shetland, and Saxby ("Birds of Shetland", 1872) gives both "Skooi" and "Bonxie".

It is curious that "Bansi" should have disappeared from the Faeroese language long years ago (certainly before Svabo's time), and

yet in Shetland its counterpart has outlived the old Norn. In the case of the Arctic Skua Stercorarius parasiticus the reverse has happened, - the old Faeroese name has survived, but its Norn equivalent is dead. The colloquial Shetland name is "Scootie Alin" or just "Alin", and the Faeroese name is "Kjogvi", which means a thief. In the version of Fuglakvaedi given by Grundtvig and Bloch (MS., 1872) this name is spelt "Kjeui", - phonetically cho-i, which is substantially the same as the pronunciation we heard on the North Islands of Fugloy and Svinoy, though elsewhere one now hears chegwi. There can be no reasonable doubt, we think, of the kinship of the older form and the Norn name which Dr. William Eagle Clarke heard from an old Fair Islander when he first came here in 1906, and which he wrote down quite simply as "Q" (Annals of Scot. Nat. Hist., 1906).

#### 146. First Record of Shoveler Nesting in Shetland.

After the spring migration of 1953 a pair of Shoveler Spatula clypeata remained in Dunrossness, usually frequenting Loch Hillwell. During late May and early June the female was seldom seen and may possibly have made an unsuccessful attempt at breeding. Shortly after mid-June she again disappeared and on July 20th we saw her on Loch Hillwell with five ducklings a few days old. We suspect an abortive attempt at nesting in this locality in 1952. Hillwell is the only loch known to us where Shovelers winter and, indeed, is the only loch where the species is seen regularly on spring and autumn passage.

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

147. A Visit to the Sheep Rock.

JOHN PETERSON.

Seen from the North Haven the Sheep Rock, rising in bold sweeping lines to some 400 ft., dominates the view. Although it is joined to the island there is no approach to its green slopes by land, and the top, protected by sheer cliff on all sides, has that element of remoteness which adds to its fascination. Sheer cliff, however, does not deter the people of Fair Isle, and normally about 20 sheep are grazed there, including the lambs. The Rock, in addition to being exposed to the open sea, stands in a tide-race, and these sheep have been taken there in a small open boat on some rare occasion when a landing was possible, and then carried up the steeply sloping rocks to a narrow ledge along which they have been conveyed to the foot of the last perpendicular ascent of a hundred feet or so. There, slung on a rope, they have been hauled up one at a time. To aid the ascent at this point a galvanised chain, - said to have come from the wreck of a German emigrant ship, the LESSING, - has been hung, permanently secured from the top.

Once or twice a year the Rock is scaled; and it is doubtful if anywhere else in Britain sheep-rearing is pursued under conditions half so awesome or exacting. On July 3rd 1953, in exceptionally fine weather, a shearing expedition to the Rock was made, including in its preliminaries a kind invitation to those at the Bird Observatory to come along. A boat

would arrive at the South Haven at 1.30 p.m. to embark all who wished to join this unique outing. The boat was a Ness yoal, with Mercedes outboard, a most pleasing combination: it came at exactly 1.30, and this note of precision marked the undertaking throughout.

I had long abandoned hope of being able to set foot on the top of the Rock, but the high-spirited cajolery of the Fair Isle cragsmen (who obviously treated the outing, in such fine weather, as something of a lark) was too much for me. With their efficient help, a stout rope, and much qualms-dispelling wise-cracking, I soon found myself on the cliff-top, the Director having gone on ahead in the rope-disdaining manner of the experts.

The whole operation of landing on the Rock, climbing, caain' the sheep, shearing, and descending with sacks of wool, two live animals, various equipment and such unnecessary encumbrances as myself was done with a proficiency and despatch it will always be a pleasure to remember. Our one regret was that it reduced the time for exploring thoroughly an area that is quite steep in parts and is over 11 acres in extent.

Puffins, Great Black-backed Gulls and a few pairs of Oyster-catchers were found nesting. Twite and Rock Pipit were seen. There was no evidence of Wheatears or Starlings nesting and no indication of petrels. Very small burrows suggested the presence of mice, - the Fair Isle Field-mouse, - perhaps even the Sheep Rock Field-mouse! The Puffins were almost completely indifferent to this invasion of their territory &

were less disturbed than any I have known, including those of Foula. Their behaviour in this respect was entirely different from that of the birds on the South Gavel of Bunness only a short distance away. Their nesting-burrows were often very wet and many of the birds had soiled plumage. Several pairs of Great Black-backs had well-grown young, nine of which were ringed whilst the adults made vigorous attacks. Two young Oyster-catchers were ringed near the summit of the Rock.

In all too short a time the sheep, gathered in a quickly-erected net enclosure, were clipped and released, and we were on our way down to the boat, which looked ridiculously small on the water below. Then home by way of the South Harbour, zig-zagging through caves interlinked in the base of the Rock itself. As we emerged on the South side, under the main cliff-face, one of the nesting Peregrines came out overhead.

Landing at the South Harbour one felt that the F.I.B.O. had added another rare occasion to its field activities, but that the abiding impression would be one of men adding what looks like an inaccessible patch of green grass to the economy of a small island, - and doing so with a complete mastery of the difficulties the undertaking entails.

oOo

It is hoped to include in the next issue of the Bulletin an accurate determination of the height of the Sheep Rock, made in July by W.G. HARPER.



148. "Siberian" Lesser Whitethroats -  
a cautionary Note.

On September 9th 1951 A.G.S. Bryson trapped and carefully examined two Lesser Whitethroats Sylvia curruca at the Isle of May. One had the wing-formula of the typical race, but on the same criterion the other would have been placed with the eastern form S. curruca blythi, the 2nd primary being 1 mm. shorter than the 6th in one wing and 2.5 mm. shorter than the 6th in the other.

He and the present writer have discussed this and similarly "suspect" cases which have occurred at Fair Isle and the Isle of May in other seasons, and we are agreed that there must always be some element of doubt about British examples of blythi determined on wing-formula in the early part of the autumn season. Although the majority of adults have completed their post-nuptial moult by the end of August, it seems reasonable to suppose that there will be a minority of late birds just finishing wing moult even in mid-September. Such birds, with the 2nd primary not yet fully extended, would show the formula of the eastern race.

We strongly recommend that both wings of trapped birds should be carefully examined and the formula recorded, and that the base of the 2nd primary should be scrutinised for signs of remaining sheath. A discrepancy in the position of the tips of the 2nd primaries in relation to the 6th, as in the above instance, would suggest a moulting condition rather than a "Siberian" bird.

K.W.

149. Waterfowl at Toftavátn, Faeroe Islands, in June 1953.

From Notes by TORBEIN REIN

Systematic observations on the waterfowl of the Faeroe lakes during the summer months have never been made, with the consequence that there is very little knowledge concerning the status at that time of those species migrating regularly through Faeroe to Iceland, and pairs of which may conceivably remain to breed (see Bull. No. 11, para. 138). These notes by Torbein Rein have therefore an unusual value.

Pintail. Anas acuta. One pair June 11th, but the drake only on 20th. A female Mallard Anas platyrhynchos on the 15th.

Scaup. Aythya marila. Pochard. A. ferina. A pair of each species on June 11th: the latter is an exceedingly scarce duck in Faeroe.

Tufted Duck. A. fuligula. A pair on 11th; 3 drakes and 2 ducks on 15th, suggesting that passage was still continuing; again a pair, 25th.

Red-breasted Merganser. Mergus serrator. A remarkable concentration occurred during the month: 13 males, 8 females on 10th; 16 males, 12 females on 11th; 13 males, 2 females on 15th; 12 males, 3 females on 20th, and 13 birds on 25th. Nest with 9 eggs was found on 20th.

Goosander. M. merganser. The presence of a drake on June 1st has already been noted (Bull. No. 11, para. 138). There was a pair on June 10th and again on 20th.

150. Notes from Foula, Summer 1953.

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

We were in Foula, the most westerly island of the Shetland group, from June 21st to July 7th, and noted several increases since our previous visit at the same season in 1948.

Red-throated Diver. Colymbus stellatus. In 1948 there was only one pair, and this either did not nest or did so unsuccessfully. In 1952 there were three pairs - one successful, one unsuccessful, and one fate unknown. In 1953 there were two successful pairs (one chick and two chicks) and at least one non-breeding bird.

Arctic Tern. Sterna macrura. About 37 pairs in 1948, and at least 50 pairs in 1953. Common Terns S. hirundo were not noted in 1948, but in the present season one was scolding at the ternary and one was seen fishing in Nan Voe.

Peregrine. Falco peregrinus. Did not breed in either 1952 or 1953 for the first time within living memory.

The winter of 1946-7 was exceptionally severe, while that of 1952-3 was open and mild. This may account for the increase in:

Blackbird. Turdus merula. 5 pairs at most in 1948; certainly 14 pairs in 1953.

Snipe. Capella gallinago. Comparatively rare in 1948, but abundant in 1953.

Lapwing. Vanellus vanellus. One pair in 1948. One pair still "wailing" over chicks and a post-breeding flock of 17 in 1953. A similar increase has taken place throughout Shetland.

Great Skua. Catharacta s. skua. In 1948 we spent several days in estimating the population at 400-500 pairs, and this included a large number of non-breeders. In 1953 no attempt was made to repeat this count but our impression was that there had been no obvious increase. In fact there seemed to be considerably fewer non-breeders, this being most marked at the now almost deserted "assembly ground" between the Sneug and the Kame which was such a feature at this season in 1938 (L.S.V.V. and James Fisher) and 1948.

Migrants or summering non-breeders included the following birds:

Crossbills were seen daily (para. 151).

Blackcap. Sylvia atricapilla. Female, June 23rd; male, June 30th. (A singing male was heard in a garden at Bridge-of-Walls, west Mainland, on June 22nd).

Phylloscopus (probably trochilus). One on June 30th.

Swallow. Hirundo rustica. Two or three from June 23rd to 25th.

Swift. Apus apus. Two on June 27th and two on July 1st.

Whimbrel. Numenius phaeopus. A flock of 6 on June 27th.

Turtle Dove. Streptopelia turtur. One on July 3rd alighted near a Rock Pipit's nest on the east banks. The Rock Pipit ran to and fro with drooped, spread tail and occasionally leapt up and attacked the dove's head, neither of which activities shifted the intruder.

Quail. (Coturnix coturnix). In the week prior to our arrival one had been heard on several days at Ham, and one (possibly the same) at Hametoun. None was heard during our stay, but Mrs. W. Raiter put up a bird from a rig at Hametoun on June 26th, which was almost certainly a Quail.

We had one night at the Storm Petrel Hydrobates pelagica area on South Ness, but saw neither Storm (which, however, are known to be there) nor Leach's Petrels Oceanodroma leucorhoa.

#### 151. Summer notes from Shetland.

Chaffinch. Fringilla coelebs. 3 flying over Spiggie, July 16th; 2 flying over Noss next day.

Gannet. Sula bassana. In the third week of June Theo Key went round Ramna Stacks in his boat and Donald Cross in his. There was a fine smooth sea permitting close approach. Neither party saw any Gannets on the top (see Bull. No. 8 para. 89).

Leach's Petrel. From his boat, in fine weather, Donald Cross saw 4 birds about two miles north of West Linga (Whalsay) at midday, June 26th. He also saw 2 birds in approximately the same place on July 1st at 1600 hrs. (Samuel Bruce found remains of this species on Whalsay in the summer of 1951).

L.S.V.V.

(During the storm of late October 1952 which wrecked a great number of Leach's Petrels all over Britain, Alex. Tulloch saw 2 birds close to Bressay Lighthouse, and one was found dead in a field on the same island. - Ed.)

152. Crossbill "Irruption" News.

## FAEROE ISLANDS.

There is evidence that Crossbills were present between Froðþúur and Tvøroyri, in the island of Suduroy, from mid-June. On 29th I saw a flock of about 20 birds which had been reported to me on 27th; there were a few more females than males, and some heavily streaked juveniles. They were all very tame, and so far as I could see fed only on buttercup Ranunculus sp. seeds. Some remained in early July. At that time I had gone back to Torshavn, but saw none during a visit to the plantation there on 3rd, nor were there any in either the Torshavn or Hoydalur plantations on July 8th. - ESTHER WILLIAMSON.

There were Crossbills at Klakksvik in the north-east of the islands. A male, killed by a cat, was brought to me on June 21st, and I received females on June 24th and 25th. The last had been caught on board a Faeroe fishing vessel M.V. EYSTNES when she was 80 sea-miles NE. of Faeroe, and had died very soon afterwards. When I visited Kirkjubøur (Streymoy) on July 2nd Sverre Patursson told me that Crossbills had been there too. The next day, walking between Dalur and Skarvanes, on Sandoy, I saw two males.

SAMUEL PETERSEN.

## FOULA.

Crossbills were scattered throughout Foula, both in the hills and on crofting land, during the whole of our stay from June 21st to July 7th. They were in "singles", small parties and flocks of up to 20. Red males were frequent. Hill birds fed largely on the Fruits of Vaccinium myrtillus which, for Shetland, is abnormally abundant on the hills

of Foula. Birds in the crofting area fed largely on the thatched roofs and pecked at the undersides of the flowers of Red Campion Melandrium rubrum var. zetlandicum. On three occasions we saw Crossbills being chased by Arctic Skuas (single birds in each case) and escaping only with considerable difficulty.

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

### SHETLAND.

During our absence in Foula small flocks were seen scattered throughout Dunrossness, and Charles Inkster reported them from Yell. On our return home on July 7th Mrs. Winton said that Crossbills were still at Kergord plantations. From July 11th-19th there was a flock of about 20 (with several red birds) down the cliffs at Fitful Head feeding on the seeds of Sea-thrift Armeria maritima. Birds were seen regularly till July 22nd; then 3 on August 1st and one on 2nd, and none since. - L.S.V.V. and U.M.V.

Jack Peterson reported a few in Lerwick in mid-week prior to July 19th. There were 2 on my telephone wire on July 27th and about this time Jack Peterson repeatedly saw them feeding on thistles which abound on the strip of waste ground betwixt his house and mine. -

JOHN CAMPBELL.

Flock of about 40-50 during most of July on the cliffs of Sumburgh Head. - LESLIE ANDERSON. (One in a garden on Bressay in Mid-July. - ALEX TULLOCH. At 5 a.m. June 29th when we were two hours sailing from Lerwick, a juvenile Crossbill alighted on board the S.S. St. CLAIR. - GORDON CORBET. Numbers seen in ORKNEY during late June and early July. - P.E. BROWN.

## FAIR ISLE.

Crossbills remained at 40 or 50 birds after the period dealt with in the last Bulletin, down to July 11th or so. In mid-month they became scattered in smaller groups and difficult to tally, especially as by this time the majority had forsaken the Juniper and were feeding on the seeding heads of Thrift Armeria maritima on the cliffs. They were in the 30's from 13th to 16th and next day flocks of 15, 15, 8 and 10 were seen in different places. The party of 8, still faithful to Juniper, was on Burrashield. Most of those we saw late in the month were in the south of the island, on Malcolm's Head, Skaddan, and later Meones where a large flock spent a few days round about July 20th. Flocks located on this day were 6, 8 and 23; next day, only 6, 6 and 3. The next two days were without record, but it is highly probably that a few remained, though the majority had obviously gone out. Two parties, one containing 15 birds and the other about 5, were seen on 24th, and a party of 11 plus 3 males and 3 females were found on 25th. The last days on which any number were recorded were 27th with 14 birds and 29th with 8. In August, there were 4 on 1st and 2 red males on 4th, since when there has been no record.

Here, as recorded by the Venables on Foula, the Crossbills haunting Burrashield at the end of June and in early July were much troubled by Arctic Skuas. A skua would single a bird out of the flock and pursue it relentlessly with all the dash and persistence of a Merlin, and although we never actually saw a bird struck down the Crossbills had to fly for their lives! Their salvation lay in the chase being carried into another skua's territory, for one skua



cannot tolerate another hunting over its own preserves, and the Crossbill was able to make good its escape whilst its pursuer was called to account for trespass. Once we saw both adults of the Mire of Vatnagard pair in pursuit of the same Crossbill, and how the small bird managed to evade capture is a mystery. One injured female, barely able to fly, at the foot of Burrashield one day, may have been struck by a skua. The Burrashield Crossbills, in contrast to those in Faeroe and elsewhere, were very wild, and even the cry of a passing Oystercatcher would put them up.

A small number continued to roost on the precipitous sides of Troila Geo which intersects the summit of Burrashield, until near the end of July. At least one male and one female of this party were ringed birds, and as they were first seen in the Geo at a time when we had trapped very few Crossbills, the inference is that they had been on the island since June 19th-20th. A small party also roosted in Mavers Geo, and others on the sandstone cliffs of the Wirvie coast. - K. WILLIAMSON.

#### HEBRIDES.

Crossbills turned up on the Shiant Isles, in the Minch 6 miles east of Lewis and 12 miles north of Skye. A party of geologists was on the islands from about June 16th to 26th and the Crossbills were there all the time, - on one isle, 2 females and 1 male; on another, a dozen or so, mostly females. The birds seemed to be mainly on the cliffs. - MARTIN MUNRO.

On Canna on June 17th I found some Crossbills in the pine woods and the Campbells and I were able to get good views of them during

the next few days. There were at least 5 birds, some of them extraordinarily tame, especially an orange male which fed at a range of 5ft. from me. The night of 15/16th was rather rough with NW. wind which died away to calm followed by slight westerly breeze on 17th. - HAROLD A. COURSE.

#### ISLE OF MAY.

When Winifred Flower and Aileen Kelly arrived on July 1st they found 18 Crossbills. This flock appeared to consist of 4 ad. males, 4 ad. females and 10 juvs. The maximum seen up to July 4th was 24 birds. On 5th 20 were seen. and on 6th, 16. When Ian Munro, Irene Kinnear and I got out at week-end we saw 5 on July 12th. - GEORGE WATERSTON.

#### SKOMER and SKOKHOLM.

Nine possible Crossbills were seen on Skomer on June 25th: they were flying over and I did not get a good view. On Skokholm one "possible" was seen on 28th and 3 birds on 30th. Five were positively identified on July 2nd but on 3rd only 4 were present. The 5 on 2nd were feeding on seeds of Sea Campion Silene maritima and were very tame. - PETER CONDER.

#### MISCELLANEOUS.

There were 15 on Lundy, June 28th-30th (PETER DAVIS). BRUCE CAMPBELL reports 5 birds which were almost certainly Crossbills flying SSW. along Chiltern Scarp on June 27th. R.F. RUTTLEDGE had a report of about 10 birds in Co. Tipperary on July 12th, where the species is not usually seen at this time of year. A.B. DUNCAN saw Crossbills in Kent, July 18th-19th, and at Tynron, Dumfriesshire, in the last week of the month. They were present at Rockcliffe, Kirkcudbrightshire, in the last week of June.

153. Summer Records of Rare Buntings.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

We were engaged in unloading the island's yearly supply of coal on July 22nd when the crew of a lorry returning from the south end reported having had a fleeting view of one of the rarer yellow buntings. A lively discussion developed on the quay as to whether the bird, seen by Alex. and Jerome and James A. Stout, belonged to the Red-headed or Black-headed species. I joined them on their next trip and got a good view of the bird as it rose from the rye-grass at Barkland, - an adult male Red-head Emberiza bruniceps with strikingly yellow rump, bright coppery head and the characteristic bounding flight and "pwik" call-note.

The bird disappeared after this encounter and was not seen again until the week-end, when James Wilson reported its presence at Kennaby, half a mile away. It was later found by the Busta family on their croft, and here Arthur B. Duncan and I had a perfect view of it as it sat on a wire fence for a few minutes on July 30th. - the last time this elusive bird was seen.

Others have appeared in Ireland, - a male at Tory Island in the north-west on April 26th, and another at the Nullett, Co. Mayo, on June 8th (per R.F. Rutledge). Peter Davis reports the fifth example to have come to Lundy, off North Devon, the date being June 6th. Another rare eastern bunting Emberiza rustica was caught in the Garden Trap on Skokholm (South Wales) by Mrs. Peter Conder on June 8th.

Rumour has it that the journal British Birds is shortly to publish details of how a large number of Red-headed Buntings, mostly males, have been imported over the last two years and released in the London area. This revelation, of course, will take a good deal of the gilt off the ginger-headed buntings seen in the summer of 1953, and probably for some time to come. I have already emphasised in a letter to the Editors of this journal (46:75) that the meteorological conditions at the time of several of the 1951 occurrences of this handsome bird support the view that those which reach remote island observatories are natural drift-vagrants from the south-east; and even if thousands of Red-headed Buntings were to be released weekly in Whitechapel my confidence in this view would remain unshaken. After all, many thousands of migratory birds of various species were ringed and released in Great Britain in 1951, but how many of them were retrapped at Great Saltee, Lundy and Fair Isle? Not one.

The Fair Isle bird of July 2nd appeared during a synoptic situation which was essentially similar to that prevailing at the time of our first notice of this species in late September 1950. Practically the whole of central and southern Europe had been under the influence of an anticyclone for several days, its centre reaching from northern Italy to the Black Sea. Only along the western seaboard and in Britain was there low pressure weather, and this was of the now familiar drift-creating type with a warm sector moving up the North Sea and SE. winds in Denmark and the Skagerrak extending to the northern isles.

The weather set-up during the period of June 5th-8th is no less suggestive of drift, the situation being that an Azorean ridge covered the British Isles, and was linked to an eastern anticyclone by a col of fine weather in middle Europe. Easterly winds prevailed in southern Britain and on the adjacent Continental coasts, - light, but quite sufficient to cause cross-Channel drift. One must not make too much of coincidence, but the triple appearance at this time of rare luntings in the west and south-west of Britain, taken together with the meteorological situation outlined above, leaves me more than ever convinced that there is a powerful case for the natural agrancy of these eastern birds.

#### 154. Bird-Ringing Progress in 1953.

As a result of the poor spring migration the season's total at the beginning of July was the poorest for any year since 1949, with only 454 birds. During July we more than doubled this, and the month was our best yet in the summer-time with 580 birds.

The month closed with the WHEATEAR total 229 (still behind last year's 276 at the same date, despite a greater number of nestlings), STARLING 135, ROCK PIPIT 120 (more than double the average, due to intensive shore trapping), CROSSBILL 60, ARCTIC SKUA 53, OYSTER-CATCHER 34, MEADOW PIPIT 35, and TWITE 19.

155. Rare Vagrants to Scandinavia from East and South-east. - Part I.

CARL-FREDRIK TUNDEVALL.

As a supplement to the earlier paper dealing with the range-expansion to NW. Europe of species from the east and SE. this article gives a selected list of scarce vagrants to Scandinavia which have presumably originated in much the same regions. Only such vagrants as have been recorded since 1930 are included. A few other notes of interest which bear on the main problem have been included in a second article which will appear later.

Slender-billed Nuthacker. Nucifraga caryocatactes macrorhynchus. Invasions in 1931, 1933, 1943, 1949 and 1950.

Rose-coloured Starling. Pastor roseus. Some recorded during the last decades.

Black-headed Bunting. Emberiza melanocephala. Oeland, Sweden, August 4th 1952.

Red-headed Bunting. Emberiza bruniceps. Utsira, SW. Norway, August 7th 1937.

Girl Bunting. Emberiza c. cirrus. Marstad, Denmark, October 12th 1942.

Eastern Short-toed Lark. Calandrella cinerea longipennis. Four at Utsira, Norway, between September 29th and October 5th 1936.

Richard's Pipit. Anthus novaezeelandiae richardi. Several records from Norway and Sweden. At Falsterbo, October 6th 1942 and 14th 1943.

Hodgson's Pipit. Anthus hodgsoni inopinatus. One at Utsira, Norway, October 8th, 1937.

Muthatch. Sitta europae a baicalensis. Several reports from Finland, where an invasion seems to have occurred in 1901-02.

Azure Tit. Parus c. cyanus. Reported in Sweden in 1940, 1944 and 1945.

Bearded Tit. Panurus biarmicus. On November 20th 1949 one was observed at Vanhankaupunginlahti near Helsinki, Finland. On December 6th a bird, presumably the same, was seen at the same place. The species has never been recorded in Finland before (L. Sammalisto, Orn. Fenn. 1953: 17), and there is only one previous record for the whole of Scandinavia, viz. Ringkøbing Fjord, Denmark, November 12th 1921.

Lesser Grey Shrike. Lanius minor. Åland, Finland, June 9th 1930; Russian Karelia, May 15th 1943; Öland, Sweden, September 1st-2nd 1946, and other records.

Woodchat Shrike. Lanius s. senator. Åland, Finland, June 9th 1930; Tønder, Denmark, May 9th 1951; Öland, Sweden, May 23rd 1952.

Siberian Chiffchaff. Phylloscopus collybita tristis. Utsira, Norway, October 4th 1937.

Yellow-browed Warbler. Ph. i. inornatus. Utsira, September 20th 1937, and again in autumn 1952, - see Bulletin no. 9 (106).

Pallas's Warbler. Ph. p. proregulus. One  
Åland, Finland, October 30th 1934.

River-Warbler. Locustella fluviatilis.  
Several recorded in Denmark, Sweden (since 1937),  
and Finland, and one in Norway.

Savi's Warbler. Locustella l. luscinioides.  
Hammarsjön, SE. Sweden, June 12th 1947; Tingslev,  
Denmark, May 29th 1949.

Lanceolated Warbler. Locustella lanceolata.  
Anholt, October 2nd 1932, and Lyngvig, October 5th  
1935, in Denmark; Hoburgen, Sweden, October 13th  
1939.

Eastern Lesser Whitethroat. Sylvia curruca  
blythi. Utsira, SW. Norway, September 22nd to  
October 7th 1952, - see Bulletin no. 9 (106).  
Possibly also some specimens from south Oeland in  
1951, but these are not yet certainly identified.  
One from the Norwegian weather-ship the "Polar  
Front" on September 22nd 1952, at position 66 N.  
2 E., is now in the Zoological Museum at Bergen  
(H. Holgersen, in lit.)

White's Thrush. Turdus dauma aureus. In  
southern Norway at Ostfold, October 3rd 1936.

Black-throated Thrush. Turdus ruficollis  
atrogularis. The latest records at Stangby, in  
south Sweden, March 23rd 1940, and at Drøbak in  
Norway, January 8th 1945. Two reports from Oslo  
on January 21st 1945 and east Sweden May 25th  
1951 are probably incorrect.



Desert Wheatear. Oenanthe deserti atrogularis. S. Oeland, Sweden, October 8th 1941; Helsinki, Finland, November 4th 1950.

White-spotted Bluethroat. Cyanosylvia s. cyaneula. Latest records at Örebro, Sweden, June 17th to July 3rd 1943 and April 20th to May 31st 1944.

Red-rumped Swallow. Hirundo daurica rufula. Kittila, Finland, May 5th 1933.

Needle-tailed Swift. Chaetura c. caudacuta. Markkala, Finland, May 21st 1933.

Great Spotted Cuckoo, Clamator glandarius. Gamla Karleby, W. Finland, in October 1946, following a severe blizzard.

Scops (wl. Otus s. scops. Karlshamn, SE. Sweden, July 11th 1943.

Peregrine. Falco peregrinus leucogenys. May possibly breed in NE. Norway. Has occurred at Jaeren, south Norway, May 26th 1933, and at Vardø, north Norway, June 24th 1939.

Imperial Eagle. Aquila h. heliaca. One 25 km. NW. of Gällivare, north Sweden, June 1933.

Lesser Spotted Eagle. Aquila p. pomarina. Found breeding in southern Denmark on different occasions at the beginning of the 19th century, but does so no longer. There have been several records within recent years.

Short-toed Eagle. Circaetus g. gallicus. Some recent occurrences are Falsterbo, Sweden, September 8th 1946; south Oeland, September 30th 1946; Slite, Gotland, September 1st 1947.

Griffon Vulture. Gyps f. fulvus. Puolanka, Finland, June 1938; Hiitola, Russian Karelia, June 3rd 1939.

Black Vulture. Aegypius monachus. Falster, Denmark, autumn 1943 (two individuals).

Purple Heron. Ardea p. purpurea. Records from Copenhagen, Denmark, May 24th 1943; Tønder, Denmark, May 26th 1947; south Oeland, Sweden, October 12th 1951.

Great White Heron. Egretta a. alba. One at Örtomta, SE. Sweden, July 1931.

Little Egret. Egretta g. garzetta. Kävsjön, south Sweden, May 14th-15th 1949; Oeland, June 5th 1952; and western Zealand, Denmark, August 28th-September 10th 1952.

Night Heron. Nycticorax n. nycticorax. Kuopio, Finland, November 6th 1935.

Little Bittern. Ixobrychus m. minutus. Tammerfors, Finland, May 19th 1935; Haraldsted, Denmark, August 5th 1949.

Flamingo. Phoenicopterus ruber roseus. Jylland, Denmark, for a long time in 1933; Jaeren, Norway, May and June in the same year; Löddeköpinge and Halmstad, SW. Sweden, June-August 1943.

Bar-headed Goose. Anser indicus. Åland, Finland, May 2nd 1932; Halsikko, Finland, August 21st 1933; Årnsjön, Jämtland, Sweden, May 12th 1940 and May 16th 1941 (together with wild Bean Goose).

Red-breasted Goose. Branta ruficollis. Hillesjön, east Sweden, October 12th 1932 (2); Skanör, south Sweden, November 8th 1943 (3).

Barnacle Goose. Branta leucopsis. This species has become a very regular passage-migrant in east Sweden since about 1920, and flocks of more than 10,000 birds have been reported from Gotland during the last few years.

Ruddy Sheld-Duck. Caesarca ferruginea. Several reported.

Baikal Teal. Anas formosa. Nälden, Jämtland, Sweden, in 1931 and Uleåborg, NW. Finland, December 1st 1950.

Mandarin Duck. Aix galericulata. Occurred at Laxsjö, Jämtland, on May 25th 1930, but was perhaps an escape from captivity.

White-eyed Duck. Aythya n. nyroca. Skälderviken, on the west coast of Skåne, S. Sweden, September 20th 1951; Praestø, Denmark, 15 birds on October 4th, 1951.

Steller's Eider. Polysticta stelleri. This species is possibly breeding in NE. Norway, where it has been recorded annually in the breeding-season from 1924-28 and 1931-33. It is possibly also regular in the Baltic during the winter, but is of course rare.

Fischer's Eider. Arctonetta fischeri. At Vardø, north Norway, in December 1935, and Petsamo, in north Finland (now Russian territory) on March 16th 1938 (two males and three females recorded by R. Meinertzhagen).

Terek Sandpiper. Xenus cinereus. Found breeding in east Finland on four or five different occasions between 1884 and 1913. About 15 individuals have been recorded in Finland since 1930, 4 in Sweden (1934, 1938, 1943 and 1950) and one in Denmark (Amager, July 23rd 1951.)

Large Sand Plover. Charadrius leschenaultii. Morup, SW. Sweden, June 26th-27th 1938.

Asiatic Golden Plover. Pluvialis dominica fulva. Pasvik, north Norway, September 26th 1937.

Sociable Plover. Chettusia gregaria. Thy, Denmark, June 23rd 1930; Pori, Finland, April 28th to May 8th 1951.

Black-winged Stilt. Himantopus h. himantopus. Malmö, south Sweden, May 14th 1944 (3) and Vendsyssel, Denmark, August 5th 1951.

Cream-coloured Courser. Cursorius c. cursor. Ängelholm, south Sweden, October 16th 1933; south Oeland, September 4th-5th 1942.

Black-winged Pratincole. Glareola nordmanni. Thy, Denmark, May 20th 1930; Nørresundby, Denmark, September 30th 1934.

Stone-Curlew. Burhinus oe. oedicnemus. Several and at least some of them probably from SE. at Havringe, east Sweden, May 13th 1930; Ängelholm, south Sweden, January 14th 1936.

Great Bustard. Otis t. tarda. Bred in south Sweden at the beginning of the 19th century. As vagrant to Skanör, south Sweden, April 1st 1939, and Himanka, Finland, July 25th 1942.

MacQueen's Bustard. Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii. Venjan, Dalarna, Sweden, October 26th 1933.

Demoiselle Crane. Anthropoides virgo. At Nordfyn, Denmark, June 1933; Fårö, Gotland, east Sweden, July 1934; Krankesjön, south Sweden, July 23rd 1947.

Sabine's Gull. Xema sabini. Björneborg, Finland, October 13th 1929; between Iolland and Falster, Denmark, October 29th 1936; Køge Bugt, Denmark, November 15th 1945 and Sakskøbing Fjord, Denmark, November 2nd 1947.

Mediterranean Black-headed Gull. Larus melanocephalus. Bornholm, Denmark, June 28th 1939; Holstebro, Denmark, September 18th 1949 (a bird ringed at the mouth of Dnieper, in the Black Sea, on July 2nd 1949); Vallby, south Sweden, August 19th 1950; Lista, SW. Norway, a sight-record on September 25th 1952.

Herring Gull. Larus argentatus heuglini. Kalmar, SE. Sweden, April 30th 1939, and in north Finland, July 11th 1942.

156. A Flat-fly Marking Experiment.

GORDON B. CORRETT

This summer a technique was evolved for the large-scale marking of flat-flies Ornithonyia fringillina, and was put into operation from the beginning of July. A quick-drying cellulose paint was used (made for marking queen bees), and by using three different colours and putting three spots of paint on each fly (usually two on the thorax and one on a leg) over 400 flies have been marked so as to be individually recognisable. A total of about 250 birds, - Rock Pipits, Meadow Pipits, Wheatears and Starlings, - have been liberated carrying the flies. Of these, the Rock Pipits have produced most retraps (c. 30%), followed by wheatears (20%) and Meadow Pipits (10%). Many of these, however, have been retrapped more than once, the record being held by a Wheatear which has been caught seven times in all, including three times in one day.

Just under 10% of the flies have been recovered, but again, some individuals have been released and recovered several times on different hosts. Only about 50% of the birds have yielded their marked flies on being retrapped, and this is probably largely due to the failure of the fly to accept its new host, - it was often found very difficult to persuade a fly to settle down in a bird's plumage. However, there have been several instances of flies being recaptured on different hosts from those on which they were released, and these cases are summarised in the following table:

	<u>Original Host</u>	<u>Released on</u>	<u>Recovered on</u>
1.	Wheatear	Meadow Pipit	Meadow Pipit
2.	Starling	Rock Pipit	Rock Pipit
3.	Meadow Pipit	Wheatear	wheatear
4.	Twite	Rock Pipit	Rock Pipit
5.	Rock Pipit	Rock Pipit	Rock Pipit
6.	Wheatear	Rock Pipit	Rock Pipit
7.	Wheatear	(Set free)	Wheatear
8.	Wheatear	"	Wheatear
9.	Wheatear	"	Wheatear

It will be seen that, in every case, the flies had gone to the same species as that on which they were released, irrespective of the original host-species. This seems to suggest that they did leave the host of their own accord after its release, when the host was in the company of birds of its own species. Several flies were set free without a new host and the three recoveries obtained from these are also shown in the table. In these cases, the flies returned to their original host-species.

The longest interval after which a fly was recovered from the bird on which it was placed was 30 days (a female fly on a juvenile Meadow Pipit.) Two others, male and female, were recovered from Rock Pipits after 21 days.

#### Phoresy

Many of the flies were infested with mites, at least two species being commonly found. The most frequent was a fairly large white mite found in varying numbers on the undersides of the legs and thorax, while a much smaller species occurred in clusters on the under surface of the wings.

Most of the flies from Starlings were carrying up to 12 feather-lice (Mallophaga) on the abdomen. The table below gives approximate figures for the occurrence of phoresy in the four species concerned:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Total no.</u> <u>birds</u>	<u>% infested</u> <u>mites</u>	<u>% infested</u> <u>lice.</u>
Wheatear	77	70	0
Starling	26	20	60
Rock Pipit	92	17	0
Meadow Pipit	35	17	6

Several of the recoveries of marked flies showed interesting changes in mite infestation whilst the fly was on the bird. Some of these are summarised in the following table. The first three cases refer to flies set free without a host.

<u>Species.</u>	<u>Mites when</u> <u>released.</u>	<u>Mites when</u> <u>recovered.</u>	<u>Time</u> <u>interval</u>
Wheatear	1	9	3 days
Wheatear	3	9	1 day
Wheatear	nil	5	1 day
Rock Pipit	32	1	2 days
Rock Pipit	21	4	2½ hours
Wheatear	nil	4	12 hours

The large species of mite was usually present in small numbers, but several flies were very heavily infested, up to 80 being counted on one fly. Even so, they were not found on the abdomen, but only on legs, thorax and head. Only on one fly were the eggs on this mite observed, forming a large frill round the fly's neck and at the bases of the legs.



Breeding

So far, the information on breeding is rather scanty. The ratio of females to males has been fairly constant throughout at 2:1. Gravid females have been obtained with constant frequency throughout the period of the investigation, and 30 puparia have been laid while the flies were in the lab. However, 30% of these have been small and non-viable, probably laid prematurely as a result of the chloroform treatment used in removing flies from their hosts. Only one female has recovered twice in a gravid state, the interval being four days.

A female noted as being "slightly gravid" was kept in the lab., without food, and produced a mature puparium in three days, which suggests that when on a bird a fly might perhaps drop puparia at intervals as short as five days. As these puparia have no mechanism for attachment to the host they must be dropped at random about the island, remaining in the vegetation until the flies emerge in the following spring.

Although there is little direct information available up to the present, a more careful analysis of the recovery data may shed a little more light on the many problems still surrounding the life-history of these flies.

# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY

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## 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

