

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN



Edited by
KENNETH WILLIAMSON
Director

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January 1956.

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1. Hudsonian Whimbrel at Fair Isle:
a new British bird.

An example of the American race of the Whimbrel, - called "Hudsonian Curlew" in the American Ornithologists' Union Check-list, - was present at Fair Isle between May 27th and 31st 1955. The occurrence has been reported in British Birds, 48: 379-381, and a reprint of the article is issued with this Bulletin.

2. Recent Fair Isle Bird-Ringing Recoveries.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. Six of a party of eleven Dunlin at Easter Lothar Pool on August 13th were taken with the Yeoman Net. With one exception, at 112 mm., their wing-lengths ranged from 115-119 mm., so they are likely to have belonged to the Northern race C.a. alpina. One (wing 115 mm.) was recovered at Basin d'Arcachon in Gironde, FRANCE, on September 16th, 1050 miles south.

BLACK-HEADED GULL Larus ridibundus. One ringed as a chick in the Spiggie-Brow marsh, Dunrossness, on behalf of F.I.B.O. on July 3rd 1955, was caught in an exhausted state at Deerness, ORKNEY, 90 miles south, on July 29th. Later it recovered and was released.

CUCKOO Cuculus canorus. An adult ♂ caught in the Observatory Trap at 1630 hrs. on May 6th 1955 had reached Bergen, NORWAY, two days later, - a journey of 280 miles slightly north of east. First seen there on May 8th, it was shot on 12th by Reidar Birkeland of Valestrandssossen. The Daily Weather Report shows that the bird took advantage of fine anticyclonic weather with light breezes in the sea-areas Fair Isle and Forties to make the crossing.

SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. A ♂ ringed at Fair Isle in early July 1953 was recaptured at a nest at Reay, in CAITHNESS, by James Gunn on July 6th 1955, for the second year in succession.

3. Thick-billed Warbler at Fair Isle: a
Bird new to Europe.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

An example of the Thick-billed Warbler Phragamaticola aedon, an eastern Asiatic species never before recorded in Europe, was captured at Fair Isle on October 6th 1955. It was seen in the field and examined in the laboratory by I.J. Ferguson-Lees (executive editor, British Birds), H.E. Axell (warden of Dungeness Bird Observatory), Dr. Maeve Rusk, Dr. A.G.G. Thompson, Miss V.M. Thom, my wife and myself.

In the fleeting glimpses we obtained in the field its large size and long, rounded tail at once attracted notice. The rufous rump, contrasting with the uniform olive-brown of mantle and wings, was a conspicuous feature, and much more striking in the field than in the hand. In these characteristics the bird strongly resembled a Great Reed Warbler, but its habit of skulking among the crops did not allow of a really critical view. When flushed from the turnip rig at Lower Leogh it flew to a tangle of Heraclium and long, reedy grass on the banks of a nearby ditch, and the way it crept through the vegetation gave hopes that an attempt to trap it there might prove successful. Accordingly, the Yeoman Net and portable "Craw" catching-box were set up, giving a trap with an entrance less than 3 ft. wide. Again the bird was driven out of the turnips, and it threaded its way through the tangle of vegetation and was quickly in the box.

In the laboratory it was seen that the resemblance to a Great Reed Warbler was confined to size and plumage: there was no eye-stripe as in that species, and the structure of wing and bill was very different. Acrocephalus has a thin straight bill; in this bird it was shorter and deeper, and the culmen was distinctly down-curved. In place of the very small 1st primary of the Reed Warblers, our specimen had a broad 1st primary 8 mm. longer than the primary coverts; the 3rd primary was the longest, the 4th slightly shorter, and both were emarginate. The tip of the 2nd lay between the 6th and 7th. Measurements were: chord of wing 79 mm., bill

from skull $16\frac{1}{2}$ mm. (6 mm. in depth at the nostrils), tarsus $29\frac{1}{2}$ mm., tail 78 mm. The bird weighed 22.84 gm.

The upper-parts were a bright olive-brown, the rump - as mentioned - having a decidedly rufous tinge. Chin and throat were yellowish-white, and the breast, flanks and under tail-coverts were washed strongly with buff. The dark brown wing-feathers were fringed olivaceous on the primaries and rufous on the secondaries, and axillaries and under wing-coverts were buffish-white. In the tail of 12 feathers the outer pair were 18 mm. shorter than the longest feathers, and the penultimate pair 8 mm. The upper mandible was dark brown and the lower flesh-colour; the legs were bluish, inclining to purplish on the sides of the tarsi, and the toes were blue.

This bird reached Fair Isle as part of a considerable drift movement involving a rush of Redwings Turdus musicus and Fringilla sp., as well as a small number of departing summer visitors among which Whinchats Saxicola rubetra and Blackcaps Sylvia atricapilla were dominant. Overnight a depression moving quickly eastwards from the Atlantic had crossed southern Scotland, its occluded front and associated rain spreading northwards through the North Sea, with a SE. windstream between the Skagerrak and the northern isles.

The Thick-billed Warbler is an inhabitant of south-east Siberia from the Yenesei eastwards to Manchuria and North China: it winters in India, and in vast numbers in Burma. It is a bird of marshy places, haunting bushes and low trees close to water, and is said to be extremely shy, hiding in the dense herbage at the least sign of danger, - a trait which in the present instance contributed to its capture. It is very remarkable that any bird with so distant a range should have drifted so far to the west as the very edge of the Eurasian Continent, yet it is by no means the first species to have done so, and (may we hope!) it will not be the last. What happens to such wind-blown waifs we do not know, but it seems unlikely that they ever return to their natural range. Some day the chance recovery of an aluminium ring may give us the information we want.

4. Red-footed Falcon trapped at Fair Isle.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

A Red-footed Falcon Falco vespertinus, first seen on June 4th 1955, was trapped and ringed on 8th, and last seen on 12th. When found on the afternoon of 8th it was working along a line of fencing-posts, using them as look-out points for insect prey in the manner of a shrike. Its sallies from these posts usually took it to about ten or twelve feet from the fence, and this habit seemed to offer a fair chance of catching the bird with a clap-net operated from a hide. Accordingly one was set up, with a good supply of meal-worms as bait. Twice during the next hour the bird passed by the net without showing any interest in the bait, but on the third occasion it flew down and was caught.

It was a 1st-summer ♂ with a good deal of juvenile plumage remaining on the wings and underparts, but the head, mantle, upper breast and sides of neck were slate-grey as in the adult ♂. The tail was completely juvenile and was very worn. The reddish-orange bill, eye-rims and legs - the latter surmounted by warm-rufous "trousers" - were the finishing touches to a handsome ensemble which is described in greater detail in a note in British Birds. The bird weighed 136 gm.

At the beginning of June the whole of Europe was covered by a vast anticyclonic system with calms or light airs everywhere, and with the approach of a low from the Atlantic a marked south-easterly airflow developed across the North Sea, out of an extensive col between centres of high pressure over Jan Mayen Seas and the Central Mediterranean. It was at this period that a large influx of Bee-Eaters Merops apiaster took place in southern England, two pairs remaining to breed successfully in Sussex. One Bee-Eater was recorded in Lerwick on June 3rd and other interesting species seen in Dumrosness (see pp. 21-26) were the first Shetland Stone Curlew, two Golden Orioles and a ♂ Scarlet Grosbeak.

Greenish Warblers in Britain

- North Cotes, Lincolnshire, September 5th 1896. Shot.
G.H. Caton-Haigh, Bull. B.O.C., 6: viii. ♀.
- Skaw of Whalsay, Shetland, September 12th 1945. Shot.
Samuel Bruce. See Scot. Nat., 62: 20. Unsexed
adult. In S. Bruce's collection, Lerwick.
- Fair Isle, Shetland, June 2nd-3rd 1949. Trapped and
ringed. Scot. Nat., 62: 18-20 and F.I.B.O. First
Annual Rep. 1949, pp. 12-13 and plate 13. Adult.
- Spurn Point, Yorkshire, August 21st 1949. Trapped and
ringed. G.H. Ainsworth. See Brit. Birds, 43: 209
and Y.N.U. Committee for Ornithology Rep. 1949, p.11
- Fair Isle, Shetland, September 19th 1950. Trapped and
ringed. Brit. Birds, 44: 120-121. 1st-winter ? ♀.
- Blakeney Point, Norfolk, September 6th 1951. Sight.
P.W.P. Browne and A. Hitchon, Brit. Birds, 45:413.
- Great Saltee Island, Co. Wexford, Eire, August 25th
1952. Shot. P.W.P. Browne, Brit. Birds, 46: 456.
Specimen in National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.
- Bardsey Island, Carnarvonshire, N. Wales, June 16th
1954. Sight. R. Thearle, Brit. Birds, 47: 408.
- Fair Isle, Shetland, July 15th-24th 1955. Trapped and
ringed. See foregoing Note and Brit. Birds, 49 (in
press). Adult ? ♀.
- Isle of May, Forth, Scotland, August 27th-September 3rd
1955. Trapped and ringed. See Brit. Birds, 49 (in
press). 1st-winter ? ♀.

5. A third Greenish Warbler trapped at Fair Isle.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

When I visited the Gully Trap early in the morning of July 15th 1955 a tiny greyish-green warbler about the size and shape of a Chiffchaff, but with a single whitish bar in the wing and a long yellowish-white stripe above the eye, fluttered into the funnel ahead of me and hovered for several seconds in front of the box. It proved to be the third Greenish Warbler Phylloscopus trochiloides viridamus recognised at Fair Isle, where the species had not been recorded before the Observatory's first full season in 1949.

At that time there were only two records of this eastern species in the British Isles, one from North Cotes on the Lincolnshire coast, as long ago as 1896, and one from the Shetland island of Whalsay in 1945. We trapped our first in the Gully on June 2nd 1949 (see J. Peterson's photograph in Annual Report 1949, pl.13) and caught another with the Yeoman Net among crops on September 19th 1950. The present bird, which remained in the Gully until July 24th, is actually the ninth occurrence in Britain: a tenth was to follow when a bird was trapped at the Isle of May later in the summer. This spate of records of what was an extremely rare visitor to western Europe prior to the end of the war emphasises the important part the Bird Observatories are now playing in the study of migration and faunistics; for Spurn Point, Isle of May, Great Saltee and Bardsey Bird Observatories all share with Fair Isle recent records of this species, as will be seen from the summary.

It is doubtful if the establishment of these Bird Observatories at key migration points can be the whole explanation of this recent increase in Greenish Warblers, for this is one of several interesting species which are spreading slowly westwards into Europe from beyond the Ural Mountains. The Greenish Warbler was first noticed at Rositten on the Baltic in 1905, and it appears to have colonised a number of places in East Prussia, Danzig and Pomerania in the 20's and 30's. At the same time it was

spreading into Finland (which, with Sweden, enjoyed a small invasion in 1952), and there have been several occurrences in Sweden since its first appearance there in 1939. These have been mentioned by Carl-Frederik Lundevall, Bulletin 1: no.9, para. 102. So the increasing number in our own country is almost certainly a part of this pattern of westwards range-expansion, especially as some of the birds have appeared in the summer months from June to August, when they have been heard in song.

In the field the Fair Isle bird could best be described as a greyish rather than a greenish warbler, its drab appearance being doubtless due to plumage-wear. It was greyest on head, nape and rump, with green showing only on the edges of the flight-feathers in the closed wing. The underparts were whitish, with some streaky yellow markings on the breast which were not visible in the field. The yellowish-white tips to the inner webs of the greater coverts and the long and almost straight superciliary stripe, extending nearly to the gape, were prominent features. Other details of plumage and wing-structure (on which racial identification is based) are given in a note sent to British Birds. The bird had a musical, disyllabic call "chee-wee", probably an anxiety note as it was heard only when the bird was in the trap. It was once seen to take a moth, but "flycatching" for small Diptera and foraging for insects in the low-growing herbage on the rocky face of the Gully were its usual methods of feeding. Very often, when searching for food, it carried the wing-tips below the level of the back and flicked the wings and tail spasmodically not unlike a Hedge-Sparrow.

The bird was trapped on three occasions, its weight decreasing from 7.75 gm. (0640 hrs. 15th) to 7.39 gm. (0700 hrs. 23rd). The wing-length of 58 mm. suggests a ♀. The adult caught in June 1949 (wing 62 mm.) weighed only 6.68 gm. at midday, and the weight of the 1st-winter bird of September 1950 was 7.15 gm. at 18 00 hrs.

K.W.

6. Spring Migrants at Foula in 1955.

C. K. MYLNE.

- BEAN GOOSE Anser a. arvensis. One on June 15th.
 WHOOPER SWAN Cygnus cygnus. Two on June 18th; see Tom Henderson's notes on Shetland Migrants, p. 22.
 KESTREL Falco tinnunculus. Singly, May 1st & 14th.
 QUAIL Coturnix coturnix. One from June 9th-12th.
 CORNCRAKE Crex crex. One on May 28th.
 GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. Flock of 10 on May 2nd; 6 Northern Ch. a. altifrons on May 4th and one on 25th, also a single bird on 29th.
 COMMON SANDPIPER Tringa hypoleucos. Singly, May 25th and June 1st.
 WOOD PIGEON Columba palumbus. One on June 4th.
 TURTLE DOVE Streptopelia turtur. One on June 1st.
 CUCKOO Cuculus canorus. Singly, May 26th and on June 2nd and 3rd.
 SHORT-EARED OWL Asio flammeus. One on May 31st.
 NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus europaeus. One on June 10th.
 SWIFT Apus apus. One on June 2nd.
 SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. Passage from May 23rd to 29th (with 5 on 26th-27th, increasing on next two days); June 1st-3rd; one on 6th-7th, and a few from 10th-13th.
 HOUSE MARTIN Delichon urbica. Two on May 27th and more on 29th, but the main movement was from June 1st-3rd with 50 birds on 2nd and 20 next day.
 SAND MARTIN Riparia riparia. One on May 29th and one on June 2nd.
 SONG THRUSH Turdus ericetorum. One on June 9th.
 REDWING Turdus musicus. 2 on April 30th; one from May 4th to 13th, with 2 on 8th.
 RING OUSEL Turdus torquatus. ♂ and ♀ on June 7th.
 WHEATEAR Oenanthe oenanthe. An increase in numbers at the beginning of May, followed by an imrush on 4th. Later increases took place on 10th, 17th and 22nd, and there were noticeable decreases on 24th, 26th and 31st.
 STONECHAT Saxicola torquata. A ♀ on May 1st.
 WHINCHAT Saxicola rubetra. Singly, May 2nd and 27th.

REDSTART Phoenicurus phoenicurus. ♂ on May 2nd, followed by 3 birds on 3rd; one on 30th, ♀ on 31st.

BLACK REDSTART Ph. ochruros. One on June 16th.

ROBIN Erithacus rubecula. One, April 30th; 2 on May 4th and one on 6th (Compare with Fair Isle numbers).

SEDGE WARBLER Acrocephalus schoenobaemis. One on June 2nd.

BLACKCAP Sylvia atricapilla. ♂ and ♀ on May 29th and ♂ next day; ♀ on June 6th and again from 11th-13th.

GARDEN WARBLER Sylvia borin. Single birds early June increasing to 6 on 6th. Two on 9th and 15th, with odd birds between.

WHITETHROAT Sylvia communis. Two on May 29th and singly on 30th and June 7th.

LESSER WHITETHROAT Sylvia curruca. Singly, May 7th 30th and June 4th, 11th and 18th. Those of May 7th and June 18th had wing-formula of the Siberian form Sylvia c. blythi, but it is likely that this condition was due to excessive wear of the primaries.

WILLOW WARBLER / CHIFFCHAFF Phylloscopus trochilus / collybita. The first Willow Warbler was on April 27th; others were identified on May 3rd and 30th. A definite Chiffchaff was noted on May 8th; otherwise, phylloscopine warblers were seen on May 4th-5th, 26th, 28th, June 2nd-3rd and June 15th-16th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata. One bird from May 28th-30th, and another on June 10th.

PIED FLYCATCHER M. hypoleuca. ♂, May 4th-6th.

HEDGE SPARROW Prunella modularis. One, May 28th.

PIED / WHITE WAGTAIL Motacilla alba. Passage on May 1st (5) and following days to 6th, again from 10th-14th, and 21st (2). There was a Pied on 4th-5th. In June there were Whites between 3rd-7th and 17th-19th.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE Lanius senator. One, May 28th.

REDPOLL Carduelis flammea. One on May 30th.

BRAMBLING Fringilla montifringilla. Single ♂ on May 4th and 7th; two on 11th.

REED BUNTING Emberiza schoeniclus. ♂, May 27th.

SNOW BUNTING Plectrophenax nivalis. 3 on May 12th one 17th, one 21st with 3 on 22nd followed by 2 till 24th.

TREE SPARROW Passer montanus. One, May 7th-8th.

7. The early May Drift at Fair Isle.

VALERIE M. THOM.

During the last week of April a high covering the whole of southern Europe provided suitable conditions for migration. On May 1st an Icelandic low developed a small secondary off SW. Ireland and this deepened rapidly and moved N.NE. The easterly airstream ahead of an associated occlusion, combined with fog and rain in the Skagerrak area during the night, resulted in a large-scale drift of small Passerines across the North Sea.

This influx first became apparent at Spiggie in the south of Shetland, where the Fair Isle party was delayed by bad weather, on the afternoon of May 2nd. In the crofting area of the township and its neighbourhood some 20 Willow Warblers, 4 Pied Flycatchers, one or two Whitethroats and Reed Buntings (probably migrants) and a single Whinchat and White Wagtail were seen, while 2 Sand Martins and a Swallow were hawking for insects over Loch Brow. No migrant birds had been seen the previous day.

After an ideal crossing "The Good Shepherd" took up her moorings in the North Haven in mid-afternoon of May 3rd and during the remainder of the day 24 birds were trapped. As in early May 1954 the Robin was the dominant species, 28 being trapped in our first two days, and these birds were of the Continental race. Hedge-Sparrows, Willow Warblers, Redstarts and Common Whitethroats were also present in fair numbers, with several Pied Flycatchers, a Wrenneck and Ring Ousel. The cultivated part of the island was not covered thoroughly until May 4th, and the Tree Sparrows, Reed and Lapland Buntings, Yellow Hammers, Bramblings and Short-toed Lark seen then may well have been on the isle since 2nd.

The cool conditions which gave us such an unexpectedly calm crossing of the Roost probably encourage redetermined passage, and a big decrease in birds was noted on 5th after a night of relatively light southerly wind.

A selected list of migrants at this period, and also during the middle part of the month when migration was almost at a standstill owing to cold northerly winds, is given below:

Ducks and Geese. One or two Mallard and Teal from May 5th-7th. There were 3 Pinkfeet on 10th and single Shelduck (a scarce bird at Fair Isle) on 17th.

Birds of Prey. Single Kestrels on 4th and 6th and a ♀ on 16th. There was only one Merlin, on 9th.

Rails. The first Corncrakes were 3 on May 5th. We had a Moorhen from 3rd-5th and again on 9th.

Lapwings. In addition to the two breeding-pairs with nests on the Thione moorland there were 10 birds on 4th and 5 on 13th.

Golden Plover. 3 on 10th and 2 on 13th were of the Northern form, Charadrius apricaria altifrons.

Curlew and Whimbrel. Of the former, only odd birds until 7th, when 7 were seen, with 2 next day. Whimbrel were on passage from 4th to 18th with peaks on 13th (30) and 16th (26). There was a single Woodcock on 10th.

Sandpipers. First Common on 6th-7th and another on 17th. There were more Purples than usual at this time of the year, with 3 on 5th, 6 on 7th, 12 on 9th, 10 on 11th, 12 on 13th, 15 on 14th followed by a decline to 2 on 18th.

Gulls. A few Common on 7th-8th and 14th; occasional Black-headed Gulls with 3 on 14th.

Wood Pigeon. One on 8th, 3 on 9th, and one on 18th.

Cuckoo. An adult ♂ trapped on 6th was in western Norway on 8th, see p. 2.

Owls. Single Long-eared and Short-eared on May 4th.

Wryneck. One on May 4th-5th.

Short-toed Lark. See p. 14.

Swallows. Slight passage, 3rd-9th, with 6 on 8th; and again from 15th-17th with 4 on 16th.

Crows. There was an unusual number of Carrion Crows: Corvus c. corone on the isle between 4th and 17th, the biggest count being of 7 on 8th. Rooks were also present - 6 on 13th, 3 on 14th and one on 17th.

Thrushes. 4 Fieldfares on 4th and 3 on the next two days; last seen, 2 on 17th. One or 2 Song Thrushes were present from 3rd-6th and single Redwings were seen on 4th, 13th and 15th. There was a Ring Ousel on 3rd, and at no time were there more than 3 Blackbirds.

Chats. There was a marked passage of Wheatears on 14th. (This was a big passage-day also at Great Saltee, see p. 41). Further birds passed on 17th. Whinchats fell from 8 on 4th to one on 5th. There were several Redstarts, mostly ♂♂, on 3rd-4th, down to 6 on 5th, then absent until 11th and 13th when a single ♀ was seen. Of the big influx of Robins on 3rd-4th only 10 remained on 5th, 5 on 6th, 2 on 7th and one on 8th and 11th.

Warblers. A ♂ Blackcap on 7th. A dozen Whitethroats on 4th gave place to 3 on 5th and 2 on 6th, with a single bird on 8th-9th. Willow Warblers were at about the same strength as the Robins on 3rd-4th and fell to 10 on 5th, with a single bird next day.

Flycatchers. 2 ♂♂ Pied on 3rd; 2 ♂♂ and ♀ on 4th, ♂ 5th. There were no Spotted until late in the month.

Hedge Sparrows. Movement was stronger than at any time spring or autumn, since the Observatory opened. At least 6 on 3rd, 3 on 4th, one on 6th. All trapped were Continental.

Tree Pipits. 6 on 4th, 3 on 5th, 2 on 9th, singly on 12th-13th and 2 on 14th.

White Wagtails. 6 on 4th and 7th, otherwise a few almost daily.

Bramblings. 2 ♂♂ and 3 ♀♀ on 4th; ♂ on 5th, 8th, 10th.

Buntings. Pair of Yellow Hammers and 6 ♂♂ Reeds on 4th; a single ♂ Reed on 5th, 7th, 9th was heard singing. There were 2 ♂♂ Lapland Buntings on 4th and a few Snows 11th.

Tree Sparrows. Two on 4th, the first record since 1936, the last year that Tree Sparrows nested at Fair Isle.

8. Short-toed Larks at Fair Isle in 1955.

With a number of Skylarks on an area of ploughland on May 4th 1955 there was a smaller and very much redder bird which I identified as a Short-toed Lark Calandrella cinerea. A full description of it is given in a note in British Birds, 48: 512. The Skylarks were almost imperceptible against their background of dark brown soil until they moved, but this bird was very conspicuous, and I can fully endorse P.J. Conder's impression of a "small, reddish brown lark" rather than a "pale, sandy-looking" one as it is described in The Handbook (see British Birds, 46: 190). R.F. Rutledge has also commented on this difference in the case of a bird seen at Great Saltee on May 16th 1953 (British Birds, 47: 442; see also this Bulletin, p. 41).

In the autumn we suspected, from call-notes heard in the stubbles, that a Short-toed Lark was present at the isle on October 6th and 7th: the call was the distinctive, bell-like one described in my note in British Birds, 48: 457, but the bird was never clearly seen. On October 20th, in the Busta stubble, I.J. Ferguson-Lees identified a Short-toed Lark which he described as a very grey type of bird, and which may therefore have inclined towards the eastern form Calandrella c. longipennis, rather than the reddish south European type. At Taft on November 14th James A. Stout found a specimen of a Short-toed Lark which he sent to me and which I have compared with skins in the Royal Scottish Museum. This is a very reddish example and is clearly referable to Calandrella c. brachydactyla. There are a few previous autumn records of this form, mostly very late in the season: ♂ November 11th 1907, ♀ November 28th 1910, ♂ November 9th 1925, ♀ October 19th 1926, ♂ October 24th 1930.

Finally, on November 27th James Wilson observed a Short-toed Lark at Taing which he describes as much paler than the example shown to him a few days earlier by James Stout, and which seems likely therefore to have had closer affinity with the grey-brown eastern bird.

K. W.

9. Migration at Fair Isle in late May and
early June 1955.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

Low pressure weather over Scandinavia throughout mid-May brought bitterly cold days of north winds at Fair Isle, and there was little to reward the bird-watcher. This series of depressions broke down on May 24th and a small low in the North Sea gave way to a high pressure cell that was part of an anticyclonic system affecting the whole of south and south-east Europe, extending on 24th as far east as Asia Minor and the Black Sea. Locally, this high pressure expanded during 24th-25th and overnight a cold front across the North Sea and Forties brought the south-easterly airstream we had waited for so long.

The return of anticyclonic weather immediately brought a resurgence of passage, very noticeable amongst Curlew and Wimbrel, Dunlin, the Hirundines, and a few Passerine species including Bluethroat and Blackcap. The Passerine migration, however, did not warm up until 27th-28th, and most of the species struck a peak on one or the other of those days. By this time the high was firmly centred over sea-area Forties, and the whole of the North Sea enjoyed a light easterly airstream. Conditions in Denmark and the Skagerrak region were excellent for night migration with clear skies and very little wind, and to this must be attributed the fact that ~~that~~ movement reaching Fair Isle was slight in strength, if varied in species.

A ridge of high pressure from the north enveloped Fair Isle and the north-east coast of Scotland on 29th and we lost the easterly wind; but with calms in northern Scotland conditions continued to be good for redetermined passage, with the result that migration continued to the end of the month, some species showing a minor peak on 30th-31st. This double peak of drift followed by onward passage is shown most clearly by the day-migrating birds such as the Hirundines. A few waders which did not show up with us in the early movement (though they reached Shetland) appeared on 30th-31st (e.g. Wood Sandpiper and

Sanderling). Most of the Passerines showed a steady declining passage following the peak of 27th-28th, but in one or two cases - particularly Willow Warbler - there was a slight hiatus on 29th.

During the first few days of June light SE. to S.SE. winds again developed in the North Sea, with clear skies and light breezes in Denmark and southern Norway, so that again a slight drift-movement to Fair Isle took place. The most interesting birds of the spring passage, rarities with a southern or south-eastern origin, appeared in south Shetland and Fair Isle at this time. Our best was the Red-footed Falcon described on p. 5, and at Spiggie there were Stone Curlew (a first record for Shetland), Golden Orioles, and a really Scarlet Grosbeak. Occurrences there, reported by Tom Henderson on pp. 21-26, fit very neatly with the pattern outlined for Fair Isle. Other species taking part in this June influx were Red-backed Shrike, Turtle Dove, House Martin, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, and Spotted Flycatcher. Indeed, the strength of the Spotted Flycatcher movement through Fair Isle was quite unusual. R.F. Rutledge makes the same point with regard to Great Saltee (p. 43), though an earlier period and clearly a different stock of birds are involved.

WIGEON Anas penelope. ♂ and 2 ♀♀ on May 27th and ♀ on May 30th.

MALLARD Anas platyrhynchos. ♂ on 3 days in early June.

WHOOPEE SWAN Cygnus cygnus. Two flew northwards across the isle on the evening of June 10th, - almost certainly the same two which summered in Shetland (p. 22).

KESTREL Falco tinnunculus. One on May 30th-31st, and one on July 22nd.

RED-FOOTED FALCON Falco vespertinus. See p. 5.

CORNCRAKE Grex crex. One on May 25th increasing to 3 on 27th-28th and declining to one on June 1st.

MOORHEN Gallinula chloropus. Singly, May 20th, 23rd and 25th, - probably the same bird.

LAPWING Vanellus vanellus. Flock of 37 arrived on May 20th, staying till 22nd; there were then 7 or 8 in addition to the two breeding-pairs until 28th.

RINGED PLOVER Charadrius hiaticula. A few birds additional to the 3 breeding-pairs, May 31st-June 1st.

GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. Singly on May 26th and June 1st; two Ch. a. altifrons on May 24th; one or two in early July.

TURNSTONE Arenaria interpres. Singly May 23rd-27th; 2 or 3 on 31st and June 1st, and 3 on June 7th.

WOODCOCK Scolopax rusticola. Singly May 24th, 26th.

CURLEW Numenius arquata. Passage from May 25th with 6 on 26th, a few till June 2nd, singly on 3rd-4th.

WHIMBREL Numenius phaeopus. After mid-May passage (May 5th-12th, a dozen daily; May 13th, 30; May 16th-17th, 20 +) the only marked increases in number were 10 on 23rd and half-a-dozen or more daily from 26th-30th, with 4 on the following two days. Slight passage continued as usual into mid-June. With the birds on 27th was an example of the American race N. ph. hudsonicus, - see p. 2.

WOOD SANDPIPER Tringa glareola. One at the Golden Water on May 30th.

COMMON SANDPIPER Tringa hypoleucos. Singly May 17th, 19th; two on 22nd; singly, 24th, 26th.

REDSHANK Tringa totanus. Two on May 19th and 4 on 20th; singly on 23rd, 26th and 28th.

KNOT Calidris canutus. One on May 27th.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. 10 on May 26th reduced to 3 over the next three days and 2 on 30th, but 5 on 31st and June 1st.

SANDERLING Crocethia alba. Four on May 31st.

POMARINE SKUA Stercorarius pomarinus. One was over Vaasetter, being chased by Arctic Skuas, on June 4th.

COMMON GULL Larus camus. Slight passage, May 25th (11), and a few on most days to June 6th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL Larus ridibundus. Slight passage May 22nd (9) and one or two most days to June 3rd.

WOOD PIGEON Columba palumbus. One, May 27th; 2 on 29th; one, June 2nd.

TURTLE DOVE Streptopelia turtur. Singly, May 28th, 30th, June 1st and 3rd; 2 on 6th-7th with one on 8th; one very late bird from July 19th to 21st.

CUCKOO Cuculus canorus. One on May 26th-27th.

NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus europaeus. One, May 31st.

SHORT-EARED OWL Asio flammeus. Singly, May 22nd, 30th and June 2nd.

SWIFT Apus apus. One on May 27th-28th. In June there were 6 on 19th and 2 on 30th; and in July 5 on 9th, 7 on 12th and one on 25th.

WRYNECK Jynx torquilla. Singly May 27th and 31st.

SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. Passage began with 5 on May 22nd, increasing to 14 next day; there was a fresh burst on 25th with 7 followed by a dozen on 26th, then two heavy days on 27th-28th. There were a score or more from May 30th to June 1st, up to 5 daily to June 19th and some on 26th, with single birds on 30th and July 3rd, 3 on July 5th and 4 on 9th.

HOUSE MARTIN Delichon urbica. One at the start of the Swallow movement on May 22nd, but passage did not begin until 20 came on 26th, building up to 50 by 28th. They decreased next day but there were 30 on 30th and 15 on 31st. There were 7 on June 1st, a dozen on 3rd, and 7 on 4th, otherwise a few daily until 19th (6). There were 4 as late as July 9th.

SAND MARTIN Riparia riparia. Three with the House Martin movement on May 26th, 5 next day, then 2 on 28th and 30th.

CARRION CROW Corvus corone corone. Two, May 23rd, and a bird on 30th-31st.

FIELDFARE Turdus pilaris. One on May 22nd and 2 next day. Two on May 27th.

REDWING Turdus musicus. One, May 23rd, and from 26th-28th.

BLACKBIRD Turdus merula. Four on May 27th and 2 or 3 daily till June 3rd. (Only one pair nested in 1955).

WHEATEAR Oenanthe oenanthe. Mid-May influxes on 14th, 17th (peak), 19th and 23rd. Some long-winged and heavy birds were trapped on 19th-20th, including an ad. ♂ leucorrhoa at 37.39 gm. (wing 106 mm.). See Foula notes.

WHINCHAT Saxicola rubetra. ♀ on May 25th joined by ♂ next day; 4 on 27th declining to one on 31st; ♀ on June 3rd; 2 birds on June 9th.

REDSTART Phoenicurus phoenicurus. A ♂ on May 23rd; one on 27th increased to 6 next day and fell to 4 on 29th. One on June 1st.

BLUETHROAT Luscinia s. svecica. 1st-summer ♂♂ Red-Spotted Bluethroats were trapped on May 25th and 28th, and there were 2 ♀♀ on 26th.

ROBIN Erithacus rubecula. Singly, May 19th-20th, 24th, and 28th-31st; one on June 5th. All Continental.

SEDGE WARBLER Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. A poor passage this year with 2 on 27th and 29th and singletons on 28th and June 1st.

BLACKCAP Sylvia atricapilla. Two on May 26th and singly till 30th, and a ♀ on June 4th.

GARDEN WARBLER Sylvia borin. Four on May 28th, 2 on 30th and June 1st, 2 on 4th and 6th, and singly on other days in the period. The last was on July 1st.

WHITETHROAT Sylvia communis. ♀ on May 24th, ♂ 25th, 2 on 26th and peak-passage of 8 and 16 during the next two days. There were 6 on 29th-30th and odd birds in early June.

LESSER WHITETHROAT Sylvia curruca. Four on each of the peak Whitethroat days and 2 or 3 daily thence to June 2nd. Four on June 3rd and 5 on 4th, and singly 5th-6th.

WILLOW WARBLER Phylloscopus trochilus. One on May 25th; 6 on 27th rose to 20 + on 28th and fell to 7 on 29th.

There were at least 10 on 30th and 2 on 31st, and occasional birds in early June. One Ph. t. acredula on each of May 27th-28th, June 5th and 7th.

WOOD WARBLER Phylloscopus sibilatrix. One from May 28th-30th.

ICTERINE WARBLER Hippolais icterina. One was trapped on May 28th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata. First seen May 27th, and a rush of 25 + took place on 28th; there were 4 or 5 on the next two days and 2 on 31st and June 1st-2nd. A minor peak of 6 followed on June 3rd and there were 3 or 4 daily thence until the last bird on 9th.

PIED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa hypoleuca. Single ♂♂ on May 23rd and 28th.

HEDGE SPARROW Prunella modularis. Two on May 28th and one on June 1st, those trapped being Continental.

TREE PIPIT Anthus trivialis. One on May 25th.

WHITE WAGTAIL Motacilla alba alba. Occasional birds from mid-May.

YELLOW WAGTAIL Motacilla lutea flavissima. One on each of May 22nd and 24th.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL Motacilla flava flava. ♂♂ on May 22nd and 24th-25th and a ♀ (? race) June 3rd-5th.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE Lanius cristatus collurio. One on May 27th increasing to 5 on 28th; ♀ on June 1st and 2 ♀♀ on June 3rd.

REDPOLL Carduelis flammea. One seen on June 9th.

CHAFFINCH Fringilla coelebs. Two ♀♀ on May 27th and a ♀ from June 1st-3rd and on 6th.

BRAMBLING Fringilla montifringilla. ♂ on June 5th and again on 8th.

YELLOW-HAMMER Emberiza citrinella. One, May 26th.

SNOW BUNTING Plectrophenax nivalis. A pair from May 20th to 24th.

10. Spring Migration (1955) in the South
of Shetland.

TOM HENDERSON.

During the spring and summer of 1955 a "Migration Schedule" and "Log" of the same pattern as those kept at the Bird Observatories were maintained at my hotel at Spiggie, Dunrossness, with the dual purpose of supplementing records at the Fair Isle Bird Observatory and of continuing the series of observations made in this area in years past by L.S.V. and U.M. Venables (see pp. 47-8). The following notes are abstracted from these books, to which guests staying at Spiggie as well as bird-watchers going to and from Fair Isle have contributed. Some of the birds seen are of unusual interest, and in a few cases more detailed accounts have been submitted to the journal British Birds. A note on an unusual Fulmar seen at Colsay in early May appears on pp. 27-8.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER Gavia immer. An adult in full summer dress in Scousburgh Bay on May 1st was probably the same as was picked up dying on the Sand of Maywick on 3rd. An immature bird at Rerwick on 23rd was in Scousburgh Bay next day.

STORM PETREL Hydrobates pelagicus. We organised a "petrel expedition" to Colsay on the night of May 24th. While not numerous, the birds were very much in evidence and were entering burrows. This is earlier in the year than I have previously visited Colsay for this purpose.

HERON Ardea cinerea. One frequented Loch Spiggie from May 24th; others were seen on 31st and June 7th, 17th.

TEAL Anas crecca. ♂, June 1st; 2 pairs, July 2nd.

WIGEON Anas penelope. Pair on Hillwell on May 1st and on Loch Brow on 2nd.

PINTAIL Anas acuta. A pair on Hillwell on May 1st.

SHOVELER Spatula clypeata. A pair divided their time between Lochs Hillwell and Spiggie during May. They bred on the former loch last year (Bulletin, 2: 304).

SCAUP Aythya marila. A ♀ in Scousburgh Bay on May 20th and pair on Brow 29th. Drake from June 8th-10th.

TUFTED DUCK Aythya fuligula. Two ♂ and one ♀ were present on Spiggie or Hillwell throughout May, and there were 2 ♂♂ on June 1st and July 12th. This species also has bred on Hillwell in recent years.

GOLDENEYE Bucephala clangula. Quite a number were still with us at the beginning of May, - up to a dozen in one flock. Later these dwindled to 3 1st-year birds, last recorded June 1st-2nd.

LONG-TAILED DUCK Clangula hyemalis. Present in diminishing numbers throughout May: 80 were counted (many were calling) in the West Voe and Scousburgh Bay on 1st. Small groups of 6 or more were to be seen as late as 24th.

COMMON SCOTER Melanitta nigra. Two pairs on Loch Spiggie and Scousburgh Bay, May 1st to 21st. One, July 3rd.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER Mergus serrator. Numbers varying from one to 6 on Spiggie and Brow throughout May.

SHELDUCK Tadorna tadorna. Numbers about normal. 17 at Pool of Virkie on May 28th. One pair at Spiggie.

WHOOPEE SWAN Cygnus cygnus. Three birds remained until May 8th when two were seen to start their flight to the north-west. The remaining bird was reported a day or two later, but I did not see it again. There were 2 on Loch Brow from June 12th to 16th after a pair had been seen passing Fair Isle on 10th, and these were at Clumlie on July 21st and Spiggie on 22nd. What may well have been the same pair was seen at Foula on June 18th.

OSPREY Pandion haliaetus. On May 27th a large, buzzard-like bird was seen by Leslie A. Brown over Loch Brow and was identified by him as an Osprey. It was harried ceaselessly by a mob of screaming Black-headed Gulls, Lapwings and 2 Hooded Crows. It dived twice in the loch, the second time within a hundred yards of his position, after which it flew off towards Pitful Head. Later in the day it was seen again by him and Colin Barr, but at a distance. It was last reported by a local man at Rerwick on May 29th.

QUAIL Coturnix coturnix. One on July 21st.

CORNCRAKE Crex crex. Heard on May 24th and June 14th. A very poor year after last year's large numbers.

WHIMBREL Numenius phaeopus. A few non-breeders all through May; 6 on June 22nd and 3 on July 3rd-4th.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT Limosa limosa. Two birds at Sumburgh aerodrome on July 2nd. See p. 46.

GREEN SANDPIPER Tringa ochropus. One near Spiggie on May 29th, and one on June 1st.

WOOD SANDPIPER Tringa glareola. One at Loch Brow on May 27th.

REDSHANK Tringa totanus. Noted on May 1st, 18th, 23rd and 28th and July 17th.

KNOT Calidris canutus. Two were seen at the Pool of Virkie on May 25th.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. 15 at Virkie on May 25th, 2 on June 1st and 2 on 7th.

SANDERLING Crocethia alba. Three at Virkie on May 25th, one on June 1st and 2 on July 31st.

RUFF Philomachus pugnax. Two very handsome Ruffs in full plumage were at Sumburgh aerodrome on July 2nd. The only previous spring record for Shetland is a ♂ at Spiggie on May 8th 1952. See p. 46.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE Phalaropus lobatus. Perhaps because of the prolonged wintry weather with north winds in the middle of May, our first Phalarope did not appear until June 5th. Previously the first-comer has never been later than May 27th. Five pairs bred successfully.

STONE CURLEW Burhinus oedionemus. Donald Walker, who has had previous experience of this species on the Berkshire Downs, identified a Stone Curlew near L. Spiggie on June 2nd. His notes describe it as a large, ungainly bird which trailed its yellow legs as it flew; it showed white wing-bars on a brown, variously-shaded wing, and had a fairly long neck and rounded head with the bill mainly

yellow. The flight was somewhat slow and measured, with periods of gliding when it seemed the bird must be about to alight. This is the first record of the species for Shetland, though it has occurred once at Fair Isle.

COMMON TERN Sterna hirundo. Two at Loch Spiggie from May 23rd onwards.

ARCTIC TERN Sterna macrura. First arrival noted on May 20th, when about 6 were seen. They were followed by over 30 on 21st.

SANDWICH TERN Sterna sandvicensis. An example of this rare Shetland tern was at St. Ninian's on May 24th.

WOOD PIGEON Columba palumbus. One at Royalhoull, May 4th. One on the unusual date of July 1st.

LONG-EARED OWL Asio otus. A fine specimen was to be seen among the willows in the deserted Durigarth garden from May 26th to June 3rd.

BEE-EATER Merops apiaster. One at Lerwick, June 3rd: there was an "invasion" of southern England about this time.

WOODLARK Lullula arborea. One was closely watched at south Scousburgh by Colin Barr and myself on May 25th, apparently only the second spring record for Shetland.

SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. Three at Brow on May 2nd; 4 at Scousburgh on 3rd; 2 on 23rd, 3 on 24th, 5 on 25th, but only one on 26th. Again 5 on 27th and 4 on 28th; 2 on June 1st and one or 2 on 7th-8th. One was found dead on a road on June 19th.

HOUSE MARTIN Delichon urbica. One at Spiggie Voe on May 27th, 5 on June 1st-2nd, and over 30 on June 8th.

SAND MARTIN Riparia riparia. One at Brow on May 2nd and one there on 27th. (Compare these dates for the Hirundines with the Fair Isle records).

FIELDFARE Turdus pilaris. One was seen on May 2nd.

REDWING Turdus musicus. One at the Dale, May 3rd.

GOLDEN ORIOLE Oriolus oriolus. A 1st-summer ♂ was seen at Sumburgh on June 1st-2nd and one, the descrip-

tion of which corresponds more with a ♀, was at Spiggie on June 5th. The first is described as having the head and neck yellowish, and much brighter than the Handbook plate of the ♀, the back and wings brown, and the rump yellowish. The tail was dark with yellow tips to the feathers. The underparts were a light brown shading to white in the centre of the breast, and the bill was large and flesh-coloured. In its undulating flight the bird is said to have resembled a Green Woodpecker when seen from behind. There are previous spring records from Lerwick, May 25th 1944; Whalsay, May 27th 1945; and here at Spiggie, May 26th-28th 1954 (Bulletin, 2: 179).

WHINCHAT Saxicola rubetra. Singly at Spiggie on May 2nd and June 2nd.

STONECHAT Saxicola torquata. ♂ at Noss, May 4th.

REDSTART Phoenicurus phoenicurus. ♀ at the Dale, May 4th.

ROBIN Erithacus rubecula. One at the Dale, May 4th.

BLACKCAP Sylvia atricapilla. ♀ among the willows at Loch Brow on May 28th and another on June 3rd.

GARDEN WARBLER Sylvia borin. One at the Burn of Scousburgh from May 28th onwards; singly on June 1st-2nd and June 5th.

WHITETHROAT Sylvia communis. Two at Durigarth on May 2nd, one at Grutness on 28th, and one at Loch Brow on 29th-30th. Singly June 1st-2nd and 5th-6th after 3 on 31st.

LESSER WHITETHROAT Sylvia curruca. One at Baxter on May 28th; one at the Dale on 29th, and one on June 3rd.

WILLOW WARBLER Phylloscopus trochilus. Over 20 at various places in the neighbourhood of Scousburgh on May 2nd; 6 on 4th; one on 27th and 12 next day, and 6 on 29th.

WOOD WARBLER Phylloscopus sibilatrix. One first seen among the willows at Loch Brow on May 28th was still there on 31st and June 2nd, and there were 2 on June 3rd.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata. One at Noss on May 4th and 2 in the Dale willows on 31st. There were unconfirmed reports of several others at the end of May,

and in June we had 2 on 1st, 4 on 2nd and one on 3rd-4th.

PIED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa hypoleuca. 3 ♂♂ and a ♀ at the Dale and Spiggie on May 2nd, and 2 ♂♂ on 3rd, also one on 4th-5th. There was a ♀ at Durigarth on 31st and June 1st.

TREE PIPIT Anthus trivialis. One near Loch Spiggie on May 27th and another on 31st.

WHITE WAGTAIL Motacilla a. alba. One on May 2nd; one on 18th; one on 21st and 3 on 22nd.

PIED WAGTAIL Motacilla a. yarrellii. One was seen near Loch Spiggie on May 18th.

GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL Motacilla flava thunbergi. An unusually dark-headed bird with blackish forehead and crown, but grey on the nape, was seen at Grutness on May 25th by several visitors joining The Good Shepherd for Fair Isle. There was no eyestripe, nor was there any white between the dark cheek and the yellow of the neck. A more detailed note on the bird has been sent to the editors of British Birds.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE Lanius cristatus collurio. A ♀ was at Durigarth on May 31st and June 1st.

REDPOLL Carduelis flammea. There was a redpoll in willows near Loch Brow at the end of May. It was much darker than a Lesser Redpoll and possibly a migrant bird of the Greenland form restrata.

CHAFFINCH Fringilla coelebs. A ♀ seen on June 2nd.

SCARLET GROSBEEK Carpodacus erythrinus. A ♂, in all probability not fully mature, was observed at close range by Leslie A. Brown and Colin Barr at Durigarth on June 3rd. It had the whole of the head, neck and breast of a dark red colour, the wings and tail brown, the underparts buffish-white shading into the pink of the lower breast. It was slightly bigger than a House Sparrow, with which it was seen at one point, and had a heavy and bullfinch-like bill. A more detailed note on this bird, which is exceedingly rare in Britain in spring, has been sent to British Birds.

11. Unusually small-billed Fulmar at a
Shetland cliff.

TOM HENDERSON and K. WILLIAMSON.

One of us, accompanied by Alex. Henderson, visited Colsay, - a small island which lies outside Spiggie Voe in the south of Shetland, - on May 7th 1955, and saw among Fulmars sitting on ledges in Willie Eunson's Geo a most unusual bird. Three points about this individual, which we were able to observe at 20 yards range, attracted our notice at once. Firstly, it was a medium dark or "blue" phase Fulmar; secondly, it was not more than two-thirds the normal Fulmar size; and thirdly, in size and shape of head it bore about the same proportions to an ordinary Fulmar as a Common Gull does to a Herring Gull. The head and neck were an ashy greyish-white, and the small beak was dark and showed very little yellow. Alex. Henderson was in full agreement on all these points. We watched it for 7 or 8 minutes until it flew from the ledge, and when on the wing it was noticeably different from the others.

The fact that this unusual Fulmar was sitting beside a nesting-scrape and behaving very much as the normal bird alongside it raised hopes that it might breed on the isle. For the following few days there was rough north-easterly weather and a landing on Colsay was impossible, but when conditions improved T.H. went over for the express purpose of discovering if the bird were still there. It could not be found, however, either then or on later visits.

There is a possibility (but no more) that this bird, so strikingly different in size of head and bill from its companions, may have had affinity with the high arctic form known as the Short-billed Fulmar Fulmarus glacialis minor. This race, which breeds in the Canadian Arctic and is predominantly of the "blue" phase, was described by Kjaerboelling in 1852 with type-locality "North Greenland" (where the form may or may not breed). After being overlooked for many years this race was resuscitated by Dr. F. Salomonsen, who gives measurements of a series of bills and skulls (Dansk Orn. Foren. Tidss., 44: 100-105). Prof.V.C.

Wynne-Edwards has further investigated the validity of minor (Scot. Nat., 64: 84-101) and shows that although Baffin Island birds can be accepted as a distinct race, those of Spitsbergen show some intermediacy between minor and British Fulmars in the measurements of wing and bill. Little is known of the position of North Greenland birds, but it is possible that the Fulmars of the North Atlantic show a "stepped cline" running from Britain through Faeroe, Iceland, Jan Mayen, Spitsbergen and North Greenland to the Canadian Arctic. It is unfortunate and unsatisfactory from a taxonomic point of view that the type-locality of Fulmarus glacialis (and therefore of the nominate race) is somewhere near the middle of this cline, i.e. "Spitsbergen Seas."

It is thus impossible to fix a name on an isolated specimen taken (much less seen) outside its normal range; and indeed, as Wynne-Edwards has shown, a ♀ from Blakeney (September 29th 1908) in the British Museum is perhaps the only British example of minor, but on statistical grounds some doubt must exist. Nevertheless, the bird seen so well on Colsey, under conditions very favourable for comparison with the local birds, leaves little doubt that it must have been of arctic origin, approaching the minor end of the cline.

"Blue" Fulmars are more often reported on Shetland cliffs nowadays than was formerly the case, and though this may be due in part to increased observation, it is worth remarking that G.T. Kay, John Peterson and the late George Russell were on the look-out for this rare plumage-type (a regular visitor to Shetland waters in winter) for many years before they saw their first ashore (G.T. Kay, Scot. Nat., 64: 119). Up to the present there has been no suggestion that such dark phase Fulmars have been other than members of the local population. All those seen at Fair Isle, including 2 breeders and 3 young reared from a "blue" x normal mating in the seasons 1953-55, have been large-billed birds. So also is the example which bred for several years at Hascosay. For this reason the occurrence ashore at the beginning of the breeding-season of a "short-billed" bird would seem to have sufficient interest to merit a written record.

12. Birds of the Butt of Lewis in April 1955.

W.L. St. CLAIR, H.G. USHER and
D. GARDNER-MEDWIN.

At the suggestion of Mr. Kenneth Williamson we decided to go to the Butt of Lewis to follow up the work of R.W.J. SMITH and C. WALKER last April on spring migration through the Outer Hebrides (Bulletin, 2: 238-246). This work had not been considered entirely successful, mostly because of adverse weather conditions. Our main object was to study the movements of geese, but we also intended to watch gull, wader and passerine migration.

We arrived on April 14th and pitched camp near the Lighthouse at the Butt, where we stayed until the 25th. During this time we watched the area of the Butt fairly intensively, and also went down the coast as far as Cellar Head on the east and Aird Dell on the west. We visited the moorland lochs south-west of Cellar Head, the Shader Estuary 4 miles north of Barvas, Loch Barvas and Stornoway. Loch Stiapavat, 2 miles from the Butt, was counted almost every day.

On the 15th the weather was bright and clear with fair southerly winds, apparently perfect for northwards migration. From the 16th to the 19th it was still bright but with light north winds. However, from then on it became more cloudy, with drizzle or mist and fair variable winds, mostly from the north. On the 25th there was a very strong south-westerly wind.

A number of the resident birds have been omitted from the following selected list of the species seen.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER Gavia arctica. One in winter plumage off Cross Sands, and one changing near Port of Ness on 16th.

RED-THROATED DIVER Gavia stellata. A pair in the area of the Butt from 20th to 23rd.

SLAVONIAN GREBE Podiceps auritus. Two off Swani-boat in winter plumage on 15th.

LITTLE GREBE Podiceps ruficollis. Four resident at Loch Stiapavat, where signs of nest-building were seen.

MANX SHEARWATER Procellaria puffinus. Flocks of 70 or more off the Butt during the first few days. Later on there was definite coasting movement of very large numbers almost every day, flying round the Butt from east to west.

FULMAR Fulmarus glacialis. Scattered pairs on cliffs at least from Cunndal on the west coast to Cellar Head on the east. We counted 693 birds from Cunndal to Port of Ness, but at times there seemed to be more than the 257 birds at the Butt which we included in this census.

GANNET Sula bassana. Every day Gannets, in parties of up to 50, flew up the east coast, rounded the Butt, and set off in a W.S.W. direction. Numbers varied but were at times very large. On 15th, 202 were counted in 25 minutes, and these numbers continued for most of that day. Sometimes large numbers flew in the opposite direction, setting off due east from the Butt, but they never seemed to balance the amount of westwards-moving birds. We were never quite sure whether they were going to and from St. Kilda (about 90 miles SW.) or a fishing-ground, or some other goal.

SHAG Phalacrocorax aristotelis. We counted 48 at the Butt on 24th and numbers there seemed to remain fairly constant. There were also some birds on the cliffs and at sea off the east coast. We found 4 nests at the Butt and observed a curious display apparently connected with courtship, but not mentioned in The Handbook of British Birds. Two Shags on a nesting-ledge faced each other, "muttering", then stretched their necks vertically and twisted them one around the other. The display stopped at this point, the birds noticing our presence.

MALLARD Anas platyrhynchos. Up to 3 pairs were seen regularly on Loch Stiapavat, and pairs were found on moorland lochs and Loch Barvas when these were visited. There were 2 at the Butt on 20th and 23rd and one at Port of Ness on 23rd.

TEAL Anas crecca. About 10 fed regularly at Loch Stiapavat, but there were 18 on 23rd. Parties of from 2 to 6 were seen on moorland lochs, and there were 10 on the sea near Stornoway on 20th and 5 on 21st.

WIGEON Anas penselope. At L. Stiapavat there were 10 at 0600 hrs on 15th, 2 fairly early in the morning of 16th, and 4 at about 9 o'clock on 25th. The Wigeon may spend the night at Stiapavat and feed elsewhere during the day. On the other hand, the only other place where any were seen was the Shader Estuary, where there were 2 on 19th.

PINTAIL Anas acuta. A pair was seen at L. Stiapavat from 19th to 21st and again on 23rd.

TUFTED DUCK Aythya fuligula. There were 2 ♂♂ and a ♀ at Loch Stiapavat on 15th-16th; thereafter only a pair, which presumably would breed.

GOLDENEYE Bucephala clangula. One drake at a loch near Stornoway on 18th.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER Mergus serrator. Four at L. Barvas on 21st and 5 on 25th.

GREY LAG GOOSE Anser anser. There were 5 at Loch Bacavat Ard, near Cellar Head, on 18th, and feathers and droppings round many lochs nearby suggested that these were regular resting-places for geese at this time of the year. These geese and 7 at the Shader Estuary on 19th may have been local birds. The other Grey Lags we saw were more restless and seemed about to set off. There were 3 at L. Scriachavat on 21st; at the Butt on 19th 2 flew 30 degrees W. of N. at 0800 hrs, and 2 came down to rest at a pond at 1600 hrs. On 20th 4 were seen at about 1600 hrs, and 10 birds (probably Grey Lags) landed at dusk. There were 4 at Stornoway on 23rd.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE Anser fabalis brachyrhynchus. 10 started out 50 degrees W. of N. from the Butt at 1700 hrs. on 19th but gave up and returned. At Cellar Head on 18th we saw at a range of about half-a-mile a flight of geese, sounding like Pinkfeet, come in from the SW. and go north towards the Butt.

The following unidentified Grey Geese were also seen: One at Loch Stiapavat on 15th; 10 flying north 5 miles to south-east of Barvas on 18th; 2 flying out to sea from Loch Drollavat on 21st.

WHOOOPER SWAN Cygnus cygnus. One at Loch Barvas on 21st. We were told that about a dozen had wintered at L. Stiapavat but had gone before our arrival.

HEN HARRIER Circus cyaneus. One on 25th near Loch Gunna, 6 miles from Stornoway.

PEREGRINE Falco peregrinus. One near Loch Dubh on 16th; one on the Barvas-Stornoway road, one at Galson and one near Loch Hatravat on 18th.

MERLIN Falco columbarius. One at the Butt on 15th and 16th; one at Lochan an Meadhonach on 18th; one at Skegirsta on 19th; 1 on 22nd and 2 on 23rd near Stornoway.

KESTREL Falco tinnunculus. One at the Butt on 22nd.

MOORHEN Gallinula chloropus. At least 9 birds at Loch Stiapavat.

OYSTER-CATCHER Haematopus ostralegus. A flock seemed to remain fairly constantly at the Butt. Birds were seen in small numbers on the west coast, but never inland.

LAPWING Vanellus vanellus. Common nester on machair and sometimes on old lazy-beds and cultivated land. Flock of 80 near Loch Barvas on 21st.

RINGED PLOVER Charadrius hiaticula. Several pairs were about to nest at the Butt and a flock of up to 20 fed on the sands west of Eorpie. One at Loch Barvas on 21st and 7 on 25th.

GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. A flock of 20 north-west of Swaniboat on 15th-16th; on the moor 6 at L. Dubh on 16th and 20 at L. Shiavat on 21st; 50 at L. Barvas on 21st. At L. Stiapavat there were 60 on 15th, 120 on 20th, 75 next day, 2 on 22nd-23rd and 4 on 25th. At the Butt there were 80 on 15th, 19 on 16th, 15 on 17th seq., 55 on 22nd & 15 on 23rd. Thus flocks appear to have been

on the move throughout our stay: most (say 90%) of these birds were in Northern plumage, Ch. apricaria altifrons.

TURNSTONE Arenaria interpres. 14 SE. of Stornoway on 20th; one with Golden Plovers at Swaniboat on 15th.

SNIPE Capella gallinago. Found in most marshy places. About 6 on the banks of the Dell River, at least 6 around Loch Stiapavat, and at least 3 at the Butt.

CURLEW Numenius arquata. 6 at the Shader Estuary on 19th, 3 at Loch Barvas on 21st. At the Butt, 3 on 15th-16th, 5 on 17th, 2 on 18th, 5 on 19th, thereafter only one. Probably there was a certain amount of movement: birds at the Butt frequently started off in a N.NE. direction but we never saw them fly very far out.

WHIMBREL Numenius phaeopus. Seen only at the Butt, 2 on 16th and one on 20th.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT Limosa limosa. A bird in full summer plumage arrived at Loch Stiapavat on 22nd and was there until we left. Last year on May 7th a bird said to have been the second record for Lewis was found at Barvas. (Baxter and Rintoul, Birds of Scotland, record one shot at Stornoway on August 31st 1912. - Ed.).

REDSHANK Tringa totanus. We had been given the impression that the Redshank was scarce in the Outer Hebrides, but we saw birds quite frequently. There were 16 at the Shader Estuary on 19th and one at Loch Barvas on 21st. On the machair between Loch Stiapavat and the west coast at least 3 pairs were about to breed, and a flock of 16 was seen at this loch on 22nd-23rd. A single bird stayed at the Butt from 15th to 21st and 2 were seen there on 23rd.

GREENSHANK Tringa nebularia. There was one at Loch Stiapavat on 20th.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. One at the Butt on 15th-16th and 3 at Loch Barvas on 25th.

SANDERLING Crocethia alba. There was a flock of 20 near Port of Ness on 22nd.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL Larus marinus. Parties of up to 20 were on suitable lochs and at the Butt throughout our visit; these parties fluctuated in numbers, but we never saw any definite "visible migration".

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL Larus fuscus. Parties were moving north to the Butt, particularly during the last 3 days of our stay. For instance, on the west coast of the Butt none were seen on 21st, there were 14 on 22nd, and a group of 16 was watched flying north on 24th. Records for one favourite resting-place at the Butt show 2 on 17th, 12 on 19th, 10 on 21st and 14 on 22nd-23rd. There were NW. winds at forces 3-4 on the last two days which might have held up northwards migration.

HERRING GULL Larus argentatus. We found colonies at Loch Sgeireach na Creige Brist (10 on 18th) and Loch Barvas (15) on 21st) and there were always a few along the coasts and at Loch Stiapavat. A large colony at the Butt was beginning to show signs of breeding.

COMMON GULL Larus canus. A few were always to be seen at Loch Stiapavat. There was some movement of this species on 21st when the number there increased to 9 and parties of up to 20 were seen along the east coast.

ICELAND GULL Larus glaucooides. A bird changing from 3rd-winter to adult plumage was feeding in the fields near Eorpie on 21st and 23rd.

BLACK-HEADED GULL Larus ridibundus. Rarely seen far from the colonies at Lochs Barvas and Stiapavat; in our counts of the latter group we never had a total of more than 90 birds, compared with "at least 120 pairs" at the same time last year.

KITTIWAKE Rissa tridactyla. There were two main colonies, one at Berie just north of Port of Ness, and one at the Butt. There were always Kittiwakes flying up and down the coast so it was difficult to be sure of the size of these colonies, but numbers at the nesting-sites were fairly constant in spite of this at ca. 90 at Berie and 460 at the Butt.

RAZORBILL Alca torda. We found no cliff colony but at the Butt there were 6 or more on 16th, 3 on 17th, 150 on 19th and 50 on 20th, after which we saw large numbers every day. At Stornoway at 1500 hrs on 22nd 66 Razorbills were counted going north in 3 minutes, and this movement went on for 15-20 minutes. Large numbers were also flying north at Skegirsta on 23rd.

TYSTIE Cephus grylle. There was a colony of about 25 birds at the Butt.

ROCK DOVE Columba livia. There were at least 8 birds (probably more) in the caves at the Butt, and a small flock fed in the fields nearby. At the mouth of the Dell River on 21st 16 were seen, and there were scattered pairs in the cliffs all along the coast.

WOOD PIGEON Columba palumbus. A single bird was flying about the cliffs at the Butt on 17th.

SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. 3 at the Butt on 15th and 16th, and 2 on 24th.

RAVEN Corvus corax. A pair seen daily at the Light-house had had their nest destroyed before our arrival. We found a nest with 4 young north of Port of Ness. Ravens were seen commonly on the moors in twos and fours; and we saw 19 together at the Butt on 17th, 7 on 21st, and 4 on each day 18th and 23rd.

FIELDFARE Turdus pilaris. One straggler near Loch Stiapavat at 0500 hrs on 15th.

REDWING Turdus musicus. One at the Butt, 15th; one at Barvas, 18th; one at Lionel, 16th, - all very weary.

WHEATEAR Oenanthe oenanthe. Favourite haunts were old lazy-beds and peat-cuttings on the edge of the moor. There were 6 pairs on the Butt.

WILLOW WARBLER Phylloscopus trochilus. There was one at Fivepenny Borge on April 25th.

WHITE WAGTAIL Motacilla a. alba. A few unidentified "alba" wagtails were seen during the first few days flying high over the Butt. The White Wagtail was first recognised on the Dell River on 19th. After 20th the weather became

unsuitable for their migration and they were often seen on the ground.

TWITE Carduelis flavirostris. Flocks of up to 50 fed in fields near Ness.

CHAFFINCH Fringilla coelebs. A ♀ stayed at the Lighthouse 19th-20th.

CORN BUNTING Emberiza calandra. Fed singly and in pairs in Ness and sometimes congregated on telephone wires where up to 91 were seen together.

SNOW BUNTING Plectrophenax nivalis. Four were seen near Stornoway on 22nd and 6 on 26th.

When this list is compared with that of last year's expedition the similarities are striking. The main differences lie in the rather larger numbers of fresh-water ducks (Mallard, Wigeon, Pintail, Teal) in 1954, and the almost complete absence of sea-ducks in 1955. The complete absence of Manx Shearwaters in 1954 and the scarcity of Razorbills are strange considering the huge numbers of both species seen during our visit.

Once again there was little obvious migration, though the weather was kinder than it was last year. We saw several small Grey Lag parties about to set off, but the number of Pinkfeet was disappointingly low. We were told by a crofter who lived by the Dell River that geese "flew down the river and straight out to sea in thousands" at this time of the year, - and the map shows that this would lie on a direct route from the moorland lochs to Iceland. But the one big flight of Pinkfeet we did see was flying up the east coast straight for the Butt. It is quite impossible to draw conclusions from the small amount of observation that has been done.

Wader migration was restricted, as far as we could see, to Curlew, Whimbrel, Golden Plover and comparative rarities. There was a slight migration of Lesser Black-backed and Common Gulls but no mass-movement on the scale of last year's. Swallow, Fieldfare, Redwing, Willow Warbler, White Wagtail and Snow Bunting were the only

Passerines that showed any sign of migration. We were too late for the main Redwing-Fieldfare movement and probably too early for most of the Swallows and White Wagtails.

On the whole we found less migration than we had hoped for, partly because we had expected the Butt to be more of a "bottleneck" than it was, and partly because the passing birds found little inducement in the way of shelter or fresh water, or even beaches, to tempt them to land. A small plantation of, say, whin bushes would have helped the ornithologists if not the birds. In fact, the area is so large and uniform that any effort by two or three people to keep a check on all migration is somewhat frustrating. Trapping data for waders and Passerines would be extremely useful in distinguishing between passage and local birds, but the practical difficulties of finding good trap sites are very great.

In spite of the rather negative evidence of these two expeditions, the Butt of Lewis may still prove to be a major stepping-off point for north-bound migrants, and it would be well worth while making a concentrated study all through the spring migration period (end of March to early June) in the hope of producing definite evidence one way or the other.

13. April Migrants at the Isle of Coll, Inner Hebrides.

JOHN FURSE.

I spent the week April 18th-26th 1955 in the isle of Coll, Argyllshire, with the primary object of watching and sketching Barnacle Geese, divers and Whooper Swans. Some notes were made on the other birds seen.

It is possible that on 18th some birds remained from an earlier passage. Four Whooper Swans on one loch had gone by 19th, and a flock of 70 Northern Golden Plovers and a few Sanderlings were present. A Chiffchaff appeared on early morning of 19th, - an unusual record, - and a Merlin seen

this day only may have been on migration. The Barnacles were at normal strength for the period, most of the winter flock having left about a week before, according to one of the crofters. I estimated there were about 200 birds.

There was a moderate NW. wind during the night of 19th -20th but a cloudless, hazy day followed. A Song Thrush and Kestrel on the cliffs may have been migrants, and 25 Grey Lags and 2 Whooper Swans certainly were. A Goldeneye and 30 Long-tailed Ducks appeared in one of the bays on 21st and there was a slight increase in Great Northern Divers: next day the Long-tails had increased to 60, but the most noticeable feature of this day was a marked increase in waders.

A flock of 120 Golden Plovers and 10 Turnstones arrived on 22nd, there were 50 Redshank (only 3 or 4 on previous days) and 15 Dunlins (but no Sanderlings, which had peaked at 20 on 21st), single Jack Snipe and Whimbrel, and some 25 Curlew (3 only on 21st). There was an apparent increase in Oyster-catchers and Ringed Plovers. Barnacle Geese showed an increase to about 400, due perhaps to birds gathering prior to migration. On this day the wind was SW. at forces 3-4 with an overcast sky but good visibility.

On April 24th, a warm sunny day with light NW. wind backing to W.SW. and freshening in the evening, there were two records of "visible migration". At 0840 hrs. a Whooper Swan left the island flying steadily north towards Canna at a height of 300-400 ft., calling. At 1230 hrs. a party of 5 Grey Lags flew up the south-east coast on a NE. course, sheered off as though to descend to one of the lochs, but in the event carried on. The wind backed during the night and blew hard at about force 5 from between south and S.SE. It had moderated by afternoon of 25th, when rain fell continuously. Parties of Meadow Pipits were seen about for the first time. A tired Willow Warbler was feeding in a ditch early on 26th and in all 4 were noted (there had been one, sometimes 2, in song daily since 20th). Two Whooper Swans and a flock of 30 Golden Plovers present on 25th had gone early, and there were more Mallard, Teal and Curlews than usual.

14. Spring Migration (1955) at Great Saltee.

ROBERT F. RUTTLEDGE.

The Bird Observatory at Great Saltee was manned from March 17th to June 4th, except for an unfortunate gap from April 17th to 23rd inclusive, when no observers were available. It was the first year in which the Observatory has been open in March.

W e a t h e r

March. There was an easterly element in the wind on 12 days between 17th and 31st. A SE. gale on 22nd veered northerly and blew on 23rd and 24th. Otherwise, winds were chiefly moderate, rarely fresh. Visibility was good and rain fell only during the gale.

April. Winds were persistently about SW. till 13th, when after a calm morning the wind became east for 2 days. When the Observatory re-opened on 24th the wind was E.SE. but became southerly until the month ended. There was a southerly gale on 2nd, otherwise winds were moderate except for a strong blow on 3rd and a fresh breeze on 9th and 10th. There was some fog from 4th to 6th, but rain fell only on 2nd, 7th, 25th and 26th.

May. Winds came from every quarter, chiefly with a westerly element until 9th, then with a northerly one, particularly from 17th to 21st. An east wind blew on 24th and a SE. wind that set in next day held until June 3rd. There was a northerly gale on 17th; otherwise winds were light or moderate, visibility was excellent or good, and there was little rain. It was unseasonably cold.

M i g r a t i o n

Notable occurrences were a WOOD SANDPIPER, SHORT-TOED LARK, two NIGHTINGALES, a RED-THROATED PIPIT and at least three WOODCHAT SHRIKES. Some acredula-like Willow Warblers were again recorded.

From the point of view of Irish ornithology the records of a LESSER WHITETHROAT, PIED FLYCATCHERS and TREE PIPITS were of particular importance.

MERLIN Falco columbarius. A ♀ on March 31st; singly on April 2nd, 4th and 24th.

CORNCRAKE Crex crex. First on April 24th; from one to 3 on nine days to May 9th.

GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. Two on March 25th and 8 on 27th. One of the Northern race on May 5th.

TURNSTONE Arenaria interpres. Maxima April 25th (43) 27th (45) and 28th (49). Numbers declined during May, but 27 were recorded on June 3rd.

SNIFE Capella gallinago. Daily, March 17th-31st, in numbers up to 12. Six on April 4th-5th, otherwise on 7 days in numbers up to 4. Singly, May 5th and 23rd.

JACK SNIFE Lymnocyptes minimus. One, March 24th-25th, and 2 on 26th.

WOOD SANDPIPER Tringa glareola. One, the first to be recorded in Ireland in spring, from May 14th to 16th.

COMMON SANDPIPER Tringa hypoleucos. First on April 16th; 5 or more on 24th. Singly on 6 days in May.

PURPLE SANDPIPER Calidris maritima. April 4th (2), 29th (29), 30th (4), May 1st (7); otherwise in May singly or in twos on 5 days to 15th.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. About 80 on May 7th and a single bird from 24th to 27th.

SANDERLING Crocethia alba. One on June 1st.

TURTLE DOVE Streptopelia turtur. First on May 1st. Intermittent pass age became regular from May 22nd to June 3rd; maxima on May 25th (10), 31st (16) and June 2nd (12).

CUCKOO Cuculus canorus. The usual passage, numbers up to 3, with the first on April 26th.

SHORT-EARED OWL Asio flammeus. One on May 19th.

NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus europaeus. Single ♂♂ on May 13th, 23rd, 25th and a ♀ on 26th.

SWIFT Apus apus. Movement was heavier than in any spring since the inception of the Observatory. First on April 30th. Peaks on May 3rd (50) - but only 4 on 5th -

and May 8th (70). None from 16th to 21st but 8 on 22nd, thereafter irregularly in numbers up to 5.

SHORT-TOED LARK Calandrella cinerea. One was seen on May 10th. It was watched for long periods by F. King, P.J. Roche and R.F.R. In flight the warm brown upper-parts of this lark-like bird contrasted strongly with the off-white and unmarked under-parts. A warm buff area on the upper breast was noticeable, however, when the bird was on the ground. At times a slight crest was seen and more rarely (and only when the bird turned its head away) a dark mark on the side of the breast. No matter how often it was disturbed the bird always returned to the same area in a small field where it spent the whole day.

HIRUNDINES. Passage of **SWALLOWS** from March 25th. Movement was at its height from May 3rd to 12th, peaking on 8th (800) and 11th (900), although hardly any were migrating on 10th (15). **HOUSE MARTINS** peaked on the same days, with a maximum of 15, and 16 were recorded on 28th. Passage of very small numbers was still in progress on June 4th. **SAND MARTINS**, first seen on March 28th, were at a peak on May 8th (15), but otherwise passed irregularly in very small numbers up to June 1st.

The wind on May 8th and 11th was SW. 4 and West 3 respectively, while on 10th it was N.NW. 3. Visibility was excellent on each day.

MISTLE THRUSH Turdus viscivorus. One, March 30th.

FIELDFARE Turdus pilaris. Passage in numbers up to 10 almost daily to March 30th. One on April 12th.

SONG THRUSH Turdus ericetorum. Six on March 18th, then a gradual decrease to 30th (1), when last seen.

REDWING Turdus musicus. Daily from March 19th to 31st. Most on March 24th and 26th (25 each day).

RING OUSEL Turdus torquatus. At least 2 on April 15th and one next day.

WHEATEAR Oenanthe oenanthe. Recorded on all but 15 days in the period. Heaviest movement was from May 13th to 16th, with most on 14th (36). Their numbers were far below those of last year and the peak-time was different.

STONECHAT Saxicola torquata. The only evidence of migration was when 6 appeared on March 30th.

WHINCHAT Saxicola rubetra. On 9 days only between April 30th and May 29th, with a maximum on May 1st (3 or more). The majority were ♀♀.

REDSTART Phoenicurus phoenicurus. A single ♂ on May 29th was the only one.

BLACK REDSTART Phoenicurus ochrurus. A ♀ on March 24th, one on 25th and a ♂ and ♀ on 28th, with one on 29th.

NIGHTINGALE Luscinia megarhynchos. One on May 13th, the second Irish record. Another trapped on 24th was re-trapped on the two following days.

ROBIN Erithacus rubecula. Three on March 17th and 18th; thereafter singly on 8 days to 30th, with 2 on 31st. Singly, April 9th and 13th.

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER Locustella naevia. Two, April 15th, and 3 on 30th. On most days from May 1st to 10th in numbers of up to 7.

SEDGE WARBLER Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. First on April 30th, maximum May 8th (30). There seemed to be an increase on May 20th-21st followed by a decrease on 22nd. In most cases it is difficult to segregate passage from the island breeding-population.

BLACKCAP Sylvia atricapilla. ♂♂ on April 22nd and May 8th, ♀♀ on April 30th and May 3rd.

GARDEN WARBLER Sylvia borin. Two on May 13th, one on June 2nd.

WHITETHROAT Sylvia communis. First on April 15th (2); thereafter on all but 3 days during the period. Most on May 8th (150), a sharp rise from 20 of the previous day and contrasting with the fall to 12 on 9th. Minor peaks occurred on May 1st (75), - a sudden influx after one on April 30th, - 6th (75), and 21st (70). After the last day numbers fell to singletons which were possibly breeders.

LESSER WHITETHROAT Sylvia curruca. A bird of the typical race was trapped on June 1st, the fifth spring record at Saltee.

WILLOW WARBLER Phylloscopus trochilus. The first, a rush of over 50 birds, came on April 6th. A regular passage followed, in numbers far below those of previous years. Except for this initial rush, numbers reached 40 only on April 12th and 24th. Birds with an affinity to Ph. t. acredula were less in evidence than in former years and were recorded singly on May 9th, 11th, 14th, 19th and 28th, with a probable on 4th.

CHIFFCHAFF Phylloscopus collybita. Recorded on most days from March 26th to April 15th, with most on April 12th (20 +). Irregularly and mostly few to May 7th (3); two on 22nd.

GOLDCREST Regulus regulus. Two on March 27th and one next day; singly April 1st, 3rd, and May 24th, 27th and 28th.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata. The heaviest migration we have so far experienced took place this year. (See the Fair Isle notes, pp. 16, 20. - Ed.). Regular from May 1st, except for 4 days, with peaks on 9th (20), 14th (15) and 20th (20). Singly, May 29th to June 2nd.

PIED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa hypoleuca. A ♂ from May 1st-5th and a ♀ from May 25th-28th, both trapped.

MEADOW PIPIT Anthus pratensis. Heavy passage on March 25th (500), 26th (100) and 27th (75). 50 recorded on April 6th and 14th, a number which considerably exceeds the breeding-stock.

TREE PIPIT Anthus trivialis. Singly on May 2nd and 5th, identification substantiated by observers familiar with the flight-note.

RED-THROATED PIPIT Anthus cervinus. One was seen by B.H. Harley, F. King and R.G. Wheeler on May 2nd and a full description was recorded in the Observatory's "Field Record Book." The salient feature was the reddish-buff throat, chin and sides of head. The bird was rather confident and spent most of its time on the ground, walking about quietly. When in flight it gave a rather plaintive "zee-oo". This is the first authentic record for Ireland.

WAGTAILS. Alba wagtails were recorded, mostly singly, on 10 days. Of these, single birds on April 11th, May 4th, and May 6th were identified as Motacilla a. yarrellii, the Pied Wagtail. One M. a. alba was identified on April 15th.

Yellow Wagtails, Motacilla lutea flavissima, were identified on May 7th and 15th, and an M. flava s.sp. was present on 28th.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE Lanius senator. A ♂ was trapped on May 13th; one unsexed was present from May 17th to 19th, and a bird present from May 28th to 30th may have been the same as one seen on May 26th.

STARLING Sturnus vulgaris. Migration in the second half of March peaked on 26th (300), falling in intensity during the first half of April; then one or two on most days until May 4th.

GREENFINCH Chloris chloris. One on March 30th.

GOLDFINCH Carduelis carduelis. Single birds on all except 2 days from March 21st to April 2nd, and singly on April 4th, 5th and 24th.

SISKIN Carduelis spinus. One on March 28th.

LINNET Carduelis cannabina. Irregularly in numbers up to 4 in March (2 days), April (7 days) and May (4 days).

CHAFFINCH Fringilla coelebs. A movement at the end of March peaked on 26th with over 50. Mr. W. Bates, while fishing to the east of Saltee about March 15th, noticed a large number which came "from southard" on 2 or 4 days. Between March 15th and 19th the large wintering flocks of Chaffinches departed from Cloonee, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo. At Saltee stragglers were occasional in April, and there was a single ♀ from May 8th-12th and one from 24th-27th.

BRAMBLING Fringilla montifringilla. Up to 4 on 6 days between March 21st and 28th, and a ♀ on April 15th.

T r a p p i n g

588 birds of 41 species were trapped and ringed. Willow Warblers again headed the list (149), then came Whitethroats (115), Chiffchaffs (62), Swallows (56) and Spotted Flycatchers (48).

15. Migrants at St. Kilda in late May 1955.

A.A.K. WHITEHOUSE.

A full account of a spring visit to St. Kilda, by the present writer in collaboration with J. Morton Boyd and D.J. Munro, has been prepared for The Scottish Naturalist, and this note is confined to the migrants observed. There was rather more migration than other parties have noted at this time, presumably because of the earlier cold weather, and the fresh east and SE. winds which prevailed, together with clear skies.

WHEATEARS were very common all over the island of Hirta at first, and then decreased steadily. Counts within the village wall gave 23, 3, and 1 on May 24th, 27th and 28th. Many appeared to be of the Greenland race and one found recently dead weighed 22 gm. and had a wing of 102 mm.

WHITE WAGTAILS similarly decreased from 4 near the village on 24th, there being 1 on 25th and none afterwards.

TURNSTONES decreased daily from 13 + on 24th to 3 on 29th. A KNOT in full summer plumage was seen on 24th and 26th.

Several species tended to increase, e.g. CORNCRAKE, one from 27th onwards; LAPWING, 2 from 26th; WHIMBREL, up to 6 on 27th; SEDGE WARBLER, 2 on 28th; WHITETHROAT, 2 on 27th. (See the Fair Isle and Foula Notes).

There was a surprising number of vagrants, e.g. HERON, WHOOPER SWAN, GOLDEN EAGLE, KESTREL, WOOD PIGEON, CUCKOO and TREE SPARROW.

SWALLOWS were continually passing through and HOUSE MARTINS were in smaller numbers, whilst 3 SWIFTS were seen on 28th and one on 29th.

GOLDEN PLOVERS, of which a maximum of 3 was seen, were of the Northern race Charadrius apricaria altifrons. One pair was holding territory on Mullash Geal.

WRENS Troglodytes t. hirtensis appeared to be very common with singing ♂♂ all over the cliffs.

16. A Midsummer Migration of Curlew.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

During the last few days of June and early July there was a movement of Curlew Numenius arquata at Fair Isle on an unusual scale. Since Curlew breed in Shetland there is a trickle of migration, off odd birds and small groups, throughout June in most years, and also from mid-July when southward movement begins. The present migration, however, was altogether too large to have had its origin in the local population. The first big party was of 20 + on June 27th, and birds remained at about this strength for the next few days. About 0700 hrs. on 29th a single very tired Curlew circled the island mail-boat as she was proceeding towards Sumburgh Head, in fog, and alighted on the foredeck, remaining for about 10 minutes.

The peak of migration came at the week-end, when a flock of over 100 birds, plus scattered individuals, was at Fair Isle on July 2nd-3rd. Among waders at Sumburgh airfield on July 2nd were 2 Black-tailed Godwits Limosa limosa and 2 Ruffs Philomachus pugnax, the latter in full breeding-dress. These birds, probably part of the same influx, were seen by Miss V.M. Thom and Messrs. Wm. Horne, Tom Henderson and H. McConnell. Mr. J. Peterson saw a flock of 27 Curlew at Gruting Voe on 3rd which may also have been associated with the migration, since so large a group is unusual in Shetland at midsummer. Some Whimbrel were also recorded at Fair Isle and Dumrossness.

So far as the Fair Isle numbers are concerned they are quite unprecedented at any season in my experience, and Mr. James Wilson says the only occasion he can recall when a similar invasion took place was in late winter some years ago, after a gale with snow from the south-east. An examination of The Daily Weather Report of the Meteorological Office of the Air Ministry for the beginning of July shows that the invasion was unquestionably a drift movement in the south-east airstream ahead of an occluded front

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17. "Birds and Mammals of Shetland," by
L.S.V. and U.M. Venables.

The pages of this Bulletin have often been enriched by notes of migrants and breeding-birds in Shetland, sent by L.S.V. and U.M. Venables, who for 9 years prior to 1954 were resident in these northern isles, closely studying in nature the mammals and birds and all that pertains to them. The full fruits of this devotion to a fascinating subject have now appeared in a handsome work of 385 pp., sensibly illustrated with end-paper maps and excellent photographs of typical Shetland habitats. The production accords with the high standard which has long distinguished the house of Oliver and Boyd, of Edinburgh, and the price is 30/-.

The northern element in Shetland's avifauna has for long been a source of great attraction to bird-watchers and photographers, so the appeal of this book is national, not local. Shetland is fortunate to number among its breeding-birds several that are either unique (as in the case of the Whimbrel) or more easily accessible for study than elsewhere in the British Isles (such as Arctic Skua, Bonxie, Dunlin, Red-necked Phalarope and Red-throated Diver).

The birds of such an environment call for a more specialised treatment than is usual in faunistic surveys. Their abundance or scarcity, increase or decrease, colonisation or extinction, need to be related to special qualities of the climate and landscape; their breeding-habits to the comparatively late season in these higher latitudes, and so on. The Venables have conducted their observations with these requirements well in mind, and the biological and ecological aspects of ornithology are given due prominence in the systematic section of their book.

There are chapters dealing with "Naturalists in Shetland," "Shetland Habitats," and "Status Changes among Shetland Birds" during the last 80 years; there is a most useful Appendix giving breeding-lists of birds and mammals for each island, and the value of the work is enhanced by

a 13 pp. bibliography containing about 400 references. A valuable feature is the authors' own observations on breeding data, - season of song, clutch and brood size, peak nesting-dates, post-nuptial flocking, and so on. The essays on the Blackbird (a species which has colonised most successfully during the past 80 years), Fulmar (which has expanded enormously, as in other parts of the country), Gannet (which colonised in 1914 and is still increasing), Corncrake, the skuas, and the wintering Whooper Swans of Loch Spiggie are particularly fine.

There is much of interest to be learned from this work, especially in the realm of status changes. Final extirpation of the Sea-Eagle, in a land given to sheep-rearing, was a foregone conclusion, but the total disappearance of the once-common Kestrel and the rather scarcer Sparrow-hawk is difficult to understand. The birds which have colonised or increased are southern elements which have extended their distribution north-westwards in the Scandinavian countries following a general climatic amelioration. The authors conclude that, "If northern Europe can now support a far larger breeding population of these species, this may well swell our wintering numbers, and so increase the chance that a few individuals may remain to breed." However, a critical appraisal of such evidence as there is does not deny the possibility that the new colonisation is due to the northwards march of our own British populations.

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extending across the North Sea along a line linking Faeroe and the Hook of Holland. During the early hours of July 2nd this occluded front moved northwards across the coast of Holland and Germany, pivoting on a centre a little to the south of Fair Isle. A narrow belt of drizzle accompanied the occlusion, and it seems likely that a southwards migration of non-breeding Curlew proceeding along the North west German or Dutch coasts ran into these conditions of poor visibility during the night and drifted down-wind on a course that brought them to Shetland and Fair Isle.

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.

The Hostel.—The Hostel has accommodation for ten observers. It is sited at the North Haven, the main landing-place, and consists of a group of well-constructed timber buildings formerly occupied by the Royal Navy.

Terms.—Full board, including service, is SEVEN GUINEAS PER HEAD PER WEEK. Reduced terms are available for parties of students from schools and universities. These terms include use of bicycles, bird-rings, and other Bird Observatory equipment, but do not include hire of motor transport or small boats whilst staying on the island.

Catering.—Breakfast is served at 9 a.m., lunch at 1 p.m., and supper at 6.30 p.m. Facilities for early morning and late evening refreshments are provided in the hostel sitting-room.

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

Publications.—The Trust publishes an *Annual Report* which is sent to all subscribers. *Bulletins* are also published at regular intervals and are obtainable free by subscribers who indicate their wish to have them.

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