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# FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN



Edited by  
**KENNETH WILLIAMSON**  
Director

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February 1957

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35. Observations on Fitful Head Fulmars in Autumn 1955.

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

During our residence in south-west Shetland Mainland Fulmars Fulmarus glacialis returned to the cliffs between Fitful and Spiggie Voe progressively earlier each year:

1947 November 2nd.                      1949 October 29th.

1948 November 1st.                      1950 October 23rd.

1952 October 14th.

We have accurate dates for the final departure only for 1948 (September 10th) and 1949 (October 1st) and although these are progressively later the exit may well depend on onshore gales. Nevertheless, the exit is a real one, and the birds do not return for several weeks.

In the autumn of 1955 we returned to this locality. Each day between September 24th and October 17th we looked along the cliffs, and John Mouat of Noss kindly continued observations till the end of the month. Although numbers sitting ashore varied from day to day the Fulmars did not really leave at all except for three short periods during strong offshore gales. These were October 13th (southerly gale, a few circling), October 15th-17th (none), and Oct. 25th (NW. gale, none).

From 1947 to 1952 we would not have found a Fulmar sitting between Fitful and Spiggie in the first half of October, and a flying bird seen from the cliffs would have been a great rarity. But on calm days during this period in 1955 there were several thousand Fulmars either sitting ashore or circling at this enormous colony. At a nearby small colony of largely non-breeders at Cubal Banks the birds behaved normally and all were away for the first half of October. Both colonies face the Atlantic.

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There was a similar situation at Fair Isle. Fulmars were virtually absent till the beginning of October, when return began, increasing on 3rd-4th. There were many on 10th-11th and a "large-scale return" on 12th. Numbers at the east-side cliffs decreased somewhat towards the end of the month, when another large-scale return took place on 31st. Fulmars were away throughout October 1956, as usual, returning at their customary time, 30th-31st. - K.W.

### 36. Steppe Shrike at Fair Isle: a New British Bird.

An immature specimen of the Steppe Shrike Lanius e. pallidirostris was watched for an hour on the afternoon of September 21st 1956, and subsequently trapped at the Haa. It is the first record of this eastern shrike for Britain and the second only for western Europe. A ♂ collected on the Norwegian island of Utsira on September 5th 1953 is now in Stavanger Museum (R. Edberg, Sterna no. 13, 1954).

The bird has a superficial resemblance to a Great Grey Shrike Lanius e. excubitor, of which it is currently regarded as a geographical race inhabiting the arid zone between the Caspian and Aral Seas and the river-courses of Syr Dar'ya and Amu Dar'ya which descend from the mountainous country of Kirgizia and Tadzhikistan. It is, however, slightly smaller and very much paler, with considerably more white in the wing, and has a paler bill which is one of its best field-characters, appearing brownish-flesh even at a good distance. Other characteristics and a full description will be given in an appropriate journal.

### 37. Semipalmated Sandpiper at Fair Isle: a New Scottish Bird.

A small and unfamiliar wader, little bigger than a stint, was watched closely on May 28th 1956 as it fed with Dunlins and Turnstones on Kirkigeo beach. Provisionally identified as either a Western Calidris maurii or a Semipalmated Sandpiper C. pusillus, its capture for a closer examination was desirable as these are highly critical N. American species. A Japanese mist-net was erected over the wrack where the birds were feeding, and the bird was caught and its identity as a Semipalmated Sandpiper (the first for Scotland) was established in the lab. Among its best features were the small size, generally pale colouration (greyish with dark brown mottling above, and white beneath), red-brown ear-coverts, thin white wing-bar and dark green legs with partially webbed toes. A full note of the occurrence will appear in one of the ornithological journals.

K.W.

38. American Golden Plover at Fair Isle.

What at first appeared to be an adult Grey Plover in moult was found amid a small flock of Golden Plovers at Vaassetter on September 14th 1956. The bird, however, had brownish-grey, not black, axillaries, and no white above the tail. The whole appearance was very white and grey, and as The Handbook of British Birds (iv, 372) says that the American Golden Plover Charadrius d. dominicus in autumn resembles a young Grey Plover, it was thought possible the bird might be of this form.

Subsequently three of the observers, F.R. Allison, G. Waterston and M.F.M.M., studied skins of Charadrius d. dominicus and the Asiatic C. d. fulvus in the British and Royal Scottish Museums, and their view that the bird was of the American race was confirmed. Reasons are given in a full description which will appear in a future issue of British Birds.

M.F.M. MEIKLEJOHN.

39. The Fair Isle Lapwings.

The 3 pairs of Lapwings Vanellus vanellus which have nested in the Thione fields during the past several years again had a bad start to the season, the Ravens or Hooded Crows despoiling 2 nests. A third pair succeeded in hatching 4 young on May 15th, a normal Shetland date.

One of the remaining pairs laid again, a few yards from the road; and like many birds which lay in places where there is a good deal of innocuous human activity, they grew confiding and would continue to sit within a few feet of passing cyclists, though they never came to trust people on foot. The 4 eggs hatched on June 21st, and two of the young flushed almost from beneath my feet as the wildly anxious parent cried overhead on July 27th. The 37 days for fledging is considerably longer than the 33 given by most authorities; but with nidifugous young the rate of growth depends much on the availability of food (which the young must find for themselves), and in southern localities with a richer soil-fauna Lapwing chicks should develop more rapidly than in the north.

K.W.

40. The Arctic Skua Study in 1956.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

From an increase by ten pairs to 44 in 1955 (Bulletin, 3: 51) our Arctic Skuas Stercorarius parasiticus rose by a further seven pairs to 51 in 1956. At the close of the 1955 nesting-season 76 of the breeders carried colour-rings - in addition to their numbered metal bands - and of these 67 came home. Thus nine failed to return, representing a loss to the effective breeding-strength of 11.84%, - a much lower figure than the 19% obtained from a smaller sample of 35 in 1955.

This figure of roughly 12% may approximate to the adult mortality between the two seasons, - but a warning note was sounded by one bird which we ringed as a new breeder in 1954, was certainly not breeding at Fair Isle in 1955, but took a new mate on a new territory close to its original home in 1956. Whether or not this bird had a non-breeding year in 1955, or nested elsewhere in Shetland (which seems unlikely), we cannot know; and how rare or regular a feature of Arctic Skua biology this phenomenon is we must leave for future seasons to decide.

Analysing the state of the colony in 1956 we find that the new intake comprised 26 birds, or 25.49%; whilst of the 1955 intake 29 birds were back again, or 28.43%; and 47 birds were individuals which first nested in 1954 or a previous year, i.e 46.08%. Thus nearly 54% of the colony comprised young adults in their first or second breeding years.

Of the 51 pair, (a) 18 were matings begun in or before 1954, - 35.3%; (b) 5 preserved matings established in 1955, - 9.8%; and (c) 7 were made up of entirely new birds, - 13.7%. The balance of 41.2% comprised changed matings involving both old and young breeders and resulting from various causes. It is hoped to give a full account of these, with some preliminary discussion, in a paper now in preparation.

At least 69 young were reared from the 96 eggs laid, a breeding-success of 71.9%, slightly better than that of 1955, but below the figure for the seasons 1952-53. For a note on a 3-egg clutch see p. 132.

#### 41. Recoveries Abroad of Young Arctic Skuas.

A young bird ringed on July 14th 1956 was found dying on the shore at La Caridad (Asturias), SPAIN, on August 26th, - a date when several skua families were still present at Fair Isle. The bird was skinned and mounted by the finder, Jose Villamil Arias, who reported that the crop was "full of grain of wheat recently taken," - a remarkable diet for a young skua! This place is at lat. 43 34 N., long. 6 52 W., about a thousand miles south of Fair Isle, and the youngster was one of two pale morphs reared by intermediate parents at Brunt Brae West.

Another young bird ringed on the same afternoon was found dead at Koksijde (West Flanders), BELGIUM, on September 19th. This is lat. 51 06 N., long. 2 39 E., and about 600 miles S.S.E. of its birth-place. It was a dark-intermediate chick of the Homisdale East dark ♂ x pale ♀ mating.

A juvenile ringed on July 21st was found dead "about 2 weeks" at Egfred, near Kolding, DENMARK, on November 9th. It was thus nearly 50 miles from the North Sea coast and at the head of the Little Belt, some 500 miles S.E. of Fair Isle.

A more fortunate youngster - a pale morph of the double pale mating which has occupied the Mire of Vatnagard since 1950 - was caught when apparently tired at Vila Real de Santo Antonio (Algarve), PORTUGAL, on October 26th. It was rested for several hours, and then released with its rings intact. This is at lat. 37 12 N., long. 7 25 W., and about 1,600 miles south of Fair Isle.

The wide distribution of these four recoveries in both time and space is most interesting. Like previous autumn recoveries (including one of a bird I ringed in Faeroe on July 31st 1942, and which was storm-driven at Waddington in Lincolnshire in September) they show a southward migration through the North Sea, apparently off either coast.

K.W.



42. Recoveries at Home of Young Arctic Skuas.

KENNETH and ESTHER WILLIAMSON.

Of 15 birds ringed as non-breeders at their communal bathing-pool beside the Airstrip in the summer of 1954 eight have now established themselves as nesting birds, 5 in 1955 and 3 in 1956. As in 1955, midsummer last year was rather dry and only three additional sub-adults were caught.

In one case, Busta Brecks, two of the 1954 sub-adults are now breeding together: the ♂, however, was mated with an older bird at Homisdale West in 1955. We trapped these birds inside half-an-hour on the afternoon of June 23rd, and were intrigued to find that they had consecutive ring-numbers. It transpired they had been caught together in one throw of the net at the bathing-pool on the afternoon of July 18th 1954!

Of the other birds, five mated with young "unknown" birds probably of much the same age, establishing new territories; and one, like the Busta ♀, joined a breeder with one year's experience. Of the five matings in the first group, four were established in 1955 and continued into 1956. The remaining one was the Sukka Moor Middle mating whose story is told in Bulletin, 3: 55. The pale partner did not return in 1956 and the dark one joined with a neighbouring bird at Sukka Moor North, whose 1955 mate also failed to come home.

During the two seasons ten birds first banded as chicks took their place as breeders, as shown below:

	<u>Year of Birth</u>				
	1950	1951	1952	1953	Total.
Joining in 1955	1	2	2	-	5
Joining in 1956	-	-	2	3	5

There is no point in examining these figures against the total of ringed young known to have survived after fledging in the seasons in question, since the ring-loss now known to occur would introduce a considerable error. Doubtless a number of newcomers of recent years are birds we marked years ago as chicks: several birds caught at new nests in 1955-56 were found to have a single colour-ring only of the combination

put on them as young, the butted No.3 B.T.O. aluminium ring having fallen off. Two such rings have been found lying on the moor, one sufficiently close to a nest (at Wirvie, 1956) to make it virtually certain that it was dropped by an adult at this site, and the other not far from the skuas' pool.

In one case only has it been possible to identify a bird by its colour-bands alone. The colours, pink over blue on the right leg, were used only once in conjunction with a butted ring (the only type likely to be lost) during the seasons 1949 to 1953, on a brood of two at Sukka Moor South on July 18th 1952. This "retrap" was caught at the bathing-pool on June 14th 1956, and it is of course excluded from the Table, being a non-breeder. It is interesting, however, that its brood-mate (also retaining the pink-over-blue combination unfaded, as well as the aluminium ring) was caught on June 20th 1956 at a 2-egg nest in a new area, Svey Summit West.

There was another instance of brood-mates returning in 1956, the pale morph young reared by a double-pale mating on Mire of Vatnagard in 1953. One, a ♂, is the bird whose shed ring was found close to the Wirvie nest, where 2 eggs were laid by the ♀ which in 1955 succeeded the "white-winged" ♀ in the Burn of Furse (see Bulletin, 3: 50, 53). The other, a ♀, laid a single infertile egg late in the season after taking up a territory at the edge of the Mire with the 1955 Brunt Brae Middle ♂. (His 1955 ♀ had gone to another ♂, at Vatstrass, earlier in the season, and a new pair of Bonxies had usurped his original territory).

The main causes of ring-loss are corrosion (which is not surprising in a bird which is constantly at sea) and loosening of the butted ends as the ring wears thin, aggravated by its catching in strands of juniper and heather on the breeding-ground. Since 1954 chicks and adults have always been banded with "double-ended" rings in which a complete overlap, giving a double thickness of metal, can be effected, and it seems highly unlikely that any of these will share the fate of so many of the "butted" type. From 1957-59, during which years we may expect the 1954 age-class to return, we should be able to record increasingly reliable figures for the proportion of chicks rejoining the colony of their birth.

43. The Year's Migration at Fair Isle - Part 1.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

RED-NECKED GREBE Podiceps griseigena. One in the bay at Furse, September 16th, is worthy of note as it is much the earliest of the few Fair Isle records. The only previous fall occurrence is for the last week of October 1926, and 3 others are between February 8th-11th in 1915, 1922 and 1937.

SLAVONIAN GREBE Podiceps auritus. Singly on March 31st and November 5th-6th.

H E R O N Ardea cinerea. There was some passage during the anticyclonic period at the end of March, and scattered records throughout the spring until June 9th. Also seen from July 19th-22nd, perhaps arriving from west Norway on light NE. anticyclonic wind; and from 30th to August 6th, probably with a similar airstream ahead of the occluded front of a North Sea low. There was a slight increase to August 12th when more young birds arrived, with a small but active low between us and the Skagerrak; and there was a small influx on September 4th-5th at the time of the big "rush" of passerine birds. On 13th, 7 passed by with Shetland, Faeroe and west Norway in an anticyclonic ridge, and 11 were seen in similar weather on 18th. There were 2 or 3 from 26th-29th, and 4 on October 8th.

MALLARD Anas platyrhynchos. Occasional records include two pairs on July 1st.

T E A L Anas crecca. There were 2 on August 10th with a high over southern Norway; and again on 25th followed by 6 next day, this being a cyclonic arrival in an easterly wind north of an occlusion between Scotland and the Skagerrak. In September there were 8 on 7th-8th after similar weather, and 5 "onward passage" birds on 10th after a marked improvement. Scattered records followed till 4 appeared on October 6th.

W I G E O N Anas penelope. A pair from May 2nd-4th. 3 ♂♂ and 2 ♀♀ from May 21st-28th appeared with cyclonic SE. wind over the North Sea. Drakes on June 2nd-3rd. A bird stayed from August 30th to September 8th, and there were 5 on 9th after a day of calm weather along the route between

Iceland and Scotland. Five on September 14th had made a cyclonic journey from Iceland in the NW. airstream of a low to the north of Shetland; and 3 were present between 23rd-25th with a SE. anticyclonic wind in the North Sea. Six on Oct. 6th, probably ex Iceland on the north-east periphery of an Azores high, were followed by 3 or 4 from 8th-10th which may have made a similar approach.

TUFTED DUCK Aythya fuligula. One or two between May 24th-28th, and singly on June 1st and September 8th.

GOLDENEYE Bucephala clangula. A pair from March 25th-30th and a ♂ on April 21st. One with a party of Mergansers on October 6th.

LONG-TAILED DUCK Clangula hyemalis. A drake in full breeding-dress gave delight to all at North Haven between July 4th-18th. The first of autumn was seen on October 1st and on 9th there were 5. A party of 7 at sea off Dutfield on October 26th had increased to 10 on 28th after a period of NW. wind.

COMMON SCOTER Melanitta nigra. A 1st-summer ♂ was in North Haven from April 15th-18th.

VELVET SCOTER Melanitta fusca. A pair from March 25th-29th, the ♂ staying till April 1st. There were 2 from April 24th-27th, one staying till 29th, and in autumn a ♀ was in North Haven from October 2nd-9th.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER Mergus serrator. One on July 13th. There were 3 on September 15th and 21st, 4 on October 6th and again in early November. A ♀ caught by Jerome Stout of Busta on November 11th weighed 422 gm.

SHELDUCK Tadorna tadorna. A drake was seen from April 22nd-24th and a 1st-summer bird was found dead on Vaasetter on 28th and the skin preserved. There were 4 on May 5th, one from July 15th-18th, and a ♀ on September 10th, - altogether more than in any recent year.

GREY LAG GOOSE Anser anser. Singly on April 29th-30th and from May 7th-10th. Four were recognised, October 5th-6th, and there were probably others among the "grey-geese" recorded under the next species.

**PINK-FOOTED GOOSE** Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus. One on May 17th had been ringed on the Solway, at Annan in Dumfriesshire, on October 16th 1954 by the Wildfowl Trust. The date is late for return passage at Fair Isle.

In autumn there were 3 on October 2nd with clear weather and NW. wind to northwards, 24 "grey geese" on 3rd when a cyclonic arrival from Iceland was possible, and parties totalling 25 on 18th, mostly Pinkfeet, and mostly passing on a morning of cyclonic NW. wind. Three small skeins of "grey geese" were seen on October 24th, also a flock of 24 believed to be **BARNACLE GEESE** Branta leucopsis (see p. 154). Several parties of geese passed the island on November 12th with light NW. wind.

**WHOOPEE SWAN** Cygnus cygnus. We had 5 on April 16th with a vast Atlantic high influencing Britain, and 5 on May 20th with a ridge extending from the south.

The first of autumn were 4 on September 13th, no doubt the same 4 which had made a night's halt on Loch Spiggie in Dunrossness, - and which, according to Tom Henderson, "were definitely not our birds: they settled and stayed on the wrong part of the loch, and did not find the best feeding-ground." At the usual arrival-time one on October 2nd was followed by parties totalling 25 next day, and there were 2 on 4th and again on 6th, mostly cyclonic arrivals from Iceland riding the strong N.-NW. airstream of a low moving from that country to the Norwegian coast. Five passed on the big day of goose passage and Iceland Redwing "rush", October 18th, and on 20th a lone and inexperienced juvenile just managed to evade capture on North Haven shore (see Bulletin, 3: 68). There were 4 on October 26th with an anticyclonic NW. wind. At Loch Spiggie the mid-November peak was 92.

**SPARROW-HAWK** Accipiter nisus. Singly on several days in mid- and late April, birds being trapped on the 23rd (♀), 27th (1st-s. ♂) and 30th (adult ♂). There was one on the early date of August 15th, but the only other seen was a 1st-w. ♂ in a Roadside Trap on October 24th.

**ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD** Buteo lagopus. One was seen on Ward Hill on April 18th by Mr and Mrs Douglas Lees.

**KESTREL** Falco tinnunculus. Occasional between the last days of March and May 31st. There were at least three on the unusual date of July 7th after a small depression had moved through the North Sea. One was seen on August 8th and again one on 22nd-23rd and 30th. The easterly weather of early September brought in 2 on 3rd, and 3 from 7th-9th, and there were again 3 on 24th and 30th and 2 from October 5th-9th. Otherwise single birds were seen on most days.

**M E R L I N** Falco columbarius. Spring migrants were few, as usual, and confined to single birds between March 27th-30th and five dates in May down to 19th. An adult ♂ Falco c. aesalon (wing 192 mm.) was trapped on May 15th, our first spring capture. Single birds were seen on June 23rd and July 6th, with two next day, these being almost certainly Continental immigrants in easterly weather on the northern side of a North Sea low.

The first of autumn, a ♀ aesalon (wing 219 mm.), made a long stay from August 12th-30th, when it was found injured and had to be destroyed (see p. 145). Two were seen on August 28th followed by 3 on 29th-30th, and what has been said in regard to the July birds applies to these also. Two 1st-winter ♂♂ trapped at this time were aesalon (wings 199 mm. and 202 mm.) but a ♀ on 30th (wing 225 mm.) and a 1st-winter ♂ next day (wing 205 mm.) were Icelandic subaesalon, the wind at the time being NW. on the periphery of a high centred to west of Ireland. (A compromise between figs. 4 and 5 in "The Migration of the Iceland Merlin," British Birds, 47: 434-441, corresponds fairly with the situation). There were 4 at the peak of this influx on September 1st, and we had one or two daily afterwards until 30th (3). On September 12th the ♀ of August 30th was re-trapped, and birds caught on 26th-27th after fog and southerly wind in the North Sea were small ♀♀ aesalon (wings 212 mm. and 213 mm.). Numbers were similar in early October, and a ♀ sub-aesalon (wing 226 mm.) was caught on 3rd. There were 3 birds on October 8th and at least 6 on 18th with the first big wave of Iceland Redwings. Falcons trapped on 11th and 25th (wings 220 mm. and 221 mm.) seem likely to have been Continental in origin: the former, at 270 gm., was the heaviest ♀ yet trapped bar one at 275 gm. in autumn 1953.

**PEREGRINE** Falco peregrinus. Sporadic records of this species throughout the season refer mostly to single birds: there are singularly few for July and August and it is very doubtful if any bred in 1956. Frequent autumn records begin with the drift-movement of August 24th, and the species is noted daily from September 6th. It is noteworthy that a ♂ on July 6th and 2 birds next day coincided with the arrival of migrant Merlins and Kestrels in cyclonic easterly weather.

**GYR FALCON** Falco rusticolus. On October 18th, a day of heavy Pinkfoot and Merlin passage, a pair of Peregrines was seen in hot pursuit of a much bigger and broader winged falcon which could only have been a Gyr. It fled from them with a typical falcon scold, strident and hoarse: the tiercel sheered off, but the ♀ Peregrine actually bound to the bigger bird for several seconds, forcing it down towards the sea.

**CORNCRAKE** Crex crex. First seen on April 25th, then on May 2nd and 13th-14th, the last bird parading about within a few feet of me by the roadside as I sat astride my bicycle. No evidence of breeding, and one autumn record for Sept. 17th.

**WATER RAIL** Rallus aquaticus. Singly on several October days from 3rd, and one on November 7th. The 4 trapped had pale olive-brown mantle fringes typical of Continental birds.

**LAPWING** Vanellus vanellus. Close on 100 on March 25th increased to ca. 400 next day, falling to 20 by 27th. During this anticyclonic period passage was tremendous, and more came in making 100 again on 29th. There were 2 or 3 only in early April, then 20 on 9th, after which we had only the three nesting pairs (see p. 112). Ten arrived on May 24th with SE. wind and 9 on 31st. There were few records after the disappearance of island birds in mid-August until the autumn migration began with individuals on September 7th and 10th-11th, followed by 6 on 14th after a night of cyclonic SW. wind. Numbers then fluctuated between one and 7 till 22nd. There were 8 on 29th with a col to the north-west, 2 or 3 on most days in early October, and a flock of 30 on October 20th with SE. wind ahead of a warm front in the North Sea.

**RINGED PLOVER** Charadrius hiaticula. One pair nested successfully. Autumn migration was first apparent with 10 on

August 12th and 12 on 14th, with depressions to the east perhaps causing drift off the west coast of Norway. Numbers fluctuated in late August and September with 23 on 1st and 30 on 3rd during the movement of an anticyclone through our area from south-west. There were over 50 between September 7th-14th, a period which began with easterly weather betwixt Norway and Shetland, frontal in character, succeeded by col conditions. Following this peak numbers fell through 10 on 15th to a few only, rising slightly once more on 24th-25th (10).

GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. Occasional spring, with 5 Northern C. a. altifrons between May 8th-10th. There were 4 on July 21st with a high centred locally. They were occasional in August with 7 on 15th (col) and 17 on 31st (high to westward), and infrequent in September till 7 on 9th (col). were followed by a fairly steady passage of increasing numbers. from 12th (cyclonic NW. weather). The peak was of 40 on 15th. The next influx was of 20 on 28th (col), after which only odd birds were seen.

DOMINICAN PLOVER Charadrius d. dominicus. See p. 112.

D O T T E R E L Charadrius morinellus. A single bird was seen by James Wilson and G. Stansfield in the village on June 23rd, the second spring record and third for the island.

W O O D C O C K Scolopax rusticola. A few passed on March 26th and late birds were seen on April 20th and 27th. A single bird "froze" in open view before Don Freshwater and myself in the Gully on October 8th, but there are reports of odd birds preceding this in the south of Shetland.

There was no "rush" until the month's end, when 15 or so on 27th were followed by 200+ next day, - fortunately for the Woodcock, a Sunday! There was a high over Norway giving clear skies on the coast, and an easterly wind in the Skagerrak becoming southerly in advance of frontal developments at Fair Isle. Some 70 birds on October 30th, in all likelihood "onward passage" of this lot in anticyclonic weather, had fallen to 30 or so next day. A few came in on November 10th and 12th, and a big "fall" ensued on 19th-20th with a high established over Scandinavia and a SE. airstream in the North Sea. There was another arrival on 23rd-24th again with anticyclonic weather



in Norway and east wind and mist in the Skagerrak, the wind veering later to westerly gale at Fair Isle as a front came in.

SNIPES Capella gallinago. Slight movement, April 22nd, and in autumn on September 8th-9th, 15th-16th and 19th-20th.

JACK SNIPES Lymnocyrtes minimus. An early bird on 8th September, 6 on October 6th with a cyclonic NE.-N. wind, and one or two on 8th.

CURL EWS Numenius arquata. Five on May 8th, a few at the end of the month, and a stray on June 22nd.

As last year (Bulletin, 3: 46) there was a midsummer influx, 30 arriving on July 2nd ahead of an occlusion stretching across the North Sea from Orkney to the Dutch coast. With a low similarly centred (Northern Ireland), its warm front again reaching across the North Sea to Holland, causing SE. winds in the region, there was a further influx of about the same number on 5th. The warm front of yet another low, similarly placed, brought in 5 birds on July 9th.

August movements began with 6 on 3rd and peaked at 60+ on 11th, again with frontal SE. wind in the North Sea. There were 18 on 19th with a small North Sea low causing a direct NE. airstream between west Norway and Shetland, and 12 on 22nd which probably represented onward passage in an anticyclone. About 10 were seen each day from 24th-26th and on 30th when east winds were blowing on the northern perimeter of a low in the North Sea. In September, numbers did not exceed 10 on 8th, when a filling low was similarly situated.

WHIMBREL Numenius phaeopus. First on May 2nd-3rd followed by strong passage (13) on 4th in calm ridge conditions, then 6 or so daily till 8th. A further movement took place on 9th (13) and 10th (10) in similar weather, this phase finishing with 6 on 14th. There was a later phase beginning with 3 on 22nd and continuing with a few daily to June 6th, the biggest numbers being 7 on May 26th (ridge), 16 on 31st (col) and 12 on June 3rd (col).

There was a trickle of passage in June between 10th-14th and 21st-25th, and in July from 16th-19th and on 27th (6) and 29th (5). The species occurred singly on most days in August with passage of a dozen on 14th when a low was centred between

our own area and south Norway. In September there was movement only on 6th (10) with a ridge to northward, and the last was seen on 8th.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT Limosa lapponica. Movement between September 6th-12th with 4 on the last day, and again on 15th and 17th with 3 each day. A 1st-winter bird was caught in a mist-net on 7th, and the last was seen on 21st.

GREEN SANDPIPER Tringa ochropus. Singly, June 24th, August 1st and 14th.

WOOD SANDPIPER Tringa glareola. Singly, August 30th-31st and September 8th, and 2 on September 14th.

COMMON SANDPIPER Tringa hypoleucos. The first was seen on April 28th and there were scattered occurrences in May, particularly between 2nd-6th and 24th-26th. Singly on June 5th and July 12th. Numbers were very few in August, but a small movement took place between September 7th-11th, with 3 on the first day.

REDSHANK Tringa totanus. The first flush of autumn migration came between August 11th-13th with a low to northward, and there was a build-up from 19th-21st after which the species was fairly common round the coast. A flock of 20 on August 27th may have been new arrivals through a North Sea col. Numbers were small in September but rose to 20 on 12th with a "cyclonic approach" pattern between Iceland and Scotland, and in October noticeable increases coincided with the immigration of Iceland Redwings.

SPOTTED REDSHANK Tringa erythropus. Single birds on August 26th and September 1st, 8th and 11th-12th.

GREENSHANK Tringa nebularia. Three each day, August 11th-15th, and 2 on 16th-17th. Singly, August 26th and September 22nd.

SEMI-PALMATED SANDPIPER Calidris pusillus. See p.111.

K N O T Calidris canutus. A fine "red" bird on May 7th-8th. Autumn movement began on August 22nd-23rd when a high between Iceland and Scotland was succeeded by a col. We had 14 on 25th and 5 next day, with a NE. cyclonic airstream from the Norwegian coast. There were 2 or 3 juveniles from 30th-September 1st with similar conditions, and further pass-

age from 11th-15th, with 5 on 12th and 15th with the wind a cyclonic westerly.

PURPLE SANDPIPER Calidris maritima. Small numbers indicated passage from May 5th-7th and on 24th; also on September 11th-12th and 27th.

LITTLE STINT Calidris minutus. A 1st-winter bird with Dunlins on South Haven shore blundered into a Potter Trap on August 25th. It remained till 27th, another was seen on Sept. 7th and there were 2 next day, a calm day after SE. frontal weather.

DUNLIN Calidris alpina. Spring passage was between May 5th-10th, 20th-22nd (slight), and 24th-June 7th, with 8 on 28th-29th in col weather, and 6 on June 3rd. Singly on July 9th and 30th. The first of autumn was on August 9th; slight passage took place on 14th and 18th, and was renewed between September 6th-15th with 10 birds on 7th and 11th.

CURLEW SANDPIPER Calidris testacea. A handsome "red" bird frequented the Leestat beach with Dunlins from May 24th-26th. It was noticeably larger and longer-necked than its companions, and quite apart from its intrinsic merit a good bird for Fair Isle, where the few previous occurrences have all been in autumn months.

SANDERLING Crocethia alba. One on June 3rd was welcome as it provided an instructive plumage comparison with our Semi-palmated Stint of a few days before (see p. 111). Except for size, the general likeness was remarkable, only the head appearing markedly different and more dusky.

Sanderlings came singly on August 3rd and 10th-11th and some movement followed at the month's end, building up to 6 on 31st. These were days with a cyclonic airstream off the Norwegian coast. More passage took place between September 6th-13th, with 9 at the outset in easterly weather and 7 on 9th in a col.

RUFF Philomachus pugnax. First seen on August 15th-16th with a low over southern Norway, then 4 on 25th with a cyclonic wind from that quarter, and 3 on 27th (col). There was a peak of 10 birds, again with a low in the Skagerrak, on the last 2 days of the month, and this phase ended with 4 on

September 3rd. A new influx of 9 occurred on 6th, with the weather much as before, and numbers fell to one on 12th. A final influx of 4 occurred on 13th under ridge conditions.

BONXIE Catharacta skua. Two visited the island on April 9th, but no further visits were recorded till mid-month, when one on 13th was followed by 4 next day and 12 or so on 14th-15th, this being an anticyclonic period. There were still 3 (including a late youngster) on Ward Hill on October 4th and the last was noted on 9th.

ARCTIC SKUA Stercorarius parasiticus. Single birds looked in on April 23rd-24th and 28th, and 5 were ashore for a brief spell in anticyclonic weather on 29th. Visits were sporadic until over 15 were seen on their territories on May 3rd, and the breeding-ground was well frequented from 6th. Most had gone by the end of August and they were down to a mere half-dozen by September 3rd-4th. The last, possibly on passage, were seen on September 12th and 15th.

POMARINE SKUA Stercorarius pomarinus. H.G. Alexander saw one flying over Buness on May 29th.

LONG-TAILED SKUA Stercorarius longicaudus. A young bird, unusually white-breasted, and probably 2nd-summer, was in company with non-breeding Arctic Skuas at the Rippack on June 23rd, - a first record for Fair Isle and apparently the first for Shetland since 1906.

COMMON GULL Larus canus. Spring passage dates were April 12th, 18th-20th, May 14th (all slight) and May 7th (60). Some return migrants appeared on August 11th-12th with SE. wind, but the first big movement was of 200+ on August 24th, increasing to 400 next day and declining to 50 on 26th, with 2 only remaining on 27th. There was a low centred over Scotland at the outset, giving easterly wind on the Norwegian coast, and this was succeeded by a col. There were 20+ on August 30th-31st with a similar airstream caused by a trough in the Skagerrak. The next big passage was of 100+ on 7th September, with a frontal easterly wind and bad visibility, and afterwards birds were few until 50+ were recorded on 18th with a high over the area and a NE. wind from the Norwegian coast. There were small subsequent increases, particularly on 28th-29th (60+), with a front crossing the North Sea from a centre near Fair Isle.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** Larus ridibundus. In April there were 7 with the first lot of Common Gulls on 12th, and 4 appeared on 25th. A few in the first week of May culminated in 30, with twice as many Common Gulls, on 7th. There were 8 each of this and the last species on 10th, and 5 with 7 Common Gulls on 26th, otherwise odd birds down to mid-June and from July 2nd to 21st (4). Odd birds were seen from early August but the first big lot was a dozen on 30th (see above). During September we had from one to 4 almost daily, with the species rather commoner between 21st-24th. Occasional in October, with one trapped on 22nd.

**SANDWICH TERN** Sterna sandvicensis. Two on May 29th and June 3rd and one on August 14th. It is absent in most years.

**COMMON and ARCTIC TERNS** Sterna sp. Two on July 16th and one on 22nd. Slight passage from August 26th, with a peak on September 14th.

**WOOD PIGEON** Columba palumbus. One or two on April 20th-21st, 30th, May 3rd-8th and 27th-28th. Single birds on the unusual dates of June 1st and 17th-18th, and in September one on 24th-25th.

**TURTLE DOVE** Streptopelia turtur. Spring migrants came on May 23rd (2) and 24th (3) with SE. wind, and one remained till June 8th. Another stayed on the isle for a similar period, the 17 days from June 18th to July 4th, keeping company with a lost homing-pigeon and often coming with it to the kitchen window sill in expectation of food. One in autumn on August 28th.

**CUCKOO** Cuculus canorus. A 1st-summer ♀ was caught on May 24th, and another on June 11th. One on June 1st. Young birds appeared on August 27th and 29th, and there were birds in September on 3rd, 8th and 24th.

**SNOWY OWL** Nyctea scandiaca. A bird with black-mottled underparts (so presumably a ♂) was seen by T. Stout on Ward Hill on April 17th.

**LONG-EARED OWL** Asio otus. One from April 1st-4th and 2 on the hill, October 31st. An owl flying at night, November 6th, was probably this species, and the last bird trapped for the season was a Long-eared Owl in Vaadal on November 13th.

**SHORT-EARED OWL** Asio flammeus. Singly on April 9th, May 22nd and August 17th.

NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus europaeus. Singly on September 14th and 21st. There are few spring records, and none for autumn since Eagle Clarke found the remains on one in 1908.

SWIFT Apus apus. In spring, one on May 23rd and 2 next day, and one on June 5th. In summer, one on July 3rd, 5 on 6th, and singly on several days between 7th-12th and 21st-28th. In autumn, 2 on August 27th and September 7th, 3 on the next three days, and one on 19th.

PIED WOODPECKER Dendrocopos major. The first was seen prospecting a clothes-post at Melville House on August 25th, and others were reported on October 8th and 24th.

WRYNECK Jynx torquilla. None in spring. There were 3 on August 26th and one each day to 31st, and a bird on each of September 5th and 7th. Three were trapped.

SWALLOW Hirundo rustica. In May there were 3 on 2nd and 4th and 4 from 10th-12th, with odd birds close to these. Passage was fairly strong from May 22nd to June 7th, slight from June 9th-12th, and sporadic afterwards to July 7th. A peak of 30 was recorded on May 23rd-24th when an occluded front moved across Scotland from the west, bringing S.SE. wind to the North Sea; and a minor peak from June 10th-12th was during anticyclonic weather. Four passed on June 26th, and 12 appeared in typical drift conditions on July 2nd with easterly weather as described for CURLEW. One on September 28th-29th provides the sole autumn record.

HOUSE MARTIN Delichon urbica. First on May 3rd, and others on 10th and 21st, then strong passage from May 21st to June 8th, sporadic afterwards. From ca. 15 on May 23rd-24th with SE. wind in the North Sea, martins increased to 20-30 on 27th-28th when a high pressure ridge was succeeded by a col. There were 30 on 30th and June 1st in anticyclonic weather. There was passage at similar strength on June 4th-5th with a cyclonic SE. wind at the outset, and 20 birds on 7th under similar circumstances. Slight passage of a similar nature took place with Swallows on July 1st-2nd and 7th. Autumn passage was noted on September 4th-5th (6) and 7th-8th (9), with the last record on 18th.

SAND MARTIN Riparia riparia. One or two daily from May 22nd-26th.

**CARRION CROW** Corvus c. corone. There were the usual observations of Carrion and/or hybrid crows among local Hoodies Corvus c. cornix in April (3 on 11th and 28th) and early May (8 on 2nd, 6 on 4th), and such occurrences seem to be increasing in frequency. There were also one or 2 in early July (see CURLEW for weather note), and one on most days in September.

**ROOK** Corvus frugilegus. Six on March 27th increased to 40 next day, and by 31st there were 120 on the isle. There are scattered records later in the spring.

**JACKDAW** Corvus monedula. Singly on April 13th-14th and May 6th; 3 on April 21st and May 2nd. A bird with dark underparts and an obscure collar, probably C. m. spermologus, stayed from September 17th-25th, and others of the same were noted on October 2nd-3rd, 8th and 10th.

**W R E N** Troglodytes t. troglodytes. The facility with which birds were trapped on October 17th and 24th, and their comparative docility when handled, aroused suspicions as to their origin. On examination in the lab. both proved to be immigrants of the typical race, smaller and lighter than our T. t. fridariensis (see Ibis, 93: 599-601), more russet above and paler and much less vermiculated below.

**BLACK-BELLIED DIPPER** Cinclus c. cinclus. One haunted the Gully burn and waterfall between March 29th - April 5th.

**FIELDFARE** Turdus pilaris. A small passage on March 27th and one or two in the last week of April, followed by the usual early May rush of 100+ on 2nd when an occlusion passed across the North Sea. An early return migrant was seen from September 7th-10th, but it was six weeks before any further record accrued. Late autumn immigration was the poorest ever, with 20+ on Oct. 22nd, 10 on 27th increasing to 50+ next day, declining on 29th.

**REDWING** Turdus musicus. A few at the end of March (10+ on 31st) and occasional in April (6 on 2nd and 10th) to May 2nd. Autumn immigration is dealt with on pp. 149-152.

**RING OUSEL** Turdus torquatus. One on March 29th and two between April 21st-23rd.

( To be concluded )

#### 44. A Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler Trapped.

A small brown bird appeared briefly before the startled gaze of Bruce Low and myself at the Haa in the south of the island on the morning of October 2nd. It made a brief re-appearance before vanishing into a stone wall, and we saw that it was a "fantail", as James Stout of Midway respectfully and noncommittally calls warblers of the genus Locustella. (He had seen one near his own croft a week before, and this may or may not have been the same). We found it again, lost it near the house, searched for it high and low, and ultimately found it in much the best place of all, the funnel of the Haa Trap.

On removal from the box a character we had looked for but had not seen in the field, whitish spots at the tips of the tail-feathers, at once identified it as the third British example of Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, Locustella certhiolan. I was reminded of happy days in October 1949 when a number of ornithologists spent hours on end in the crops at Lower Leogh trying to see this so-called "field-character" in the second bird recorded for the British Isles. (See Annual Report for 1949, pp. 13-14, particularly R.F. Ruttledge's remarks; and also a fuller description in British Birds, 43: 49-51). All saw it in the end, but it was not obvious unless the closest of views was obtained. We concluded on that occasion that a better character was the warm brown - almost rufous - rump, not unlike a Sedge Warbler's, but even this character failed us on the present occasion, though it was plain enough with the bird in the hand, and was also seen well when we released it from the lab. Like our bird of October 8th-9th 1949, this one was an inveterate skulker, and gave no opportunity for a really critical view until it was in the trap.

A full laboratory description of the plumage etc. will appear in British Birds. It was a 1st-winter bird and at 15.7 gm. was at least 3 gm. heavier than spring Grasshopper Warblers L. naevia we have examined.

K.W.



45. The Bonxies' Breeding Season in 1956.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

Altogether 17 pairs of Bonxies Catharacta skua nested at Fair Isle in 1956, four more than in 1955 (see Bulletin, 3: 93). Six of these pairs were in their first breeding season and were more successful than the old-established pairs, rearing 77% of the eggs they laid in comparison with a figure of 70% for the older birds.

In the older category, 11 pairs laid a total of 20 eggs and had 17 young, only 14 of which eventually flew. Among the new pairs there were 3 x C/2 and 3 x C/1, 8 hatching successfully and all being reared. For all the pairs we have 29 eggs in 17 nests, 26 of which hatched and produced 22 flying young, a success figure of 72.4% compared with 76.9% in 1955.

First to lay was the oldest pair at Eas Brecks, whose clutch of 2 eggs was found on May 8th. Three pairs at Dronga on the grass slope between Ward Hill and the north-west cliffs followed, completing their clutches between May 12th and 17th. Three pairs on Vaasetter laid in mid-May, between 15th-17th, 16th-18th and 20th-22nd respectively; and the birds at Sukka Moor (a very dark ♀ and a rufous ♂ whose first year was 1953) and the 1951 pair at Byerwall also laid at this time.

One chick at Eas Brecks died in the shell after the other had hatched on June 7th, and this bird first flew on July 21st after a fledging-period of 45 days. The chicks at Byerwall hatched on June 15th-16th, and the only fertile egg in the Sukka Moor nest also hatched on 16th. This and the younger Byerwall bird made strong efforts to fly on August 1st: it was an absolutely windless day and neither was able to rise higher than a foot or so, nor travel more than about 20 yards at a time. Fledging in these cases took 47 days.

Of the new pairs, a family of two chicks at the top of Burrashield, and one of two at the Brae of Ressinsgeo, were still in their nests on June 23rd and 28th respectively. At

Brunt Brae, sandwiched between several pairs of Arctic Skuas, the chicks appeared on July 8th-10th. The three single-egg nests were later than this, and at Cup of Hey Doo the chick did not get on the wing till the beginning of September, and was still on the moor in company with a parent a month later.

At Thione the half-grown chick was badly mauled by avian predators and we had to destroy it: the wounds were of a kind which could well have been made by strong, hooked beaks, and suspicion fell on a pack of 15 non-breeding Bonxies which were roaming the moor daily in the latter half of August. The only other nest, a new one at Dronga, came to nothing. The record achieved by the Fair Isle Bonxies over the past 6 years stands as in the Table below:

<u>Year.</u>	<u>Pairs.</u>	<u>Eggs.</u>	<u>Hatched.</u>	<u>Reared.</u>	<u>Success.</u>
1 9 5 1	5	10	7	(4)	?
1 9 5 2	10	20	12	(8)	?
1 9 5 3	9	15	9	8	53.3%
1 9 5 4	8	16	10	10	62.5%
1 9 5 5	13	26	21	20	76.9%
1 9 5 6	17	29	26	22	72.4%

One of the new pair at the Brae of Ressingsgeo is a ringed bird and when caught in a clap-net on June 21st it was found to be AN 7093, ringed as a chick at Vaasetter on August 17th 1950. This is undoubtedly the same individual as was present here as a mated non-breeder in summer 1955, and was wandering about the isle in the summer of 1954. It is interesting to know that in this species breeding may not begin until the 6th year of life, and we may hope that in future years more of our island-bred youngsters will return.

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One of the Arctic Skuas' nests in 1956 contained 3 eggs, the first time I have seen such a clutch in over 300 nests found in Shetland and Faeroe. All failed to hatch, due to the inability of the birds to cover them properly. It is probable they were laid by two ♀♀ as one egg was dissimilar from the 2 others, but no third bird was ever seen at the site.

46. Longevity in Local Passerines.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

WHEATEAR Oenanthe oenanthe. The oldest bird for which we have a record was at least 7 years of age when re-captured on May 22nd 1956, having been ringed as a breeding ♂ on June 12th 1950.

There are 4 records of 5-year-olds. A ♀ we ringed on April 22nd 1952 and re-caught twice in 1956 may of course be older, as also may be a bird ringed as an adult ♂ on August 18th 1952 and re-trapped on the same date in 1955. ("Adult" and "1st-summer" ♂ plumages are distinguishable in this species). F 0544, ringed as an adult ♂ on May 5th 1950 and re-captured on July 10th 1953, is a similar case. The fourth record is a ♀: she was ringed as a nestling in late June 1951, re-captured on August 4th 1953, and again on May 5th 1956.

There are four 4-year-olds in the Ringing Book. A bird marked as an adult ♂ on June 14th 1954 was found dead in early July 1956. An adult ♀, ML 525, re-trapped on May 18th 1956, first came to hand as a juvenile in mid-July 1952. The other two were birds already in adult ♂ plumage when ringed and were last handled in August 1952 and 1954 respectively.

There are in addition eight records of birds at 3 years of age and 13 at 2 years, whilst 24 others have been captured in the season subsequent to ringing.

STARLING Sturnus vulgaris. One bird is at least as old as the Bird Observatory: it is a ♂ first caught on Christmas Day of 1948, and taken in a mist-net at Busta on September 20th 1956.

SP 217 may also be 8 years old: an adult ♂ on October 1st 1949, re-captured on October 25th 1956. And SP 170 is at least 7: unsexed when ringed on August 16th 1949, re-captured October 15th 1955 and September 28th 1956 as an adult ♂. A second-brood nestling marked on July 8th 1949 entered the Axell Trap, an adult ♀ just over 6 years of age, on October 16th 1955.

One 5-year-old came to hand in 1956, and we had 3 of this age in 1954 and 1955. There are 6 records of 4-year-old birds.

ROCK PIPIT Anthus spinoletta. The 1956 season produced one at 6, one at 5 and one at 4 years of age. Previously our

best records had been two at 4 years old and five at 3 years. The oldest, L 2630, is a ♂ ringed as a juvenile, August 15th 1950, and re-ringed C 47718 on September 1st 1956.

The 5-year-old M 2527 (now A 62203) is an old favourite who has been taken in traps near the Observatory buildings on no fewer than 30 occasions since his first capture as an adult on September 16th 1951. This bird, caught twice in 1952 and only once in 1953, did not really acquire the "trap habit" until 1954.

Altogether there are 17 records of measurements of this bird taken at various times, and they provide an instructive series. The wing-length ranges from a maximum of 95 mm. after completion of the autumn moult, maintained until the following spring, to a minimum of 83-85 mm. at the height of the nesting season. Similarly the variation in tail-length shows the effects of abrasion, though it is less pronounced than in the wing. Tail-length is recorded as 70 mm. on September 28th, October 26th and November 15th in three different years, but 67-68 mm. in May 1954 diminishing to 65 mm. in July. Corresponding figures for 1956 (apparently a more rigorous season, since the wing showed greater wear also) were 65 mm. in April falling to 59 mm. at the beginning of June.

The 30 weight-records vary between 22.8 gm. and 30.5 gm. the latter being for November 15th, a time of year when the body-weight of locally resident Starlings and Rock Pipits has begun its climb towards the winter peak. There are 5 late afternoon weighings between October 26th-31st 1955 averaging 27.36 gm. and 4 corresponding records for 0800 hrs. after it had roosted in the lab. These average 24.27 gm. thus showing an overnight drop of the order of 11%.

Other re-captured Rock Pipits also show the effects of abrasion during the nesting-season. A 3-year-old who has now been in the lab. on 9 occasions shows a variation from 89 mm. on June 13th to 95 mm. on October 24th.

There is a sexual difference in wing-length in the Rock Pipit, but with a small overlap in the region of 88-90 mm. The above figures, however, demonstrate the danger of using wing-length as a criterion of sex during the course of the breeding-season.

47. Spring and Autumn Migration (1956) at Great Saltee.

R.F. RUTTLEDGE and JOHN WEAVING.

The Observatory was manned from March 29th to May 21st (less the period April 20th-29th), and from September 1st to November 11th, all dates inclusive. Covering as it does the two migrations, the report is necessarily even more selective than usual.

## M i g r a t i o n

Some spring migrants, especially passerine birds, came in unusually small numbers. This was particularly the case with SEDGE WARBLER, WHITETHROAT, and WILLOW WARBLER. Many of the species that were scarce in the spring appeared more numerous in the autumn.

The most notable event was the occurrence of what can only have been LESSER SHORT-TOED LARKS Calandrella rufescens. Other unusual spring birds were a NIGHTINGALE and BLUETHROAT.

The autumn was "one in a million", the like of which we shall be lucky ever to experience again. The persistent easterly weather in September brought to Great Saltee examples of WRYNECK, BLUETHROAT, BARRED WARBLER, LESSER WHITETHROAT, MELODIOUS & ICTERINE WARBLERS, SHORT-TOED LARK, RED-THROATED PIPIT, as many as 40 flava WAGTAILS together in one field, ORTOLAN and LAPLAND BUNTINGS and others. PIED FLYCATCHERS and TREE PIPITS exceeded in numbers anything in normal experience. In October a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER was seen.

BLACKBIRDS were late in arriving and up to the time of closing the Observatory STARLING and CHAFFINCH numbers were not on the scale of previous years.

## S y s t e m a t i c      L i s t

MERLIN Falco columbarius. One or two on many days in October and November (3 on 10th). A ♀ on October 11th had a wing-measurement (chord) of 222 mm. which is just within the range for the Icelandic race F. c. subaesalon.

QUAIL Coturnix coturnix. One on September 20th.

LAPWING Vanellus vanellus. Very few until October 21st (12), then almost daily to November 11th, with most on November 5th and 6th (26) and 3rd and 9th (24).

GOLDEN PLOVER Charadrius apricarius. The only worthwhile record was of 35 on September 25th.

DOTTEREL Charadrius morinellus. One between September 21st and October 1st (not seen on several intervening days).

WHIMBREL Numenius phaeopus. One or two, April 4th to 8th, and 4 on 30th. Daily from May 1st to 9th (but not 6th) with most on 8th (17). One or two, May 18th-20th. Small irregular numbers in September and October, mostly September 9th (29). One on November 1st.

GREEN SANDPIPER Tringa ochropus. One, September 8th.

WOOD SANDPIPER Tringa glareola. One, September 4th.

COMMON SANDPIPER Tringa hypoleucos. Unusually scarce. Singly, April 12th-14th, and on 17th and 30th, May 13th-16th, 19th and September 15th-16th.

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER Calidris fuscicollis. One was identified on October 17th by G.C. Johnson and R.G. Wheeler. It was about the size of a Dunlin with a noticeable white rump like a Curlew Sandpiper's, but the bill was shorter and straighter than in that species. It was heard to call on several occasions with a pipit-like "tweet, tweet, tweet" - very like the calls of nearby Rock Pipits. It was watched for an hour at ranges down to 7 ft. and a full description is on record.

RUFF Philomachus pugnax. One on September 13th.

PHALAROPE Phalaropus sp. One on the sea on September 29th. The 3 observers considered that the views they had were not good enough for positive identification. The Grey Ph. fulicarius is the more likely, and one such was identified on the mainland 6 miles away on September 30th.

GREAT SKUA Catharacta skua. One on September 3rd.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL Larus fuscus. Passage of L.f. graellsii took place on many days throughout the autumn. On September 1st 95 were recorded, on 7th 20; thereafter they were in numbers up to 10, except on October 3rd (13) and 8th (12).

WOOD PIGEON Columba palumbus. Singly on April 30th, May 12th-13th; two on 15th-16th and 4 on 17th.

TURTLE DOVE Streptopelia turtur. Only on May 7th (4) and 8th (3), and September 14th (1) and 16th (2).

CUCKOO Cuculus canorus. Few in spring, none in autumn.

SHORT-EARED OWL Asio flammeus. Singly on April 6th and 14th, September 15th and November 3rd.

NIGHTJAR Caprimulgus europaeus. One on May 7th.

SWIFT Apus apus. On most days from May 5th (10) to 19th; 11 on 6th, 9 on 7th. Singly on four days between September 3rd and 26th.

WRYNECK Jynx torquilla. One trapped on September 17th.

SHORT-TOED LARK Calandrella cinerea. One on September 30th and probably the same until October 4th. Two on October 10th. Identification was fully substantiated by field-notes and in each case the dark markings at the sides of the neck were seen. One of the birds on October 10th had the whole breast buff, quite unlike the other or what one normally sees, and perhaps due to soil-staining.

LESSER SHORT-TOED LARK Calandrella rufescens. A party of 5 small larks were seen on March 30th and were watched at close quarters by F. King, P.D. Nolan, F. O'Gorman and R.G. Pettitt. Very full field-notes were made, including sketches. F. King, who had previous experience of Short-toed Larks, was unable to reconcile them with that species as there were no neck-marks, the upper breast was finely streaked dark brown on buff, and the upper parts were darker than in C. cinerea. The birds were under observation all day but remained unidentified until late at night when it was believed they best fitted the description given in Peterson et al. "A Field Guide etc." It was with extreme satisfaction that 4 were seen again next day, in even better light, and all the previous observations were checked and confirmed.

SKYLARK Alauda arvensis. The first evidence of autumn migration was on September 18th (20) and 21st (30). October as usual saw migration in earnest, starting with a peak on 1st (270). There was marked movement from 7th (31) to 13th (60)

and on 16th a peak (150), after which numbers fell gradually, with minor peaks on 18th (35), 22nd (30) and November 7th (28).

**SWALLOW** Hirundo rustica. The usual pattern of passage at both seasons, but with heavy movement on May 5th-6th (200) and September 11th (1,000+); and again from 23rd (100) and 26th (200), with a minor peak on October 10th (90). Last seen 27th.

**HOUSE MARTIN** Delichon urbica. First on April 12th. A meagre passage, most pronounced between May 4th-8th. Autumn passage from September 23rd-26th (day maximum 6 birds) and from October 7th-11th (day maximum 9). Last, October 1st-2nd (2).

**SAND MARTIN** Riparia riparia. First on April 7th, then regular passage in numbers up to 10 to May 10th, but 30 on 6th. Irregular passage in September of numbers up to 10, but a peak period 10th (100), 11th (200), 12th (50). One on October 7th and 9th, 4 on 10th and 2 on 11th.

**MISTLE THRUSH** Turdus viscivorus. Singly on September 25th, October 9th and 26th; 2 on Oct. 8th; 3 on November 3rd.

**FIELDFARE** Turdus pilaris. 5 on March 30th and a single bird March 31st to April 2nd. In autumn the first came on Oct. 27th (7) and there were from one to 3 almost daily to Nov. 7th.

**SONG THRUSH** Turdus ericetorum. In March, 2 on 29th, 3 on 30th, singly April 1st and 10th. A few rather irregularly in October from 8th (2) to 31st (5). On most days to November 10th in numbers up to 10. Birds trapped in November seemed intermediate between T. e. ericetorum and T. e. philomelos.

**REDWING** Turdus musicus. 13 on March 30th, 2 on 31st, 7 on April 1st and one on 2nd. Almost daily in numbers up to 15 between October 7th and November 11th, with peaks on 28th and November 7th with 50+ each day. Those trapped were of the nominate race.

**RING OUSEL** Turdus torquatus. 14 on April 2nd is the biggest number so far recorded at Saltee. 6 on 3rd and 2 on 7th-8th. In September a few on 5 days; singly Oct. 11th, 19th.

**BLACKBIRD** Turdus merula. There was some movement on September 10th followed by a period without evidence of migration on any scale. A slight increase took place on Oct. 10th and again on 12th, after which there was little evidence of



movement till 26th. There were peaks on 27th (70), 28th (60), and 31st (60). For some days in early November there was a marked movement, but this died down on 8th. At the time of peak movement birds were passing rapidly through the isle: not only were they seen arriving and departing, but on days of heavy trapping very few were recaptured. We expect larger numbers in October than were noted in 1956.

**WHEATEAR** Oenanthe oenanthe. The usual pattern of spring and autumn migration, in numbers seldom above 10 on any day. Migration ended on October 18th, with a straggler on Nov. 3rd.

**STONECHAT** Saxicola torquata. No evidence of any spring migration. Movement of numbers up to 10 in mid-October.

**WHINCHAT** Saxicola rubetra. Only one in spring. The usual thin passage on many days in Sept., with most on 16th (8) and 21st (7); also 7 on 23rd-24th. Last seen, Oct. 2nd.

**REDSTART** Phoenicurus phoenicurus. A ♂ on April 18th. Singly on September 9th and 12th and from one to 5 daily from September 15th to 27th. One on October 16th, two on 18th.

**BLACK REDSTART** Phoenicurus ochrurus. Single ♀♀, March 29th-30th; 3, one a ♂, on 31st, and 3 ♀♀ on April 1st. Singly October 16th-18th, 26th and November 10th; 2 on October 15th and November 9th.

**NIGHTINGALE** Luscinia megarhyncha. One on May 6th.

**BLUETHROAT** Luscinia svecica. A ♀ on April 15th-16th, trapped. One on September 11th was seen in bushes and in flight, the redish sides of the tail being well seen.

**ROBIN** Erithacus rubecula. Movement daily in September especially during the first half, and most on 10th (20). The migration continued to mid-October; thereafter birds seen were probably winterers.

**GRASSHOPPER WARBLER** Locustella naevia. Many less than usual in spring, but in autumn, when normally very scarce, it was recorded from September 7th to 11th (3+) with one on 19th.

**SEDGE WARBLER** Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. Did not appear till May 3rd, instead of in the second half of April as usual: numbers were below those of other years, with a day-maximum of 10. September numbers were rather above average, most on 4th

(15). Recorded on most days, September 3rd-24th, in numbers up to 5.

**MELODIOUS WARBLER** Hippolais polyglotta. One taken on September 22nd was identified by wing-formula and thought to be immature, the breast being yellowish-white.

**ICTERINE WARBLER** Hippolais icterina. One trapped on September 15th was identified on wing-formula and believed ♀ on wing-length, 75 mm.

**BLACKCAP** Sylvia atricapilla. Single adult ♂♂, September 8th, 19th and November 9th. Two ♀♀, September 26th.

**BARRED WARBLER** Sylvia nisoria. One was well seen by H. Dick, R.J. Pettitt and A.J. Tree on September 17th.

**GARDEN WARBLER** Sylvia borin. One on September 9th; one from 15th-18th; 4 on 19th; 2 on 20th-21st; one on 23rd-24th.

**WHITETHROAT** Sylvia communis. Normally an abundant migrant in spring and one which, on days of heavy movement, may appear in hundreds. Only recorded on 16 days in spring 1956, most on May 17th (30), and on other days never more than 10. (There was, however, a big "rush" of Whitethroats through the Copeland Islands, outside Belfast Lough, on May 13th). Autumn passage was rather heavier than usual and was noticeable all September in numbers up to 20, a total recorded on 7 days. Maximum movement, September 17th-24th. One, October 10th.

**LESSER WHITETHROAT** Sylvia curruca. One ringed on Sept. 19th was still present on 23rd. The dark ear-coverts were very noticeable with the bird in the hand, but were not even slightly visible at 15 yards. One on October 1st-2nd had the dark ear-coverts noticeable at 20 yards (see Irish Bird Rep., 1953, p. 25).

**WILLOW WARBLER** Phylloscopus trochilus, and

**CHIFFCHAFF** Phylloscopus collybita. Numbers reached a maximum on April 12th with over a thousand, by far the biggest number yet recorded on one day. Trapping on this and other days of heavy movement just then showed a preponderance of Chiffchaffs. Willow Warblers preponderated from April 16th and had a peak on May 6th (100). There was a thin irregular passage of both species in September. Single Chiffchaffs

were seen on four widely-separated days in October, and in November occurred on 4th, 7th, 9th (2) and 10th. An acredula-like Willow Warbler was trapped on May 8th.

GOLDCREST Regulus regulus. The usual very thin passage at both seasons. A ♀ trapped on October 12th was clearly preferable to the nominate race on comparison with skins.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata. From May 7th passage was regular; most on 16th-17th (20 each day) with 15 the day before and after. Daily in September (except 13th-14th) down to 27th, in numbers up to 7.

PIED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa hypoleuca. A ♀ on May 16th. Singly on a number of days in September down to 25th; at least 12 on 10th, 3 on 8th and 4 on 9th.

MEADOW PIPIT Anthus pratensis. Evidence of movement, April 15th-18th. Autumn migration commenced on September 4th (80), the same date as in 1955, and continued to October 22nd (23rd in 1955), then consisted of stragglers only. Heaviest movements, September 19th (150-200), 24th (170), 25th (170), October 1st (250), 2nd (200) and from 8th (200) to 10th (300). At Inishtrahull off the N. coast of Donegal and down the west coast to Blackrock off Co. Mayo a heavy migration was reported on September 4th-5th, but none at Maidens at the NE. corner of Ireland.

TREE PIPIT Anthus trivialis. One from May 5th-8th and singly September 15th, 19th, 23rd, with 2 on 5th and 17th and 3 on 18th. Identification was based on the call-notes.

RED-THROATED PIPIT Anthus cervinus. Recorded singly on September 4th, 8th-10th, 11th-13th, 17th-18th, with 2 on 14th-15th and 3 on 16th. The birds' calls attracted attention, and thereafter they were well seen, the heavy breast-markings being very obvious. They were watched by five observers in all and a full description of each bird is recorded in the Observatory's Record Book. The first authentic record for this species in Ireland was in May 1955 (see Bulletin, 3: 43).

alba WAGTAILS. Motacilla a. yarrellii moved according to the usual pattern in spring, and was rather more numerous in autumn. White Wagtails M. a. alba were seen only in autumn from September 3rd to 14th (24), followed by 3 on 24th.

flava WAGTAILS. These were recorded from September 5th to 27th. There was an unusually heavy movement from 15th (40 in one field alone!) to 21st (25), with 33 on 16th and 30 on each of the two following days. A number were identified as M. lutea flavissima, the maximum being 9 on September 21st.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE Lanius collurio. An immature bird appeared on October 6th.

STARLING Sturnus vulgaris. From over 200 on March 29th and 370 next day numbers fell rapidly during the first half of April, and there were none in May. Though there was some irregular movement to October 7th no worth-while migration was recorded until 27th (280). Afterwards there were from 200 to 500 on many days until November 4th, when migration ceased till 9th (6), rising to 200 again on 11th.

GREENFINCH Chloris chloris. Most on November 1st (5+).

GOLDFINCH Carduelis carduelis. One on April 15th was the only spring record. Fairly regular in small numbers (11 on October 11th, 12 on 27th) from October 3rd to November 3rd, and singly on 7th, 8th and 11th.

SISKIN Carduelis spinus. Four on October 9th.

LINNET Carduelis cannabina. The usual pattern, but in 1956 in numbers only up to 70 in autumn, in October only with the exception of a few November stragglers.

REDPOLL Carduelis flammea disruptis. Two, identified as the British race, on October 9th.

CHAFFINCH Fringilla coelebs. Movement at the end of March on 29th (10), 30th (20) and 31st (30). After April 2nd numbers were negligible. In October the first sign of strong migration was on 11th, and there were peaks on 22nd (350), 30th (250) and November 3rd (200). Minor peaks with numbers not above 60 were recorded on October 15th-16th and November 7th.

The question of the races involved was again given great attention. Unfortunately only ♀♀ were trapped in spring, and few of the earlier autumn migrants touched down for long. A ♂ well seen on October 11th was clearly F. c. coelebs, but from 16th ♂♂ seen were F. c. hortensis and 15 trapped from then to November 10th were of this race when compared with a series of skins.

It is perhaps interesting to record that ♂♂ at Cloonoe at Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, up to October 27th were coelebs, but that on 26th the first hortensis appeared in unusually large numbers. Perhaps they tie in with a mass movement passing NW. and W.NW. across south-east England on 27th. This was not reflected at all at Saltee where numbers were then very low, though reaching 250 on 30th.

On the whole ♂♂ predominated at Saltee and in Mayo, and in Cos. Down and Wicklow Colonel Scroope reported a great preponderance of ♂♂ in the migrant flocks.

The weights of 15 ♂♂ and 20 ♀♀ when compared with the mean arrival weights for Saltee given in Bulletin no.8 (1952), p. 37, show 5 ♂♂ and 9 ♀♀ exceeding the mean and 10 ♂♂ and 11 ♀♀ below.

BRAMBLING Fringilla montifringilla. No autumn has passed with so few records. In October on 16th (4), 26th (5) and 27th (3) and one on November 1st. In Dublin and Wicklow it was hard to find a Brambling (Col. Scroope), yet there was an unusually good sprinkling in the Mayo Chaffinch flocks from October 24th.

YELLOW-HAMMER Emberiza citrinella. Two on March 30th; one on April 15th. The only records since 1953.

ORTOLAN BUNTING Emberiza hortulana. Singly on September 4th (♂), 15th (♂) and 20th-22nd. There were 2 on 16th (one ♀) and 2 next day. A ♀ and immature on 18th-19th. The call-note, a liquid "quipp", was usually the first indication of presence.

LAPLAND BUNTING Calcarius lapponicus. In September from 14th to 25th, excepting 16th-18th, in numbers up to 5, but 8 on 22nd. Singly on October 1st-2nd.

### T r a p p i n g

The ringing total of 1,091 was contributed by 48 species, nearly all being birds on migration. Leading totals were BLACK-BIRD 241, WILLOW WARBLER 164 and CHIFFCHAFF 112. WHITETHROATS totalled only 48 as against a normal average of 114.

### C o r r e c t i o n

The Editor apologises for an error (his fault) which was made in Bulletin, 3: 84, in reporting recoveries. A CHAFFINCH ringed as a nestling near Oslo and trapped at Saltee on November 1st 1955 was a ♀ and was not assigned to any race. Hortensis ♂♂ were on passage at the time.

48. Migrant Land-Birds at Ocean Weather Ships.

IVOR McLEAN.

During a tour of duty as a meteorologist on board ocean weather-ships, covering in part both spring and autumn migrations, many observations of "lost" land-birds were made, and it is hoped to publish a full analysis of the records at a later date, with special reference to their meteorological environment. Meanwhile, some of the more interesting occurrences are given.

Events at station "I" (lat. 59 N., long. 19 W.) some 300 miles south of Iceland and 650 miles west of Shetland, during the latter part of September, bear out the proposition that a good deal of migration takes place south-eastwards from Iceland to the British area when col weather prevails along the route. At this period, with fog to the eastward and light SE. winds, 28 migrants came aboard, mostly Meadow Pipits and Wheatears.

The "off-passage" stay at the ship of a Merlin - most probably an Icelandic bird - for a full week between September 23rd and October 1st was particularly interesting. Meat-scraps were put out for it, and it took them. It frequently pursued the small migrants (and once a Storm Petrel), but was seen to kill only one Wheatear. It came in col weather, and was seen to leave at 0800 hours on October 1st with the assurance of a cyclonic "ride" on a NW. wind to the British Isles.

The rarest visitor was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper at the same station on September 21st, doubtless borne to the ship from eastern North America by the winds of a vigorous depression which earlier had swept down from Labrador. The unfortunate waif was slain by the ship's cat and a number of feathers and a few photographs were obtained "for the record".

At the more southerly station "J" (lat. 52 30 N., long. 20 W.) a juvenile Ruff was seen on August 7th, - nearly 500 miles from the nearest land! A Grey Phalarope came aboard on November 8th and roosted in the ship's balloon-shed, leaving next morning. Another visitor, on November 3rd, was a Short-eared Owl; and on November 2nd-3rd several Purple Sandpipers, so exhausted that I doubt if any survived, took refuge during a fine anticyclonic spell.

#### 49. Some Recoveries of Birds Ringed at Fair Isle.

**SPARROW-HAWK** Accipiter nisus. A ♀ caught in the Gully on September 9th 1955 was recovered on its spring migration at the North Sea island of Heligoland, GERMANY, on March 3rd 1956.

A 1st-winter ♂ in Vaadal on October 5th 1955 was shot at Farnell, by Brechin, ANGUS, some 200 miles south of Fair Isle. on January 18th 1956.

All 4 of the autumn migrants ringed at Fair Isle in 1955 have now been recovered (see Bulletin, 3: 94), bringing the returns at that time to over 30%.

**MERLIN** Falco columbarius aesalon. A 1st-winter ♂ driven into the Double Dyke Trap at dusk on August 28th 1956 was shot at Halen, Limburg, BELGIUM, about October 20th (lat. 50 57 N., long. 5 07 E., some 700 miles south-east). It is interesting that this bird, a drift-migrant to Fair Isle, should have re-crossed the North Sea to a region within the normal wintering range of the Continental race.

It seems worth-while recording as a useful recovery a ♀ F. c. aesalon, caught in the small North Grind Trap on August 12th 1956, and found injured on the island 18 days later. It is an unusually long period "off-passage" (see pp. 120, 144). Merlins ringed at Fair Isle now show a return of  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$ .

**WOODCOCK** Scolopax rusticola. One caught in the Gully Trap on October 28th 1956 was shot a fortnight later, November 12th, at Strathdon, ABERDEENSHIRE, 170 miles S.SW. The only other recovery we have of this species is a spring migrant shot in the following winter on the Isle of Harris, OUTER HEBRIDES.

**OYSTER-CATCHER** Haematopus ostralegus. One which was marked as a nestling on June 7th 1955 was reported from Swansea GLAMORGAN, about 560 miles S.SW., on March 26th 1956. Oyster-catcher recoveries away from the island now stand at 4% of the total ringed.

**BONXIE** Catharacta skua. For a local return, see p. 132.

**ARCTIC SKUA** Stercorarius parasiticus. See pp. 114-116.

TYSTIE Cephus grylle atlantis. An adult taken on its nest on South Haven shore on June 30th 1953 was re-captured on eggs at the same site on June 29th 1956. It was carrying a double-ended ring, and although the exposed number was completely rubbed away the duplicate number protected by the fold was perfectly legible. A new ring was given. The old one weighed 0.890 gm., a loss of nearly one-half of its weight in 3 years!

ICELAND REDWING Turdus musicus coburni. An adult trapped on October 16th 1955 was reported from Clash Cross, Tralee, Co. Kerry, EIRE, on November 16th 1956. There was a movement of this race through Fair Isle on October 15th-16th 1955, and 11 were trapped, 6 of them in the Double Dyke. Measurements of the present bird were: wing 125 mm., tail 87 mm., bill 22 mm., tarsus  $31\frac{1}{2}$  mm., and its weight was 77.1 gm.

BLACKBIRD Turdus merula. A 1st-winter ♂ from the Gully on October 16th 1953 was recovered at Borris, DENMARK, in April 1955 (lat. 55 58 N., long. 8 39 E.).

An adult ♀ ringed on November 7th 1953 was found near Thornhill, DUMFRIESSHIRE, 310 miles south, on March 30th 1956.

An adult ♀ on spring migration, taken in the Gully on March 26th 1956, was shot a week later, April 2nd, at Idd, near Halden, Ostfold, NORWAY (lat. 59 05 N., long. 11 25 E.). The weather over the northern part of the North Sea was anticyclonic throughout this week.

A 1st-winter ♂ trapped in Vaadal on October 29th 1954 was "presumed killed by cat" at Erøy, Erfjord, Rogaland, in NORWAY (lat. 59 20 N., long. 6 14 E.), during July 1956.

An interesting recapture at Fair Isle is that of an adult ♀, W 14642, one of 6 birds ringed in Vaadal at 0700 hours on October 19th 1955, when a big influx arrived with cyclonic SE. weather. The bird was again taken in the Observatory Trap on March 28th 1956, a fine period when strong movement of Blackbirds and other species was under way, with a high centred to the east of Fair Isle. This wintering bird may well have been trapped both "coming and going". Its weight on the first occasion was 91.7 gm., and on the second (after 23 weeks on the isle) 110.4 gm., a substantial gain.



WHEATEAR Oenanthe oe. oenanthe. A 1st-summer ♂ of small dimensions (wing 96 mm., tail 54 mm. and weight 26.3 gm.), and therefore assignable to the typical race, was caught in the Obs. Trap on May 19th 1956 at 0630 hours. It flew on board a trawler 300 miles north-west of Fair Isle in mid-afternoon of May 22nd, and was found dead next morning.

Mrs. E.L. Gray of Waltham, near Grimsby, the wife of the finder, wrote: "S.T. DRAGOON sailed from Grimsby on May 19th. She was approximately three days steaming towards Iceland, just beyond Faeroe, when the bird dropped on deck about 3 p.m. on May 22nd. It fluttered around that day, was fed with bread-crumbs, and watered with fresh drinking-water. My husband looked for the little bird when he went on watch the next day and it was then that he found it to be dead on the wheelhouse roof. The whole crew were interested in the little bird and of course sorry to see it dead. My husband says it could have been that the bird had been flying in very heavy mist and fog after leaving Fair Isle because they encountered much of that kind of weather on their way to Iceland that trip."

The weather on May 19th-20th was anticyclonic but on 21st a warm front was active in the area, causing a good deal of fog in Faeroe: there and in Shetland the wind was light SE., but it veered somewhat on 22nd. As the bird was too small to be the Greenland-Iceland Oe. oe. leucorrhoa Mr. Gray is very probably right in assuming that it had lost direction in the mist after leaving the Shetland area.

A juvenile from the Double Dyke late on July 12th 1956 was found dead at Lit et Mixe, Landes, FRANCE, on August 28th. This is lat. 44 02 N., long. 1 15 W. only a few miles from the coast and 1,100 miles south of Fair Isle. It is much the earliest Wheatear recovery we have for autumn passage through France.

Another juvenile from the Double Dyke, ringed July 21st 1956, was caught at Beachy Head Lighthouse, near Eastbourne, SUSSEX, about 610 miles south of Fair Isle, in the early hours of September 10th. Lightkeeper R.M. Bolton reports that it arrived "with many other species of small birds ... in obscure weather and fog signal in action." The weather had improved a little to "light mist, wind NE., force 2," by 0630 hours,

and the bird was released with its ring. Southern England was under the influence of a widespread high pressure system with its centre over France, and there was much mist and fog in the Channel.

**WHINCHAT** Saxicola rubetra. A 1st-winter ♀ on September 6th 1956, from the Double Dyke Trap, was found injured near Petersfield, Hampshire, nearly 600 miles south, on Oct. 10th. This is our first Whinchat recovery out of 99 ringed.

**MEADOW PIPIT** Anthus pratensis. An adult from the Obs. Trap on May 19th 1953 is reported as having been found at Pueblo del Rio, Sevilla, SPAIN (lat. 37 16 N., long. 6 04 W.) on an unspecified date in 1954. The locality is about 1,600 miles south of Fair Isle.

**ROCK PIPIT** Anthus spinoletta. A juvenile of August 9th 1955 was forced down on a trawler in the ORKNEY area by bad weather "about April 1st 1956". The position was given as 60 miles SW. of Fair Isle. The bird was kept alive for five days and then died. There is some doubt about the recovery date, and in fact the weather maps and local records show that no bad weather was experienced during the last week of March, when an intense anticyclone was centred in the area, or in April until a sudden deterioration set in on 3rd.

**STARLING** Sturnus vulgaris. One ringed as a juvenile ♂ on September 13th 1954 was found dead at Midmar, ABERDEENSHIRE, about 165 miles S.SW. of Fair Isle, on June 18th 1956 (i.e. in the breeding season).

A second-brood youngster ringed on September 17th 1956 was found dead by W.A. Tulloch of Upper Linnay, North Ronaldshay, ORKNEY, on November 8th. Fair Isle and North Ronaldshay are within sight of one another and 25 miles apart.

K.W.

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Visitors to the North Haven on August 1st 1956 were two BOTTLE-NOSED DOLPHINS Tursiops truncatus. They came in with the mail boat and stayed for upwards of an hour, and excellent views were had from the cliff of Hoill Lee. Subsequently they were seen on a number of occasions, either in or just outside the Haven, down to August 27th. The Venables, "Birds and Mammals of Shetland," do not give any record of this cetacean in Shetland waters.

50. The Invasion of Iceland Redwings in October 1956.

KENNETH WILLIAMSON.

At Fair Isle we have seen how certain north-western species among our passage-migrants occur in small or moderate numbers over a succession of years, and then suddenly reach a phenomenal peak. This happened with the Lapland Buntings Calcarius lapponicus of southern Greenland in September 1953 (Williamson and Davis, British Birds, 49: 6-25), Greenland Redpolls Carduelis flammea rostrata in 1955 (Williamson, Dansk. Orn. Forenings. Tidsskr., 50: 125-133), and may also have been the case with the Snow Bunting Plectrophenax nivalis in September 1949, although the area of origin of the great flocks which appeared in that month is a little more doubtful. In 1956 it was the turn of the Iceland Redwing Turdus musicus coburni to follow in this tradition.

In the great majority of cases, examples of the Scandinavian and Iceland Redwing are easily separated in the laboratory, the Iceland birds being generally bigger and darker in appearance. The breast-markings are more diffuse and the sides of breast and flanks more heavily washed with olive; usually the head and breast, and almost always the olive-centred under tail-coverts, are strongly suffused with buff; and the legs are horn-brown and not flesh or pinkish-flesh as they are in the majority of musicus. Although there is sometimes difficulty with atypical specimens of either race, a trapped sample of three or four birds can be referred with complete confidence to one form or the other.

In a normal autumn the bulk of our Redwings come from the Continent, sometimes in vast numbers. October 8th 1954 was a memorable "rush" day on which we reckoned that some 5,000 were present on the isle. The biggest movements occur about this time provided that east or south-east winds are blowing in the North Sea. With westerly winds in October birds referable to coburni appear, but until 1956 these had never made up more than 20% or so of the total catch, which is usually of the order of 100 birds.

Our Redwing "bag" in 1956 reached the undreamt-of total of 333 birds, of which 203 (over 60%) were Icelandic. There was admittedly a preponderance of westerly weather in October and very little wind from between south and east. The first few coburni appeared on October 4th, and they were followed on 6th and especially 7th by an influx of Continental Redwings, 17 being trapped on these two days. Icelandic birds first arrived in strength on October 12th, after a night of strong west-nor'-west wind, and the Observatory's "Log" takes up the story:

"There were over a score of coburni in the lab. before breakfast, our biggest-ever 'bag' of this handsome race. The Redwings were wilder afterwards and very difficult to trap, and we finished the day with 25, - only one of which, surprisingly enough, came from the Gully. This is certainly the biggest movement of Iceland Redwings we have seen, and although I was not in the south James Wilson assures me that there were numbers on Skaddan, and according to George Stout they were common enough around the Burn of Gilly and in the lee of Huni. There were not many on the hill in the afternoon ... " It was certainly an influx to excite wonder, with as many coburni to hand on one day as we normally get in a whole season. We did not know then, of course, that bigger and better days were to come.

The second wave came on October 18th. The wind had had a brief blow from the south-east, and had given us a profitable spell with musicus, but it was back in the north-west by the night of 17th. The next morning (to return to the "Log"): "began inauspiciously, with a trickle of Continental migrants on the early round," and indeed there was nothing to suggest that an unusual number of Redwings was about. "Just before mid-day what appeared to be a cold front, with heavy squalls of rain, hit the island, and from then on the trapping was brisk, even if the conditions were decidedly unpleasant. Redwings were much in evidence, and I got 5 birds of one flock in the Single Dyke at 1230 hours, all coburni, these bringing the morning's catch to 16. By this time I was wet to the skin, but after a bath and complete change (not to mention a good lunch) felt ready for the fray again, and just before 3 o'clock set off on another round, getting no farther

than the Gully. A whole flock of Redwings flew before me along the wall and into the Double Dyke, and I got 13 there and 3 in the Gully and found myself without any more bags!"

By the time we had weighed and measured this lot, not a great deal of daylight remained, so I hurried out again with an abundance of bags in a haversack. I soon had need of them. This time the Double Dyke apprehended 14 birds which fled in front of me, streaming down from Eas Brecks, and there were others at the traps beyond. We were busy with these until 9 o'clock, by which time we had a stack of 62 chits for the day, - exactly twice our previous best of 31 musicus on October 8th of 1954.

The wind was still fresh from nor'west next morning and it was clear that more birds had arrived. They were common and widespread in the North Haven, Eas Brecks, Vatstrass and Byerwall areas and the early round provided 18 birds, 10 of which were secured in one drive of Vaadal. During the morning the wind fell away and with the improvement birds were more difficult to trap. However, Vaadal came to the rescue again at dusk, when I took home 11 coburni from a flock which had settled in the little glen to roost, these making a total of 30 for the day.

Early on October 20th the wind was fresh from the south-east, under an overcast sky, and in the dawn the dim figures of islanders, full of hope, could be seen deploying on the hill. With such conditions Woodcock - and Continental Redwings - were expected; but again all the birds trapped were Icelandic, though a few Continental migrants such as Blackbirds and a Water Rail got mixed up with them in the traps. The inference was that birds had come in from two directions, and examination of the weather-maps when these eventually came to hand suggested that this explanation was feasible. North Sea winds had been light south to SE. ahead of a distant warm front, but there was good "onward passage" weather to the north, with the wind light in Faeroe and Shetland in a ridge intruding from Denmark.

The next 2 days were uneventful, but the 23rd was good, another influx of Continental Redwings coming through a col betwixt west Norway and Shetland. Then came the 24th, with the wind blowing an unfriendly south-west, the sky enveloped in

grey, the ground sodden and every small ditch a rivulet of briskly-running water. The traps were not very productive in the morning, though what they had to offer was interesting, - a Robin, two very late Garden Warblers, a "small, dark" Song Thrush and a Black Redstart. Several lots of "grey geese" passed over and in their wake, in the early afternoon, the third really big wave of Iceland Redwings arrived. It was a repeat of the big afternoon of the 18th, with flocks sweeping down off the moorland and along the field-wall to the Double Dyke. The biggest catch was of 18 coburni at one drive.

Aided by a ♀ Merlin, who caught several for me in Vaadal Trap (and was herself apprehended before she could do any harm) - and by frequent vicious hail-storms which kept many of the Redwings in the shelter of the long dyke at Vatstrass - I had a good sample again on 25th. There was an arrival of musicus in fair strength on October 27th-28th, again with a col to the north-east between anticyclones over Norway and the Atlantic. Of 30 birds caught on these two days the only Icelanders were 3 first ringed on the afternoon of October 24th.

This was the Redwings' final fling: a few of both races came to hand in the fine, clear anticyclonic weather at the close of the month, but as this high intensified in early November almost all the migrants departed for the south, so that the island seemed unusually bare. The synoptic scene on each of the occasions when the Iceland birds arrived in strength was of cyclonic westerly weather (more northerly in the Iceland region) on the south-western perimeter of lows moving away to the Norwegian coast. So far as the Continental birds were concerned, three of the main influxes appear to have been direct passages with a south-west orientation from Norway, making use of a "fine-weather bridge" provided by col or ridge conditions.

The trapping revealed an intriguing behaviour difference between the two races, for the newly-arrived coburni flocks showed a remarkable fixation for the long dry-stone wall that runs roughly NE.-SW. across the moor towards the village, and there can be little doubt but that they regarded this wall as a miniature "leading-line". Singularly few came from the Gully, where the best catches of Continental Redwings (which are not at all attracted by the walls) are made.

51. Migrants in Wester Ross, October 1956.

ELLEN A. MUNRO.

REDWINGS were abundant in flocks in a small birch-alder wood beside the Loch Skinaskink - Inverkirkaig Road on October 21st; but many fewer there on 23rd. Parties were also seen in woods by Loch Assynt on 21st and again, in flocks, on 24th. Flocks were seen at Elphin and near Altnacealgach Inn on 24th.

WHOOPER SWANS were on the move at this time. There were 40 on Loch Raa on October 21st, but only 8 remained on 22nd; these had been reduced to a single immature by 24th and this had gone next day. At 0715 hours on October 22nd a long line of 32, calling loudly, flew past Tanera Mhor in the direction of Little Loch Broom, and later the same morning a herd of 20 was seen on Loch a' Bhraoin.

There was passage of GREY GEESE from NE. - SW. by Loch May on October 20th, skeins of 25, 50 and 10 being seen, and thought to be Pinkfeet from their calls. Migration was heavy on October 24th, when nearly 100 birds were seen in several skeins of up to 30 strong, passing south near Loch Raa. They included 16 black-and-white geese most probably BARNACLES B. leucopsis. Only 4 geese were seen in the area next day.

Five GREAT NORTHERN DIVERS on a sea-loch on October 21st were still mainly in summer plumage.

52. Redwing Movements at Kingussie (Spey Valley) in October 1956.

There was a strong westward movement, involving Redwings and other thrushes, on October 8th; and from 16th-23rd a large westerly movement each day. From 23rd-25th inclusive Redwings, Song Thrushes and a small number of Blackbirds remained in the district, in woods, gardens and fields in exceptional numbers. This was an unusual phenomenon not seen in previous years when westerly movement took place. The weather was cold, with snow on the high ground. Very few flocks remained on 26th.

C.C.I. MURDOCH.

53. Field Identification Notes on Certain North American Waders.

D.I.M. WALLACE.

Whilst in Canada from July 25th to September 22nd in 1956 I was able to observe a number of American waders, and these notes on their characteristics are offered in the hope that they may be of some use to watchers in this country, particularly at the Bird Observatories. On the whole I found waders in Canada considerably less wild than in this country, a fact which made careful observation easier.

Semi-palmated Plover Charadrius hiaticula semipalmatus.

No obvious difference from the typical race.

Killdeer Charadrius vociferus.

Ecologically the Lapwing of North America, but in the field of course a very different bird. A large "ringed" plover: best field-mark, the bright rusty-orange rump; a longish tail and fluid flight-action also striking.

American Golden Plover Charadrius d. dominicus.

A greater extent of black in summer plumage gives the impression of a much darker bird than C. apricarius.

Black Turnstone Arenaria melanocephala.

The common west-coast Turnstone; more contrast in wing-pattern and on rump and tail; wholly black head, neck and chest, with dark colouration continuing down flanks.

Wilson's Snipe Capella gallinago delicata.

One well seen struck me as a very dark bird. The barring on the underwing was not obvious.

Upland Sandpiper Bartramia longicauda.

My first attempt at a general description was "small graceful bustard", but at a distance perhaps "small, short-billed, long-tailed Whimbrel" provides the best comparison with a British wader. Peterson's reference to a similar flight-action to Common Sandpiper seems to me inexplicable.

Spotted Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos macularia.

Flight-action and other behaviour exactly as Common Sandpiper, but birds in fall plumage looked cleaner, with flecking on back still noticeable. A generally greyer bird.



Solitary Sandpiper Tringa solitaria.

Not so solitary. In plumage like a dark-rumped Green, but with the carriage of a Wood Sandpiper. Call-notes like Green, but alarm phrases longer. Lack of contrast, due to absence of white rump, made birds appear lighter than my memories of Green.

Willet Catoptrophorus semipalmatus.

The only wader I have seen that looked "clumsy" on the ground. Heavy bill, uniform dull grey colouration on head, neck and upper-parts shading off-white to white on chest, belly and under-tail. The wing-pattern, which in flight "does wonders" for the bird, is usually concealed on ground.

Greater Yellowlegs Tringa melanoleuca.

Immediately recalls Greenshank, but not quite as bulky, with a fine head and slender neck. Bill "never" as distinctly upturned; legs appeared longer. Short alarm yelps like a guttural Redshank; flight-calls like muted Greenshank (3 or 4 syllables). Flight-action less wild than Greenshank.

Lesser Yellowlegs Tringa flavipes.

Larger than Solitary Sandpiper, but like that species has the carriage of a Wood Sandpiper rather than a Redshank. Eyestripe conspicuous, meeting over bill. Less uniform appearance than Redshank and flight-calls flatter, less penetrating (one or two syllables).

Pectoral Sandpiper Calidris melanotos.

Flocks give a surprising impression of a general yellowish brown colouring. Woodlark-like eyestripe.

Baird's Sandpiper Calidris bairdii.

Nearest to White-rumped in size. Horizontal carriage and generally buffy-brown colouring on head, upper chest and back led to confusion with Sanderling, but has less obvious wing-bar (though one clearly present). Scaly back and overlap of wings over tail diagnostic. Deep-chested appearance.

Least Sandpiper (American Stint) Calidris minutilla.

The "stint of stints". Unlike Little or Temminck's, more similar to small Pectoral Sandpiper, with a marked suggestion of that bird's streaked breast-band. Back a

rich red-brown with light inverted "V" high on shoulders, feathers noticeably dark-centred. Angular head with a fine, short bill (at close range, a distinctly decurved tip). Legs typically yellowish-green. In some a strong contrast between upper-parts and very white belly.

Western Sandpiper Calidris maurii.

Similar to Semipalmated Sandpiper but typically with longer and, at close range, distinctly decurved beak. A warm red patch on nape, very obvious on all the birds I saw on Vancouver Island on August 29th, and red-brown shows elsewhere on upper-parts, unlike the uniform back colouration of the Semipalmated. Black legs. Call-notes rather liquid, not in my opinion as described in Peterson, but more reminiscent of Dunlin than other American "peeps".

Semi-palmated Sandpiper Calidris pusillus.

Larger than Least, and with noticeably "washed-out" plumage (at a distance, looks like pale ochre). Precise carriage, with none of the "round-shouldered" look of our European stints. Bill reminiscent of a Sanderling's. A brownish patch on ear-coverts surprisingly obvious, even in flight.

Stilt Sandpiper Micropalama himantopus.

Young and fall birds can be confused with Lesser Yellowlegs rather than Dowitcher (Peterson disagrees here). Bill has distinctly decurved tip, giving it a drooping look, and is held at a distinctive angle when feeding, almost pointing to the toes. Longish legs greenish and plumage of upper-parts more uniform than that of Lesser Yellowlegs. In summer plumage the barring of underparts and cheek-patch are diagnostic.

Dowitcher Limnodromas griseus.

Rump (as in Spotted Redshank) in my opinion sufficient to separate it from Stilt Sandpiper (in addition to other points noted above) in all plumages. Long, straight bill. A stocky bird. From certain angles, gives a rather tail-less impression in flight.

Wilson's Phalarope Phalaropus tricolor.

Strikingly longer-necked than the other two species. Yellowish legs, long needle-like bill, no wing-bar. Seen even in flooded farm-yards.

54. A Summer Visit to Foula in 1956.

C.K. MYLNE.

In August 1956 I returned to Foula for 3 weeks, from 3rd to 26th. My visit was planned to coincide with an expedition of the Brathay Hall Exploration Group, when two parties of boys from various schools and industries spent ten days under their leaders on the island. One of the leaders of the first party was R.F. Dickens of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. I am grateful to him and his boys for much help with ringing and transport. Apart from their scientific work on the island, it should go on record that one of the objects of the expedition was to assist the islanders with their work, especially the carrying of peats, and much valuable help was given.

Owing to adverse weather conditions (especially for those under canvas) in the first half of the month, we were not able to achieve as much as we had hoped. Also August is a bad month both for migrants and breeding-birds; but beggars - and school-masters - cannot be choosers. Our aims included the ringing of young Bonxies, but many were already on the wing when we arrived and only 44 were marked between 4th and 15th, after which none were found on the ground. A number of young Fulmars, Arctic Terns and Black Guillemots were ringed by the Brathay party. The remaining 35 of the total of 108 birds were caught in the Heligoland Trap which I erected when I lived on the island, and which was still intact after its second winter.

Many of the breeders had left before we arrived, especially the cliff-nesting species. There was evidence that the Bonxies continue to do well, especially where they are spreading on the low ground among the Arctic Skuas. The latter were leaving by the third week of August but the Bonxies were still present in strength and up to 80 were seen on the Mill Loch down to 25th. After much frustration in the early stages due to high winds I managed at last to erect a hide at the Loch and film the bathing-display of the birds on the water. Red-throated Divers had again nested in several places and young were seen on two lochans, but as in 1955 only one youngster is known to have survived. Small birds were as before, but there seemed to be more Wrens inland in 1956 and the numbers of Twite appeared to have recovered after their virtual disappearance.

in the hard winter of 1954-55. A Starling ringed as a nestling in June 1954 was re-trapped.

There was little evidence of migration during our stay. On August 9th a Golden Plover was seen and others were noted down to 15th. A party of a dozen Curlew, with a few Whimbrel often in attendance, were present; on 10th there was a Common Sandpiper, and on 12th a Green Sandpiper which stayed to 16th, with two present on 15th. Single Knot were recorded on 14th and 19th, and a Greenshank stayed from 17th to 23rd. On the 13th two Herons were watched arriving apparently from the SW. against a strong breeze, and they made a landfall only with difficulty in face of the violent gusts off the cliffs.

Warblers were the only passerines noted (Willow on Aug. 12th, 15th and 22nd, and Garden on 25th), except for the one highlight of the period, - a Lesser Grey Shrike Lanius minor which was trapped on 9th, and concerning which a note will appear in British Birds. It was an adult ♀ in good plumage and very lively; the breast and flanks were distinctly pink in tinge, and the forehead was speckled with black. The bird was kept overnight and released, and was last seen being hotly pursued towards the hill by an Arctic Skua. Unfortunately it did not survive, being found dead on the beach at Ham on 12th.

## 55. Autumn Birds (1956) at Portland Bill, Dorset.

K.D. SMITH.

SOOTY SHEARWATER, October 24th. DOTTEREL, Sept. 11th to 17th. GREAT SKUA, several from August to October. LONG-TAILED SKUA, 2 on October 18th. LITTLE GULL, one on August 24th and one on October 6th.

BLUETHROATS, one on September 3rd, 3 on 9th (one being Luscinia s. cyanecula). MARSH WARBLERS, 3 in early September. OLIVACEOUS WARBLER, one Hippolais pallida opaca, August 16th, was compared with skins at the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), and then released in a London park. BARRED WARBLERS, singly on September 9th, 12th and October 21st. CHIFFCHAFES, 2 of "Northern" type (thought to be Phylloscopus c. tristis) on September 2nd and November 7th-8th.

FIRECRESTS, several. RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER, October 1st-2nd. TAWNY PIPITS, 3 on September 9th, one on 23rd. BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL, ♂ on September 11th. WOODCHAT SHRIKE, August 22nd. ORTOLAN BUNTINGS, several, maximum 5 on Sept. 9th and 24th.

Extraordinary numbers of LAPLAND BUNTINGS for southern England, first on September 22nd, and present to the end of the year in varying numbers, several influxes taking place. Maximum 8 on any one day.

56. Summer and Autumn Bird Notes from Unst, Shetland.

MAGNUS SINCLAIR.

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. One offshore, September 8th and 16th. Two seen, September 22nd.

FULMAR. Two pairs in summer on an isle in the middle of Loch of Watlee. None seen after September 23rd.

HERON. One at Snarravoe, July 17th, and one at Haroldswick on August 23rd. Seen regularly from September onwards.

PINTAIL. A ♂ on a loch at Haroldswick on June 5th.

EIDER DUCK. First young reached the sea at Baltasound on June 19th, and at Haroldswick on June 24th.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. Seven pairs counted on lochs of Unst. A ♀ with 7 young and another with 4 young were on Snarravoe on July 15th. A ♀ had 3 young on Loch of Brecksie on August 6th.

SHELDUCK. A pair at Loch of Brecksie on June 24th.

KESTREL. One, August 6th; odd birds in September; 3 on October 25th.

OYSTER-CATCHER. Local birds had left by mid-August. One, September 8th; 2 on October 8th had left next day.

GOLDEN PLOVER. Post-breeding flock of 30 on July 5th had reached 100 by the end of the month and 200 by mid-Aug. Marked decrease on August 27th. Flocks of up to 200 in September decreasing towards the end of the month. Small parties in October with approximately 100 on 13th.

TURNSTONE. First arrivals, 2 on August 30th and 8 on September 7th. Flock of 15 on October 17th and 3 feeding in an inland field, a common habit in Unst in winter.

SNIFE. Two chicks 4-5 days' old, September 3rd. Parent indulged in lure display.

WHIMBREL. Last seen on September 8th.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT. Two seen on August 18th, one on 25th.

PURPLE SANDPIPER. First arrival, September 1st.

BONXIE. Most had left by mid-Sept. One, October 10th.

ARCTIC TERN. Nearly all away by September 1st but seen singly throughout the month, and 3 with a westerly gale Oct. 1st. Last seen October 6th.

TURTLE DOVE. Seen in last week of June, also one on Sept. 3rd. One was seen by J.W. Henderson on Sept. 27th.

OWL. A probable Long-eared Owl was being mobbed by Hoodies early on October 25th.

SWIFT. Single birds on July 4th and 21st.

SWALLOW. Two on June 19th and 22nd; 3 on Sept. 7th.

REDWING. First arrival October 10th. Flock of 25 seen along with 9 FIELDFARES on October 20th.

WHEATEAR. Numbers fluctuated throughout August and September, with increases on 1st and 5th. In October, 2 on 4th and one on 5th were the last seen.

REDSTART. A ♂ was seen on September 7th.

WILLOW WARBLER. Singly on August 16th, 30th and 31st, September 3rd, 5th, 7th and 9th. Last seen, October 10th.

PIED FLYCATCHER. A ♀ on September 8th.

MEADOW PIPIT. Large numbers on September 5th and a flock of 20 on 27th.

WHITE WAGTAIL. Singly August 27th, 31st and Sept. 10th.

CROSSBILL. A ♂ and ♀ arrived at Haroldswick with an east wind on July 1st. A ♀ was calling loudly on 6th. Six were reported eating kale seeds on July 12th.

CHAFFINCH. Two on September 27th. J.W. Henderson saw ♂ and ♀ at Norwick on October 20th and ♂ at Haroldswick 22nd.

SNOW BUNTING. First arrival, September 26th. Flock of 20 at Outer Skaw on October 18th.

HOUSE SPARROW. An albino was reported from Norwick.

## 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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