

Fair Isle Bird Observatory

BULLETIN



Edited by
PETER E. DAVIS

Vol. 5 No. 3 (New Series)

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Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

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Hon. Secretary.

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FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY BULLETIN

Vol. 5 No. 3 (New Series)

OCTOBER, 1963

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EDITORIAL

IT must be rare, if not unprecedented, for the editor of a bird-journal to have to explain why an issue is appearing three months before it is due. As most readers will be aware, I left Fair Isle to take up another post at the end of September 1963: and having spared the time to compile this Bulletin during the summer, I felt that there was little point in keeping it in cold storage until January.

It was originally intended to publish the "Birds of Fair Isle" list in five instalments, but this task also had to be completed before my departure, so that the present issue contains a rather extended third part of the list, and a fourth and final part will appear in the first Bulletin prepared by my successor, Roy H. Dennis. It is hoped that the list may then be revised and published in the form of a booklet.

I should like to thank all "Friends" and subscribers for their support and encouragement during the past six years.

22. The Birds of Fair Isle—Part III

PETER DAVIS

BONXIE *Catharacta skua*. Said to have bred in the early years of the nineteenth century, but absent for many years until one pair nested in 1921. Probably bred intermittently during the twenties, but up to three pairs regularly in the thirties. Only one pair reported 1943, but four 1944. Again four pairs 1948 and 1949; since then has tended to increase, despite occasional setbacks, and at least thirty pairs in 1963. Arrival-dates were normally from mid-April until the recent increase, but now usually from first week April (early date, 31st March 1959). Most birds depart by mid-September, but some stragglers or passage-migrants on or near the isle most years to mid-October (late date, 2nd November 1957). Said to have occurred offshore very occasionally in the winter, but the only dated records of birds on the crossing are for 2nd March 1927 and 4th March 1958. Eggs are sometimes laid second week May, but mostly from mid-May. Recoveries of birds ringed on the island as young are from N. Spain in January three and a half years later, and from S.W. Greenland in July two years later. Local-born birds have been found as first-time breeders on the island at four years (two birds) and six years old.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus*. Nested in small numbers during the nineteenth century, but reduced to one

pair by 1905, then none until the early twenties. Four pairs in 1926, twelve by 1935, then numbers apparently fairly static at eight to twelve pairs until 1947; about fifteen pairs 1948 and since then has increased every year (except 1953) to reach 70 pairs 1962, perhaps small decrease in 1963. First birds arrive punctually about 22nd-25th April (early date, 19th), most in early May; many depart mid-August but some remain to early September, stragglers or migrants seen occasionally to early October (late date, 25th October 1961). Eggs are laid from middle of May onwards. Birds ringed as young have been reported during their first autumn in E. Scotland (August), S.W. Norway (September), Denmark (August and November), N.W. Germany (August) Belgium (September and November), N.W. Spain (August), Portugal (October) and Algeria (August); also in Denmark in August two years later, in Angola over one year later (October) and over three years later (November), while five birds have been found in or near other Arctic Skua colonies in Orkney and Shetland in summer. Some fifty local young were recaptured on the island as first-time breeders at between three and six years old. There are no recoveries oversea of the large number of adults ringed at Fair Isle. Local name (obsolete): "Kju."

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*. Eight dated records: 2nd June 1949, 4th June 1955, 29th May 1956; "October" 1934 (two), 29th October 1910 (obtained), 16th November 1951, 27th November 1906 (obtained); and said to have been seen on other occasions in autumn.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudis*. One record: an immature bird, thought to be of the Greenland form *S.l. pallascens*, seen on 23rd June 1956.

IVORY GULL *Pagophila eburnea*. One seen 28th December 1933; an adult found dying on 9th February 1952.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus*. Breeds: present throughout the year; considerable numbers (occasionally over 500) settle on the island with rough weather at most times of year, but especially in October-December. Described as a numerous breeding species in the early twentieth century, but estimated only 12 to 20 pairs in early thirties; about forty pairs in 1959. Eggs are laid last week April and early May. Birds ringed as young at Fair Isle have been found in Sutherland next December, Aberdeen next January, Banff next March, Shetland next July, and in Holland in September of the second autumn. Visiting birds caught at roost in November and December have been reported from N.W. and S.W. Norway, in June (both adults): in Aberdeen just over two years later, and in Pembrokeshire in July eighteen months later (both immatures). One ringed as young in the Barents Sea, N. Russia, was found

dead at Fair Isle the next February. Local name (obsolete): "Swaabie."

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*. Summer visitor and passage-migrant. The British form *L.f. graellsii* breeds; formerly "common" but only about twelve to twenty pairs in 1949-62, about thirty 1963. Eggs are laid mid-May. The breeders return occasionally late March, usually April (early date, 12th March); depart late August and early September, stragglers occasionally in early October. There are sometimes large falls of adults in late summer (over 200 15th July 1958, sixty 5th August 1955 and 5th September 1961) otherwise passage-movements are difficult to detect. Local young have been recovered in the first autumn in N. Ireland (September) and S.W. Spain (December), and in May nearly two years later on the Mediterranean coast of France (Hérault); while one ringed in Shetland was at Fair Isle eight weeks later (late August). Birds of the Scandinavian (typical) form occur most years in autumn and rarely in winter and spring; seldom more than six present but up to twenty noted. The autumn records fall between 1st September and 22nd October, with one 12th December; mostly in mid-September. The winter and spring birds were between 11th February and 17th May.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*. Breeds: present throughout the year; passage-migrant. Numbers often come to land during rough weather; up to 3000 seen ashore in October-December. Breeding-population was much greater during period when Fair Isle was a fishing-station (up to about 1920) than at present; estimated only about 140 nests in 1959; but marked increase over preceding years in 1963. Eggs are laid end April and early May. Local young have been recovered in Aberdeen in August of the next year, in E. Lothian about two years after ringing, and in Holland in June three years later. Birds caught at roost in December 1961 were found subsequently in Northern Norway (two, June 1962 and April 1963) and Denmark (April 1962); while one ringed as young on the Murmansk coast, N. Russia, in 1960 was taken in the same roost. This bird was from the breeding-area of *L.a. omissus*; a yellow-legged bird collected 28th September 1921 may also have been referable to this form. Local names: adult, "Maa"; immature, "Scorie"; sometimes also applied to other gulls.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*. Common passage-migrant, and frequent visitor at all seasons. Spring passage mostly late March to early June, largest numbers generally mid-April, though rarely over 200 recorded at peak. Autumn movements of small parties from late June or early July, often large numbers from end July or early August; up to 1500 seen together in August and up to 700 in September, Octo-

ber, and early November; but varies greatly from year to year. August birds are nearly all adults, but immatures well-represented earlier and later. Usually only very small numbers intermittently from late November to early March, but over 100 seen with cold weather in January. Local name: "Landpicker."

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus*. Formerly a regular winter visitor, late October to February, but markedly scarcer since about 1935, perhaps earlier, apart from big falls in the winters of 1951-52 and 1952-53. Now fairly regular in autumn in very small numbers, but irregular in winter and spring; a few recent summer records. Autumn birds are from 20th September, mostly second half October and early November since 1952, though earlier the biggest arrivals came in December. Numbers have rarely exceeded five birds recently, whereas over 100 were present in December 1951 and over 50 in December 1952. Since then the highest totals were thirty-five 17th October 1955 and ten 17th November 1959, with no more than four irregularly December to February, occasionally March. There are a few old records in early April, and three in the observatory period, the latest being 29th, 1961. Summer records of immature birds on 19th May 1928, 11th June 1959, 11th-18th July 1959 (at least two), 19th July 1955, 2nd August 1958, and 8th August 1949. One ringed December 1951 was recovered in Faeroes next February. Local names: this and the following species were both known as "Iceland Maa," the immatures formerly called "Valkie."

ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides*. Occurred regularly in the early years of this century between late October and early April (extreme dates, 19th October and 4th April) though in smaller numbers than the Glaucous Gull. Since 1948 there have been seldom been more than two or three birds in any year, except in the winter of 1951-52, and in some years no records. In 1951-52 there were "several" from 3rd November, "many" in late December, and up to twelve between 8th and 12th February. Most other recent records were between 24th October and early December; none late February or March but two birds from 6th April 1949 (one until 15th May) and two from 23rd April 1950 (one until 31st May).

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*. Reported by the islanders to have been seen on a good many occasions, but there are no observatory records. The only dated occurrences known are for June 1934, 25th September 1935, and 10th February 1954, the last staying for two weeks.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*. Regular on spring and autumn passage; occasional visitor during the winter

Spring passage March to early June, with two peak-periods, one less regularly in late March (apparently drifted birds) and the other more consistently in late April and early May (probably Shetland breeders); peak numbers seldom exceed thirty at either period, but as many as 100 on 30th March 1958. Protracted autumn movements commence late June or early July and continue into November; peak numbers rarely exceed 25 and may occur at any time from mid-July to mid-October; over 100 on 6th October 1951. Winter records mostly December-January, rarely more than one or two birds. A young bird ringed in Jutland, Denmark, in 1961 was caught at Fair Isle on 19th March 1963.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*. A second-winter bird 31st August to 2nd September 1957; a first-winter 14th October 1957.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla*. Breeds; a few offshore through the winter. Recorded as "nesting in great numbers" before 1912; a count in 1959 gave about 2750 nests. Birds return to land between mid-February and late March, though not ashore regularly until mid-April; eggs are laid in mid-May. Departure from mid-August, numbers offshore until mid-October but seldom more than odd individuals or small parties near the island later in the winter. In some years, large gatherings of first-summer birds around the isle between June and August. A chick ringed by J. Wilson in 1939 was recovered at Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland, in September 1941. Local name (obsolete): "Rippack."

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*. Common and/or Arctic Terns are recorded rather irregularly from May to early July, more frequently mid-July to mid-September, some stragglers to early October. Extreme dates are 5th May and 26th October, with one extraordinary record on the crossing, 16th January 1952 (J. A. Stout). Numbers rarely exceed ten but there have been over fifty on a few occasions in late July and September. Common Terns have been identified between 24th May and 20th September; they appear to be barely half as numerous as Arctics.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura*. For status see preceding species. This bird has been identified between 23rd May and 6th October. The "pictarrs" which Eagle Clarke was told formerly bred, in the early part of the nineteenth century, were most probably of this species.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*. A rare visitor, reported to have been seen "on occasions" before 1936, and recorded in six years since 1953, all between 26th May and 24th July; usually one or two individuals but up to seven present in July 1958.

GREAT AUK *Alca impennis*. Eagle Clarke refers to a statement in Baikie and Hedle's *Historia Naturalis Orcadensis* (1848), that one was seen off Fair Isle in June 1798. The species bred at Papa Westray, about forty miles away, at that time.

LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle*. Considerable numbers winter regularly near Sumburgh Head and are seen on the crossing to Fair Isle; hundreds and even thousands may be observed in November to February, and smaller numbers October and March. Much less often seen from the island but over 100 occasionally observed during the peak-period, and odd birds not infrequently; in some winters live or dead birds are found on the land. One was seen on 29th August 1957, otherwise the extreme dates are 15th September and 20th March. Local name: "Rotchie."

RAZORBILL *Alca torda*. A common breeding bird; a few occasionally seen offshore outside the breeding-season. Returns to the cliffs sometimes in late January, more often late February onwards. Eggs are laid mid-May. Departure completed by the end of August. No census has been made, but the population is of the order of 750-1000 breeding pairs. No evidence of any marked change in numbers in this century. Eleven recoveries of local young were reported in the first autumn and winter in S.W. Norway (all south of 62° N., mostly south of 60° N.); and another in Denmark. One was in N. Spain in its first November, and one in Northumberland in March of its second winter. The distribution of recoveries is undoubtedly greatly biased by the incidence of autumn auk-shooting in Scandinavia. Local name: "Wilekie."

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge*. Status very similar to that of Razorbill, but probably about twice as numerous (estimated 1500-2000 pairs in 1959), and tends to arrive rather earlier. First ashore in first week January in 1963, but more usually early February onwards. Counts of "Bridled" birds have ranged between 10% and nearly 20% of the samples in different years. Eight ringed young were killed in the first autumn and winter in S.W. Norway, though one north of 63° and another nearly 64° N. were further north than any Razorbills so far reported. Another was found in Co. Durham in its first February. Local name: "Longvie."

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Cepphus grylle*. Breeds; population of the order of 200 pairs in recent years; smaller numbers winter inshore. Eggs are laid late May and early June. Two ringed as young were recovered in Essex in late November of the first autumn, and in N. Ronaldshay, Orkney, in July a year later. Another was found freshly-dead at Fair Isle when a

year old, and one breeding in its natal colony at four years old. Local name: "Tystie."

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica*. The commonest breeding bird at Fair Isle; estimated over 20,000 pairs, has probably increased in this century. First gathers offshore in late March, and comes to land towards end of first week or in second week April. Eggs laid end April and early May. Most depart by mid-August; seldom seen ashore after 20th, but sometimes to end of month (late date, 2nd September). Very rarely seen near the land in the winter half of the year. Two birds ringed as young have been reported from Co. Durham next December and January; one in Essex next January, and one off S.W. Greenland next November. Local name: "Norie."

PALLAS'S SANDGROUSE *Syrrhaptes paradoxus*. Eagle Clarke was informed by the Rev. H. A. MacPherson that a flock of forty arrived at the beginning of June 1888, but only five survived to the end of the month.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*. Irregular on spring and autumn passage; recorded in seven springs and eight autumns in the past fifteen years. Spring records fall between 17th March and 3rd June, well-spread but slightly more in April than at other times; autumn records are from 9th August to 12th November, mostly late September and early October. The only note of more than two birds refers to five on 7th April 1952.

ROCK DOVE *Columba livia*. Breeds; noted as a passage-migrant in early spring and late autumn; a few winter in most years. Bred commonly in the nineteenth century, when many were caught for food; but became extinct as a breeding bird about 1895. Apparently known only as a passage-migrant or winter visitor until at least 1927. Three or four pairs were nesting in 1948 and a few, probably under ten pairs, have bred until the present. Most breeders apparently return in April, young appear late May onwards. In most recent years flocks of up to forty birds have arrived on, or passed over, the isle between late September and December, mainly November; as many as 100 noted 20th December 1943. Occasional small parties or single birds pass north between February and April.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*. Regular on spring and autumn passage, usually in very small numbers; recorded in all months. Spring movements mid-March to late May, mainly early April to mid-May, with odd birds through June in some years. Occasional records in July and early August. Autumn passage sometimes from late August, more usually from late September or early October, through November; odd birds irregularly in all winter months. Sel-

dom more than five present on best days at either migration, rarely more than singles at other times of year. The species appears to have become more common in the past five years, and all the highest scores are in this period: c. fifteen 10th April 1960 and 1st April 1963; and an exceptionally strong arrival in November 1959 peaking at thirty on 18th, at least one of these remaining until late February 1960.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*. Regular in spring and autumn, in very small numbers; rather more birds in spring than autumn, but recorded maxima are only four in spring and three in autumn. Spring occurrences 9th May onwards, and has been seen on most dates to 21st July, though mostly late May and early June. Autumn records 9th August to 10th October, mostly first half September. A Turtle Dove bearing a Belgian carrier-pigeon ring was found on the island on 8th September 1927; the domestic bird carrying this ring had been lost near Ghent in May 1927, but no details of the transference were discovered.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*. Single birds seen 18th April and 18th June 1960, 12th and 14th May 1961, 13th May and 15th-16th June 1962, and probably at least five different birds between 30th April and 20th June 1963.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*. Regular on spring passage; usually no more than one or two present, but "exceptional numbers" in mid-May 1910 and up to seven in mid-May 1951. The extreme dates for spring migrants are 26th April and 9th July, mostly mid-May to mid-June. One or two birds, nearly all juveniles, appear irregularly in summer, mostly late July (from 13th) and early August, and rarely September (to 8th, once 24th). Two or three birds are said to have stayed all summer in 1936; it is possible that some of the recently-fledged juveniles seen in July were reared on the island, but no satisfactory proof of breeding. One ringed on 6th May 1955 was found near Bergen, Norway, only two days later.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*. Five records. Single birds of the White-breasted (typical) form present January-February 1926 (obtained), seen October-November 1940, 11th April 1944, and 12th November 1958; and one reported to be of the Dark-breasted form *T.a. guttata* present October-November 1943.

SNOWY OWL *Nyctea scandiaca*. Said to have occurred on a number of occasions, but only three dated records known: 26th October 1907, 17th April 1956, and 23rd December to 14th January 1961-62.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*. Occurs almost every year in spring and regularly in autumn, in very small numbers.

Spring records are between 18th February and 26th June, mostly late March to early May, no record of more than two birds. Autumn records in the past fifteen years have all been between 7th October and 29th November, mostly late October and early November; usually single birds but up to five noted at peak. The species is said to have occurred several times in August (from 2nd) and September in earlier years, and there is one record as late as 8th December. One ringed in November 1950 was found near Stavanger, Norway, in early December 1954.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*. Regular in spring and autumn, in very small numbers. Spring records 29th February to 10th June, mostly late April and May, no more than two recorded on one day. A few July records between 7th and 24th. Autumn birds from 3rd August to 26th November, mostly October; usually less than three seen on best day, but in 1950 up to six (27th October) and in 1960 up to at least eight (26th-29th October). Two January records; 2nd, 1929, and one (dead some days) in mid-January 1963.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*. Ten records in spring (eight since 1949); all between 7th May and 30th June except for one exceptionally early bird reported 12th April 1949. A record of "remains found" in mid-July 1949 and one "quite recently dead" 21st August 1908. Two or three autumn occurrences; 14th and 21st September 1956 and 24th September 1961.

ALPINE SWIFT *Apus melba*. One seen 20th June 1962.

SWIFT *Apus apus*. Regular visitor in summer, in very variable numbers. The extreme dates are 30th April and 7th October, but birds seldom appear before mid-May or after mid-September. The peak numbers, rarely more than twenty, are most frequently observed in late May or early June, but sometimes late June-early July, or late August, and rarely at other times. An exceptionally big movement in late August 1958 produced about 150 birds on 21st and over 120 on 24th; the only occasions on which recorded totals have exceeded fifty.

NEEDLE-TAILED SWIFT *Chaetura caudacuta*. One seen and described by G. Stout, 6th August 1931.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*. Eleven dated records; four between 9th and 21st May, one in "mid-June," one 22nd August, and five between 3rd and 21st October. Only three of these are since 1948. The high proportion of October records suggests a late "reversed migration" like that made by the Red-breasted Flycatcher.

GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*. Irregular in autumn; singly or in very small numbers except in ir-

ruption years; three spring records of single birds. Small irruptions, composed almost entirely of birds of the year, reached Fair Isle in 1909, 1928(?), 1935, 1949, and 1962; and there are records of odd birds in 1927, 1929, 1951, 1953, 1956, 1958, and 1960. The extreme dates are from 1st August to 4th January, mainly late September and early October, and probably no fresh arrivals after mid-November; the highest totals on record are ten 6th October 1949 and twelve 11th October 1962. The spring dates are 7th-11th May 1936, 10th-30th May 1950, and 12th-25th May 1954. All closely examined were referable to the Northern (typical) form.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*. Recorded almost every year in spring and autumn (all but two springs and one autumn since 1948). Only one record of more than three in spring (six to eight 7th-12th May 1950) and none of more than four in autumn since 1948; but formerly occurred in larger numbers: "remains of a number" found September 1905, "considerable passage" May 1910, "a good few" May 1936, "scores" September 1943. Spring dates are from 22nd April to 7th June, mostly mid-May; autumn passage 19th August to 8th October, mostly end August and early September.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella cinerea*. Irregular visitor in autumn; five spring records. The spring birds, four between 20th April and 15th May, and one 18th June, were all of the southern form *C.c. brachydactyla*. One midsummer record, a southern bird 19th July to 8th August 1957. Over twenty autumn records (including about twelve in six years since 1952); often several individuals in the years the species has occurred, though never more than two at once. Extreme dates are 22nd September and 4th December, mostly October; the majority of birds resemble the Eastern form *C.c. longipennis* though southern-type birds have occurred between 1st October and 14th November (?28th November 1910).

[**CALANDRA LARK** *Melanocorypha calandra*. One reported to have been obtained in spring about 1925, but no details known.]

CRESTED LARK *Galerida cristata*. One seen 2nd November 1952.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*. Irregular visitor in spring and autumn. Formerly more numerous and frequent, wintered on the island in some years up to at least 1928; usually "small numbers" but as many as twenty recorded (December 1926). Since 1948 only some ten records in spring, between 18th March and 15th May, mostly end-March and early April; and a similar number in autumn, 20th September to 30th November, mostly late October and November. No more than two birds present except in 1949, fifteen on 11th October. Once recorded as late as 2nd June, 1927.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*. A common breeding bird (probably 100-120 pairs in 1963); regular and often quite numerous on passage in spring and autumn, late February to early April and September to November. The breeders are summer visitors, and only small numbers (usually well under fifty) winter, though these may increase with weather-movements. The species was apparently more abundant on passage in the early decades of this century: "often in vast numbers" before 1912, "enormous numbers" November 1927; whereas recently there have hardly been more than 500 birds in the largest arrivals in spring or autumn. The winter population also seems to have decreased with the decline of arable farming on the isle. The eggs are laid from late April, mostly May; some birds are probably double-brooded. A bird ascribed to the eastern form *A.a. intermedia* was collected 3rd November 1935. One ringed in March 1950 was recovered at Bell Rock, E. Scotland, in the following October, and another, ringed October 1956, near Boston, Lincs., in January 1963.

SHORELARK *Eremophila alpestris*. Rare visitor in spring and irregular in autumn; formerly more frequent in autumn ("annual" to 1912) but no record of more than two at once. Once March (6th), and four between 16th April and 12th May. Autumn records between 10th September and 16th December, mostly October-early November.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. Regular in spring and autumn; has bred at least once. In most years the spring totals, probably composed largely of birds overshooting Scotland, are much larger than those in autumn. The earliest record is for 14th April, but seldom seen before last week of month; main spring movements May (especially second half) and early June; often over twenty but rarely over fifty birds on best day. Small numbers irregularly late June and early July, rarely early August; most autumn records late August to late September, often less than ten at peak, but occasionally as many as 50-60 (17th-18th September 1949, 18th September 1961) with southerly gales. Occasional records October, latest date 26th. A publication of 1936 stated that the Swallow "has bred"; a pair bred successfully in 1962, laying eggs in mid-July. One ringed on 6th July 1953 was caught at nest in Caithness in July 1954 and 1955.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*. One obtained, out of three reported seen, 2nd June 1905 (first British record). One reported seen 19th June 1931.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*. Regular in spring, rather irregular in autumn, though records to at least early August in all of past fifteen years; numbers usually smaller than those of Swallow, but once over 100 in spring (1st June

1950). Earliest date is 28th April, more usual from first week May, main spring movements late May and early June; stragglers to end June and irregularly through July. Occasional records in August, most autumn birds in September but no more than twelve recorded (18th September 1961) apart from "many" on 10th September 1927. Stragglers in October some years, once seen as late as 14th November. Two pairs nested in 1922, one in 1935 and 1946.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*. Regular spring migrant, irregular in autumn, in very small numbers; no record of more than five at either season, apart from "many" 19th May 1910. Spring records extend from 5th April to 1st July, mostly May; autumn birds (seen in all but four years since 1948) 18th July to 18th October, mostly September.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*. Seven records; five between 1908 and 1913. Four spring birds were all between 11th and 26th May; three in autumn between 1st and 25th September.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*. Resident and breeds; occasionally recorded on passage. Said to have been as many as six pairs about 1897, then cut down, and only one or two pairs in the early years of this century. Usually three, occasionally four, pairs in recent years, despite control measures. Eggs are laid late March or early April. Young leave the island July to September. Definite records of passage are sparse though a few strangers must often reach the isle. Isolated records suggest movement especially in late March and early April (24 present 6th April 1956, 20 moving N. 9th April 1959) and during September-October (24 to 27 12th-18th September 1956, 17 on 13th September 1959); and numbers apparently fluctuate during the winter. Local name: "Corbie."

HOODED/CARRION CROW *Corvus corone*. Hooded Crows *C. cornix* are resident and breed; also regularly noted on passage in the early part of the century, but migrants seldom detected in recent years. Breeding population said to be about six pairs before 1912; probably about ten-twelve pairs recently. Eggs are laid late April and early May. Arrivals used to occur mostly in March-early April and in October-November, occasionally "great numbers" (from 3rd October 1911) or "considerable immigration" (10th-18th November 1926); and small arrivals have been suspected at the same periods in recent times. Fluctuations have also been noted in mid-winter. Local name: "Craa." Carrion Crows *C. corone* (or black hybrids) were formerly rare visitors, unless confused with Rooks, but have been annual for at least the past fifteen years, and odd birds have summered several times, mated with Hooded Crows,

and produced hybrid young in 1959 and perhaps other years. Records cover the period 12th March to 27th November, with most consistent arrivals in May (up to eight on best days) and a less regular peak in September; though daily totals rarely exceed two or three birds.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*. A few regularly on spring passage, and most years in autumn. One or two sometimes winter on the island, and considerable increase may occur with hard weather. Single birds visit the island during June to August in some years, occasionally staying for some weeks. The species was much more abundant earlier in the century. Spring movements occur from late February to early June, mainly late March and early April, but peak numbers in the observatory period have never exceeded forty and usually less than ten, whereas up to 600 were seen in several springs before 1915. Autumn passage seldom begins before mid-September, with most records in late October and early November; but no score of more than eighteen at this time since 1948, compared with a former status of "common" (up to 1912) and records of 100 on 10th November 1923 and "hundreds" 5th November 1926. The only recent large arrival in winter totalled 38 birds on 21st-25th January 1952. Local name: "Scotch Craa."

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*. Almost annual in spring, less regular in autumn; has wintered in at least two years (1935-36, 1953-54) and odd birds or small parties occasionally arrive with hard weather in December-February. Spring passage mainly late March and early April, usually less than five birds at peak, but as many as fifty-six seen (5th April 1960); small numbers late April and May in some years, rarely early June (to 13th). Two 6th July 1952. Autumn movements 8th September onwards, mostly late October and early November, usually only one or two birds but up to sixteen (23rd October 1950) on record. Birds with pale blue-grey napes, presumably of the Scandinavian (typical) form, and ones with dark napes, presumably of British or Central European form *C.m. spermologus*, occur at both seasons, often in company; but the majority cannot be determined with any confidence.

[**JAY** *Garrulus glandarius*. One reported seen mid-May 1940, but no details available.]

GREAT TIT *Parus major*. Birds of the Continental (typical) form recorded in five autumns since 1910: one 17th November 1910; up to a dozen from 27th October 1914, two present until at least 23rd January 1915; one 22nd September 1936; one 13th October 1959 to 29th March 1960; one 21st-22nd October and 31st October 1961 to 15th February 1962.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*. Five records: 24th April 1962 and

20th October 1926, 3rd November 1935 (three birds), 3rd October 1961, and 6th November 1962. The 1926 and both the 1962 birds were examined in the hand and were of the Continental (typical) race.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*. One seen by L. S. V. Venables on 21st September 1936.

WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*. One seen (with Blue Tits) on 3rd November 1935.

[LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*. A party of three or four said to have been seen about 1930, but no date or details known.]

[NUTHATCH *Sitta europea*. Single birds reported seen 29th-30th May 1936 and 1st May 1939, but no description available.]

TREE CREEPER *Certhia familiaris*. Single birds of the Northern (typical) form on 14th April 1913; 27th December 1906, and 17th-18th October 1959; all obtained or handled.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*. Resident and breeds; small numbers detected on autumn passage in some years. The breeding population (probably about 40-50 pairs in most years), was separated as *T.t. fridariensis* by K. Williamson (Ibis 93: 599); the upper parts being intermediate in colour between the typical and St Kilda forms, paler and less russet than the typical, Hebridean, or (especially) the Shetland birds; whereas the underparts are not whitish like the typical and St Kilda Wrens, but suffused buff, intermediate between the bright buff of Hebridean birds and the pale buff of the Shetland ones. The size is between that of the typical and the larger Shetland Wrens. Eggs are laid in late May and June. Rarely nests away from the sea-cliffs. Typical Wrens, presumably from Scandinavia, are recorded irregularly (in six of past fifteen years) in very small numbers between 25th September and 11th November, mostly October.

DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus*. Eight or nine spring records and three or four in autumn. Spring birds were between 19th March and 7th May, mostly end March and early April; autumn birds between 13th October and 24th December (one late November arrival stayed about five weeks). All were of the Black-bellied (typical) form from Scandinavia, except for one 30th April to 7th May 1963, a brown-bellied bird of the British *C.c. gularis* or Middle-European form *C.c. aquaticus*.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*. Probably annual in spring (every year since 1958) and most years in autumn (all but one since 1957); a scarcity of records in 1948-56 being due to lack of coverage in early spring and late autumn. Al-

ways in very small numbers, but more in spring than autumn. Spring records are between 6th March and 13th May, mostly late March and early April, no record of more than six birds. One 27th July 1962. Autumn records 17th September to 20th November, mainly late October and early November, no record of more than two birds.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*. Regular on spring and autumn passage; a few winter, and numbers may increase with hard weather. Spring passage from late February or March, mainly mid-April, with sizeable falls in early May in some years; stragglers to late May and occasionally early June, rarely late June (late date, 30th); seldom more than 100 at peak, but up to 300 recorded. Autumn migrants rarely August (recorded from 5th), more regularly from mid-September onwards, though occasionally no records until early October. Main falls seldom occur before mid-October (500 30th September 1952 and 6th October 1955 were abnormally early) and main passage normally late October and early November, maxima varying between 100 (1961) and over 2000 (1952). Fairly large arrivals continue to early December in some years, and a last wave of movement, apparently unrelated to hard weather and sometimes involving several hundred birds, reaches the island occasionally in the last two weeks of December.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*. Regular on passage in spring and autumn, in extremely variable numbers; a few winter in some years, and also occur most years at mid-summer (especially July). One pair bred in 1905 and 1911, two pairs in 1926. Spring movements late February or March to late May or June, mainly end March and early April; seldom more than twenty birds at peak, but occasional large falls, as on 30th March 1958 (500) and 5th-6th April 1961 (800). Autumn immigrants rarely August, more regularly from early September, with main passage last week September and early October, with small arrivals into November and sometimes a few appearing December; peak numbers usually up to fifty and occasionally up to 250. Most migrants are of the Continental (typical) form; but a few thought to have been of British origin have been examined in spring; and the midsummer birds, often in heavy moult, are usually darker and warmer brown than the majority. Five recoveries of birds ringed in March-April came from Denmark in the following May, from W. France in January, Cheshire in February, and Perthshire in June of the following year, and from Inverness two years later. Seven reports of birds ringed in late September or October were from S.W. France in November of the same year, from N. Spain in November of the following year, in late February over two years later, and in early December

over three years later; from Dorset in January fifteen months later, from Denmark in October three years later, and from Portugal in March six and a half years later. One ringed late December was in Denmark the following April.

DUSKY THRUSH *Turdus eunomus*. A bird probably of this species was seen by G. Stout on 7th October 1937. A first-winter female was present 18th-21st October 1961 (trapped on 19th).

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*. Regular in spring in very variable numbers; invariably one of the most abundant migrants in autumn; a few winter in most years, and small numbers arrive in weather-movements. A pair, believed to be of the Icelandic form *T.i. coburni*, bred at Setter in 1935. Spring movements late February or early March to mid-May and occasionally later (late date, 18th June); peak period late March and early April, maximum often less than fifty birds but sometimes up to 1000. Except in 1935, no July records and only one in August (5th, 1961). Autumn migrants rarely early September (from 6th), more usually from third week September, until December; largest falls normally in October (especially first half) but occasional large falls early November; usually over 500 on best days, and up to 10,000 recorded. The great majority are normally of the Continental (typical) form. The Icelandic birds tend to migrate a little later in both spring and autumn, mainly mid-April and last three weeks October (early date, 30th September); always very small numbers in spring and in some years in autumn also; autumn peaks in best years are seldom over 200-300 but up to 1000 recorded (18th October 1956). Both forms occur in winter. One Continental bird ringed on spring passage was in Portugal next January; twelve ringed in autumn were reported as follows: four in the same autumn and winter in Banffshire (November), Holland (December), Athlone (January), and S.W. France (February); one next spring (end March) in Holland; four in the second autumn and winter in N.E. France (November), S. Spain (December), S.W. France (January and early March); one in S. Sweden in mid-April eighteen months later, one in Portugal in February over two years later, and one in Estonia in mid-April five and a half years later. A bird ringed as a juvenile in W. Norway in 1956 reached Fair Isle in October 1957. Seven Icelandic birds, all ringed in autumn, have been recovered: three the same autumn and winter in S.W. Norway (November), Belgium (November) and N. Ireland (January); one next spring in Aberdeen (April), one next autumn in S.W. Ireland (November), one in S.W. France two years after ringing (November), and one in N.W. Ireland three years later (December).

RING OUZEL *Turdus torquatus*. Annual on spring passage; almost annual (all but one of past fifteen years) in autumn. Odd birds have summered on the island (probably 1932, 1962). Earliest spring date is 18th March; first arrivals usually last days March or first week April, main arrivals (up to thirty birds recorded, but often less than ten) may occur at any time between early April and mid-May. Stragglers most years to late May and sometimes June (late date, 1st July). Autumn migrants seen from 30th August, more often from middle or end September, mostly early October (recorded maxima only six birds), with stragglers most years to early November. Several late November records (to 27th); one 18th December 1909. One ringed 22nd May 1960 was recovered in S.W. France 20th October 1960.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*. Regular and often numerous in spring and autumn; a few winter, and may increase slightly with hard-weather movements in December-January. Apparently did not winter in the early years of this century, but recorded by 1927-28. Irregular breeder; up to three pairs recorded nesting in most years 1948-59, but not before or since; one or two have summered in other years. Spring migrants late February or early March to late May or early June, mainly late March and early April; maximum under fifty in some years but up to 2000 recorded. Autumn passage occasionally late September, normally from early October, main movements late October and early November, usually over 250 and sometimes over 2000 at peak. Sizeable falls some years in late November, smaller movements to late December. Over a hundred recoveries show that most migrants originate in Norway and winter in N. and W. Scotland and Ireland; a smaller proportion are from Finland (one), Sweden, or Denmark, and the more southerly wintering areas of this stock in England and Wales; one bird was in N. France and another in S.W. France in winter. One ringed in March was in W. Germany next July. Two autumn migrants had returned to Norway, one only two days and the other twelve days after ringing. A bird ringed at Heligoland in November was caught at Fair Isle twelve days later; one ringed at Spurn in November was at Fair Isle exactly a year later; a nestling from S.W. Finland reached the isle in its first November.

WHITE'S THRUSH *Turdus dauma*. Four records: single males obtained 19th October 1929 and 18th October 1944, one seen mid-November 1948, and one seen 6th November 1958.

BLACK-THROATED THRUSH *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*. A male (trapped) 8th December 1957 to about 22nd January 1958.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH *Hylocichla minima*. First-winter birds

on 5th-6th October 1953 (first British record) and 29th October 1958, both caught.

ROCK THRUSH *Monticola saxatilis*. One reported seen 8th November 1931; a male seen by L. S. V. Venables on 16th October 1936.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*. The most numerous breeding passerine; normally abundant as a passage migrant in spring and autumn. First birds arrive end March or beginning April (early date, 13th March), main arrivals of local birds second half April, sometimes into early May; Greenland/Iceland birds *Oe.oe. leucorrhoea* and "*schioleri*" normally first appear third week April, main passage early May, stragglers to mid-June in some years. Drifted birds of European stock probably arrive in small number in May also. Autumn movements sometimes begin early August, most local and Shetland birds leave by late August; Iceland birds pass mainly late August and early September; Greenland birds mainly through September, peaking mid-month. Occasional large falls of drifted European birds occur in September. Smaller movements involving both large and small Wheatears arrive to mid-October, stragglers to end October or early November in most years (late date, 19th November). Most eggs are laid late May. Sixteen recoveries of local-born young show autumn passage through England (Staffordshire and Sussex) in September, S.W. France (four birds) late August and September, and the western half of Iberia (one September, eight October-November) with one Morocco in November and one S. Spain in February. Thirteen recoveries are of birds of uncertain origin: one ringed 19th May was caught at sea about 300 m. N.W. of Fair Isle two days later; another May bird was in Majorca next April; of the remainder, all ringed in autumn, eight were found in the same or subsequent autumns in Scotland (one), Holland (one, three days after ringing), N.W. France (one), S.W. France (three), and S.W. Spain (two), between August and October; one (probably a Greater Wheatear) was in Belgium in April, and two in Shetland (April and July). Of seven recoveries of definite Greater Wheatears, one was in N. France in November, three September returns were in S.W. France, N.E. Spain, and S.W. Spain; whilst there are spring recoveries near Marseilles in April, in the Dordogne (inland S.W. France) and off Shetland in May. The spring birds in Majorca and Marseilles are well east of any reported in autumn. Local name: "Chack."

DESERT WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti*. Three records of male birds, all obtained. One 6th October 1928 was assigned to the typical form (western Sahara); one 26th October 1928

to the eastern race *Oe.d. homochroa*; and one 18th November 1940 was of uncertain race.

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*. Two records of males of the Black-throated phase of the western (typical) form; one obtained 25th September 1907, one seen 8th-13th November 1951.

BLACK WHEATEAR *Oenanthe leucura*. Single birds seen 28th-30th September 1912 (male), and 19th October 1953 (probably female).

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*. Regular on spring and autumn passage, in very variable but normally rather small numbers. Spring records 21st April to 27th June, mostly mid-May; often less than ten at peak, but up to fifty recorded. Autumn migrants: once 22nd July, otherwise 8th August to 3rd November, mostly late August and first three weeks September with few records after first week October; usually ten to thirty on best days, occasionally up to fifty, and once 500 (4th September 1956). One ringed 6th September 1956 was found in Hampshire 10th October 1956.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*. Annual in spring, except perhaps in periods of extreme scarcity following exceptionally severe winters (e.g. 1940, 1947; only two birds 1963); irregular in autumn. Spring dates are 17th February to 3rd June, mostly March and early April, few records of more than three, and none of more than seven birds on best day. Autumn records 24th August to 10th November, mostly late September and early October; nearly all single birds but rarely (as in October 1961) up to four present. One is said to have occurred in "July and August" 1935. All the birds critically examined resembled the British stock *S.t. hibernans*, except for a female attributable to one of the eastern forms (probably *S.t. maura*) 13th-21st October 1961, trapped on 17th.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Regular in spring and autumn, in very variable numbers. In spring, said to have been seen as early as 22nd March (1909), also 24th March (1928); both dates would be more appropriate to the next species. No recent record before 9th April, and rarely arrives before third week April. Most spring birds occur in May, few records after mid-June, but seen to 28th; peak numbers seldom exceed twenty, but up to 300 recorded. One 22nd July 1950, otherwise autumn records 7th August to 11th November, mostly late August to early October; maxima often under twenty but over 1000 present on two occasions, 4th September 1956 and 20th September 1957. A male showing the characters of Ehrenburg's Redstart *Ph. ph. samamiticus* was observed 6th September 1948.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*. Annual in spring, and

occurs almost every year in autumn. Spring records 19th March to 13th June, well-spread but slightly more in April than at other times; no record of more than three birds at once. Autumn passage rarely August (from 11th) and September, mainly late October and early November, late date 29th November; mostly single birds and no more than two on one day.

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*. One trapped 22nd May 1949.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*. One obtained 15th May 1911 (first British); single birds, both trapped, 10th May 1957 and 15th-17th May 1958. An unidentified Nightingale was present 7th-8th May 1958.

BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica*. The Red-spotted (typical) form is regular in spring and autumn, in very small numbers. Extreme dates for the species in spring are 22nd March and 13th June, but most if not all records before late April refer to the White-spotted form *C.s. cyaneacula*, males of which have been noted on seven or eight occasions between 22nd March and 21st May. The typical form occurs mainly in May (not before 5th in recent years), sometimes only odd birds and rarely more than five at peak, but up to sixty recorded (7th-8th May 1936). Autumn records are between 1st September and 11th November, mostly September; often 5 to 10 on best days but no more than twenty recorded; few records after mid-October. Only the typical form has been identified in autumn. A female ringed 24th May 1959 was found dying at Ostende, Belgium, four days later.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*. Regular and sometimes numerous on spring and autumn passage; a few winter in most years. Spring movements late February to early June, mainly end March to mid-May, sometimes under twenty at peak but more often 50 to 100, and records of up to 500 (30th-31st March 1958). Stragglers some years late June, a few isolated records July and August. Autumn passage occasionally from late August, more regularly from mid-September, main movements normally October (especially first half) with smaller arrivals through November. In some years very few, but falls of up to 500 (5th-9th October 1961) are on record. Six birds ringed in spring have been recovered: one caught 18th May 1960, and retrapped to 25th, was on Trischen Island, Heligoland Bight, on the 30th; and one ringed 25th April 1963 was at Ottenby, Sweden, on 4th May; another was in W. France next October, others in Norfolk in March a year later, in N.E. Yorkshire in November of the following year, and in N.W. Germany in March two years after ringing. Three October birds were

recovered within eight months; in N.E. France in November, Portugal in January, and near Oslo in May; while one ringed late November appeared in Bressay, Shetland, the next February. Birds ringed near Amsterdam and in Suffolk in October reached Fair Isle the following April.

(To be concluded)

23. Additions and Corrections to Parts I and II

Additions

- LITTLE GREBE (Vol. 5, p. 5). One reported 23rd March 1954 was overlooked.
- PINTAIL (p. 8). Seven were reported present on 24th November 1951 (latest and largest autumn record).
- SHOVELER (p. 8). Two 8th June 1963 (latest spring record).
- TUFTED DUCK (p. 8). One 7th February 1963 (first winter record). Birds 24th March and 12th June 1963 are now earliest and latest spring records.
- GOLDENEYE (p. 8). Two December to February 1962-63 (first record of wintering); up to six present through February and up to seven through March 1963 (largest numbers recorded in winter or spring).
- LONG-TAILED DUCK (p. 9). A fourth midsummer record, 9th July 1943, was overlooked.
- COMMON SCOTER (p. 9). Four additional spring records in 1963, include one from 13th March (earliest spring record).
- EIDER (p. 9). A complete census on 3rd May 1963 gave 407 birds (178 adult males, 30 first-summer males, 199 females). The population was thought to be the highest in recent years.
- GREY-LAG GOOSE (p. 10). One apparently of the Eastern form *A.a. rubirostris*, 19th-28th March 1963.
- BARNACLE GOOSE (p. 11). Spring records given for 1953 should start with seven from 25th April, ten from 29th.
- WHOOPER SWAN (p. 11). Two wintered, December to February 1962-63; up to seven present throughout February. One 23rd May 1963 was the latest ever recorded in spring.
- ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD (p. 34). One recorded 16th November 1953 was overlooked (latest autumn record). An adult 29th May 1963 was the third spring record.
- SPARROWHAWK (p. 34). A winter record 8th December 1952 to 13th January 1953 was overlooked.
- OSPREY (p. 35). A second spring record, 6th June 1963.
- LAPWING (p. 38). Breeding-population fell to three pairs following severe winter of 1962-63.

- DOTTEREL** (p. 39). A fourth spring record, 10th-11th June 1963.
- BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (p. 41). One 3rd July 1963 was thirteen days earlier than any previous "autumn" record.
- WOOD SANDPIPER** (p. 42). Spring records in 1963 include three birds 27th May (largest number recorded in spring).
- STONE CURLEW** (p. 45). A second or third record, 23rd-25th May 1963.

Corrections

MERLIN (p. 36). A line was omitted from the last sentence of this account; this should have read: "Birds ringed on autumn passage have been recovered during the same autumn and winter in N. and E. Scotland (four, two October, one January, one March), in N.W. Germany (October), in Belgium (two, October), and in S.W. France (October); ..."

24. Spring Rarities in 1963

- EASTERN GREY-LAG GOOSE** *Anser anser rubirostris*. A bird with a pink bill, presumably of this form, present 19th to 28th March.
- ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD** *Buteo lagopus*. An adult 29th May (third spring record).
- OSPREY** *Pandion haliaetus*. A "probable" 2nd June, followed by a definite record of one passing north on 6th; (second spring record, and third or fourth island record).
- QUAIL** *Coturnix coturnix*. Two 19th June, one to 21st.
- DOTTEREL** *Charadrius morinellus*. A female 10th-11th June (fourth spring record).
- STONE CURLEW** *Burhinus oedicnemus*. One present 23rd-25th May (second dated record for the island).
- COLLARED DOVE** *Streptopelia decaocto*. One 3rd-5th May, 14th May, 21st May, 29th-31st May and (perhaps same) 3rd June, two most days 4th to 20th June (probably at least three different individuals during this time). Although first recorded only in 1960, has now almost attained the status of a regular spring visitor.
- NIGHTJAR** *Caprimulgus europaeus*. A male 9th and one (probably same) 12th-13th June; (tenth spring record).
- WRYNECK** *Jynx torquilla*. Single birds 29th April, 21st May, and (perhaps same) 25th-26th, 28th and 31st May.
- WOODLARK** *Lullula arborea*. One 4th-5th April.
- DIPPER** *Cinclus cinclus*. One of the Black-bellied (typical form 7th-8th and (probably same) 12th-13th April; and a brown-bellied bird *C.c. gularis* or *aquaticus* 30th April to

- 7th May (trapped 30th). All the previous Fair Isle records were of the typical race.
- BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica*. A male of the White-spotted form *C.c. cyanecula* present 18th-22nd April; a male Red-spotted (typical) 23rd May, three males and two females 24th, two males and three females 25th, male 26th, one 27th, female 28th.
- REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*. One trapped 23rd June was probably also the unstreaked *Acrocephalus* seen 21st, 28th, and 29th; (fourth acceptable spring record).
- MARSH WARBLER *A. palustris*. Single birds trapped on 29th May, 1st June, and 5th June. There are now about fifteen acceptable spring records.
- ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*. One 22nd May. Now at least twelve spring records.
- RED-BREADED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa parva*. A female 3rd-4th and (perhaps same) 20th-21st June (third spring record).
- TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*. One 6th June (fifth record for the island).
- GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor*. Singles on 19th April and 3rd-7th May.
- WOODCHAT *L. senator*. A first-summer male 2nd to 22nd June, trapped 10th; (seventh record for Fair Isle).
- RED-BACKED SHRIKE *L. cristatus collurio*. Two males and a female 25th May, two of these to 27th; female 1st June, male 2nd, female 5th and 6th; two females 12th, one 13th.
- HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. One 12th April and 24th May; (eighth and ninth records for the isle).
- PARROT CROSSBILL *Loxia pityopsittacus*. Two (a male trapped) 20th March; (first spring record).
- ORTOLAN *Emberiza hortulana*. A male 25th May, a female 8th June.
- RUSTIC BUNTING *E. rustica*. A female 12th to 19th June, trapped 12th; (fifth spring record).

P. D.

25. The Spring Migration in 1963

PETER DAVIS

At Fair Isle, where we are so dependent upon the incidence of S.E. winds to deflect large numbers of migrants in our direction, it is seldom that any spring brings a reasonably balanced sample of the migrants moving into N.W. Europe. Usually we are favoured by the Blackbirds in March, or the Robins in April, or the warblers in May, sometimes by two

of these waves, but rarely by all three. The spring of 1963 was one of these rare seasons.

The first real signs of spring passage came with a small arrival of Skylarks and some thirty Lapwings on 6th March. From the 10th to the 20th the wind was constantly between south and east; the Lapwings increased to over 100 in a gale on the 10th, and more Skylarks, with about twenty Redwings, a Stonechat, and a Hedge Sparrow appeared on the 11th. By the 12th there were at least 210 Lapwings and over 300 Skylarks, a few Woodcocks and Blackbirds, the first Lesser Black-backs, Meadow Pipit, White Wagtail, and Chaffinch. Most of these moved on during the next two or three days, but passage was renewed on the 16th. In the early hours of this day, considerable numbers of Starlings and a few Redwings appeared in the beams of the South Lighthouse; the morning's census yielded at least 800 Starlings, over 200 Lapwings, about 75 Blackbirds, some 20 Common and rather more Black-headed Gulls, and a few Fieldfares, Song Thrushes, Redwings, Chaffinches, four Herons, Wigeon, Golden Plover, Wood Pigeon, Long-eared Owl, and three Linnets. Next day, the 17th, Starlings had slumped, but the other birds remained; a Mistle Thrush was seen, a Pied Wagtail, and four very dark Hedge Sparrows; three of these were trapped on the 17th and 18th, they were certainly of Scottish stock. On the 18th many Starlings again came to the lantern at the South Light, but as so often happens with this species, only a minor increase was apparent on the island next day. A Shelduck and a Robin were the only other incomers. The 19th saw an increase in Chaffinches, to over 25, of Common Gulls to about forty; seven Dunlins, three or four Wood Pigeons, six Rooks, at least four Robins were seen, and a Grey Lag-Goose appeared, which stayed until the 28th, and on several close views was seen to have a flesh-coloured bill, a character of the eastern form *rubirostris*. A Black-headed Gull dazzled by Gordon Barnes on the evening of the 19th bore a Danish ring—it had been marked as a nestling in Jutland in 1961.

The 20th March saw the climax of the early passage, in fresh S.E. winds and overcast. Again there were reported to have been many birds at the lighthouses before dawn, and this time there was ample confirmation of the passage at daybreak. Over a thousand Blackbirds, half adult males, as many Starlings, 500 Lapwings (a surprising total after the losses of the severe winter), over 400 Skylarks, a number of Woodcocks; these were the important species. Small numbers of Fieldfares, Redwings, Curlews, Goldcrests, Chaffinches; two Parrot Crossbills (our first spring record, following the irruption in the previous autumn), single Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, and a very early Lapland Bunting were also involved. Then from about 1100 GMT came a trickle of Con-

tinental Hedge Sparrows, some 20 seen, and a few Robins. A hundred birds were ringed, and had I not been alone the score might well have been doubled. Some Blackbirds departed N.E. at dusk, and I expected to find a marked decrease on the 21st; instead, there were just as many, but the proportion of adult males was nearer a third than a half, and evidently there had been a change of population. The other species were very much as before, and no new ones were noted. The traps yielded eighty-five more birds. Night-migrants were still unchanged on the 22nd, when 110 were trapped, but most of the day-migrants—Lapwings, gulls, and larks—departed; some were seen flying away N.E. early in the morning. The night-migrants decreased sharply over the night of 22nd-23rd and most of the remainder left on the nights of 23rd-24th and 25th-26th. The only notable records of the few quiet days that followed were of a Velvet Scoter on 26th, a Black Redstart 28th, a Kestrel and another Stonechat 29th; the occurrence of only two Stonechats in March presumably reflects the severity of the winter, for it was by far the lowest score since we started covering the early passage in 1958.

The big fall of 20th March produced several quick recoveries; three of the Blackbirds were reported in S.W. Norway within a month, a Song Thrush ringed on the 24th was in Denmark in May, and an eccentric Starling ringed on the 27th came down the chimney of the lifeboat station at Blakeney in Norfolk (c. 460 miles S. of Fair Isle) on 9th April.

March ended with a pleasantly varied fall of European night-migrants in easterly weather on the 30th and 31st. About thirty Hedge Sparrows and twelve Robins trickled in from mid-morning on the 30th; there were three Mistle and three Song Thrushes, a few new Blackbirds, a Brambling, On the 31st Robins and Hedge Sparrows were unchanged, but Song Thrushes had increased to about forty, Blackbirds doubled their score at about fifty; at least six Mistle Thrushes, a dozen or more Fieldfares and Redwings, two Stock Doves, our first post-war record of a Chiffchaff in March, a Mealy Redpoll, three or four Yellowhammers, and two or three extra Tree Sparrows (in addition to the six that survived the winter) were present. Three Pied Wagtails were also seen.

April started fairly fell, with an increase of Skylarks, about sixty Lapwings, and a record spring total of fifteen Wood Pigeons on the 1st; but the following week was extremely quiet. The first Wheatear came on the 2nd; on the 3rd the only Water Rail of the spring, while Chiffchaffs increased to three. A Woodlark was seen on the 4th, a few Twites arrived on the 5th (there had been odd ones through March). Three Whooper Swans passed north on the 6th, and

next day there were five about, also a Shelduck and a Black-bellied Dipper. The 8th April saw a northward passage of day-migrants: a few Common Gulls mid-morning and at least fifty Meadow Pipits towards noon; five Red-breasted Mergansers stopped, at least one Iceland Redwing, and a Greenfinch. The wind blew from S.E. for a few hours on the night of 9th-10th and this brought a small increase in Blackbirds (35), Robins (10) and Hedge Sparrows (20), also five Wheatears, a Siskin, and six Bramblings; three Shelduck were now resident, and a Common Scoter arrived. A Grey Lag, a Ring Ouzel, a Blackcap, and a Chiffchaff were seen on the 11th, but the smaller birds had perhaps arrived earlier, for the wind was now fresh westerly. It backed N.E. by the 12th, a moderately interesting day with over 50 Fieldfares, 15 Song Thrushes, and about 20 Redwings, eight Bramblings and a Hawfinch, one of the earliest of our few records. A Jack Snipe was logged on the 13th, but there were no further arrivals until a few more Wheatears (including the first females) came in in westerly weather on the 15th.

Although south-east winds set in again on the 16th, and blew until the 25th, the only changes at first were a little further increase of Wheatears and Meadow Pipits on the 16th, and a few Common Gulls, about forty Fieldfares, and a White Wagtail on the 17th. The 18th April, after overnight rain which cleared at mid-morning, saw a radical change in the bird-population. Some 250 Common Gulls were in (one of our highest spring scores) but a mass arrival of Robins from about 1000 GMT was the outstanding feature of the day; at least 250 were present in the afternoon. With them came sixty Bramblings, at least 25 Song Thrushes and as many Ring Ouzels, five Chiffchaffs, three Redstarts, Black Redstart, a male White-spotted Bluethroat, Goldcrest, more Meadow Pipits, and three Greenfinches. Eleven Whoopers went north in the morning; an early Green Sandpiper was noted; and odd Hedge Sparrows were arriving after 1600 GMT, but their numbers never looked like approaching those of the big fall exactly a year earlier, when they were co-dominant with the Robins.

By the morning of the 19th the Common Gulls numbered only 75, but the other birds of the 18th were all still present. Fieldfares had now increased to over 150, Wheatears to over 50, and other newcomers were ten Curlews, 14 Golden Plovers, a Swallow, a Great Grey Shrike, and a Mealy Redpoll. On the 20th, however, at least a third of the migrants had left, and the only new record was of two Lapland Buntings. The wind had been light and the skies clear on these two days; on the 21st and 22nd it increased to gale force. Except for Common Gulls, which increased again to 180 on the 22nd, and a fall of 22 Curlews on this day, migration was neglig-

ible, though our earliest-ever Corncrake appeared on 21st and a Whinchat on the 22nd. The wind died early on the 23rd, and a further small increase of Wheatears included at least two largish birds, while Blackcap, Willow Warbler, and Tree Pipit added to the score of grounded passerines. Most of the remaining birds from the big fall took advantage of the quieter weather and departed on the night of 23rd-24th. Two very interesting rapid recoveries came from this fall, both within a fortnight of ringing; one of the Robins was trapped and released at Ottenby bird-station in Sweden (ESE from Fair Isle), and a White Wagtail (one of only two seen during the rush) was found in N.E. Yorkshire—another instance of a spring migrant returning south, presumably after overshooting, and from a most unexpected species. A Starling ringed on 17th April, and presumably an earlier arrival, made a similar movement to the one in late March and to the White Wagtail, being caught at sea about 400 miles S.E. of Fair Isle at some time before 21st May.

The clean-out of 24th April was followed by four weeks in which we often despaired of having any more large falls. The wind, throughout this time, rarely left the west for more than a few hours; there was a great lack of continental birds, and no compensation in the way of big falls of Wheatears or other north-western species. However, the situation was seldom without interest.

Whimbrel and Sand Martin first reached the isle on 24th April, and two more Grey Lags came on 25th. Small numbers of Common and Black-headed Gulls were passing north on 28th, and on 29th we saw at least five Whimbrels, the unusual total of ten Carrion Crows, an early Wryneck, and a House Martin. The 30th produced another Dipper, which was eventually trapped, and proved to be the first brown-bellied bird (i.e. from Britain or Middle Europe) recorded at Fair Isle. On 3rd May, a Great Grey Shrike and a Collared Dove were seen, and on the 5th some forty Black-headed Gulls, a Common Sandpiper, and nine Fieldfares. Records on the 6th included two Pintails, a Green Sandpiper, a Whitethroat, and a Lapland Bunting; on the 8th there were two Swifts, seven Swallows, six White Wagtails, Whinchat, Robin, Lesser Whitethroat and Chiffchaff; and next day fifteen Swallows, a Cuckoo, and a Sedge Warbler were found. A brief S.E. blow on 9th-10th swelled these lists only very slightly, with a Redstart, two Sedge Warblers, a Blackcap (dying of exhaustion), two Willow Warblers, and two Tree Pipits, a Blue-headed Wagtail; most of these appeared mid-afternoon. On 11th May we were back to westerlies; one Greenland Redpoll recorded. The 13th produced three oddly-assorted new birds, a Grey Lag, a Knot, and a Grey-headed Wagtail; the 14th was marginally livelier, with a little hirundine passage, an-

other Collared Dove, and a sprinkling of large Wheatears. The odd warblers from the 10th were still about, and despite the S.W. wind they had a few recruits on the 15th; there were now four Sedge Warblers and two Whitethroats, also a Ring Ouzel, Turtle Dove, Wood Warbler, and three Mealy Redpolls on the 16th were rather better fare; one of two Grey Lags present on the 17th ended-up on a crofter's table.

No new birds were seen from the 18th to the 20th, and morale reached a new low; but hopes began to revive as the wind backed S.E. on the 20th, a day of continuous rain. It was fine, with a moderate southerly breeze, next morning, and at last there were signs of movement. Unfortunately, as so often happens, most of our visiting bird-watchers had departed by the mailboat at five a.m. Over 30 Tree Pipits were seen, a Collared Dove, Redwing, Whinchat, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff (both in song) and a Spotted Flycatcher. Then, from early afternoon, at least ten Whitethroats appeared in the trap-area, two more Chiffchaffs, another Whinchat, Redstart, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, a Wryneck, and a male Grey-headed Wagtail. There was no time to explore the crofting area again, but since the wind had veered N.W. by the morning of the 22nd, it is almost certain that most of the birds seen then had arrived on the previous evening. Some forty Willow Warblers, 22 Redstarts, 20 Tree Pipits, a dozen Whitethroats, and as many Garden Warblers, eight Whinchats, three Blackcaps, three Spotted Flycatchers, three Reed Buntings, two Pied Flycatchers, single Ring Ouzel, Grasshopper and Icterine Warblers were logged, and about thirty Swallows came in during the day. Most of the birds that could be sexed were females, as might be expected so late in the month.

The 23rd May produced generally fewer small migrants, except that the *Sylvia* warblers were unchanged; additions to the list were a Stone Curlew (only our second spring record, the first being almost exactly fifty years earlier), Fieldfare, a male Red-spotted Bluethroat, a Robin, three Sedge Warblers; while a late Whooper passed north and the first Arctic Terns occurred. The wind backed easterly again during the 23rd, and remained in this air until the 25th. Many of the remaining Redstarts, Garden and Willow Warblers had left overnight on the 23rd-24th, but other species remained as before; newcomers were five Bluethroats (three males and two females), Greenshank, Cuckoo, and Hawfinch. On the 25th there were still five Bluethroats, but three of them were males, and several were probably new; a female Blue-headed Wagtail, three Red-backed Shrikes, an Ortolan, and at least ten Reed Buntings (eight females) were found. In a S. to S.W. wind on the 26th the only new passerines were five *flava* wagtails, three of which were male Grey-

headed, but two Wood Sandpipers were seen. In a light northerly breeze on the 27th, some fifty Swallows were present, and a Wood Warbler trapped. There was another departure of small migrants on the 27th-28th, and the 28th was an almost blank day, but on the 29th our third spring record of a Rough-legged Buzzard (a fine creamy-breasted adult), another Collared Dove, and a Marsh Warbler more than redeemed an otherwise dead day. The only new bird of consequence on the 30th was a Lesser Redpoll, a rarity at Fair Isle though occurring more frequently in the past two or three years. The 31st was shrouded in fog for most of the day, but it was suspected that one or two warblers arrived in the gently S.E. breeze after the clearance.

This seemed to be confirmed by events on 1st June, a sparkling day with light airs from the S.E. The list of new birds included a Song Thrush, Whinchat, three Redstarts, a Black Redstart, Robin, another Marsh Warbler, Blackcap, four Garden Warblers, three Lesser Whitethroats, two Whitethroats, three Willow Warblers, nine Spotted Flycatchers, and a female Red-backed Shrike. The perfect weather continued on the 2nd, and birds were more abundant; in fact it was the biggest June movement for many years. Over thirty Spotted Flycatchers, and 18 Garden Warblers, eight Redstarts, two Blackcaps, seven Whitethroats, eight Lesser Whitethroats, seven Willow Warblers, two Chiffchaffs, were seen; while two Tufted Ducks, at least 32 House Martins, a Ring Ouzel, a male Woodchat and a male Red-backed Shrike, and two Turtle Doves had come in. What was almost certainly an Osprey passed high and distantly south in the afternoon.

On 3rd June, with the wind now north-westerly, there were few new discoveries, though Spotted Flycatcher (40 seen) may have increased further, and two Ring Ouzels, three Whinchats, a Hedge Sparrow and a Siskin occurred. A Collared Dove was trapped. By the 4th, many birds had passed on, but at least two Collared Doves were seen, and our third spring Red-breasted Flycatcher, a female, appeared exactly a year after the second. From 4th to 6th the wind freshened, from the N.E., and though this is not usually reckoned to be a "good air" in the spring, there were several interesting arrivals. On the 5th we trapped a third Marsh Warbler, saw a Wood Warbler, a Pied Flycatcher, and a female Grey-headed Wagtail, and there were probably new Garden Warblers (9) and Whitethroats (3); next day the highlights were a Tawny Pipit (the fifth at Fair Isle) and an Osprey (the fourth dated record) which passed north early in the afternoon. At least nine Willow Warblers were seen, two female Grey-headed, another Wood Sandpiper, while thirty Swifts and twenty House Martins were on the move. By the 8th the breeze was more S.E. and Willow Warblers increased to

twelve; there were six Redstarts, six Blackcaps, a few more Garden Warblers, a Brambling (which stayed till the 15th) and an Ortolan; two Shovelers came in. This was the last fall of any size, but in continuing fair weather with easterly winds there were few days without some new record until the end of June; rarely has the spring passage been so protracted. On the 9th two Wood Sandpipers and a Nightjar were seen, on the 10th four Kestrels, a Green Sandpiper, and a handsome female Dotterel; the Woodchat was caught—it stayed on until at least the 22nd. On 11th there were two Siskins, on 12th two more Red-backed Shrikes and a female Rustic Bunting, which was caught and remained till the 19th. The 13th found a late Redwing in song, and the 15th another Lesser Redpoll. A Woodcock and a Rook appeared on the 16th, Wood Pigeon and Chiffchaff 17th, a Cuckoo and two Quails on the 19th. On the 20th a Red-breasted Flycatcher, perhaps the original bird, was found again, and two Corn-crakes started calling in the crops, the first recorded for three weeks. An *Acrocephalus* warbler first seen on the 21st was almost certainly the Reed Warbler caught in the same place on the 23rd; a rarer bird than the Marsh in spring. A Pied Flycatcher male on the 24th was uncommonly late, as were two more Blackcaps on the 26th, and a Willow Warbler on the 29th. By this time some of the waders were already on autumn passage, and a Crossbill on the 23rd was the forerunner of a splendid irruption, far larger than that of 1962, which will doubtless be discussed in a future Bulletin.

26. Notes on the Breeding Birds, 1963

STORM PETREL. No proof of breeding, but birds were caught at night at Malcolm's Head and the Kirn o'Skroo, and seen at other localities.

EIDER. This species had its most successful season in the past seven years, rearing an exceptional number of ducklings. A census of birds around the whole coast of the island on 3rd May, shortly before they started to come ashore to look for nest-sites, gave 178 adult males, 30 first-summer males, and 199 females. Assuming that the number of immature females was similar to that of males, the breeding population would be of the order of 170 pairs. It is believed that the birds were more abundant than in most recent years, but there are no previous complete counts for comparison.

PEREGRINE. A pair was present throughout the breeding season, and from their behaviour it is believed that they laid eggs in the vicinity of Gunnawark; but no young were seen. The accessible sites of the two previous years were not in use.

- CORNCRAKE.** Two birds were calling, at Kennaby and at Lower Leogh, in late June, and it was reported that three birds had been seen at Kennaby at this time. One bird at Kennaby continued calling until mid-July, and it is probable that breeding took place, but up to mid-August there was no definite evidence.
- OYSTERCATCHER.** Although the first record was at the early date of about 5th February, most of the breeders were late in returning, some delayed until late March. One of the breeders was seen to be colour-ringed; it had been marked by Liverpool University at Talacre, Flintshire, on 9th March 1963. Most of the season's young were colour-ringed, at the request of Dr P. J. Dare of the Fisheries Experiment Station, Conway, who is directing the governmental research into Oystercatcher populations. Another bird ringed as a chick on the island was recovered there, a bird marked on Bunes in 1954 and found freshly-dead at Hoilie in May 1963.
- LAPWING.** The breeding population decreased from about twelve pairs in 1962 to only three in 1963; presumably an effect of the severe weather further south.
- SNIPE.** A pair nested in Gilsetter, but were probably unsuccessful.
- RINGED PLOVER.** Two pairs bred, as in 1962, in the usual area at Skervalie. A nest with three eggs was found on 29th April; it had four two days later; a second c/4 was located on 2nd May. The first nest failed, but replacements were laid later, and both pairs reared young.
- BONXIE.** Some 30 to 32 pairs nested, an increase of five to seven pairs over 1962. The islanders were very disturbed by this increase, alleging serious harm to the hill sheep, and most nests or broods were destroyed, and a good many adults shot. So far as is known, only four young were reared. One bird killed in late June or early July had been ringed as a chick on the island in 1958.
- ARCTIC SKUA.** About sixty-five pairs bred, a decrease of about five pairs on 1962, and the first decrease in the colony since 1953. The cause of the decrease is not known, but does not seem to have been due to the spread of the Bonxie, as this took place mainly on ground never occupied by the smaller species, except in the Brae of Restensgeo area where the impact resulted in smaller Arctic territories and low breeding-success, but not a reduction in the number of pairs. It is believed that a few birds in the Vaadal-Byerwall area were shot during the purge of Bonxies; at any rate the Vaadal and Byerwall West pairs disappeared without trace at this time. The female at Brunt Brae Upper which produced three eggs in 1962 did so again this year, and al-

though one was removed as soon as it was laid, she failed to hatch the other two, which were incubated for over five weeks. The female at Brae N.E., which has laid a clutch of three for the past four years, this year established a new record for the Fair Isle colony by laying four. Unfortunately the nest was not located until some time after the clutch was complete, so there was no point in removing any experimentally; none of them hatched.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. The breeding population was about double that of 1962, and higher than for any season since the observatory was founded. At least thirty pairs bred; seven or eight at the South Gavel, one on the North Gavel, about twenty at Goorn, one at Mid Head o' da Soonds, and two or three on the Burrian. They had a most successful season, and 62 well-grown chicks were ringed.

HERRING GULL. A marked increase in the breeding population, probably by a third over recent years (the last count, in 1959, gave about 140 nests); and the breeding-success was exceptionally high.

KITTIWAKE. Large numbers of newly-fledged young were found dead or dying in early August.

TYSTIE. Another very successful species this season, and for the first time we ringed over fifty young.

PUFFIN. A few came ashore on 8th April, but the first big landing was rather late, on 15th. The breeding-season also seemed to be timed a few days later than normal, and judging from the number of young available for ringing in the areas usually covered, success was not outstandingly high. A bird ringed as a breeding adult at Wirvie in 1951, and reringed there in 1954, was found in its nest at the same place in July 1963, twelve years later.

RAVEN. Two pairs bred successfully, and a third pair which was observed carrying nest-material was probably destroyed. It is understood that eight or ten Ravens were shot during the winter, which suggests that incomers were present at that season.

WHEATEAR. The population was evidently considerably higher than in 1962, and the birds had an outstandingly successful season.

MEADOW PIPIT. The population was lower than for many years, but the rate of success appeared to be fairly high.

ROCK PIPIT. This species, which is mainly sedentary (unlike the Meadow Pipit) was in good numbers and bred very successfully.

WHITE WAGTAIL. A pair bred in the cliffs at the Bay of Furse, rearing at least two young, which were first seen on the

wing on 2nd July. Previous records of breeding were in 1909, 1910, 1911, about 1933, and about 1944.

TWITE. Numbers appeared to be considerably lower than in recent years. This species is the one most obviously affected by the toxic dressings on the locally-sown oats.

HOUSE SPARROW. Thought to be in considerably smaller numbers than in recent years; probably no more than forty pairs bred.

TREE SPARROW. Six birds overwintered; and a few incomers arrived in late March. At least three pairs bred, in the South Reeva, and it is possible that there were other nests in the east cliffs, as birds were frequently seen in the vicinity of Shieldi Geo and Field during the summer.

Of the remaining breeding-birds, the Shag, Fulmar, Guillemot and Razorbill all apparently had a better-than-average season; particularly the last-named, which yielded a record ringing-total in the areas habitually covered. The Rock Doves were apparently over-controlled by the crofters when they were damaging the growing corn, and were scarcer than usual later in the summer. Skylarks had a good year; Hooded Crows were less in evidence than usual; Wrens were probably rather down in numbers though they reared good families; and Starlings were in about-average numbers and shared the generally high level of breeding-success, which must certainly be attributed to the quite exceptionally dry and calm weather from April to July.

P. D.

27. The Breeding Census of Common Birds

At the request of the Populations Branch of the British Trust for Ornithology, a census of the land-birds breeding in the major part of the crofting area was undertaken in the spring of 1963. It is hoped that the census may be repeated in future years, as part of the national inquiry into bird populations on farmland, the main objective being to provide a background for studies of the effects of modern farming techniques, and in particular the impact of the widespread use of toxic dressings and sprays. Fair Isle's remoteness does not make it immune from such effects; all the seed-oats sown in the past three years have been dressed with toxic chemicals, and sprays have been used to suppress thistles and other weeds, while some of our migratory species will be exposed to mainland hazards during their absence from the isle. Future counts will also provide an indication of the effects of severe winters.

Seventeen species of land-birds, excluding the Oyster-

catcher and Ringed Plover, bred at Fair Isle in 1963. Seven of these did not nest in the census-area: Peregrine, Lapwing, Snipe, Raven, Hooded Crow, White Wagtail, and (surprisingly) Twite; while an eighth species, the Rock Dove, was not definitely known to be nesting in the area although the small local population (under ten pairs) often fed there, and one or two pairs may have bred in the cliffs in the vicinity of the Reeves.

The census covered some 375 acres of farmland extending southwards from the boundary-fence between Pund and Barkland and Taing; excluding the eastern half of Taing (a former croft now subdivided), the Rippack and Brecks o' Busta scattalds on the east coast, and the Malcolm's Head scattald on the west, but including Meoness and Skadan on the south coast. The area contained some three miles of coastline and the passerine species of this zone were included in the counts. No more than thirty acres of this area were under cultivation, the rest being natural grassland; the cultivation consisted of the characteristic small rigs of oats, rotation grasses, potatoes, turnips, and cabbage, and none of these except the rotation grasses had made much growth before late May, so that they did not greatly influence the distribution of nesting birds.

The area contained the following totals of occupied territories: Corncrake 2, Skylark 41, Wren 3, Wheatear 24, Meadow Pipit 8, Rock Pipit 16, Starling 45, and Tree Sparrow 3; together with a population of House Sparrows (probably around 40 pairs) which was not counted.

In the absence of earlier counts there can be no direct comparisons with earlier years; but it is certain that the Meadow Pipit population was well below that of most recent years, and Wrens were absent from territories at South Harbour and Busta Geo which they are known to have held in many other years.

Wrens, Rock Pipits and Tree Sparrows were confined to the coast, as is usual; and the higher and more deeply-indented coastline between Linni Geo and Hjukni Geo, in the west, had a far greater density of birds than the more open and lower shores from Hesti Geo to Busta Geo in the south. Starlings nested both in the cliffs and in stone dykes (though not near occupied buildings) and their distribution was broadly determined by the availability of these sites as well as locally by their tendency towards gregarious or semi-colonial nesting; but they were widely-distributed throughout the census area. Wheatears were found only in areas with a combination of dry nesting-holes (natural sites or dykes) and very close sward, so that the territories were all in windswept areas near the coast or on rocky braes inland. Skylarks and Meadow

Pipits both settled mainly in areas which offered cover in the form of rough grass or sedges, before the spring flush of new growth made reasonable cover widespread in late May; and the territories were markedly concentrated into the eastern and central parts where the pastures are more sheltered and tend to retain a more tussocky character through the long winter. Only the two calling Corncrakes were confined to the cultivation, both choosing the rotation grasses which provide the earliest and best cover on the island.

The results of the counts were plotted on our new nine-inch maps, and copies deposited with the B.T.O. and in our own files.

P. D.

28. Birds in Shetland, Spring 1963

C. J. BOOTH

RED-THROATED DIVER. First birds seen at breeding lochs on 17th March.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. One Dales Voe on 27th January.

SLAVONIAN GREBE. Single birds in breeding plumage on 7th April, Loch of Tingwall and 29th June, Urafirth.

LITTLE GREBE. Two birds present in Scalloway area during February and March. Last seen, a single bird on 7th April, Loch of Tingwall.

FULMAR. One dark phase bird, Loch Strom, 26th June.

MALLARD. Maximum 34 at Virkie on 11th February.

SCAUP. One, Loch of Tingwall on 27th January.

TUFTED DUCK. Regular counts taken on Loch of Tingwall showed maximum numbers during March with a big decrease by mid-April.

POCHARD. Maximum number on Loch of Tingwall in mid-March, only a single bird on 7th April.

GOLDENEYE. Maximum number at Loch of Tingwall recorded during first week of April. Three at Spiggie 18th June (P.D.).

VELVET SCOTER. Maximum 8 at Dales Voe on 31st March.

GOOSANDER. Female at Saewater on 7th April.

SMEW. A female, Weisdale Voe on 17th February and Loch of Tingwall on 24th February.

WHOOPE SWAN. Small numbers present in the early part of the year. Maximum 13, Loch of Vatster on 29th April.

SPARROW HAWK. Single birds on 6th April and 6th June at Kergord.

KESTREL. One present in Sandwick area on several occasions

- between 11th January and 28th February. One near Whiteness on 31st May.
- MOORHEN.** Single bird at Whiteness on 12th April may have been a migrant. Breeding pairs noted Dunrossness and Walls.
- COOT.** A small number wintered in the Scalloway area. Maximum 6 on 24th February; last seen on 7th April.
- OYSTERCATCHER.** Increase in numbers first noted on 20th February, with further influx on 10th March. First young seen on 26th May.
- LAPWING.** Maximum wintering flock was 15 at Virkie on 11th February. A definite decrease in breeding pairs. First birds returned to Whiteness area on 9th March and display was seen on 15th March.
- RINGED PLOVER.** There was a decrease in breeding birds in several parts of Mainland.
- SNIPE.** Drumming first heard on 7th March at Whiteness.
- WOODCOCK.** Single bird on 23rd March at Lerwick.
- WHIMBREL.** First recorded on 23rd April.
- BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.** One in breeding plumage, Delting, on 1st June.
- BAR-TAILED GODWIT.** Maximum at Virkie, 12 on 11th February.
- COMMON SANDPIPER.** First young seen on 16th June.
- REDSHANK.** Breeding pairs reported from Dunrossness, Sandsting, Ollaberry and possibly Bressay. Three pairs bred in Whiteness area, where display was first noted on 29th March. Young hatched on 24th May.
- GREAT SKUA.** One pair nested on low lying moorland in Delting.
- LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL.** First recorded, two on 1st April, but no more seen until 13th April.
- GLAUCOUS GULL.** Two, 1st winter birds at Virkie on 4th February. An immature Lerwick late May (J. Wills) and 4th June (R. A. Richardson). A 3rd-summer bird Loch of Hillwell 20th June (P.D.).
- BLACK-HEADED GULL.** Several new breeding colonies formed, including at least six pairs on Mousa. None breeding at the site of the formerly large colony at Loch Brow.
- LITTLE AUK.** One dead at Cunningsburgh on 1st March.
- WOOD PIGEON.** Two migrant birds noted Tingwall on 17th March. Definite increase in breeding pairs at Kergord; 34 feeding in one field on 22nd May. One at Bigton 20th June (P.D.).
- COLLARED DOVE.** One near Loch Brow 23rd June (B. S. Hardy).

- CUCKOO. Three, Scalloway on 28th May (D. Coutts). Male seen and heard at Kergord on several occasions between 6th and 14th June.
- GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER. One at Seafield, Lerwick from 18th May to 1st June (W. Porteous).
- SWIFT. Single birds at Spiggie 18th June, Hillwell 19th, and Clumlie 20th June (P.D.).
- SKYLARK. First breeding birds at Whiteness on 7th March.
- SWALLOW. One on 22nd May, five on 25th May, one 27th May, all Central Mainland. Four at Grutness and 1 Cunningsburgh on 8th June. A nest with 5 young at Grutness, in the same place as a pair reared young last year. Two at St Ninian's 20th June (P.D.).
- HOUSE MARTIN. Three on 25th May at Brae. Two at Sumburgh on 8th June.
- RAVEN. One pair nested successfully on a ruined building about 20 yards from a minor road. Another pair attempted to nest in a small roadside quarry. Flock of 40 feeding near piggeries at Gulberswick.
- ROOK. About 45 pairs attempted to breed in Lindsay Lee plantation, Kergord.
- JACKDAW. Maximum number recorded 42 at Kergord on 24th February. At least 7 pairs bred in Lindsay Lee plantation. Newly hatched young seen on 22nd May in 2 nests. Breeding probably took place at the Noup of Noss.
- FIELDFARE. Single birds on 27th January and 22nd February, 20 Cunningsburgh on 22nd April.
- SONG THRUSH. Single birds, Levenwick on 15th February and Boddam on 23rd April.
- REDWING. Ten at Virkie on 4th February. One at Stromfirth on 17th March.
- BLACKBIRD. Migrant birds noted on 20th and 21st March.
- WHEATEAR. First seen on 15th April. Several on 16th April, a large influx on 22nd April.
- WHINCHAT. One on 25th May at Whiteness.
- REDSTART. Female at Whiteness on 9th May.
- ROBIN. One Gulberwick on 7th March. Influx on 22nd and 23rd April when birds were widespread throughout South and Central Mainland. Several noted until 29th April. Majority of birds were very pale.
- WHITETHROAT. One Whiteness on 13th June.
- WILLOW WARBLER/CHIFFCHAFF. Two on 23rd April, Loch Spiggie.
- GOLDCREST. One at Kergord on 24th February.
- PIED FLYCATCHER. Male on 14th June at Kergord.

- HEDGE SPARROW.** Single birds on 17th March at Strom and 31st March at Whiteness.
- MEADOW PIPIT.** First breeding birds at Whiteness on 19th March.
- YELLOW WAGTAIL.** A male of the Grey-headed form at Whiteness on 9th June.
- HAWFINCH.** One at Quendale on 23rd April.
- BRAMBLING.** Five on 19th April, one on 20th April, two on 22nd April at Whiteness. One at Boddam on 23rd April.
- REED BUNTING.** One at Whiteness on 19th April. Three at Loch Spiggie on 23rd April. Pair feeding newly-fledged young at the Spiggie-Brow marsh on 18th June (P.D.).
- TREE SPARROW.** At least 5 pairs bred in Lindsay Lee plantation Kergord. Nests held newly hatched young on 6th June, and second broods were noted on 19th July.

29. Bird Notes from Haroldswick, Unst, Spring 1963

MAGNUS SINCLAIR

- RED-THROATED DIVER.** One in winter plumage on 9th February. One on 8th March and three 10th April. A pair at Loch of Stourholl had a small chick on the exceptionally early date of 14th June (P.D.).
- LONG-TAILED DUCK.** Last seen were two on 6th May.
- SHELDUCK.** One on 8th May.
- BRENT GOOSE.** Three swimming twenty yards offshore on 29th and 30th April.
- HEN HARRIER.** A harrier probably of this species seen 2nd June.
- KESTREL.** Singles on 12th and 14th April.
- CORNCRAKE.** First bird was one calling on 16th May; another heard later in the month. (Two were still calling west of Haroldswick on 12th and 13th June; none heard at Baltasound—P.D.). One calling in rye-grass at Outer Skaw during June; the first Mr W. Sinclair has ever heard there.
- OYSTERCATCHER.** Five returned on 17th February, and more came 8th March; flock of thirty by 17th.
- WHIMBREL.** Four arrivals on 6th May. A pair had three small chicks (ca. 5 days old) on the very early date of 12th June (P.D.).
- WOOD SANDPIPER.** One at Snabrough on 14th June (P.D.).
- GREAT SKUA.** Two on 24th April were the first seen.

- ARCTIC SKUA. First seen on 24th April.
- GLAUCOUS GULL. One immature from 1st to 7th March, and on 21st-22nd.
- ARCTIC TERN. First arrivals were two on 11th May.
- TURTLE DOVE. One seen at Baltasound on 4th June (A.J.T.N.) and one on 11th (J.F.M.); also two at Uyeasound during June (A.P.).
- COLLARED DOVE. A visiting bird-watcher named Roberts reported seeing one near Haroldswick in the first week of June.
- CUCKOO. One on 26th May (E.B.).
- SWALLOW. Singles on 23rd-24th and 29th-30th April. In May, one on 16th and 21st, four 24th. One 1st June, three 5th and 7th; four noted from 8th to 16th and 18th to 24th.
- HOUSE MARTIN. Four on 5th June.
- ROOK. One on 1st January and 11th February.
- FIELDFARE. One on 17th March and ten 28th; two 3rd April and twenty on 22nd, but only two 24th.
- SONG THRUSH. One on 23rd April.
- REDWING. One on 17th and 21st-22nd March; one 12th April and two next day. A flock of 100 seen 20th April, eighty 21st; this was down to fifty on 22nd, and last seen were ten on 24th.
- BLACKBIRD. Increases on 15th and 16th March, and up to a dozen about on 22nd and 23rd, but these had moved out by 26th.
- WHEATEAR. One on 1st April, and another the same day at Norwick (D.M.) passed on. A female on 17th, and three 18th, with more on 23rd.
- REDSTART. A male stayed from 23rd to 28th April. A female 21st May. One on 3rd June.
- ROBIN. One on 17th April, two next day, and four on 19th; six 23rd, one in song. Singles seen until 28th. One on 21st May.
- BLACKCAP. A pair during June at Valyie, in Norwick (D.M.). A male at Halligarth, Baltasound, on 14th June (P.D.).
- WHITETHROAT. One on 3rd June.
- WILLOW WARBLER/CHIFFCHAFF. Two at Baltasound on 24th April (J.F.M.). One on 11th and 23rd May, three 24th.
- SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. Singles on 1st, 2nd, and 3rd June.
- PIED FLYCATCHER. One female on 21st May, and one 2nd June.
- HEDGE SPARROW. More numerous than usual this spring. Two on 26th and 27th March, and one 29th. Four on 18th April and two next day; three on 20th, two 21st, and three 23rd; one 27th. One again on 1st May.

WHITE WAGTAIL. One on 6th and 19th May. A female White and a male Pied at Burrafirth on 13th June; a male Pied with a juvenile near Haroldswick on 14th (P.D.).

RED-BACKED SHRIKE. One male at Saxa Vord on 3rd June.

CHAFFINCH. Two on 28th March. Singly on 2nd and 23rd April, with three males and a female 24th.

BRAMBLING. A flock of twenty on 20th and 22nd April, one on 23rd.

YELLOWHAMMER. One at Saxa Vord on 7th and 18th April.

CORN BUNTING. Singles on 6th May and 1st June.

SNOW BUNTING. A flock of 200 on 21st February. Nine on 19th March and thirty on 27th. One 5th April and twelve 6th (A.J.T.N.); a party of thirty on 27th. One 5th April and twelve 6th (A.J.T.N.); a party of twenty on 11th, and singles seen at end of month. Last noted were two on 3rd May, singles on 4th and 5th.

TREE SPARROW. A Mr Roberts reported seeing c.20 near Haroldswick in early June. Five seen near Burrafirth on 13th June (P.D.).

Records are gratefully acknowledged from the following:
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