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*All statements of fact and expressions of opinion
in the following papers are the sole responsibility of
the authors and must in no way be taken to represent
the opinions of the Natural History Society.*

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FOR NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FOR 1953

Compiled from the notes and records of members of
the Natural History Society of Northumberland,
Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne and many other
observers throughout the two Counties

by

GEORGE W. TEMPERLEY, M.Sc., M.B.O.U.

More than 150 observers have this year contributed information to this Report. Owing to lack of space it has been impossible to quote more than a very small proportion of the individual records received, but every statement in the Classified Notes which follow is based upon evidence provided by contributors. The initials which follow the records indicate the observers who are responsible for them. A list of such contributors will be found at the end of the Report, which may be used as a key to the initials.

The Natural History Society appreciates the co-operation of all, whether members of the Society or not, who have generously contributed the information without which this Report could not have been compiled.

The use of square brackets in this Report denotes that there is some doubt as to the accuracy of the identification of the species, either owing to the unfavourable conditions under which it was observed or to the inexperience of the observer. It will be realised that it is essential that a high standard of accuracy and reliability should be maintained in these Reports and that every record should be above suspicion. Brackets are also used if there is some doubt as to whether a bird was truly wild.

When notes on species do not indicate changes in distribution, status or habits they have been omitted.

As in the previous Report, the classification followed is that of the latest edition of *The Check-list of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1952.

Abbreviations used :—N=Northumberland ; D=Durham ; *B.B.* = *British Birds* ; *O.R.* = *Ornithological Report* ; *F.I.O.R.* = *Farne lands Ornithological Report*.

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RECORDS OF UNUSUAL INTEREST IN 1953

Full details will be found below of the following records of special interest :—Successful breeding of Great Crested Grebes (5), a possibly wild Night Heron (36), Bittern at Gosforth Park Sanctuary (38), Smews in the Sanctuary (71), Hen-Harriers (100), Breeding of Montagu's Harriers (102), Osprey in the Sanctuary (103), Quails (117), Spotted Crake (121), [Little Crake (124)], another "Corncrake year" (125), Iceland Gull (203), Little Gull (207), [Scops Owl (242)], Woodlark (271), Black Redstarts (321), White-spotted Bluethroat (324), Blue-headed Wagtail (382), Lesser Grey Shrike (385), Little Bunting (420), Lapland Bunting (422).

WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING BIRD LIFE

The year 1953 will long be remembered for its lack of sunshine, and, at the same time, lack of rain. The opening months were mild, the spring cold and dry, the summer dull and sunless, the autumn unusually mild and the winter free of frost. Every season in turn was, in fact, unseasonable. The rainfall was as much as 20% below the average.

The year opened with a slight covering of snow on the ground, which soon melted and was followed by a long, dull, dry period which extended throughout January, February and March. The only snow-fall of the year occurred in the second week of February and was of short duration. March, though dull, provided a few warm, sunny days in its third week. The first three weeks of April were very cold and sunless. May opened warm and sunny, but after the first week cold easterly winds persisted with little sunshine until almost the end of June, the first week of June being particularly cold and wet. The whole of July was cool and sunless and, after a summer-like Bank-holiday, August provided the only wet month of the year. September and October were again dry and November and December were without frost or snow.

The chief meteorological event of the year was the abnormally high tides on the coast at the end of January, caused by strong westerly gales driving into the North Sea. These tides wrought enormous destruction on the south-east coast and in Holland, but fortunately the north-east coast suffered little damage.

On May 25th (Whit Monday) there were widespread thunderstorms which resulted in a "tremendous downpour" in the Cheviots. The Coquet gravel-beds were all flooded and very many nests of ground-nesting birds were washed away. (E.M.) "At Uswayford the Sandpipers and Dippers were flying up and down the burn and all left afterwards and did not return." (H.H.)

After the cold wet week in early June, Dr. E. A. R. Ennion wrote from Monks' House :—"Deserted eggs, starved broods, dead fledglings (e.g. Black-headed Gulls) and even adults were met with everywhere. Five out of our six resident Swallows perished or disappeared. It was noted that broods chilled more readily in thick, felted nests, like Chaffinches' and Dunnocks', than in 'free-drainage' nests like White-throats' and Reed-buntings'. There were, of course, repeats and second broods but neither birds nor weather got properly into stride again." R. Martinson, of Wolsingham, Co. Durham, wrote :—"The recent heavy rains have caused havoc amongst bird life and I have never known so many young birds drowned, not only the ground-nesting species, but others as well. Grouse and Pheasants fared badly and many of them, on the point of hatching, left their eggs. Pied Wagtails, their nests in a stone wall, had their youngsters drowned and a Redstart with six young ones in a hole in a tree suffered a similar fate, and many young Wood-pigeons were found dead. A young Cuckoo in a Meadow-pipit's nest, which had just tipped the rightful occupants over the edge, was, in turn, itself drowned." In the Redesdale Forestry Plantations 23 nesting boxes were occupied, but hardly any young were successfully reared. Eggs were deserted or young were found dead in the nests. (W.L.McC.). In nesting boxes at Gosforth Park Sanctuary eggs were laid in three boxes, but only one brood was reared. (W.D.R.) In the Hamsterley Plantations the number of nests containing eggs or young which had been deserted was considerably above that of any previous year. (C.H.L.)

The lateness of the season as compared with the previous year is shown from the following dates when nestlings in the boxes in the Hamsterley Plantations were found ready for ringing. Pied Flycatcher : In 1952 on June 15th ten broods were old enough to be ringed ; in 1953 on June 16th only one was ready, on the 21st only three, on the 27th five, and two not until July 8th. Redstart : In 1952

ringing dates ranged from May 31st to June 22nd ; in 1953 from June 6th to July 5th. Great Tit : In 1952 eleven broods were ringed on June 4th, 7th and 8th ; in 1953 seven broods were too young to be ringed on June 6th and 7th, and four were ringed as late as June 27th. Blue Tit : In 1952 one brood was ringed as early as May 31st and three on June 7th ; in 1953 none was ready until June 27th. Coal Tit : In 1952 three broods out of six were ready on May 25th and two on May 31st ; in 1953 only one was ready on June 6th, three on June 7th and one not until June 16th. (F.G.G.)

Several unaccountable bird movements were reported during the year. For instance :—On February 27th at Teesmouth a great movement of waders of many species was observed. Thousands of birds were present, both on the sands at Seaton Carew and at the mouth of the river. They flew restlessly around and settled on the shore in falling black masses. (C.G. & D.B.) Again, on August 26th there was an exceptionally large muster of gulls, terns and waders at the Teesmouth. As the tide rose large flocks assembled on the mud banks until they covered an area of roughly a quarter of a square mile. (O.C.H.)

BIRD-RINGING

This branch of the Society's work is being still further developed and plans are laid for extending its range. This year, however, bad weather conditions hampered the activities of ringers. Owing to the unfavourable season many nests were deserted and young destroyed, which resulted in fewer nestlings being ringed than in the previous season.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Birds ringed in the Forestry Plantations and elsewhere ... | 653 |
| „ „ on the Farne Islands | 2,123 |
| Total | <u>2,776</u> |

This compares with a total of 3,579 in 1952.

Nestlings ringed in the Forestry Plantations and elsewhere, but not including the Farne Islands, were of the following species :—

Montagu's Harriers 3, Merlin 4, Kestrel 5, Lapwing 11, Ringed Plover 2, Woodcock 3, Kittiwake 45, Little Tern 1, Short-eared Owl 10, Tawny Owl 4, Skylark 8, Swallow 7, Raven 4, Great Tit 100, plus 2 adults, Coal Tit 109, Blue Tit 51, Wren 7, Song-Thrush 10, Mistle-Thrush 9, Blackbird 15, Redstart 91, Robin 8, Willow-Warbler 29, Wood-Warbler 6, Whitethroat 7, Pied Flycatcher 76, Spotted Flycatcher 2, Hedge-Sparrow 4, Tree-Pipit 3, Meadow-Pipit 4, Linnet 1, Chaffinch 1, Yellow Hammer 7, Grey Wagtail 4. Total : 653.

NESTING-BOX RETURNS. SEASON 1953

In the Forestry Commission's plantations near Hamsterley, Co. Durham, about 300 nesting-boxes were put up for the 1953 season. Of these, 84 were occupied, as compared with 78 in the previous year and 88 in 1951.

The nesting species were :—

| | | <i>No. of nests</i> | <i>No. of broods hatched</i> | <i>Broods ringed</i> | <i>Young ringed</i> |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Pied Flycatcher | ... | 27 | 18 | 11 | 54 |
| Redstart | ... | 14 | 9 | 5 | 21 |
| Great Tit | ... | 22 | 15 | 12 | 77 |
| Blue Tit | ... | 10 | 6 | 3 | 22 |
| Coal Tit | ... | 7 | 6 | 6 | 50 |
| Creeper | ... | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | | — | — | — | — |
| | | 84 | 54=64% | 37 | 224 |
| Last year | ... | 78 | 65=83% | | |
| 1951 | ... | 88 | 74=84.5% | | |

From the above it will be seen that out of 84 nests only 54 broods were successfully hatched, or 64%. The number of nests containing eggs or young which were deserted was very considerably above that of any previous year.

Of the 84 boxes occupied, 31 were more than 50 yds. from the nearest stream—a larger number than usual. Of these, 11 were occupied by Pied Flycatchers.

The relative increase in the number of Pied Flycatchers' nests found in 1953 is interesting :—

| | <i>Year</i> | 1949 | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 |
|------------------|-------------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| Pied Flycatcher | ... | 28 | 40 | 20 | 18 | 27 |
| Redstart | ... | 14 | 16 | 15 | 13 | 14 |
| Great Tit | ... | 29 | 27 | 19 | 30 | 22 |
| Blue Tit | ... | 9 | 17 | 12 | 9 | 10 |
| Coal Tit | ... | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Creeper | ... | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| | | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | ... | 82 | 104 | 74 | 78 | 84 |
| Percentage of | | | | | | |
| Pied Flycatchers | ... | 34% | 38.5% | 27% | 23% | 32% |

We are indebted to F.G.G. & C.H.L. for the above figures.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY ENQUIRIES

Heronry Census. The number of occupied nests in the two counties has for some years been very small indeed. The total for 1953 was only 32. This compares unfavourably with the number at the beginning of the century when the late George Bolam, writing in 1912, could say "There are considerable Heronries of ancient standing at Bolam, Harbottle, Chillingham and Howick, with smaller ones at Otterburn, Unthank, Capheaton and Felton and scattered or occasional nests at other places. At Chillingham there are usually from 60 to 100 nests." Owing to tree felling the large heronries of that time were broken up and any that have since been founded have been small and unstable. Some pairs have adopted the habit of nesting singly in out-by plantations, where they are very difficult to trace.

For some years the B.T.O. Census has taken the form of a sample count; only a limited number of known heronries having been counted; but in 1954 it is proposed to take a complete National Census in order to compare the figures obtained with those of 1928, when a previous National Census was taken. It is therefore very desirable that no nests in Northumberland and Durham should be overlooked and members are earnestly requested to report at once on any previously unrecorded heronries or single nests that they hear of or discover.

Unusual passage migration of certain Waders. From some parts of the country come reports of a larger autumn passage migration of Little Stints, Curlew-Sandpipers, Spotted Redshanks and, perhaps, Ruffs than is usual. The B.T.O. is investigating this movement and reports were called for from all districts where these species normally occur on passage. An examination of the records for Northumberland and Durham showed that, except perhaps in the case of the Ruff, no marked increase in numbers had taken place. The Little Stint, Curlew-Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank are fairly regular passage migrants, but normally only in very small numbers. The Ruff has been steadily becoming more numerous as an autumn visitor during the last few years. It would seem that on its autumn passage it is making a landfall on the east coast some miles further north than it was wont to do; but apart from this no abnormally large arrival in 1953 could be reported. (For records see under Classified Notes below.)

Invasion of Crossbills. It was reported that an unusually large "invasion" of Crossbills had occurred in some parts of the country early in 1953 and the B.T.O. sent out a request for statistical evidence of this. So far as Northumberland and Durham were concerned the

number of birds recorded was very little above the normal, as will be seen by the report given on this species in Classified Notes below (404).

Wryneck Census. Since the Wryneck is declining in numbers comparatively rapidly, both as a summer resident and a passage migrant, it is proposed that a census should be taken in the summer of 1954. This species is only a very unusual straggler to our counties, but should any occur they should be promptly reported.

Common Buzzard Census. The B.T.O. is to take a census of this species in 1954 to trace the recent extension of its breeding range. It does not yet breed in either of our counties and it is uncommon as a casual visitor. Any birds seen should be immediately reported.

WILDFOWL CENSUS

This has been continued for another year and local census-takers have worked with great regularity and zeal to obtain the required counts on the main inland waters and along the coast. The census is to be continued in the season 1954-55.

MOULT MIGRATION OF THE SHELD-DUCK

Further evidence has been obtained that some Sheld-duck use the Tyne Gap on their flight from the west coast to the east.

Our correspondent Mr. Matthew Philipson, of Haltwhistle, writes :—
"On June 30th at 9.30 p.m. a flock of 30 flew down the Tyne Valley from the west. On the following evening at 9.0 p.m. a flock of 40 was seen taking exactly the same route. There was a strong N.E. wind blowing at the time and much low cloud. Both flocks were flying very low in V-formation as if they were preparing to alight. The birds were so low that their chestnut and white markings were plainly visible to the naked eye. On July 7th at 9.0 p.m. a single bird was seen following the same route ; the wind being N.W. and the sky cloudy."

Members living on this route should make a point of watching for further evidence of this migration. How far east do these birds fly before turning south to cross the North Sea ?

HOMING EXPERIMENTS WITH MANX SHEARWATERS

In connection with Dr. G. V. T. Matthews's "homing" experiments, our member, Mr. W. Johnson, of Haydon Bridge, again released breeding birds sent from Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, on New Alston Fell ; on

May 20th twenty and on June 7th nineteen. Practically all the birds returned to their nesting holes, but there were no "record breakers" on this occasion. In the previous year one returned in 13 hours, over a distance, in a direct line, of c. 250 miles.

GOSFORTH PARK BIRD SANCTUARY

This sanctuary continues to justify its existence in spite of the steady advance of "built-up" areas towards its boundaries. The diversity of its wildfowl, the wealth of its woodland and lake-side bird population and the number of rare and interesting visitors which it attracts may be seen from the Classified Notes that follow. It is providing opportunities for local naturalists to become familiar with species which otherwise they might have to go far to seek.

CLASSIFIED NOTES

2. GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn. (276)

Single birds present on the coast throughout the winter of 1952-53. (E.A.R.E.) A few reported in autumn of 1953. (W.S.C. ; E.K. & B.L.)

On inland waters—On March 15th on Burnhope Reservoir, Wearhead, D., one in full breeding plumage. (C.T.L.H.)

5. GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* (L.) (370)

Breeding—On one inland water a pair was displaying as early as March 20th. During April and May, two pairs were present. In May a nest was found and, as a precaution, the two eggs were marked in indelible ink "Not to be taken"; nevertheless they soon disappeared. The pair remained and is reported to have bred successfully. (K.I.) On another inland water a pair was seen in April, on June 14th a nest of three eggs was found and on August 26th a young bird was seen there. Breeding had previously been suspected on this water, but this is the first time that it has been definitely proved. (R.T.G. & E.M.L. ; J.H.A.)

On yet another inland water a pair was located on July 29th when one of the birds was still sitting on eggs. On August 26th three very small young were seen and this family was still present as late as October 15th. (J.H.A.) This is the first record of breeding on this water; its late date may have been caused through a disaster to an earlier nest elsewhere.

A single bird in breeding plumage was seen on Gosforth Park lake on April 26th, where it remained until at least May 17th. No mate was ever seen. (J.M.S., M.E.W., M.G.R., &c.)

No breeding records from Co. Durham.

6. RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Boddaert) (371)

An uncommon winter visitor. On several dates in March, off the Brownsman, Farnes, one was recorded. (E.A.R.E.)

More than usual reported in the autumn. First seen, on September 26th off Holy Island, two, one still in summer plumage (E.K. & B.L.) Single birds were reported in the Tees estuary on November 4th, 28th and 29th. (C.J.H., P.J.S. & K.B.) Also off the North Northumberland coast on November 28th, December 5th, 27th and 29th. (L.G.H., E.K., B.L., A.B. & W.D.R.)

Inland—On November 14th on Crag Lough, N., one. (R.F.L.)

8. BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps caspicus* Hablizl (374)

None reported from inland waters in either county. Single birds on the coast in January/February and again in November. (L.G.H., E.K., L.McG., W.D.R., &c.)

On February 15th near Waren Mill, Bamburgh, one was seen to swallow an eel over five inches long, the process taking at least ten minutes. (E.A.R.E.)

16. MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus* Brünnich (355)

An unusual number of this species was reported during September. On the 4th, off Souter Point, D., during two hours' watching, seven and one were seen. (F.G.G.) On the 10th, off Seahouses, N., as many as eleven were reported. (S.S. per E.A.R.E.) On the 12th, off Seaton Sluice, N., in 2½ hours from 4.30 to 7.0 p.m., thirty-seven were counted, all but five flying north, and on the following day seven were seen, also flying north (B.L. & E.K.), while single birds were reported by other observers. The last to be recorded were three birds flying north off Marsden, D., on October 14th. (F.G.G.)

16/21. SHEARWATERS *spp*?

On March 1st off the Farnes, a large Shearwater was seen at about 150 yards range, flying N.N.W.—“It appeared somewhat larger and less bluff than a Fulmar, wings proportionately longer and beat faster and of greater amplitude, bill longer but heavier than Manx type. Greyish brown above, darker towards the wing-tips, paler and greyer on mantle and fore-scapulars, generally patchy effect; no clear demarcation between upper and under-parts, although too distinct for *P. grisea*; no definite cap and no obvious bar across tail-base.” It was judged to be Cory's Shearwater, *P. diomedea borealis* (Cory), but definite confirmation was not obtainable. (E.A.R.E.)

In addition to the many Manx Shearwaters (see above) observed off the coast during September, a few larger and browner birds were also seen. These were thought to have been Sooty Shearwaters, *Procellaria grisea*, Gmelin and/or Cory's *P. diomedea borealis* (Cory) but it was not possible to determine the species with certainty. (W.D.R., B.L. & E.K.)

The descriptions of these birds were submitted to expert authorities, who, however, were unable to make a definite pronouncement upon them. The identification of Shearwaters in the field is very difficult indeed and great caution is necessary in accepting sight records. It is

not yet definitely established which of the various species of Shearwater do frequent the coasts of the British Isles. (See E. M. Nicholson, "Shearwaters in the English Channel," *B.B.*, Vol. XLV., p. 41.)

26. FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.) (368)

On the Northumberland coast breeding was successful at the usual sites. On April 5th birds were seen haunting a cliff south of Cresswell Coastguard Station, a new site. (H.T.) One chick was seen on the Tynemouth cliffs (F.G.G.) and young were on Crag Point, Hartley. (W.D.R.)

In Howick quarry, N., about a mile from the sea, eight pairs have been present and at least three laid eggs, but the eggs were all taken. Last year, however (1952), an egg hatched and all went well until blasting operations had to be done close by. The quarrymen moved the chick to another ledge, out of harm's way, but returned it to its home ledge within 4 or 5 hours. Unfortunately the parent birds refused to come near and some five days later the chick was found dead. (per W.S.C.)

On the N.E. Durham cliffs, from South Shields to the Wear, birds did well and on August 23rd a total of 76 young was counted; but further south, between Ryhope and Easington, not a chick was to be found and only one adult was seen on the ledges where they used to breed, while very few birds were seen over the sea! (F.G.G.) No report from the Blackhall Rocks sites, further south.

27. GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.) (349)

The following is interesting as illustrating the distance from their birth-place that juvenile Gannets will travel by paddling before becoming free-flying:—"On September 13th a juvenile, presumably born on the Bass Rock, was swimming very close inshore at Alnmouth, N. That it was uninjured, but not yet able to take to the air, was indicated by the amount of wing-flapping in which it indulged and by the heavy way in which it finally accomplished a flight of about 10 yards before coming down on the water again." (F.G.G.)

On June 10th on the beach at Seaton Snook, Teesmouth, a bird was found dead that had been ringed on the Bass Rock in 1950. (C.G.) On September 9th at Hartlepool, D., a mature bird was picked up injured that bore a ring showing that it had been ringed as young on the Bass Rock on July 11th, 1949. It was later released after being fed. (P.L.H.)

30. HERON *Ardea cinerea* L. (389)

Northumbrian Heronries :—Longridge, Berwick. In mid-April seven occupied nests were counted. The thick conifer plantation which held nests last year has now been felled. Whether the birds have gone elsewhere or not is unknown ; they have not so far been traced. (H.F.C.) Chillingham. On April 19th, nine occupied nests—same as last year. (C.B.) Boundary Wood, Alnwick. In mid-April only three nests. (J.E.R.) On the North Tyne, south of Bellingham, a newly-discovered heronry in a dense fir plantation. On May 3rd at least four occupied nests, possibly seven, but accurate counting impossible from below. Adults present twelve. (K.I.) Blagdon estate, none. (N.R.) Allen Banks, Bardon Mill, none. (M.P.) Riding Mill, Tyne Valley, none.

Durham Heronries :—Dyance Wood, Gainford. On May 1st six occupied nests, with young. (O.C.H. & K.B.) Harperley, Weardale. On April 19th one nest only, with young. (C.H.L.)

A new Heronry has been located near Frosterley, Weardale. It is reported that in 1951 it contained about a dozen nests, in 1952 half a dozen, but unfortunately it was not visited in 1953. (R.M.P.)

36. NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax* (L.) (295)

[From March 15th until the beginning of September, 1953, a Night Heron in immature plumage frequented the banks of the river Coquet just above Warkworth. It was at first thought that it might have been a truly wild bird, for, by a strange coincidence, the last Night Heron recorded for Northumberland was a bird shot on the banks of the Coquet above Warkworth in February, 1913. This was doubted, however, when it was learnt that at the Edinburgh Zoo there is a large colony of Night Herons in the gardens. These birds live in the open and are full-winged. No record is kept of their number and they are not ringed, so if they wander away they cannot be traced. They breed successfully, so there are always a number of immature birds present. The fact that the Warkworth bird remained for so long (six months) in one place, never moved more than a few hundred yards from the grounds of Coquet Lodge, which was its headquarters, and took so little notice of people passing along the river bank or boating on the water, suggested that the bird might not be truly wild. On the other hand, during the summer Night Herons have been reported from Morecambe Bay, Norfolk, Essex, Kent and other places, and it is hardly likely that all these birds were escapes. If there has been an invasion of genuine vagrants from the continent, then our bird may

well have been one of them. Under the circumstances, this record must be placed within square brackets. We are indebted to Miss D. Carr, of Coquet Lodge, who first identified and reported the bird, for information about its long sojourn.]

38. BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris* (L.) (297)

On January 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 7th at Gosforth Park lake a single bird was seen. (W.D.R., L.McG., L.G.H., E.K., B.L. & A.B.)

47. GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* L. (322)

From March to October pairs or single birds, usually drakes, were reported from many waters :—Holy Island Lough, Newton Bog, Holywell Ponds, Killingworth Mere, Gosforth Park, Swallow Ponds, N., and from Primrose Pond, Boldon Flats and the Tees Marshes, D., but no breeding was proved.

49. GADWALL *Anas strepera* L. (318)

On March 1st and 7th on Whittle Dene Reservoirs, a drake (E.K., B.L. & W.D.R.) From April 25th to May 1st on Holywell Ponds, N., a drake. (F.G.G., K.Y. & W.D.R.) From April 25th to May 1st on Holy Island Lough, two. (R.H.) During July and August at Waskerley Reservoir, D., four small flocks were present totalling 28 birds; by day they spent their time on or near the burn, but at dusk they came to the reservoirs to feed. (R.M.) On October 15th on Catcleugh Reservoir, N., a drake. (J.H.A.)

52. PINTAIL *Anas acuta* L. (325)

From January to April single birds or pairs were reported from various inland waters and on April 18th near Teesmouth eight birds were flushed. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) From September until the end of the year usually single birds were seen, but on November 7th on Gosforth Park lake four were present, two of them drakes. (W.D.R.)

53. SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata* (L.) (326)

Most frequently noted during April; maximum nine on April 8th at Killingworth Mere. (W.D.R.) On Cowpen Marsh, Teesmouth, a pair was present from May 2nd onwards, the drake was seen as late as June 6th and on July 25th nine "flappers" were seen, so evidently breeding had taken place. (K.B.) On August 12th on Gosforth Park lake nine were present and on October 7th a flock of seventeen. (W.D.R.)

55. SCAUP *Aythya marila* (L.) (331)

More plentiful on the coast than for several years past. In autumn single birds spent some time on inland waters :—Gosforth Park lake, Holywell Ponds, Whittle Dene Reservoirs, Harbottle Lough (2), Holborn Moss, Tanfield Ponds, &c.

61. LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* (L.) (334)

More plentiful on the coast than usual, in the autumn and winter.

From mid-July until September a female was present off Ness End, Holy Island. In August it moulted and for a time was quite without flight feathers. (R.H.) In September it was shot by a shore-shooter and sent to the Hancock Museum.

62. VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* (L.) (340)

From August 1st to the end of the year a few were reported ; maximum number fifteen off Seaton Sluice, N., on November 22nd. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

64. COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.) (339)

The usual large flocks off the coast. On June 18th in the Tees estuary near Greatham Creek, six drakes ; it is unusual to find them so far up the estuary at this time of year. (D.S.) During October four birds spent some five weeks on Tunstall Reservoir, D. (R.M.), and one female was on Whittle Dene Reservoir about the same time. (P.A.L. & L.G.H.)

67. EIDER *Somateria mollissima* (L.) (337)

More abundant than ever.

On the Farnes c. 643 pairs nested (G.W.), on Coquet Island c. 100 (A.E.G.) and on another small island on the coast 13 (R.C.).

At Warkworth a "flotilla" of 45 ducklings, of differing ages, was seen in charge of two adults. (A.E.G.) On August 9th between the Stag Rocks and Seahouses 740 were counted and on September 6th 580. (E.A.R.E.) On November 8th off Holy Island c. 300 and on December 6th c. 500. (R.H.) More frequently reported off the Durham coast and in the Tees estuary than formerly. (F.G.G. & K.Y. ; P.J.S., C.J.H., K.B.)

Inland waters :—On February 23rd, after severe easterly gales, two were seen on Catcleugh Reservoir, Redesdale. (W.L.McC.) It is only very seldom indeed that Eiders have been recorded from fresh-water lakes. George Bolam, in *Birds of Northumberland*, going back as far as the time of Wallis (1769), could only record two or three such occurrences.

70. GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* L. (342)

Five nests were reported from the Upper Coquetdale area. (R.C.) On April 30th, on a tributary of the Coquet, a duck was seen sitting on eggs in a nest in a hole in an ash tree; the entrance was c. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ft. from the ground and the hollow c. $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. deep. (W.E.A.)

71. SMEW *Mergus albellus* L. (344)

On January 31st at Hallington, two females or immature. (R.I.D. & B.J.) On November 1st on Crag Lough, N., one female or imm. (R.I.D.) On November 25th at Gosforth Park lake two female or imm. appeared; on December 8th they were joined by an adult drake which remained for four or five days and departed, leaving them behind. They were still present up to the end of March, 1954. (W.D.R., K.N.G., E.K., &c.)

73. SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.) (315)

On Holy Island at least 12 pairs nested. (R.H.) On April 18th a brood of ducklings was already out on the water—an early lot. (J.M.C.) On May 28th at Teesmouth 44 were counted, all adults (E.G.Y.) and on June 7th off shore between Alnmouth and Boulmer, c. 30 in twos and threes (W.S.C.), probably all non-breeding birds.

During September and October very few present on the coast; which goes to prove that the adult birds from our coast go elsewhere to moult and do not return until late in the autumn.

On December 6th and 12th on Seal Sands, Teesmouth, 177 and 160 were counted. "These are the first I have seen at Teesmouth since September when a few juveniles were about." (P.J.S.)

On inland waters:—In September, on a dam near Little Egglesthorpe Burn on Middleton Common, D., two or three were seen. (H.W.) On October 24th on Hallington Reservoir, one (K.I.), and on December 6th, two. (R.T.G. & E.M.L.)

75/78. "GREY GEESE" *spp?*

During October and November observers from many parts of both counties reported flocks of unidentified "Grey Geese" seen in flight. Many of these flocks were large, e.g., one of c. 300 which flew over West Hartlepool heading north on November 28th. (P.L.H.)

75. GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.) (303)

In January and February at Holborn Moss, still c. 50 (F.B.); on February 4th on the pool at Monks' House, twelve. (E.A.R.E.)

For the fifth year in succession a party spent the summer on the Wamses, Farne Islands. It arrived in mid-June and remained until mid-August; maximum number, eleven on July 24th, all full-winged adults. An examination of the Island proved that at least three had moulted there. (E.A.R.E.)

On October 5th from 50 to 100 arrived at Holborn Moss and roosted there nightly thereafter; on November 7th at mid-day 210 were counted. (F.B.) On the 8th 60 were identified and flocks of c. 1,000 and c. 100 were seen in flight too far off to be identified with certainty. (R.I.D.) On October 8th at Holy Island c. 250. (R.H.)

78. PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus* Baillon (307)

Single birds and small parties were seen at various places in May, June, August, October and November. On June 5th a skein of c. 70 in flight over moors near Otterburn, N.; on the 9th c. 30 flying near Howick and a single bird on Low Newton pond. (per E.A.R.E.)

80. BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* (L.) (312/313)

Early in January Brents arrived at Holy Island in larger numbers than for several years past. The maximum number on the slakes never exceeded c. 500. In the middle of February the maximum was reached, by the second week in March only about 25 to 30 remained and by the end of that month none was left. (R.H.) This is the largest number recorded since the winter of 1946-47, when, in mid-February, 1947, they were estimated to number at least 5,000. (F.B.)

81. BARNACLE-GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (Bechstein) (311)

In February, near Monks' House, a single bird remained for about three weeks cropping grass round the pool. (E.A.R.E.)

85. WHOOPER-SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* (L.) (300)

More than usually plentiful and widespread in the early months of the year. Last seen March 21st when 20 still present on Grindon (T.F.H.) and 13 at Broomlee (J.H.), and on April 8th two on Killingworth Ponds. (E.K., L.McG.)

In autumn first reported on October 10th when four adults were seen at Holywell Ponds, N.—nearly a month later than last year. (W.D.R.) Thereafter very widely distributed and numerous.

86. BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus bewickii* Yarrell (301)

On January 16th on Kimmer Lough, Alnwick, three (J.E.R.), on the 18th on Hartburn Lake eighteen, with twelve Whoopers (H.D.B.) and on 25th on Hartburn Lake four—these were still there on March 8th.

(E.K., B.L. & R.I.D.). On the 25th January at Whittle Dene Reservoir at least three with c. 12 Whoopers. (A.MacR.) From February 15th to March 20th on Hallington Reservoir, four, joined for a short time by another party of four. (W.D.R., E.K., B.L., K.I.) On March 21st at Greenlee Lough, eight. (J.H.) It is possible that most of these records refer to the same party of eight birds.

91. COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* (L.) (269)

A single bird spent most of the winter of 1952-53 near Burradon, N.W. of Thropton, N. (B.C.E.R.) It was seen on March 17th (T.G.W.) near Alwinton and again in May. (R.C.) This may have been the same bird as was reported several times in the College Valley and was definitely identified there on May 28th. (E.A.R.E.)

During March, in Upper Teesdale, near the Moorhouse Nature Reserve, on the Durham-Westmorland border, up to three birds were frequently seen. (J.A.S. per R.M.P.)

94. GOSHAWK *Accipiter g. gentilis* (L.) (275)

On February 15th and 18th at Fellside, Whickham, D., a bird was seen, under very favourable circumstances, which was considered to be of this species. Its dark grey upper parts and white underparts closely barred with dark lines from the throat downwards, were clearly noted. The wings were broad and rounded. It was chasing small birds through a wood with a dashing and rapid flight. (L.G.H.)

[On November 2nd at Catraw, Stannington, N., a large hawk which was probably of this species was seen chasing pigeons. (N.R.)]

98. HONEY-BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus* (L.) (281)

On September 14th an immature bird was picked up in an injured state in Messrs. Parsons' Heaton Works, Newcastle. It was sent to the Hancock Museum where it was kept for several days; after which, having recovered its powers of flight, it flew strongly away. It was of an exceptionally dark colour, with very few and small buff markings on the head and none on the breast; very different in that respect from the immature bird shot in King's College Botanical Gardens nine years ago, which was a very pale specimen (see O.R., 1944). (S.E.C.)

100/102 HARRIER *sp?*

On July 25th and 26th an adult Harrier was seen in the Bowmont Valley, N., by Rev. M. D. Walker, of Castle Douglas. On or about the 29th, not far from the same spot, two juvenile Harriers were seen on

the wing by the same observer. A few days afterwards these two juveniles were seen on the wing by the late Sir Walter Aitchison ; but not under conditions favourable for identification. From the descriptions given it is not possible to decide whether these birds were a family of Montagu's or of Hen-Harriers or whether they had been bred locally. They should be looked for again in the coming year.

100. HEN-HARRIER *Circus cyaneus* (L.) (273)

On July 21st at Monks' House, a juvenile was seen over the fields near the house. (E.A.R.E.)

From November to December for about three weeks a female remained in the neighbourhood of Crookfoot Reservoir, D. It was regularly seen quartering the ground in search of prey, often passing within a few feet of the observer. (J.A.A. per P.L.H.)

In December an adult female was wintering on Ross Links. This was probably the bird also reported from Ellwick and the Holborn Moss area. (E.A.R.E.)

102. MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus* (L.) (272)

Three pairs bred successfully in Co. Durham. On one site a nest with three eggs was found on May 23rd ; on June 1st the hen was sitting on five eggs. (E.G.T. & H.A.) Of these one was lost, one was infertile, three were hatched ; but only two young were successfully reared. (A.R.H.) On another site two cocks and a hen were seen, the hen carrying nesting material on May 22nd. On July 2nd the nest was located with three young and one infertile egg. On July 19th the young were still in the nest with a hen and two cocks in attendance. The three young were last seen on August 15th. (C.G. & D.B.) On a third site a pair was seen with young already on the wing on August 1st. (C.G. & D.B.)

In August, on a moorland far distant from any of these sites, two Harriers, believed to be Montagu's, flew across the moor during a grouse-drive. (E.L. per A.P.C.) On August 29th a pair was seen upon a south-west Northumbrian moor. (G.A.C.)

103. OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus* (L.) (284)

On April 26th an Osprey was seen over Gosforth Park lake. Excellent views were obtained and it was seen to take a perch from the water. (F.G.G.) Later in the day it was seen carrying an 8-inch fish in its talons. (J.M.S. & M.E.W.) It was seen again on the 27th (R.I.D.) and on the 28th. (W.D.R.)

105. PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall (259)

On several breeding sites eggs were laid but disappeared before hatching—no doubt "collected." In other instances second clutches were laid and young reared. In March a pair was seen near a Northumbrian site which has not been used for many years and on June 21st three young were found that had just left the ledge. The adult birds were watched feeding the young on small birds, etc. (A.B. & R.L.R.) Single birds were seen on the coast in January and February and again from September to December.

110. KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L. (263)

On May 14th a brood of young was found in a nest with their feathers so well developed that it was calculated that they must have been hatched from eggs laid in March. This early breeding must have been due to the exceptionally mild weather in that month. (H.M.S.B.) Of eight nests inspected in Coquetdale two contained clutches of six eggs, an unusually large number. One nest contained young on May 17th. (R.C.)

A pair bred in the nest of a Rook situated in the jib of a tower crane in the Naval Yard at Walker. Six eggs were laid and five young successfully reared. The hen sat quite unconcerned by the turning of the jib. (A.B.)

113. BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix* (L.) (513)

More have been reported than for some recent years from both counties. Still quite numerous in the country between the Rede and Upper Coquetdale. (J.H.A.) On November 4th and 11th near Colt Crag, several, maximum eight, were flushed from hawthorn bushes. (K.I.)

117. QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix* (L.) (520)

A few birds were reported from both counties; but no definite evidence of breeding was obtained. Birds were heard and occasionally seen at the following places:—Northumberland: Ellwick, Monks' House (E.A.R.E.), Little Swinburn (J.C.R., per K.I.), Throckley (W.A.W.), near Gosforth. (B.L.); Durham: Long Newton (K.B.), Coniscliffe (W.K.R. in *The Field*, September 17th), and near Middleton-in-Teesdale. (H.W.)

121. SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana* (L.) (505)

On October 18th, on Tanfield Ponds, Stanley, D., after N.E. winds, a single bird was flushed from a muddy stream. It was clearly seen both in flight and on the ground and the distinguishing features were noted. It uttered a shrill alarm note when flushed. (R.M.P.)

124. LITTLE CRAKE *Porzana parva* (Scop.) (507)

[On April 28th at Gosforth Park, a very small Crake was flushed near the N.W. corner of the lake, where a streamlet flows through swampy ground. It showed a dark chocolate-brown back and wings and no white markings on the upper parts. (R.I.D.) In the late evenings from April 30th to May 4th, and occasionally as late as June, a Crake, whose call exactly corresponded with the *Handbook's* description of the "ordinary note" of the Little Crake, was heard calling in the reeds at the lake edge. (M.G.R., E.K., B.L., D.M.R.C.)] These reports are hardly sufficiently detailed to establish the identity of this small Crake. The Little Crake has never been recorded in Northumberland.

125. CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L.) (504)

Hardly as many reported as in the previous year, but very generally distributed over both counties. In North Northumberland a Tillmouth farmer reported having heard one for the last three years, but not previously for many years. (F.B.) Another report comes from the Ottercaps. In Coquetdale several reported from Felton (W.M.B.) to above Thropton. (E.M.) In Upper North Tynedale three pairs bred successfully within 200 yds. of Deadwater railway-station. (per A.MacR.) Others heard near Falstone (R.F.L., &c.) and at Bellingham. (K.I.) Many were reported from the South Tyne and in the Allendales. (Shaftoe Trust School Naturalists' Club, per L.C.C.) On June 8th, on the road between Catton, Allendale and Haltwhistle, a distance of eight miles, ten different birds were heard in one evening. (M.P.) In the main Tyne Valley, birds were heard at Gosforth (B.L.), Throckley (W.A.W.), Stocksfield area (G.A.C., G.W.T., &c.), and other places. Several nests, destroyed during the hay harvest, were reported.

In Co. Durham reports were received from Blaydon (L.P.H.), Hamsterley, three (C.H.L.), and in the west from Middleton-in-Teesdale, two. (H.W.)

127. COOT *Fulica atra* L. (511)

"On February 15th in Gosforth Park, a bird was seen to swim under the banks of a small stream leaving only the tip of its tail visible.

It allowed me to pick it up. Its head hung limply at first, but later it began to flap its wings, so I released it and it flew away into the reeds." (W.D.R.)

131. OYSTERCATCHER *Hematopus ostralegus* L. (452)

On February 21st at Haltwhistle, first seen on shingle, by the 24th, six. On May 16th a clutch of four eggs, an unusual number. (M.P.) On March 4th near Holystone, Upper Coquet, first seen, three. (E.M.) Near Netherton North Side, Coquetdale, a pair nested in an oat-field. (T.G.W.) Three pairs bred on Coquet Island. (A.E.G.) A pair frequented the Tees at Coniscliffe, D., throughout the breeding season; but dredging for gravel drove it away. (K.B.)

133. LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.) (449)

Undoubtedly more plentiful in the Blagdon, N., area this year than for some time past. A census of breeding birds taken there showed that over an area of c. 5,100 acres, of which 4,030 acres were of farmland as opposed to woods, 102 pairs were breeding. This gives a density of one pair per 50 acres. A sample taken of 61 attempted nests, on all classes of land, showed that out of every seven eggs laid only about three were hatched out successfully. The following figures show the average fate of the clutches laid.

Average number of eggs laid per nest 3.46; hatched per nest 1.49; taken per nest 1.19; ploughed in 0.45; deserted 0.14; addled 0.16; died at hatching 0.03 per nest. (N.R.)

134. RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* L. (435)

Returned to their Upper Coquetdale breeding site between February 15th and 22nd. On the former date there were two or three inches of snow on the ground; but by the latter date single birds were present. (E.G.T.) On April 13th and 15th at Boldon Flats, D., single birds were seen. On May 1st at Holywell Ponds, N., two; still there on 23rd. (W.D.R.) On August 17th at Hallington Reservoir, twelve. (K.I.) and on August 9th, four. (R.T.G. & E.M.L.)

On the coast near Sunderland two pairs attempted to nest; one clutch of eggs was taken in April; but on June 30th a nest with four eggs was seen, a late date. (T.S.D.)

140. SOUTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius a. apricarius* L. (440)

On May 10th near Edmondbyers, D., a four-day old chick was found; a very early date. (D.W.)

143. TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* (L.) (402)

Inland :—On August 17th at Hallington Reservoir, two. (K.I.) On August 11th at Holywell Ponds, six flew in, but did not alight ; and on the 17th at Killingworth Mere, over five miles from the sea, two flew in but did not alight, passing on inland to the west. (W.D.R.)

145. COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.) (395)

Unusually numerous—some large flocks noted. On March 28th at Swallow Ponds, Wallsend, c. 200 birds were flushed (E.K. & B.L.) and at the same place on August 17th, 48 flushed. (W.D.R.) On September 23rd on Boldon Flats, D., a big influx. (F.G.G.) On October 25th at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 285 counted. (E.K.)

150. CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.) (388)

Birds remained up to the end of the year on the river haughs in Upper Coquetdale ; on December 15th a party of c. 200 was still in the valley below Holystone (E.M.) ; on the 20th a flock of 44 birds was seen. On January 31st, 1954, with three inches of snow and two or three degrees of frost, c. 50 were still present, though more scattered. It remains to be seen whether they can successfully outstay the winter this year as they did last. (E.G.T.)

A census of breeding Curlew at Blagdon, N., showed that 22 pairs were nesting on c. 5,000 acres ; an average of one pair to 225 acres. Two nests with eggs were found within 80 yds. of one another. (N.R.)

A Curlew, ringed as young at Edmondbyers, D., on July 17th, 1950, by A. & R., was recovered at Straffen (Kildare) on January 10th, 1953. Another ringed as young at Wynyard Park, D., on May 31st, 1952, by P.A.R. was recovered at Roundstone (Galway), on February 15th, 1953. (B.B., Vol. XLVI, p. 313.)

154. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* (L.) (387)

No spring migration records. In autumn single birds, maximum three, reported from various places, on or near the coast ; one or two probably wintering. On June 24th at Monks' House, one, and from August 24th to 28th, one. On September 15th at Budle Bay, three ; seen there on numerous occasions since—probably wintering. (E.A.R.E.) On August 12th at Holywell Ponds, three in summer plumage ; on September 1st, one. (B.L.) From August 18th to 26th on Jarrow Slake or at Primrose Pond, one or two. (W.D.R. & B.L.) From August 23rd to 31st at or near Fenham Flats, one or two ; on seven occasions from September 26th to December 26th at Holy Island Lough, one. (W.D.R., E.K., B.L.)

156. GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L. (424)

Spring passage :—On March 7th at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, one. (W.D.R.) On April 1st to 9th at Ingram, N., one. (E.A.R.E.) On May 18th at Wallsend Swallow Pond, one. (B.L.)

Autumn passage :—From July 11th to September 20th single birds were reported from several places and on August 25th on Tanfield Ponds as many as twelve were seen (R.M.P.) ; while on the same day five were counted on Darlington Sewage Farm. (K.B.)

157. WOOD-SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* L. (423)

Spring passage :—On May 15th and 19th on Boldon Flats, D., one. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

Autumn passage :—Between August 16th and September 20th a total of eight birds was reported, usually singly, from various places.

159. COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L. (421)

First seen on April 7th on the Tees (D.R.S.) ; on the 9th on the Wear (C.G.) ; and on the 13th on the North Tyne near Tarsset, six. (J.H.A.)

On migration :—On July 28th on Tanfield Ponds, D., c. 20. (R.M.P.)

Last seen on October 4th near Holystone, one. (E.G.T.)

161. CONTINENTAL REDSHANK *Tringa t. totanus* L. (429)

On April 15th at Monks' House, three, out of six Redshanks trapped, were of this form. (E.A.R.E.)

162. SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas) (431)

Normally this is an autumn passage migrant in very small numbers ; usually only a few single birds being reported each season. 1953 showed no increase in numbers as compared with previous years.

Northumberland :—First reported on June 23rd at Monks' House, one. (E.A.R.E.) On September 6th and 12th on the shore near Beal, one, and on the 26th, three. (F.G.G., W.D.R., &c.) From September 6th for two or three days on Holywell Ponds, one. (A.B.)

Durham :—From September 1st to 17th on Jarrow Slake, one. (W.D.R., B.L.) On October 4th on the Tees marshes, one. (D.S.)

165. GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.) (432)

Reported during every month from March to December, usually single birds, occasionally two or three. First recorded on March 31st on Boldon Flats, D., one (F.G.G. & K.Y., A.H.B.) ; last record

December 17th on Budle Bay, N., one. (W.S.C.) On August 25th on the banks of the Tyne near Haltwhistle, two—"The first that I have seen in the area for 20 years." (M.P.)

169. KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.) (403)

Unusually plentiful in January at Teesmouth:—On the 2nd c. 4,000 to 6,000 flying into the estuary from the north; on the 14th at least 500 in the estuary. (D.S., P.E.) On the 17th at St. Mary's Island, N., c. 300. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

Inland:—On April 8th at Killingworth Ponds, N., one, with Redshanks. (E.K., W.D.R.)

A flock of c. 70 spent the summer on the Islestone, Bamburgh. (E.A.R.E.)

171. LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisler) (407)

As usual, very few reported; no marked increase on previous years.

Northumberland:—First recorded August 22nd near Beal. This or another was seen at or near the same place on the 31st and on September 4th; on the 6th, five were seen here and on the 12th and 13th, three. (F.G.G., W.D.R., &c.) On August 31st near Seahouses a party of four was seen, of which three were trapped and ringed. (E.A.R.E.) On August 31st at Boulmer three were seen and on September 24th, one (J.E.R.), and on October 3rd, eight were counted. (W.S.C.) On September 21st at Seaton Sluice, one. (B.L.)

Durham:—On August 23rd at Teesmouth, one, and on September 13th, two. (A.B. & K.B.) From September 1st to 7th and again on the 16th, from one to two at Primrose Pond, Jarrow. (F.G.G. & K.Y., W.D.R., B.L.)

178. DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.) (404)

A pair bred on Holy Island; a nest with four eggs being seen. (R.H.) This is the first authenticated record for Holy Island. George Bolam suspected that breeding took place some years ago, but he was never able to prove it. On May 14th several pairs were seen in their usual breeding haunt in S.W. Durham and three Crows were flushed from a Dunlin's nest where they had been sucking the eggs. (H.W.)

179. CURLEW-SANDPIPER *Calidris testacea* (Pallas) (406)

As usual, very few reported.

Northumberland:—One spring record; a single bird in Holy Island harbour on April 5th and 6th. (E.K. & B.L.) On August 30th a flock of ten, with Dunlin and four Little Stints, arrived at Annstead

Burn mouth, near Seahouses, where they remained for about three weeks; then dispersing along the shore to Beadnell, where two remained up to September 28th. Three were caught and ringed. (E.A.R.E.) On September 4th near Boulmer, four, on the 12th, five, on the 24th, seven, and on October 3rd, two. (J.E.R.) On September 5th and 12th near Beal, one. (F.G.G. & K.Y., B.L.) On October 3rd at Seaton Sluice, one. (W.D.R.)

One inland record only:—On September 31st a single bird, with three Dunlin, on Whittle Dene Reservoirs, c. 20 miles from the sea. (P.A.L.)

Durham:—From August 31st to September 27th on Jarrow Slake, one to three. (F.G.G. & K.Y., W.D.R., E.K., &c.) On August 23rd at Teesmouth, two (A.B.); September 13th, one (K.B.); September 19th, one (P.J.S.); and October 4th, one. (D.S.)

181. SANDERLING *Crocethia alba* (Pallas) (416)

Unusually large flocks reported, both in spring and autumn. On May 16th on Holy Island c. 300. (B.L.) On October 5th at Seaton Carew, Teesmouth, at least 300 (C.G. & D.B.) and on December 8th c. 200. (C.J.H.)

Not often recorded away from the shore, but on April 16th at Boldon Flats, D., three with Ringed Plover (A.H.B.), and on August 28th at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, N., two. (R.T.G. & E.M.L.)

184. RUFF *Philomachus pugnax* (L.) (417)

Only a few single birds reported on spring passage. First seen March 8th at Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.)

Numerous and well distributed in autumn, chiefly in August. Last seen October 24th.

193. ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.) (493)

First reported June 28th, an early date (W.S.C.); last seen on October 14th. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) A few of the light phase reported, but the majority dark. On September 4th off Souter Point, D., thirteen passed in two hours, all of the dark phase and on September 4th at Holy Island of fourteen seen only one was light. (F.G.G.)

194. GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* (Brünn) (491)

Only four reported. On August 22nd off Holy Island, one. (E.K. & B.L.) On August 29th at Teesmouth, one (F.G.G.) and on September 27th, one at Teesmouth (C.G. & D.B.) and one off the Inner Farne. (N.R. & F.J.N.)

195. POMATORHINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temm.) (492)

On September 12th off the North Gare Breakwater, Teesmouth, an immature bird. (P.J.S.)

199. BRITISH LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Larus fuscus gracillii Brehm. (485)

Two pairs bred successfully on Marsden Rock, D., and one on a neighbouring stack. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

200. HERRING-GULL *Larus a. argentatus* Pontopp. (482)

At Marsden, in addition to the large colony on the top of the Rock, another has been founded on a neighbouring stack, while one pair bred successfully on the mainland cliffs. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

Inland :—On Holborn Moss, N., three nests were seen. (W.D.R., B.L. & E.K.)

201. COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L. (481)

A bird recovered at Consett, D., in mid-September had been ringed as young on an island off Faka, ten miles south of Bergen, Norway, on July 8th, 1953. (per G.W.)

202. GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Gunnerus (487)

On January 2nd and 3rd off St. Mary's Island, one. (W.D.R., L.G.H., B.L.) On February 1st off Cullernose Point, N., three immature. (W.S.C.) On February 15th on Beal shore, N., one adult. (F.B.) On November 29th at Seaton Carew, D., an immature bird was haunting a rubbish tip with other gulls; it remained until well into 1954. (P.J.S., D.R.S. & P.E.) On December 6th off Cullernose Point, N., one, immature. (W.S.C.)

203. ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides* Mayer (488)

On November 22nd on the beach near North Shields Fish Quay, an adult. Very pale grey in colour, almost white. Seen under very favourable conditions with Herring-Gulls alongside for comparison. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

207. LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Pallas (477)

On August 24th at South Shields Pier, a juvenile. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) On September 20th at Whitburn a juvenile. (C.G. & D.B.)

208. BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L. (478)

On May 15th near Stanley, D., a bird was found dead that had been ringed as young at Bowes, near Barnard Castle, D., on June 14th,

1951. On September 2nd near the Teesmouth a bird was shot that had been ringed in Russia, date and place not yet known. (P.L.H.) On October 17th at Teesmouth a bird was shot that had been ringed as a juvenile at Ravenglass, Cumberland, on July 5th, 1952. (E.Y.)

211. KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.) (489)

The colony at Marsden, D., continues to spread along the mainland cliff. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) At the North Shields colony, on warehouse window-ledges nearly two miles up river from the Tyne Piers, 38 nests were counted, a small increase on previous years. (R.H.S.)

212. BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* (L.) (462)

Only two recorded. On September 20th at Teesmouth, one (D.S.) and on the 30th off Bamburgh, one. (E.A.R.E.)

217. COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L. (469)

A few pairs attempted to breed on the Northumbrian mainland; on May 30th several pairs were present, but only one nest was located. (R.F.L.)

218. ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naumann (470)

At a little known breeding colony on the Northumbrian coast 30 to 40 birds were present on May 30th and on June 21st there were sixteen nests with eggs. (W.S.C. & R.C.) About nine pairs bred at another mainland colony where young were reared. (E.A.R.E.)

219. ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii* Montagu (468)

On the Longstone, Farnes, 93 nests were counted and as many as 140 young were ringed. (F.I.O.R.) It is very interesting to compare this with previous records. In 1932 George Bolam wrote of this species:—"A summer visitant which has nested in small numbers on the Farne Islands from time out of mind, without either appreciably increasing or the reverse. In 1914 there were at least seven pairs a high-water mark, within my experience, during the last half century." (Trans. N.H.S., Vol. VIII.)

222. LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Pallas (471)

Four breeding colonies were reported in Northumberland and one in Durham. Many nests were destroyed by high tides, but in some cases young were reared and ringed. On quite a new site, two nests with eggs, c. 30 ft. apart, were under observation. While the females were incubating only one male was present which paid constant and equal attention to each of them. A high tide destroyed both nests. (S.A.)

235. TURTLE-DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* (L.) (383)

In June at Piercebridge, D., two nests were found ; one was in an elder bush only three ft. above the ground. (K.B.)

237. CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* L. (240)

First heard April 21st at Middlestone Moor, D. (C.G.), a week later than in 1952. On the 22nd and 23rd heard in many places. On the 24th and 25th many were seen flying N.W. in full migration at Haltwhistle, N. (M.P.)

242. SCOPS OWL *Otus scops* (L.) (252)

[On October 4th on Holy Island a very small owl, which was probably of this species, was seen by Mrs. Ennion and other observers ; but this record has not been officially accepted. (E.A.R.E.)] There is no record of this rare little Owl in Northumberland.

249. SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* (Pontopp.) (251)

Still extending its range in both counties. Frequently reported from the moors in summer and from the coast links in autumn and winter.

The increase in the number of Short-eared Owls in N.E. England dates from the time when the Forestry Commission began the planting of the moorlands with coniferous trees and still continues ; the birds "spilling over" into other moorland areas. Mr. W. C. McCavish, Forester in Redesdale, writes :—"These owls definitely prefer the areas planted from the time of planting until approximately the thicket stage of the crop. This is usually a span of ten years and the owls seem to prefer the areas where the trees are 3 to 4 ft. in height and, therefore, as these areas increase in height growth, the owls drift from such areas to the younger crops. In my opinion the increase of this species in Durham and Yorkshire is the first sign of this drift taking place. Favourable conditions of heavy vegetation increase the number of voles and, as the size of the brood of owlets reared depends upon the amount of food available, an increase of voles is accompanied by an increase of owls. In this neighbourhood I have observed as many as 20 owls in one day."

255. SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.) (225)

First seen April 28th, but not generally noted until May 8th and 9th, when they returned to their local breeding haunts ; a week later than last year. On May 17th a very considerable northward movement of Swifts, with a few Swallows and House-Martins, was noted from the

lighthouse on the South Gare, Teesmouth (Yorkshire side). The birds crossed the river mouth flying N.W. towards Hartlepool against a strong S.W. wind. In $\frac{3}{4}$ hour's watching at least 1,000 birds passed, of which c. 80% were Swifts, c. 15% Swallows and c. 5% House-Martins. This takes no account of birds crossing the estuary at other points. (P.J.S.) The return passage was first noted at Teesmouth on July 4th. (D.S.)

258. KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis* (L.) (234)

Still increasing in numbers. Seen several times in Jesmond Dene and on the Ouse Burn both above and below the Dene ; also in Gosforth Park Sanctuary. During September and October one was seen on the Wear within Durham City. On August 16th one was picked up alive in Stockton-on-Tees High Street by a policeman. It was " discharged " later, quite unhurt, by the River Tame. (O.C.H.)

262. GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis* L. (235)

" In the Forestry plantations in Redesdale three or four have recently appeared, where formerly only the Greater Spotted was known. With the changing state of the forest it looks as if the Green was now moving in. It was thought that these birds do not inhabit areas of woodland until the wood-ants appear, as these are its favourite food, but so far there are no wood-ants in Redesdale Forest. (W.L.McC.)

264. LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor* (L.) (238)

On April 4th in Cleaside Avenue, Cleadon, South Shields, a single bird was watched at c. 10 yds. distance for c. 5 mins. on the trunk of a small poplar tree, by a competent observer. (per F.G.G.)

271. WOOD-LARK *Lullula arborea* (L.) (69)

On April 26th near Monks' House one was seen in a field. (E.A.R.E.) This is a very rare visitor to the two northern counties and it is many years since one was reported. Since 1827 there have only been four recorded for Northumberland and three for Co. Durham. Previous records have been in the months of March, May, August and November. It is probable that the species has hitherto been overlooked, as few observers would be able to identify it.

273. SHORE-LARK *Eremophila alpestris* (L.) (72)

On January 4th at Greatham Creek, Teesmouth, parties of c. 20 and of five were seen (P.E.) ; on the 11th, five were still there. (D.S.)

On February 14th on sandhills in Embleton Bay, N., seven. (W.S.C.) No other records reported and none seen in the autumn.

274. SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L. (220)

First seen on April 7th at Bamburgh, N., two (K.I.) ; on the 9th at Gosforth Park, six or eight single birds (W.D.R.) ; on the 12th reported from many places, two days later than in the previous year.

Several reports of birds being picked up dead or found dead on nests after the cold spell of weather and many very late broods reported. Late stragglers were seen during the first fortnight of November.

276. HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.) (222)

Very late in arriving. Except for one bird on April 11th at South Shields (F.G.G. & K.Y.), none was reported until the end of the month. On May 17th at Bamburgh numbers were seen on northerly migration. (E.K. & B.L.)

The cliff-nesting colony south of Cullernose Point now extends irregularly on suitable rock for nearly a quarter of a mile. On July 26th c. 40 nests were counted, all apparently occupied. (W.S.C.)

Many late broods reported, young being still in the nest as late as October 23rd. (B.G. per F.G.G.)

277. SAND-MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.) (223)

First seen April 8th and 9th, more general 12th and 13th. Last seen October 19th, over Durham, two, with Swallows. (R.M.P.)

279. RAVEN *Corvus corax* L. (1)

Two pairs bred successfully in Upper Coquetdale (E.G.T.) and others in North Northumberland. For the first time for several years a pair bred successfully on the Durham side of the Tees, thanks to special protection afforded. (Chief Constable, Durham County)

280. CARRION-CROW *Corvus corone* L. (3)

On March 9th at Lilburn, near Wooler, N., an adult female was shot, the plumage of which was of a uniform hoary grey colour. The specimen is now in the Hancock Museum. (N. Rollin)

On September 27th on the Inner Farne, a Carrion x Hooded hybrid was seen. "A very dark example ; the position of the black on the head, wings and tail was as in the normal Hooded, but the body plumage was dark grey-black." (N. Rollin)

282. ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* L. (4)

In April a census of rookeries was taken over an area covering c. 12 sq. miles within a radius of two miles of Durham City. Fourteen

rookeries were found containing 1,022 occupied nests, representing c. 85 breeding pairs per sq. mile. Over 200 rooks were shot in this area during April. (R.M.P.) This is the greatest density of population yet reported in either county. See previous "Reports" for census figures elsewhere.

On October 14th near Langley Park, D., a buff-coloured bird was seen in a large flock. (G.A.C.)

283. JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* L. (5)

About 200 pairs nested this year on Durham Cathedral, most of them on the west tower. (R.M.P.)

On December 28th a curiously pied female was shot on the Matten estate and sent to the Hancock Museum by Major C. D. Blackett, Halton Castle, Corbridge.

293. WILLOW-TIT *Parus atricapillus* L. (108)

Identified at Whitworth Park and at the Grove, Hamsterley, D. (C.G. & D.B.) In February one came regularly to a bird-table in a Stocksfield garden. (T.F.H.)

296. NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea* L. (96)

Seen on the Banks, Durham City, but no breeding proved. (R.M.P.) On April 20th at Eggleston, D., a pair was under observation. The hen was seen blocking up a hole in a tree; but the cock gave no help and went on feeding and singing in the same tree. (K.B.) A pair was watched building in Whitworth Park, D., but they were later driven from the hole by Starlings. (C.G. & D.B.) More numerous near Middleton-in-Teesdale than previously. (H.W.)

300. DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus* (L.) (218)

During the autumn, single birds were noted several times on the Ouse Burn, south of Armstrong Bridge, Newcastle. (W.A.W.)

302. FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L. (173)

Many remained late. On April 23rd in the Derwent Valley a flock of c. 600. (G.A.C.) On the 24th there were still large flocks on fields about Haltwhistle, N.; on the 25th, in the evening, they gathered on the tree-tops and after much chattering, flew off to the N.E. and were not seen again. (M.P.) Last seen May 15th in Coquetdale. (E.M.)

In autumn very numerous indeed. During October and November very large numbers were seen to fly in from the sea on the Northum-

berland and Durham coasts. Inland, in Upper Coquetdale, never known to be so numerous; peak numbers reached on November 8th. (E.G.T.)

Partial albino :—On November 1st near Grindon, N., a bird was seen with a pure white head, white back and grey markings on wings and tail. (R.T.G. & W.M.B.)

303. SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton (175)

An adult, ringed at Monks' House, N., on October 17th, 1951, was recovered at Lege (Gironde), France, on December 15th, 1951.

An adult, ringed at Isle of May Bird Obs. on March 19th, 1952, was recovered at Penshaw, Durham, on December 4th, 1952 (100 miles S.S.E.). See *O.R.*, 1952, for a similar case. (*B.B.*, Vol. XLVI, p. 321)

303. CONTINENTAL SONG-THRUSH

Turdus ericetorum philomelos Brehm. (177)

On April 3rd one on the Inner Farne and on the 7th five on Ross Links, N., were of this form. (E.A.R.E.)

304. REDWING *Turdus musicus* L. (178)

In October and November large flocks seen and heard flying in from the sea; particularly numerous on November 14th.

307. RING-OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* L. (182)

First seen :—March 22nd at Wolsingham. (R.M.) On April 19th on the Inner Farne, one. (E.A.R.E.) By April 22nd in the College Valley, N., at least six cocks were singing. (E.A.R.E.) In Coquetdale a nest was found with six eggs; unusual for this species. (R.C.)

308. BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L. (184)

Very large arrivals on the coast during October and November. The chief passage waves were on October 18th and 31st, November 2nd and 6th, hundreds teeming in from the sea on each occasion, often with Redwings. A number fell into the sea just short of land and many were taken by gulls. (E.A.R.E.) On November 16th at Craster c. 200 arrived in the space of four to five minutes; all those near enough for identification were cocks. (W.S.C.) It is notable that the winter population of Blackbirds is predominantly male.

311. GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Enanthe æ. leucorhoa* (Gmelin) (187)

On April 22nd and 23rd and May 1st and again on September 3rd, 4th and 8th at Monks' House, birds trapped were found by wing measurement to be of this form. (E.A.R.E.)

317. STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* (L.) (198)

Numbers show a small but decided increase.

In last week in March near Otterburn, N., a cock, "The first that I have seen in this part of Northumberland." (B.C.E.R.) On May 12th near Edmondbyers, D., two pairs. (C.H.) Successful breeding reported from several points on the coast and single birds throughout the winter.

318. WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L.) (197)

First seen :—On April 10th on the moors above Haltwhistle at c. 1,000 ft. Later more plentiful than usual. (M.P.) On June 17th a nest with young was found near Gosforth Park. (B.L. & E.K.)

320. REDSTART *Phœnicurus phœnicurus* (L.) (201)

First seen :—On April 13th at Bishop Auckland (M.G.R.) but not generally distributed until the 20th and 25th. Many seen on the coast on migration during September ; latest date October 4th.

A bird ringed as a nestling at Kielder, N., on June 8th, 1952, was recovered near Viseu, Portugal, on September 16th, 1952. (B.B., Vol. XLVI, p. 323.)

321. BLACK REDSTART

Phœnicurus ochruros gibraltariensis (Gmel.) (202)

On March 22nd and 24th at Monks' House, a hen ; on April 8th on Ross Links, a hen ; on April 2nd and 19th on the Brownsman, two cocks and on April 24th on the Inner Farne, one. (E.A.R.E.)

324. WHITE-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT

Cyanosylvia svecica cyanecula (Meisner) (206)

On April 18th between Seahouses and Beadnell, N., an adult male ; "Seen in a cottage garden, a beautiful bird in perfect condition and so tame that it came within a few yards of us." (E.A.R.E.)

This is the first bird of this species that has been definitely identified in the county. In some of the few previous records of Bluethroats the sub-species was not determined. It is only in the case of the adult cocks that the sub-species can be identified in the field.

It is of interest to record that the first Bluethroat obtained in the British Isles was shot on Newcastle Town Moor on May 28th, 1826, as reported by P. J. Selby. (*Trans. N.H.S.*, Vol. 1, 1831.) It is still in the Hancock Museum.

327. GRASSHOPPER WARBLER *Locustella naevia* (Bodd.) (145)

During May in marshy woodland around Greencroft Ponds, Stanley, D., six different birds were heard, sometimes all "reeling" together. In the same woodland area Willow-Warblers, Garden-Warblers, Blackcaps, Sedge-Warblers and Common Whitethroats were present and on a neighbouring pond on May 18th no less than 21 Sedge-Warblers were heard singing. (R.M.P.)

347. WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Latham (163)

A bird ringed at Monks' House on August 15th, 1952, was recovered at Marhina Grande, Portugal, on October 11th, 1953. (E.A.R.E.)

348. LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* (L.) (164)

On May 17th a nest with five eggs was found at Winston-on-Tees, D., (E.G.Y.) On June 14th a cock heard singing at Howick, N.—"the first for several years." (W.S.C.) On September 17th at Monks' House, one trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

354. WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.) (132)

First seen on April 9th at Whitworth-on-the-Wear (C.G.) but not general until the 18th.

354. NORTHERN WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus t. acredula* (L.) (133)

On May 15th at Monks' House, one trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

356. CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus c. collybita* (Vieillot) (129)

First seen April 3rd at Rothbury (R.J.D.), then April 8th at Stocksfield. (W.E.O.) On April 10th at Monks' House, one trapped and another seen, and on October 29th, one trapped—the only occurrences here. (E.A.R.E.)

356. SCANDINAVIAN CHIFFCHAFF

Phylloscopus c. abietinus (Vieillot) (130)

On September 26th at Budle Bay, Bamburgh, N., a bird of this sub-species was both seen and heard. (J.S.T. & M.B.)

359. ARCTIC WARBLER (Eversmann's)

Phylloscopus borealis (Blasius) (136)

[On May 16th on Holy Island, in the trees near the lough, a small Warbler was watched for a considerable time. Its olive-brown back, olive-buff throat, yellow eye-stripe, single yellow wing-bar and yellowish

brown legs were noted. It was about the size of a Willow-Warbler, which it resembled in its feeding habits. It was thought to be of this species, but no confirmation was obtainable. (E.K. & B.L.)]

366. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* (Pallas) (121)

At Whitworth Park, D., a pair reared three young in an old nest of a Swallow. (C.G. & D.B.)

A bird ringed as a nestling at South Shields on June 28th, 1952, was recovered at Coimbra, Arganil, Portugal, on September 13th, 1953. (F.G.G.)

368. PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pallas) (123)

First seen April 22nd. (K.I.) In the Forestry Commission's Redesdale plantations a pair bred in a nesting box: this is the first record for that area. (W.L.McC.) The late Robert Craigs, of Catcleugh, writing in 1939, stated that from 1910 to 1939 he had only once seen a bird of this species, a single cock in July, 1936.

On September 7th a considerable passage recorded on the coast near Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.) From September 7th to 18th single birds were seen on and near the Pier at South Shields. (F.G.G. & J.S.)

A bird ringed as a nestling near the Rowley Burn, Hexhamshire, on July 1st, 1951, was recovered near Lincoln c. April 29th, 1953.

379. ROCK-PIBIT *Anthus spinoletta petrosus* (Mont.) (81)

Spring passage:—A considerable passage along the coast in mid-March, when c. 60 were trapped at Monks' House. Amongst them were three very grey birds, March 10th two, 22nd one, referable to the Scandinavian race, *Anthus s. littoralis* (Brehm). (E.A.R.E.)

380. PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrelli* Gould (90)

In Upper Coquetdale a nest was found built on the top of the old nest of a Dipper. (R.C.)

A strong steady passage of juveniles throughout early autumn: 55 trapped at Monks' House between July 1st and early September. (E.A.R.E.)

382. BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flava* L. (84)

On May 9th on Holy Island, a cock; seen at close range under very favourable conditions. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) On August 25th at Monks' House, one trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

382. YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima* (Blyth) (88)

More plentiful and more widely distributed than usual. On April 30th at Holywell Ponds, N., a roost of c. 30, all coming in from the coast. (B.L.)

From May 9th to 18th at Tanfield Ponds, Stanley, D., an unmated cock was present which resembled the *beema* type, described and illustrated (plate 6) by Dr. Stuart Smith in his monograph on *The Yellow Wagtail*. (R.M.P.) Note :—Birds in this plumage seen in the British Isles are considered to be aberrant individuals of *M. flava flavissima* and not migrants of the *M. flava beema* sub-species which breeds in S.E. Russia and W. Siberia.

383. WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* (L.) (120)

Very few reported in the winter of 1952-53. In late January near Sunderland a flock of c. 10 was seen on several occasions. (Local Press per T.S.D.) On the 30th and 31st in a garden near Stocksfield, one. (G.A.C.)

In winter of 1953-54, first recorded on October 27th, three in Mowbray Park, Sunderland. (R.H.L.) On November 22nd near Whalton, N., one. (H.T.) From December 12th to end of January at Stocksfield, a few single birds (P.A.L.) On December 13th at High Horse Close, Rowlands Gill, two only. (C.H.)

384. GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor* L. (114)

On January 8th at Rookin, Upper Redesdale, one. (W.L.McC.) On February 23rd near Longhorsley, N., one. (per H.T.) On March 15th near Bamburgh, one. (A.B. & R.R.) On June 4th near Monks' House an adult female was found dying on the shore. (E.A.R.E.) On December 31st near Warden Law, D., one seen. (per *Sunderland Echo*).

385. LESSER GREY SHRIKE *Lanius minor* Gmelin (113)

On September 8th at Monks' House, N., one, a first winter male, remained for 24 hrs. This is only the second record for the county; the first being the bird trapped and ringed at Monks' House on September 13th, 1952 (see *O.R.*, 1952.) (E.A.R.E.)

389. STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L. (14)

Many very large winter roosts reported: one near Sherburn Village, D., was estimated on January 18th to consist of considerably over 100,000 birds. (R.M.P.) On July 17th in Durham City three partial albino juveniles were seen together. (R.M.P.)

A bird ringed in a garden at Stockton-on-Tees on December 7th, 1952, was recovered at Altenbruch, Nieder Elbe, Germany, on June 21st, 1953. (D.S.)

394. SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* (L.) (21)

Very few indeed recorded in either winter. One was seen in June at Langleeford, Cheviot, a most unusual date and place. (E.A.R.E.)

396. TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* (L.) (29)

On the slopes of the Simonside Hills one pair was found. It successfully reared a brood of five, which were fledged on June 21st, and probably bred a second time. (E.G.T.) This is the only record for the year.

404. CROSSBILL *Loxia c. curvirostra* L. (36)

The June "invasion" which was very considerable in other parts of the country was hardly noted here. The only birds reported were:—

Northumberland:—On April 10th in woods at Catcleugh, Redesdale, one only, which may well have been a resident. (W.L.McC.) On Holy Island on June 16th, six; on August 12th and September 11th, three; and on August 15th, one was found dead, killed by a hawk. (R.H.) On the Farnes in June/July, eight were recorded and in September, one. (E.A.R.E.) On July 13th at Haltwhistle, a flock of twelve flying due east. "They may have been bred in North Cumberland pine-woods; it is several years since I have seen Crossbills here." (M.P.) On July 30th near Brinkburn in the Coquet Valley, a flock of thirty. (R.L.E.M.) On August 22nd at Monks' House, two. (E.A.R.E.) On September 20th, close to the shore near Alnmouth, four on some bramble sprays; "as there were no conifers nearby to attract them, these may have just arrived." (M.G.R.) At the end of October in Kyloe coniferous woods, North N., small numbers were seen and heard several times, maximum six (F.B.) and on November 14th, flocks of six, twelve and twenty-five were seen there. The local keeper said that they had been there since June. (L.G.H.)

For the first time for some years no birds were seen in Dipton wood in the breeding season.

Durham:—From mid-October to mid-December near Middleton-in-Teesdale small parties, up to half-a-dozen or so, were seen on several occasions.

420. LITTLE BUNTING. *Emberiza pusilla* Pallas (54)

On October 27th near Beal, N., in a mixed flock of Finches and Buntings, an adult cock was seen as it sat on a wire accompanied by a hen Yellow-Hammer and a hen Reed-Bunting, with which it could be compared for size and plumage. All the distinctive features were clearly noted. (F.B.)

422. LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus* (L.) (58)

From September 13th, 1953, until March, 1954, a varying number was seen at Teesmouth. Maximum number c. 20 seen on November 14th. (P.E., D.S., C.J.H., P.L., K.B.)

On November 8th at Monks' House, N., a cock was trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

423. SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.) (59)

Very large numbers reported from the coast during both winters. Maximum flock c. 200 at Teesmouth in January. (D.S.) A few single birds reported from inland moors.

Key to the initials of those contributing to the Report :

A. Adams, J. A. Ainsley, J. Alder, H. Alder, W. E. Amies, J. H. Arthur, S. Ash, J. S. Ash, A & R.=J. S. Ash & M. W. Ridley, M. Baker, A. Baldridge, K. Baldridge, A. H. Banks, Miss D. Bell, Lady C. Bennet, R. V. H. Benson, A. Blackett, C. D. Blackett, Dr. H. M. S. Blair, T. L. Bookless, F. Brady, Miss W. M. Brady, H. D. Briggs, P. Brodrick, Dr. H. O. Bull, J. E. Caffyn, Miss D. Carr, G. Carr, R. Chislett, H. F. Church, A. J. Clissold, R. Cook, S. E. Cook, A. P. Coote, L. C. Coombes, G. A. Cowen, M. Cowley, J. M. Craster, W. S. Craster, D. M. R. Crombie, T. S. Dillon, R. I. Duncan, Durham County Chief Constable, Dr. E. A. R. Ennion, P. Evans, C. R. Fail, N. Fletcher, C. J. Gent, B. Goodwin, K. N. Green, Miss C. Greenwell, A. E. Gregory, F. Gregory, F. G. Grey, R. G. Grey, Miss R. T. Grey, Miss U. M. Grigg, C. T. L. Harrison, C. G. Headlam, H. Hedley, R. Henderson, C. J. Henty, S. B. Hewitt, B. P. Hill, M. J. Hill, O. C. Hill, L. P. Hird, Dr. T. F. Hird, P. L. Hogg, L. G. Holloway, J. Hudspeth, A. R. Huntley, C. Hutchinson, Rev. K. Ilderton, W. Johnson, E. Keys, E. Laidler, Miss P. Lapper, Miss H. Lewis, W. J. Lewis, B. Little, L. Livingstone, Miss E. M. Lobley, W. R. Lofthouse, F. Long, C. H. Longstaff, R. H. Lowe, P. A. Lucking, E. Luxmoore, R. F. Lyndon, A. Macdonald, W. L. McCavish, L. McGowan, A. MacRae, W. Matheson, R. Martinson, Rev. A. M. Medforth, R. L. E. Milburn, E. Miller, H. R. Oliver, Mrs. W. E. Oliver, R. M. Palmer, J. D. Parrack, M. Philipson, Dr. T. G. Quinn, D. A. Ratcliffe, P. A. Rayfield, P. S. Redman, Dr. B. C. E. Richardson, Mrs. C. Richardson, J. C. Riddell, M. W. Ridley, N. Ridley, M. G. Robinson, N. Rollin, R. L. Rowley, J. E. Ruxton, W. D. Ryder, B. Sadler, H. Sanderson, J. Saxton, D. Seaward, J. Sexton, Shaftoe Trust School Natural History Club, D. R. Shannon, S. Shiel, P. J. Stead, R. H. Stephenson, J. M. Stuart, D. Souter, D. Summers-Smith, J. A. Svendsen, E. H. Taylor, H. Tegner, G. W. Temperley, J. S. Trimmingham, T. F. Turnbull, E. G. Tyer, T. G. Wallace, J. J. Walsh, H. Watson, Miss G. Watt, Miss J. Whillis, C. White, E. D. Wilthew, D. Wright, Miss M. E. Wright, W. A. Wright, F. Wrigglesworth, E. G. York, K. Young.

ERRATUM

In *O.R.*, 1952 (p. 115) it was stated that on February 24th, 1952, 68 Grey Lag-Geese were shot on Fenham Flats out of a flock of about 125 by two shots from a punt-gun. This statement was made to our correspondent, F.B., when making his monthly count of wildfowl for the Wildfowl Census, by a wildfowler whom he met. It was understood that the occurrence had only just taken place and so accounted for the small number of birds left. The figure was noted down on the spot and accepted in good faith. F.B. has since learned that the figure was "grossly exaggerated."

Copies of this Report (price 2/6) and of the Farne Islands Report for 1953 may be obtained on application. A few copies of Reports of previous years and also of Volume IX of the *Transactions*, "A History of the Birds of Durham," 1951, price 15/- (unbound) are still available.

Application should be made to the Natural History Society, Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne 2.

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT ON THE FARNE ISLANDS FOR 1953

Compiled by

GRACE WATT, M.A., M.B.O.U.

The opening of the Farne Island Study Centre has proved of great value and it is now possible to obtain a picture of the day to day bird life of the Inner Group comparable with that furnished by W. J. Lewis for the Longstone. A group of students from Oxford University were in residence on the Inner Farne from the end of February until mid-August, and other students stayed on the island during September and early October. Unfortunately, no one was there in late October and November, when the main autumn passage took place, but it is hoped to cover these months in 1954.

The bird diary maintained by the Study Centre students has proved most useful, while E. A. R. Ennion and W. J. Lewis have once again provided valuable records.

Eight new species have been added to the systematic list of birds recorded for the islands. These are the Slavonian grebe *Podiceps auritus* (L.), the pochard *Aythya ferina* (L.), smew *Mergus albellus* L., black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* (L.), spotted redshank *Tringa erythropus* (Pall.), tree-pipit *Anthus trivialis* (L.), hawfinch *C. coccythraustes* (L.) and reed-bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* (L.).

During the early part of the year mallard, teal, wigeon and eiders were seen almost daily and there were usually one or two long-tailed duck and golden-eye off Inner Farne. Waders such as redshanks, turnstones and purple sandpipers wintered on the islands and gulls were frequent visitors. On January 31st there was a violent gale, with seas forty to fifty feet high, and this caused considerable mortality, especially among rock-pipits and eiders.

Although a few starlings were seen round the Longstone light on February 10th/11th, it was not until April 18th/19th that the first spring rush occurred. Birds identified included starlings, willow-warblers, skylarks, redpolls, wrens, wheatears, flycatchers, chaffinches, thrushes, blackbirds, robins, goldcrests, whinchats and stonechats. Further rushes took place on April 22nd/23rd, 24th/25th and 29th

and May 1st, 4th/5th, 5th/6th, 10th/11th, 14th/15th and 19th, while small numbers of migrants continued to arrive until early June. It is probable that the first migrant of the summer was recorded on Inner Farne, but at no time was there any large influx of passage birds on this island comparable with the Longstone rushes. At the moment it is difficult to find any close correlation between migrants on the Inner and Outer Groups, but it seems evident that the Longstone rushes do not affect the Inner Farne to any great extent.

The breeding season was, on the whole, a late one and further delay was caused by the gales of early June which destroyed both terns' and kittiwakes' eggs. It was disappointing to find that the Sandwich terns, which visited Brownsman in May, stayed only for twenty-four hours, but the Longstone colony was a particularly fine one. The outstanding feature was, without doubt, the colony of ninety-three pairs of roseate terns on Longstone End. The extraordinary increase in the size of this colony is due partly to the protection given to the birds in recent years by W. J. Lewis, and partly to the fact that Longstone End is now closed to the public.

Eider ducks have again increased although it is probable that the number of ducklings reared by each duck was smaller than usual. Throughout the winter W. J. Lewis and the Longstone lightkeepers fed the eiders regularly and in the spring they made some artificial nests, most of which were occupied. This is an interesting revival of a custom in force some forty years ago. F. McKinney, of Oxford University, made a special study of eiders, while J. M. and Esther Cullen were engaged on a similar study of kittiwakes.

Breeding was confirmed in the case of two species which, so far as is known at present, are merely sporadic nesters. These were the pied wagtail (last known to have nested in 1939) and the meadow-pipit (last nest found in 1947).

By July 24th most of the resident waders had returned to the Longstone and the numbers seen on the Inner Group gradually increased. Wheatears, stonechats, warblers, flycatchers, starlings, redpolls, blackbirds and thrushes were seen on passage in early autumn, and very large movements took place in October and early November when thousands of birds were seen round the Longstone light on certain nights. These large rushes were recorded on October 6th/7th, 7th/8th, 8th/9th, 11th/12th, 15th/16th, 16th/17th, 17th/18th, 20th/21st and 21st/22nd. Strong winds prevailed for a week at the end of October, and it was not until November 1st/2nd that the passage started again. It continued, although not in such large numbers, through November,

most of the birds being starlings and blackbirds. The most notable feature of December was the arrival of very large numbers of blackbirds; thousands were seen at the Longstone and many were, unfortunately, killed. Considerable numbers of snipe arrived from time to time.

Below is a list of the birds arranged in systematic order :—

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn. and RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus* Pontopp. Small numbers of divers were seen occasionally in February, March, April and December, both the great northern and red-throated being identified.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Bodd.) and SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* (L.). A red-necked grebe was seen on March 1st and 3rd and a Slavonian grebe on December 5th.

MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus* Brünn. The few records are all for the Longstone. One was seen on July 24th, while there were a few on November 15th and 16th.

FULMAR PETREL *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.). Ten pairs nested. There were six on Inner Farne, three on Staple Island and, for the first time, one on Brownsman. This nest was near the S.E. kittiwake colony. The gulls took several eggs, but there was at least one chick on Inner Farne and it is probable that one of the Staple Island birds also hatched off. The first egg was laid on May 21st. A fulmar on Inner Farne was found to be incubating a herring-gull's egg; when the chick hatched it was removed and placed in a kittiwake's nest.

GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.). Seen, in parties of varying size, throughout the year.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.). About one hundred and fifty pairs settled on North Wamses in April, but were, as usual, robbed, and only seven pairs reared young. There were some three hundred pairs in the Megstone colony, but those on the lower part of the rock—at least one hundred pairs—were washed away in the June gales and other nests were robbed. On July 16th most of the nests still contained eggs and the adult birds were very wild.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.). Considerable numbers of shags and cormorants were seen in winter, and between 9.0 and 10.0 a.m. on January 14th E. A. R. Ennion noted some four hundred, mostly shags, moving north in flocks past Monks' House. He thought that they might have been birds which had moved south from the Megstone

during the N.E. gales of the previous weeks. As he had, however, noticed a similar southward mass movement on October 18th, 1951, when prevailing weather conditions did not justify such a movement, he considered that these may possibly, in both cases, have been passage birds.

At least one hundred and eight pairs nested, sixteen being on Brownsman, twenty-five on Inner Farne and sixty-seven on Staple Island.

HERON *Ardea cinerea* L. Seen in small numbers in spring and autumn.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L., TEAL *Anas crecca* L., and WIGEON *Anas penelope* L. Seen during autumn and winter, mallard being most numerous.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta* L. Single birds were seen on February 26th and March 2nd.

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata* (L.). A pair were seen occasionally near Inner Farne from February to early May.

SCAUP *Aythya marila* (L.). A pair were on Knoxes Reef on February 18th.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* (L.). One was at the Longstone on March 3rd.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina* (L.). A duck was on a pool at the Longstone on February 9th, while on June 19th a drake flew past the Inner Farne tower.

GOLDEN-EYE *Bucephala clangula* (L.) and LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* (L.). Seen in small numbers from February to mid-April.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* (L.) and COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.). Small flocks of common scoters were seen in March and April, while single velvet scoters were recorded on February 10th, March 6th and November 8th.

EIDER-DUCK *Somateria mollissima* (L.). Approximately six hundred and fifty ducks nested. One hundred and seventy-three were on the Longstone rocks, twenty on Staple Island, one hundred and fifty on Brownsman and about three hundred on Inner Farne; there were also a few on Knoxes Reef and the Wideopens.

On April 18th there was a duck with two eggs on the Longstone, but it was not until June 3rd that the first duckling was hatched. Laying started on Inner Farne on May 5th and ducklings were seen on May 29th. Broods were small, there being generally two, three or sometimes four youngsters. Families with escorts were again noticed on Inner Farne.

The fishermen reported that a very late duckling, with its mother, was in Seahouses harbour at the end of October.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator* L. A pair were seen off Inner Farne from time to time during March and there was a single bird in Sunderland Hole on November 8th.

SMEW *Mergus albellus* L. A duck was at the Longstone on February 14th.

SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.). A pair were on the Inner Group throughout the late winter and early spring and by mid-April more birds had taken up station outside their burrows. No young were seen, but it is probable that at least half a dozen pairs nested.

GREY-LAG GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.). A small party again visited North Wamses where they were first noticed on June 17th. Eleven, all full-winged, were seen on July 24th, but it was evident that at least four adults had moulted on the island.

BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* (L.). One (dark breasted) was seen at the Longstone on March 5th.

SPARROW-HAWK *Accipiter nisus* (L.), PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunst., MERLIN *Falco columbarius* L. and KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L. A peregrine wintered on the islands; its kills included starlings, redwings, thrushes, woodcock, rabbits and a water rail. A merlin was a fairly frequent, and a kestrel a less frequent visitor, while a sparrow-hawk was seen at the Longstone on October 18th and 20th. W. J. Lewis has noticed that hawks often appear after big rushes.

WATER-RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* L. One was killed by a peregrine on the Outer Group on November 21st.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L.). One was on the Longstone on May 15th.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on April 7th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L. Four pairs nested on Inner Farne, six on Brownsman, three on Staple Island and twelve on the Longstone rocks. A scrape with three eggs was found on Longstone End on April 18th.

In early September a large flock, numbering at least one hundred and thirty-five, frequented Knoxes Reef.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.). A fairly frequent visitor to Inner Farne in spring and early summer. There was often only a single bird and never more than four. On August 13th a flock of forty-one was seen flying west from the Wideopens and it appears that at certain seasons there is a definite daily movement between the islands and the mainland. Lapwings were included in the rush recorded at the Longstone on October 17th/18th.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* L. At least nineteen pairs nested, nine being on the Longstone rocks, five on Inner Farne, two on Staple Island and three on Brownsman. Gulls took the Brownsman eggs, while the nests on Staple Island were robbed by visitors. Small numbers of ringed plover were seen in spring, and at the beginning of September there was a flock of about fifty on the Inner Group.

GREY PLOVER *Charadrius squatarola* (L.) and GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius apricarius* L. A flock of nineteen golden plovers flew over Inner Farne on October 2nd, while single grey plovers were seen at the Longstone on July 16th and August 7th.

COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.) and JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brünn.). Two snipe were on Inner Farne from the end of February until mid-April while on July 30th there was a jack snipe on Longstone End. There was a considerable passage of snipe through the Longstone during December.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* L. Seen in small numbers in spring and autumn.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.) and WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* (L.). Large flocks of curlew were seen in late summer, autumn and winter and a flock which visited the Longstone on February 25th included two whimbrel. A single whimbrel was on Inner Farne on May 1st while others, usually in ones and twos, were seen occasionally during July, August and early September. The main passage observed was on September 7th when, in two hours, eleven birds were counted, all travelling south or south-west.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* (L.) and BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* (L.). Single bar-tails were seen on Inner Farne on February 28th and March 2nd, and on the Longstone on August 17th, while there was a black-tailed on this last island on November 12th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L. One was on Inner Farne on May 23rd.

WOOD-SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* L. Six were seen at the Longstone on October 22nd.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L. Two were on Inner Farne on August 7th and one on September 7th.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* (L.), REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* (L.), PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima* (Brünn.) and DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.). Wintered as usual on the islands and were seen also on passage. On the Inner Group their headquarters appeared to be Knoxes Reef and here turnstones were most numerous, there being about two hundred present in autumn. There were only a few dunlin.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* (Pall.). For some time W. J. Lewis has been convinced that two different species of redshanks visited the Longstone. On August 17th he definitely identified spotted redshanks, for they were in company with redshanks and the difference in size, plumage and the colour of the soft parts could be quite clearly seen.

KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.). A flock, which sometimes numbered eighty, was on the Inner Group in September.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisl.). A few were among the newly-returned resident waders on the Longstone on July 24th, while others were seen on Inner Farne in early August.

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.). One was at the Longstone on November 11th.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.). Single birds were seen on February 14th, March 4th and June 16th.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* (Brünn.). One spent most of the day on, or near, Inner Farne on September 27th.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L., LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus* L., HERRING-GULL *Larus argentatus* Pontopp. and COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L. Both lesser black-backs and herring-gulls nested, the favourite islands being the Wideopens and Wamses. Greater black-backs and common gulls were seen in small numbers in autumn and winter, and at the end of September a flock of about one hundred Scandinavian lesser black-backs frequented the Wideopens.

• [GLAUCOUS GULL] *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn. On June 1st a gull was identified by Dr. N. Tinbergen as being probably a glaucous gull.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Pall. W. J. Lewis found a dead bird on the Longstone on February 26th and it is probable that others were occasional visitors.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L. Seen, usually in ones and twos, on Inner Farne from February to May and on Brownsman in July.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.). An adult and a first year bird were on Inner Farne on February 18th and nine days later about fifty were present. J. M. Cullen counted two hundred and eighty-six nests on this island at the end of May. The season was a late one, and although the first egg was laid on the Outer Group on May 11th (and on Inner Farne two days later), on June 10th at least 50% of the Staple Island nests were still empty. The small colony on the south-west of Brownsman was washed away in the June gales, but further eggs were laid. Many of these had still not hatched on July 16th.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* (L.). One was seen among arctics on Inner Farne on May 28th.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L. Several pairs nested near the lake on Brownsman, there were twenty to thirty pairs on Inner Farne and a total of three hundred and forty-five pairs on the three Longstone rocks.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naum. In addition to the usual large colony on Brownsman there were approximately fifteen hundred pairs on both Inner Farne and the Longstone. For the fourth successive year the birds settled on Longstone End on May 11th although the first egg was not laid until May 20th. On all the islands the terns were

very late in laying and on June 25th many of the Brownsman birds had incomplete clutches. Hatching commenced on the Longstone on July 2nd. Birds nesting in St. Cuthbert's Cove lost their eggs in the June gales.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii* Mont. There were one or two pairs on Inner Farne, three pairs on Brownsman and ninety-three pairs on Longstone End. This last colony is the largest ever recorded at the Farnes and many young birds hatched out, one hundred and forty being ringed.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Pall. A single bird was on the Longstone on May 9th.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Lath. A Sandwich tern was seen on April 6th. None bred on Brownsman, but there were three pairs on Inner Farne. There were nine hundred and fifty-five pairs on Longstone End; here the first eggs were laid on May 16th and hatching commenced on June 23rd.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda* L. Although some fifty birds were seen off Inner Farne in June only five pairs nested and these were all on Inner Farne.

LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle* (L.). A badly oiled bird was seen at the Longstone on November 2nd and 14th.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge* (Pontopp.). The colony on the Megstone was unusually large—about one hundred and sixty pairs—but, unfortunately, these suffered, like the cormorants, from human marauders and on July 16th, although there was a number of eggs, only five young birds were found. Fewer birds than usual appeared to nest on the centre Pinnacle.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Uria grylle* (L.). Single birds, travelling northward, passed the Longstone on April 21st and May 6th, while on November 21st there were three near the Outer Group.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica* (L.). The colony seemed larger than ever and on April 18th there must have been at least ten thousand present. Large rafts were on the water and many hundreds were resting on the land beside their nesting sites.

WOOD-PIGEON *Columba palumbus* L. One, probably a visitor from the mainland, was seen on Inner Farne on April 26th.

TURTLE-DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on May 8th.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* L. A bird was seen on Inner Farne between May 16th and 20th and was on Brownsman on May 21st. According to the watchers a cuckoo laid an egg (later destroyed by visitors) in a rock-pipit's nest on Staple Island on June 21st, but this is a doubtful record.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* (L.). One was on the Longstone on July 16th.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus* L. One was on Inner Farne on May 8th.

SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.). Seen occasionally, in small numbers, from May 2nd to September 23rd.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* L. On February 27th at least twenty were seen flying north from Inner Farne and small numbers were seen (or heard) almost daily on this island until late March. The spring passage was recorded at the Longstone on April 18th/19th and 22nd/23rd and the autumn passage from October 2nd to 12th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L., HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.) and SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.). The first swallow was seen on Staple Island on April 24th and others, with martins, were recorded on both Groups throughout May and early June.

CARRION-CROW *Corvus corone* L. and HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L. A pair of carrion-crows were seen frequently in February and March. At the end of March, and throughout April, a mixed flock of crows, which on one occasion was made up of about forty hooded and ten carrion, made almost daily visits to the islands. It is probable that a pair of carrion-crows nested on the Outer Group.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* L. Rooks, in numbers varying from single birds to flocks of ten or so, visited the islands from February to early April.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* L. Recorded, usually in ones and twos, but occasionally in flocks of as many as thirty-two, at Inner Farne from mid-March to the end of May. There appeared to be a definite daily passage between the islands and the mainland.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea* L. Single birds were among migrants on the Longstone on April 25th and May 5th.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.). One or two probably wintered on Inner Farne. Wrens were included in the April and October rushes.

MISTLE-THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* L., FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L., SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turt., REDWING *Turdus musicus* L., RING-OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* L. and BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L. A few blackbirds and song-thrushes, and an occasional mistle-thrush, redwing and fieldfare, were seen during winter and spring. E. A. R. Ennion considers that two song-thrushes, seen in early April, were almost certainly continental birds. A cock ring-ouzel was on Inner Farne on April 19th, while others were seen on passage on May 4th/5th.

On August 14th/15th a migratory movement, which included blackbirds and thrushes, was recorded at the Longstone and the passage continued intermittently until the end of November. Many thousands of blackbirds appeared in the late autumn rushes and there were also considerable numbers of redwings and song-thrushes, and smaller numbers of mistle-thrushes and fieldfares.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.). Seen on passage in spring and autumn. On September 8th three of the Greenland form were identified.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* (L.) and WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L.). Seen on passage in spring and autumn.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L.) and BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* (Gm.). Small numbers were present in spring, the passage of black redstarts lasting from April 2nd to May 6th, and of redstarts from April 22nd to May 21st. A black redstart, seen on April 24th, was identified by E. A. R. Ennion as a continental bird. A single redstart, which was on Inner Farne on September 8th, is the only autumn record.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* (L.). One or two probably wintered on Inner Farne. Passage birds were seen on both Groups in April.

[REED-WARBLER] *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (Herm.). W. J. Lewis again recorded reed-warblers among migrants at the Longstone during May. Unfortunately, no birds were obtained, and it is therefore

impossible to check his identification, but in view of the fact that this species has been recorded at the Isle of May and Fair Isle, it is probable that the record is correct.

SEDGE-WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.), BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla* (L.), WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Lath., LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* (L.), WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.), CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita* (Viell.) and WOOD-WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Bechst.). The first warbler, probably from its leg-colour a willow-warbler, was seen on Inner Farne on April 6th, and the passage through the islands continued intermittently until late May. Chiffchaffs were not definitely identified, but there were considerable numbers of willow-warblers, whitethroats and lesser whitethroats, as well as a few blackcaps and a single sedge-warbler. A whitethroat seen on Inner Farne on July 22nd marked the start of the return passage, which consisted of whitethroats, lesser whitethroats, willow and sedge-warblers and also a few wood-warblers. No blackcaps or garden warblers were seen.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus* (L.) and FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus* (Temm.). Some goldcrests were included in the rush of April 18th/19th, while many goldcrests and a few firecrests took part in the autumn rushes.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* (Pall.) and PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pall.). Seen on passage in spring and autumn.

HEDGE-SPARROW *Prunella modularia* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on March 24th.

MEADOW-PIBIT *Anthus pratensis* (L.). Seen on passage in spring and autumn, large numbers taking part in the October rushes. A pair nested on Inner Farne and two fledged young were found on July 17th.

TREE-PIBIT *Anthus trivialis* (L.). A few were with meadow-pipits on the Longstone on May 5th/6th.

ROCK-PIBIT *Anthus spinoletta* (L.). Some thirty-one pairs nested. E. A. R. Ennion has continued his study of this species and has proved that they travel freely, not only between the different islands, but also between the islands and the mainland. He found, for example, that a bird bred on Inner Farne mated with a mainland bird and that the pair nested on Brownsman. A nest on the Wideopens contained four erythristic eggs.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba* L. Seen on passage in spring. A pair nested on Inner Farne ; the young hatched on July 25th.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* Tunst. and YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* L. Single yellow wagtails were on Staple Island on April 26th, and on Inner Farne on May 3rd, while another arrived, with a few grey wagtails, on the Longstone on May 5th/6th.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L. Starlings were frequently seen round the Longstone light during March and April and again from August to November. Large flocks took part in the late autumn rushes. As usual a few pairs nested.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (L.). One was among migrants which arrived at the Longstone on May 4th/5th.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris* (L.). A single bird, probably a visitor from the mainland, was seen occasionally on Inner Farne in February, March and April. Greenfinches were among the migrants which arrived at the Longstone on May 5th/6th and October 16th/17th.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* (L.). A few were included in the rushes of April 24th/25th and May 4th/5th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* (L.). A flock, which sometimes numbered as many as thirty, was again seen fairly frequently on both Groups during winter. Linnets were among passage birds which arrived on the Longstone on May 4th/5th and 5th/6th.

TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* (L.). Single birds were on the Longstone on May 5th and 19th and August 15th.

LESSER REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* (L.). Included in the spring and early autumn rushes at the Longstone.

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* L. At the Farnes the first intimation of the 1953 invasion was a bird, reported to be an adult male, seen on Staple Island on June 13th. On the same day there was another on Inner Farne. On June 25th a female was on Brownsman and a male and two others (probably juveniles) on Inner Farne, while for the next four days a juvenile frequented this last island. Five were seen on July 3rd, at least two being males, and another male was recorded on September 7th and 8th : all these were on Inner Farne.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* L. A cock and a hen, always seen singly, were fairly frequent visitors to Inner Farne in March and early April. Chaffinches were recorded at the Longstone in both the spring and autumn rushes.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* L. Three were on Inner Farne on April 14th and a single bird was on this island on April 19th.

YELLOW HAMMER *Emberiza citrinella* L. and CORN-BUNTING *Emberiza calandra* L. A few were on the Longstone on May 1st.

REED-BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* (L.). A cock was on Inner Farne on March 24th and another on the Longstone on May 16th and 19th.

SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.). Single birds were seen on Staple Island and Inner Farne on April 18th.

TREE-SPARROW *Passer montanus* (L.). Small numbers were seen on passage at the Longstone on May 14th/15th and again on May 29th.

RINGING

During the year 1925 nestlings and 198 adults were ringed, the total—2123—being 646 less than the 1952 figure. Numbers of individual species were as follows:—

Cormorant 68; shag 116; eider 24; oystercatcher 15; ringed plover 9; lesser black-backed gull 213; kittiwake 445; common tern 20; arctic tern 559; roseate tern 140; Sandwich tern 387; guillemot 11; puffin 65; swift 1; swallow 1; blackbird 15; wheat-ear 1; redstart 3; robin 5; whitethroat 2; rock-pipit 16; pied wagtail 2; starling 3; greenfinch 1; crossbill 1.

Unfortunately, the Heligoland trap was destroyed in the January gales, and it was impossible to repair it until autumn, when E. A. R. Ennion very kindly carried out the work. It is hoped that it will withstand the winter and be in use in the spring of 1954.

RECOVERIES

Sixty birds, ringed on the islands, have been recovered, while four others, marked at Monks' House, have been found on Inner Farne. The most notable were two arctic terns, both ringed as nestlings by Mrs. Hodgkin. The first, marked on July 1st, 1933, was found dead on

the beach at South Shields on June 3rd, 1953, and provided a new age-record for a bird of this species. The second, ringed on July 1st, 1936, was nesting in St. Cuthbert's Cove. Another arctic, this time a young bird, was recovered in Holland only a month after ringing.

There have been two more recoveries of kittiwakes in Newfoundland, making nine for the islands, as well as a second one from S.W. Greenland. All these were birds in their first year. The bird found at Eina, in Norway, was unusually far inland for a kittiwake.

Many of the shags nesting on Staple Island were ringed birds and some were captured. Unfortunately, this is by no means an easy (or painless) job, hence the difficulty of making further recoveries. Among more distant recoveries the most interesting is that at Limburgh, for shags are comparatively rare in Holland; the Morden one, too, is unusual in being so close to London.

A few rock-pipits have been caught at Monks' House, while mainland ringed birds have been trapped on Inner Farne. A robin, which may have been a continental bird, was ringed at Monks' House in October, 1952, and found on Inner Farne in March. Similarly a hen blackbird, ringed on Inner Farne in March, 1953, was re-trapped on this island in September and again in November.

RECOVERIES OF RINGED BIRDS

(a) RINGED ON FARNE ISLANDS

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| CORMORANT | | |
| 31.7.52 | Hoveton Broad, Wroxham, Norfolk (killed) | early Jan.53 |
| 4.8.51 | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 12.2.53 |
| 13.6.52 | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 13.2.53 |
| 4.8.51 | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 7.4.53 |
| 9.7.52 | Armathwaite, Cumberland | April,53 |
| | Ormesby Broad, Norfolk | late May,53 |
| 13.6.52 | R. Tweed (shot) | 13.6.53 |
| 3.7.53 | Newbiggin-by-the-Sea | mid-Sept.53 |
| 9.7.53 | The Wash, Lincolnshire (shot) | 21.9.53 |
| 31.7.53 | West Ord, nr. Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 21.9.53 |
| 15.8.52 | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 19.10.53 |
| 4.8.51 | Blyth | Oct.53 |
| 18.6.53 | Gourdon by Bervie, Kincardineshire | early Dec.53 |
| SHAG | | |
| 29.8.52 | Ryhope, Co. Durham | 3.2.53 |
| 26.6.52 | Morden, Surrey (found unable to fly, later released) | 17.2.53 |
| | Merkelbeek, Limburg, Holland (found alive in drain) | 21.2.53 |
| 28.6.51 | *Cove, nr. Cockburnspath, Berwickshire (caught in harbour) | 2.3.53 |
| 17.7.52 | Long Melford, Suffolk | 12.3.53 |
| 26.6.52 | Lybster, Caithness | early April,53 |
| 28.6.51 | *Staple Island (129064—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| 5.7.51 | *Staple Island (129019—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| 29.4.52 | *Staple Island (508429—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| | *Staple Island (508437—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| 1.7.52 | Staple Island (508460—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| | *Staple Island (508371—nesting, released) | 24.4.53 |
| 26.6.52 | Isle of May | May,53 |
| 1.7.52 | Inner Farne | June,53 |
| 29.4.52 | *Staple Island (508425—nesting, released) | 16.7.53 |
| | *Staple Island (508430—nesting, released) | 19.7.53 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult.

(a) RINGED ON FARNE ISLANDS—*continued*

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

| | | |
|---------|---|-----------|
| 29.8.52 | La Berverie-en-Retz, Loire Inf., France | March, 53 |
|---------|---|-----------|

KITTIWAKE

| | | |
|---------|--|----------|
| 6.7.52 | Off island of S. Miguel, Azores (caught by fisherman, probably eaten) | 3.3.53 |
| 28.6.51 | Off Whitehills, Banff (caught on boat, ring removed and bird released) | 7.4.53 |
| 28.6.51 | *Newbiggin-by-Sca | 30.4.53 |
| 1.7.52 | New Perlican, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland | 3.5.53 |
| 17.7.52 | Is. of St. Pierre et Miquelon, south-west of Newfoundland (killed) | 1.6.53 |
| 10.7.52 | Balmedie, Aberdeenshire | 25.6.53 |
| 3.7.52 | Douarnenez, Finistère, France | 30.6.53 |
| 10.7.52 | Julianehaab, S.W. Greenland (shot) | 7.8.53 |
| 16.7.53 | Eina, Norway (60°35'N, 10°39'E) (presumed dead) | 29.11.53 |

ARCTIC TERN

| | | |
|---------|--|---------|
| 1.7.33 | South Shields | 3.6.53 |
| 13.7.50 | Ravenscar, Scarborough | 11.6.53 |
| 29.6.50 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 5.7.53 |
| 1.7.36 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 8.7.53 |
| 10.7.53 | Island of Schouwen-Duiveland, Holland (injured, died next day) | 7.8.53 |

SANDWICH TERN

| | | |
|---------|--|---------|
| 3.7.52 | Keta, Gold Coast (found injured) | 30.1.53 |
| 21.7.52 | Agadir, Morocco (presumed killed) | 13.3.53 |
| 5.7.51 | Honfleur, Seine Inf., France (presumed shot) | 25.7.53 |
| 4.7.53 | Nr. Grimsby (found dead) | 4.9.53 |
| | Grimsby Dock (released) | 5.9.53 |
| 10.7.52 | Nr. Agadir, Morocco (caught by fisherman) | 8.11.53 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult.

(a) RINGED ON FARNE ISLANDS—*continued*

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| GUILLEMOT | | |
| 9.7.52 | Nordeney, E. Frisian Is. | 3.1.53 |
| | Nr. Faerder, Oslo Fjord, Norway (shot) | 1.3.53 |
| 16.7.53 | Zuider Zee Dam, nr. Harlingen, Friesland, Holland | 15.10.53 |
| PUFFIN | | |
| 13.7.52 | *Inner Farne (released) | 4.5.53 |
| 19.8.53 | Off Bergen, Norway (shot) | 20.11.53 |
| ROCK-PIBIT | | |
| 21.5.52 | Monks' House (released) | 17.4.53 |
| 24.5.52 | Monks' House (released) | 21.4.53 |
| 6.7.52 | Monks' House (released) | 27.3.53 |
| | | 21.4.53 |
| | | 27.4.53 |
| 12.8.53 | *Inner Farne (released) | 10.9.53 |
| BLACKBIRD | | |
| 13.3.53 | *Inner Farne (released) | 15.3.53 |
| | | 7.9.53 |
| | | 8.11.53 |

(b) RINGED AT MONKS' HOUSE, SEAHOUSES,
AND RECOVERED ON FARNE ISLANDS

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ROBIN | | |
| 27.10.52 | *Inner Farne (released) | 15.3.53 |
| | | 19.3.53 |
| | | 22.3.53 |

* Included bird ringed as adult.

(b) RINGED AT MONKS' HOUSE, SEAHOUSES,
AND RECOVERED ON FARNE ISLANDS—*continued*

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| ROCK-PIBIT | | |
| 22.7.51 | Inner Farne | 19.7.53 |
| 23.4.53 | *Inner Farne (released) | 8.9.53 |
| | | 28.9.53 |
| 17.4.53 | *Inner Farne (released) | 28.9.53 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult.

Unless otherwise stated all birds have been found dead.

NOTE ON THE BREEDING OF AN ARCTIC TERN
IN IMMATURE PLUMAGE ON THE
NORTHERN HARES, FARNE ISLANDS, IN 1953

By W. J. LEWIS

The plumage of this tern was very similar to that of the mature birds, except that the grey on the underparts was slightly duller. The bill, legs and feet were the usual blood-red, with a tinge of black at the tip of the bill and on the feet. The most noticeable feature was the large white patch on the forehead with the rest of the cap black.

Its mate was a normal adult, and their nest was just a scrape in the sand. The two eggs were normal in shape and size, and were greyish-white to stone in colour, blotched with blackish brown, the broad ends being heavily marked.

The bird was first seen on its nest on July 3rd when there were then two eggs. It was watched until July 17th, when the young hatched. The chicks, which were ringed to facilitate identification, were greyish in colour, with black markings.

The bird was undoubtedly the female, for not only did she sit for longer periods than the male, but this last bird was observed feeding her at the nest.

THE BIRDS OF UPPER COQUETDALE THEIR PRESENT STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

By

EDWARD G. TYER

This list has been compiled from notes and observations which I made on the bird life of Upper Coquetdale over a period of six consecutive years, 1949-54. Prior to this, in 1938-39, and again in 1946-47, I made a number of observations on the moorland birds of the district. With one or two exceptions, my observations have been made during week-end visits.

The present list takes no account of previously published lists or records; it has been compiled entirely from personal notes made in the field. In no sense therefore is it a complete list. The object of this paper is to show the pattern of bird life occurring within the district at the present day.

Acknowledgments must be made to the landowners, farmers and shepherds of Upper Coquetdale, who kindly gave me permission to wander freely over their land. Especially must I mention Major G. A. Renwick who, on several occasions, most generously allowed me to search for nests of the Goldfinch in his garden and orchard.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT

Upper Coquetdale may be roughly defined as that part of the dale which begins at Thropton and ends in the Cheviots near Windyhaugh at the extreme head of the dale, almost the whole of it being situated in the Watsonian vice-county 68, Cheviotland or Northumberland North. The district is essentially an upland, ranging in altitude from about three hundred to over one thousand feet above sea-level, and covering an area of approximately forty square miles.

Although the greater part of this area is marginal or moorland, with a vegetation largely of heather, bent, bracken, juniper and bog myrtle, with birch and alder scrub on most of the steep and rocky burn-sides, the lower reaches of the dale have many affinities with that of a lowland. Between Harbottle and Thropton there are broad pasture-flats, stands of mixed woodlands, and several patches of arable land.

Broadly, the district may be divided into three types of habitat, i.e.,

(i) The Cheviots :

Festuca-Agrostis grasslands, with occasional outcrops of crag and scree ; largely a treeless area. Drained by river and numerous tributaries ;

(ii) The Riverside Flats :

A mixed area of pasture, woodland, swamp-patch, and cultivation ;

(iii) The Simonside Escarpment :

A typical heather moor with a mean elevation of 1,000 feet above sea-level.

LIST OF BIRDS

The number preceding the name of each species refers to the *Check-list of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland* (1952), which follows the Wetmore order of classification.

9. LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis* (Pallas)

A summer resident. Like the Coot, it is restricted in numbers by lack of suitable habitats. One or two pairs are to be found on a small lake near Burradon, where they invariably breed.

30. HERON *Ardea cinerea* L.

A resident. During recent years its numbers have remained small, though stable. Although heronries formerly existed in the district, breeding is now confined to isolated pairs.

45. MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L.

A common resident and winter visitor. As a breeding bird it is to be found nesting at all elevations, and in a wide range of sites. Increasing numbers winter each year on river and lough.

46. TEAL *Anas crecca* L.

A resident and winter visitor. The Teal is found breeding in scattered pairs throughout the district, the most favoured nesting-site being the riverside marshes, where the dead and rank vegetation of the previous year offers plenty of cover. As a winter visitor it is usually found in small parties. During the winter of 1952-53, about fifty birds remained on the lake near Burradon from November until February.

50. WIGEON *Anas penelope* L.

A species of very irregular occurrence. In winter it is totally absent. In spring a pair or two may settle on one of the loughs, and no doubt odd pairs have bred from time to time. On May 30th, 1951, five drakes and two ducks were present on Linsheeles Lake, in the vicinity of which is suitable nesting terrain.

55. SCAUP *Aythya marila* (L).

A rare winter visitor of which there is only one record. A pair in adult plumage was observed on Harbottle Lough on November 8th, 1953.

57. POCHARD *Aythya ferina* (L).

A winter visitor of casual occurrence. In severe weather small parties resort to the river, having no doubt been "frozen out" from their regular haunts elsewhere.

60. GOLDEN-EYE *Bucephala clangula* (L).

A winter visitor of casual occurrence. Single birds may haunt the river during severe weather. Though usually seen alone, on January 14th, 1954, a duck was seen in company with four Goosanders, on the river near Holystone.

70. GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* L.

A resident and winter visitor. Although hitherto found breeding only in Scotland, the Goosander in quite recent years has become firmly established as a regular breeding species. It may be found nesting in some hollow tree close to the river, or far up one of the tributaries. As a winter visitor, its numbers are variable.

75. GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L).

A rare winter visitor. On November 1st, 1952, twenty-three birds were present on Harbottle Lough.

84. MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* (L).

A summer resident. This species is represented by one pair, which annually breeds on the lake near Burradon. The birds leave in autumn and return in early February. Incubation usually begins in first week of April.

85. WHOOPER-SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* (L).

A rare winter visitor. Seventeen adult birds spent the winter of 1953-54 on the river in the vicinity of Thropton; they remained until early April. They obtained their food from one of the riverside marshes, roosting and resting on the river.

89. GOLDEN EAGLE *Aquila chrysaetos* (L).

A rare vagrant. In recent years there has been at least one authentic record. The writer's own record is the occurrence of an adult female seen hunting the middle slopes of the Simonsides on June 22nd, 1938.

91. BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* (L).

An occasional visitor. Mostly seen during early spring, when single birds may haunt the moorlands for several days.

93. SPARROW-HAWK *Accipiter nisus* (L).

A common resident. Although many birds are trapped and shot, its numbers tend to increase. Resorts when nesting to the most out-of-the-way places, i.e., remote pine clumps, etc., far out on the moors. It usually nests at a fairly considerable height, but on May 31st, 1951, near the head of Holystone Burn, a bird was flushed from a nest which was only fourteen feet from the ground.

105. PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall.

A resident. Altogether there are two pairs breeding in the district. As the nesting-sites are easy of access, the nests are frequently harried. But for the lack of suitable sites, this species would undoubtedly be more numerous. On several occasions, pairs prospecting for sites have spent several days in the vicinity of an already occupied eyrie. In such instances, four adult birds may be seen in the air at once. Moreover, it is not uncommon for a second male bird to remain near the eyrie throughout the breeding season.

107. MERLIN *Falco columbarius aesalon* Tunstall.

A resident. A few scattered pairs on all the moorlands. Invariably a pair or two breeding on the Simonsides. In 1952, and again in 1953, a pair bred in the old nest of a Raven.

110. KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L.

A common resident. The most favoured nesting-site is a crag-ledge covered with *Lazula sylvatica*.

111. RED GROUSE *Lagopus scoticus* (Latham).

A resident. Fairly well represented but not so numerous as in favoured localities elsewhere. Numbers fluctuate each year.

113. BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix britannicus* Witherby & Lönnberg.

An uncommon resident. Decreasing. Although formerly common, now reduced almost to extinction. A small number of birds, apparently the last remaining stock at the present day, are to be found in the vestigial birch woods situated near the source of the Barrow Burn.

116. PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix* (L).

A common resident, well distributed throughout both the cultivated and marginal areas. The most typical nesting-site is under a clump of common rushes.

118. PHEASANT *Phasianus colchicus* L.

A common resident, found breeding under hedge-rows, in woodlands, shrubberies, etc.

125. CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L).

A summer resident. Although formerly no doubt a common bird of the district, in recent times rare or absent altogether. In 1952, however, one or two birds were heard calling in various parts of the dale ; but in the following year only a single bird was recorded.

126. MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* (L).

A resident, increasing. Very common about the backwaters and marshy places bordering the river.

127. COOT *Fulica atra* L.

A summer resident. Owing to the absence of suitable habitat, other than one small lake near Burradon, this species is confined to two or three pairs ; the birds leave during October and return in early February. The district contains five tarns, but they offer little attraction to bird life as they are peat-acid and at high elevations.

131. OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L.

A common summer resident. One of the characteristic riverside birds of the district. During recent years it has shown a steady increase in numbers. Though normally nesting on the river gravels, it has now taken to nesting on arable land, often at a considerable distance from the river. It arrives on the breeding grounds in late February and early March ; first recorded arrival :—February 14th, 1954, a single bird.

133. LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L).

A common summer resident. The Lapwing is found nesting at all elevations from the riverside gravels to 1,000 feet on the Simonsides. The district, with its wide range of habitat, and almost complete freedom from human disturbance, is a great attraction to the species and consequently it is in a flourishing state. Should mild weather prevail during February, small flocks arrive, but depart again at the first sign of winter conditions.

134. RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* L.

A summer resident, common and increasing. Usually one or two pairs may be found breeding on every suitable gravel-bed. On one favoured site near Caistron a small colony of five or six pairs breeds annually.

140. GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius apricarius* L.

A summer resident, well represented, but numbers vary somewhat each year. Favours the bare slopes of the Simonsides, but many nests are found on dry patches in cotton-sedge bogs.

145. COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L).

A summer resident. Perhaps not so numerous as formerly, but still in good numbers. Unusually numerous near Thropton on April 18th, 1954.

146. GREAT SNIPE *Capella media* (Latham).

[Although this species usually occurs in Britain from August to November and March to May, a single bird, almost certainly of this species, was flushed from dry moorland south of Harbottle on December 20th, 1953—a time when the Common Snipe is totally absent from the district. From its size, flight, and the conspicuous amount of white on the tail, the bird was judged to be a Great Snipe.]

147. JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brünnich).

A regular winter visitor. Small parties of five to a dozen birds usually occupy a single marsh. It regularly frequents the riverside marshes between Holystone and Thropton, where it is resident from November to late March. Though several birds may occupy the same feeding ground, the species is not gregarious, but near Holystone on November 1st, 1952, at least fifty birds were seen feeding on ground which had been recently flooded by the river. Subsequent observations showed that the birds must have been on passage, for only the usual numbers remained.

148. WOODCOCK. *Scolopax rusticola* L.

A resident, and possibly a winter visitor in small numbers. Pairs are to be found breeding in almost every birch wood throughout the district. In winter it may occasionally be flushed on the moorlands where, normally, it is absent.

150. CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L).

A common summer resident and, in recent years, a small number of birds wholly resident. The greatest density of breeding birds is to be found on the rough marginal land rather than on the higher moorland. Since 1951-52, a small but increasing number of birds has wintered in the district. The birds haunt the marshes, backwaters, and flood channels of the river flats between Holystone and Thropton. Despite the hard weather experienced in February, 1954, the birds remained in their usual haunts, and showed no signs of distress; altogether, forty-five to fifty birds wintered.

156. GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L.

A passage migrant of casual occurrence. There are only two records:—A single bird seen on the river near Dues Hill Wood, Holystone, on August 26th, 1951, and one near Caistron on August 29th, 1954.

159. COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L.

An extremely common summer resident. Should the eggs be washed away by flood water, the Sandpiper, of all the riverside-breeders, is the first to lay again. On October 4th, 1953, a single bird still present on the river near Holystone.

161. REDSHANK *Tringa totanus britannica* (Mathews).

A common summer resident. Numbers much increased during recent years. The most favoured nesting-site is around the patches of swamp found on the river flats. Arrives late in March and early April.

165. GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunnerus)

A rare passage migrant. Two birds, obviously on spring passage, were seen on April 10th, 1949, resting on a gravel bed near Holystone. On September 5th and 26th, 1954, a single bird was observed feeding in the river near Hepple.

178. DUNLIN *Calidris alpina schinzii* (Brehm).

A summer resident. Since 1949, a small colony has nested in one locality. In May, 1953, two pairs of birds haunted a small series

of pools adjoining the river near Castron. Breeding was suspected on the rough pastures nearby. On May 25th, extensive flooding of the river occurred; thereafter the birds were not seen again.

198. GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L.

A regular winter visitor in small numbers. About a dozen birds, both mature and immature, regularly haunt the river near Holystone, where they obtain waste offal from the nearby kennels. In summer, it is frequently seen in pairs, quartering the moorlands and moorland loughs; though much of the ground is suitable for nesting, it has never been known to nest.

199. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus graellsii* (Brehm).

A regular summer visitor. Small numbers in adult plumage occur regularly during May and June.

200. HERRING-GULL *Larus a. argentatus* Pontopp.

Small numbers, mostly immature, in winter.

201. COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L.

A winter visitor in small numbers, and passage migrant. Numbers reach their peak in April, when large flocks congregate about the lower reaches of the river, prior to their departure north.

208. BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L.

A common summer resident; also a winter visitor in small numbers. Breeds on Little Lough, also a pair or two on Darden Lough, and usually a colony on Chartners. In 1950, fully eight hundred pairs bred on Linsheeles Lake, but in the following year the number fell to one or two pairs. As a winter visitor, it occurs in small numbers about the river, often singly.

232. STOCK-DOVE *Columba oenas* L.

A fairly common resident. It is found breeding both in hollow trees on the low ground, and in high crags.

234. WOOD-PIGEON *Columba palumbus* L.

An abundant resident and winter visitor. Large numbers present throughout the year.

237. CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* L.

A common summer resident, though numbers vary each year. Fosterers : Meadow-Pipit and Tree-Pipit.

241. BARN-OWL *Tyto alba* (Scopoli).

A resident, rare and decreasing. Pair bred Hepple Whitefield, 1953.

246. LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua vidalii* A. E. Brehm.

A resident in small numbers. There is evidence that, in recent years, one or two pairs have nested, or attempted to do so.

247. TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco sylvatica* Shaw.

A resident, common and increasing. The most common of the owls, breeding at all elevations wherever suitable sites occur.

248. LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* (L).

A resident, now rare and decreasing. It seems that the Tawny Owl has now almost completely displaced this species.

249. SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* (Pontoppidan).

A summer resident ; occasional birds more or less resident. Scattered pairs breed throughout the moorlands, though perhaps less commonly than formerly. Undoubtedly many birds have, in recent years, moved into the neighbouring dale of the Rede, where the Forestry Commission's plantations of young conifers greatly attract the species.

252. NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus* L.

A fairly well represented summer resident. One of the most favoured breeding grounds is between Alwinton and Harbottle, where two or three pairs regularly return every year.

255. SWIFT *Apus apus* (L).

A common summer resident. Found breeding in the ruins of Harbottle Castle, and in all the old peel towers of the district.

258. KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis ispida* L.

Has probably never been a common species. Only a single bird observed during last few years—on January 14th, 1951.

262. GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis pluvius* Hartert.

A resident species which has arrived in the district only within the last three or four years. Now heard regularly in the woods around Harbottle, Holystone and Grasslees.

263. GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

Dendrocopos major anglicus (Hartert).

A resident. Common throughout all the woodlands.

272. SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* L.

An abundant summer resident. Return to breeding grounds begins in mid-February.

274. SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L.

A common summer resident. Earliest recorded arrival : April 13th, 1952.

276. HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L).

A well represented summer resident. A small colony nests each year under the bridge over the river at Sharperton. Others found at many of the farmsteads up and down the valley.

277. SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L).

An extremely abundant summer resident, found breeding for many miles on both banks of the Coquet. Small numbers, though quite often only single pairs, may be found nesting far up the Cheviot burns. On the Riddlees Burn, for example, the nest may be excavated out of the peat which may be only about ten inches deep, and covering solid rock.

279. RAVEN *Corvus corax* L.

A resident. Four pairs invariably manage to bring off broods annually. In common with the Peregrine, its numbers are limited by lack of suitable nesting-sites, the birds by tradition only nesting in crags. However, from time to time, wandering pairs will turn up and attempt nest-building on some rocky outcrop, but usually without success. During the present spring (1954) a pair has built a nest in the Darden Valley within half a mile of an established pair.

280. CARRION CROW *Corvus corone* L.

A very common resident. Found breeding in every woodland, and far out on the moors in single trees and clumps. On the whole,

little attempt is made to reduce its numbers; on a single estate, however, no less than 362 birds were destroyed over a period of two years—1952-53.

281. HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L.

A casual winter visitor. Usually occurs singly, from November to April.

282. ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* L.

A common resident. There are small rookeries throughout the district, one or two even extending into the Cheviots, as at Linsheeles.

283. JACKDAW *Corvus monedula spermologus* Vieillot.

A common resident. Shows every sign of increasing yearly.

284. MAGPIE. *Pica pica* (L).

An uncommon resident. Has occasionally bred near Sharperton. A pair annually attempts to nest near Little Tosson, but the nest is usually destroyed by the keeper. One or two pairs breed in the old thorn hedges in the Burradon-Thropton area.

286. JAY *Garrulus glandarius rufitergum* Hartert.

A rather uncommon resident. Breeds sparingly in the woodlands near Holystone and elsewhere. In winter, small parties of four or five birds are occasionally met with as they roam from woodland to woodland.

288. GREAT TITMOUSE *Parus major newtoni* Prazak.

A common resident.

289. BLUE TITMOUSE *Parus caeruleus obscurus* Prazak.

A common resident.

290. COAL-TITMOUSE *Parus ater britannicus* Sharp & Dresser

A resident. Not so common as the two previous species.

292. MARSH-TITMOUSE *Parus palustris dresseri* Stejneger.

A common resident, usually seen in pairs about the nesting woods throughout the year.

Note.—Although the district appears eminently suitable for the Willow-Titmouse (*Parus atricapillus*), the species seems to be entirely absent.

294. LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE *Aegithalos caudatus rosaceus* Mathews.

A resident, and regular winter visitor. Though fairly well represented, its numbers vary somewhat each year. It usually nests well up in alder or birch, but some nests are placed in small thorn bushes. In winter, flocks of variable size roam the woodlands.

298. TREE-CREEPER *Certhia familiaris britannica* Ridgeway.

A common resident. Found in every woodland. One pair nested for three consecutive years in the same site. Very much a resident species and, in winter, often the sole occupant of many woods.

299. WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.).

A common resident ; widely distributed.

300. DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus gularis* (Latham).

A common resident ; numbers now fully recovered after the severe winter of 1946-47.

301. MISTLE-THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* L.

A well represented resident. During the last two or three years it has shown a notable increase in numbers.

302. FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L.

A common winter visitor. Flocks of variable size roam the district from November to late April. Exceptionally numerous during the winter of 1953-54, large flocks being still present on April 18th. During autumn passage, large numbers pass through the district flying S.W.

303. SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton.

A common resident. The majority of birds leave the district in winter. Not so common as the Blackbird. Numbers increased during the last three years.

304. REDWING *Turdus musicus* L.

A winter visitor in small numbers. Occurs mainly during autumn passage, but small numbers remain throughout the winter until April. Often seen singly.

307. RING-OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* L.

A summer resident. Numbers not so great as in favoured localities elsewhere. It is chiefly found breeding in the upper reaches of the dale ; usually one pair only in each cleugh, or heather-covered siding.

308. BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L.

A common resident. Unlike the Song-Thrush, the Blackbird readily adapts itself to a wide range of habitat. In the Grasslees Valley, for example, it commonly nests in holes and hollows of tree-trunks, stone walls, and insides of barns. Two factors which may account for this are (i) the large number of birds seeking sites and (ii) the lack of foliage in the breeding-season, in an upland area.

311. WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L).

A common summer resident, found breeding at all elevations. Same nesting-hole often used in following year.

318. WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L).

A very common summer resident, breeding at all elevations up to 1,000 feet. Earliest arrival:—April 13th, 1952.

320. REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L).

A common summer resident. Haunts the same woodlands as the Pied Flycatcher, and breeds in identical nest-sites, although a few birds nest in stone walls. Earliest arrival:—April 27th, 1952.

325. REDBREAST *Erithacus rubecula melophilus* Hartert.

A resident. A common bird of the woodlands.

337. SEDGE-WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L).

A well represented summer resident. This species is chiefly confined to the riverside marshes, where it breeds fairly freely.

346. GARDEN-WARBLER *Sylvia borin* (Boddaert).

A summer resident. Not quite so numerous as the preceding species. The nest is usually found in brambles, a young conifer, or a clump of honeysuckle. It may be worthy of mention that, for some obscure reason, clutches of eggs tend to be remarkably small, three eggs being an average clutch. Furthermore, one or two eggs invariably fail to hatch.

347. WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Latham.

An abundant summer resident. In common with the Whinchat, it is found breeding on the moorlands up to 1,000 feet above sea-level; the typical nesting-site is a patch of bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

354. WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L).

A very common summer resident.

357. WOOD-WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Bechstein).

A regular summer resident, although numbers extremely small. A survey made in 1953, and covering over two-thirds of all suitable habitats in the district, showed a total of four breeding pairs in three widely-separated woodlands.

364. GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus anglorum* Hartert.

A common resident, found breeding wherever there are conifers.

366. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* (Pallas).

A common summer resident of regular occurrence and wide distribution. In the Cheviots, near Linbrig, a pair nested for two consecutive seasons on the steep bank of the river, the nesting-site resembling that of the Grey Wagtail.

368. PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pallas).

A well represented summer resident. It favours the natural woods of birch, alder and oak found growing in the subsidiary valleys, such as Grasslees. The nesting-site is usually five to seven feet from the ground. The male birds regularly arrive well in advance of the females.

371. HEDGE-SPARROW *Prunella modularis occidentalis* (Hartert)

A common resident. Pairs occasionally wander far out on to the moorlands, where they haunt the streams and rocky cleughs.

373. MEADOW-PIBIT *Anthus pratensis* (L).

An abundant summer resident. It is found breeding throughout the district at all elevations. Small numbers remain on the moorlands until late autumn and early winter.

376. TREE-PIBIT *Anthus trivialis* (L).

A common summer resident, found breeding in the open birch woods, often far out on the fringe of the moorlands.

380. PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrelli* Gould.

An abundant summer resident. It usually arrives in early March. After the breeding season, large numbers gather into loose flocks and resort to the riverside pastures.

381. GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* Tunstall.

A numerous summer resident. Favourite nesting-sites may be resorted to year after year. Its numbers appear to remain constant.

389. STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L.

A common resident. It is often found nesting in the old holes of Great Spotted Woodpecker, far up the birch-clad moorland burns.

392. GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris* (L).

A common resident. Found breeding throughout all suitable parts of the district. In winter large flocks roam the more cultivated areas found in the lower reaches of the dale.

393. GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis britannica* (Hartert).

A summer resident and casual winter visitor. An uncommon and sparsely represented species which, in quite recent years, has shown a slight increase in numbers. The birds first make their appearance in early April, either in single pairs or in small flocks of four or five. On two occasions only has the species been recorded in winter: two birds near Farnham Moor on November 8th, and five near Holystone Grange on December 20th; both occurrences, incidentally, were in the same year—1953.

394. SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* (L).

A winter visitor of rather irregular occurrence. Though fairly numerous in the winter of 1950-51, it is usually found in small numbers only, often in the company of other finches.

395. LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* (L).

A common summer resident. It returns year after year to its favourite breeding haunts, chiefly gorse-covered wastes.

396. TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris pipilans* (Latham).

A summer resident breeding in small numbers, and of irregular occurrence. Two or three pairs almost certainly bred in the Darden Burn valley in 1952. In the following year, a single pair returned to the same place and successfully reared a brood of five, which were ready to leave the nest on June 21st. While many pairs are undoubtedly double-brooded, it is one of the last of the moorland birds to begin breeding.

397. REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea cabaret* (P. L. S. Müller).

A fairly common resident; also a regular winter visitor. It is usually found breeding in small colonies of three or four pairs. By far the most common nesting-site is in young birch, about five feet from the ground. In winter it frequents the birch and alder woods found growing along the moorland burns. In 1951, a flock, consisting of at least fifty birds, was still present as late as May 6th.

401. BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula nesa* Mathews & Iredale.

A summer resident, fairly well represented. Breeding birds appear to be summer residents; on one occasion only has the species been observed in winter—a single bird. It is regularly found breeding between Alwinton and Harbottle. The nest is usually placed in a young conifer, but also quite frequently in young birch, and once in snowberry.

404. CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* L.

Bred near Harbottle in 1952. On July 29th, 1950, five seen near Holystone Grange. Odd pairs no doubt breed from time to time undetected in the many scattered conifer woods.

407. CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs gengleri* Kleinschmidt.

A common resident found breeding wherever trees and bushes afford it nesting-sites.

408. BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* L.

A fairly regular winter visitor, usually in small numbers and mixing with other finches. On April 4th, 1954, near Sharperton, fully fifty birds were seen feeding on a heap of weed-seeds, which had recently been discharged from a threshing-machine.

409. YELLOW HAMMER *Emberiza citrinella nebulosa* Gengler.

A common resident, widely distributed.

421. REED-BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* (L).

A common summer resident. Pairs may be found breeding far into the Cheviots, beside the smallest patch of reeds. By mid-February, single male birds begin to arrive on the breeding grounds.

423. SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L).

A regular winter visitor. Flocks of variable size roam the Cheviot grasslands from November to March.

424. HOUSE-SPARROW *Passer domesticus* (L).

A resident. Usually a few pairs found about each farmstead.

425. TREE-SPARROW *Passer montanus* (L).

An uncommon summer resident, breeding only sporadically, and in very small numbers. In 1952, a pair nested in a tree close to the river near Hepple.

THE BADGER

carnivora

IN NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM

ITS NUMBERS AND DISTRIBUTION, PAST AND PRESENT

By

G. A. COWEN

Though the birds of the two Counties have always received considerable attention from observers and writers, the mammals of Northumberland and Durham had been sadly neglected until Mr. G. W. Temperley last year produced his paper on the Red and the Grey Squirrels. I have been prevailed upon to collect some information on the Badger (*Meles meles* L.) in the hope that others may follow suit with the remaining mammals both common and less common in the two Counties. I have always lived on the borders of the two Counties in either the Tyne or Derwent Valleys and have studied Badgers in this district for many years. To add to my personal observations I have sought the assistance of a number of naturalists, gamekeepers, Masters of Foxhounds and other observers in different parts of Northumberland and Durham in an effort to obtain a comprehensive picture of the present distribution of the Badger and of the increasing or decreasing trend of the Badger population over the last half century. I wish to thank most sincerely all those who have so kindly written to me, answered my questions and in so many ways assisted me.

It has not been in any way my intention to deal with the general natural history or habits of the Badger except in so far as they may particularly apply to the two Counties under consideration. Such lifelong observers as Miss Frances Pitt and Mr. H. M. Batten have already written widely on this subject and more recently Mr. Ernest Neal has written what may be termed an up-to-date monograph on the Badger containing a number of photographs taken by himself which are unlikely ever to be excelled.

EARLY RECORDS

Badgers have probably inhabited the North-east of England in greater or less numbers throughout historic times. Bones of the Badger have been found in a number of ancient caves in County Durham, but it has not been possible to prove whether such bones were contemporaneous with other material found in these caves at

the same time. Badgers will undoubtedly have lived in such caves during the hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years which have passed since some of the early deposits were first left there. In 1878 the old sea-caves at Whitburn Lizards, on the Durham coast, were discovered and Mr. John Hancock identified the various bones found therein. These included bones of the Horse, Cow, Sheep, Dog, Pig or Wild Boar, Red Deer, Roe Deer, Badger, Fox, Yellow-breasted Marten, Weasel, Hedgehog, Mole, Water Vole, and among other birds' bones, those of the Kestrel, Merlin and Great Auk. Mr. Richard Howse, writing in 1880 on this find, remarks that "the badger, formerly abundant in the Northern Counties of England, has now disappeared from our locality and is only found in the more wooded and secluded parts of the South of England." (*Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne*, 1880, Vol. VII). This cave was formed during the maximum post-glacial depression of the land but, as mentioned above, there is no certainty that all the remains found in the cave date back to the same period.

Badger remains were also found in the Heathery Burn Cave in Weardale together with a number of Bronze Age relics. In the Backhouse Caves in Teesdale the remains of badgers were found together with one of the very few examples of Lynx remains to have been found in this country.

PLACE NAMES

Before passing on to more modern times, the ancient association of the Badger with the district can be traced in a considerable number of place names derived from the Badger under its various names of Brock, Pate and Grey. To give only a sample of these names there are Brockdam and Eshott Brocks in Northumberland and Brockley Hall and Brockwell in County Durham. The latter, through the famous Brockwell seam, is well known to all mining engineers and pitmen. In Weardale are Brock Banks (Eastgate) and Patefield Brow (Westgate). The word Grey is associated with various place names, but it is not always certain whether it refers to badgers or merely to the colour.

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

We must now skip many unrecorded centuries till we come to the period of the 17th century when it became very general for churchwardens to pay for the heads of a number of so-called destructive

animals killed in their parishes. These included Fox (Tod, Todd), Polecat (Foumart, Foulmart, Marten), Badger (Brock, Pate), Cat, Otter, etc. I include here extracts from two Churchwardens' Books which may be considered typical of many others. They would appear to indicate the comparative numbers of the various animals in their districts at that time and also, by the amounts paid, the degree of damage done or considered to be done by the different varieties.

Extracts from the Churchwardens' Book of the Parish of Ryton :

| | | | |
|------|---|---------------|----------------|
| 1666 | " It is likewise ordered that there be a sesse of 3d. per plough and 1d. per cottage laid on to pay for fox heads." | | |
| 1667 | Ryton | 1 Fox Head. | |
| | Winlington [Winlaton] | 4 Fox Heads. | |
| | Chopwell | 36 Fox Heads. | 1 Brocke Head. |
| 1669 | Paid for 14 Fox Heads | 14-0d. | |
| | 2 Catt Heads | 2-0d. | |
| | 2 Foumart Heads | 4d. | |
| 1696 | Paid for a Polecat Head | 4d. | |
| 1706 | Paid for two Martin Heads | 4d. | |

Extracts from the Stanhope Church Parish Accounts :

| | | |
|------|-------------------------|--------|
| 1693 | 2 Otter Heads | 4-0d. |
| 1695 | 13 Fox Heads | 13-0d. |
| 1696 | 3 Fox Heads | 3-0d. |
| 1696 | 12 Fox Heads | 12-0d. |
| 1696 | 4 Fox Heads | 4-0d. |
| 1697 | 1 Otter Head | 2-0d. |
| 1698 | 3 Fox Heads and 2 Pates | 4-0d. |
| 1700 | 3 Otter Heads | 6-0d. |
| 1702 | 8 Fox Heads | 1-0-0 |
| 1703 | 2 Pate Heads | 8d. |
| 1703 | 1 Foulmart Head | 4d. |
| 1703 | 2 Broks | 8d. |
| 1703 | 2 Pates Heads | 8d. |

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The history of almost all British animals and birds which can be classed as either game or predatory follows much the same pattern during the last thousand years. From the Norman Conquest up to the mid-17th century game (especially deer) was carefully preserved by strict and varying laws in the interests of the Royal Family. The

predatory animals and birds were left much to their own devices, except when they caused damage to the local population. As has been shown, towards the end of the 17th and the early 18th centuries the Churchwardens took an interest in the destruction of so-called vermin. Then, with the coming of the shot gun and, subsequently, the large land enclosures, came the period of intensive game-preservation, large numbers of gamekeepers and the day of the battue. This covered the late 18th century, the whole of the 19th century and continued more or less up to 1914. This was a very bad period for British birds of prey and for the predatory or semi-predatory animals. The kite, the polecat, the pine marten and others were virtually exterminated. The badger was probably at its lowest in the North of England during the 19th century. Although omnivorous and largely vegetarian during most of the year, badgers were undoubtedly destroyed wholesale on the intensive game preserves. During the 18th and early 19th centuries large numbers were caught for the so-called sport of badger-baiting and most public houses with a "sporting" landlord kept a badger in a barrel in the yard for customers to try their dogs at.

Macpherson (1892) wrote: "From 1830 onwards badgers were extinct in Westmorland and Cumberland." In 1895 Sir Alfred Pease wrote: "The badger is practically extinct in Northumberland and entirely so in the County of Durham." By 1903 Thomas Robson, of Winlaton, could report that: "The badger is becoming much more common, especially in the lower reaches of the Derwent Valley than was formerly the case." Thomas Charlton, my gamekeeper, tells me that when he first started work for my grandfather at Blaydon Burn in 1893 there were no badgers in the Blaydon Burn valley or the lower Derwent valley. They are comparatively common in both districts to-day.

The following are extracts from various local writers on natural history during the late 18th and 19th centuries. The Rev. John Wallis wrote in 1769: "The Badger is frequent in the woods and by the sides of rivers in our alpine vales." (*The Natural History and Antiquities of Northumberland*, Vol. I). Mr. John Hutchinson, of Lanchester, Co. Durham, wrote in 1840: "It is not common Badgers have occasionally been taken in Croxdale and Keeper Woods" "The Badger is a scarce animal in the County. It was formerly trapped for the purpose of being baited, a cruel diversion and much out of fashion in the present." (*Durham Fishes, Reptiles and Quadrupeds*, MS.). In 1864 H. T. Mennell and V. R. Perkins wrote: "This interesting animal is still to be met with in considerable

numbers in many parts of our district." They give the following places where badgers had been seen or taken recently in the two Counties :

Northumberland : Hedley Wood, near Weldon Bridge ; Batey's Crag, near Cocklaw ; Hareshaw Linn, Woodburn ; Brockhill, Stamfordham ; Long Nursery, Gilchesters, Dissington ; Bewick on Beamish.

Durham : St. John's, Weardale ; Castle Eden Dene ; Banks of the Wear near Lumley ; Softly Wood, Knarsdale (*Transactions of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club*, Vol. VI, 1863-64). Dr. Leonard Gill, writing in 1905, said : " The Badger has held its ground successfully in the County of Durham. It is fairly plentiful in the more secluded western half of the County and also inhabits some of the quieter woodlands of the eastern half." (*Victoria County History of Durham*, 1905). Thomas Robson, of Winlaton (1903), writing of the Derwent Valley, said : " In the year 1899 it reared its young in the vicinity of the Spen. It also makes its home at Gibside, Milkwellburn Woods, Allensford and Hisehope Burn. About three years ago a female was caught in the Broadoak Coverts." (*Vale of Derwent Naturalists' Field Club*, Vol. IV, 1901-1902).

From my own observations and those which I have recently collected from the two Counties, the number of badgers has generally increased over the last 40 years. Since 1914 there has been no wholesale destruction. Some are still killed by gamekeepers and farmers, usually when they have been known to interfere with game eggs or poultry. A certain number are caught by rabbit trappers. (There is no doubt that badgers can interfere considerably with rabbit-snaring and trapping operations.) A growing number are run over at night on roads and, to a lesser extent, on railways. Odd ones are killed (almost always in the autumn) by foxhounds.

The general picture over the last 200 years is that they held their natural level of numbers up to about 1750, gradually declined 1750-1825, rapidly declined 1825-1890, slowly increased 1890-1914 and from 1914 to the present time have increased in most places fairly rapidly. This latter increase was confirmed on a national scale as opposed to a purely local one by Miss Frances Pitt, who considered that badgers had increased very considerably during the first 35 years of this century. In her own district of Shropshire she estimated that they had increased fourfold in 30 years. (*Journal of Animal Ecology*, 1935).

PRESENT DISTRIBUTION

In order to form a picture of the present number and distribution of the badger in the two counties, I have made enquiries, as nearly as possible, to cover all parts of the area under review. I did this in the form of a questionnaire sent to each district. Most of those who so kindly replied wrote saying that they felt that their answers would not be very helpful. This was far from being the case, for the answers, when grouped together and tabulated, give a very good picture of the whole area.

Throughout the two counties the Badger to-day is common or at least fairly common. In almost all parts it is increasing. The exception to the general increase is in North Northumberland, roughly speaking north of the River Coquet. In the Coquet valley itself they are probably about static, but in the Belford and Wooler areas they are showing a small decrease. All my correspondents point to the same reason for this, namely, the intensive campaign being waged on rabbits since 1939. Rabbit traps and, even more, the gassing of rabbits, have undoubtedly killed a considerable number of badgers in the north.

It appeared an almost impossible task to estimate the numbers of badgers in the area, but I thought it might be possible to get some idea of the ratio of badgers to foxes as at least some guide to numerical strength. Fox-hunting takes place in most rural parts of the two counties, with the result that foxes are not destroyed at sight as they might otherwise be. This tends to a certain preservation of foxes in most places. The overall picture I get is that the ratio of foxes to badgers is as three to one throughout the two counties. There are three districts where the numbers of badgers are reported to equal or exceed the number of foxes and in each case no foxhunting takes place, but shooting interests are uppermost. These are the areas around Chester-le-Street and Lambton Park, around Blagdon and Seaton Burn and also around Allendale and Allenheads. No doubt badgers are but little interfered with in these districts, whereas foxes are severely controlled in the interests of game.

Provided that the ground is suitable for underground working and that food supplies are available, there appear to be no limits as to the height above sea level at which badgers are found in this district. They are reported from sea level up to 2,000 ft. above. They are found from Cheviot down to the coast. There are many reports of

them living regularly on the 900' to 1,000' contour. I have reports of badgers at Windy Ghyll, Coquetdale (2,000'), Eggleston (Teesdale) 1,400', Sinderhope (Allendale) 1,200' and many more besides. They are not often found on the open moors, but where denes and ghylls with scrub trees, bracken and rocks run out on to the hills there seems to be no limit as to altitude.

Badgers live almost entirely underground, coming out only during the hours of darkness. When they do lie rough, it is almost always in the very thickest of cover, a preference being shown for whins and rhododendrons. They very rarely lie out at any time of the year except in the autumn from August to October. If they are found above ground at other times of the year it is usually the result of earth-stopping operations for fox-hunting or of their being flooded out of drains where they often live.

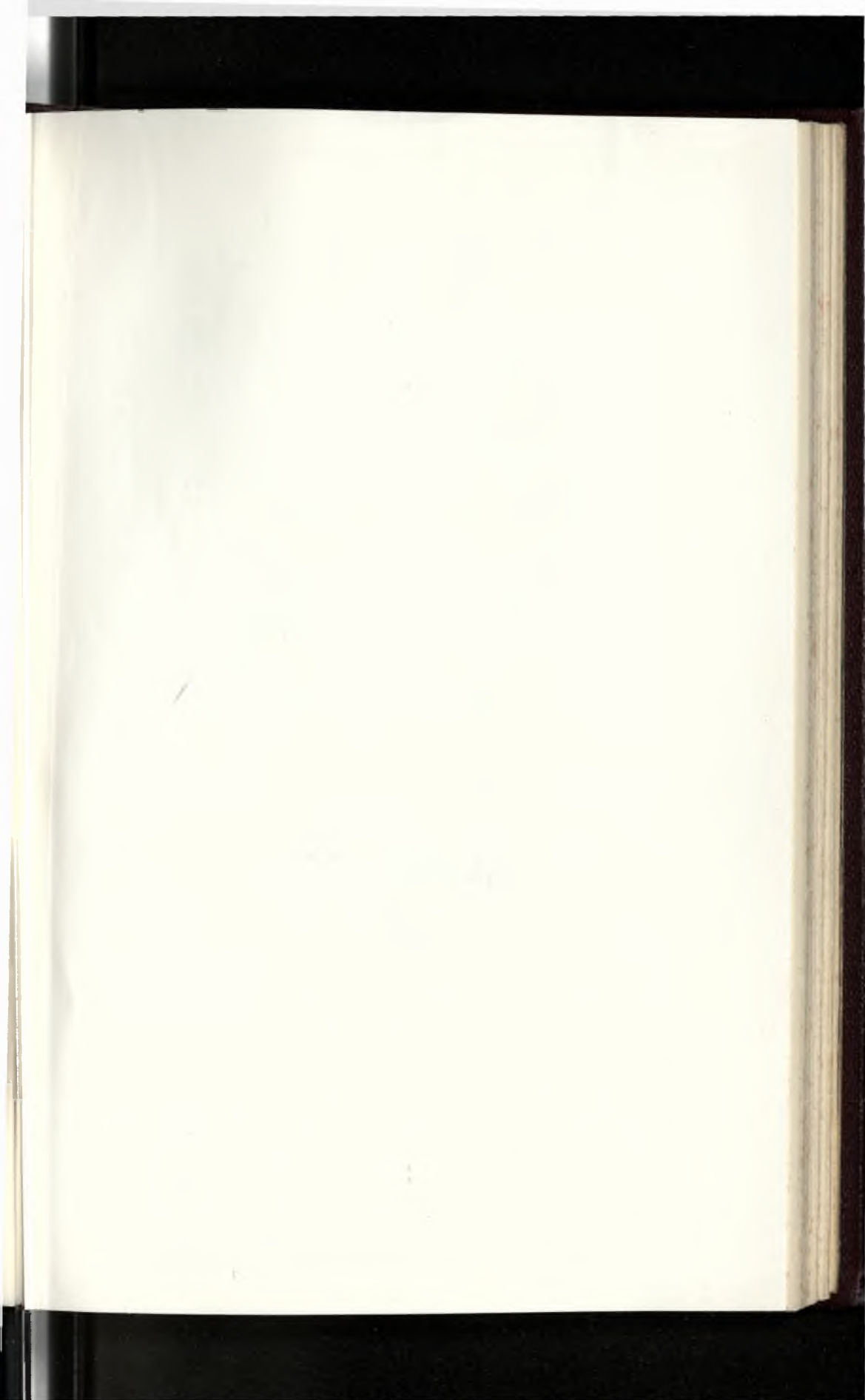
SIZE OF FAMILIES

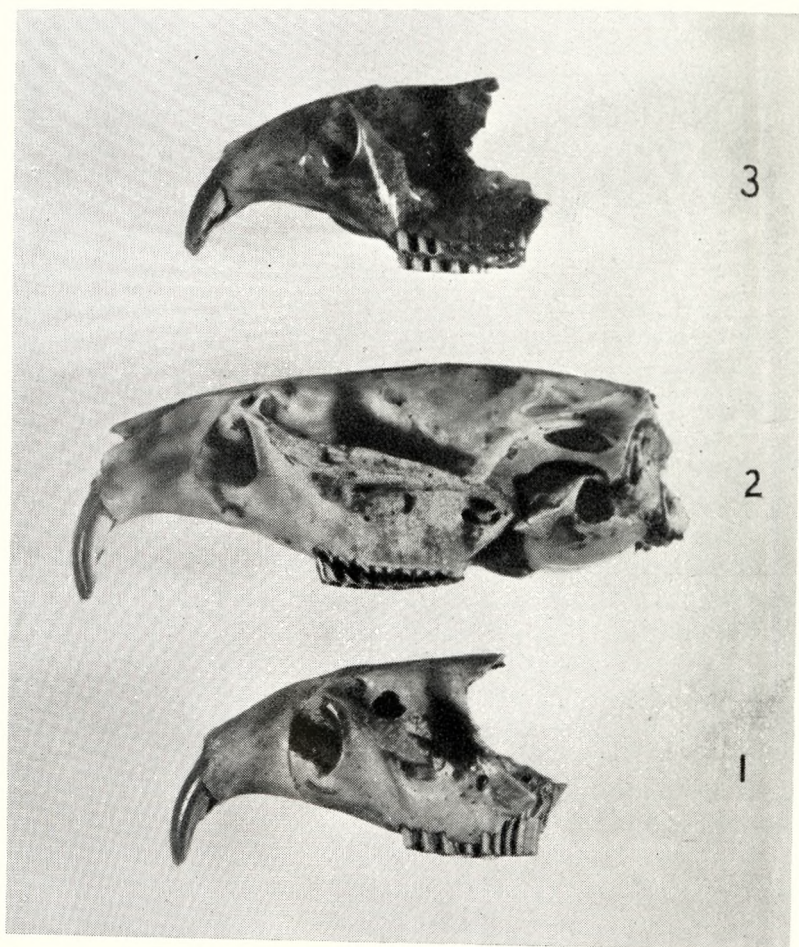
In my questionnaire primarily dealing with the numbers and distribution of badgers I touched on three other questions. One of these was the number of young found in each litter. The usual textbook figure given for a litter of badgers is two to four. I do not find that local records vary much from these figures. In my personal observations I have always found that hill foxes tend to have larger litters than their more sophisticated sisters and I am now inclined to think the same applies to badgers. My own records show the following as the most common number of badger cubs to a litter, in the order given: 2, 3, 1, 4. In response to my questions I have received three reports of litters of five cubs. These come from Allendale, Upper Coquetdale and Fourstones. I have never personally observed more than four in a litter.

A second question I mentioned in my questionnaire referred to unusual colour in badgers. From time to time badgers of a yellow or sandy colour or alternatively of a reddish or cinnamon tinge are observed in different parts of the country. Some of these are very genuine variations, as for instance the yellow-coloured sow with her two sandy offspring watched so often by Mr. Ernest Neal. Many of the reported cases are, however, in my opinion, due to staining from a local yellow or red earth or sandstone and are not an inherent colour variation. I have never personally seen any abnormal colour in badgers in Northumberland or Durham, nor have I been able to obtain any reliable reports of such being recorded or observed.

Thirdly and finally I have tried to find out what is the general belief locally as to the damage done by badgers, if any. I was most satisfied to find that replies to this question were most restrained and for the most part entirely coincided with my own observations. Many of my questionnaires were addressed to gamekeepers, foxhunters and farmers, all of whom are reported to be lifelong enemies of badgers. I am glad to say that I have not found any general enmity towards badgers, but much that is said in their favour. Most people who have lived in the country all their lives have heard of cases of a badger breaking into a henhouse, when he usually kills most of the inmates and as often as not is unable to find his way out and is killed on the site of his crime next morning. Many correspondents reported individual cases of this sort. Most gamekeepers and landowners report that they have known of pheasant or partridge nests destroyed by badgers, though not as a regular thing. No doubt a badger blundering on to such a nest will eat the contents, but I am certain in my own mind that he does not look for them and that his accidental finds are rare. I have no record of a badger interfering with grouse eggs or young. Badgers undoubtedly dig out and eat very large numbers of young rabbits in the nest stage which can only be for the good of the countryside. What is more annoying to the rabbit-trapper is the badger's habit of eating rabbits when they are caught in traps or snares. But they are not nearly such bad offenders in this respect as either foxes or cats. A very occasional young lamb is eaten by badgers, but a healthy active lamb can always get out of the way of a slow-moving badger; those eaten are usually found dead or dying. A rabbit or lamb killed by a badger is easily identified as they are expert skimmers and always leave the skin intact and neatly turned inside out. Masters of Foxhounds in the two counties have little complaint against badgers, except for their habit of opening up earths which have been stopped overnight before hunting. They put to the badger's credit the fact that they make and clear many an earth which is subsequently used by a vixen in which to lay up her cubs.

In conclusion I would say that badgers have increased in numbers fairly rapidly over the past forty years and are still increasing, though rather more slowly, in most parts of Northumberland and Durham. Their only real enemy is man and he, by greater enlightenment and increased tolerance, tends more to leave badgers to their own devices. That is all they ask for. They need no special protection or encouragement—just to be left alone.





10 20 30 40 50 M/M

Rodentia

NOTE ON SKULLS OF THE WATER VOLE FROM MARSDEN CAVES

By

THE EARL OF CRANBROOK

Through the kindness of the Curator of the Hancock Museum at Newcastle I have been able to examine some of the animal remains found in 1878 by Mr. John Daglish in the Marsden Caves on the Whitburn Lizards. This material consists of the broken skulls of two field voles (*Microtus*) with some lower incisors of the same and the remains of a number of water voles (*Arvicola*), viz. : 12 broken skulls, 125 (69 right and 56 left) more or less broken lower jaws and a large number of detached teeth. From the circumstances of their discovery (Howse, 1880) and from their appearance, all seem to be of recent date. The *Arvicola* remains are of an animal of the size of the ordinary English water vole (*Arvicola terrestris amphibius* Linn.) but seem to give some support to Thomas's suggestion that there is in N.E. England another sub-species which he described as *A. t. brigantium* (Thomas, 1928).

Though the British races usually live by the waterside, most species of *Arvicola* are terrestrial animals, some even leading an underground mole-like existence. Those most highly developed for a fossorial life are marked by the relatively greater protrusion of their upper incisors, which they use to bite their way through roots, earth, etc., in forming their runs under the surface. This pro-odonty is most marked amongst living members of the genus in the central and eastern European *A. scherman* Shaw, but is seen at its highest development in the fossil *A. abbotti* Hinton from the late Pleistocene of Britain. Even the living British races show it to some extent : they are in no way modified for aquatic life and a comparison of the skull of a water vole with that of a common rat will show how far the former's skull and teeth are developed for a fossorial existence.

Thomas devised a method of comparing the relative pro-odonty of different skulls by measuring the angle between the upper incisors and the plane of the crowns of the upper molars, calling that angle the " incisive angle " : this he found to be 90° (87-92) in *A. t. amphibius* and 97° (96-102) in *A. t. brigantium*. In *Arvicola* the crowns of the

molars are not set in a straight line but in a curve and it would seem that though each would himself make accurate and comparable measurements, different workers might well measure the incisive angle against a different tangent: it does not seem safe, therefore, to compare another worker's measurements with those recorded by Thomas. On the other hand, it is not difficult to judge from two skulls held in the hand if one is more pro-odont than another. None of the Marsden Cave skulls are less, and several are distinctly more pro-odont than normal *A. t. amphibius* but in some cases the incisors seem to be unnaturally worn and shortened at the tip, which would exaggerate the effect. Some of the others are of sub-adult individuals with the temporal ridges not, or scarcely, joined: in these the rostrum and incisors may not have reached their full proportionate length—these increase considerably with age, being relatively short in proportion to the rest of the skull in juvenile individuals (Hinton, 1926). On balance, however, though they do not seem to be so markedly pro-odont as those described by Thomas, the few skulls which are comparable could be referred to his *A. t. brigantium*. Of the mandibles only 21 have complete tooth rows: these are about average for *A. t. amphibius* and larger than *A. t. reta* Miller from the north of Scotland.

The plate shows (1) one of the Marsden Cave skulls compared with (2) a skull of *A. t. amphibius* from the south of England. Both are adult skulls of a comparable age with the temporal ridges fused to the same extent. (3) is a juvenile skull from the Marsden Caves with the temporal ridges still slightly open.

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ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FOR NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FOR 1954

Compiled from the notes and records of members of
the Natural History Society of Northumberland,
Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne and many other
observers throughout the two Counties

by

GEORGE W. TEMPERLEY, M.Sc., M.B.O.U.

More than 150 observers have contributed to this Report. Only a very small proportion of the many thousands of individual records and notes can here be quoted, but every one of them has been valuable in arriving at a true assessment of the status, distribution and movements of the birds in the two Counties. The names of the contributors will be found at the end of this Report and their initials will serve as a key to those used after the records quoted in the body of the Report.

The Natural History Society appreciates the co-operation of all those, whether members of the Society or not, who have generously contributed observations and notes, without which the compilation of this Report would have been impossible.

The use of square brackets in the Report signifies that there is some doubt whether a record can be accepted or whether a bird seen was truly wild. The omission of a common species from the Report signifies that no notes of special interest concerning it have been received, or, in the case of rare species, that it has not occurred.

As in the previous Reports, the classification followed is that of *The Check-list of the Birds of Great Britain and Ireland* (1952).

Abbreviations used :—N=Northumberland ; D=Durham ; B.B.=*British Birds* ; O.R.=*Ornithological Report* ; F.I.O.R.=*Farne Islands Ornithological Report*.

All notes and communications should be addressed to G. W. Temperley, "Restharrow," Stocksfield, Northumberland.

WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING BIRD LIFE

Much has been written and a great deal more said in condemnation of the weather experienced in 1954 ; but, in fact, the weather was not so abnormal when compared with that of several recent years. Its principal failing was in the lack of sunny days. The actual amount of rain, at least in Northumberland and Durham, was not so excessive, but it fell on more than the usual number of days and the lack of sunshine slowed down the rate of evaporation so that the soil remained continuously wet and often water-logged for considerable periods. This had the effect of delaying the cutting of the hay and, later, held up harvesting to a serious extent and interfered with potato-picking. On low-lying fields Lapwings and Curlews were often flooded out, but on the whole the late hay-harvest was favourable to the young Lapwings, Corncrakes and other ground-nesting species. The only really wintry spell was at the end of January and beginning of February. In the west and south heavy snow fell and many roads were blocked ; but on Tyneside not more than two or three inches were registered and the cold period was so short that it did not seriously affect bird life. The driest month of the year was April, which was milder than usual, though there was little sunshine. The first spring migrants were not very late ; but they straggled in slowly, breeding being deferred, perhaps owing to lack of insect food. A few warm days in early May welcomed the Swift and other late migrants. On the whole, to judge from the nesting-box returns and other evidence, woodland birds found no lack of food and good broods were reared. One of the outstanding features of the year was a period of S.E. winds which, in late August, swept across the North Sea bringing about an abnormal " drift migration " and carrying a larger number of passage migrants than is usual and several rare visitors to the North-east coast. Amongst the first was an unprecedented number of Ruffs, Wood-Sandpipers, Curlew-Sandpipers, Greenshanks and a few Black Terns ; while amongst the rarities were a Black-winged Stilt—the first recorded for Northumberland—two Temminck's Stints, seven Wrynecks and a couple of Richard's Pipits. Very large arrivals of Redwings, Fieldfares, Blackbirds and Bramblings were noted on October 9th, 15th to 18th, on the 23rd and again on the 26th and 27th, when, on various parts of the coast of both counties, large flocks were observed to fly in from the sea. During the first days of November an unusually large arrival of Woodcock took place. The most noticeable spell of sunshine occurred in November when, from the 7th to

the 17th, the skies were almost continually clear ; though the month closed with sudden and serious floods. Up to the end of the year no wintry weather occurred.

PROTECTION OF BIRDS ACT, 1954

To ornithologists and bird-lovers the most notable event of the year has been the passing of the Protection of Birds Act, which came into force on December 1st. Under this Act, for the first time, *all* birds, their eggs and nests are protected with the exception of a certain number of named species which may be destroyed at any time as pests (17 in number in England), or shot, outside the "close season" only, for food (23 in number). As a result of this new legislation no less than fifteen previous Acts have been repealed, bringing about a great simplification of the laws relating to bird protection. Instead of each county drawing up its own list of protected birds, wild birds are equally protected everywhere, thus making it a simpler matter for detecting infringements of the law. The heavy fines and terms of imprisonment which may now be enforced may at last be a deterrent to bird-catchers and egg-collectors. Every ornithologist should carry a précis of the Act and a copy of the schedules listing unprotected birds in his pocket and report any cases of infringement of the Act to the police. These may be obtained from the Hancock Museum free of charge.

BIRD-RINGING

Owing chiefly to unfavourable weather conditions, which hampered the activities of ringers, fewer birds were ringed in 1954 than in either of the previous years.

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Birds ringed in the Forestry Plantations and elsewhere ... | 642 |
| " " on the Farne Islands | 1,845 |
| Total | <u>2,487</u> |

This compares with 2,776 in 1953 and 3,579 in 1952.

Birds ringed elsewhere than on the Farnes were of 32 different species.

NESTING-BOX RETURNS. SEASON 1954

In the Forestry Commission's plantations near Hamsterley, Co. Durham, 304 nesting-boxes were put up for the 1954 season. Of

these, 90 were occupied, as compared with 84 in the previous year. Only once has this total been exceeded, namely in 1950, when 104 were occupied.

The nesting species were :—

| | | <i>No. of nests</i> | <i>No. of broods hatched</i> | <i>No. of young ringed</i> |
|-----------------|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Pied Flycatcher | ... | 21 | 20 | 50 |
| Redstart | ... | 16 | 15 | 45 |
| Great Tit | ... | 18 | 17 | 75 |
| Blue Tit | ... | 17 | 17 | 23 |
| Coal Tit | ... | 11 | 10 | 35 |
| Creepers | ... | 7 | 4 | 5 |
| | | 90 | 83 | 233 |

From the above it will be seen that out of 90 nests 83 broods were reared, or 93%. This compares very favourably indeed with the previous year in which only 64% of the broods were successfully reared and with 1952 (83%) and 1951 (84.5%).

The percentage of Pied Flycatcher's nests to the total of occupied boxes was 23%. This is the lowest figure for any of the last six years.

The above number of occupied nests does not include two in which Common Wrens built but did not lay. This habit in Wrens of building what are probably "cock nests" in nesting-boxes has been observed elsewhere.

The number of young birds ringed during the season, 233, compares with 224 last year. In addition, six adult Pied Flycatchers were captured and ringed.

In the Redesdale plantations 126 boxes were put up, but only 17 were occupied. The nesting species were :—Redstart 7, Great Tit 5, Coal Tit 3, Blue Tit 1, Creeper 1. 104 nestlings and 34 adults were ringed.

We are indebted to C.H.L., C.G. & L.M.M. for the above figures.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY ENQUIRIES

Heronry Census. Once again the census shows how few Herons now breed in the two counties. Only 44 nests were found to be occupied, and it is doubtful if young were successfully reared from some of them. For particulars see below. (Heron 30)

Unusual passage migration of Black Tern. As will be seen below (Black Tern 212) neither the spring nor the autumn numbers were much above the average of the last few years.

Common Buzzard Census. As mentioned in our previous Report, the B.T.O. organised a census of this species in 1954 to trace the recent extension of its breeding range which has occurred in some parts of the country. As will be seen below (Buzzard 91), no breeding took place in either county. Only the usual occasional visitors were noted.

Wryneck Census. When the taking of this census was first mooted it was not expected that any would be reported here; the Wryneck having become a very rare visitor indeed. However, during the last week in August and the first week in September, no less than seven separate birds were recorded, an unprecedented occurrence. See below (Wryneck 265).

Mute Swan Census. The Scientific Advisory Committee of the B.T.O. has approved a national census of the breeding population and of the non-breeding herds of Mute Swans in the spring of 1955. This will be taken partly in conjunction with the Wildfowl Census; but, as breeding pairs are scattered far and wide, often on very small inland waters, it will be necessary to cover a much wider field than is now surveyed by the census-takers. All members who can report breeding pairs are asked to do so, giving the name and exact position, if possible by quoting grid references from maps, of the waters frequented and the number of pairs breeding on each. Had "Operation Water-log" mentioned below, been completed earlier, this census would have been much easier to carry out.

Unusual number of Scaup in 1953-54. See below (Scaup 55).

WILDFOWL CENSUS AND "OPERATION WATER-LOG"

This Census, now in its seventh year, is now organised by The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Glos. In order that no waters capable of supporting wildfowl shall be missed, it is proposed that a National Register of Waters be compiled. No list of the waters in the two Northern Counties has ever been made, so it will become necessary to compile one. Steps are now being taken to carry this out and an appeal has been made for information as to the whereabouts and character of every inland water in the two counties, however small. Such a register will be of great value to other field-workers in natural history, zoologists, botanists, etc., and it is hoped that all who are

interested will co-operate in making the list as complete and informative as possible. Further information and the requisite forms may be obtained at the Museum.

MOULT MIGRATION OF THE SHELD-DUCK

For further evidence of this see below. (Sheld-duck 73.)

HOMING EXPERIMENTS WITH MANX SHEARWATERS

Once again, Manx Shearwaters from Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, were released on New Alston Fell north of Haydon Bridge, N. The following report on the result of the experiment has been sent by Dr. G. V. T. Matthews through Mr. W. Johnson who liberated the birds.

20 Birds released at 7.45 p.m., etc., on May 30th. No cloud, full sun.

13 Returned on night of May 31st

3 " " " June 1st

1 " " " " 2nd

3 no news.

20 Birds released at 2.30 p.m., etc., on June 6th. 10/10th cloud, no sun.

9 Returned on night of June 7th

5 " " " " 8th

2 " " " " 9th

1 " " " " 12th

3 no news.

It was very striking indeed to note how rapidly each bird, on being released, re-oriented itself and flew steadily and unerringly away to a point slightly west of south by an overland route which it could never have traversed before.

RECORDS OF UNUSUAL INTEREST IN 1954

Full details will be found below of the following records of special interest:—Marsh Harrier (99), breeding of Montagu's Harrier (102), Ospreys (103), Quail (107), Spotted Crake (121), Little Ringed Plover (135), Kentish Plover (136), Temminck's Stint (173), Black-winged Stilt (186), Iceland Gull (203), Sabine's Gull (209), Hoopoe (261), Wrynecks (265), Golden Oriole (278), Richard's Pipit (374), Lapland Buntings (422).

CLASSIFIED NOTES

1. BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus arcticus* L. (378)

In the early months of the year rather more than usual were reported. One or two were found dead on the shore ; one very badly oiled. (R.I.D.) A few remained into April ; the last reported was a single bird off the Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, N., on April 28th. In the autumn only two were reported ; one on November 7th off Cullernose Point, N. (W.S.C.) and the other on December 11th off Alnmouth, N. (A.W.M.)

2. GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn. (376)

Very few recorded. A pair spent the winter, January 10th to March 9th, in the Tees Estuary. (P.J.S.) A few were seen off the Northumberland coast—the last near Seahouses on April 18th. (E.A.R.E.) On March 4th one was picked up dead on the North Tyne above Chollerford. (O.W. per K.I.)

In autumn first reported on September 18th near Seahouses, N. (E.A.R.E.) On November 27th off Holy Island, after a heavy gale, five were seen. (B.L. & A.Bl.) On the following day one was seen flying south over the Tees Estuary and other birds were seen there on December 5th and 19th. (P.J.S., et al.)

4. RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus* Pontop. (379)

A few were seen off Teesmouth in the early months of the year, maximum four on February 18th ; last seen March 28th (P.J.S. et al.) During April and May off Bamburgh six were present and on June 2nd and 12th birds were seen in full breeding plumage. (E.A.R.E.) In autumn they were more than usually numerous. (A.Bl.) The return passage began on September 18th, and active movement occurred from October 21st to 23rd ; over sixty being seen in half an hour off the Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, N. ; perhaps due to storms in the wintering grounds off Heligoland. (E.A.R.E.) On November 7th nine were seen off Cullernose Point, N. (W.S.C.) On September 26th one was seen on Hallington Reservoir, N., 22 miles from the sea. (R.T.G.)

5. GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* (L.) (370)

During February and March, one was present on the park lake, Stockton-on-Tees (O.C.H.) and on February 21st one was picked up alive in the I.C.I. works at Billingham. (D.S. et al.)

At Hallington Reservoir, N., a pair was seen from April 20th onwards. A nest was found, but the eggs were destroyed, probably by a fox. Another nest was made and eggs were hatched, but both young and adults soon disappeared. (K.I.). At Colt Crag Reservoir, N., two pairs were present up to the end of May, but no young were reared. (R.T.G.) At Catcleugh Reservoir, N., a pair was present from March 30th onwards, but it was not until August that three young were seen. (J.H.A.)

6. RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Bodd.) (371)

On February 27th in Budle Bay, Bamburgh, N., one. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) On the 28th at Greatham Creek, Teesmouth, D., one; seen again in the same place on March 27th and 28th, perhaps the same bird, in company with a Great Crested Grebe. (P.J.S. & A.B.) On March 20th and 27th off Boulmer, N., one. (W.S.C.) On April 18th in Holy Island Harbour, N., one in full summer plumage. (B.L.)

During the autumn at least three were seen off the Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, N.; one young bird was picked up on the beach after a storm and ringed and released. (E.A.R.E.)

7. SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* (L.) (373)

On March 27th off Holy Island, N., c. 20, a most unusual number. (L.G.H.) From March 28th until April 15th one was seen on Holywell Ponds, N., just changing into summer plumage. (W.D.R. et al.)

8. BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps caspicus* Hablizl (374)

More reported than usual during January and February. From February 14th for c. three weeks, one was present on flood water near Monks' House, N. (E.A.R.E.) On the 22nd five were seen between Alnmouth and Warkworth (R.W.B. & N.A.R.) and a few more with Slavonians off Bamburgh. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

On June 13th a pair was present and displaying on the usual pond near Durham, but no breeding took place. (J.D.P.) On some flooded ground in Co. Durham one was seen on June 26th and July 27th and on the 30th two were present and remained up to August 9th when one was changing into winter plumage. Breeding was suspected, but not proved. (D.W.S. & P.L.H.)

9. LITTLE GREBE *Podiceps ruficollis* (Pallas) (375)

In the autumn unusually large numbers frequented Killingworth Mere, N.; on October 25th 41 were counted. (W.D.R.) Two pairs bred successfully on the lake in Darlington Park. (A.Ba.)

12. LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (Vieillot) (351)

On December 1st an exhausted bird alighted on the "S.S. Ben Vennock" while she was riding out a gale off the Farne Islands. It was brought in to Middlesbrough on December 2nd and handed over to Inspector Peacock of the R.S.P.C.A. who identified it and released it on the sea at Redcar. (P.J.S.) The only bird reported during the year.

16. MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus* Brünnich (355)

First reported on April 14th: a single bird off Holy Island, N. (G. Lilburn per B.L.) During May, June and July single birds and small flocks were seen; largest number a flock of 10 off the Farnes on June 22nd. (E.A.R.E.) A few in September. The last reported was on November 27th, when, after a heavy gale, six were flying over the sea with Kittiwakes and Fulmars. (B.L. & A.Bl.)

19. GREAT SHEARWATER *Procellaria gravis* O'Reilly (360)

On October 16th at Seahouses, N., a single bird flew close to the harbour piers, being mobbed by Herring Gulls. It was seen under most favourable conditions so that its size and plumage were accurately noted. The pale crescentic mark at the base of the tail was very clearly visible. The observer is quite familiar with the Great Shearwater, having seen it at close quarters in the Atlantic. (C.N.R.) On the following day a large Shearwater was seen afloat on the sea between the Inner Farne and the mainland, which, from the description given, was probably also of this species (P.J.L.H. per C.N.R.)

On several occasions during the past two or three years, large and medium-sized Shearwaters have been seen off the coast; but too far distant to make identification perfectly certain. It has therefore been impossible to decide which of several species visit our seas. It is satisfactory to have such a well-authenticated report of a Great Shearwater as that provided above. (See *O.R.*, 1946, 1948, 1952 and 1953.)

26. FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.) (368)

At several of the usual breeding haunts no young were reared. At some, eggs were laid but destroyed. At Holy Island very few young were reared; on the Farnes, none; on Bamburgh Castle cliff, none; at Spindleston, none; at Cullernose Point, one only; at Ratcheugh Crag, none; at Hartley cliffs, all eggs taken.

Adults returned early to their nesting sites for next season. From Holy Island they were only absent for about 14 days; one returned to

the Castle cliffs as early as November 1st. (G. Lilburn per B.L.) Three were at Cullernose Point on November 12th (W.S.C.) and fifteen at Marsden, D., by the 17th. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

On June 25th one was seen flying over Whickham, D., 12 miles inland. (L.G.H.)

27. GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.) (349)

During the first and second weeks of April an unusually heavy passage north was seen off the North Northumberland coast (E.A.R.E.) and in the middle of that month an adult bird was picked up dead on the moors near Bloody Bush on the Scottish Border, just west of Kielder, some 45 miles inland and within 10 miles of Falstone. On September 15th an immature bird was picked up exhausted at Falstone. It carried a ring proving that it had been ringed on the Bass Rock that summer. A week later, September 22nd, another immature bird was picked up in an exhausted state at Blanchland, N., some 28 miles inland.

On September 26th, outside our area, an immature bird was caught alive on a quarry pond at Garsdale, near Hawes, 50 miles inland from the east coast.

The date of the death of the Bloody Bush bird in April is unknown, so the weather conditions at the time are not known; but C.N.R. has gone very thoroughly into the weather reports for September, when the other birds were picked up, and he states that there were no easterly winds that could have blown these immature birds inland; in fact, what wind there was came from the W or WNW.

George Bolam in his *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* referred to several instances of Gannets being found inland. He wrote: "My journals contain several [such records]; one of a bird captured near Jedburgh in October, 1887, and others from the English slopes of the Cheviots." Unfortunately, he gives no dates for these, nor does he suggest that any of them were other than storm-driven waifs. However, from the evidence of these September birds, the Gannet inland is not always storm-driven and there may well be a migration passage of Gannets from east to west and *vice versa* across Northumberland. But more evidence is needed to prove this.

In the last week in December a bird was picked up alive but dying near Slaggyford on the South Tyne, 45 miles inland. (M.P.) This is a very late date and the bird may have been storm-driven.

On September 5th off Holy Island, during 25 minutes, c. 350 passed north. (C.J.H.) Very large concentrations were noted in mid-September: on one occasion c. 1,000 collected from the south to feed

in the Holy Island-Megstone area, probably on mackerel. (E.A.R.E.) On October 4th off Seahouses, between 6.15 and 7.45 a.m., birds were passing north at the rate of 50 a minute. In one-and-a-half hours some 4,500 must have passed. (C.J.H.)

28. CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.) (346)

During December an immature bird was on the River Tyne near Warden Bridge, N., 30 miles inland. It roosted at night on the bridge. (W.J.)

29. SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.). (348)

On January 14th at 9.0 a.m. an extraordinary northward movement of Shags and Cormorants was noted off Monks' House, N.; at least 400 birds, more Shags than Cormorants. Most probably due to a return after a southerly movement caused by the northerly gales of previous days. Later in the day a somewhat similar movement of Scoters was seen. (E.A.R.E.) Seen off Teesmouth in the early part of the year; maximum 16 on February 18th; last noted on March 14th. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.) More than usually plentiful on the coast off South Shields in spring. On February 22nd c. 25 fishing near the pier, remaining in the neighbourhood for some weeks. On April 21st at least nine on Marsden Rock; but not seen subsequently. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

30. HERON *Ardea cinerea* L. (389)

Northumbrian Heronries:—Longridge, Berwick: about 13 nests of which nine were occupied. (H.F.C. & R.F.L.) Chillingham: 12 nests occupied. (C.B.) Boundary Wood, Alnwick: four occupied nests. (J.E.R.) Styford, Tyne Valley: re-established on a new site: 12 nests counted, six occupied. (A.Bl.) Ridley Hall Woods: one nest only. (M.P.) Three single nests reported elsewhere, but whether successfully occupied is unknown. (per S.B.H.)

Durham Heronries:—Dyance Wood, Gainford: 15 occupied nests. (K.B.) Hamsterley: no nest this year. (C.H.L.)

On June 30th at Hartlepool, D., a Heron was seen to fly steadily out to sea for a distance of c. 2 miles, when it turned and flew back again. A cautionary note for visible migration watchers! (C.J.H.) On September 19th at Teesmouth at c. 4 p.m. three birds were seen flying in off the sea. (B.L.) There is however no doubt that the local Heron population is recruited from abroad. (See *O.R.*, 1941, 1946 and 1949).

38. BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris* (L.) (297)

On September 21st and 23rd at Gosforth Park Lake, one. (W.D.R. & B.L.) ; and on December 12th, another. (A.W.M.)

45. MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L. (317)

On April 25th on Killingworth Mere, N., a duck with 11 ducklings was seen. (W.D.R.) During May, in Gosforth Park, five nests were found, but in most cases the eggs were either destroyed or taken, probably by foxes. (W.D.R.)

Counts at Teesmouth :—During January and February from 300 to 500 falling to 100 by the end of March and 55 in early April. (D.S.R. & A.Ba.) In November c. 500. (P.J.S., A.Ba.)

46. TEAL *Anas crecca* L. (319)

On December 5th at Gosforth Park c. 300. An unusually large concentration. (W.D.R.)

47. GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* L. (322)

First reported on March 28th—an adult drake on Holywell Ponds, N. (B.L.) Reported in Co. Durham on several waters from April to September, but no breeding proved. It is stated that breeding has taken place in marshes at the Teesmouth of recent years. (P.J.S., C.J.H., et al.) A single drake was on Gosforth Park Lake on August 26th and September 9th and on Holywell Ponds on September 18th. (W.D.R.) Last reported on November 20th—a drake, on Upper Waskerley Reservoir, D. (C.T.L.H.)

49. GADWALL *Anas strepera* L. (318)

A very few reported during March/April and again in September/October. Last seen—a duck on Gosforth Park Lake on October 19th (M.W.R.), and again on December 7th. (B.L.)

50. WIGEON *Anas penelope* L. (323)

Very numerous during both winters. Maximum counts at Holy Island :—February 7th c. 8,000 and December 19th c. 8,000. (R.H.) At Teesmouth :—February 28th c. 600 ; a pair remained until June 17th but there has been no record of breeding in the Tees Marshes. (P.J.S. et. al.) On October 23rd at Holborn Moss in a flock of c. 3,000, c. 20% were adult drakes. (F.B.)

52. PINTAIL *Anas acuta* L. (325)

Several reported from various inland waters from January to April. A pair reared young successfully in a marsh near the Tees Estuary, where this species has now been breeding for several years. (C.J.H. & P.J.S.) Two drakes and a duck are wintering on Jarrow Slake. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

53. SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata* (L.) (326)

Single birds and small parties were present on inland waters and along the coast throughout the year. Breeding was suspected in one or two places. On one small water near the coast, two broods out of three were successfully reared. (W.S.C.)

55. SCAUP *Aythya marila* (L.) (331)

As reported above, the B.T.O. is carrying out an inquiry into the reasons for the unusual influx of Scaup on the coast and on inland waters during the winter of 1953-54. On the north-east coast, Scaup have never been really plentiful since the winter of 1946-47 and in the winters of 1951-52 and 1952-53 they were markedly scarce. In the autumn of 1953 a small increase was reported and this became more noticeable after the turn of the year. Off the Tees Estuary during February numbers rose from 17 on the first of the month to 120 on the 13th and from March 7th onwards there were between 180 and 220, falling to 17 on the 31st. Three drakes spent the summer there, being seen in July, August and September. (C.J.H., P.J.S., et al.) On Jarrow Slake, D., during February and March from three to fourteen. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Off Seaton Sluice, N., during February up to 40 were counted. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Off Warkworth at the end of February flocks of 31 (R.B. & N.A.R.) and of 70 (R.I.D.) were seen and at the end of January 30 were seen off Craster. (W.S.C.) At Holy Island a flock of c. 300 was in Coves Bay until the last week in April. (F.St.) Other smaller flocks were seen on the coast.

Several were reported from inland waters during February, usually single birds, but on the 23rd seven were seen on Swinhoe Lakes, N., $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the sea. (R.I.D.)

The first arrivals in the autumn of 1954 were noted on August 3rd, a single drake near Seahouses, and up to the end of the year numbers were only small. The largest flock reported was only 15 off Seaton Sluice, N., on October 3rd (W.D.R.) and off the Tees Estuary the maximum number reported was only 10. (P.J.S., C.J.H., et al.) Again a few single birds occurred on inland waters; on December 19th on Whittle Dene Reservoirs there were four. (H.L.)

56. TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* (L.) (330)

On March 22nd on the South Park Lake, Darlington, five. (A.Ba.) In May remarkably common on Gosforth Park Lake. On one day 24 were counted, evidently intent on breeding. (W.D.R.)

On July 26th, 1953, at Gosforth Park a duck was seen with a single duckling. This seems to be the first record of breeding in the Sanctuary. No doubt attempts have been made before, but all young birds are destroyed by pike as soon as they get on to the water. The fact that this brood only consisted of one duckling suggests that the others had been killed. No other observer reported this duckling, so it probably did not long survive. (T.W.)

57. POCHARD *Aythya ferina* (L.) (328)

The largest number occurred in mid-March, when there were 25 on Gosforth Park Lake (W.D.R.); 10 on Killingworth Mere; 13 at Hartburn (W.D.R.) and 20 at Grindon. (M.P.) Pairs and single birds remained through April, May, June and July, but no breeding was proved.

60. GOLDEN-EYE *Bucephala clangula* (L.) (332)

First seen in autumn on October 16th at Teesmouth, maximum number 11 on November 7th. (P.J.S.) In late October on the Weel, in Upper Teesdale, 1,500 ft. above sea-level, a pair. (K.B.) The largest number reported was on Hurworth Burn Reservoir when on November 13th 46 were counted. (P.J.S.)

61. LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* (L.) (334)

In about their usual numbers in the early part of the year. From April 14th to 20th more than 40 assembled gradually in the Budle Bay area, most of the drakes being in breeding plumage and courting assiduously, before leaving more or less simultaneously. (E.A.R.E.) First reported in autumn on November 2nd. (W.M.B.) On the 27th off Holy Island, 13. (B.L. & A.Bl.) Inland:—On November 13th a duck was on Hurworth Burn Reservoir, D. (P.J.S.) and throughout December one was on Howick Pond, N. (W.S.C.)

62. VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* (L.) (340)

In usual small numbers during both winters. Some remained late. On July 4th, five were seen at Goswick, N. (F.B. & F.G.G.) and on July 10th four off Seaton Sluice, N. (B.L.) First seen in autumn on August 25th.

64. COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.) (339)

An adult male, apparently uninjured, was taken to Monks' House at the end of December, where it remained for some time, becoming very tame. It devoured 30-odd shelled limpets at a sitting, three times a day. Its feeding method was interesting. When offered a limpet held between thumb and forefinger it "nuzzled" one's hand as far up as the wrist-watch for as long as half-a-minute before it discovered and wolfed the food. This suggests that it must feed "blind" on submerged mussel-beds and that sight is not called into play at all. (E.A.R.E.)

67. EIDER *Somateria mollissima* (L.) (337)

A good breeding season. In addition to the Farne Islands population more pairs than usual bred successfully on the mainland. (J.S.A. et al.)

69. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator* L. (343)

Some remained late into the summer: on June 19th, off Holy Island, seven (W.D.R.); on July 4th at Goswick, five (F.B. & F.G.G.) and on the 19th off Whitburn, D., two. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Numbers increased in November after severe gales.

70. GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* L. (342)

On February 13th at Whittle Dene Reservoirs, 37 were present, c. 20 of them drakes. They had flown in, in small parties, from 3.0 to 4.0 p.m. (J.H.)

71. SMEW *Mergus albellus* L. (344)

The two female or immature birds, which were reported as wintering on Gosforth Park Lake from November 25th, 1953 (see O.R., 1953), remained until March 20th, 1954, being seen either there or on Killingworth Mere on many occasions. From February 20th to 23rd they were joined by an adult drake. (W.D.R., T.W., et al.) On February 13th two, immature, were on Whittle Dene Reservoirs; perhaps the same birds. (J.H.) From January 29th an immature bird spent about a week on Budle Bay, N. (E.A.R.E.) and in February single birds, all immature or females, were seen on Swinhoe Lakes, N., Bolam Lake, N., Hallington Reservoir; and on the 28th a drake was in the Tees Estuary.

In the winter of 1954 one was seen on Fenham Flats on October 24th and a drake was on Hurworth Burn Reservoir on December 27th. (A.W.M. & B.J.)

73. SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.) (315)

Moult Migration :—On July 2nd at 8.10 p.m., a flock of 20 passed over Haltwhistle flying east. On August 7th at 8.30 p.m. a flock of 30 flew over. Clouds were low and it was raining at the time. The birds flew in V-formation, so low that the chestnut and white plumage could be seen by the naked eye. When nearly out of sight to the east they wheeled and flew back directly above the river for half a mile; finally they alighted on the river just below Haltwhistle and were still there when darkness fell. It is probable that this flock had been forced to check its migration flight on reaching an area of low cloud, thick mist and poor visibility. (M.P.)

The following figures show the building up of the number of birds in the Tees Estuary after the turn of the year and their dispersal in the breeding season. January 2nd 240, 12th 320, February 20th 340, March 6th 458, 8th 300, 28th 200, April 7th 144, May 2nd 50. From June until the end of September c. 20 adults present and c. 30 young were reared, several of which were later shot. (P.L.H. & P.J.S.) On October 6th 80, of all ages, November 13th 80, 28th 162, December 12th 255. (C.J.H.)

"On April 20th five pairs were seen circling on up-currents over the north end of Spindleston Crag, N., with 11 Fulmars and c. 50 Jackdaws. They flew clumsily but were obviously 'playing,' since the circling lasted for $\frac{1}{4}$ hour (timed) and was very distinct from normal flight. I have never seen ducks soaring before, but that is what it was; they were not just prospecting for burrows." (E.A.R.E.)

75/78. "GREY GEESE"

From September 18th onwards many flocks were seen in flight overhead, too high to be identified with certainty.

75. GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.) (303)

The usual flock wintered at Holborn Moss, N. c. 90 were present up to the middle of April. (F.B., R.F.L., et al.)

For the sixth successive summer a party of adult birds was on the Farne Islands; in June there were from 6 to 8 on the Wamses. (E.A.R.E., et al.)

By October 23rd c. 120 had returned to Holborn Moss, N. (F.B.) On October 26th 64 were on Kimmer Lough. (F.B.) From December 13th to 15th a flock of about 60 roosted on the lake at Capheaton, N. (per A.M.) and on the 31st 28 were on Colt Crag Reservoir (B.J.) and other smaller flocks were seen elsewhere in the north.

76. WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* (Scop.) (304)

On February 17th at Gosforth Park Lake a single bird was seen standing on the ice. Its white forehead, barred breast and orange legs were clearly seen. After about 5 hours it rose from the ice and flew away to the north. (W.D.R.) On February 21st at Greatham Creek, Teesmouth, one was seen with Sheld-duck and Wigeon, white forehead and barred belly distinctly seen. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.) On February 22nd off Holy Island, N., one was seen swimming close in shore. The white "front" on the face was clearly seen at a distance of c. 10 yds. (R.I.D.) These three single birds were the only ones recorded in the winter of 1953-54.

On September 18th, 19th and 25th a single immature bird was seen on Holywell Ponds, N. On October 8th and 10th, what was probably the same bird was on Gosforth Park Lake. (T.H.A., A.Bl., et al.)

78. BEAN-GOOSE *Anser arvensis arvensis* Brehm. (306)

On January 16th near Ellington Village, N., c. 2½ miles from the coast a single bird was shot. It bore a metal tag on its wing marked "Svenska Jägare—Förbundet 30547." It had been marked as a gosling near Stomsund, Jamtland, Sweden, on June 20th, 1953. This is the first Bean-Goose definitely identified in Northumberland for some years. On February 21st on Budle Bay, N., a single bird flew in at dusk to rest and preen on a small island, from which it flew as the tide rose. Its orange legs and the lack of grey on wings and rump were noted. (R.I.D.)

[A flock of 20 birds flew north over Fenham Flats, N., on September 26th. Their uniform brown necks and upper-parts, no pale forewings, no white foreheads or barred breasts were noted; they made no calls. In all probability they were Bean Geese. (F.B.)]

78. PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus* Baillon (307)

In February on Holy Island from 300 to 350. (R.H.) During March c. 250 were present on grass fields at Elwick, N., flying out a short distance to the end of Fenham Flats if disturbed. (E.A.R.E.) On February 14th at Teesmouth, five. (K.B.)

First reported in autumn on September 17th when 36 were feeding in a field near Blagdon, N. (M.W.R.) (The first arrived at Slimbridge, Glos., on September 19th—"a few days earlier than usual.") On September 19th at Teesmouth a flock of seven was seen to fly in from the sea; they appeared very tired and allowed a very close approach.

Later they were joined by others and by the 29th 22 were present and these remained in the estuary until the end of October. (P.J.S., et al.) At Holy Island the numbers reported were: September 26th *c.* 50, October 24th to end of December *c.* 300. (R.H.) At the end of October at Otterburn, N., a couple of wild birds alighted and joined a flock of domestic geese: they were still present up to November 11th. (W.L.McC.)

80. BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* (L.) (312)

On January 9th on Fenham Flats, N., 55 were seen. (B.L. & W.D.R.) On February 1st on Holy Island *c.* 200 turned up and on the 3rd and 4th 1,000 more. During the early part of March they numbered some 3,500. By April 4th only nine were left. (R.H.) In late January at Seal Sands, Teesmouth, five were present and on February 1st one was picked up alive in Middlesbrough; two remained until March 21st. Three of them were of the dark-breasted race. (P.J.S., C.J.H., et al.) On March 3rd 13 pale-breasted birds alighted on the beach at Monks' House.

In the autumn the first was reported on December 19th at Holy Island and by the last week of that month numbers had increased to *c.* 70. (R.H.) On January 7th, 1955, flocks of 110, 75 and 4 were seen near Holy Island. (W.D.R.)

81. BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (Bechstein) (311)

On September 24th a pair arrived on Monks' House pool where they remained till the 27th. (E.A.R.E.) On September 23rd on the Inner Farne, five. (U.G.) On October 15th at 11.0 a.m. a flock of from 80 to 90 flew in and alighted on the sand down the Mill Burn, Fenham Flats, N.; they were observed from a distance of *c.* 70 yds. and were all Barnacles. By the following day they had all left but one, which was seen on several occasions up to the 22nd. "I have never seen so many Barnacles at Holy Island before." (F.St.) The last record of such a flock was in 1937 when "about 100" were present near Holy Island for two or three days. (See *O.R.*, 1937)

On October 19th on the roadside between The Riding and Codlaw Dene, a single apparently disabled bird was seen. It allowed an approach to within five yds. when it got up, ran up the road and took flight in a westerly direction. It is probable that it had struck the power-cable from Stella, which crosses the road near this point, and become temporarily stunned. (S.E.) This provides further evidence that, on occasion, Barnacle Geese, as well as other species, follow an

overland route between the east coast, where they are only irregular visitors, and the Solway where they are normal winter visitors. In 1912, the late George Bolam wrote in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*: "It has been obtained as a straggler in Upper North Tynedale and elsewhere in the west of Northumberland, as though indicating a cross-country migration from the Solway, where it is generally abundant." On October 23rd at Holborn Moss, four flew over high up (F.B.); and on the 24th at Holy Island there were nine. (R.H.)

84. MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor* (Gmelin) (302)

Each year a large flock, sometimes numbering nearly 300 birds, spends the summer months in the Tweed Estuary between Berwick and West Ord. These are non-breeding birds. In winter a still larger flock, numbering upwards of 500 birds, collects on Fenham Flats and Budle Bay. It might be expected that this winter flock would consist largely of birds of the year, driven off the inland breeding waters by their parents, but this appears not to be the case. From observations made it is estimated that less than 10% of this flock are birds of the year. A count made on Fenham Flats on December 19th showed that out of 360 only 35 were first winter birds. This agrees with counts made in previous years. (F.B. & H.F.C.) It remains to be shown where these birds come from.

85. WHOOPER-SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* (L.) (300)

Very numerous and widespread each winter. On January 29th there were c. 220 on Fenham Flats, N. (P.J.S.) From February to early April a flock of 17 adults was on the Coquet above Thropton, feeding on one of the riverside marshes and roosting on the river. (E.G.T.) Some birds remained up to the end of April; a party of four was seen on May 11th and on July 5th at East Ord, on the Tweed above Berwick, an adult and an immature bird were seen consorting with Mutes. (H.F.C.) In the autumn the first were recorded on September 26th, when three birds arrived at Holy Island. Numbers increased there until by December 19th over 300 were present. (R.H.) On December 28th at Holywell Ponds, N., there were 22, the largest number ever recorded there. (W.D.R.)

86. BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus bewickii* Yarrell (301)

The first arrivals for the winter of 1953-54 were seen on February 6th, when a flock of 14 was on the sea off Hartley, N. (B.L. & W.D.R.) On the 21st a single bird was reported from a flooded field near

Thornley, D., where it remained for a week, while on April 14th and 15th two were on the same water. (D.W.S.) A small flock varying in numbers from six to 16 was at the Teesmouth from February 27th, one remaining as late as April 18th. (P.J.S., et al.) From March 26th until April 1st six were present on Boldon Flats, D. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) From March 27th until April 3rd two haunted the pool at Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.) A single bird was seen about Fenham Flats in May and June, probably a disabled bird. (W.D.R. & B.L.) In the autumn none arrived until December 20th, when at least five were with other Swans on Smiddyshaw Reservoir, D. (A.Bt.)

91. COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* (L.) (269)

As stated above, the B.T.O. organised a census of breeding pairs in the British Isles to trace the recent spread of this species. No birds bred in either Northumberland or Durham; nor have they yet been proved to do so. Occasionally single birds or pairs are seen—probably coming over temporarily from the western slopes of the Pennines and beyond, where they are common and increasing. On January 4th two were seen in Allendale, near Staward (J.H.A.) and on April 16th a pair was in Upper Teesdale. (A.Ba.) Single birds were seen on the slopes of Cheviot, in Upper Coquetdale and in Redesdale and elsewhere. Those reported in autumn may possibly have been Rough-legged Buzzards, as in the case of a bird seen soaring over the mouth of the Tyne on August 9th (P.A.L.) and one over Jesmond, Newcastle, on November 2nd. (G.L.D.)

93. SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus* (L.) (277)

In May in Gosforth Park four nests were found; all but one were destroyed. There seems no evidence that these birds are taking either adult or young birds in the Sanctuary itself, but on October 15th three were seen together, attendant on the assemblage of Starlings coming to roost in the reed-beds. (W.D.R.)

99. MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus* (L.) (271)

On May 8th an adult female flew over the Inner Farne. It passed over the island at a height of c. 200 ft. and was clearly seen under most favourable conditions. (J.M.C.) On July 17th in marshy moorland at Melkridge Bog, north of the Roman Wall near Haltwhistle, a juvenile was seen both in flight and perched on a stone at a range of about 25 yards. It was under observation for half an hour. (J.D. per E.A.R.E.)

100. HEN-HARRIER *Circus cyaneus* (L.) (273)

As reported in *O.R.*, 1953, an adult female wintered on Ross Links, N. ; on March 13th it was seen on Holborn Moss. (B.L.)

[On June 20th, between Belsay and Kirkheaton, a female was seen quartering the ground ; it was watched for some ten minutes and was judged to be of this species (J.A.H.)]

102. MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus* (L.) (272)

So far as is known, only one pair bred in County Durham this year, though single birds were reported from various places and a pair was seen between Whitfield and Alston on June 16th. (A.A.)

On the Durham site the birds were first seen on May 10th. On the 27th a nest with four eggs was found. Two females were present, one sitting and the other flying over the site. On June 17th the eggs were chipping. All four had hatched by the 23rd when both females were flying over the nest together. On the 27th the second female was in charge of the nest, she and the male attacking and driving off the first female, which was not seen again after July 4th. On the 10th the young were ringed and by the 30th all four were on the wing. (C.G. & D.N.B.)

103. OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus* (L.) (284)

On April 19th at Holy Island one was seen to fly north over the Snook and out to sea. From its movements over the water, slow wing-beats and glides, it was evidently on the watch for fish. (W.D.R.) On June 10th near Catcleugh Reservoir, Redesdale, one was seen circling slowly overhead. Its white head and white underparts and its wedge-shaped tail were very clearly seen. (W.M.B.)

105. PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall (259)

A pair was seen in Upper Teesdale in April, but did not breed. (P.J.S.) A pair bred in Upper Redesdale and raised three young. (R.L.B.) On November 7th over the Snook, Holy Island, a Peregrine, a Kestrel and three Merlins were seen in the air together. (B.L.) As usual a falcon is wintering on the Farnes. (E.A.R.E.)

110. KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L. (263)

Two, or three pairs bred in shipyards on the Tyne and one on King's College tower. (A.Bl.) During April a pair haunted the tower of St. George's Church, Jesmond. (F.St.) In Gosforth Park three nests were located. (W.D.R.) At Teesmouth a pair was suspected of breeding on the face of a slag-tip. (C.J.H.) On August 14th c. 20 birds

were counted near the Tees Estuary between Port Clarence and Seaton Carew. (P.J.S.) Birds were seen to fly in from the sea at Seaton Sluice, N., on August 31st a cock, on September 11th a hen and on the 12th a pair. (A.Bl.)

A bird ringed as a nestling in the Redesdale State Forest on June 10th, 1952, was recovered at Querenaing, near Valenciennes, France, c. March 1st, 1954. (per G.W.) A bird ringed as a nestling at Stannington, N., on June 4th, 1953, was found dead on the railway at Newmains, Lanarks., on December 14th, 1953. (A. & R.)

113. BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix* (L.) (513)

Rather more reported than of late from both counties.

117. QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix* (L.) (520)

Only one record for the year :—On June 21st and again on July 1st one was heard calling in a wheat-field near Cramlington, N. : no nest was found. (M.W.R.)

121. SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana* (L.) (505)

On November 13th and 14th on a pond near The Riding, Hexham, one was seen and heard. (S.E.)

124. LITTLE CRAKE *Porzana parva* (Scop.) (507)

[From April to June last year (1953) a small Crake was heard calling and on one occasion flushed near Gosforth Park Lake. It was not possible to establish its identity with certainty, but it was thought to have been a Little Crake. (See *O.R.*, 1953, p. 20). In 1954 on March 28th and again in early April, the same call was heard again at the same place, but no bird was seen. (B.L. & E.K.)]

125. CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L.) (504)

Another good "Corncrake-year." Birds were seen and heard over a very wide area—Weardale, Derwent valley, Tynedale from Throckley westwards and up the North Tyne valley to Deadwater, in Allendale, Upper Redesdale, Coquetdale, as far up as Alwinton, around Wooler and in the Tweed valley. Several nests were destroyed during hay-cutting, but others escaped and young were reared. The late hay harvest was in their favour.

126. MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* (L.) (510)

On November 6th at Boldon Flats at least 90 ; a very large concentration. (P.J.)

127. COOT *Fulica atra* L. (511)

On December 12th on Gosforth Park Lake c. 285 present. (W.D.R.)
An unusually large concentration.

131. OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L. (452)

On February 14th on the Coquet near Thropton, one; an early date considering the wintry weather. (E.G.T.) Settled in pairs there by March 9th (E.M.) and on March 31st as far up the river as Uswayford. (H.H.) On February 18th on the shingles of the Tyne near Haltwhistle and at Haydon Bridge:—"This is the earliest record for their return to their breeding haunts." (M.P.) Breeding confirmed on other gravel-beds on the Tyne and also in the Wear valley. (C.H.L.)

On Coquetdale a pair bred in a turnip-field about a mile from the river. The two young remained in the field until they could fly and afterwards flew up from the river-gravels to visit it frequently. (E.M.) Near Monks' House a pair nested in a wheat-field 400 yards from the shore; on being disturbed they deserted the nest and built another half-a-mile inland in a turnip-field where they reared a brood. (E.A.R.E.) About 50 spent the summer at Teesmouth. (C.J.H.)

133. LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.) (449)

A bird ringed as a nestling at Stannington, N., on May 18th, 1953, was found injured at Baldrine, I.O.M., on February 20th, 1954. (A. & R.) A bird ringed as a nestling at Blagdon, N., on May 7th, 1952, was shot at Troarn, Calvados, France (420 miles SSE), on March 17th, 1954. (A. & R.) A bird picked up injured and destroyed at West Hartlepool on December 20th, 1954, had been ringed as a juvenile at Herikstad, near Stavanger, Norway, on May 30th, 1954. (P.L.H.)

135. LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius* Scop. (438)

On May 1st at a flooded brick-field near Shotton Colliery, D., a single bird was seen in company with a Dunlin and a Green Sandpiper. It was under observation for three hours with x8 binoculars down to a range of c. 10 yards and was seen at rest and in flight. By the following day it had gone and was not seen again. (D.W.S.) From a detailed description and sketches made on the spot, there is no doubt about its correct identification. This is the first record of this species in Co. Durham and it has not yet occurred in Northumberland. As it is now breeding no further away than Yorkshire, it is possible that it may yet spread further north. It is particularly partial to inland shingle-beds on river banks and to gravel-pits.

136. KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus* L. (439)

On May 27th on Cowpen Marsh, Teesmouth, D., one was seen in company with Ringed Plovers and Dunlin. It was seen again in the same place on the following day. From the description, taken from notes made on the spot, it was a female. (P.J.S. & J.G.) This is only the fourth record for Co. Durham, all from the Tees estuary. Previous occurrences were:—June 8th, 1902, one; May 20th, 1904, one; May 11th, 1924, two.

145. COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.) (395)

A bird ringed at Bamburgh on August 26th, 1953, was recovered at Tralee, Co. Kerry, on January 1st, 1954. (E.A.R.E.)

148. WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* L. (393)

Increasing both as a resident and winter visitor at Gosforth Park; estimated number in winter nearly 20. (B.L.) On February 7th five were flushed from a field within the South Shields boundary. (J.S.) On July 25th a bird was found sitting on eggs in a nest amongst bracken on the Harthope Burn slopes of Cheviot at an altitude of 1,000 ft. (A. & R.) Unusually plentiful on the coast in autumn. During two days, November 5th and 9th, near Craster, N., 18 birds were flushed. (J.M.C.)

150. CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.) (388)

In Coquetdale, since the winter of 1951-52, a small but increasing number of birds has wintered in the Thropton district. During February a flock of 45 to 50 remained, although the ground was hard frozen below the surface. (E.G.T.) At the end of November a party of c. 50 was on the haughs below Holystone and was still present up to the end of the year. (E.M.)

151. WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* (L.) (389)

A few reported on spring migration; first heard April 25th at Teesmouth (C.J.H.); largest number 14 on May 9th at Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.) On May 15th one was heard going north over Cronkley Fell, Teesdale. (C.G.) Many more than usual on autumn passage during July and August, including flocks of up to 50 birds.

154. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* (L.) (387)

A few on spring migration. From April 20th to 25th from one to four at Grindon Lough, N.—a favourite place of call on the spring migration. (J.H.A., W.J., et al.) On April 30th at Boldon Flats, D.,

one assuming breeding plumage. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Several seen on the coast in autumn, usually single birds, but on July 25th at Teesmouth, flocks of 12 and six (A.Ba.) and on August 30th on Boldon Flats, four. (W.D.R.) Last seen October 31st, one on Jarrow Slakes, D. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

155. BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* (L.) (386)

As late as June 19th at Holy Island c. 175 apparently resident ; and at the end of June at Teesmouth a flock of c. 40, none in breeding plumage. (C.J.H.) Numerous in autumn at Teesmouth, maximum on October 10th c. 355, on November 24th 230, but very few in December. (C.J.H., et al.)

156. GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L. (424)

Two spring records : On April 17th at Monks' House pool, one (E.A.R.E.) and in early May a pair at Prestwick Carr, arousing unfounded suspicions of breeding. (M.W.R.) Unusually numerous during August and a few in September, usually single birds.

157. WOOD-SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* L. (423)

On May 18th at Cowpen Marsh, Teesmouth, one. (P.J.S. & J.G.) On June 6th one was picked up dead on Ross Links, N. (W.D.R.) Much more than usually numerous on autumn passage. First seen on August 1st on Cowpen Marsh, where from one to seven were present throughout the month. (P.E., P.J.S., et al.) Single birds, but occasionally more, were reported from Darlington Sewage Farm, Boldon Flats, Primrose ponds and Jarrow Slakes, D., and from Wallsend Swallow (up to nine birds at a time) and from near Seahouses and Beal, N. At least three were at Monks' House pool from August 21st to 27th. Last reported September 19th.

159. COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L. (421)

First seen March 27th at Monks' House pool, one, an early date. (E.A.R.E.) On April 9th on a pond near Stanley, D., two (R.M.P.) ; but not generally distributed until April 20th onwards. On the coast, from July 7th onwards, many were seen on migration. Last reported on October 31st and November 14th, single birds, at Greatham Creek, Teesmouth. (K.B.)

162. SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas) (431)

Only two reported on spring passage : a single bird at Beal road-ends, N., on April 18th (B.L.) and a bird in summer plumage at Budle

Bay on June 12th. (L.G.H.) More than usual noted during August and September, usually single birds; last seen on October 24th on Fenham Flats. (F.G.G. & F.B.)

165. GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.) (432)

More than usually numerous. First recorded on April 27th at Gosforth Park, one (B.L.), where one was seen again on August 28th and 31st. (D.G. & T.W.) Reported frequently from the coast and from inland waters throughout July, August and September, from as far west as Hepple on the Coquet, Little Swinburn, near Hallington, N., and Darlington Sewage Farm. On September 7th there were 19 at Boulmer and at other places six and eight were seen together. Single birds were seen up to the end of October and one in Budle Bay was still there on January 1st, 1955, probably wintering. (B.L.) (See Abel Chapman's account of this species in *Bird Life of the Borders* (1907), p. 402.)

169. KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.) (403)

Very numerous indeed all along the coast. At Teesmouth on January 12th, 1,000, on the 19th, 3,000, on February 20, c. 4,000, March 8th, 3,000 falling to c. 900 by the end of the month and to 30 at the end of May; on July 8th, 10, rising to c. 450 by November 12th. (C.J.H., P.E., et al.)

171. LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisler) (407)

Several seen at the Teesmouth from first week in August, maximum eight on the 26th; one or two still present during September; last recorded, two on October 10th. (C.J.H., P.J.S., et al.) On August 15th at Budle Bay, five, on the 26th two; on the 18th and 22nd on the Inner Farne, one. (E.A.R.E.) On the 22nd at Annstead near Seahouses, one, and on the 29th, three. (W.D.R.) On the 28th at Boulmer, N., one (W.S.C.); on the 29th on the Long Nanny estuary, N., three. (B.L.) Last seen September 9th at Budle Bay, N., and on September 16th at Beadnell. (E.A.R.E.)

173. TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii* (Leisler) (409)

There have been two records of this rare little wader. From August 21st for about 14 days, one at Annstead, near Seahouses, N. It was trapped and ringed. (E.A.R.E.) On August 30th and September 3rd one at Saltholme Pool, Teesmouth, D. (P.J.S. & J.G.)

178. DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.) (404)

Very numerous indeed at Teesmouth in February, maximum c. 3,000 on the 7th. (D.R.S.) On February 7th on St. Mary's Island, N., c. 280; a very large flock for this part of the coast! (W.D.R.)

At the end of April a pair was on the Upper Teesdale breeding ground and on June 13th on Great Cheviot a pair was seen obviously breeding. (W.M.B., et al.) On July 20th at Hallington Reservoir, 29. (R.T.G., et al.)

179. CURLEW-SANDPIPER *Calidris testacea* (Pallas) (406)

Most unusually plentiful during August and September; large flocks being seen, particularly at Teesmouth, where parties of 55, 25 and 30 were counted. (A.Ba., et al.) On August 27th a flock of 26 flew in from the sea in front of Monks' House, circled widely inland and then flew off to the NNW. Many other parties and single birds were seen at various places on the coast. Last recorded October 17th at Warkworth, N. (J.H.)

184. RUFF *Philomachus pugnax* (L.) (417)

On May 5th, 6th and 7th at Monks' House pool, a male (E.A.R.E.), and on the 21st at Teesmouth, one (C.J.H.); the only spring records.

Remarkably plentiful during August and September on the coast and on some inland waters. Numbers larger than ever before. In some places from 15 to 25 birds were present together; at Holywell Ponds on August 26th there were 27. (B.L.) Most of them had gone by the end of September, but two were seen on a pond near Chevington on December 26th and January 3rd, 1955. (M.F.)

186. BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus* (L.) (450)

On September 4th at Wallsend Swallow, N., a single bird was seen to fly in to the flooded ground, where it alighted for a short period before flying away to the north. It was very clearly seen both in flight and at rest. Its contrasting black and white plumage and its long trailing legs were most distinctive in flight. It was not seen subsequently either there or elsewhere, though it was diligently searched for. (J.A. & T.H.A.)

This is the first record for the species in Northumberland.

187. GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.) (400)

Seven records of this rare little wader. On January 12th in the harbour at Seahouses, one. (per E.A.R.E.) On the 12th, 16th and 24th in Craster Harbour, one was seen in company with Turnstones. (W.S.C.)

& J.M.C.) On the 16th off the North Gare breakwater, Teesmouth, a first winter bird was seen on the water ; on the following day it, or another, was seen on the beach ; on the 30th an adult was seen off Seaton Carew, when it swam ashore and joined a party of Sanderlings on the beach. (P.J.S. & C.J.H. and D.G.B. & B.J.N.E.) These seem to be the first records for this species for the month of January. Usually they have occurred in October, though occasionally in August, September and early November.

On September 9th on the sea at Seaton Sluice, N., two, one in winter plumage and the other still showing signs of breeding plumage. (A.Bl. & B.L.) On September 11th on Cowpen Marsh, Teesmouth, one ; seen at close range before it flew out into the estuary. (P.E.)

193. ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.) (493)

On May 2nd off Teesmouth, one, light form (P.J.S., et al.) and on the 6th off Souter Point, D., a dark bird. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Spring records of Arctic Skuas have hitherto been few. (See *O.R.*, 1943 & 1944)

In the autumn they were very numerous. During August and September many were reported, particularly from the Tees estuary. On September 5th, 21 were counted flying south ; on the 11th, in c. 5 or 6 hours, 31 were counted (P.J.S., et al.) and on the 18th, 34. (K.B.) Single birds were seen as late as the end of November.

194. GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* (Brünn.) (491)

On January 24th off Seaton Sluice, one flying south. (B.L. et al.) Several reported during the autumn, usually single birds ; but on October 14th near Bamburgh, two were seen chasing Gannets and, later in the day, nine flew down the coast, high and keeping station, obviously on migration. (E.A.R.E.)

195. POMATORHINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temm.) (492)

On July 10th, off Seaton Point, N., one was seen chasing gulls ; it was a pale bird and judged to be an adult. (B.L.)

On September 3rd, off Souter Point, D., a pale skua flying north was thought to have been of this species and on November 6th of two flying north one was certainly of this species. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) On October 16th, off the North Gare, Teesmouth, a string of skuas passed south out at sea ; five of them being immature, but the sixth was undoubtedly an adult Pomatorhine ; then followed two more adult Pomatorhines and nine more immature. From their heavy appearance and broad wings, all the immature birds were judged to be also of this species, making 17 in all. Just previous to this a flock of ten immature

skuas of rather heavy build had been seen to fly over the North Gare from the north and pass into the Tees estuary ; these were possibly also of this species. (C.J.H.) On September 26th off Newton, N., a skua was seen that was almost certainly of this species. (per E.A.R.E.) On October 17th, on the shore near Warkworth, N., an adult bird of the pale form was found in an exhausted condition. (J.H.)

196. LONG-TAILED SKUA. *Stercorarius longicaudus* Vieillot (494)

On September 26th an immature bird was seen off Seahouses harbour ; it was in company with several Arctic Skuas with which it could be compared. (E.A.R.E.)

198. GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L. (486)

" On December 27th, when walking along the tide-line in Embleton Bay, N., an immature bird of this species, flying towards me, alighted on the sand not ten yards from me and, walking straight up to me, uttered a succession of mewing notes with wide-open bill as if asking for food. After watching it for a time I walked on along the shore ; but it flew after me and again repeatedly asked for food." (W.S.C.)

201. COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L. (481)

For some years past, a few Common Gulls, apparently in pairs, have been noted in the breeding season at various inland gulleries of the Black-headed Gull. On the gullery being disturbed by a visitor, they fly up with the rest of the gulls and behave in every way as though they were breeding ; flying overhead and escorting the intruder off the premises even more assiduously than the Black-headed Gulls themselves. At no time, however, has a nest been definitely identified, nor has a Common Gull ever been observed to rise from a clutch of eggs or to return to one. In future a careful watch should be kept on these birds to determine whether any of them are actually breeding. There is no record of the Common Gull breeding inland in either county.

202. GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn. (487)

Three birds spent the winter in Seahouses harbour, N., two first-winter and one very large second-winter. (E.A.R.E.) During January, February and March one or two birds haunted a refuse tip near Seaton Carew, Teesmouth ; one immature bird was still there on June 1st. (C.J.H.) On January 4th one was off Cullernose Point (W.S.C.) and on May 9th an immature bird was off Seaton Sluice, N. (W.D.R. & B.L.) On September 26th a second-winter bird was seen on the Wideopens, Farnes (E.A.R.E.) and on November 6th an immature bird was at Boulmer. (W.S.C. & J.E.R.)

203. ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucooides* Mayer (488)

On February 22nd on St. Mary's Island, one, immature. (K.Y.)

On November 26th off Seaton Sluice, N., an adult, in flight with Herring Gulls. (W.D.R.) On December 4th and 5th at North Shields, two, in company with Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls, feeding at the mouth of a drain; seen at a range down to c. 15 yards. From differences in plumage one was judged to be a first-winter bird and the other a second-winter. On December 7th an adult bird was with them, making three in all. On December 11th the second-winter bird was still there and the first-winter bird was seen again as late as January 16th, 1955. (W.D.R., B.L. & A.B.I.)

207. LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Pallas (477)

Single immature birds were seen on the coast in January, February and March. On May 9th one, and on the 15th two, immature, on Newton Pond, Embleton; one still present on May 28th and June 5th, but not seen subsequently. (W.S.C.)

Single immature birds were seen on the coast in late August and early September and again in the first week of October. On the 5th one was on the Tweed opposite Birgham, west of Coldstream, 14 miles from the sea. (J.H.A.) On December 4th a single bird was at North Shields. (W.D.R.)

208. BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L. (478)

In April, on the Banks, Durham City, a flock of c. 20 was seen soaring above the level of the tops of the trees; some of them succeeded in alighting on the topmost branches for several seconds before they were blown off by a strong wind. (R.M.P.) On October 24th in Howick Woods, several were seen circling over the oak trees, alighting on the topmost branches from which they were collecting food, probably acorns. (W.S.C.) We can find no previous record of this habit.

On March 5th, an adult was found dead in Leazes Park, Newcastle, bearing a ring showing that it had been ringed as a juvenile at Lake Orrevann, 25 kms. south of Stavanger, Norway, on July 6th, 1952. (A.P.) On March 29th a bird was picked up dead on Boldon Flats, D., bearing a ring showing that it had been ringed as a juvenile at Rychnov, Czecho-Slovakia, on May 29th, 1949. (per F.G.G.)

On February 9th, on Newcastle Quayside, out of a flock of c. 120, one bird already had a complete dark hood. (A.M.)

About 50 pairs nested at Seaton Burn Lake, where 15 young were counted on July 29th. (A. & R.)

209. SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini* (Sabine) (474)

On August 15th, off Seaton Snook, Teesmouth, D., an adult in winter plumage was seen in company with Terns and Kittiwakes. (C.J.H. & W.M.T.) This species is a very rare visitor to the N.E. coast; there are only two or three previous records for Co. Durham and only one for Northumberland.

211. KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.) (489)

A large number bred successfully at Dunstanburgh, N. (W.S.C.) On July 26th at Marsden, D., on the mainland cliffs alone, 300 chicks were counted. (C.J.H.) On October 2nd on the beach at South Shields, D., c. 2,500 birds. (F.G.G.) On November 6th at Whitburn, D., and off Boulmer, N., numbers were seen flying north and on November 14th off the North Gare, Teesmouth, flocks of 60 and 150 passed north, wind mod. NW. (C.J.H., et al.)

A bird ringed as a juvenile at Brown's Warehouse, North Shields, on July 7th, 1952, was recovered at Smith's Dock, North Shields, on June 11th, 1954. It appeared to be unmated. (per G.H.)

212. BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* (L.) (462)

The B.T.O. has been collecting information regarding an unusual passage of this species which took place in May and again in August and September. In Northumberland and Durham the May passage was small, but a few more appeared than usual in the autumn.

Spring passage. Co. Durham:—From May 5th to 12th at Cowpen Marsh, Teesmouth, from two to three birds present (P.J.S. & C.J.H.) and on May 10th on Boldon Flats, one. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Northumberland:—On May 2nd at Holywell Ponds, two, and on the 10th at Seaton Burn Lake, five (M.W.R.); on May 4th over Holy Island Lough, one (E.A.R.E.) and on May 14th and 15th on Newton Marsh, Embleton, one. (W.S.C. & F.G.)

Autumn passage. Co. Durham:—The first arrivals were noted as early as August 8th, when, in the Tees estuary, three adults in full breeding plumage were seen. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.) No more were noted until the 15th and 22nd when single birds were present. On the 29th there were six. Numbers reached their maximum on September 1st when twelve were counted (C.J.H.) and on the 5th there were seven, flying south, the last to be recorded here. (C.G. & D.N.B.) On Boldon Flats a single bird was seen on September 12th, two on the 13th, three on the 15th and two on the 18th, 19th and 20th. (F.G.G., et al.) The last reported was from Hurworth Burn Reservoir on September 26th.

(P.L.H.) Northumberland:—On August 24th one was seen flying south off Cullernose Point (W.S.C.); on September 6th, one off Beadnell, and on the 7th, one off Seaton Sluice, and on the 10th, two. (B.L. & A.Bl.) At Holywell Ponds single birds were seen on August 25th and September 10th and 11th. One roosted in a hawthorn hedge. (B.L. & W.D.R.) It is perhaps noteworthy that no birds were reported further north than Beadnell.

217. COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L. (469)

A few pairs attempted to nest on the Northumbrian mainland; eggs were laid in one colony, but a high tide washed them away. (R.F.L.) On another site, further from the sea, at least two pairs nested and reared young. (W.S.C.) At Teesmouth up to 20 birds were regularly seen over the breeding area, nests were found and at least four young were reared. (C.J.H., W.M.T., et al.)

218. ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naumann (470)

Breeding was attempted on three different mainland colonies. At one 18 nests were found and at another 15; but high tides swept them all away and no young were reared; at another a few young were seen. At Teesmouth, during the southern migration of Terns, the numbers rose to over 1,000 in August. Of 90 birds examined critically, 72 were Arctic, a ratio of 4 : 1. (C.J.H.)

222. LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Pallas (471)

At Teesmouth a small colony attempted to breed; three nests with eggs were seen, but no successful breeding proved. (P.J.S.) Two colonies were found on the Northumbrian mainland; but high tides washed away the eggs and no young were reared. (R.F.L., et al.)

226. LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle* (L.) (502)

In January, February and March oiled birds were found dead on the shore at Bamburgh, Newbiggin and South Shields. (W.A.W., et al.) On November 27th on Holy Island, after a severe gale, 43 birds were seen in small flocks of up to 12 birds. (B.L. & A.Bl.)

227. NORTHERN GUILLEMOT *Uria a. aalge* (Pontopp.) (498)

On January 31st off Seaton Sluice Point, N., one seen. (B.L.)

229. BLACK GUILLEMOT *Uria grylle* (L.) (501)

Very few reported. On January 29th in Holy Island harbour, one, reported by a wildfowler. On February 11th at Teesmouth, one, in

winter plumage. (D.G.B.) On August 27th at Beadnell, one. (E.A.R.E.) On November 27th at Holy Island, one. Fishermen reported that a pair was wintering on a small outcrop of rock about a mile off shore. (A.B.I. & B.L.)

235. TURTLE-DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* (L.) (383)

Heard and seen again on the banks of the Bedburn, near Stocksfield and at Minsteracres, but no breeding proved.

237. CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus* L. (240)

On January 26th and 28th one was seen at within 10 yards distance in a plantation near Tunstall Cottage, Wolsingham, D. This was just before the severe snowstorms of January 30th. This was doubtless a bird which had been unable to migrate. (R.M.)

First heard on April 18th on Holy Island. (B.L.) Not heard elsewhere until a week later. Last heard on September 19th, when a bird was calling the full "cuckoo" song in a garden in Elgy Road, Gosforth. It was heard in the vicinity, after leaving the garden, moving away in a south-easterly direction. (S.A.) Juvenile Cuckoos do occasionally begin to call before leaving.

241. BARN-OWL *Tyto alba* (Scop.) (254)

More reported than usual. At Gosforth Park, in February, one was seen roosting under one of the bird-watchers' "hides." (W.D.R. & B.L.) As late as September 10th at "Sunnyside," near Staward, Allendale, three young birds, in down, were still in the nest in a barn. (A.F.P.)

246. LITTLE OWL *Athene noctua* (Scop.) (249)

In June a pair reared three young in a hole in the walls of Queen Margaret's Tower, Dunstanburgh Castle, N. (W.S.C.)

248. LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* (L.) (250)

As early as March 29th, in Gosforth Park, a nest was found with two eggs. Three pairs bred in the Park and reared eight young. One pair was only successful at the third attempt, as two clutches of eggs were taken. On August 26th in the evening a single bird was seen to fly in from the sea near Seahouses, N. (E.A.R.E.) On October 16th on Holy Island, four birds were roosting in a hedge; no doubt on migration. (B.L.)

249. SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* (Pontopp.) (251)

Now becoming very numerous. Reported from the moors in the breeding season and from the coast in winter; but fewer now seen in the afforested areas as the trees grow up. (W.L.M.) A pair bred on the fells north of Haltwhistle and raised seven young; though they varied so widely in age, all survived, which suggests that food must have been unusually plentiful. (M.P.) On October 17th at Longhoughton Steel, N., one seen flying in from the sea. (P.J.) Presumably passage birds seen on the coast at curious dates—May 30th, August 11th, 12th and 27th. (E.A.R.E.)

255. SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.) (225)

First seen on April 24th at Gosforth, one (B.L.); but not another until May 8th, when they appeared in several places. A few stayed late; the last of many in September was one over Gosforth Park on the 26th. (W.D.R.)

As late as June 17th there was a steady northerly movement of birds crossing the Tees estuary (A.Ba.) and on the 19th a similar northern migration was seen over Ross Links, N., a steady but thin stream of birds flying over quite low. There was a strong SW wind and the sky was overcast at the time. (W.D.R.)

261. HOOPOE *Upupa epops* L. (232)

On April 27th at West Boldon, D., one was watched for an hour at close quarters. It was haunting rough ground close to the main Sunderland to Newcastle road where a stream of traffic was hurtling by, of which it took no notice. (F.G.G.) Early in May at Shotton Grange, Seaton Burn, N., a bird was seen which, from the detailed description given, could only have been a Hoopoe. (per M.W.R.) On September 11th on the Ouseburn refuse-tip, c. 100 yards north of Byker railway-bridge, Newcastle, one was seen walking and flying about amongst clumps of herbage. It was an immature bird. (W.A.W.) Several Hoopoes have been reported from neighbouring counties this summer.

262. GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis* L. (235)

Still spreading northwards. Several in Harthope Valley, Cheviot in July (A. & R.) and at Kylloe Crag, N., in July. (S.A. & J.S.A.) On September 29th in the Tweed Valley near Horncliffe, a cock. (R.F.L.)

On August 26th near Seahouses, N., a juvenile was seen to fly in from the sea at c. 6.30 p.m., immediately after a Long-eared Owl; almost certainly on passage, though not hitherto recognised as a migrant. (E.A.R.E.)

264. LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor* L. (238)

On September 10th, in a garden in Broom Lane, Whickham, D., one was seen and identified under most favourable conditions with glasses at five yards range. It was not seen again. (R.W.L.)

265. WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla* L. (239)

A most unusual influx occurred in the last week in August when no less than seven birds were recorded. On August 22nd, on the road one mile east of Haltwhistle, an injured bird was picked up. It was an adult. As it was not seriously injured it was released in Blenkinsop woods near Haltwhistle. (M.P.) On August 28th and 29th one was under observation at Teesmouth in a row of scattered hawthorn bushes on the road to the Acid Works. (C.G., D.R.S. & C.J.H.) On August 27th one was picked up, several days dead, in the mouth of a burrow on the Brownsman, Farne Islands, and from August 22nd to 27th one was on the Inner Farne. On the 27th one was seen in the plantation just south of Bamburgh Castle and on September 7th one was trapped at Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.) On September 24th or 25th a very decomposed specimen was picked up near Hexham and sent to the Museum. (S.E.C.)

274. SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L. (220)

First seen on March 28th, a single bird near Craster, N. (W.S.C.) The first March Swallow ever recorded in Northumberland; previous earliest date, April 2nd in 1883; average date April 19th. Not another was seen until April 10th, 11th and 12th, when single birds were noted, and it was not until the end of the month that any number was seen.

Many birds stayed late into October: a single bird was seen flying over Holy Island on November 14th, and the *Berwick Journal* of January 6th, 1955, reported one flying over Marshall Meadows, Berwick, for quite a time, on December 31st.

276. HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.) (222)

The first recorded were two birds which arrived at their nesting haunts in Lanchester Village, D., on April 14th. (R.M.P.) No others were reported until April 26th and it was not until the first and second weeks of May that any number was seen.

Many birds stayed late. On September 30th a pair was still feeding young in a nest under Sharperton Bridge, Upper Coquetdale. (E.M.) On August 17th, near The Chesters, Chollerford, N., a bird was seen

with pure white wings, but otherwise of normal colouring. (E.M.C.) On September 11th at Alnmouth, N., a bird with pure white primaries. (P.J.)

277. SAND-MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.) (223)

First seen, a single bird on March 30th at Blagdon, N. (M.W.R.) A few single birds on April 9th and 14th, but no large arrival until the end of that month.

278. GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus* (L.) (17)

On April 11th on the River Hart, near Garden House, Hartburn, a cock was seen. It flew away in the direction of Needless Hall, c. two miles distant. (W.A.D.) In early June and again on July 20th a cock was seen near Needless Hall, Hartburn; probably the same bird. (A.H.) On July 10th, near Low Bridges, Stocksfield, a cock was seen flying along the road in front of a car. (K.A.) On September 5th three miles north of Rothbury a bird was seen which, from the description and sketch provided, was almost certainly a female or immature Golden Oriole. (D.W.)

279. RAVEN *Corvus corax* L. (1)

Successful breeding was proved in two or three sites, but several nests were destroyed.

280. CARRION-CROW *Corvus corone* L. (3)

A pair built a nest in a tall tree in a garden on Heaton Road in the City of Newcastle. The hen was frequently seen sitting, but whether young were reared is not known. The birds' favourite perch was the dome of the local picture-house. (D.M.R.C.)

281. HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L. (2)

Fewer reported than usual; chiefly single birds on the coast. Unusual dates were May 28th, June 19th and 28th, all single birds.

283. JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* L. (5)

"On April 10th an unusually large number of dung-beetles were in flight near Haltwhistle and many Starlings were hawking them in the air. At the same time at least 30 Jackdaws were engaged in the same practice. They flew somewhat clumsily but they caught their prey, for the snapping of their bills could be plainly heard. This seems to be a new habit." (M.P.)

298. NORTHERN TREE-CREEPER *Certhia f. familiaris* L. (94)

On October 12th at Monks' House, one trapped and examined. Its pale upper colouration and striking marbled effect were very marked. This occurrence is parallel with that of 1952, when, on October 5th and 8th two very similar birds were trapped which, at the time, were strongly suspected of being of this race. (E.A.R.E.)

301. MISTLE-THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* L. (174)

In the early autumn a roost of over 100 birds was established in a hill plantation of conifers near Haltwhistle. The birds come to the place in the same wood each year. Though the trees are quite 30 ft. high, the birds never roost more than three ft. from the ground. (M.P.)

302. FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L. (173)

Many remained late into May ; even on the 25th three were seen flying NE at Holywell Ponds. (W.D.R.)

First seen in autumn on October 2nd, on Holy Island. (C.N.R.) On the 15th a very considerable movement took place, flocks arriving from overseas and passing inland. This continued on the 16th and 17th, increased on the 23rd and reached its climax on the 26th and 27th.

303. SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton (175)

On July 24th at Ponteland a nest was seen containing eight eggs. It was stated that they had been laid daily over a period of eight days. (J.S.A.)

A bird ringed as a nestling at Blagdon, N., on April 30th, 1953, was found dead at Pembroke, Wales, on February 10th, 1954. (A & R.)

304. REDWING *Turdus musicus* L. (178)

On January 30th and 31st a considerable southward movement was reported ; flocks being seen on the coast, Teesmouth, Craster, N., and inland.

First seen in autumn on October 2nd on Holy Island (C.N.R.) and on the mainland. (C.J.H.) Large scale immigration was seen all along the coast from Holy Island to Teesmouth on the 9th, 15th to 18th and again on the 23rd and 26th to 27th. Compare Fieldfare above. October 27th was a warm sunny day with a SW to W breeze after a severe but short SE gale on the previous night. (F.S.)

308. BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L. (184)

Outward migration :—On March 26th near Craster, N., at 6.0 p.m. a single bird was watched flying in wide and rising spirals, then heading

ENE towards the sea. At about the same time two were seen to make the same sort of flight at Howick. (W.S.C.)

At Cockfield, D., a stone was thrown into a Blackbird's nest by children and the eggs broken, but the bird continued to sit on the stone for a whole week, until finally the nest was destroyed. (H.M.)

Considerable passage movements were noted all along the coast on October 9th, 15th, 17th, 23rd and 27th and again in the drift movement of November 6th and 7th.

A bird ringed as a nestling in the College Valley, Cheviot, was trapped at Monks' House on July 25th. (E.A.R.E.)

311. GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Oenanthe o. leucorhoa* (Gmelin) (187)

A few between May 8th and 17th on and near the coast. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) In autumn, reported from the coast from August 18th onwards. The last five Wheatears trapped at Monks' House (September 1st to 12th) were all of this form. (E.A.R.E.)

317. STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* (L.) (198)

Reported frequently from many parts of the coast in winter. A pair at Alnmouth had fledged young on May 8th and successful breeding was proved in three or four other places. In Druridge Bay, N., one pair raised two broods. (M.F.)

318. WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* L. (197)

Not reported in spring until April 27th—a late date. Fewer than usual in the Cheviot valleys this summer. Last seen September 7th, six on the Farnes. (E.A.R.E.)

A bird trapped and ringed at Monks' House on August 27th, 1953, was found dead on November 20th, 1954, at Salir, near Loule (Algarne) in Portugal. (E.A.R.E.)

320. REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L.) (201)

First seen on April 23rd, a cock at Chathill, N.; but no more recorded until the first week in May. Last seen on September 12th on the coast near Howick. (W.S.C.)

321. BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* (Gmelin) (202)

Only two recorded:—On March 20th on the coast near South Shields, D., one (K.Y.) and on April 21st on the Brownsman, Farnes, one. (E.A.R.E.)

322. NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos* Brehm (203)

On May 2nd on the Inner Farne one was seen with other passage migrants. (J.M.C. & T.B.)

This is the first record for this species occurring on migration on the Northumberland coast. All previous reports of this species refer to birds stated to have been heard singing at night. In those few cases where the song had been correctly identified, the birds were strongly suspected of having been released from captivity. (See G. Bolam, *The Birds of Northumberland*.)

324. BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica* (L.) (205)

On April 6th, on the dunes near Greenhill, N., a bird almost certainly of this species. Note heard several times and many fleeting views obtained; but it was not possible to substantiate the race. (E.A.R.E.)

343. BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla* (L.) (162)

First seen April 13th at Alnwick Park, N. (E.A.R.E.) On September 19th at Teesmouth one was seen to fly in from the sea and perch on the rocks. (A.Ba.)

344. BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria* (Bechstein) (159)

Three recorded:—On August 23rd at Monks' House, one caught and ringed; on the 27th one seen at Annstead, N., and on September 7th one seen on the Inner Farne. (E.A.R.E.)

346. GARDEN-WARBLER *Sylvia borin* (Bodd.) (161)

First seen May 9th at Howick, N. (W.S.C.) Between August 14th and 25th relatively large numbers were seen at Monks' House, probably drift migrants from the Baltic area; eight, all birds of the year, were trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

347. COMMON WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Latham (163)

First seen May 1st, a cock on the Brownsman, Farnes; on May 2nd at Gosforth and Teesmouth.

348. LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* (L.) (164)

First seen May 9th at Alnwick. (J.E.R.) Others reported from Hexham, Shotton Colliery, D., Hartlepool and Teesmouth. On June 19th a cock was seen and heard in the Harthope Valley, Cheviot. (B.L.) Last seen on September 7th on the Inner Farne. (E.A.R.E.)

354. WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.) (132)

First seen on April 3rd at Fence Houses, D. (I.C.T.N.) ; on the 5th, one at Haltwhistle (M.P.) ; but not really plentiful until a full fortnight later.

" In June in a wood at Dinnington, N., a pair of Willow-Warblers became so used to my presence that when my hand was placed in front of the nest containing young the adult bird stood on my finger to feed them." (A.B.I.)

On August 30th at Monks' House, N., an unusually small bird was trapped and examined. It was several mm. shorter in all its measurements than the *Handbook* minima and weighed only 7.42 grams. Quite a " dwarf." (E.A.R.E.)

354. NORTHERN WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus t. acredula* (L.) (133)

From October 16th to 24th, one, in the garden at Monks' House ; it was trapped and critically examined. (E.A.R.E.)

356. CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus c. collybita* (Vieillot) (129)

First heard April 9th in Gosforth Park ; but not generally until nearly a fortnight later. On September 28th in my garden, one ; " the first seen in Haltwhistle for 20 years." (M.P.)

On August 14th near Barnard Castle, D., one was heard making the " chicken in distress " call which has previously been stated to be characteristic of the Scandinavian sub-species. It turned out to be a young bird calling for food. It was seen being fed by adults. (M.D.C.)

364. CONTINENTAL GOLDCREST *Regulus r. regulus* (L.) (126)

On March 29th at Monks' House, one trapped. (E.A.R.E.)

366. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* (Pallas) (121)

First seen on May 13th at Alnwick. Later than usual in most places. At Whitworth, D., a pair bred in the same nest as last year—built upon the old nest of a Swallow. (C.G. & D.N.B.)

368. PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pallas) (123)

First seen on April 18th at Hamsterley ; but no others until the first week in May. None seen at Blagdon during the year. (M.W.R.) Only about 25% of the usual number in Alnwick Park ; perhaps the result of the bad nesting season of 1953. (J.E.R.)

A bird ringed as a nestling at Emmethaugh, Kielder Forest, N., on June 8th, 1952, was found dead in a nesting-box at Little Whickhope Burn, N., in early June, 1954. (per G.H.)

373. MEADOW-PIPIT *Anthus pratensis* (L.) (76)

A considerable passage migration was noted on March 26th and 27th and again on April 17th. Autumn movements were noted on September 7th and 13th. On the 11th, at Holywell Ponds, N., a remarkable southward migration was observed; small parties continually passing over, calling as they flew. Next day, at Killingworth Ponds and at Palmersville, N., the same sort of movement went on, though it was not quite so intense. (W.D.R.) As late as December 11th a very definite coasting movement was noted. (E.A.R.E.)

A bird trapped on Monks' House beach on July 5th, 1954, was later caught near Lisbon, Portugal. (E.A.R.E.)

374. RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus richardi* Vieillot (73)

On November 2nd, on the cliff-top north of Marsden, D., two were under continuous observation under most favourable conditions for nearly an hour, as they flitted about and alighted on a low wall on the cliff-top. Every feature was most carefully noted—their size, plumage, stance and movements. On the following day they could not be found. (E.G.T.) This is the first record for this species in Co. Durham.

375. TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris* (L.) (74)

[On November 4th on waste ground overlooking the Tyne and well within the City boundary, a Pipit was under close observation for 45 minutes. It was seen both perched and in flight. The upper-parts were uniform pale olive-brown completely unstreaked; the head, crown, nape and cheeks rather darker. There was a distinct white ring round the eye, but no sign of an eye-stripe. The crown had several thin black streaks. The rump was as the upper-parts, but was slightly striated. The wings were definitely barred, including two black bars, very conspicuous while perched and in flight. The tail was long and rounded at the tip, with dark central feathers and pure white outer ones. Chin, belly and under-parts whitish shading to cream. Legs and bill reddish-brown. Except for the lack of a pale eye-stripe this bird closely resembled a Tawny Pipit and it is probable that it was an example of the variant described by T. A. Coward in *Birds of the British Isles*, Vol. III, p. 105. (B.L.)]

379. ROCK-PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta littoralis* Brehm (83)

On March 28th at Monks' House, N., on spring passage, an example of this race. (E.A.R.E.)

380. WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba alba* L. (91)

Many reported from April 9th to May 9th. On May 2nd at Tees-mouth at least 13. (D.R.S.)

381. GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea* Tunstall (89)

Unusual nesting site :—On June 28th at Woodley Field Farm, Hexham, a pair was feeding young in a nest in a wall of the farm-house, directly above the main door, while most of the work of the farm was carried on just below the nest. (E.M.L.)

382. YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flavissima* (Blyth) (88)

First seen March 26th at Monks' House, two cocks passing north. A very early date. On March 28th and April 1st at Fenwick, N. (B.L.); but few others until the end of the month. In the first week in May, at Tanfield Ponds, Stanley, D., hundreds passed through on migration. (R.M.P.) On autumn migration at these ponds, on August 25th, after severe northerly winds, hundreds were present, "I have never seen so many there before"; on September 2nd c. 300, about 50% juveniles. (R.M.P.) On September 4th at Boldon Flats, D., 40 counted and more present. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

A bird ringed as a nestling on Boldon Flats, D., on June 9th, 1954, was recovered at Vieux Boucau, Landes, France, on September 2nd, 1954 (c. 750 miles). (F.G.G.)

383. WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* (L.) (120)

Except for five single birds seen during January and February, no others were reported. None were seen during the winter of 1954-55.

384. GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor* L. (114)

On February 21st at Lordenshaw, near Rothbury, one. (H.T.) On February 28th near Glanton, N., an adult. (C.N.R.) On March 31st near Houghton-le-Spring, D., one. (I.C.T.N.) This is only a few miles from the spot where one was seen in December, 1953—perhaps the same bird wintering there. (See *O.R.*, 1953). On October 10th near Beadnell and on the 15th on Holy Island, single birds were seen to fly in from the sea, in the latter case hotly pursued by Common Gulls. (E.A.R.E.)

386. WOODCHAT-SHRIKE *Lanius senator* L. (116)

From May 23rd to 25th an adult, probably a cock, was on the Inner Farne. (J.M.C. & E.C.)

This is only the third record for Northumberland. The only previous records are :—One shot near Bamburgh on April 29th, 1859, and one on Holy Island in September, 1876.

388. RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio* L. (119)

Many more than usual reported. On June 5th at Cleadon, South Shields, a cock. (F.G.G.) On August 21st and 22nd on the Inner Farne, a juvenile; on Staple Island another and at Monks' House a third, which was trapped and ringed. (E.A.R.E.) On August 22nd at Seaton Carew, D., a juvenile. (P.J.S., J.G., et al.) On the 25th and 26th at West Hartlepool, D., on the bowling green, two. On the 28th one was trapped and ringed at Annstead, N., and on September 24th it turned up at Marsala in Sicily; an interesting example of "re-directed passage." (E.A.R.E.) On the 28th near Fenham, in the Fenham Flats area, another juvenile. (C.N.R.) The last to be reported was a juvenile near Howick, N., on August 29th. (W.S.C.)

391. HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (L.) (18)

"For the last five years one or more Hawfinches have visited my garden at Stocksfield in the month of February. They alight just below one of my windows to pick up fallen cherry-stones under a tree on the lawn. Evidently these stones are not brittle enough to crack until they have lain on the ground throughout the winter, for the birds come at no other time. I watch them adroitly fitting the stones between their mandibles to get them into the right position for cracking, exactly as one fits a walnut between the jaws of a pair of nut-crackers. The halves of the stones fall apart and the kernel is swallowed. This year four came together, three cocks and a hen." (G.W.T.)

394. SISKIN *Carduelis spinus* (L.) (21)

Rather more reported than in previous years. A flock of c. 30 was present in Langleeford, Cheviot, in the early months of the year. By April 26th a well-formed pair and a male beset by two females remained. On July 9th adults were carrying food to at least one juvenile. "I do not think that there can be any doubt that these birds were breeding." (E.A.R.E.)

A bird, one of a passage pair, trapped and ringed at Monks' House on September 18th, 1953, was re-trapped and released at Bowhill, Selkirk, on November 22nd, 1953. (E.A.R.E.)

401. BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (L.) (33)

Increasing in number in Upper Redesdale, N., where they are appearing in the Forestry plantations where the trees were planted in 1934 and 1937. (W.L.M.)

404. CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra* L. (36)

On January 2nd and 17th, in Kylloe Woods, N., flocks of c. 10 were heard. (B.L. & E.K.) On April 11th on the outskirts of Dipton Wood, N., a single hen was seen, but no signs of nesting. (T.F.H.)

405. PARROT-CROSSBILL *Loxia (c) pytyopsittacus* Borkhausen (38)

On September 16th an immature cock Crossbill was picked up dead near Catcleugh, Redesdale, on the main Newcastle to Jedburgh road, having just been knocked down by a passing vehicle. It was one of a party of four—another red bird and two green. These three remained by the roadside, flying round calling, and were under observation for some twenty minutes. (R.L.B.) This bird was taken to the Hancock Museum where it was at once seen that it was unusually large and had a very stout bill. The depth of the bill at the base was 13 mm. and the length of the upper mandible 22 mm., while the overlap of the upper mandible was very prolonged. It was submitted to the Editors of *British Birds* who identified it as a Parrot Crossbill. This is the first record for Northumberland.

Within the last decade, Parrot Crossbills have been found breeding close to the southern and western sea-boards of Norway, so their appearance as immigrants to this country is now not unlikely. No immigrant Common Crossbills were recorded here in 1954; but as the Parrot and Common Crossbills do not necessarily breed in the same district in the same year in Norway, an immigration of the former would not normally be associated with an "invasion" of the latter. (H.M.S.B.) (See *B.B.*, Vol. XLVII, p. 274 and plate 47.)

422. LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus* (L.) (58)

The flock, maximum 20, at the Teesmouth from September to the end of the year 1953 (see *O.R.*, 1953) was present in varying numbers until March, when 12 were seen, one cock coming into summer plumage. On March 28th a hen was still present and remained until May 2nd. (C.J.H., P.J.S., et al.)

On October 23rd a flock returned to the same refuse dump at Teesmouth; its numbers varied, maximum 18 in November and December. Still present up to the end of the year.

On November 14th and 15th two were seen on Holy Island (M.F.M.M.) where a few were present up to the end of the year (B.L.) and on November 16th one was seen on the coast at Boulmer. (C.J.H.)

423. SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.) (59)

Several flocks reported from the coast in January and February; from 20 to 30 wintered near South Shields pier. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

First seen in autumn on September 14th on the Inner Farne, one later picked up dead. (U.M.G.) From October onwards very large flocks appeared on the coast and inland. At the Teesmouth maximum 160 in December. (C.J.H.) On Newbiggin links over 200. (D.M.R.C.) On December 28th a flock of c. 150 in front of the windows of Monks' House, bathing in the streamlet. (E.A.R.E.) On Holy Island over 100. (B.L.) Inland on December 20th near Smiddyshaw Reservoir, D., three flocks totalling 130 to 150 birds. (A.Be.)

Key to the initials of those contributing to this report :

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ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT ON THE FARNE ISLANDS FOR 1954

Compiled by

GRACE HICKLING, M.A., M.B.O.U.

For various reasons it is not possible to make this report as comprehensive as in the past.

Careful records kept by W. J. Lewis during recent years have given us a picture of bird-life on the Longstone throughout the year. Unfortunately, Mr. Lewis was transferred to Whitby lighthouse last March and, as his successor is not an ornithologist, there is very little about the Longstone in this report. Mr. Lewis, writing of his work on the Longstone, says: "I think that with my records I have brought the passage migrants up-to-date; I also think that, through the years, little, if any, change has occurred in the migrants—a fact which is proved by comparing my records with those of many years ago." This statement is undoubtedly true, and although an experienced observer might be able, from time to time, to add new birds to the systematic list, and to confirm the more frequent occurrence of others hitherto regarded as merely occasional, the general picture will remain substantially the same.

The figures for the breeding birds on the Longstone have been furnished by E. A. R. Ennion, but, in order to avoid injuring the young terns, he landed only once on this island, so no accurate counts were made. There are no figures for the other Longstone rocks.

Less information than usual is available about conditions on the remaining islands of the Outer Group, for J. Turnbull, who shared the duties of watcher with R. Nelson, was taken suddenly ill in the middle of the season and could not complete his observations.

Fortunately, students were again in residence in the Inner Farne Study Centre from the beginning of March until nearly the end of October, and they have maintained a day-to-day diary, which has still further extended our knowledge of the bird-life of the Inner Group.

Finally, personal affairs prevented me from paying my usual frequent visits to the islands and I am, therefore, extremely grateful to Dr. Ennion, and to Mr. and Mrs. Cullen, for their very valuable help, not only in ringing, but also in compiling this report.

Six new species have been added to the systematic list of birds recorded for the islands. These are the great shearwater *Procellaria gravis* O'Reilly, marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus* (L.), nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* Brehm, barred warbler *Sylvia nisoria* (Bech.), woodchat-shrike *Lanius senator* L. and goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* (L.). In addition, three other species, which have not been recorded for a number of years, have been seen. These are the wryneck *Jynx torquilla* L. (last seen on May 15th, 1885), the shore-lark *Eremophila alpestris* (L.) (last seen in the autumn of 1880) and the house-sparrow *Passer domesticus* (L.) (last seen on August 10th, 1914).

Two peak periods of migration were recorded on Inner Farne. The spring peak was on May 2nd when, with an E to SE wind, at least four fieldfares, two blackbirds, two song-thrushes, six wheatears, four redstarts, a whinchat, a robin, a sedge-warbler, three whitethroats, three leaf warblers and a nightingale were counted. The other peak occurred on August 21st and 22nd when, after three days of N or NE gales, the island was packed with migrants. On August 21st these included ten wheatears, eight leaf warblers, a whinchat, a red-backed shrike, a redstart, a pied flycatcher and either a tree- or meadow-pipit. Some of these remained until the following day when they were joined by more warblers, two spotted flycatchers and a wryneck.

Below is a list of the birds arranged in systematic order :—

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus arcticus* L., GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn. and RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus* Pontopp. Divers were seen occasionally off Inner Farne in March and again in early May. Red-throated were identified at least three times and on one occasion a bird was seen which was either a black-throated or great northern. A black-throated was off the Longstone on January 30th.

RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Bodd.). Single birds were seen off Inner Farne on March 3rd and August 19th.

SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* (L.). One was seen off Inner Farne on March 11th and October 22nd.

MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus* Brünn. On May 3rd E. A. R. Ennion saw a single bird and on June 21st a flock of ten—the largest number he had ever seen together in this area.

GREAT SHEARWATER *Procellaria gravis* O'Reilly. One was seen off Inner Farne on May 2nd.

FULMAR PETREL *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.). A pair nested on both Staple Island and Brownsman and there were probably eight pairs on Inner Farne. On this last island three eggs were hatched, but only one chick was reared.

GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.). Seen in parties of varying size throughout the year.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.). There was again a colony on North Wamses where, with the exception of one brood, all the young birds (totalling forty) were ringed. Most of the first clutches on the Megstone were taken by visitors, or fishermen, and the birds which laid again on the lower part of the island had their eggs washed off by heavy seas. Late in the season the upper colony managed to rear about one hundred young.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.). Approximately one hundred and ten pairs nested, or tried to nest. Ten were on Brownsman, seventy-three on Staple Island and twenty-six on Inner Farne, although of these last at least four had their nests either robbed or washed away. A nest was seen on the West Wideopens in April; this is the first time shags have bred on this island. On Inner Farne the first egg was seen on April 16th; this was six days later than in 1953.

HERON *Ardea cinerea* L. Seen occasionally in small numbers in spring and autumn.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L., TEAL *Anas crecca* L. and WIGEON *Anas penelope* L. Flocks of mallard, numbering up to fifty, were recorded fairly frequently in winter and spring. Teal and wigeon were, however, seen only occasionally and in small numbers.

SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata* (L.). There are only three records:—a drake seen on March 23rd, five drakes on May 27th and a duck on July 1st.

GOLDEN-EYE *Bucephala clangula* (L.) and LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* (L.). Seen off Inner Farne during March: they were usually in the Kettle or near the Bridges. Numbers varied from

day to day, the maximum for golden-eye being thirteen and for long-tailed, nine.

COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.). Small parties were seen occasionally in April, May and August.

EIDER-DUCK *Somateria mollissima* (L.). Between three hundred and eighty and four hundred ducks probably nested on Inner Farne, but there are no figures for the other islands.

On Inner Farne the first egg was laid on May 2nd and the first young were seen exactly a month later—on June 2nd. By June 28th most of the broods had hatched, although on that day a duck and a drake were seen in the courtyard of the tower, obviously still prospecting for a nesting-site.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator* L. Parties, varying in size from one to seven, were off Inner Farne in March, there was one in the Kettle on April 23rd, and six were seen in flight on June 13th.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* L. One was on the Longstone on January 13th.

SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.). There is no definite proof of breeding, but at least six pairs frequented the Inner Group in spring.

GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.). Six were seen near the Inner Group on June 10th, while the usual party, this time numbering from two to eight, arrived on North Wamses about June 21st.

"GREY GEESE" ?*sp.* A party of ten, thought by W. J. Lewis, to be pink-feet, flew over the Longstone on January 30th.

BARNACLE GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (Bechst.). On October 16th a single bird was seen flying to the mainland from the islands.

MARSH-HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus* (L.). An adult female was seen flying low over Inner Farne on May 8th.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunst. A peregrine wintered on the islands in both 1953 and 1954. In 1953 the bird was a tiercel and in 1954 a falcon.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius* L. One was seen on Inner Farne on March 7th and April 8th.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L. One visited Inner Farne daily between August 2nd and 4th.

WATER-RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* L. One, which seemed very exhausted, was seen on the Longstone on January 3rd, while on March 27th another was on the West Wideopens. It was watched for about half-an-hour, and was seen to spend several minutes at a time down puffin burrows.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L.). One spent a short time on Inner Farne on May 8th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L. A flock of about ten wintered on the Inner Group, but in April and May the numbers had increased and these were probably passage birds. Three or four pairs nested on both Inner Farne and Brownsman, but the figures for the remaining islands are not known.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.). Flocks of varying size were seen almost daily on the Inner Group in March and April and in mid-March five birds appeared to take up territory on the island. They only remained for a day or two, however, and did not nest.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* L. As usual a small number wintered on the islands. Four to six pairs nested on Inner Farne and there were others on the Outer Group.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius apricarius* L. Seen occasionally, in small numbers, on Inner Farne in March, May and June.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* (L.), REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* (L.), PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima* (Brünn.), DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.). Turnstones, redshanks and purple sandpipers wintered as usual on the Longstone. In March there were between ten and forty turnstones and the same number of purple sandpipers, as well as up to ten redshanks, on the Inner Group. The position remained more or less the same until May, but the numbers then gradually decreased, although even in June an occasional redshank, or small party of turnstones, was seen. The numbers increased again at the end of July. It is possible that many of the turnstones seen in late summer were on passage—on August 26th, for example, parties of from one to twenty were seen arriving from the sea every five or ten minutes—but by October 28th the numbers had dropped to the spring figure. Dunlin were seen on the Inner Group in both spring and autumn, but they were never numerous.

COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.). At least one, and possibly two, were on Inner Farne throughout March. There are occasional records of single birds in April, August, October and November.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* L. Seen occasionally in spring and autumn.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.). Flocks of from ten to fifty made almost daily visits to the islands in spring. During June only occasional birds were seen, but by the end of the month large flocks had reappeared.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* (L.). Recorded occasionally at Inner Farne in May and August.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* (L.). Seen occasionally, in numbers varying from one to twenty, on the Inner Group in spring and autumn.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L. One was on Inner Farne on August 24th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L. One was on Staple Island on July 11th and another spent from August 21st to 23rd on Inner Farne.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.). One, described as an unusually tame bird, spent from August 24th to 28th on Inner Farne.

KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.). A flock of between thirty and fifty waders, probably knots, was on Knoxes Reef on March 18th. Knots were seen on the Inner Group during August and September, the numbers varying from one to fifty.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisler). A single bird, on autumn passage, spent from August 18th to 22nd on Inner Farne.

GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* (Brünn.). One, which was being chased by terns, was flying south near Knocklin Ends on August 16th.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L., LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus* L., HERRING-GULL *Larus argentatus* Pontopp. and COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L. Large numbers of gulls, sometimes numbering several thousands, roosted on Knoxes Reef and the Wideopens in spring, late summer and winter.

J. M. Cullen made some careful observations on the build-up of the herring and lesser black-backed population of the Wideopens.

At the beginning of March he noticed that among the roosting gulls were common and greater black-backs, as well as large numbers of herring-gulls, many of the birds being immature. He saw the first lesser black-back on March 4th, but it was only after March 23rd that this species appeared regularly.

Between March 31st and May 9th he made periodic counts of herring-gulls and lesser black-backs on the west face of the West Wideopens and, as a result, found that by the beginning of April the number of herring-gulls had reached the level—approximately twenty—at which it stayed for the breeding season. On the other hand, the numbers of lesser black-backs continued to increase and virtually doubled the number (twenty-five) present at the beginning of the count.

Both herring-gulls and lesser black-backs nested as usual, and a herring-gull chick, reared by the Cullens in the study centre, became extremely tame. On one occasion, when the Cullens approached the Inner Farne on their return from a trip to Seahouses, they gave the call used by parent gulls to summon the young to feed, and were astonished, and delighted, to see their own chick fly out from the island and circle the boat before returning to the shore.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn. A second-winter bird was on the Wideopens on September 26th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L. A fairly frequent visitor to the Inner Group from March to June.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.). Three hundred and thirty-seven nests were counted by J. M. Cullen on Inner Farne in July and the Staple Island colony also showed an increase. On Brownsman the first egg was laid on May 15th and on Inner Farne on May 20th. On both groups the first young bird hatched on June 16th. An unusual feature was the large number of immature and non-breeding birds seen on some of the islands, especially Longstone End, during the summer.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* (L.). One was fishing with arctic terns in the Kettle on May 20th and 21st.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L. Twelve were seen on Inner Farne on May 8th and between fifty and one hundred pairs nested on this island. There were about ten pairs on Longstone End.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naum. As will be appreciated it is impossible to give any accurate figure for the sizes of the different

colonies, but J. M. Cullen estimated that the Inner Farne one was virtually unaltered, there being at least fifteen hundred pairs. There were some thirty pairs on Longstone End and the usual large colony on Brownsman. About twenty pairs nested on Staple Island; they were on the rocks near Brownsman's Gut and at least six young hatched, but were probably taken by gulls. For the first time since 1951 there was a colony (about thirty pairs) on the West Wideopens. The first arctic terns were seen on May 2nd and the first young hatched on Inner Farne on June 17th, six days earlier than in 1953.

On August 15th J. M. Cullen noticed the first flocks of migrating terns and by August 28th the terns had nearly all gone. Flocks left the island every evening, and the breeding areas were gradually deserted, the last to leave being the common terns. Small numbers, however, remained in the vicinity and could be seen flying over the water in ones and twos.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii* Mont. As in 1953 the main colony was with Sandwich terns on Longstone End. No count was made, but E. A. R. Ennion estimated that there were some forty pairs. There was a pair or two on Brownsman and three pairs on Inner Farne.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Pall. Two flew over Inner Farne on May 10th.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Lath. The first Sandwich tern was seen on April 6th, the same date as in 1953.

The main colony, some nine hundred pairs, was again on Longstone End and there were about twenty pairs on Brownsman where, early in July, they were joined by another forty pairs. None nested on Inner Farne.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda* L. Five eggs were seen on Inner Farne and it is probable that from five to ten pairs attempted to nest. There were no nests on the Outer Group.

LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle* (L.). Two oiled birds were seen at the Longstone on January 20th and 21st.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge* (Pontopp.). Nested in all the usual places.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica* (L.). The usual large number nested. Small parties were seen off Inner Farne in mid-March and by the end of the month between two and three thousand were present. On April 1st they were digging and collecting nest material.

WOOD-PIGEON *Columba palumbus* L. One or two were seen occasionally on the Inner Group from April 5th to May 13th.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus* L. At the beginning of July Turnbull reported that he had seen one on Brownsman.

SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.). Seen occasionally, in small numbers, from May 29th until August 10th.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla* L. One frequented Inner Farne from August 22nd to 27th, while another was found dead on Brownsman on August 26th. There were at least two others on the mainland, one being seen at Bamburgh on August 27th and another trapped at Monks' House on September 7th.

SKYLARK *Alda arvensis* L. Recorded on passage in spring and autumn, the largest numbers appearing in March and September.

SHORE-LARK *Eremophila alpestris* (L.). One was on the Inner Group on April 28th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L., HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.) and SAND-MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.). The first swallow was seen on April 21st, three days earlier than in 1953. The passage reached its peak in May, but there are records also for June, July and August. There are two records of sand-martins, and two of house-martins, all in May.

CARRION-CROW *Corvus corone* L., HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L., ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* L. and JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* L. During March, carrion and hooded crows, rooks and jackdaws made almost daily visits to both groups, and on Inner Farne these continued (though less frequently) until May. The different species were sometimes seen separately and sometimes in company with other *corvidae*.

A carrion-crow's nest, with one egg, was found on East Wideopens on May 13th, but was destroyed within a day or two. The birds frequented the Inner Group throughout the season, but no second nest was discovered.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on March 3rd; it was seen daily until March 14th, when two birds were noticed, and they probably remained until the end of April. One or two were on this island in October.

There are two records for Brownsman: one on May 1st and two on September 7th.

MISTLE-THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus* L., FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L., SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton, REDWING *Turdus musicus* L., RING-OUZEL *Turdus torquatus* L. and BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L. An occasional blackbird was seen at the Longstone during January. Passage movements were recorded at this lighthouse on March 10th/11th, 20th/21st, 23rd/24th, 26th/27th and 27th/28th: the birds were mainly blackbirds, but there were also some song-thrushes and redwings.

On the Inner Farne blackbirds, song-thrushes and, less frequently, fieldfares and redwings, were recorded in both spring and autumn, and it is interesting to find that the greatest number of blackbirds—about twenty—were seen on March 21st, the day after one of the Longstone "rushes." Most of the fieldfares appeared in the first half of May, the maximum number (seventeen) being recorded on both May 1st and 3rd. There is a single record of a mistle-thrush, on March 7th. A cock and hen ring-ouzel, probably migrants, were seen between April 30th and May 11th.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.). Seen on passage in spring and autumn, the spring movement starting on March 23rd and the return passage on July 24th. A few birds, obviously of the form *O. o. leucorhoa* (Gm.), were identified in September.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L.). Seen on passage in late spring and autumn.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L.) and BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* (L.). Redstarts were seen on passage, in small numbers, in spring, but there is only one autumn record. A hen black redstart was on Brownsman on April 21st.

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos* Brehm. One was with other migrants on Inner Farne on May 2nd. It spent at least three hours on the island and was identified by N. Tinbergen and J. M. Cullen.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* (L.). Mr. and Mrs. Cullen found a robin in the cellar of the tower when they went out to the islands on March 2nd and this, and another bird, may have wintered, as in 1953-54, on Inner Farne. Two robins were seen almost daily until March 22nd, but after that date there are only occasional records. At least three, possibly birds returning to the Continent, were on this island from May 5th to 8th. Two robins were again recorded in October and these may have been the usual wintering birds.

SEDGE-WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.), GARDEN-WARBLER *Sylvia borin* (Bodd.), WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Lath., LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* (L.), WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.), CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita* (Vieill.) and WOOD-WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Bech.). The first warbler was a chiffchaff seen on Inner Farne on March 20th, but it was not until April 29th that another, probably a willow-warbler, appeared. The passage, which included whitethroats, an occasional lesser whitethroat and sedge-warbler, continued through May and into June.

The autumn movement started on August 1st when a bird, which was either a willow-warbler or a chiffchaff, was seen on Inner Farne. Birds continued to arrive, the numbers, which were considerably greater than in spring, increasing towards the end of the month. On the 22nd at least ten warblers, including three lesser whitethroats, a wood-warbler and a garden-warbler, were on Inner Farne, while on the 30th there were many willow-warblers and whitethroats on both the Inner and Outer Groups. There are further records in September, and a garden-warbler was trapped on Inner Farne on September 30th.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria* (Bech.). An immature bird was seen by E. A. R. Ennion on Inner Farne on September 7th. It frequented the nettle-bed above St. Cuthbert's Cove, from which it was flushed many times.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus* (L.). One or two seen occasionally on Inner Farne in spring and autumn.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata* (Pall.) and PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pall.). Pied flycatchers were seen on passage, in small numbers, in spring and autumn, but only two spotted flycatchers were recorded. These were on Inner Farne on August 22nd.

HEDGE-SPARROW *Prunella modularis* (L.). Single birds were on Inner Farne on March 21st and 22nd, May 14th and October 9th. It is not known whether these were passage birds, or merely casual visitors from the mainland.

MEADOW-PIBIT *Anthus pratensis* (L.) and TREE-PIBIT *Anthus trivialis* (L.). At least two meadow-pipits were on Inner Farne from March 20th until May 12th and these were sometimes joined by passage birds. The autumn passage started on August 21st and records

continued until September 30th. Considerably more birds were seen than in spring—on September 30th there were at least seventeen—and it is probable that one or two of the birds seen in August were tree-pipits.

ROCK-PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta* (L.). As usual a few pairs nested on each of the larger islands. No colour-ringing has been carried out this year, but E. A. R. Ennion has found from his previous work that the nesting pairs are mainly resident, while the juveniles move away at the end of July, or beginning of August, and are replaced by a wintering population of juveniles which may, perhaps, come from further north. He has also found that there are three main types of nesting-site: rock crevice, wall crevice and turf "pocket," this last being the commonest. Second nests seem always to be in similar positions to the first.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba* L. A pair of pied wagtails again nested on Inner Farne; they lost their first eggs, but the second brood fledged. They appeared to be resident on the island, for they were seen in March and were still there at the end of September.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* L. Seen occasionally, usually only single birds, on Inner Farne in May. There is one autumn record, on October 1st.

WOODCHAT-SHRIKE *Lanius senator* L. An adult, probably a male, spent from May 23rd to 25th on Inner Farne. It was seen near the Heligoland trap, and on a window-sill of the study centre, and was easily identified. Mr. and Mrs. Cullen noted the broad white wing-bar and concluded that it was, therefore, of the form *L. s. senator* and not *L. s. badius*.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio* L. A cock was on Inner Farne on May 27th. A juvenile was on this island on August 21st and 22nd, while another immature bird was seen on Staple Island and Brownsman on August 22nd. E. A. R. Ennion reports that there were at least two others on the mainland at this time and that these birds were probably travelling from the Baltic to Africa, and were carried to Northumberland by drift.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L. Starlings were recorded in considerable numbers at the Longstone on the nights of March 10th/11th, 23rd/24th, 26th/27th, 27th/28th and 29th/30th.

A flock of from ten to twenty was seen daily on Inner Farne during March, but by April it had split up and several had started to nest. From five to fifteen pairs bred on this island.

GREENFINCH *Chloris chloris* (L.). One or two were on Inner Farne during the last half of March; there are also records of single birds for April 28th, May 12th and September 30th.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* (L.). There were two on Inner Farne on March 2nd, and single birds were seen occasionally on this island up to April 19th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* (L.). A small flock, which sometimes numbered as many as ten, was seen almost daily on Inner Farne from March to early May. There is only one autumn record—five seen on October 21st, again on Inner Farne.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* L. A party, varying in number from one to six, was on Inner Farne from March 19th to 29th and a small party was again recorded at the end of October.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* L. Seen occasionally on Inner Farne in May and October.

SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on March 10th, there were two on the gallery of the Longstone lighthouse on March 26th/27th, and on September 27th a party of about five was seen on Inner Farne where at least two remained for the next few days.

HOUSE-SPARROW *Passer domesticus* (L.). A single bird, probably a visitor from the mainland, was seen near the buildings on Inner Farne on March 27th.

TREE-SPARROW *Passer montanus* (L.). A party of four was seen round the tower on Inner Farne on May 9th and 10th and one remained until the 16th.

RINGING

During the year 1,575 nestlings and 270 adults were ringed, the total—1,845—being 278 less than the 1953 figure. Numbers of individual species were as follows:—

Fulmar petrel 3; cormorant 40; shag 130; eider 3; oystercatcher 2; ringed plover 8; lesser black-backed gull 271; kittiwake 430; arctic tern 457; Sandwich tern 314; puffin 165; wheatear 1; garden warbler 1; rock-pipit 18; starling 1; chaffinch 1.

The winter gales once again ripped most of the wire netting from the Heligoland trap and, in consequence, this could not be used. It is obvious that this trap, as at present constructed, will not withstand the winter and it is hoped to try some alternative form of trap.

RECOVERIES

There have been eighty-four recoveries of birds ringed on the islands, an increase of twenty-three on the previous year. The five arctic tern recoveries, all on Inner Farne, include nesting birds fifteen and seventeen years old. There is another kittiwake from Greenland, while the North Shields recovery is of special interest.

The colony of kittiwakes at Messrs. Smith's Dock Co., Ltd., North Shields, was started in 1949, and the birds build their nests on the window-ledges of a store overlooking a busy ferry. The Farne Island bird was caught on one of these ledges, and later released, and it provides the first proof that birds from the Farnes visit this colony.

RECOVERIES OF RINGED BIRDS

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
| CORMORANT | | |
| 15.8.53 | L'Etang de Lacanau, Gironde, France (shot) | 1.1.54 |
| " | Spittal Point, R. Tweed (shot) | 11.1.54 |
| 3.9.51 | Inverkeithing Bay, Fife | 17.1.54 |
| 13.6.52 | Crab Water, R. Tweed (shot) | 3.2.54 |
| " | Burham, Rochester (killed on gravel pit) | 6.2.54 |
| 3.7.53 | Hornsea Mere, E. Yorks. (found frozen in and dead) | 14.2.54 |
| 15.8.53 | Montrose (shot) | c. 6.3.54 |
| " | Carr Rock, R. Tweed (shot) | 5.5.54 |
| 31.7.52 | Spittal Point, R. Tweed (shot) | 17.5.54 |
| 15.8.53 | Portobello, Edinburgh | c. 25.5.54 |
| 18.6.53 | Spittal Point, R. Tweed (shot) | 6.9.54 |
| 1.9.53 | Inner Farne (found dead) | 6.10.54 |
| 15.8.53 | Nr. Penkridge, Stafford (shot) | 9.10.54 |
| 1.9.54 | Spittal Point, R. Tweed (shot) | 6.11.54 |
| " | Teesmouth (found dead) | 6.11.54 |
| " | Port en Bessin, Calvados (presumed dead) | 13.11.54 |
| " | Tweed Dock, Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 16.11.54 |
| " | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 29.11.54 |
| " | Johnshaven, Kincardineshire | 4.12.54 |
| 9.7.52 | Berwick-on-Tweed (shot) | 10.12.54 |
| 15.8.53 | Mugdrum Island, R. Tay (shot) | 10.12.54 |
| 1.9.54 | R. Tweed (shot) | 21.12.54 |
| SHAG | | |
| 25.6.53 | On R. Derwent, at Ambergate, nr. Belper, Derbyshire | 4.2.54 |
| " | Southwick, Sussex | 12.2.54 |
| " | (1) Bowers Gifford, Essex (found unable to fly, but released later) (2) Pitsea | 12.2.54 |
| | Basildon, Essex (landed on pond and died) | 16.2.54 |
| 3.7.53 | Portlethen, by Aberdeen | 15.2.54 |
| 16.7.53 | Prestonpans, E. Lothian | 16.2.54 |
| 19.7.53 | Blakeney Point, Norfolk | 20.2.54 |
| " | Easthaven, Angus (caught on beach, oiled) | 21.2.54 |

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 24.4.53 | *Sandend, Banffshire | 28.2.54 |
| 3.7.53 | Cramond, nr. Edinburgh | 6.3.54 |
| 11.7.53 | Cove Bay, nr. Aberdeen | 21.3.54 |
| 19.7.53 | South Shields | 22.3.54 |
| 25.6.53 | Eilean Donan Castle, L. Duich, Ross (ring only found on edge of fountain) | 25.3.54 |
| 4.8.53 | *Sandsend, Whitby | 15.4.54 |
| 10.7.50 | Staple Island (129025—nesting, released) | 25.4.54 |
| 25.4.52 | *Inner Farne (508416—nesting, released) | 17.6.54 |
| 25.6.53 | Seahouses | 28.7.54 |
| 11.6.53 | R. Blyth, nr. Bedlington | 2.11.54 |
| 25.6.54 | Peterhead, Aberdeenshire (found exhausted) | c. 30.11.54 |
| 16.7.54 | Orwell Creek, Ipswich, Suffolk | early Dec.'54 |
| 25.6.54 | Colne Point, Essex | 7.12.54 |
| 8.7.54 | Dovercourt, Essex (found emaciated and dying) | 11.12.54 |
| 25.6.54 | Frinton-on-Sea, Essex (caught by fox on golf course) | 14.12.54 |
| ,, | Holy Island | 19.12.54 |
| ,, | St. Malo des Bains, Pas-de-Calais, France (caught) | c. 23.12.54 |

EIDER-DUCK

| | | |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|
| 6.6.53 | *Monks' House, Seahouses | 22.6.54 |
|--------|--------------------------|---------|

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

| | | |
|---------|---|------------|
| 29.8.52 | Nr. Villa Real de St. Antonio, Algarve, Portugal (caught, presumed dead) | c. 20.1.54 |
| 20.8.53 | Rufisque, Senegal | 25.1.54 |
| ,, | Nr. Cape Mondego, Portugal (presumed dead) | 4.3.54 |
| 10.8.53 | Port of Safi, Morocco | 19.3.54 |
| ,, | On sea off Ramsjostrand, 4 kms. south of Torekov, Sweden | 31.5.54 |
| 20.8.53 | Comporta, nr. Setubal, Portugal (shot) | 4.6.54 |

KITTIWAKE

| | | |
|---------|---|---------|
| 11.7.53 | Guiseley, nr. Otley (found exhausted, revived and disappeared) | 13.1.54 |
| 3.7.53 | Hallo Lighthouse, Smögen, mouth of Abyfjord, Sweden | 28.1.54 |

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| 26.6.52 | Qagssmuit, N. Julianehaab district, W. Greenland (shot) | 18.3.54 |
| 16.7.53 | Wissant, Pas-de-Calais, France | c. 5.4.54 |
| „ | Roos, nr. Hull (found dying) | 19.6.54 |
| „ | Bridlington | 20.6.54 |
| 1.7.52 | Staple Island (nesting, released) | 13.6.54 |
| 11.7.53 | Island of Hvaler Group, Oslofjord, Norway (skeleton found) | 4.7.54 |
| 26.6.52 | Smith's Dock, North Shields (released) | 26.7.54 |
| 10.7.54 | Blyth | 22.8.54 |
| 27.7.54 | Seahouses (found exhausted and died later) | c. 23.8.54 |
| 8.7.54 | Between Goole and Scunthorpe | 8.10.54 |

ARCTIC TERN

| | | |
|---------|---------------------------------|---------|
| 29.6.47 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 18.5.54 |
| 26.6.39 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 10.6.54 |
| 11.7.49 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 12.6.54 |
| 5.7.51 | Inner Farne (released) | 12.6.54 |
| 8.7.37 | Inner Farne (nesting, released) | 5.7.54 |

SANDWICH TERN

| | | |
|---------|--|---------------|
| 4.7.53 | Etang de Berre, Bouches-du-Rhone, France (shot) | early Jan.'54 |
| „ | Keta, Gold Coast (presumed dead) | 12.2.54 |
| 10.7.52 | Mouth of R. Comoe, Grand-Bassam, French West Africa (presumed dead) | 21.2.54 |
| 9.7.53 | Off Lighthouse, Gibraltar (caught in a bonito fishing line—dead) | 26.2.54 |
| 2.7.52 | Hekome Lagoon, Keta, Gold Coast (killed by hawk) | 25.6.54 |
| 8.7.54 | Rattray Head, Aberdeenshire (found with broken wing, probably destroyed) | 16.8.54 |
| 3.7.52 | Blakeney Point | 4.10.54 |
| 8.7.54 | Off Dakar (caught in fishing net, released) | 4.11.54 |
| 6.8.54 | Six miles W. of Accra, Gold Coast (found dying) | 14.11.54 |
| 21.7.51 | Keta Lagoon, Gold Coast (caught) | 2.12.54 |
| 8.7.54 | Abidjan, Ivory Coast, French West Africa (caught) | 17.12.54 |

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|--|-----------------------|
| SOUTHERN GUILLEMOT | | |
| 9.7.52 | Drumby Head, Cruden Bay, nr. Peterhead (caught in salmon net) | 1.6.54 |
| PUFFIN | | |
| 11.7.52 | Inner Farne (released) | 21.4.54 |
| 4.5.53 | Inner Farne (released) | 21.4.54 |
| „ | Brownsman (released) | 1.5.54 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult.

Unless otherwise stated, all birds have been found dead.

VISITORS TO FARNE ISLANDS STUDY CENTRE

1953

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Where from</i> | <i>Date of stay</i> | <i>Main object of visit</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Dr. N. Tinbergen | Oxford University | Feb. 27-Mar. 2 April 2-11 May 23-June 9 | Supervision of students. Filming gull and tern behaviour. |
| J. M. Cullen | Oxford University | Feb. 26-Apr. 27 May 11-Aug. 15 | Reproductive behaviour of arctic terns. |
| Dr. Esther Sager | Oxford University | Feb. 26-Aug. 15 | Reproductive behaviour of kittiwakes. |
| Dr. F. McKinney | Oxford University | Feb. 26-June 9 | Courtship and incubation behaviour of eider ducks. |
| Prof. W. S. Verplanck | Harvard University | Feb. 26-Mar. 2 April 7-11 June 26-July 1 | Bird study with Dr. Tinbergen. |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Where from</i> | <i>Date of stay</i> | <i>Main object of visit</i> |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Dr. and Mrs. Paris | Gouda, Holland | May 25-June 9 | Filming gull and tern behaviour with Dr. Tinbergen. |
| Dr. van Beusekom | Naarden, Holland | April 2-11 | Bird behaviour. |
| King's College Natural History Society. Leader : (1) D. Robertson ; (2) B. Sowerby | King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne | April 11-18 July 25-Aug. 8 | Ecological survey of Inner Farne, including plants, seaweeds, marine life and insects. |
| A. Walker R. Smith | Harrogate ; Lockerbie | Sept. 5-12 | Bird study— migration. |
| Mr. and Mrs. and D. Rollin, Miss M. Robertson, Prof. F. J. Natrass | Glanton, Northumber- land ; Newcastle upon Tyne | Sept. 26-Oct. 5 | Daily behaviour of birds. |
| L. Gowan | Whickham, Co. Durham | July 18-25 | Bird study— nesting sea birds. |
| Miss M. F. Hall M. Moynihan | Oxford University | June 14-20 | Bird behaviour. |
| Comm. H. H. P. Moore | Uckfield, Sussex | July 4-7 | Bird study— nesting sea birds. |

1954

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Dr. N. Tinbergen | Oxford University | April 27-May 14 June 9-19 | Supervision and bird behaviour. |
| Mr. and Dr. Cullen | Oxford University | Mar. 2-Aug. 28 | Reproductive behaviour of arctic terns, kittiwakes and shags. |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Where from</i> | <i>Date of stay</i> | <i>Main object of visit</i> |
|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| Miss R. E. Laurie | Chippenham, Wilts. | April 29-May 4 | Bird study—kittiwakes. |
| J. C. Coulson and party | Durham University | Sept. 27-Oct. 1 | Bird study—migrants. |
| King's College Natural History Society. Leader : B. Sowerby | King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne | June 19-26 Sept. 4-25 | Continuation of ecological survey of Inner Farne. Survey of island and preparation of large-scale map. |
| N. Rollin, B. A. Rollin, H. W. Wright | Glanton, Northumberland | April 5-10 | Daily behaviour of birds. |
| L. Gowan | Whickham, Co. Durham | May 30-June 4 | Bird study—nesting sea-birds. |
| Mr. and Mrs. J. Bruce Falls | Toronto University | April 28-29 | Research on bird populations. |
| Dr. H. Cott | Cambridge University | May 31-June 1 | Bird photography. |
| Miss S. Parker | University of Cape Town | July 15-25 | Bird study—nesting sea-birds. |
| A. Macdonald C. M. Adamson | Northumberland and Durham Nat. Hist. Soc. | Oct. 3-6 | Bird study—migrants. |
| Misses D. M. and J. K. Muir, W. Harrison | Northumberland and Durham Nat. Hist. Soc. | Oct. 16-23 | Bird study—migrants. |

THE GREY SEALS OF THE FARNE ISLANDS

A report on investigations carried out in 1953 and 1954

by

GRACE HICKLING, M.A., ARTHUR W. JONES, B.Sc., AND

IAN M. TELFER, M.B., B.S.

Weather conditions in both 1953 and 1954 were very unfavourable and it was only possible to pay four visits to the islands. Three of these were in 1953 and one in 1954.

During the 1953 visits seventy-four animals were tagged, thirty-nine being in the first coat, twenty-two changing coat and thirteen in the second coat. Calves marked when in the second coat were, in general, not weighed and measured, but where this was done the methods used were the same as in 1952. In 1954 it was felt that, in view of the uncertain weather, every effort should be concentrated on tagging and, in consequence, while ninety-three calves were marked, only one was weighed.

TAGGING. As the result of discussions with Professor H. R. Hewer, of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, the design of the tags has again been modified. Hewer prepared a tag which could be applied to an outer digit of the hind flipper by means of a pair of special pliers, thus doing away with the need for a preliminary incision. He first tried out these tags at Ramsey Island in September, 1953, and they have been used at the Farnes in both 1953 and 1954. The fact that it was possible to mark ninety-three calves on November 20th, 1954, shows how much more quickly they can be applied, but there are still a few failures, some of which are probably due to badly formed rings.

The tags and pliers have been provided, without charge, by the Zoological Society of London and the Council of the Natural History Society wish to record their grateful thanks to that Society, and to Dr. L. Harrison Matthews, F.R.S., and Professor Hewer, for their generous help.

In the past all the tags have borne the inscription "Inform Hancock Museum, Newcastle/Tyne," but it is felt that there should

now be only one marking scheme in the British Isles and Zoological Society tags will accordingly be used in the future.

RECOVERIES. There have been two recoveries, the details being as follows :—

- No. 98. Marked December 6th, 1952, on Brownsman. Found dead on the same island by one of the bird-watchers in June, 1953. No particulars of age are available, but it is obvious that this calf had never left the breeding grounds.
- No. 154. Marked November 21st, 1953. Recovered January 29th, 1954. Found on beach at Cairnbulg, four miles south of Fraserburgh. Probably injured, and unable to make headway against the heavy seas. Ring removed and animal put back into water. Approximate age ten weeks.

FURTHER DEDUCTIONS FROM THE RESULTS OF WEIGHING AND MEASURING.

- (a) While weighing errors were small it was again apparent that measuring was distinctly inaccurate.
- (b) It seems probable that the greatest weight (117 lbs. was the maximum recorded) is reached at about 21 days. At this stage the moult has started, but it is not greatly developed.
- (c) The rate of increase varies considerably. In the case of calves Nos. 124 and 131, both weighed originally at 10-14 days, the increases during the following seven days were 35 lbs. and 31 lbs. respectively, while calf No. 142, of approximately the same age, increased by 46 lbs. during the same period. Figures for Nos. 132 and 141 suggest that, during the first three weeks of life, there is an increase of approximately 60 lbs. On the other hand, No. 140 increased by 71 lbs.
- (d) Figures are now available for calf No. 61, originally marked when 4 days old and recovered off the R. Elbe at approximately ten weeks. There had been no change in flipper (9") or overall (42") lengths; the girth had increased by 1" to 27" and the weight by 13 lbs. to 47 lbs. The animal was reported as being in an exhausted condition, which may account to some extent for its very small weight, but it seems probable that, after weaning, there is a very considerable loss in weight before it again starts to gain. This recovery is of particular interest when related to the weights of 104 and 85 lbs. already obtained for yearlings.

NUMBERS OF CALVES.

- (a) 1953. It was impossible to land on the Wamses and the figure for that island is merely an approximation supplied by Dr. E. A. R. Ennion. The visit to Staple Island on December 5th was limited to 45 minutes and the count, though carefully made, probably errs on the low side. In the table below, figures marked with an * indicate that an accurate count was made, while the absence of any figure means that no count was made on the day in question.

| Date | Brownsman | Staple Island | N & S Wamses | Northern Hares | Longstone End |
|----------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 8.11.53 | 40 | 130-150 | — | — | — |
| 14.11.53 | *71 | 92 | — | — | — |
| 21.11.53 | *54 | 103 | 200 | — | — |
| 5.12.53 | *56 | *189 | — | — | — |
| Dead | *2 | *14 | — | — | — |

As accurate counts were made on Brownsman it is possible to make a reasonable estimate of the number of calves on that island up to December 5th: this figure is 87 live and two dead animals. Although in the circumstances no accurate total can be given for the islands as a whole it is probable that this was between 550 and 650.

- (b) 1954. Staple Island was the only island visited and it was impossible even to obtain approximate figures for the other islands. On November 20th, 224 live and at least six dead calves were counted on Staple Island.

PROPORTION OF MALES TO FEMALES. In 1953 out of 73 calves sexed 31 were males and 42 females. This means that only 42.5% of the total were males and is a reversal of the 1952 position.

OBSERVATIONS ON CALVES

- (a) Pre-natal moult. We could again find no evidence of this.
- (b) Types of calves. We had further confirmation of the fact that certain of the Farne Island calves swim in the sea at quite an early age, although in a few cases they appear to become distressed and have to be helped by the cows. One calf, about

4-5 days old, actually swam across Brownsman's Gut. It approached the boat, which was anchored off Brownsman, in Pinnacles Haven, but when one of the fishermen tried to lift it out of the water, it swam back to Staple Island.

- (c) Behaviour of young calves. Newly-born calves are very tame and can be handled easily. One, which from the fact that the placenta was still there had evidently just been born, cried and followed us round, obviously mistaking us for its mother. By two to three days, however, calves become distinctly aggressive and difficult to handle.

OBSERVATIONS ON ADULTS

- (a) Aggressive behaviour. It was again noted that one or two cows remained on land and defended their calves. We also saw one bull, which was near some calves, and greatly resented our approach.
- (b) Mating. On several occasions we were able to observe this at quite close quarters as the animals seemed entirely oblivious of our presence. Our observations did not bear out our previous suggestion that the animals preferred to mate in the sea, for we saw a number on the land as well as in shallow water.

The bull appeared to grip the cow by the neck, mount her and then fall over on his side and lie there. The whole process was a leisurely one and lasted 15 to 20 minutes. During this period some of the cows once or twice tickled the bull's face with their flippers.

We were particularly interested to find that the harem system is not always rigidly maintained as the following incident will show:—On November 21st, 1953, we watched a bull and cow mating on the rocky slopes of Brownsman. The cow had a wall eye, and so was readily identifiable. About half an hour after the first mating we saw her in the shallows with a second bull. She appeared to be taking the lead in the courtship, but after various thrashings round, etc., they seemed to mate successfully. The first bull was still on the rocks, about 100 yards away, and seemed entirely uninterested in the proceedings.

SIZE OF COLONY

It is impossible to give any definite figure for the size of the colony, but counts made in the spring of 1953 provide some indication. On April 18th we saw about 1,000, of all sizes and colours, but with

only a few of the calves of the year, crowded together in a comparatively small area of Longstone End, while there were at least another 100 on the Crumstone. On another day W. J. Lewis counted 1,750 pulled out on the Longstone and adjacent islands.

PARTICULARS OF MARKED SEALS

(a) 1953

Animals marked * have been re-weighed at least once

MARKED WHEN IN PUPPY COAT

| Number and Sex | Age (approx) | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Greyish hair on face | Teeth (where known) |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|-------|----------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| *104 ♀ | 14 days | 44½" | 10½" | 38½" | 94 lbs. | — | All showing |
| *106 ♂ | — | 44" | 11" | 36" | 95 lbs. | — | — |
| 107 ♀ | 2 days | 38" | 10" | 27½" | 45 lbs. | — | All showing |
| 108 ♂ | 2 days | 39" | 9½" | 23" | 36 lbs. | Slight traces | Just appear- ing |
| 123 ♂ | 14-21 days | 41½" | 9½" | 39" | 107 lbs. | — | — |
| *131 ♀ | 10-14 days | 43" | 9" | — | 76 lbs. | Yes | — |
| *132 ♀ | 2 days | 36" | 9" | 23" | 32 lbs. | — | all showing |
| 137 ♂ | 2 days | 39" | 8½" | 25" | 39 lbs. | — | — |
| *138 ♀ | 7 days | 38" | 9" | 31" | 63 lbs. | — | — |
| *139 ♀ | 7 days | 35" | 10" | 29" | 58 lbs. | — | — |
| *140 ♀ | less than 2 days | 37½" | 8½" | 23" | 32 lbs. | — | — |
| *141 ♀ | 2 days | 41½" | 9½" | 29" | 35 lbs. | — | Just showing |
| 143 ♀ | 3-4 days | 39" | 9" | 35" | 45 lbs. | Yes | — |
| 144 ♂ | 3-4 days | 41" | 10" | 24" | 35 lbs. | — | Hardly through |
| *145 ♂ | 3-4 days | 37½" | 9½" | 24" | 37 lbs. | — | — |
| *146 ♀ | 7 days | 42" | 9" | 28" | 47 lbs. | — | Just showing |
| 147 ♂ | 7-10 days | 43½" | 9½" | 28" | 52 lbs. | — | Well through |

MARKED WHEN IN PUPPY COAT—*continued*

| Number and Sex | Age (approx) | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Greyish hair on face | Teeth (where known) |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|-------|---------|----------------------------|--|
| *148 ♀ | 2-3 days | 46" | 8" | 24" | 37 lbs. | — | Well through |
| *149 ♀ | — | 45" | 9" | 26" | 39 lbs. | — | Well through |
| 150 ♂ | 7-10 days | 42" | 8½" | 31" | 60 lbs. | — | Well through |
| 154 ♀ | Under 2 hours | 37" | 9" | 23" | 31 lbs. | — | Only one or two back teeth through |
| 157 ♂ | 3 days | 37" | 9½" | 26½" | 44 lbs. | — | — |
| *167 ♂ | 7-10 days | 42" | 9" | 34" | 71 lbs. | — | — |
| *168 ♀ | 7-10 days | 44" | 10" | 28" | 54 lbs. | — | — |
| 169 ♀ | 4-7 days | 39" | 10" | 29" | 50 lbs. | — | — |
| *170 ♂ | 7-10 days | 45" | 10" | 33" | 70 lbs. | — | — |
| 171 ♀ | 4-7 days | 38" | 9" | 27½" | 42 lbs. | Little | — |
| 175 ♂ | 4-5 days | 43" | 9" | 26" | 36 lbs. | — | — |
| 186 ♀ | 7-10 days | 43" | 9" | 32" | 52 lbs. | — | — |
| 188 ♀ | 7 days | 40" | 9" | 30" | 51 lbs. | — | — |
| 230 ♀ | 7 days | 42½" | 9½" | 28" | 44 lbs. | — | — |
| 501 ♀ | 7-10 days | 41" | 9" | 33" | 59 lbs. | — | — |
| 503 ♂ | less than 1 day | 38½" | 8½" | 20½" | 23 lbs. | — | Almost through |
| 504 ♀ | 7 days | 38" | 9" | 30" | 48 lbs. | — | — |
| 513 — | 7-10 days | 43" | 9" | 31" | 63 lbs. | — | — |
| 518 ♀ | 7 days | 41" | 9" | 29" | 52 lbs. | — | — |
| 522 ♂ | 7-10 days | 42" | 9" | 35" | 71 lbs. | — | — |

MARKED WHEN CHANGING COAT

| Number and Sex | Age (approx) | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | State of Moul |
|----------------|--------------|---------|---------|-------|----------|---|
| *105 ♀ | — | 42" | 11" | 36" | — | Nearly complete |
| 109 ♀ | — | 43" | 9½" | 35½" | 92 lbs. | Second coat on muzzle, hind and fore flippers, and tail |
| 110 ♀ | 14 days | 42" | 8½" | 33" | 76 lbs. | Started on outer margin of hind flippers and round eyes |
| *113 ♂ | — | 46" | 9½" | 40" | 108 lbs. | Little on muzzle and hind flippers |
| *116 ♀ | — | 48" | 10" | 39" | 108 lbs. | Started on muzzle, hind flippers and tail |
| *117 ♀ | — | 41" | 10" | 38" | 107 lbs. | Started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| 118 ♂ | 10-14 days | 38" | 10" | 29" | 64 lbs. | Traces on muzzle |
| 119 ♂ | 10-14 days | 43" | 9½" | 29½" | 72 lbs. | Traces on muzzle |
| 120 ♀ | — | 42" | 9½" | 31" | 71 lbs. | Started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| 121 ♀ | 14-21 days | 44" | 9½" | 42" | 103 lbs. | Started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| *122 ♂ | 14-21 days | 45" | 9½" | 37" | 98 lbs. | Started on muzzle and tail |
| *124 ♀ | 10-14 days | 43" | 9½" | 34" | 75 lbs. | Little on muzzle, hind flippers and tail |
| *127 ♀ | — | 38" | 8½" | — | 80 lbs. | Little on muzzle |
| *128 ♂ | 14-21 days | 36" | 9½" | 35" | 94 lbs. | Started on hind and fore flippers and tail |
| 129 ♂ | 14-21 days | 43½" | 9½" | 40" | 102 lbs. | Started on hind flippers and tail, on muzzle and round eyes |

MARKED WHEN CHANGING COAT—*continued*

| Number and Sex | Age (approx) | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | State of Moul |
|----------------|--------------|---------|---------|-------|----------|--|
| 130 ♀ | — | 42½" | 9½" | 44" | 114 lbs. | Well advanced on hind quarters |
| *135 ♂ | 14-21 days | 46" | 10" | 38" | 107 lbs. | Started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| *142 ♀ | 10-14 days | 43½" | 8½" | 32" | 71 lbs. | Started on muzzle and inner margins of hind flippers |
| *166 ♂ | 3-4 weeks | 49" | 11" | 41" | 116 lbs. | Little on muzzle and hind flippers |

Following were marked, but not weighed or measured :—151, 153, 155, 156, 158, 160-165, 179-181, 183, 185, 226, 523

WEIGHTS AND MEASUREMENTS OF CALVES AT DIFFERENT AGES

NOTE.—In each case the first age given is an approximate figure ; the others show the number of days which have elapsed between the first weighing and the re-weighing

| Number | Age | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Condition of Coat |
|--------|----------|---------|---------|-------|----------|--|
| 104 | 14 days | 44½" | 10½" | 38½" | 94 lbs. | First |
| | + 7 days | 46" | 10" | 35" | 92 lbs. | Second, except for small area of first on back |
| 105 | — days | 42" | 11" | 36" | — | Moult nearly complete |
| | + 7 days | 49" | 10" | 36" | 92 lbs. | Second |
| 106 | — days | 44" | 11" | 36" | 95 lbs. | First |
| | + 7 days | 50" | 9½" | 37" | 112 lbs. | Moult started on inner margins of hind flippers and in patches on back |
| 113 | — days | 46" | 9½" | 40" | 108 lbs. | Little moult on muzzle and hind flippers |
| | + 7 days | 48" | 9½" | 35" | 96 lbs. | Some first coat still on tummy and right side |

WEIGHTS AND MEASUREMENTS OF CALVES AT DIFFERENT AGES—*continued*

| Number | Age | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Condition of Coat |
|--------|------------|---------|---------|-------|----------|---|
| 116 | — | 48" | 10" | 39" | 108 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle, hind flippers and tail |
| | + 7 days | 39" | 10" | 40" | 98 lbs. | Second |
| 117 | — | 41" | 10" | 38" | 107 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| | + 7 days | 48" | 10" | 42" | 114 lbs. | Second |
| | + 21 days | 45" | 10" | 39" | 97 lbs. | Second |
| 120 | — | 42" | 9½" | 31" | 71 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| | + 7 days | 39" | 8" | 40" | 90 lbs. | Little first on back |
| 122 | 14-21 days | 45" | 9½" | 37" | 98 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle and tail |
| | + 7 days | 46" | 10" | 37" | 103 lbs. | Moult on hind flippers and starting on body |
| 124 | 10-14 days | 43" | 9½" | 34" | 75 lbs. | Little moult on muzzle, hind flippers and tail |
| | + 7 days | 50" | 10" | 40" | 110 lbs. | Moult on hind flippers and tail |
| 127 | — | 38" | 8½" | — | 80 lbs. | Little moult on muzzle |
| | + 7 days | 45" | 9" | 40" | 90 lbs. | Moult on muzzle and fore flippers |
| | + 21 days | 44" | 10" | 34" | 75 lbs. | Second |
| 128 | 14-21 days | 36" | 9½" | 35" | 94 lbs. | Moult started on tail and flippers |
| | + 21 days | 46" | 10" | 34" | 82 lbs. | Second coat |
| 131 | 10-14 days | 43" | 9" | — | 76 lbs. | First |
| | + 7 days | 45" | 9½" | 39" | 107 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle, flippers and tail |
| | + 21 days | 44" | 10" | 38" | 90 lbs. | Second |

WEIGHTS AND MEASUREMENTS OF CALVES AT DIFFERENT AGES—*continued*

| Number | Age | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Condition of Coat |
|--------|------------------|---------|---------|-------|----------|--|
| 132 | 2 days | 36" | 9" | 23" | 32 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 45" | 9" | 33" | 56 lbs. | First |
| | +21 days | 48" | 10" | 42" | 92 lbs. | Second |
| 135 | 14-21 days | 46" | 10" | 38" | 107 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle and hind flippers |
| | +7 days | 58" | 10" | 40" | 108 lbs. | Considerable area of first coat remaining |
| 138 | 7 days | 38" | 9" | 31" | 63 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 46" | 10" | 37" | 97 lbs. | First |
| | +21 days | — | — | — | 76 lbs. | Second |
| 139 | 7 days | 35" | 10" | 29" | 58 lbs. | First |
| | +21 days | — | — | — | 75 lbs. | Second |
| 140 | less than 2 days | 37½" | 8½" | 23" | 32 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 43" | 9" | 30" | 60 lbs. | First |
| | +21 days | — | — | — | 103 lbs. | Second. Slight traces of first |
| 141 | 2 days | 41½" | 9½" | 29" | 35 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 42" | 9" | 44" | 69 lbs. | First |
| | +21 days | — | — | — | 91 lbs. | Second |
| 142 | 10-14 days | 43½" | 8½" | 32" | 71 lbs. | Moult started on muzzle and inner margin of hind flippers |
| | +7 days | 50" | 10" | 42" | 117 lbs. | Moult on muzzle, hind flippers and tail; little on fore flippers |
| 145 | 3-4 days | 37½" | 9½" | 24" | 37 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 46" | 10" | 32" | 62 lbs. | First |
| 146 | 7 days | 42" | 9" | 28" | 47 lbs. | First |
| | +7 days | 44" | 10" | 35" | 79 lbs. | Moult on hind flippers and little on muzzle |

WEIGHTS AND MEASUREMENTS OF CALVES AT DIFFERENT AGES—*continued*

| Number | Age | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight | Condition of Coat |
|--------|-----------|---------|---------|-------|----------|--|
| 148 | 2-3 days | 46" | 8" | 24" | 37 lbs. | First |
| | + 7 days | 46" | 10" | 32" | 72 lbs. | Little moult on inner margins of hind flippers |
| 149 | — | 45" | 9" | 26" | 39 lbs. | First |
| | + 7 days | 40½" | 9½" | 34" | 69 lbs. | First |
| 166 | 3-4 weeks | 49" | 11" | 41" | 116 lbs. | Little moult on muzzle and hind flippers |
| | + 14 days | 49" | 11" | 40" | 96 lbs. | Second |
| 167 | 7-10 days | 42" | 9" | 34" | 71 lbs. | First |
| | + 14 days | — | — | — | 95 lbs. | Some first remaining on back |
| 168 | 7-10 days | 44" | 10" | 28" | 54 lbs. | First |
| | + 14 days | — | — | — | 110 lbs. | Moult starting on hind flippers |

(b) 1954

| Number and Sex | Age (approx) | Overall | Flipper | Girth | Weight |
|----------------|--------------|---------|---------|-------|---------|
| 257 ♀ | 2-3 days | 36" | 10" | 25" | 33 lbs. |

Following were marked, but not weighed or measured :—194-197 ; 199-203 ; 209-212 ; 214-225 ; 235, 236, 239, 242, 244, 247, 249-254 ; 256-268 ; 272 ; 274 ; 276-278, 280, 282-283, 286, 288-290 ; 293-300 ; 526-543.

Artiodactyla

THE PAST AND PRESENT DISTRIBUTION
OF ROE DEER IN NORTHUMBERLAND

by

HENRY S. TEGNER, M.A.

There can be no doubt that the roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) is an indigenous Northumbrian mammal.

An examination of existing Northumbrian roe remains shows us that apparently the animal of to-day has changed little, if at all, from his ancestors of prehistoric times. Fossil antlers, such as the specimen found beneath the south aisle of St. Nicholas's Cathedral in Newcastle during restorations, show little difference from the horns of present-day bucks. This specimen is now in the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne. This is all the more remarkable when one realises the very marked changes which have characterised the evolution of some of the other mammals of the Glacial Epoch.

The roe deer is one of the few Old World examples of the Telemetacarpalia or deer who retain the bones of their side toes at the end of the limb. This is an important physical feature of the roe. The reindeer also has these side bones but he, of course, is not to-day an inhabitant of the British Isles.* The main significance of these additional leg bones is the fact that their presence indicates the more primitive nature of the roe deer, as compared with the other members of our *Cervidae*.

In the Hancock Museum in Newcastle there are some good examples of remains in the form of broken horns and the jaw and leg bones of roe. These have been found at The Chesters, in company with the remains of pigs and domestic cattle—evidence that the roe existed in Northumberland during the Roman occupation and that their venison was appreciated by the invaders.

Apart from these trivial remains I have been unable to discover any ancient heads or bones which can in any way be dated. This is

* Except for the domesticated reindeer introduced by the Reindeer Council of Great Britain into the mid-Grampian area of Scotland.

not surprising as the excavations of old kitchen middens or hill forts where the relics of domestic and wild beasts might be expected have apparently not been preserved. The bones, and teeth, of wild mammals such as the boar, the roe, and the red deer, could easily be mistaken, by the uninitiated, for those of domestic beasts such as the pig, the goat, and even cattle, and as such they were not worth keeping. During the course of my investigations I approached a world-famous archaeologist about the existence of roe deer in the county in the past. He produced a sackful of red deer horns !

Coming to a much later era, Leland wrote in 1538, " In Northumberland, as I heare say, be no forest except Chivet Hills, and there is great plenty redde-deare and row bukkes."

As considerable parts of Northumbria were densely wooded during this period, roe deer would undoubtedly be plentiful, together with other mammals such as the red deer, which is now extinct in the county.

In King Charles I's time (1633), they must have been uncommon in the south, as the King asked for them to be sent to him from Naworth Castle in Cumberland, and Lord William Howard paid a bill for them, entered in the Household Book.

It would appear that, at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, roe had become very scarce in most parts of England and Wales, as it was during the early 1780's that the various successful artificial re-introductions took place, the best known of which were the importation of Perthshire roe by Lord Dorchester into Milton Abbas in Dorset, the subsequent local redistribution by Mr. Drax of some of these Milton Abbas roe into Charborough and Lord Egremont's introduction of roe (which also came from Dorset) into Petworth Park, Sussex. Partly as a result of these artificial transfers, roe are now fairly well distributed throughout the British Isles. Northumberland appears to have experienced no such artificial introductions. Nevertheless, to-day roe are numerous in the county.

Though usually remaining their whole lives in one place, it is now known that, at certain times of year, some roe will travel great distances, either in search of a mate, or through being driven out of their homes by persecution, or with the object of finding better feeding conditions. Multiply this migration over a number of years and, provided shelter is available, the result will be a gradual distribution into new places where roe have not been seen before. Something very like this has taken place in Northumberland over the last quarter of a century.

In two of Abel Chapman's books, *Retrospect* and *Memories*, roe deer are mentioned as being part of the fauna of the author's property at Houxty. In a footnote to *Memories* George Bolam, the Northumbrian naturalist, mentions seeing a number of roe in the neighbourhood of Chapman's home when he visited him during his last illness. This was on February 2nd, 1926. George Bolam goes on to say that he has seen roe deer at Houxty on many occasions both before and since that date.

It is a constant surprise to me that other eminent Northumbrian naturalists such as Wallis, Bewick and Hancock make no mention of the roe deer in their various works—at least, I have been unable to trace any such references by these authors.

In the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* of March 2nd, 1948, an article appeared on roe-stalking in Northumberland. A Mr. Garrie, stalking in the Allenheads, Minsteracres and Dilston areas, was reported to have killed 550 roe deer in three years. This, for one man, is a fantastic figure and far exceeds the bags of the famous roe stalkers such as Macpherson Grant of Ballindalloch on Spey, the late J. G. Millais and Captain Brander Dunbar of Pitgaveny in Moray. I suspect, however, that the Northumberland tally consisted of bucks, does and yearlings, all of which appear to have been regarded as fair game. The accuracy, however, of this record may be open to question as, in the article, it is mentioned that roe weigh up to 80 lbs. ! The nearest authentic weight of an exceptionally heavy roe is recorded at 65 lbs.

The Forestry Commission has been credited with a total of over 100 roe deer killed in the Thrunton, Callaly, and Whittingham woods during the last year of the 1939-45 war. These deer were mostly slaughtered with shot guns. The snare was also used extensively.

Although the accuracy of these records is open to some doubt, they are, in effect, an indication of the enormous increase in the roe population in Northumberland during the last twenty years. A figure of over 300 would, I think, be a conservative estimate of the number of roe killed in Northumberland during the winters of 1949-50, 1950-51 and 1951-52.

Sir William Taylor published two papers in the *Journal of Animal Ecology* in 1939 and 1948, both entitled "The distribution of wild deer in England and Wales." In the latter paper he gives certain information concerning roe in Northumberland. These statistics, which have obviously been obtained from Forestry Commission sources, are as follows :—

| <i>County</i> | <i>Forest</i> | <i>Density, 1938</i> | <i>Density, 1948</i> |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Northumberland | Kielder | Numerous | Not numerous |
| | Redesdale | Not numerous | " " |
| | Tarset | No details | " " |
| | Wark | " | " " |
| | Slaley | " | Occasional |
| | Swarland | " | " |
| | Harwood | Numerous | Not numerous |
| | Rothbury | " | " " |

I know the artificial woodlands of Harwood and Rothbury well and do not agree with Taylor's conclusions. In 1948 roe deer were numerous in both areas. During an early morning stroll, in 1948, around Cragside estate, above the town of Rothbury, I saw eight roe which means, of course, that there must have been a number of others which I did not see.

An inquiry of the various Hunts in the county indicates that roe deer to-day are to be found wherever there is suitable cover. The answer generally received from these sources is that roe are found anywhere and everywhere—where there is sufficient holding cover.

It is doubtful whether roe deer ever became extinct in Cumberland and the Border Counties, but there is no doubt that they did become very scarce indeed in Northumberland at one period and particularly during the latter part of the 19th and the early part of the 20th century.

A number of causes have undoubtedly accounted for their surprising increase during the last twenty years. There are fewer keepers to-day than there were before the 1914-18 war. With taxation at a penal rate, landowners cannot afford to pay many keepers. I have found that, in general, the keeper is an enemy of the roe and will persecute him on every occasion, unless specifically requested not to do so. Hunting people also do not like roe, as their hounds are inclined to run riot on them; therefore, in most districts where hunting took place, the death sentence went out against any roe found. To-day the hunts are not as powerful as they used to be and very few Masters of Foxhounds can issue the verdict of death against these deer throughout their territory and hope to see their orders carried out. Foxhunting is an extremely popular pastime in Northumberland: there are in existence, at the time of writing, twelve packs of foxhounds actively engaged in hunting within the confines of the county. It has been found, however, that foxhounds can be made steady to roe deer by discipline and also by keeping in kennels, running with hounds, a

goat or even a roe doe. In Sussex, where roe are plentiful, it was usual, at one time, to keep a doe in the Leconfield hunting establishment. As a consequence, the hounds take no notice of these deer when they come across them in the wild state.

The lessened keeper population and the diminished power of hunting establishments have contributed a measure of reprieve to the roe deer. However, the main reason for their increase in this county is, strangely enough, a paradox of man's creating, for the forester, outstandingly the roe's worst enemy, because of the alleged damage these deer do to the planter's young trees, affords them, in due course, when his plantations have reached sufficient maturity to be immune from the roe's depredations, cover and sanctuary in which to breed and multiply. As a result of the vast increase in afforestation which has taken place in Northumberland during the last quarter of a century, the roe are with us in increasing numbers.

Roe deer are fascinating creatures and, to the naturalist, their study can afford endless pleasure. Although the roe is one of our oldest British mammals, his ways and habits have never received a fair share of the naturalist's attention. Three aspects alone of their lives would well justify further examination. These are: the roe's habit of making circular tracks, or trodden rings, during the mating season; the seasonal movements of roe from one locality to another; and their communal gathering into small parties or herds during the late autumn and winter months.

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FOR NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FOR 1955

Compiled from the notes and records of members of
the Natural History Society of Northumberland,
Durham and Newcastle upon Tyne and many other
observers throughout the two Counties

by

GEORGE W. TEMPERLEY, M.Sc., M.B.O.U.

The Society much appreciates the co-operation of the many members and others, now numbering over 150, who have so generously contributed observations and notes to this Report. Without their help its compilation would have been impossible. Unfortunately, only a very small proportion of the many hundreds of individual notes and records that have been received can be quoted here; but every one of them is of value in arriving at a true assessment of the status, distribution and movements of the birds of the two Counties. A list of the chief contributors' names will be found at the end of this Report, from which the initials, placed after the individual records in the "Classified List," can be checked.

So many observers are now reporting from Teesmouth, North Shields, Gosforth Park and Seaton Sluice that it is sometimes impossible to include all their individual initials after the records from those areas.

It will greatly relieve the labours of the compiler if observers will send in their notes at least *quarterly*, if not once a month. An interesting record reported promptly may often enable other observers to share the recorder's good fortune.

All notes should be arranged under the classification adopted in this Report and should always begin with the name of the species referred to, followed by the date and then the place of observation. Dates and numbers should always be clearly written, so that they may be easily deciphered. It has now become quite impossible to acknowledge promptly all the letters and reports received; so much correspondence now being necessary to elucidate problems of identification,

to answer questions and to correct errors. If replies are not received immediately, observers must not take it to mean that their notes are not appreciated but rather that they call for no special comment or criticism.

The use of square brackets in the Report signifies that there is some doubt whether a record can be accepted on the evidence provided or whether a bird seen was truly wild. The omission of the name of a common species from the Report signifies that no notes of special interest concerning it have been received, or, in the case of a rare species, that it has not occurred.

Abbreviations used :—N=Northumberland ; D=Durham ; B.B. = *British Birds* ; O.R. = *Ornithological Report* ; F.I.O.R. = *Farne Islands Ornithological Report*.

All notes and communications should be addressed to G. W. Temperley, " Restharrow," Stocksfield, Northumberland.

WEATHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING BIRD LIFE

The year opened in gloom and by January 10th a frost set in, with snow a foot deep. On the previous day many thousands of Lapwings, in flocks of 500 to 600 each, were noted flying steadily west towards the Tyne Gap. (M.P.) Cold conditions persisted for a fortnight, but were followed by a fortnight of most unusually mild weather. By the end of the first week in February it again became very frosty and on the 14th snow began to fall again, forming a covering which did not completely thaw until nearly the end of March. On February 19th, with six inches or more of snow on the ground and a keen N.E. wind, nearly 600 Brent Geese were on the Holy Island slakes, the forerunners of some 2,500 which arrived in the first week of March. (F.S.) On the same day, February 19th, on the coast near Amble, N., many hundreds of birds were seen flying south along the snow-covered shore—Lapwings, Starlings, Fieldfares and c. 60 Snow-Buntings, with other species. (M.F. & J.W.C.) April opened sunny and warm and spring conditions prevailed. The summer migrants arrived at about their normal times, though at first only in small numbers. On the 10th the first Lapwing's eggs were found and on the 11th a Mallard's nest contained 14 eggs—the first of which must have been laid before the end of March when snow was still present. (R.L.B.) Suddenly, on May 17th, very cold conditions set in, bringing sleet showers here and heavy snow in the South and Midlands. This was followed by a very long spell of very

dry weather. Prolonged drought persisted until the end of the year causing a very serious water shortage, lowering the water-level in all the reservoirs, lakes and ponds and completely drying up many pools and marshes. During this period there were a few short breaks in the weather, as on August 6th to 8th, when there was a N.E. gale on the coast and on September 15th, a day of almost continuous rain and a strong northerly wind. On this latter day, during an 8-hour vigil at Monks' House Observatory, a steady northward movement of ducks, divers, shearwaters and waders was recorded. Concurrently, a marked southerly movement of skuas was taking place. Throughout the period a total of 1,199 duck was counted, chiefly Wigeon, Scoter and Teal, but Mallard, Shoveler, Pintail, Pochard and Scaup were identified. Other birds seen to take part in this movement were Oystercatchers, a few Curlew, Godwits and Whimbrel and up to five Shearwaters, with many Kittiwakes and some Sandwich Terns. In the teeth of this movement, Skuas, to a total of 44, were all, singly or in pairs, heading south. Why they, alone, should have been unaffected by the conditions which were the cause of the northward passage of other species can only be conjectured. (A.W., B.L. *et al.*) This passage was also noted later in the day off Souter Point on the Durham coast; when, again, the same species were seen to be involved and, again, the only Skuas noted, three Arctics, were flying south. (F.G.G.) For the most part, October, November and December were dry, sunny and exceptionally mild. The only frosts of the autumn occurred on October 17th and November 24th and it was not until nearly the end of the year that a few snow showers fell.

One of the most interesting events for the bird-watcher occurred on October 22nd and 23rd. At about noon on the 22nd a gale sprang up from the north-east. It had the effect of sweeping the more pelagic type of sea-birds, in the area of the North Sea, up against the east coast, so that, in order to escape being driven ashore by the wind, they were obliged to hug the coast, flying in a north-north-westerly direction almost into the teeth of the gale. Little Auks, hitherto absent, suddenly appeared in numbers, flying only a few yards off shore. With them were many hundreds of Kittiwakes and a number of Skuas. This gale continued until well into the 23rd when it suddenly fell and the movement ceased, leaving dead and dying Little Auks strewn along the shore. This movement was watched from the Tees Bay all along the coast to Holy Island and reports show that it was noted further north on the east coast of Scotland. (For fuller details see 226, Little Auk, below). This N.E. gale brought many migrants to the coast. On the 23rd large numbers of newly arrived Blackbirds, Thrushes and

Bramblings were reported and, at Hartlepool, a Great Grey Shrike. (P.L.H.) Another interesting feature of October was the extraordinary number of duck which arrived on the coast and on inland waters; Wigeon and Mallard being the most numerous.

BIRD RINGING

During 1955 the total number of birds ringed by the Society was 3,809. Of these 3,262 were ringed on the Farne Islands and full details of the species and of birds recovered during the year, are given in the 1955 Ornithological Report for the Farne Islands.

The remaining 547 include Kittiwakes at Messrs. Smith's Dock Company's warehouses at North Shields and birds ringed in the State Forests at Hamsterley, Kielder, Redesdale and Thrunton. Numbers of individual species were as follows:—

Merlin 3; Kestrel 4; Lapwing 2; Woodcock 8; Curlew 1; Common Sandpiper 1; Kittiwake 37; Little Tern 2; Woodpigeon 1; Tawny Owl 2; Swallow 34; Great Tit 74; Blue Tit 12; Coal Tit 96; Wren 1; Mistle-Thrush 1; Redstart 114; Garden-warbler 4; Willow-warbler 18; Wood-warbler 11; Spotted Flycatcher 12; Pied Flycatcher 64; Meadow-pipit 12; Tree-pipit 9; Yellow Wagtail 4; Chaffinch 3; Yellowhammer 13; House-sparrow 4.

Recoveries of ringed birds:—

| <i>Date and place ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| KITTIWAKE | | |
| 2.7.52 North Shields | R. Tyne (found dead) | 12.6.55 |
| 2.7.53 " " | Where ringed (released) | 29.7.55 |
| 17.6.55 " " | Outer Dowsing Lightship, near Winton, Lincs. (flew into light, killed) | c. 18.8.55 |
| 29.6.53 " " | Where ringed (released) | 25.8.55 |
| COAL TIT | | |
| 22.6.54 Thrunton, S.F. | Where ringed (nesting, released) | 12.7.55 |
| MISTLE-THRUSH | | |
| 24.5.53 Redesdale, S.F. | Moir, Co. Down, North Ireland (found dead) | early Dec. '55 |

NESTING-BOX RETURNS. SEASON 1955

HAMSTERLEY FOREST

| <i>Nesting species</i> | | <i>Nests</i> | <i>Broods hatched</i> | <i>Birds ringed</i> |
|------------------------|-----|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Pied Flycatcher | ... | 10 (21) | 10 (20) | 46 (50) |
| Redstart | ... | 19 (16) | 17 (15) | 63 (45) |
| Great Tit | ... | 25 (18) | 22 (17) | 67 (75) |
| Blue Tit | ... | 3 (17) | 2 (17) | 2 (23) |
| Coal Tit | ... | 10 (11) | 10 (10) | 27 (35) |
| Creeper | ... | (7) | (4) | (5) |
| | | 67 (90) | 61 (83) | 205 (233) |

Last year's figures in brackets.

From the above it will be seen that out of 67 nests found 61 broods were reared, or 91%. This compares with former years:—

| 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 |
|-------|------|------|------|
| 84.5% | 83% | 64% | 93% |

The above figures show that a very marked reduction has taken place in the number of Pied Flycatchers breeding in the Forest nest-boxes. It is interesting to note that a report from the Forest of Dean shows a somewhat similar reduction.

No. of nests found:—

| | 1950 | 1951 | 1952 | 1953 | 1954 | 1955 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Hamsterley ... | 40 | 20 | 18 | 27 | 21 | 10 |
| Forest of Dean | | 98 | 98 | 85 | 76 | 68 |

The percentage of Pied Flycatchers' nests to the total of occupied boxes was only 15%. This is less than last year's figure which was 23%. The percentage of Great Tits, on the other hand, has risen from 20% in 1954 to 37% in 1955.

* We are greatly indebted to C.G., D.N.B., A.W.J. and C.H.L. for the above figures.

BRITISH TRUST FOR ORNITHOLOGY ENQUIRIES

Heronry Census. A reduction in the number of occupied nests was again recorded. Only six heronries are known, all now much shrunk in size, and the total of occupied nests found was only 32. This compares with 44 in 1954. For particulars see under 30, Heron, below.

Common Buzzard Census. This is being resumed in 1956. Any birds seen should be immediately reported and their status thoroughly investigated.

Coastal Roosting of Gulls in mid-winter. A few members living near the coast contributed to this Enquiry and supplied useful and interesting information; enough to indicate the general pattern of coastal roosting of gulls in Northumberland and Durham, which is very briefly as follows. There are three very large roosts, where the numbers are in tens of thousands:—Goswick, the flats of Holy Island and Fenham, and Teesmouth. In addition, there is a string of small roosts from Tweed to Tees.

Most of the roosts are mixed in composition, but Black-headed Gulls roost alone at Tweedmouth, while a roost at the Farnes is occupied by Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls. Observers are agreed that nearly all the Common and most of the Black-headed Gulls forage inland for food, as far as 17 miles and probably more. The majority of Herring Gulls tend to remain about the shore.

The roosting of gulls, both coastal and inland, is indeed a very interesting and necessary enquiry for local ornithologists to continue into the future; so any member who can furnish information, however slight, is asked to forward it to the organiser, Fred G. Grey, 5 Redhead Road, South Shields.

Mute Swan Census. It is disappointing to note that this Census received little attention from members and associates during the summer of 1955. The figures obtained from all sources were very far short of representing anything like the true breeding population of the counties of Northumberland and Durham. It has been decided to repeat the Census during the 1956 season and, for the credit of the two counties, members are urged to give the matter their attention during this spring and summer. The exact location of each nesting pair should be reported, giving the National Grid references where 'possible, and the success or failure of each brood should be recorded. All reports should be sent to the organiser: G. W. Temperley, "Restharrow," Stocksfield.

OPERATION WATERLOG

Though a nearly complete list of the major waters has been compiled, much information is still required about the main characteristics of many of them—the type of habitat which they provide, their vegetation and so on. A map has been prepared giving the exact

location of all the waters so far listed and marking, by means of coloured pins, those waters about which more information is needed. This map may be inspected at the Hancock Museum. Members and associates are asked to give as much help as they can in making this "operation" a success. All information should be sent to the organizer: Professor John Boyes, 41 Clayton Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne 2.

THE WILDFOWL CENSUS

This operation, now in its eighth year, has been continued with unabated zeal and determination during 1955. All category "A" waters are well covered, but additional counters are still needed for some of the more outlying category "B" waters.

RECORDS OF UNUSUAL INTEREST IN 1955

Full details will be found below of the following records of unusual interest:—Balearic Shearwater (16b), Sooty Shearwater (21), Bittern at Gosforth Park Sanctuary (38), Kite (95), Honey-Buzzard (98), Hobby (104), Great Snipe (146), Marsh-Sandpiper, first occurrence in Northumberland (166), Long-tailed Skua (196), Mediterranean Black-headed Gulls, first occurrence in Northumberland (205), Bonaparte's Gull, first record for Northumberland (206), Sabine's Gull (209), Wryneck (265), Shore-larks (273), Desert-Wheatear, first record for Co. Durham (312), Reed-warbler (333), Tawny Pipit (375), Ortolan Bunting (416), Lapland Buntings (422)

CLASSIFIED NOTES

(Records relating to the Farne Islands will be found in the *Ornithological Report on the Farne Islands for 1955*)

1. BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus arcticus* L.

Though few were reported in the autumn of 1954, several were noted after the turn of the year and more at the end of February—five being seen on the 27th off St. Mary's Island. (B.L.) The last to be recorded was on March 12th when one was seen off Holy Island in almost full breeding plumage. (B.L.)

Very few indeed were seen on the coast in the autumn, the earliest being two on September 15th off Souter Point, D. (F.G.G.) Single birds were seen off the Teesmouth in October and December. None were noted in the Holy Island area up to the end of the year.

2. GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn.

Though very few birds had been recorded in the autumn of 1954, they became more numerous in January and February, when, on more than one occasion, flocks of four or five were seen together, sometimes in flocks of Red-throated Divers. (W.S.C. & B.L.) On March 26th off Holy Island, two out of six were in almost complete breeding plumage. (B.L. & A.Bl.) The last seen there was on April 15th, a single bird, and on the 16th when a bird in full summer plumage was found dead on the Snook, Holy Island. (W.D.R.)

The earliest autumn arrival was an immature bird seen on September 10th off the North Gare, Teesmouth. (P.J.S. & P.E.) Up to the end of the year, only a very few single birds were reported.

4. RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus* Pontop.

Very numerous from January to March, often in small parties and sometimes in considerable flocks. On January 9th off Bamburgh, N., c. 40 and on February 2nd c. 30. (B.L. & W.S.C.) The last reported were two at Teesmouth flying north on May 28th, a late date. (P.J.S.)

The first record for the autumn was on September 3rd when two were seen crossing Tees Bay. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.) On September 18th a flock of 12 was in the bay south of Cullernose Point, N. (W.S.C.) On October 1st off St. Mary's Island, N., 23 were counted flying north in three hours. (A.Bl.) On September 27th near Alnmouth, N., a bird was seen to take off from the sea and fly directly inland over fields and woods. (P.J.)

5. GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus* (L.)

Probably owing to the very low water-level in the local reservoirs, few were reported on inland waters. Only one pair bred successfully and that late in the season. Three young were reared. (J.H.A.) A few single birds were seen on the coast in the autumn and winter.

6. RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Bodd.)

More numerous than usual off the coast in the early months of the year, sometimes two or three together; the latest date being April 2nd, when one was seen off Holy Island. (E.A.R.E.) On July 3rd off Bamburgh a pair was seen in full summer plumage. (B.L.) In September several were reported; on the 27th a party of six was in Foxton Bay, north of Alnmouth (P.J.) and a few were on the coast up to the end of the year. Only one inland record—on October 16th one on Capheaton Lake, N. (A.M.)

7. SLAVONIAN GREBE *Podiceps auritus* (L.)

Very few reported in the early months of the year, usually single birds, the largest number being five off Bamburgh on January 2nd. (B.L.) None from the Durham coast. In the autumn only two single birds were reported.

8. BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps caspicus* Hablizl

Remarkably few reported. Single birds were on the north Northumberland coast on January 29th, March 6th and April 8th and again on August 26th. (E.A.R.E.) In summer only one was reported from inland waters; a single bird on Hurworth Burn Reservoir, D., on August 28th, 30th and September 18th. (P.L.H. *et al.*) In winter only two records—on December 3rd off Souter Point, D., one (A.N.) and on the 27th two off Bamburgh. (W.D.R.)

12. LEACH'S PETREL *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* (Vieillot)

[On October 6th in a gale off Monks' House beach, N., two small petrels flew south that were most probably of this species. (E.A.R.E.)]

16(A). MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria p. puffinus* Brünnich¹

This species has been unusually numerous off the coast, particularly during July and August. The first recorded were on June 4th when, off Souter Point, D., a party of three was seen flying north. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) On July 25th many were flying north off Seaton

Sluice, N., 35 being counted ; with smaller numbers on the 26th and 27th. (L.G.H. & B.L.) During August large numbers were seen, with few exceptions all flying north along the coast. On the 8th, a day of strong N.E. winds and a rough sea, during a watch of seven hours from Souther Point, D., 140 were counted, the largest number flying together being seven and this was noted three times. The movement gathered intensity during the day and was still in progress at 6.45 p.m. B.S.T. when the watch came to an end. (F.G.G. & D.W.) Later, on the same day, off Seaton Sluice Point, N., between 6.45 and 8.45 p.m. 147 were counted, one flock numbering eleven birds. (B.L. & A.Bl.) Lesser movements were recorded from various parts of the coast on August 10th, 15th and 17th and on the 27th and 28th they were again numerous ; on the 27th a gathering of 40 to 50 was seen off Cullernose Point, N., in flight and resting on the sea, while on the 28th c. 40 were off Howick (W.S.C.) and on the same day others were seen off Holy Island. (W.D.R. *et al.*) A few were noted in September and October and on October 22nd, during the great passage of Little Auks (*see below*), four were seen (F.G.G.) ; these being the last to be recorded.

16(B). BALEARIC SHEARWATER *Procellaria p. mauretanicus* (Lowe)

On July 25th off Seaton Sluice Point, N., when Manx Shearwaters were flying north, a single bird, accompanied by three Manx, was of this sub-species. It was of the same size as the Manx, but of a uniform sooty brown colour with a paler belly patch, but no light markings under the wings. It was flying very close to the shore and excellent views were obtained. On August 8th, off the same point, another similar bird was seen flying north with Manx ; and on September 15th off Monks' House, N., two birds flying north were judged to have been of this sub-species. (B.L.)

19. GREAT SHEARWATER *Procellaria gravis* O'Reilly

On July 25th, off Seaton Sluice Point, N., two large Shearwaters flying north were thought to have been of this species (B.L.) and on the 26th eight more were seen flying north and on the 27th two flew north and later two flew south ; these birds passed within 150 yds. of the observer. They showed a conspicuous broad white band at the base of the dark tail and the cap was very dark compared with the brown mantle and pale under-parts. (B.L.) On July 31st off the same Point, four, flying south, passed within twenty yards, showing very conspicuous white rump, white cheeks and black cap. (D.H.)

21. SOOTY SHEARWATER *Procellaria grisea* Gmelin

On August 18th at 5.0 p.m. one flew into the Tees estuary and passed along the edge of Seaton Snook. (A.Ba. & B.Co.) On September 15th off Souter Point, D., three. (F.G.G.) On the 16th off the Longstone, Farne Islands, one was seen flying N.E. at close range, followed a few moments later by three Manx Shearwaters, with which it could be compared. (E.A.R.E.) On October 6th off Monks' House, N., one, in a gale. (E.A.R.E.)

26. FULMAR *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.)

The breeding season was less successful than usual. In Coves Bay, Holy Island, where early in the year c. 50 birds had been counted, only ten chicks were seen in August. (W.D.R.) In Spindleston Quarry ten young were counted, but none was successfully reared; on Bamburgh Castle cliffs eight pairs laid eggs but no young were reared, eggs probably destroyed by boys; in Shada Quarry seven full-grown young were seen. (E.A.R.E.) On August 1st at Dunstanburgh only one adult and one young were seen. (B.C.) On June 9th at Cullernose Point 20 pairs were present, but later not a single egg or chick was seen. (B.C.) On March 27th six pairs were at Hartley Point, N., but no young were reared. (J.D.P.)

Inland records.—On May 25th at Long Newton Reservoir, D., about 12 miles from the open sea, a single bird was seen flying east. (D.R.S. & P.S.) On June 30th one was seen flying over Dunston, D., also about 12 miles from the sea. (L.G.H.)

Birds returned to their nesting cliffs in mid-November, but their presence was intermittent. On December 11th at Coves Bay, Holy Island, after strong easterly gales, 70 were counted; but by the 28th they had all left. (W.D.R.)

27. GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.)

Very common in Tees bay during late August and September, 95% of them immature. (P.J.S.) In late September and early October, when herring were shoaling abnormally close inshore, up to 1,000 were present immediately off shore between Holy Island and Seahouses. On one occasion c. 50 were diving over rocks at high tide within 50 yds. of the dunes; their calls were clearly audible and incessant, recalling breeding birds on the Bass Rock. (E.A.R.E.) On May 27th an adult was found in a cricket field at Stockton-on-Tees. It appeared to be uninjured and was taken to the sea at Seaton Carew and released. The weather previous to its arrival was perfect, without much wind. (P.J.S.)

28. CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.)

In 1954 a few birds tried to breed on the summit of Marsden Rock, D., on the fringe of the Herring Gull colony. Three nests were built, but it is not known whether young were reared. In 1955 six nests were built, but young were seen in only one of them. On June 9th as many as 51 birds were on the Rock, the majority being adults. It is probable that the Gulls destroyed all the other eggs. (F.G.G.)

On June 25th over Haydon Bridge, N., one was seen flying west up the Tyne Valley. (W.J.)

29. SHAG. *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.)

Unusually numerous in the early months of the year. On February 19th 46 were counted off South Shields Pier, D. (F.G.G.) and on March 2nd 30 were fishing in Blyth Bay, N. (B.L.), while smaller flocks were seen elsewhere.

30. HERON *Ardea cinerea* L.

Northumbrian Heronries:—Longridge, Berwick, five occupied nests. (H.F.C.) Chillingham Park, five occupied nests. (Lord Tankerville). Boundary Wood, Alnwick, two occupied nests. (J.E.R.) Woods near Bellingham, five occupied nests. (K.I.) Styford, seven occupied nests. (I.D.) Blagdon Estate, none. Allen Banks, Bardon Mill, none. (M.P.)

Durham Heronries:—Dyance Wood, Gainford, eight nests. (K.B.)

Fewer Herons are now being observed in winter, both on the coast (F.S.) and inland. (E.M. *et al.*)

38. BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris* (L.)

On January 18th at Riding Haughs, Bellingham, an adult male was picked up in an exhausted condition and soon died. It was very emaciated from starvation. (E.A.) It is now in the Hancock Museum. From November 13th until the end of the year, one was seen frequently at Gosforth Park. (B.L.)

45. MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L.

At the end of October Mallard were very numerous on the coast and particularly on Holy Island slakes. "I have never seen so many about as there were this year." (F.S.) From mid-October to early November, abnormally large numbers for the Monks' House section of the coast including the Farnes. (E.A.R.E.) From October to December unusually plentiful in the Blagdon area. (M.W.R.) On November 13th off Greatham Creek, Teesmouth, c. 450. (P.J.S.)

Ringed as young Allenheads, N., June 5th, 1955 ; shot Holywood, Dumfries, September 26th, 1955, 58 miles N.W. (A. & R.)

46. TEAL *Anas crecca* L.

At the end of October on Holy Island slakes, the usual few accompanying Wigeon. (F.S.) During December on Fenham Flats two packs of 100 and 150. (B.L.) On December 2nd at Gosforth Park c. 100, on the 7th 180. (W.D.R.)

47. GARGANEY *Anas querquedula* L.

Reported from various inland waters from March 22nd to August 29th, usually single drakes ; but on Gosforth Park lake a pair was present from April 15th to early May (T.W. *et al.*) and on Holywell Pond a pair was present on August 9th. (B.L.) None reported during the breeding season from Cowpen Marsh this summer. (P.J.S.)

49. GADWALL *Anas strepera* L.

Very few records. On April 8th a drake was on Newton Pond, N. (E.A.R.E.) From April 21st to 30th two drakes and a duck were seen at Teesmouth and two on July 9th to 10th. (C.J.H. *et al.*) On September 14th two were on Tunstall Reservoir, D. (C.G. & J.G.) and on October 16th six on Holborn Moss, N. (F.B.)

50. WIGEON *Anas penelope* L.

During the heavy frosts on the coast in mid-January nearly all the Wigeon on the Holy Island slakes left, except some 500, but on the 22nd when the thaw set in they returned. (R.H.) On the 23rd on Fenham Flats there were c. 1,500 ; on March 6th 3,500 ; but by March 20th only 400 were left. (F.B.) In February many were feeding far inland—" I never remember seeing so many Wigeon and Tufted Duck in West Tynedale before ; many were haunting the quieter reaches of the river." (M.P.) In March at Teesmouth numbers rose to a maximum of 80. (C.J.H.)

In September numbers increased again and on the 23rd c. 350 were seen off Seaton Carew, Teesmouth. (P.J.S.) On Holy Island slakes by the end of October there were c. 3,000 and another 1,000, at least, came later. (F.S. & R.H.) Inland, on Swinhoe Pond, N., it was estimated that there were from 2,000 to 3,000. (F.B.)

52. PINTAIL *Anas acuta* L.

Certainly more plentiful than usual, particularly at Teesmouth during April, when from 7 to 19 were seen almost daily. As late as the 25th there were nine, but no signs of breeding were noted. (P.J.S.)

& C.J.H.) From January 9th to the end of March two drakes and a duck haunted Jarrow Slake, D. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) and on March 31st a similar party, if not the same, was on Gosforth Park Lake. (J.D.P. & P.J.)

The first autumn record was a single duck in Budle Bay, N., on August 3rd. (B.C.) From October to the end of December a pair or more was on Gosforth Park Lake (W.D.R. *et al.*) and birds were reported from Jarrow Slake, Holborn Moss and the Farnes. On December 15th, off Monks' House, 14 flew north together with duck of other species. (B.L.)

53. SHOVELER *Spatula clypeata* (L.)

From mid-March to the end of October many were reported. The largest number recorded at Gosforth Park was nine in April and ten in October. At Teesmouth at least one brood was reared (P.J.S.) and, in August, 20 were seen together there more than once. (A.Ba.) A brood was reared on a pond north of Newcastle (B.L.) and at least three pairs bred on a pond in North Northumberland. (E.A.R.E.)

55. SCAUP *Aythya marila* (L.)

Still far from plentiful on the coast. On Jarrow Slake the maximum number seen was 18 on February 20th. (D.H.W.) Single birds appeared at various times on inland waters—Charlton's Pond, Billingham (P.F.), Whittle Dene Reservoirs (B.C.), Holywell Ponds (B.L.) and Holborn Moss. (F.B.)

56. TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula* (L.)

Remarkably plentiful in the early months of the year. On February 5th on Killingworth Mere, N., c. 50 were present and on the 27th at Gosforth Park, where the lake was partially frozen, c. 110—"the largest flock of this species that I have ever seen." (W.D.R.) In the autumn and winter they were less numerous; but on Capheaton Lake in November and December numbers rose to 80 birds. (A.M.)

On August 4th on Gosforth Park Lake a duck was seen with two young in down only a few days old. (T.W.) As they were not seen again, they no doubt fell victims to the pike which infest the lake. Wildfowl whose young take to the water at an early age cannot breed successfully in the sanctuary.

57. POCHARD *Aythya ferina* (L.)

Fewer reported than usual, particularly in the autumn. In January and February at Gosforth Park maximum 20, nearly all

drakes. (P.J.) On one of the Seaton Burn ponds, N., a duck's nest was found which, from an examination of the down, could only have been of this species. (N.R.)

60. GOLDEN-EYE *Bucephala clangula* (L.)

Quite as numerous as usual off the coast and on inland waters. On February 26th there were 200 in the Tweed estuary. (F.B.) At the Teesmouth in March maximum 41 birds (A.Ba.); one seen there as late as May 31st. (P.J.S.) In the autumn many were seen from October onwards. On December 18th a drake was at the Black Middens, North Shields, and two more were seen flying up the Tyne (F.G.G.); on the 21st six were on Howick Pond, N., and on the 24th c. eleven in Embleton Bay. (W.S.C.)

61. LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis* (L.)

Seen from more points than usual off the coasts of both counties. From January to March off Holy Island maximum frequently 15 (J.C.) and at the same time a flock of up to 15 off the Stag Rocks, Bamburgh (E.A.R.E.) with others off Cullernose Point, Beadnell, Embleton, etc. (W.S.C.) From January to April 2nd a duck was off Seaton Sluice, N., and from February to April 23rd one was off Seaton Carew, D. (P.J.S.) Fewer were noted in the autumn and winter. In October only an odd bird was to be seen on Holy Island slakes (F.S.); the largest number reported was on December 27th when 14 were off Snipe Point, Holy Island. (B.L.) In October and November a few were seen off the North Gare, Teesmouth, and off Hartlepool, usually single birds. (B.Co. *et al.*) On December 18th off St. Mary's Island, N., one female. (D.H.W.)

62. VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* (L.)

Larger numbers than usual were reported, particularly in the autumn. On January 7th off Holy Island, 13. (W.D.R.) On September 16th at Seaton Carew, D., 10 were seen in a flock of over 100 Common Scoters (C.G. & J.G.) and on October 23rd a small flock was still there (M.G.R.), odd birds and small parties being seen there up to the end of the year. (P.J.S.) On October 23rd off Seaton Sluice, N., a flock of 16 was seen, 10 of them drakes. (A.Bl. *et al.*)

64. COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.)

Some unusually large flocks were noted in the summer; on July 9th off Seaton Sluice, N., a flock of 200 and another of 40 (W.D.R.), on the 29th one of 40 and another of 10 (J.D.P.), while on June 8th 20 were off Teesmouth. (C.J.H.)

67. EIDER-DUCK *Somateria mollissima* (L.)

Steadily increasing in numbers. Birds are now wintering more frequently off the Durham coast ; in the Teesmouth area in November parties of up to eight were frequently noted. (P.J.S.)

On a small islet off the Northumberland coast 15 birds had eggs or young. (A.Bl.) At Monks' House, N., 60 were trapped and ringed. (E.A.R.E.)

70. GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser* L.

In January and February, very numerous in West Tynedale, haunting the quiet reaches of the river. (M.P.) In January a pair was on the lake at Gosforth Park (W.D.R.) and a single duck was present from November 27th until the end of the year. On Whittle Dene Reservoir, N., maximum number reached on March 18th when 19 were present, chiefly drakes. (T.W.) On April 14th a nest containing eggs was found in a hollow tree on the river gravels of the Coquet near Holystone. (E.M.)

73. SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.)

The following figures from Teesmouth show the rise and fall of the winter population as the birds return from their moult migration and later pass on. January 1st, 280 ; 13th, 430 ; 19th, 550 ; 30th, 590. This peak was reached remarkably early this year and is the largest number recorded from Teesmouth in recent years. (C.J.H.) February 20th, 400 ; March 10th, 250 ; April 20th, 160 ; May 28th, 30. The first brood appeared on May 31st ; in all, at least 39 young were hatched. (A.Ba.) December 8th, 75 ; 31st, 150. (P.J.S.)

No migrating birds were detected flying east through the Tyne Gap in the late summer ; though they were watched for continuously (M.P.) In December, however, two pairs were seen flying steadily west, no doubt on their return journey after the moult, and an adult pair was seen on the South Tyne near Haltwhistle at the end of the month. (M.P.) In August, up to three immature birds were on Jarrow Slake, D., (F.G.G.) and from September to the end of the year an immature bird was on Gosforth Park Lake. (E.N.G. *et al.*)

75/78. " GREY GEESE " *spp.* ?

Many unidentified flocks were reported flying over both counties, some very large, maximum 70 flying over Middleton-in-Teesdale on October 3rd. (W.H.) On June 2nd, a very late date, a flock of 30 flew north over Norton-on-Tees. (D.S.R. & P.S.)

75. GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.)

The largest number seen at Holborn Moss was in February when c. 350 were present (L.G.H.); some remained until the end of March (F.B.)

The usual party "summered" on the Farne Islands; maximum number 12, seen off the North Wamses on July 25th (B.C.); two remained until well into August, when they were seen at Fenham. (E.A.R.E.) In the autumn on Holborn Moss the first birds arrived on October 1st (F.B.); by the 29th there were c. 300. (E.A.R.E.) On Holy Island slakes seven arrived on October 16th, increasing to 70 by the 21st. (F.S.) On October 16th on Netherwitton Lake, N., 35, on November 13th 59. (H.G.H.C. & H.R.C.) At Teesmouth on October 2nd one was shot out of a flock of 18 (P.J.S.) and on the 16th a flock of six was on Crookfoot Reservoir, D. (P.L.H.)

78(A). BEAN-GOOSE *Anser a. arvensis* Brehm.

About Christmas time, 1954, at Teesmouth, one was shot out of a party of 20 and definitely identified; the remaining 19 birds are stated to have been in the area throughout January and as late as February 27th a flock of 19, thought to have been the same birds, were seen flying across the Seal Sands. (P.J.S. & B.Co.) On January 27th near Kielder, on the North Tyne, a solitary bird was shot.

78(B). PINK-FOOTED GOOSE *Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus* Baillon

Many of the flocks of "Grey Geese" seen in flight were probably of this species. Those which were definitely identified were for the most part small flocks or single birds, perhaps "pricked," which could be easily approached. On January 7th six were at Teesmouth (C.J.H.) and on the 15th two on Monks' House pool. (E.A.R.E.) The first birds seen in the autumn were on October 1st. On the 2nd a flock of c. 80 was seen off Hartlepool, D., flying south; later they were seen over Middlesbrough heading inland for the western edge of the Cleveland escarpment. (P.J.S.) Thereafter small numbers and flocks up to 16 were seen in various places and on November 26th a chevron of 65 flew over the North Gare into the Tees estuary. (D.G.B.)

80. BRENT GOOSE *Branta bernicla* (L.)

On Holy Island slakes in January they numbered some 200, but on February 19th, after much snow and N.E. wind, c. 580 had arrived. (B.L.) By the first week in March numbers had increased to c. 2,500 (F.S.) but by the end of the month only 52 were left. On March 18th, when at sea seven miles from land, from 800 to 880 were seen flying

due east. (R.H.) In the following winter the first flock of c. 40 arrived in mid-December (F.S.) and by the 27th there were c. 200 (B.L.) on Holy Island slakes.

81. BARNACLE-GOOSE *Branta leucopsis* (Bechstein)

The last birds to be seen in the winter of 1954-55 were two, associated with a flock of c. 580 Brents on Holy Island shore on February 19th. (B.L.) The earliest to be reported in the autumn were on September 18th, when flocks of 25 and 15 were seen flying inland over Beal, N., and again on the 23rd when flocks of 65 and 50 were seen flying north off Berwick some half-mile out at sea. (F.B.) On October 15th 35 were seen flying north in a gale off Bamburgh (E.A.R.E.), on the 16th 16 were at Holy Island (R.H.) and on the 19th nine were flying S.E. towards Newton Links. (E.A.R.E.) Thereafter only single birds were seen—one, an adult, strong on the wing and therefore not a "pricked" bird, spent the first weeks of November at Colt Crag Reservoir, N. (K.I.)

82. CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis* (L.)

[On June 5th two were present on the Gosforth Park lake. (J.S.) These had probably escaped from ornamental waters.]

85. WHOOPER SWAN *Cygnus cygnus* (L.)

Numbers on Holy Island slakes varied considerably. The maximum recorded was on January 7th when 115 were present. (F.B.) On February 19th, after much snow and N.E. wind, none were to be seen, but later small numbers returned, 50 being present on March 5th. (P.J.S.) At the end of March flocks were seen flying north along the coast. (E.A.R.E.) On inland waters flocks frequently changed their haunts and some were seen in unusual places:—In January a party, maximum number 20, haunted a back-water of the river Coquet above Harehaugh (E.M.); on February 5th, 25 were on Holywell ponds (W.D.R.) and four on Jarrow Slake (D.H.W.); on March 6th, two were on a field near Newburn-on-Tyne (W.A.W.) and on the 19th, two were on Wallsend Swallow, N. (W.D.R.)

The first to be noted was on September 17th when six arrived at Holywell ponds, increasing to 25 birds by the end of October. Parts of this flock also visited Killingworth Mere and Gosforth Park lake. (W.D.R. *et al.*) On November 19th 32 were on Netherwitton lake. (P.O.) In December the number on Holy Island slakes rose to c. 220 (B.L.) and many were on the loughs—Grindon 27 (E.L.A.), Catcleugh 12 (J.H.A.), Hartburn 32. (A.W.J.)

86. BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus bewickii* Yarrell

Very few reported. On January 1st a single bird was seen at Teesmouth. (C.J.H. *et al.*) On February 3rd a family party of six was on a field pond near Hexham (K.I.); on the 19th three adults were seen on Beal Low, N., "the only birds of the year." (B.L.) On March 27th and 30th 14 adults were on a pond at Teesmouth, but not seen subsequently. (P.J.S.)

The only flock in the winter of 1955 was one of 14 birds on Whittle Dene Reservoirs on December 14th. (E.L.A.)

91. COMMON BUZZARD *Buteo buteo* (L.)

A few single birds reported. On April 15th and 22nd a mile south of Alnwick, one. (per E.A.R.E.) On May 7th off Seaton Sluice, N., one flying south over the sea. (W.D.R.) From July 23rd for at least a week, one haunted Fenwick woods, N. (A.Bl.) On August 9th at Apperley Farm, Stocksfield, one flying low. When mobbed by Carrion Crows it soared higher and higher until almost out of sight. (G.A.C.) On September 14th near Ponteland, N., one. (per E.A.R.E.)

92. ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus* (Pontopp.)

On February 22nd and for a few days previously, on Stublick Fell, south of Haydon Bridge, N., two were seen together. (M.P.) On April 13th, soaring over Eggleston, Tees Valley, D., one. (C.G. & D.N.B.)

94. GOSHAWK. *Accipiter gentilis* (L.)

[On June 30th between Fenton and Doddington, N., a bird was seen to fly across the road. It was wearing a bell on its leg. It had already been reported a few days previously by a gamekeeper at Ford. No doubt a captive bird which had escaped. (B.L.)]

95. KITE *Milvus milvus* (L.)

On September 22nd at 6.0 p.m. at Tindal House, Duddo, near Berwick, N., a bird was seen flying steadily at from 100 to 200 ft. from a direction north of Cheviot towards the coast. Its large but narrow wing-span and its long forked tail were clearly seen. (J.N.H.R.) This is only the third record for the county this century. (For previous records see O.R. 1944 & 1947.)

98. HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus* (L.)

On October 16th in Gosforth Park Bird Sanctuary a bird was seen flapping and soaring over the woods and the lake. It alighted on the island where it was under observation under excellent conditions, so that all its distinguishing characteristics could be noted. It was an exceptionally pale bird, being grey-brown on the upper parts, and white below, with only a few markings on the flanks, grey tail with one dark bar near the tip and two or three near the base. A very great contrast with the very dark bird picked up alive at Heaton on September 14th, 1953. (B.L. & E.N.G.) (See O.R. 1953.)

102. MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus* (L.)

In May a cock returned to one of the recent breeding haunts in Co. Durham. As in the previous year, it was accompanied by two hens. A nest was built and four eggs were laid, but before incubation had gone far the nest was deserted and the birds left the immediate area. Later, on a neighbouring site, a pair, perhaps the same birds, reared two young, which, by the end of August were strong on the wing. (C.G. & D.N.B.) Birds were reported from other parts of Co. Durham during the summer, but no breeding was proved. During July a pair was seen twice in Upper Coquetdale (H.H.) and other single birds were seen in Northumberland.

103. OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus* (L.)

From April 30th to May 5th in Gosforth Bird Sanctuary one was seen many times, both fishing and perching on a dead tree near the island. It was noted that the fish were taken by an oblique glide, not by a vertical plunge. (M.G.R. *et al.*) On May 26th this bird, or another, was seen over the lake carrying a fish and being pursued by gulls. (T.W.)

On August 31st over the Seal Sands, Teesmouth, D., three young observers of the Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club saw a bird which they are confident was an Osprey. It flapped slowly over the channels in the mud-flats and approached to within 100 yds. so that they were able to note and describe all its characters. (per P.J.S.)

In late September an Osprey was seen in flight over Matfen, N., It swooped down from a great height and came near enough for the observer to note its form and plumage clearly. (R.K.)

104. HOBBY *Falco subbuteo* L.

On July 25th at Monks' House, N., a juvenile was seen flying N.W. It was identified by a Swedish observer very familiar with this species. (per E.A.R.E.)

105. PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunstall

No successful breeding was recorded from either county. Single birds were frequently seen on the coast during the winter months. On March 26th at Holy Island one was watched stooping from heights of from 30 to 40 ft. at larks, finches and other birds. It never attempted to make a kill, but appeared to be only exercising its powers of flight. (B.L., *et al.*)

107. MERLIN *Falco columbarius* L.

In Redesdale a pair of Merlins was found nesting in an old nest of a Carrion Crow in a tree. (H.M.S.B.) "It has been noted that in some parts of the Pennines, where Merlins are common, these hawks lay in tree-nests as often as they do on the ground. If such departures from the normal habit are becoming more frequent, as distinct from being more frequently noted, I think they can be explained. First, old Carrion Crows' nests are more numerous than they were 30 years ago when keepers were more active; secondly, the ground on some moors is too closely cropped by sheep to allow of sufficient cover for a Merlin's nest. George Bolam advanced this as an explanation for the number of tree-nesting Merlins he saw in Wales. It does seem also that Merlins are either more numerous than they were or else are shifting their ground and moving down from the moors into neighbourhoods where there are thorn-trees large enough to hold Crows' nests." (H.M.S.B.) (For previous records of this habit see O.R. 1943 & 1952.)

Frequently seen in autumn and winter in the Holy Island area. (L.G.H.) On October 29th a female was seen flying along the Coast Road near Wills' Tobacco Factory (B.L.) and on December 27th one was flying round a pit-heap at Birtley, D. (S.A.)

110. KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L.

On Tyneside, Kestrels bred successfully in Walker Naval Yard, Swan Hunter's Wallsend Shipyard and in Wallsend Slipway, also on the Church Tower at Preston Cemetery, North Shields. (A.Bl.) Frequently seen over Newcastle and on the towers of Durham Cathedral. (R.M.P.)

"At the end of September I was the witness of a Kestrel taking fish. I first saw the bird, a cock, skimming over the surface of a stream in Upper Coquetdale for quite a long distance before taking up the normal position of hovering. On the following day, in another area and over a different stream, I watched a cock Kestrel make two runs, each up river, for about 100 yds., hovering after each; then, on a third run, it took a fish as it jumped for a fly." (H.H.)

113. BLACK GROUSE *Lyrurus tetrix* (L.)

Reports show that some increase in numbers is taking place in parts of both counties.

117. QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix* (L.)

Few records were received. In July a bird was heard near Riding Mill (per R.T.G.) and another at Dinnington. (J.A.) As late as September a nest with ten eggs was found near Duddo, N. (J.N.H.R.) On September 7th at Tritlington Broom, near Morpeth, N., four were flushed from stubble during a Partridge drive. (H.T.)

120. WATER-RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* L.

On January 15th in Gosforth Park Sanctuary a large concentration was noted, when eight were feeding at the few unfrozen streamlets near the lake. The following day there were 13—but no such numbers were seen subsequently. (W.D.R.) On November 20th one was trapped and ringed at Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.)

125. CORNCRAKE *Crex crex* (L.)

Fewer reported than in the previous year or two. Missing altogether from some areas, but heard frequently in the valley of the South Tyne about Haltwhistle (M.P.) and in one or two places up the North Tyne. (L.P.H.)

126. MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus* (L.)

Late nesting—On August 1st at Guyzance on the Coquet a nest of four eggs. (M.F. & J.W.C.) On September 12th at Whitworth Park, D., a brood of newly-hatched young on the water. (C.G. & J.G.)

On November 18th at Killingworth Mere, N., a very large concentration of 77 birds was noted; by the 23rd only 10 remained, but by December 2nd the number had built up again to c. 30. Owing to the drought the water was shallower than it had been at the same period last year, when there were only one or two Moorhens but as many as 41 Little Grebes, which this year were missing altogether. (W.D.R.)

131. OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L.

On February 13th at Corstopitum, Corbridge, N., an injured bird was picked up. (G.T.) Considering the wintry weather it is remarkable to find one so far up the river. On March 9th the first birds were back on their breeding haunts on the shingle beds on the South Tyne, much behind last year's date but earlier than the average over the past 20 years. Later, on the shingles, six nests with eggs were found, one with a clutch of four. All were subsequently robbed. (M.P.) Not noted on the Coquet at Holystone, N., until March 15th. (E.M.)

133. LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.)

On January 9th to 11th thousands, in flocks of five or six hundred each, were seen passing west through the Tyne Gap, just before the snow-storms. "I have never seen so many before at this time of the year." (M.P.) On January 26th and 29th at the North Gare, Tees-mouth, a small steady passage south was noted and on the 30th hundreds were coming in from the sea in large flocks. (C.G., D.N.B. & C.J.H.) This passage was also noted over South Shields. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) Nevertheless on March 5th near Haltwhistle, N., Lapwings were uttering their spring calls over the fields (M.P.) and on April 10th the first eggs were found. (R.L.B.)

A farmer in Upper Coquetdale, when ploughing a field, found a Lapwing's nest with the hen incubating; he bodily removed the nest on to the ploughed land and the bird returned to the eggs and successfully hatched out a brood. (E.M.) As late as August 18th near Haltwhistle a female was seen still feeding two young in down. (M.P.)

Recovery of ringed birds, all ringed as juveniles:—Stockton-on-Tees on July 4th, 1953; recovered Gijon, Asturias, Spain, on February 10th, 1954. (P.A.R.) Monks' House, early Autumn, 1954; found dead near Dumfries at end of December, 1954. (E.A.R.E.) Monks' House, July, 1954; shot Côte Maritime, France, in February, 1955—the second French recovery from Monks' House. (E.A.R.E.) Sharperton, Rothbury, on July 11th, 1954; shot Vitoria Alava, Spain, on January 28th, 1955. (A. & R.) Elsdon, N., June 11th, 1955; found dead at Glenfarg, Perth., 90 miles N.W. on August 28th, 1955. (A. & R.)

134. RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula* L.

On May 3rd on a shingle bed on the South Tyne, two cocks and a hen were seen in company with breeding Oystercatchers and Lapwings. On the 20th a scrape with four eggs was found. The eggs were either taken or buried by wind-blown sand. No second nest was located, but on July 10th two young in down were found and were seen again on the 16th. This is the first record of the species' breeding on the South Tyne. (M.P.) At Teesmouth c. 7 pairs attempted to breed; probably c. half-a-dozen chicks were reared. (A.Ba.)

140 SOUTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER *Charadrius a. apicarius* L.

Ringed as immature at St. John's Chapel, Weardale, on June 21st, 1955; shot near Reeth, Yorks., on November 14th, 1955. (N.R.)

143. TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* (L.)

An adult, trapped and ringed on Beadnell beach on August 30th, 1955, was recovered at Libreville, French Equatorial Africa, on October 27th, 1955. This is only the third recovery of British ringed birds of this species abroad. The other two were recovered in Ellesmere Land and Greenland respectively. (E.A.R.E.)

145. COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.)

On January 9th on Jarrow Slake, D., 22 birds were feeding on the open mud as the tide rose (W.D.R.) and from the 17th to 19th during severe frost, birds were seen feeding at high-water mark on the shore near Monks' House, picking up sand-hoppers and shore-fly larvae. (E.A.R.E.) In August, remarkably plentiful, but falling in numbers from October to December. (M.W.R.)

146. GREAT SNIPE *Capella media* (Latham)

On September 16th at Greymare Hill, near Minsteracres, Stockfield, one was shot during partridge shooting. (G.A.C.) It is now in the Hancock Museum. It will be remembered that on September 8th, 1951, Mr. G. A. Cowen shot a Great Snipe near Minsteracres. With the exception of one or two rather doubtful sight records, these have been the only birds recorded during the 22 years in which the *Ornithological Reports* have been compiled. (See O.R. 1951.)

147. JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brünn.)

Unusually early records:—September 18th on Saltholme pool, Teesmouth, one (P.J.S.) and on the 21st near Shotton Colliery, D., one. (D.W.S.)

148. WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* L.

On January 17th on the shore at Monks' House, N., a bird, feeding on the tide-line, walked into the trap on the beach and was ringed. (E.A.R.E.)

In July, on the road near Acomb, Hexham, three young were seen with an adult. On being approached the adult flew off; but while the young were being examined, it was seen to rise from the neighbouring field, in which it had pitched, with a fourth young one between its thighs. It carried it into a wood about 60 yds. away and returned to the other three with which it walked off to the wood. (S.E.)

In autumn, Woodcock arrived in considerable numbers, but must have passed south early, as 'cock shooters had poor bags as compared with previous years. (H.T.)

150. CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.)

Throughout January and February, in spite of the severe frosts, a few odd birds remained about the haughs in Upper Coquetdale. On February 6th 100 were on the common near Holystone. (E.M.)

A nestling ringed at Wooperton, N., in June, 1954, was shot on Budle Bay, N. (12 miles N.E.) in mid-September, 1955. (E.A.R.E.)

A juvenile ringed at Stannington, N., on July 6th, 1952, was shot at Longboy, Co. Mayo, Eire, on January 3rd, 1955. Another, ringed at the same place on June 29th, 1954, was shot at Milltown Malbay, Co. Clare, Eire, on February 10th, 1955. (A. & R.)

151. WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* (L.)

In April and May several small flocks and single birds were noted on northward passage. On May 7th in Druridge Bay, N., 13 Whimbrel and 21 Oystercatchers were seen flying together in perfect V-formation; the Oystercatchers formed the right leg of the "V" and the Whimbrels the left, with a Whimbrel leading. (M.F. & J.W.C.)

Unusually plentiful in July, August and early September, when some large flocks were counted. As late as September 12th at Fenham, N., c. 60 were seen roosting at high tide. (B.L.)

154. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa* (L.)

Rather more than usual reported. The first, on April 8th, was a single bird found dead on Ross Links, N. (E.A.R.E.) On April 26th five were at Grindon Lough, N., their favourite resting place on spring migration. (R.T.G. *et al.*) Most of the others were single birds seen in April-May and August-September on or near the shore.

156. GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ocropus* L.

From January 16th to March 2nd one "wintered" near Holystone, in Upper Coquetdale, N. (E.M.) On April 24th at Langdon Beck, in Upper Teesdale, D., one was flushed from the river—a most unusual place and date. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.)

Frequently reported in August and September, often as many as six together. A single bird was present at Colt Crag Reservoir, N., from November 1st to the end of the year. (K.I. & E.L.A.)

157. WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola* L.

Much fewer than last year; only about 10 reported and all single birds. On June 4th and 6th at Holywell Ponds, N., one was heard to utter its spring call. (L.G.H. & B.L.) All the others were recorded from Co. Durham.

161. REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* (L.)

Juvenile ringed at Monks' House, N., in July, 1954; recovered Amble, N., in January, 1955. (E.A.R.E.) Another ringed at Elsdon, N., on June 12th, 1955, was recovered at Noyelles, Somme, France, on July 23rd, 1955. (N.R.)

162. SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus* (Pallas)

A few reported in March-April; more frequently noted in August and September. Almost invariably single birds.

165. GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.)

A few single birds in April-May; more numerous than usual in August and September, often in small parties: August 19th at Fenham Mill, N., seven; on the 28th at Beal Low, N., ten, and on September 7th, from 15 to 20. (W.D.R.) During September, at Teesmouth, 12. (P.J.S.) The last reported was on Holy Island on December 28th, a late date. (W.D.R.)

166. MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis* (Bechstein)

From August 20th to 29th on Wallsend Swallow, N., a single bird was present. It was seen under excellent conditions up to 15 yds. with binoculars. Detailed descriptions and sketches were made on the spot of its plumage, proportions and movements from which its correct identification was confirmed. It was often in company with two Greenshanks, with which it could be compared. (M.B., R.A.F., J.A.F. & B.L.) This is the first occurrence of this species in Northumberland.

169. KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.)

Very numerous indeed in both winters. During January to March at Teesmouth numbers varied from 2,000 to c. 4,500, the maximum being reached at the end of February. (C.J.H. & A.Ba.) At Seaton Sluice, N., c. 400 wintered and on Jarrow Slake c. 100. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) In the winter of 1955-6 c. 650 were at Seaton Sluice—a most unusually large number at such a place. (P.J., W.D.R. *et al.*)

171. LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisler)

Fewer reported than usual. Spring records are rare, but on May 27th at Saltholme, Teesmouth, one was seen with Dunlin. (B.Co.)

178. DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.)

A passage migrant ringed at Monks' House on September 17th, 1954, was recovered near Liverpool in February, 1955. (E.A.R.E.) Eighty Dunlin were trapped and ringed at Monks' House in 1955;

c. 50 of them were of the Northern form by wing-measurement. The total number of this form ringed at Monks' House is now c. 175. (E.A.R.E.)

179. CURLEW-SANDPIPER *Calidris testacea* (Pallas)

Very few reported. On May 21st on Holy Island sands, three. (F.B.) On August 3rd, off St. Mary's Island, a group of three. (J.D.P.) Very scarce at Teesmouth; only a few seen between July 31st and September 1st. (P.J.S. *et al.*) Only five seen during the year by Monks' House observers; four of them on the Inner Farne on September 3rd. (E.A.R.E.)

181. SANDERLING *Crocethia alba* (Pallas)

More numerous than usual; flocks of up to 200 birds were reported.

184. RUFF *Philomachus pugnax* (L.)

A few birds wintered in the area. In February and March one was present on Jarrow Slake (F.G.G.) and on a pond near Chevington, N., one was seen several times between January and March. (M.F. & J.W.C.) In the autumn, in spite of the drought, quite a number were seen on various inland waters, sometimes as many as a dozen at a time. A few remained to the end of the year.

187. GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.)

On September 16th, in Sheldrake Bay, Holy Island, one. (R.H.) On October 22nd, near Seaton Carew, Teesmouth, one (M.G.R. *et al.*); no others reported.

193. ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.)

In the late summer and autumn an unusually large number of Skuas visited the north-east coast. The great majority of these were Arctic. The first to be recorded was a single bird seen flying south off Seaton Sluice, N., on May 7th. (W.D.R.) On July 2nd another single bird was seen at the same place. (W.D.R.) The first noted at Teesmouth was on July 24th (P.J.S.); on this day others were seen off the coast between Budle Bay and Dunstanburgh, N. (B.C. *et al.*) On August 3rd in Budle Bay, 20 were resting together. (B.C.) On the 5th at Fenwick Steads, a mile inland from Fenham Flats, N., a flock of 10 was seen to fly inland, calling loudly. (W.D.R.) From August 6th to 10th many were off Souter Point, D. (F.G.G. & K.Y.) During the second week in August many were seen off the coast either singly or in parties. One was seen to attack and chase a Pigeon over land for more than a mile. (J.A.F.) On August 28th off Teesmouth, a considerable northerly movement was in progress and more than

50 birds were counted (C.G. & D.N.B.); while on September 3rd c. 40 were seen in a day. During September and October in the Budle Bay-Stag Rocks area, as many as 25 could be seen in the air together, chasing gulls and terns. (E.A.R.E.) In fewer numbers, birds were seen all along the coast, the last being recorded on November 13th.

194. GREAT SKUA *Stercorarius skua* (Brünn.)

About 18 were recorded off the coast in the autumn, usually solitary birds, often associated with Gannets. The first noted was on August 3rd, off Seaton Sluice, N. (A.Bl.) Three were seen in September, thirteen in October and two in November, the last on the 20th of that month.

195. POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temminck)

This species was unusually numerous off the coast, generally in company with Arctic Skuas. The first noted was an adult, which, on June 12th flew over Budle Bay sand-bar to chase Sandwich Terns. (B.L.) No more were reported until July 31st when one was off Bamburgh. On several days during August single birds were seen off Souther Point, D., (F.G.G.) and during September off Boulmer, the Farnes and Holy Island. (M.F.M.M. *et al.*) On October 15th off the North Gare, Teesmouth, D., many Skuas were passing north, amongst them a few Pomarines; later a flock of 30 birds flew together into the Tees estuary, passing so close to the observers that they were seen to be adult Pomarines, most of them of the light form. (D.G.B. *et al.*) A few were seen off various points up to the end of October.

196. LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus* Vieillot

Six single birds of this very irregular and rare species were reported. On July 31st off Bamburgh, N., one (J.A. & T.H.A.); on August 20th off Seahouses Harbour, one; and on the 28th on Fenham Slakes, one. (E.A.R.E.) On September 16th one in Seahouses Harbour. (B.L.) On October 9th off the North Gare, Teesmouth, an immature bird (B.Co. & N.Y.) and on the 22nd another immature bird off Teesmouth. (P.J.S.)

198. GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L.

In February and March at Teesmouth, the number must often have been up to 1,000. (C.J.H.)

In autumn very large numbers at Teesmouth—on September 8th c. 1,000. (P.E.) On September 3rd on Jarrow Slake, 230 and on the 12th, 250 on South Shields beach. (F.G.G.) On November 4th at Colt Crag Reservoir, N., c. 25 miles inland, a large roost. (K.I.) "During

October this year I have seen more around Haltwhistle, N., than at any time in the last twenty years." (M.P.)

On November 13th at the Fish Quay, North Shields, an immature bird was seen with a ring on each leg. By means of binoculars the numbers were read, proving that it had been ringed as a nestling at Reinoya, near Vardø, in Northern Norway. (W.D.R.)

199. BRITISH LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

Larus fuscus graellsii Brehm.

One pair bred successfully at Marsden, D. (F.G.G. & K.Y.)

200(A). HERRING-GULL *Larus argentatus* Pont.

At a refuse tip at Teesmouth very large numbers have been counted. On February 14th and March 24th c. 3,000 (C.J.H.), August 31st c. 2,000. (P.E.)

On June 27th at Holborn Moss at least two pairs were breeding and three young were seen. "Breeding has been suspected here for some time, but these are the first young that I have yet seen there." (F.B.)

200(B). SCANDINAVIAN HERRING-GULL *Larus a. omissus* Pleske

On August 18th at Coldstream, N., a single mature bird was seen with bright yellow legs, which is the distinguishing feature of this form. (N.M.K.) This appears to be the first time that this form has been definitely identified in this County; but perhaps it has been overlooked.

202. GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn.

In the early part of the year, several immature birds were reported to be wintering along the coast, from Holy Island to the Teesmouth, some of them remaining until the end of April. One or two seen in March were judged to be nearly adult. The first to be recorded in autumn did not arrive until mid-November and up to the end of the year very few indeed had been reported.

203. ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides* Meyer

At least two immature birds were on the coast from January until nearly the end of April, one at North Shields, N., and the other at Teesmouth. From September 1st until the end of the year a mature bird was frequently seen at North Shields Fish Quay. On November 9th and again on the 11th it, or another, was seen in Gosforth Park, bathing in the lake with other gulls. (W.D.R.) On August 26th a second year bird was in Seahouses Harbour, N., (E.A.R.E.) and on December 10th at Fenwick, N., an adult was seen with other gulls following the plough. (B.L.)

205. MEDITERRANEAN BLACK-HEADED GULL

Larus melanocephalus Temminck

From March 20th to 27th near the Fish Quay, North Shields, N., an adult in nearly full breeding plumage was under observation at close range. Its stoutish, red, dark-tipped bill and its *black* head and nape were clearly noted, as well as the absence of black on the primaries and under-wing and the lack of a white band along the leading edges of the wings. It bore a ring on its right leg. (T.H.A., J.A., B.L., H.M.S.B. *et al.*) This is the first record of this rare gull for Northumberland. For fuller particulars and a note on the ringing of this species see *B.B.*, Vol. XLVIII, p. 330 (July, 1955).

From November 12th to the end of December at North Shields Fish Quay, an adult in full winter plumage was under observation. It was associating with common Black-headed Gulls at exactly the same place and in almost the same manner as the bird seen in March; but this bird did not carry a ring. (T.H.A., J.A., F.G.G. *et al.*)

Note.—An adult bird of this species was seen on August 3rd at Langney Point, Sussex, and another on August 5th at sea off the Isle of Wight. (See *B.B.*, Vol. XLVIII, p. 547)

206. BONAPARTE'S GULL *Larus philadelphia* (Ord)

On July 11th at Seaton Sluice Point, N., a small gull was seen beating up and down the coast where it was feeding with large numbers of adult and juvenile Kittiwakes, Common and Black-headed Gulls with which it could be compared. It was quite obviously smaller than the other gulls in its company. The head, nape, neck, under-parts and under-wings were pure white. There was a quite large dark smudge behind the eye. The mantle was as in the Black-head, but with very fine bars crossing the carpal joints, as in the juvenile Kittiwake, but not so conspicuous or broad. The wings were more pointed and longer than those of a Little Gull. The primaries were pure white with black leading edges. The tail was pure white, slightly rounded at the tip, with a very narrow terminal band. Bill small and completely black. Legs dark, the exact colour being indistinguishable. The flight was a very conspicuous character, being much more like that of a tern than a gull; the wing-beats being noticeably faster than those of a Black-head. It was not seen subsequently. There can be no doubt that it was a Bonaparte's Gull assuming its first adult plumage. (B.L.) This is the first record of this rare North American species for Northumberland.

207. LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Pallas

Adults and juveniles were unusually frequently recorded in every month of the year. On June 13th an adult and an immature bird were at Holborn Moss, N., six miles from the open sea (E.A.R.E.) and from July 10th to 18th a second-year bird was seen at a gull roost at Teesmouth, while on the 28th an adult in breeding plumage was at the same place. (P.J.S.) In no previous year have so many been recorded.

209. SABINE'S GULL *Xema sabini* (Sabine)

On August 11th off Seaton Sluice, N., one was seen on the water in company with a Kittiwake with which it could be compared for size and markings. The black primaries and white secondaries were noted and the strong black bill. It was watched for two hours, but not seen subsequently. (J.A. & T.H.A.)

On November 6th an immature bird of this species was seen flying close inshore at Cullernose Point, N. All its distinguishing features were noted, including its distinctly forked tail with a dark terminal band and its wholly black primaries. (W.S.C.)

There is only one previous record for Northumberland, one seen on Holy Island in September, 1946. (See *O.R.*, 1946)

211. KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.)

On April 14th off Souter Point, D., a marked passage north was noted; 750 being counted in under two hours. (F.G. & K.Y.)

On October 22nd during a strong N.E. gale large numbers were flying north with other species. At Teesmouth the number passing must have reached 1,000 during daylight hours and the lighthouse keepers at the South Gare reported that the beams from the lighthouse had attracted hordes of small gulls the previous night, almost certainly Kittiwakes. (P.J.S. *et al.*) This movement was also noted off Dunstanburgh, when, in less than two hours, at least 1,000 must have passed. (W.S.C.)

On the North Shields warehouses 30 pairs nested and 56 chicks were counted. It is a very striking fact that out of a total of 28 adult breeding birds ringed on the window ledges at the North Shields colony in 1954, no less than 24 of them returned to the colony in 1955—all but two to occupy the same nesting ledges. This shows how closely the Kittiwake exhibits both nest-site tenacity and colony tenacity. (J.C.C. & E.W. in "A Study of Colonies of the Kittiwake," *Ibis*, Vol. 98, pp. 63-79.)

212. BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger* (L.)

Several seen on passage in August and September. At the Tees-mouth up to six were seen almost daily. (P.J.S. *et al.*) On August 8th off Seaton Sluice, N., during two evening hours, 40 were counted in small parties from 6 to 10 (B.L. & A.Bl.) and others were seen in the Holy Island area. Inland, one was seen on Broomlee Lough, N., on August 17th (J.W.G.C.) and single birds on Hurworth Burn Reservoir, D., on August 28th and September 4th. (P.J.S. & A.Ba.)

215. GULL-BILLED TERN *Gelochelidon nilotica* (Gmelin)

[On July 3rd on Goswick sand-rigg, N., a large tern was seen in flight. In plumage it resembled a Sandwich Tern, but with rather more black at the wing-tips. The bill was the odd feature; it appeared shorter and stouter than that of a Sandwich Tern and, though black, lacked the yellow tip. It flew slowly, steadily and heavily past at a distance of *c.* 15 yds., in a northerly direction, uttering no sound. It was considered that it was most probably a Gull-billed Tern. It was not seen again. (B.L., L.G.H. & A.Bl.)]

Note.—On May 29th, two birds of this species and on July 29th, three, were identified off Langney Point, Sussex; on August 13th one was seen to fly across Dungeness promontory, Kent, and on August 15th one was seen at the Midrips, near Camber, Sussex. On each occasion these birds uttered their characteristic notes which confirmed the identification. (See *B.B.*, Vol. XLVIII, p. 511.)

This species has not been recorded for our two counties.

217. COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L.

As usual, several attempts were made to found breeding colonies on the coast. At Teesmouth a few young were successfully reared in more than one place. About 20 pairs attempted to breed on a ploughed field, where in July five or six young were found. (B.Co. per P.J.S.) On one small islet close to the shore on the Northumberland coast 100 nests were counted in June (A.Bl. *et al.*) and later 70 chicks were ringed. (E.A.R.E.) In July on this site a bird was seen to be trying to incubate ten eggs at once, presumably placed together by human agency. (S.A.) In July, near Holy Island, 20 breeding pairs were seen and a few chicks were later ringed. (S.A.)

218. ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naumann

The founding of breeding colonies was attempted at one or two points along the shore. In June 70 scrapes with eggs were counted at one of them, but, later, high tides washed away many of them. Fresh clutches were laid and some 30 chicks reached the flying stage. (B.L.)

222. LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons* Pallas

Several unsuccessful attempts at breeding were made both at the Teesmouth and on the North Northumberland coast. Eggs were seen on more than one site, but human interference and high tides combined to destroy them. Not more than about half-a-dozen young were reared at Teesmouth and only one or two elsewhere.

223. SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Latham

Between 1,800 and 1,900 pairs nested on the Farne Islands where, for the first time on record, there was a large colony of c. 900 pairs on the Inner Farne.

226. LITTLE AUK *Plautus alle* (L.)

On October 22nd and 23rd, during a strong N.E. gale, quite a considerable northward passage was observed from many points on the coast. These birds had probably been swept from the North Sea up against the north-east coast, and, to avoid being blown ashore, were flying almost in the teeth of the gale. They were flying singly or in small flocks of up to 20 birds. When the passage ceased, many remained on the coast for a considerable time; even as late as January 12th, 1956, 50 were counted during a trip round the Farnes. Many suffered casualties: on October 28th near Seahouses, N., three were swept across the road by the N.E. wind and were watched flying inland over the ploughed fields (B.C.) and in November one was picked up dead near Thirlwall Castle on the Northumberland-Cumberland border. (M.P.) Others were from time to time found dead upon the beach.

Note.—This northerly movement was also observed off the Isle of May and off Shetland.

227(A). NORTHERN GUILLEMOT *Uria a. aalge* (Pontopp.)

On January 22nd there was a considerable off-shore passage of this form off Monks' House, N. (E.A.R.E.) and oiled birds of this form have been picked up on the shore, dead or alive. The footprints of one of the latter found near Amble showed that it had walked for 40 yds. along the sand on its webbed feet without its tarsus having once touched the ground. (M.F. & J.W.C.)

229. BLACK GUILLEMOT *Uria grylle* (L.)

On January 2nd off Whitburn, in an easterly wind, many auks were flying south, including a party of 10 of this species. (D.W.) On April 13th and 21st a single bird was seen off the Farnes; fishermen reported that it had been there for about a month. (E.A.R.E.) No others were recorded.

235. TURTLE-DOVE *Streptopelia turtur* (L.)

Birds have been seen and heard in North Durham and in South Northumberland in the breeding season ; but no actual proof of breeding is yet forthcoming.

241. BARN-OWL *Tyto alba* (Scop.)

On February 23rd at Apperley Dene, Stocksfield, one was seen hunting over a plantation of young trees when the ground was covered by 18 inches of snow. Some time later one was shot on a neighbouring farm for killing young chickens. Perhaps the snow had deprived it of its usual prey. (G.A.C.) At Port Clarence, Teesmouth, a nest was found on a slag-tip, but the eggs were later taken. (per P.J.S.)

247. TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco* L.

On November 5th at Holy Island a bird of the grey phase was seen ; probably an immigrant as it was with newly arrived Blackbirds, Chaffinches, etc. (L.G.H. *et al.*)

A nestling ringed near Belford, N., on May 7th, 1952, was found dead near Ford, N., 14 miles N.N.W. on April 29th, 1954.

248. LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus* (L.)

Passage birds were seen singly on Holy Island in October, November and December. On December 26th, in Gosforth Park Sanctuary, at least ten were in osiers at the east end of the lake—a most unusual gathering. (W.D.R.)

249. SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* (Pontopp.)

Rather fewer reported from the moors, but many along the coast. On October 22nd and 23rd birds were seen to fly in from the sea.

255. SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.)

First recorded May 1st, Coxgreen, D. (D.D.) In June birds were seen entering holes in Marsden Rock, D. (P.J.) Cliff-nesting is seldom noted on the coast. A new small colony of *c.* 12 pairs has established itself in Whickham, D., under the roofs of fairly modern Council houses. (L.G.) In other places numbers were reported to be fewer than usual.

262. GREEN WOODPECKER *Picus viridis* L.

Still extending its range. In February one in the plantation on the dunes south of Bamburgh Castle, N. (W.A.W.) In May one was flushed from some rocks well up in the College Valley in Cheviotland. "I have not seen them up there before." (F.B.)

263. GREATER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopus major* (L.)

In January one seen in Cleadon Park, South Shields, D. (F.G.G.)
On September 23rd a single bird was seen to fly north over King's College, Newcastle. (R.M.P.)

265. WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla* L.

Two records only, compared with seven last year. On June 26th near Haltwhistle, N., an adult bird was watched for a few minutes as it flew back and forward from a tree to the ground. It was within 100 yds. of the spot where a bird was picked up injured in August last year! (M.P.) On August 23rd on Holy Island one was seen sitting on a wall near the farm. (G.L. per B.L.)

273 SHORE-LARK *Eremophila alpestris* (L.)

Three separate flocks recorded. On October 30th at Roker, Sunderland, within 50 yds. of the sea, a party of four. (R.H.L.) On November 13th on Fenham Flats, N., three, feeding amongst dead *Zostera* at high water mark. (F.B.) On December 27th on Holy Island, nine. (L.G.H. *et al.*) Others were reported after the turn of the year.

274. SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L.

First arrivals April 6th, but only single birds; not numerous until the end of the month.

In August at Kirkwhelpington, N., one was seen with elongated outer tail-feathers projecting almost 3 inches beyond the normal length. (W.A.W.) A few years ago a Sand-Martin was reported with the same abnormality. (See *O.R.*, 1947) At Craster a juvenile was seen of a pale cream colour with the exception of a pinkish throat. (W.S.C.) On August 31st on the shore at Druridge Bay, N., a continuous stream of birds was flying steadily north! (M.F. & J.W.C.) A few late birds lingered until the end of October.

276. HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.)

First seen April 7th at Monks' House, two (E.A.R.E.) but not numerous until much later in the month. Second broods were fledged late and birds lingered until mid-October. The last seen was a juvenile at Craster, N., as late as November 23rd. (W.S.C.)

277. SAND-MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.)

First seen April 2nd, but few others until the 14th.

279. RAVEN *Corvus corax* L.

A gamekeeper in the Teesdale area boasted that he had trapped seven Ravens last winter. (W.H.) Though several nests were destroyed, there is evidence that on the whole it has been a successful breeding season. One or two nests were built in trees. (H.T. *et al.*)

"On August 3rd over Uswayford, Upper Coquetdale, a party of 24 birds, four adults and the rest immature, remained in the valley for quite half-an-hour. Three days later on the border between Windy Gyle and Great Cheviot, a flock of 12 flew towards me and then accompanied me for at least twenty minutes. They flew in circles so closely over me that I could have touched one with my stick. Five were adults, the remainder immature. It is not uncommon for me to have Ravens as walking companions, but usually only from two to six birds." (H.H.) In 1912 George Bolam wrote of the Raven:—"In olden days they were well known to congregate together into flocks for the purpose of roosting together. . . . It must be long enough now since any considerable flock of Border Ravens could be formed and for the most part it is only a single bird, or a pair, that at the present day attracts attention." (*Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, p. 198.) As more recent records have shown, successful breeding is more frequent on the Borders than it was early in the century.

281. HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L.

A few single birds were reported from several places on the coast from January to April. On May 1st, in the Monks' House area, several were seen on passage (E.A.R.E.) and one on Holy Island remained as late as May 21st. (F.B.) Except for a single bird at Goswick, N., none were reported until the end of October. On November 9th at Gosforth Park two or more were over the lake. Elsewhere the maximum number seen together was five.

289. BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus obscurus* Prazak

In the Whickham area several pairs are nesting in lamp-posts. (L.G.) An adult ringed at Gosforth, N., on December 27th, 1950, was found dead there on April 20th, 1955. (A. & R.)

294. LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus* (L.)

At Fenwick, N., at the end of May, a pair built inside the newly-erected Heligoland trap and held up operations for three weeks. (B.L.)

298. TREE-CREEPER *Certhia familiaris* L.

There is some controversy as to why the Tree-Creeper excavates the small holes in the thick bark of the trunks of Wellingtonias, on

which they roost. M.P. writes that he recently inspected some of these holes at dark by means of a torch. He found five occupied roosts and in each case the bird was clinging to the bark *below* the excavated crevice so that only its head was in the hole. He suggests that the holes are made so that the bird may roost in a relaxed position with its bill pointing forwards instead of upwards.

300. DIPPER *Cinclus cinclus* (L.)

"Dippers now appear to be quite plentiful again and I often see them on the river Tyne here at Haydon Bridge." (W.J.) This applies very well to other parts of the two counties.

302. FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L.

Many remained into late April. On the 17th near Colt Crag, N., a flock of many hundred birds (J.H.R.); on the 22nd near Monks' House, c. 25. (E.A.R.E.) First reported in the autumn on September 3rd. On October 8th and 9th a large immigration was in progress all along the coast, when many were seen to fly in from the sea; further arrivals occurring on October 16th, 20th and 29th.

303(A). BRITISH SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton

A nestling ringed at South Shields on May 30th, 1953, was caught and released at Wexford, 275 miles S.W., on February 6th, 1954.

303(B). HEBRIDEAN SONG-THRUSH *Turdus e. hebridensis* Clarke

On October 17th and 18th at Monks' House, N., two trapped and ringed. (E.A.R.E.)

303(C). CONTINENTAL SONG-THRUSH *Turdus e. philomelos* Brehm.

On March 27th at Monks' House, N., one trapped and ringed and others on October 10th, 17th and 18th. Others seen but not handled. (E.A.R.E.)

304. REDWING *Turdus musicus* L.

During January and February 40 were taken at a roost near Monks' House, all of them, by measurement, of the usual Scandinavian form. (E.A.R.E.) A few birds arrived in September, but the main immigration took place on October 8th, 9th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th.

On October 23rd near the North Gare, Teesmouth, an incoming migrant was seen to alight upon the sea. It swam for a minute or so with its tail held well up. Then, nearly swamped by a wave, it rose and flew to the Gare where it found a foothold in a crevice and immediately

went to sleep. As the tide was ebbing it seemed quite safe ; but, a few minutes later, a wave, slightly higher than the rest, swept it away as it slept. (M.G.R. & P.J.S.)

308. BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L.

From October 8th many immigrants were on the coast ; some being seen to fly in from the sea with gulls chasing them.

Birds trapped and ringed on passage at Monks' House were recovered from Jutland, S.W. Sweden, Norway and Tipperary, Ireland. (E.A.R.E.)

311(A). WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oe. oenanthe* (L.)

First seen March 29th and 31st, but not plentiful until the end of April. On April 30th a flock of about 80 at Holywell ponds, N. Fewer now breeding along the coast in some areas ; much reduced in numbers at Teesmouth where they used to nest in holes in the slag breakwaters. (P.J.S.) None seen nesting on the coast between Hauxley and Druridge. (M.F. & J.W.C.) Very scarce in the Monks' House area ; several local nests on the dunes were scraped out by foxes and destroyed. (E.A.R.E.)

311(B). GREENLAND WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oe. leucorhoa* (Gmelin)

On April 30th at Holywell ponds, N., c. 8 or 10. (W.D.R.) A strong passage was noted in the Monks' House area around May 14th and birds of this race were trapped on June 6th—a late date—and again on return passage on August 28th. (E.A.R.E.)

312. DESERT-WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti* (Temm.)

On December 4th a bird of this species was identified on the south shore of Jarrow Slake, D. It was haunting a strip of bare ground between the mud of the slake and the stacks of timber in Pyman Bell's timber-yard. It was very fearless, flitting about close to the observers. It was seen almost daily up to and including December 18th, a day of hard frost and some snow. This hard weather continued for some days, so presumably the bird did not survive it. It was first seen by D.W., identified by F.G.G., trapped, ringed and photographed in the hand by J. & T.H.A. and seen by many other bird-watchers. It was judged to be a cock in first winter plumage, almost certainly of the Western race.

Note.—This is the first occurrence in Co. Durham of this very rare casual visitor. The last to be recorded in England was a bird which wintered on the banks of a reservoir near Halifax, Yorks., from November to January, 1949-50. (See *B.B.*, Vol. XLIII, pp. 179-183, and plates.)

317. STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* (L.)

Wintering cocks seen at various points on the coast ; but no breeding pairs reported in summer. Now rarely seen inland, but on April 21st a cock was seen near Middleton-in-Teesdale (J.A.F.) and on May 17th a pair was seen near Holystone, in Upper Coquetdale—"the first I have met with in this area." (E.M.)

318. WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L.)

In July in the College Valley, Cheviot, N., many pairs were noted in the bracken area ; one pair just below the Hen Hole at c. 1,000 ft. (B.C.)

A good many on passage at Monks' House, from mid-August to early September. On August 20th at least a dozen in the garden and others in nearby fields. Last trapped on September 3rd. A bird ringed at Monks' House in the autumn of 1953 was recovered in Portugal in the winter of 1955. (E.A.R.E.)

321. BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* (Gmelin)

A dozen single birds were recorded, usually hens, from various parts of the coast.

325. ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* (L.)

During the severe snowy weather of February a flock of c. 20 birds was seen more than once amongst bushes in a cemetery in the centre of Newcastle—a most unusual concentration. (R.M.P.)

333. REED-WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (Hermann)

On May 31st and again on June 4th in the reeds at Gosforth Park Lake, N., one was seen and heard. (B.L. & A.Bl.) The observer had just returned from Norfolk where he had seen and heard many. This summer visitor does not normally breed further north than Yorkshire, though there are three records of its having done so in Co. Durham during last century. With one possible exception this is the first record of its occurrence in Northumberland ; but it is possible that it has been overlooked by those who do not know the song.

344. BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria* (Bechstein)

On August 24th at Monks' House one trapped and on the 26th, another ; on September 16th, two ; October 7th, one. On September 16th one was seen on the Farne Islands and another at Bamburgh. On August 28th at Fenwick, N., one seen in a garden. (E.A.R.E. & B.L.) "It looks as if this species is a regular autumn passage migrant on our coast." (E.A.R.E.)

348. LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca* (L.)

On July 28th at Holywell ponds, N., one. (B.L.) On September 16th on the Inner Farne, one on passage (B.L.) and on the 17th in a garden at Berwick, one on passage. (F.B.)

354(A). WILLOW-WARBLE *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.)

Earliest arrivals, April 10th and 11th. On the 13th in Gosforth Park, c. 20. (B.L.)

At Monks' House, out of 25 birds trapped in April and critically examined in the hand, eight, of this race and the next, had legs as dark as a typical Chiffchaff's! (E.A.R.E.)

354(B). NORTHERN WILLOW-WARBLE *Phylloscopus t. acredula* (L.)

In spring, no less than five out of fifteen Willow-warblers caught between April 22nd and 28th, and one other, seen at close range, were of this race, as matched with known skins in the hand. (E.A.R.E.)

368. PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pallas)

Though the number breeding in the nesting boxes in Hamsterley is gradually falling, there is no diminution in other areas. Several observers report marked increases this season.

In one of the nesting boxes in the Hamsterley Forest a cock in brown plumage was breeding. It was as brown as a hen, with black bars near the white on the wings. A cock ringed there in 1953 was seen in the area this season. (C.G. & D.N.B.)

373. MEADOW-PIBIT *Anthus pratensis* (L.)

Of birds ringed as passage migrants at Monks' House one was recovered in Portugal and another in Basses Pyrenees. (E.A.R.E.)

375. TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris* (L.)

On October 8th on St. Mary's Island, N., a pipit attracted attention by its larger size, longer legs, slimmer build and longer tail, which it continually jerked like a Wagtail. On closer inspection it showed a warmish-brown, unmarked back, light cream throat, pale eye-stripe and pale breast with very few slight marks on sides, and long fleshy-yellow legs. Sketches made on the spot prove that it was undoubtedly a Tawny Pipit. (J.A. & T.H.A.)

Note.—On November 4th, 1954, on waste ground in Newcastle a similar bird was seen and described by B.L. It agreed in almost every particular with the above, except that it lacked the pale eye-stripe. A variant has been described by T. A. Coward in which the eye-stripe

is missing. In O.R., 1954, this record was placed in square brackets, but in view of this second occurrence, this species can now be added to the Northumberland list.

380(A). PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba yarrelli* Gould

Autumn passage.—From mid-July to mid-September at Tanfield ponds, Stanley, D., hundreds were present each day. "I have never seen so many before; this is certainly a Pied Wagtail year here." During August a flock of c. 150 birds was present on pastures at Nafferton Farm, N. (R.M.P.)

Unusual nesting site.—In a garden at Holystone, Upper Coquetdale, N., a pair successfully reared a brood in a nest built in a clump of daffodils. (E.M.)

A bird ringed as a nestling at Seaton Burn, N., on June 6th, 1951, was found dead near Basingstoke, Hants., 270 miles south, on February 27th, 1954. (A. & R.)

382(B). BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava flava* L.

On April 30th at Greatham Creek, Teesmouth, a "Yellow Wagtail" with a slate-blue head, a very prominent eye-stripe starting in front of the eye and an olive back was under observation. It was thought to be one of this sub-species. (N.Y. per P.J.S.)

On August 15th at Wallsend Swallow, N., an adult cock, in a large flock of Yellow Wagtails, chiefly hens and juveniles, was watched under good conditions for about an hour. (B.L.)

383. WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus* (L.)

Only three records. On January 22nd at New Ridley, Stocksfield, three on hawthorns. (G.A.C.) On October 31st at Haltwhistle, N., in the observer's garden, a single bird. Not seen again and no others found in the district. (M.P.) On December 12th at Red Row, near Broomhill, N., a single bird on a T.V. aerial. (J.W.C.)

384. GREAT GREY SHRIKE *Lanius excubitor* L.

On April 6th on the Jedburgh-Newcastle road just north of Colt Crag, N., one was under observation at very close quarters. (I.K. & G.W.T.) On October 23rd on the bowling-green of Hartlepool Town Moor, one flushed from an evergreen bush in which it appeared to be going to roost. (P.L.H., M.G.R. *et al.*)

389. STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L.

On October 21st, 23rd and 24th at various points on the coast many very large flocks were seen to fly in from the sea, some numbering many thousands. Birds caught at roosts and ringed at Monks' House

in winter have been recovered from Norway and Schleswig Holstein as well as from British localities in the N.E. (E.A.R.E.) An adult ringed at Norton-on-Tees in February was recovered in Denmark in June of the same year. (P.E.)

Towards the end of the year a huge Starling roost was established inside the I.C.I. plant at Billingham-on-Tees. The local press estimated that it contained a million and a half birds. Large flocks were seen at dusk heading for the roost from many points on both sides of the Tees estuary. (P.J.S.)

394. SISKIN *Carduelus spinus* (L.)

A few scattered flocks and single birds noted in the early months of the year and a few more from October to the end of the year. For some years this species has been markedly less frequently seen.

In April in the Harthope Valley, Cheviot, N., a pair was seen and in June at least six adults were seen carrying food. (B.L.)

396. TWITE *Carduelis flavirostris* (L.)

Very few indeed reported. On January 1st and February 19th on Holy Island, one. On September 15th at Newton Pond, N., three. On December 26th at Fenwick, two, and on the 27th on Holy Island, a flock of five. (B.L.)

400. SERIN *Serinus canarius* (L.)

[From August 27th to September 15th at South Shields, D., a single bird haunted the gardens of St. George's Road and Readhead Road. It was seen frequently and attracted attention by its characteristic note. On September 15th it was found dead and its skin is now in the Hancock Museum. (H.M.S.B. & F.G.G.) A bird of this species was seen in a garden near Westoe, South Shields, from November 12th to 26th, 1950. (See O.R., 1950.) The fact that a single bird should appear in the same place on two occasions suggests that they may both have escaped from captivity or been released by someone in the district. As there are no other records for Co. Durham, these must be accepted with caution.]

416. ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana* L.

On April 8th on Holy Island a single adult cock was seen under conditions which enabled all its distinguishing characters to be noted. (D.H.W.) On October 9th, also on Holy Island, in a flock of c. 80 Bramblings, an adult cock was clearly identified as it perched on a wire at 10 yds. distance. (B.L.)

So far the only record for Northumberland was a single first-winter bird seen on November 17th, 1945, near Fenham by F.B. This record was cautiously placed in square brackets in *O.R.*, 1945; but it has now been proved that this species is an occasional visitor to the north-east coast.

421. REED-BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus* (L.)

On April 2nd a single bird was in song in Walkerdene, Newcastle, a most unusual place! At Tanfield ponds, Stanley, D., a total of 23 pairs nested—a very high concentration. (R.M.P.)

422. LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus* (L.)

Co. Durham.—At Teesmouth the flock which had arrived in October, 1954, remained until March, on the same rubbish tip as it had frequented in the winter of 1953-54. The maximum number seen was 25 birds on January 9th. On March 13th one was seen to have acquired a black breast and on the 19th singing in flight and on the ground was heard. Last seen March 30th. (C.J.H. *et al.*)

The first to be seen in autumn was a single bird near South Shields pier on September 22nd. (F.G.G.) The Teesmouth flock did not return to the rubbish tip until October 22nd. It was seen throughout November, but never more than six birds at a time. (P.J.S. & P.E.) On December 26th at Marsden, two were seen in a flock of c. 12 Snow Buntings. (D.W. & L.D. per F.G.G.)

Northumberland.—On February 19th at Holy Island, flocks of six and seven with Snow-Buntings and on the 20th near Fenham Mill, three on stubble. (B.L.)

In autumn on September 29th and 30th, one, and on October 2nd, two, feeding along the shore. (M.F.M.M.)

423. SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.)

Very plentiful all along the coast during both winters and some large flocks were reported. At Teesmouth c. 50 (C.J.H.), at Amble c. 60 (M.F.) and on Holy Island over 100 were wintering. (B.L.) Inland records are rare, but on January 12th near Haltwhistle, N., two were seen on bare stubble—"Now very rare in West Northumberland" (M.P.) and on February 6th on the fells above Sweethope Lough, N., two were seen. (C.J.H.)

First noted in the autumn on September 4th on Holy Island. On October 29th at Teesmouth birds were seen flying in from the sea and in November over 70 were present. (P.J.S.) In December near Craster, N., c. 50 were seen (W.S.C.) and near Marsden, D., 15 were feeding on the fields. (F.G.G.)

425. TREE-SPARROW *Passer montanus* (L.)

In February and March in Whitworth and Byers Green area, D., many more than usual were noted during the severe weather. (C.G. & D.N.B.) Appears to be increasing in numbers in the Craster area, N. (W.S.C.)

A bird caught at a roost at Adderstone, N., on the night of January 13th, was released at Monks' House, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, on the following morning. It was caught again in the same bush at Adderstone on the night of January 16th. (E.A.R.E.)

Key to the initials of those contributing to this Report :

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ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT ON THE FARNE ISLANDS FOR 1955

Compiled by

GRACE HICKLING, M.A., M.B.O.U.

Thanks to the diary kept by students on the Inner Farne it is again possible to give a day-to-day picture of bird life on the Inner Group from March 31st until September 5th. Outside the breeding season records for the Outer Group are less complete, although Mr. Eric Simms, of the British Broadcasting Corporation, who stayed on the Brownsman from November 6th to 11th, has furnished a useful picture of bird life on that island at a time when there was a considerable influx of winter visitors.

The fine dry summer contributed greatly to the success of the nesting season and, at least in the case of arctic terns, there seemed to be almost too much food, for youngsters were seen refusing their parents' offerings. The most noteworthy feature was, undoubtedly, the large colony of some 900 pairs of Sandwich terns which settled on Inner Farne. These brought the total of nesting pairs to approximately 1,550, the largest number since 1939. Shags continued to increase and the number of nesting eider-ducks was maintained. There was again a fair-sized colony of roseate terns on Longstone End, but considerable damage was done to the young terns in this colony by visitors who ignored the notices prohibiting landing.

Two new species were added to the systematic list of birds recorded for the islands. These were the grasshopper-warbler *Locustella naevia* (Bodd.) and the Iceland gull *Larus glaucoides* Meyer. It is interesting to note that, for the second year in succession, a barred warbler was seen. This species was first recorded in 1954 and the 1955 date is only nine days later than the previous occurrence.

Floodlights were installed at the Longstone lighthouse in July and the head lightkeeper, Mr. G. W. Phillips, reports that they were used seven times and served their purpose well. Details of operation are as follows:—

| Date | Weather | Wind | Force | Species seen |
|----------|---------|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
| 8.10.55 | Misty | S.S.E. | 4 | Starlings |
| 11.10.55 | „ | S.W. | 1 | Starlings, blackbirds, storm-petrels |
| 3.11.55 | Hazy | S. | 4 | Starlings, blackbirds, thrushes |
| 6.11.55 | Fog | S.E. | 3 | Starlings, pipits |
| 30.11.55 | „ | S.W. | 4 | Starlings, pipits |
| 22.12.55 | Misty | S.S.W. | 7 | Starlings, pipits |
| 23.12.55 | „ | W.S.W. | 8 | Starlings, pipits, wood-pigeon |

Finally, I must again thank Dr. E. A. R. Ennion for his very comprehensive list of records and for his invaluable help in ringing—help which has enabled us to reach the record number of 3,262 birds ringed. My thanks are also extended to Mr. Simms, to the watchers, Messrs. J. Mullins, R. and B. Nelson, and to the various students and members of the Natural History Society, who have helped by providing records or by assisting with the ringing. I should like specially to mention Mr. and Mrs. Cullen, whose work in re-trapping arctic terns has yielded some very useful information and, at the same time, to express regret that their work on the Inner Farne is now completed. and that, in future, we shall not have the benefit of their observations.

Below is a list of the birds arranged in systematic order :—

GREAT NORTHERN DIVER *Colymbus immer* Brünn., RED-THROATED DIVER *Colymbus stellatus* Pontopp. and RED-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps grisegena* (Bodd.). A great northern diver and a red-necked grebe were seen off Brownsman on November 10th. Three red-throated divers were identified from Inner Farne on both August 3rd and September 5th.

STORM-PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus* (L.). Two were on the gallery of the Longstone lighthouse on October 11th.

MANX SHEARWATER *Procellaria puffinus* Brünn. Parties of up to five were seen on many occasions.

SOOTY SHEARWATER *Procellaria grisea* Gm. On September 16th one was seen near the Longstone, travelling N.E.

FULMAR PETREL *Fulmarus glacialis* (L.). Seventeen pairs are believed to have nested : this is an increase of seven on the 1954 figure. The four eggs on Staple Island were all taken by visitors and only one or two chicks are known to have hatched on Inner Farne and Brownsman.

GANNET *Sula bassana* (L.). Seen regularly throughout the year. E. A. R. Ennion reports that the area between Holy Island and the Farnes is a favourite feeding ground.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.). Early in the season the cormorants were washed off the Megstone and the majority congregated on North Wamses where, on June 26th, 140 nests were counted. Most of these were empty, some had one or two eggs, but there were no complete clutches and only about a dozen young birds.

SHAG *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.). At least 124 pairs nested: 25 were on Inner Farne, 17 on Brownsman and 82 (possibly 85) on Staple Island. The birds are still spreading on Staple Island and for the first time there were nests in the cleft adjacent to Skeney Scar. A nest with three eggs was found on Inner Farne on April 19th and the first young were seen on May 15th.

HERON *Ardea cinerea* L. On November 6th E. Simms recorded six, and on November 10th eleven, migrating herons flying in towards Brownsman from the N.E.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos* L. and TEAL *Anas crecca* L. Mallard were seen regularly in autumn in considerable numbers, but the only record of teal is a party of four or five off Inner Farne on April 16th.

WIGEON *Anas penelope* L. and PINTAIL *Anas acuta* L. A pair of pintail were among wigeon on Knoxes Reef on November 1st.

VELVET SCOTER *Melanitta fusca* (L.) and COMMON SCOTER *Melanitta nigra* (L.). Parties of scoters were seen regularly from April to November. They were particularly numerous in May, when several hundreds were seen on the 6th. The majority were common scoters and there is only one definite identification of a velvet scoter, a bird seen off South Wamses on November 10th.

EIDER-DUCK *Somateria mollissima* (L.). About 400 ducks nested on Inner Farne and 120 on Brownsman, but there are no figures for the other islands. The first egg was seen on Inner Farne on April 23rd—nine days earlier than in 1954. The first young hatched on May 19th, but a duck was still sitting on Staple Island on July 17th.

SHELD-DUCK *Tadorna tadorna* (L.). At least four pairs were seen from time to time on the Inner Group and one pair hatched off five young. On July 14th J. M. Cullen saw about 15 flying high over

Inner Farne in an easterly direction ; he remarked that he had never before noticed sheld-duck flying at such a height, and wondered if it was part of the moult migration.

GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser anser* (L.). The party of grey lags, which for the past few years has summered on the Wamses, again visited the islands. They were first noticed on June 18th, when there were two birds, and the numbers increased to thirteen. Two were still there on August 10th.

SPARROW-HAWK *Accipiter nisus* (L.). A female spent some time on Brownsman on November 9th.

HARRIER (? *sp.*). J. M. Cullen saw a female harrier flying over Inner Farne on May 16th. Although he could not make a positive identification, he thought it was either a hen harrier or a Montagu's harrier.

PEREGRINE FALCON *Falco peregrinus* Tunst. A pair wintered on the islands ; their prey included turnstones, woodcock, starlings, skylarks, redwings and blackbirds. When staying on the Brownsman in November, E. Simms caught a tiercel in one hand and a skylark in the other, but, not surprisingly, soon let the peregrine go !

MERLIN *Falco columbarius* L. One frequented Brownsman and South Wamses from November 9th to 11th. It was seen to take starlings and skylarks.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus* L. One was observed hovering over Inner Farne on April 28th.

WATER-RAIL *Rallus aquaticus* L. A dead bird was found on Brownsman on November 6th.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus* L. During the winter a large flock frequented the East Wideopens, and they returned in mid-July. As usual a few pairs nested.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus* (L.). Recorded, in ones and twos, on Inner Farne in April, May and early June. Immigrant parties, numbering up to ten, arrived on Brownsman from the N.E. and E. in early November.

RINGED PLOVER. Five or six pairs nested on Inner Farne and there were others on the Outer Group. A few wintered, as usual, on the islands.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres* (L.), REDSHANK *Tringa totanus* (L.), PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima* (Brünn.) and DUNLIN *Calidris alpina* (L.). Wintered as usual on the islands, turnstones being the most numerous.

COMMON SNIPE *Capella gallinago* (L.). Single birds were seen occasionally on Inner Farne in April and were recorded on Brownsman on November 7th and 9th.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola* L. Seen, in small numbers, in April and November.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata* (L.). Seen, in flocks of varying size, from March to November.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus* (L.). Small numbers were recorded in April, May, August and September.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica* (L.). Four were on Inner Farne on September 3rd and 4th.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos* L. One was on Inner Farne on May 17th and 18th.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.). A single bird was on Inner Farne on August 3rd.

KNOT *Calidris canutus* (L.). A flock of about 30 was on Inner Farne in early September.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta* (Leisler). One was reported among dunlin on Inner Farne on August 18th.

CURLEW-SANDPIPER *Calidris testacea* (Pall.). Four were on Inner Farne on September 3rd and 4th.

ARCTIC SKUA *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.) and POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temm.). Skuas were recorded on a number of occasions from June to September and there are records of single arctic skuas on November 13th and December 4th. Although in a few instances it was impossible to distinguish the species, the majority were arctics. On September 3rd E. A. R. Ennion watched, at close quarters, a juvenile pomarine chasing terns in the Kettle.

GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus marinus* L., LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus* L. and HERRING-GULL *Larus argentatus* Pontopp. Late in the season considerable numbers of lesser black-backed gulls nested successfully on the Wideopens and the Harcars.

A few pairs of herring-gulls reared young on Inner Farne, Brownsman and Staple Island. Greater black-backed gulls were only occasional visitors.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus* L. At the end of April flocks were recorded flying northward over Inner Farne and an occasional immature bird was seen in August and September.

GLAUCOUS GULL *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn. and ICELAND GULL *Larus glaucoides* Meyer. On April 17th an adult glaucous gull was observed flying south over the Kettle, while on the same day an immature Iceland gull was seen among herring-gulls on Inner Farne. There is a further record of an immature glaucous—a bird passing S.S.E. over Brownsman on November 7th.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus* Pall. An immature bird was seen in company with kittiwakes on the south cliff of Brownsman on May 8th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus* L. Recorded on the Inner Group, in small numbers, in April, May and September.

KITTIWAKE *Rissa tridactyla* (L.). On July 8th, 349 nests were counted on Inner Farne; this compares with 337 in 1954. The first egg was laid on May 18th and the first young hatched on June 14th. Despite this the season, at least on the Outer Group, seemed to be a late one, and on June 26th there was still a high proportion of eggs and most of the chicks were very tiny. As in 1954 large numbers of immature and non-breeding birds were seen on Longstone End and Skeney Scar, and even as late as November an occasional immature, and one or two adults, were in the vicinity of Brownsman.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo* L. Common terns are known to have nested on Longstone End, Brownsman, the West Wideopens and Inner Farne. It is always difficult to estimate numbers, but J. M. Cullen put the figure for Inner Farne at 100-500 pairs. He thought they were more numerous than in previous years.

ARCTIC TERN *Sterna macrura* Naum. The number of breeding pairs was virtually the same as in 1954. There were the usual large numbers on Inner Farne and Brownsman and a few pairs tried to nest on Staple Island, but lost their eggs. From 20 to 80 pairs were on the West Wideopens, while there were others in the mixed tern colony on Longstone End. The first egg was laid on May 24th and the first chick hatched on June 19th.

ROSEATE TERN *Sterna dougallii* Mont. Eight pairs were identified on the West Wideopens, but there were probably from 10 to 15 pairs on that island and a further 10 to 20 pairs on Inner Farne. None was on Brownsman, and E. A. R. Ennion estimated the Longstone colony at about 50 pairs. Unfortunately, the Longstone birds lost a good many of their chicks.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis* Lath. Sandwich terns were first seen on April 6th. About 90 pairs nested on Brownsman and there were another 600 or so on Longstone End. The outstanding feature, however, was the large colony of some 900 pairs which nested, apparently for the first time on record, on Inner Farne. Hatching started here about June 26th and on July 30th most of the young were on the West Wideopens. They were so numerous that the island seemed literally covered with terns.

This is the largest number of Sandwich terns to have nested on the Farnes since 1939.

RAZORBILL *Alca torda* L. Eight eggs were laid on Inner Farne and there were probably three pairs on Brownsman and one on Staple Island. A few birds were still to be seen in early November.

LITTLE AUK *Plantus alle* (L.). Seen regularly from October onwards. E. Simms reported parties of up to 15 off Brownsman in November and E. A. R. Ennion counted at least 50 on a visit to the islands on January 12th, 1956.

GUILLEMOT *Uria aalge* (Pontopp.). Nested in the usual places. By July 30th the Pinnacles were practically bare and there were only a few birds on the sea. On November 13th E. A. R. Ennion saw a bird in full breeding plumage (southern form) off Inner Farne.

BLACK GUILLEMOT *Uria grylle* (L.). Seen occasionally in March and April; there is a single November record.

PUFFIN *Fratercula arctica* (L.). The usual large numbers nested.

STOCK-DOVE *Columba oenas* L. Two were on Inner Farne on April 1st and one on May 12th.

WOOD-PIGEON *Columba palumbus* L. Single birds were on Inner Farne on May 1st and 15th and June 23rd and on the Longstone on December 23rd.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus* (Pontopp.). One was on Inner Farne on April 11th.

SWIFT *Apus apus* (L.). Recorded occasionally in May, June and July. Six was the largest number seen on any one day.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis* L. Skylarks were frequently heard singing over Inner Farne from the beginning of April until mid-May. The autumn movement was recorded at Brownsman on November 6th, 8th and 9th.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica* L., HOUSE-MARTIN *Delichon urbica* (L.) and SAND-MARTIN *Riparia riparia* (L.). The first swallow was seen on Inner Farne on April 20th and birds appeared in ones and twos until the end of June. Three or four flew south over this island on September 5th. There are occasional records of house- and sand-martins for April, May and June.

CARRION-CROW *Corvus corone* L., HOODED CROW *Corvus cornix* L., ROOK *Corvus frugilegus* L. and JACKDAW *Corvus monedula* L. A pair of carrion-crows appeared to be in residence on the Inner Group in May; they were seen carrying nest material to the Wideopens, but no nest was found. Other carrion-crows, as well as an occasional hoodie, were recorded from time to time in spring and autumn. A rook was identified on Inner Farne on April 27th, and a flock of twelve corvidae seen on May 5th probably included both rooks and carrion-crows. Small parties of jackdaws visited Inner Farne in May and two arrived on Brownsman from the north-east on November 7th.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on April 2nd and 3rd, while another spent from November 6th to 11th on Brownsman.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris* L., SONG-THRUSH *Turdus ericetorum* Turton, REDWING *Turdus musicus* L. and BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula* L. Recorded on passage in both spring and autumn. There was a considerable immigration of redwings on November 7th.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.). The spring passage started on April 2nd and reached its peak on April 30th, when a great many wheatears were present on Inner Farne. The passage continued throughout May and the return movement was noted in July, August and September. On September 3rd two birds of the form *O. o. leucorhoa* (Gm.) were identified.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra* (L.). Seen on spring passage in small numbers.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L.) and BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* (Gm.). A cock redstart spent from April 25th to 28th on Inner Farne and an adult female black redstart was on the same island between April 3rd and 6th. Another female of this species was recorded on June 3rd.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula* (L.). A single bird was on Inner Farne on April 2nd.

GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER *Locustella naevia* (Bodd.), SEDGE-WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.), BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla* (L.), BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria* (Bech.), GARDEN-WARBLER *Sylvia borin* (Bodd.), WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis* Lath., WILLOW-WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus* (L.) and CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita* (Vieill.). As usual willow-warblers and chiffchaffs (the two species were usually not separated) were most numerous, but small numbers of whitethroats were seen in May. All the other records were of single birds and, with the exception of the sedge-warbler found dead on the Longstone on August 2nd, were on Inner Farne. There was a grasshopper-warbler (which was ringed) on April 22nd, a hen blackcap on May 30th and a garden-warbler on June 6th and 7th. The barred warbler seen on September 16th is only the second for the islands, the first being recorded on September 7th, 1954.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus* (L.). One was on Inner Farne on April 17th.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pall.). A dead bird was found on Inner Farne on September 3rd.

MEADOW-PIBIT *Anthus pratensis* (L.) and TREE-PIBIT *Anthus trivialis* (L.). Pipits, the majority meadow-pipits, were recorded on passage in April and May, and again from late August until the end of December. A tree-pipit was heard in full song on Inner Farne on May 6th.

ROCK-PIBIT *Anthus spinoletta* (L.). Seen on the islands throughout the year. As usual a few pairs nested on all the larger islands.

PIED WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba* L. Late in the season the resident pair on Inner Farne hatched off four young. In early August only one parent was seen: this was the cock, which had been ringed in October, 1953. He was feeding the youngsters and it was presumed that his mate had died. On September 3rd E. A. R. Ennion saw what he considered to be a white wagtail *M. a. alba* L., on the same island.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava* L. Recorded, in ones and twos, on Inner Farne at the end of April and the beginning of May.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris* L. Six or eight pairs nested on Inner Farne and there were a few on the other islands. Incoming winter visitors were recorded at the Longstone on October 8th and 11th, November 3rd, 6th and 30th, and December 22nd and 23rd.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis* (L.). Three were on Inner Farne on April 2nd and one remained until the following day. Another bird appeared on April 18th.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina* (L.). One or two were on Inner Farne at the end of April.

REDPOLL *Carduelis flammea* (L.). One was seen flying over Inner Farne on April 26th. J. M. Cullen identified it by its call, but it was impossible to determine its race.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* L. A cock spent November 7th and 8th on Brownsman.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla* L. One or two were seen in April and November.

SNOW-BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.). A pair spent from April 1st to 3rd on Inner Farne. On November 13th a party of eight were on Brownsman and single birds were seen on the Outer Group on November 27th and December 4th.

HOUSE-SPARROW *Passer domesticus* (L.). A single bird, probably from the mainland, visited Inner Farne on April 2nd.

RINGING

During the year 2,982 nestlings and 280 adults were ringed, the total—3,262—being a record for the islands. Many of these were ringed by Dr. E. A. R. Ennion, and his students from Monk's House Bird Observatory, and the Society's Ringing Committee is most grateful to Dr. Ennion for his help. Numbers of individual species were as follows :

Cormorant 48 ; shag 183 ; eider-duck 1 ; ringed plover 2 ; lesser black-backed gull 484 ; kittiwake 599 ; common tern 43 ; arctic tern 766 ; roseate tern 31 ; Sandwich tern 1,011 ; guillemot 4 ; puffin 78 ; grasshopper-warbler 1 ; willow-warbler 1 ; rock-pipit 10.

RECOVERIES

There have been 170 recoveries of birds ringed on the islands : this includes an additional 1954 recovery. The increase of 86 on last year's figure is due to the fact that 102 birds have been re-trapped on

Staple Island and Inner Farne. In addition, three birds ringed nearby (at Seahouses and Holy Island) were caught on the islands and released.

The eider-duck found near Anstruther is the first to be recovered away from the vicinity of the islands.

The Truro kittiwake brings the Farnes total of trans-Atlantic recoveries to eleven; so far as the islands are concerned, it is not only the first adult-ringed bird known to have made the crossing, but also the first to be found in Nova Scotia. Greenland recoveries now total four.

RE-TRAPPING

Special efforts have been made to re-trap a number of shags, kittiwakes and arctic terns, and the results are analysed in section (d) of the recoveries list.

J. M. Cullen re-trapped forty-one nesting arctic terns on Inner Farne; of these three were 18, two 17 and two 16 years old. One of the 18-year-olds (YS 729) had been re-trapped in 1954. The recovery rate was highest among 1952 ringed birds; this, incidentally, was the first year in which adults were ringed in any number.

During June and July twenty-four kittiwakes were re-trapped; two of these had been ringed as adults at Seahouses, but were obviously visitors from the Farnes.

The ringing during recent years of large numbers of shags is now yielding results. Thirty-four birds with more or less legible rings were re-trapped on Staple Island and Inner Farne; all except seven had been ringed as adults and with two exceptions (one ringed as an adult and the other as young) were caught on the island where they were originally ringed. A pair, recorded as mated in 1954, were again nesting on the same ledge on Inner Farne, while another bird had its nest in the same place as in 1953. Two others, ringed on Staple Island in 1951, have been re-trapped there in 1952, 1953 and 1955.

Unfortunately, the rings used on both kittiwakes and shags showed very considerable wear and most of the birds had to be re-ringed. This wear was particularly noticeable in the case of shags for, in addition to the birds already mentioned, five were re-trapped and it has so far proved impossible to decipher the numbers. It is significant, too, that no kittiwake bore a ring more than five years old.

The majority of the shag and kittiwake recoveries were made by J. M. Cullen, J. C. Coulson and E. White, and the two latter are using these results in their study of the effective life of the rings at present used on the two species.

RECOVERIES OF RINGED BIRDS

(a) Ringed on Farne Islands and recovered elsewhere

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|
| CORMORANT | | |
| 1.9.54 | Horncliffe, nr. Berwick (shot) | 7.1.55 |
| " | Lochcote, nr. Torphichen, W. Lothian | 7.1.55 |
| " | R. Wansbeck, nr. Ashington, Northumberland (shot) | 18.1.55 |
| " | Forth Estuary, nr. Rosyth | 26.1.55 |
| " | Bridlington, Yorks. | ca. 17.4.55 |
| 9.7.52 | R. Tweed (shot) | 19.4.55 |
| 1.9.54 | Warkworth, Northumberland | 22.4.55 |
| 13.6.52 | R. Tweed (shot) | 19.5.55 |
| " | Goswick, Northumberland (found injured, died later) | 30.5.55 |
| 9.7.52 | Newton-by-the-Sea, Northumberland | ca. 15.9.55 |
| 26.8.55 | R. Tweed (shot) | 19.10.55 |
| " | Cresswell, Northumberland (shot) | 6.11.55 |
| " | R. Tweed (shot) | 10.11.55 |
| 26.6.55 | R. Tweed (shot) | 21.12.55 |
| 26.8.55 | Lochar, Dumfries-shire | 28.12.55 |
| SHAG | | |
| 8.7.54 | Kingston, Garmouth, Morayshire | ca. 24.1.55 |
| 25.6.54 | New Aberdour, nr. Fraserburgh | ca. 25.1.55 |
| " | Blyth, Northumberland | 25.2.55 |
| 10.7.54 | Bempton Cliffs, Yorks. | 6.3.55 |
| 25.6.54 | Aldborough, Yorks. | 13.3.55 |
| " | Cambois, Blyth, Northumberland | 28.3.55 |
| 16.7.54 | R. Lode, Lakenheath, Suffolk | 21.4.55 |
| 5.7.55 | Amble, Northumberland (found dying in fishing net) | ca. 27.7.55 |
| 17.5.55 | Beadnell, Northumberland | 7.8.55 |
| 26.6.55 | Brighton, Sussex (found injured, died later) | 31.12.55 |
| EIDER-DUCK | | |
| 8.5.53 | *Nr. Anstruther, Fife | 16.11.55 |

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

| | | |
|---------|---|--------------|
| 10.8.53 | Denia, Alicante, Spain (shot) | 23.1.55 |
| 9.8.54 | San Martinho do Bispo, Coimbra, Portugal (shot) | 13.2.55 |
| 20.8.53 | Vila Real de Santo Antonio, Algarve, Portugal (presumed dead) | 22.3.55 |
| 9.8.54 | West Tanfield, Ripon, Yorks, (shot) | 21.5.55 |
| 10.8.53 | Wath-upon-Deerne, Yorks. | ca. 28.6.55 |
| 26.8.55 | Eyemouth, Berwickshire (caught and released) | 18.9.55 |
| 17.8.54 | Nr. Paimboeuf, Loire-Inferieure, France (found injured) | 4.10.55 |
| 31.8.55 | Marsden, South Shields, Co. Durham | 20.10.55 |
| 12.8.55 | Off Mazarren, Murcia, Spain (captured, ring removed) | 20.10.55 |
| " | Mogador, Morocco | 22.10.55 |
| 31.8.55 | R. Douro, nr. Oporto, Portugal (found injured) | 1.11.55 |
| " | Matosinhos, nr. Oporto, Portugal (caught) | ca. 13.11.55 |
| 26.8.55 | Carino, nr. Ortigueira, Coruna, Spain | 23.12.55 |
| 31.8.55 | Nr. Freetown, Sierra Leone (shot) | 29.12.55 |

KITTIWAKE

| | | |
|---------|---|-------------------------|
| 7.7.54 | At sea, Bay of Biscay, 46.48 N, 7.58 W. (came on board S.S. "Stonegate" exhausted and died) | 6.1.55 |
| 16.7.53 | Ricourt, Gers, France (shot) | 7.2.55 |
| 13.6.54 | *Truro, Colchester Co., Nova Scotia | ca. 24.3.55 |
| 25.6.53 | ca. 150 miles N.W. Reykjanes, Iceland (caught by fishing boat) | May or early June, 1955 |
| 22.7.55 | St. Mary's Is., Whitley Bay, Northumberland | 31.7.55 |
| 5.7.51 | Seaton Sluice, Blyth, Northumberland | ca. 12.8.55 |
| 14.7.55 | Insel Juist, East Frisian Is., Germany (shot) | 18.9.55 |
| 17.7.55 | Querqueville, Manche, France (found stranded with damaged wing) | 21.10.55 |
| 14.7.55 | Cocklade, Wedmore, Somerset (found injured) | 5.11.55 |
| 18.7.55 | Between Dornoch and Eabo, Sutherland (found oiled, died later) | 14.11.55 |
| 6.7.55 | Castro-Urdiales, Santander, Spain (caught, presumed killed) | 15.11.55 |

| <i>Date ringed</i> | <i>Place recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| KITTIWAKE— <i>continued</i> | | |
| 18.7.55 | At sea off Co. Kerry, Eire (caught, presumed killed) | 15.11.55 |
| | Additional 1954 recovery | |
| 10.7.52 | Fiskenaesset, Godthab District, S.W. Greenland (shot) | Some time before Sept., 1954 |
| ARCTIC TERN | | |
| 17.1.55 | St. Abbs Head, Berwickshire | 31.7.55 |
| 13.7.50 | Lyneburn, nr. Ashington, Northumberland | 30.9.55 |
| SANDWICH TERN | | |
| 3.7.52 | Keta Lagoon, Gold Coast (caught) | Winter 1954/55 |
| 8.7.54 | Nr. Keta, Gold Coast (caught) | ca. 3.1.55 |
| „ | Nr. Keta, Gold Coast (caught) | March, 1955 |
| 16.7.54 | Winneba, Gold Coast (caught) | 16.3.55 |
| 8.7.54 | Lagos, Nigeria (shot) | 3.4.55 |
| 5.7.55 | Tynemouth, Northumberland | 31.7.55 |
| „ | Amble, Northumberland | 2.8.55 |
| 13.7.55 | Gullane, East Lothian (found injured, destroyed) | 8.9.55 |
| 4.7.55 | At sea off Mauretania, French West Africa (released) | 17.12.55 |
| PUFFIN | | |
| 9.7.55 | Scarlet, nr. Wick, Caithness | 11.12.55 |
| | * Indicates bird ringed as adult | |
| | Unless otherwise stated all birds have been found dead | |
| | (b) Ringed on Farne Islands and recovered there (re-traps <i>not</i> included) | |
| SHAG | | |
| 13.7.54 | Wideopens | 13.5.55 |
| 25.6.53 | Inner Farne | 29.5.55 |
| 17.6.54 | *Inner Farne | 22.6.55 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult

Unless otherwise stated all birds have been found dead

(c) Recovered on Farne Islands, but ringed elsewhere

| <i>Date and place ringed</i> | <i>Recovered</i> | <i>Date recovered</i> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| KITTIWAKE | | |
| 17.4.54 Monk's House, Seahouses | *Brownsman (released) | 14.7.55 |
| 29.7.54 Seahouses | *Staple Is. (released) | 14.7.55 |
| ARCTIC TERN | | |
| 24.7.42 Holy Island | West Wideopens (released) | 30.7.55 |

* Indicates bird ringed as adult

(d) Analysis of birds ringed on Farne Islands and re-trapped in 1955

| <i>Species</i> | <i>1937</i> | <i>1938</i> | <i>1939</i> | <i>1947</i> | <i>1948</i> | <i>1950</i> | <i>1951</i> | <i>1952</i> | <i>1953</i> | <i>1954</i> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| SHAG | | | | | | | | | | |
| young | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 2 | 4 | — |
| adult | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 6 | 7 | 11 |
| age doubtful | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| KITTIWAKE | | | | | | | | | | |
| young | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 3 | 4 | — | 1 |
| adult | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | — | 11 |
| ARCTIC TERN | | | | | | | | | | |
| young | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 6 | — | — |
| adult | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 9 | 3 | 2 |
| PUFFIN | | | | | | | | | | |
| young | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| adult | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 | 2 |
| PIED WAGTAIL | | | | | | | | | | |
| young | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| adult | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — |

Total of re-trapped birds (excluding birds ringed in 1955)

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Shag ... | ... | ... | ... | 34 |
| Kittiwake | ... | ... | ... | 22 |
| Arctic Tern | ... | ... | ... | 41 |
| Puffin ... | ... | ... | ... | 4 |
| Pied Wagtail | ... | ... | ... | 1 |

VISITORS TO FARNE ISLANDS STUDY CENTRE
1955

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Where from</i> | <i>Date of stay</i> | <i>Main object of visit</i> |
|---|---|--------------------------|--|
| Mr. and Dr. Cullen | Oxford University | April 23– Aug. 14 | Reproductive behaviour of arctic terns, kittiwakes and shags |
| Dr. E. A. R. Ennion and party | Monk's House | Sept. 3–5 | Possible repair of trap |
| Cmdr. D. H. Fryer and party | King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne | Sept. 13–16 | Completing large scale map of Inner Farne |
| D. Goodwin and friend | British Museum (Natural History), London | June 29–30 | Studying sea birds |
| Dr. G. J. M. de Greef | Vlissingen, Holland | May 3–9 | Studying puffins, shags and fulmars |
| Dr. K. Hoffman and party | Oxford University | July 23–28 Aug. 23–26 | Studying sea birds |
| King's College Natural History Society. Leader : B. Sowerby | King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne | July 2–22 | Ecological survey of Inner Farne, including plants, seaweeds and marine life |
| G. H. Orians | Edward Grey Inst., Oxford. (Working on U.S. Govt., Fulbright Grant) | May 7–15 | Bird behaviour—shags, kittiwakes, arctic terns and eiders |

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Where from</i> | <i>Date of stay</i> | <i>Main object of visit</i> |
|------------------------|--|---|--|
| Miss O. Razumovsky | Austria. (Working under Dr. N. Tinbergen at Oxford University) | July 23-28 | Bird behaviour |
| C. N. Rollin and party | Glanton, Northumberland | Dec. 29, 1954- Jan. 7 April 16-23 June 18-24 July 30-Aug. 10 | Daily behaviour of birds |
| C. N. Rollin's party | | | |
| D. W. Snow | Ed. Grey Inst., Oxford | July 23-28 | Bird study, especially kittiwakes and arctic terns |
| J. P. Strijbos | Heemstede, Holland | May 3-9 | Studying puffins, shags and fulmars |
| Dr. N. Tinbergen | Oxford University | April 23- May 15 June 8-15 | Supervision of students. Bird behaviour. |
| W. R. Wooff | King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne | Mar. 30-April 4 May 3-14 June 9-17 July 5-21 Aug. 26-Sept. 2 Sept. 17-22 | Investigating insect life of islands |
| A. Zahavi | Hebrew University, Jerusalem. (Working at Oxford University on a British Council Scholarship) | June 8-15 July 23-28 | Studying kittiwakes and arctic terns |

THE GREY SEALS OF THE FARNE ISLANDS

A report on the work of the 1955 season

by

GRACE HICKLING, M.A., ARTHUR W. JONES, B.Sc., AND

IAN M. TELFER, M.B., B.S.

Plans were made to visit the islands each week-end from October 29th until the end of December. Unfortunately, there was no spell of settled weather and the four expeditions—on November 13th, 19th and 27th and December 4th—were all, so to speak, "stolen" visits.

G.H. was present on each occasion, I.M.T. was there twice and A.W.J. once, while we were delighted to have Professor H. R. Hewer with us on two of the days. The energy and perseverance of our small band of enthusiastic sealers contributed much to the success of the work.

It was once again decided, in view both of the weather and of the importance of thoroughly testing the pliers and tags, to concentrate solely on tagging and to do no weighing. The resultant number of 200 calves tagged, which was achieved despite difficulties, is a record not only for the Farnes, but also for the whole country, and so justifies our decision.

TAGGING. On the first visit, when H.R.H. did the actual tagging, weather conditions were such that only 15 minutes could be spent on Staple Island, but in that time he marked 12 calves. All but one of the calves then on Brownsman (total 29) were marked. He did not experience any great difficulty in affixing the standardised tags, although he found it necessary to discard some of the re-made ones.

All three of us were out on November 19th. It was an ideal day for sealing: there were large numbers of calves, but the total of 47 marked was most disappointing. This low figure was due to the very high percentage of tags which failed to close because we attempted to use up the non-standardised tags.

During the following week further consultations took place and on H.R.H.'s second visit, on November 27th, he again had relatively few failures, the number marked—26—being governed by the unmarked calves then on Brownsman, as a heavy swell prevented us landing on Staple Island. The fact that he encountered so little trouble did, however, make us wonder if the pliers and tags were of such a kind as to be used successfully only by their designer.

On the final visit, on December 4th, the whole time was spent on Staple Island and 88 calves were marked; this figure would have been considerably higher if more tags had been available. One of the most satisfactory features of this visit was that I.M.T. had only two failures, while Michael Gledson, who had had little previous experience with the pliers, also had comparatively few failures. Only standardised tags were used.

We are reasonably confident that the present form of pliers and standardised tags can be used with a high degree of certainty by any suitably instructed, and physically capable person (G.H. found that her hand was not strong enough to close the pliers), and not solely by their designer (H.R.H.), and we feel that this is one of the most important results of this season's work. We would stress, however, that it is essential for older calves to be held firmly, for it was apparent that failures on December 4th were due to calves pulling away.

It is not necessary to give detailed reasons for the earlier failures, but it was obvious that the fault lay in the tags, not in the pliers. In some of these the piercing point was not directly opposite the receiving slit and, in consequence, when the pliers were closed it did not engage, but simply bent over. In certain of the re-made tags the piercing point had also, as the result of re-sharpening, become too short to lock, *e.g.*, on November 27th it was noticed that tags on three of the marked calves were loose and the animals were re-tagged. The standardisation of the tags in a hand press ensuring accuracy of positioning of the piercing point was the answer.

RECOVERIES. Only one marked animal has been recovered, the details being as follows:—

No. 498 Z. Marked November 19th, 1955, on Brownsman. Found dead, minus head, on beach at Bamburgh, about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles S.W. of Outer Group, on January 8th, 1956.

In addition, two calves which were unmarked, but had obviously come from the Farnes, have been found. In each case the weather during the past few days had been stormy and it is probable that the animals had been washed off the nursery before they were weaned. The first was seen at Berwick-on-Tweed on December 17th, 1955, and seemed just able to swim, but was later found dead. It was in the first coat and was described as being the "size of a large terrier" and "easily lifted." The second, which was found by J. Jobson, one of our sealers, at Seaton Sluice, 5 miles north of the Tync, on December 27th, 1955, was from 14 to 21 days old. It was in the first coat,

well grown, and showed little sign of moulting. It had been dead approximately 3 to 5 days and here also the head was missing.

NUMBERS OF CALVES. Once again it is impossible to give an accurate figure for the number of calves born. In the table below the figures for Brownsman and Staple Island are reasonably accurate, but that for the Wamses is merely a very approximate estimate. In any case counts were not made sufficiently often to provide a true picture.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Brownsman</i> | <i>Staple Island</i> | <i>N. & S. Wamses</i> |
|-------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 6.11.55 | — | — | 75+ |
| 11.11.55 | 19 | *70 | *3 |
| 13.11.55 | 30 | 198+4 dead | — |
| 19.11.55 | 43+8 dead | 276+19 dead | — |
| 27.11.55 | 58 | — | *23 |
| 4.12.55 | — | 204+19 dead | — |

* Count made by binoculars or telescope

The figures for 6.11.55 and 11.11.55 were supplied by Mr. Noble Rollin and Mr. Eric Simms respectively. Mr. Rollin also told me that when he landed on Staple Island on January 4th, 1956, there were still three calves on this island.

The count made on Brownsman on November 13th included every animal then on the island and by adding to this, on subsequent visits, animals which were found to be unmarked, and of suitable age, a fairly accurate estimate of the number of calves born on Brownsman during November can be obtained. It is, however, important to exclude animals which have either completed the moult or are moulting, as it seems possible that such animals may have been born on one of the other islands, probably Staple. Working on this principle we can say that, up to December 4th, at least 69 calves were born on Brownsman and probably 348 on Staple Island, thus giving a known total of 492+ births.

PROPORTION OF MALES TO FEMALES. Out of 198 calves sexed 97 were males and 101 females; this gives a sex ratio of 1:1.04.

MORTALITY AND DISEASE AMONG CALVES. Most of the deaths occurred in calves under 7 days old and the figure of 43 dead out of a total of 417 known births on Staple Island and Brownsman gives a

mortality rate of 10.3%. It is difficult to calculate previous rates with any degree of accuracy, but the following approximate figures will serve to indicate that there has been a very considerable increase:— 1952 (all islands) — 4.03%; 1953 (Brownsman only) — 2.24%; 1954 (Staple Island—one day's count) — 2.6%.

It is hoped, during the forthcoming season, to investigate the reasons for this increase, but, in the meanwhile, it seems obvious that overcrowding of the nurseries, particularly noticeable on Staple Island, results in some of the calves being run over by adults. It is undoubtedly true that adults may injure calves deliberately; for example, a cow attacked a calf which appeared to approach her too closely, while a bull was seen to pick up and shake a calf. On the other hand, apparently healthy calves, such as one on Brownsman which was aged about 2 days, may be dead within 24 hours, while still-births, or desertion by the cow, may account for some deaths.

As usual quite a number of calves showed signs of sepsis: this occurred round the eyes, on the flippers and sometimes on open wounds. In one or two instances the flippers were obviously not healthy and on November 26th H.R.H. and G.H. saw a calf with marked oedema of one of its hind flippers which must seriously have affected its swimming and may have contributed to its death. This calf had been alive when washed ashore at Newton-by-the-Sea on November 25th, but had died shortly afterwards.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON CALVES.

- (a) Location. There was a definite change in the distribution of calves. On Staple Island fewer than usual were on the grassy top of the island, but the beach, and the northern slopes, were thickly populated. For the first time (in our records) there was a calf on Skeney Scar. On Brownsman practically all the calves were near the water and very few were on the top of the island. There are two main groups on this island: one on the N.E. beach and the other, which definitely seems to be increasing, in the cove at the north end of the island. In addition, two or three calves are born near Pinnacles Haven and one, about 4 days old, was on the flat below the cottage.
- (b) Types of calves. There has been still further confirmation of the fact that certain of the calves swim in the sea at quite an early age. We saw at least one newly-born calf on the seaweed-covered rocks close to the breaking waves, while most of those in the north colony were very near the water and some of them, still in the first coat, were swimming strongly.

In this connection observations made by Mr. Eric Simms, of the B.B.C., who spent several days on Brownsman in November, are of interest, for they not only confirm this early swimming, but also show that calves may be taught to swim by their mothers when quite young and not, as had previously been thought, only after they have been weaned.

Mr. Simms writes : " A cow with a three-day-old calf had the habit of taking the calf to sea for long periods of swimming practice. The longest period observed when the calf was four days old was three-quarters of an hour, when six days old just over an hour, and seven days old an hour and a half, at any one time. It was, however, regular during the whole period for the cow to take the calf into the sea on four or five occasions during the hours of daylight." This, of course, is quite normal behaviour in Pembroke-shire grey seals. (*Davies.*)

- (c) Birth of a calf. Mr. Simms also witnessed the birth of a calf and here again his observations, which were made from behind cover, at a range of 20 yards, are of interest and value. He says : " My attention was first attracted to a pregnant cow by its curious actions some 15 minutes before the birth. She was lying on a flat ledge of rock, below high-water mark, and rolling slightly from side to side, the lower part of the back arched very slightly with each roll.

" She tended to blow harder and more frequently than normal, and some of the harder blowings seemed to produce, on occasion, a very low, soft moan. As labour developed her back contractions increased in speed, and I then became aware of the actual process of birth, as the cow lay on her side facing me. Since I first observed the whiteness of the calf's head, I timed the event ; three (perhaps four) final contractions completed the birth in fourteen seconds. The cow then rolled slightly over towards the sea, and from my position I could not see the calf. Immediately after the birth the cow appeared to take no interest in her offspring.

" As the tide was coming in towards the calf, I moved my position to get a better view, and some four minutes after its birth a breaker swept it into the sea. Within two minutes the cow realised what had happened and, with a tremendous leap, dived into the sea and swam to the seaward side of the calf. Some twenty minutes later she succeeded, after strenuous efforts, in breasting it against her chest, and between her fore flippers, into a crack in the rock, over which the sea was breaking. She then lay in the crack and thus allowed the sea to break on her back,

preventing the calf from being carried out into the surf again. It was clear that after the twenty minutes period the calf's silky coat was becoming water-logged, and it was experiencing great difficulty in keeping above the water. It seemed, evidently, to suffer little or no ill effects as a result of its experience."

This account confirms Davies' observations, it being noted, for example, that birth took place when the tide was coming in, and that it was only the calf's danger which awakened the cow's interest in it. It seems probable, too, that such rescues must occur fairly frequently, for the new-born calf which we saw was also in danger of being washed away, and was moved further up the beach by one of the party.

OBSERVATIONS ON ADULTS. We were most struck by the tameness of many of the adults, particularly those on Staple Island: this was much more marked than in the past. It was possible to get comparatively close to one or two of the mating animals—incidentally, mating on land was seen on several occasions and, in general, we found that the life of the colony went on largely unaffected by our presence. On the other hand an occasional bull and, more frequently, a cow, would chase us if we got too near. Individual animals could, with care, be approached even more closely. H.R.H. was within 15 feet of a cow and 10 feet of a bull, while I.M.T. was only a yard away from a young bull when it suddenly woke up and lumbered rapidly away.

Even when we first landed several of the adults held their ground, appearing quite unconcerned, and there was nothing like the former general exodus to the sea. We noticed, however, that a bull, which took no notice of us when we were 20 or 30 feet away, soon attacked another bull which invaded its territory.

As a contrast to the adults many of the calves were far from tame, even the most rotund ones seemed to have no difficulty in turning to snap at us.

H.R.H. is of the opinion that calves tend to become increasingly worried and frantic, when faced with, or surrounded by, a group of people, and he has found that given time, and without an audience, it is often possible to calm an anxious pup into at least complacency by gentle tickling.

Fights were observed between both bulls and cows, in each case contestants were of the same sex. Many of the bulls were heavily scarred—a not surprising state of affairs when it was seen how much blood was shed in fights. Cows, too, fought half raised up and with bared teeth, trying to bit each other's neck.

NUMBERS OF ADULTS. On November 13th there were seven bulls and at least twenty-nine cows on, or near Brownsman, while on November 27th, when we cruised slowly past the Harcars and Blue Caps we were able to count eight bulls and 150+ cows pulled out on the rocks or in the water close by. Most of the bulls were immature—possibly 5 to 6 years old—and we saw only one or two really mature animals. Among the cows were about a dozen two to three years old: these were considerably smaller than the others.

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PARTICULARS OF MARKED CALVES

MONEL METAL TAGS

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of Coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|--------------|-------------|-----|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 236 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♂ | — | |
| 237 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 238 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 239 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 240 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 241 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 242 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 243 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 244 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on face and flippers | 14-17 days |
| 245 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 246 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of Coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|---|--------------------|
| 247 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♀ | Moulting | 21-28 days |
| 248 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 249 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 250 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♂ | First | 1+ days |
| 252 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 2 days |
| 255 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♀ | — | |
| 256 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 257 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 258 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | 491 Z Re-marked | |
| 260 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult well advanced on face and flippers | 18-21 days |
| 261 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♂ | Moult starting | c. 14 days |
| 262 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | First | 4-7 days |
| 263 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7+ days |
| 264 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult on flippers | 14+ days |
| 265 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7+ days |
| 268 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♀ | First | 2-4 days |
| 270 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | c. 7 days |
| 271 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | c. 21 days |
| 272 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♂ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 273 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♂ | — | |
| 274 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 276 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | Moult well advanced | 21-28 days |
| 277 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♀ | — | |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|--------------|-------------|-----|---|-----------------|
| 278 | Z | Brownsman | 19.11.55 | ♂ | — | |
| 281 | Z | " | 27.11.55 | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 282 | Z | " | 19.11.55 | ♀ | — | |
| 283 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 285 | Z | Staple Is. | " | ♂ | Moult on face and flippers | 17-21 days |
| 286 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♂ | First | Under 7 days |
| 287 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on hind flippers and muzzle (?) Re-marked | |
| 288 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First 495 Z Re-marked | |
| 289 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |
| 293 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 2-4 days |
| 294 | Z | Staple Is. | 19.11.55 | ♂ | Moult half completed | 21-28 days |
| 297 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | c. 7 days |
| 300 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |
| 302 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | First | 2-3 days |
| 305 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 4-7 days |
| 306 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 2 days |
| 308 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on face and flippers | 14+ days |
| 309 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7 days |
| 417 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Half moulted | |
| 418 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | |
| 419 | Z | " | 13.11.55 | ♂ | First | 4-5 days* |
| 420 | Z | " | " | ♀ | | 17-18 days* |
| 423 | Z | " | " | ♂ | | 10-12 days* |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 424 | Z | Staple Is. | 13.11.55 | ♂ | | 14 days* |
| 425 | Z | " | " | ♂ | | 16 days* |
| 426 | Z | " | " | ♀ | | 14 days* |
| 427 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | c. 7-8 days* |
| 428 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7 days* |
| 429 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 5 days* |
| 430 | Z | " | " | ♀ | | 10-12 days* |
| 432 | Z | " | " | ♀ | | 14 days* |
| 433 | Z | " | " | ♂ | | 10 days* |
| 434 | Z | " | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Moulting | |
| 435 | Z | Brownsman | 13.11.55 | ♂ | Moulting | 14-21 days |
| 436 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on face and flippers | 14+ days |
| 437 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7 days |
| 438 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Second | |
| 439 | Z | Brownsman | 13.11.55 | ♀ | First | c. 10 days |
| 440 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult on face and flippers | 14+ days |
| 441 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 4 days |
| 442 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7-10 days |
| 443 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Second | |
| 444 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 445 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 446 | Z | " | " | — | Second | |
| 450 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moulting | |
| 451 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|---|--------------------|
| 453 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Second | |
| 455 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | |
| 456 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | |
| 459 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | |
| 460 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 485 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | Moult well advanced | 21-28 days |
| 486 | Z | " | 19.11.55 | ♀ | — | |
| 487 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 488 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 489 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 490 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 491 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Re-marked 258 Z on 27.11.55 | |
| 492 | Z | " | 27.11.55 | ♀ | Moult starting | 14+ days |
| 493 | Z | " | 19.11.55 | ♂ | — | |
| 494 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 495 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Re-marked 288 Z on 27.11.55 | |
| 496 | Z | " | " | ♂ | — | |
| 497 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 498 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | Less than 2 days |
| 499 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | Less than 2 days |
| 500 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | c. 4 days |
| 501 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | c. 4 days |
| 502 | Z | " | 27.11.55 | ♂ | Moult well advanced on face and flippers | 21+ days |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 504 | Z | Brownsman | 27.11.55 | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 505 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 506 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 508 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 509 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 510 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 511 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 512 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 513 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | Under 2 days |
| 514 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 515 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | 5-6 weeks |
| 516 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 517 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 518 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 519 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7-10 days |
| 520 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7-10 days |
| 521 | Z | " | " | ♀ | — | |
| 522 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |
| 523 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moulting | 21-28 days |
| 524 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 10-14 days |
| 525 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7-10 days |
| 526 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 10-14 days |
| 527 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Half moulted | 21-28 days |
| 528 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7 days |
| 529 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Tiny patch of first coat remaining | 28-35 days |
| 530 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on flippers and tail | 14-21 days |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 531 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♀ | Second | |
| 532 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | |
| 533 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | |
| 534 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | |
| 535 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult just starting | |
| 536 | Z | " | " | ♂ | Moult on flippers and muzzle | 14-21 days |
| 537 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7 days |
| 538 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 539 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7-14 days |
| 540 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7-14 days |
| 541 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 7 days |
| 542 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | 21 days |
| 543 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult on flipper, tail and muzzle | 14-21 days |
| 544 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 2 days |
| 545 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 4 days |
| 546 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 4 days |
| 548 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 7-10 days |
| 549 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult on flippers | 14+ days |
| 550 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 551 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 552 | Z | " | " | ♀ | First | 10-14 days |
| 553 | Z | " | " | ♂ | First | 10-14 days |
| 554 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult on face and flippers | |
| 555 | Z | " | " | ♀ | Moult nearly complete | 28+ days |

MONEL METAL TAGS—*continued*

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of Coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 556 | Z | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♀ | Second | |
| 102 | H | Brownsman | 13.11.55 | ♀ | Moult practically complete | 4 weeks |
| 111 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult starting on flippers | 10-14 days |
| 112 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 2 days |
| 114 | H | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | c. 21 days |
| 115 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 4-7 days |
| 123 | H | " | " | ♀ | Moulting | 14-21 days |
| 125 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | c. 7 days |
| 126 | H | " | 27.11.55 | ♀ | First | c. 4 days |
| 133 | H | " | 13.11.55 | ♀ | First | c. 7 days |
| 152 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |
| 159 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 2-4 days |
| 174 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 2-4 days |
| 177 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult fairly well advanced | 21+ days |
| 184 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 7 days |
| 187 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult on face | 14+ days |
| 189 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | c. 10 days |
| 190 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 7-10 days |
| 191 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 2 days |
| 192 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |
| 213 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 2 days |
| 227 | H | " | " | ♂ | First | 4 days |
| 228 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult on face and flippers | 17-21 days |
| 229 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 4 days |

STAINLESS STEEL TAGS

| Number | | Where marked | Date marked | Sex | State of coat | Approximate age |
|--------|---|-----------------|----------------|-----|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 502 | H | Staple Is. | 4.12.55 | ♂ | Second | |
| 505 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 506 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 507 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 508 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 509 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 510 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 511 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 512 | H | " | " | ♂ | Tiny patch of first coat on back | |
| 514 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 515 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 516 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 517 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult not quite complete | |
| 519 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 520 | H | " | " | ♀ | Moult not started, but very fat | 18-21 days |
| 521 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult starting | 14-21 days |
| 524 | H | " | " | ♀ | First | 10-14 days |
| 525 | H | " | " | ♀ | Second | |
| 544 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult well advanced | 21-28 days |
| 545 | H | " | " | ♂ | First | 10-14 days |
| 546 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult starting | 14-21 days |
| 547 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 548 | H | " | " | ♂ | Second | |
| 549 | H | " | " | ♂ | Moult nearly complete | 21-28 days |
| 550 | H | " | " | — | Second | |

Z = Zoological Society of London

H = Hancock Museum

* Ages estimated by H. R. Hewer

