

THE "BRITISH BIRDS" MARKING SCHEME.

[PROGRESS FOR 1911 AND SOME RESULTS

BY

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ONCE again I am able to report decided progress in the work of our enthusiastic band of "ringers." The number of birds marked has steadily increased until this year the splendid total of just nine thousand five hundred has been reached. In the first year of the inquiry only 2,200 rings were used, but in the next year 7,900 were placed, so that the number of birds "ringed" by the readers of BRITISH BIRDS now amounts to nearly twenty thousand.

To the total for the year, as will be seen in the list printed below, Mr. H. W. Robinson has contributed the largest number, namely, seventeen hundred and fifty, while Mr. F. Smalley has done six hundred and eighty-one, so putting their figures together, to compare with last year, these gentlemen have "ringed" nearly two thousand five hundred birds between them, a remarkable number. Mr. N. H. Joy is not far behind with one thousand and sixty-six, Mr. R. O. Blyth reaches over four hundred, and Messrs. A. G. Leigh, J. Bartholomew and J. R. B. Masefield have each three hundred or over. Quite a number of "ringers" exceed two hundred, while without the long list of those coming under that figure our total would have been found wanting.

This splendid total is due not only to the unabated zeal of our "ringers," but also to the generosity of those who have come forward with financial support towards the expenses of the scheme. As these expenses naturally grow with the increase in the number of rings issued, I may here take the opportunity of reminding those who are desirous of seeing the inquiry carried on, that subscriptions, however small, are very welcome.

That the inquiry will eventually prove scientifically useful can, I think, no longer be doubted, but it is equally certain that it must be continued for some years before

really valuable results can be arrived at. The danger of drawing conclusions from too slender a basis of fact must be studiously avoided. So far as migrational movements are concerned, it is tempting to arrange “routes” on the basis of a comparatively few “recoveries,” but because some individuals of a species take one route, it must not be inferred that all birds of that species go the same way, or even migrate at all. This much anyway we have already proved, and it would be fair to say that of certain birds we have now got just enough results to show how dangerous it would be to draw conclusions from them!

Having said this much in warning, I shall not be misconstrued if I point to a few results which are interesting in themselves, and may prove, in conjunction with others, to be valuable.

Four Blackbirds “ringed” in Ayrshire in June, July, and August, 1909, were found in the same place, two in July and August, 1910, and two in June and July, 1911. Two “ringed” in Berkshire in July, 1910, were found in the same place in December, 1910, and March, 1911, respectively. But another “ringed” near Glasgow in June, 1910, was found in Pembrokeshire in January, 1911.

Of Starlings caught in his useful cage-trap, Mr. Joy has already published many interesting records, showing that a number marked in January in Berkshire stayed in the same place through the following March to October, yet one marked in February travelled to Kent in the same month. Two Starlings marked in September in Lincolnshire were found in December in Pembrokeshire and Yorkshire, while another marked in October, was found in the following March in the original place.

A Meadow-Pipit marked in Yorkshire in June, 1910, was found near the same place in May, 1911. Two others marked in Yorkshire in May and July, 1911, have been found in south-west France, in September and October.

Three Mallards marked in Norfolk in June, 1909, were found in the same place in November, 1909, another

marked in Dumfriesshire in June, 1910, was found within a few miles in October, 1910, but one marked in Essex, in May, 1910, was found in West Prussia in August, 1911.

Two Teal marked in Essex in February, 1910, were found near Hamburg and in Cumberland respectively, in the following August and November.

Two Lapwings marked near Glasgow in June, 1909, and June 1910, were found respectively in the Basses Pyrénées, France, in November, 1909, and near Kilkenny, Ireland, in February, 1911, while another marked in Yorkshire in July, 1909, was found in the same county in the following December.

Of Black-headed Gulls we are collecting a fine series of records, which should prove of great value with the additions that are certain to come during the next few years. The following Lesser Black-backed Gull records may be mentioned: One marked in Westmorland in July, 1911, was found in Lancashire the following September, and another marked in the same place in June, 1910, was found at the mouth of the Loire, France, in September, 1910; one marked at the Farne Isles in August, 1910, was taken at Hartlepool in October, 1911, and another marked in Argyllshire in July, 1910, was reported from Aveiro, Portugal, in December, 1910.

Of other "recoveries" abroad we may mention Common Terns marked in Cumberland and Renfrew, found in Spain and Portugal. Swallows marked in Lancashire and Staffordshire, reported from Indre et Loire and Charente Inférieure in France. A Pied Wagtail marked in Sussex in June, found the following December in Portugal. A Greenfinch marked in Staffordshire in June, reported the following April from Aisne, France.

I must repeat that the records are far too few for us to draw inferences from them, and indeed many of those mentioned above show this by their apparent contradictions; but they also show what valuable results will be obtained if our "ringers" continue their work, as I am sure they will.

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NUMBER OF BIRDS "RINGED."

Messrs. H. W. Robinson (1,750), N. H. Joy (1,066), F. Smalley (681), R. O. Blyth (429), A. G. Leigh (380), J. Bartholomew (301), J. R. B. Masefield (300), W. I. Beaumont (270), W. T. Blackwood (250), M. Portal (243), J. D. Patterson (240), J. S. T. Walton (224), W. E. Suggitt (216), W. Stewart (207), A. Bankes (202), H. W. Ford-Lindsay (187), Dr. N. F. Ticehurst (170), Messrs. T. Smith (145), J. Steele Elliott (139), North London Nat. Hist. Society (C. L. Collenette, Sec.) (139), Messrs. A. Mayall (121), C. T. Cobbold (95), T. C. Hobbs (89), G. R. Humphreys and W. G. Edwards (87), Miss A. C. Jackson (81), Messrs. G. P. Hony (80), M. W. Compton (78), R. E. Knowles (77), J. Murray (gamekeeper to Mr. H. S. Gladstone) (71), Major H. Trevelyan (62), Miss C. M. Acland (62), Messrs. W. C. Cattell (59), T. Hepburn (58), Captain W. Mackenzie (58), Messrs. G. J. van Oordt (49), T. F. Greenwood (48), H. Bentham (47), H. S. Greg (44), H. F. Witherby (44), G. T. Atchison (43), D. G. and Miss M. Garnett (43), Messrs. C. Collier (42), J. Hutton (gamekeeper to Mr. J. Bartholomew (41), W. Davies (38), W. S. Medlicott (36), Mrs. Patteson (34), Captain B. van de Weyer (31), Messrs. H. L. Popham (28), E. A. Wallis (21), R. M. Barrington (20), W. A. Nicholson (20), R. Starley (18), B. Starley (18), S. Maples (18), E. G. B. Meade-Waldo (15), L. Clark (14), C. F. Archibald (14), Captain C. H. T. Whitehead (14), Mr. W. W. Lowe (12), and others who have ringed less than ten birds each

	'09	'10	'11		'09	'10	'11
Thrush, Mistle ..	2	48	40	Tit, Willow ..	—	1	—
Thrush, Song ..	71	625	693	Nuthatch ..	—	4	5
Redwing ..	—	7	20	Wren ..	9	38	62
Fieldfare ..	—	48	30	Creepers, Tree ..	—	3	3
Blackbird ..	83	505	421	Wagtail, Pied ..	12	29	42
Ring-Ouzel ..	—	—	9	Wagtail, White ..	—	—	6
Wheatear ..	1	15	1	Wagtail, Grey ..	5	6	13
Whinchat ..	7	30	28	Wagtail, Yellow ..	1	—	—
Stonechat ..	—	10	19	Pipit, Tree ..	14	26	19
Redstart ..	1	15	35	Pipit, Meadow ..	27	32	75
Redstart, Black ..	—	5	—	Pipit, Rock ..	—	6	3
Redbreast ..	41	217	322	Shrike, Red-backed ..	2	15	13
Nightingale ..	—	11	4	Flycatcher, Pied ..	—	—	5
Whitethroat ..	22	53	33	Flycatcher, Spotted ..	23	65	64
Whitethroat, Lesser ..	1	19	5	Swallow ..	113	463	594
Blackcap ..	—	7	12	Martin, House ..	13	128	73
Warbler, Garden ..	3	9	13	Martin, Sand ..	—	25	66
Warbler, Dartford ..	—	5	—	Greenfinch ..	28	100	208
Wren, Golden-crested ..	—	16	15	Hawfinch ..	—	—	6
Chiffchaff ..	2	16	5	Goldfinch ..	—	8	2
Wren, Willow ..	50	107	139	Sparrow, House ..	8	109	85
Wren, Wood ..	—	12	27	Sparrow, Tree ..	17	49	24
Warbler, Reed ..	—	4	10	Chaffinch ..	6	103	271
Warbler, Sedge ..	1	4	12	Brambling ..	—	—	3
Sparrow, Hedge ..	18	117	198	Linnet ..	20	65	63
Dipper ..	4	9	22	Redpoll, Lesser ..	—	8	—
Tit, Long-tailed ..	—	3	—	Bullfinch ..	—	8	16
Tit, Great ..	16	127	154	Bunting, Yellow ..	4	13	31
Tit, Coal ..	—	12	26	Bunting, Reed ..	2	8	40
Tit, Marsh ..	—	25	3	Starling ..	21	428	1109
Tit, Blue ..	12	54	144	Jay ..	—	5	3
				Magpie ..	—	7	4

	'09	'10	'11		'09	'10	'11
Jackdaw	11	5	15	Pheasant	7	6	30
Crow, Carrion ..	—	6	11	Partridge	1	1	20
Rook	—	1	64	Rail, Land	3	—	4
Lark, Sky	1	20	39	Moorhen	—	34	23
Lark, Wood	—	—	1	Coot, Common ..	1	4	1
Swift	—	—	5	Curlew, Stone ..	1	4	—
Nightjar	3	—	3	Plover, Ringed ..	—	35	12
Wryneck	14	16	1	Plover, Golden ..	—	2	2
Woodpecker, Green	—	8	—	Lapwing	56	254	280
Woodpecker, Great	—	—	—	Oyster-catcher ..	7	16	8
Spotted	2	2	—	Avocet	—	5	—
Cuckoo	4	4	13	Woodcock	6	10	68
Owl, Barn	—	10	—	Snipe, Common ..	1	23	21
Owl, Long-eared ..	—	2	3	Dunlin	5	1	—
Owl, Tawny	—	13	6	Sandpiper, Common	5	10	29
Owl, Little	—	1	4	Redshank	5	19	12
Hobby	1	—	—	Godwit, Black-tailed	—	4	—
Hawk, Sparrow ..	—	5	19	Curlew	14	10	34
Merlin	1	4	2	Tern, Sandwich ..	57	79	24
Kestrel	1	—	5	Tern, Common ..	786	836	669
Cormorant	—	3	25	Tern, Arctic	25	—	1
Shag	—	4	—	Tern, Common or	—	—	—
Heron, Common ..	14	13	22	Arctic	—	25	5
Grey Lag-Goose ..	—	—	6	Tern, Little	—	31	13
Sheld-Duck	1	24	2	Gull, Black-headed	417	1828	2949
Mallard	11	20	139	Gull, Common	—	184	248
Shoveler	—	2	—	Gull, Herring	5	117	48
Pintail	—	13	—	Gull, Lesser Black-	—	—	—
Teal	1	21	3	backed	12	137	62
Widgeon	—	3	1	Gull, Great Black-	—	—	—
Duck, Tufted	3	—	2	backed	1	8	13
Eider	3	—	—	Kittiwake	4	11	—
Merganser, Red-	—	—	—	Skua, Richardson's	—	2	4
breasted	1	—	—	Razorbill	—	31	3
Pigeon, Wood	3	20	22	Guillemot	—	23	—
Dove, Stock	1	4	6	Puffin	4	15	12
Dove, Turtle	1	11	11	Grebe, Great Crested	1	—	—
Grouse, Red	7	3	19	Grebe, Little	—	1	—
Grouse, Black	2	—	2	Petrel, Storm	1	—	—