

## LETTERS.

## INFLUENCE OF WEATHER ON DISPERSAL OF SWIFTS AND SWALLOWS AFTER NESTING.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—The ringing results showing dispersal in various directions of young Swallows (*Hirundo r. rustica*) after leaving the nest (*antea*, pp. 278-287) do not indicate the weather conditions prevailing. Having made intensive field observations on the movements of Swifts (*Apus a. apus*) and Swallows after nesting, and having learnt to distinguish with some confidence between movements which are migratory in character and those which are made by birds residing locally, I think that weather conditions have an important bearing upon the direction of the post-breeding dispersal of these species.

In 1935 the weather at the end of July was fine and great numbers of Swifts were noted in Devon. On July 25th, 1935 at 6.30 p.m., I witnessed the arrival of several small parties of Swifts which came in from the sea and proceeded inland in a northward direction near Start Point just as they do in early May. Other northward movements were reported in South Devon in 1935 around the end of July though on July 19th I saw a large southward migration down the Exe.

In 1936 a sharp watch was kept by many observers in Devon in anticipation of a repetition of the northward trend but the weather was unsettled and a succession of depressions produced storms of the south-westerly type with the result that fewer Swifts were seen and the migrations noted were largely southerly in direction. The first July record of a northward direction being taken was on the 28th when a change had taken place from cyclonic to anti-cyclonic conditions. A few similar directions were recorded in August when the improved weather continued.

In the case of Swallows I saw a small party fly direct north on July 13th, 1935—a very fine day. This was at Plymouth (2 miles inland) and as at least two of them were seen to be young birds it is probable they were a family party. In 1936 the weather was wet and stormy and as in the case of Swifts no corresponding movement was seen until July 28th when three small parties of about half-a-dozen each passed northward at Plymouth with typical purposive migratory flight. July 28th was a glorious day following a very unsettled period.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that the above movements tend to be made more or less against the wind which in Devon is commonly from the northern half of the compass when fine weather prevails and from the southern half when the weather is bad. It may be that these post-breeding wanderings are more influenced by wind direction than the longer journeys when a definite objective has to be reached whatever winds may blow. However, it is not known definitely whether wind is a more important influence than temperature, sunshine, etc., so it would be unwise to rely too much upon wind direction alone for explanation of the observed facts. What can definitely be stated is that when northward post-nesting movements have been seen the weather has been fine.

It has been shown too that one year may differ widely from another in the time and extent of these movements and it remains to be seen if similar weather conditions produce the same variations in future.

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## REFLECTED COLOUR OF NIGHTJAR'S EYES.

*To the Editors of* BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—In a note under this heading (*antea*, p. 322) Mr. Geo. Marples states "I saw the tiny points of *green* light"—this is interesting, as according to my observation in Ceylon, where it was very common to see many Nightjars (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*) in sandy roads, when driving by car at night, the eyes appeared "*pink*," somewhat the colour reflected by rabbits' eyes at night.

GEORGE BROWN.