

## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

**Widespread irruptions of Blue Tits and other species.**—About the middle of September 1957 a remarkable movement of Blue Tits (*Parus caeruleus*) and certain other species started in south-east England. Between then and the time of writing (third week of October) this movement has been noted in many coastal districts and some inland ones in a number of counties, but particularly in East Anglia and along the South Coast, in the Irish Sea area, and in Cheshire and Lancashire. In most areas the Blue Tit is easily the dominant species, but there have also been smaller numbers of Coal Tits (*P. ater*) and Great Tits (*P. major*), considerable flocks of Tree Sparrows (*Passer montanus*), Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea*) and Siskins (*C. spinus*), many Goldcrests (*Regulus regulus*) and (in the south only) some Firecrests (*R. ignicapillus*), and also Dunnocks (*Prunella modularis*), Wrens (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Treecreepers (*Certhia familiaris*) and Great Spotted Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos major*). A few Jays (*Garrulus glandarius*) have been seen coming in off the sea and an astonishing concentration of 1,000 of this species was noted in Essex. In other areas, movements of small, dark Song Thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*), Reed Buntings (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) and Yellowhammers (*E. citrinella*) are commented on.

Among the birds trapped at observatories, individuals of Continental races of Blue, Great and Coal Tits have been identified, while the Redpolls appear all to be *C. f. cabaret* (or *disruptus*). On the other hand, a number of typical British Blue, Great and Coal Tits have been examined, and the onset of the irruption is to some extent obscured by the considerable dispersal, again originally in south-east England, of apparently local tits, during August and the first half of September. The suggestion at the moment is that at least some of the birds since mid-September are of central European origin, and it seems certain, from information received from Dr. G. Svårdson and others, that Scandinavian populations are not involved—except that a most interesting irruption of Treecreepers is reported from Sweden and parties of Jays have also been on the move in that country.

It is clear that we must try to form as full as possible a picture of these interesting irruptions, and Messrs. A. Pettet and J. T. R. Sharrock have agreed to collect and analyse the data, with a view to preparing a report for publication. We ask that all those who have made relevant observations should get in touch with them at the Botany Department, University of Southampton. Data required are any observations suggesting unusual arrivals or passages of these species (and also of any other birds that may seem connected), but particularly, where possible, details of the numbers involved, times and directions of movement, etc. Negative records would also be useful; information on dates and times when various places were watched is important in establishing the complete picture. Any records (with details of determination) of Continental forms trapped during recent weeks or during the coming winter would also be of interest.

**The abnormal breeding-season of 1957.**—The start of the breeding-season of 1957 was abnormal in that quite a number of species nested exceptionally early, while some were only a little early and others at the usual time. Dr. David Lack is preparing an analysis for us and we invite readers to send all relevant records and comments to him at the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, Botanic Garden, Oxford. He would like to receive all records of unusually early nests, and if a series of nests of one species were found, some early and others not, details of all would be useful. If anyone has comparisons with the same area in previous years he is asked to say so, and records from those who keep regular notes on all nests found will be particularly welcome. Please give as full information as possible to enable

the date of laying to be established for each nest, e.g. whether found with clutch incomplete, or the date the young hatched or flew. Information is also wanted on the fate of unusually early nests, where known, though not for nests at the usual season. The enquiry covers all regular breeding species, but particularly those which normally breed in March and April. Dr. Lack will be extracting details from the Nest Record cards of the British Trust for Ornithology, so that there is no need to repeat details of nests already reported in this way.

**The "wreck" of Kittiwakes in the early part of 1957.**—During the early months of 1957 large numbers of Kittiwakes (*Rissa tridactyla*) were found on shores and inland, particularly in western districts of England and Wales. Many of these birds appeared to be in ill-health and later died. Miss L. McCartan has been collecting observations on this "wreck" and has nearly completed a report on the subject for publication. We should be grateful if any information about these flocks of Kittiwakes, together with details of their numbers, length of stay and behaviour, could be sent to Miss McCartan at the Department of Zoology, University College of Wales, Cambrian Street, Aberystwyth. She would also be particularly glad to have details of any dead or dying Kittiwakes found, and of any post-mortem examinations which were carried out on them.

**The Waxwing invasion of February and March 1957.**—In our August issue (*antea*, p. 339) we referred briefly to the sizeable invasion of Waxwings (*Bombycilla garrulus*) which occurred in the eastern counties of Scotland and England during the latter part of February and the beginning of March 1957. It seems evident that the numbers involved were the largest to reach the British Isles since the big invasion during the winter of 1946-47 (*antea*, vol. xli, pp. 2-9 and 34-40) and we have therefore asked Mr. R. K. Cornwallis if he would prepare a summary and analysis of the records. We would be grateful if all records that for any reason are not being reported to the editor of a county bird report could be sent to him at Bleasby Grange, Legsby, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire; particularly does this apply to Scottish records.

Many readers will remember, from the previous reference to this invasion, that these birds were thought to be the overflow of a far larger immigration into Scandinavia, which was halted by the plentiful supplies of berries that were available there. In his paper on "The 'invasion' type of bird migration", Dr. G. Svårdson made the forecast (*antea*, p. 339) that there would be a large-scale Waxwing movement outside Scandinavia in the autumn of 1957. It is therefore of interest to add that in a recent letter (dated 17th October) Dr. Svårdson wrote to say that in the previous few days it had become clear that a Waxwing movement was already starting in Scandinavia. Flocks had been observed moving south and, as the berry crop "is roughly 5 per cent of that of last year", it seems likely that the birds will not delay in Sweden. Those moving along the west coast of Scandinavia may well result in another irruption in Britain by the time this issue is published.

**The irruption of Crossbills in the autumn of 1956 and breeding in 1957.**—The invasion of Crossbills (*Loxia curvirostra*) in the autumn of 1956, though not as large as the 1953 one (*antea*, vol. xlix, pp. 289-297), resulted in rather more cases of breeding in the spring of 1957. Mr. F. R. Smith has therefore agreed to prepare a report for publication and we ask that records of Crossbills in the autumn of 1956 and the spring of 1957 should be sent to him at Telford, Hill Barton Road, Exeter, Devon, unless they have already been passed to the editor of a county bird report.