

Reviews

Birds and Woods. By W. B. Yapp. Oxford University Press, London, 1962. xii+308 pages; frontispiece, 12 monochrome photographs and 24 text-figures. 35s.

In the opening lines Dr. Yapp ascribes this book to two causes: the interest of the work, and an "exasperation at being unable to find in the books the answers to simple questions". A fortunate interest and a fortunate exasperation which have combined to provide us with an important book, wherein once and for all the imprecise categories of "abundant" and "scarce" are abandoned, and a determined effort is made to provide an objective measure of the frequency of occurrence of woodland birds. The reviewer found himself reading on and on, not merely with interest, but with eagerness.

In the chapter on methods of research (wherein the discussion of the underlying mathematical theory is wisely left to reference to the relevant papers) no claim is made that the systems employed are perfect, but Dr. Yapp does not ally himself with that school of ecologists who seek so long for the perfect method that they never make any actual measurements at all. His methods are defined and can be repeated, and at a time when the fauna of this country seems to be changing in such a horrifying manner the data in *Birds and Woods* cannot but be of great value. There is a chapter on the woodlands of Great Britain, brief but authoritative and clearly illustrated, and then the different woodlands of Britain and their bird populations are surveyed. The data are given as the number of "contacts" with each

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species in a stated period of time; relative abundance is expressed on the basis of the number of contacts with any one species stated as a percentage of all contacts; and, sometimes, a percentage frequency gives the percentage of a defined number of "time quadrats" in which a species was encountered. A chapter is devoted to the problems of woodland succession. (It is a pity that plate I, an aerial view of deciduous woodland, has been printed "upside down", so that the convexities of the canopy appear at first sight as concavities.)

The three chapters on the "Inter-relations of the Community" come, it must be admitted, as a disappointment—a disappointment due partly to the high standard of factual statement to which Dr. Yapp has accustomed his readers, and partly to the fact that in the realm of avian feeding ecology, at least, we are still at the horn-book stage. In the survey chapters the reader has been advancing in knowledge all the time; in the inter-relation chapters he will not quarrel with the generalisations presented, but he may not find them stimulating. In a brief discussion of density-dependence it is surprising to find that the increase of the Pied Flycatcher in the Forest of Dean after the provision of nesting-boxes is regarded as having "nothing to do with density dependent factors".

In a chapter on problems of distribution there is some bold but extremely reasonable speculation on the influence of climatic and edaphic factors upon the occurrence of certain species.

Nearly a quarter of the book is given to a "Systematic List" wherein the birds associated with woodlands are surveyed species by species. Dr. Yapp does not hesitate to disagree with other ornithologists when he considers that their data do not warrant their conclusions; and this is very stimulating. But *is* a Heron really to be described as a bird of the "tree-water ecotone"? It is found on trees, it is found in water, but is it necessarily found where trees and water meet?

There is a carefully prepared index, and a valuable bibliography. This is a "big" book—not big in size, but big in scope and broad in treatment. No future worker on woodland birds is going to be able to neglect it as a standard of comparison, as a basis for speculation or as a source of inspiration.

P. H. T. HARTLEY

Die Brutvogel der Schweiz. Edited by U. N. Glutz von Blotzheim. Verlag Aargauer Tagblatt, Aarau, 1962. 648 pages; 54 photographic illustrations; 26 maps and diagrams. No price given.

This finely produced work on the breeding birds of Switzerland is written mainly in German, though some sections are in French. It is a result of the collaboration of some 56 Swiss ornithologists and is

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designed not only to furnish the reader with all the existing information on the subject but also to act as a spur to further investigations which, it is hoped, will "soon make it out of date", though one must doubt that this can happen very quickly.

The book begins with a general section which deals in detail with the methods used by field ornithologists in studying breeding birds, with the geography and climate of Switzerland and with its vegetation. This section covers 148 pages and is illustrated by photographs of habitats and by a remarkable aerial panorama covering the whole of the country.

The rest of the book is devoted to the separate species, including those which bred in the past but do not do so now and those whose nesting must be regarded as doubtful. Species are, in general, treated under the following headings: distribution; habitat; population density, including population changes; feeding, including methods of feeding and food; reproduction, including nest-site, building of nest, beginning of laying, size of clutch, breeding results, number of broods, duration of breeding season, and incubation and fledging periods; and migrations, including arrival, departure and wintering. In a number of cases there is also a final section of remarks and suggestions indicating deficiencies in existing information about the species and ways in which these can be remedied. Breeding and other data are, in the main, based on Swiss experience, but a wide range of sources has been consulted and full references are given. It will be noted that plumage details, song and display are not regarded as coming within the sphere of the work. Each species is treated by the ornithologist who, presumably, knows it best. In 14 cases distribution maps are given.

The following breeding species have been gained during the present century. The Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) has nested for at least 30 years and is extending its range. The Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) has established itself since 1941, though apparently only in one area. About two pairs of Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) have bred annually since 1959 and numbers on passage and in winter have increased considerably. The Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) was first proved to breed in 1917 and about six pairs now do so regularly. The Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*) was first proved to breed in 1919 and 36 pairs are known to have done so in 1952; there has also been a great increase in numbers on autumn passage, thousands of birds being involved. Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Tufted Duck (*A. fuligula*) and Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) have all nested once or more in recent years, but have not apparently become established. The Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) was first recorded in 1948 and probably nested about 1950 though breeding was not positively con-

firmed until 1955; since then expansion has been rapid and is still continuing. The Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) first nested in 1923 and has since colonised much of the country; it is still extending its range westwards. Savi's Warbler (*Locustella luscinioides*) was first recorded in recent years in 1943; singing males have since been regularly noted, but breeding has been proved only once, in 1956. The Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*) has also been found nesting only once, as long ago as 1903. The first record of the Melodious Warbler (*Hippolais polyglotta*) was in 1948; breeding was proved in 1960 when the species was found to be well established in certain areas south of the Alps. The Barred Warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*) is known to have nested once, in 1952; this species has been recorded on passage only nine times during the last 90 years. The Collared Flycatcher (*Muscicapa albicollis*) was not found breeding between 1835 and 1949, but it now nests over a considerable area. The first real evidence of the nesting of the Penduline Tit (*Remiz pendulinus*) was obtained in 1952 and sporadic and irregular breeding has occurred since.

The list of birds which have been lost during this same period is fortunately much shorter and comprises only the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) which has not nested since 1950, the Osprey (*Pandion haliaëtus*) which has not done so for some 50 years, the Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) which was last recorded breeding in about 1930, the Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) which is not known to have nested since 1939 and the Bluethroat (*Cyanosylvia svecica*) which has not been proved to nest for some 30 years. All these birds, except the White Stork, were only known to breed in very small numbers and all still occur regularly on passage. It seems probable, however, that the Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) has also ceased to breed, the last record being for 1959. This species appears to have colonised Switzerland during the second half of the 19th century and to have been most numerous during the first 20 years of the present one. The decline set in towards the end of the 1930s and is attributed to the many cold winters, the disappearance of the horse and the chemical destruction of weeds at railway yards.

A number of species have become commoner or more widespread since 1900. Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps cristatus*) have greatly increased over the past 40-50 years. Protection has improved the position of the Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) over the past 30 years, though numbers are still apparently less than in the last century. The Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) has both increased in numbers and extended its range. The Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), originally introduced, is steadily growing in numbers. The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtus*) seems to have increased somewhat and 40-50 pairs now nest. The Coot (*Fulica atra*) has increased considerably and appears to be still extending its range. The Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) was decreasing

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until the 1930s, since when the population has recovered to about 366 pairs. Both the Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) and the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) have increased as a result of protection. The Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) has become much commoner in some localities. Since the end of the 1940s the Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) seems to have been extending its range. The Great Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*), which began to colonise Switzerland about 1870, had occupied all suitable areas by 1920. The Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa hypoleuca*) has greatly increased both in numbers and range since about 1920. Corn and Ortolan Buntings (*Emberiza calandra* and *hortulana*) have both become commoner, the latter occupying new areas in the south-west since 1920. The Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*) has increased in recent years and the Serin (*Serinus canarius*), which has been extending its range since the middle of the 19th century, is also still spreading. The Alpine Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*) appears to be on the increase. The Raven (*Corvus corax*) has been expanding since 1950 and has reoccupied districts from which it had been absent for some years.

On the other hand, a good many species are stated to be declining. The Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*) have all decreased, apparently as a result of changed methods of agriculture. The Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) has decreased greatly since the beginning of the century owing to destruction of nesting sites by dredging and the building of dams, and similar factors have led to a decline in the numbers of Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*). Habitat destruction has also greatly affected the numbers of both the Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and the Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*), and only about 20 pairs of the former now nest. The Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) is becoming scarcer and scarcer despite protection, so much so that its eventual extinction is feared; at present the main threat is from the growing number of aerial cables in the mountains. The Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) has also decreased, largely as a result of improved forestry and the destruction of old trees. Kingfishers (*Alcedo atthis*) have suffered from losses of both nesting sites and food supplies, and only a few pairs now breed. The disappearance of old fruit trees has similarly led to a decline in the numbers of Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopos minor*). Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and House Martins (*Delichon urbica*) continue to decrease despite fluctuations. Red-backed, Lesser Grey and Great Grey Shrikes (*Lanius cristatus*, *minor* and *excubitor*) all appear to have decreased, perhaps as a result of the clearance of trees and bushes. The Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*) seems to be less widespread than formerly. The Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) has declined and is now only a sporadic breeder in the south. The Orphean

Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*) has declined since the first quarter of the century and now nests only irregularly. The Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) has decreased greatly in some areas as a result of agricultural improvements. The Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) was formerly commoner and more widely distributed than it is at present, but its numbers seem to have remained stable over the past 10-15 years.

Those who are contemplating visiting Switzerland in search of the typical Alpine birds will be glad to learn that all those not mentioned above are, on the whole, apparently maintaining their numbers. Species which nest at high altitudes are naturally less subject to disturbance from human activities though, on the other hand, their exact status may be less easy to determine. The Alpine Accentor (*Prunella collaris*), for example, may have ceased to breed in the Jura, though this is not certain; incidentally, little is known of the breeding biology of this bird. Interesting data about the Alpine Swift (*Apus melba*) are given; in 1959-60 at least 800 pairs nested in buildings, the largest colony being of 156 pairs, while up to 25 pairs nested in cliffs.

This is a most valuable work, not only for those interested in questions relating to ecology, breeding biology and distribution, but also for the casual ornithological visitor to Switzerland. Those involved are to be congratulated on its production.

D. D. HARBER

Våra Fåglar i Norden (Our Birds in the North). Second edition edited by Kai Curry-Lindahl (Swedish text). Bokförlaget Natur och Cultur, Stockholm, 1961. Volume III, 503 pages; coloured and black-and-white plates, and maps. (Four volumes: Sw. Kr. 430.)

Swedish ornithologists will not be alone in finding the third volume of the revised edition of *Våra Fåglar i Norden* as informative and useful as its predecessors (reviewed in *Brit. Birds*, 54: 74-78). The whole work follows the Wetmore order and this volume covers the skuas, gulls, terns, auks, pigeons, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, hoopoes, woodpeckers, larks, swallows and martins—64 species and races in all.

Again Dr. Curry-Lindahl and his associates have to report losses and gains in the Swedish avifauna. A marked alteration in climatic conditions has led to the disappearance of the Roller (*Coracias garrulus*) from all but one of its Swedish haunts, and has perhaps banished the Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*), last known to breed there in 1954. Black Terns (*Chlidonias niger*), too, are neither as common nor as widely distributed as they were at the beginning of the century. From the

west coast come disturbing reports of the Black Guillemot (*Cepphus grylle*), some of the colonies being greatly reduced in numbers and others, in the Skagerrak, even totally deserted. Here the species is represented by the western race, *atlantis*; Baltic colonies—all populated by the nominate race—have meanwhile maintained their strength. Birds that rely on rotting and hollow trees for nesting-sites have all become scarcer where modern methods of forestry are practised. The Three-toed Woodpecker (*Picoides tridactylus*), in particular, seems to have been seriously affected by the clearance of unsound timber, and in some “improved” woodlands there is little to be seen of the Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*), a species which, however, has appeared and multiplied elsewhere. The Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*) is being ousted in many places by the Green Woodpecker (*P. viridis*), but is actually increasing in parts of Jämtland not yet colonised by the stronger bird. Local ornithologists take a despondent view of the outlook for the Middle Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos medius*) with its preference for old, tall, deciduous woods. Every effort is being made to save the Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*), even to the extent of restocking some deserted strongholds; there are now estimated to be over 300 pairs of these fine owls distributed over the country, the majority in Norrland. Recent winter movements of the Great Grey Owl (*Strix nebulosa*) have been on a lesser scale than those recorded in the past, which, Curry-Lindahl fears, implies a considerable falling-off in the numbers breeding in Lapland. The Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) shows little tendency to recover from the havoc of the disastrous winters of 1940-42. First recorded as nesting in Sweden in 1850, this lark gradually extended its range until, some thirty years ago, it could be described as relatively common in the southern districts; but today it breeds only sparingly, in Skåne, Halland and the neighbourhood of Göteborg. Finally, both House Martins (*Delichon urbica*) and Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) have withdrawn from some of their breeding stations.

Against this rather depressing record must be set one notable addition to the native avifauna, and a quite satisfying list of species which have gained or recovered ground. Noted for the first time in 1949, the Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) now breeds regularly in Skåne and Halland, is still advancing northwards, and has been found nesting in Uppland and Narke. Even in Sweden this dove lays two or three clutches a year, the last, in one case, at the end of October. With the exception of the Little Gull (*Larus minutus*), the indigenous gulls are increasing and occupying fresh territory. Most impressive has been the progress of the Herring Gull (*L. argentatus*), now established on many of the Lapland lakes. The yellow-legged form, which has taken to nesting in the interior of Finland, regularly winters in

Swedish waters. A newcomer in 1911, the Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) appears to be more than holding its own. Meanwhile, Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*) have twice reared broods as far north as Haparanda, and for at least a decade—from 1947 to 1957—two or three pairs of Little Terns (*S. albifrons*) have nested on islands in Luleå, seven degrees beyond the previously known limit of the range. Far commoner in southern and central Sweden than it was, the Wood-pigeon (*Columba palumbus*) has also made its way northwards, through the coastal districts, to Haparanda, and it has even been seen in Tornea Lapland. Thanks to protection, the colony of Guillemots (*Uria aalge*) on Stor Karlö, only 19 strong in 1880, totalled 40,000 birds in 1954; this is the more satisfactory as Karlö is one of the few stations of *intermedia*, a form confined to the Baltic. A handful of Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*) fortunately survived the hard winters of the early 1940s, and by 1954 the number of occupied sites had reached three figures.

In this volume nine well-known Swedish ornithologists are responsible for the "popular-scientific" essays, which invite quotation as frequently as those in the previous ones. Recent field-work has not confirmed Sven Ekman's rather far-fetched theory that some Long-tailed Skuas (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) breed alternately in Sweden and Russia. On the contrary, flocks of these birds do ascend the Lapland fells even in seasons when Lemmings (*Lemmus lemmus*) and voles alike have almost disappeared; but they do not disperse, and, of course, make no attempt at nesting. Under such adverse conditions, the skuas have sometimes been reduced to feeding on carrion. Curry-Lindahl, who himself deals with the native gulls, considers each one as a predator, coming finally to the conclusion that while a very large colony of any one of these birds can be a serious menace to wild life, the harm done by gulls in general has been exaggerated, at least in Sweden. For example, despite the increase in the number of big gulls over the last two decades, at least three ducks—the Eider (*Somateria mollissima*), the Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) and the Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)—have become more plentiful. Of the three large gulls, the Lesser Black-backed (*Larus fuscus*) seems to be the least destructive, as remains of young birds were detected in only 14 out of 1,276 pellets gathered at breeding-stations. Brief reference is made to wild hybrids between gulls—including the rather unexpected one of Lesser Black-backed \times Black-headed (*L. fuscus* \times *ridibundus*)—but in no case is it stated whether the bird in question was obtained, or seen, in Sweden.

White-breasted birds have occasionally been noted amongst Swedish breeding Barn Owls; three of a brood hatched by one of these resembled their parent while the fourth was a typical example of the dark-breasted phase. Paul Henrici calls attention to the curious

winter-larders of the Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium passerinum*), one of which held seven Common Shrews (*Sorex araneus*), a Lesser Shrew (*S. minutus*), a House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), a Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), twelve voles, two Great Tits (*Parus major*), a Coal Tit (*P. ater*), a Crested Tit (*P. cristatus*), two Willow Tits (*P. atricapillus*) and two Goldcrests (*Regulus regulus*). This tiny owl can surely rank amongst the more formidable predators, as it has even been known to overcome a Three-toed Woodpecker! Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco*) are often the first birds to set about nesting in Sweden, one once laying in December.

The life-histories of the various woodpeckers are especially interesting. One of two Green Woodpeckers quarrelling over an ant-hill killed its opponent with a peck that penetrated the skull. This species has mated with the Grey-headed Woodpecker, and interbreeding has also occurred between the Great Spotted and White-backed (*Dendrocopos major* and *leucotos*). Nests of Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Stock Dove have been rifled and adult sparrows (*Passer*) attacked by Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Being less discriminating in its diet, this species requires a smaller territory than its White-backed ally. Curry-Lindahl credits the Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*) with hearing keen enough to locate an ant-nest under the snow.

While colonising southern Sweden, the Crested Lark followed the railways from station to station. This, together with its habit of nesting by the permanent way, earned it the name of the "Railway Lark" (Järnsväglärka). The Sand Martins in some coastal districts nest under stones on flat ground. More space is devoted to the Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) than to any other bird. The list of species victimised in Sweden runs to thirty-eight, with the Shore Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) as the most surprising. The parasitic eggs resemble those of the host more frequently, and more closely, in Sweden than in Britain. Eight well-defined types occur, some generally distributed, others more or less restricted to certain areas. The "Reed Warbler" type, for example, is found in Skåne, while the "Brambling" type predominates in Lapland. Though not neglecting the field-work of his countrymen, the writer of this essay, Curry-Lindahl himself, has drawn largely on foreign sources, including such well-known authorities as Chance, Makatsch, Paulsen and Rey. Prominence is given to the late P. F. Bunyard's account of a Cuckoo removing its eggs in its bill from the old nest of a Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) to the nests of two Reed Warblers (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*). The reviewer has no wish to revive old controversies; but he feels obliged to point out that, while Chance took pains to have his important discoveries confirmed by independent witnesses, Bunyard neglected

this precaution. Furthermore, his notes were never published in a recognised scientific journal and his claim was treated with considerable reserve by the authorities of the day.

In the previous review readers were advised that *Våra Fåglar i Norden* is a book on the birds of Sweden rather than of—as the title would imply—the whole of Scandinavia. Notes on status and distribution in Norway and Finland continue to be disappointingly brief for the most part, and occasionally misleading. For example, Yngvar Hagen's records of the breeding of the Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*) in southern Norway appear to have been overlooked, Trøndelag being given as the limit of its range in that country. Again, the reader is left to conclude that no competent observer has seen the Great Grey Owl breeding in Arctic Norway since Schaanning found nests there in 1904. The section on the breeding biology of the Cuckoo might usefully have included a note of the species recorded as hosts in Norway, five of which—Mealy Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*), Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*), Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*), Redwing (*T. iliacus*) and Blackbird (*T. merula*)—do not find a place on the Swedish list.

The use of coloured photographs of mounted specimens as illustrations has already been unfavourably criticised. Looking through those in the present volume, the eye is at once drawn to the painted and shrivelled tarsi, the modelled herbage and, in some cases, the bleached eggs. It is not too much to say that some birds seem almost caricatured. Far more useful, and certainly far more attractive, is the spirited black-and-white plate by Allan Brooks, showing the four skuas together. Also, the high standard so noticeable amongst the black-and-white photographs of the first two volumes is maintained. Photographers and naturalists alike will admire the lovely study of a Long-tailed Skua emerging from the mist over a Lapland fell. If any of the others should be singled out for special commendation they are the nesting series of the Little Gull, Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) and Hawk Owl. The editor is to be congratulated on his decision to publish once again Oliver Pike's still unrivalled sequence of a young Cuckoo evicting one of a Reed Warbler's brood.

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