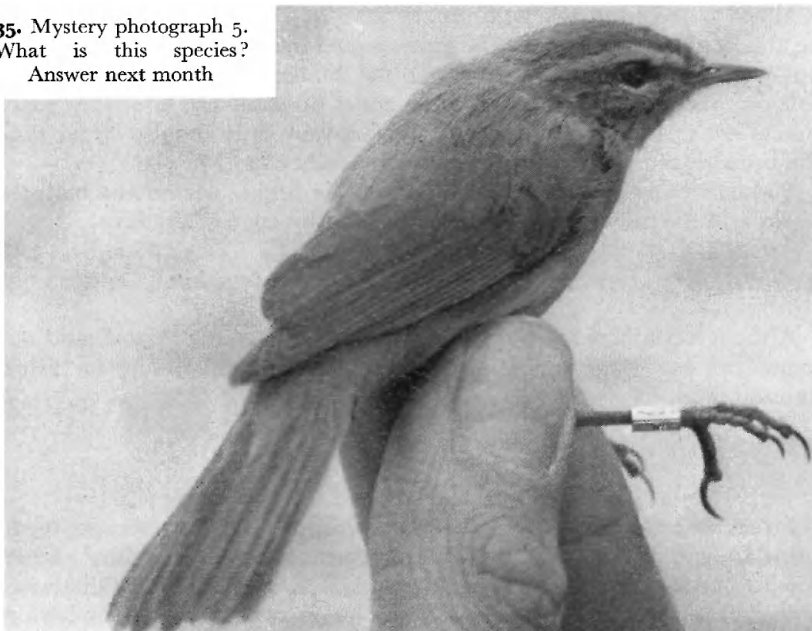


Mystery photographs

4 Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, France, May 1971. The long, pointed bill (plate 23, page 116) suggests an *Acrocephalus*, *Hippolais* or, possibly, *Phylloscopus* warbler, but not a *Sylvia*. Many *Acrocephalus* have streaked mantles, so that the uniform upperparts help to narrow the field to less than a dozen species. The other main features of this bird are its relatively short supercilium, distinct eye-ring, and long, pointed wings with a pale panel produced by the edges to the secondaries. Although size is difficult to judge, it gives the impression of being bulky. The expert will already have looked for the wide-based bill and square-ended tail of a *Hippolais*. Neither can be seen clearly, but the rather thick legs and, especially, the uneven spacing of the primary tips confirm that it is an Icterine Warbler, although this species usually shows a flat or peaked crown. Adults in spring are mainly greenish above and yellow below, but young in autumn can be grey-brown and white, often with only a trace of yellow wash on the throat. The main confusion species is the Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*, which, however, has shorter, more rounded wings (obvious in flight), with closely-bunched and evenly-spaced primary tips (discernible at rest) and either a less clear wing panel or none at all; the greyish legs usually lack the blue tinge of most Icterines' legs. The field identification of *Hippolais* warblers was discussed in great detail by D. I. M. Wallace (*Brit. Birds* 57: 282-301) and in subsequent correspondence (58: 520-521).

35. Mystery photograph 5.
What is this species?
Answer next month



My *Scarce Migrant Birds in Britain and Ireland* (1974) showed that there was a total of 646 Melodious and Icterine Warblers during 1958-67 and that, of those specifically identified, 41% were Melodious and 59% Icterine. Whereas Melodious are virtually confined to Ireland and southwest Britain (east to Sussex and Kent), Icterines are recorded almost equally on the east coast (Shetland southwards) and in the south and west (Kent to Cork), mirroring their respective Continental breeding distributions. JTRS

CORRECTION The statement (*Brit. Birds* 70: 34) that 20 of the 22 British records of Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* had been on Fair Isle, Shetland, was incorrect: as P. K. Kinnear (*in litt.*) has pointed out, one of these 20 was actually on Out Skerries, Shetland (67: 332).