

A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR FIELD ORNITHOLOGY.

WE very gladly support the appeal printed below. Such an organization as the proposed British Trust for Ornithology, which is to form a national centre for ornithological work in the field, is very much required.

We feel sure that the project will greatly interest our readers, the large majority of whom, being keen workers in the field, will at once realize the great value of such a centre for consultation, advice or co-operation in their work.

We hope that the Trust will be widely supported not only financially, but also by gifts or promises of books, photographs, MS. notes and other material which would be useful for reference now or in the future.

We understand that the sum of £10 will qualify the donor for Life Membership, that an annual subscription will be a minimum of 10s., though it is hoped that many will subscribe at least a guinea, and that some may be found, even in these difficult days, who will make very generous donations with a view to putting the Trust on a secure foundation. Backed by an institute such as is proposed, British field ornithology, with the many skilled and keen observers that are available, would make a notable advance, and we cannot too strongly urge every reader to get into touch with Mr. Nicholson or Mr. Tucker and assist the scheme in whatever way each can.

THE EDITORS.

AN INSTITUTE OF ORNITHOLOGY AT OXFORD.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—During the past few years developments in several branches of ornithology have become extraordinarily rapid. To mention only a few instances: the attack on the migration problem through large-scale marking of wild birds, through experiments on the effect of light, temperature and other factors; the attack on distribution through intensive work on the territory theory, through bird censuses which sometimes involve more than a thousand observers, and through general ecological approaches; and the growing emphasis on the economic reactions of a bird population, may illustrate the pace and scope of the advance. All these instances point to one evident conclusion—that the demands of contemporary research have in this field outstripped the training and organization available for meeting them.

In the United States a government-run Biological Survey supplies resources and direction; here the field worker has

no such machinery, either official or unofficial, for reinforcing his individual efforts. The elementary co-operative services—a common library of books, MSS. and photographs, a clearing-house of information and contacts, a national field centre which can collaborate with other national field centres overseas, a permanent experimental reserve for long-term research—still remain to be provided.

At Oxford six years ago a series of researches was begun on the numbers, habits and economic status of certain Midland species, and these researches have recently depended to a large extent on government grants. Owing to the termination of these grants at the end of September the future of the work (papers on which have appeared, or are pending, in *British Birds*, the *Journal of Ecology*, the *Journal of Animal Ecology*, and the *Journal of Agriculture*) is imperilled. After consultations between representative field ornithologists it has been decided to try to turn the emergency into an opportunity by establishing a British Trust for Ornithology, to act as a permanent trustee and to raise through every possible channel funds to support an Institute of Ornithology at Oxford as a national centre. The Trust is seeking incorporation and has already been given or promised valuable assets in cash and in kind, including collections of MSS. whose permanent availability to research workers is of capital importance.

The Trust is appealing for £8,000 to carry it over the next five years, until permanent endowments can be arranged. Payment of donations may be spread over the whole period, and those who may be in a position to contribute or to help in any other way are urged to get in touch with the acting Hon. Treasurer, B. W. Tucker, M.A., University Museum, Oxford, or the acting Hon. Secretary, E. M. Nicholson, 58, Petty France, London, S.W.1, who will gladly give further information.

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