

COUNTY BIRD REPORTS.

Twenty-fourth Report of the Devon Bird-Watching and Preservation Society, 1951. Recorder for birds—F.R.Smith.

There are short reports on special enquiries : (a) Swift Migration.—Cold weather for 4 or 5 days in May caused such a remarkable disappearance of Swifts that "it seems feasible that for several days this species was 'grounded'". Some birds remained exceptionally late : there were several October records, and one was seen on a number of occasions from November 15th to December 3rd. (b) Black Redstarts.—There was no evidence of breeding, and although 6 birds were observed on the south coast on January 11th (1952), "an unusual feature of this year's records is the lack of evidence of any wintering birds." (c) Spotted Flycatchers.—The collection is continuing of reports of every aspect of behaviour in as much detail as possible.

The main body of the report consists of classified notes, the observations on each species being divided into areas shown on a map. Records from W. Somerset and Lundy, appearing in the Devon report, are not included in the following extracts as most of them appear in the review of the Somerset Report (*antea*, p. 146) or in the Bird Observatories Report (*antea*, vol. xlv, pp. 297-298) :—

Raven observed on a sheep's back, searching for ticks ; 42 in a flock on Dartmoor. Magpie is reported as increasing in all areas. A roost of c. 200,000 Starlings in E. Devon in December. A flock of 200 or more Goldfinches as early as June 28th ; young still in the nest, October 13th. Over 100 Yellowhammers on October 10th. A Black-headed Bunting at Sidmouth on October 4th and 6th has already been reported in *British Birds*. Several Snow Buntings. Dozens of Pied Wagtails roosting in bracken July 28th. A remarkable increase in Long-tailed Tits makes recovery from 1947 almost complete. Great Grey Shrikes in January and November. A steady increase of Goldcrests in all areas. Unusually few wintering records of Chiffchaff. Dartford Warblers again nested successfully. Winter records indicate a steady increase in the winter population of Fieldfare. Stonechat numbers are now back to normal. Several Hoopoes in mid-April, one in August. Hobby bred. Kestrel increasing steadily. 17 Buzzards seen in the air together in December. Fewer Montagu's Harriers bred than usual. A Hen Harrier in May. Spoonbills were seen on the Exe estuary in April and May, on the Teign in January, February, April, May, October, November, December ; 14 in Torbay in October ; on the Tamar throughout the year except May-August. A Little Egret on the Exe estuary on June 17th ; one on Erme Estuary on April 18th and 19th. Whooper Swans in January, February, October and November. Bewick's Swan in November. Brent Goose wintered on Exe estuary in both seasons, maximum 38 birds ; 99 Pintail there on October 28th. The report of a Ferruginous Duck on Exe estuary on July 1st was also submitted to *British Birds*, but was not regarded as absolutely certain. A Long-tailed Duck wintered. Eiders were seen in January on both N. and S. coasts. Up to 10 Fulmars at Berry Head but no eggs, June 6th. Several Slavonian Grebes. Up to 6 Great Northern Divers together. Black-tailed Godwits, Common Sandpipers, Green Sandpipers, Spotted Redshanks, Greenshanks, Kentish Plover and Avocet all wintered—a remarkable list. A Pectoral Sandpiper in September ; one is also recorded on the exceptional date of February 11th, but unfortunately does not appear to have called, flown, or shown the colour of its legs. Roseate Tern in May. Glaucous Gulls in January, March/April and December. Iceland Gull in December.

P.A.D.H.

Wiltshire Bird Notes for 1951. (From *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Magazine*, vol. liv.) Recorders for birds—Ruth G. Barnes and Guy Peirson.

Although the county, lacking a coast line or any large areas of water, does not attract many rare species, stress is rightly laid in the editorial on the need for critical consideration of all unusual records.

We note the following :—

Raven in January and November, a Hooded Crow seen as early as August 19th. Starlings going to a roost $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant actually flew through flocks circling over another roost. A Snow Bunting in January. Several variant Yellow Wagtails in April and May as well as one of the Blue-headed race. A Treecreeper nested on a corrugated iron shed. Nuthatch climbing over the face of a brick-built house. Great Grey Shrike in April. A number of Pied Flycatchers in spring. A Firecrest on March 19th, 1943. Several Ring Ouzels on passage. An undated Hoopoe. Great Spotted Woodpecker had large young by April 15th, a very early date. 2 or 3 records of Long-eared Owls nesting. Hobbies and Buzzards bred, and Peregrine and Montagu's Harrier were seen in summer. Several Bitterns in winter and a party of Whooper Swans in April. Garganey in April and October. Sheld Duck, Cormorants, Storm Petrel, Red-throated Diver, Oystercatcher and Puffin came inland. A movement of Wood pigeons lasting 3 hours and comprising about 2,400 birds was seen on December 27th. There is a report of 2 pairs of Curlew in spring over a breeding area in S. Wilts., but this cannot be reconciled with a statement in the introduction that "the Curlew still manages to present a successful challenge to those who try to find out how commonly, if at all, it nests in Wiltshire." Golden Plovers in the breeding plumage of the northern race were seen in mid-April. Two Dotterels are claimed. Several winter or spring records of Great Black-backed Gull. A few Corncrakes were heard, but no indication is given of breeding. Several Quail reported and one nest found.

In addition to the classified notes there is a report on the Redstart, based on 3 years' observation by a number of members of the society, which points to a fluctuating rather than decreasing population. The map accompanying the report shows not only the sites of Redstart's nests, but also the homes of the main observers, which is a useful qualification. P.A.D.H.

Ornithological Notes, Bristol District, 1951. Reprinted from *The Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists' Society*, vol. xxviii. Compiled by H. H. Davis.

The observations of this society cover parts of N. Somerset and S. Gloucester, but the actual area is not specified. A good working arrangement seems to be in operation with the Somerset Society for the exchange of interesting information: it is therefore only necessary here to notice S. Gloucester records :—

Ravens were seen in January and December. A bird at the New Grounds described as "a robin with a blue breast with a red spot in the middle" is recorded as a Red-spotted Bluethroat. A Hoopoe in August. Several autumn and winter Peregrine records. Several Hobbies seen. Buzzards reported from widely separated localities, the records covering all seasons of the year; it seems likely that the species is now breeding in S. Gloucestershire. A Hen Harrier in November. Concerning geese at the New Grounds, White-fronted reached a maximum c. 3,700 in January, last seen March 21st, returned September 30th; family parties of Greenland White-fronted were seen in January and February; Lesser White-fronted were present from January to May, total 6 birds; one Bean in October; Pink-footed left in mid-March, returned October 13th, maximum 120 on October 26th; one Barnacle in January; one Brent Goose in October. On the Severn estuary there were 90 Pintail in February, 70 in December. Several Black-tailed Godwits in April, May and August. Common Sandpiper in mid-winter. A Little Crake at New Grounds in April. Quail heard on August 5th. P.A.D.H.

Montgomeryshire Field Society, Report and Notes, 1951.

The short list of systematic notes on birds includes the following: One pair of Choughs in the county. A pair of Golden Orioles seen again. A small party of Waxwings on November 17th. A Bittern on January 6th. 700-1,000 White-fronted Geese, January and March. Several pairs of Corn-crakes bred.

J. H. Owen contributes notes on 127 Spotted Flycatchers' nests found during the season: particular attention was paid to nest site and composition, and to clutch size (average 4.11 eggs), and nesting success (average 2.7 juveniles, i.e. 66% success). The same observer analyses the causes of failure to hatch (17.8%) and failure to rear young (13%) in well over 100 Robins' nests found in 1951. P.A.D.H.

West Wales Field Society: Report for Year Ending 31st March, 1952.

Two or three pages are devoted to ornithological matters. Of particular interest is a short account by Capt. H. R. H. Vaughan of the Kite in 1951. There were certainly 11 nesting pairs, probably 15, which represents a slight increase in the last two years. Young birds flew from 6 nests; between 20 and 30 young have reached the flying stage in the past three seasons. The good work done by the Kite Field Committee deserves wide support.

The Gannet population of Grassholm was estimated at about 8,000 nests on May 11th. P.A.D.H.

Herefordshire Ornithological Club, Annual Report, 1951. Edited by R. H. Baillie.

It is a pleasure to welcome this report which summarizes the first full year's observations made by a club that was formed only in 1950, the more so as from 1952 onwards it is also taking on the task of covering neighbouring Radnorshire, so that of the six counties forming the triangle Hereford-Glamorgan-Montgomery only Brecknock remains in need of a periodical publication on birds. Though much of Herefordshire is of the midland agricultural type, parts are hilly or mountainous resembling the Welsh counties on which it borders, and thus it presents a varied habitat.

The report is mainly devoted to 9 pages of classified notes based on the observations of 22 observers, and there is also a 3-page article on "Bird Ringing" written with the intention of giving "some indication of the importance and interest" of this work. A page entitled "Annual dates of interest in the county" consists in the main of the average arrival dates of some of the summer migrants in or near Hereford itself between 1931 and 1951. The results would be of greater significance if the range of dates of each species were given, but such averages are of little value unless based on the observations of a number of observers over a wide area daily covered.

We extract the following from the classified notes. Raven "is on the increase and is slowly spreading eastwards from the Welsh border." Bramblings near Kington reached a maximum of 200 or more in the latter half of January. A Great Grey Shrike on the unusual date of September 27th deserves the support of the observer's own description. Red-backed Shrikes bred successfully at Hereford; also reported in three other localities in the county. Reed Warblers in two places, 4 birds and a pair (this is almost the western limit of the species' range in Britain). Marsh Warblers at 3 sites; young known to be reared from 2 nests. Male Black Redstart at Hereford Cathedral from December, 1950, to March, 1951. Records are given of the very locally-distributed Nightingale. Brood of Swallows left nest on October 18th. Hobbies bred successfully. The occurrence of a Kite is very vaguely noted without date or locality, and the wording suggests that it was not even seen by the observer whose initials are given. This last comment also applies to the Osprey "reported to have visited Shobden for one day in April" (which should certainly have some supporting evidence) and the Mute Swan "reported to have taken off from a small pool with two cygnets on its back."

Corncrakes in 2 localities, at one of which the species "has been heard annually for the last three years." The status of several species that suffered in the hard winter of 1946/47 is reviewed and Treecreepers, Long-tailed Tits, Green Woodpeckers, Little Owls and Coots are all reported as having made a partial or complete recovery, but Goldcrests are still very local (though common again in the Kington area).

It would have been particularly useful if this first report had included *all* species seen during the year, the more so because the classified notes are full of surprise omissions and inclusions, and it is therefore unusually difficult to know whether a bird has been left out as being too common or on account of a total lack of records. There are, for example, some elaborate figures on Lapwing, but no mention of the Curlew; Siskins are included, but what of Redpolls? If the remarks on Wood Warbler are worthy of inclusion, so should be something about Blackcap and Garden Warbler. A scarcity of Barn Owls is remarked, and there are some notes about the Little Owl, but one is left to wonder about the Long-eared species. The status comments given for Grey Wagtail, Dipper and Song Thrush are hardly worth including unless such comments on all species are made. It cannot be over-emphasized how carefully these local reports must be compiled so as not to give a false impression to the reader.

I. J. F.-L.

The Liverpool Naturalist's Field Club: Proceedings and notes for 1951.

THE bird notes include an account of the breeding of the Pied Flycatcher in Wirral, the first record for Cheshire, although one pair probably nested in the east of the county in 1948 (*vide, antea*, vol. xlii, p. 57 and vol. xlv, p. 289). A Harrier, believed to be a Montagu's, was observed at a distance of 12 yards at Kirkby, Lancs., on April 17th; it lacked the white rump of the Hen Harrier. There is only one other record for Lancashire (in 1874). Other birds rarely seen in Cheshire were Eider on December 31st and 5 Roseate Terns on September 9th. A note by T. S. Williams on summering of Oystercatchers in the Dee estuary shows that in 1951 about 500 remained during June and July.

A. W. B.

Derbyshire Archæological and Nat. Hist. Socy. Ornithological Record for Derbyshire, 1951. Compiled by W. K. Marshall.

A Golden Oriole seen in the N.W. of the county on July 24th, is apparently new to the county. There are a number of records of the Pied Flycatcher in April and May, but no nest was found in the year. A continued increase in the numbers of the Nuthatch is paralleled by a similar increase in other counties in N.W. England. Buzzards were seen in May, August and September, and an Osprey in May. A Black-throated Diver was seen at Buxton in November and a Grey Phalarope at Barbrook from August 31st to September 2nd. From one to three Dotterels were seen on Big Moor for the first nine days of September. A careful table showing the numbers of waders, etc., at Barbrook reservoir shows that this place does not attract many of the normal migrants in autumn.

A. W. B.

The Peregrine: A publication of the Manx Field Club. Vol. 2, No. 1, (September, 1952). Edited by W. S. Cowin.

BIRD notes cover the years 1948 and 1949. A Firecrest, a bird new to the Isle of Man, was killed against the Douglas Head Lighthouse on March 31st, 1948. Among other interesting records is one of a young Golden Eagle on October 9th, 1949. As the Editor points out, the distance to a nesting-site in Galloway is not great. An early Sand Martin was reported on March 10th, 1948. A Bullfinch, a bird rarely noted in the island, came to Douglas Head Lighthouse on October 28th, 1949, and Pied Flycatchers were twice recorded in the autumn of 1949. Red-necked, Slavonian and Black-necked Grebes are

all recorded in both years. About 25 pairs of Herring Gulls formed an inland colony at about 1,000 feet above sea level in 1951 and many successfully reared broods. A.W.B.

Report on Birds observed in Hertfordshire in 1949. By J. N. Hobbs. (In the *Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, vol. xxiii, part 5).

It is much to be regretted that this report was not published until 1952. It consists of some 7½ pages of classified notes based on the records of 23 observers and these are preceded by a page of introductory remarks. The Mecca for ornithologists in Hertfordshire is of course the area of the Tring reservoirs and it is not surprising therefore that two-thirds of the records in this report should come from there. Ducks noted in the county, mainly at Tring, include Gadwall in January, Garganey March-May, a pair of Wigeon until the end of May, Pintail, Shoveler "present . . . during the breeding season," Goldeneye, only 1 record of Goosander (November), very small numbers of Smew at each end of the year (the numbers of Sawbills visiting Tring have dropped considerably). Among waders, Jack Snipe in April, Curlew Sandpipers in August and September, Little Stints in May and August, Sanderling in July, Ruff at both migrations, Greenshank in autumn, and several records of Little Ringed Plover may be mentioned. The occurrence of a party of 15 Oystercatchers so far inland in the south is distinctly uncommon. A record of Grey Plover well inland is sufficiently unusual to justify the inclusion of at least the name of the observer. Various records of gulls and terns include Sandwich Terns in April and September.

Cirl Bunting and Woodlark are stated in the introduction to have been seen at Sarratt and West Hyde "under circumstances which make breeding very probable if not certain," but the evidence given in the classified notes is only that of date. A total of some 11 pairs of Red-backed Shrike are noted. Waxwings in March and December. Under "Greenland Wheatear" two lines are devoted to the mention of a bird that was "perched high in a tree" and *ipso facto*, it seems, assignable to this race; no other evidence is given; the statement in *The Handbook* about tree-perching has led to far too much stress being laid on this as a means for the field-separation of the Greenland form. A Black Redstart is recorded in April. There is an interesting account of the eviction of a pair of Nuthatches from a previous year's hole by Great Spotted Woodpeckers and the latter's subsequent breeding in it. Slavonian Grebes are recorded in January, and Black-necked in May and June. The occurrence of a Black-throated Diver in winter constitutes a sufficiently critical and uncommon identification to warrant the inclusion of full details, but these are missing from a January record in this report. A Corncrake is recorded in September. Full details of a Spotted Crake in April are given, and another is noted for August. Quails were seen in May and September and one was shot in January. I. J. F.-L.

Natural History Society of Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne : Ornithological Report for 1951. Edited by G. W. Temperley.

ONCE more over 100 contributors have supplied notes for this full report. There are many items of particular interest.

A Red-breasted Flycatcher was seen on the spring passage for the first time and another in October. A Yellow-browed Warbler, the first for Co. Durham, was closely examined in October between the 4th and the 28th. A Pallas's Warbler, previously known as a British bird from one occurrence in Norfolk was trapped and examined by Dr. E. A. R. Ennion at Monk's House on October 13th (*vide, antea*, vol. xlv, pp. 258-260). An Aquatic Warbler, another bird new to these counties, was seen near South Shields on August, 28th. A Baldpate, the first recorded in Northumberland, was shot on November 8th. Other unusual records were those of Hoopoe, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (probably nested), Wryneck, Golden Eagle, several Ospreys and

Spoonbill. Montagu's Harriers returned, but were not proved to have nested ; it seems probable that the hen was shot. A very considerable and gratifying increase in the number of Corncrakes is recorded. A pair of Great Crested Grebes bred successfully for the first time since 1934. A.W.B.