

## More examples of the best recent work by British bird-photographers

*Plates 24-35*

This is the sixteenth annual feature on the best contemporary black-and-white bird photographs. Once again we had a record number of prints submitted to us, 215 by 43 photographers, which really is gratifying when one considers that most photographers nowadays use nothing but colour, and it does show that there is still a place for monochrome work. Indeed, we were told recently by a well-known publisher that the costs of reproducing colour are soaring so much that we are unlikely to see an increase in the number of colour plates used in books during the foreseeable future.

We have noticed that in a few cases a black-and-white print has been made from an original colour picture. Unfortunately this generally leads to a degradation of tones and a certain loss of definition, which is normally unacceptable when the emphasis is on photographic quality rather than ornithological interest. If a really unusual or spectacular transparency has been obtained, however, it is certainly worth while having a monochrome print made. Since it is possible to make a black-and-white from a colour transparency but obviously not the reverse, we would have to advise photographers to use colour but wherever possible to repeat it in monochrome if the subject permits.

Partly owing to the record number of prints, but mainly because of the exceptionally high quality of those submitted, we have decided, on this occasion, to publish twelve plates and show the work of 20 photographers. Even so, the task of making the final selection was extremely difficult and many photographs we should have liked to include just had to be omitted. Nevertheless, we are very pleased to be able to include the work of four photographers new to this feature.

We start this selection with a delightful study by Harold Grenfell of a cock Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* bringing food to a nearly fledged chick (plate 24), which we like for the action shown in both birds. E. A. Janes' photographic work has improved steadily over the years, although we have not until now managed to include any of his pictures in this feature. This year he submitted several very fine prints of which we considered his cock Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* in summer plumage (plate 25a) to be the best. Brian and Sheila Bottomley regularly send us a splendid variety of prints; this year was no exception. We finally selected from these a bird

whose portrait we have not previously included—a Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* photographed in October (plate 25b). As we look at Dennis Green's Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (plate 26a) we can almost hear it calling, that rather sad but musical note that is such a feature of some moors during the breeding season. Most of the photographs of Dotterels *Eudromias morinellus* we see are taken on the high tops of the Scottish mountains but Pamela Harrison secured hers on the north Kent marshes, one of a flock of 22 birds (plate 26b).

What tremendous action is shown in the photograph of Coots *Fulica atra* fighting (plate 27a) by another new photographer to our series, Michael Richards, drops of water flying in all directions as the combatants kick out at each other, one high in the water, the other almost submerged. There are few good photographs in existence of Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* and most of these have been taken at the nest, but Roy Blewitt succeeded in getting his bird to come to bait which he put down daily for a week before obtaining the photograph we show (plate 27b). This is a branch of photography where there is still great scope for much more work to be done. We have seen numbers of photographs of Dippers *Cinclus cinclus*, a comparatively easy bird to portray, but few have been so well composed as the one (plate 28a) by Graham Date. The water swirling round the rock in the middle of a stream adds so much to it. A third newcomer is J. Russell and we liked his study of a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* bathing in the clear water of a little pool in Nottinghamshire (plate 28b).

For some years now Stephen Dalton has been producing some quite remarkable photographs by high speed electronic flash sets which he has been developing himself. It is not often in this series that we use more than one print by the same photographer but on this occasion we include two of his, a Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* just taking flight as it drops from the nesting hole carrying a faecal sac in its bill (plate 29a), and a Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* leaping away from its nest (plate 29b), showing how it kicks itself clear. The latter was taken at 1/22,000th second and the woodpecker at 1/11,000th second, and such speeds have frozen all movement. So often when flash has been used there have been black backgrounds because the artificial light does not penetrate very far, but in these two photographs a method has been devised to illuminate the background, giving a more natural effect.

Probably the most photogenic British bird is the Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, and never a year goes by without our receiving a number of fine studies of this subject. Indeed, we have already published five in this series and have had to turn down many others, but Donald Smith's result (plate 30) was so outstanding we had to include it.

Many years ago a list was drawn up by the Zoological Photographic Society of British birds that had never been photographed, and one of these was the Rock Dove *Columba livia*. We cannot recall having seen a good photograph of this species and we are glad to be able to publish Rodney Dawson's shot taken at night at a roost on the coastal cliffs of Islay (plate 31a).

We mentioned earlier that black-and-white prints from colour transparencies were not always successful. One exception to this is the picture by Frank Blackburn of a Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* passing a food-ball to its young (plate 31b). The young were already free-flying and had spent a day away from the nest, but returned to it for the evening feed. Another photographer who always takes the greatest care to get as near perfection as possible in his photographs is Arthur Gilpin, this point being well illustrated in his lovely cock Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* (plate 32a); whether the lichen-covered perch is natural or has been placed there we do not know, but it certainly helps to make a really attractive picture. Portraits of birds singing are very difficult to obtain and we cannot remember ever having seen a really good photograph of a Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* in full voice. Philip Weaving has filled this gap and the picture we reproduce (plate 32b) is one of several he obtained.

Only two of the photographs in this year's feature were taken abroad. One of these, by Dr Kevin Carlson, portrays a Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* in Austria in June 1974 (plate 33). It shows the bird, nest and habitat very well indeed. There does not seem to be as much tree-top photography being done today as there was a few years ago and the only example we show on this occasion is the picture by G. H. E. Young of a hen Raven *Corvus corax* at its nest in mid-Wales (plate 34). It gives a good impression of height and was taken before the leaves came out. The second photograph obtained abroad is that of the Roller *Coracias garrulus* bringing up a pellet (plate 35a), which was secured in Kenya in April 1974 by John Reynolds. He really is getting the best out of his photography in Africa and from the selection he sent us we had great difficulty in making a choice. (See also *Brit. Birds*, 68: plates 1-7.) We conclude with the fourth of our new photographers, M. Holliday, and we are pleased to use his picture of a Rook *Corvus frugilegus* calling aggressively in north Humberside (plate 35b). This shows not only the fine sheen on the bird's plumage but also an attitude we so frequently see but which is rarely photographed.

We hope that those photographers whose work we have been unable to include on this occasion will not hesitate to submit their prints to us again next year. We should like to thank all those who

suggested particular photographs to us, and also the secretaries of the Zoological Photographic Club, the Nature Photographic Society and the Nature Photographers' Portfolio for their recommendations. Prints for next year's selection should arrive by 23rd February 1976.

Finally may we again remind all bird-photographers that birds on Schedule 1 of the Protection of Birds Act 1967 (listed in *Brit. Birds*, 61: 215; 64: 189) may not be disturbed at or near the nest unless approval is first obtained from the Nature Conservancy Council at 12 Hope Terrace, Edinburgh EH9 2AS.

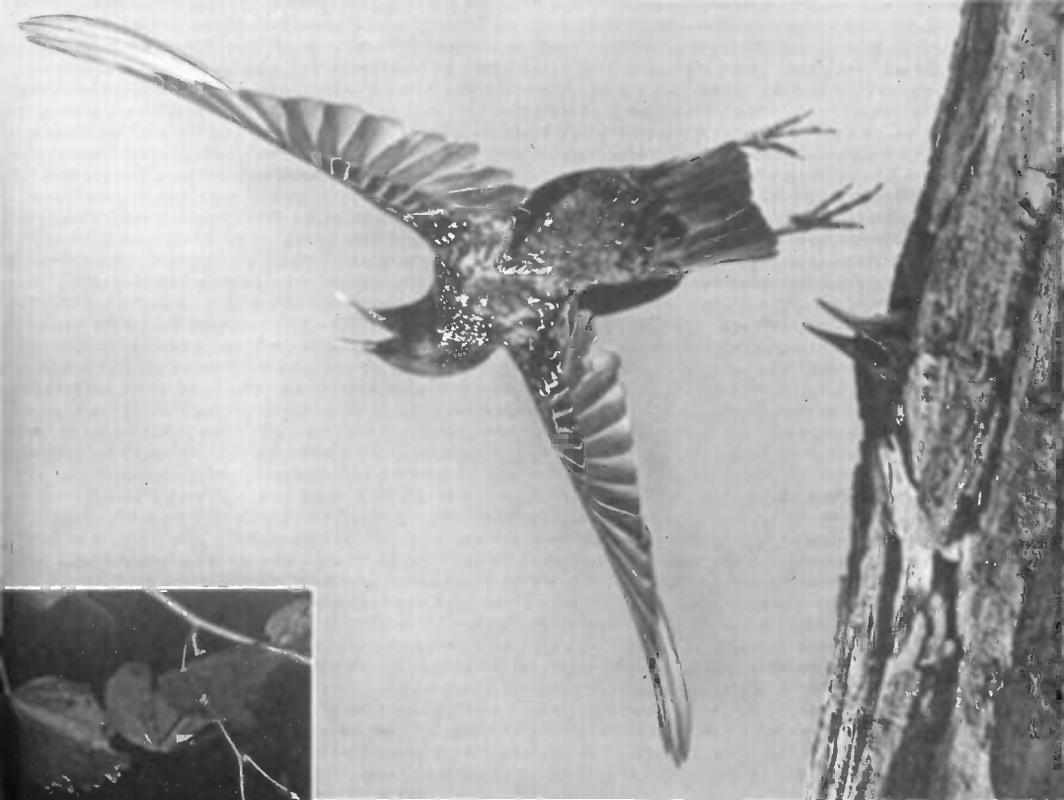
ERIC HOSKING





PLATE 28. Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*, Dyfed, June 1973 (Graham F. Date); below, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* in bathing pool, Nottinghamshire, June 1974 (J. Russell)







PLATES 29-30. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* carrying faecal sac away from nesting hole, East Sussex, June 1974, and Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* leaving occupied nest, Surrey, May 1974 (*Stephen Dallon*); above, Barn Owl *Tyto alba* returning to its nest in lime tree, with female Short-tailed Vole *Microtus agrestis*, Strathclyde, August 1973 (*Donald A. Smith*)



PLATE 31. Rock Dove *Columba livia* at night roost, coastal cliffs of Islay, Strathclyde, March 1973 (*Rodney Dawson*); below, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* passing food-ball of moths to chick, Surrey, September 1974 (*Frank V. Blackburn*)





PLATE 32. Two portraits of passerines. Male Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* on lichened perch, Powys, June 1974 (Arthur Gilpin); and Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* singing, Hereford & Worcester, May 1974 (P. D. V. Weaving)





PLATE 25. Male Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* in breeding plumage at drinking pool, Hertfordshire, April 1974 (*E. A. Janes*); below, Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Cornwall, October 1974 (*J. B. and S. Bottomley*)





PLATE 26. Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* calling (four chicks were scattered in the vicinity), Clwyd, June 1973 (*Dennis Green*); below, one of trip of 22 Dotterel *Eudromias morinellus*, Kent, May 1974 (*Pamela Harrison*)





PLATE 27. Coots *Fulica atra* fighting, Surrey, August 1974 (*Michael W. Richards*); below, Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, Hereford & Worcester, December 1974 (*R. J. C. Blewitt*)





PLATE 33. Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*, Austria, June 1974 (K. J. Carlson )



PLATE 34. Raven *Corvus corax* on huge stick nest, Powys, April 1974 (G. H. E. Young)



PLATE 35. Roller *Coracias garrulus* bringing up pellet, Kenya, April 1974 (*J. F. Reynolds*); below, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, Humberside, December 1973 (*M. Holliday*)

