

FOREIGN NEWS

PALAEARCTIC PASSERINES IN UGANDA

Main arrival of European Swallows mid-August, with a southward passage in September/October. Of migrant warblers ringed, 25% retrapped. Of 15 Sedge Warblers transferred from their wintering areas and released 25 miles away, 4 were recaptured at the original netting site within a week.

(Ref: Pearson, D.J. (1972) Ibis 114(i): 43-60)

MAGNETIC MIGRATION

Under test conditions, European Robins were found to select their migratory direction according to the direction of an experimental magnetic field.

(Ref: Wiltschko, W. & Hock, H. (1972) - Wilson Bull 84(2): 149-163)

BROOD SIZE AND SURVIVAL IN GULLS

Chicks raised in 3-chick broods were recovered in greater numbers in the first 2-3 months after fledging and in smaller numbers thereafter than small broods. Chicks hatched early were recovered in smaller numbers during the first 6-12 months after fledging and in greater numbers thereafter - chicks hatched late - vice-versa.

(Ref: Nisbet, I.C.T. & Drury, W.H., (1972), Bird-Band 43 (3) :161-172).

BARN SWALLOW SEX

Among techniques used for sexing American Hirundo rustica was:- Adults were colour-marked with paint on their wings. A mounted female specimen was placed in a field and the behaviour of swallows in the vicinity was observed. The colour code of birds attempting to mount the mounted specimen was noted and these birds recorded as males.

(Ref: Samuel, D.E. (1971) - Ohio Jour.Sci. 71 (2): 125-128).

H-BOMB SCORCHED DUNLIN

On 10th August 1962, an adult Dunlin Calidris alpina was trapped in south-west Finland. It was found to have scorched back feathers. The burns could have been produced in a number of ways, most of them very unlikely, such as lightning, contact with electric wires etc. None of these would seem likely to produce light, even scorching. On 5th August, the U.S.S.R. exploded an H-bomb. The size of the explosion would have affected areas up to 50 km. from the epicentre. The latter was situated about 2000 km. away, reasonably within rapid long-distance migratory flight time for a Dunlin.

(Ref: Lilja, I & Soikkeli, M. (1972) - Ibis 114(2): 273-274)

BAND LOSS FROM GULLS

A study of band loss was made in Red-billed Gulls in New Zealand. It was found that there was a different rate of loss between butt to butt bands and lock bands. It was suggested that this was due to the lock on the latter causing the rings to tilt on the birds' legs in uneven wear on the ring. All the rings used were aluminium or aluminium alloy (no stainless steel). There was also a different rate of loss

between males and females. A variety of explanations was offered for this, the most likely being that the female tarsus is smaller, allowing more movement of the ring, and thus more wear.

(Ref: Mills, J.A. (1972) - Ibis 114: 252-255)

FLIGHT RANGE

This paper gives a formula for calculating flight range of birds from their fat weight, fresh body weight, flight speed, flattened wing length. For ringers operating in the field, a mean increase in weight before migration will give some indication of fat deposited, though some of this increase will be caused by protein build up. Without any dissection or analysis work, a rough guide to flight range can therefore be worked out.

(Ref: McNeil, R. & Cadieux, F. (1972) - Bird-banding 43(2): 107-113)

PATAGIAL MARKER FOR DUCK

A new method of attaching the marker by sewing through the patagium with nylon thread was devised. Preliminary study showed the tags in position and unaffected after 13 months in captive birds and 6 months in wild birds.

SPANISH SWALLOWS MOULTING

19% of adult Hirundo rustica caught in southern Spain showed primary moult at the end of July. It is suggested that this moult is arrested and completed in Africa.

(Ref: Pimm, S.L., Bird Study 17: 49-51)

AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN NIGERIA

This is the first half of a long paper on intra-African migrants. Quite a lot of species not normally regarded as migratory in southern Africa are given this label in the Nigerian region. The definition follows Moreau (1966) and seems to be too loose involving irregular movement dependent on local climatic conditions. However, the paper is useful for ringers in southern Africa as a guide to what to look out for in African species.

(Ref: Elgood, J.H., Fry, C.H. & Dowsett, R.J., (1973) Ibis 115(1):1-45).

BARN SWALLOWS IN WEST MALAYSIA

This study makes an interesting comparison with the S. African swallow ringing studies. It also shows methods of further analysis of data collected on this species.

(Ref: Medway, Lord (1973), Ibis 115(1):60-86).

ELECTROCUTED VULTURES

From 1st January 1970 to 31st March 1972 at least 148 Cape Vultures are known to have been electrocuted by contact with high tension power lines in the S.W. Transvaal. It is not known if the birds were killed trying to perch or when flying off the wires, or both. (More likely from flying into the wires, eg. Mute Swans in South east England - Ed.). This mortality pressure on normally long-lived birds may be making a significant impact on the vulture population.

(Ref: Markus, M.B. - Nature, 238, 5361:228)