

FOREIGN NEWS

EASTERN GREAT REED-WARBLER STUDIES

This is an important paper which should be read by anyone contemplating a study of reed-warblers. The species concerned, Acrocephalus orientalis, is very similar to A. arundinaceus and a number of comparisons was made by the authors. The study was carried out in swamps at Sungei Way, Selangor Malaysia. Among the many facts revealed, it is shown that males and females winter in different habitats, the males mostly in bushes occasionally away from water and the females in Phragmites. As a result males suffer from more feather wear than females. Different departure dates for the sexes were determined as was the build up of migratory fat deposits. The effect of disturbance caused by mist-netting activities was also quantified and as a result adjustments were made to the data.

(Ref: Nisbet, I.C.T. & Medway, Lord (1972) - Ibis 114:451-494)

MIGRATION OVER THE SEA MAY BE HAZARDOUS

Arctic Skuas Drowning Passerines

The skuas were repeatedly observed chasing passerines mainly Skylarks Alauda arvensis and Meadow Pipits Anthus pratensis at Aberlady Bay, Scotland. On several occasions the skuas eat crabs dropped by the birds. Twice a Skylark was chased over the sea and forced into the water by several skuas. The drowned bird was then picked up and eaten by a skua. (Ref: Ramsay, A.D.K. (1973) British Bird 66(4) : 168)

Passerines Settling On The Sea

Also in Scotland, a Song Thrush Turdus philomelos was observed being blown towards the shore by a strong wind. Flying weakly, it finally flopped into the sea 300m offshore. It remained in the water for nearly two minutes, keeping its tail cocked above the surface. It then took off from a wave top and flew ashore fairly strongly. (Ref: Hog, R.H. (1973) British Birds 66(4) : 169-170)

A male Blackbird Turdus merula was observed flying weakly above the sea and gradually losing height. About 100m from the shore, it could not clear the top of a wave and landed in the water. The bird remained unmoving and was carried inshore by the waves until a breaker flung it up on the pebbly beach. Thinking the bird to be dead, the observer walked over to examine it, when the bird suddenly revived and flew off quite strongly. (Ref: Delaney T. (1973) British Birds 66(4) : 170)

FLIGHTLESSNESS IN MOULTING PASSERINES

Five species in Finland including Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus and Whitethroat Sylvia communis were investigated. Short postnuptial moult (35 - 50 days). Some moulting birds unable and/or unwilling to fly. The flightlessness was caused by many remiges and retrices being lost simultaneously.

(Ref: Haukioja, E. (1971) Orn. Fenn. 48 (3-4) : 101-116)

CAPTURE-RECAPTURE OF TAXICABS

A statistician has developed further methods of population estimate by testing the capture-recapture technique on a population of known parameters. The population chosen was the taxicab population of Edinburgh, 'capture' and 'recapture' being made by reading number plates. (Ref:Carothers, A.D. (1973) J.Anim.Ecol. 42 : 125-146)

PALAEARCTIC WARBLER MOULT IN UGANDA

An account is given of moult studies on 1 100 warblers trapped at Kampala. The species covered are the Reed, Sedge, Garden and Willow Warblers. Reed Warblers arrived in either worn (first year birds) or fresh (adult birds) plumage. The other three species arrive in worn plumage and moult locally. Moult duration of 65 - 80 days was found in the latter species. (Ref:Pearson, D.J. (1973) Bird Study 20 (1) : 24-36)

KNOT WING LENGTHS

Changes in Knot wing lengths in relation to age and time. (Ref:Pieukowski, M.W. & Minton, C.D.T. (1973) Bird Study 20 (1) : 63-68)

NEW ZEALAND BANDING

1971/72 totals were 35 125 ringed, 11 994 recoveries and 9 704 retraps. The proportionately high number of recoveries is apparently due to a number of records being held over while the system was being computerised. Emphasis on specific studies has resulted in a decrease in the number of birds ringed. (Ref:Robertson, C.J.R. (1973) Notornis 20 (1) : 59-70)

TAPE RECORDER AS AN AID TO TRAPPING

Further information on the technique is given in this article. The main point of interest for us is that it is mentioned that swallows Hirundo rustica were found to roost around the speaker of a tape recorder when it played the swallow's song. In 1972 it was found that the birds were even more attracted when pre-amplifiers were used. (Ref:Speek, B.J. (1973) Ebba News 36(2) : 106)

NIGERIAN RINGING 1972

2083 birds were ringed during this period. The author points out that the Government of the N.E.State has engaged a Zoologist (Birds) and ringing may depend on this appointee's activities in the Maiduguri and Lake Chad areas. Included in the 1972 ringing totals are:- 93 Wood Sandpiper; 943 Yellow Wagtail; 45 European Swallow; 187 Willow Warbler.

One intra-African recovery is of interest:-

Garden Warbler ringed: 9.10.70 Kano, Nigeria
recovered: 1.2.71 Kinshasa, Congo
(Ref:Sharland, R.E. (1972) Nigerian Orn.Soc.Bull. 9(34):13-15)

BRITISH RINGING 1970

This report is published for the first time as a supplement of Bird Study. Much of the comment in the report covers the continuing battle to keep ringing within the financial resources available to the B.T.O. Increased prices of rings do not yet seem to have had much influence on the number of birds ringed which for the year was 506 108 including 88 533 pulli. One of the more notable recoveries was:-

Knot CR 76777	FG	30.8.69	Midrips, Lydd(Kent)
			50.55 N, 0.51 E.
	Shot	10.10.70	Lourenco Marques
			25.58 S, 32.35 E

This was the first B.T.O. bird of any species recovered in Eastern Africa. According to the tables given, 44 British swallows have been recovered up until the end of 1970 in South Africa.

A Common Tern recovered seven months after ringing at Walvis Bay was the most southern B.T.O. record of this species (since eclipsed by the controls made in the Port Elizabeth area).

The report is pleasantly presented but it is a pity that distance moved and direction taken is not included.
(Ref:Spencer, R. (1972) Bird Study 19. Supp. : 1-52)