

FOREIGN NEWS

MALLARD RELEASE IN UNDERSTOCKED PRAIRIE POTHOLES

An attempt was made to increase the breeding population of mallard duck in potholes in Manitoba, Canada. Of about 1 400 female ducklings released, only 25% returned the year after release to the breeding area. Although the density of mallards in the release area became four times the normal density elsewhere as a result of the releases, only 12% of the hens produced broods. The production rate therefore remained very low. Lack of nest cover and high predation rates were thought to be the main factors responsible.
(Ref: Sellers, R.A. (1973) - J. Wildl. Manage. 37(1):10-22)

WADER NUMBERS IN BRITAIN

The national count of all waders in Britain carried out in Jan. 1972 showed a total population of 1 410 000 birds. Of these the most numerous was the Knot Calidris canutus at 388 000, which is estimated to be 70% of the 550 000 total European wintering population. It is interesting to note that the International Waterfowl Research bureau classifies any estuary which has a regular count of 20 000 or more waders as being of international importance.
(Ref: Prater, Tony, (1973) - B.T.O. News 60:4-5)

"EXTRA" PRIMARIES IN DOVES

A captive Collared Turtle Dove Streptopelia decaocto was found to have 11 primaries on one wing and ten on the other. The extra primary had an extra greater and under-wing covert, but the number of median wing coverts was the same on both wings. The beginning and end of moult on both wings was synchronous i.e. one wing moulted an extra feather in the same time as the other moulted the normal number of feathers.

(Ref: Imboden, C. (1973) - Der Ornith. Beobach. 70:19-26)

(What is the frequency of extra primaries in our S.A. Streptopelias? Ed)

MIGRATION SPEED

During the 1971 Operation Baltic, a study of migration in this area involving large scale ringing, a Great Tit Parus major was recovered seven hours after ringing, having flown a total of about 260km. A speed of 37km/hour was therefore maintained over this period.

(Ref: Busse, P. (1973) - The Ring 74:1)

ESTIMATING ROOSTING BIRD POPULATIONS

The estimation of numbers of birds can be indirectly one of the aims of ringing studies. An alternative ingenious way has been developed in the U.S. for blackbirds/starlings. An estimate was made of the quantity of faeces deposited by a single bird per night. Then samples were taken in different areas in the roost. The conclusion - 2 294 713 birds.

(Ref: Stewart, P.A. (1973) - Auk 90:353-355)

WADER BANDING IN AUSTRALIA

4 092 migratory waders have been banded in 19 years work in New South Wales, though half of this small, by S.A. standards, total was caught in only two seasons. Ringers suffer many of the problems familiar to S.A. wader ringers, mosquitoes, rain, heat, sweat and even a 'southerly buster' (wind) being mentioned. Cannon-netting

trials have also been started but no real success has been achieved yet. Species of interest are 16 Turnstone, 574 Curlew Sandpiper and 6 Knot.

(Ref: Lane, S.G. (1973) - Australian Bird Bander 11(2):27-29)

PALEARCTIC MIGRANTS IN KENYA AND TANZANIA

This paper covers the less common migrants to the two countries. It includes useful comments on the full range of species from raptors and waders to warblers.

(Ref: Backhurst, G.C., Britton, P.L. & Mann, C.F. (1973) E.A.N.H.S. Journal 140:1-38.)

AUSTRALIAN RINGING REPORT, July 1971 to June 1972

79 323 birds of 405 species were banded in this period, colonially breeding species such as the Straw-necked Ibis and the Crested Tern providing a high percentage of the total ringed. The 93 page report contains a lot of information though only 335 selected recoveries out of a total of 13 110 recoveries and retraps are given in detail. Other statistics such as notable movements and longevity records are presented plus details of the year's completed moult cards (678). A long list of publications involving use of ringing data is included, but very few of these involve detailed analyses. The recovery data are interspersed with comments which makes this section interesting reading. The parallels between the Australian and the S.A. ringing schemes remain close.

(Ref: Purchase, D. (1973) - Div. of Wildl. Res. Tech. Paper No.27:1-93)

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Great Reed Warblers

David Pearson, a well-known ornithologist in Kenya is carrying out a study of the Great Reed Warbler. He requests data on :

- 1) Number in old/new plumage.
- 2) Number in active moult.
- 3) Number in fresh plumage

Please give the date of each observation. Information to D.J. Pearson, Dept. of Biochemistry, University of Nairobi, P.O.Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya.