

FAIR ISLE BIRD OBSERVATORY.

BULLETIN No. 3, 1950.

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1. Interesting records - Shetland.

Water Pipit. One was seen at a few yards range, in bright sunlight, by L. S. V. Venables, at edge of Spiggie Brow marsh, Dunrossness, May 8-9th. First record for Shetland and apparently also for Scotland.

Marsh Warbler. One was trapped in the Gully, Fair Isle, by Cmdr. Tom Yeoman, on June 10th, and was retrapped at North Haven on the 11th. Colorimeter readings of mantle, breast and rump were taken. Fourth Spring record for Fair Isle and Scotland, the last being in 1929.

Hobby. Excellent views of one were had by Pat Sandeman and K. W. near Burravoe, Yell, on June 13th. There are few previous records for Shetland.

King Eider. A drake was seen near St. Ninian's Isle, S. Mainland, by Mrs. F. E. Carter on May 27th. The last Shetland record (excluding Fair Isle) is apparently June 1910.

White-billed Northern Diver. L. S. V. Venables identified a first-year bird near Spiggie on May 21st. For previous records see British Birds 40: 282 (1947).

(Red-headed Bunting. A male in fine plumage, except for a much-battered tail, was caught in a baited bird-cage in a Lerwick garden on June 6th. G. Theo Kay and K. W., who have examined the bird, consider the condition of the tail-feathers and the bird's remarkable tameness point to its being an "escape", probably from a passing vessel. The species is permitted British Status on the strength of an adult male taken at North Ronaldshay on June 19th, 1931, - see British Birds 25: 66).

2. Recovery of ringed bird.

A 1st-summer male Wheatear trapped on June 16th, 1950, was wearing ring D. 8159, put on a nestling (one of a brood of 7) in a burrow at North Haven on June 19th, 1949. The trap in which the bird was taken is only one hundred yards from the old nesting-burrow!

3. Late migrants at Fair Isle.

Chaffinch. A pair from June 1-4th. The male was trapped on 5th when singing in the approach to the Haa Trap, and was retrapped in the Gully 2 miles N. on 9th. Colorimeter readings were taken and may assist later in determining race. (Stay 10 days, without any increase in weight).

Yellow-hammer. A late male on June 17th.

Willow-warbler. Last one seen was trapped June 6th. One was reported Unst, June 8th.

Marsh Warbler. See para. 1.

Sedge Warbler. One trapped in Gully, June 6th, and released North Haven was retrapped in Gully June 10th. (Stay 5 days, no increase in weight. A similar case of a Sedge Warbler returning to this habitat was experienced last year).

Redstart. Last seen was a female, June 5th.

Swallow. Several daily to June 4th; three on 6th and singly 8-9th, 16th and 19th. Six at Baltasound, Unst, June 10th.

House Martin. Many on June 4th; two next day; thirty on 6th and singly 8th and 10th.

Sand Martin. Single bird, June 16th.

Swift. One June 3rd, four next day, one on 5th and three on 6th.

Guckoo. Three, June 5th.

Kestrel. Female from June 7-10th.

Heron. One, June 5th; one, June 19th.

Wigeon. Two, June 8th.

Goosander. Male in eclipse from June 5-10th.

Great Northern Diver. Immature bird from June 3-12th.

Curlew. Two on June 5th, four on 15th and one next day.

Whimbrel. Four on 4-5th and singly 6-7th and 9th.

Snipe. Singly June 9-10th and 12th.

Turnstone. Two on June 6th and three on 16th. Flock of thirty, Baltasound, Unst, June 9-13th.

Dunlin. Four, June 8-9th and 12th; one on 15th.

Redshank. One on June 12th and 16-17th.

Black-headed and Common Gulls. A few at intervals.

4. Spring 1950 migrants at Scousborough, Shetland.

L. S. V. and U. M. Venables have supplied the following notes of Spring migrants in the Scousborough district of South Mainland/

## Mainland, Shetland.

- Mealy Redpoll. One, May 12th.  
 Brambling. Males, May 10th and 18th.  
 Ortolan Bunting. One, May 2nd.  
 White Wagtail. One, May 4th.  
 Tree Pipit. One, May 19th.  
 Pied Flycatcher. Males on April 27th, May 8th and  
 24th, - the first a week earlier than on Fair Isle.  
 Chiffchaff. One, May 10th.  
 Willow Warbler. One, May 5th. Several *Phylloscopus*  
 sp. and a singing Willow Warbler on 7th and a few next day  
 (coinciding with the "rush" at Fair Isle); "very pale Northern-  
 type singing in my garden", May 9-10th; similar bird, 11th;  
 one, 14th; "very yellow bird", June 4-5th.  
 Sedge Warbler. Male singing, June 4th.  
 Common Whitethroat. One, May 7th.  
 Blackcap. Singly, May 7th and 8th; two males, 11th.  
 Redwing. One, May 21st.  
 Whinchat. One, May 10th.  
 Redstart. Male and female, May 7th; male, 24th.  
 Robin. One "very Continental bird", May 14th.  
 Swallow. First on May 3rd; one, 10th; two, 24th;  
 one, June 8th.  
 House Martin. One, May 10th; four, 23rd; two,  
 June 2nd; more than a dozen flying south, June 3rd, also eight  
 on 6th; one, June 7th; four next day.  
 Sand Martin. One, June 5th.  
 Swift. One, June 2nd.  
 Wryneck. One, May 13th.  
 Cuckoo. One calling, May 13th.  
 Pintail. Five, May 1st.  
 Shoveller. Male, May 15th.  
 Wigeon. Two pairs, May 8th; male, 15th.  
 Goldeneye. All wintering population away by May 8th;  
 female, May 24th; three males and female, 27th.  
 Scaup. Males on May 21st and 23rd.  
 Tufted Duck. Wintering birds mostly away by May 8th,  
 one male remaining. Pair, May 15th; two males and female,  
 23rd, and again 30th; male, June 6th.  
 Common Scoter. Five, May 2nd.  
 Long-tailed Duck. Pair in Summer plumage, May 1st.  
 Seven in Summer plumage, May 8th; four, 17th.  
 Great Northern Diver. Adult in Summer plumage, May  
 26-27th.  
 Curlew/

Curlew. Six, May 13th; six, 27th; eight, June 5th.  
 Whimbrel. Two, May 12th; singly from 13-19th;  
 thirteen, 23rd; many, 26th.  
 Black-tailed Godwit. One in red plumage, May 12-16th;  
 three red birds, June 4th.  
 Dunlin. Singly, May 24-25th; two, 30th.  
 Sanderling. Five, May 13th; one in Summer plumage,  
 June 6th. A party was seen at Unst, June 10th.  
 Common Sandpiper. One, May 12th; one, June 7th.  
 Wood Sandpiper. One, May 11th ("have seen only one  
 proviously in Shetland, - seem to be curiously rare").

## 5. Breeding Birds.

### A. Fair Isle.

Grey Wagtail. A pair has C/5 in a rock-face below the approach to the Gully Trap, - an ideal haunt close to the Gilsetter Burn. This is the first breeding-record for Shetland, and an interesting extension of range northwards from Orkney, where the species nests regularly.

RockPipit. Two C/4 were lost to predators and two C/5 are known. All four nests were on the moorland, under heather, in typical Meadow Pipit habitat. Two broods of 4 and 5 young respectively were nearly fully fledged June 17th, in nests beneath stones on the headland Bunes.

Wheatear. Three B/4 have been ringed. One nest contained in addition two infertile eggs. Two nests were under stones on Bunes in similar sites to the Rock Pipits' nests mentioned above; the other was under heather on the moor.

Bonxie. Six pairs have 5 x C/2 and 1 x C/1. Two nests are hatching, June 19-21st; another had the eggs sucked, apparently by Ravens.

Arctic Skua. The first nest to complete hatching did so on the evening of June 15th (as against 21st in 1949). One pair which lost their C/2 on June 6th had a second C/2 at the same site before 14th. There have been 19 x C/2 and 2 x C/1. A partial albino female of the dark phase, which last year reared a chick with the same white markings as herself (see Annual/

Annual Report 1949, p. 25), has hatched one similar and one normal chicks again this year. One of last year's youngsters, recognised by its colour-rings, is present on the island as a non-breeder.

B. South Mainland.

Red-necked Phalarope. Two females arrived, May 26th; male, May 29th.

Reed Bunting. Male at only Shetland breeding-place, May 11th; female building there, May 28th.

Terns. Arrived May 21st; big influx, 26th.

Corncrake. First on May 3rd.

Quail. One calling, June 6th.

C. Unst.

Twite. One pair nesting in ivy creeper against wall of house, in typical House Sparrow niche.

Blackbird. Very common. A brood of 4 in a deserted W. D. building on summit of Saxa Vord at 940 feet.

Whimbrel. Now well established as a breeder on suitable hill-ground. Very little overlap with Curlew, most of which prefer the marshy fields.

Redshank. Now ten or a dozen pairs nesting at various places.

Dunlin. Common. Brood of 4 hatched, June 9th.

Great Skua. First chick seen, June 10th. Probably now 300 pairs Hermaness and 50 pairs Saxa Vord.

Corncrake. Very scarce; two only heard.

6. Ringing progress.

Total at June 20th, 800 birds of 47 different species.

7. Distribution.

To the distribution of this Bulletin as given in Bulletin No. 1, para. 1, add L. S. V. Venables, Ness, Scousborough, Shetland, for his own and Tom Henderson's information; and G. Theo Kay, 51 St. Olaf Street, Lerwick, Shetland, for circulation among Lerwick ornithologists.