

This was the third Scottish record of the species and the second of the American race. It was reported by other observers as remaining until 26th February 1976, the first British record of wintering.

ALAN BROWN, R. H. HOGG

Aberrant Golden Plover

In late July 1979 we were informed that a Lesser Golden Plover was present at Musselburgh (Midlothian) and we understood that grey axillaries, diagnostic of the species, were said to have been seen. Close observations over the following week, however, proved the bird to be an aberrant Golden Plover.

It was strikingly grey and could easily be picked out from the flock of Golden Plovers at a considerable distance. The pale supercilium was more prominent than the Golden Plovers' but overall the bird was the same size and shape. Good views of the underwing showed it to be completely white, including the axillaries. The flanks beside the join of the wing were grey, however, and it is possible that observers who obtained a brief view of the bird in flight may have mistaken this area for grey axillaries.

It is clear that observers faced with a bird superficially resembling a Lesser Golden Plover should first of all satisfy themselves that it is not an aberrant Golden Plover (see also note on similar bird on Islay, *British Birds* 71: 271-2).

ALAN BROWN, PETE ELLIS

Calandra Lark on Fair Isle

On 28th April 1978 R. A. Williams found a Calandra Lark at Field, Fair Isle. Together with other observers I arrived at the site shortly afterwards and with the aid of a tripod-mounted telescope very good views were obtained.

Description A large pale lark, perhaps a third larger than Skylarks alongside. Upperparts mid brown, pale buff edges to feathers giving streaked appearance; crown darker than mantle and more heavily streaked. Sides of face warm rufous buff contrasting with crown; pale spot between eye and malar region; inconspicuous buff supercilium from base of bill to rear of ear coverts; broad white moustachial stripe bordered beneath by thin dark brown stripe ending on sides of throat. Throat pure white; upper breast washed warm buff, darker streaks becoming heavily streaked in centre, forming pectoral band; two black crescentic neck patches blended with streaks on lower edge of pectoral band; belly white, flanks off white with a few dark streaks. Median coverts dark brown with broad buff edges forming a wing bar; greater coverts similar with broader edges; tertials pale buff with darker centres; secondaries dark brown with broad buff

edges and white tips; primaries darkest brown with narrow buff edges. Tail dark brown with prominent white outer feathers. Underwing blackish with paler axillaries and white trailing edge to secondaries. Bill heavy and bunting-like, pale horn above, straw colour beneath; eye appeared dark and legs dark flesh.

It did not call often but a *churrreep* note was heard in flight, when the large size and black underwing with white trailing edge afforded easy identification; the legs dangled in the manner of a Corn Bunting. The flight was heavy and floppy compared with that of Skylark, with broad based wings with blunt tips.

The bird frequented fields of newly sown oats and was seen to feed on oat grains and small insect larvae and earthworms. It was well camouflaged against the earth and generally kept a low stance but when alert stood erect, the white belly and dark neck patches then making it quite conspicuous. It was watched till late in the afternoon but not seen subsequently.

This would appear to be the first Scottish record and the second for the British Isles, the first being at Portland, Dorset, on 2nd April 1961. Peter Davis in Williamson's *Fair Isle and its Birds* (1965) gives a record for Fair Isle in spring about 1925 but no details were known. The species breeds throughout the Mediterranean region to Afghanistan and the northern Caspian; northern populations winter in southern parts of the range and in Egypt.

I. S. ROBERTSON

Obituary

FRANK FRASER DARLING

(23 June 1903 - 22 October 1979)

Sir Frank Fraser Darling was a Yorkshireman by birth and a Scot by adoption. His name has been synonymous for half a century with natural history and land use in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. For 30 years he was a leading figure in the world conservation movement, travelling widely in North America and Africa to repeat in foreign settings what he first did in Scotland. His ecological work possessed visionary as well as scientific qualities and his advice was stamped with an authority born from a rare insight into natural processes as well as experimental results. He was a pessimist in the world of human devastation, to the relief of which he devoted his life and which he could never bring himself to eschew in favour of the optimistic speculator.