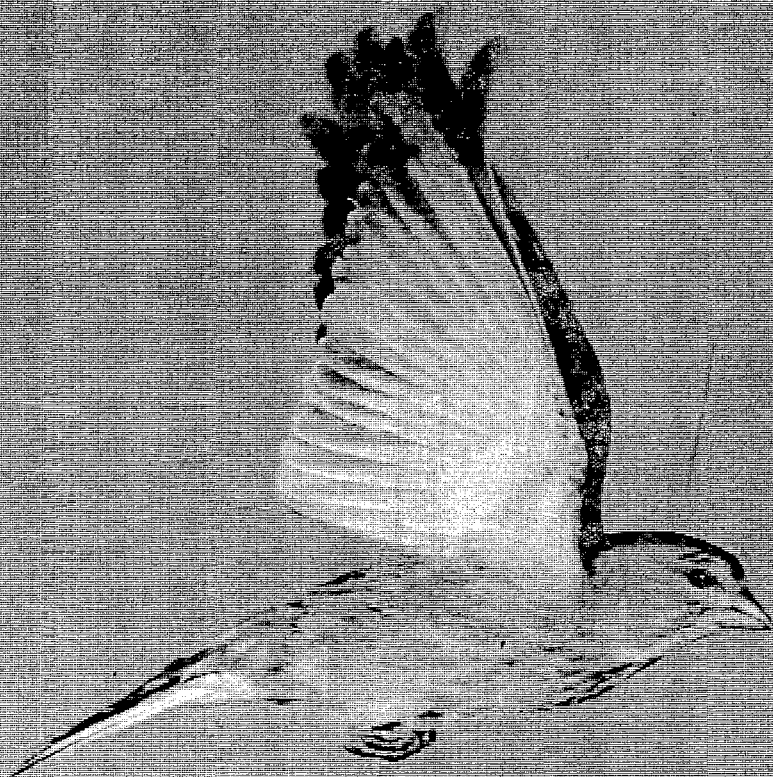


IL-MERILL

MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

BULLETIN OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

No. 2 August 1970



MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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Cover picture: Linnet (*Acanthis cannabina*) by E. Hosking. This dainty finch is a very common autumn migrant and a common winter resident. A few birds breed regularly in Gozo. Unfortunately it is one of the most trapped finches in Malta.

IL-MERILL

The title of the Society's Bulletin, IL-MERILL, is the Maltese name for the Blue Rock Thrush, *Monticola solitarius*, which is one of the few resident species of the Islands. It was chosen as the National Bird of Malta by the local National Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation and has been the emblem of the Malta Ornithological Society since the latter's inception.

Bulletin of the Malta Ornithological Society No. 2 August 1970

EDITORIAL

We have great pleasure in presenting the second issue of the new Bulletin, Il Merill, the organ of the Ornithological Society. The chief aim of this publication is to seek support in our continuous effort to protect bird life, especially in Malta, but also in other countries. Single efforts often achieve little but united, international ones do eventually make their mark. It is some consolation to know that after hundreds of thousands of protests to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture over the renewed annual massacre of millions of small birds, there has been a definite promise of a revoking of the permission to net birds during the migration periods. Pollution of the national heritage of land, forest, air and water is fortunately being brought home to the public by means of the Press, radio and TV, but closely connected with this is the wanton destruction of increasing numbers of species of wild life throughout the world. DDT and other chemicals are now being banned in many countries and

they are the great enemies of wild life, especially birds. But man the hunter does his share of destruction also and we hope gradually to bring this home to the public. It is always a question of education and that can only come about through instruction of the adult population and the children in the schools. It would do Malta no harm to take a leaf from the teachings of Buddha and to realise that life in all its forms is sacred. Man is now the master of nature but he has no right to the wanton destruction of any form of life.

Malta is being represented at the Autumn Convention of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Texel, Holland by Mr. J. Sultana, our hard-working secretary. We are pleased to be able to send him there through the generosity of THE FRIENDS OF MALTA who kindly came to our aid. Mr. J. Sultana is most up-to-date in field work and various aspects of bird preservation in Malta and he will, no doubt, tell us of his experiences in our next issue.

MISCELLANY

A misguided educational approach

The appreciation of nature and wild-life can only be attained through the education of the younger generation with practical examples in the field.

It is therefore frustrating to learn that a bird stuffing club was opened in the scholastic 1969-70 of the Lyceum, Secon-Gozo. "Focus" — review of activities and achievements during 1969-70 of the Lyceum, Secondary Technical School, Technical Institute and Gozo Industrial Training Centre — carries a report on the bird stuffing club, "many birds were skinned and mounted. A large number of attractive and beautifully mounted specimens will be on show at the 1970 School Exhibition".

1970 happens to be European Nature Conservation Year and it would have been more befitting to do something towards conservation. In this modern age, in which bird life is being threatened as never before by pollution and destruction of the environment, we can no longer afford the selfishness of bird skin collections. Birds, whether resident or migratory, are part of our national heritage and individuals have no right to destroy it for their own selfish ends.

It is by far better to teach young people to appreciate birds in their wild state. There is a thrill in the ability to identify the large number of different migrant species that visit our shores and pleasure can be derived from watching and studying these feathered creatures.

Introducing bird watching to school children is certainly healthier than bird-stuffing which is nowadays regarded as

totally Victorian and is one of the major causes of the indiscriminate slaughter of wild birds in our islands.

It is worth quoting an extract from the foreword by Miss M. Mortimer, present Director of Education, in A. Valletta's booklet "Know the Birds", which was prepared for primary schools:

"But when we walk in the country or sit in the public gardens how many of us are familiar with the birds that delight us with their songs or flit about us gaily at work? Yet it is the birds that move freely in these surroundings that charm us best: in fact there are many persons particularly in other countries who make "bird watching" their hobby and whose delight it is to remain hidden for hours near bird haunted places not to kill the birds nor to take their eggs but for the joy of getting to know more about these lovely creatures of God".

Indiscriminate shooting at Ghadira

It is said that Ghadira is reserved for duck-shooting. Those who visited the place in April and May can deny this statement. Green, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Little Ringed Plovers, Little Stints and other small waders were indiscriminately shot on more than one occasion. The result was a heap of dead waders. Several others, which were left maimed, could be seen pitifully limping about in the shallows.

M.O.S. representation at the XVth World Conference of the I.C.B.P.

On behalf of the Friends of Malta G.C., Mr. H.C. Morris, A.C. C.S., Vice-president of the Local

Branch, has donated the sum of £60 to the Malta Ornithological Society in assistance to send a representative to attend the XV World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, which is taking place at De Koog, Texel, Netherlands, between the 6th and 11th September, 1970.

Malta has been a member of the I.C.B.P. since September, 1963, The International Council for Bird Preservation has National Sections in many countries and exercises considerable influence throughout the world in bringing about adequate measures for the protection of wild birds.

Mr. W.E. Grey, Life-member of the M.O.S., also made a donation of £10 to assist in this matter.

Italy to ban bird-netting

After a widespread outcry from European Nature Conservationists at the legalising of bird-netting in Italy last January, the Italian delegation has told the Council of Europe that the Italian Ministry of Agriculture intends soon to introduce a new law to forbid this practice.

Bird-netting is still carried on in many parts of Europe and the Italian Authorities hope that other countries will follow suit to put an end to what is everywhere recognised as a severe threat to bird life.

The Council of Europe's Conservation experts paid tribute to the Italian Minister of Agriculture, Lorenzo Natali, for this initiative. Statements from national delegations and International Hunting Council revealed a thriving trade in netting birds between several countries and the experts agreed that only co-ordinated legislation in all parts of Europe against netting and the importation and exportation of birds could solve the problem. The chief species involved are song-birds which are caged and other small birds to keep as pets etc.

European Conservation Year Exhibition

The Malta Committee for E.C.Y. 1970 held an exhibition at the National Museum, Valletta, from 14th to 23rd July. The exhibition was officially opened by a speech from the Hon. Minister of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, who conveyed a word of praise to the M.O.S. for its activities.

Hats off to the R.S.P.C.A. (Malta Branch)

The Royal Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (Malta Branch) deserves a word of praise for helping the cause of bird protection. Officers and inspectors of the Society are going round to see that protected birds like the Blue Rock Thrush are not kept in cages.

REGINALD ERNEST MOREAU Hon. M.A. (Oxford) — AN APPRECIATION —

The man who followed the birds from their breeding quarters in Europe across the Mediterranean to their farthest wintering latitudes of Africa

has died in Hereford General Hospital in June this year on the day after his 73rd birthday.

Reginald Moreau was a well

known ornithologist and a great friend of our Society. He joined the M.O.S. when I met him one fine day in May 1962 at the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology in Oxford.

'Reg', as all his friends knew him, was thrilled when I mentioned to him that an Ornithological Society had just been started in Malta.

This first meeting made me realise that, besides being an ornithologist of great ability, Reg was a gentleman and a great character. Before I left he presented me with several copies of his ornithological papers.

As is known in the bird world Reginald Moreau, was one of the foundation stones of the new science of field ornithology and his theories on Trans-Mediterranean migration have always been the key-stone in our analysis of bird migration over Malta.

Over a period of 45 years, he wrote many authoritative articles and some of them in collaboration with his wife Winifred, who continues to live in Sutton St. Nicholas, Herefordshire.

In 1966, Moreau published "The Bird Faunas of Africa and its Islands", a zoo-geographical synthesis of this continent and a formidable task in itself that makes Moreau an international authority on African birds.

His interest in birds started in 1930 when he went to Egypt, where he spent seven years on the edge of the Sahara in Lower Egypt. He travelled extensively with his wife on camel back across the deserts and in a volume of short stories he describes some of these travels. His bird notes in Egypt appeared in two

issues of the "Ibis" between 1927 and 1928.

In 1928, Moreau moved to Tanzania (then Tanganyika) to become secretary and librarian of the East African Agricultural Research Station at Amani. It was here that he began the extensive field work on African birds. He even discovered several new ones.

When he retired from the Colonial Service in 1946, he was offered responsibility for Animal Behaviour Unit at Cambridge University, but finally moved to Oxford and worked in the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology from 1947 to 1968.

He edited the 'Ibis' - journal of the Ornithologists' Union - from 1947 to 1960 and succeeded in making this journal into the premier scientific ornithological publication in the world. Between 1960 and 1965 Moreau served as President of the B.O.U.

Besides his many authoritative papers published in different scientific journals, his range of publications includes a book of social history on the village of Berrick Salome, near Oxford, where he lived for twenty years, a contribution to "A New Dictionary of Birds", and a book on the Palaearctic Birds Migration System which he had just completed in bed two days before he died.

Notwithstanding his academic career, Moreau had no formal education after the age of 17, when he left Kingston Grammar School, but his academic honours in later years included an honorary M.A. from the University of Oxford in 1955, and the Stamford Raffles Award for Contributions to Zoology presented by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1962 on behalf of the

Zoological Society of London.

Reginald's first connection with Malta was on 27th October 1936 when, together with his wife, their ship stopped for a short call in the Grand Harbour on their way back from London to Tanganyika.

After I met him in 1962, we kept in touch through correspondence and his advice and encouragement in the early days of the M.O.S. were of tremendous help. He also joined the Society as a Life-member.

In the last years of his life, though already ill, Reg continued to travel overseas. In March 1968, he and Winifred spent a fortnight in Gozo where my colleagues of the M.O.S. and I spent an enjoyable time with them either bird-watching or discussing birds and local ornithological problems.

It was a great honour to our

Society when after his visit to Gozo, Moreau sent a contribution to the Quarterly Bulletin which appeared in Vol.1 No.3 - 1968 - regarding two achievements of our bird-ringing scheme.

As Moreau states in one of his early papers, "the sea-crossing of Palaearctic birds moving to and from Africa was still imperfectly documented", and, "the actual migration over the Mediterranean is by no means well documented."

Since he wrote this statement, Moreau succeeded in filling satisfactorily this blank in ornithology. Moreover, he forwarded theories which made a great approach of human understanding in the mystery of bird migration.

Reginald Moreau is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter to whom we offer our condolences.

J.M. Attard.



ASPECTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 1969 FALL OF MIGRANTS IN MALTA.

D. Rushforth

J.Sultana and C.Gauci recorded in the September 1969 quarterly bulletin of the Malta Ornithological Society details of a major fall of trans-Saharan migrants in Malta during the last week of September 1969. Large Spring arrivals of birds that winter south of the Sahara are not unusual in Malta as borne out by historical records of the Society.

Autumn migration through the island is however generally accepted as being of a minor nature and in most years the daily totals of species primarily involved in this major arrival do not reach double figures so late in the month of September if at any time

The abundance of species primarily involved in the movement is indicated by the table below.

	Autumn 1967	Autumn 1968	24/9/1969 (Mtahleb - Buskett)
Turtle Dove	Small passage	Small passage	600 +
Tree Pipit	Singles	6 on 7/9	2200 +
Yellow Wagtail	Small numbers	100 on 9/9	920 +
Subalpine Warbler	Common in small numbers	30 on several occasions	400 +
Garden Warbler	Common in small numbers	100 on 15/9	600 +
Whitethroat	3 records	3 records	800 +
Willow Warbler	Common in small numbers	20 on 15/9	1380 +
Wood Warbler	6 on 11/9	4 on 30/8	600 +
Spotted Flycatcher	Few records	10 records	600 +
Whinchat	2 records	7 records	600 +
Wheatear	70 on 24/9	25 on 7/9	300 +
Redstart	Common in small numbers	60 late Sept.	600 +

The figures for 24th September 1969 refer to only a small area in the North West of Malta and it must be accepted that these figures are typical of a general fall throughout the islands. In view of the few competent observers in Malta at this time it is difficult to make any reasonable estimate of birds involved in the fall but it must certainly be many thousands.

For at least a week prior to the fall, throughout the whole of the southern and central European belt it had been unattractive weather for migration. Extensive overcast conditions and frequent rain suggests that it is safe to assume that little was crossing this wide belt of Europe at this time. An anticyclone approaching from the South West on the 20th September started the recession of this unpleasant weather and gradually over the next four days spread eastwards across Spain, France, Italy and

the Adriatic regions. On the 23rd and 24th September this high pressure area was centred over Czechoslovakia and extended favourable migratory conditions over the whole of the Central and Southern Mainland of Europe.

On the 23rd September low pressure approached Malta from the South West and by the 24th had developed into a depression centred over Malta itself. 7/8 cloud and winds in excess of 13 knots together with frequent heavy rain showers created depressive migratory conditions.

Many papers have been written expressing the view that under normal conditions the majority of migrants wintering South of the Sahara make the journey from the European mainland to a point south of the Sahara in one single journey. Hence the comparatively small number of birds recorded

and on the North African coast during the typical autumn migration.

The situation during the 23rd-26th September was however anything but typical. The favourable weather conditions over the mainland of Europe encouraged migrants to commence their long journey southwards only to be met in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean region with totally unfavourable conditions, which brought their migratory journey to an abrupt halt. There can be little doubt that the majority of birds present in Malta at this time were birds brought down by the depressed weather conditions. Whilst the grounding conditions continued in Malta until the 27th September there are indications that breaks in the cloud began to develop during the night of the 24th/25th September sufficient to allow a proportion of the grounded migrants to leave. This is borne out by the reduced numbers of most species on the 25th and reducing even further on the 26th and 27th as conditions continued to improve.

Major falls of migrants on the

requent in September since the weather in Northern Europe tends to be more susceptible to change at this time of year. In Malta however the weather in September and early October is usually settled with light winds creating generally favourable migratory conditions. The only comparable fall of Autumn migrants in recent years occurred late in October 1966 following a period of severe thunderstorms, when many thousands of Songs Thrushes, Blackbirds and Robins were grounded on the islands.

These conditions will occur periodically and in varying degrees of intensity to give the ornithologist in Malta an unexpected boost at a time of year when things are normally unexciting. It must be recognized however that those conditions are abnormal and that in most years the trans Sahara migrants will pass by Malta on their long flight Southward.

I am indebted to Nick Diamond of the British Trust for Ornithology for his assistance in interpreting the weather reports and to the Meteorological Office at Bawtry for the loan of the weather reports.



BIRD-WATCHING IN MALTA

M. Beaman.

Where do you see all these birds? I've only seen a few sparrows in Malta. This is a question which I am frequently asked. Many people, including, I suspect some of our members, are under the impression that these islands are almost devoid of bird-life. Although this is almost true during the summer months, at other times of the year the islands hold considerable numbers of many species of birds.

The secret of seeing birds lies in being in the right place at the right time. The time of day is of great importance, for birds tend to be most active in the early morning and late afternoon, thus it follows that watching is best done at these times.

Factors such as wind direction also influence the numbers and types of birds which may be seen. It should be remembered that

migrating birds tend to fly into the wind and thus arrive in Malta on the side towards which the wind is blowing. Even then, certain localities will be more favoured than others; for this reason a list of the best areas in Malta, including some information about likely birds etc., follows:

Buskett

The only area in Malta which can be described as woodland and one of the best places to watch birds in attractive surroundings. The access is too well known to need mention, although it should be noted that the best part is at the lowest part of the valley.

Winter:

Thrushes, finches, wagtails, Goldcrest, & Firecrest, Robin, Blackcap, Chiffchaff.

Spring & Autumn:

Night Heron, raptors (Birds of

Prey), crakes, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Hoopoe, Golden Oriole, Wryneck, warblers, chats, flycatchers, hirundines (swallows etc.), Woodchat Shrike, Roller.

Delimara

The southernmost point of Malta, forming one of the arms of Marsaxlokk. During strong north-west or north east winds in spring and autumn, large numbers of herons can be seen from the point as they seek shelter from the wind on Malta's southern coast.

Winter:

Gulls, terns, ducks, Gannet, Cormorant.

Spring & Autumn

Hérons, terns, Cory's Shearwater (Mediterranean form), raptors.



Għadira, the only fresh-water pool in Malta, where many waders and wild fowl rest and feed during migration. The M.O.S. hopes to turn it into a bird-sanctuary and field centre. (*J. Attard*).

Ghadira

Malta's only freshwater pool and the target of a bird-reserve campaign by the M.O.S. Preserved as a duck shoot (during winter) by its present tenant, it is virtually the only sanctuary for exhausted migrants. In addition to the water birds attracted by the pool, the surrounding tamarisks hold large numbers of small passerines. Easterly winds produce the largest falls in this area, but some birds are always present.

Winter:

Ducks, Black-necked Grebe, Coot, Moorhen, Water Rail.

Spring & Autumn:

Hérons and waders (in autumn, only if pool full), Turtle Dove, Wryneck, Woodchat Shrike, Hoopoe, warblers, chats, flycatchers, pipits, Scops Owl.

Mtahleb

An area of great scenic beauty, Mtahleb is the only break in the high cliffs that run from Gebel Ciantar to Fomm ir-Rih. Access to the lowest part of the valley, which is the best for watching, can be obtained by taking a left

turn from the cliff-top road near the primary school and by taking the right fork halfway down the hill. The rocky cliff-top should be searched for such species as the Rock Thrush (not to be confused with the Blue Rock Thrush, which is to be found along the sea-cliffs), Wheatear and Black-eared Wheatear. Due to its position on the coast, Mtahleb is best visited during easterly winds in spring and autumn.

Spring & Autumn:

Raptors, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Hoopoe, Wryneck, Woodchat Shrike warblers, chats, flycatchers, pipits.

Salina

The salt-pans at Salina form an ideal resting place for migrating waders and other water birds.

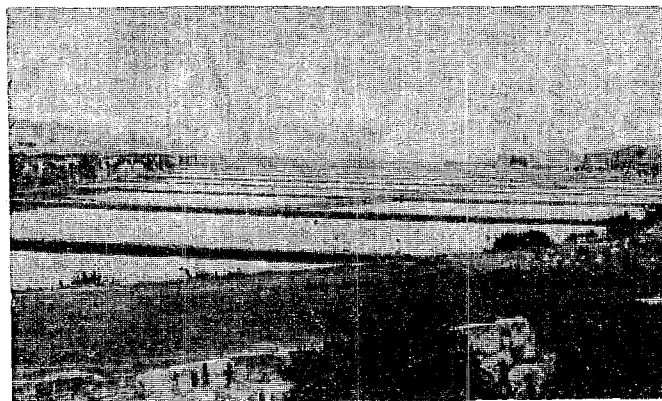
Unfortunately the place is heavily shot and those birds that escape the guns are discouraged from remaining there long.

Winter:

Ducks, Black-necked Grebe.

Spring & Autumn:

Hérons, Waders, terns, Kingfisher (autumn), hirundines, wagtails, small passerines (in the Kennedy Grove).



The salt-pans at Salina are also much frequented by waders, but these are not given any chance by the numerous shooters that visit the place.

(J. Sultana)

Ta' Qali

The disused airdrome at Ta' Qali forms an ideal habitat for birds of heathland and other flat areas. Unfortunately it is also heavily shot over and few large birds remain for long.

Winter:

Golden Plover, Lapwing.

Spring & Autumn:

Raptors (especially harriers in spring), waders, Hoopoe, pipits, wagtails and chats.

In the next issue J.Sultana writes on bird-watching in Gozo.

BIRD NOTES

APRIL to JULY.

Spring migration was rather lean with very few notable falls or passages recorded. As usual, however, it was nonetheless exciting with a good number of rare or unusual birds turning up regularly.

APRIL

April opened with a movement of Ruffs, with 15 counted on the 1st. On the same day a Dotterel was found freshly dead. The 2nd saw more Ruffs with 52 counted and a fall of Bonelli's Warblers, with 6 at Ghadira and 2 at Mosta. 3 Kentish Plovers, a Great Spotted Cuckoo, a Stone Curlew and an Osprey were also logged. 2 Whinchats at Ghadira were the first for the spring. On the 3rd two late Ring Ouzels were at Delimara, where Purple and Grey Heron and Little Egret were also seen; a Pallid Swift was seen at Gebel Ciantar. Great Reed Warbler was new on the next day, when a Pratincole was also newly arrived. The first Montagu's Harrier arrived on the 5th; on the same day a party of 16 Black Kites flew over Ta' Qali and 17 Honey Buzzards were seen at Mtahleb. A late Blackbird was also logged. The first of a number of Reed Warblers was seen on the 6th and the last White Wagtail the following day. Another Great Spotted Cuckoo was recorded on the 8th. The 9th saw a Savi's Warbler at Wied il-Luq and Marsh, Pallid, Hen and Montagu's Harrier at

Ta' Qali, where about 20 Red-throated Pipits were present. A Pratincole and a late Starling were seen on the same day. A Kentish Plover arrived at Ghadira on the 10th and stayed till the 24th. The first Garden Warblers arrived on the 11th when a final Serin was seen. A passage of herons, including the first Squaccos, was recorded at Delimara the next day: a Glossy Ibis, an Osprey, a Pratincole, a Snipe and several Greenshanks were also observed. A Savi's warbler on the 13th could have been the same bird logged on the 9th. A Black Kite, a Dotterel and a late Song Thrush were seen. An influx of Red-throated Pipits was noted on the 14th, with 30 counted at Ta' Qali. A Corncrake and an Alpine Swift arrived on the same day. A Blackcap and a Cormorant on 15th were late birds; Golden Oriole and Little Bittern were new on the same day. 2 Pratincoles and 2 late Robins were seen on the 16th when the first Nightjar was logged. The 17th saw a final Goldfinch, a very late Blackbird, 2 Reed Warblers, a Black Kite and 6 Montagu's Harriers. Small influxes of Quail, Turtle Dove and Hoopoe were noted on the 19th. New on the same day were Curlew Sandpiper, Roller, Bee-Eater and a Great Snipe: a final Chiffchaff was also seen. A Great Snipe was again recorded on the following two days. The first Red-footed Falcons arrived on the 23rd when an Ortolan Bunt-

ing and influxes of Turtle Dove and Yellow Wagtail were recorded. Several birds arrived the next day, with 2500+ Turtle Doves, 1000+ Swallows, 900+ Yellow Wagtails, 400+ Whitethroats, 100+ Spotted Flycatchers, 70+ Willow Warblers and 40+ Redstarts counted in three localities. A Temminck's Stint was new on the same day. More large arrivals were noted on the 25th and these included 800+ Whinchat, 70+ Red-footed Falcons, 14 Hobbies, 36 Golden Orioles and 30+ Wood Warblers. A Ruppell's Warbler, an Osprey, a Pratincole, an Ortolan Bunting and a very late Blackcap were also recorded, as well as the first Icterine Warblers. 3 Dotterels were at Salina the next day. Notable birds on the 28th were a Cattle Egret, an Eleonora's Falcon and a Wood Pigeon. 28 Purple Herons, 18 Hobbies and 11 Red-footed Falcons were seen on the next day. A final Bonelli's Warbler was also logged on the same day. More Red-footed Falcons passed over on the 30th.

May

A Sparrow Hawk was at M'Scala on the 1st and the last Red-throated Pipits were seen at Ta' Qali. A Garganey, a Bailon's Crake and a White-winged Black Tern were new the next day, when a few Little Bitterns and Squacco Herons were also recorded. On the 3rd there was a passage of Honey Buzzards, with 40 counted, and influxes of Quail and Little Stint, with up to 50 of the latter present at Ghadira. The last Wryneck was logged on the same day. More Honey Buzzards passed over the next day when a Corn Crake was also recorded. An exceptionally late Chiffchaff was singing at Girgenti Valley on the 5th. The following day 300+ Yellow Wagtails were counted coming in off the sea at Qawra Point and Paradise Bay. On the same day a

Kentish Plover, a Lesser Black Backed Gull, a Black Tern, a Great Snipe and 12 Nightjars were logged. Yellow Wagtails and Nightjars were again prominent the next day. On the 9th 12 Nightjars were again counted; a Common Tern was at M'Xlokk and a Sanderling arrived at Ghadira, the latter staying till the 14th. About 80 Honey Buzzards and an Osprey passed over Delimara on the 10th, when a Great Spotted Cuckoo and a late Greenfinch were recorded. The next day saw a Hen Harrier and two more Sanderlings at Salina. Several waders were at Ghadira on the 12th and these included 3 Dunlins, 23 Little Stints, 5 Curlew Sandpipers and single Greenshank, Ringed Plover and Common Sandpiper. Another Osprey and a final Redstart were seen on the same day. A Turnstone arrived on the 14th, when the last Red-rumped Swallow and Tree Pipit were seen. A final Whitethroat was seen on the following day. A large movement of hirundines took place on the 16th, with 6000+ Swallows, 6000+ House Martins and 2000+ Sand Martins counted. On the same day there was a passage of Garganey, with 15 at M'Scala/M'Xlokk and 2 in the South Comino Channel. The last Wood Warbler was seen on the 18th, when 2 Turnstones and a Rufous Bush Chat were newly arrived. The following three days saw the last Marsh Harrier, Yellow Wagtail and Lesser Kestrel respectively. On the 22nd a Lesser Black Backed Gull was seen at Dingli Cliffs and a final Garden Warbler was recorded. An Eleonora's Falcon was at Luqa and a final Whinchat at Marfa on the 23rd. The following day the last Squacco Heron, Sedge, Great Reed and Icterine Warblers, Spotted Flycatcher and Linnets were seen, and a Little Ringed Plover the next day, when a small passage of Bee-Eaters

took place. A Cream-coloured Courser arrived on the 26th and a late Night Heron on the 30th.

June

As usual June was rather quiet, but a few late stragglers were recorded on most days. Swifts were seen daily in good numbers. Hirundines, Honey Buzzards, Hobbies, Red-footed Falcons, Kestrels, Ruffs, Redshanks Turtle Doves, Bee-Eaters, Woodchat Shrikes and Chaffinches were occasionally recorded. Other unusual birds for the month of June were Rock Thrush, Whitethroat, Spotted Redshank and Alpine Swift. More interesting were a Gull-billed Tern on 3rd, a Cream-Coloured Courser on 14th and two Trumpeter Bull-

finches on 28th and 30th.

July

Redshanks, Green and Wood Sandpipers, Little Ringed Plovers and Little Stints were occasionally seen through July. Single Purple and Grey Herons were recorded on 9th and 11th respectively and a Whimbrel arrived on the 26th.

The contributors to the above Bird Notes were M. Beaman, B. German, S. Borg, C. Galea, C. Gauci, Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Hardman, D. Rushforth, J. Sultana and Mr. & Mrs. T.M. Watson.

Taxidermists C. Falzon, A. Sammut and S. Xuereb were also visited on several occasions

J. Sultana & C. Gauci

NEWS FROM THE RINGING GROUP

APRIL to JULY.

The months of April and May, the peak period of the spring migration, did not produce the number of birds a ringer would like. Only one significant fall of small passerines was recorded throughout the two months. With all ringers very active, however, over two thousand birds were ringed from April to June.

The first three weeks in April were one of the worst and with ringing taking place daily, less than two hundred birds were trapped for ringing. But a large fall took place on 24th and four ringers active on that day doubled the total for April. Very good catches were again obtained in the subsequent three days. Most of the birds were ringed at Wied Migra l-Ferha and Ghadira, in Malta and Ramla and Lunzjata Vall-eyes in Gozo. A new species added to the ringing list during the month was a Great Snipe trapped at Wied il-Luq.

Hirundines were certainly the most abundant birds about in

May. Ramla Valley, which was the best catching area during the first three months, again topped the list of best areas. It was tackled collectively by J. Sultana, Bro. Edmund and C. Gauci with very good results. The maximum catch was of over 150 hirundiunes in three hours. Hirundines in fact, constitute 85% of the birds ringed in May. Another new species was ringed this month. This was a Swift ringed at Ramla Valley.

The only ringing carried out in June was on a visit to Filfla which was originally scheduled to take place in mid-May, but had to be postponed three times owing to the strong winds. J. Sultana and C. Gauci also visited a Manx Shearwater colony in order to ring the young birds, but unfortunately it was attacked by rats and not a single one survived.

The active ringers during this period were M. Beaman, Bro. Edmund, C. Gauci, Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Hardman, J. Sultana, V. Vella Muskat and Mr. & Mrs. T.M. Watson.

LIST OF BIRDS RINGED:

Species	Jan-March	April	May	June	July	Total
Manx Shearwater	9	1	4	—	—	14
Cory's Shearwater	—	—	—	23	—	23
Storm Petrel	—	—	—	553	—	553
Kestrel	—	—	1	—	—	1
Little Ringed Plover	5	5	—	—	—	10
Little Stint	—	8	6	—	—	14
Green Sandpiper	—	2	—	—	—	2
Wood Sandpiper	—	3	1	—	—	4
Common Sandpiper	—	1	—	—	—	1
Snipe	—	1	—	—	—	1
Great Snipe	—	1	—	—	—	1
Herring Gull	—	—	—	3	—	3
Turtle Dove	—	1	—	—	—	1
Cuckoo	—	1	—	—	—	1
Scops Owl	—	1	—	—	—	1
Nightjar	—	—	1	—	—	1
Swift	—	—	1	—	—	1
Hoopoe	1	—	—	—	—	1
Wryneck	3	—	—	—	—	3
Sand Martin	3	8	173	—	—	184
Swallow	129	175	215	—	—	519
Red-rumped Swallow	1	1	2	—	—	4
House Martin	7	24	273	—	—	304
Tree Pipit	1	22	1	—	—	24
Meadow Pipit	3	—	—	—	—	3
Yellow Wagtail	1	64	4	—	—	69
Grey Wagtail	1	—	—	—	—	1
Woodchat Shrike	—	—	1	—	—	1
Dunnock	2	—	—	—	—	2
Cetti's Warbler	—	2	—	—	—	2
Savi's Warbler	—	1	—	—	—	1
Moustached Warbler	3	—	—	—	—	3
Sedge Warbler	7	39	9	—	—	55
Reed Warbler	—	5	1	—	—	6
Great Reed Warbler	—	27	14	—	—	41
Icterine Warbler	—	2	9	—	—	11
Garden Warbler	—	12	21	—	—	33
Blackcap	81	3	—	—	—	84
Whitethroat	1	103	13	—	—	117
Sardinian Warbler	19	28	6	—	—	53
Subalpine Warbler	7	8	1	—	—	16
Spectacled Warbler	—	1	—	—	—	1
Willow Warbler	6	28	5	—	—	39
Chiffchaff	202	2	—	—	—	204
Bonelli's Warbler	—	3	—	—	—	3
Wood Warbler	—	28	3	—	—	31
Firecrest	3	—	—	—	—	3
Pied Flycatcher	—	25	8	—	—	33
Collared Flycatcher	—	4	—	—	—	4
Spotted Flycatcher	—	20	7	—	—	27
Whinchat	—	28	1	—	—	29
Stonechat	1	—	—	—	—	1
Blue Rock Thrush	—	1	—	—	—	1
Black Redstart	1	—	—	—	—	1
Redstart	5	25	3	—	—	33

Robin	65	6	—	—	—	71
Nightingale	7	18	1	—	—	26
Bluethroat	1	—	—	—	—	1
Blackbird	2	—	—	—	—	2
Corn Bunting	—	—	1	—	—	1
Chaffinch	2	1	—	—	—	3
Serin	1	—	—	—	—	1
Greenfinch	1	—	—	—	3	4
Linnet	62	—	—	—	—	62
Spanish Sparrow	17	56	9	—	10	92
Golden Oriole	—	2	1	—	—	3
Total	660	797	796	579	13	2,755

RETRAPS

Few interesting retraps were obtained during the four months. The more interesting are given:

Species	Locality	Ringed	Wt. (gms)	Re-trapped	Wt.
Cory's Shearwater	Filfla	17.5.69.		14.6.70.	
Storm Petrel (Pull.)	Filfla	28.7.68.		13.6.70	
Great Reed Warbler	Wied il-Luq	13.4.70	21.7	17.4.70.	26.7
				18.4.70	28.7
				24.4.70	30
Sedge Warbler	Ramla Valley	30.3.70	11.6	3.4.70	10.8
Sedge Warbler	Ramla Valley	30.3.70	15.5	3.4.70	16.1
Redstart	Ghadira	26.3.70	13.8	2.4.70	15.7
Spanish Sparrow	Xaghra	7.2.67	—	26.4.70	—

(8 more adult Storm Petrels were retrapped after two years and 5 after one year)

BIRDS RECOVERED ABROAD

A Sedge Warbler ringed at RamlaValley on 4th April, 1970 was controlled at Little Hallingbury, Essex, England on 28th April, 1970.

FOREIGN BIRDS RECOVERED IN MALTA

An Osprey ringed as a pullus at Haltia, Finland was shot at Bahar ic-Caghaq on 2nd April, 1970.

A Swallow ringed at Kain, Belgium was controlled at Ramla Valley on 8th May 1970.

ERRATA: The ringed total for Jan — March in Bulletin NoI Page 14, should read 660 not 659.

C. GAUCI.