

HEREFORDSHIRE
ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

ANNUAL
REPORT
1951

No. 1. Vol. 1.

HEREFORDSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

No. 1.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE, 1951.

President :

Captain H. A. GILBERT, M.B.O.U.

Chairman :

Dr. C. W. WALKER, M.C.

Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer :

C. J. BRECKNELL.

Committee :

R. H. BAILLIE, M.B.O.U., P. W. HINDE (County Representative of the British Trust for Ornithology), Dr. H. G. LANGDALE-SMITH, L. SMITH, A. J. TUCKER and J. H. WILLIAMSON.

HEREFORDSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB RULES.

- 1.—NAME. The Club shall be called the Herefordshire Ornithological Club.
- 2.—OBJECTS. The objects of the Club shall be (a) to further the study of birds in the field, and (b) to assist in their preservation.
- 3.—MEMBERSHIP. The Club shall consist of a President, a Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, an Editor, five Committee Members and Ordinary Members. The Officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting and shall be eligible for re-election. Members may be elected at any meeting.

- 4.—**CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP.** Members shall be required to support and keep the laws concerning Bird Protection, as laid down in the Hereford County Council Order or Orders for the time being in force, and any members failing to support and keep such laws shall be required to resign. Members shall not divulge to unauthorised persons (*e.g.*, known collectors of skins and/or eggs) information in a manner likely to be detrimental to the objects of the Club.
- 5.—**SUBSCRIPTION.** (a) Ordinary Members:—18 years of age or over, 10s., payable on January 1st, or on election to membership. Any additional members of a family after the first, 7s. 6d.; such members receiving all the privileges of full membership.
- Junior Members (under 18 years of age), 5s. per annum, payable as above.
- Honorary Members:—As approved by the majority present at the Annual General Meeting.
- (b) All subscriptions, subsequent to those paid on admission, shall be due on January 1st each year. Any member whose subscription is twelve months in arrears shall cease to receive the Club's publications and, should the subscription not be paid during the ensuing twelve months, his name shall be deleted from the List of Members.
- 6.—**MANAGEMENT.** The Secretary shall keep Minutes of the meetings and prepare such literature as shall keep members informed of the Club's activities.
- The Treasurer shall present an audited statement of accounts at the Annual General Meeting.
- 7.—**MEETINGS.** Meetings shall be held as often as deemed desirable at the discretion of the Officers.
- 8.—**REPORT.** There shall be an Editorial Committee of at least three members, including the Secretary, appointed at an ordinary Committee Meeting. These shall prepare and present an Annual Report and such special reports as may be decided upon.
- 9.—**ALTERATION OF RULES.** An alteration of the Rules may be made only if proposed at one meeting, printed on the agenda for the following meeting, and passed by a two-thirds majority of those present.

FOREWORD.

On April 6th 1950, Dr. C. W. Walker invited a small party of eleven to his home to discuss the possibility of forming a Bird Club. From this modest start the membership had risen to 94 by December 31st, 1951.

During the year covered by this first report (1951) seven indoor meetings have been held at the Woolhope Club Room, which is the Club's headquarters by virtue of our affiliation to that Club, and the speakers at these meetings were Captain H. A. Gilbert, Dr. C. W. Walker, and Messrs. R. S. R. Fitter, P. W. Hinde and Leonard Smith. Five field meetings were also held at Dinmore Manor, Rhos Goch Gullery, Shobdon and Berrington, and twice to the Severn Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge.

Members have also taken part in the wildfowl counts in connection with the International Wildfowl Inquiry; the Heronry Census sponsored by the British Trust for Ornithology (with which we are affiliated), as well as the keeping of Nest Record Cards and the Bird Ringing scheme organised by the same Trust.

For the interest of Members, and to be in line with other Clubs of this nature, it was thought to be highly desirable that an Annual Report be published, and the compilation of this was put into the hands of a sub-committee of four of the Members.

It is greatly hoped that Members will support this wholeheartedly with suitable notes, and so ensure that it will continue to be a regular production which will increase in value and interest as time goes on.

To Dr. C. W. Walker, Messrs. C. J. Brecknell and P. W. Hinde, on the editorial sub-committee, and to all those who sent contributions I would like to offer my sincere thanks as, without their help, this Report could not have been produced.

R.H.B.

HON. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING
DECEMBER 31st, 1951.

The Balance Sheet for the Club's Accounts will be found on Page 5. Cash in hand amounts to £9 1s. 7d., there being no outstanding liabilities. The significant thing about the balance of funds remaining is that it is less than the amount of the voluntary donations which were generously given to assist the Club's inauguration. The Club has not been able to pay its way on its ordinary income, *i.e.*, the subscriptions of members.

At the Annual General Meeting held on February 9th 1952, it was decided to double the subscriptions in order to meet the rising costs of printing, paper, postages, etc.

The revised Rules, as passed at this Meeting, will be found in the Report.

C.J.B.

HEREFORDSHIRE ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB.

ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER, 1951.

RECEIPTS.	£	s.	d.	EXPENDITURE.	£	s.	d.
Dec. 31.—Subscriptions :—				Dec. 31.—Subscriptions to			
Junior	1	17	6	Affiliated Societies :			
Current	17	0	6	British Trust for			
Less overpayment	18	18	0	Ornithology	1	0	0
Donations	18	12	6	Woolhope Club	1	0	0
Sale of Nest Record Cards	11	16	0	Birmingham & Mid-			
Excess receipts over expenditure	12	6	0	land Bird Club	10	0	0
on Slimbridge trip	1	0	0	Printing, duplicating,			
				typing, etc :—			
				Membership cards	1	9	3
				Notices of Meetings	4	15	6
				Expenses of R. S. R.			
				Fitter's lecture	1	5	0
				Purchase of Nesting			
				Cards	18	0	0
				(Credit 5/6 due re			
				reduction in price)			
				Newspaper Reports	1	6	3
				Petty Cash :			
				Postages	6	13	10½
				Stationery	3	2	6½
				Balance at Bank	9	16	5
					9	1	7
					£31	2	0

I have audited the above accounts and to the best of my knowledge they are correct.

(Signed) L. SMITH,
Member of Committee.

C. J. BRECKNELL,
Hon. Treasurer.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

(The number preceding the name of each bird is that used in "The Handbook of British Birds" (1938-41) where the scientific name can be found).

1. **RAVEN.** This bird is on the increase and is slowly spreading eastwards from the Welsh border where it is common. One pair had a nest this season in a *dead* Scots pine in the north of the County (C.W.W.). Reports of nests in live pines and larches have been received, including that of a pair which successfully reared young some four miles south of Hereford (L.S.). Birds have been seen at Symond's Yat (R.H.B.), Woolhope (K.J.W.), Lucton and Bircher (P.W.H.).
3. **CARRION CROW.** Nests in thorn trees have been reported, one of which was only six feet from the ground (L.S., P.W.H. and R.H.B.).
4. **ROOK.** A freak bird was seen in the Dunfield area of Kington on July 8th and October 17th. Wings pigeon grey, back mouse brown and head brownly black. It was a mature bird with the usual whitish base to the beak (R.H.B.).
14. **STARLING.** Flocks have appeared more common this year in the Bircher-Lucton area. The normal size of the flocks not exceeding 50 birds in February and March. On March 25th at Bircher and March 26th at Lucton flocks estimated at between 600 and 700 birds were seen in the afternoon: they were very restive (P.W.H.).
18. **HAWFINCH.** Scarce. Single birds were reported at Aconbury Hill March 18th (J.E.C.), Kington April 1st (R.H.B.), and a pair at Swainshill in February (J.H.W.); a pair at Bircher on March 23rd (P.W.H.).
19. **GREENFINCH.** Large flocks frequented cider and pectin works during the winter to feed on the apple pips from processed pomace (L.S.).
21. **SISKIN.** Not uncommon during the winter in the Kington area, but rather erratic. The latest spring date was March 24th, when two birds were watched singing. The only flock for this autumn was noted on November 26th—10 birds (R.H.B.).

42. **BRAMBLING.** Erratic. The winter of 1950-51 was extremely good for these birds and beechmast plentiful in the Kington area. From a single bird seen on November 7th, 1950, the figure rose to c. 50 on January 3rd, 200 or more from January 17th to the end of the month. By February 9th this number fell to 25/30 birds and the last bird, a male, was seen on March 10th. The first and only bird seen this autumn was a male in a mixed flock of finches on October 24th. Beechmast was extremely scarce this autumn (R.H.B.).
55. **REED BUNTING.** Common in suitable areas such as Eastnor, Byton, Tyberton, Ivington, Shobdon and the Lugg and Wye banks (C.W.W. and L.S.). Not noted in the Kington area 1947-51 until December when birds were seen flocking with finches on the big Hergest ridge stubbles (R.H.B.). Two pairs bred in the Lucton area (P.W.H.).
62. **TREE SPARROW.** Widely spread over the county: watched building at Dilwyn and Tram Inn (L.S.). Breeding in the Lingen area (H.A.C.) and the Lugg Valley near Hereford (C.W.W.). A flock of some 20 birds seen feeding on Willow Herb seed at Tidnor on November 11th (C.J.B.). Scarce in the Kington area (R.H.B.).
69. **WOOD LARK.** A pair, which nested at Woonton, brought up four young, one of which met with an accident. The remaining three flew on July 2nd (R.H.B. and A.P.J.H.). At least two pairs at Dinmore (L.S.). A bird in song noted in the Lingen area during the fourth week of June (H.A.C.). Breeds regularly at Shobdon (per S.M.D.A.).
88. **YELLOW WAGTAIL.** Most common in the valleys, but also occurs in agricultural areas. A roost of 40/50 birds in the Lugg meadows assembled about dusk in the spring, until May 11th, after which the birds remained in their own territories at night (C.W.W.). Family parties noted flocking in the Lugg meadows on June 21st (C.J.B.). During the past five years the only birds seen in the Kington area were a female and a youngster on Bradnor on August 19th, 1948 (R.H.B.).
89. **GREY WAGTAIL.** Reasonably common in the west of the county, on the Black Mountains and the upper drainages of the Wye, Lugg and Arrow, but there is no recent data as to how far east this bird breeds.

90. **PIED WAGTAIL.** Very common but, as far as Kington is concerned, is much more in evidence during the summer than the rest of the year (R.H.B.). Flocks are to be seen throughout the winter on drowned lands and river mudbanks near Hereford (C.W.W.). The following notes made at Hereford Sewage Farm by K. J. Witts in 1950 are of interest. Feb. 25th, 4; March 19th, 1; Aug. 27th, 10; Sept. 1st, 50 plus; Sept. 3rd, 110; Dec. 1st, 1; and Dec. 31st, 6. More common in summer than winter in the Bircher-Lucton area. The largest flock seen in winter has been 11 at Lucton in January (P.W.H.).
93. **TREECREEPER.** After the disastrous winter of 1946-47 this bird became very scarce, but seems now to be back to normal strength.
100. **BLUE TIT.** This autumn birds have again been reported doing similar damage to that which they did in the autumn of 1949. Half a milk bottle cap was pecked off on October 19th (C.J.B.) and during the latter half of October and the first half of November these birds did damage to book dust covers and wallpaper at Kington Vicarage (R.H.B.).
111. **LONG-TAILED TIT.** Another bird which suffered very severely in 1946-47. This has recovered its numbers and, in the Kington area, the following rate of recovery was noted: Birds seen in 1947, none; 1948, 5; 1949, 8; 1950 up till June 9th (when notes were discontinued), 37 (R.H.B.).
114. **GREAT GREY SHRIKE.** An adult in full plumage was seen near Checkley Common on September 27th by three observers. It was a close view and the identification was certain (W.G.).
119. **RED-BACKED SHRIKE.** A pair successfully brought off a brood of three young within the Hereford city limits this year (F.C.M.). This family was last seen flying around on July 20th (C.W.W. and R.H.B.). Three birds were reported as being seen near Bodenham in August (J.E.C.). A cock bird was seen in May near Whitney-on-Wye (C.W.W.). Birds have also been reported on the eastern edge of the county in the Malvern hills (S.M.D.A.).
123. **PIED FLYCATCHER.** A cock and a hen were seen in Hereford City, on migration, on April 23rd and 24th (C.W.W.). Bred Titley and Gatley Park (C.W.W.), Kington (R.H.B.), and the Black Mountains (L.S.). In the Bircher-Lucton area a male was seen in mid-May in an area used for nesting in 1948 and 1949. No nest was discovered and the bird not seen again (P.W.H.).

127. **GOLDCREST.** Suffered badly in the winter of 1946-47 but soon picked up in the Kington area where it is now common (R.H.B.). Still very local and only a few birds heard in 1951 (L.S.). Not very common in the Bircher-Lucton area, but seen and nested at Lucton, Bircher and Berrington (P.W.H.).
135. **WOOD WARBLER.** Common summer migrant in the Kington district (R.H.B.). Several pairs at Lingen (H.A.C.). Two noted singing at Haugh Wood, Aconbury and at the head of Blaen Olchon in the Black Mountains (L.S.). In the Lucton-Bircher area more than one pair was seen and two nestlings ringed; but not so common as in 1948 and 1949 (P.W.H.).
145. **GRASSHOPPER WARBLER.** A bird singing on Bromyard Down on April 12th (C.W.W.). Two birds in Haugh Wood which sang from May to July 30th and a single bird at Breinton (L.S.). One heard singing on Eaton Hill, near Leominster (S.M.D.A.).
149. **REED WARBLER.** Four birds singing in one area in the north of the county and last heard on July 21st (C.W.W. and L.S.). A pair noted at Hereford Sewage Farm on July 2nd (C.J.B.).
150. **MARSH WARBLER.** Five birds heard singing in three localities. Two nests watched from which young flew (C.W.W.).
153. **SEDGE WARBLER.** Two pairs Shobdon (R.H.B. and P.W.H.). Bred at various points by the Wye and Lugg rivers (C.W.W.).
164. **LESSER WHITETHROAT.** Thinly distributed around Lingen (H.A.C.). One nest at Bishopstone (W.H.M.).
175. **SONG THRUSH.** Common in spring and summer around Kington, but become scarce in autumn and winter (R.H.B.). Several deserted nests of Song Thrushes and Blackbirds found with 3/5 eggs in them. Also heard of nestlings being deserted. Presumably due to lack of food caused by cold and wet this spring (L.S.). Definite decline of this bird in the Bircher-Lucton area in November (P.W.H.).
182. **RING OUSEL.** Seen at Craswall, Blaen Olchon and Cefn Hill in the Black Mountains (L.S.).

184. **BLACKBIRD.** A pair built three nests in a row inside the groundsman's hut at Ross School, but only one of the nests was used.
186. **WHEATEAR.** Breeds on Bradnor and Hergest ridge, Kington (R.H.B.). Also Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains (L.S.).
197. **WHINCHAT.** Breeds Kington (R.H.B.), Longworth, Lugwardine, Hampton Bishop, Stretton Sugwas and Clehonger (C.W.W.) and Black Mountains (L.S.). Absent Bircher Common (P.W.H.) and Lingen (H.A.C.) areas.
198. **STONECHAT.** At present rare in the county. Single birds reported from near Madley in May (J.E.C.) and Putley Common on October 14th (C.J.B.).
201. **REDSTART.** At Bircher a pair used two nesting boxes within 60 yards of each other. In one they built and laid one egg, deserted it and built and reared a brood of five in the other, of which four were ringed (P.W.H.).
202. **BLACK REDSTART.** A male frequented the Cathedral, where it was noted on the following dates: December 6th, 7th and 13th, 1950; January 15th, February 24th and 25th, March 3rd, 10th, 11th and 25th, 1951 (C.W.W. and J.O.B.L.).
203. **NIGHTINGALE.** Two pairs bred at Pontrilas and two more pairs north of Leominster (C.W.W.). Several present, as usual, in the Haugh Wood district (L.S.). Breeds Hampton Court (per S.M.D.A.).
211. **HEDGESPARROW.** A hen bird, identified by a white feather in the tail, is reported as having reared six broods in a garden at Eyton, all in the same nest: of these the last four broods were successful. Eggs laid were 4, 4, 5, 4, 4 and 2—23 in all, of which 15 fledged and flew (per P.W.H.).
218. **DIPPER.** Common on nearly all the small streams in the western half of the county (R.H.B.). Common on the Kingsland-Kinsham stretch of the Lugg (P.W.H.).
220. **SWALLOW.** Seemed to be scarcer than usual this year. The latest nesting date noted was of a brood that left the nest on October 18th. They returned to the nest that evening, but were gone on the 19th (P.W.H.).

227. **NIGHTJAR.** Birds seen and heard at Haugh Wood, Whitfield, Dinmore and Shobdon (C.W.W.). Heard east of Deerfold (H.A.C.). Although not checked this year there have been birds on Bradnor (Kington) each summer since 1947 or earlier (R.H.B.). Mr. Powis states that they breed annually at Aston, near Leominster (per S.M.D.A.).
235. **GREEN WOODPECKER.** Has now partly recovered from the heavy toll taken of it in the winter of 1946-47 (C.W.W.).
238. **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.** Is not nearly as common as the Greater Spotted, but occurs sparsely distributed.
249. **LITTLE OWL.** Another bird which suffered disastrously in the winter of 1946-47. Only four birds have been seen between Staunton-on-Arrow and the Welsh Border since that time (R.H.B.). One seen at Lingen in June (H.A.C.). One caught and ringed at Bircher in December, 1950. One pair known to have nested at Lucton in 1951. Has been seen on occasions in the autumn (P.W.H.). Common from Eardisland eastwards (S.M.D.A.).
254. **BARN OWL.** Scarce in N.W. of county where only four birds noted in the last five years (R.H.B.). Scarce in the Lucton-Bircher area; one reported in 1950 (P.W.H.).
259. **PEREGRINE.** Three birds were seen flying over Birley Court in May (D.C.W.). A single bird on Lugg Meadows on November 18th (C.J.B.) and a pair there on December 16th (C.W.W.). A single bird between Bollingham and Eardisley also on December 16th (R.H.B.). Seen several times in the Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains (L.S.).
261. **HOBBY.** A single bird seen soaring high over Aylestone Hill on May 12th (C.W.W.). Prior to this year the last known breeding of this bird was in 1947. In August a pair brought off three young in the Weobley area. One of the parents was, unfortunately, shot but the remaining four birds were seen subsequently (per H.A.G.). On September 4th two, or possibly three, birds were seen further eastwards. One of these was thought to be a young bird (L.G.P.). It is possible that these were the Weobley birds.
262. **MERLIN.** Uncommon. One seen in the Black Mountains (L.S.).

269. **BUZZARD.** Common in the western half of the county and one was seen on the southern outskirts of Hereford City on October 18th (R.H.B.).
273. **HEN-HARRIER.** A female flushed from the ground at Upperton below Ladylift on November 21st (A.E.W.S.).
278. **KITE.** Has occurred periodically during the last few years, but only once this year when a single bird was reported as having been seen in the north west of the county (J.E.C.).
284. **OSPREY.** Rare vagrant. One reported to have visited Shobdon for one day in April (C.W.W.).
289. **HERON.** In addition to the known heronries at Aconbury, Letton and Berrington another has come to light at Tyberton. Before the last war there were a number of nests in trees around the pool which have since been felled. Of the two nests used this year one was some four years old and the other built this year (J.B. per C.J.B.).
At Aconbury the two nests were deserted in May for no known reason and of the eight adults at Letton two broods flew (C.W.W.). At Berrington there were 38 occupied nests in April as against 42 in April, 1950 (P.W.H.).
302. **MUTE SWAN.** One bird of a pair is reported to have taken off from a small pool with two cygnets on its back, leaving the other parent with one young on the water (per L.S.).
GREY GEESE. Have been reported in flight from various localities during the year under review. Probably 304 White-fronted Geese, but none was satisfactorily identified.
323. **WIGEON.** Always winters on the Wye in some numbers, perhaps most numerous near Letton (C.W.W.).
325. **PINTAIL.** Four seen on floods in the Lugg Meadows with 12 Mallard on January 14th and a single drake was seen in an adjoining area the same day (L.S.).
328. **POCHARD.** Fairly regular winter visitor and the biggest number noted at Eywood was 15 on February 22nd (R.H.B.). Flock of 50 at Letton, December 30th (C.W.W.).
330. **TUFTED DUCK.** Winter visitor which may breed in the county occasionally. Single pairs were noted at Shobdon on April 30th and May 15th (C.W.W.) and at Eywood up to May 10th (R.H.B.), but none of these bred locally.

342. **GOOSANDER.** Not uncommon on the Wye in winter. One male in company with many Wigeon, was seen at Bredwardine on March 8th (C.W.W.).
346. **CORMORANT.** Irregular. One seen at Letton on March 3rd and five on the Teme floods at Leintwardine on March 15th; 2 on Wye at Hampton Bishop, November 25th (C.W.W.). One seen flying along the Wye at Caplar on November 18th (L.S.).
370. **GREAT CRESTED GREBE.** Absent during January and February. Breeds in the county. Broods brought up at Shobdon and Eywood this year (C.W.W. and R.H.B.).
383. **TURTLE DOVE.** A not uncommon summer visitor to the county, but rarely seen in the north west (Kington) area, where only four have been noted in the last five years (R.H.B.).
424. **GREEN SANDPIPER.** Not common, but a few are noted in most years. Single birds were seen on the Lugg on December 29th, 1950, and March 3rd, 1951, and two at Letton on August 5th (C.W.W.). One on the Lower Lugg on February 25th (C.J.B.).
432. **REDSHANK.** Not common. Five birds were seen in the Lower Lugg valley on March 12th and a pair attempted to breed there, but gave up towards the end of April when the field dried up (C.W.W.).
449. **LAPWING.** Small flocks were noted in the Lower Lugg during February and flocks of 200/300 were seen there on February 26th. These flocks started to break up on March 1st and appeared to take up breeding territories. In August there were about 300 in this area, rising to 2,000 in early September. All had left by October 15th, but large flocks returned in November (C.W.W.). Common as a breeding bird in the Lucton-Bircher area, but flocks few in winter and generally smaller than 30 birds, though a flock of 200 birds was reported at Lucton in February (P.W.H.).

At the Old Fields, Leominster, despite a wet spring, birds that bred on high ground were very successful and of eight nests under observation containing 30 eggs, twenty-two young flew and 6 eggs were still under incubation when observation ceased. Only two eggs had failed to hatch and these contained almost fully grown chicks (S.M.D.A.).

478. **BLACK-HEADED GULL.** Gulleries exist in the Upper Lugg valley (one) and two or more in the Temе Valley. A few birds may be seen near Hereford on any day in autumn or winter, larger flocks as spring approaches. They return to the gulleries late in March (C.W.W.).
481. **COMMON GULL.** A regular winter visitor. In the winter of 1950/51 they were first noted on the Lugg Meadows on November 30th, when a flock of 200/300 was present. From then on they were seen almost daily in varying numbers and were last noted on April 12th near Sutton St. Nicholas. Their reappearance this autumn took place on October 28th and 29th when several parties of 6/8 birds were seen flying southwards over Tupsley. These flocks feed in the county by day, returning to the Severn estuary before sunset to roost there (C.W.W.).
485. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL.** Although this gull does not breed in the county, it can be seen singly or in small parties along the Wye throughout the year. Odd birds were seen over Kington for the first time in five years. A small movement took place at the end of March, as on the 26th a single bird was seen flying north at 1730 G.M.T. On the 27th birds were seen at 1010 (one); 1012 (three); 1030 (five); 1715 (one) and 1720 (three). The last three birds were travelling northwards and the rest westwards (R.H.B.). Three birds flying in a northerly direction passed over Highwood, Bircher, on March 25th at about 1600 hours (P.W.H.).
504. **CORNCRAKE.** Occasional passage migrant which has been heard annually for the last three years in the Lugg Meadows near Tupsley. This year it was heard there on and off from May 23rd until July 1st (C.W.W. and C.J.B.). One heard at Moorhampton (per C.W.W.).
509. **WATER RAIL.** Uncommon. One seen in Mordiford parish on February 9th (W.R.C.).
511. **COOT.** Suffered badly in 1946-47, but has now recovered. On the Flintsham and Eywood pools none were noted in the years 1947-49 and it was not until January, 1950, that up to 30 appeared. By the end of February there were only 12/14 and by March 25th, 8. By November 5th of that year there were 100. This autumn birds have again been scarce on these pools for no very obvious reason (R.H.B.).
137 counted on the big lake at Shobdon on December 30th (P.W.H.).

514. **RED GROUSE.** Sparse in the Black Mountains (L.S.).
519. **RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE.** Local. A single bird seen near Hereford (L.S.). A pair near Tupsley March 4th (C.J.B.). Two shot at Canon Pyon, October 15th (A.P.J.H.). A pair nested at Lyde, but were not successful in hatching their eggs (E.B.).

REFERENCES.

MEMBERS: S. M. D. Alexander; R. H. Baillie; C. J. Brecknell; J. E. Cheney; Capt. H. A. Gilbert; Col. A. P. J. Hibbert; P. W. Hinde; J. O. B. Lambert; W. H. Meadlam; F. C. Miller; L. Smith; Dr. C. W. Walker; J. H. Williamson; K. J. Witts.

NON-MEMBERS: E. Ball, Lyde, Herefordshire; J. Buckley, Tyberton Lodge, Herefordshire; Rev. W. R. Chignell, Fownhope Vicarage, Herefordshire; H. A. Course, Royston, Herts.; Miss W. Gibson, Broomyhill, Hereford; L. G. Peirson, Marlborough, Wilts.; Maj. A. E. W. Salt, Weobley; D. C. Walker, Birley Court, Herefordshire.

ANNUAL DATES OF INTEREST IN THE COUNTY.

The following dates are the averages based on notes relating to observations made in the central part of the county, *i.e.*, in or near Hereford, from 1931 to 1951. Being the work of one observer, they will no doubt be greatly improved upon in the future when checked by other Club Members. Similar calendars for other parts of the county will no doubt be forthcoming, and the comparison will prove of great local interest.

- Feb. 5th.—Chaffinch in full song.
 .. 10th.—Greater Pied Woodpecker drums.
 .. 12th.—Blackbird in song.
- March 7th.—Spring flight of Lapwing.
 .. 12th.—Greenfinch in song.
 .. 14th.—Arrival of curlew.
 .. 26th.—Arrival of chiff-chaff.
- April 2nd.—Arrival of sand martin.
 .. 9th.—Arrival of willow-warbler.
 .. 16th.—Arrival of yellow wagtail.
 .. 16th.—Arrival of cuckoo.
 .. 21st.—Arrival of common whitethroat.
 .. 28th.—Arrival of first swifts.
- May 9th.—Arrival of spotted flycatcher.

A number of common species are not mentioned and figures for swallow, martin, common redstart, nightingale, common sandpiper, blackcap, garden warbler, turtledove and nightjar are required. In watching for these the swallow, martin and nightingale will be found close on the heels of the willow-warbler, while the blackcap will probably precede it. Garden warbler will be later in April, and wood warbler at the end of the month. The turtledove does not as a rule appear until early in May. Much interesting work could be put in in determining the average arrival dates of all these migrants with accuracy.

C.W.W.

BIRD RINGING.

By P. W. HINDE.

The scientific knowledge of birds, has greatly increased during the last twenty years and many methods both of observation and research have been added to the increasing accumulation of data concerning the 'how' and 'why' of birds. Of various subjects studied bird migration is one of the most fascinating, for comparatively little is yet known and it is always a matter of wonder that creatures, often very small, can obey some law of natural life to ensure their livelihood and breeding. Birds of the same species and sex are hard to differentiate between and, unless some freak or albino is noted, practically impossible to recognise with certainty when seen again. Thus the marking of birds with rings has produced much information of movement. It is a relatively simple matter to trap a bird and ring it, or to ring a nestling; but very slender is the chance of that particular bird being recovered many miles from the place where it was originally ringed. Therefore can it be said that the more birds ringed the greater the chance of recovery. The number of birds in this country ringed from 1909 to 1950 under the direction of the Bird Ringing Committee of the British Trust for Ornithology is 954,560 (British Birds Vol. XLIV., pp. 306). Even this small number, compared with all the birds of each different species ringed, has produced extremely interesting results. Recovery of ringed birds records not only detail of movement but length of time since the bird was ringed. The age of a bird, if trapped as a nestling, will be known as soon as it is recovered, and if the same bird is eventually found dead the total age of the bird is known. Valuable information, therefore, is supplied not only of movement but of age.

Birds of any given locality either remain there throughout the year, or move at certain times to other parts of the same country or land area, or, lastly, migrate to some other country at given times of the year usually along a known route. Ringing birds in one's own garden can produce one of the following results. Firstly, to see frequently, even to recapture, birds ringed by oneself and which remain in the locality. From time to time a nuthatch ringed on 19.12.49 flies into my trap, the last time being on 30.12.51. We are quite old friends! Blue tits and robins often return—although robins move away and in two years there appears to be a complete change in the robin population, a fact, of course, largely explained by casualties and that the life of a robin, in most cases, is short ("The Life of the Robin"—D. Lack). Secondly, to hear of the recovery of a ringed bird within a matter of a few miles. Thirdly, but not yet experienced by the writer, to hear of a migrant's recovery in some distant country: surely the most satisfying of all results? And fourthly, and most common, to

hear of no recovery at all although this result can never be truly ascertained since at any moment may come news of a bird having been trapped and found.

To me the ringing of a bird is an excitement, the beginning of an adventure. Imagine a willow warbler, for instance, ringed as a nestling. What chance has it of survival and of recapture? Will it survive the fledging period and fly safely to its winter home? Will it, one of thousands of first year birds, return again in the following year? Anything can happen to it—the adventure of its own life is tremendous and once a ring is placed upon its leg the ringer, however many hundreds of birds he may have ringed, must become interested in that particular bird: even the most scientific ornithologist must feel something of the thrill that comes when news of a ringed bird is received, be it only a blackbird!

Ringing of birds is primarily concerned with bird movement, but to the ringer there is the additional interest of having the bird in the hand; plumage can in no way be more satisfactorily examined unless by the use of stuffed birds. There is also the matter of behaviour and some birds become 'trap-minded' and seem not to mind passing through the ringer's hand. A nuthatch on one occasion appeared as dead and deluded the watcher into believing it had been mortally injured, only to fly away when the trap was opened. The nuthatch mentioned previously once did the same thing, but at other times nuthatches have behaved normally. Added interest is obtained if birds living in the locality are colour ringed as well. Methods of colour ringing are numerous, but to see two birds of the same species ringed and having in addition rings of different colour indicates, by the method I adopt, that one bird was ringed in 1948, say, and the other in 1949. Spells of hard weather favour the trapper and always is there the hope that some new species will enter the trap. Apart from aiding the general principle of ringing as many birds as possible for the study of bird movement the ringer has added interest to his bird watching and can learn much of the birds of his locality. Methods of catching birds are various and mention should be made of P. A. D. Hollom's excellent field guide "Trapping Methods for Bird Ringers" published by the British Trust for Ornithology.

In Herefordshire the number of recovered birds is not great, some twenty-one being mentioned in "British Birds" between the years 1908 and 1950. The county is not, however, on any well defined migration route and of the species recovered the most interesting is that of a teal marked in Denmark in October 1907 and recovered at Leominster on 5.1.08 (Vol. III., pp. 252). A teal was also recovered in the county on 28.3.31, having flown from Iceland, where it was ringed in 1930 or 1931 (Vol. XXI., pp. 75). Of birds ringed in the county two are mentioned: a robin ringed

near Ledbury on 22.5.33 and recovered at Rouen, France, 11.12.33. (Vol. XXVII., pp. 243), and a spotted flycatcher ringed in Hereford on 9.7.41 and recovered where ringed on 9.6.42 (Vol. XXXVI., pp. 236). These are only those mentioned in "British Birds" and other instances have probably occurred. That they are few must depend partly on geographical position and the presumably small amount of ringing carried out in the county.

It is hoped that these notes may give some indication of the importance and interest of bird ringing, but it is well to remember that bird ringing must be carried out with great care and meticulous recording. So much is this so that the Bird Ringing Committee of the British Trust for Ornithology are most particular about issuing rings to would-be ringers—and, in fact, will not do so unless a request for rings is backed by evidence of competence and the inquirer must be a member of the British Trust for Ornithology or a subscriber to "British Birds." It is of vital importance that no error be made with regard to identity of species. On more than one occasion I have had to release a trapped fledgling because of lack of certainty concerning its identity. The ringing of nestlings must be carried out with particular care since a bird ringed too young will suffer when the leg grows, or if ringed too near the time of leaving the nest will fly prematurely and become an easy prey to any predatory bird or beast. But for all the birds ringed of which one never hears again and for all the time spent in ringing them there is very considerable interest, and for myself, at least, much that is learnt. Not only is there the scientific importance, but the individual interest, which has as its incentive the hope that all rings marked "British Museum Nat. Hist. London" will indeed return to that place of origin, either in fact if found on a dead bird, or in report if found on a live one.

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