

The BEDFORDSHIRE NATURALIST

BEING THE
JOURNAL
OF THE
BEDFORDSHIRE
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
AND FIELD CLUB
FOR THE YEAR
1955

No. 10

Price Five Shillings

PUBLISHED BY THE
BEDFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY & FIELD CLUB

BEDFORD
STONEBRIDGES PRINTERS LIMITED

1957

BEDFORDSHIRE
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY & FIELD CLUB
1955

President

MAJOR SIMON WHITBREAD, B.A., D.L., J.P.

Past President

OLIVER G. PIKE, F.R.P.S., M.B.O.U.

Chairman

F. G. R. SOPER, J.P.

Hon. General Secretary

HENRY A. S. KEY, M.P.S., 61b GOLDINGTON ROAD, BEDFORD

Hon. Programme Secretary

L. A. SPEED, 226 GOLDINGTON ROAD, BEDFORD

Hon. Treasurer

J. M. DYMOND, 27 WENDOVER DRIVE, BEDFORD

Hon. Editor

A. W. GUPPY, B.Sc., 53 GRANGE LANE, BROMHAM

Hon. Librarian

MISS E. PROCTOR, B.Sc., THE NATURE ROOM, THE AVENUE, BEDFORD

Council

MISS A. L. COOPER

J. G. DONY, Ph.D.

W. DURANT

F. C. GRIBBLE

W. G. HARPER

W. E. K. PIERCY, B.Sc.

MISS E. PROCTOR, B.Sc.

S. W. RODELL

MISS G. M. TATTAM

K. E. WEST

RECORDERS

METEOROLOGY : A. W. Guppy, B.Sc., 53 Grange Lane, Bromham, Bedford

BOTANY :

Except Fungi : J. G. Dony, Ph.D., 41 Somerset Avenue, Luton

Fungi : D. A. Reid, B.Sc., The Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Plant Galls : H. F. Barnes, M.A., Ph.D., 21 Carisbrooke Road, Harpenden, Herts.

ZOOLOGY :

Crustacea : MISS E. Proctor, B.Sc., 253 Goldington Road, Bedford

Mollusca : (Vacant)

Insecta :

Odonata : Bernard B. West, 37 Cardington Road, Bedford

Lepidoptera : Bernard B. West, 37 Cardington Road, Bedford

Coleoptera : C. MacKechie Jarvis, F.L.S., Sussex House, Parkside, Wimbledon

Hymenoptera : V. H. Chambers, Ph.D., 47 Westbourne Road, Luton

Diptera : B. R. Lawrence, B.Sc., Ph.D., 4 Princes Garth, London Road, Forest Hill, London, S.E.23

Vertebrates :

Fishes : F. G. R. Soper, The Briars, Bromham Park, near Bedford
Amphibians and Reptiles : F. G. R. Soper, The Briars, Bromham Park, near Bedford

Birds : Henry A. S. Key, 61b Goldington Road, Bedford

Mammals : Henry A. S. Key, 61b Goldington Road, Bedford



NEST AND EGGS OF BLACK-HEADED GULL (*see p. 16*)
(*Photograph by D. and R. White*)

THE BEDFORDSHIRE NATURALIST

BEING THE

JOURNAL

OF THE

BEDFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY AND FIELD CLUB

EDITED BY A. W. GUPPY, B.Sc.

No. 10—1955

CONTENTS	PAGE
OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY cover	ii
CONTENTS	1
1. REPORT OF COUNCIL	2
2. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS	3
3. PROCEEDINGS—	
Indoor Meetings	4
Field Meetings	4
Botanical Section	7
The Fungus Foray	9
Ornithological Section	10
Annual General Meeting 1956	10
4. THE WEATHER OF 1955. <i>By A. W. Guppy</i>	12
5. THE DRAWINGS OF CAROLINE GAYE. <i>By J. G. Dony</i>	14
6. BLACK-HEADED GULLS BREEDING IN SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE <i>(illustrated). By H. Cole, D. & R. White and M. Wortley</i>	16
7. REPORTS OF RECORDERS—	
BOTANY. <i>By J. G. Dony</i>	17
BIRDS. <i>By Henry A. S. Key</i>	17
MAMMALS. <i>By Henry A. S. Key</i>	28
8. NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS—	
FOOD OF THE OTTER. <i>By Oliver G. Pike</i>	29
MIGRATION OF THE COMMON GULL. <i>By A. R. Jenkins</i>	29
THE PURPLE HERON IN BEDFORDSHIRE. <i>By F. C. Gribble</i>	29
ABBOT'S ANNOTATED ENCHIRIDION. <i>By J. G. Dony</i>	30
9. ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE ON BEDFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY	
FOR 1955	30
THE LIBRARY	31
NEW MEMBERS	32
CHANGES OF ADDRESS	32
NOTICES	cover iii

Report of the Council

The year 1955 was not conspicuous for any outstanding feature, but was essentially one of steady progress and achievement. Membership showed a marked increase, and at the close of the year there were 249 names on the register; of these, 33 were new members. In addition to a few resignations, mainly due to removal from the County, the Council, with regret, removed the names of some members whose subscriptions were grossly in arrears. Prompt payment of dues is essential if the Society is to function satisfactorily. It is of paramount importance that membership should be increased, and the Council urges members to assist in recruitment.

It is with regret that the passing of one valued member is announced. Mr. Robert Skinner of Bromham Hall was ever ready to welcome the Society on his property, and there are pleasant memories of meetings in the Park. The Society extends to his wife and family sympathy in their loss.

Both indoor and outdoor meetings were generally well attended in all districts, and the summer programme was aided by almost ideal weather for most of the engagements. Members are reminded that friends are cordially invited to all meetings, and by their participation will be encouraged to membership. The outstanding lecture of the year was that given by James Fisher, M.A., at the Modern School Hall in February, when more than six hundred packed the building to see the remarkable film *Wild America*. The net results were great advertisement for the Society and a handsome contribution to our funds. For a number of reasons, the Ornithological Conference, which was to have been held in November, has been postponed till March, 1957.

The Library continues to expand under the worthy management of Miss E. Proctor, and it now contains many useful works of reference, including exchange copies of the proceedings of other Societies. It is disappointing that more members do not avail themselves of the loan of these works, for which there is no fee. Donations of suitable works for the collection should be sent only to Miss Proctor at 4 The Avenue, Bedford.

Dr. H. F. Barnes and his Editorial Committee once again earned the praise of members for a Journal which improved on the usual high standard and was well illustrated. The Committee were not responsible for its late publication, and members are asked in future to submit contributions by the end of January.

Many others, too numerous to mention in detail, aided the Society in many directions, and the Council takes this opportunity of expressing gratitude for such valued assistance. Their reward will be to see the affairs of the Society in its present healthy condition.

HENRY A. S. KEY, *Hon. General Secretary*

THE BEDFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY AND FIELD CLUB

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1955

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 1955

RECEIPTS

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Cash in Bank, 1st January 1955 ...	62	12	4			
„ Cash in Hand, 1st January 1955 ...	9	17	5			
				75	9	9
„ Subscriptions—1954 ...		10	0			
1955 ...	89	5	8			
1956 ...	3	10	0			
1957 ...		10	0			
				93	15	8
„ Sale of JOURNALS ...				1	15	0
„ Subscriptions and Collections to- wards cost of JOURNAL ...				13	9	2
„ James Fisher Lecture :						
Sale of Tickets ...	72	18	6			
Less Expenses ...	10	14	6			
Lecturer's Fee ...	42	10	0			
	53	4	6			
				19	14	0
				£204	3	7

PAYMENTS

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
By Cost of JOURNAL ...	118	12	6			
„ Printing and Stationery ...	9	8	11			
„ Lecturer's Travelling Expenses ...	2	1	0			
„ Postages ...	6	19	8			
„ Insurances ...		16	0			
„ Hire of Hall ...	2	10	0			
„ Bank Charges and Sundry Expenses ...	1	2	3			
„ Deficit on Coach Trips ...		1	6			
„ Cash in Bank, 31st December 1955 ...	51	10	3			
„ Cash in Hand, 31st December 1955 ...	11	1	6			
				62	11	9
				£204	3	7

We have examined the above Account with the books and vouchers of the Society and certify the same to be correct in accordance therewith.

BEDFORD,
27th January 1956

MCPHERSON, TIMMINS & EDNIE,
Chartered Accountants, Honorary Auditors

PROCEEDINGS 1955

Indoor Meetings

81ST ORDINARY MEETING, 7th January 1955, Bedford. 'Route Finding in Insects', by Dr. J. D. Carthy. Attendance 22. *Chairman*: Miss E. Proctor.

82ND ORDINARY MEETING, 13th January 1955, Luton. 'The Problems of Myxomatosis', by J. S. Dunn. Attendance 13. *Chairman*: Mr S. W. Rodell.

83RD ORDINARY MEETING, 3rd February 1955, Bedford. 'The Vegetation of Ruwenzori', by R. Ross. Attendance 33. *Chairman*: Mr A. W. Guppy.

8TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 17th February 1955, Bedford. Details as printed in the last issue, No. 9, 1955, p. 8.

84TH ORDINARY MEETING, 24th February 1955, Luton. A discussion on 'New Approaches to Field-Work', led by F. C. Gribble. Attendance 14. *Chairman*: Dr. J. G. Dony.

85TH ORDINARY MEETING, 24th March 1955, Dunstable—in conjunction with the South Bedfordshire Preservation Society. 'Badgers', by Miss P. Hagan. Attendance 60. *Chairman*: Dr J. G. Dony.

86TH ORDINARY MEETING, 31st March 1955, Bedford. 'Bird-Watchers and Bird-watching', by M. F. M. Meiklejohn. Attendance 40. *Chairman*: Mr F. C. Gribble.

87TH ORDINARY MEETING, 13th October 1955, Bedford. 'The Problems of Myxomatosis', by J. S. Dunn. Attendance 25. *Chairman*: Mr F. G. R. Soper.

88TH ORDINARY MEETING, 26th October 1955, Luton. 'A Bird-Watcher in Norway', by F. C. Gribble. Attendance 40. *Chairman*: Miss A. L. Cooper.

89TH ORDINARY MEETING, 10th November 1955, Bedford. 'Children as Naturalists', by Miss E. Proctor. Attendance 27. *Chairman*: Miss G. M. Tattam.

90TH ORDINARY MEETING, 23rd November 1955, Luton. 'Skokholm Bird Sanctuary', by Mr and Mrs E. A Cunningham. Attendance 53. *Chairman*: Mr F. C. Gribble.

91ST ORDINARY MEETING, 1st December 1955, Bedford. 'Lapland Journey', by Henry A. S. Key. Attendance 70. *Chairman*: Miss E. Proctor.

Field Meetings

SUNDAY, 2ND JANUARY 1955, WALK FROM BARTON TO PEGSDON. *Leader*: D. White. A party of nineteen members was present, the day being cold and dry.

After setting off up the main combe a Woodcock was flushed near the top. From there, down through Fairy Hole to the Icknield Way where the party stopped for lunch, and a flock of Bramblings was seen; then on to Telegraph Hill and the Pegsdon Hills, and back to Barton.

SUNDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 1955. A meeting had been arranged to visit Tring Reservoirs, but owing to rain this was cancelled.

SUNDAY, 20TH MARCH 1955, WALK FROM STAGSDEN TO PAVENHAM VIA TURVEY. *Leader*: H. A. S. Key. Fifteen members attended this meeting, the weather being fine but overcast. Meeting at Stagsden Turn on the

Northampton road, the party proceeded to Great Oaks Wood, noting on the way the total absence of rabbits. Among the birds seen were several Bramblings, and in the wood some Woodcock were flushed, and hares were seen; then across the fields to Blackwell Spinney, where another Woodcock was put up. The party then went down to the river near Woodcraft Wood, taking note of the large Horsetails there, and continued to the Holy Well at Stevington, with its abundant growth of Liverworts, where the Butterbur was just coming into flower.

Finally, the party visited Park Farm, Stevington, at the invitation of Mr C. F. Green, to see a wild White-Fronted Goose which was keeping company with some domestic geese; it would not allow too close an approach, and when disturbed it flew around the area.

SUNDAY, 24TH APRIL 1955, TRING RESERVOIRS. *Leader: S. W. Rodell.* The day was very fine, with some sun, and the party consisted of twenty-seven members. Little Tring Reservoir was first visited, and the following birds were seen: Snipe, Coot, Moorhen, Little Grebe, Pochard, Widgeon, Shoveller, and Reed Bunting. The Chiffchaff was heard.

Crossing the road to Marsworth Reservoir, Black-Headed Gull, Great Crested Grebe, Mallard, and Herring Gull were seen.

After eating lunch to the music of the Sedge-Warbler, Wilstone Reservoir was visited, where a first-class view of a Dunlin was obtained, and continuing round the perimeter, Mute Swans, Willow-Warblers, and Whitethroats were seen.

Crossing the field to the old disused canal, and walking along the towpath, two Rooks were noticed mobbing a fox which was coming directly towards the party; on seeing us it immediately turned tail and disappeared over the hill.

On reaching the road again, near Little Tring, Swallows and House Martins were seen near a cottage.

Other birds observed during the meeting were: Magpie, Skylark, Carrion Crow, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Stock-Dove, Blue and Great Tit, Linnet, Kestrel, Fieldfare, Robin, Yellow-Hammer, Jackdaw, Wood-Pigeon, Chaffinch, Starling, Song-Thrush, Peewit, and Hedge-Sparrow.

SUNDAY, 8TH MAY 1955, MAULDEN AND CLOPHILL WOODS FOR DAWN CHORUS. *Leader: H. A. S. Key.* A very fine morning; thirty people met at 3.45 a.m., the party including about twelve students of the Bedford Training College, and members from Luton.

Among the dawn chorus were heard the songs of the Woodcock, Tawny Owl, Grasshopper-Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Chaffinch, Willow-Warbler, Robin, Wren, Nightingale, Song-Thrush, Blackbird, Pheasant, Red-Legged Partridge, Wood-Pigeon, Turtle-Dove, Carrion Crow, and Magpie.

THURSDAY 19TH MAY 1955, BLOW'S DOWNS. *Leader: H. Cole.* Twelve members were present, and the evening being dry, though cold and windy.

The most interesting find on this outing was a late party of eight Wheatears in the cornfield at the foot of the downs. No Red-Backed Shrikes were seen, nor anything else of outstanding interest.

SUNDAY, 22ND MAY 1955, HANGER WOOD, STAGSDEN. Sixteen members visited the wood on a very fine day. On the way to the wood a badger's sett was observed. The two outstanding finds of this visit were the Adder's Tongue and the Fly Orchid.

MONDAY, 30TH MAY 1955, TILBROOK BUSHES. *Leader: Mrs E. L. Wade.* Fourteen members met at Swineshead Church on a fine but cool day, and walked round the fields and woods. An interesting meeting, but nothing of special note was seen.

SUNDAY, 5TH JUNE 1955, ROWNEY WARREN. *Leader*: J. S. Dunn. Twenty-five members attended this meeting, the afternoon being fine and warm. The meeting was mainly botanical, but nothing of particular interest was found.

SATURDAY, 11TH JUNE 1955, TOTTERNHOE. *Leader*: Dr J. G. Dony. Eighteen people were present at this meeting, the weather being fine. The main interest of the meeting was the wealth of plant-life of the Mead; the most useful new discovery was of an additional station for the county of *Orchis latifolia*.

SUNDAY, 19TH JUNE 1955, CAMBRIDGE—SUFFOLK AREAS. *Leader*: W. Durant. Twenty-seven people met at Bedford and Baldock in cars, and journeyed to Therfield Heath near Royston, where the usual heath flora was explored.

After lunch, the party moved off to the Devil's Dyke, near Newmarket, where the Bloody Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*) was found growing in great profusion.

The weather deteriorated during the day, and the meeting ended in rain.

SUNDAY, 26TH JUNE 1955, GREAT HAYES WOOD AND SOULDROP TUNNEL. *Leader*: Miss G. H. Day. Eighteen members were present at this meeting, the weather being fine. Nothing of special interest was found in Great Hayes Wood except several Greater Butterfly Orchids. A ramble on Souldrop Tunnel resulted in the finding of a great variety of plant-life, but nothing of outstanding interest.

THURSDAY, 30TH JUNE 1955, SOUTHILL PARK LAKE. *Leader*: H. A. S. Key. Twenty-two people were present on this fine sunny evening. Several Great Crested Grebes with young were seen on the lake, and a few Pochar and Tufted Ducks, but no proof of breeding of these two species. Reed- and Sedge-Warblers were seen (a nest with eggs being found of the former) while in the surrounding woodlands were Nuthatches and Golden Grebe. A small party went on to Rowney Warren, where Nightjar and Woodcock were both seen in flight and heard calling.

SUNDAY, 3RD JULY 1955, WICKEN FEN. *Leader*: F. G. R. Soper. Seventeen people made the journey by private cars. Unseasonably cold and windy weather kept birds under cover, and few were seen or heard. For the same reason butterflies were absent. Greater Spearwort, Lesser Water Plantain, and Bladderwort were among the interesting plants seen; Marsh Orchids were exceptionally abundant.

The progress of the work being done beyond Adventurers Fen, where a mere was under construction, and the fen being restored to its former primitive state, was noted with satisfaction.

SUNDAY, 10TH JULY 1955, CHEDDAR GORGE. *Leader*: H. A. S. Key. A full coach of thirty-three people spent a very enjoyable day in the Cheddar Gorge, the weather being hot and dry. The party rambled some distance down the Gorge, where the Cheddar Pink was found, and visited the caves.

SUNDAY, 17TH JULY 1955, BURY END FARM, STAGSDEN. *Leader*: D. W. Elliott. Mr Elliott conducted several members round his farm and his museum, which contains a large and varied collection of British and foreign birds and animals, and later provided tea for his visitors.

SATURDAY, 23RD JULY 1955, PEGSDON HILLS. *Leader*: R. Morse, F.L.S. This meeting was held on a very hot day and in conjunction with the Letchworth Natural History Society, thirty-two members of the two Societies

being present. Seventy-eight kinds of flowering plants were seen, including *Seseli libanotis*.

SATURDAY, 6TH AUGUST 1955, AMPHILL PARK—MOTH SUGARING. *Leader*: W. Champkin. This was held on a dull evening, with a cool breeze blowing, twelve members being present. In spite of the trees having been 'sugared' twice during the preceding week very poor results were obtained—only one Poplar Grey appearing at the sugar. An Antler Moth was taken flying over bramble blossom, and an August Thorn was seen resting on another bramble patch.

SUNDAY, 28TH AUGUST 1955, DEVIL'S DYKE AND CHIPPENHAM FEN. *Leader*: B. D. Jones. This meeting was held in conjunction with the Suffolk Natural History Society, forty-six members of the two Societies being present. The weather was dull, and deteriorated into drizzle later. The eastern end of the Dyke was first visited and explored for about half a mile; the western end subsequently proved less interesting botanically.

Nothing of outstanding note was found on reaching Chippenham Fen, but as this was a fresh region to our members, it was decided to pay another visit next year.

SUNDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER 1955, NORTHAMPTON SEWAGE FARM. *Leader*: F. C. Gribble. Cancelled owing to heavy rain.

SUNDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER 1955, CLEY, NORFOLK. *Leader*: F. C. Gribble. Thirty-three members travelled from Luton and Bedford in a special coach; the day was bright, and a moderately warm south-west wind was blowing.

The party visited Arnold's Marsh, where a number of the more common wading birds was seen, together with Sandwich Terns, Sheld Duck, and a few Widgeon. After lunch most of the party walked along the shingle ridge towards Blakeney Point; Bar-tailed Godwits, Grey, Golden, and Ringed Plovers and Knot were seen. Among the smaller birds were a Redstart and a Woodlark.

SUNDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER 1955, FUNGUS FORAY AT KING'S WOOD. *Leader*: D. A. Reid. A separate account of this meeting appears on page 9.

SUNDAY, 23RD OCTOBER 1955, DUNSTABLE DOWNS. *Leader*: R. J. White. Only seven members were present at this meeting, the day being dull and misty. Yellowhammers and Meadow Pippits were seen but nothing of special interest. The meeting ended early due to rain.

SUNDAY, 20TH NOVEMBER 1955, AMPHILL-MILLBROOK AREA. *Leader*: H. A. S. Key. The weather deteriorated soon after a party of nineteen started on this meeting. Nothing of particular interest was seen.

Botanical Section

In making my first report as Botanical Secretary I would like first to pay a tribute to Mr A. W. Guppy who, through pressure of other circumstances, has had to relinquish the position of Botanical Secretary which he has held since the formation of the Section. I know I express the views of all in saying how much we appreciate the work he has done during the past years in keeping the Botanical Section alive, and I am grateful to know that I can count on his help and advice for the future. I am also assured of the continual support of Miss Proctor, who at all times has been most helpful, and whose enthusiasm has always been of great benefit to the Section.

Botanically, 1955 has been a very successful year. I am pleased to note a growing enthusiasm amongst members for this side of the Society's activities which I hope will continue into the future.

A meeting of the Section was held in the Nature Room on Thursday, 12th May, when about twenty members were present. The activities of the Section for the summer season were discussed, and it was decided, that as a strong botanical programme was arranged within the general Summer Programme, not to run a series of sectional meetings. However, one evening meeting was arranged for Wednesday, 18th May, in the Wilstead area for the purpose of "Flower Identification". This was attended by eleven members and proved very successful, much useful work being done.

The meeting at Hanger Wood on Sunday, 22nd May, found the botanical members much alive, and two outstanding records were made: one, the finding of the Fly Orchid, (*Ophrys muscifera*), after about 25 years, by Miss Pamela Soper, and secondly, the excellent observation of Miss G. H. Day in finding the fern Adder's Tongue, (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), not previously recorded from here. Apart from these, fifty-nine other plants were logged.

At Rowney Warren on Sunday, 5th June, the members were again "on their toes", and a large number of interesting plants were noted, including the Slender Yellow Clover (*Trifolium filiforme*), Trailing St. John's Wort (*Hypericum humifusum*), and Yellow Mouse-ear Chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*). The Botanical Secretary was fortunate in re-discovering Hoary Cinquefoil (*Potentilla argentea*), a rare plant in Bedfordshire, and not found in this area for a number of years.

Sunday, 19th June, saw a botanical excursion by cars into Cambridge-shire and Suffolk, when the Botanical Secretary was able to show members a number of rare plants not found in our own county; these included the following:

Bastard Toadflax (*Thesium humifusum*)
 Madwort (*Asperugo procumbens*)
 Perennial Flax (*Linum anglicum*)
 Water Avens (*Geum rivale*)
 Bloody Cranesbill (*Geranium sanguineum*)

Unfortunately, rain set in at tea-time before the final locality, in Suffolk, had been visited to see the rare Spanish Catchfly. However, despite this, two cars decided to carry on, and were rewarded by seeing the plant in some quantity.

The Annual Botanical Exhibition, held in the Nature Room, was this year arranged to follow the Cambridgeshire-Suffolk excursion, and took place on Monday, 20th June, when a display of the previous day's collections was on view, and this proved of great interest to those members who had been unable to go on the excursion. Sixty-five members visited the Exhibition.

A very interesting meeting was that of Sunday, 3rd July, when Wicken Fen was visited. Here a number of fenland plants was observed, and we were fortunate to see in flower the Bladder Wort (*Utricularia vulgaris*), one of the fen's noted plants. Other interesting species observed were:

Greater Spearwort (*Ranunculus lingua*)
 Meadow Thistle (*Carduus pratensis*)
 Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus palustris*)
 Milk Parsley (*Peucedanum palustre*)

the last-named being the food-plant of the Swallow-tail Butterfly.

The high-light of the summer, botanically, was the coach-trip to the Cheddar Gorge on Sunday, 10th July, the main object being to find the

rare Cheddar Pink (*Dianthus caesius*), for which the Gorge is noted, and in this we were highly successful as at least four members independently came across the plant. In addition, many other plants of interest were found, and the short stay in the Gorge passed altogether too quickly.

This is a brief resumé of some of the season's activities and I look forward to increased botanical interest in 1956. I should like to emphasize that Section meetings are open to ALL members of the Society and their friends.

W. DURANT

The Fungus Foray

The foray was held on 28th September 1955 at King's Wood, Heath and Reach, and was led by Mr D. A. Reid. About twenty members of the Society were present.

The area visited consisted of both pine and mixed woodland, but agarics were, with the exception of a few species, rather scanty owing to the very dry summer and early autumn. Despite this, some interesting fungi were found. Those present were able to compare *Amanita phalloides*, popularly known as the Death Cap, with *A. citrina*, a much more common species, but one with which it is often confused. Some good specimens of *Fistulina hepatica*, or Beef-steak fungus, were also collected. However, the foray was notable for the quantity of *Clitocybe aurantiaca*, or False Chanterelle, which was growing in great abundance under the bracken together with its pale form.

Altogether 43 species were collected, of which three are new records for the county.

An enjoyable day was had by all and our thanks are due to Mr N. L. Long for his kindness in allowing us to visit his estate.

Amanita citrina (Schaeff.) Roques; *A. phalloides* (Vaill.) Fr.; *A. rubescens* (Pers.) Fr.; *Amanitopsis fulva* (Grev.) Rea; *Clitocybe aurantiaca* (Wulf.) Studer; *C. geotropa* (Bull.) Fr.; *Collybia dryophila* (Bull.) Fr.; *C. fusipes* (Bull.) Berk.; *C. maculata* (A. & S.) Fr.; *Coprinus atramentarius* (Bull.) Fr.; *Entoloma sericeum* (Bull.) Fr.; *Gomphidius rutilus* (Schaeff.) Fr.; *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Huds.) Fr.; *H. velutinum* (Pers.) Fr.; *Inocybe decipientoides* Peck*; *Lactarius plumbeus* Fr.; *L. vietus* Fr.; *Mycena ammoniaca* Fr.; *M. galericulata* (Scop.) Fr.; *M. galopus* (Pers.) Fr.; *M. haematopus* (Pers.) Fr.; *Omphalia fibula* (Bull.) Fr.; *Paxillus involutus* (Batsch) Fr.; *Psalliota campestris* (Linn.) Fr.; *Psathyrella multipedata* (Peck) A. H. Smith*; *Russula atropurpurea* Kromb.; *R. cyanoxantha* (Schaeff.) Fr.; *Stropharia semiglobata* (Batsch) Fr.; *Tricholoma sordidum* (Fr.) Quel.; *Tubaria conspersa* (Pers. ex Fr.) Fayod*.

Boletus chrysenteron (Bull.) Fr.; *B. subtomentosus* (Schaeff.) Fr.
Daedalea quercina (Linn.) Fr.; *Fistulina hepatica* (Huds.) Fr.; *Polyporus betulinus* (Bull.) Fr.; *P. lacteus* Fr.; *Polystictus versicolor* (Linn.) Sacc.
Hymenochaete rubiginosa (Dicks.) Lév.
Scleroderma vulgare (Horn.) Fr.
Sphacelotheca hydropiperis (Schum.) de Bary.
Erysiphe cichoraceum DC.; *Microsphaera alphitoides* Griff & Maub. (conidial)

Sepedonium chrysospermum Fr.

*=Species new to the county.

D. A. REID

Ornithological Section

Dull weather and cool winds were the New Year's greeting to the nineteen members who met at Barton on 2nd January and walked across the hills to Pegsdon. Although much of the grassland has now been re-seeded and fenced off they had a most enjoyable walk. Among the birds seen were a Woodcock, parties of gulls, Bramblings and Tree Sparrows. Owing to heavy snow the meeting at Tring on 2nd February had to be cancelled but fine weather led to a successful ramble in the Stagsden and Stevington area on 20th March. Several Woodcock were seen and an immature Whitefronted Goose at Stevington feeding with farmyard geese.

Indoor activities at this time were also successful. In February six hundred people saw Roger Tory Peterson's colour film *Wild America*, a first hand commentary being given by James Fisher. Those present certainly envied Mr Fisher's good fortune in his tour of America, Alaska and the North Pacific islands, and admired the skill of the photographer.

Professor M. F. M. Meiklejohn visited Bedford in March and gave a talk to the Section entitled "Bird Watchers and Bird Watching". In this he gave a review of British Ornithology over the last one hundred years and some excellent tips and observations from his own experiences.

During April Dr Bruce Campbell addressed a small party of enthusiasts on the work of the B.T.O. and gave examples of individual study which could be pursued by the part-time bird watcher.

For the summer months several meetings of an ornithological nature were arranged, of which particular mention might be made of the "Dawn Chorus" at Clophill. Good support enabled the Secretary to organise a coach excursion to Cley, Norfolk, in September, and though birds were few in number they included Arctic Skua, Wood Lark, Redstart, Bartailed Godwit and the more common shore birds.

For the autumn two field meetings were arranged at Dunstable Downs and Ampthill, the latter being marred by heavy rain. Indoors again, the Society's programme contained three meetings mainly of interest to bird watchers, and these were very well attended. Unfortunately the Ornithological Conference planned for November had to be postponed for several reasons but plans for this to be held in March are now complete.

Other activities of the Section included participation in the monthly counts organised by the Wild Fowl Trust and six areas are being regularly covered this winter. The annual counts of Herons and Great Crested Grebes were again undertaken for the B.T.O. together with the new enquiry into Mute Swans.

I should like to thank all those who have taken part in these enquiries and hope they will continue their efforts in the coming year. If any other members would like to participate, their aid will be most welcome and I shall be pleased to hear from them.

F. C. GRIBBLE

Annual General Meeting 1956

THE NINTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on Thursday, 16th February 1956, in the Nature Room of the Training College, The Avenue, Bedford, with an attendance of forty-seven. Mr F. G. R. Soper presided.

The proceedings opened with the reading of the Minutes of the previous A.G.M. by the Hon. General Secretary, who then submitted the

Report of the Council for 1955. Both items were adopted. The Report, printed on page 2, indicated an unspectacular year of sound progress with a further increase in membership.

In presenting the Hon. Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for 1955, Mr J. M. Dymond indicated a position that was slightly less favourable than of the previous year due mainly to increased costs incurred in publishing the JOURNAL. There had been, however, a heartening improvement in the payment of subscriptions. Thanks were expressed to the Hon. Auditor, Mr Eric Lucas, and to the College Authorities for the continued free loan of the present room for meetings. (See page 3.)

Mr F. C. Gribble as Hon. Secretary read the Report of the Ornithological Section which gave an interesting account of both indoor and field activities, the latter being greatly stepped up. (See page 10.) The corresponding Hon. Secretary of the Botanical Section, Mr W. Durant, showed an encouraging record of activity, and paid tribute to Mr A. W. Guppy from whom he took office.

As Hon. Librarian, Miss E. Proctor presented an encouraging report in which an appeal was made to members to take greater advantage of the loan of books. The final Report was that of the Hon. Programme Secretary, Mr L. A. Speed, and the attendances at meetings were regarded as satisfactory.

All the Officers were suitably thanked for their services.

The election of Officers was the next business. The Chairman announced that the Council had nominated Major Simon Whitbread for a further term as President and this was approved unanimously by the Meeting. The retiring Chairman, Hon. General Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Librarian had all been re-nominated by the Council and Messrs F. G. R. Soper, Henry A. S. Key and J. M. Dymond, together with Miss E. Proctor respectively, were all re-elected. It was with regret that Dr H. F. Barnes, under pressure from increasing duties, had reluctantly vacated the office of Hon. Editor and expressions of gratitude were made from all sides for the excellent way he had maintained his office. Mr A. W. Guppy was elected as his successor.

Ten nominations were received for the Council and the undermentioned were duly elected :

Miss A. L. Cooper, Miss E. Proctor, Miss G. M. Tattam, Dr J. G. Dony and Messrs W. Durant, F. C. Gribble, W. G. Harper, W. E. K. Piercy, S. W. Rodell and K. E. West.

Mr Soper then outlined a discussion which had taken place in Council suggesting among other items of finance, the possibility of increasing membership fees. In the debate which ensued a number of interesting points was raised and duly noted for Council's future consideration.

Business now being concluded, the evening was rounded off with a talk given by Mr Key, entitled "Recording Wild Birds" which indicated the technique of securing on tape the songs of a number of species, several of which were played. The lecture was further illustrated with monochrome slides projected by Mr L. A. Speed.

The Weather of 1955

BY A. W. GUPPY

In several respects 1955 was a complete contrast to its predecessor, with rainfall everywhere well below average and an unusually hot, dry, summer; July and August, in particular, had temperatures comparable to those of the corresponding months of 1949, and even lower rainfall. At some stations the second half of the year was drier than for any comparable period during the present century. Bromham, for example, having only 5.6 inches. July, is, on average, a wet month, usually because of thunderstorms, but in 1955 the weather throughout the month was dominated by Scandinavian anticyclones which gave persistent north-easterly winds with high sunshine totals, and a drought which equalled or surpassed those of the famous summers of 1911 and 1921.

The first half of January was cold, with north-easterly winds and several falls of snow. Mild, wet weather then followed until 10th February, when a second and more persistent cold period began which continued with but slight intermissions until mid-March. Snowfall was frequent, though not heavy, and severe night frosts occurred, especially between 26th February and 3rd March. The spring continued to be dominated by north-easterly conditions with only occasional brief mild wet spells; April had a 15-day drought, and its usual low total rainfall. May was the wettest month of the year, with twenty rainy days, eleven of them consecutive. May 17th was the wettest day of the year, with over an inch in some places (1.35 inches at Cardington), and snow fell in the evening—a most unusual occurrence for the time of the year.

After a June with normal rainfall, the “summer” began in earnest on 5th July, when a prolonged period of north-easterly conditions became established for nearly six weeks. The longest period of absolute drought in most places comprised the eighteen days from 14th July until 2nd August. The sunshine for the month of July averaged over $8\frac{3}{4}$ hours daily, some days in the middle of the month having 14 or more hours.

September brought some relief, though rain was still scanty, and insufficient to make good the effects of the two previous months, and in this respect October and November were also well below normal. Mid-October brought a cold spell, with the first air frost of the autumn on the night of 15th/16th. The second half of November was dry, with some prolonged fogs, but December was, on the whole, mild and wet.

Snow fell on 20 days, but only on the 4th January was the amount considerable, and, even then, equivalent to less than half an inch of rain.

RAINFALL FOR 1955

	Amphill	Aspley Guise	Bedford	Bromham	Cardington	Carlton	Kempston	Silsoe
January ...	2.24	2.50	2.15	1.78	1.94	2.15	1.86	1.76
February ...	1.62	1.76	1.23	1.40	1.54	1.59	1.46	1.42
March ...	1.10	1.12	1.35	0.99	1.06	1.97	1.27	0.97
April ...	0.44	0.50	0.54	0.39	0.43	0.54	0.40	0.39
May ...	4.14	4.54	3.85	3.59	3.90	3.43	3.85	3.76
June ...	1.97	1.61	2.13	2.07	2.47	2.35	2.25	2.09
July ...	0.05	0.24	0.35	0.07	0.18	0.29	0.11	0.19
August ...	0.78	0.94	0.58	0.62	0.62	0.70	0.65	0.93
September ...	1.54	1.93	1.88	1.20	1.69	1.37	1.77	1.40
October ...	1.82	1.82	1.60	1.20	1.51	1.31	1.62	1.81
November ...	1.23	1.25	1.05	0.87	1.07	1.29	1.08	1.29
December ...	2.05	2.53	1.98	1.65	1.81	2.37	1.99	2.04
Totals ...	18.98	20.74	18.69	15.83	18.22	19.36	18.31	18.05

Amphill (Mr Horne)
 Aspley Guise (Mr Young)
 Bedford (Mr Lock)
 Bromham (The writer)

Cardington Aerodrome (per Mr Speed)
 Carlton (Col. Battcock)
 Kempston (Mr Payne)
 Silsoe (N.I.A.E., Wrest Park, per Mr Dunn)

TEMPERATURE

The following averages are those for the N.I.A.E. at Wrest Park, Silsoe :

January	... 36.15 deg. F.	July	... 62.9 deg. F.
February	... 34.35	August	... 64.5
March	... 37.2	September	... 58.2
April	... 49.35	October	... 48.7
May	... 50.15	November	... 44.4
June	... 57.3	December	... 41.9

Average for the whole year ... 48.76 deg. F.

(Average for 1954 ... 48.86 deg. F.)

The low average of the first six months will be noted, particularly those for February and May, while those for July and August are unusually high.

The hottest day was 17th July with 86 degrees (87 at Silsoe) ; the coldest, 14th January, when the temperature failed to rise above freezing-point.

Air frosts were severe at the end of February, and the coldest night was that of the 27th/28th with between 17 degrees and 23 degrees of frost at various stations.

The Drawings of Caroline Gaye

BY J. G. DONY

I have been lent recently, by Miss J. C. N. Willis of Ipswich, the Honorary Secretary of the Suffolk Naturalists' Society, ten volumes of water-colour drawings of plants made by her great-aunt, Caroline Gaye. Caroline was born at Shefford in 1804 and died in London in 1883. She was the third child of Charles Seaman Gaye, a country doctor and a keen amateur artist, who came from Totnes in Devon, and his wife Ann Hicks of Shefford. The volumes contain about 800 drawings which were begun in 1831 and continued with some regularity to 1849 after which time the numbers diminish to the date of the last drawing in 1863.

Caroline's drawings show great skill and a fine delicacy of touch which can be seen at its best in her treatment of the mosses, fungi and the flowering parts of the higher plants. She was less

successful with grasses and sedges and leaves. It was obviously the joy of drawing that attracted her, as the same subject is often chosen twice.

At the time she was making the drawings Caroline worked as a governess in several large houses, and her work is done in many parts of the country, but it is those drawn at Shefford during her periods spent at home, and others during a long stay at Filgrow, a few miles from the county border in Buckinghamshire, which interest us most. Her Shefford studies include some rarities: *Pulmonaria officinalis* (1831), *Borago officinalis* (1831), *Silybum marianum* (1832), *Bupleurum rotundifolium* (1832), *Hottonia palustris* from Stanford (1832), *Melampyrum cristatum* from Nun Wood, Shefford (1832), *Ophrys insectifera* from Wrest Park Wood (1832), *Cuscuta epithymum* (1833) and *Samolus valerandi* (1840); her *Orobanche rapum-genistae* from Rowney Warren (1832) must be considered to be the first record of this species for the county.

Caroline knew her plants well and gives with each drawing a long note on the plant, often adding her own personal observations. She corresponded with some of the best botanists of her day and had at least one local contact in William Crouch, 14 years her junior, and plants in his herbarium credited to Miss C. Gage, see *Trans. Beds. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, 1, 29 (1946), may now be correctly credited to her. Occasionally she slipped, for her spider orchid from Cainhoe (1840) is undoubtedly *Epipactis latifolia* and her *Althaea officinalis* from Shefford (1831) cannot be correct. While she usually portrayed her subject faithfully, she sometimes strayed. The red and white champions were thought in her day to be one species and in 1831 she drew the two side by side, but in 1849 she drew an astonishing plant with one flower white and another red.

Miss Willis was anxious for me to see the drawings, as Caroline thought she had introduced a new plant to the botanical world in *Viola Gayena* which she had named after herself, and which was known in the family as Cary's Violet. There is evidence to believe that Henslow and Daubeny led her to think that this was so. The plant which she drew most faithfully and delightfully from Sandy Woods in Bedfordshire in 1840, and again from Fulwell in Buckinghamshire in 1843, is clearly a cleistogamic form of wood violet (*Viola riviniana*), and the name is not upheld in any standard botanical work.

Black Headed Gulls Breeding in South Beds.

The Black-Headed Gulls are regular winter visitors to the Dunstable district, normally leaving by early April, except for occasional stragglers. In the spring of 1955, however, we noticed that a small flock of these Gulls was very much attached to the flooded area of Dunstable Sewage Farm well after the usual departure time. The area concerned was flooded much more than in previous years and made a very suitable site.

With the hope that the Gulls would remain to nest, they were allowed to settle down and their territory was not searched for some weeks, although their aggressive diving attacks on persons approaching within approximately 100 yards of them were indicative of breeding.

On May 29th a brief look at the most easily accessible part of their territory showed two nests with one egg each. More thorough searching at a latter date showed a total of eleven nests with eggs and one with nothing in. All the nests were in separate clumps of twitch grass surrounded by water ; none had more than three eggs.

The first young were hatched on June 5th or 6th, one was seen to fly on July 9th and eight were flying on July 10th.

By August 6th only one adult Black-Headed Gull showed signs of alarm when the site was visited, and only one pair of young was being fed by another adult, although these young were able to fly. This was the last day the adults were seen to attend the young ; by August 9th all adults had left, and all immature had dispersed by August 17th.

The maximum number of immature gulls seen in the area was 32 on the 1st August, but this no doubt included some additions from outside the colony, as five young were found dead and at least one egg was lost. A total of five young was ringed.

The only neighbouring counties in which they are reported to breed are Northampton and Cambridge, according to *The Handbook of British Birds* 1941, Vol. IV.

Apart from an unconfirmed report of 'seagulls' nesting unsuccessfully in a flooded chalk pit at Houghton Regis in 1954, this is the first record of Black-Headed Gulls nesting in Bedfordshire.

An interesting point was that two pairs of Moorhens nested on the fringe of the Gull's colony, one having eight eggs and the other nine. Neither was seen to be molested by the Gulls, although one nest was under observation for 16 days.

Modernisation work now in progress near this site indicates that this area may be unsuitable as a breeding site in a year or two.

H. COLE, D. & R. WHITE, M. WORTLEY



NEST AND YOUNG OF BLACK-HEADED GULL
(*Photograph by D. and R. White*)

Reports of Recorders

FLOWERING PLANTS

The year was perhaps without equal in the opportunities it gave for field work. My attentions were turned to the neighbouring county of Hertfordshire, and I regret that I have obtained few records from others. Some plants have been recorded from new stations : *Pedicularis sylvatica* from Flitwick Moor by D. Hillyard, *Ophioglossum vulgatum* and *Ophrys insectifera* from Hanger Wood, *Potentilla argentea* and *Cerastium arvense* from Rowney Warren, *Lathyrus aphaca* from Bedford by W. Durant, and *Taraxacum palustre* from Flitwick Moor by the Recorder. *Dactylorhiza incarnata* was found on Totternhoe Mead during the Field Meeting on 11th June, and B. Clay found *Geum rivale* in flower at Fancott, where it had not been seen for some years.

The dry year and an early frost made the crop of wool adventives less numerous than in past years, and only four new species were found. An interesting dodder (*Cuscuta campestris* Yuncker) was found on beet at Flitton and Maulden.

J. G. DONY

BIRDS

The county list has been increased this year by the occurrence of three casuals, namely Purple Heron, Turnstone and Rock-Pipit, all in the north of the county. Such additions are to be expected from time to time, and although these birds cannot be considered among the typical species of the county, and are therefore less important, yet their observations certainly creates added zest to field work.

But from the south of the county has come a breeding record of greater significance. Black-headed Gulls have bred in some neighbouring counties, but it was not till 1954, with an unconfirmed report of gulls nesting at Houghton Regis Chalk Pit, that interest became specially centred in the possibility of a Bedfordshire Colony at an early date. In the early 1940's a number of Black-heads would probably have attempted to nest on the partially flooded meadows at Bedford Sewage Farm and only departed when cattle were admitted to the area just about the time of nest-building. A few years ago too, F. C. Gribble ringed a juvenile Black-headed Gull at the partially flooded gravel pits near Cople, which as it could not yet fly, must have been reared in the area, but no trace of parents and signs of nesting were apparent.

Now at last positive proof comes from Dunstable Sewage Farm, which is only a short distance from the Houghton Regis Pits area (see article on page 15).

The evident and ever-increasing interest in the subject is providing a more balanced picture of the county bird-life and I should like to thank all those who have submitted details of their observations. If I might add one criticism, it is that some still fail to give sufficient data when referring to the rarer species. Also I should be most grateful if all members when completing their forms would place the Notes in the Whetmore order of classification.

The following observers are mentioned in the text by initials, as follows :

T.W.A. = T. W. J. Abbiss ; P.S.B. = P. S. Bates ; B.S. = Bedford School Natural History Society ; H.C. = Harry Cole ; D. W. E. = D. W. Elliott ; F.C.G. = F. C. Gribble ; G.G. = Miss Gwen Gribble ; A.R.J. = A. R. Jenkins ; A.J.L. = A. J. Livett ; M.F.M. = M. F. M. Meiklejohn ;

M.O. = more than four observers; C.S.P. = C. S. Payne; J.E.P. = J. E. Pierce; W.E.P. = W. E. K. Piercey; Rec. = Recorder; S.W.R. = S. W. Rodell; W.G.S. = W. G. Sharpe; S.H.S. = S. H. Smith; F.G.S. = F. G. R. Soper; C.F.T. = C. F. Tebbutt; E.S.W. = E. S. Wall; D.R.W. = D. and R. White; and M.W. = Michael Wortley.

Localities : S.F. = Sewage Farm; G.P. = Gravel Pit; CH. P. = Chalk Pit; CL.P. = Clay Pit.

Numbers refer to the B.O.U. Check List (1952).

In addition to the species listed more particularly, the following were recorded as usual :

93 Sparrow Hawk; 110 Kestrel; 115 Red-legged Partridge; 116 Partridge; 118 Pheasant; 126 Moorhen; 241 Barn Owl; 246 Little Owl; 247 Tawny Owl; 258 Kingfisher; 262 Green Woodpecker; 263 Greater Spotted Woodpecker; 272 Skylark; 280 Carrion-Crow; 282 Rook; 283 Jackdaw; 284 Magpie; 286 Jay; 288 Great Tit; 289 Blue Tit; 290 Coal Tit; 292 Marsh Tit; 294 Long-tailed Tit; 298 Tree-Creeper; 299 Wren; 301 Mistle-Thrush; 303 Song-Thrush; 371 Hedge-Sparrow; 392 Greenfinch; 393 Goldfinch; 401 Bullfinch; 407 Chaffinch; 409 Yellow Hammer; 421 Reed-Bunting; 424 House-Sparrow; 425 Tree-Sparrow.

5. GREAT CRESTED GREBE—52 adults counted at the time of the annual census from the following waters : lakes at Luton Hoo, Southill Park and the Woburn estate, including Eversholt and Battlesden; clay pits at Kempston Hardwick and the adjacent Coronation Works; chalk pits at Arlesey and Houghton Regis; gravel workings at Arlesey, Felmersham and Henlow (M.O.).

6. RED-NECKED GREBE—One present at the Arlesey CH.P. 8th-19th Jan. Perfect views were obtained through glasses and full characters noted, including the yellow at the base of the bill (A.R.J.).

9. LITTLE GREBE—Normal distribution at all seasons reported from all suitable waters (M.O.). Largest party—up to 20—at East Hyde, Jan.-Feb. (D.R.W.).

27. GANNET—Adult bird found alive in fields at Cople, 20th April. Attempted feeding was unsuccessful and it died. (Via R.S.P.C.A. to F.C.G.). The body was afterwards preserved and mounted for D.W.E.

28. CORMORANT—One, Felmersham G.P., 27th Nov. (Comdr. G. E. P. Milburn.) (I am informed that on page 32 of the 1954 Report the six birds referred to on 4th and 5th Dec., as 'Shag' should read 'Cormorant'.)

29. SHAG—One bird was seen at Arlesey CH.P., 26th Feb. The water froze on the next day and on 6th March one dead bird was recovered. It proved to be a female and is now to be seen in the Hitchin Museum.

30. HERON—28 nests recorded at the Annual Count—none from Turvey or Little Barford. The colony at Bromham Park was disturbed by tree-felling at the beginning of the nesting season and some nested later when foliage prevented accurate assessment. A pair bred successfully at a new site near Leighton Buzzard. The colony at Southill Lake is still the largest in the county with 16 nests.

31. PURPLE HERON—One bird was present at Felmersham, 11th-16th Sept., and it was reported as having been in the area for a fortnight previously. A separate article on this addition to the county list appears on page 29.

38. BITTERN—One, Felmersham G.P., during the latter half of August—and again on 11th September. (Comdr. G. E. P. Milburn and Lady Wells.)

45. MALLARD—Regular counts at all seasons showed no outstanding numbers. Fewer than usual were recorded from Bedford S.F. in the early part of the year and the largest party anywhere—380—was at Kempston Hardwick CL.P., 11th Dec. (M.O.).

46. TEAL—Distribution about normal with no evidence of breeding. Up to 250 visited Bedford S.F. in January (M.O.).

47. GARGANEY—A pair arrived at Bedford S.F., 27th March, but left the same day. A female was seen at the nearby gravel pit, 27th Aug (F.C.G. and A.R.J.). An unusually large party of 12 was reported from Luton Hoo Lake, 3rd Aug. No evidence of breeding (A.J.L. and M.W.).

50. WIGEON—Numbers about average. C.S.P. records a party of at least 75 on the flooded fields, Bedford S.F., 29th Jan. First winter arrivals, 6, were seen here, 13th Nov. (M.O.).

52. PINTAIL—One or two males, Bedford S.F., 23rd-30th Jan. (F.C.G.).

53. SHOVELER—Single birds only. Male, Bedford S.F., 29th Jan.; one, Luton Hoo Lake, 15th Oct., and another, Eversholt Lake, 12th Nov. (F.C.G., C.S.P. and M.W.). One, shot by gamekeeper, Luton Hoo Lake, 15th Oct., bore a ring from which it was learned that the bird had been ringed as a duckling at Gladhouse Reservoir, Midlothian, 26th June, 1955—320 miles distant (M.W.).

56. TUFTED DUCK—Recorded from all the usual pools in the autumn and winter with numbers less than usual, the largest party (18), Luton Hoo Lake, 10th April, from which locality comes the only breeding record of the year—a duck seen with three young, 20th Aug. Birds of both sexes were present at Woburn and Battlesden Lakes in May and June (M.O.).

57. POCHARD—Reported chiefly from the Woburn lakes and Luton Hoo lake in the winter months. At the latter pool, c. 70 were present on 6th March. Birds of both sexes were present at Luton Hoo and Battlesden, June-August, but there was no evidence of breeding (M.O.).

64. COMMON SCOTER—A female was discovered in company with Mallard on the artificial lake in Bedford Park on 9th May. Apparently it had been here for about three weeks prior to this date and it stayed for several weeks feeding with the other ducks. When first discovered it was very shy and would sit out on the open pool on its own. The bird was uninjured and would fly around with the Mallard.

It, or a similar bird, was seen again in this locality, 18th December, after an absence of many months (M.O.).

An unconfirmed report was again received from the Biggleswade area.

71. SMEW—Excellent views of a pair at Coronation CL.P., 10th Feb. (R. White).

75/76. GESE (Sp. ?)—A skein of 13 flew towards N.E. over Flitwick, 27th March (W.G.S.).

76. WHITE FRONTED GOOSE—An immature bird in healthy uninjured condition turned up at Park Farm, Stevington, 9th March, and kept company with farm geese on a secluded pond near the River Ouse for many weeks. It would not allow close approach if on its own in the open, but a party of members had excellent views of it both on the ground

and in flight on several occasions. The possibility of it being an 'escape' cannot be ruled out.

78. PINK-FOOTED GOOSE—Three seen on a misty day at the end of January near Sheffield and one shot which bore a ring that had been put on at Arnafallsalda Thjorsaver, Iceland, 29th July 1953.

84. MUTE SWAN—According to F.C.G. who organised the census on behalf of the B.T.O., 37 pairs were located during the breeding season, though he says that it is probable that some others were overlooked. A herd of at least 40 remained on the River Ouse at Bedford during the summer.

91/92. BUZZARD (Summer visitors, all *Common Buzzard* (91); Winter Visitors, sp. ?)—There were many more reports than usual during the year. According to W.G.S. a bird was present in the Westoning area throughout the year while three others frequented Steppingley Woods 'for a long time'. Other casualties were:

One flying from Little Gaddesden (Herts.) towards Whipsnade Zoo in Jan. (A.J.L.); one over Biddenham, 21st March (R. G. Goosey); one over Bedford, 22nd April (G. Dillingham); one at Copt Hall, 13th June, had apparently been around for some time and was later seen at Luton Hoo and other places nearby—this, or another seen at Dunstable Downs on the same date (D. & R.W. and H.C.); one shot at Turvey, 3rd Sept., had been in the area for several weeks (D.W.E.); a single bird seen 29th Oct., near Tingrith Lake, it was learned, had frequented the district for 4-5 weeks; a gamekeeper near Ridgmont reported that he had seen a party of 7 passing over, 7th November (P.W.A.); one at Luton Hoo Lake, 13th November (M.W.); one around Cranfield for three weeks prior to 19th December.

100/102. HARRIER (? sp.,—most probably *Montagu's*)—A female was seen at Colesden Wood by Mr. Addington of Colesden, 13th May—it was described as being 'brown all over'; (via C.F.T.); one over the Barton Hills, 12th October, seen by M.W., was flying slowly about 100 ft. up. It was light brown in colour.

104. HOBBY—One near Eversholt 2nd May (W.G.S.); a male at Dunstable Downs, 13th June, was seen at close range by D.R.W. and all characters were noted. It flew low several times along the Downs and once rose to catch a Swift, flying off with the bird in its talons.

107. MERLIN—A female or juvenile was being mobbed by rooks at Stewartby CLP. 16th Oct. (F.C.G.). Full description supplied.

117. QUAIL—One heard by D.W.E. at Bury End, Stagsden, early in July.

120. WATER-RAIL—One at Wyboston, 30th Jan. (F.C.G.); one visited gardens in Cutenhoe Road, Luton, during Feb. and March—feeding in company with Starlings (H.C.)—an unusual occurrence; one, Bedford S.F. 1st and 2nd April, was found just dead on 2nd. It was sent by Rec. for an autopsy but the cause of death could not be ascertained. At Flitwick Moor, birds were heard on occasions during the summer (W.G.S.)—two were heard and one seen here, 19th September and single birds in the same locality 6th and 26th December (F.C.G. and D.R.W.).

125. CORN-CRAKE—A party of c. 4 birds was seen by W.G.S. in the sand-pits near Flitwick Railway Station 4th May, and soon afterwards one, apparently uninjured was found dead and posted to Rec.

127. COOT—Recorded from most waters. Breeding distribution about normal (M.O.). Largest winter flocks were reported from Luton Hoo

lake, where up to 250 were seen by M.W. in November-December and c. 260 observed by W.E.P. at Southill lake, 30th December.

133. LAPWING—I should like to draw attention to the loose terms used in describing flocks of this and many other species, viz. 'large', 'immense', etc. For the records to have any real value they should be estimated as accurately as possible and stated in figures. Distribution appeared normal at all seasons.

134. RINGED PLOVER—One, Dustable S.F., 13th April, 2 here 2nd May, and one on 21st; one, Grovebury Farm G.P., Leighton Buzzard, 8th May; one, Dunstable S.F. 18th-27th Aug. White wing bars seen (H.C., F.C.G., E.S.W and D.R.W.).

135. LITTLE RINGED PLOVER—One, Bedford S.F. gravel pit, 23rd April, flew eastwards when disturbed; another in the same locality 1st May. All characters noted, including absence of wing-bar and call heard (F.C.G.).

140. GOLDEN PLOVER—Reported from many areas throughout the county during autumn and winter, the largest recorded parties : (c. 100) at Thrales End, 13th Feb., and c. 300, Luton Airport, 31st December (M.O.).

Birds of the Northern race were identified by several observers in April. First winter arrivals were seen near Arlesey, 29th October, and East Hyde on the following day (M.O.).

143. TURNSTONE—One bird was present at Bedford S.F. gravel pit, 8th-10th May. The unusual species was first discovered by B.S., who notified F.C.G., and he was able to confirm the identification with his own observations. The bird, which was very tame, had the characteristic orange legs, dark breast band and pronounced plumage pattern, details of which were supplied by F.C.G. who is familiar with the species.

As far as can be ascertained this is the first recorded occurrence in the county.

145. COMMON SNIBE—Recorded during the breeding season at Bedford S.F. and Flitwick Moor (M.O.). The largest winter parties were : c. 200, Bedford S.F., 13th Feb., and c. 150, Dunstable S.F., 20th November F.C.G. and D.R.W.).

146. [GREAT SNIBE]—A single bird seen at the Coronation Works Cl.P. near Kempston Hardwick, 3rd Feb., by D. White, may have been of this species.

It was seen at rest by a pool—when the large size and dark colouring were noted. When it flew, white outer tail feathers showed clearly and the mantle appeared dark with some striation. It gave a short 'grunting' call and flew with but little swerving to pitch in about 75 yards away.

147. JACK SNIBE—Only single birds seen this year at Bedford S.F.—now less marshy due to drainage—up to 13th April, and again after 9th Oct. (F.C.G. and C.S.P.). 2, Dunstable S.F., 30th Jan., and one, 2nd May and up to 10 there 20th Nov.-12th Dec. One, East Hyde, 11th Dec. (A.J.L., D.R.W. and H.C.).

148. WOODCOCK—Distribution appears to have been normal with birds present at the usual stations in the breeding season. Several seen 'roding' 8th April at Maulden Wood (F.C.G.) and others 'roding' at Flitwick Wood, Flitwick Moor, Tingrith lake and Fox Covert, Millbrook, where T.W.A. witnessed mating.

150. CURLEW—One, Wyboston, 30th Jan. Several calling at night over Bedford, 15th March; up to 6, Dunstable S.F., 14th-30th April; single

birds flying eastwards over Bromham, 30th April-11th May, and one near Biggleswade, 21st August (M.O.).

151. WHIMBREL—One flew northwards calling loudly over Arlesey CH.P., 1st May (A.R.J.) and 5, Dunstable S.F., seen feeding, and in flight, 8th-15th May. All characters noted (H.C., E.S.W. and D.R.W.).

154. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT—2, Bedford S.F., 24th July (F.C.G.).

156. GREEN SANDPIPER—Spring Passage: One, Bedford S.F., 13th April, 2 over Arlesey CH.P. on 24th, and one, Dunstable S.F., on the same day.

A.R.J. reports that on the Beds-Herts border the species was present all the year except in May and June. One, Fenlake near Bedford, 18th June.

The return passage was studied by A.R.J. in the Arlesey area, where the first birds were seen, 1st July, and numbers increased to 7 on 6th and 31st August; they decreased to only one on the 19th Sept.; 2 Bedford S.F., 24th July, and numbers increased to at least 9 on 31st with the last party of 5, 10th Sept.

At Dunstable S.F. there was one, 24th July, and up to 4 here 2nd-27th August, with a final bird, 4th Sept. (M.O.).

157. WOOD-SANDPIPER—One, Bedford S.F., 7th August, and 2 there, 20th Aug. (F.C.G.). One, Dunstable, 29th May, and up to 3 there 17th-29th Aug. (D.R.W., A.J.L. and M.W.). Confirmatory characters supplied.

159. COMMON SANDPIPER—Spring Passage: One, Wyboston, 24th April; one, Kempston Hardwick CL.P., 27th April; up to 3, Dunstable S.F., 25th April-2nd May, and 3 here again on 29th; one, Arlesey CH.P., 7th May; one, Bedford S.F. gravel pit, 1st-10th May.

Return Passage: One, Coronation CL.P., Kempston Hardwick, 23rd July and three there, 22nd Aug.; up to 8, Dunstable S.F., 24th July-17th Sept.; one or two Bedford S.F. gravel pit, 1st-31st Aug.; two East Hyde, 20th Aug. Also said to have visited Houghton Regis CH.P.

161. REDSHANK—Single birds, Bedford S.F., 29th-30th Jan. Spring passage began with one, Kempston Hardwick CL.P., 23rd March; c. 12 Bedford S.F., 27th March and c. 15, Dunstable S.F., on 27th. About 7 pairs remained during the breeding season at Bedford S.F., and 6 pairs at Dunstable S.F. Another pair was reported from Steppingley Marsh. Stragglers remained at, or passed through, Dunstable S.F. during August, when the last bird was seen on 28th.

162. SPOTTED REDSHANK—One, Dunstable S.F., 13th-14th Aug., was comparatively tame. Characters noted: Orange red legs, white above eye, grey-brown back. In flight-white rump but no white on wing; characteristic "chewit" call heard (D.R.W.). Another, Bedford S.F., 14th August was still mainly in summer plumage (F.C.G.).

165. GREENSHANK—Up to 5 Dunstable S.F., 13th-29th Aug. (H.C., A.J.L., M.W. and D.R.W.). One, Luton Hoo lake, 23rd August (M.W.). One flew over Arlesey CH.P., 3rd Sept. (C. E. Cooke, via A.R.J.).

178. DUNLIN—One by small stream near Clifton in snowy weather, 28th Feb. Up to 4, intermittently at Dunstable S.F., 27th March-2nd May, and one, Grovebury Farm C.P., Leighton Buzzard, 8th May; 2 Bedford S.F., 31st Aug. (M.W., D.R.W. and F.C.G.).

184. RUFF—One, Dunstable S.F., 24th-25th April; up to 4, Dunstable S.F., from 15th-27th Aug., then numbers fell to 2 birds till 7th Sept., and finally one 2nd Oct.; up to 3, Bedford S.F., 23rd Aug.-3rd Sept. (M.O.).

189. **STONE CURLEW**—Birds heard calling near Pegsdon, 23rd April (F.C.G. and A.R.J.). 5-6 seen near Hexton on Herts border, 20th Aug. (M.W.).

198. **GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL**—An immature bird, Arlesey CH.P., 6th March (A.R.J.).

199. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**—There was noticeable movement during April of this species, both in N.E. and S.W. directions with 5 over Great Barford on 11th, 4 over Felmersham, 18th and one over Pegsdon, 23rd. 3 others, Houghton Regis CH.P., 10th April, had very dark mantles and seemed to be of the Scandinavian race. 2 Dunstable S.F., 19th-24th April; one there 2nd August; 2 West Hyde, 8th August, and one, Coronation Pit, Kempston Hardwick, 22nd August (M.O.).

200. **HERRING GULL**—Considerable influx of this species during winter months as follows : up to 70, Arlesey CH.P. during Jan. (A.L.J.); c. 80, Luton Tip, 7th Jan., and c. 200 in company with Common and Black-headed gulls at the same locality, 13th March; up to 50, Willington tip, 30th Jan., and 13th Feb.; up to 50, East Hyde in Feb.; up to 150, Sundon dump, Feb.-March; 80-90, Sundon Park, 5th April; c. 150, Galley Hill area, 20th April. Single birds seen passing through several northern districts in Jan. and Feb., and one found dead at Manor Farm, Cranfield, 31st Oct., where it was seen alive on the previous day. Cause of death not known. c. 60, Luton, 25th December (M.O.).

201. **COMMON GULL**—One, Dunstable S.F., 9th Jan., a 'few' in the Luton area Jan.-Feb.; 10 Dunstable S.F., 25th April; c. 100 on Herts.-Beds. border at Wilbury, 3rd April, and 150-200 there, 17th April (see note on 'Migration of Common Gull' on page); c. 30, mostly immature, were drifting N.E. over the area, 22nd April; and 2, Arlesey CH.P., 1st May. One, West Hyde, 8th Aug.

First winter arrivals : c. 20 at Streatley and others in the Arlesey pits area on the following day. 4, at Houghton Regis, 24th Dec., and 3 on Wardown Sports Ground, Luton, 31st December (M.O.).

208. **BLACK-HEADED GULL**. Winter flocks : c. 200, Willington tip, 30th Jan., and c. 150 here, 13th Feb.; c. 300-400 birds going to roost flew southwards over East Hyde, 5th Feb.; c. 100-150 in the Dunstable area, 6th Feb., and up to 80 on Sundon dump in the same month; c. 30 were obviously going to roost at Kempston Hardwick CL.P., 2nd March. The first nesting colony of the species in Bedfordshire was discovered at Dunstable S.F. in May. Full details are given in an article by H.C. on page 15. C. 90, Houghton Regis, 18th Dec. (M.O.).

211. **KITTIWAKE**—A.R.J. reports the following: "One on 15th Jan. at Arlesey CH.P. It was in almost adult plumage except for a slight dark mark across the back of the neck. It was not seen on the 16th. On the 6th Feb., a bird in similar plumage was present, and clear views were obtained. On the 12th Feb., an immature was identified from a flock of 62 Black-headed gulls swimming on the water. The bird was seen from above and full details noted, including diagonal band across the wings and slightly forked tail with black terminal band."

217/8. **COMMON/ARCTIC TERN**—One, Arlesey CH.P., 22nd April (A.R.J.).

232. **STOCK DOVE**—Normal distribution. One heard singing, Kempston, 9th Jan. (C.S.P.).

234. **WOOD-PIGEON**—Normal distribution. The usual winter flocks reported, the largest recorded being c. 500, Wyboston, 13th Feb. (F.C.G.).

235. **TURTLE-DOVE**—First arrival, Whipsnade, 27th April (P.S.B.). An unusual flock of c. 100 seen feeding in a barley field at Luton, outside, but near to county. Party of 20, East Hyde, 16th Sept. (D.R.W.). A family party of 3 fed daily in a Bromham garden, 1st-8th Oct. (F.G.S.).

237. **CUCKOO**—First arrivals heard Whipsnade, 7th April (P.S.B.), and Flitwick on 14th (W.G.S.). Last emigrants (all juveniles) seen Bedford, 22nd Aug., and Dunstable S.F. on 27th (F.C.G. and D.R.W.).

248. **LONG-EARED OWL**—One, Colesden Wood, 7th Dec. (C.F.T.).

252. **NIGHTJAR**—Normal distribution. First arrival, Streatley, 16th May (M.W.).

255. **SWIFT**—First arrivals seen Bedford, 1st May, and Luton, Whipsnade and Kempston on the following day. Within the next few days there was normal summer distribution (M.O.). Last emigrants: 10, Kempston, 17th Aug.. (C.S.P.), and a single bird, Houghton Regis CH.P. on the following day (D.R.W.).

264. **LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER**—Single birds seen during the year at Bedford, Biggleswade, East Hyde, Chiltern Green and Luton Hoo. Most of these records were for the early months of the year.

274. **SWALLOW**—First arrivals, 2, Clophill, 29th March; one, Whipsnade, 3rd April and Biggleswade on the following day. Largest roosts recorded: c. 1000 in bullrushes in River Ouse, Bedford S.F., 23rd Aug., and c. 300-400 in reedbed by Mill pool at rear of Stanley Works, Ampthill Road, Bedford, 7th Sept. (F.C.G.). An albino seen with a large party on Beds-Herts border near Ickleford, 6th Aug. (A.R.J.). Last emigrants: Barton Springs, 15th Oct., and Bedford on 28th (M.W. and D.R.W.).

276. **HOUSE MARTIN**—First arrivals: 6, Arlesey, 27th March (David Wooberry) and c. 10, Felmersham G.P. on the following day (Lady Wells)—both early records. No further birds were reported till 16th April, when a single bird was seen over Galley Hill, and another, Bedford S.F. on 23rd (D.R.W. and F.C.G.). Last emigrant: a confirmed record of a single bird flying at Riseley, 24th November (Rev. F. J. C. Davis). An account of this very late occurrence appeared in the local press.

277. **SAND-MARTIN**—First arrivals: 4, Bedford S.F., 6th April; several near Biggleswade on 11th, and at Dunstable S.F. on 13th. Main passage was not apparent till 1st May. Last emigrant: Dunstable S.F., 17th Sept.

281. **HOODED CROW**—One, Dunstable S.F., 30th Jan.-6th Feb. (D.R.W., A.J.L. and M.W.). One seen by staff in same locality, 1st Nov. (Via D.R.W.)

293. [**WILLOW-TIT**]
—M.W., who has observed Willow-Tits at close quarters, in Suffolk, and heard their song, heard a bird calling at Clophill Woods, 17th April, and its notes, a relatively harsh *zi-zi-zi* reminded him immediately of that species. He was only able to get a brief glimpse of the bird which was either a Marsh- or Willow-tit.

296. **NUTHATCH**—Normal distribution. Nest containing 9 young, Whipsnade, 14th May (P.S.B.).

302. **FIELDFARE**—Last emigrants: Dunstable S.F., 2nd May (D.R.W.). First winter arrivals: 42 flying S.W., Houghton Conquest, 16th Oct. (F.C.G.). Largest recorded flocks: c. 700, Bedford S.F., 23rd Oct., and c. 300-350, Coronation CL.P., Kempston Hardwick, 13th Nov. (F.C.G. and D.R.W.).

304. REDWING—Heard singing in a Bedford garden, 18th March (Ida Brandon). Last emigrants: Stockwood Park, Luton, 5th April (D.R.W.). First arrivals: c. 25, Barton Springs, 7th Oct. (M.W.).

308. BLACKBIRD—Nest found 25 feet up in elm tree at Kempston Park, 7th April (C.S.P.). 'Anting' witnessed at Luton by Miss E. Lyddon. In December, at Little Barford, C.F.T. saw a blackbird drive away a Golden Plover from a worm that it had caught, and then seize it.

311. WHEATEAR—I shall be grateful if observers will indicate the sexes of the various numbers seen. These remarks apply also to other species. Spring passage:

MARCH. 4 males, Whipsnade; a pair, Kempston Hardwick, 8 Dunstable S.F., and 3 Houghton Regis—all on 27th; 12, Flitwick and one male, Luton, 28th; 3, Tempsford Aerodrome, 30th; one male, Bedford, S.F., 31st.

APRIL. One, Tempsford, 1st; 7, Cowslip Common, Luton, 3rd; one Sundon dump, 5th; one, Blows Downs, 7th; one Dunstable S.F., 8th; one, Biggleswade, and one female, Whipsnade, 10th; one, Streatley, 16th; one, male, Someries, 17th; one male, Bedford S.F., 23rd; one, Stagsden, 26th, and one Luton, 29th.

MAY. 2 males, 7th and 2 females 8th—both near Luton. 5 males and 3 females remained in the Blows Downs, Dunstable area, till 21st and 3 were seen at Henlow, 22nd. No evidence of breeding.

Return passage: 2, Great Barford, 11th Sept., and one, Luton on 14th (M.O.).

318. WHINCHAT—First arrivals: several near Flitwick, 21st-26th April (W.G.S.), and one, Coronation Pit, Kempston Hardwick, 23rd April (D.R.W.). Single breeding pairs present at Bedford S.F.—nest with 5 eggs found 31st May, and 5 young ringed 21st June; near Dunstable Station and near Icknield School, Luton—nest found here. Male also seen. Warden Hills, 9th May, and a single bird, Sundon dump, 5th June; up to 3 birds, East Hyde, 20th July-20th Aug., one and then two, Dunstable S.F., 18th Aug.-17th Sept. (M.O.).

320. REDSTART—First arrival, male, Stockwood Park, Luton, 13th April (D.R.W.). Normal breeding distribution

321. [BLACK REDSTART]—Oliver Pike has written to me as follows: "My doctor, who is a very keen bird man, saw a small almost black bird at a few yards range sitting on the stone wall of a bridge close to the town (Leighton Buzzard) last May. It had a few white marks on the wings. I showed him a stuffed specimen of a Black Redstart and he recognised it instantly as the bird he had seen. I doubt, however, if we can put this down as a definite record."

322. NIGHTINGALE—Reported rather later than usual. First bird heard singing at Whipsnade, 29th April (P.S.B.).

325. ROBIN—M.W. reported that just before midnight on 10th Dec., on the London Road, Luton, he was surprised to hear a robin singing 'for all he was worth' above a sodium light, and said that it was very pronounced in the still of the night. He asks if any other members have had similar experiences. I can report having heard short snatches of song from a bird of this species above an ordinary light in Goldington Road, Bedford, after midnight one day in March, 1956 (Rec.).

327. GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER—First arrival: heard singing at Maulden Wood, 23rd April (F.C.G.). Also recorded from the following areas: Whipsnade, Dunstable Downs, Copt Hall, Badgerdell Wood and Warden Hills.

333. REED-WARBLER—First arrival, Biggleswade area, 1st May (S.H.S.). On 17th July between Willington and Great Barford nests were found in osiers and wheat-fields, in addition to those in the usual reeds (F.C.G.).

337. SEDGE-WARBLER—First arrivals: Dunstable S.F., 16th April, and Bedford S.F. on 23rd. Last seen: Felmersham, 16th Sept., and Dunstable S.F. on 24th (M.W., C.S.P., D.R.W. and F.C.G.).

343. BLACKCAP—First arrivals: one, Battlesden, 16th April (M.W. and R. White), and one, Whipsnade, on 17th (P.S.B.).

346. GARDEN-WARBLER—Still overlooked, and again few reports received—none till June—from Deadmansey Wood, Badgerdell Wood and Flitwick Wood (D.R.W. and T.W.A.).

347. WHITETHROAT—First arrival: one seen Bedford S.F., 8th April (F.C.G.). Last seen: Dunstable Downs, 20th Sept. (D.R.W.).

348. LESSER WHITETHROAT—Only two reports received: one Chaul End, 24th Aug. (D.R.W.), and another, Felmersham G.P., 17th Sept. (F.C.G.).

354. WILLOW-WARBLER—First arrivals: Biggleswade and Dunstable, 27th March (S.H.S. and D.R.W.). Last seen: Dunstable, 20th Sept. (D.R.W.).

356. CHIFFCHAFF—First arrival heard singing, Flitwick, 17th March (W.G.S.). Bird heard singing at Bury End, Stagsden, into October (D.W.E.).

357. WOOD-WARBLER—Reported from Washers Wood, Tingrith and Ridgmont (Woburn Park) (T.W.A. and W.G.S.).

364. GOLDCREST—No reports of breeding. Several parties seen in conifer plantations during winter months.

366. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER—First arrival: Flitwick, 30th April (W.G.S.).

373. MEADOW PIPIT—An unusually large party of c. 40 on the filters at Bedford S.F., 3rd April (F.C.G.). Recorded from here, as well as Houghton Regis Ch.P. and Stewartby CL.P., during the breeding season (E.S.W. and Rec.).

376. TREE-PIBIT—First arrivals: 5-6, Sharpenhoe Clappers, 16th April; one, Clophill Woods, 17th, and 3 near Dagnall, 18th (D.R.W. and M.W.). Also recorded from Warden Hills, Rowney Warren and Heath and Reach—all in May (A.J.L., C.S.P. and F.C.G.).

379. ROCK PIPIT—An addition to the County list. F.C.G., who saw this bird at Bedford S.F., 3rd April, supplied the following field notes:

General appearance: larger and darker than Meadow Pipit, could easily be distinguished when perched on a wall at forty yards, without glasses. Head, Nape, Crown and Forehead—greyish olive, much more grey than neck and mantle—olive brown with a trace of grey. A dark area from beak through eye, forming a fairly distinct eye stripe, especially when head down with crown towards observer. Iris dark (almost black) with a white ring, quite distinct at times, appearing at one period as a thin white stripe above the darker area of the lores. Head appeared longer and flatter than Meadow Pipit. Chin and Throat—pale buff. Breast—olive streaks on buff background (this buff or a rather pinkish-orange tinge not inclined to yellow as accompanying Meadow Pipit). Flanks—olive streaks on grey-buff background. Under-tail coverts—buff. Tail—fairly long, much as mantle; no noticeable white outer tail feathers. Wings—much as mantle, with light edgings to feathers, especially *greater wing coverts*, forming two pale bars when closed. Beak—half length of

head, appearing quite long. Legs—brownish, appearing dark, definitely not flesh-coloured. Voice—none recorded.

When first seen the bird was easily distinguished from Meadow Pipits by larger size, being as big and possibly a little larger than accompanying Yellow Wagtails (2). The bird was shy and was under observation for at least an hour. It was last seen at 5.45 p.m. It carried itself in a more horizontal, wagtail like, position, and was seen to spiral as Tree Pipits on one occasion.

380. **PIED WAGTAIL**—Large party, c. 120-150 at Stewartby CL.P., 6th Nov., roosting in reed beds by one of the pools (F.C.G.).

WHITE WAGTAIL—2, with other Wagtails, near Biggleswade, 11th April (S.H.S.). Full details supplied.

381. **GREY WAGTAIL**—one, East Hyde, 1st Jan.-13th Feb.; one, Dunstable S.F. 6th Feb.; one male, Bedford S.F., 27th Feb; pair, Bedford S.F., 3rd April; 2, Luton Hoo, 9th Oct.; one male, Wardown Park, Luton, 5th Nov.; several records of single birds along R. Ouse in autumn, and one Southill Lake, 9th Dec. (E.S.W., D.R.W. and F.C.G.).

382. **YELLOW WAGTAIL**—First arrivals (all males): 3, Bedford S.F., 3rd April—increased to 22 on 13th; one, at Dunstable S.F., on this latter date (F.C.G. and D.R.W.); c. 20 Wyboston G.P., 24th April (C.F.T.). Two or three pairs present during the season at Dunstable S.F., but no nests found (D.R.W.). A juvenile, just able to flutter, Bedford S.F., 30th May (G.G.). At least 4 pairs at Coronation Pits, Kempston Hardwick, during breeding season and many young seen later (D.R.W.). Seen frequently along road between Steppingley Isolation Hospital and Ampthill Secondary Modern School. Pair seen on Ampthill-Bedford Road between Elstow Brick Works and spinney, feeding young (T.W.A.). Last bird seen, Dunstable S.F., 17th Sept.

388. **RED-BACKED SHRIKE**—Two nests on Warden Hills, reared young—one brood ringed (A.J.L. and S.W.R.); pair with one fledged young in Cutenhoe Rd., Luton, 30th July (A.C.); 3 pairs on Blows Downs, 21st June, and hen with 5 young (afterwards ringed) and one egg here, 26th June (D.R.W.).

389. **STARLING**—Roost near Everton again occupied (Rec.). Roosts of c. 4000-5000 birds seen 17th Sept., in a conifer plantation half-a-mile south of the Vauxhall Works (M.F.M.). Probably a congregation of local birds.

391. **HAWFINCH**—One, East Hyde, 5th Jan. (M.F.M.); one, Flitwick Moor, 12th Feb. (D. White); young birds seen in Flitwick area during the breeding season and occasional adults throughout the year (W.G.S.).

394. **SISKIN**—Party of 2 males and 4 females, Flitwick Moor, 5th Dec. (F.C.G.).

395. **LINNET**—Several large parties reported during winter months, the largest being a mixed flock of c. 1000 finches, predominantly Linnets, together with many Greenfinches, Chaffinches and a small number of Bramblings at Woodside, 27th Nov. (E.S.W.).

397. **REDPOLL**—c. 20, Flitwick Moor, 12th Feb. (D.R.W.), and a female there 5th-9th Dec. (D.R.W. and F.C.G.). A party of c 25, Clophill, 30th Oct. (M.W.).

408. **BRAMBLING**—Small Parties of up to c. 20+ reported from several areas as usual during winter months (M.O.). Last emigrants : Caddington, 3rd April (D.R.W.). First arrivals : female, Bedford S.F., 9th Oct. (F.C.G.).

410. CORN BUNTING—An unusually large party, c. 30 for the time of the year seen on Dunstable Downs, 13th June (H.C.). R. White made a survey of this species south of a line from Barton-in-the-Clay to Leighton Buzzard in the months of April/July inclusive. In this area, more especially on the higher ground, he recorded no less than 48 singing males fairly evenly distributed. From positions plotted on the map submitted, many of the song perches were located close to roads. In some cases stations were at no great distance apart, probably indicating several perches of the same male and it is therefore difficult to get an accurate census of these birds and the extent of their territories. Here is an opportunity for further field work.

HENRY A. S. KEY.

MAMMALS

For several years I have appealed for greater interest in this division of the animal kingdom, and so far there has been little response. I am sure that many of our members, when out and about, witness the activities of a number of species, yet fail to make a note of what they may consider as commonplace and unimportant occurrences. Yet it is precisely these ordinary facts that I welcome. We still have a lot to learn about even the most familiar of our county animals, and therefore I urge, once again, that all members will keep me informed about the habits and distribution of any species which they encounter.

I take this opportunity to thank those, all too few, who have sent me details enabling me to give the following specific notes:

BADGER (*Meles meles*)—As I am collecting data for the purpose of writing an article on this species in Bedfordshire, information concerning the present, as well as the former distribution in the county, is earnestly sought. During the past two years there has been evidence of destruction by "gassing" in some areas, and some ancient "sets" have been abandoned, we hope only temporarily. If anyone is keen to study this species I shall be only too pleased to offer practical assistance. If approached tactfully, I am sure that many gamekeepers and foresters will be glad to provide relevant information.

OTTER (*Lutra lutra*)—As anglers are the most likely people to come in contact with this animal, members would do well to discuss the creature with those known to fish the various county waters. In this way we may find that the species is more prolific than at present appears.

RABBIT (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)—Since the almost total destruction of the rabbit in Bedfordshire through myxomatosis there is recent evidence of partial recovery in some areas. Here again, positive data are welcomed and will be treated as confidential, since it is now compulsory to eradicate this animal, classified officially as a pest.

As the rabbit is the prey of many species of animals and birds, and when abundant formed a principal article of diet, its relative scarcity has evolved changes in the feeding habits of those species concerned. Here is suggested an ample field for investigation.

BROWN HARE (*Lepus europaeus occidentalis*)—It would appear from several reports that the hare has increased during the last few years in some districts, more especially in the north of the county. If this is true, then the disappearance of the rabbit may be a contributory factor, but we lack, at present, sufficient data to evaluate theories. Here, once again, I feel sure that farmers and gamekeepers would assist with information.

HARVEST MOUSE (*Micromys minutus soricinus*)—The only known occurrence in 1955 was of two caught alive in the Woburn Sands area and given to Mr D. W. Elliott of Stagsden, who kept them successfully for a time in captivity. Every effort should be made to solicit the support of farmers to encourage a sharp look-out to be made at times of harvest and threshing. There seems to be little doubt that these small rodents are overlooked and that their probable distribution is wider than is at present apparent.

GREY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*)—Now that repressive measures are in force, and the numbers have been considerably reduced, details of the quantities shot or otherwise destroyed in all areas are particularly requested, together with estimates of present distribution.

HENRY A. S. KEY.

Notes and Observations

FOOD OF THE OTTER.

In your notes on mammals in the current number of *The Bedfordshire Naturalist* you mention that visits from otters may be expected wherever there is a plentiful supply of fish. Now for years past I have been doing my best to get rid of the idea that otters are entirely fish eaters. Numbers of these lovely mammals are being destroyed by fishermen who believe that they are enemies of fish. For twenty years past I have made a keen study of the habits of the otter, and spent a whole year in filming its life story. Fish form a *small* part of the otter's diet, most of their food is obtained on and around the banks of the streams and lakes. On one occasion I watched an otter swimming among a dozen trout, and although it often passed only a few inches from the fish, it ignored them. An otter under water cannot swim nearly as fast as a healthy fish, its chief fish diet consists of eels and crayfish, slow-swimming creatures.

OLIVER G. PIKE.

MIGRATION OF THE COMMON GULL.

The Common Gull (*Larus canus*), is a regular winter visitor and passage migrant to South Bedfordshire and North Hertfordshire, and in spring large numbers pass through on migration.

While cycling over the Herts-Beds border on the morning of 17th April, 1955, I noticed a flock of gulls resting on a large open field. Before I was able to make a careful count, the birds got up, circled the field several times, and began their usual soaring flight gaining height the whole time. The flock numbered between 150 and 200 birds, all of which were adult Common Gull, except for two Lesser Black-backed Gulls and two immature birds probably of the latter species. After about 15 minutes they were almost invisible even with the aid of a pair of 8 × 30 binoculars. Finally they headed into the wind and drifted in a N.E. direction. The weather was clear and sunny with a slight N.E. wind. This is the first time I have been able to observe the actual migration of this species on such a scale inland, since I began making notes nearly twenty years ago.

A. R. JENKINS.

THE PURPLE HERON IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

During late August and early September an immature Purple Heron was seen on several occasions at a gravel pit in the north of the county. Owing to the fact that a Bittern was also present in the area the bird was not identified at first, both birds being of a general brownish appearance when seen on the ground.

On the evening of 10th September, Cmdr. G. E. P. Milburn saw the bird in flight at a distance and had some doubts as to its identity. The following afternoon, accompanied by his family, he made a thorough search of the area and flushed a Bittern from a pool overgrown with reed mace and willow scrub. Whilst the bird was still in flight the Purple Heron rose from the same pool. Seeing both birds together they were able to confirm the identity of both and Miss Milburn was now certain that a bird she had seen a fortnight previously was the heron.

Accompanied by D. W. Elliot and A. J. Dymond I visited the gravel pit on 13th September in the evening and we were fortunate enough to flush the bird from the same pool. As it rose from behind a willow bush we were able to note its long snaky neck and general brown appearance. It was noticeably smaller than a Common Heron and in flight was faster and less jerky. The crown was of dark chestnut with the neck somewhat paler behind and a light buff in front with darker streakings. The back and mantle were a dark sandy brown also the wings excepting the quills which were a darker blue-grey, the contrast being most marked in flight.

During the evening of 16th September we saw the bird in flight again but only for a few minutes. We did, however, notice the long toes projecting beyond the tail and the pouched effect of the neck. The bird flew towards the river and then downstream as it did on the previous appearance. We followed the river bank for some distance but were unable to find the bird. This was the last time it was seen, a thorough search of the area on the 17th and 24th September revealing no sign of it.

So far as I can trace this is the first recorded occurrence of this species in Bedfordshire.

F. C. GRIBBLE.

ABBOT'S ANNOTATED ENCHIRIDION.

Mention is made in Pryor's *Flora of Hertfordshire*, xlv, (1887) of a copy of Broughton's Enchiridion (1782) annotated by Charles Abbot. The Enchiridion, popular in its day, might be compared perhaps inadequately with Hayward's Pocket Botanist of our day. Search has failed to find the book which in 1881 belonged to William Hillhouse, but in 1887 Daydon Jackson wrote that it was in his possession. In 1889 W. W. Newbould copied the annotation into a copy of *Flora Bedfordiensis** which has since passed to Dr. George Taylor, Keeper of Botany, British Museum (Natural History), who has lent it to me.

According to Newbould, Abbot ticked plants in the Enchiridion which he knew in the county from 1794, and gave stations not given in the *Flora* for many of the higher plants. Newbould thought that Abbot's manuscript notes in Latin were often clearer than the English ones which appeared in the text of the *Flora*.

The notes, which I have incorporated into an annotated copy of the *Flora of Bedfordshire*, add little to our knowledge of the plants of the county, but are important as evidence of Abbot's method of work. It would be helpful if the original could be traced, and also a copy of *Flora Bedfordiensis* in which Abbot included a list of the Lepidoptera of the county.

J. G. DONY.

*This includes also a letter from Hillhouse to R. A. Pryor, giving stations for a number of Bedfordshire plants.

ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE ON BEDFORDSHIRE NATURAL HISTORY FOR 1955

BRITISH BIRDS. Vol. 48 (1955).

"Passage of Black Terns through Britain in Spring, 1954", No. 4, pp. 148-169. Details of occurrences in the county.

THE LIBRARY

All books have been checked and none is missing. It is not easy to keep a check on the pamphlets and contemporary literature unless members are extremely conscientious in making use of the signing list on the inside of the library door. It is essential to indicate the name of the transaction and the name of the borrower, and also to give the date of return of this literature.

A reference list of books and contemporary literature is being prepared for circulation to all members, and this will enable anyone to state the book required and to take it out on lecture evenings at the Nature Room without the laborious process of "hunting through" in the extremely limited space of our library shelves.

ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

BOOKS

Dr W. B. Turrill's *British Plant Life*. From Mrs C. M. Lucas.

PERIODICALS

Countryside. 1954 and 1955 (complete).

Council for the Promotion of Field Studies. *Ann. Rep.* 1953-4

Jour. of the Arch. and Arch. Soc. for the County of Buckingham, Records of Buckinghamshire, Vol. XVI, Pt. 1, 1953-4.

OUR CONTEMPORARIES

Hertfordshire Nat. Hist. Soc., *Trans.* 1953, 1954, 1955.

Huntingdonshire Flora and Fauna Soc., *Ann. Rep.* 1954, 1955.

Middle-Thames Nat. Hist. Soc. (The Middle-Thames Naturalist), *Ann. Rep.* 1954.

Northamptonshire Nat. Hist. Soc. and Field Club, *J.*, 1954, 1955.

Northumberland, Durham and Newcastle-on-Tyne Nat. Hist. Soc., *Trans.*, 1954, Nos. 3 and 6. *Trans.* 1955 compl.

Suffolk Nat. Hist. Soc., *Trans.*, Vol. VIII (1952-4), Vol. IX, Pt. 1 (1954), Vol. IX, Pts. 2 and 3 (1955).

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORTS

Cambridge Bird Club. *Rep.* for 1954.

MISSING

The following is an up-to-date list of missing contemporary literature ; it is difficult to know whether they have been borrowed without signature or whether they have been received by other officers and not yet passed on to the Librarian :

Natural History (J., of the American Museum of Nat. Hist.)

1954 : April, July, and August.

1955 : July, and August.

Report of the Nature Conservancy for the period up to 30th September, 1955.

The Countryman. All issues for 1954 and 1955.

Letchworth Nat. Hist. Soc., *J.*, for 1954 and 1955.

Norfolk Naturalists Trust. *Rep.* for 1949, 1954, and 1955.

Lincolnshire Naturalists Trust. *Rep.* for 1951, 1953, 1954, and 1955.

Cambridge Bird Club. *Rep.* for 1955.

I should be grateful if members will examine this list and do what they can to supply or replace any of the above.

E. PROCTOR,
Hon. Librarian.

NEW MEMBERS

- Charie, H. J., 145 Kimbolton Road, Bedford.
 Clark, B. A., 25a Kimbolton Road, Bedford.
 Cobring, D. J., 10 Summer Street, Leighton Buzzard.
 Cooper, Miss J. M., 184 Bromham Road, Bedford.
 jEphgrave, G. E., 14 Cannon Lane, Stopsley, Luton.
 Farr, A. L., 9 Glebe Road, Bedford.
 Ferguson-Lees, I. J., 30 St. Leonard's Avenue, Bedford.
 Ford, Mrs J. P., 9 Linden Road, Bedford.
 Fowler, M. J., 25 Cardington Road, Bedford.
 jGibbons, J. E., 10 Bedford Gardens, New Bedford Road, Luton.
 Goldman, A., 40 Thirlstone Road, Luton.
 jHirsch, Miss C. A., 49 Warwick Avenue, Bedford.
 Horne, Miss A., 57 Cranleigh Gardens, Luton.
 James, W. H., 7 Park Rise, Harpenden.
 aJames, Mrs A. C., 7 Park Rise, Harpenden.
 jJennings, I. F., 21 Wychwood Avenue, Luton.
 Johnson, Miss M., 47 St. Catherine's Avenue, Luton.
 Keens, Miss P., 2 Mayne Avenue, Leagrave, Luton.
 Leak, Miss E. A., c/o Mrs. Christie, Ardline, High Street, Sharnbrook.
 aMcAusland, Mrs. E. S., 20 Clapham Road, Bedford.
 Manley, Mrs M. E., 44 Spenser Road, Bedford.
 Markham, R., c/o 168 Crawley Green Road, Luton.
 Meadows, E. G., 25 Studley Road, Luton.
 Neate, Mrs K. M., Redlands, Bromham Road, Biddenham.
 Raybould, Miss E. M., 10 Woburn Road, Bedford.
 Shipton, Mrs P. S., 16a Kimbolton Road, Bedford.
 Skinner, C. R., Bromham Hall, Bedford.
 aSpeed, Mrs K. N., 226 Goldington Road, Bedford.
 jSpeed, Miss L. M., 226 Goldington Road, Bedford.
 jStanbridge, D., 238 Crawley Green Road, Luton.
 Wright, Miss M., Mill Cottage, Pavenham.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

- Cole, Mrs A., 43 Chester Road, Chigwell, Essex.
 Cole, Miss E. G., 43 Chester Road, Chigwell, Essex.
 Curle, Miss J., Ringle Crouch, Nash, Bletchley.
 Lamb, E. C., The Barns, Grange Road, Blunham.
 Parry, F/O J. M., 15 The Avenue, Hitchin.
 Plummer, G., The University, Reading.
 Pugh, Miss M. R., 2a Campbell Road, Bedford.

CONDITIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

The Council of the Society shall approve each application for membership, but subject to this condition, membership shall be granted on payment of the annual subscription, viz :

- 10s. 0d. Ordinary members and affiliated institutions (full membership).
- 7s. 6d. Full time students (full membership).
- 5s. 0d. Associate members (do not receive the Society's Journal).
- 2s. 6d. Junior members (under sixteen years of age, do not receive the Society's Journal).

Application Forms for membership can be obtained from the *Hon. Treasurer*, 27 Wendover Drive, Bedford.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Any member may compound for life by a single payment of £10.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded that their subscriptions are due on the 1st January in each year. These should be sent to :

The Honorary Treasurer,
J. M. DYMOND,
27 Wendover Drive, Bedford.

NOTICE TO CONTRIBUTORS

The Editorial Committee welcomes suitable contributions on the natural history of the County for publication in THE BEDFORDSHIRE NATURALIST. Short paragraphs from members about their own observations of general interest are specially desired. All material should be typewritten in double spacing on one side of the paper only, or written very legibly. Illustrations should not be prepared before consultation with the Editor.

Contributions to be considered for publication in the next issue should be sent to the *Honorary Editor* by 31st January 1957.

SETS OF THE JOURNAL

Complete sets of the JOURNAL (Nos. 1-8) are now obtainable, price thirty-five shillings, from the Hon. Editor. Single copies remain at five shillings each.

LIBRARY

All presentations, gifts of books and journals, as well as exchanges should be sent direct to

The Honorary Librarian,
MISS E. PROCTOR, B.Sc.
The Nature Room,
4 The Avenue, Bedford