

NEWS FROM THE RINGING GROUP . . . JANUARY-APRIL

During the first four months of the year 2,455 birds of 63 different species were ringed. This is a record total and is a credit to the ringers, who worked so hard. Spring migration was one of the poorest for years but was nevertheless exciting. Curlew Sandpiper, Red-throated Pipit and Orphean Warbler were new species ringed. It was a good spring for Blue-throats and a total of eight was ringed.

JANUARY

Ringing was mainly confined to Buskett and Mtahleb, with occasional visits to other localities. As expected, Chiffchaffs, Blackcaps and Robins were the main birds caught. No exciting catches were reported and the highest catch was recorded at Mtahleb on 6th, when twenty six birds were ringed and five re-trapped.

FEBRUARY

February followed the pattern of January. Salina, where quite a large number of Chiffchaffs wintered, was visited on a few occasions. The highest catch was obtained there on the 25th when twenty Chiffchaffs were ringed. Buskett was the main catching area for Blackcaps and Robins. Both these species showed an increase over the previous month. Interesting birds ringed were a Wren at Buskett on 6th and a Dartford Warbler at Salina on 25th.

MARCH

Many Blackcaps were at Buskett during the first week of the month. Though they were feeding high in the ivy, we managed to ring forty-three during three visits. The first spring migrant to be ringed was the House Martin, when nine were trapped at Ramla Valley on the 6th. Otherwise, spring migrants were very late and only hirundines were caught in large numbers. Between the 24th and 31st, just under 400 hundred mostly Swallows, were ringed at Lunzjata Valley. On the 28th there was a moderate fall, mainly of Subalpine Warblers, and fourteen were ringed at Wied Znuber and Mtahleb. A new Cetti's Warbler was ringed at Wied il-Luq on 21st. Interesting birds ringed were a Water Rail and a Spotted Crake at Ghadira on the 29th and two Red-rumped Swallows at Chadwick Lakes on the 22nd.

APRIL

With a depression stationary over North Africa for most of the first three weeks of April only a trickle of birds arrived. Swallows were again the main birds ringed. The highest catches were recorded at Ramla Valley during the first half of the month with a maximum of 164 on the 10th. The first indication of a small fall was noted on the 18th and then on the 24th, when the first Great Reed Warblers were ringed. A larger fall took place on the 26th, when 29 birds were caught at Ghadira. Interesting birds ringed were a Curlew Sandpiper at Ghadira on the 27th, a Red-throated Pipit at Marsalforn Valley on the 18th and an Orphean Warbler at Ghadira on the 2nd, all species being new to our ringing list.

LIST OF BIRDS RINGED

Species	1971				Total
	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	
Manx Shearwater	—	—	—	4	4
Kestrel	—	—	—	1	1
Water Rail	—	—	1	—	1
Spotted Crake	—	—	1	—	1
Little Ringed Plover	—	—	—	2	2
Little Stint	—	—	—	1	1
Curlew Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	1
Ruff	—	—	—	1	1
Green Sandpiper	—	—	1	—	1
Wood Sandpiper	—	—	—	2	2
Common Sandpiper	—	—	—	1	1
Scops Owl	—	—	—	1	1
Wryneck	—	—	1	2	3
Short-toed Lark	—	—	1	3	4
Sand Martin	—	—	16	107	123
Swallow	—	—	373	696	1,069
Red-rumped Swallow	—	—	2	—	2
House Martin	—	—	74	57	131
Tree Pipit	—	—	1	14	15
Meadow Pipit	1	1	3	—	5
Red-throated Pipit	—	—	—	1	1
Yellow Wagtail	—	—	10	17	27
Grey Wagtail	3	2	—	—	5
White Wagtail	—	1	4	—	5
Wren	—	1	—	—	1
Dunnock	4	3	—	—	7
Cetti's Warbler	—	—	1	—	1
Sedge Warbler	—	—	8	14	22
Reed Warbler	—	—	—	1	1
Great Reed Warbler	—	—	—	8	8
Icterine Warbler	—	—	—	1	1
Orphean Warbler	—	—	—	1	1
Garden Warbler	—	—	—	22	22
Blackcap	47	71	68	3	189
Whitethroat	—	—	1	28	29
Sardinian Warbler	7	7	5	6	25
Subalpine Warbler	—	—	18	7	25
Spectacled Warbler	1	—	2	—	3
Dartford Warbler	—	1	—	—	1
Willow Warbler	—	—	18	31	49
Chiffchaff	108	130	67	8	313
Bonelli's Warbler	—	—	3	—	3
Wood Warbler	—	—	1	13	14
Goldcrest	—	—	1	—	1
Firecrest	3	3	2	—	8
Pied Flycatcher	—	—	1	20	21

Spotted Flycatcher	—	—	—	2	2
Whinchat	—	—	—	7	7
Stonechat	1	—	1	—	2
Wheatear	—	—	1	2	3
Black Redstart	1	—	—	—	1
Redstart	—	—	1	21	22
Robin	40	68	26	2	136
Nightingale	—	—	6	15	21
Bluethroat	—	—	4	4	8
Blackbird	—	1	1	—	2
Song Thrush	4	1	5	—	10
Corn Bunting	—	—	—	2	2
Chaffinch	—	2	—	—	2
Serín	1	—	—	—	1
Greenfinch	5	—	1	—	6
Linnet	—	—	16	—	16
Spanish Sparrow	7	17	21	17	62
Totals	233	308	768	1,146	2,455

RETRAPS

About four hundred birds were retrapped during the first four months. Among the most interesting were two Chiffchaffs ringed five years back. Several Chiffchaffs were ringed 1-4 years ago. A good number of Blackcaps, ringed 1-3 winters back were also retrapped. Other birds (apart from Cetti's and Sardinian Warblers and Spanish Sparrows) ringed in previous years and re-trapped during this period were Grey Wagtail, Robin and Manx Shearwater.

RECOVERIES

1. A Wood Sandpiper ringed at Ghadira in April 1970 was recovered at Mosta in March 1971.
2. A Chiffchaff ringed at Lunzjata in January 1969 was controlled in Austria in March 1971.
3. A Robin ringed in October 1970 at Buskett was shot in Greece in February 1971.
4. A Robin ringed at Mtahieb in October 1968 was caught in Algeria in March 1971.
5. A Swallow ringed at Ramia Valley in April 1971 was found in Crete a few days later.
6. A Sand Martin with an Arnhem (Dutch) ring was controlled at Ramla Valley in April.
7. A Swallow with a Paris (French) ring was controlled at Ramla Valley in April.
8. A Little Bittern with a Zagreb (Yugoslav) ring was recovered at Rabat in April.
9. A Turtle Dove with a Praha (Czechoslovak) ring was caught near Zurrieg in April.

Ringing details of 6-9 have not yet been received. These will be published in a future report.

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