

~~Zoological Society of London.~~

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

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

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

~~It was a great honour to our~~

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

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

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

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

~~J.M. Attard.~~



ASPECTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 1969 FALL OF MIGRANTS IN MALTA.

D. Rushforth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Major falls of migrants on the

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

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

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



~~BIRD-WATCHING IN MALTA~~

~~M. Beaman.~~

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

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

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