

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

~~Golden Plover, Lapwing.~~

~~Spring & Autumn:~~

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

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



BIRD NOTES

APRIL to JULY.

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

APRIL

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

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

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

May

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

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

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

June

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

finches on 28th and 30th.

July

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

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

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

J. Sultana & C. Gauci

NEWS FROM THE RINGING GROUP

APRIL to JULY.

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

The first three weeks in April were one of the worst and with ringing taking place daily, less than two hundred birds were trapped for ringing. But a large fall took place on 24th and four ringers active on that day doubled the total for April. Very good catches were again obtained in the subsequent three days. Most of the birds were ringed at Wied Migra 1-Ferha and Ghadira, in Malta and Ramla and Lunzjata Valleys in Gozo. A new species added to the ringing list during the month was a Great Snipe trapped at Wied il-Lug.

Hirundines were certainly the most abundant birds about in

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

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

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