

~~a straggler in autumn by G. Despott (Notes on the Ornithology of Malta Ibis (10) 5:231-349, 466-526) who also gives a record for April, 1916. This subspecies differs from the nominate *M.a.alba* in having a black back and rump in the breeding season.~~

~~Wing length and Weight of the White Wagtail (M.O.S. Ringing Group records):~~

~~The wing length of 26 birds ranged from 83 to 92.5 mm. with an average of 87.5 mm. The weight of 20 birds ranged from 18.4 to 29 gms. with an average of 22.6 gms.~~

A NEW SPECIES ADDED TO THE LIST . . .

SOOTY FALCON

Owing to the small size and position of the Maltese Islands a large number of species in the list of birds recorded are either accidental, rare or somewhat scarce visitors. Several have been recorded only once. Two American species also figure in the list, namely the American Kestrel (M.O.S. Quarterly Bull. Vol. I No. 2: J. Sultana "The Occurrence of the American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* in Malta" and the Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* (M.O.S. Quar. Bull. Vol. II No. 4: J. Sultana & C. Gauci "Systematic List — Oct.-Dec. 1969)

Another new species to be added is the Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*. A specimen was taken at tal-Han-daq on 17th August, 1970. It was in the company of two other unidentified falcons.

The Sooty Falcon breeds from the Libyan Desert to the Red Sea Area. In the non-breeding season its range spreads to coastal areas of Eastern Africa and especially to Madagascar. It struggles to Mauritius and sometimes it is recorded in the Sudan and Lake Victorian Basin ("Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World" Leslie Brown and

S. BORG

Dean Amadon, Vol. II).

The following is a description of the skin. The specimen is 12 ins. in length. The mantle, rump and head are dove grey, the latter slightly darker. Their feathers have thin dark shafts which are shorter and more narrowly spaced on crown and nape. It has a blackish mark under the eye which seems to merge into an inconspicuous moustachial stripe. The latter contrasts with the dirty whitish chin which merges into the grey of the breast. The rest of the underparts are also dove grey retaining some juvenile feathers on belly and flanks. These juvenile feathers are light brown, edged whitish giving it a blotchy appearance. The dark shafts are also present on the underparts and under tail coverts. The wing coverts are of a dirty brownish grey colour while the primaries and secondaries (unmoulted like the coverts) are blackish brown. The tail is also unmoulted. The two centre tail feathers are dark blackish grey; the rest are broadly striped with white on inner webs and are white tipped. It seems that the bird is in transition from immature to adult

plumage. The colour of the cere is yellow with a shade of green, while the feet, which have markedly long toes and black claws, are bright yellow with a shade of orange. The closed wing is slightly longer than the tail. Measurements: Wing 270

mm., Tail 130 mm. Bill 12 mm. and Tarsus 34 mm.

The Maltese name which fits this falcon is Zumbrell Gharbi. (Zumbrell is the Maltese name for the Red-footed Falcon and Gharbi means Arabian).

~~NEWS FROM THE RINGING GROUP~~

~~All ringers were very active throughout most of the last five months of the year. The new ringers, S. Borg and J. Grech, completed their training in November and are now awaiting their permits from the British Trust for Ornithology~~

~~A number of interesting retraps was obtained in November and December. Some Chiffchaffs were ringed up to four winters back and Robins and Grey Wagtails up to two winters back.~~

~~The only birds ringed in each of the last five months were Cetti's Warbler, Sardinian Warbler and Spanish Sparrow.~~

~~AUGUST~~

~~August was the initial month of autumn migration. Three of our ringers were away from the Island and only one ringer was active — during the latter half of the month. Ringing was mainly carried out in the early morning at Wied il-Luq, Buskett, which was visited on nine days. The most interesting birds ringed were three Cetti's Warblers and one Savi's Warbler. Three Whitethroats were also noteworthy.~~

~~SEPTEMBER~~

~~Three ringers active in September trapped 468 birds of 22 species. J. Sultana and C. Gauci, helped by S. Borg, successfully worked a big Yellow Wagtail roost at Salina on five occasions. J. Sultana and J. Grech also manned Lunzjata Valley for roosting Swallows and Yellow Wagtails. Wied il-Luq and Mtahleb in Malta and Pergla Valley in Gozo were used several times in the mornings.~~

~~OCTOBER~~

~~October was the best month in autumn as far as ringing was concerned. Early in the month we had the pleasure of welcoming once again to our shores Glyn Davies, who spent a fortnight in Gozo. He and V. Vella Muskat worked Lunzjata for roosting hirundines almost every day with very satisfactory results. Lunzjata Valley was the most frequented site with 21 ringing sessions to its credit. Wied il-Luq, Mtahleb, Ramla Valley and Ramla Bay were the most frequented localities. The best catches were recorded at Lunzjata on 6th and 7th, with 52 and 51 birds trapped respectively. A Water Rail ringed at Mtahleb was a new species added to the list. Other interesting birds ringed were a Red-backed Shrike, 2 Cetti's Warblers, 1 Savi's Warbler, 1 Moustached Warbler and a Bluethroat.~~