

News from the Ringing Group January to March

By C. Gauci

The first three months were dominated by strong winds which hampered ringing activities no end. Despite this, however, the group managed to ring over 650 birds belonging to thirty four different species. This figure exceeds that of the corresponding period for the past two years.

In January five ringing stations were manned: Buskett for seven hours on three days, Mtableb for five hours, on two days Wied Znuber and Ghadira for two hours on a single day each, and Lunzjata Valley, in Gozo, for six hours on two days. The Chiffchaff, one of our commonest winter residents, was the main bird trapped during this month. Two Moustached Warblers ringed at Ghadira were the first ever to be trapped in January. The best catch of the month was recorded at Lunzjata Valley on the 10th, when thirty five birds were ringed and nine retrapped.

February proved to be the poorest month, with only sixty one birds ringed. Buskett was the most frequented site with twelve hours on seven days. Ghadira, Lunzjata Valley and Ramla Bay were each visited once. The rather poor results obtained during the month were compensated by the addition of a new ringer to the group — Bro Edmund. Bro. Edmund who was trained by J. Sultana, received the necessary permit from the British Trust for Ornithology late in the month.

With the onset of Spring migration ringing was intensified in March and no fewer than nine localities were used. These were Buskett (including Wied il-Luq) — 21 hours on 9 days, Ghadira — 18 hours on 8 days, Ramla Valley — 15 hours on 6 days, Xlendi Valley — 6 hours on two days, Lunzjata Valley — 6 hours on 2 days, Ta' Giorni — 8 hours on 3 days, and Wied ir-Raghab, Ghajn Barrani and Wied Znuber on one occasion each. Ramla Valley proved to be the

best area with three very good catches to its credit. The first was on the 15 th when eighty five birds of eight species were trapped and ringed in just over two hours. These were mostly Chiffchaffs, but also included a brilliant male Bluethroat. On the 28 th and 29 th, fifty two and seventy eight birds (Mainly hirundines) respectively were ringed. These included a Red-rumped Swallow. J. Sultana and C. Gauci visited a Manx Shearwater colony three times at night. This colony was discovered by them last year. Nine birds could be recovered from their burrows to be ringed. An all out effort to ring Blackcaps during the last week of March (usually their peak period at Buskett) was foiled when these birds left much earlier than usual.

Mr. & Mrs. Hardman and Mr. & Mrs. T.M. Watson, all B.T.O. ringers, arrived on the 27 th March for a holiday in the Maltese Islands and helped the group with the ringing. J.A. Hardman was one of the British Trust for Ornithology ringers who came over in 1965/6 to start the present Ringing Group and helped J. Attard, C. Gauci, J. Sultana and V. Vella Muskat to obtain the necessary permits from the B.T.O.

List of Birds Ringed

| Species | Jan | Feb | Mar | Total |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Manx Shearwater | — | — | 9 | 9 |
| Little Ringed Plover | — | — | 5 | 5 |
| Hoopoe | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Wryneck | — | — | 3 | 3 |
| Sand Martin | — | — | 3 | 3 |
| Swallow | — | — | 129 | 129 |
| Red-rumped Swallow | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| House Martin | — | — | 7 | 7 |
| Tree Pipit | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Meadow Pipit | — | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Yellow Wagtail | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Grey Wagtail | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Dunnock | 1 | 1 | — | 2 |
| Moustached Warbler | 2 | 1 | — | 3 |
| Sedge Warbler | — | — | 7 | 7 |
| Blackcap | 5 | 16 | 60 | 81 |
| Whitethroat | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Sardinian Warbler | 4 | 2 | 13 | 19 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----|----|-----|-----|-----------------|-----|----|-----|-----|
| Subalpine Warbler | — | — | 7 | 7 | Bluethroat | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Willow Warbler | — | — | 6 | 6 | Blackbird | 1 | 1 | — | 2 |
| Chiffchaff | 80 | 15 | 107 | 202 | Chaffinch | 2 | — | — | 2 |
| Firecrest | — | — | 3 | 3 | Serín | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Stonechat | 1 | — | — | 1 | Greenfinch | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Black Redstart | — | — | 1 | 1 | Linnet | — | — | 62 | 62 |
| Redstart | — | — | 5 | 5 | Spanish Sparrow | 6 | — | 11 | 17 |
| Robin | 26 | 24 | 15 | 65 | | | | | |
| Nightingale | — | — | 7 | 7 | TOTALS | 129 | 61 | 469 | 659 |

The birds in the above list were ringed by **M. Beaman**, Bro. **Edmund**, **C. Gaudi**, **J.A. Hardman** (Mr. & Mrs.), **J. Sultana**, **V. Vella Muskat** and **T.M. Watson** (Mr. & Mrs.).

RETRAPS:

As usual, a good number of ringed birds was retrapped. The majority were Chiffchaffs retrapped after one to three weeks. Following is a list of more interesting ones.

| | Species | Locality | Date | | Wt. | |
|-----|--------------------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| | | | Ringed | (gms) | Retrapped | (gms) |
| 1. | Cetti's Warbler | Wied il-Luq | 15 - 9 - 69 | | 11 - 2 - 70 | |
| 2. | Cetti's Warbler | Wied il-Luq | 29 - 8 - 68 | | 11 - 2 - 70 | |
| 3. | Moustached Warbler | Wied il-Luq | 11 - 2 - 70 | | 6 - 3 - 70 | 11.9 |
| | | | | | 8 - 3 - 70 | 11.8 |
| 4. | Sedge Warbler | Ramla Valley | 15 - 3 - 70 | 11.7 | 29 - 3 - 70 | 16.5 |
| 5. | Blackcap | Buskett | 29 - 3 - 69 | | 17 - 3 - 70 | |
| 6. | Sardinian Warbler | Lunzjata | 9 - 10 - 67 | | 10 - 1 - 70 | |
| 7. | Chiffchaff | Lunzjata | 30 - 1 - 68 | | 3 - 1 - 70 | |
| 8. | Robin | Lunzjata | 10 - 1 - 70 | 17.2 | 19 - 3 - 70 | 21.5 |
| 9. | Robin | Buskett | 21 - 12 - 68 | | 18 - 3 - 70 | |
| 10. | Spanish Sparrow | Ghadira | 27 - 4 - 69 | | 30 - 8 - 70 | |

- Remarks:**
- (1) Still present in same locality after five months.
 - (2) Still present in same locality after eighteen months.
 - (3) Still present in same locality after three weeks.
 - (4) Increased in weight by 4.8 gms in 14 days.
 - (5) Same place the year after.
 - (6) Over two years old.
 - (7) Returned to winter in same place after two years.
 - (8) Note increase in weight before departure.
 - (9) Wintering in same place the year after.
 - (10) Still present after one year.



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(a) The Society's main purpose is to initiate, foster and aid the study of avian fauna in accordance with strictly scientific methods, thereby helping to increase the sum of human knowledge on the subject.

(b) The Society solemnly affirms its belief in the Conservation of Nature and will pursue whatever actions it deems necessary to ensure adequate protection of wild - life, and to propagate these ideas in the Maltese Islands.

Membership:

Members can join the Society and participate in all its activities, provided they subscribe to the aims of the Society and further, undertake to propagate its views, each in his own sphere of life, thus spreading the Society's enlightened ideal and awaking a social conscience that will brook no further deprecation of the living resources of Nature, especially birds.

Membership Fees:

| | |
|---|----------------|
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Malta Ornithological Society Ringing Group:

The Society also has its Bird Ringing Group. This Group is engaged in studying the various aspects of Maltese Ornithology, and is staffed by qualified bird ringers holding a ringing permit from the British Trust for Ornithology.



The Editor welcomes articles, letters and other features bearing on any aspect of the Ornithology of the Maltese Islands and the Mediterranean for publication in this Bulletin.

The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or the M.O.S.