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# LAKELAND BIRDS

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1. THE BIRDS OF LAKELAND:  
A THIRD SUPPLEMENT.
  2. FOOD OF BIRDS.
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*By*  
ERNEST BLEZARD

LAKELAND  
BIRDS

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A THIRD SUPPLEMENT.

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By  
ROBERT HILLIARD

# CARLISLE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1893.

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Eight hundred years ago, during her turbulent history, Carlisle became once and for all an English city. The new surge in civic life, brought about by King Henry II, must soon have spread beyond mere walls. Greater attention would undoubtedly be paid to the rich natural setting and its resources, especially to the great Forest of Inglewood with its unlimited timber and wild game.

Such interests long continued under an essentially practical influence, the wild animals, whether mammal, bird or fish, being regarded mainly for their edible qualities, and the plants or herbs in either a culinary or medicinal light. Deer, for which the local forests were famous, have been named since the Middle Ages as beasts of chase. There has always been the sport of hunting and hawking is one of its most ancient forms. Down to the time of Queen Elizabeth I, certain local lands were held on payment of a hawk, so highly were these birds still prized.

Successful hunting calls for inquiry into the habits of the quarry and, when hawking is the practice, into the ways of both the hawk and its prey. This could be regarded as one of the beginnings of nature study. Another traces back to the time when man, in his own interests, first began to take note of birds, insects and blossoms according to their season. These observations he combined with a study of the sun, moon and stars to regulate his husbandry and his pursuits in general.

Nature study eventually developed more fully as a branch of learning, remaining no less a source of the greatest pleasure and interest. Many districts began to produce their outstanding naturalists and, in the eighteenth century, Carlisle had one of the most notable in Dr. John Heysham. A Lancastrian by birth, half Westmerian by parentage, he became a Cumbrian by domicile and famed, in one of different respects, for his *Catalogue of Cumberland Animals*. His son, Thomas Coulthard Heysham, wholly a citizen of Carlisle, and equally eminent as a naturalist, has left his mark in the literature of his period besides bequeathing an exceptional legacy of records.

The Reverend Hugh Alexander Macpherson afterwards came to Carlisle and, before the end of the nineteenth century, he wrote, among many other works, *A Vertebrate Fauna of Lakeland*, which stands to the benefit of every succeeding generation and to the lasting memory of its author.

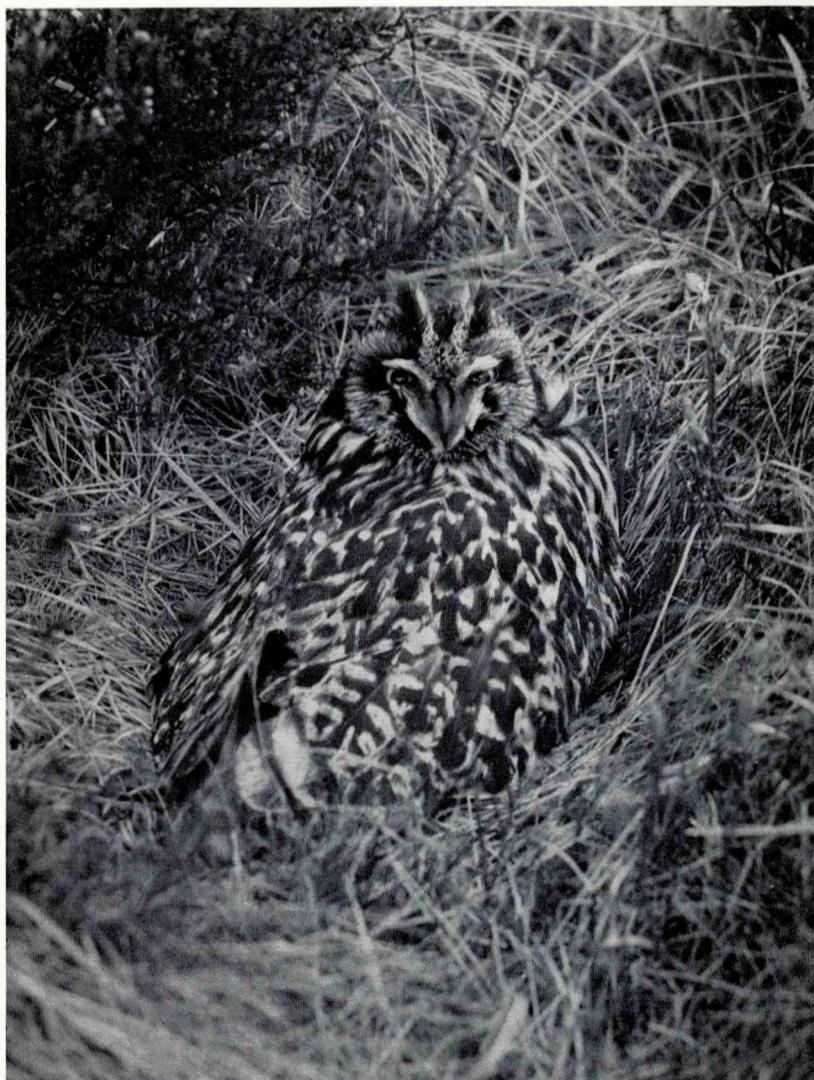
Here and there, during that century, a few naturalists had been drawing together out of mutual interest. In this way, in 1893, a small band of ardent entomologists became the founders of the Carlisle Natural History Society, with Macpherson its first President. His "Lakeland" eventually became the full field of investigation and the members of the Society, since grown from the original few to some two hundred and fifty, to be drawn from all parts of it. These are Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North of the Sands, conforming to the Diocese of Carlisle with the addition of the Parish of Alston which, although in Cumberland, is part of the Diocese of Newcastle.

A working tradition has been maintained in the eight volumes already published on the fauna, flora and geology of Lakeland which have had a world-wide demand. The Society's work has also an appeal which enlists members from other counties in the land. There follows the esteem in which a Northumbrian, Mr. Matthew Philipson, of Haltwhistle, is held as President and successor to a line which includes two descendants of Dr. John Heysham.

This last session figures prominently in the annals of the Society. It has provided an occasion on which, it is most happy to record of Mr. Frank H. Day, eminent in entomology, that there should still be a founder member to give a lecture sixty-three years after he first addressed a meeting.

It was then a proud event for the Society when a Past-President and serving Vice-President, Mr. Councillor Ritson Graham, was made Mayor of the City of Carlisle and distinguished at his election as the Naturalist Mayor. In faithfully presenting his customary annual nature report to the Society, the Mayor symbolised the course of natural history in eight centuries of civic life.

E.B.



SHORT-EARED OWL AT NEST  
SPADEADAM WASTE. 1957

*Photo: Arthur V. Millard*



## THE BIRDS OF LAKELAND.

## A THIRD SUPPLEMENT.

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This present account follows in sequence *The Birds of Lakeland*, 1943, and its supplements contained in *Lakeland Natural History*, 1946, and *Lakeland Ornithology*, 1954. It is almost entirely built up of notes and records contributed by members and friends of the Society after the last-named volume was prepared for the press in November 1952. The few extracts from other publications are duly acknowledged.

Since the occurrence of the Crested Tit, Siberian Chiffchaff, American Robin and Whiskered Tern as new to the faunal area, the full list now runs to 299 bird forms.

The Yellow-browed Warbler and Scops Owl re-appear as the first of their kind to be recorded for Westmorland, and the Water-Pipit and Alpine Swift as the first for Lancashire North of the Sands.

The return of the Chough and of the Golden Eagle, two rather anticipated events, bring the possibility of there being 146 nesting birds, comprising 109 British residents and 37 summer-visitors.

Bird life on the whole seems to be increasing, despite the fact that a few species are becoming less familiar. These include the Grey Wagtail, apparently following in the way of the diminished Stonechat, and the Long-eared Owl. Conversely, the Song-Thrush and the Blackbird are gaining ground, both certainly being adaptive to suburban conditions. The spread of the Green Woodpecker and the Curlew is clearly evident, and the Corncrake has by no means yet vanished. Besides those nesting on farmlands, Curlews in flocks up to fifty strong have become usual, through the middle of the year, on peat mosses and in other parts of the low country. Carrion-Crows, gulls and the oceanic birds on the coastal cliffs are some others to be making headway in numbers.

Speculation on adversely affected Buzzards and their shifts for food have followed upon the reduction of the rabbit population by

myxomatosis. There are indications that these hawks simply turned more to birds and carrion and, in 1957, to the then abundant field voles. Whatever their changes in food and habitat, Buzzards in Lakeland appear none the worse for them, because they are not merely spreading out to the extent that a pair have nested in a country vicarage orchard, but increasing as well. Rabbits are showing some recovery to encourage their progress.

It might be held of equal moment, in these days of intensive ornithological research, that Starlings have progressed from perching on chimney-pots, telegraph poles and railway signals to television aerials. It is conceivable that some future earnest or organised enquirer will be glad to know that the habit was first noted in Carlisle at 9 a.m. on 14 December 1951. A pair of Jackdaws were soon afterwards seen cuddling up to each other on the same aerial.

Other, more vital, and just recent happenings are linked with the minor vole plague of 1957, affecting a good deal of the faunal area. Short-eared Owls came much stronger to Cumberland where three of the Pennine pairs successfully reared young in one restricted locality. Kestrels were more plentiful and, in the West, nesting more closely to each other. Even in the North, they began laying at the beginning of April, if not before the end of March, clutches of six eggs being frequent.

Thanks are due to all the contributors who have made the whole account possible, and again to the particular members of the Society who have helped by checking over it.

The systematic arrangement continues, as it first began in *The Birds of Lakeland*, by following *The Handbook of British Birds*.

In a tradition of sixty-four years, the notes and records received by the Society are fully and freely offered as one more contribution to the natural history of Lakeland. For any other application of them, the contributors and the Society together would simply appreciate a customary courtesy, the acknowledgement of their source.

Carlisle, August 1957.

**THE RAVEN—*Corvus corax* L.**

Two instances of the uncommon use of artificial nesting sites are provided by the nesting of a pair in an old Pennine quarry in 1954 (John Oliver) and of another pair in a quarry in southern Lakeland in 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

Some of the shifting of the birds from traditional breeding crags could be due to the increasing popularity of these places among humans.

The one coastal pair, continuing at St. Bees Head, reared young in the seasons 1954 to 1957, using a different nesting site each year (Ralph Stokoe).

One of the large, roaming flocks of Ravens appeared at the head of Mardale in the late afternoon of 11 August 1957. The whole fifty Ravens in this flock made great play in the air above the fell tops as they drifted along in a north-easterly direction (Ernest, Dorothy, Peter, Andrew and Crispin Blezard).

**THE HOODED CROW—*Corvus cornix* L.**

Single birds at Nibthwaite, High Furness, January 1947 (L. A. Cowcill) and Over Water, below Skiddaw, 21 May 1953 (N. F. Ellison). One at St. Bees Head, 26 February 1955, and then two, flying steadily up the coast, 10 May 1956 (G. W. H. Moule). One behind the Head during May 1956 (George West and Robert West).

**THE CARRION-CROW—*Corvus corone* L.**

Still a generally increasing species, and adaptable in various ways. One pair of town-dwellers built eighty feet up on a cross-arm of one of the main electricity pylons rising from the Power Station at Carlisle, their nest containing four eggs on 28 April 1953 (Raymond Laidler and Ernest Blezard). A pair at Crosby Aerodrome, Carlisle, in 1956, built on the door-runner guide of a hangar, had their nest dislodged, and simply chose the same kind of projection from another hangar for their next attempt (Andrew T. Blezard and Ernest Blezard).

In East Westmorland, where albinos have persisted since 1924, an all-white male was shot at Ormside on 6 April 1955 and handed to R. W. Robson, who gave it to Carlisle Museum. A completely white crow, presumably a female, was with a normal mate at Hartley on 12 March 1954 and sitting on a nest there on 9 May (Walter Thompson).

THE CHOUGH—*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (L.)

The Chough until now was described as a former resident which disappeared very soon after the year 1860. Its return may be dated from 26 February 1955, when the Rev. G. W. H. Moule found a Chough quite at home again in one of the old Lakeland haunts. He afterwards met with a single bird on 10 March and again on 24 March, when it was feeding in a field.

Early 1956 brought greater interest with a pair of Choughs seen on 12 March by Howard Smith, and on 14 March by G. W. H. Moule who next saw one sunbathing on 1 April. During this April Mr. Smith watched a Chough carrying nest material into the rocks and, in early May, the sight to Mr. Moule of just one of the birds, incidentally harassed by a Jackdaw, could have meant that its mate was sitting.

Single Choughs were seen on 23 September 1956 (Howard Smith), on 6 October 1956 (Ralph Stokoe), on two occasions during January and on 17 March 1957 (G. W. H. Moule).

Writing in June 1957, from the Isle of Man, which is visible from the Cumberland coast, W. S. Cowin says that Choughs there seem to be more numerous than ever.

THE STARLING—*Sturnus vulgaris* L.

A Lakeland village, High Nibthwaite, had its first pair of nesting Starlings for ten years in 1956, although a few pairs had always favoured the adjacent village of Low Nibthwaite. The nearby reed beds of Lake End, Coniston Water, an early autumn roost of Pied Wagtails and Swallows, are next usually occupied for a brief time by crowds of Starlings (L. A. Cowcill).

The reed beds of South Bay, Esthwaite Water, and of the half-mile distant Out Dubs Tarn, in October 1953, and October 1956, held about ten thousand roosting Starlings, equally divided between them. A roost of about five thousand in the reeds of Parsonage Bay, Windermere, used from October, diminished until it was abandoned by the end of November, in 1955 (Alan F. Airey).

Particulars of the Starling with Rossiten ring, F317703, shot at Floriston, Cumberland, 24 February 1947 have successfully been obtained and forwarded by Miss E. P. Leach. This bird was ringed on migration at Hindenburg, Memel Territory, late 1942. See *Lakeland Ornithology*, 1954, p. 105.

The remains of a Starling, with ring 806479 of the Zoological

Museum of the University of Copenhagen, found at Ickenthaite in High Furness, late December 1955, were handed to L. A. Cowcill. We returned the ring and had reply from the University that the bird was ringed at Korsor, West Sjælland, Denmark, 6 March 1955.

THE HAWFINCH—*Coccothraustes coccothraustes* (L.)

Nests were found at Ravenglass, Cumberland, in the late 1920's when the birds were scarce, but regular, residents in the Muncaster woods (S. Marchant).

Single birds were at Nibthwaite on 26 December 1955, and 28 January and 11 April 1956, and there was one feeding in the reputed oldest Douglas Fir in Britain, at Wray Castle, on 6 November 1956 (L. A. Cowcill). Again in High Furness, there were three feeding on elderberries at Skelwith, on 22 September 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

THE SISKIN—*Carduelis spinus* (L.)

Cartmel Fell attracted goodly numbers of Siskins during two winters. Fifty were near Cowmire Farm, on the Westmorland side of the River Winster, on 21 November 1952. A flock of a hundred and thirty were feeding on the remains of poultry food in a pasture at Heights Farm, on the Lancashire side of the river, on 20 February 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

Still in Cartmel, ten Siskins were noted near Field Broughton, 8 and 30 December 1955 and forty at Newton, 8 February 1956. In Westmorland, there were sixty near Crosthwaite in the Lyth valley on 6 March 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

THE TWITE—*Carduelis flavirostris* (L.)

Seven feeding on the shingle beach at Allonby, 20 March 1953 (Ralph Stokoe). Two, and almost certainly two more, with about twenty Goldfinches, in a field of thistles by the Leven estuary, at Plumpton Hall, 22 October 1955 (L. A. Cowcill). One at St. Bees, 23 October 1955 (G. W. H. Moule).

The Twite is not nearly so often noted as it used to be.

THE CROSSBILL—*Loxia curvirostra* L.

Two juveniles were seen in conifers at Loweswater on 2 August 1953 by Robert Spencer.

Early in the visitation of 1956, Crossbills were present around Skelwith at the head of Windermere. They had apparently moved

by 22 September, when Ralph Stokoe saw a passing party of six and found a litter of characteristically treated cones, mostly larch. Twenty Crossbills were afterwards observed in tall larches at Coniston, from 17 to 19 October, by H. L. Grisedale, and a bigger flock at Tarn Hows, about the same time, by Miss Mary Birkett. At this last place, a pair were seen keeping together, and others heard, on 1 March, by L. A. Cowcill, and eight or more on 19 May 1957 by Ralph Stokoe.

About twenty were found in Upper Gelt Woods, on 27 December 1956, by Ronald A. Laird. Sixteen were spied feeding in sixty-foot larches, and more heard among the pines, on Whinfell, on 17 February 1957 by the Blezard family.

#### THE BRAMBLING—*Fringilla montifringilla* L.

Some of the arrivals in 1953 ran to more than a hundred in Matterdale on 16 November (J. M. L. North), and about forty in a turnip field in the Vale of Lorton on 22 November (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE CIRL-BUNTING—*Emberiza cirrus* L.

A pair of Cirl-Buntings nested on the north-west outskirts of Carlisle in 1955. They were feeding three young when discovered, on 6 June, by David Paull, who is familiar with the bird in his native Devon and who forthwith brought the family to the notice of Thomas Jackson.

#### THE SNOW-BUNTING—*Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.)

One at Grune Point, Skinburness, 6 December 1953 (Ralph Stokoe) and one on the grassy top of Tomlin, St. Bees, 24 February 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

The Snow-Bunting does not seem to visit the coast so much as in former years.

#### THE MEADOW-PIPIT—*Anthus pratensis* (L.)

Autumn movements in 1953 brought a hundred and fifty flying south-west over Matterdale Common on 11 September and two hundred and fifty, accompanied by fifty Pied Wagtails, west over Gawthwaite Moor, Kirkby in Furness, on 24 September (Alan F. Airey).

#### THE WATER-PIPIT—*Anthus spinoletta* (L.)

A Water-Pipit, finally and satisfactorily determined, came and

perched on a rock about six feet away from L. A. Cowcill while he was sitting by the east shore of Coniston Water on 1 April 1955.

It is recorded in *North Western Naturalist*, 3 (N.S.): 252.

**THE YELLOW WAGTAIL**—*Motacilla flava rayi* (Bp.)

Several instances show a return to former nesting haunts at Carlisle. In 1953 and 1954, a pair nested in the Holmes by the River Caldew where, fifty years earlier, the observer had known the Yellow Wagtail to breed (Richard Martindale).

In the same two years, and following upon the 1952 record by F. H. Day, a pair nested in a hayfield between Upperby and Blackwell (Ernest Blezard). Another pair bred in allotment gardens near the Grammar School in 1954 (V. J. Dunstan).

**THE PIED WAGTAIL**—*Motacilla alba yarrellii* Gould

More than two hundred were roosting in reeds in Parsonage Bay, Windermere, on 20 September 1953, and seventy were roosting on boats in the same bay on 28 September 1955 (Alan F. Airey).

**THE TREE-CREEPER**—*Certhia familiaris* L.

At Lowick Hall in High Furness, on 6 August 1955, L. A. Cowcill was shown a whole pattern of roosting holes made, or in process of being made, by Tree-Creepers in the bark of a Big Tree—*Sequoia gigantea* Decne. Under date 2 December 1955 he writes:—"I saw the Tree-Creeper roosting in the lowest of the holes. It roosts facing the centre of the trunk; head completely out of sight in the hole; body vertically downwards; wings pressed close to the sides; tail straight down and pressed to the bark of the tree; back feathers all fluffed up. The bird continues to roost nightly in this hole which is seven feet from the ground and which is two inches in diameter, with a minimum depth of one inch plus thickness of bark ridges at the sides. The bottom of the hole is flat. There are many more holes higher up the tree. Dr. Mather has seen a Blue Tit roosting in one of them."

Near Scarness, Bassenthwaite, on 3 February 1957, Ralph Stokoe examined a *Sequoia*, one of several known in that district with roosting holes made in the bark by Tree-Creepers.

**THE NUTHATCH**—*Sitta europaea affinis* Blyth

Two in Hillbeck Wood, Brough, East Westmorland, 7 December 1952 (R. W. Robson).

THE CRESTED TIT—*Parus cristatus* L.

An unmistakable Crested Tit disclosed itself to Mrs. Enid J. Wilson at the head of Derwentwater on 16 February 1954. It was in an otherwise usual kind of mixed flock of Blue Tits, Long-tailed Tits and Tree-Creepers which were moving through a tangle of hazel and hawthorn bushes. The flock remained in very close view for at least five minutes, the Crested Tit being at one time almost within arm's length as it perched on a hazel.

THE MARSH-TIT—*Parus palustris* L.

For High Furness, Alan F. Airey gives the finding of a nest of five eggs in the Rusland valley in May 1953 and L. A. Cowcill describes the bird as apparently increasing, certainly numerous, about Nibthwaite during the autumn of 1955.

THE WILLOW-TIT—*Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* Hellm.

One at Over Water, 8 July 1956; two at Dubs Moss, Eaglesfield, and two more, with other tits, at Scarness, Bassenthwaite, in February 1957; a pair near Ullock, 5 May 1957, and a nest near Setmurthy, 11 May 1957, add to the pattern of distribution in Cumberland (Ralph Stokoe).

THE GREAT GREY SHRIKE—*Lanius excubitor* L.

R. W. Robson writes to us about a Great Grey Shrike which was using a telegraph wire as a point of vantage, near Appleby, Westmorland, on 21 December 1952. A bird of the kind was next studied by him, in the same district, between 27 November and 21 December 1953. He gives a full account in *North Western Naturalist*, 2 (N.S.): 365.

A Solway-visiting Great Grey Shrike was seen by D. G. Andrew on Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumberland, on 30 October 1955.

THE WAXWING—*Bombycilla garrulus* (L.)

One feeding on wizened elderberries at Castle Carrock early November 1952 (Mrs. S. Bertram). Eight on a hawthorn hedge at Upperby, Carlisle, 27 December 1952 (Andrew T. Blezard).

One feeding on haws at Botcherby, Carlisle, 25 October 1953 (J. M. L. North). Three in a sycamore at Dalston, near Carlisle, 7 February 1954 (Henry Marrs). Some at Crosthwaite, Keswick, and Parker Gate, Bassenthwaite, during February 1954, per Mrs. Enid J. Wilson. One near Bunkers Hill, Carlisle, 12 March 1954 (Joseph Blaylock).

Two at Dalston in January 1955 (Henry Marrs). One by the River Eden, Carlisle, during February 1955, per Frank Ridpath. All the above occurrences refer to Cumberland.

One in Appleby, Westmorland, 22 January 1956 (R. W. Robson).

Birds were noted at several places in Cumberland during the forepart of 1957. One was picked up at Cumwhitton, 23 February (Mrs. R. K. Jackson). Two were feeding on haws at Castle Carrock, 24 and 25 February (J. M. L. North). One, and then two, were at Wigton, 26 and 27 February (Ernest Williamson). One was at Justicetown, 1 March (Robert Forrester).

#### THE PIED FLYCATCHER—*Muscicapa hypoleuca* (Pall.)

There were two broods in Hillbeck Wood, Brough, in June, 1951 to mark an additional nesting haunt for East Westmorland (R. W. Robson). A return to Belah Gill, Kirkby Stephen, was noted on 18 May 1954 (Walter Thompson).

Two accounts of the Pied Flycatcher in another distinct region are particularly interesting:—

“It seems to be a rather rare bird in South-west Cumberland. A pair once nested in the terrace at Muncaster Castle, in the late 1920's or early 1930's. At Wasdale Hall and in the neighbouring woods, they used to occur and breed regularly, but it is the only station I know in this vicinity.” S. Marchant, April 1954.

“It appears to have become established half a mile or so above Duddon Bridge, on the Furness side of the river. Three or four pairs have nested there for the past few years. At the height of the breeding season this year, a cock bird was observed quite close to Foxfield railway station, which suggests there was a nest somewhere nearby.” Kenneth R. Burgess, November 1953.

A male near Scale Woods, between Crummock Water and Buttermere, 11 June 1955 (J. J. Boswell). A brood of six young at Bassenthwaite, 17 June 1956 (Walter Thompson) and, in the same district, a male near Ouse Bridge, 24 June 1956, and two nesting pairs near Wythop Mill, in 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF—*Phylloscopus collybita tristis* Blyth

A Chiffchaff which had flown into a house at Stainton, near Kendal, Westmorland, on 25 December 1956 and died the next day,

was handed to John W. Allen. He sent the bird to the Editors of *British Birds* who informed him that it was a Siberian Chiffchaff.

**THE YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER—*Phylloscopus inornatus* (Blyth)**

An unusual call note drew the attention of R. W. Robson to a small warbler in a hawthorn hedge at New Hall, Appleby, on 23 July 1956. From a distance of four to five yards, this little bird allowed a description to be taken which tallied entirely with that of the Yellow-browed Warbler.

**THE GRASSHOPPER WARBLER—*Locustella naevia* (Bodd.)**

Used to be a common breeder in favourable localities in the lower part of Eskdale in South-west Cumberland, 1930 to 1935. Considerable habitat changes make it doubtful whether the bird still breeds there (S. Marchant, 1954).

**THE FIELDFARE—*Turdus pilaris* L.**

A migrating thousand on a west to east course over the Westmorland Pennines and Nine Standards, 25 April 1954 (Walter Thompson).

**THE SONG-THRUSH—*Turdus ericetorum ericetorum* Turton**

One ringed as a nestling at Braithwaite, near Keswick, Cumberland, 21 May 1955, by Ralph Stokoe, was shot near Villa Real (Tras os Montes), Portugal, about 29 February 1956.

It is possibly the first British Song-Thrush recovered in the Iberian Peninsula.

**THE AMERICAN ROBIN—*Turdus migratorius* L.**

From 2 to 6 March 1955 an American Robin stayed about the garden to a house at Brampton, Cumberland, where it was constantly under close observation by Miss C. L. Murray and Miss K. S. Hodgson.

**THE BLACKBIRD—*Turdus merula* L.**

A pair raised three broods in the same nest, built in a work shed at Harraby, in the City of Carlisle, in 1956. The third brood fledged some time after 21 June (George Mallinson).

At Blackwell, Carlisle, in 1957, a female Blackbird began to build her nest on 22 February, finishing it on 25 February. She laid her first egg, after an interval of fourteen days, on 11 March, completing

a clutch of three on 13 March. Her first two young hatched out on 26 March and the third on the next day (Peter S. Blezard and Dorothy Blezard).

**THE WHEATEAR**—*Ænanthe ænanthe ænanthe* (L.)

A pair of Wheatears nested on a piece of waste ground in the City of Carlisle in 1953. Two fledglings had just left the nest on 24 July (Roger R. Lovegrove).

**THE GREENLAND WHEATEAR**—*Ænanthe ænanthe leucorrhœa* (Gm.)

Spring passage-migrants were particularly noticeable in the Carlisle district in 1955. On Blackhall Racecourse there was a male on 30 April, three males on 7 May and at least six individuals on 13 May. In a pasture, two miles to the south, there was a female on 9 May and a male and a female on 15 May.

Cold westerly winds with rain, hail and snow prevailed at the time and the surrounding fells took a covering of snow (Ernest Blezard).

**THE BLACK REDSTART**—*Phoenicurus ochrurus* (Gm.)

One on old slag banks at Maryport, on the Cumberland coast, 29 November 1953 (Ralph Stokoe).

One on Farleton Knot, in South Westmorland, 28 and 29 March 1956 (R. K. Jackson).

**THE HEDGE-SPARROW**—*Prunella modularis* (L.)

A bird ringed six years earlier at Nibthwaite, in High Furness, was recovered at the same place in June 1956 by the ringer, L. A. Cowcill.

**THE WREN**—*Troglodytes troglodytes* (L.)

A nest built in an open-fronted garden shed at Blackwell, Carlisle, in May 1954 remained a typical, unlined "cock's" nest for two months or more. Although its entrance had been well fingered in the meantime, it was found to have been lined and to contain four eggs on 25 July. Three young fledged from it on 22 August (Blezard family).

**THE HOUSE-MARTIN**—*Delichon urbica* (L.)

Very rarely seen in the Muncaster district, South-west Cumberland, till the late 1930's. Just prior to 1939, House-Martins

were possibly breeding at The Grove and certainly at some old farm buildings nearby. After 1945 they had become common, locally more so than Swallows, and now breed regularly at farms in Drigg and Ravenglass and all over the district (S. Marchant, 1954).

#### THE ALPINE SWIFT—*Apus melba* (L.)

On 17 June 1957, Master H. A. F. Thompson and two school friends were watching circling Swifts at Grange-over-Sands. A sudden sound of wing-clapping overhead drew all attention to a bird whose larger size and white underparts distinguished it from the other birds as an Alpine Swift.

#### THE HOOPOE—*Upupa epops* (L.)

News of a Hoopoe he had seen at Grune Point, Skinburness, Cumberland Solway, on 14 October 1956, was promptly given by W. F. Davidson. This bird was found to be still at the same place, by Ralph Stokoe, on the evening of the next day. A day later again, it had apparently gone, other seekers then failing to meet with it.

Early in the morning of 19 August 1957, a Hoopoe was seen by Frederick Nicholson of Hayton, on the ground where a wood had been felled at Wetheral Plains, Carlisle.

#### THE ROLLER—*Coracias garrulus* L.

Near Mungrisdale, Cumberland, on the afternoon of 15 March 1953, G. E. Hall, of Rydal, came upon a Roller, most unexpected in itself and in strange company. It was among twenty to thirty Curlews on open ground. The Roller was obviously tired and, unlike the quickly departing Curlews, made evasive flights of only a few feet when approached.

A fresh to very strong easterly wind at the time, after ten days of warm weather, might account for the arrival of this bird. It is the first Roller to be recorded for Lakeland since 1907.

#### THE GREEN WOODPECKER—*Picus viridis* L.

More light on the Green Woodpecker in South-west Cumberland comes in a note, of 19 April 1954, from S. Marchant:—

“My own records are that I first met the species at Dunningwell, The Green, Millom, on 4 September 1951. In spring 1952, I found the bird well established in the Muncaster Woods and now know that the species has colonised the whole district, and probably breeds in

all suitable woods from Seascale to the Duddon, even extending quite well up the valleys and fell sides, particularly around Black Combe."

From Broughton-in-Furness, 18 November 1953, Kenneth R. Burgess writes:—"The first I ever saw of the bird in the locality was in 1947, and it was then undoubtedly very, very scarce. Each year since has seen the Green Woodpecker coming more and more into the picture until it is now here, there and everywhere."

As another side to the picture, on 30 April 1956, L. A. Cowcill says of Nibthwaite in High Furness:—"A few still here, but definitely getting less each year. It is strange how, or rather why, they arrived so suddenly in 1948 and why they are leaving here again."

In Low Furness, W. H. Little saw a Green Woodpecker at Ulverston, on 6 November, 1956.

#### THE LITTLE OWL—*Athene noctua* (Scop.)

The south and west of Cumberland appear to have been reached first by the Little Owl in its spread over the county. The Rev. P. W. Parminter has known the bird to nest near his Waberthwaite home since 1944. Writing on 19 April 1954 S. Marchant says:—"The first time I saw this bird in Cumberland was on 27 August 1951, at the old farm of Lacro, Kirksanton, near Millom. Since then, I have come across it in and around the Whicham valley quite often and would say that at least three pairs, but not more than six, were established between the Duddon and Millom, including the Whicham valley. I have never yet seen it round the corner of Black Combe from that valley, nor about Bootle or Muncaster or Seascale."

A pair nested at Boot, in Eskdale, in 1954 (E. Hayes). Up the coast, two pairs were noted frequenting old stone walls near St. Bees in 1955, and one pair in 1956, per G. W. H. Moule. Northward still, a pair bred in a disused Jackdaw nest in a quarry at Aspatria in 1956, and a bird was previously seen, 14 May 1954, on a coastal telegraph pole at Allonby (Ralph Stokoe).

Across in the east of the county, at the foot of the Pennines, a pair were settled in a quarry in 1955 and 1956 (John Oliver). To the north-west, a Little Owl road victim was picked up near Longtown on 8 October 1956 (W. H. Little).

#### THE SCOPS-OWL—*Otus scops* (L.)

A small owl was noticed in a larch at the edge of a wood near Kendal, Westmorland, on 18 December 1956, by J. W. Allen. After

studying it for some minutes from various angles, he found that it had all the characteristics of a Scops-Owl.

#### THE PEREGRINE FALCON—*Falco peregrinus* Tunst.

A pair of Peregrines, perhaps caused to remove like the Ravens, were established in the same southern Lakeland quarry, an even more unusual place for them, in 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

Besides an occasional change of scene by Peregrines, or their sporadic use of some haunts, they may, for some inexplicable reason, remain away from a traditional breeding place for a long period of years. One such place in the Lake Fells, last used in 1933, was not retented until 1956. Another to become vacant there, in 1928, was at least revisited in 1937 and 1942, but did not come into regular occupation again until 1943. A Pennine haunt, which long ago may have had a previous break and then been used only by Ravens, has continued without its Peregrines since 1939. These particular periods of desertion do not reflect any decline in the Peregrine population as a whole yet none of them could be accounted for by birds just changing from one haunt to another.

#### THE MERLIN—*Falco columbarius* Tunst.

A pair of Merlins successfully reared a brood of four young ones in an old nest of Magpie, near Torver in High Furness, in 1956 (H. L. Grisedale).

#### THE GOLDEN EAGLE—*Aquila chrysaëtus* (L.)

There happen to have been more eagle visitors since the re-occupation of not so distant breeding haunts. The Golden Eagle is named in all the various reports and certainly this description applies to a bird in the Cumberland Pennines on 20 January 1954.

Next, in Dunnerdale, on 2 May 1954, John Longmire saw two eagles arrive and circle over the dale in occasionally quite low flight, once passing within three hundred yards of him, before drifting away southward.

One was reported from Honister in December 1954, by William Bewley, and on 5 July 1955, by John Cowcill, and then one was satisfactorily described to L. A. Cowcill as seen over Harrison Stickle, Langdale, on 6 August 1955.

An eagle in the Westmorland Pennines was closely encountered by Walter Thompson at Barrenthwaite, North Stainmore, on 29 August 1956.

A Golden Eagle kept appearing over one particular Lakeland valley for some weeks after 23 January 1957, when it was first seen by Thomas Livock, H. Hogarth and W. Hogarth. After marking its usual line of departure, L. A. Cowcill and John Cowcill, on 27 March, repaired to a favourable position from which they were able to study the bird for half an hour.

On 29 May 1957 Ernest Blezard surprised an immature Golden Eagle on the floor of a gill in the Cumberland Pennines. This bird was followed up the watercourse until it was last seen soaring over the Northumberland side of the county boundary.

Here are two sentences written by Seton Gordon in his book *The Golden Eagle* (1955), p. 13:—

“ There is no reason why, if not molested, the golden eagle should not return to the high hills of the Lake District and of North Wales, from which strongholds it has long been exterminated. I am told that immature golden eagles have been shot in the Lake District in recent years.”

Mr. Gordon gives a plurality of recent victims but he does not give the name of his informant.

So distant are the days when the people of the Lake District were given to molesting or shooting eagles—and then not without cause—that we must tell of the last occasion before it becomes completely lost to our local lore. Ninety odd years ago, Farmer Jenkinson of Dunnerdale, was troubled by an eagle which kept lifting his lambs. Naturally enough, he took to carrying his muzzle-loader out with him on his rounds of the fell, but with no better result than an unsuccessful shot or two at the raider. He then decided to wait his chance and, ramming a “ turr’ble gurt charge ” of powder and lead down his weapon, he lay flat on his back in the heather. When the eagle came overhead he fired vertically, winged his bird and sustained a broken collar-bone from the violence of the recoil of the gun, checked as it was by the unyielding ground. The eagle was retrieved from the bobbin mill dam, into which it had fallen, giving further account of itself before it was dispatched and carried home to Hole House Farm where its full-spread wings were found almost to span the small kitchen.

This we believe to have been the last eagle shot in the English Lake District. The account of its death was told to L. A. Cowcill, of Nibthwaite, by John Stilling, since deceased, who was a grandson of

the shooter and one of the real old-time statesmen. The re-telling, we trust, will dispel that other monstrous charge.

Now we can return to very much more recent days. On 23 March 1957, D. A. Ratcliffe saw a Golden Eagle leave a Lakeland crag and, on that crag, he discovered a newly-built eagle's nest. Here then, it seemed that, after an absence of more than a century and a half, the Golden Eagle had indeed come back to an ancient home.

A fortnight having been allowed for developments, the discoverer and Ernest Blezard and Andrew Blezard went to the crag on 7 April only to find the nest empty as before and the bird missing. Parts of a kill remained at the nest and a freshly shed eagle feather was picked up near to it. The great nest on a roomy ledge within an angular recess conjured up a picture of what had most surely been one of the olden-time eyries. As a last note, Dr. Ratcliffe again saw an eagle about the crag on a later visit in April.

Present events and bird-ringing activities hold the interest that the first Golden Eagle to be recovered in Britain was ringed by Ralph Stokoe of the Carlisle Natural History Society. He marked this eagle as a young one in a Galloway eyrie on 20 May 1956, and it was recovered by J. Cattenach at Makeness Kipps, near Peebles, on 7 May 1957, to be released in a remoter district.

#### THE BUZZARD—*Buteo buteo* (L.)

Recent years have seen a spread of the Buzzard over the Pennine region, affecting the fells themselves, the fell-foot country and the woodlands of the Eden valley. This was evident well before myxomatosis arrived in 1954 to wipe out the rabbit population, the main source of food.

Since that event, and possibly resulting from it, there have been other trends. In 1955, L. A. Cowcill found the Buzzard increasing and nesting in the lower valleys of Furness and regularly to be seen right down to the coast by the rivers Crake and Duddon. In August 1956, the Blezard family had, from Arrad, the previously unheard of sight of a Buzzard floating over Greenodd railway station, by the Leven estuary. The previous April they saw four Buzzards together in a South-west Cumberland locality where rabbits had made an astonishing recovery. On 24 February 1956 the Rev. G. W. H. Moule saw one on the coast, over St. Bees Head, where it was being mobbed by three Carrion-Crows and two Herring-Gulls.

In 1957, Richard Taylor confirmed three to four nesting pairs in

the lower Crake valley, R. D. Humber reported two pairs rearing young down by the Kent estuary, and Ernest Blezard found the nest and eggs of a pair in the middle Caldew valley, Cumberland.

Remains of prey at two nests containing young in 1956 may show directions in which Buzzards have turned to feed their broods. At a Pennine nest, they were entirely of young birds, Meadow-Pipit, Curlew and Red Grouse (D. A. Ratcliffe). At a nest in the Skiddaw Group, they represented carrion mutton and a young crow (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE OSPREY—*Pandion haliaetus* (L.)

An Osprey, which had its talons entangled in the wool of a dead sheep, was killed by a terrier dog on Bow Fell, between the head of Eskdale and Langdale, in 1946. The facts were subsequently gathered by Ralph Stokoe who obtained and forwarded the left foot of the bird for examination.

On 19 May 1955 the Rev. G. W. H. Moule saw an Osprey flying north over the sea, off St. Bees Head, Cumberland.

#### THE HERON—*Ardea cinerea* L.

Numbers of nests in some heronries in the three counties:—

##### CUMBERLAND.

Flimby, Maryport. One in 1953 (Ralph Stokoe).

Great Corby. Nineteen in 1955; twelve in 1956; fifteen in 1957 (Ritson Graham).

Muncaster. Thirteen, possibly sixteen, in 1955 (J. J. Boswell and S. Marchant).

Kirklington. Three in 1956 (Ritson Graham). Three in 1957 (William French and Lloyd Caris).

Castletown (Floriston). Three in 1957 (D. A. Ratcliffe).

Rattlingate (Kirkandrews-on-Eden). Four in 1957 (D. A. Ratcliffe).

Rosley. Five in 1957 (Peter S. Blezard).

Flimby and Kirklington are previously unrecorded heronries.

##### WESTMORLAND.

Dallam. Forty in 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

Elterwater and Rydal. None in 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

Smardale, Kirkby Stephen. Fourteen in 1954 and 1955 (Walter Thompson).

Bleatarn, Kirkby Stephen. Two in 1954 (Walter Thompson).

## LANCASHIRE NORTH OF THE SANDS.

Nibthwaite. Two in 1954, when new; none in 1955; one in 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

Underfield, Greenodd. Ten in 1953; twelve in 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

Rusland. Sixteen in 1953; ten in 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

Two adult birds on nests at Rusland on 14 April 1953 had pink beaks (Alan F. Airey).

A Heron ringed as young at Egersund (Rogaland), Norway, 5 June 1950, was recovered at Satterthwaite, Lancashire N. S., 25 April 1951 (*British Birds*, 49: 439).

THE BITTERN—*Botaurus stellaris* (L.)

A Bittern was flushed by Alan F. Airey in a marsh by Rusland Pool, Furness, 5 February 1954.

During October and November 1955, a Bittern was seen almost daily by John Todd in a flooded gravel pit at Silloth on the Cumberland coast. It was photographed by Austin Barton and Ralph Stokoe on 27 November, the date it was last seen.

In the early morning of 11 March 1957, Frank Ridpath saw a Bittern fly low over Burgh Marsh, Solway, and settle in a bed of rushes near the King Edward I Monument.

THE WHOOPER SWAN—*Cygnus cygnus* (L.)

During the winter of 1952-53, the first Whooper Swans to be noted in the Ambleside neighbourhood were six on Elterwater on 13 November. Forty were on Grasmere on 2 December, after which date a minimum of twenty were estimated to be variously dispersed, travelling from one water to another or shifting from the smaller or higher tarns to the lakes in time of frost. Hard weather apparently brought increased numbers. There were twenty together in Miller-ground Bay, Windermere, in frost and snow on 6 January. Towards the end of their stay, there were five on Barngates Tarn on 27 February and all were gone by about 7 March, although seven were seen in Waterhead Bay, Coniston Water, on 27 March (Alan F. Airey).

In the same winter, twenty-four Whoopers, all adult save one, were constant to Thurstonfield Lough, near Carlisle (Arthur V. Millard). Four adults were still there on 18 April (Ernest Blezard).

A linear range of Whoopers in the area in 1953-54 shows in sixteen on Elterwater from early November to 1 December (Alan F. Airey); twelve on Coniston Water on 21 March (L. A. Cowcill);

ten on Derwentwater on 25 February and six on Over Water on 2 January (Ralph Stokoe) down to two on 13 April (J. M. L. North).

On 7 November 1954 a low-flying string of seven adults went south-west over Blackhall Racecourse, Carlisle (Ernest Blezard). The season onward brought three Whoopers to Yew Tree Tarn, Coniston, on 31 December, seven to ten to the south end of Coniston Water, between 14 and 17 January, and two in a last appearance on 29 April (L. A. Cowcill). There were nineteen in Waterhead Bay, Windermere, also on 14 January (Alan F. Airey). Talkin Tarn, in East Cumberland, enters newly into the records with a herd of sixteen on 4 January 1955 (V. J. Dunstan).

Visitors to the south end of Coniston Water next began with a family of two adults and one cygnet on 13 January 1956. Numbers there increased to eight on 3 February, fourteen on 11 February and eighteen on 23 February. They had dropped to sixteen, including the original family, by 29 February and so remained until 2 March, when they were last seen (L. A. Cowcill).

The following notes from five waters for the winter 1955-56 and October 1956 are all from Alan F. Airey:—

Elterwater. Seven on 18 November; eighteen the most in December; twenty-seven the most in January; nineteen on 11 February; twenty-three on 3 March, down to six on 28 March. Afterwards a solitary adult on 23 and 28 April, gone by 6 May. The next visitors, ten in number, arrived on 25 October, increasing to twenty-eight the next day.

Windermere. Seven arrived in Wray Bay, from the east, on 20 December. Twelve in Millerground Bay and seven in Wray Bay on 1 February. Twenty-one in Lowwood Bay, seven in mid-lake and six in Wray Bay on 3 February. Twelve at the south end, near Graythwaite, on 18 February. Thirty-eight in Millerground Bay and White Cross Bay on 24 February.

Grasmere. None in early winter, then two on 5 January, increasing to twenty-one on 2 February and down to twelve on 14 February.

Blelham Tarn. Two adults on 16 April and a lingering cygnet on 5 May.

Coniston Water. Eleven at the south end on 2 March.

In the fore part of 1956, there were five Whoopers on Loweswater and one on Over Water on 1 January, and twenty-eight on Bassen-

thwaite Water on 8 January (Ralph Stokoe). Thirlmere had twelve adults on 19 January and Bassenthwaite ten adults and two cygnets on 19 February (G. W. H. Moule). Thurstonfield Lough claimed ten adults and four cygnets all during January (Ernest Blezard, Ritson Graham and Arthur V. Millard) and then a total of eighteen on 25 March and twenty-one on 1 April (Malcolm Short).

At Tindale Tarn, East Cumberland, occasionally visited by Whoopers, there was a dead adult on 13 March (Ernest Blezard).

Thirty-two Whoopers were packed on a flooded gravel pit of ten acres at Oulton, Cumberland, on 14 January 1957 (D. A. Ratcliffe). This pond is congested with Water Buttercup. There were two on the River Eden, close to Carlisle, on 17 January (Frank Ridpath) and three on 2 March 1957 (W. H. Little). Thurstonfield Lough had twenty-two on 3 February 1957, increasing to thirty-six on 3 March, and still twenty-seven on 11 March (Malcolm Short).

#### BEWICK'S SWAN—*Cygnus bewickii* Yarr.

A lone adult on the River Eden at Rickerby, Carlisle, 15 to 25 February 1955 (W. H. Little). Two adults on Bassenthwaite Water, 4 April 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

#### THE GREY LAG GOOSE—*Anser anser* (L.)

Grey Lags leaving Morecambe Bay in the direction of the Solway continue to follow the main valley line through the fells. A northward-going skein of fifty passed up Windermere for Dunmail on 17 March 1953 and another of a hundred and fifty up the Leven on 28 December 1954 (Alan F. Airey).

#### THE WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE—*Anser albifrons* (Scop.)

Both the European and the Greenland race are known on the upper part of the Cumberland Solway.

A female of the European race—*A. a. albifrons* (Scop.)—was shot out of ten White-fronts associating with Pink-footed Geese, by T. P. Davidson, early in 1956.

An almost completely black-breasted old male Greenland White-front—*A. a. flavirostris* Dalgety & Scott—was shot out of a skein of fifteen Pink-feet on 6 December 1956 (R. H. G. Mounsey-Heysham).

Previous examples are recorded in *Lakeland Ornithology*.

**THE PINK-FOOTED GOOSE—*Anser brachyrhynchus* Baillon**

For three seasons running, Pink-footed Geese have arrived earlier than usual. In 1954 they were in thousands on the Solway by 16 September. In 1955, skeins were noted over Carlisle on 9 September (Samuel Maskell), 13 September (William French) and at 1-15 a.m. on 15 September (Ernest Blezard). Some sixty birds reached Rockcliffe Marsh on 14 September 1956, per T. P. Davidson.

There are two instances of geese, definitely Pink-feet, coming down to ground in East Westmorland. Thirteen alighted on a pasture at New Hall, Appleby, on 15 January 1953 (R. W. Robson). Three were found in a garden at Kirkby Stephen during a hard frosty time, on 26 February 1955, eating greens protruding through snow (Walter Thompson).

**THE BARNACLE-GOOSE—*Branta leucopsis* (Bechst.)**

Rockcliffe Marsh, on the Cumberland side of the Solway, with its extensive and attractive newly-forming ground, is once more a prime haunt of Barnacle-Geese. Up to a thousand were seen by Ian Laval during the 1956-57 season, and more than seven hundred counted by Cyril L. Atkinson and Arthur Beattie on 24 March 1957.

**THE BRENT GOOSE—*Branta bernicla* (L.)**

There were twenty-five Brent Geese at Cardurnock, on the upper Solway, in February 1954 (Richard Martindale) and a similar number, perhaps the same gaggle, were afterwards seen on Rockcliffe Marsh into April (T. Beattie). Ten or twelve were found by the first-named observer at Cardurnock in February 1956.

**THE CANADA GOOSE—*Branta canadensis* (L.)**

Visitors to the Carlisle neighbourhood include some in the light of prospecting pairs. Two birds stayed a few days at Thurstonfield Lough in early April 1954 (T. J. Stordy). Two were again at the lough on 19 April 1956 (Jeffrey Bowes and Harry Gledhill) and, at about the same time, there was one at the Carr-bed Islands, near the mouth of the River Eden, per T. P. Davidson. Two which arrived at Upperby Park on the evening of 15 April 1955, were persistently attacked and finally driven away by the cob of the established Mute Swan pair (Joseph Howe).

A few Canadas were seen with the grey geese on Rockcliffe Marsh during the winter 1954-55 (E. E. Laval) and a pack flying down the River Eden on two occasions, April and September 1955 (J.

Howcroft). The visitors evidently enough spring from the colony at Kinmount, Dumfriesshire, to where about a hundred of these geese were seen to flight, over the open sands, from the direction of the Cumberland side of the Solway, at daybreak on 29 September 1955 (C. L. Atkinson, E. Blezard and W. R. Laidler).

A solitary Canada Goose which came to stay at Tindale Tarn was noted on various dates from early May to late July 1957. It was found to have made two attempts at nest-building during May (Ronald L. Laird, William French and A. W. Vincent, Ernest Blezard, Andrew T. Blezard).

A skein of twenty-four Canada Geese went northerly over Carlisle on 12 June 1957 (G. A. Allison).

In early July 1957 the Westmorland Wildfowlers Association introduced about sixty Canada Geese into the county, releasing them on the tarns of Ratherheath, Whinfell, Lilymere, Tarnhouse and Ewefell Mire. During August, birds were flying freely around Kendal and district but going back to Ratherheath and Lilymere, per Robert D. Humber.

#### THE SHELD-DUCK—*Tadorna tadorna* (L.)

Counts in the estuaries and channels, north to south.

Wampool and Waver, Solway, 1952-57.

141 on 23 March 1952.

195 on 16 March, 85 on 8 November, 108 on 6 December 1953.

68 on 3 January, 300 on 7 February, 401 on 7 March, 204 on 28 November, 241 on 19 December 1954.

296 on 27 March 1955. 360 on 11 March 1956.

309 on 17 February, 304 on 17 March 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

Irt, at Ravenglass, 1955. Fifty-six adults on 14 June (J. J. Boswell).

Walney Island, South End, 1953. Over fifty on 17 June (Alan F. Airey).

Leven, 1953.

250 at Park Bay and Greenodd on 7 April, and 750 at Sandgate, Flookburgh, down to 250 on 12 April; 200 between Aldingham and Bardsea on 27 June (Alan F. Airey).

Leven, 1955-56.

150 at Sandgate on 20 September (Alan F. Airey); 30 at Park Bay, Holker, on 9 October (L. A. Cowcill); 150 at Sandgate on 4 December and 50 on 15 January; 30 at Park Bay on

16 January; a thousand at Sandgate on 19 March. After this last month the large gatherings in the Leven disperse all around the estuary, but a great many of the birds are apparently non-breeders (Alan F. Airey).

Kent, 1953 and 1956.

150 at Grange-over-Sands on 5 June 1953 and 40 on 16 December 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

Unusual inland occurrences are two drakes on Tarn House Tarn, Ravenstonedale, Westmorland, 21 November 1954 (R. W. Robson) and a drake on Tindale Tarn, Pennines, Cumberland, 13 March 1956 (Ernest Blezard).

Sheld-Duck now nest annually at the south end of Coniston Water, there being one to two pairs in 1955 and 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

Breeding birds appeared to be much fewer on the Cumberland Solway in 1955, and to have declined considerably on both sides of the Firth in 1956. Some thousands of Sheld-Ducks have been reported destroyed in 1954 through the use of their moulting grounds in the Heligoland Bight as a bombing range.

#### THE MALLARD—*Anas platyrhynchos* (L.)

An unusually large gathering of Mallard on Coniston Water, chiefly the south end, began with twenty-one pairs on 11 November 1955. There were a hundred and forty birds on 22 January 1956, and a similar number until at least the end of February. They were gone before the end of April, leaving the normal few nesting pairs (L. A. Cowcill).

Three hundred and sixty Mallard were counted on Bassenthwaite Water on 8 January 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

These counts represent the southern and northern extremities of the Lakes in the same season.

In the previous winter season, there were the large number of seven hundred and fifty Mallard in Moricambe, Solway, on 23 January 1955 (Ralph Stokoe).

Mallard gather to some strength in autumn on woodland pools and small, out of the way ponds. For two instances, respectively, there were about three hundred Mallard at High Corby on 9 September 1951, and a hundred at Greystoke on 24 August 1952, both places being in Cumberland (Andrew T. Blezard, Ernest Blezard and D. A. Ratcliffe).

THE TEAL—*Anas crecca* L.

A Teal, marked as a juvenile with Reykjavik Museum ring, 67340, at Fnjoskadalur, North Iceland, 9 August 1953, was shot by Gordon Taylor on the River Eden at Grinsdale, Carlisle, 10 January 1954.

A drake, marked as adult with Bird Museum of Paris ring, EB2555, at the Biological Station Le Sambuc, Bouches-du-Rhone (Camargue), South France, 25 February 1956, was picked up by John Oliver at Hallbankgate, Cumberland, 15 April 1956.

Ringling particulars received through Miss E. P. Leach.

THE GARGANEY—*Anas querquedula* L.

A drake Garganey was at a pool in Biglands Bog, Cumberland, during April and May 1954. Search did not produce a female (Ernest Blezard).

THE WIGEON—*Anas penelope* L.

Leven estuary.

More than two thousand near Flookburgh on 21 September 1953, and more than a thousand near Chapel Island on 25 November 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

Moricambe, Solway.

1660 on 6 December 1953. 920 on 28 November 1954.

1200 on 20 February 1955. 1700 on 6 November 1955.

450 on 2 January 1956. 1130 on 17 February 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

THE PINTAIL—*Anas acuta* L.

The Pintail seemingly does not favour the Cumberland side anything like so much as it does the Dumfriesshire shore of the Solway.

In Moricambe there were four, including one drake, on 6 December 1953; five, including two drakes, on 24 October and 28 November 1954; one drake on 23 January 1955, and 2 January 1956, and two on 15 January 1956. There were five Pintail, including two drakes, on 17 February 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

A pair were on Siddick Pond, Workington, 29 January 1955 (G. W. H. Moule) and a drake 15 February 1955 (Ralph Stokoe).

In the Leven estuary, twenty-six Pintail were near Plumpton Hall,

3 December 1955 (Alan F. Airey) and some few with Mallard, Wigeon and Shoveler, off Bardsea, 21 March 1956 (L. A. Cowcill). In the Kent estuary, twenty-two pairs were out off Grange-over-Sands, 16 December 1955 (Alan F. Airey).

THE COMMON POCHARD—*Aythya ferina* (L.)

Forty, mostly males, on Coniston Water, 4 March 1955 and a few on Rydal Water, 19 October 1955 (L. A. Cowcill). About thirty on Derwentwater, 6 November 1955 (Thomas Jackson). Forty-five, of which more than thirty were males, on Tindale Tarn, 13 March 1956 (Ernest Blezard).

THE TUFTED DUCK—*Aythya fuligula* (L.)

A male, possibly a breeding bird, on Terrybank Tarn, Kirkby Lonsdale, Westmorland, 22 May 1955. A pair, strongly suspected of nesting, constant to one part of Coniston Water during May and June 1956. Twenty on this lake on the previous 12 March (L. A. Cowcill).

THE SCAUP-DUCK—*Aythya marila* (L.)

A lone female inland, on Monkhill Lough, Cumberland, 26 April 1952 (Ernest Blezard and Andrew T. Blezard).

Seven males and nine females in Workington Harbour mouth, 31 January 1954 (Ralph Stokoe). Up to thirteen, including three adult males, close inshore at St. Bees, 19 to 22 February 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

In the Leven estuary at Canal Foot, Ulverston, forty to fifty, 12 November 1955 (L. A. Cowcill); seventy, 17 January 1956 and two hundred 13 March 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

THE GOLDENEYE—*Bucephala clangula* (L.)

Nine, including three adult drakes, in the Leven estuary at Greenodd, 10 March 1954 (J. M. L. North).

A pair over the confluence of Irt and Mite, near Ravenglass, 18 April 1954 (J. J. Boswell).

Sixteen, having only one adult drake among them, on Tindale Tarn, 19 April 1954 (Ernest Blezard and Andrew T. Blezard).

An adult drake, full-winged, 11 June 1956, and another, in moult, 19 September 1956, both on Coniston Water (L. A. Cowcill).

An adult drake, uninjured, on the River Esk, off Rockcliffe Marsh, Solway, 30 June 1956 (Ritson Graham).

An adult, ringed at Hallefors (Orebro), Sweden, 12 June 1949, was recovered on Windermere, 14 January 1951 (*British Birds*, 49: 442).

#### THE COMMON EIDER—*Somateria mollissima* (L.)

Eiders on Walney Island have increased both in numbers and interest since the first nest was found in 1949 (*Lakeland Ornithology*, p. 122). By the next three years there were at least two pairs nesting, and it was in the winter of 1951-52 that the late Mr. Fred Swarbrick kept counting up to as many as forty Eiders offshore.

On 4 July 1953, Arthur Millard, the original discoverer, and Ernest Blezard learned from Mrs. Ella Wheeler, at the Walney Lighthouse, that there had been six nests earlier in the year. They saw two broods of feathered young ones, off Shelly Bars, that day.

Mrs. Wheeler has very kindly communicated the more recent developments. The 1956 season started with a hundred and four Eiders among which were forty-three, or more, pairs. They nested here, there and everywhere; in the fields, on the shingle, in the sand-hills and on the tideline. A hundred and fifty-two birds, old and young, were counted at the end of the season. Many of the young ones apparently did not survive the menaces of the horde of Lesser Black-backed Gulls and Herring-Gulls and oil pollution.

Eleven Eiders were back to the island by February in 1957. They included three pairs and also a particularly confiding duck which keeps returning to exactly the same nesting place. These later increased to a hundred and ten, as Mrs. Wheeler and Mrs. Braithwaite informed Ralph Stokoe and Ernest Blezard on their visit to Walney at the beginning of June. Four nests with eggs, and one empty, were seen on 2 June. Fourteen drakes and eleven ducks were in one raft, that day, off Shelly Bars.

An Eider, in brown plumage, a new species for the locality, was swimming and diving in the sea, off St. Bees Head, on 11 July 1954 (Ralph Stokoe and Austin Barton).

#### THE COMMON SCOTER—*Melanitta nigra* (L.)

Three adults flying up the River Irt, near Drigg, West Cumberland, 18 April 1954 (J. J. Boswell).

A flock of about thirty on the sea off St. Bees Head, 25 June 1956, an unusual occurrence (Ralph Stokoe).

THE VELVET SCOTER—*Melanitta fusca* (L.)

A dead male, oiled, at Mawbray, near Allonby, 1 January 1955 (Ralph Stokoe).

One, in company with Mallard and Wigeon, in the Leven estuary, at Plumpton Hall, 26 October 1955 (L. A. Cowcill).

One dead at St. Bees, 16 May 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

THE GOOSANDER—*Mergus merganser* L.

Nine ducklings with the parent female were found on the River Eden, just above Carlisle, on 9 June 1953, the male being seen as well. The family kept to the same stretch of river until 18 July, by when the young had assumed juvenile plumage (Roger R. Lovegrove).

Also in Cumberland were a brood of young on the River Irthing, near Walton, in 1954 (Lady Constance Howard); a brood on the River Esk, at Netherby, in 1955 (W. Raymond Laidler) and an adult female flushed in the wooded valley of the River Gelt, 31 May 1955 (Blezard family).

In 1957, a nest of eight eggs was found in the rocky side of the Irthing (Lloyd Caris), a nest of ten eggs in a hollow tree beside the Lyne (Ritson Graham) and a brood of at least five young on the lower Esk (William French).

Pairs on the lakes in spring may be now rather more interesting than the widespread visitors of winter. The male of a pair at the head of Derwentwater, in early April 1954, was often engaged in conflict with an unattached male (Mrs. Enid J. Wilson). Two pairs were on Coniston Water, above Peel Isle, 29 March 1954, and one pair on 27 March 1955 (L. A. Cowcill). In 1954, again, there were a pair on Ennerdale Water, 4 April, and a pair on Haweswater, 11 April (D. A. Ratcliffe). Tindale Tarn had a pair on 19 April 1955 and Haweswater a pair in April 1957 (Ernest Blezard).

THE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER—*Mergus serrator* L.

So-called Goosanders which have bred by salt water at the Ravenglass gully, Cumberland, since 1950, are very evidently Red-breasted Mergansers. Mr. S. Marchant, in referring to the confusion between the two species, writes under date 19 April, 1954:—"Nests have been found by Joseph Farren, the watcher, in deep hollows in tufts (of Marram) on the sandhills and small young seen with the adult female every year."

Miss Mary Milne reports nesting in 1951, and an attempt in 1953 in which the eggs were destroyed by a gull, or gulls.

Undoubted Red-breasted Mergansers have been seen in the estuaries at Ravenglass. There were two males and three females on 18 April, 1954 (S. Marchant and J. J. Boswell). Five grey-plumaged Mergansers together on 17 August 1954 could all have belonged to the same brood (J. M. L. North). Adults were seen frequently between 10 and 14 June 1955, the last again being two males and three females (J. J. Boswell).

Higher up the coast, at St. Bees, two pairs were flying southerly on 16 May 1956, and a single bird on 2 June 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

Near Broughton-in-Furness, a possible local breeding pair were observed as the male was displaying to the female on the River Lickle, on 26 May 1957 (N. F. Ellison).

In the Leven estuary, sixteen pairs were seen along by Ulverston on 28 December 1954 (Alan F. Airey) and at least seven individuals, including four males, at Plumpton on 29 December 1955 (L. A. Cowcill).

A Merganser, in grey plumage, was on Sunbiggin Tarn, East Westmorland, on 19 October 1952 (R. W. Robson).

#### THE SMEW—*Mergus albellus* L.

Notable occurrences in High Furness are two adult males and six females or immatures, in company with fourteen Wigeon on Rusland Pool, near Rusland Hall, during hard frost, on 5 February 1954 (Alan F. Airey), and an adult male and three females or immatures on Coniston Water, near Nibthwaite, on 18 March 1955 (L. A. Cowcill).

A red-headed bird was on Bassenthwaite Water on 10 February and 16 March 1956 (G. W. H. Moule) and another on Over Water, Cumberland, on 18 March 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE CORMORANT—*Phalacrocorax carbo* (L.)

Cormorants had been very conspicuous throughout the winter of 1954-55 on all parts of Ullswater, their favourite gathering place being the rocky islet of House Holme where as many as thirty-five had been counted at one time. "Water Hen" in *The Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, 26.3.1955.

Twenty-two were on an islet near Peel Isle, Coniston Water, 18 March 1955 (L. A. Cowcill); fourteen to twenty roosting on trees on Lady Holme, Windermere, November 1955 to the end of February 1956 (Alan F. Airey); eleven on Derwentwater, 6 November 1955 (Thomas Jackson); one actively fishing in Haweswater, 27 August 1956, and two in early April 1957 (Blezard family).

#### THE SHAG—*Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (L.)

A Shag, surprised at close quarters, swam out from a rock on the western shore of Coniston Water, 5 December, 1954 (H. L. Grisedale).

#### THE GANNET—*Sula bassana* (L.)

A stray Gannet swimming in Bowness Bay, Windermere, during severe weather, on 15 February 1953, was presumably the same bird seen diving in Lowwood Bay the previous day (Alan F. Airey).

Four adults were fishing offshore at Drigg on 12 June 1955 (J. J. Boswell). Visitors are frequent off St. Bees Head, especially from May to July, and include a good many immature birds. About forty were seen on 6 May 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

#### THE STORM-PETREL—*Hydrobates pelagicus* (L.)

Wild weather from the sea, at the end of November 1954, brought Storm-Petrels inland and ashore to be picked up dead.

In Westmorland, on 1 December, one in Scandale, Ambleside (M. Black) and one at the Pennine fell-foot village of Knock (Miss K. Smith).

In Cumberland, a male at Aspatria on 2 December (David Atkinson) and a male at Whitehaven on 5 December (J. Turnell). Remains of a fifth bird, which had evidently died about the same time as the others, were found at Allonby on 27 December (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE MANX SHEARWATER—*Puffinus puffinus* (Brunn.)

One freshly dead on the beach at Drigg, 13 June 1955 (J. J. Boswell) and another brought in by the tide at Maryport, 19 May 1956 (Blezard family).

Often in ones, two or threes off St. Bees Head, May to July 1955-56. About fifty flying south-westerly on 3 July 1955, and about twenty on 6 May 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

An early victim dead on the shore at Seascale, 7 April 1957 (Miss M. Garnett).

**THE FULMAR—*Fulmarus glacialis* (L.)**

The following notes all refer to St. Bees Head, Cumberland. On 24 March, 1956 Ralph Stokoe discovered the presence of a dark or "Blue" Fulmar, one of the form so rare in British colonies. After being glimpsed in flight and lost, it was then searched out to a ledge on which it had settled and was sharing with a light or normally coloured bird. The two were obviously paired and in occupation of the ledge. They were some time viewed at rest and in flight. The whole plumage of the stranger was dark, the wings being darker than those of light birds with which it was compared. The wing tips were still darker than the rest of the upper plumage. This and the breast were as dark as the wings; the cheeks, throat and belly slightly paler. The feet were blackish and the beak had the upper mandible blackish with yellow tip and the lower mandible and gape greenish. The dark bird was seen again on 31 March but both it and its mate had disappeared between then and 8 May.

At the end of May 1956 the same observer counted twenty-three occupied sites; fourteen of them on the North Head (Sandwith) and nine on the South Head (Tomlin). Although this is a goodly record, it is not claimed to be exhaustive, nor do we know of any really thoroughgoing efforts on which a complete history of this Fulmar colony could ever be based. Much less can we account for the concluding statement on the place by James Fisher in his book, *The Fulmar* (1952), p. 233. The meagre information on St. Bees in that work appears to show not so much slow progress as a decline in the colony during the period covered, 1938 to 1949. Then, seemingly by way of explanation, we are offered the gratuitous remark:—"It is possible that this interesting and popular colony is occasionally over-disturbed by over-keen ornithologists."

As we ourselves know it — and this goes for a number of local ornithologists — the colony suffers hardly at all through human interference, for one reason simply because of the very nature of the cliffs. Then again, we have come to regard the Fulmar here as being rather indifferent to the human presence when not, in other mood, mildly curious. The occasions do happen when the "birdwatcher," subject to those gliding tours of inspection, becomes "watched" by the bird!

It is now possible to discuss the whole situation in the light of facts and figures contributed by Mr. Stokoe, who happens to have very much more than a passing acquaintance with the cliffs in question and their Fulmars. Any misconception about the state of the colony could arise from a failure to study critically even the known information.

This is affected by the following points:—

1. Most usually, people visit only one part of the Head, either the North or the South, and often no more than the Fleswick to lighthouse stretch of the North Head which claims the most interest, mainly from the top of the cliffs.
2. Some sites are not visible from above; some not from below—and some from neither position.
3. As the year advances, the Fulmar population declines from a maximum in February and March when non-breeders occupy sites which are later deserted. There may be a brief period of increase in July after which month most birds depart for a time, though a few, at least, may be seen throughout the year.
4. It is virtually impossible, in most cases, to tell whether a bird is incubating or brooding or merely squatting.

The available information for the entire period 1938 to 1955 is scanty and, for the years 1939 and 1942-44, non-existent. For some other years, especially 1948 and 1951, it is so vague as to be of little use. No conclusions can be drawn for the years up to 1945 because of the blanks, 1942-44. Prior to that time, ten sites were seen in 1941, presumably on the North Head, and five in 1940, the precise dates not being given.

In 1945, seven or eight pairs were reported present on an unknown date and all gone by 20 July. Doubtless the North Head was the place. No birds on 20 July is not impossible, but a young one or two could have been tucked away somewhere, just as were three, found deserted on ledges on 2 August 1954. However, the situation was improved in 1946—if it had ever been bad—with twenty sites on the North Head on 2 June, including some north of the original settlement, near the lighthouse. Eggs and young were seen. The 1947 tally was apparently similar.

The questionable decline comes in 1948 with its six sites given under 3 July. Again, most likely, they were on the North Head, but exactly where is not known and, at that date, numbers would be near their minimum. There appeared but little improvement in 1949 with a reported ten sites on 12 and 26 June. That same year, our observer counted twelve sites on the North Head on 12 June, after twenty-two on the same extent of cliff on 24 April. The existing condition on the North Head was apparently maintained in 1950 with ten sites on 8 July.

Erroneous ideas are obviously based on a comparison of the figures for 1948 and 1949 with those for 1946 and 1947, and also on the apparent failure to increase between 1941 and 1945, perhaps without making allowance for the dates on which counts were made. Further, Fulmars do not pack into tight colonies, like Kittiwakes and Guillemots, and although there are dense patches, a colony may be rather widely dispersed, as at St. Bees Head. If maximum density has been reached in the original location, in this case a section of cliff easily and regularly scanned, any increase must be looked for at the fringes or elsewhere along the cliffs.

The original settlement was about fully occupied possibly as early as 1941, and certainly before 1946. In the usual course, numbers would decline in it from March to June or early July, according to the lateness of the season, and any count there would show no increase, and possibly a decrease, depending on the dates of the count, from year to year.

Extension along the cliff had begun by 1946 when, on 2 June, there were fifteen sites at the original settlement and five more to the north of it. No details are known of the 1947 count of twenty pairs. The count of six pairs in 1948 was on 3 July and so is not comparable, but numbers were maintained over the same stretch of cliff in 1949. Further extension was going on until, in 1956, sites were occupied along the whole of the North Head from near Fleswick to north of Lawson's Loup. On these fringes, a greater fluctuation in numbers between March and June indicates more recent colonisation.

Regarding the South Head, birds have been seen there from the earliest days, but at that time they may well have been from the North Head colony, as certainly were the first seen there by Stokoe. The facts remain that, in June 1956 the South Head population reached not far short of the North Head colony and that its increasing numbers are not known to be in any of the figures quoted.

After sixteen or more years, twenty-three sites counted, incidentally in a month when a minimum of squatters normally are present, may not indicate violent expansion. They do, however, represent a residue of at least fifty pairs, and possibly a good many more, of Fulmars, which visit for part of the year and may be expected to swell the breeding population in the future.

Subsequent counts, made by Mr. Stokoe on 10 February and 10 March 1957, go to prove this last statement. The first time the

North Head showed twenty-three occupied sites and thirty-three birds; the South Head forty-two occupied sites and eighty-one birds, or a total of a hundred and four birds, with a possible maximum of a hundred and thirty. The second time, the North Head ran to twenty-three occupied sites and thirty-nine birds and the South Head to fifty-three occupied sites and ninety-six birds, or a total of a hundred and thirty-five birds. This gives a possible maximum of a hundred and fifty-two by the process of multiplying the occupied sites by two.

#### THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE—*Podiceps cristatus* (L.)

During the breeding season of 1953, when three pairs were on Esthwaite Water, two pairs were on Blelham Tarn. Esthwaite had five pairs in 1955, when no young ones were seen, and five again in 1956 when, on 4 September, each pair was accompanied by two young (Alan F. Airey).

Three birds in full plumage were on Talkin Tarn, 4 July 1953 (Roger R. Lovegrove) and an adult and two juveniles on Loughrigg Tarn, Great Langdale, 18 August 1954 (J. M. L. North).

There was a winter presence of at least six Great Crested Grebes on Esthwaite Water, 5 January 1956, and an individual, apparently in full summer dress, on Coniston Water, 14 March 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

#### THE RED-NECKED GREBE—*Podiceps griseigena* (Bodd.)

Two in Moricambe, off Skinburness, 7 February 1954 (Ralph Stokoe). One on Grasmere, 31 December 1954 (Mrs. E. J. Wilson).

#### THE SLAVONIAN GREBE—*Podiceps auritus* (L.)

The body of one was found washed up in Allonby Bay, Cumberland, 14 November 1953 (Ralph Stokoe).

Early in 1956, two were seen on Grasmere, 8 January; one on Elterwater, 11 February, and one in White Cross Bay, Windermere, 24 February (Alan F. Airey).

#### THE BLACK-NECKED GREBE—*Podiceps nigricollis* Brehm

Windermere had one in Waterhead Bay, 24 February 1953, and one at the south end, near Blake Holme, 17 November 1955 (Alan F. Airey).

A dead one was picked up on the shore at Maryport, 8 December 1956. (Michael McKay).

**THE GREAT NORTHERN DIVER**—*Colymbus immer* Brunn.

One, recently dead, was found on the tide line at Seascale, Cumberland, 28 January 1955 (Miss M. Garnett).

**THE BLACK-THROATED DIVER**—*Colymbus arcticus* (L.)

In the last week of March and first of April 1956 a Black-throated Diver, assuming summer plumage, frequented the west side of Windermere, fishing regularly between the Ferry and Wray (Alan F. Airey).

**THE RED-THROATED DIVER**—*Colymbus stellatus* Pontopp.

Often seen on the sea off St. Bees Head, 1955-56, in autumn, including several in late September, and through winter up till 24 May (G. W. H. Moule).

**THE TURTLE-DOVE**—*Streptopelia turtur* (L.)

One by the River Lune at Tebay, Westmorland, 25 May, 1953 (Robert H. Brown); one in Sandwith Lane, St. Bees, Cumberland, 23 May 1955 (Miss M. Garnett), and one near St. Bees Lighthouse, 20 July 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

**THE BAR-TAILED GODWIT**—*Limosa lapponica* (L.)

A high tide brought up at least a thousand Bar-tailed Godwits to Skinburness, Solway, on 17 February 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

**THE BLACK-TAILED GODWIT**—*Limosa limosa* (L.)

Winter birds were seen singly in the Leven estuary, near Plumpton, Ulverston, on 25 November 1953 (Alan F. Airey), and 2 January 1957 (L. A. Cowcill).

One in summer plumage was on Burgh Marsh, Solway, 4 May 1956 (G. W. H. Moule), and another 6 May, 1957 (D. A. Ratcliffe).

**THE CURLEW**—*Numenius arquata* (L.)

At the same time that breeding Curlews have become widespread in the low lands, they have been found at high altitudes in the Pennines. Parents birds, very evidently with young, were: one on Knock Fell, at 2,500 feet, 22 June 1952 one on Green Fell, Crossfell, at 2,200 and some feet, 6 June 1953 and two on this fell at the same altitude 12 June 1954 (D. A. Ratcliffe).

A Curlew ringed as young at Sumiainen, Finland, 4 June, 1952 was recovered in the Leven estuary, Lancashire North of the Sands, 6 September, 1952 (*British Birds*, 49: 445).

THE WHIMBREL—*Numenius phaeopus* (L.)

One in flight off Biggar Bank, Walney Island, 4 July 1953, an unusual date (Ernest Blezard and Arthur V. Millard).

One flying past St. Bees Head, 21 April 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

THE GREY PHALAROPE—*Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.)

One in winter plumage, on the sea, close inshore, at St. Bees, 7 October 1956. It was typically tame and it was flying well from time to time (G. W. H. Moule).

THE TURNSTONE—*Arenaria interpres* (L.)

Along the Cumberland coast, about twenty-five on Grune Point, Skinburness, 7 February 1954; thirty-eight on Stenor Scar, off Skinburness, 24 October 1954; about sixty at Flimby, 2 January 1955; twenty-seven at Dubmill Point, Allonby, 16 April 1955; and six on Grune Point, 5 May 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

Forty at South End, Walney Island, 5 July 1953 (Arthur V. Millard and Ernest Blezard), about twenty-four, with a large flock of Dunlins and Sanderlings, 4 August 1954 (J. M. L. North), and about thirty, with some fifty Sanderlings, 2 June 1957 (Ralph Stokoe and Ernest Blezard).

In the Leven estuary, a number constant to about Plumpton Hall, September and October 1955, and some with Dunlins, Redshanks and Ringed Plovers at Bardsea, 10 March 1956 (L. A. Cowcill).

THE KNOT—*Calidris canutus* (L.)

A Knot ringed at Revtangén (Rogaland), Norway, 12 September 1946, was recovered at Flookburgh, Lancashire North of the Sands, 20 January, 1953 (*British Birds*, 49: 446).

THE DUNLIN—*Calidris alpina* (L.)

The Dunlin is rare among the central fells where one was seen at Bassenthwaite Water, 31 May 1953 (Ralph Stokoe).

Ten thousand were estimated in Holywell Bay, Cartmel, on 18 January 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

A Dunlin ringed at Revtangén (Rogaland), Norway, 26 September 1953, was recovered on Rockcliffe Marsh, Solway, Cumberland, 23 October 1953 (*British Birds*, 49: 447).

**THE PURPLE SANDPIPER—*Calidris maritima* (Brunn.)**

Two seeking food on the rocks at St. Bees Head, 11 April 1954 (Ralph Stokoe and Austin Barton).

One picking among bladderwrack on the stony shore at Port Carlisle, Solway, 16 September 1956 (Ernest Blezard).

**THE SANDERLING—*Crocethia alba* (Pall.)**

At Dubmill, Allonby, one on 5 June 1953, three on 9 June 1954, and one on 2 June 1955 all in summer plumage (Ralph Stokoe).

Also on the Allonby shore, there were large flocks with some Dunlins, 25 July 1954 (J. M. L. North), about two hundred, 2 August 1954 (Ralph Stokoe) and five in summer plumage with about forty black-bellied Dunlins, 15 July 1956 (Ernest Blezard).

**THE RUFF—*Philomachus pugnax* (L.)**

Five at Dubmill Point, Allonby, on the Cumberland coast, 2 August, and one 23 August 1954. Two early arrivals, in a month previously unrecorded for Lakeland, at Skinburness, Solway, 21 July 1957 (Ralph Stokoe).

**THE COMMON SANDPIPER—*Actitis hypoleucos* (L.)**

A cliff-haunting Common Sandpiper was twice encountered at St. Bees Head in 1952. Just north of Fleswick, on 5 July, it was seen to fly up on to a broad and thickly overgrown ledge, half-way up the two hundred foot face, and to leave again (Ralph Stokoe). At the same place, on 17 July, it flew down from its midway resort to travel a short way and perch on a block along the undercliff (Ernest Blezard).

**THE GREEN SANDPIPER—*Tringa ochropus* (L.)**

One on Rockcliffe Marsh, Solway, 30 October 1955 (D. G. Andrew). One on Blackhall Racecourse, Carlisle, 9 September 1956 (Ernest Blezard).

The species has been recorded in Lakeland for every month in the year except May and December.

**THE REDSHANK—*Tringa totanus* (L.)**

Four hundred Redshanks were in Holywell Bay, Kent estuary, on 6 February 1953 and again on 18 January 1956, after there had been the same number off Aldingham, Leven estuary, on the previous day (Alan F. Airey).

The following extract from Wm. G. Hale's letter of 16 August 1954 refers to three Solway taken Redshanks in the Carlisle Museum, the first two being from the collection of the Rev. H. A. Macpherson and the other from that of Ritson Graham:—

“The Rockcliffe male, dated 11.3.1884, is undoubtedly of the Icelandic race, and in all probability the Skinburness female, 31.12.1884, and the Burgh Marsh female, 4.11.1925, are also of this race.”

#### THE SPOTTED REDSHANK—*Tringa erythropus* (Pall.)

An adult, still in almost complete summer plumage, with Redshanks off Grune Point, Skinburness, 22 August, 1954 (Ralph Stokoe).

Skinburness Marsh has now added greatly to its pride of place for Spotted Redshanks on the Solway. Three times in 1955, on 14 and 21 October and 4 November the Rev. G. W. H. Moule saw six together there.

Next autumn, 1956, Ralph Stokoe and Austin Barton built up an unprecedented record, combining notes and cine film. They saw two winter-plumaged adults and a juvenile on 2 September, four or five on 9 September and two on 16 and 23 September. Then, on 30 September, they found twelve, all in winter plumage, and the most ever recorded. These were followed by two on 5 and 8 October, seven on 21 October and two on 28 October. Associated waders were Common Sandpipers, Green Sandpipers, Redshanks and Greenshanks in September, and a Whimbrel on 5 October.

One Spotted Redshank was seen by G.W.H.M. on 1 October.

An adult at Skinburness, Solway, on 21 July 1957, is the first Spotted Redshank to be recorded in that month for Cumberland (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE GREENSHANK—*Tringa nebularia* (Gunner.)

Three in the Leven estuary at Park Bay, Holker, 2 January 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

One at Beckfoot, Allonby, 10 January 1954; three at Dubmill Point, Allonby, 23 August 1954; one inland at Scarness, Bassenthwaite Water, 5 September 1954; and one at Beckfoot, 11 March 1956 (Ralph Stokoe).

#### THE GOLDEN PLOVER—*Pluvialis apricaria* (L.)

Recent notes on birds with characteristics of the Northern Golden Plover include extra localities.

A few birds still in the distinctive summer plumage were in a flock of fifty near Allonby on 25 August 1946. A female in winter plumage, which had struck wires, found at Flimby on 20 March 1953, gave maximum measurements of the Northern race. Sixty-four, varyingly distinguished by handsome summer plumage, graced Skinburness on 27 April 1952 and a few, already showing this plumage, were included in small flocks at Dubmill, Allonby, on 28 February 1954 (Ralph Stokoe).

Ten, in full splendour, were at Siddick Pond, Workington, on 3 May 1955 (G. W. H. Moule).

Every one of the above records is from the Cumberland coast.

Inland, at Broadfield, near Carlisle, in 1956, about a hundred and fifty of the later, and presumably north-bound, migrants were on a pasture on 7 April, and about eighty on 14 April. A few miles north of the city, over the Border in Roxburghshire, there were more than two hundred on a pasture on 1 April. The same Broadfield pasture showed thirty-one on 21 April 1957. In all these flocks, very many of the birds were wearing the richest of black and white plumage, as to head, neck and underparts.

#### THE AVOCET—*Recurvirostra avosetta* L.

Two Avocets appeared in the Duddon estuary, near Buckman Brow, in March 1954 (Dr. and Mrs. Gawith).

One stayed for a day at Port Carlisle, Solway, in September 1954 (Henry Simpson).

#### THE OYSTERCATCHER—*Haematopus ostralegus* L.

Reckonings of Oystercatchers assembled in Morecambe Bay during 1953 and 1956 come from Alan F. Airey. After ten thousand near Silverdale, just beyond our bounds, on 2 February, there were five thousand off Humphrey Head on 6 February. More than four thousand were at Sandgate, in the Leven, on 2 April; two thousand at Grange-over-Sands on 21 May and again on 10 August. Over five thousand were in Holywell Bay on 18 January 1956.

Whether or not the Solway has contributed to the extraordinary numbers, popularly reported to have descended upon Morecambe Bay, is a matter for speculation. Large flocks still gather around the Cardurnock peninsula and Ralph Stokoe considered that there had been no marked decline on the Mawbray to Silloth stretch, between 1946 and January 1954, when he found fourteen hundred birds to

be the usual number, with a possible several hundred more at Skinburness.

There may be a difference on the Scottish side of the Firth. Along Blackshaw, during high tide on 10 October 1953, there was a complete absence of the thousands of Oystercatchers which used to stream along the shore at such a time (Ernest Blezard).

Inland breeding birds were back up the River Eden at Musgrave, Westmorland, on 15 March 1955, and to the headwaters, in Mallerstang, on 22 March 1955 (Walter Thompson).

#### THE STONE-CURLEW—*Burhinus oedicnemus* (L.)

Two Stone-Curlews arrived at Windscale, on the Cumberland coast, in early May 1955 (John Hillaby). Two more reached Kingstown Aerodrome, Carlisle, at the same time of year in 1956 (William French).

Relevant to these northern occurrences, two Stone-Curlews were seen on Stanhope Common, in the adjoining County Durham, in June 1951 by William Graham of Carlisle. These birds, very evidently a pair, held to one particular piece of ground.

#### THE BLACK TERN—*Chlidonias niger* (L.)

One in the Kent estuary at Arnside, 22 September 1955 (G. W. H. Moule).

#### THE WHISKERED TERN—*Chlidonias hybrida* (Pallas)

A Whiskered Tern was present at Tindale Tarn, East Cumberland, on 13 May 1957 (William French and A. W. Vincent).

While the tarn is a known place of call for Black Terns—*C. niger* (L.), this bird happened to be well viewed by two observers whose acquaintance with birds, and not least terns, extends over a great part of the world.

#### THE COMMON TERN—*Sterna hirundo* L.

A colony of Common Terns has been renewed, evidently after a long interval, on Skinburness Marsh, Solway. Forty adult birds were counted and eggs and young seen in July 1957 (Ralph Stokoe and Austin Barton).

It was first recorded with six pairs of birds in 1909, and last with thirty pairs in 1915, by William Nichol.

A Common Tern, ringed as a young bird on Walney Island, came

to be recovered as the oldest bird traced through British ringing schemes. It was marked by H. W. Robinson, with Witherby ring J2925, on 29 June 1929. After very nearly twenty-five years, and surviving all its annual journeyings, normally to and from Africa, it was found dead beside a nest of eggs at Ravenglass, on 13 June 1954 (*British Birds*, 48: 486).

#### THE BLACK-HEADED GULL—*Larus ridibundus* L.

One of the largest Cumberland gulleries is now at North Scales, Heads Nook, with well over a thousand pairs of birds at its best. Numbers were rather lower than usual in 1956, perhaps owing to drought and the lowering of the water level in the rush-grown breeding pond. The gulls have evidently transferred from the Carlatton pond, two miles away, since it dried out (Various Members).

Newton Reigny Bog, which is developing into firm ground and was formerly the home of a large colony, had three lingering pairs of gulls in 1950, afterwards to become completely deserted (Ernest Blezard and D. A. Ratcliffe).

The Sunbiggin Tarn colony, in Westmorland, was counted to six hundred pairs on 11 June 1953 (Alan F. Airey).

Beacon Tarn and Roerigg Tarn, on Lowick Common in Furness, had fifty pairs between them on 2 June 1956. Simpson Ground gullery on Cartmel Fell had a thousand pairs on 3 June 1956 (Alan F. Airey).

#### THE COMMON GULL—*Larus canus* L.

The June arrival of Common Gulls in Cumberland becomes more regular. In 1956, there were ten or more following mechanical cultivators at Walton on 22 June and thirty over Blackwell, Carlisle, on evening flight to the Solway, on 26 June (Ernest Blezard).

#### THE HERRING-GULL—*Larus argentatus* Pontopp.

#### THE LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL—*Larus fuscus* L.

Probably in most years before the 1939-45 war, a pair or two of one or other or both species tried to breed on the Ravenglass gullery, but never successfully as the watchers used to destroy the nests. Since the war there has undoubtedly been a more serious attempt to colonise Ravenglass, mainly at some distance from the Black-headed Gull colony, and rather nearer to Drigg.

On 23 May 1948, two nests of Herring-Gull, with eggs, were found and there were perhaps six other pairs in the vicinity. Four or five pairs of Lesser Black-backs were present without definite evidence of breeding. On 2 July 1948 the two earlier nests of Herring-Gull had vanished and another held eggs. There were now six nests of Lesser Black-back with eggs, and a pair of birds with small young. Several non-breeding birds of both species were along the Irt. For 1951 and 1952, the recollection is that about the same numbers of birds were trying to breed. Suspicion attaches to the much larger figures given for 1949 and 1950 in *Lakeland Ornithology* (S. Marchant).

The breeding strength of the two species together on Walney Island, at the beginning of June 1957, could only be reckoned in thousands save that the Lesser Black-back was the more numerous. This concentration of big gulls bodes no good to the other birds nesting at South End. The terns which at one time were numerous established on the sandhills have been banished to the shingle. On this occasion, Shelly Bars, also invaded by the gulls, could show no more than about twenty pairs of Common Terns, while Sandwich and Arctic Terns were completely missing (Ralph Stokoe and Ernest Blezard).

At St. Bees Head, the albinistic Herring-Gull, presumably the same bird first noted in 1944, was seen on 11 July 1954 (Ralph Stokoe and Austin Barton).

On 29 April 1955 there was an adult Herring-Gull, at St. Bees, with white primaries showing very faint mirrors, but with a grey mantle, unlike the bird previously recorded (G. W. H. Moule).

#### THE GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL—*Larus marinus* L.

A breeding pair of Greater Black-backs were found among the Lesser Black-backs and Herring-Gulls at South End, Walney Island, on 5 July 1953. Their nest of three eggs was placed in a bed of Mayweed—*Matricaria*—on a gravel strip running out into one of the lagoons (Ernest Blezard and Arthur V. Millard).

Four pairs were found on Walney in 1957 and, on 2 June, there was one nest of three eggs in almost the identical spot occupied in 1953 and another at the tip of Shelly Bars (Ernest Blezard and Ralph Stokoe).

The island was known only as a former nesting haunt of the

Greater Black-back when Clifford Oakes wrote his book, *The Birds of Lancashire*, published in 1953.

A pair or two cling to a Solway saltmarsh, a nest of two eggs being found on 16 June 1956, and another nest in May 1957 (William French).

At Siddick Pond, West Cumberland, there were seventy-nine Greater Black-backs, sixty-eight of which were adults, on 19 October 1954, and at least eighty in two flocks, adults and immatures mixed, on 29 January 1955 (Ralph Stokoe).

In High Furness, two on Coniston Water, at Nibthwaite, on 7 April 1955, made an unusual occurrence. Next month, on 9 May, between twenty and thirty were over Lowick and, by June 1956 the Greater Black-back had become fairly frequent inland over the River Crake and Coniston Water (L. A. Cowcill).

A Greater Black-back, ringed as young at Langvingen Bremanger, 75 miles north of Bergen, Norway, 5 July 1955, was found dead by F. R. Nelson, on Burgh Marsh, Solway, Cumberland, 13 May 1956.

#### THE KITTIWAKE—*Rissa tridactyla* (L.)

In the Black-headed Gull colony at Ravenglass, on 10 June 1955, an adult Kittiwake was seen on a ledge of a thirty-foot sand cliff edging the dunes, and among nesting gulls. On 14 June, an adult was on a similar ledge in another part of the colony and, on 18 June, an adult at exactly the same spot as the first. No nest was discovered and no more than one Kittiwake seen at any one time (J. J. Boswell).

A flock of about two hundred and fifty Kittiwakes arrived and settled on the sea off St. Bees Head on 26 February 1956. They did not stay long before moving away. The nesting population at St. Bees in 1956 was approximately sixteen hundred pairs, almost all of them on the North Head (Ralph Stokoe).

## LAKE ROOSTS OF GULLS.

Windermere. Mid-lake from Millerground Bay, 1955-56.

Black-headed Gulls and Herring-Gulls, the former usually outnumbering the latter by about four to one.

1700 on 12 December; 2000 on 1 February.

2500 on 11 February; 1700 on 8 March.

1000 on 20 March (Alan F. Airey).

Ullswater. Out from between Howtown Bay and Sharrow Bay, 6 January 1957.

At three in the afternoon, gulls arriving in thousands, seething low over the water and in a great canopy to a considerable height in the sky. The first arrivals beginning to settle. They appeared to be nearly all Common Gulls. Occasional Herring-Gulls were picked out, and some number of Black-headed Gulls seen about Sharrow (Blezard family).

THE GREAT SKUA—*Stercorarius skua* (Brunn.)

A Great Skua over Burgh Marsh, Solway, on 9 February 1957, was seen to strike down two Common Gulls and begin to rend the flesh from one of them (Gordon Taylor).

Another Great Skua was seen on the western coast, off Drigg, on 19 July 1957 (Miss M. Garnett).

THE ARCTIC SKUA—*Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.)

One, in dark plumage, off the Cumberland coast, at St. Bees on 3 July, and a pale adult on 14 July 1955. Three birds flying north-westerly, off the Head, on 25 June 1956 (G. W. H. Moule).

THE LONG-TAILED SKUA—*Stercorarius longicaudus* Vieill.

An adult of this species, off St. Bees Head, on 24 May 1957, was first observed as it gave chase to a Kittiwake. The long, central tail feathers were then apparent. During the bird's subsequent tern-like hovering and buoyant dipping and rising flight over the sea, its characteristic plumage pattern became discernible through high-power binoculars (G. W. H. Moule).

The second occurrence of the Long-tailed Skua in spring to be recorded for Lakeland.

THE RAZORBILL—*Alca torda* L.

THE GUILLEMOT—*Uria aalge* (Pontopp.)

These auks are generally assumed to abandon their breeding haunts and remain out at sea for some period after the season. Recent observations show that a few or more may continue to visit the cliffs of St. Bees Head at times onward throughout the autumn and winter months.

On 27 November 1955, a cold day with a strong wind and rain off the sea, L. A. Cowcill found between two hundred and three hundred Guillemots clustered on the ledges.

That same day, at a different point, the Rev. G. W. H. Moule noted considerable numbers of auks flying in two streams to and from the cliffs, as in summer. Those seen close enough to identify were Razorbills.

Commenting, 5 December 1955, on these occurrences, Ralph Stokoe says:—"I have visited the Head at some time during every month of the year, except December, and have only failed to see Guillemots in January. I do not say that they are there always, or in numbers, and I have never seen more than a few in November. The observations are of great interest because of the numbers of birds present and, regarding my experience, because the day was not particularly fine and warm. It is on those milder, calm days that the visitors are more frequent, the wilder days usually drawing blank."

On 28 January 1956, Mr. Stokoe saw one Razorbill out on the water and, on 26 February 1956, both Guillemots and Razorbills on the ledges in numbers, but not up to full strength. Two Black Guillemots and one Puffin were seen as well.

On 28 October 1956, again a cold, wet and windy day, Mr. Cowcill found that there were about fifty Guillemots either on the ledges or flying up and down between the sea and the cliffs.

On 25 November 1956 and 24 February 1957 George West found numbers of Guillemots on the ledges, but not at any other time between those dates.

THE LITTLE AUK—*Alle alle* (L.)

At daybreak on 23 November 1955, Dennis Atkinson picked up a Little Auk, which had flown into a farm building at Penny Hill, Colby, Appleby, Westmorland. Seemingly none the worse, it was transported to the east coast for release on the sea.

This, and another one found by Alan Nixon on Barron House Farm, Gilsland, just over the Northumberland side, on 27 October 1955, had evidently been driven across the country from the North Sea area, previous gale warnings being for Faeroes and Forties.

#### THE CORNCRAKE—*Crex crex* (L.)

The Corncrake appears to be regaining some lost ground. From Broughton-in-Furness, in 1953, Kenneth R. Burgess records a recovery, beginning in 1946, with a bird in the Lickle valley which old inhabitants said was the first to be heard for at least ten years. Each year since, there had been two, and sometimes three, within about two miles radius of the village.

Again in High Furness, in 1954, L. A. Cowcill found a very strong return and birds to be heard in many localities from which they had been missing for many years.

In Cumberland, at Blackwell, Carlisle, in 1954, after twenty years, four different Corncrakes were again to be heard in an evening (Blezard family). There were as many, or more, in the immediate neighbourhood in 1956. On 8 May that year, one was calling from the Stoney Holme in the city where, for several years, a rubbish tip has been a constant haunt (W. H. Little).

In East Westmorland, in 1955, there were two nesting attempts by one pair at Kirkby Stephen and, in 1956, the first nest known in the Mallerstang valley (Walter Thompson).

#### THE SPOTTED CRAKE—*Porzana porzana* (L.)

A young male was accidentally killed by a hay bogey in a meadow on the farm of White Hill, Gilsland, Cumberland, on 14 September 1953 (J. Murray).

A male, in breeding condition, was killed against overhead wires at Kirkbride, Cumberland, on 17 May 1954 (Mrs. Little).

Both these birds were sent in the flesh to Carlisle Museum.

#### THE WATER RAIL—*Rallus aquaticus* L.

There is direct evidence of breeding at two different places in Cumberland in a brood of chicks seen by William French in 1952, and a nest of eggs found by Ernest Blezard in 1954.

**THE COOT—*Fulica atra* L.**

On Windermere, 14 December 1952, there were eight hundred and fifty Coots between Storrs and Waterhead Bay. They fed in various bays between the two points during the winter. Their numbers were down to six hundred and fifty in January 1953, to four hundred and fifty in February and until 5 March, after which they were less than a hundred. In February 1954, during hard frost, flocks near Ramp Holme and Bowness totalled more than eight hundred birds. After heavy snow from the north-east, on 20 December 1955, the number near Ramp Holme rose from fifty to four hundred and, during frost and snow on 8 January 1956, seven hundred birds were counted on the lake (Alan F. Airey).

About two hundred Coots were seen on Derwentwater on 6 November 1955 (Thomas Jackson).

**THE QUAIL—*Coturnix coturnix* (L.)**

A nest of eggs was cut out during the mowing of a hayfield at Ainstable, Cumberland, in 1953 (J. Pattinson).

One of the eggs, unblown, was brought along to be identified (E.B.).

## FOOD OF BIRDS.

These notes form an extension to a previous series contained in *Lakeland Ornithology* or *Transactions* VIII, published in 1954. They similarly result from work on stomach or gut contents and pellets and observations in the field. All the observations relating to cultivated plants at Blackwell, Carlisle, were made by Dorothy Blezard in our home garden. The few entries originating beyond Lakeland come from not very far away in adjoining counties and are included for their uncommon interest. Localities, dates and concomitants are all regarded as equally essential to the subject. In this connection, the bulk of grass holding bone or shell fragments in Raven pellets had very evidently been purposely swallowed. There are again food items additional to those listed in *The Handbook of British Birds* which work is still followed in the arrangement of bird species.

Three historic entries appear in the analyses of stomach contents which had been preserved by the Rev. H. A. Macpherson from birds given mention in his *Vertebrate Fauna of Lakeland*, 1892. These birds are two Sand-Grouse shot during the period of a great invasion and a Dotterel shot in times when trips occurred with some regularity on the Solway.

I would express all due thanks to other members of the Society called upon in their respective fields of interest. The particulars about insects once more reflect the unfailing help of Mr. Frank H. Day, F.R.E.S. The spider found in the Green Woodpecker has been named by Mr. John R. Parker, F.Z.S., the cereal in the Greenland White-fronted Goose by Dr. Derek Ratcliffe, The Nature Conservancy, and the seeds in the Spotted Crake by Dr. Donald Walker, University of Cambridge.

For the description of grit in Pink-footed Geese I am greatly indebted to Dr. Maurice Black, University of Cambridge.

A shorter version of this paper is printed in *North Western Naturalist*, 1955, Vol. 3 (N.S.), pp. 307-9.

RAVEN—*Corvus corax* L.

## PELLETS.

Skiddaw Group, Cumberland, 2.3.1953.

Rabbit fur and bones, *Oryctolagus cuniculus* L., 3 dor beetles—*Geotrupes sylvaticus* Pz., 8 sharp-edged rock fragments including white quartz.

Cheviots, Northumberland, 3.4.1954.

A litter of pellets mainly sheep and rabbit remains with one including a foot of Red Grouse—*Lagopus scoticus* Lath. and two a quantity of coarse grit.

Cheviots, Dumfriesshire, 11.4.1954.

- 1 and 2. Entirely rabbit fur and bones.
3. Grass and soil with sheep's wool and bone fragments.
4. Mass of grass with some soil and bone fragments.
5. Mass of grass with strands of sheep's wool.

Cumberland—Northumberland border.

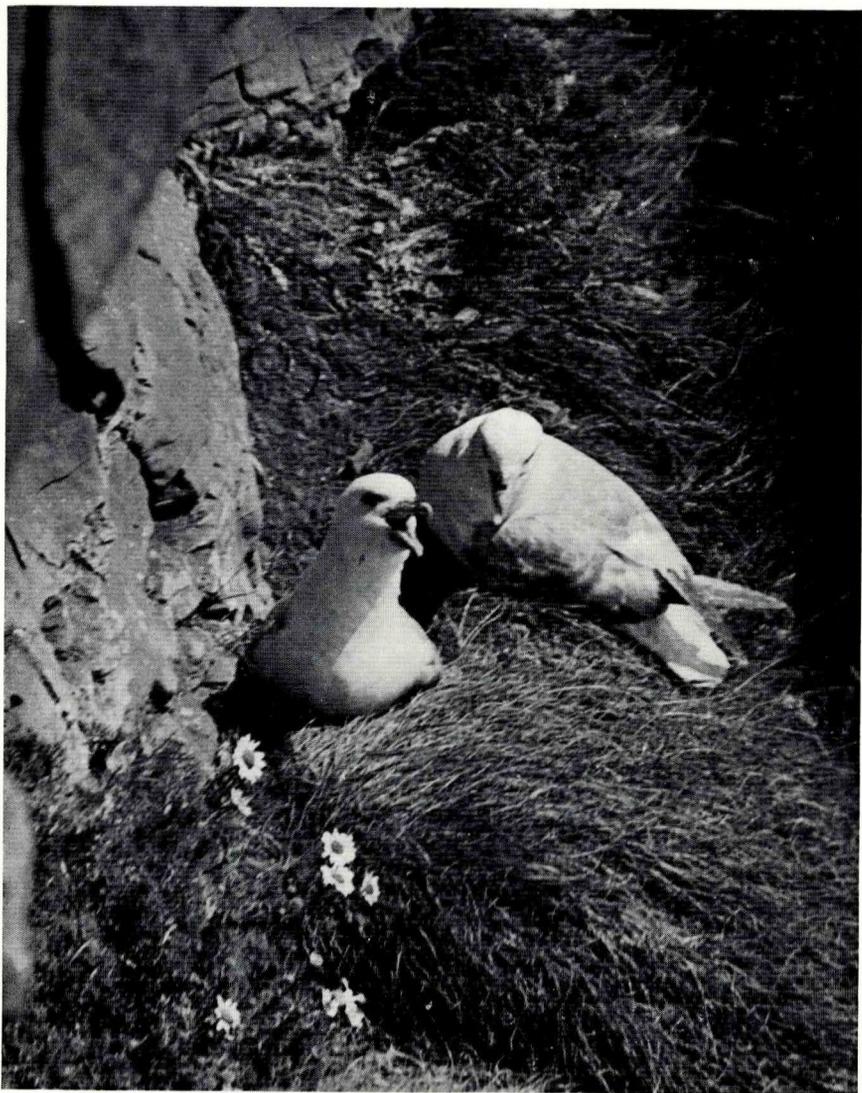
Two. 10.3.1956. Remains of a water vole—*Arvicola amphibius* L. including complete skull.

One. 17.3.1957. Mass of basal parts and roots of grasses, apparently *Agrostis* and *Triodia*, with fragments of shell and pieces of shell membrane from an egg of Mallard — *Anas platyrhyncha* L.

CARRION-CROW—*Corvus corone* L.

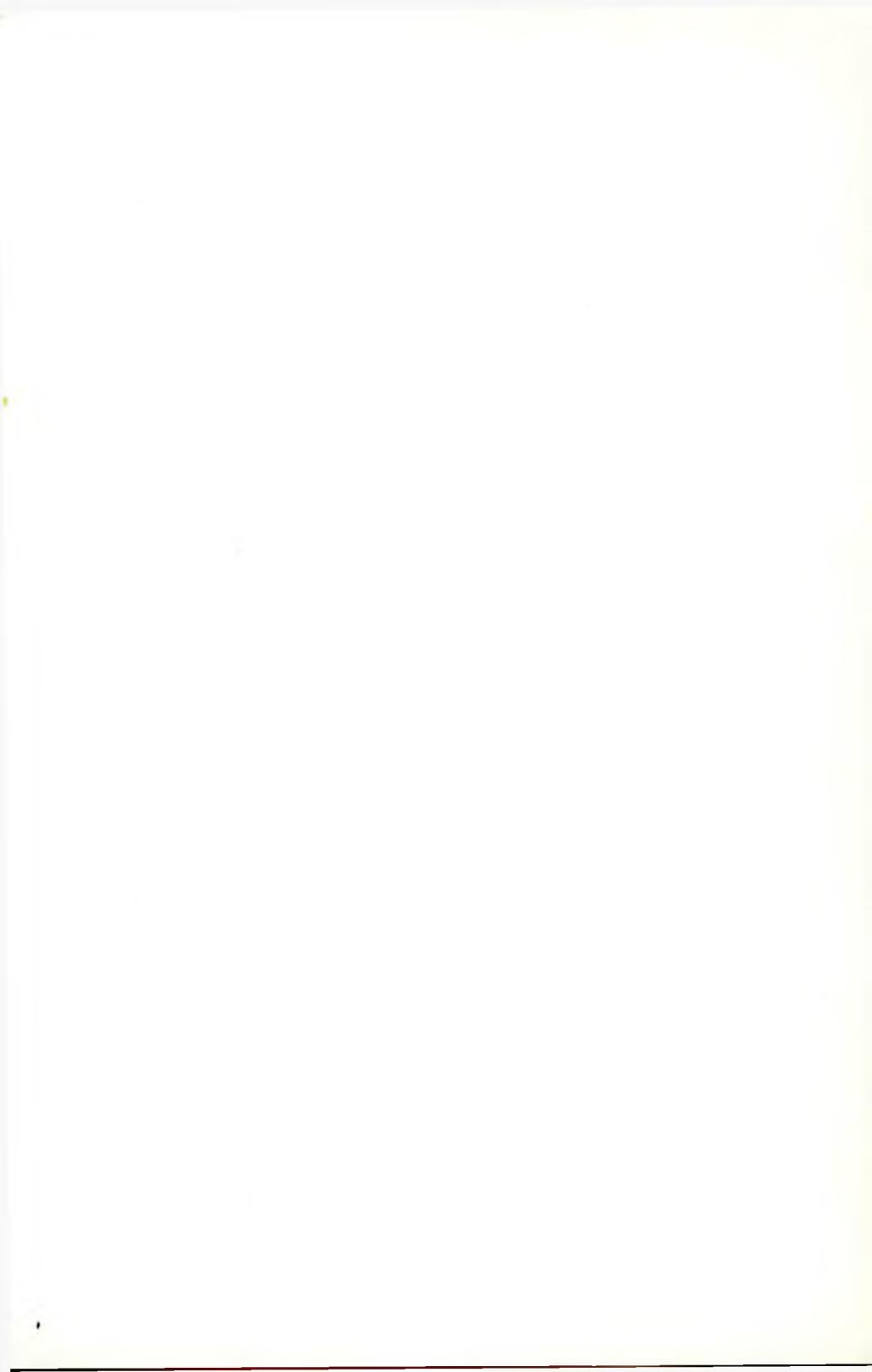
1. ♀. Blackwell, Carlisle, 28.2.1953.  
Cram of crushed locust bean (sheep food) in which 21 Scarabaeid beetles—*Aphodius sphacelatus* Pz. and 2 *A. prodromus* Brahm.
2. ♂. Orton Woods, Carlisle, 26.12.1954.  
Cram of oat glumes with one nutlet of *Polygonum persicaria* L., 3 particles of quartz grit and 2 of lime.  
Bird shot coming into roost and typically empty of actual food.

## FIELD OBSERVATIONS (Rook to Hedge-Sparrow)



FULMARS AT ST. BEES

*Photo : Austin Barton*



ROOK—*Corvus frugilegus* L.

Durdar, Carlisle, 19.10.1947.

Several birds plucking immature walnuts from tree—*Juglans regia* L.—and flying down to ground to deal with them. Nuts carried between the mandibles.

GREENFINCH—*Chloris chloris* (L.)

Blackwell, Carlisle.

11.5.1954. Male regularly picking out unripe seeds of *Daphne mezereum* L. and feeding to female who came off nest to receive them.

4.8.1954. Juvenile feeding on discharged seeds of Dog Violet—*Viola canina* L.

5.8.1955. Female feeding on fallen seeds of pansy, "Black Knight"—*Viola cornuta* hybrid.

22.8.1956. Juvenile feeding on scattered seeds of Cheddar Pink—*Dianthus caesius* Sm.

6.10.1956. Pair feeding on fallen seeds of Alpine Penny-cress—*Thlaspi alpestre* L.—introduced from Nenthead, Cumberland.

24.7.1957. Several pulling out sprouting Sweet William—*Dianthus barbatus* L.—just appearing above ground, to eat the germinating seed. A common habit of Greenfinches in nursery gardens (Peter S. Blezard).

LINNET—*Carduelis cannabina* (L.)

Skinburness, Solway, Cumberland, 10.11.1951.

Some 200 feeding on seeds of Herbaceous Seablite—*Suaeda maritima* Dum.

BULLFINCH—*Pyrrhula pyrrhula* (L.)

Blackwell, Carlisle, 29.6.1955.

Male feeding on unripe seeds of Shining Cranesbill—*Geranium lucidum* L.

HOUSE-SPARROW—*Passer domesticus* (L.)

Blackwell, Carlisle.

30.11.1956. Female eating leaves of Salsify—*Tragopogon porri-folius* L.—piecemeal and beginning at the tips.

December, 1956—January 1957. Several eating off by the ground the small, young leaves of Chicory—*Cichorium intybus* L.—as fast as they appeared.

February 1957. Up to six at a time eating young flower buds of a cream-coloured or Warminster Broom—*Cytisus praecox* Wheeler—having temporarily transferred their attentions from *Forsythia*.

BLUE TIT—*Parus caeruleus* L.

Blackwell, Carlisle, 6.9.1953.

Bird picking out inside of head of a nearly full-grown caterpillar of Poplar Hawk Moth—*Smerinthus populi* L. Prey clasped to hawthorn branch by one foot.

FIELDFARE—*Turdus pilaris* L.

Blackwell, Carlisle, October, 1955.

One to three birds for several days gouging pieces out of Bramley Seedling apples still on the trees.

Dalston, Carlisle, December 1955—January 1956.

Several hundred constant to an orchard and feeding on fallen and decaying Bramley Seedling apples.

RING-OUZEL—*Turdus torquatus* L.

Newbiggin, Pennines, Cumberland, July 1957.

Up to five at a time gorging on a field crop of cultivated strawberries (Peter S. Blezard).

BLACKBIRD—*Turdus merula* L.

Blackwell, Carlisle, 6.9.1956.

Juvenile gorging on berries of Honeysuckle—*Lonicera periclymenum* L.

♀. Blackwell, Carlisle, 13.1.1957.

Complete cram of buds of Flowering Currant—*Ribes sanguineum* L.

WHINCHAT—*Saxicola rubetra* (L.)

Broadfield, Carlisle, 16.9.1951.

Juvenile picking inside out of caterpillar of White Ermine Moth—*Spilosoma menthastri* Esp.

HEDGE-SPARROW—*Prunella modularis* (L.)

Blackwell, Carlisle, 13.5.1954.

Parent breaking up a large earthworm to feed to fledged young.  
Unusual action in a bird given to taking the smallest of morsels.

GREEN WOODPECKER—*Picus viridis* L.

1. Juv. Staveley, Westmorland, 28.6.1954.

About 100 imagines and 400 pupae of Negro Ant—*Formica fusca* L., a few shreds of grass.

2. ♂. Southwaite, Cumberland, 17.11.1954.

Wolf spider—*Trochosa ruricola* Degeer, about 300 Negro Ants, 20 Bird-nest Flies—*Protocalliphora azurea* Fall. The flies presumably taken from hibernation point.

LITTLE OWL—*Athene noctua* (Scop.)

♂. Southwaite, Cumberland, 30.10.1953.

3 weevils—*Phytonomus punctatus* F., 13 caterpillars including 3 Large Yellow Underwing Moth—*Triphaena pronuba* L., 6 shreds of grass, particle of grit.

PELLET. Appleby, Westmorland, November 1953.

Ground beetle—*Carabus catenulatus* Scop., 2 dor beetles—*Geotrupes*, bones of a small rodent, grass roots.

PEREGRINE FALCON—*Falco peregrinus* Tunst.

## KILLS AT BREEDING SITES.

Southern Uplands, Dumfriesshire, 6.4.1953.

Three eggs in the eyrie. Common Gull—*Larus canus* L.

Lake Fells, Cumberland, 24.4.1953.

Three eggs in the eyrie. Jackdaw—*Corvus monedula* L., Greenfinch—*Chloris chloris* (L.), Fieldfare—*Turdus pilaris* L., Redshank—*Tringa totanus* (L.), Lapwing—*Vanellus vanellus* (L.), Red Grouse—*Lagopus scoticus* Lath.

Cheviots, Dumfriesshire, 11.4.1955.

Four eggs in the eyrie. Blackbird ♂—*Turdus merula* L., Woodcock—*Scolopax rusticola* L.

Cheviots, Dumfriesshire, 27.5.1956.

One young and one bad egg, out of c/4, in the eyrie.

Starling—*Sturnus vulgaris* L., Blackbird ♂, Red Grouse.

KESTREL—*Falco tinnunculus* L.

PELLETS.

Cheviots, Dumfriesshire, 3.4.1953.

1. Fur of Field Vole—*Microtus agrestis* L., ground beetle—*Carabus nemoralis* Müll., dor beetle—*Geotrupes sylvaticus* Pz.
2. 2 ground beetles—*Carabus catenulatus* Scop. in a mass of grass shreds and rootlets.

Tindale Fells, Pennines, Cumberland, 13.3.1956.

Fur and bones, including jaws of Water Shrew—*Neomys fodiens* Schreber, 2 ground beetles—*C. catenulatus*, dor beetle—*Geotrupes stercorarius* L.

GOLDEN EAGLE—*Aquila chrysaetus* (L.)

PREY AT EYRIE. Lakeland, 1957.

Rook—*Corvus frugilegus* L. Both wings.

Pluckings from the same prey on another part of the nesting crag.

WHOOPEE SWAN—*Cygnus cygnus* (L.)

♀. Bassenthwaite Water, Cumberland, 8.1.1956.

Broken up rhizome of Horsetail—*Equisetum*, cram of fine to coarse grit including clear and white quartz and weighing three ounces. Relating to the bird's country of origin, a few particles agreeing in character with the evident Icelandic "black sand" in the Pink-footed Geese. Ralph Stokoe found this swan after it had apparently killed itself against a wire fence.

GREENLAND WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE — *Anser albifrons flavirostris*—Dalgety & Scott

♂. Rockcliffe Marsh, Solway, Cumberland, 6.12.1956.

Young leaves of Cultivated Oat—*Avena sativa* L., nutlet of *Polygonum persicaria* L., fine to coarse grit. The bird shot

out of a party of fifteen Pink-footed Geese with which it had evidently been on arable land.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE—*Anser brachyrhynchus* Baillon

♂. and ♀. Solway Firth, 29 September 1955.

Both had a fairly full charge of grit consistent with the "black sand" of Central Iceland. A small admixture of other sand graded down to very fine. Half of a grain of Cultivated Oat in the female.

The birds shot at morning flight.

♂. Solway Firth, 10 October 1953.

A cram of Cultivated Barley grains—*Hordeum*, a few particles of black grit contrasting with silt.

Bird shot at evening flight.

♂. Solway Firth, 2 November 1955.

No food. The contents almost entirely silt.

Bird shot at morning flight.

The "black sand" was at first simply diagnosed from its appearance together with the fact that the birds were newly arrived and then that the Icelandic origin of their kind visiting the Solway had been confirmed by ringing. The contents were afterwards submitted for examination by a geologist who comments:—"The material is a sand of black volcanic glass, most probably basaltic. This implies origin in a volcanic district, presumably Iceland. The fine sand accompanying it contains minerals indicative of metamorphic rocks of continental origin (i.e., from some large land mass)."

Seemingly the black grit which the birds bring with them is gradually replaced by the local silt or sand.

GOLDENEYE—*Bucephala clangula* (L.)

♂. River Eden, Beaumont, Cumberland, 10.11.1955.

Freshwater Shrimps—*Gammarus*, coarse grit to small gravel.

LONG-TAILED DUCK—*Clangula hyemalis* (L.)

♂. River Eden, Cargo, Cumberland, 12.11.1939.

36 small freshwater snails, Wandering Snail — *Limnaea pereger* (Müller), 43 particles of coarse grit.

COMMON SCOTER—*Melanitta nigra* (L.)

- ♂. Smithfield, Cumberland, 3.2.1957.  
72 glumes of Marram Grass — *Ammophila arenaria* (L.),  
coarse, waterworn grit.  
Bird picked up inland, after storm.

PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE—*Syrhaptes paradoxus* (Pall.)

1. ♂. Silloth, Cumberland, 17.11.1888.  
Cram of seeds of Corn Spurrey—*Spergula arvensis* L. —  
with capsules included, several seeds of Orache—*Atriplex*,  
3 grains of wheat, 4 particles of grit.
2. ♂. Skirwith, Cumberland, 19.1.1889.  
Cram of seeds of Corn Spurrey with capsules included, 5  
small leaves of Sheep's Sorrel—*Rumex acetosella* L.

DOTTEREL—*Eudromias morinellus* (L.)

- . Burgh-by-Sands, Cumberland, 17.5.1891.  
14 Chrysomelid beetles—*Chrysomela staphylea* L., weevil  
—*Sitona*, fine grass shreds, 23 particles of grit mostly white  
quartz.

HERRING-GULL—*Larus argentatus* Pontopp.LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL—*Larus fuscus* L.

- Hestan Island, Solway, Kirkcudbright, 30.6.1957.  
Remains and disgorgings showed the food of the gulls in  
the breeding colony to be made up very largely of Flocks,  
Shore Crabs, Whelks, Mussels and Tellens. Many other  
pellets were each a compacted margarine wrapping paper  
with the printed name still legible. The wrappers had  
clearly been swallowed for the fat adhering to them and,  
likely enough, been picked up as floating refuse.

GREAT SKUA—*Stercorarius skua* (Brünn.)

- ♀. Burgh Marsh, Solway, Cumberland, 9.2.1957.  
Flesh and feathers of Common Gull—*Larus canus* L.  
The victim seen struck down.

SPOTTED CRAKE—*Porzana porzana* (L.)

- ♂. Gilsland, Cumberland, 14.9.1953.  
2 Crane-fly larvae (*Tipulidae*), 7 seeds of Marsh Cinquefoil  
—*Potentilla palustris* Scop., 5 particles of grit.

