

FOREIGN NEWS

Compiled by Cynthia Best

POPULATION FLUCTUATIONS IN EUROPEAN MIGRANTS

The first annual report on the MRI Program of the German Ornithological Institute 'Vogelwarte Radolfzell', by A Kaiser & P Bertold, was published in *Bird Populations* Vol 2 1994. This is a long-term bird-trapping program initially established at three central European sites, the Mettnau Peninsula at Lake Constance in southwestern Germany, Reit in northern Germany and Illmitz in Austria. A new site, Galenbeck, in northeastern Germany was added and two sites, one situated in Russia and one in Spain, now work in close collaboration.

All sites participate in the *European-African Bird Migration Network*, the objective of which is to support some 40 study sites in Europe and northern Africa using standardised methods, during the same seasons and concentrating on the same target species. A major goal of the project is to discover where, when, which, and to what extent, Palearctic songbird species or populations prepare for migration.

The report analysed the population trends of resting migratory passerines at the Mettnau Peninsula, Germany. The number of first-captured individuals at the Mettnau Peninsula during the autumn migration (30 June to 6 November) tended to increase from 1991 to 1992 and to decrease from 1992 to 1993. A total of 15 out of 35 species showed significantly decreasing long-term trends. Most of the declining species were long-distance (trans-Saharan) migrants.

Percentage changes in population for first-captured migratory passerines reflected in the

1992-1993 study include the following migrants to South Africa:

Species	%
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	6
Marsh Warbler <i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	-29
Great Reed Warbler <i>A. arundinaceus</i>	11
Icterine Warbler <i>Hippolais icterina</i>	-33
Redbacked Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>	250
European Sedge Warbler <i>A. schoenobeamus</i>	56
Whitethroat <i>S. communis</i>	-12
Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	-43

BTO NEST RECORD CARD SCHEME

The Fifth Annual Monitoring Report of the BTO's Nest Record Scheme for Breeding Birds, by H Crick, C Dudley & D Glue, was also presented in *Bird Populations* Vol 2 1994. Analysis of the nest record cards for 1992 confirmed impressions that the year was generally a good one for birds breeding in the UK; clutch sizes tended to be high and failure rates were low. However, conservation alerts were heightened for certain species, including two of our southern African migrants, the European Swallow and Ringed Plover. These were singled out as demonstrating significantly higher rates of nest loss during the nestling period.

The recent poor breeding performance of the European Swallow, in particular, was causing mounting concern, as 1992 was the third year in a row with significantly high nest failure rates. These have been increasing notably since 1962 and the Common Birds Census has shown a substantial population decline since 1980.

DECLINE OF THE CORN BUNTING *EMBERIZA CALANDRA*

Die Vogelwarte Vol 35(1) 1989, the Journal of Avian Biology of the German Ornithological Institutes of Helgoland and Radolfzell-Andechs, published an article by Von Gunter Busche on the drastic decline of the Corn Bunting in Schleswig Holstein. This provides a useful example of how long-term population monitoring of a once-common bird enabled an historic review of a local decline.

In 1955, there was an estimated population of three to four thousand pairs in the state, half of which were resident in marshland, a quarter in sandy uplands and a quarter in the hill country. By 1987, however, there were only 40 pairs left and half of them had retreated to two offshore isles. This decline had begun in the mid 1960s and accelerated rapidly after 1975.

The main breeding distribution had centred on farmlands with fertile soil. Examination of the various causes of this dramatic population decrease, consistently established a direct relationship to the usual setbacks associated with the development of intensified farming methods. The dominant factor was the resultant lack of food for Corn Buntings in autumn and winter. This was caused by the use of herbicide applications, the elimination of field borders, the mowing of path and road edges, the burning of fields which were then immediately plowed under and finally by a decreased corn supply due to the efficiency of modern combine harvesters. Consequently, many Corn Buntings appear to have starved to death or perished as a result of undernourishment.

NEW ENTRIES ON DUTCH RED LIST OF THREATENED BIRD SPECIES

A report published in *Oriolus* 60(4) 1994, lists the Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* among the 14 new species added to the Red List of Threatened Bird Species in the Netherlands. The

Corn Bunting, described above, was another new entry.

The collapse of the Common Tern population was particularly drastic. In the 1950s, it totalled between 35 000 to 40 000 breeding pairs, but plummeted to 5 000 pairs in the early 1960s. The recovery rate has been very slow, reaching an estimated population of only 11 to 14 000 pairs by 1988-90. There has been a 65% decline in numbers over the course of the review period.

NEW ZEALAND BIRD BANDING IN 1992-1993

The Report on Bird Banding in New Zealand: 1992-1993, compiled by R Cossee (1994), indicates that a total of 23 659 birds of 101 species were banded during the banding year of April 1992 to March 1993. Game species comprised 7,7% of this annual total. Altogether, 43 institutions and 25 individual permittees participated in the 1992-1993 ring-year.

This brings the grand total of birds ringed since the start of banding in 1950 to 1 129 653 birds of 233 species (with Terek Sandpiper as a banding first). Of these 14,5% have been subsequently controlled.

There were 2 852 'recoveries' during the report year but 'recoveries' include birds controlled or retrapped once or several times. Of these, 454 birds were dead and would qualify as recoveries in SAFRING terminology. Game birds comprised 41,6% of these dead birds. The remaining 2 389 birds were controls which were either caught and released, or sight-controlled by colour markings. Game birds comprised only 0,2% of these controls.

Some interesting instances of movement resulted from the use of leg flags on waders. Of particular note was the sighting of a New Zealand Bartailed Godwit in Kyushu, Japan, along with two from Australia.

BIRD RINGING IN THE USSR FOR THE TWO YEARS 1986-1987

Processing of ringing data submitted to the Moscow Ringing Centre has been facilitated by the development of special computer software with the support of the California Waterfowl Association (another example of American-Russian detente!).

As a result, the Moscow Ringing Centre has started to publish the annual totals of birds ringed in the former USSR. In 1994, the centre produced its fourth publication entitled *Bird ringing and marking in Russia and surrounding territories: 1986-1987*, in which it reported that 341 704 birds of 413 species were ringed in 1986 and 376 799 birds of 420 species in 1987.

Table 1 lists some migrants of interest to different ringers in southern Africa. Even though the report deals with the ringing effort of eight and nine years ago, it is useful to know how many birds were (and for some species, perhaps still are) potentially recoverable.

Table 1. Some potential Palearctic migrants ringed in the former USSR in 1986 and 1987.

Species		1986	1987
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	274	339
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	151	106
Curlew Sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	237	241
Knot	<i>C. canutus</i>	6	0
Sanderling	<i>C. alba</i>	28	118
Little Stint	<i>C. minuta</i>	1 978	629
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	47	38
Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	9 473	4 727
Arctic Tern	<i>S. paradisea</i>	145	231
European Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	8 853	7 267
European Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	12 607	41 650
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	1 329	1 852
Redbacked Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	435	661
European Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	3 778	3 594
European Marsh Warbler	<i>A. palustris</i>	830	683
Great Reed Warbler	<i>A. arundinaceus</i>	782	848
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1 414	2 022
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	14 236	10 873

BIRD RINGING IN CROATIA 1992-1993

Larus Vol 44/45 1992/3, published the results of the Zagreb Ringing Scheme for 1991 and 1992. During these two years, a total of 32 535 birds of 164 species were ringed, 14.9% of which were chicks. Approximately 45 ringers took part in the ringing effort. The grand total of birds ringed since the inception of the scheme in 1910 now stands at 547 442.

The 1991 annual total of 13 582 birds ringed reflected the drop in ringing effort due to the war in the former Yugoslavia. In 1992, however, 18 953 birds were ringed, representing an annual total closer to those of pre-war years. European Swallow *Hirundo rustica* was the most-ringed species for both years.

Over the two year period, 171 Zagreb ring recoveries of 35 species were recorded. There were also 57 foreign ring recoveries of 21 species, originating from 13 European ringing schemes.

BIRD RINGING IN ICELAND IN 1993

The activities of the Icelandic Bird Ringing Scheme during 1993 were reported in the annual bulletin of the Icelandic Society for the Protection of Birds, *Bliki* Vol 15 1995. That year 41 ringers were involved in the ringing effort and a total of 13 718 birds of 55 species were ringed, 57,8% of which were chicks. This brings the grand total of birds ringed since the inception of the scheme in 1932 to 366 000. There were 700 recoveries of birds ringed in Iceland (72 recovered abroad) and 88 recoveries of foreign-ringed birds.

BIRD MORTALITY STUDIES ON ROADS IN LATVIA

The Latvian ornithological journal *Putni daba* Vol 4 1994, includes a note concerning bird mortality rates on roads in Latvia.

Data resulting from studies on birds killed by traffic between 1988 and 1991 revealed that 540 corpses of 60 species of birds were found on the 1 695 km of road covered in the survey. Maximum mortality was observed during the breeding period, and worst hit were sparrows, wagtails and chaffinches.

NOTICE

EXPERIENCED BIRD WATCHERS REQUIRED

Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration, Northern Israel

Annual Survey, Autumn 1995

Over a period of 45 days during the autumn months of September and October, some 806 000 migrating birds can be counted passing over Israel. These include 580 000 raptors of 30 different species, 190 000 White Storks and 36 000 White Pelicans.

The Israel Ornithology Center would like to invite you to join the international team of birdwatchers participating in the annual Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration Survey. The survey will take place in the valleys of northern Israel. During that time you will experience the busiest migration route on the western Palearctic.

There is a minimum participation period of four weeks. We will provide lodging and food during the survey. The cost of travel to and from Israel will be covered by the participant.

If you are an experienced birdwatcher, capable and willing to watch migration for a minimum of eight hours a day, please contact the following as soon as possible, enclosing details of your previous experience and curriculum vitae:

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<i>25 Ruth St</i>	<i>972 4 389973</i>
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