FOREIGN NEWS

CATTLE EGRET MOVEMENTS

The movements of Cattle Egrets in America are discussed. It seems that a regular migration pattern has been set up which necessitates the birds crossing long distances over water, across the Gulf of Mexico and into the Caribbean. Heavy mortality can occur after flocks have made a landfall. The American situation is compared with that in Africa.
(Ref: Browder,J.A. (1973) - Bird Band. 44:158-170).

SEX AND AGE RATIOS IN MIGRANTS

Evidence is given for the Western Flycatcher Empidonax difficilis in the U.S.A. that (a) in spring adult ♂♂ and ♀♀ migrate synchronously (b) adults were two to five weeks ahead of first-year birds (c) a pronounced change in age ratio occurred after each migration indicating a heavy mortality in inexperienced young birds.
(Ref: Johnson,N.K. (1973) - Bird Band. 44:205-220).

A PERMANENT SITE WATERFOWL TRAP

A concrete-based trap 50' x 100' apparently gave an average night trap of 300 geese or 500 duck. In five years 83 000 birds were caught in three traps set in southern Illinois.
(Ref: Arthur,G.C. and Kennedy,D.D. (1972) - J.Wildl.Manag.36:1257-1261).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER MIGRATION AND MOULT

Records were obtained in the Aland Islands, Finland.
(Ref:Hyytia,K. and Vikberg,P. (1973) - Orn.Fenn. 50:134-143).

MIST-NETS AND DECOYS FOR CATCHING IBISES

Cattle Egrets were caught on the edges of swamps and feeding areas, in mist-nets using white ibis decoys. Catches were best at the beginning of the breeding season and fell off as the birds apparently became used to the decoys.
(Ref: Dusi,J.L. and R.T. and Bateman,D.L. (1971)
Inland Bird Band News 43:6-7).

PATAGIAL TAG FOR AUSTRALIAN CRANES

The standard method described elsewhere in this Safring issue has been used successfully on Australian Cranes. Tags are readable with a telescope from 450m in good conditions. The tags were still going strong after 20 months on birds in the wild.
(Ref: Blackman,J.G. (1973) - Austral. Bird Band. 11:56-57).

GAPE WORMS IN WADERS

Gape Worms Syngamus trachea were found in a juvenile Dunlin Calidris alpina. It is suggested that waders seen coughing might be suffering from syngamosis. Gape Worms have also been found in Greenshank and Painted Snipe among others.
(Ref: Cabot,D. (1973) - Brit.Birds 66:365).

PROTEIN RESERVE IN FLIGHT MUSCLES

Investigation of the weights of the lean dry flight muscles i.e. flight muscles which have been dissected off specimens, had the fat extracted from them and then been dried, of Quelea has shown that there is a considerable annual change. The muscle appears to reach peak size in the female just before she lays a clutch of eggs, and reaches its smallest size at times of starvation. Microscopic examination of the muscle shows that it is the sarcoplasm between the myofibrils which is the chief variant. The sarcoplasm apparently acts as a protein reserve to be drawn on in times when protein is required eg. egg-production, migration, etc. These fluctuations in muscle size will, of course, affect the overall body weight.
(Ref: Kendall,M.D., Ward,P., Bacchus,S. (1973) - Ibis 115:600-601).

GARDEN WARBLER AND BLACKCAP MIGRATION

The work of the Max-Planck Institute and of Vogelwarte Radolfzell has gone a long way to unravelling the complexities of the migration of Sylvia borin and S.atricapilla. Their latest paper compares the two species. The migration route of the Garden Warbler is on a broad front ignoring coastlines, while that of the Blackcap is a guided broad front with coastlines affecting the guidelines. The Garden Warbler averages 76km/day moving south at 73km/day while the equivalents for the Blackcap are 49km and 46km. The whole of the European population of the Garden Warbler migrates, while the Blackcap has resident populations in southern France and elsewhere. In the Blackcap, the pattern of migration has been shown to be closely correlated with the movement of the 10°C isotherm which forms the northern border of the population. In the Garden Warbler no close correlation with temperature has been shown.

Although the Blackcap does not reach southern Africa, it is interesting to see how accurate a picture of a bird's migration can be built up by a combination of ringing and behavioural physiological studies in the laboratory.
(Ref: Klein, von H., Berthold,P., and Gwinner,E. (1973)
- Die Vogelwarte 27:73-134).

PROPORTIONS OF PALAEARCTIC BIRDS IN AFRICA

Moreau estimated that there were 200 palaearctic birds per km^2 in Africa during the northern winter. If these represent 5 - 10% of the total assemblage, then densities of 2 000 to 4 000 birds per km^2 would be expected. In dry savannah in Senegal, between 400 - 800/km^2 have been recorded, in Ethiopia $\pm$ 4 500 adults/km^2.
(Ref: Ulfstrand,S. (1973) - Die Vogelwarte 27:137-141).

What are the quantitative relationships in South Africa in our midsummer? What % of palaearctic migrants are caught in "bush-ringing" in the Transvaal and Natal? What about comparing catches with censuses carried out along transects in the study area? The above article shows that there is a lot to learn about this problem.
C.C.H.E.

STINT IDENTIFICATION

A comprehensive guide to the Calidris stints is included in the latest edition of British Birds. Six reprints have been obtained for issue to interested wader ringers. The latter should apply to NUBRA for a copy.
(Ref: Wallace,D.I.M. (1974) - Brit.Birds 67:1-17).

ROBIN STUDY

This article reports the progress of a detailed study of the South Island Robin in New Zealand. Most aspects of the species biology have been looked at. Ringing has played an important part in the study and has helped to reveal some interesting results on the relationship between the juvenile and adult population. It shows the sort of fascinating discoveries that can be made by concentrating on one species and a closely observed colour-ringed population, especially one where most nests are found and most broods of chicks are ringed. Flack also reports relative mortality rates and the relation of moult to the annual cycle. Trapping appears to have been effectively carried out using baited (wriggly worm) single-bird clap-traps.
(Ref: Flack,J.A.D. (1973) - Wildlife 4:28-36).

WHITHER WHITETHROATS?

The B.T.O. Common Birds Census showed a crash in the Whitethroat Sylvia communis population in 1969. It is suggested that the crash was produced by deterioration in climate of the wintering area in the drought-stricken Sahel Zone of West Africa.
(Ref: Winstanley,D., Spencer,R. and Williamson,K. (1974) - Bird Study 21:1-14).