

# Recent Literature

## ANALYTICAL STUDIES

**Geographical Variation in Mortality Rates and Production Requirements of the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba* ssp.)** Charles J. Henry. 1969. *Bird-Banding*, 40:277-290.

The mortality rates of Barn Owls in southern and northern United States are compared for two periods, viz. prior to 1948, and 1948-63. Overall mortality rates for the northern birds were 52.2 and 48.1 per cent, and for the southern birds were 35.6 and 34.3 per cent respectively. More severe winters in the northern areas are a basic cause for this higher mortality. The Barn Owl has a relatively low fat reserve, and northern birds are unlikely to survive under certain unfavourable conditions i.e. lack of prey under snow cover. Breeding season in the northern areas is prolonged and double broods are much more likely than in the southern areas.

**Grey Wagtail Passage and Population Fluctuations in 1956-67.** J. T. R. Sharrock. 1969. *Bird Study*, 16:17-34.

The autumnal migration of the Grey Wagtail in Britain and Ireland is analysed, using data from bird observatories. Stations at the southern tips of headlands, or on off-shore islands, record the greatest numbers of wagtails. The passage occurs almost simultaneously throughout Britain and Ireland, with peak numbers passing between 5-25 September; but the passage may be later at St Agnes (off Cornwall) due to a higher proportion of continental birds. Maxima were recorded in 1959 and 1961, and dropped to one third of this level after the hard winters of 1962/63; since 1963 there has been a gradual increase in numbers again. From these data, an index was derived to show the numbers of birds on passage each year. A second independent index was derived from analysis of banding data and from nest record data. Both indices were very similar, and these were combined to give an overall index which is considered to give a fair representation of the fluctuations of the wagtail populations in Britain and Ireland for the 12 years 1956-67.

Ten recoveries of banded birds are tabulated, and these suggest that birds breeding furthest north move furthest south on autumnal migration.

**Some Vital Statistics of British Mistle Thrushes.** D. W. Snow. 1969. *Bird Study*, 16:34-44.

Egg laying starts in late February and continues until late June, with a peak in late March-early April. An average of 2-21 clutches per pair are laid each year. Clutch size increases from 3.60 in early March to 4.12 in late April; thereafter it gradually decreases, and this pattern is similar to the related Song Thrush and Blackbird. Nesting success varies from 49 per cent in March to 33-35 per cent in April-May. Each pair must rear 2.6-3.3 young each year to maintain the population. Annual mortality of adults is 48 per cent. A considerable proportion of the British population migrates to Ireland or continental Europe.

## TECHNIQUES

**The Tape Recorder as a Banding Aid.** Timo Tallgren. 1969. *EBBA News*, 32:261-263.

The use of taped records to attract various types of birds to mist tents in Finland is detailed. Large numbers of finches were attracted to a pond by playing their calls; after birds had been caught, caged decoys replaced the tape recorder. The recorder was also used to net small numbers of rare nesting warblers which sing towards midnight. The warbler song was played; if a response was obtained, nets were erected and the song replayed in a different location to lure the warbler to the site of the nets. A recording of a predatory shriek was effective in attracting many small passerines to net sites. The call of an owl is also most effective, according to an editorial postscript.

**Nacton Decoy and its Catches.** G. V. T. Matthews. 1969. *Wildfowl*, 20:131-137.

Commercial duck decoys have been established on ponds in England for over 150 years. The last of the commercial decoys, Nacton, has now been converted to a banding station, instead of supplying ducks for the market. Seasonal takes since 1895 are tabulated; these averaged 2,222 birds per year from 1895-1918, and 3,903 birds per year from 1919 to 1968. The paper is illustrated by a map and two photographs of the decoy.

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Field Identification of Juvenile Common, Arctic and Roseate Terns.** P. J. Grant and R. E. Scott. 1969. *British Birds*, 62:297-299.

Juveniles of these three terns have been considered difficult to separate, but these two authors suggest that specific identification is relatively easy in reasonable conditions. Descriptions, which emphasize specific differences, are given and these are supplemented by sketches of flying and perched (recently fledged and slightly older) juveniles.

**Cutaneous Diseases of Wild Birds in Britain.** D. K. Blackmore and I. F. Keymer. 1969. *British Birds*, 62:316-331.

Data relating to skin diseases in wild birds are very limited. Following a request for suitable specimens in Britain, 153 diseased birds were examined. Infections noted (and described in some detail) were Bacterial (Tuberculosis and other), Virus (Pox and Puffinosis), Mycotic (Mycotic dermatitis), Parasitic (Knemidokoptic mange and ticks) and Neoplasia (Papillomatosis and other). Various injuries and localised infections involving the mandibles or feet and legs and also miscellaneous conditions of uncertain origin are also discussed. A series of six photographs show typical diseased parts of birds. Banders may handle large numbers of wild birds and are in a unique position to locate diseased birds; this paper would serve as an excellent introduction.