

BRISTOL ORNITHOLOGY



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PREFACE

This issue is given over almost entirely to an interesting survey of the avifauna of the northern Voronezh region of Russia, compiled by Michael Wilson. Although the author now lives and teaches in Essex he still makes regular observations in his home county of Somerset, when time allows. In general we have a very incomplete knowledge of the birds of the Soviet Union, but since birds do not recognize frontiers, observations from Eastern Europe may have wide-ranging implications for our own scene. For example, some interesting comparisons can be made with the Collared Dove which first appeared in the region in 1969 and is extending its range, while on the other hand, Whitethroats do not appear to have suffered a population crash, as did our birds in 1969.

The remainder of this number is concerned with notes from Peter Rodgers, Bernard King, Derek Lucas and Robin Prytherch and begins as usual with the review of 1975, written for us on this occasion by Keith Vinicombe. For many of us this last work is the most readable source of reference for how things were. How sad this hardy annual only extends back to 1967, a year after the Club began. Our attention is directed to the important facts and, as decades go by, it may be appropriate to compare them birdwise — then the true value of the yearly summaries will be fully recognized.

Keith Vinicombe has also contributed a paper on waterfowl numbers at Chew Valley Lake, a locality where he is a familiar figure to many Club members. This paper is the result of several years methodical and routine watching and gives an indication of the sort of useful work that can be carried out in our area. It is also an example of the kind of paper that the Editors consider ideal for publication in this journal and we would hope to receive many similar ones in the coming years.

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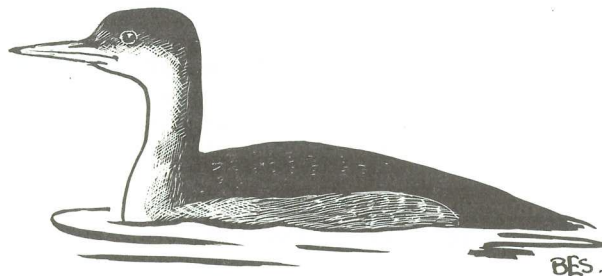
A REVIEW OF 1975

by Keith Vinicombe

This review is based on observations submitted to *Bird News* during 1975. The area involved is basically the county of Avon, parts of Gloucestershire (as far north as Frampton-on-Severn and the Cotswold Hills) and Somerset, to within some 30 miles of Bristol. The 'reservoirs', often referred to collectively, signify those at Barrow Gurney, Blagdon, Cheddar, Chew Valley and Durleigh. The 'levels' refer to both the peat moors and heaths in Somerset and to the moors which lie south of the Polden Hills. My thanks are due to all the contributors to *Bird News* during 1975, especially those who provided regular detailed counts of various species, particularly ducks and waders. Finally I would like to thank Andy Davis for providing me with additional wader information.

The first winter period

The 1974/75 winter was exceptionally mild, with January temperatures up to 3°C above normal. January was dominated by Atlantic depressions with gales at the end of the month. February was mainly anticyclonic, but even so, temperatures were generally above average. March began with a SW airstream until 10th, but anticyclonic conditions then prevailed until 19th with some sleet and snow. Frontal troughs reappeared on 20th with strong NW gales at the end of the month. Temperatures for March were generally below average.



Great Northern Diver

It was a notable winter for divers on the reservoirs. At Chew two Great Northern were present until 27 April and at Cheddar up to two were seen until 24 March along with a much rarer Black-throated Diver from 24 January to 24 March. Also at Chew, Cormorants reached a record 63 on 11 January and there was an escaped Chilean Flamingo on 1st of that month. The only Bittern of the winter was one seen near Bridgewater on 2 February.

The mildness of the weather resulted in unusually low numbers of surface-feeding wildfowl, with an early exodus in February. Maximum counts on the reservoirs included only 303 Mallard, 328 Teal and 107 Shoveler, all at Chew, while at the favoured Wigeon localities, Chew and Steart, numbers reached only 816 and 450 respectively. Pintail, on the other hand, reached 108 at Slimbridge on 16 February, while 41 at Chew on 11 January was also quite a good count.

Diving ducks fared better with up to 848 Pochard at Chew and 559 at Bladgon in January, though the Cheddar flock reached only 449. It was a good winter for Goldeneye with up to 47 at Chew and 38 at Blagdon but Goosanders were present in average numbers with up to 26 at Chew. A Goosander at Orchardleigh Lake until March was unusual. Two Smew were seen at Chew and one at Blagdon, while Ruddy Ducks reached a peak of 62 at Chew on 11 January. The only Scaup were two at Durleigh on 16 February.

Not only was it a disappointing winter for ducks, but geese and swans were also thin on the ground. At Slimbridge, the White-fronted Goose flock reached a maximum of only 1450 on 17 January, the lowest winter peak since the Trust's formation in 1946. Similarly, numbers of Bewick's Swans were low with only 259 individuals visiting Slimbridge during the winter, compared with 541 in 1973/74. Nearly all had gone by the middle of January. Elsewhere, small herds were seen in a variety of localities with 129 (22 immatures) at Muchelney on 26 January being the highest count for the Somerset levels. Bean Geese occurred in a number of widely separated localities in Britain during the winter and six stayed at Slimbridge from 26 January to 2 March. Two Pink-footed Geese put in an unusual appearance at Cheddar on 26 February and a Brent Goose was seen at Steart on 28 March.

Birds of prey included a male Hen Harrier at Steart in February and March and another on the levels during the same period. About eight Merlins were seen at six localities, but Peregrines only at Slimbridge and Steart (two at each). In view of the large influx of Rough-legged Buzzards into Britain in the autumn of 1974, it was perhaps disappointing that none reached our area in early 1975. Short-eared Owls were seen at six localities with up to four at Steart and six on the levels in February.

Coastal wader counts for the year are summarized in Table 1, so only exceptional counts will be mentioned in the main text. Some interesting wader numbers were recorded inland on the levels in January and February. On Tealham/Tadham Moors these included up to 6000 Lapwings, 700 Golden Plovers, 1500 Dunlin and 20 Ruff, while on Wet Moor there were up to 50 Black-tailed Godwits and 80 Redshanks. Even more remarkable, however, were 15000 Lapwings, 2000 Dunlin and 150 Black-tailed Godwits on West Sedge Moor, and 3000 Dunlin near Langport in February and March. Figures suggest that between 5000 and 8000 Dunlin were present on the levels in February.

Table 1. Monthly wader totals from the south side of the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel, from Frampton-on-Severn to Steart. The figures are derived from the summation of the maximum monthly counts at each locality. Obviously the figures are far from accurate, but it is hoped that the broad trends of the fluctuations become apparent. There are still areas of the coast for which regular accurate counts are lacking, notably Portishead to Woodspring Bay and Steart.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Oystercatcher	173	193	185	124	149	149	410	373	452	452	177	119
Ringed Plover	187	201	75	61	375	175	93	1953	894	230	169	276
Grey Plover	53	35	85	2	1	15	17	145	218	90	17	10
Turnstone	105	101	131	122	181	5	20	158	159	115	54	75
Dunlin	14200	17210	13150	1808	1920	25	1950	2832	1170	7400	11700	23350
Knot	97	14	5	2	3	2	11	70	669	83	18	18
Sanderling	7	10	0	19	127	16	86	90	58	14	13	3
Redshank	1244	724	677	57	8	25	1256	870	380	1145	520	515
Black-tailed Godwit	3	3	3	51	1	0	1222	1623	400	338	250	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	43	46	40	163	65	37	10	11	72	19	33	4
Curlew	802	962	956	108	74	123	1648	1270	780	573	339	226

Snipe numbers on the other hand were low, with a maximum of 125 at Clevedon on 11 January. Jack Snipe were seen at six places with up to twelve at Aust in February and Woodcock appeared at five localities. Twelve Green Sandpipers were recorded at eight places, five Common at four and a Spotted Redshank and a Little Stint were seen in Sand Bay in February. The usual Avocet remained at Steart until 29 March and another put in a rare inland appearance at Chew on 23 February. Finally one or two Purple Sandpipers were present at Brean Down and Severn Beach, but six at the latter locality on 23 March were considered to be passage birds.

Winter sea-birds were few, a Gannet and a Guillemot at Weston and another Guillemot in the Axe Estuary on 4 January with a Kittiwake at Cheddar from 23 to 25 January. More interesting was an injured Little Auk which unfortunately died, at Brean on 28 January, followed by another at Blagdon Lake on 1 February. On 13 February there was a weather movement of 50 Kittiwakes off Brean Down, perhaps a forerunner of the spring movements. An adult Little Gull at Huntspill on 2 March can perhaps also be included along with the sea-birds. While on the subject of gulls, it is also worth noting that up to 4000 Herring Gulls were present at Cheddar Reservoir and its adjacent refuse tip in the first two weeks of January but numbers soon decreased following the closure of the tip.

The mild weather resulted in good numbers of insectivorous birds remaining to winter in Britain. Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs were commoner than usual and in our area they were seen at seven and four places respectively, with up to three Blackcaps at Berrow. Firecrests also occurred in unprecedented numbers, our area producing singles at five localities and two at both Stock Hill and Chew. Eleven Black Redstarts also occurred at seven localities until 26 April. It may also be relevant to mention that resident species such as Long-tailed Tit, Treecreeper, Wren and Goldcrest have reached very high population levels, while Stonechat and Grey Wagtail are numerous and widespread in winter. A remarkable count of 70 Magpies at Ashcott Heath in January also illustrates another species at present enjoying high population levels. The mild weather provoked some early breeding activity with a Blackbird carrying nest material on 9 January, Magpies and Blue Tits nest building in February and a Mallard brood as early as 2 March.

Fieldfares and Redwings were not particularly numerous, with maximum counts of 750 and 500 respectively. Water Pipits were also scarce with up to three at Chew and two at Cheddar, where a Rock Pipit was seen from 10 to 21 March followed by two more on 30th. Redpolls and Siskins were present mainly in small numbers, but larger flocks included 40 Siskins at Snuff Mills, 50 at Compton Dando and Frampton and 60 at Stock Hill, while the largest Redpoll flock was 50 at Ashcott and Westhay in February. There was a paucity of Bramblings with a February maximum of only 13 in Sand Bay.

Scarce passerines included up to four Bearded Tits at Chew until 13 April and a Great Grey Shrike at Stockwood on 26 March, but there were no Snow Buntings at all. The rarity of the early part of the year, however, was a female Cetti's Warbler trapped at Chew on 25 February. It remained until 20 April but proved to be extremely elusive for much of this period. This is an encouraging record of a species which is rapidly increasing after recently colonizing this country from the continent.



Spring migration

April was variable with a cold N-NE airflow until 8th bringing widespread heavy snowfalls. Cyclonic conditions dominated the rest of the month except from 21st to 27th when a ridge of high pressure moved north from the Azores. May was generally cool with temperatures below normal. An anticyclone from 2nd to 5th was replaced by depressions until 15th when pressure increased. A N or NE airflow persisted from 20th and a front moving from the north on 29th allowed unusually cold air to spread over the country at the end of the month.

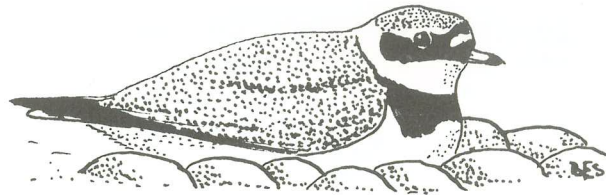
A Wheatear at Steart on 2 February was exceptionally early. Spring migrants seemed slow in arriving in March and April, though a House Martin at Axbridge on 9 March was also very early.

Sea-bird passage began in March with a movement of Kittiwakes (66) north past Brean Down on 22nd. Small numbers continued through April and May with peaks of 250 on 11 April and 41 on 18 May. One wonders whether some of these may continue north and migrate overland, explaining the regular spring passage through the Midlands reservoirs (see *Brit. Birds* 69: 62–63). Fulmars occurred in small numbers and a few Gannets, Razorbills and Guillemots were also seen. Five divers, probably Red-throated, flew down-channel past Brean Down on 29 April and Common Scoters reached a maximum of 35 on 2nd of that month. Scoters also occurred inland, at Orchardleigh Lake on 18 March and one or two at Chew from 7 to 14 April. Eight Arctic Skuas were seen at Brean and Sand Point between 26 April and 29 May and a Great Skua was at Berrow on 26 May. An immature Iceland Gull was seen at Sand Point on 30 May.

Tern movement, though not as big as in the exceptional spring of 1974, was nevertheless heavy. At Sand Point 183 Common/Arctic were seen on 11 May, 429 on 18th and 200 on 28th, nearly all going north. Twenty-eight at Cheddar on 12 May was the highest reservoir count. About 18 Black Terns passed through between 10 May and 6 June, while the only Sandwich Tern was inland at Chew on 20 April. The only Little Gull of the spring was an adult here on the previous day, a remarkable contrast with the record 143 recorded in the old county of Somerset alone in the spring of 1974.

Two escaped Chilean Flamingos were seen on 23 April, one at Chittening and the other at Chew, and while dealing with escapes, it may be worth noting also that two Sarus Cranes were seen on West Sedge Moor on 26 April, the third year that they have been seen here. Turning briefly to wildfowl, Tufted Ducks at Chew reached their spring peak on 17 April, when 528 were counted. A Scaup on the same day was only the third for the year in our area. Gadwall at this locality increased to 122 on 17 April, while a Gadwall x Wigeon hybrid appeared on 11th, remaining throughout the year and into 1976. Garganey were few, just one on the levels in March and one at Chew and two at Blagdon in May. A small movement of Canada Geese in April involved two on the River Severn on 9th, five down-channel at Brean on 11th and one at Cheddar on 15th. A Cattle Egret was noted at Slimbridge 2–7 March (possibly the same bird as in August 1974).

The only interesting raptors were three female or immature Marsh Harriers, at Congresbury on 28 April, Chew on 27 May and on the levels on an unspecified date. Two Short-eared Owls were at Chittening from 5 to 12 April and a late bird from 4 to 7 May.



Ringed Plover

Peak passage of Ringed Plover reached 221 at Berrow on 25 May while Sanderling reached 116 on the same day. Inland, Sanderling occurred at Chew and Cheddar with a whole series of records at the latter locality with five on 28 April and four on 28 May and 2 June. Fifty Black-tailed Godwits were at Steart on 5 April and 150 Bar-tailed made a short stop at Severn Beach on 26th. The Whimbrel roost on Steart Island reached 1000 on 3 May and a few remained on the coast into June.

Some good counts of Common Sandpipers at Cheddar included 21 on 21 April and 38 on 11 May. Six Green Sandpipers were seen at four places in April while Greenshanks appeared in good numbers, with nine at Sand Bay on 24th and five at Cheddar on 26th with records from a further four localities in May. Five Spotted Redshanks and two Ruff also came through in April and May, and there was a Curlew Sandpiper at Steart on 12 May and two at Berrow on 17th. Two other rare waders were an Avocet at Frampton on 24 April and a Temminck's Stint at Cheddar on 28 May.



Collared Dove

Small numbers of migrants were reported from the coast during April. At Brean Down there was a movement of Collared Doves with a maximum of 19 on 19th. Also here were three Ring Ouzels on the same date, with one until 26th and 24 Tree Pipits and a Pied Flycatcher on 21st. Another Pied Flycatcher was seen at Henbury on 20th and an early Spotted at Snuff Mills on 21st. Passage Wood Warblers occurred at five localities and White Wagtails included up to 15 at Berrow and nine at Cheddar. Single Corn Buntings occurred away from their breeding areas at Cheddar on 6 April and at Portbury Wharf on 1 June. A Quail on Somerton Moor on 17 May completes the picture of the 1975 spring migration.

The breeding season

Unusually cold weather with sleet and snow on 1 and 2 June was followed by anticyclonic conditions until 13th and again from 21st until 5 July. Thunderstorms occurred until 10 July then a westerly airstream dominated until 26th. A ridge of high pressure extended over the country until the end of the month. Temperatures were generally above average and rainfall below normal.

At the reservoirs, water levels were at a maximum and it proved to be quite a good breeding season, but levels began to fall rapidly from June onwards with the warm weather. This prevented some species, such as Great Crested Grebe and Coot from continuing their nesting season as long as usual. Breeding success at Blagdon, Chew and Litton is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of broods of waterfowl reared at Blagdon and Chew Valley Lakes and Litton Reservoir in 1975

	Blagdon	Chew	Litton
Little Grebe	4	16	1
Great Crested Grebe	5	35	
Canada Goose		2	
Mute Swan	2	6	
Shelduck		1	
Mallard	7	32	3
Gadwall	1	21	
Tufted Duck	2	18	2
Ruddy Duck		2	
Moorhen	4	18+	5
Coot	24	55	8

At Chew, both Shoveler and Pochard failed to breed and no Garganey were seen apart from two drakes on 6 June. At least five pairs of Ruddy Ducks could only manage to hatch three ducklings but only one of these seems to have survived. Three Ruddy Ducks were also present at Frampton on 2 May and a drake was at Blagdon on 14 June. A pair of Great Crested Grebes bred at Hunstrete Lake, Teal bred at Shapwick and two pairs of Gadwall were present at Frampton and another pair at Litton. Finally, feral Greylag Geese bred at Frampton, where 40 were counted on 31 August. One was also seen at Chew throughout much of the year.

Hobbies were recorded at ten localities between May and August and at an additional three in September. A male Montagu's Harrier at Tadhams Moor on 25 June was an encouraging observation in view of this species' current rarity in Britain. The annual totals of sightings of our three commonest raptors (Table 3) may be a guide to their comparative status, but it must be remembered that many observers do not send in their Kestrel records, so the figures for that species are certainly too low. Sparrowhawks seem to be maintaining a steady increase and it is pleasing to record that Barn Owls were reported from so many places during the year (also Table 3).

Table 3. Observations of our three commonest diurnal raptors and Barn Owls in 1975.

	No. of Localities	No. of Bird/days	No. of Observers
Sparrowhawk	130	640	62
Buzzard	86	293	54
Kestrel	168	637	47
Barn Owl	56	155	47

Both the partridges remain scarce. Only five pairs of Red-legged Partridge were seen during the year and about 18 pairs of Partridge were reported from only 12 localities. At least eight Quail were heard at Marshfield during the summer; a Corncrake was heard at North Wootton and a Water Rail on Nailsea Moor, both during July.

Waders included Ringed Plovers displaying at Steart, a Woodcock roding at Shapwick and Black-tailed Godwits were again seen on the levels. In Bristol, considerable numbers of Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls were recorded nesting on buildings around the city centre. As the exact numbers involved are not known a detailed survey at some time in the future would certainly be a worthwhile project.

Two adult Long-eared Owls were present on the Mendips but breeding does not seem to have occurred this year. The only Nightjars were recorded from Shapwick (two), Shipham (one) and Stock Hill (up to four). Turning to passerines, Sand Martins seem to be restricted to only two localities while Grasshopper Warblers also seemed scarce with only 16 'reeling' birds reported from 11 localities. Whitethroats are perhaps slowly increasing and about 13 singing Wood Warblers were reported from eight places. About 30 Nightingales were reported from 15 sites, but a 50% decrease in Redstarts was reported on the levels since last year. Some 25 pairs of Tree Pipits were present at nine localities. A pair of Blue-headed Wagtails was seen feeding young at Steart on 13 July and a pair also summered again at Chew, though no young were seen this year.

To conclude this breeding survey, we turn to some selected resident species. Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers remain widespread if thinly distributed, with 115 records of birds at 36 localities during the year. Ravens were seen at seven places, but with breeding season records from only two. Dippers were also noted at seven places with breeding season birds at Wick, Midford and Combe Hay. Another local species in our area, the Willow Tit, was seen at 12 localities during the year with breeding season records from eight places on the Mendips and the levels. The winter abundance of Stonechats has already been mentioned and in 1975 there were breeding season records of 16 pairs from nine places, four coastal and five inland.

Hawfinches were recorded at Abbots Leigh, Clifton Downs (up to four) and Hallen. Redpolls bred at Stock Hill and Dolebury Warren and there were further records from several other localities in June and July. The decline of the Cirl Bunting unfortunately continues with only three records in 1975. Corn Buntings on the other hand were seen at four places in south Avon and north Somerset in addition to the traditionally favoured area around Marshfield, although a count of 15 in June was rather low.

Other mid-summer observations

Manx Shearwaters appeared in reasonable numbers on feeding expeditions from their large colonies to the west. At Brean Down there were 600 on 28 June and 350 on 7 July with around 100 on four other dates. At Sand Point, 505 were counted on 25 May with fewer than 100 on many days until the end of July. Small numbers of Fulmars, Gannets, Kittiwakes, Razorbills and Guillemots were recorded right through the summer into August. Three Common Scoters were also seen on the coast in June.

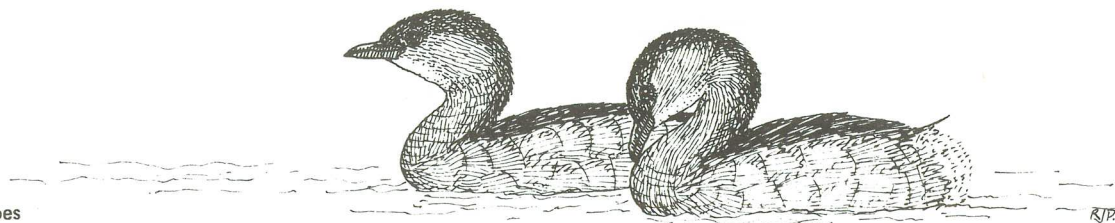
Some interesting mid-summer waders included 109 Oystercatchers at Berrow on 15 June, a Greenshank in Sand Bay from 8 to 18th and 12 Grey Plovers, 37 Bar-tailed Godwits and three Avocets at Steart on 9th. Finally two summer-plumaged White-winged Black Terns made a brief appearance at Chew on 14 June, fortunately allowing themselves to be photographed before quickly moving on through.

Autumn migration

The fine summer continued into August with temperatures of up to 34°C between 4th and 8th. Depressions crossed northern districts from 14th to 19th but high pressure again became established until 8 September. Successive fronts crossed the country from 9 to 14 September and again from 22nd of that month to 3 October with gales on 13th and 14th and again on 27th. High pressure again became dominant from 4 to 13 October with a NE airstream from 9th to 11th. High pressure returned from 19th to 27th with extensive fog during this period but cold fronts from the west dominated the last two days of the month.

The autumn of 1975 will long be remembered for its abundance of rarities which sent intrepid bands of people tearing off all over the country. Locally it was also very good, not only for a good crop of rarities, but also for some excellent numbers of commoner passage visitors.

A Red-throated Diver was an unusual visitor to Cheddar on 24 September while rarer grebes involved single Black-necked at Durleigh on 10 August and at Chew from 16 September to 1 November; a Slavonian Grebe was also at Chew from 4 to 13 October. The moult gathering of Great Crested Grebes at this locality reached 452 on 18 August and there was a second peak of 464 on 7 October, while up to 73 Little Grebes were also present in August and September.



Little Grebes

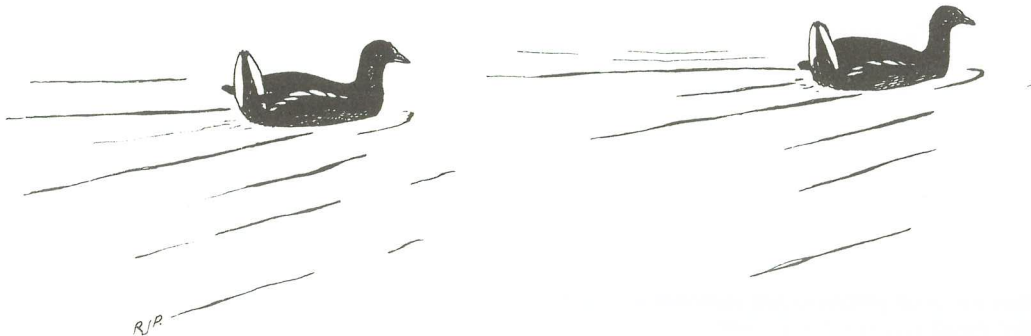
Six Grey Herons came in across the channel at Brean Down on 20 July while later in the year numbers at Chew reached 36 on 8 November. Also at Chew, a Purple Heron was seen on 28 September. Chilean Flamingos continued to be recorded, with one at Chew on 19 July, one at Steart from 13 to 21 August and a third at Chittening from 21 September through into December.

Some notable influxes of wildfowl occurred in August and September. Teal reached 742 at Chew on 22 September and 1160 at Blagdon two days later. There was also a large influx of Shoveler in August and during 22 to 24 September, 426 were counted at Chew and 330 at Blagdon. The peak Mallard counts, however, were disappointing: 1083 at Chew on 29 August and 898 at Blagdon on 5 September. Most impressive though was a record count of 275 at Gadwall at Chew on 12 September. These dispersed soon after and there were 71 at Blagdon

on 24th and 120 at Cheddar on 3 October. Garganey occurred on four reservoirs between 18 July and 30 September with maxima of seven at Durlough on 10 August, 12 at Blagdon on 15th and 10 at Chew on 12 September. A drake Red-crested Pochard was at Cheddar from 14 August until 6 December with a second bird on 13 October. An eclipse male was also seen at Blagdon from 24 September to 11 October.

Moulting Tufted Ducks reached 508 at Blagdon and 325 at Chew in August while there was an unusually large moulting flock of Pochard at Chew, reaching 449 on 29 August. Peak Pochard numbers occurred later, with 508 at Chew on 22 September and 750 at Cheddar on 24 October. Also at Cheddar were a female Ferruginous Duck from 22 to 27 September followed by a male Ferruginous x Pochard hybrid on 28th and 29th. Ruddy Ducks appeared at Cheddar and Durlough in August while 32 at Chew on 28 September and 19 at Blagdon on 8 October indicated that outsiders were already arriving in the area. A few Common Scoters were seen on the coast in July and August and five males were at Chew on 26 July and a female at Cheddar from 30 July to 4 August. An escaped Snow Goose appeared at Chew on 30 August, but did not stay long.

The only Spotted Crake of the autumn was one at Chew on the early date of 17 July. Finally, Coot reached 1450 at Chew on 6 August and a high peak of 1920 at Blagdon on 24 September, while 142 Moorhens at the former locality on 17 October was also a good count.



Moorhens

Single Peregrines were seen at Brean and Aust in September and October. Two Merlins were also at Brean in mid-October and one was at Steart at the end of the month. A Short-eared Owl appeared at Chittening in late July and remained until the end of September. During this month and October singles were also seen at Berrow and Sand Bay with up to three at Chittening and Lymphsham.

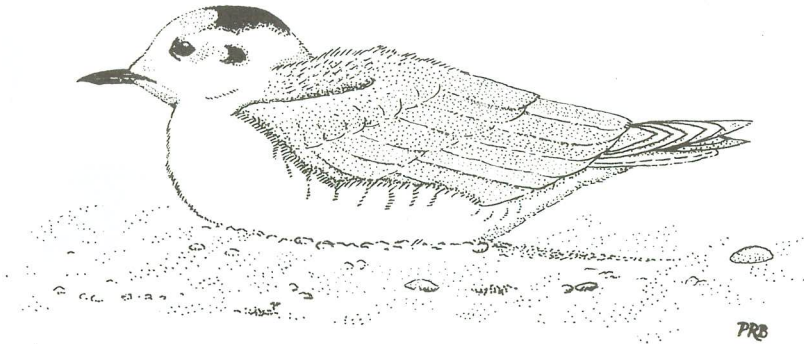
There was a high inland count of 20 Oystercatchers at Durlough on 17 August. Ringed Plovers numbered 800 at Steart from 21 to 28 August but the inland peak of 54 at Chew on 1 October was unusually late. Little Ringed Plovers continue to become more numerous, at least 34 being recorded in the old county of Somerset between 6 July and 5 October, 15 of these being between 28 July and 3 August with a maximum of eight at Chew on 29 July. Some large flocks of Lapwings assembled in July and August and there was a notable influx of 2770 at Chew on 8 August. Grey Plover were numerous inland with up to five at Cheddar on 27 September and three at Chew on 29th, while on the coast 140 were at Steart on 17 August and 200 on 21 September. Also at Steart, 1165 Black-tailed Godwits had assembled by 25 July reaching a peak of 1200 on 17 August. 400 were also counted at Berrow on 10 August, while inland there were 30 at Durlough on 28 September. Up to six Bar-tailed were at Blagdon and Chew in September and October but at Chew, a flock of five on 5 August, 23 on 4 September and 31 on 6 September all flew south without stopping. 1000 Curlews were counted at Steart on 29 July while the largest group of Whimbrel was 36 at Chew on 5 August. A large flock of 400 Knot made a brief stop at Chittening on 13 September and passage Sanderling reached 83 at Berrow on 27 July. Two singles also appeared inland at Cheddar in August and September.

The peak count of Green Sandpipers was 23 at Chew on 13 August, but 12 were also present at Wells Sewage Farm on 20th. About 33 Wood Sandpipers occurred at eight localities between 29 July and 3 October with up to four at Durleigh and Chew from 6 to 11 August. Common Sandpipers reached a peak of 44 at Chew on 13 August. A Redshank put in a strange appearance at Knowle Golf Course, Bristol on 25 September while Spotted Redshanks were recorded at ten places with a maximum of 15 at Chew on 3 October. Greenshanks were common, with up to 24 at Chew on 18 August but Ruff were far fewer than in the record autumn of 1974, but 31 at Chew on 26 August was still a good maximum.

It was probably the best year for Curlew Sandpipers since the epic 1969 invasion. One at Chew on 5 July was most unusual but between 27 July and 29 October about 80 were seen at seven localities with a record 29 at Chew on 12 September; eight were at Steart a week later. Little Stints were also fairly numerous; about 50 were recorded at ten localities between 13 August and 5 November with maxima of six at Cheddar on 31 August and five in Sand Bay on 9 September.

Two Avocets were seen in Sand Bay on 25 October, but in our area the autumn of 1975 will be best remembered for its influx of American waders. At Chew, two Buff-breasted Sandpipers arrived on 1 September and one remained until 12th; a third was present from 20th to 22nd and what was almost certainly a fourth, from 26th until 1 October. A Wilson's Phalarope was seen on 17 and 18 September and a Pectoral Sandpiper from 26 September to 21 October, with a second individual from 29 September to 3 October. At Cheddar there was a Buff-breasted Sandpiper on 3 September and at Blagdon a Pectoral was seen on 30th.

Single Arctic Skuas were seen at Brean Down on 20 August, Steart on 21st and inland at Chew on 7 October. Great Skuas were seen off Steep Holm on 11 July and Brean Down on 16 September. Four Razorbills flew north here on 12 October and two Shags on 24th were probably lost in foggy conditions. The only Kittiwake in September was an immature at Chew from 3rd to 6th. An immature Little Gull was seen at Brean Down on 2 August while at Chew, two adults on 17 July were followed by about 25 immatures between 8 August and 10 October, with a peak of 11 on 12 August. An immature was also present at Cheddar from 13 to 18 September.

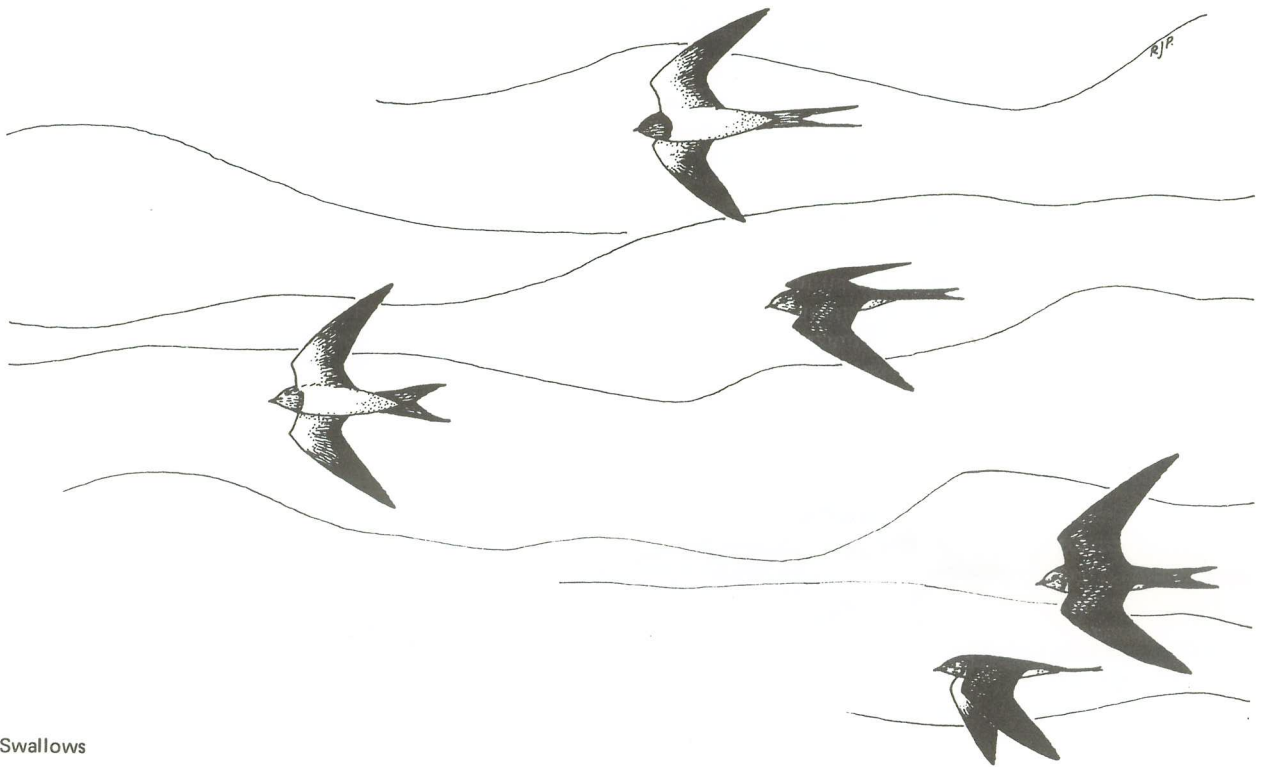


Little Gull

Common/Arctic Terns were not particularly numerous but a late Common was seen at Chew on 3 November. Sandwich Terns appeared at six coastal localities between 13 July and 16 September and a very late bird flew north past Brean Down on 24 November. At least 11 passed through Chew and three through Cheddar between 5 August and 27 September. The only Little Terns were at Chew, one on 12 September and up to three from 4 to 7 October. About 185 Black Terns passed through between 17 July and 10 October with a peak of 66 at Chew on 9 September. For many people the local rarity of the autumn was a fine summer-plumaged White-winged Black Tern present at Chew from 8 to 11 August. Since 1966 this species has been recorded annually in the old county of Somerset, and this was the 16th individual since then.

The fine summer meant an early departure of Swifts, though one was at Chew on 18 September. Also here up to 4000 Swallows roosted in the first half of August while on 12 September a heavy build-up of hirundines involved 3000 House Martins and 300 Sand Martins. On 21 September 1500 Swallows were noted at Yate. The autumn maximum of Yellow Wagtails was 100 at Steart on 28 August

The amazing total of ten Aquatic Warblers was trapped at Steart during August and an eleventh unringed individual was seen. Despite the recent upsurge in the number of Aquatics trapped in Britain, there is still no clue as to their origins, but presumably they must be birds which migrate almost due west from their breeding areas in eastern Europe. Other scarce migrants included two Crossbills at Stock Hill on 25 June, a Hoopoe at Chew Stoke on 22 July and Pied Flycatchers at Axbridge and Wells during August. An immature male Red-backed Shrike was seen at Churchill on 11 October and one or two Ring Ouzels were noted at Brent Knoll, Brean Down and Sand Point until 25th. Late summer migrants included two Tree Pipits over Brent Knoll on 25 October, a House Martin at Brean Down on 13 November and a Swallow at Berron on 17th.

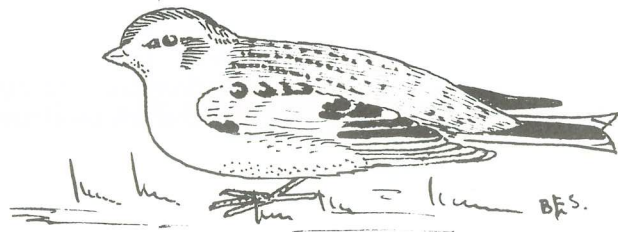


Swallows

Visual migration was heavy in October. Between 23rd and 28th there was a large movement of Wood-pigeons with flocks of up to 300 seen flying high to the south. At New Passage, 1025 Redwings were counted on 11th and 1381 Fieldfares flew south at Berron on 26th. Incidentally the first Fieldfare of the winter had been an early individual at Abbots Leigh on 20 September. A heavy tit movement was noted, perhaps reflecting the present high population levels. At New Passage, 60 Blue Tits and 92 Coal Tits moved NE in two hours on 11th, while the following day 258 Blue and 80 Coal Tits passed NE in four hours of watching. At Sand Point, 162 mixed Great, Blue and Coal Tits were also moving on 12th, while at Brean Down five migrant Coal Tits were seen on 4th with another six on 29th. Jays also seemed to be on the move in October; a flock of 15 flew east at Uphill on 4th and 25 flew NE at New Passage on 11th. Others were seen moving at Sand Point and Portbury Wharf. On 12 October at New Passage, the amazing total of 61 Bullfinches moved NE in two hours, followed by 40 going NE in one hour on 20th. At the same time 300 Siskins and 1000 Chaffinches also flew NE while up to 70 Siskins were seen at Abbots Leigh at the end of the month. Bramblings were also numerous, with up to 91 at Berron on 19th and 60 at Sand Bay and 66 at Brean Down on 23rd.

Unusual numbers of Black Redstarts appeared in October with singles at seven localities and three in Weston-super-Mare, while another four were seen in November. In contrast, only one Firecrest was recorded, a male trapped at Chew on 8 November which proved to be one of the two originally ringed there earlier in the year on 3 January. There was no large-scale Bearded Tit irruption; the only ones seen were two flying east at Sand Point on 26 October.

A good crop of scarce diurnal migrants during September and October involved two Woodlarks at Middle Hope on 17 September and singles at Berrow on 19 October and Brean Down on 23rd. Four Snow



Snow Bunting

Buntings flew south at Brent Knoll on 12 October and there were two at Clevedon, six at Steart and three at Sand Bay between 28 October and 12 November. A Hooded Crow was seen at Brean Down and eight Twite at Chittening on 25 October; a Lapland Bunting flew south at Berrow on 26th while in November a further three Twite arrived at Severn Beach on 29th.

Inland, a remarkable series of unusual passerines was seen at Cheddar Reservoir. There was a Dipper on 28 September, a Richard's Pipit on 20 October, a Woodlark on 29th, a Snow Bunting from 3 to 7 November, three Twite on 4th (with one on 5th) and finally an immature Lapland Bunting on 20th.

The second winter period

A westerly airstream across Britain in early November was replaced by the Azores anticyclone until 15th when the westerly airflow returned to dominate the weather during the remainder of the month. Rainfall was above average and temperatures close to normal. A deep depression crossed the country on 1 and 2 December, but for the remainder of the month pressure was again high as the Azores anticyclone was centred well north of its usual winter position. Mean temperatures were below average in southern England and rainfall was also below normal in most places.

The first Bewick's Swans had arrived by 18 October and small herds were widespread on the levels and reservoirs, with up to 90 on King's Moor in November, 69 (six immatures) on Tealham Moor in November and December and 30 on Kenn Moor on Christmas Eve. A few small flocks of White-fronted Geese appeared in December and an immature Lesser White-front arrived at Slimbridge on 28th, staying into the New Year. An adult on the same day also remained well into 1976 and there was another on the 29th. Perhaps even more unusual however, was an immature dark-bellied Brent Goose inland at Chew from 15 to 30 November.

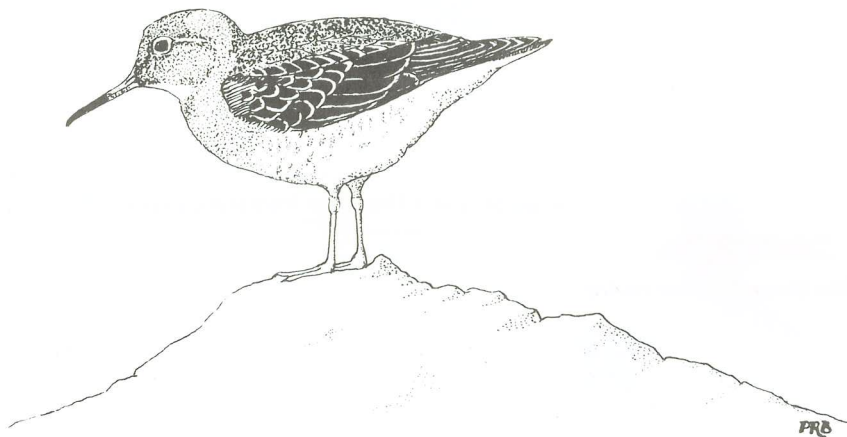
At Cheddar, there were 2500 Coot by 17 November and 2750 on 12 December. Wildfowl numbers here were high with 1400 Teal, up to 46 Pintail and 1000 Pochard at the end of November and beginning of December. Also at Cheddar there were up to 10 female or immature Scaup during November with up to three right through December. A drake Scaup had also been present at Chittening from 12 to 25 October and an immature

was seen at Chew on 1 November, followed by three more on 20 December. An immature male Long-tailed Duck present here on 1 November was joined by another immature male and an immature female on 28th, all three remaining into 1976. By 20 December, there were 788 Wigeon, 52 Goldeneye and 26 Goosanders at this locality and an eclipse male Smew, present since 12 November was joined by a female on 30th, both staying into the New Year. The now regular November passage of Red-breasted Mergansers involved three redheads at Berrow on 9th and singles at Blagdon on 15th and at Chew from 16th until 7 December. The Ruddy Duck flock at Blagdon had reached a record 111 by 26 November, while on the coast there were four Common Scoters at Brean and one at Berrow at the end of November. A female Red-crested Pochard seen on the River Avon at Keynsham on 26 December must surely have been an escape. Finally, before moving on to birds of prey, it is worth noting that Cormorants at Chew reached yet another record in December, when up to 70 were counted

Interesting raptors involved a Red Kite at Chewton Mendip on 2 November and a male Hen Harrier at Tadhams Moor on 9th. Single Merlins were seen at five places while the only Peregrines were an immature at Steart and an adult at Brean Down. An escaped immature Lanner appeared at Chew on 3 December and created havoc amongst the local ducks and waders well into 1976! Owls included only three single Short-eared, at Brean Down, Chittening and Kingston Seymour. There was an unprecedented influx of Long-eared Owls into Britain in October and November but it was not until January 1976 that any penetrated into our area.

Overwintering waders in November and December included up to 10 Ruff at four localities, while Green Sandpipers were seen at six places with up to six at Chew in December. A Grey Plover here on 13 December was unusual, as was a Black-tailed Godwit which stayed all winter. An inland count of 300 Black-tailed Godwits was made at Durleigh on 13 December presumably birds which had flown from nearby Steart. Other inland wader counts included 4500 Lapwings on Tealham/Tadhams Moors in December, 341 Snipe at Chew in November and 725 Dunlin in December. Up to seven Jack Snipe were seen at seven places and Woodcocks were reported from five. A

Purple Sandpiper



Purple Sandpiper returned to Severn Beach in November and December and single Avocets were seen in Sand Bay on 26 November and at Steart on 21 and 22 December. Finally, before turning to passerines there was a count of 3000 Herring Gulls at Cheddar on 22 December and this included one albinistic bird.

At least 17 Blackcaps were seen at 10 localities and nine Chiffchaffs at seven during November and December. No winter Firecrests were noted, but December Black Redstarts were seen at Axbridge, Hengrove Park and Steart. Fieldfares included 2000 on Tealham/Tadhams Moors, along with 800 Redwings. Up to three Water Pipits were seen at Chew from 8 October and one was at Cheddar on 6 and 22 December, with a Rock Pipit on 12th. Bramblings continued to be numerous with up to 300 at Aust/Severn Beach and 100 at Portbury Wharf while flocks of up to 50 occurred at several other spots. Up to 60 Siskins were seen at Abbots Leigh and 53 in Leigh Woods, while Redpolls included 45 at Barrow Gurney in December. A Snow Bunting was seen at Kingston Seymour on 16 December with two at Brean Farm on 19th and four at Berrow on 29th. Finally a Corn Bunting was seen at Long Ashton on 21 December.

ORNITHOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE NORTHERN VORONEZH REGION*, U.S.S.R.

by Michael Wilson

Plates 17–20

Introduction

From late October 1973 to early July 1974 I worked as British Council teaching assistant at Voronezh State University, U.S.S.R. Figure 1 shows the position of this central Russian city. Throughout the period of my stay I carried out regular but by no means always systematic ornithological observations in and around the city of Voronezh, more particularly at the sites of special interest shown in figure 2.

Voronezh is a large industrial town with nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million inhabitants, lying some 600 kilometres south south-east of Moscow. The shopping and administrative centre is separated from the industrial area by the River Voronezh, a tributary of the Don. The River Voronezh was dammed in 1972 to create a vast reservoir (about 70 sq km), popularly known as the 'Voronezh Sea', and it is under this title that the same water finds frequent mention in this paper (see also figures 1 and 2).

The countryside around Voronezh is flat or gently undulating. Large areas are given over to arable farming, predominantly the cultivation of various cereal crops, but vast tracts of woodland still remain. The dominant tree species are Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Birch *Betula pendula*, oaks *Quercus* spp. and Aspen *Populus tremula*, with copses and smaller woods of Alder *Alnus glutinosa* in river valleys. Marshy or boggy areas are scarce but there is habitat of this kind in the valleys of the Don, Voronezh and Usmanka. Extensive stands of Common Reed *Phragmites communis* with, in places, dense growth of such bushes as Sallow *Salix caprea*, are a feature of particularly the northern part of the Voronezh Sea and, to a lesser extent, the valleys of the Don and Usmanka. The soil contains a great deal of sand and in places large open areas are cut across by sandy ravines or gulches. Separating the south-west boundary of the city of Voronezh from the Alder and Willow *Salix* spp. forest bordering the Don, there is a large sandy wasteland, partly used as a rubbish tip, and certainly not without ornithological interest (see also figure 2 and the systematic list).

Like much of the Soviet Union the Voronezh Region, and certainly its northern part where I studied birds, is far from well covered ornithologically. Comparisons with a country like Britain with its huge army of amateur birdwatchers are scarcely fair or relevant: it can almost be said that 'birdwatchers' as such simply do not exist in the U.S.S.R. It may not be without significance to mention that my expressed interest in ornithology was almost invariably taken to mean an occupation with aviculture, not the serious study of wild birds which, in the Soviet Union, appears to be something exclusively for the professional. While young people, through the medium of the Pioneer and Komsomol Organizations may be encouraged to take an interest in nature and develop a positive attitude (e.g. keeping of diaries, nature walks, putting up of nest-boxes etc.), one also has clear memories of a popular pastime with young boys: the trapping of small birds, mainly Siskins**, Goldfinches and Bullfinches, by using a decoy and a series of twigs with fine thread entanglements. These birds are taken either as songsters, or merely to serve as an adornment in a cage. Most cities have a thriving bird market; one bird show I went to exhibited caged specimens of *inter alia* Thrush Nightingale, White Wagtail, Woodlark, Icterine Warbler and Nuthatch. There is little doubt that many of the birds either suffer or die through the ignorance of some younger bird fanciers and it is only fair to add that there is now pressure from naturalists and others to put an end to mass trapping and trading.

L.L.Semago, with the help of his own zoology students, carries out regular observations on spring and autumn passage over the River Don, and also more detailed biological work on breeding birds in a variety of habitats in the environs of Voronezh. Some longer excursions are undertaken: e.g. downstream on the Don, to the Kamennaya Steppe (about 120 km south-east of Voronezh) etc. A certain amount of spasmodic reporting comes in from hunters and also students doing practical work further afield. There is nothing like a 'Voronezh Bird Report' and rather little

* In this paper the Russian *oblast'* is rendered as Region and the smaller *raion* as District.

** For scientific names of species see the systematic list.

material actually reaches the publication stage. However, nature notes in a popular form by L.L.S. have appeared in both local and national newspapers and, more recently, in book form with the publication of his *100 Encounters with Nature* (Voronezh, 1975). In this context one might also make brief mention of the 'journal' *Ornitologiya* which comes out whenever its Moscow editors consider they have enough material of value to warrant it. The VIth All-Union Ornithological Conference which I attended at Moscow University in February 1974 was a forum for much useful discussion and the *Proceedings* (Moscow 1974) contain summaries of papers delivered by L.L.S.

Hunting is fairly strictly controlled in the Soviet Union, but the degree of strictness appears to vary from Republic to Republic. Hunters are generally permit-carrying members of a hunting fraternity. In 1962 the Voronezh Region had 14,400 registered hunters (Barabash-Nikiforov, I.I. & Semago, L.L. 1963, henceforward referred to simply as 'N. & S.'). It is clear that guns are coming into the possession of far from competent persons and N. & S. recommend a tightening-up here, and particularly where young boys and youths are using birds as target practice for their catapults and shotguns. A certain amount of shooting for the pot (both legal and illegal) goes on. N. & S. express deep concern about the harmful effects of spring shoots and are indeed of the opinion that a total ban should be imposed. Alongside decrease in suitable habitat, lack of food base, local abundance of predators and other factors, excessive shooting may well have contributed to the very marked decline or even complete disappearance of Black Grouse *Lyrurus tetrix*, Great Bustard *Otis tarda* and Little Bustard *O. tetrax*. A number of species are considered very harmful, e.g. Goshawk, Sparrowhawk and Marsh Harrier, but even here N. & S. advise caution: culling by experts only and no mass blasting by such as cannot tell 'a hawk from a hernshaw'. The shooting of fine specimens for trophies may still be a serious threat to some groups, notably raptors. Also one must mention that many if not most Soviet ornithologists still consider a corpse in the hand the only sure proof of a new record for a particular area and collecting for various museums and institutes is taken for granted. Happily, quite considerable concern regarding these practices was voiced at the 1974 Conference.

Worry expressed by N. & S. about toxic seed dressings and the use of various pesticides and fungicides has a familiar ring. Specific mention is made of several gamebirds — ducks, Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* and Partridge — where the signs are that toxic chemicals are one of a number of factors involved in their conspicuous decline. The same authors emphasize the need to make more people aware of the dangers to the environment, to

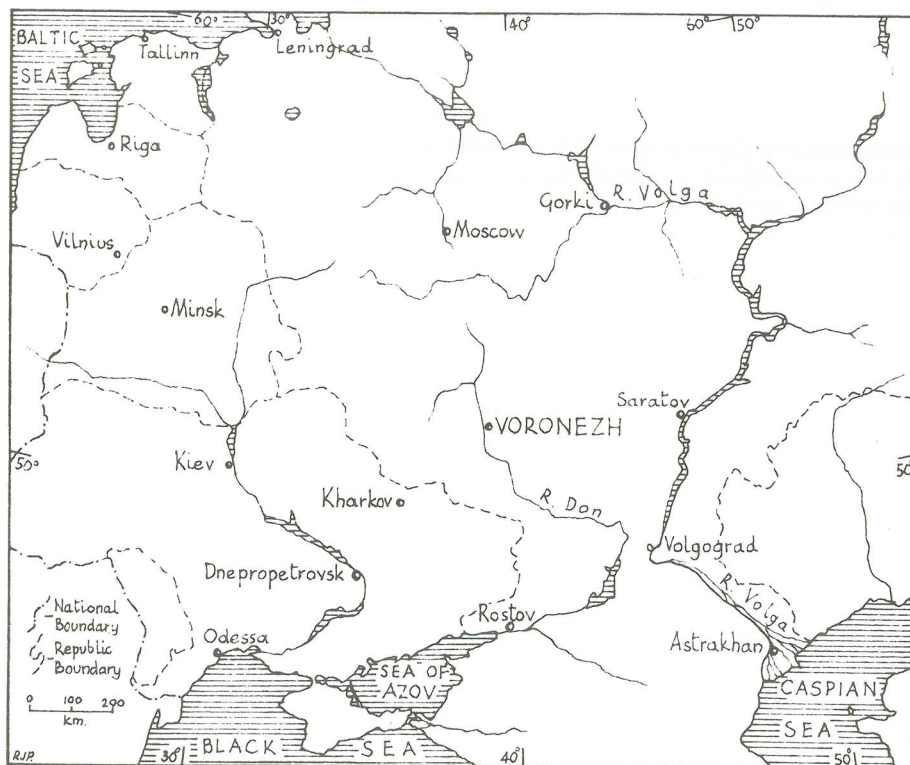


Fig. 1: The location of Voronezh in central U.S.S.R.

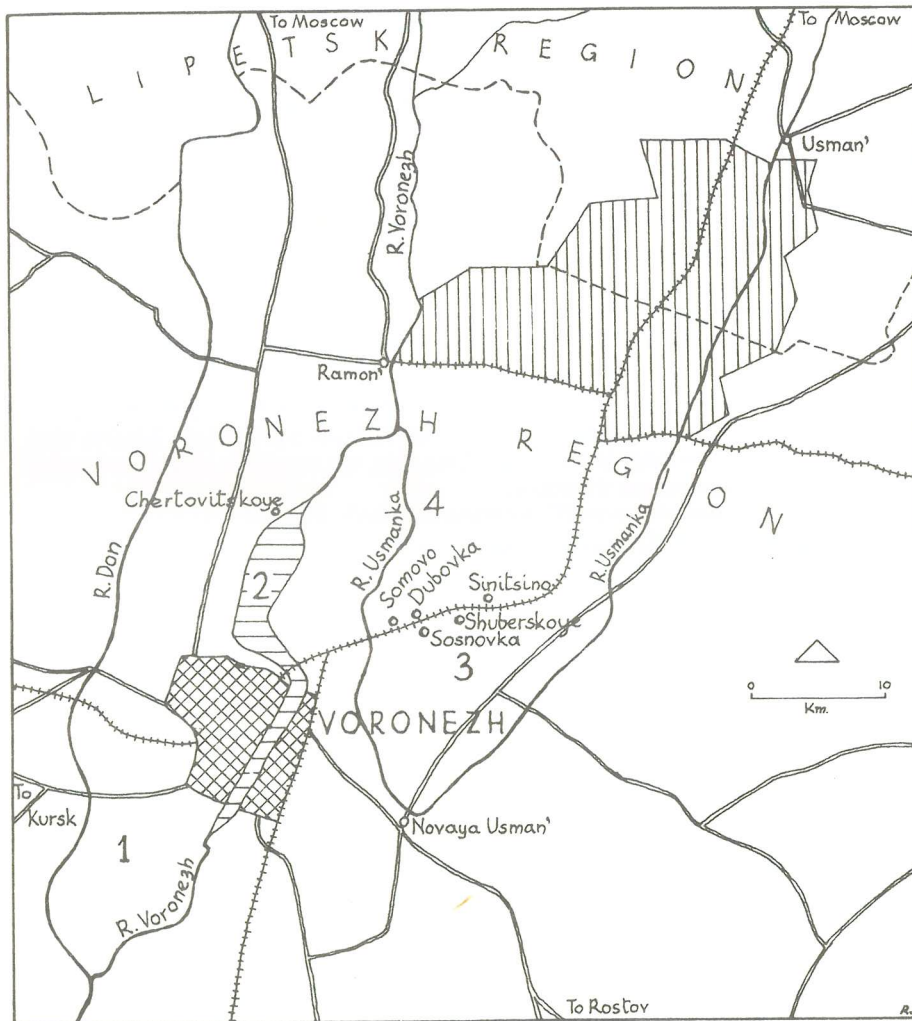


Fig. 2: Sites of particular ornithological interest near Voronezh.

KEY:

1. SW boundary of Voronezh/R. Don
 2. Voronezh Sea (reservoir)
 3. Woods near Shuberskoye
 4. Usmanka Valley
-  Voronezh State Nature Reserve

in general restrict the use of pesticides and, where they are being used, to make sure that agriculturists adhere in every case to the relevant instructions. The picture of a wide gap between Ministry recommendations and regulations on the one hand and actual practice amongst collective farmers on the other, will similarly be not unfamiliar to those who know the sorry tales of abuse in many Western countries. An altogether happier aspect of pest control is presented by the quite widespread 'exploitation' of birds like tits and flycatchers as destroyers of insect pests and their larvae in forests, this being achieved by attracting the useful species through a nest-box scheme on a really grand scale.

One obvious pressure on the countryside and hence on its birds is the increasing desire by city-dwellers to seek out green places at weekends. Russia may well have more vast forests, marshes and lakes than West European countries, none the less people there tend to move in rather large groups and even the wildest, remotest corners are no longer safe from invasion. Fortunately, some superb reserves have been established (not least the Voronezh State Nature Reserve) but all the same some of the more sensitive species, like the larger raptors and Cranes, may disappear or at best greatly decline in numbers. Ornithologists and others sense the need for a widespread educational campaign through lectures, seminars, group work for young people and the mass media, so that all Soviet citizens may become more acutely conscious of their responsibilities to an only apparently boundless nature.

The climate of the Voronezh area is characterized by its relative warmth and inconstant precipitation (Zharkov, 1972). The mean annual temperature (1932 – 1961) was +5.1°C; in some years it may be as low as

+2.7°C, or as high as +7.1°C. The mean January temperature, in the aforementioned period, was equal to -9.4°C and that of July to +19.5°C. Winters are not generally very severe. In the Usmansky Forest (the Voronezh Reserve covers part of this forest: see figure 2) snow cover — in 21 winters out of 30 — did not exceed 60 cm in depth, and the minimum air temperature did not fall below -35°C. There have been very hard winters, such as 1955/56 and 1959/60 and also extraordinarily mild ones with frequent periods of thaw, as was the case in 1935/36 and 1954/55. Droughts are similarly not uncommon and the summer of 1972 was for example an exceptionally dry one. My arrival in Voronezh coincided with the transition period from autumn to winter proper: wet and windy days with overcast skies, some rain and then gradually dropping temperatures with flurries of snow. The winter of 1973/74 seemed to continue the trend of recent years: i.e. not necessarily warmer winters but certainly ones with less snow than the Russians are used to or would like (I am however informed by L.L.S. *in litt.* that the winter of 1974/75 brought a great deal of snow). Typically the coldest period (temperatures falling to -25°C) came shortly after the turn of the year. January, February and March had many exhilarating days, the air seeming to be alive with sparkling frost motes and the sky of the clearest blue; interspersed with this were snowfalls and, as time went on, more frequent and more powerful thaws. The spring warmth makes itself felt towards the end of March and beginning of April and at this time the Don, heavy with melt water, usually bursts its banks; however this has been of less than regular occurrence in recent years. The weather for the rest of my stay was generally settled and warm, occasionally came cloudy days of wind and rain, sometimes thundery.

My arriving in late October meant that I missed most of the activity in the bird world associated with pre-departure assemblies and autumn passage. Also I was obliged to spend some time settling in, so that ornithological excursions had of necessity to be postponed. Similarly, I was not able to stay on in Voronezh after the completion of my contract and therefore most of July, and all of the following two months are not included in this paper. Assuming a 'year' beginning in October, an ornithological calendar of events might run as follows. Mid to late October sees the departure of the very last summer visitors and the arrival of winter guests from further north will already be in full swing. The observer's attention is drawn to Rough-legged Buzzards, and flocks of Siskins, Goldfinches and sparrows are much in evidence. Lakes, rivers and reservoir will hold small numbers of divers, grebes and ducks, whilst geese of various species may move through. This pattern continues to some extent into November; a few Starlings may hang on, Waxwings appear, and a number of small birds, perhaps most characteristically the Great Tit, will move nearer to human habitations where they are assured of a ready food supply. The ubiquitous members of the crow family become yet more conspicuous as migrants arrive, some local birds leave and remarkable roosting assemblies form. In the depths of the winter, from December through to January and February, the only sound in the forests may be that of Great Spotted Woodpeckers hacking away at pine cones, apart that is from the assiduous scurrying and scratching of foraging tits, Treecreepers, Nuthatches and Goldcrests. Parties of brightly plumaged Northern Bullfinches are a splendid sight and often allow close approach as they strip the 'keys' from an ash tree. Whilst February may bring back partially migrant Yellowhammers and Linnets, and Ravens carry nesting material through a blizzard, Bullfinches and Goldcrests begin to move north, it is really until March that one has to wait before the first rushes of spring migrants are recorded. Cold snaps, or a generally late spring will, of course, have a distinct retarding effect.

March anyway normally sees the arrival of larks, Lapwings and others and passage of geese and Cranes begins; depending on the state of rivers and lakes this period is also associated with various duck species, some arriving to breed, others merely *en passant*. As April takes the place of March the northward push of a whole host of 'new' birds keeps the observer busy: several birds of prey including eagles, harriers and buzzards, many waders, Black-headed Gulls, pigeons and doves, thrushes, wheatears and finches. There is increasing activity amongst resident species, and in particular the woods lose something of their winter quiet. Passage of especially northward-bound waders continues through May and even into the first few days of June. May is a month in which many species will be busy with the start of the breeding season and yet there are still more, one thinks of the 'marsh' terns, Red-footed Falcons, colourful Bee-eaters and Rollers, shrikes, *Sylvia* and *Acrocephalus* warblers and flycatchers, which will put in an appearance only when the trees are green and the woods carpeted with flowers. As the late spring moves into summer one has the chance to acquaint oneself with the very varied sounds produced by Spotted Crakes and Corncrakes, Icterine, Barred, River and Marsh Warblers, Thrush Nightingales and Redwings; the skies seem never empty of the distinctive shapes of birds of prey. At the end of one's short 'year' more time can perhaps be devoted to the finding of nests: Black Kite, Common Sandpiper, woodpeckers, Red-backed and Lesser Grey Shrikes, Barred Warbler, Hawfinch and Golden Oriole.

The Systematic List

In the following complete list of all species observed between 27 October 1973 and 3 July 1974, the sequence is that used in Peterson *et al.* (1966). I am indebted to L.L.Semago for much valuable material and quote him liberally. As a basis for comparison and as a supplement to my own notes a summarized translation of all relevant information from N. & S. introduces the entry for each species recorded by those authors. Reference is also made to Flint *et al.* (1968), Heinzel *et al.* (1974) and Voous (1960), particularly in the case of species which may have extended their breeding range into the Voronezh Region in recent years.

BLACK-THROATED DIVER *Gavia arctica*. 'Regular on autumn passage, River Don and tributaries' (N. & S.). One, Voronezh Sea on 17 November.

DIVER sp. *Gavia* sp. Two singles at Voronezh Sea: one on 28 October was probably Black-throated; the other, seen in flight over the reservoir on 29 May was possibly Red-throated *G. stellata*, for which N. & S. give 'one shot, Bolshoi Pogonovoye Lake near Zhirovski Forest, April 1940.'

GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*. 'Rare on passage and very rare breeding bird on lakes of forest and steppe. Until recently bred Khopyorski Reserve (about 200 km south-east of Voronezh), but now no longer does so' (N. & S.). At Voronezh Sea 35 – 40 were seen on 27 October and six or eight on 8 November. Noted in spring at the same place from 1 April when at least eight present and one pair displaying. Later in season increase to eight or ten pairs and some were presumed to have bred, although no direct proof was obtained.

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*. 'Common summer visitor and a passage migrant. First 'booming' may be heard as early as mid-March' (N. & S.). One calling from dense reed cover, northern part of Voronezh Sea on 2 June

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*. 'One shot, near Zhirovski Forest on 2 October 1941' (N. & S.). More recently unconfirmed reports of breeding in the south of the Voronezh Region in the summer of 1974 (L.L.S. *in litt.*). One flying south over the Voronezh Sea on 11 May apparently constitutes the first record for the northern part of the Region (L.L.S. pers. comm.).

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*. 'Passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving in the second half of March and departing in September' (N. & S.). My observations were confined to the spring and summer when the species was noted near the R. Don, in the Usmanka valley and, most frequently, at the Voronezh Sea (max. seen together, 12 – 15) where a small colony exists.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*. 'Passage migrant and summer visitor, mainly to the southern part of the Region where it sometimes nests' (N. & S.). The same authors also bemoan the frequent cases of senseless destruction by man. At the Voronezh Sea a single bird was seen on 3 May. Later observations suggested however that one, possibly two pairs bred in the reed beds there. Small colony found, Voronezh Sea, summer 1976 (L.L.S. *in litt.*).

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*. 'Regular on spring and autumn passage, but much less common than Bean Goose' (N. & S.). Skein of c.50, heading north-east over the Voronezh Sea on 7 April.

BEAN GOOSE *Anser fabalis*. 'Of the geese which have been recorded in the Region, this species is the most frequently met with. Spring passage end of March/early April; autumn passage mid-October' (N. & S.). Voronezh Sea: 35 flying north and c.25 south on 30 March. Five geese flying south-east near the R. Don (south-west of Voronezh on 6 April and c.70 heading north-east over the Voronezh Sea on the 7th were probably also of this species.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*. 'Irregular passage migrant which may also have bred' (N. & S.). A lone adult on the R. Usmanka on 8 May was the only record.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, usually arriving in March and April and departing October to November. Single birds and small flocks may winter on unfrozen stretches of rivers.' (N. & S.). This pattern is confirmed by my own observations: quite large numbers (up to 400), Voronezh Sea and environs, late October to early November, with some movement west. First noted in spring on 23 March. Maximum count later at Voronezh Sea, where breeding took place, of c.30 – 40 on 11 May.

TEAL *Anas crecca*. 'Summer visitor and passage migrant, not so numerous as Garganey; nests in same places as that species, but in considerably smaller numbers, though hunters report slight increase in recent years' (N. & S.). Not seen by me in the late autumn or winter, the first noted being two near the R. Don on 24 April. Small numbers (less than ten) were observed on the R. Usmanka in April and at the Voronezh Sea, where breeding probably took place, in May and June

GADWALL *Anas strepera*. 'Not uncommon on passage and regular breeder, but only in small numbers. Nests mainly on waters of the steppe zone but there are also breeding records for the alder-fringed creeks of the Khopyorski Reserve' (N. & S.). Not seen by the author in autumn or winter but one pair, Voronezh Sea in early May and a single bird there on 2 June.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*. 'Uncommon passage migrant with isolated pairs breeding sporadically, mainly in the north of the region' (N. & S.). Interestingly, L.L.S. reports (*in litt.*) that 'large numbers' bred at the Voronezh Sea in 1976. The indications are of an extension of the range southwards: see maps in Flint *et al.* (1968), Heinzel *et al.* (1974) and Voous (1960). Small numbers were observed, R. Don and R. Usmanka in April and in the second locality, in early May. Peak count of c.100, Voronezh Sea on 3 May.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*. 'Like Wigeon, uncommon passage migrant and irregular breeder in very small numbers, mainly in the north of the Voronezh Region. However, in 1953, significant numbers of Pintail were discovered breeding at the lakes and marshes of the Pavlovski District about 150 km south-east of Voronezh' (N. & S.). Not seen in autumn or winter, but first noted at Voronezh Sea on 7 April and up to 20 there in April and May, with one pair on 2 June and female flushed from eight eggs on 16th.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant' (N. & S.). First recorded, Voronezh Sea on 7 April, when 15–20 present; thereafter plentiful — peak of c.100 on 1 May — and much display and territorial squabbling noted. Also recorded in the Usmanka valley, with a peak of 35–45 on 27 April and one pair near R. Don on 28th.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*. 'Like Wigeon and Pintail an uncommon passage migrant which breeds irregularly in only very small numbers' (N. & S.). Present at the Voronezh Sea from 7 April and peak there in early May with c.100 recorded; possibly up to ten pairs stayed to breed. Also recorded in Usmanka valley where at least five on 21 April.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*. 'Much less numerous on passage than Tufted Duck and also rarer as a breeding bird. Breeding recorded Khopyorski Reserve' (N. & S.). First noted, Voronezh Sea on 7 April and already c.250 there by early May; numbers remained quite high (c.80) into June and some probably bred.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*. 'Far less common than Tufted Duck on passage; rare as breeding bird, but breeding recorded for *inter alia* the Usmanski Forest. Sometimes overwinters on unfrozen stretches of water.' (N. & S.). Observed only at the Voronezh Sea where one or two in May and June and where breeding may have occurred.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. 'Most frequently met with of the diving ducks of the Region and most numerous on autumn passage, with assemblies of 500–700; sporadic breeder' (N. & S.). Noted at Voronezh Sea from 7 April and at least 200 there by early May. Only about ten seen at the reservoir in the early part of June and it was not definitely established whether any bred.

LONG-TAILED DUCK *Clangula hyemalis*. 'One record of a bird shot, R. Don, on 15 March 1939' (N. & S.). A tight-knit group of seven, Voronezh Sea on 8 November. Annual winter visitor in some numbers to the Black Sea, particularly west of the Crimea (Bauer & Glutz von Blotzheim 1969) and the newly created reservoir is clearly going to attract migrants moving south from their northern breeding grounds.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*. 'Small groups appear in the second half of March and some birds may stay throughout the summer, leading a nomadic existence. Isolated birds sometimes winter on unfrozen water. Breeding recorded, valley of the R. Potudan', Ostrogozhski District about 80 km south-west of Voronezh' (N. & S.). Small numbers in autumn (up to eight) and spring (at least three) Voronezh Sea. According to L.L.S. (pers. comm.) there have been more recent records of breeding in the Voronezh Region, but attempts to induce this species to use nest-boxes at the Voronezh Sea have thus far been unsuccessful; one such box was used by Tawny Owl in 1974.

SMEW *Mergus albellus*. 'Regular in small numbers on passage and has bred' (N. & S.). Eight at Voronezh Sea on 17 November and two pairs, which finally left in a north-easterly direction, in the valley of the Usmanka on 27 April.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*. 'Irregular in small numbers on spring and autumn passage; overwintering on unfrozen waters also recorded' (N. & S.). Four 'redheads', Voronezh Sea on 30 March.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*. 'Passage migrant in very small numbers, appearing in the first half of April and departing during September and October. Formerly bred in both the Khopyorski and Voronezh Reserves, in the latter up to 1959 or 1960, but nesting nowhere confirmed since' (N. & S.; additional information supplied by L.L.S. *in litt.*). One pausing to fish (successfully) in R. Usmanka, before moving on north, on 21 April.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor' (N. & S.). Passage was observed over the R. Don, at the Voronezh Sea and in the Usmanka valley, lasting from early April through to late May. Generally numbers seen were small (less than ten) but at the eastern shore of the Voronezh Sea at least 22 'buzzards' moved north on 11 May, and most, if not all of these were considered to have been Honeys. Breeding pairs found at Voronezh Sea, in valley of R. Usmanka and in mixed woods near Shuberskoye Village.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans*. 'One of the commonest raptors of the Region. Passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving (late March) early April and departing by the end of September. Flocks of up to 20 or 30 non-breeding birds may be observed during the summer and larger assemblies (100+) are a feature of the mid-August period' (N. & S.). First noted, R. Don on 6 April, then at Voronezh Sea and R. Usmanka in same month. At least three breeding pairs, R. Don, near city of Voronezh; probably five or six pairs bred at Voronezh Sea, where the species was frequently observed, both typically as a scavenger and also as an adept catcher of live fish. L.L.S. reports (pers. comm.) 'abundant all down the Don'.

GOSHAWK *Accipiter gentilis*. 'Resident, slightly less common than Sparrowhawk. Both these species are considered harmful but measures should be taken to reduce their numbers only if there is a direct and serious threat to game. Otherwise the presence of a small population in our woods should be welcomed as a healthy regulating force' (N. & S.). Single Goshawks were seen in autumn and winter in the wooded areas east of Voronezh. Some evidence of possible passage with single birds observed over the Don, Usmanka and Voronezh rivers in April and May. No direct proof of breeding but birds certainly present in nesting season near Shuberskoye Village.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*. 'Commonest of the three *Accipiter* hawks found in the Region. (Levant Sparrowhawk *A. brevipes*, a rare summer visitor which reaches the northern limit of its distribution at Voronezh, was not observed during 1973–74). Some winter but mainly summer visitor and passage migrant' (N. & S.). Recorded in wooded areas east of Voronezh in November and December. Three migrants, R. Don on 6 April. Possibly bred in Usmanka valley, at Voronezh Sea and near Shuberskoye Village.

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD *Buteo lagopus*. 'Commonly observed on passage and some also winter. Average arrival date over 17 years in Usmanski Forest was 26 October. Abundant in winter of 1945–46 when rodent prey was conspicuously numerous' (N. & S.). Autumn passage during November with at least 25 moving west in about one hour near Shuberskoye on 3rd. In winter at least three near Sosnovka on 10 February. Return passage during March and April, R. Don and near Shuberskoye (up to four together). Last seen over R. Don on 10 April.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*. 'Widespread and common summer visitor and passage migrant. Arrival generally during first ten days of April. Towards end of August moves around in groups of 10–15, mass passage and departure around middle of September, but the species may be observed up to early or even mid-October. Deserves protection as a most useful species' (N. & S.). Spring passage from 10 April, with nine, including one showing characteristics of Steppe Buzzard *B.b. vulpinus*, moving north over R. Don. Northward movement of 22 (one apparent Steppe) in seven hours, same place on 24th. One already on nest high in Alder, valley of R. Usmanka on 13 April. Apart from this also probably bred near R. Don, at Voronezh Sea and near Shuberskoye.

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraaetus pennatus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant. First arrive Usmanski Forest between 7 and 20 April. Autumn assembly and departure during September. Light- and dark-phase birds found in roughly equal proportion' (N. & S.). According to L.L.S. (pers. comm.) now much reduced as a summer visitor. All records are of pale-phase birds: R. Don: one moving quickly east on 24 April and another soaring for some time and then drifting north-east on 28th. Single birds at Voronezh Sea on 3 May (persistently mobbed by Hooded Crow) and on 25th.

SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila clanga*. 'Quite common as passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrives early April; assemblies engage in local movements during September and this gradually takes the birds into departure proper. The southern limit of the breeding range runs through the northern part of the Voronezh Region.' (N. & S.).

According to L.L.S. (verbal comm.) still regularly observed but now much reduced in numbers, probably in the main because of human disturbance and persecution. One passing east low over the Don on 3 April. One at Voronezh Sea on 3 May and one or two there on 11th, certainly involving a different individual from that seen on the 3rd.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*. 'Rare summer visitor; breeding recorded for both Voronezh and Khopyorski Reserves (about 40 km north-east, and 200 km south-east of Voronezh respectively). Arrival from early to late April and latest departure date 27 September 1950' (N. & S.). One pair soaring over Usmanka valley on 13 April. Single birds circling over R. Don on 24 April and passing north-east, Voronezh Sea on 1 May.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving later than Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* which is often seen as early as March (no Hen Harriers were positively identified by the author during 1973–74).' (N. & S.). Only record was of single male passing east over R. Don on 3 April.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*. 'Quite common, mainly as passage migrant, but also breeds. Latest of the four harriers to arrive' (N. & S.). Single males north-west or north R. Don on 24 April and over R. Usmanka on 27th. One or two males, R. Don on 28 April and most likely bred on wasteland on west bank of this river, near Voronezh, as well as near Shuberskoye Village.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant. When rodents are in short supply this species may cause considerable damage to populations of Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, gulls, terns and ducks, comparable to that inflicted by Goshawk and Sparrowhawk, but demanding more incisive measures because of the Harrier's greater abundance.' (N. & S.). First noted, Voronezh Sea on 1 May; probably two pairs bred there. Possibly also bred in Usmanka valley and near Shuberskoye Village.

HARRIER sp. *Circus* sp. Records of unidentified harriers as follows: R. Don: one north-east and one south-west on 6 April; two east and one soaring on 28th. R. Usmanka: one to the north (possibly Hen) and one in area for some time (probably Montagu's or Pallid) on 28 April; two on 2 May and one moving west on 9th.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*. 'Fairly common as passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving during the last days of April and early May, and departing during the first half of September' (N. & S.). First recorded, R. Usmanka on 13 April and five or six hunting insects with Red-footed Falcon same place on 9 May. At least one pair, Voronezh Sea on 2 June: determined but unsuccessful pursuit of Sand Martin. One pair patrolling territory near large Sand Martin colony there on 16th. Probably also bred in Usmanka valley. L.L.S. informed me (verbal comm.) that the Sand Martin is a favoured prey of many pairs around Voronezh.

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving during May and departing in September (late birds into October). Autumn pre-departure assemblies of up to 150 and more' (N. & S.). Passage observed from 1 May when at least nine hawking insects over Voronezh Sea. At least ten moving north-east over R. Usmanka on 2 May and eight east over the Don on the 4th. Finally, c.15 hunting insects over the Alder woods and water meadows of the Usmanka valley on 9 May. No breeding colonies were found but according to L.L.S. (verbally) the birds move around from year to year and numbers are subject to considerable fluctuation. The nests most commonly occupied are those vacated by Rooks.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*. 'One of the commonest and most widespread raptors of the Region. Present from March to October. Deserves active protection as an extremely useful species.' (N. & S.). First seen in spring was one moving west near Shuberskoye on 23 March. Thereafter single birds or pairs were noted in likely breeding habitat in the following localities: near Dubovka Village, valley of R. Usmanka, R. Don near Voronezh and near Shuberskoye.

PARTRIDGE *Perdix perdix*. 'Resident, with some local movements in winter. Considerable decline in recent years attributed to introduction and spread of modern farming methods, high mortality in winters with much snow and frequent heavy frosts and finally, loss of clutches and chicks to various predators, including scavenging, half-wild dogs' (N. & S.). A pair was flushed on the eastern shore of the Voronezh Sea on 3 May, and a single bird in the same place on the 11th. No nest was found but the birds may well have been breeding there.

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant. However, marked decline in numbers in recent years, to a significant extent the result of the mass trapping of the species in those areas where it assembles in large numbers on passage. First calls usually heard late April or early May (average for 11 years in Voronezh

Reserve was 7 May). Departure is slow and inconspicuous, usually concluded by early October, but late birds have been recorded in November' (N. & S.). First heard were one or two in the Usmanka valley on 9 May. One or two noted later in May and June by R. Don and also in cereal crops near Shuberskoye Village.

CRANE *Grus grus*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor; main arrival and spring passage usually in second half of March (average over 21 years was 28 March). Return passage birds appear in August; general exodus reaches peak in second half of September and then, in some cases, flocks may contain 200–300 birds. Such large assemblies on stubble fields immediately prior to departure proper are not considered a harmful phenomenon. Breeds in small numbers in remote woodland fens, e.g. in Voronezh Reserve (Usmanski Forest)' (N. & S.; also L.L.S. verbally). Only record was of one soaring high over the Voronezh Sea on 11 May.

WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*. 'Rare summer visitor, but mainly passage migrant. Arrival during last ten days of April and departure in the second half of August or beginning of September' (N. & S.). One record of a bird calling briefly from a small marsh near the Don on 14 April.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*. 'Relatively common on spring and autumn passage and small numbers breed, but not so often as the Little Crane *P. parva* (a species not recorded by the author!). Arrives in the second half of April and departure takes place during the whole of August' (N. & S.). Eight or ten calling in the Usmanka valley on 8 May and at least five on the following day; possibly bred in this locality.

CORNCRAKE *Crex crex*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving in early May and leaving during August and September' (N. & S.). Noted in Usmanka valley from early May (at least ten calling on the 9th); also recorded in marsh near R. Don, near Shuberskoye and at Voronezh Sea. Likely to have bred in all these localities.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving quite late, i.e. end of April/early May and leaving during the second half of September and the beginning of October' (N. & S.). Small numbers were seen at Voronezh Sea in May and June and also on the R. Usmanka in early May. Likely to have bred in both localities.

COOT *Fulica atra*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Decline, especially after 2nd World War (no reason given, but authors plead for more protection for this otherwise important game bird). Arrival in early April and departure at end of September/early October' (N. & S.). Found only at Voronezh Sea where present as a breeding bird in small numbers from late March.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*. 'Very rare on passage and as breeding bird. Breeding pair found at confluence of Don and Voronezh on 25 June 1941 and a pair present at the same locality on 14 June 1950' (N. & S.). One with gulls and terns on small island in Voronezh Sea on 29 May and 2 June; presence of breeding pair confirmed on 5 June. One nest with three eggs on same islet on 16 June and second pair also seen. According to L.L.S. (verbally) the Oystercatcher is rare as a breeding bird this far up the Don and this was indeed the first breeding record for the Voronezh Sea. L.L.S. however later confirmed (*in litt.*) that inquisitive humans virtually put paid to any attempts by these birds to breed on the islet and that the species did not appear at the reservoir after 1974, although breeding continued to be recorded further south on the Don.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival and passage sometimes as early as late March. Local birds have generally left by early September, but passage birds are to be met with after this' (N. & S.). First seen, R. Don on 14 April. Later noted in April and May: R. Usmanka, R. Don and at Voronezh Sea. Probably bred on R. Don near Voronezh and certainly at Voronezh Sea, where three nests were found on sandy islet on 16 June, one containing the unusual clutch of five eggs.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrives second half of March/early April; departure sometimes as late as end of October' (N. & S.). Spring passage from 23 March, when two flying east near Shuberskoye, but one or two pairs already displaying over fields near R. Don on 3 April. At least 210 moved east over the R. Don in 5½ hours on 6 April and c.200 were settled on R. Voronezh floods on the following day. Small numbers (less than ten pairs) bred at Voronezh Sea, by R. Don and in Usmanka valley.

LITTLE or TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris minuta* or *temminckii*. 'Both these species are encountered only as passage migrants: Little in groups of up to 20 on R. Don; Temminck's common' (N. & S.). One, probably Temminck's Stint at Voronezh Sea on 2 June.

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*. 'Common passage migrant, found in flocks of up to 20 on the Don' (N. & S.). One feeding with other waders and 20–25 peeled off from northward-bound flock of c.100, to come down and land at Voronezh Sea on 2 June.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*. 'Not uncommon passage migrant which may possibly have bred. Spring passage lasts almost throughout May (during this time flocks of 20–30 birds) and autumn passage extends from the first ten days of August to early October, the peak coming in early September.' (N. & S.). Two, R. Usmanka on 27 April and small numbers (up to 50) at Voronezh Sea in early May, until build-up to 250–300 there on 11 May. Later numbers dropped and only 25–30 were noted at the Voronezh Sea on 2 June. Breeding was not proved. Numbers on passage are subject to considerable fluctuations (L.L.S. *in litt.*).

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*. 'Passage migrant and summer visitor in only small numbers' (N. & S.). First noted at Voronezh Sea on 7 April, when 15–20 present. At least three pairs occupying territory, valley of Usmanka in early May and three or four pairs probably bred at the Voronezh Sea.

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*. 'Rare summer visitor and passage migrant' (N. & S.). Single pairs at Voronezh Sea, where breeding may have taken place, on 3 May and 2 June and also in Usmanka valley on 8 and 9 May.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*. 'Rare passage migrant' (N. & S.). Two single birds in spring: one flying south, R. Usmanka on 13 April and another heard near R. Don on 28th.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, usually arriving late March/early April and leaving by mid-September' (N. & S.). Nine (song heard) in Usmanka valley on 13 April and same number by R. Don on 24th. 13 or 14, some in damp-bottomed Alder woods, Usmanka valley on 27 April and at least seven there on the following day, with two or three on 2 May. I was not able to establish whether breeding took place in this locality but Green Sandpipers nest regularly in the Usmanski Forest where they occupy the disused nests of Turtle Dove, Jay and others (N. & S.).

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*. 'Rare passage migrant and breeder in small numbers' (N. & S.). Noted on passage in May with peak of c.50 at Voronezh Sea on 11th. Clearly this species is of somewhat irregular appearance, as L.L.S. reports (*in litt.*) that none were seen at the reservoir in the spring of 1976.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Tringa hypoleucos*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, virtually the commonest wader of the Region. Main spring arrival and passage mid-April; autumn passage begins early and is usually completed by the end of August' (N. & S.). First seen were four by the R. Don on 24 April but there were already 15–20 at the same place on the 28th. 10–15 breeding pairs, with much calling and display, at the Voronezh Sea on 1 May. A nest with a clutch of four eggs was found by the R. Voronezh, north of the reservoir on 29 May.

TEREK SANDPIPER *Xenus cinereus*. 'Rare passage migrant' (N. & S.). At least one pair, probably a third bird present, at the Voronezh Sea on 25 May: there was much song and display. One or two were noted at the reservoir later in May and in June and the behaviour of one on 16 June indicated possible breeding on islet. L.L.S. however states (*in litt.*) that he has no positive proof that the species has ever bred at the Voronezh Sea.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*. 'Rare passage migrant and breeding bird. Appears in small flocks on spring passage in mid-April; autumn passage sometimes begins in August and lasts to the end of September. Bred on R. Voronezh, near city in 1962' (N. & S.). At least four with Ruff at Voronezh Sea on 11 May and a pair, very aggressive in defence of territory there on the 25th.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*. 'Passage birds appear at the lakes and marshes of the steppe in spring and autumn. Singletons and small flocks have also been observed in summer. According to other authors (*cit.* N. & S.) both this species and Whimbrel *N. phaeopus* (not recorded by the author during 1973–74) can be described as rare breeders' (N. & S.). Noted once only, on spring passage: two flying north-east near R. Don on 10 April.

SNIFE *Gallinago gallinago*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival and display of this species extends from the end of March to the first half of May. Departure is concluded by mid-October' (N. & S.). First seen, Usmanka valley on 13 April. Later observations suggested that small numbers (less than six pairs) bred there and also at the Voronezh Sea.

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minima*. 'Rare passage migrant' (N. & S.). One flushed, Voronezh Sea on 27 October.



Plate 17. Above: this small sandy islet in the Voronezh Sea held many nesting birds in the summer of 1974 — perhaps most notably a colony of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons*, 24 pairs strong. Birds regularly encountered loafing here included Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, 'marsh' terns and various waders. Below: mixed woods on the west shore of the Voronezh Sea boast a rich avifauna — Icterine Warblers *Hippolais ictarina*, Barred Warblers *Sylvia nisoria* and Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia*, and nesting Fieldfares *Turdus pilaris*, Redwings *T. iliacus* and Hawfinches *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. Characteristic here are the sandy-bottomed channels. (See pages 127–152.) (Photos: Michael Wilson)



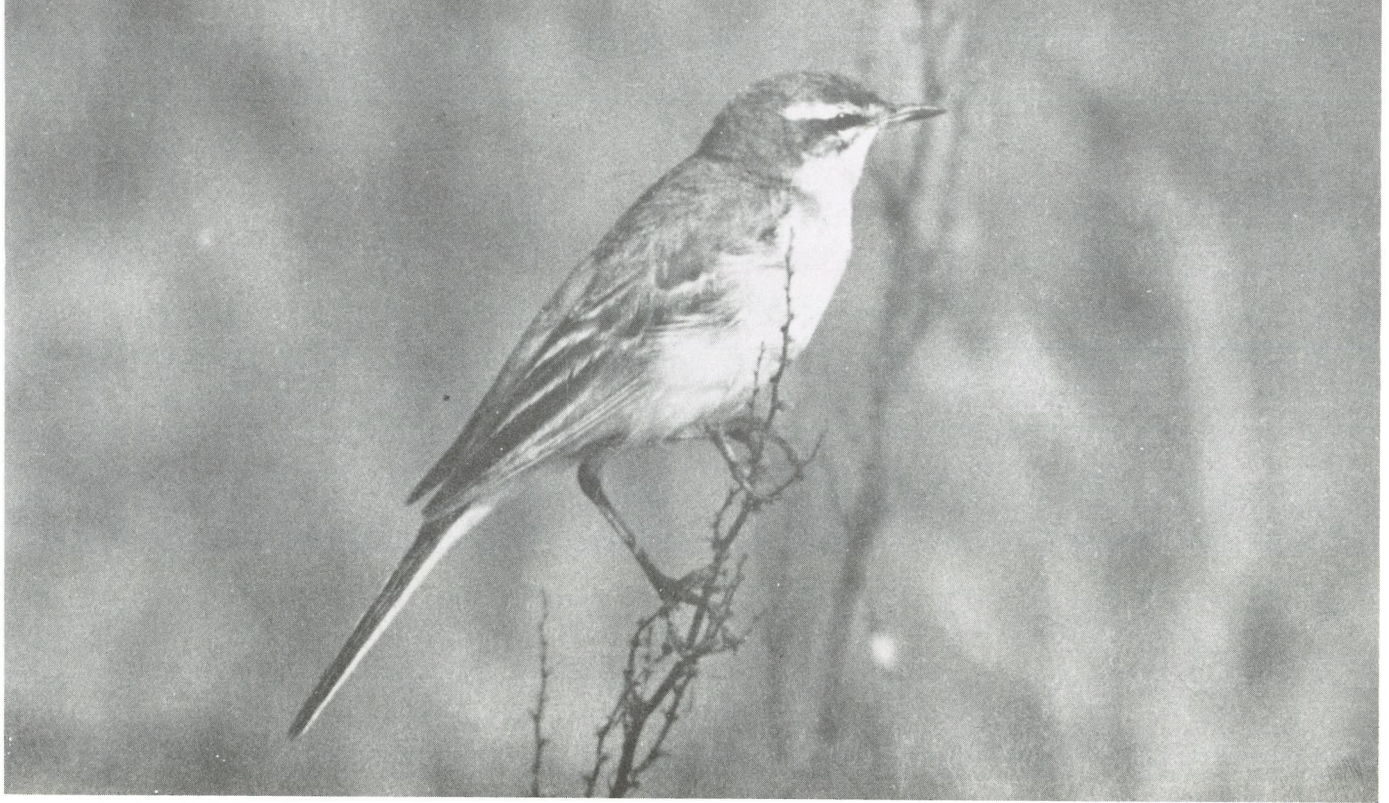


Plate 18. Above: Blue-headed Wagtails *Motacilla flava flava* are found as breeding birds in the river valleys and on the verges of the Voronezh Sea. (Photo: L.L. Semago) Large numbers of 'yellow' wagtails pass through the Voronezh Region and other races recorded include both *beema* and *thunbergi*. Below: in summer the northern end of the Voronezh Sea has a lush aquatic vegetation providing a superb haven for nesting wildfowl and others. (Photo: Michael Wilson) Abundant are Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* and both Black and White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* and *leucopterus*, much rarer breeders are Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*, Little Gulls and Whiskered Terns *C. hybrida*.





Plate 19. Above: the male Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* is a beautiful and distinctive bird with yellow head, face and breast, grey mantle and black collar. (Photo: L.L. Semago) The species appears to be extending its breeding range to the south and west at present. Below: valley of the River Usmanka, spring 1974. (Photo: Michael Wilson) Here both woods — particularly Alder stands on the east bank — and water meadows were a great attraction to migrant and nesting birds: Hobbies *Falco subbuteo*, Red-footed falcons *F. vespertinus* and White-winged Black Terns were seen in the air together, and Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* and Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus* haunted the partially flooded grassy areas.

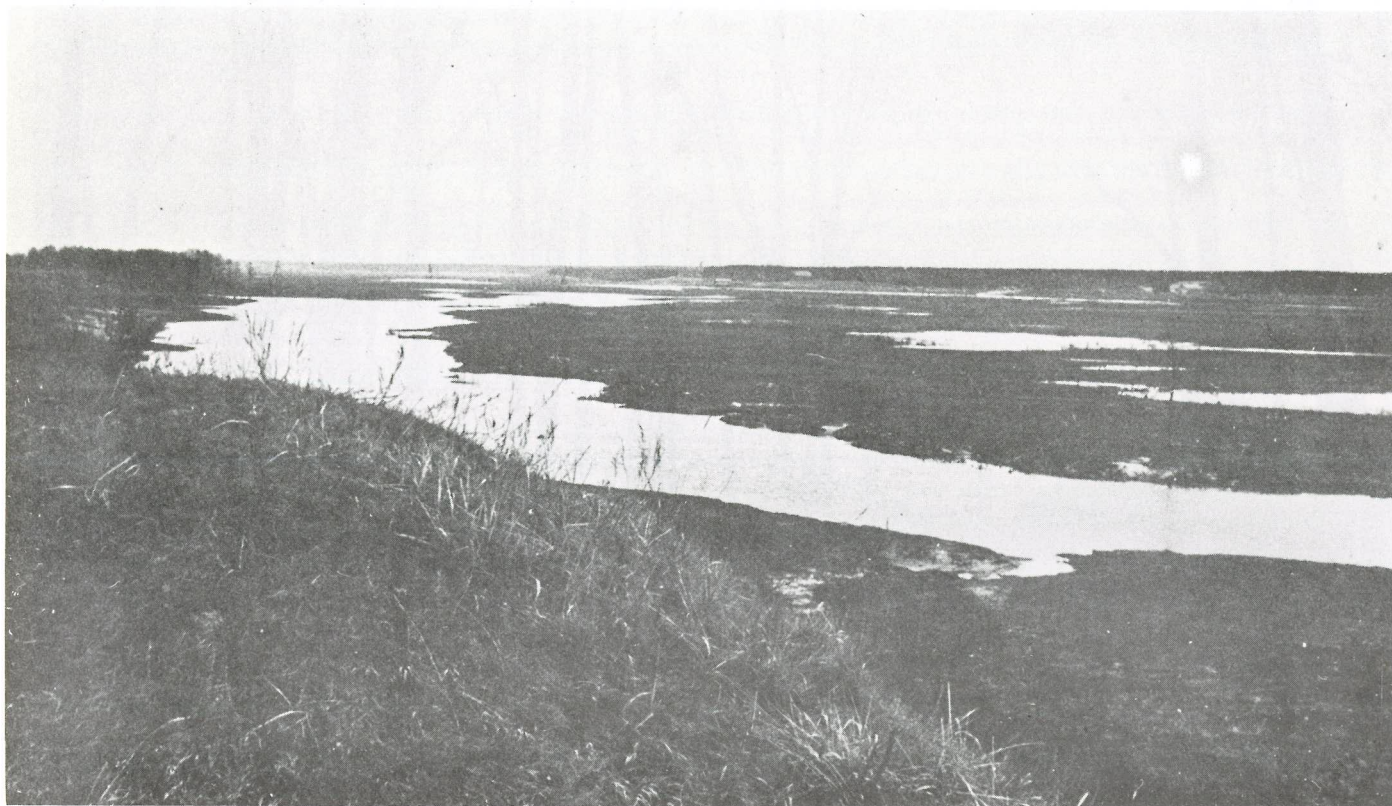




Plate 20. Above: in early April winter has given way to spring and snow-melt swells the waters of the Voronezh Sea. Migrating flocks of ducks, waders and others find these conditions much to their liking. Below: winter quiet in the predominantly Aspen and oak woods near the village of Shuberskoye. With the snow deep and the temperatures low, the few remaining birds — tits, woodpeckers and the like — are almost entirely occupied in getting enough food during the brief daylight hours. (*Photos: Michael Wilson*)



PRATINCOLE *Glareola pratincola*. Not recorded by N. & S. and L.L.S. (verbal comm. and *in litt.*) has never been seen in the Voronezh area, but only near Odessa on the Black Sea. Thus a record of one hawking insects for some time over the northern part of the Voronezh Sea on 3 May would appear to be the first for the Voronezh Region.

BLACK-WINGED PRATINCOLE *Glareola nordmanni*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor. Flocks of 40–60 were recorded in the Kamennaya Steppe by Ogniov and Vorobyov (1923, *cit.* N. & S.); nowadays flocks seen in the Region, on meadows near the Don, mainly in the south, are likely to be smaller (10–15 birds). Scarce breeding bird' (N. & S.). One pair on and over islet in Voronezh Sea on 16 June; the birds were very agitated but L.L.S. (*in litt.*) reports that they did not breed and that also there had been a few records of this species in the Voronezh area prior to 1974.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*. 'Two records of birds shot: Kamennaya Steppe in August 1922 and near Chertovitskoye (R. Voronezh) on 16 April 1950' (N. & S.). A few pairs now breed in the Black-headed Gull colony at the Voronezh Sea (L.L.S., verbal comm. and 1974). Regular breeder further north in the R.S.F.S.R. and also in the south on the Black Sea (cf. maps in Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960). Eight or ten at the Voronezh Sea on 1 May and regular thereafter, with peak of 80–100 (many immatures and sub-adults) in June.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor' (N. & S.). Small numbers (up to 20) at Voronezh Sea, late October to mid-November and present there again from late March. 200 or more pairs bred in large reed bed at north end of reservoir (L.L.S. 1975).

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*. 'One record of bird shot by hunter, Petino on the Don, near Voronezh, at the end of August 1961. The bird had been ringed at the nest near Kauko, Finland on 11 July of the same year' (N. & S.). Voronezh Sea: two adults and two sub-adults on 25 May and one adult there on 2 June.

COMMON GULL *Larus canus*. 'Common on spring (particularly heavy on 4 and 5 April 1957, Usmanka River) and autumn (September) passage' (N. & S.). Small numbers (up to 12) at Voronezh Sea in autumn, and last noted there on 17 November. Present at this locality again from 7 April and c.40 (majority sub-adults) seen on 29 May. Birds were still observed in June. L.L.S. reports (*in litt.*) that, prior to 1973, he had never seen either old or young birds after mid-May, but that immatures of both Common and Little had been a regular feature of the summer months since that time.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias niger*. 'Very common passage migrant and summer visitor' (N. & S.). According to L.L.S. *et al.* (1974) numbers of migrant Black and White-winged Black Terns reached 25,000–30,000 at the newly-created Voronezh Sea in 1972. Observed only at the Voronezh Sea: c.50 there on 1 May and c.90 on 3rd. At least 100 on 25th and certainly many pairs bred. See also below under White-winged Black Tern.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucopterus*. 'Like Black Tern spring passage from second half of April and autumn passage in September. Nests in colonies of smaller size than those of Black Tern, not infrequently the two species may be found breeding together.' (N. & S.). 20–25 at Voronezh Sea on 1 May were the first. At least 50 hawking insects over water meadows in the Usmanka valley, in loose company of Hobby and Red-footed Falcon on 9 May. Certainly not less than 500 'marsh' terns at the reservoir on 11 May and majority of these were White-winged Black. Many pairs bred there.

WHISKERED TERN *Chlidonias hybrida*. Not recorded by N. & S. but L.L.S. (1974 and verbally) reports that the species first appeared in 1972, with the flooding of the Voronezh Sea, and that breeding then took place. That this may be only a tentative extension of the range is demonstrated by the fact that the species was not seen at all in 1976 (L.L.S. *in litt.*). Voronezh Sea: at least three on 11 May, one seen on 15th and three again on 29th.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, present from April to September. Like Little Tern, mainly found on sandy islets and sand bars of R. Don, sometimes forming small colonies' (N. & S.). Voronezh Sea: first noted on 3 May and possibly eight or ten pairs on 29th. Nest with three eggs on islet on 16 June.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor, present from April to September' (N. & S.); see also under Common Tern. Voronezh Sea: c.20 on 25 May and an estimated 20 pairs on 29th. 24 occupied nests on sandy islet on 16 June. In 1972 a colony of 26 nests at the reservoir was the only one of any size in the Central Don basin (L.L.S. 1975).

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving somewhat later than Stock Dove (see below). Flocks of up to 100 and more in mid-August, mass departure in late September' (N. & S.).

Spring passage from late March. Later small numbers noted in breeding season: R. Usmanka, R. Don and near Shuberskoye village.

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*. 'Relatively common on passage and as summer visitor. Arrival late March/early April (average date over 21 years was 25 March), departure in late September' (N. & S.). One or two flying west near R. Don on 6 April. Later noted in breeding season Usmanka valley and near Shuberskoye.

FERAL PIGEON *Columba livia*. 'Common resident in and around human settlements. A few pairs nest in chalk cliffs of Don valley' (N. & S.). Commonly seen in small flocks in city of Voronezh, in villages and sometimes on open fields.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*. A recent addition to the Region's avifauna, not recorded by N. & S. According to L.L.S. (verbally and *in litt.*) the Collared Dove first appeared in the city of Voronezh in the late summer of 1969; since that time there has been an increase and the species has been observed in many settlements all over the Region. This clearly represents a considerable expansion to the east, or a 'filling-out' of the well documented thrust to the north-west through Europe (see maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960). Two seen, Voronezh on 22 March and one calling, Sanatorium gardens at Chertovitskoye, R. Voronezh on 7 April.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving early May and leaving during September' (N. & S.). First noted, Somovo, near Voronezh on 27 April. Widespread and 'super-abundant' in May and June; particularly numerous in Usmanka valley and in mixed woods near Shuberskoye village.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*. 'Arrival very dependent on type of spring: average date for Voronezh Reserve was 25 April. Last calls heard in second half of July, birds themselves may be seen up to the beginning of October. Nest-boxes normally used by Redstarts have entrance holes enlarged to facilitate entry by Cuckoos: foresters are keen to attract the parasitic species as a well-known destroyer of various caterpillar pests' (N. & S.). First noted by R. Don on 28 April; three, including hepatic female same place on 4 May. Thereafter regular and in good numbers at Voronezh Sea, in Usmanka valley and in woods near Shuberskoye.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*. 'Summer visitor and passage migrant; some winter if rodent prey is plentiful and indulge in local movements. Arrival otherwise in March' (N. & S.). Two disturbed from day-time roost in pine, near village of Sinitsino on 10 March. At least two young calling from pines near Dubovka in the evening of 8 May.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*. 'Most often met with on spring and autumn passage and also during its winter wanderings. Spring passage late March and early April and autumn passage begins in September. Many stay to winter in good rodent years and gatherings may then reach up to 15 birds. At present much reduced as a breeding bird in the Region as a result of habitat destruction and also high mortality during severe frosts of 1959/60 winter' (N. & S.). One flushed, eastern shore of Voronezh Sea on 1 May.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*. 'Common resident. Occasionally there are mass movements in late autumn (mid-November): e.g. in 1955 when large numbers moved through the Usmanski Forest' (N. & S.; also L.L.S. 1960). One record of single grey-phase bird sitting by its nest hole in old oak, near Chertovitskoye on 7 April.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant. Characteristic churring may be heard as early as end of April. Departure a very extended affair; late birds may be found up to mid-October, sometimes even after the first snowfall' (N. & S.). One flushed in oakwood near Sinitsino on 10 May and another seen briefly in flight at dusk, western shore of Voronezh Sea on 29th.

SWIFT *Apus apus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving early to mid-May and leaving August to early September' (N. & S.). Up to four over Voronezh on 2 May and first large assembly, with 'screaming parties' on the 4th. Several 'hundred' over Voronezh Sea on 25 May. Many pairs bred in Voronezh.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving second half of April and leaving in the first half of September, but odd birds may be met with up to October. Despite the threat to fishing interests this beautiful and remarkable bird should not be persecuted' (N. & S.). Noted in spring and summer, R. Don, R. Usmanka and at Voronezh Sea. In last locality pair visiting tunnel at the edge of a large Sand Martin colony on 29 May.

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*. 'Abundant but somewhat sporadically distributed summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving in the first half of May and leaving during August and the beginning of September. Birds preying on bees at

apiaries should be destroyed' (N. & S.). Two near R. Don on 22 May were the first. At least seven, Voronezh Sea on 25th and 15 near the Don on the same day. Three or four near collective farm in Sinitsino area, where very large apiary and a number of holes, possibly of this species, blocked up, on 30 June. According to L.L.S. (pers. comm.) regularly breeds near R. Don on south-west boundary of Voronezh.

ROLLER *Coracias garrulus*. 'Common summer visitor and passage migrant, arriving late April/early May. Departure begins late August and the last birds are to be seen at the end of September. Deserves protection as a both useful and very beautiful species.' (N. & S.). Three to five south of Sinitsino village on 10 May and two to three near collective farm in this area on 30 June, as well as pair in woods near Shuberskoye. Also noted in Usmanka valley on 3 July.

HOPOE *Upupa epops*. 'Common as summer visitor and passage migrant: main arrival mid-April and departure in late August' (N. & S.). One near collective farm, Dubovka area on 21 April was the first. Several pairs bred: south-west boundary of Voronezh/R. Don; Voronezh Sea; Usmanka valley; Shuberskoye village area.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*. 'Common as summer visitor and passage migrant, with the first birds appearing in mid-April and passage lasting for almost three weeks. Departure in August' (N. & S.). First seen near R. Don on 4 April. Bred in Usmanka valley, south-west boundary of Voronezh/R. Don, Voronezh Sea and in woods near Shuberskoye, where three nests with young found on 30 June and bird calling at another site.

GREY-HEADED WOODPECKER *Picus canus*. 'Uncommon resident. In winter numbers increase as birds move in from areas further north. If the winter is very severe almost all quit the Region' (N. & S.). Single birds in winter: Voronezh State Reserve (at times searching for food on house wall, examining cracks in plaster and window frames); near Sinitsino on 27 January and at Sosnovka on 10 February. Later in year, one calling near Dubovka station on 13 April and in breeding season one seen briefly in Aspen wood, near Shuberskoye, on 30 June.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos major*. 'Abundant resident; some movement in winter months' (N. & S.). Commonest and most widespread of the five woodpecker species observed. Large numbers of pine cones on the ground below mainly deciduous trees (particularly oak) and also below telegraph poles, where birds had their 'anvils' were a prominent feature of the winter season. Common breeding bird.

MIDDLE SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos medius*. 'Quite common resident; some movement in winter. First discovered breeding in Shipov Forest (about 150 km south-east of Voronezh; Ogn'yov & Vorobyov 1923, *cit.* N. & S.), after which some extension of range: now common breeding bird in Usmanski Forest (also L.L.S. *in litt.*) and woods of Khopyorski Reserve. Mainly found in mature deciduous woods' (N. & S.). Observed in the following localities: Sosnovka — Shuberskoye — Dubovka (up to three in November); Voronezh Sea (one in November and two, with courtship note heard, in April); Sinitsino (one in January); Usmanka valley (one or two in Alder copse in July, possibly bred).

WHITE-BACKED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos leucotos*. 'Common resident; some local movement in winter' (N. & S.). Single birds of both sexes in woods around Shuberskoye — Dubovka — Sosnovka in autumn and winter. Probable pair in Aspens, Voronezh State Reserve — a regular breeding area — on 8 January. Spring and summer observations in Usmanka valley indicate that breeding also took place there and finally a breeding pair was found on the eastern shore of the Voronezh Sea.

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos minor*. 'Common resident with some local movements in autumn and winter. More widespread than White-backed Woodpecker' (N. & S.). Quite frequently met with in mixed woods east of Voronezh during autumn and winter, often in loose company with foraging tits: all records were of females up to the end of March, when the first male was seen. Bred, or probably did so, in the following localities: Voronezh Sea (at least six in oakwoods on western shore on 7 April, agitated male by nest hole on 5 June); R. Don; R. Usmanka.

SHORT-TOED LARK *Calandrella cinerea*. 'Rare visitor, possibly breeding in the south of the Region' (N. & S.). Passage, mainly north or west, in Shuberskoye area on 21 April (at least 25) and movement also observed, R. Don on 28th and 4 May. At least two pairs bred on sandy wasteland, south-west boundary of Voronezh/R. Don and up to six pairs on sandy fields, south of Shuberskoye on 10 May, but agricultural activities later wiped out this colony. Comparisons between these observations and data in N. & S., together with verbal reports by L.L.S., confirm that this species has greatly increased and expanded its range northwards in recent years (cf. also maps in Flint *et al.* 1968 and Voous 1960).

CALANDRA LARK *Melanocorypha calandra*. 'Uncommon passage migrant and summer visitor. Mainly associated with the southern steppe but nest found near Voronezh in April 1945; now regular this far north' (N. & S.; L.L.S. pers. comm.; cf. also distribution maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960). One flying west over the Voronezh Sea on 30 March was the first migrant. Later found in very small numbers near R. Don (one or two pairs) and on sandy fields near Shuberskoye (less than six pairs).

SHORE LARK *Eremophila alpestris*. 'Common winter visitor, found in pairs or small flocks in steppe regions from November to March' (N. & S.). Flock of 40–45 moving west over open fields, south of Shuberskoye on 11 November.

CRESTED LARK *Galerida cristata*. 'Common resident. Forms autumn concentrations in human settlements or by field tracks' (N. & S.). Confiding enough to take food scattered for them in winter in towns (L.L.S., verbally). Up to two pairs regularly observed on sandy wasteland, south-west boundary of Voronezh/R. Don, March to May. Family party near collective farm, Sinitsino area on 30 June.

WOODLARK *Lullula arborea*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving late March/early April and most leaving during September' (N. & S.). Passage from 23 March. Breeding birds found at Voronezh Sea (three or four pairs, eastern shore: occupation of open areas which had appeared as a result of forest fires), R. Usmanka/Dubovka village (three or four pairs), Shuberskoye area (up to six pairs). An interesting example of mid-summer flocking was noted near Shuberskoye on 30 June, when 30–40 were flushed from the floor of a stunted pine forest.

SKYLARK *Alauda arvensis*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor; arrival linked with appearance of first thaw patches on fields — extreme dates 4 March and 2 April. Autumn departure during September, last seen in early October.' (N. & S.). Last in autumn was a late bird (see above) passing west over the Voronezh Sea on 17 November. Spring passage from 23 March; heavy movement (involving many hundreds), Shuberskoye area, all day on 24th. Common breeding bird in all suitable habitats.

SAND MARTIN *Riparia riparia*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor. Main arrival during first half of May. Departing flocks were observed in the valleys of the Don and the Voronezh on 16 September in 1957. Size of colonies varies considerably: on small rivers with tree-lined banks the number of nests is measured in tens; on the bare banks of the Don colonies may extend for tens of kilometres and number several thousand nesting burrows' (N. & S.). First noted, R. Usmanka on 2 May, when 20–30 present. Nearly 400 pairs, same place on 18th. Several 'thousand' birds at Voronezh Sea on 25th, also one colony of 388 nests and many other smaller ones. One colony which had over 2,000 nests in 1973 (L.L.S. verbally) held only a few 'hundred' in 1974.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor, first arriving in April — around 5th to 8th if spring is early and warm. Passage for up to three weeks after appearance of first birds. Flocking and departure from August; isolated individuals up to mid-October' (N. & S.). First in spring were at least six, Voronezh Sea on 20 April. Widespread and quite common breeding bird.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival of first birds from 12 April to 2 May; beginning of departure early August, last birds from 2 September to 9 October (observations in Voronezh Reserve by Barabash-Nikiforov and Pavlovski 1947, *cit.* N. & S.)' (N. & S.). First noted at Voronezh Sea on 20 April. Common breeding bird in Voronezh, favouring the undersides of stone balconies and also the corners of windows, including those on new buildings. A total of 69 nests on lamp brackets of covered walk, Voronezh Airport on 5 June.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival late April/early May and departure during August. Northern limit of breeding range evidently runs through the Lipetsk Region (see Figure 2; N.B. this would be well north of the range as shown in Flint *et al.* 1968 and Voous 1960; Heinzel *et al.* 1974 clearly had access to more recent data)' (N. & S.). First in spring was one on eastern shore of Voronezh Sea on 1 May. Bred, or probably did so, in Usmanka valley, near R. Don (at least one pair) and Dubovka—Shuberskoye—Sinitsino area (five or six pairs, late June).

TREE PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Passage from mid-April and is fairly swiftly concluded. Flocks formed from end of July; males stop singing and a period of movement begins. Late birds disappear in September' (N. & S.). First in Usmanka valley on 13 April. Peak came in late April when c.200 at the same place. Bred eastern shore of Voronezh Sea and, in some numbers, Shuberskoye—Sinitsino—Dubovka area.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*. 'Common passage migrant. It is possible that there have been isolated breeding cases: the species has certainly bred south of its southern limit which runs through Tulsckaya and Ryazanskaya

Regions. Spring passage almost throughout April and in autumn September to early October' (N. & S.). First noted near Shuberskoye on 23 March. Passage peak late April, when up to 150 in Usmanka valley; thereafter recorded only in this area and near Shuberskoye, but breeding neither proved nor suspected.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*. 'Common passage migrant. On spring passage, in first half of May, there occur assemblies of up to 100 birds; on return passage, in September, the pipits are normally found in groups of 10–15' (N. & S.). About 40 at water meadows in Usmanka valley on 8 May and at least 12 there the following day. 12–15 on stubble field, south of Shuberskoye on 10 May and one flying south-east over Voronezh Sea on 11th. Last seen was one near Shuberskoye on 27 May.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*. 'Nominate form a common passage migrant and summer visitor. First appear in second half of April and main arrival takes place about one week after this. Departure begins at the end of July and is finished by September. Both Grey-headed Wagtail *M.f. thunbergi* and Sykes's Wagtail *M.f. beema* occur as rare visitors or passage migrants. White-headed Wagtail *M.f. leucocephala* is also listed as having occurred in the Region' (N. & S.). These authors treat Kirghiz Steppe Wagtail *M.f. lutea* as a separate species and cite two records of its having been taken in the Voronezh Region. Upwards of 800 pairs of Blue-headed nested annually up to 1972 in the area then flooded to form the Voronezh Sea (L.L.S. 1974).

First noted on 20 April, when six Blue-headed males at Voronezh Sea. About 40, mainly Blue-headed but Grey-headed also seen, in Usmanka valley on 21st and c.250 there on 27th, when first females seen. Flock of 25–30, eastern shore of Voronezh Sea on 1 May contained males showing characteristics of Sykes's. 30 or so breeding pairs in Usmanka valley on 9 May and 10–12 pairs at Voronezh Sea on the 25th.

WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, the arrival of which more or less corresponds with the break-up of ice on the rivers: extreme dates over a number of years 23 March and 12 April. Departure begins last day of August; passage birds occur in small flocks of up to 20. Last have usually gone by mid-October. The White Wagtail is the most frequently chosen foster-parent of the Cuckoo in the Region' (N. & S.). Last noted in autumn, a late (see above) single bird at the Voronezh Sea on 17 November. Spring passage from late March. Common and widespread as a breeding bird.

CITRINE WAGTAIL *Motacilla citreola*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor. Recorded as a passage migrant in the former Voronezh Gouvernement by Ogniov and Vorobyov (1923, *cit.* N. & S.). Breeding proved in the Voronezh Region only in 1960 when a small colony (15–20 pairs) was discovered below Bobrov, on the R. Bityuga, about 100 km south-east of Voronezh. It is considered possible that this is one of the very few, or indeed the only colony in the whole Region. At this locality specimens were seen which were thought to be intermediate forms between this species and Blue-headed Wagtail: the normal blue-grey crown colour of Blue-headed had in such individuals spots or larger blotches of yellow, giving the head a spotted appearance' (N. & S.). According to L.L.S. and other Soviet ornithologists (pers. comm.) this species is expanding its breeding range westwards. Cf. also maps in Voous (1960) and Heinzel *et al.* (1974).

The first recorded was a single male at the Voronezh Sea on 20 April. Probably about four pairs bred in the Usmanka valley, one or two at the northern end of the Voronezh Sea and possibly one pair in a small marsh by the R. Don.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, the most frequently met with of the Region's shrikes. Arrival in spring during first half of May (sometimes arrives at the same time as Lesser Grey Shrike when the Lilac *Syringa vulgaris* is in full bloom). Departure begins in August, odd birds are seen in September.' (N. & S.). Passage from early May. Not uncommon as breeding bird and found in following localities: Usmanka valley (at least five pairs in July); Voronezh Sea (at least four pairs); Shuberskoye–Sinitsino (at least five pairs and nest with four eggs, very low down at base of Hazel *Corylus avellana* in mainly oak wood, on 27 May).

LESSER GREY SHRIKE *Lanius minor*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor but subject to considerable fluctuations in numbers. First males arrive each year on breeding grounds with striking regularity on or about 15 May. Departure during August, birds travelling in family parties' (N. & S.). Arrival 'all at once' with 11 quite close together at edge of oak wood, Shuberskoye–Sinitsino area on 27 May. These birds must have settled to breed very quickly, as at least six pairs were feeding young there by late June. Also bred in Usmanka valley, where two or three pairs were seen on 3 July.

WAXWING *Bombycilla garrulus*. 'Common winter visitor and passage migrant. Flocks of up to 100 and more appear in early October, or sometimes not until mid-winter. Most move on further west, despite abundant supplies of food; a few stay to winter. On return migration found in small flocks (up to 15) at the end of March or in early April; late birds hanging on into May' (N. & S.). Small numbers (largest flock seen was of c.25) in Voronezh from early November to early April.

WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*. 'Rare passage migrant and winter visitor, occasionally occurring in larger numbers (e.g. in mild winter of 1954/55); also one breeding record for 1947' (N. & S.). L.L.S. (*in litt.*) reports that the Wren is by no means of annual occurrence, but he does mention the finding of a nest near Voronezh Airport in 1971. One in oak wood, south of Shuberskoye on 24 March.

DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*. 'Rare passage migrant, with records from the Voronezh Reserve on 4 April 1937 and 7 April 1939. Not recorded in autumn' (N. & S.). At least four in the Usmanka valley on 27 April.

SAVI'S WARBLER *Locustella luscinioides*. 'Rare passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving late April, or more commonly in first half of May. Somewhat less rare than Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* (a species not recorded by the author in 1973-74) for which there are no positive breeding records' (N. & S.). Recorded from 1 May. Later in the same month at least three at the Voronezh Sea, at least two in the Usmanka valley and one in small marsh by the R. Don.

RIVER WARBLER *Locustella fluviatilis*. 'Common both on passage and as summer visitor; far more numerous than previous species. Arrives during May; no information on autumn departure' (N. & S.). Recorded from mid-May by R. Don (particularly in swampy Alder woods), Voronezh Sea and in Usmanka valley. Likely to have bred in all three localities.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving in May and leaving in August' (N. & S.). Recorded from 8 May. Good numbers in breeding season, both at Voronezh Sea and in Usmanka valley.

MARSH WARBLER *Acrocephalus palustris*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving in May. Departure of local birds presumably takes place at the end of July and during August. Perhaps the commonest of the Region's *Acrocephalus* warblers.' (N. & S.). Interestingly, the southern limit of the breeding range of Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum* runs through the northern part of the Voronezh Region; in 1974 this species was recorded by L.L.S. (singing male in Usmanka valley), but not by the author.

First noted by the R. Usmanka on 15 May; plentiful there by early June. Also recorded by R. Don in late May.

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*. 'Fairly common passage migrant and summer visitor; first arrive during the early part of May (usually 5th to 10th); departure of local birds begins in late July and passage birds found throughout August. Sometimes forms small colonies (three to five pairs), more often pairs nest singly' (N. & S.). First heard in Usmanka valley on 8 May and up to three singing birds there later in breeding season. At least eight in song at Voronezh Sea on 11 May.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*. 'Not common as passage migrant and summer visitor; arrives in the first half of May. In 1956 the first appeared in the Kamennaya Steppe on 15 May, and autumn passage birds were noted in the same place around mid-September, with roving family parties being observed on 27 July 1956' (N. & S.). Heard first in spring in mainly deciduous woodland, western shore of Voronezh Sea on 15 May, and already 12 or more songsters there by the end of the month. Also noted in Usmanka valley and, frequently, in Voronezh city parks.

BARRED WARBLER *Sylvia nisoria*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, less numerous than Garden Warbler and with a more or less sporadic distribution. Both this species and Garden Warbler take readily to re-vegetated zones where there have been fires or forest clearing. Arrival in the first half of May; departure late August/early September' (N. & S.). Three in the Usmanka valley on 15 May were the first. Noted later in breeding season: R. Don (one or two pairs), Voronezh Sea (up to ten pairs, western shore), Usmanka valley (pairs feeding young at two sites on 3 July), Shuberskoye/Sinitsino (present at six sites in late May).

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival and departure times as Barred Warbler above' (N. & S.). Present from mid-May. Recorded as breeding bird R. Don, R. Usmanka, north-west shore of Voronezh Sea and in woods near Shuberskoye.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, a typical inhabitant of deciduous and mixed woodlands with a well-developed undergrowth. Readily takes to the older denser windbreaks. Arrives early May (3rd–12th) and leaves in second half of August and early September. In 1958 a single male stayed in an area on the edge of Voronezh till 10 November' (N. & S.). First noted in the Usmanka valley on 8 May. Widespread and quite common breeding bird in all suitable habitats.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*. 'Commonest of the *Sylvia* warblers occurring in the Region. Density in some years reaches four to five pairs per hectare. Passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving early May and leaving about same time as Barred Warbler (see above)' (N. & S.). L.L.S. (pers. comm.) did not have the impression that there had been any serious decline in recent years that might have corresponded to the well-known British and European population crash of 1969. First noted in spring by R. Usmanka on 9 May. Rather thinly spread as a breeding bird, but bred, or probably did so, R. Usmanka, R. Don, Voronezh Sea (both shores) and woodland edges around Shuberskoye and Sinitsino.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor but less numerous than Barred Warbler although of more even distribution. Arrival during first half of May, departure end of August and through September; odd birds sometimes recorded in October' (N. & S.). Recorded in spring from 4 May. Later noted in breeding season by Voronezh Sea and near R. Don.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrives somewhat later than Chiffchaff; e.g. in Kamennaya Steppe in 1956 passage lasted from 23 April to 7 June. Departure during September, October and first half of November' (N. & S.). According to the relevant maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960, both this species and Chiffchaff would appear to be at the southern extremity of their respective ranges in the northern part of the Voronezh Region. First noted in the Usmanka valley on 27 April. Widespread and quite common breeding bird.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*. See under previous species. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival mid-April and passage for c. 20 days thereafter; for departure see under Willow Warbler' (N. & S.). Recorded in spring from 13 April (Usmanka valley). Widespread and quite common breeding bird.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor to the northern part of the Region. Arrival date more or less exactly correspond to those of Willow Warbler (see above). Local birds evidently begin moving in mid-July but autumn passage is not at all conspicuous. Found as a breeding species in deciduous, coniferous and mixed woodlands; especially fond of pine plantations with trees of moderate age and a complete dearth of undergrowth' (N. & S.). One in the Usmanka valley on 27 April was the first. Later in breeding season: Usmanka valley, mixed woods near Dubovka and Shuberskoye, western shore of Voronezh Sea.

GREENISH WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochiloides*. 'Rare passage migrant occurring irregularly in very small numbers. May have bred' (N. & S.). One in song, at the edge of a mixed wood (mainly Aspen) near collective farm to the south of Dubovka on 27 May. Another singing as it moved through the canopy of an Alder wood in the Usmanka valley on the interesting date of 3 July. 1974 was a quite exceptional year for this species as at least three other birds were reported by L.L.S. (pers. comm.) and in one case he suspected that breeding may have taken place. The main breeding area in the Russian Soviet Republic lies further to the north (cf. maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960).

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*. 'Common winter visitor. Appears mid-September/early October. In winter is found mainly in coniferous (pine) and mixed forests where feeds chiefly on insects and their eggs gleaned from the bark or few unfallen leaves on the trees. Not seen after March when departs for breeding grounds' (N. & S.). Small numbers in the Shuberskoye area, November to early December, then again in late March.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*. 'Both this species and Collared Flycatcher may be considered as uncommon passage migrants and summer visitors with a sporadic breeding distribution in ancient deciduous and mixed woodlands of the Region. The two species are not usually found breeding together. Collared Flycatcher clearly shows preference for deciduous woods, but like Pied will take readily to pure pine forest if nest-boxes are provided (also L.L.S. *in litt.*). Ogniov and Vorobyov (1923, *cit.* N. & S.) considered Pied a great rarity in the Voronezh Gouvernement; nowadays it is common in the Usanski Forest, especially where nest-boxes are available. Ismaylov (1940, *cit.* N. & S.) described Collared as a rare bird in the broad-leaved forests of the Khopyorski Reserve; nowadays it occupies a large proportion of the artificial nest-sites provided in the pine forests

of that same reserve. Males of both species arrive at about the same time, i.e. late April/early May; passage females are observed up to 20 May. Departure of both species takes place in August, but odd birds may be seen up to mid-September' (N. & S.).

Pied Flycatcher first noted near Shuberskoye on 21 April. Main influx late April to early May: e.g. at least 32 in the Usmanka valley on 27 April and c.25 by R. Don on 4 May. Numerous as breeding bird in mixed and mainly coniferous woods to the east of Voronezh, many pairs making use of nest-boxes.

COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*. See above under Pied Flycatcher. Recorded as a breeding bird in small numbers, western shore of Voronezh Sea and in Usmanka valley, from late April.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*. 'Quite common on spring and autumn passage in various types of woodland vegetation. Very rare as breeding bird; prefers remote parts of broad-leaved woodlands. Spring passage begins late April/early May, main mass of birds passes through from 10–17 May. Autumn passage throughout September; latest date in Usmanski Forest was 22 October 1950' (N. & S.). Clearly prone to considerable fluctuations in numbers as breeding bird (L.L.S., verbally). Single male by R. Don on 4 May. Later recorded only in mixed woods by R. Usmanka, where male in song at one site in May and pair feeding young at another in early July.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving mid-May (extreme dates over a number of years 5 and 14 May), leaving late August/early September, but stragglers were noted on 7 October 1947 and 11 November 1951' (N. & S.). First recorded by R. Don on 4 May but already at least 20 there on 22nd. Widespread and quite common breeding bird of parks and woodlands.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, appearing late April/early May, the males being the first to arrive. Departure late August/September' (N. & S.). First recorded in Usmanka valley on 27 April and 15–20 pairs there on 9 May. Also noted in breeding season by Voronezh Sea and in Shuberskoye/Sinitsino area (rough field edges and wasteland).

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*. 'One record of family party in Usmanka valley, July 1962' (N. & S.). Not seen since in the Voronezh area (L.L.S. *in litt.*). The breeding record is well outside the normal range of the species (cf. maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960). A single male near the village of Chertovitskoye, by R. Voronezh on 7 April; no subsequent records for this locality.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving early to mid-April, depending on the type of spring. Large numbers bred in the ruins of Voronezh in the years immediately after the Second World War; this ceased as the town was re-built' (N. & S.). Recorded first on 20 April. At least six pairs bred on sandy wasteland between R. Don and south-west city boundary of Voronezh. Also noted in Usmanka valley and Shuberskoye/Sinitsino area (sandy ravines and hollows), breeding probably taking place in the second locality.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*. 'A fairly recent addition to the Region's avifauna, which nevertheless is now a common summer visitor to areas south-east of Voronezh. This species has rapidly pushed its range northwards in the last thirty years. First arrive mid-April. As nest-sites favours the burrows of various rodents, e.g. susliks *Citellus* and jerboas *Allactaga*' (N. & S.). Now breeds at several sites on the edge of Voronezh (L.L.S. verbally; cf. also distribution maps in Flint *et al.* 1968 Heinzel *et al.* 1974). One on sandy wasteland, south-west boundary of Voronezh on 24 April and a pair in Usmanka valley on 9 May.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*. Not recorded by N. & S. Isolated males in song: in Usmanka valley on 13 April and near Dubovka on 27th. These records are well outside the range as shown in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Found in broad-leaved and mixed woodlands, but will also take to pure pine forest if artificial nest-sites are available; also in gardens and human settlements. First males appear around 20 April; main departure in the last ten days of August, but continues all through September and odd birds may be seen in warm autumns up to mid-October' (N. & S.). Very late autumn records of single males: Shuberskoye area on 3 November and by Voronezh Sea on the 8th; flurries of snow on both dates. In breeding season: Voronezh Sea; Usmanka valley/Dubovka – at least ten males in eight km on 16 May; Shuberskoye area. Nowhere particularly common.

ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Spring passage from late March, more usually first ten days of April, and is especially noticeable in valleys of rivers flowing through woodlands. Autumn passage is on a broader front; departure begins in September, continues through October, and, in years with warm

autumns it is not unusual for birds to be observed up to mid-November. Occasionally a few individuals may stay for the winter' (N. & S.). Last seen in autumn on 8 November and present in spring again from at least from 23 March. Widespread and quite numerous as breeding bird by late April.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Shows a distinct preference for low-lying damp areas. Arrival of first birds from 20 April to 6 May and departure takes place during August' (N. & S.). Song first heard by R. Don on 28 April. Widespread and quite common breeding bird in all suitable habitats by late May — e.g. at least 44 songsters in thick cover along about eight km on the western shore of the Voronezh Sea on 25 May. One briefly in song in Usmanka valley on rather late date of 3 July (cf. Orr 1976).

BLUETHROAT *Cyanosylvia svecica*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving in the period from 3 April to 6 May. Latest date recorded was 1 October 1955 (an exceptionally warm autumn). Two subspecies are recorded in the Central Don area: *C.s. occidentalis (volgae)* and *C.s. svecica*, with *occidentalis* being without doubt the one that breeds there. Ogniyov & Vorobyov (1923, *cit.* N. & S.) give both *C.s. svecica* and *C.s. cyanecula*' (N. & S.). Recorded in spring from 24 April, when at least five in song from marsh by R. Don. Later observed also at Voronezh Sea and in the Usmanka valley. Interestingly, in the latter locality, males of both *C.s. svecica* and *C. s. cyanecula* were found defending territory in April and May.

FIELDFARE *Turdus pilaris*. 'On spring and autumn passage the most numerous of the thrush tribe but only a sporadic breeding bird in small numbers. Main arrival from winter quarters in the first half of April, but if there is a sudden cold snap — as for example in April of 1956 and 1957 — the birds will depart south again. Spring passage is swiftly concluded (four or five days). Autumn departure begins in September and lasts until mid-November. Some individuals and small groups may overwinter where there is sufficient food' (N. & S.). L.L.S. reports (*in litt.*) that this species was the commonest breeding thrush in the environs of Voronezh during 1975, but in the following year only three pairs were found in the same localities.

Assemblies in the Voronezh city parks in early November, with the birds feeding mainly on Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* berries, were presumably a prelude to departure. Small numbers apparently overwintered: c.20 in Shuberskoye area on 16 February. No really large numbers in spring until late April, when c.100 in Usmanka valley. Small breeding colonies (c. 10 pairs on average and several nests found) eastern and western shores of the Voronezh Sea; in the Usmanka valley; Shuberskoye area. Post-breeding assemblies (several small flocks and one of 30–40) in Usmanka valley on 3 July.

BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. In Usmanski Forest extreme arrival dates were 23 March and 17 April, passage lasts almost a month. In contrast to the other thrushes found on spring and autumn passage either singly or in very small loose-knit groups. Autumn departure throughout September and most of first half of October' (N. & S.). First migrant was a male near Sosnovka on 23 March. Sparsely distributed breeding bird of woodlands, though the bird's shyness may have contributed to such an impression.

REDWING *Turdus iliacus*. 'Common passage migrant, which after a number of sporadic records, may be considered a regular breeder in the Usmanski Forest and other smaller woods along the R. Don and R. Voronezh since 1960. Now not much less numerous than other thrushes. It is to be expected that the species will extend its breeding range over the Region in years to come' (N. & S.). This represents an extension of the Redwing's breeding range to the south in European Russia (cf. maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960). Last noted in autumn, in Voronezh, on 8 November; first in spring, near Shuberskoye on 23 March. About 100 by R. Don on 14 May. A few pairs bred in woods on western shore of Voronezh Sea, also in Usmanka valley, where pair feeding young on 3 July.

SONG THRUSH *Turdus philomelos*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Observations in Voronezh Reserve show that this species arrives between 24 March and 7 April. Departure begins in September and continues through October with odd birds being found in the first few days of November. Nests in mixed and broad-leaved woodlands, but in contrast to both Blackbird and Mistle Thrush prefers glades and forest clearings' (N. & S.). Last noted in autumn at Voronezh Sea on 8 November and first in spring, near Shuberskoye on 23 March. Somewhat sparsely distributed as a breeding bird.

MISTLE THRUSH *Turdus viscivorus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor, inhabiting mixed and broad-leaved forests, rarely pure pine forest. Spring passage begins early: flocks of up to 30 birds may be observed throughout the first half of April. Departure and autumn passage begin in September, and passage flocks of up to 100 and more are seen throughout October. In 1946 small flocks were noted around Voronezh on 11 November' (N. & S.).

Present in spring from at least 23 March, with larger gatherings of c.30 near Sinitsino on 24 March and 40–50 in Usmanka valley on 27 April. Found as a not uncommon breeding bird in the Usmanka valley/Dubovka area.

LONG-TAILED TIT *Aegithalos caudatus*. 'Common winter visitor and breeds in small numbers. Flocks appear from end of October and most leave late March to early April' (N. & S.). Small parties noted in woods east of Voronezh throughout the winter but not seen after 23 March.

WILLOW TIT *Parus montanus*. 'Common resident, with some local movement in winter. This species usually pecks out its own nest-hole in the trunk or rotten stump of Aspen, Oak, Birch or Alder, but not infrequently it occupies ready-made holes and artificial nest-sites, especially in pine forests. The reproduction rate is much higher in pairs that do not expend energy in excavating their own nest-hole' (N. & S.). Frequently met with throughout autumn and winter in mixed woods around Voronezh. Breeding pairs later found in several areas.

CRESTED TIT *Parus cristatus*. 'Recorded rarely at time of winter movements in mixed and broad-leaved woodlands in the north of the Region. Not known to have bred' (N. & S.). Diagnostic call-notes heard in woods near Shuberskoye on 3 November.

COAL TIT *Parus ater*. 'Appears in the Region usually in the late autumn; for most of the winter moves around in small foraging parties (up to 15 birds), visiting coniferous, mixed and broad-leaved forests, field windbreaks and young pine plantations. No exact data given as to time of spring departure for breeding areas' (N. & S.). Noted only in early November, mixed forest near Shuberskoye.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*. 'Common resident but nowhere very numerous as nesting species' (N. & S.). Small flocks were frequently noted in woods around Voronezh through late autumn and winter. A few breeding pairs also found there.

GREAT TIT *Parus major*. 'One of the commonest residents, found everywhere where suitable holes in trees or artificial nest-sites are available. Wide-ranging wanderings of flocks bring many into cities where they spend the winter. An extremely useful species to both forester and horticulturist' (N. & S.). Abundant in all suitable habitats throughout the year.

PENDULINE TIT *Remiz pendulinus*. 'Rare passage migrant and breeding bird. Nests usually found in winter when they are much easier to see' (N. & S.). One or two in thick cover by R. Don on several dates in April and May and may well have bred there, but the birds were most elusive. One seen briefly in the Usmanka valley on 27 April.

NUTHATCH *Sitta europaea*. 'Common resident with some increase in numbers in winter with the arrival of birds from further north' (N. & S.). Noted throughout the period in woodlands around Voronezh, and breeding established in several localities.

TREECREEPER *Certhia familiaris*. 'Common resident. Considerable increase in numbers in winter with the arrival of birds from breeding grounds further north: at this time also met with outside typical breeding habitat (exclusively in mature broad-leaved and mixed woods), that is in young plantations, gardens and parks' (N. & S.). Recorded from early November to early April, not proved to breed.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor; met with also in winter, but most leave in late September/early October. Arrival in spring from the end of February. In August forms small flocks (up to 30) which haunt fields' (N. & S.). Rather numerous in the Shuberskoye area in early November. Small numbers seen near Dubovka in late February may have been wintering, or the first returning migrants. Quite heavy passage near Shuberskoye on 23 March and noted as a breeding bird there (woodland abutting on cereal fields), with 10–15 pairs on 10 May.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Higher population in the south than in the north of the Region. Arrival in first ten days of May, family parties begin to move south soon after the young have fledged – e.g. last seen in Kamennaya Steppe on 27 July 1955' (N. & S.). In one area south of Shuberskoye village where oakwoods border on fields with cereal crops, first noted on 10 May and ten or more pairs bred. Two near R. Don on 29 June.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor; arrives, depending on the character of the spring, some time during the first half of April. Departure late September/early October' (N. & S.). First in spring at Voronezh Sea on 30 March. Breeding recorded there, near R. Don and in Usmanka valley.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*. 'A common winter visitor to the steppe zone of the Region. Usually appears at the end of November, and is found mainly by field tracks in flocks of five to ten birds through to mid-March' (N. & S.). About 20 flying west over open fields south of Shuberskoye on 10 February.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor; a few (usually males) may stay all winter. Nests in mature and younger mixed, broad-leaved and pine plantations, in parks, gardens and field windbreaks. Normally arrives late March/early April and departs in September' (N. & S.). First in spring near Shuberskoye on 23 March and very heavy passage (many flocks of 50–100) to the north in this area on the 24th. Widespread and abundant as a breeding bird.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*. 'Common on passage in spring and autumn, with single birds or small groups being found throughout the winter. In spring appears in mid-April, that is somewhat later than Chaffinch. Autumn passage begins in second half of September' (N. & S.). First recorded with Chaffinches in Shuberskoye area on 23 March, when at least 100 present; passage continuing there on the 24th. Last noted by R. Usmanka on 27 April.

SERIN *Serinus serinus*. Not recorded by N. & S. L.L.S. however reports (*in litt.*) that he knows of a colour photograph showing a female feeding young in the nest at a site in the Voronezh Reserve and taken in 1974. This locality is well east of the breeding range as shown in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960. My record of a singing male, seen well by a construction site on the edge of Dubovka village on 3 July thus becomes all the more interesting.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrives, depending on the prevailing weather conditions, from late March to early April. Departure, like arrival, takes place in small flocks (10–30, sometimes more) at the end of September/October; some flocks hang on to November, and odd individuals, most often males, may winter' (N. & S.). Last noted in autumn near Shuberskoye on 11 November. First in spring, same place on 23 March. Breeding recorded in several localities.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*. 'Common winter visitor, arriving in flocks of up to 50 and more in September/October and leaving again in March. Especially numerous in river valleys where good stands of Alder; in years with poor cone crop the number of Siskins falls abruptly in mid-winter, as most move away south. Birds recorded in the late spring and summer are evidently released cage-birds (see also Introduction); however has bred at least twice in Usmanski Forest (1959 and 1961) and may have become a more or less regular breeding bird there' (N. & S.). Close to the edge of its range, or even beyond the southern limit, in the northern Voronezh Region (see maps in Flint *et al.* 1968, Heinzel *et al.* 1974 and Voous 1960).

Small numbers (up to 40) in Shuberskoye area, November and early December, and thereafter very small flocks, well scattered, in woods east of Voronezh, during January and February. Northward movement at Dubovka on 3 March with *c.*60 in four flocks. Observed regularly in various localities through April, with flock of 30–40 in Usmanka valley on the 27th and last seen there on 2 May, when song also heard.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*. 'Common resident, with considerable local movements by flocks composed of birds of the year and adults from autumn through the winter' (N. & S.). Small flocks in the Shuberskoye area, October to December, with a peak of *c.*55 there on 8 December. Observed same place again from late March and many pairs bred, both in that locality and elsewhere in the observation area.

LINNET *Acanthis cannabina*. 'Common resident and partial migrant. A considerable part of the population moves south before mid-winter and returns sometime during April, depending on the weather. No large flocks formed during autumn and winter movements, usually in groups of 10–30 birds, exceptionally up to 100' (N. & S.). Not noted in autumn or winter, nor was proof of breeding obtained, but present from late March to late April near Shuberskoye and by the R. Don.

SCARLET ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*. 'Relatively common summer visitor and passage migrant but found in any significant numbers only in the Don basin. Arrives mid-May in small flocks, composed of both sexes. Birds start to leave nesting places in late July, travelling south in family parties. Latest date 16 September 1957' (N. & S.). Found throughout the Region, but has never been common (L.L.S. *in litt.*). First noted in Usmanka valley on 18 May, when at least five present; eight to ten there in July. Also recorded at Voronezh Sea in late May and likely to have bred in both these localities. Young male in song in city park, near the main street of Voronezh on 26 May.

BULLFINCH *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*. 'Common winter visitor, arriving in November, in some years much earlier, and staying to April; moves around in small groups of from five to 30 birds. In years with poor crop of seeds and tree

fruits and with pre-spring snowfalls, the birds move further south. Singletons or pairs observed in the woods at the end of April or in early May are thought to have been released by amateur bird-fanciers (see also Introduction and under Siskin). Small nomadic flocks in woods and villages east of Voronezh from early November to late March.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. A few, mainly males, found in woods and parks throughout the winter. Arrival early to mid-April in flocks of eight to 15; departure in first half of September. In spring feeds initially on buds of various trees, but as soon as fruit of various cherries *Prunus* spp. ripens, Hawfinches go over entirely to this food source. From August the bird devotes its attention more to the seeds of wild and cultivated grasses and may cause considerable damage to Sunflower *Helianthus annuus* fields on which flocks, sometimes thousands strong, may descend' (N. & S.). First spring migrant, or a wintering bird, in Voronezh garden on 6 March. Obvious passage at R. Don on 14 April with 12 flying north-east and in Shuberskoye area on 21st (c.40). Bred, or probably did so, at Voronezh Sea (nest found), in Usmanka valley and in Shuberskoye area.

HOUSE SPARROW *Passer domesticus*. 'Abundant resident. In winter considerable numbers move south from northern areas, others lead a strictly sedentary existence. Very large roosts in trees in busy streets of Voronezh. Various methods proposed to reduce numbers where the species is an agricultural pest: birds either shot or drugged provide a very tasty and wholesome meat! Each case ought to be considered separately, as the House Sparrow cannot be called a completely harmful species' (N. & S.). Abundant throughout the year in all suitable habitats.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor, the main mass of birds moving south in mid-November and returning in March. Some winter and feed with House Sparrow flocks, and in the south of the Region it is more characteristically sedentary. Takes readily to artificially provided nest-sites, to the extent in fact, that it may squeeze out almost completely the species for which the boxes were originally intended' (N. & S.). Large numbers in autumn — particularly in rough areas along the western shore of the Voronezh Sea — and smaller flocks throughout the winter. Common breeding bird, frequently using nest-boxes. Two nests, a few yards apart, in narrow outflow pipes, Voronezh Sea on 2 June.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor, arriving March/early April, and leaving during September or October, odd birds hanging on to November. Cold snaps in the spring drive the birds south. Generally considered a very useful species, destroying huge numbers of insect pests, but can cause great damage to ripe fruit in cherry orchards' (N. & S.). Last in autumn were 20–25 at Voronezh Sea on 27 October. Abundant in and around villages, also in city parks, from late March. Very large numbers make use of special Starling boxes, which, high atop poles, are a prominent feature of both the rural and urban landscape. Primarily because its return is associated with the arrival of spring, but also on account of its jaunty behaviour and remarkable song, the Starling is held in great affection by the majority of Russians.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*. 'Common passage migrant and summer visitor. Arrival during first ten days of May and departure in August. Inhabits broad-leaved and mixed woodlands, parks, gardens and field windbreaks. In the latter may attain a density of one pair per hectare. Deserves special protection as a both beautiful and useful species' (N. & S.). First heard by R. Usmanka on 8 May. Plentiful breeding bird in the Usmanka valley, on the shores of the Voronezh Sea and in wooded areas east of Voronezh.

JAY *Garrulus glandarius*. 'Common resident, in some years carrying out considerable movements which begin in late September/October. Spring passage of northward-bound birds occurs quite late, sometimes only at the end of April, when local birds are already incubating eggs.' (N. & S.). Small numbers noted throughout the autumn and winter, in woods to the east of Voronezh. Nesting proved in the Usmanka valley, probably took place in several other localities.

MAGPIE *Pica pica*. 'Common resident; some very local movements in winter in search of food. More numerous in the south of the Region, where, in some places, especially along tributaries of the R. Don, there are so many nests that the impression is created of a dispersed rookery. As with other corvids communal roosting (up to 100 and more birds) is common in winter' (N. & S.). Always very much in evidence, in the countryside and on the edge of the city. Frequent winter assemblies of up to 12 or more; 30–40, obviously attracted by the presence of animal carcasses, in woods south of Shuberskoye on 16 February.

JACKDAW *Corvus monedula*. 'One of the most typical residents, in places very numerous. Small colonies, or more rarely, single pairs, breed in ruined or deserted buildings, in river banks, cliffs, holes in trees and in the vacated nests of Magpies and Rooks. After the young have fledged, forms flocks and associates with Rooks up to the departure

of that species. In winter slight increase in numbers as winter visitors arrive from more northern regions' (N. & S.). For communal roosting see below under Hooded Crow. Common resident. Some westward movement of high-flying flocks, near Shuberskoye in early November.

ROOK *Corvus frugilegus*. 'Abundant passage migrant and summer visitor. In warm winters with little snow a few remain throughout and associate with Jackdaws and Hooded Crows. In normal years passage comes in early March, if the spring is early then in February. Main departure in mid-October. Largest colonies may contain up to 1,000 or more nests (e.g. in the Kamennaya Steppe); nested on ruined and gutted buildings in Voronezh from 1943 to 1946. Considered a threat above all to the Maize *Zea mays* crop: the shooting of females on the nest is recommended as the best method to reduce the size of the largest colonies' (N. & S.).

Common, mainly summer visitor, though it is of interest to note that large numbers stayed throughout what was, by Russian standards, a relatively mild winter (see also Introduction); L.L.S. informs me (pers. comm.) that this continued the trend of recent years. Several rookeries were found in Voronezh, in city parks and avenue trees (mainly *Populus* spp.), and also outside the city, the nests being not uncommonly situated rather low down (6–7 metres) in e.g. Birches. See also below under Hooded Crow.

HOODED CROW *Corvus corone cornix*. 'Abundant resident and partial migrant. A considerable proportion of the local population moves south in the winter, only to be almost completely replaced by visitors from further north' (N. & S.). Common resident, typical of town and country alike. Some westward movement of high-flying flocks, with Jackdaws near Shuberskoye, in early November. On 20 January a huge corvid roost, in a large park, immediately adjacent to the city of Voronezh, was visited in the company of L.L.S. who reported (pers. comm.) that upwards of 140,000–150,000 Hooded Crows and Jackdaws with fewer Rooks, were using this roost at peak in the winter of 1972–73; there cannot have been many fewer than this on 20 January 1974. A certain cleaning-up operation is executed by Foxes *Vulpes vulpes* and three or four Goshawks similarly enjoy rich pickings.

RAVEN *Corvus corax*. 'Uncommon resident; in winter some movement, the birds usually remaining solitary. Often takes over the nests of large raptors, and in the Kamennaya Steppe has long nested in rookeries' (N. & S.). Probably two pairs bred in the Shuberskoye–Dubovka–Sinitsino area, with possibly another in the Usmanka valley and at least one pair by the Voronezh Sea. Birds carrying nesting material first observed on 16 February.

Summary

The author spent a period of almost nine months – late October 1973 to early July 1974 – in Voronezh, USSR. Notes, supported by maps, are given on the geographical location of Voronezh, and some attempt is made to describe both natural habitats and climate, and to assess ornithological activity, in the Region under review. A list is given containing all the species identified, and for each of these there are notes on status and distribution, where appropriate introduced by summarized data from Barabash-Nikiforov and Semago (1963). Appendices show in concise form the status of each species and the major status changes respectively.

Acknowledgements

L.L. Semago, of Voronezh University Zoology Department, rendered me invaluable assistance in all my ornithological studies; I was frequently able to draw on his incomparable knowledge of the Region's fauna and flora. Some of his photographs adorn these pages. I should like to record here my sincere and deep gratitude to Leonid Leonidovitch and his family. My thanks are also due to Jeffery Boswall who kindly read through and gave much valuable comment on the original manuscript, besides offering encouragement when it was most needed. Stephen Chapman and John McGeoch similarly perused and commented on my manuscript. Alan Ovenden initially, and later Robin Prytherch were kind enough to work on the production of the maps. Robin Prytherch also showed patience and understanding as the paper went through its final stages of development.

In conclusion I cherish the hope that this paper may be taken, in some modest way, as an expression of my warm feelings towards all the many Soviet citizens, ornithologists and others, who did so much to make my stay in their country a happy one.

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Appendix A: complete list of all species recorded with status shown by appropriate symbol (for fuller details see systematic list)

Key: B = Breeding
 Ps = Passage, spring
 Pa = Passage, autumn
 R = Resident

W = Winter
 V = Vagrant
 (r) = rare

Black-throated Diver	Pa	Black Kite	PsaB
Great Crested Grebe	PsaB(r)	Goshawk	RB
Bittern	PsaB	Sparrowhawk	PsaBW
Little Egret	V(?rB)	Rough-legged Buzzard	PsaW
Grey Heron	PsaB	Buzzard	PsaB
Purple Heron	PsaB(r)	Booted Eagle	PsaB(r)
White-fronted Goose	Psa	Spotted Eagle	PsaB
Bean Goose	Psa	Short-toed Eagle	PsaB(r)
Mute Swan	Psa(r)?B	Pallid Harrier	PsaB
Mallard	PsaB(rW)	Montagu's Harrier	PsaB
Teal	PsaB	Marsh Harrier	PsaB
Gadwall	PsaB	Hobby	PsaB
Wigeon	Psa(rB)	Red-footed Falcon	PsaB
Pintail	Psa(rB)	Kestrel	PsaB
Garganey	PsaB	Partridge	RB
Shoveler	Psa(rB)	Quail	PsaB
Pochard	PsaB	Crane	PsaB(r)
Ferruginous Duck	Psa(rBW)	Water Rail	Psa(rB)
Tufted Duck	Psa(rB)	Spotted Crake	PsaB
Long-tailed Duck	Psa(r)	Corncrake	PsaB
Goldeneye	Psa(rBW)	Moorhen	PsaB
Smew	Psa(rB)	Coot	PsaB
Goosander	PsaW(r)	Oystercatcher	PsaB(r)
Osprey	PsaB(r)	Little Ringed Plover	PsaB
Honey Buzzard	PsaB	Lapwing	PsaB

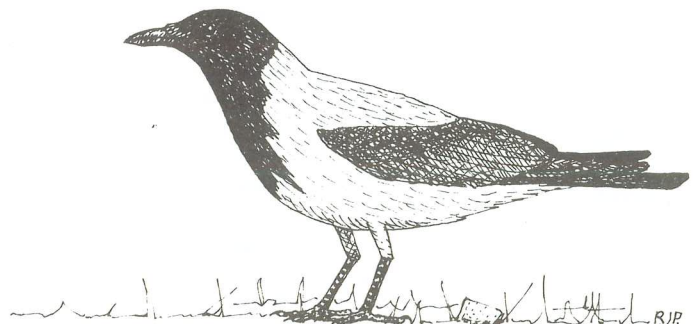
Dunlin	Psa	Tawny Pipit	PsaB
Ruff	Psa?B	Tree Pipit	PsaB
Redshank	PsaB	Meadow Pipit	Psa(?rB)
Marsh Sandpiper	PsaB(r)	Red-throated Pipit	Psa
Greenshank	Psa(r)	Blue-headed Wagtail	PsaB
Green Sandpiper	PsaB	White Wagtail	PsaB
Wood Sandpiper	PsaB(r)	Citrine Wagtail	PsaB(r)
Common Sandpiper	PsaB	Red-backed Shrike	PsaB
Terek Sandpiper	Psa(r)	Lesser Grey Shrike	PsaB
Black-tailed Godwit	PsaB(r)	Waxwing	PsaW.
Curlew	Psa(?rB)	Wren	PsaWB(r)
Snipe	PsaB	Dunnock	Psa(r)
Jack Snipe	Psa(r)	Savi's Warbler	PsaB(r)
Pratincole	V	River Warbler	PsaB
Black-winged Pratincole	PsaB(r)	Sedge Warbler	PsaB
Little Gull	PsaB(r)	Marsh Warbler	PsaB
Black-headed Gull	PsaB	Great Reed Warbler	PsaB
Lesser Black-backed Gull	Psa(r)	Icterine Warbler	PsaB
Common Gull	Psa	Barred Warbler	PsaB
Black Tern	PsaB	Garden Warbler	PsaB
White-winged Black Tern	PsaB	Blackcap	PsaB
Whiskered Tern	PsaB(r)	Whitethroat	PsaB
Common Tern	PsaB	Lesser Whitethroat	PsaB
Little Tern	PsaB(r)	Willow Warbler	PsaB
Wood Pigeon	PsaB	Chiffchaff	PsaB
Stock Dove	PsaB	Wood Warbler	PsaB
Feral Pigeon	RB	Greenish Warbler	Psa(r)?B
Collared Dove	RB	Goldcrest	W
Turtle Dove	PsaB	Pied Flycatcher	PsaB
Cuckoo	PsaB	Collared Flycatcher	PsaB
Long-eared Owl	PsaBW	Red-breasted Flycatcher	Psa(rB)
Short-eared Owl	PsaBW	Spotted Flycatcher	PsaB
Tawny Owl	RB	Whinchat	PsaB
Nightjar	PsaB	Stonechat	V(rB)
Swift	PsaB	Wheatear	PsaB
Kingfisher	PsaB	Isabelline Wheatear	PsaB
Bee-eater	PsaB	Black Redstart	V(?rB)
Roller	PsaB	Redstart	PsaB
Hoopoe	PsaB	Robin	PsaB(rW)
Wryneck	PsaB	Thrush Nightingale	PsaB
Grey-headed Woodpecker	RB	Bluethroat	PsaB
Great Spotted Woodpecker	RB	Fieldfare	PsaBW
Middle Spotted Woodpecker	RB	Blackbird	PsaB
White-backed Woodpecker	RB	Redwing	PsaB
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker	RB	Song Thrush	PsaB
Short-toed Lark	PsaB	Mistle Thrush	PsaB
Calandra Lark	PsaB	Long-tailed Tit	W(rB)
Shore Lark	W	Willow Tit	RB
Crested Lark	RB	Crested Tit	W(r)
Woodlark	PsaB	Coal Tit	W
Skylark	PsaB	Great Tit	RB
Sand Martin	PsaB	Blue Tit	RB
Swallow	PsaB	Penduline Tit	PsaB(r)
House Martin	PsaB	Nuthatch	RB

Treecreeper	RB	Bullfinch	W
Yellowhammer	PsaBW	Hawfinch	PsaBW
Ortolan Bunting	PsaB	House Sparrow	RB
Reed Bunting	PsaB	Tree Sparrow	PsaBW
Snow Bunting	W	Starling	PsaB
Chaffinch	PsaBW	Golden Oriole	PsaB
Brambling	PsaW	Jay	RB
Serin	V(rB)	Magpie	RB
Greenfinch	PsaBW	Jackdaw	RB
Siskin	W(rB)	Rook	PsaBW
Goldfinch	RB	Hooded Crow	RB
Linnet	PsaBW	Raven	RB
Scarlet Rosefinch	PsaB		

Appendix B: summary of changes in status or numbers of breeding species in the Voronezh Region (for fuller details see systematic list).

Great Crested Grebe — possible increase and spread northwards	Collared Dove — recent colonist, increase
Little Egret — possible colonist in the south	Short-eared Owl — recent decline
Purple Heron — recent colonist in the north	Middle Spotted Woodpecker — increase, expansion of range
Teal — probable slight increase in recent years	Short-toed Lark — increase, spread northwards
Wigeon — increase, expansion south	Calandra Lark — increase, spread northwards
Pintail — fluctuations in numbers	Tawny Pipit — probably spread north
Goldeneye — possibly slight increase	Citrine Wagtail — recent colonist, increase and spread west
Osprey — decrease, no longer breeds	Wren — recent isolated breeding occurrences
Booted Eagle — decrease	Greenish Warbler — possible recent breeding
Spotted Eagle — decrease	Pied Flycatcher — increase, expansion
Partridge — decrease	Collared Flycatcher — increase, expansion
Quail — decrease	Red-breasted Flycatcher — prone to fluctuations in numbers
Coot — decrease	Stonechat — isolated breeding occurrence
Oystercatcher — tentative spread north	Isabelline Wheatear — increase and spread north
Wood Sandpiper — fluctuations in numbers	Fieldfare — fluctuates, but probably overall increase
Black-winged Pratincole — decline in south	Redwing — increase, spread south
Little Gull — recent colonist, increase	Serin — recent isolated breeding occurrence
Whiskered Tern — tentative expansion north	Siskin — possible expansion south
	Rook — increasing tendency to overwinter

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A REVIEW OF SOME WATERFOWL AT CHEW VALLEY LAKE, 1967–1975

By K. E. Vinicombe

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief summary of wildfowl numbers at Chew Valley Lake, Somerset (now in Avon) during the nine years 1967–1975 and to compare these with the records for 1954–1962 covered by Atkinson-Willes (1963). From counts made during these eight 'seasons' he considered Chew Valley Lake to be the second most important reservoir for winter wildfowl in Great Britain. The counts from 1967 to 1975 are mainly my own but where gaps exist they have been augmented by records from the Club's monthly reports *Bird News*.

In the 1954–62 period the birds were counted at monthly intervals from September to March and from this information Atkinson-Willes produced a figure representing the regular population (Table 1a). This is arrived at by taking the average of the three highest monthly counts in each season. Opportunity is therefore allowed for the cancelling out of chance fluctuations and account is also taken of the time when peak numbers are present. This regular number is therefore designed to indicate the population one might expect to find when the largest numbers of a species are present. A second figure, the maximum population, is simply the highest count during that period. My figures are computed in the same way, but counts have been used for the whole year. This will not affect most species as the majority of peak counts occur in the winter, but birds which reach a peak in April to August will have slightly higher values than in the old data (Table 1b). I have also included a number of species not analysed by Atkinson-Willes (Table 1c) and breeding numbers are also discussed (Table 2).

CANADA GOOSE *Branta canadensis*. Three arrived in 1971 and by annual breeding from 1973 increased to 13. The arrival of another six in July 1975 brought the flock up to 19.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*. Between 1954 and 1962 numbers varied between 12 and 350, with an average of 80 (Palmer and Ballance 1968). By the period under review this species had become only an irregular visitor, in small numbers.

MUTE SWAN *Cygnus olor*. As the peak period occurs with the gathering of moulting birds and the increment of the year's cygnets from June to August, it is difficult to compare the figures, but it seems unlikely that any overall change has taken place.

BEWICK'S SWAN *Cygnus bewickii*. Small numbers occur irregularly during winter, the larger flocks rarely remaining long.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*. No sign of any overall change, although high numbers (up to 27) were recorded in the 1972–73 and 1973–74 winters. One or two pairs usually attempt to breed, although often with little success.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*. This species has shown a spectacular increase and is now the most constantly numerous duck. It must be noted however that as it reaches peak numbers between August and November, the actual increase is perhaps not as high as suggested. The number of broods hatched annually varied between 13 and 40 with an average of 27.

TEAL *Anas crecca*. The regular figure has remained similar, but with signs of a slight increase in recent years. There is still no breeding record.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*. Not analysed by Atkinson-Willes, the Gadwall has recently shown a spectacular increase. It first bred in 1958 and in 1961 11 broods were reared (Palmer and Ballance 1968). There was an average of 17 broods from 1967 to 1975, with between 20 and 22 in the last four years. It is also relevant to add that it is now breeding at Blagdon Lake and it bred at Litton in 1973. The regular figure of 135 does not do justice to its present abundance. If this period is divided in half, the figure for 1967 to 1970 was 90, but from 1971 to 1975 it had increased to 172. A count of 275 in September 1975 illustrated the present population levels.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*. Has shown a small decrease in recent years, the only surface-feeding duck to do so.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*. Never numerous and the recent figures suggest only a slight increase.

Table 1. Regular and maximum numbers of waterfowl at Chew Valley Lake, 1954 to 1975.

(a) Eight seasons, 1954 to 1962 (from Atkinson-Willes, 1963).

	Mute Swan	Mallard	Teal	Wigeon	Pintail	Shoveler	Pochard	Tufted Duck	Golden-eye
Regular	40	690	605	1190	15	245	355	350	10
Maximum	90	1430	1490	2360	75	1140	1200	1075	65

(b) The same species in nine years, 1967 to 1975.

Regular	55	1065	645	1005	20	315	490	400	33
Maximum	84	1615	1170	1690	55	650	1770	730	52

(c) Species not analysed by Atkinson-Willes (1963), nine years, 1967 to 1975.

	Bewick's Swan	Shelduck	Gadwall	Garganey	Goosander	Ruddy Duck	Little Grebe	Great Crested Grebe	Coot
Regular	15	11	135	8	19	28	40	415	995
Maximum	54	27	275	25	62	65	103	660	1615

Note. Gadwall 1967 to 1970 – Reg. 90, Max. 245. 1971 to 1975 – Reg. 172, Max. 275.
 Pochard 1968 to 1975 – (excluding exceptional 1967) – Reg. 350, Max. 850.
 Goosander 1967 to 1970 – Reg. 10, Max. 28. 1971 to 1975 – Reg. 26, Max. 62.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*. Although not covered in the earlier survey, has probably increased as an autumn visitor from July to September. Numbers vary with peak counts of over 20 in 1967 and 1971. Although it bred fairly regularly until 1970 it has not done so since.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeate*. This species has increased notably and Chew Valley Lake is now an important habitat for it. The breeding population however, has declined sharply. From 1957 to 1962 an average of 32 pairs bred, but after a poor season in 1962, only 13 pairs did so during the following year (Palmer and Ballance 1968). From 1967 to 1975 there was a mean of only one brood.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*. The higher regular figure for 1967 to 1975 is due entirely to the exceptional winter of 1966–67 when up to 1770 were present in January. If this is ignored, the regular figure for 1968 to 1975 becomes 350 (maximum 850) which is remarkably similar to the earlier survey. As a nesting bird, one or two pairs bred from 1958 to 1961 and four or five in 1963 (Palmer and Ballance 1968). One to three pairs bred from 1967 to 1973 with seven in 1972, but no young were reared in 1974 and 1975 although nesting was undoubtedly attempted.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*. Comparison between the tables would suggest an increase, but these figures are probably misleading as peak numbers occur in April and May and again in July and August. Both these peaks are outside the winter periods covered by Atkinson-Willes so it is impossible to suggest any real change in status. Similarly to the Shoveler it has decreased as a nesting bird since the late 1950's. From 1957 to 1962 an average of 135 pairs bred, but in 1964 only 16 broods were located (Palmer and Ballance 1968). Between 1967 and 1975 there was an average of 29 broods. Numbers fluctuate from year to year as it seems to suffer during summers of low water level, but nevertheless it is still the most numerous breeding duck here.

GOLDENEYE *Bucephala clangula*. This species has shown a three-fold increase since the earlier review. During the winter of 1975–76 it occurred in its highest numbers since the severe winter of 1963.

Table 2. Number of broods hatched, Chew Valley Lake, 1967 to 1975.

Species	67	68	69	70	71	72	73*	74	75	Mean
Little Grebe	7	11	5	13	28	14	4	11	16	12
Great Crested Grebe	22	10	12	74	39	0	0	69	35	29
Canada Goose	—	—	—	—	—	0	1	1	2	0
Mute Swan	3	4	3	2	3	3	2	4	6	3
Shelduck	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	1
Mallard	21	13	13	31	37	40	20	37	32	27
Gadwall	6	13	10	18	18	21	22	20	21	17
Garganey	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shoveler	1	2	1	2	1	4	1	1	0	1
Pochard	3	2	2	1	2	7	1	0	0	2
Tufted Duck	27	30	9	44	61	51	3	22	18	29
Ruddy Duck	?	?	?	?	1	2	6	1	3	3
Coot	26	18	41	67	97	46	5	63	55	43
Totals	117	104	98	253	287	188	66	231	189	168

* 1973 breeding season was poor owing to unusually low summer water level

SMEW *Mergus albellus*. Has greatly declined as a winter visitor, a decrease which has been reflected throughout the country. Atkinson-Willes quoted a regular peak of ten, but from 1967 to 1975 the population varied from one to four, with none at all in the 1968–69 winter.

GOOSANDER *Mergus merganser*. A regular figure of 10 for 1967 to 1970 compares with 26 from 1971 to 1975, while a count of 62 in December 1973 was in excess of anything previously recorded in the old county of Somerset. This corresponds with increases in other fish-eating birds in recent years.

RUDDY DUCK *Oxyura jamaicensis*. After first appearing in the area in 1957 it increased to a present summer population of some six to ten pairs, although in recent years breeding success has been poor. The largest numbers however, occur in winter at Blagdon Lake.

For completeness I have also shown Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* and Coot *Fulica atra* in Table 1c. Of these, the Great Crested Grebe has shown a large increase since 1967–68 with a regular maximum of 415 and a successful breeding population of up to 74 pairs. The same period also saw large increases of Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* and Goosanders. Increases in the numbers of coarse fish, particularly Roach *Rutilus rutilus* and Perch *Perca fluviatilis* are probably one of the causes of this.

To summarize, the maximum counts as shown by Atkinson-Willes have only been exceeded in the 1967 to 1975 period by Mallard and Pochard. The lack of any long periods of severe weather would perhaps account for this. Of the nine species analysed in the earlier review, three, Mallard, Shoveler and Goldeneye, have increased in recent years. Apart from Wigeon which is showing signs of a decrease, the rest have remained at similar levels. Three other species, Gadwall, Goosander and Ruddy Duck, have increased markedly but the White-fronted Goose and Smew have sharply declined. Great Crested Grebes have shown a spectacular increase in the last ten years while Canada Geese have colonized the lake and are increasing.

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 Palmer, E.M. and Ballance, D.K. 1968. *The Birds of Somerset*. London

NOTES

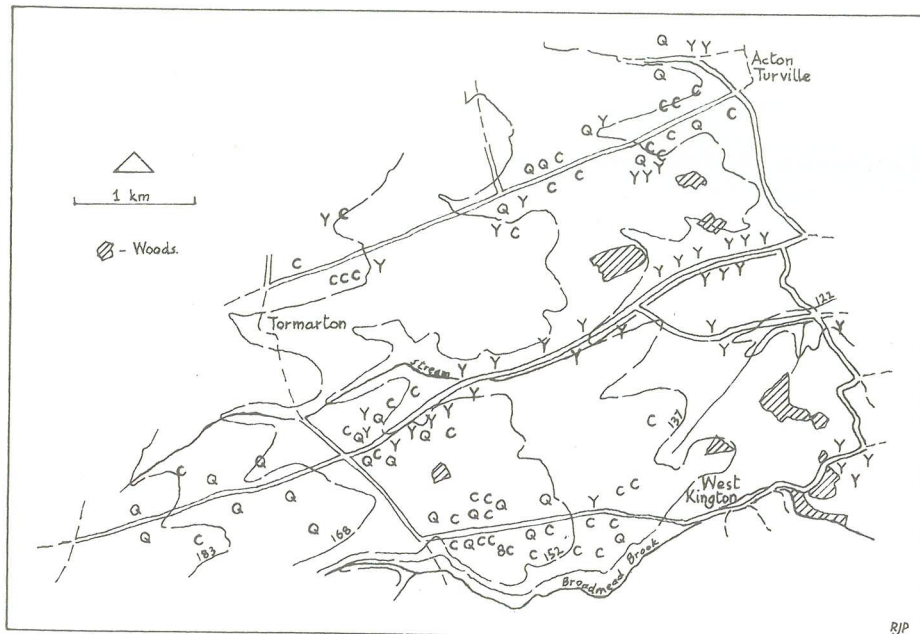
A count of Quail and other birds near Tormarton, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire

The numbers of Quail *Coturnix coturnix* present in Britain varies quite widely from year to year. When they are numerous the year concerned is often referred to as a 'Quail year'. 1970 was one such year (see *Brit. Birds* 63 (1970):311) and quite by chance we had an opportunity to count calling birds in the Tormarton, Gloucestershire (now Avon), and West Kingston, Wiltshire, areas on 6 and 7 July. The original objective of the visit was to count singing Corn Buntings *Emberiza calandra* for Nigel Collar who was at that time carrying out observations on this species but was temporarily working abroad.

After a short period of counting Corn Buntings it became clear that there were going to be exceptional numbers of Quail present. Six were heard along the first stretch of road (of four km), this being about the total number normally expected in the whole area. So, calling Quails were noted along with Corn Buntings. Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* were also counted.

A total of approximately 22 km of road was covered in the two evenings (about half in each) and the method of counting adopted was quite simple. A car was used and stops were made at 150–200 metre intervals when singing birds were listened for or Corn Buntings and Yellowhammers may have been noted on prominent song posts. The weather on both evenings was clear, fine and warm and this obviously stimulated the birds into song. We were very wary of the ventriloquial ability of Quails and calling birds were pinpointed very carefully. This was essential in some areas: in one 3 km stretch of road eleven were heard.

Fig. 1. Location of Quail, Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer counted near Tormarton, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, early July, 1970



Q = Quail C = Corn Bunting Y = Yellowhammer
 Only roads covered by the count on 6/7 July are shown in full.

Fig. 1 shows the roads covered and the location of birds counted. The totals were Quail 27, Corn Bunting 47 and Yellowhammer 40. It is interesting to note that the Quail and Corn Buntings were heard or seen mainly in the more open and gently sloping areas, whereas the Yellowhammers were mainly absent from these areas, occurring instead where the ground was more undulating and where there were many more higher trees and hedgerows.

In addition five Corn Buntings and two Yellowhammers were counted (on the same dates) to the south-west of the main area on the minor roads over Lansdown Hill (the section over 220 metres) and from the top of Tog Hill to Oldfield Gate House. Other also very suitable habitat nearer to Marshfield – the area bounded by Fig. 1, West Littleton, Marshfield and West Kington – was counted a few days later in July, but unfortunately not mapped. Surprisingly no Quail were traced in this area but 25 Corn Buntings and 23 Yellowhammers were noted. The overall totals are listed in Table 1. (These are corrected figures from those given in the issue of *Bird News* for June 1970.) The extra counting covered an additional length of very approximately 20 km of road and the total area involved over three evenings was about 30 square km.

Table 1. Numbers of Quail, Corn Bunting and Yellowhammer counted near Tormarton, Gloucestershire/Wiltshire, early July, 1970

	Mapped as in Fig. 1	Elsewhere	Total
Quail	27	0	27
Corn Bunting	47*	30	77
Yellowhammer	40	25	65

* This figure includes a group of eight birds in a loose flock which may have been one or two family parties.

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Some observations on a Black Redstart

The winter of 1974/75 provided me with some remarkable close-up views of an individual Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*. It was first seen in the back garden of my house, then in Nailsea, Avon on 30 November, 1974. From then on the bird was seen almost daily throughout the winter months and showed little or no fear. It would often approach to within a few feet of me whilst I was working in the garden. It was particularly fond of some trellis fencing about eight feet high, and the garage roof, where it would sit quite unconcerned for several minutes flicking its tail from time to time in typical fashion. Less conventional perches included, once, a Brussels sprout plant and, on another occasion, the handle of the garden spade. When it dropped onto the soil to pick up some small item of food, it often showed the chestnut rump and tail well, which contrasted vividly with the otherwise dull appearance of the winter-plumaged bird.

The first brief notes of the beginnings of a song were heard on 12 January, 1975. Gradually the bird extended the range of its song until eventually it was rendering its full repertoire. I last saw the bird in the garden on 4 April, 1975, but two days later I was lucky enough to see what I presumed was 'my' Black Redstart together with a second bird not far away, providing a wonderful, and final, highlight for me.

Peter Rodgers

1, Court Gardens, Uley, Dursley, Gloucestershire.

Communal feeding of Ospreys

On 24 December 1973 while at New Symerna, between Daytona and Cape Canaveral, on the Atlantic coast of Florida, U.S.A. I witnessed an interesting association of 29 feeding Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*. Although the birds were in a rather irregular group, nevertheless, they were clearly associated with each other, flying and hovering some nine metres or less above the tidal edge of the sea. There was frequent stooping to the surface with occasional plunging and submerging but as far as I could tell they were unsuccessful in obtaining any fish. Each Osprey slowly progressed forward but turned back after leading the flock for a short distance to rejoin the main bulk of birds. This toing and froing occurred many times during the 20 minutes they were under observation but they gradually dispersed southward along the coast. Later that same day other smaller parties, about 60 in total, behaved in a similar fashion. Local ornithologists were not familiar with this behaviour though admitting that it could have been overlooked. It is interesting to note also that during my initial observations a group of about 70 Brown Pelicans *Pelecanus occidentalis* diving further offshore, were highly successful in obtaining prey.

Bernard King

Gull Cry, 9 Park Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall.

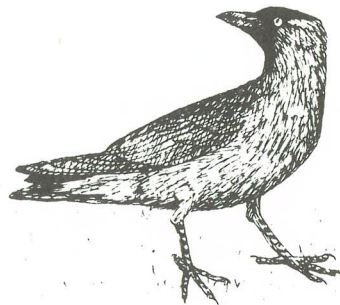


Jackdaws taking food from a bird-feeder

During a visit to Mousehole, Cornwall, on 15 March 1976 I saw two Jackdaws *Corvus monedula* in a fruit tree (*Prunus*), one of which was perched on a sloping branch near a wire mesh bird-feeder. The feeder was about 16 centimetres long and filled with shelled peanuts. By leaning somewhat precariously towards the feeder the Jackdaw found it could just reach those peanuts that protruded through the mesh. The bird was able to break and eat these but, inevitably, some fell to the ground whereupon its companion would alight to feed. This interesting behaviour continued for some 12 minutes before the birds were disturbed by traffic passing along a nearby main road.

Bernard King

(Several species have learnt to take peanuts from a feeder in the same way as tits *Parus* spp. (see, for example, *Brit. Birds* 67(1974):356, 69(1976):312–313 and 370–371) and there is even a record of a Jay *Garrulus glandarius* feeding in the same manner (*Brit. Birds* 69(1976):105–106). – Eds.)



Feeding association between Marsh Tits and House Sparrows

It is well known that many species will sometimes hide food for later consumption and some of the food thus stored is undoubtedly found and eaten by other species. An example of this occurred during the winter of 1970/71 in my garden at Saltford, Somerset (now Avon), when a pair of Marsh Tits *Parus palustris* were regular visitors to a bush of Common Box *Buxus sempervirens* some 28 centimetres high. The birds were observed inserting shelled peanuts amongst the tightly packed leaves near the top with the apparent intention of hiding and storing them. Several nuts would be stored thus on each visit as they were readily obtainable from a neighbour's suspended nut-bag. However, on each occasion the nuts fell to the ground within a few minutes. This easy source of food attracted the resident House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* which squabbled amongst themselves over the nuts. The Marsh Tits appeared not to be put off by the aggressive House Sparrows and continued with their food storing activities.

J.A.G. Barnes in *The Titmice of the British Isles* (1975) mentions food-hiding and storing for the Marsh Tit but gives no instance of the behaviour being associated with other species.

Bernard King

CLUB ACTIVITIES, 1975

1975 began with about 560 members in the Club, and by May was up to 580, but this figure included 70 defaulters and retirements so the true figure was 510. By the end of the year the number was swelled by new recruitment back to around 550. On balance then, the numbers were fairly stable.

Another 'nestbox' brood of three Kestrels was successfully reared near Chepstow.

Once again joint film shows were held with the RSPB (20 February), and the Wildfowl Trust (9 December) and a joint Wine and Cheese Party with the Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation took place at the end of September. The Club's Gull Photographic Competition closed at the end of the year, with a disappointing total of only six entries.

Field Meetings

These were held throughout the year and included two Beginners' Meetings, to Leigh Woods and Sand Bay, a weekend excursion to Suffolk at the end of May, and several coach outings to places such as Portland, Poole Harbour and Pennington. Bristol Grammar School Playing Fields were once again the venue for the Barbecue following the 24-hour Tally Hunt in July, while fourteen members enjoyed the Tally Hunt on foot at Christmas. Once again, several members contributed to the Bristol Channel Seabird Survey by travelling on White Funnel Steamer trips.

Indoor Meetings

These continued to be held at St. Mary Redcliffe and Temple School, and generally attracted good audiences.

16. 1.75	— Members' Evening
13. 2.75	— Spitsbergen 1973 — Ted Jackson
13. 3.75	— Birdwatching at Cape Clear — Kevin Baker
16.10.75	— Birds of Rocky Rivers — Peter Schofield
13.11.75	— Bird Vet in Kenya — John Cooper
11.12.75	— A.G.M. and Christmas Social

Publications

Bristol Ornithology 7 was distributed in the Spring, while *Bird News* continued to appear monthly, being distributed at indoor meetings during winter months, which, together with those that were hand-delivered, saved the Club considerable postal charges.

Wendy Dickson *Honorary Secretary*



