

Colour-ringed RINGED PLOVERS

The colour-ringing of Ringed Plovers in NE England, described in WSG Bulletin No.9 (September 73), is continuing. While this is mainly concerned with a behavioural and ecological study, sightings of these birds in other areas are extremely valuable and we are very grateful for those already reported. The number of birds ringed in the past year was greater than in preceding years and we are hopeful of more sightings. Details of date, locality, positions and colours of rings and any other relevant information should be sent to Mike Pienkowski, (address on Page 1). Observers will be informed of ringing details.

METHODS OF CATCHING AND STUDYING BREEDING WADERS

Peter Ferns and Harry Green.

With few exceptions, we know relatively little about British and Irish breeding waders. What is the exact distribution, habitat preference and population size of each species? What are their bill, wing and tarsus measurements? Where do they winter? In a country that has made major international contributions to the study of waders, many of these questions remain embarassingly unanswered. Few people have studied our breeding waders. Exceptions are Nethersole-Thompson's (1951-1973) work on Greenshanks and Dotterel in Scotland, Oystercatcher studies by Harris (1967) and others, Jim Wilson's unpublished preliminary study of Hebridean Ringed Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin and Oystercatcher, and current work on Redshanks by Bill Hale and his colleagues, and on Ringed Plover by Mike Pienkowski. In spite of these good beginnings a concerted effort is needed to ring, weigh and measure breeding adults to provide basic information for comparison with the excellent data already collected from migrant, wintering and some overseas populations. It is not an easy task since breeding adults can only be caught one at a time, and even this requires patience. The fact that every breeding adult measured is worth perhaps a hundred measured on migration or in winter, provides some consolation. We set out below some basic catching techniques for use in breeding areas. Our experience has been gained, ironically enough, in north-east Greenland, but we hope it will prove of value nearer home.

Locating nests and young

Random searching for either nests or young in suitable areas is seldom of any real value. A few may be found in this way. An adult bird which is aware of the observers' presence will rarely stand anywhere near the nest, so a search in an area where a bird has been standing is an even greater waste of time. The most useful standard method is to walk systematically across suitable habitat until a bird is flushed (a bird flushed from a nest usually rises much later than one, for example, feeding), and then to retire to cover, as far away as possible, and await its return. With shy species which flush easily the problem is retreating far enough to allow the bird to return but to still be within binocular range. With species which sit tight, the problem is getting them to rise at all, and in this case a length of rope held stretched between two people and dragged systematically across the ground often proves useful. In some parts of Britain a car is an excellent hide for