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GREENLAND RINGED PLOVER COPENHAGEN 8160408 AT THE SOLWAY, SCOTLAND

by G.H. Green

Late in the evening of 13 May 1979 the phone rang and I groaned wondering what else could possibly have gone wrong with Wader Study Group plans! Thankfully, my inward groans were soon silenced when I heard John McMeeking telling me that they had that day caught on the Solway a Ringed Plover bearing a large red colour ring on one leg and a Danish ring on the other. I knew that such a bird could only have been ringed by our expedition to north-east Greenland in 1974. I was soon excitedly thumbing through the old record cards and I was delighted to find that Copenhagen 8160408 was not just a Greenland Ringed Plover but an old friend and neighbour! In the Expedition Report (Green and Greenwood 1978) we wrote "The helicopter dropped us on snow near the old trapper's hut on the Antarctica Havn beach on 6 July (1974) ..... We landed in the centre of a Ringed Plover territory and when the birds recovered from the shock they alarm-called continuously. We found the nest about 100m away and caught the pair in a small clap net set at a place where they fed near the hut. The male, soon named Fred, was a particularly alarmist, hysterical creature and we could hardly move without precipitating a shower of nervous calls". The Solway bird was none other than "Mrs. Fred", our Antarctica Havn neighbour, so to me the record is an especially poignant one. Scientifically it adds to our knowledge of Greenland Ringed Plover migration (summarised in the report). Personally, it reminds me of the magnificent solitude of NE Greenland which 'Mrs. Fred' experiences every year of her life but which I shall probably never see again.

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