M.W.Pienkowski (Dept. of Zoology, University of Durham) Firth of Forth, Scotland (dyes and/or flags on Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Knot, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank Turnstone, Ringed Plover and Lapwing)

D.Elphick (South Manchester R.G.) mid-Cheshire, England (Curlews dyed yellow on rump)

Clyde R.G. (Clyde Estuary, Scotland) dye on Ringed Plover and Redshanks

Miss S. Jones (Dept. of Zoology, University of Durham) Upper Teesdale, England. (leg-flags on Lapwings)

N.A.Clark (Dept. of Zoology, University of Edinburgh) Severn Estuary (dyes and leg-flags on Dunlins)

The relevant workers ahve devised non-conflicting schemes but sorting out the origin of a marked bird is quite involved. Records sent to M.W.Pienkowski will be passed on to the relevant worker and observers will be notified of the origin of their bird.

Ideally observers should note the species, colour of dye, its position on the bird (eg. breast, belly or rump), and/or colour of leg-flag; also, if possible, the number of birds in the flock checked for marks. Less complete information is also very welcome.

The two largest projects this winter (as well as some of the smaller ones) form parts of investigations of movements about and between estuaries within a winter - information urgently required by conservation and planning organisations (see elsewhere in this Bulletin). Although the work is being co-ordinated by the University of Durham and the Nature Conservancy Council, many other ringers and groups are taking part.

OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

For the Americas, see Bulletin 26.

Oman

The Royal Air Force Ornithological Society will be sending a party to Maserah Island, Oman, in eastern Arabia to continue studies begun in 1976. The expedition period, 21 October to 12 November 1979, corresponds with a large passage of Palaearctic waders through this region, and it is planned to mist-net large samples of those present. All waders and sea-birds (mainly terns) trapped will be dye-marked on the underparts with picric acid. As well as a few possible sightings elsewhere, dyed birds will provide information about local feeding and roosting movements and help in estimation of the numbers present. Sightings would be welcome and should be sent to: Sgt. Brian Etheridge, c/o N.M.S.U., R.A.F. Kinloss, Forres, Morayshire IV36 0LU, Scotland, or to the Editors.

Australia

An investigation, based on dye-marked birds, of movements about and from Port Phillip Bay, Victoria has been started. This concerns all wader species and sightings should be reported to Dr. C.D.T.Minton, c/o IMI Australia, 10th Floor, Heine House, 11 Queen's Road, Melbourne 3002, Australia.

SPRING PASSAGE OF DUNLINS, SANDERLINGS, RINGED PLOVERS AND TURNSTONES THROUGH BRITAIN - A FURTHER PROGRESS REPORT

by P.N.Ferns

Thirty-two people completed the form enclosed with Wader Study Group Bulletin 24 and, as described in Bulletin 26, coverage was arranged for at least 43 sites. Results have so far been received from 50 sites, though information has still to come in from ten of the original 43. While it is thus too early to present the results in full, it is worth giving a summary of what was achieved.

A total of 459 counts were made, giving an average of nine counts per site. At least 150 people contributed to the project in some way. Several sites had only low numbers of the four species, but this may be because waders on spring migration tend to associate in large flocks on more extensive feeding areas, rather than spreading out over a wide area as birds in winter tend to do. Even so, several observers commented on the fact that numbers seemed to be lower than in previous springs. This does not necessarily mean that fewer birds were migrating through Britain, since smaller numbers might also be expected (especially at the smaller sites) when weather conditions are particularly favourable for migration, or when food supplies are particularly good. In these circumstances, some birds might be able to overfly Britain and also less use might be made of smaller "emergency" sites.

At seven sites, more than 16 counts were made during the study period, and these will be particularly valuable in sorting out the numerical trends. One notable feature of the counts, was the great complexity of the migrations, especially in the case of Dunlin. Immediately adjacent sites often gave a completely different picture, and since arrivals and departures were often occurring simultaneously, it cannot even be assumed when counts were constant over a period of a few days that the same birds were involved. In this respect, the number of birds with differing amounts of summer plumage is proving very useful in sorting out waves of new arrivals, since many of the latter tend to have less summer plumage than birds which are departing.

Departures of birds on migration were observed at nine sites in four main areas - the Solent, Severn, Forth and Menai Straits. The average date of all such observations was 6 May and the dominant directions of movement were between NW and NE. The total numbers of birds involved were as follows: Dunlin Calidris alpina - 1561, Sanderling C.alba - 309, Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula - 90 and Turnstone Arenaria interpres - 64. Very few birds were colour-dyed (less than 100 Calidris alpina alpina) and no sightings of these were reported.

Twenty-one catches involving the four species were made at nine sites - the Wash, Devon, Severn, Dee, Southport, Morecambe Bay, Solway Firth, Inverness and Teesmouth. The total numbers of birds involved were as follows: Dunlin - 1785, Sanderling - 336, Ringed Plover - 447 and Turnstone - 395. The majority of these birds were fully processed and the results will thus be very valuable in helping to determine the likely destinations of particular waves of migrants.

A detailed account of the results will appear in the next Wader Study Group Bulletin.

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