

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

FOWLER, J. AND COHEN, L. 1986. *Statistics for Ornithologists*. BTO Guide 22, 176pp. British Trust for Ornithology, Tring, Herts, U.K.

This is the latest of the BTO Guides. It "...aims to introduce ornithologists to the fundamentals of statistics without swamping them with the underlying theory."

The book covers most aspects of basic data presentation and simple statistics. It starts with measurements and sampling concepts, goes through data types and how to present them, and then on to means, medians and modes. Measurement of data variation is then covered, along with confidence limits. Data transformations, statistical significance, and types of statistical test are described next, followed by chi-squared tests and contingency tables. Finally, correlation, regression, comparisons of populations and simple analysis of variance are described. There are many examples given throughout the book, and the data used is ornithological in all cases.

My first impression of this book was that here was a useful basic introduction to the subject with a few of the pitfalls outlined - but then I started to read. I found the book very frustrating, since the information required to justify some assumptions made (and so give some insight into *why* rather than just showing *how*) was either misleading or not presented. A number of simple topics, such as areas under histograms, calculation of the median from a frequency distribution, and the short formula for calculating chi-squared from a 2x2 contingency table, were not covered. The chapter on data transformations is most confusing, with no mention of mean and variance dependence/independence. Finally, to say that there is no problem with tied ranks in the calculation of a product moment correlation coefficient will be a baffling error for a novice in the subject. I am afraid that it is back to Sokal and Rohlf (*Biometry*) for me - a book which has been in its second edition since 1981: a pity that Fowler and Cohen failed to notice this, as their page references (to the old edition) are now all wrong.

A.G. Wood

BRENNING, U. ?1986. Zum Durchzug Watvogel (Limicolae) auf der Insel Langenwerder (Wismar-Bucht). Pp 86-96 in *Tiere der polaren Regionen*. Gustav Fischer Verlag, Jena, DDR.

This paper, published in an East German book, may not be readily available to shorebird workers elsewhere, so a brief synopsis seems worthwhile. The paper records some results from counts and ringing of waders on the Baltic island of Langenwerder, the oldest coastal bird reserve in the DDR. During the period 1958-75, about 3 500 waders were caught there. More recently, between 1976-80 another 10 800 were marked during autumn migration. Of the total caught of more than 14 300, over 60% were Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, 16% Redshanks *Tringa totanus*, nearly 7% Knots *Calidris canutus* and 4% Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*.

Counts made between July and October in 1962-66 and again in 1976-80 indicate increased use of the reserve by migrating Redshanks, Dunlins, Knots and Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, but no major changes in the use by Ringed Plovers and Little Stints. Special attention has been paid to the migration of Redshanks through the site. Most birds caught

in 1976-80 have been juveniles, with peak numbers present between mid-July and late August. Wing-lengths (mean about 160 mm) confirm that almost all are of the nominate race *T.t.totanus*, but a few very long-winged birds (up to 180 mm) have been caught at the end of August and in early September. These might be *T.t.robusta* from Iceland. Average masses of passage birds caught at Langenwerder in July and August varied little with date, and were between 115-120 g. Estimates of the duration of stay of individuals indicate that most remained for 10-15 days.

Passage numbers of Knots were highest at the end of July and again (in larger numbers) at the end of August. Numbers of Ringed Plover remained high from mid-August to late September, but the main influxes of Dunlins occurred from early September to early October.

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GOLLOP, J.B., BARRY, T.W. AND IVERSEN, E.H. 1986. *Eskimo Curlew. A vanishing species?* Special Publication No. 17, Saskatchewan Natural History Soc., Regina. 160pp. (Available for \$9.00 from the publisher, Box 1121, Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 3B4, Canada).

Some bird species have not survived the intensive hunting of the European settlers in the Americas. The Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius* is the most famous example, but a shorebird has almost followed unacknowledged. The Eskimo Curlew *Numenius borealis* is a fairly small, high-arctic breeding curlew species. At the discovery of America it was certainly a very common transcontinental migrant. It had become almost extirpated by the latter half of the 19th century. However, small flocks of Eskimo Curlews are still recorded about once every 2 years, mainly along their supposed migratory routes. With this observation rate it competes in rarity with its endangered European counterpart, the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*.

Thirty-two years after publication of Fred Bodsworth's best-selling novel *The Last of the Curlews* (Dodd, Mead and Co., New York), Gollop and co-authors are again attempting to bring this interesting wader into focus, though in a very different way. One impetus to publishing this "compact handbook on Eskimo Curlews" probably came from a series of expeditions into arctic Canada in 1981-84, during which relocation of the remaining Eskimo Curlews on their former breeding grounds was attempted. These attempts failed, but this cannot be said of the book. It is an exhaustive, yet readable, overview of (almost?) all that has been written on the species, including the unpublished notes of Roderick Ross McFarlane, the only person to have left a written record (in the 1860s) of the breeding biology of Eskimo Curlews. The species description, status summary and taxonomic review are followed by an illustrated account of the breeding habitat, a summary of the known life-history traits, and an annotated review of all known Eskimo Curlew observations. A long bibliography completes the work. Waderologists are generally used to a relative plenty of the species they study. This, then, is a very different species, and one which requires a different approach. As a vivid record of what can go wrong for our beloved study subjects, the book is strongly recommended.

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