

NEWS AND REVIEWS

1987 LESLIE BROWN MEMORIAL GRANT RECIPIENTS

Djibouti III—Migration Raptor Count

Geoff and Hilary Welch

(Note: An editorial oversight resulted in the following profile note being printed in an earlier issue of *The Journal of Raptor Research*. A sincere apology is extended to Geoff and Hilary Welch.—Editor)

As with previous Djibouti expeditions, Djibouti III was co-led by Geoff and Hilary Welch. Geoff and Hilary met in autumn of 1977 whilst working as temporary wardens for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) at Minsmere Nature Reserve in Suffolk, England. Geoff graduated from Imperial College, London—reading Zoology and Applied Entomology—in July 1977, having studied avocets at Minsmere for his final year project. Hilary graduated in Graphic Design from the London College of Printing in July 1975. She had left college with a new but increasing interest in birds and conservation, so filled in the time before finding a job in design by working as a volunteer in the RSPB's southeastern office near her home.

After a year of working together at Minsmere, Geoff and Hilary were taken on as full-time wardens, Hilary being the first and only female warden with the RSPB. In September 1979 they were married, and in January 1980 Geoff was posted to his own reserve, Fairburn Ings, Yorkshire. In May 1986 they moved to a new reserve, the Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, where Geoff is now tackling the challenge of managing a wet grassland reserve with livestock. Since July 1986 Geoff has been a member of Council for the Ornithological Society of the Middle East.

Encouraged by ICBP, Geoff and Hilary began the first Djibouti expedition (14 March–3 April 1984) which was a preliminary visit to examine the status of the endemic Djibouti Francolin (*Francolinus ochropectus*) and to document the country's almost unknown birdlife. Opportunities for observing migration, their main field of interest, were unfortunately very limited.

Between 9 October and 3 December 1985, the Djibouti II expedition carried out research into several aspects of the country's wildlife: raptor migration (>80 000 birds noted in 3 wks); more work on the Djibouti Francolin; a survey of the near-endemic Bankouale Palm (*Livistona carinensis*); and a brief survey of the endangered Arabian Bustard (*Ardeotis arabs*). During Djibouti II, a new subspecies of the Green-winged Pytilia (*Pytilia melba flavicaudata*) was discovered and described (published in *Sandgrouse*, Volume 10).

The Djibouti III project (23 September–18 November 1987) concentrated on further documenting raptor migration. During 38 days of counting, 246 478 raptors of 26 species were noted. The project also endeavoured to increase public awareness of birds, wildlife and conservation in Djibouti.

No immediate plans for future expeditions are underway, but Geoff and Hilary are collaborating with Alain Laurent, a teacher in Djibouti, on a bird book for use in Djibouti schools, as well as a distribution atlas of the country's avifauna. Attempts are also being made to establish a nature reserve on the outskirts of Djibouti city. Djibouti is a coastal city located in southeastern Afars and Issas Territory on the African continent at the juncture of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.