

*Uria aalge*. **Guillemot.**

First eggs May 23rd. A few were seen off-shore until early October, later records referring to oiled birds. One caught on the Landing Beach November 29th, was of the Northern form *U. a. aalge*.

*Fratercula arctica*. **Puffin.**

Not recorded until April 11th, and none seen after the end of July, except for one off-shore, September 15th.

*Crex crex*. **Corn Crake.**

Two April 24th, 25th, single birds May 7th, 8th, 14th, June 1st and 2nd. One September 7th and 16th.

*Rallus aquaticus*. **Water Rail.**

On February 20th, two March 3rd. Single birds March 30th, April 1st, 7th and 23rd. First recorded in autumn September 10th, when one was caught in an outhouse at the Hotel. Next seen September 23rd, and two at least were present from early October until the end of the year, with three heard October 30th and 31st.

*Gallinula chloropus*. **Moorhen.**

One in the High Street, December 16th.

*Fulica atra*. **Coot.**

An adult in the Hotel garden, December 15th, found in a dying condition on the following day.

*Phasianus colchicus*. **Pheasant.**

Largest number seen, eight on April 16th, October 25th and November 23rd (one had been killed earlier in November).

## NOTES ON SELECTED SPECIES

**Chaffinch.** The autumn migration of Chaffinches appears to have been one of the heaviest ever recorded. Most of these birds passed over the Island without halting and very few were caught. Three males were however taken in early November, and one in December, and were undoubtedly of one of the continental forms. No skins were available for comparison, but in the strong vinaceous colour of the underparts, and the almost total absence of any brownish tinge on the breast, the November birds would seem to have resembled the recently-recognized *F. c. hortensis* (C. and S. Germany and the Low Countries) rather than the typical *F. c. coelebs* from Northern Europe.

**Red-headed Bunting.** The first bird, an adult male, was seen and identified by John Ogilvie, on July 14th. From then until the 21st it was almost always to be found on the east side of the Tillage Field, especially around a patch of charlock.

The general impression gained was of a large bunting with brilliant yellow underparts and a red bib and forehead. It appeared larger than the Yellow Bunting with which it was often to be seen.

The crown, ear-coverts, chin and overcoat were a rich chestnut, the colour extending onto the upper breast. The nape and sides of the neck were yellow shading into a brownish-yellow. The feathers of the mantle were greenish-yellow centred dark, and the wing feathers were dark brown margined with a sandy colour. The rump and underparts were a clear yellow and the tail feathers were dark brown. On the flanks there was a small ill-defined patch of white. The bill appeared slate-grey and the legs pale.

The second bird, a female or possibly first-winter bird, was present from September 30th to October 3rd. It frequented a small area at the edge of the Tillage Field. Although rather tame at first it soon became very wary and attempts to trap it were not successful.

In general appearance it was remarkably colourless; a pale fawnish-grey bird about the size of a Yellow Bunting, the only other species with which it was seen to consort. The entire underparts were pale brownish-grey, rather browner on the crown, rather yellowish on the rump, whilst an observer who contrived to approach to within ten feet on one occasion, described a distinctly greenish tinge on the back. The tail was of a warmer brown with pale yellowish-buff outer webs to the outermost feathers. The wing feathers, except for the median coverts, were brown edged buff; the median coverts were very dark brown with very pale edges, showing as a fairly distinct bar. The chin was whitish, throat and breast very pale grey, belly and under-tail coverts very pale lemon-yellow, deeper in the area of the vent. The eye was very dark with a rather pale orbital ring; the bill very pale pinkish-grey; legs flesh-coloured.

On July 18th, early in the morning, a brief song was heard and the observer described it as being not unlike the first five or six notes of a Blackbird's song but much softer and lasting four or five seconds. The phrase was repeated three or four times. The flight-note of the male was described as a hard 'tyuck'. The second bird was heard to call on only one occasion when it produced a soft double note.

The male fed very largely on the caterpillar of the white butterflies (*Pieris sp.*), flying down from the fence, seizing one and returning to the wire or a post and eating it. On one occasion it was seen feeding on the dried-up bed of a pond and reaching up taking the seed-heads of the grasses in its beak. On another occasion it was seen on a foxglove stem apparently taking the seeds. The second bird fed mainly in the stubble.

The identity of the male bird was never in any doubt but the female was, of course, very much more difficult. The bird's size; the colour, size and angle of the bill; the colour of the back and rump, would seem to indicate that it was not a Black-headed Bunting (*E. melanocephala*), a bird which it closely resembles. Nevertheless, the identification was not considered to be beyond all doubt until after Miss Vere Benson had compared notes and her excellent painting with series of skins of both species.

**Little Bunting.** The two adult males of October 16th showed a marked preference for a stretch of the road just outside the Hotel, where they appeared to be feeding on the seeds of swine cress (*Carara coronopus*), which grows there in abundance. This preference facilitated the catching of one bird in a hastily improvised drop-net, the second escaping from under the net at the same time. The trapped bird was duller than its companion, the buff tips to the feathers obscuring the head-pattern. Apart from this distinctive head-pattern, the rufous outer webs of the secondaries, showing as a patch of warm brown on the closed wing, were more noticeable in the field than most works of reference suggest.

The bill of the trapped bird was dark brownish horn ; eye, dark brown ; legs, pale pinkish-brown ; wing 72 mm, tarsus 17.5 mm ; weight 13.9 gms.

**Tawny Pipit.** It is not absolutely certain that the birds of September 19th and 29th were different individuals, though it seems unlikely that such a bird could have escaped notice for ten days. On both occasions good views were had (on the 29th the bird was watched for ninety minutes), and the sandy colouration, wagtail-like appearance, and distinctive 'twick' call-note were recorded.

**Meadow Pipit.** A very pale bird was seen on several occasions in August and September. It was one of a small flock of pipits and it is of interest to give the dates and places in which it was seen as it gives some idea of the movements of flocks about the Island. It was first seen at Pondsby on August 21st ; on the 25th and the two following days it was in the Bulls Paradise and Lighthouse field ; and on September 2nd it was seen near Benjamin's Chair in the morning and above Goat Island in the afternoon.

**Reed Warbler.** A juvenile trapped on September 24th had dark blue-grey legs except for a narrow line of yellow-brown at the back.

**Melodious Warbler.** The bird of July 30th was trapped at the Old Light at about midday. It was distinguished from an Icterine Warbler by the short wing (64 mm.) and the wing formula which was as follows : 1st primary 5 mm. longer than coverts, 3rd and 4th longest being practically equal and 3 mm. longer than 2nd, 5th 1.5 mm. shorter than 4th, 6th 4 mm. shorter than 4th. After a detailed examination of the plumage which agreed closely with the description in the handbook, the bird was released in the cover provided for the trap but it was, unfortunately, only a moment before it was lost to view. While in the cover, which consisted principally of small rhododendron cuttings its behaviour was distinctly more 'acrocephaline' than any of the Icterines watched later in the year. It would hop up a stem perching sideways and twisting from side to side as it went, and it stayed for a short while on one of the posts perching head downwards. The plumage was very much browner than the Icterines of the autumn but this may have been due, in part at least, to the earlier date.

Measurements : wing, 64 mm. ; tarsus, 21 mm. ; tail, 49 mm. ; bill, 13.5 mm. ; width of bill at nostrils, 5.5 mm. ; weight, 9.75 gms.

**Dartford Warbler.** For several days prior to the appearance of the bird, on October 28th, the wind had been south-easterly, so that it was probably a wanderer from the south-west of England. A first-winter bird, it was frequenting the gorse-covered slopes of St John's valley. At one moment it would appear on the tip of a bush, at the next it would dive into cover. Several times it was approached to within five yards, and good views were obtained. The upperparts and tail were very dark brown, the outer retrices having indistinct white edges. The underparts were deep buff, paler on the chin, more warm orange-buff on the sides of the lower breast, belly and flanks. The legs seemed a bright orange-yellow. The bird superficially resembled a Wren but with a very long tail, continually flicked. The Whitethroat-like 'Ichurr' was heard once.

**Song Thrush.** Many of the autumn birds, particularly those which passed through in October, were of a dark brown variety, but the measurements of those caught were 'normal'. By contrast, a bird trapped on November 21st, was remarkably grey on the upperparts, and was thought to be of the continental form *T. e. philomelos*.

**Redwing.** The bird of the Iceland race (*T. m. coburni*) caught on November 6th was identified by its very dark upperparts, the distinctness of the black streaks on the breast, the strong dark olive-brown wash on the sides of the breast and flanks and the buff suffusion of the entire upperparts. Wing, 122 mm. ; weight, 67.6 gms.

**Blackbird.** In this section of the 1950 report the occurrence was recorded in autumn of a number of Blackbirds with measurements exceeding those of the Handbook. It was interesting to find that a similar influx took place in 1951, though it came rather later in the year. Sixty-eight Blackbirds, almost all first-winter birds, were caught between October 1st and December 15th and, of these, nine (three males and six females) had wing measurements outside the Handbook range. All were caught on or after November 14th, the date of one of the biggest Blackbird movements of the autumn, a fact which prompted a closer examination of wing measurements and weights obtained and a comparison of mean data from birds caught before and November 14th. Unfortunately, only twenty-two of these birds had been weighed (the rest were taken on the Terrace, where no facilities for weighing are yet available). In any case it is appreciated that the weights are not so strictly comparable as the measurements, for not all the birds would be new arrivals when caught. Matters were also complicated by the presence of a small resident population, a few of which may have been among the birds trapped.

The tables do, however, indicate that the late migrants were generally larger and heavier than the earlier ones, and it seems

likely that they were drawn from a different part of the bird's range. It is also of interest to note that, whereas the sexes were fairly equally represented during the first period, females were predominant during the second.

TABLE I  
WING MEASUREMENTS OF TRAPPED BLACKBIRDS (mm.)

	First Period (Oct. 1st to Nov. 14th)		Second Period (Nov. 14th to Dec. 15th)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No. of specimens examined	16	18	7	25
Wing measurements	125-132	120-127	128-136	120-132
Mean wing measurements	128.4	124.4	132.6	125.8

TABLE II  
WEIGHT OF TRAPPED BLACKBIRDS (gms)

	First Period		Second Period	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
No. of specimens weighed	4	4	3	11
Mean weight of birds trapped	94.4	86.3	101.6	96.8

One of the large Blackbirds, a first-winter female with wing-measurement 131 mm., weight 92.68 gms trapped at the Old Light at 13.30 hrs in November, and considered to be a new arrival, was feeding nearby during the next four days. Re-trapped at 12.30 hrs on December 2nd, it weighed 104.43 gms, an increase of 11.75 gms.

### RINGING IN 1951

Two thousand and twenty-six birds of 53 species were ringed in the year 1951. Of these 851 were free-flying, and 1,175 were nestlings.

The Garden Trap was in continuous use, and the cover of cut rhododendrons was supplemented by a number of Tree Mallows, which appear to be thriving. This trap had its most successful year so far catching 286 birds.

In April the Quarry Trap was dismantled and a new trap was erected on the main terrace nearby. It had a promising first season, taking 218 birds and, with a recent extension, should prove very satisfactory in the future.

Nets and other methods accounted for thirty-nine birds (mainly Sky Larks). The other 308 birds trapped were adult sea-birds, almost all captured by the use of a modified type of 'puffin-hook', with a short wire hook mounted on an extensible light metal tube (originally a radio-aerial), giving an overall length of eleven feet.

It is intended to have a portable Heligoland Trap, and a number of smaller traps, in use by the spring of 1952. The conversion of an outhouse into a laboratory for the ringing and examination of birds is now virtually complete.

Three of the species trapped in 1951 may be picked out for special mention. These are Melodious Warbler, Little Bunting, and Wood Sandpiper, which are understood to be the first, second and third respectively of their kind to be ringed in Britain.