

OWNER'S LETTER

TO THE MEMBERS,

I think we can congratulate ourselves on another successful season thanks to the good work put in at various points.

A highlight of the season was the acceptance of Peter Davis's record of *Turdus migratorius* as constituting a good ground for adding the species to the British List.

This bird, it may be remembered, was present on Lundy from October 27th to November 8th 1952, and a very full account with photographs is to be found in the October 1953 number of *British Birds*.

It must be a great satisfaction to Peter Davis that just as the name of Baird will always be thought of in connection with television, so that of Peter Davis will always be remembered whenever the question of *Turdus migratorius* arises in the British Isles!

I need hardly say that *Turdus migratorius* was not allowed to pass on without being ringed. It will be interesting to see if this bird turns up again and where.

Incidentally, as an indication of the importance of Lundy's ringing operations, I think I am right in saying that approximately one in twenty of the total number of rings used in ringing wild birds in the British Isles is used on Lundy. As the area of Lundy represents only 1/40,000th of the area of the other British islands combined, it is easy to see that Lundy is relatively very busy in the bird ringing business.

The American Robin's performance of about 3,000 miles non-stop flying, taking probably forty hours, during which time it lost a third of its weight, puts into the shade the magnificent feat of Captain Abdel Rehim when he swam on July 31st, 1952, from a point between Hartland and Clovelly to Lundy in less than twelve hours.

I am hopeful that during 1954 some of the Devon amateur swimmers will arrange a contest and will endeavour to emulate the Captain's feat, taking every precaution against accident.

DEER

Major Butler of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment had hoped to lead the party this year, but at the last minute he was given a Colonelcy and sent post-haste to Nairobi. In his absence Major P. R. H. Turner and Lieutenant G. H. W. Howlett visited us and accounted for eight deer and four goats. Lieutenant Howlett subsequently wrote an interesting and very amusing account of the visit in the Regimental Journal of October 1953.

HOOPOES

I am told that Hoopoes have bred this year in Hampshire. Members will note that a couple of nesting boxes have been put

up (trunks of trees with green woodpecker breeding holes in them) in Millcombe. Let us hope for the best, even although the chances are a thousand to one against.

ARACUANAS

These little Chilean fowls to which I referred last year duly arrived and seem to be doing well. The colour of their eggs is a beautiful blue, and I am hoping that they will prove so satisfactory that in due course the other domestic fowls will make way for them.

HONORARY MEMBERS

I was delighted to hear that your Committee were proposing to the Members to offer honorary life memberships to the Commanding Officers of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment at Maidstone and also at Tonbridge, for I am sure they will appreciate the compliment and in the more peaceful days which may lie ahead we may hope to find members of the Regiment assisting at various points in the Society's field work.

Of even more immediate interest is the proposal to offer Honorary Life Membership to Mr Robert Gillespie, C.B.E., who is at this time working without respite towards the solution of the extraordinarily difficult problem of pollution of sea water by oil.

Nearly everyone must have experienced the disadvantage of oil in the sea and on beaches, for nearly everyone must have ruined or half ruined some garment or other, but only those who have gone further than merely cursing and complaining realize the difficulties with which the question is surrounded.

For one thing the use of petroleum has everywhere increased to an enormous extent. For another, if of a cargo of 10,000 tons merely 1 ton goes overboard the oil will cover the sea as far as the eye can reach. For still another, a sheet of oil seems to be capable of almost infinite expansion. Finally, however thin the film may be damage is done to the diving seabird which surfaces through it, or any bird for that matter that gets mixed up in it.

Those of us who are interested in birds have, therefore, every reason to be grateful to those like Mr Gillespie who have got the technical knowledge and ability to harness the resources necessary to deal with what is proving to be a scourge to man and to bird.

I do not claim intimate knowledge of what is going on, but I do know that a few devoted people (and not merely citizens of this country), of whom Mr Gillespie is an outstanding example, are sparing no pains to improve matters, and in my view Societies like ours do well to give token of their appreciation of work of this sort.

I have left to the last a reference to the work of our Hon. Secretary, Mr L. A. Harvey, but for whose devotion I think our Society would not exist as a flourishing concern, or at all.

He has been with us from the beginning and his enthusiasm has fired all our efforts. For approximately eight years he has been the self-starter of the Society, the central figure, the dynamo. He is remarkable for the energy that he has put into the work; remarkable too is the success which has attended his efforts equally on the business side, the scientific side, or any point that he touches.

Societies such as ours sometimes become hot-beds of intrigue and petty quarrels. The fact that we are entirely free from this sort of thing is something for which we have to thank Mr Harvey, with his great experience and splendid example.

Societies like ours often get into difficulties for other reasons. People hold on to their jobs whilst a flicker of life remains in their breasts. This is utterly wrong from the Society's point of view. One wants to secure and make available to the Society every bit of energy that is possible.

It has long been obvious to Mr Harvey's many friends and admirers that with the increasing demands of his profession and one thing and another he was taking too much out of himself, and there was a grave risk that under order of his doctors he would have to give up the Secretaryship of our Society, which would have been a bitter blow to all of us.

It was grand news, therefore, to learn in early December that there was an excellent prospect of Mr T. J. Budge becoming Assistant Secretary. We are at liberty to hope that Mr Budge will insist upon taking off Mr Harvey's shoulders a large portion of the work, particularly the routine.

I personally hope Mr Budge, moreover, will get help with the routine work so that in due course there is somebody who knows what goes on and who can help out in case of holidays, accidents and whatnot. Young people who are full of energy do not suffer from having a little bit of work to do—in fact, their experience is enhanced by taking on all jobs, even routine jobs.

The move is entirely in line with what I have been recommending for years, namely that spreading as much responsibility as we can among our Members and accordingly I congratulate Mr Budge on the appointment, and promise him (I think I take little risk in this) on behalf of the Members that they will do all they can to make his task as easy and as pleasant as possible.

Wishing the Society all success for 1954,

MARTIN COLES HARMAN.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Through the kindness of the President, Peter Davis will be publishing this summer a List of Birds of Lundy, with notes on their Status and Migrations. The approximate cost to members will be 3/6 per copy. The edition will not be a very large one, and members may therefore wish to order in advance, lest they be disappointed.