

THE BIRDS OF THE TRING RESERVOIRS

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No account of the natural history of Buckinghamshire would be complete without a section on the birds seen at the large canal reservoirs near Tring which, though actually in Hertfordshire, are bounded on two sides by Buckinghamshire, and the geographical situation of which makes it fairly safe to assume that any bird which visits these waters on passage must have flown over part of this county. The largest of these reservoirs, Wilstone, has an area of about 120 acres, while the three smaller ones, Marsworth, Startops End, and Little Tring, aggregate about 90 acres. Large reed-beds at Wilstone and Marsworth afford breeding cover for many birds, wintering ducks of several species are seen in great masses, while in periods of drought large areas of mud in autumn and sometimes in spring attract many passing waders.

In my list of 196 species and sub-species I have included all birds which have been recorded from within about a mile of the reservoirs, but have in most cases commented only on those species whose status in the locality is governed by the presence of these waters.

In addition, I have also included in "square brackets" the following birds, the validity of whose claim to inclusion in the list appears to be doubtful: Grey Lag-Goose, American Widgeon, Baer's Duck, and Little Crake.

In compiling this list, which is based largely on the *List of the Birds of Hertfordshire*, which I have prepared for publication by the Hertfordshire Natural History Society, I have made use of information from the following sources in addition to my own notes:

The annual bird reports and other papers published in the *Transactions of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society*.

"The Birds of Buckinghamshire and the Tring Reservoirs," by E. HARTERT and F. C. R. JOURDAIN in *Novitates Zoologicae*, vol. XXVII (1920).

The Victoria County History of Hertfordshire (1902). "Birds," by A. F. CROSSMAN.

The Handbook of British Birds, by H. F. WITHERBY, F. C. R. JOURDAIN, N. F. TICEHURST, and B. W. TUCKER.

British Birds (magazine).

In the specific notes which follow I have given a reference to the source of my information only when it appears to be necessary for purposes of authenticity. This list covers all records available to me up to the end of 1946.

SPECIFIC LIST

- HOODED CROW.** *Corvus c. cornix* L.
An occasional winter visitor.
- CARRION CROW.** *Corvus c. corone* L.
Has become more plentiful in recent years, presumably with the decrease in gamekeeping throughout the surrounding country.
- ROOK.** *Corvus f. frugilegus* L.
- JACKDAW.** *Corvus monedula spermologus* Vieill.
- MAGPIE.** *Pica p. pica* (L.).
At one time very scarce, this bird has in the last few years become very plentiful in the neighbourhood of the reservoirs, presumably, like the Carrion Crow, with the general decrease in gamekeeping.
- BRITISH JAY.** *Garrulus glandarius rufitergum* Hart.
- STARLING.** *Sturnus v. vulgaris* L.
- HAWFINCH.** *Coccothraustes c. coccothraustes* (L.).
- GREENFINCH.** *Chloris ch. chloris* (L.).
- BRITISH GOLDFINCH.** *Carduelis carduelis britannica* (Hart.).
Has steadily increased in numbers during the present century. Flocks of up to fifty were seen on the dried beds of the reservoirs in September and October 1944.
- SISKIN.** *Carduelis spinus* (L.).
Appears to have been scarce until recent years, as C. Oldham remarked that a party of six which he saw on the alders by Little Tring on March 25, 1923, were the first he had seen since he came to the district thirteen years before. These alders now form one of their regular winter haunts; I saw about fifty there on December 26, 1942.
- MEALY REDPOLL.** *Carduelis f. flammea* (L.).
One near Marsworth Reservoir on January 22, 1922. One at Startops End on December 9, 1923.
- LESSER REDPOLL.** *Carduelis flammea cabaret* (P. L. S. Müll.).
Occasional small parties seen in winter.
- LINNET.** *Carduelis c. cannabina* (L.).
The winter flocks of this species assume large proportions when the water is low and there are large areas of dried and overgrown mud.
- BRITISH BULLFINCH.** *Pyrrhula pyrrhula nesa* Math. and Ired.
- BRITISH CHAFFINCH.** *Fringilla coelebs gengleri* Kleinschmidt.
- BRAMBLING.** *Fringilla montifringilla* L.
In some winters this species has been seen about the reservoirs in large numbers. It was numerous during January and February 1932, about three hundred being seen on the trees near Little Tring and in an adjacent farmyard in mid-February. In the early months of 1935 a number frequented the dry beds of the reservoirs in company with other finches; C. Oldham recorded about fifty at Wilstone and others at Startops End on January 31.
- CORN BUNTING.** *Emberiza calandra* L.
Breeds fairly plentifully in the district.
- YELLOW BUNTING.** *Emberiza c. citrinella* L.
Plentiful. Large flocks are sometimes seen in winter, one of sixty being seen in a field near Wilstone on February 19, 1939.
- CIRL BUNTING.** *Emberiza c. cirrus* L.
Occasionally seen by the reservoirs in winter—probably the breeding birds of the nearby hills on their winter wanderings.
- REED BUNTING.** *Emberiza sch. schoeniclus* (L.).
Breeds by these waters, and passage parties are seen in spring. Scarcer in winter, though small flocks, as one of thirteen on February 14, 1943, are occasionally seen.
- SNOW BUNTING.** *Plectrophenax n. nivalis* (L.).
One was seen feeding on jetsam on the shore at Wilstone on October 13 and 20, 1935, one by the bank of this reservoir on November 6, 1944, and two on the following day, and two at the same place on November 10, 1945.
- HOUSE SPARROW.** *Passer d. domesticus* (L.).
- TREE SPARROW.** *Passer m. montanus* (L.).
Three pairs nested in the old poplars by Wilstone in 1936 and possibly in 1937, after large numbers had haunted the dry beds of the reservoirs in the winters of 1934-35 and 1935-36. Apparently none nested there in 1938.
- SKYLARK.** *Alauda a. arvensis* L.
- TREE PIPIT.** *Anthus t. trivialis* (L.).
- MEADOW PIPIT.** *Anthus pratensis* (L.).
A plentiful winter visitor, especially when the water is low, and passage parties of some size are seen in spring.
- ROCK PIPIT.** *Anthus spinoletta petrosus* (Mont.).
One on the causeway between Startops End and Marsworth on October 16, 1932.
- BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL.** *Motacilla f. flava* L.
Single females by Wilstone on April 29, 1917, and April 27, 1924.
- YELLOW WAGTAIL.** *Motacilla flava flavissima* (Blyth).
Seen in some numbers on passage, but does not appear to breed in the vicinity.

GREY WAGTAIL. *Motacilla c. cinerea* Tunst.

A rather infrequent winter visitor.

PIED WAGTAIL. *Motacilla alba yarrellii* Gould.

Plentiful throughout the year, and large numbers are seen on the spring and autumn passages when feeding conditions are favourable owing to low water.

WHITE WAGTAIL. *Motacilla a. alba* L.

There are eleven records of spring-passage birds, on dates ranging from April 4 to May 5. Five were seen on April 22, 1936, otherwise the records are mostly of single birds.

BRITISH TREE CREEPER. *Certhia familiaris britannica* Ridgw.

BRITISH GREAT TIT. *Parus major newtoni* Pražak.

BRITISH BLUE TIT. *Parus caeruleus obscurus* Pražak.

BRITISH COAL TIT. *Parus ater britannicus* Sharpe and Dress.

BRITISH MARSH TIT. *Parus palustris dresseri* Stejn.

BRITISH WILLOW TIT. *Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* Hellm.

Not infrequently reported from the vicinity of the reservoirs. A pair bred by Wilstone in 1932.

BRITISH LONG-TAILED TIT. *Aegithalos caudatus rosaceus* Mathews.

BEARDED TIT. *Parus b. biarmicus* (L.).

A pair was shot in the neighbourhood of the reservoirs on December 21, 1848 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 77). Hartert and Jourdain in "The Birds of Bucks, and the Tring Reservoirs" (1920) state that about twenty years previously some birds imported from Holland were released at Wilstone, but they disappeared. This may account for the statement (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XIII, p. 52) that one was seen "on one of the quieter waters in the western part of the county" in the last week of January 1905, though this bird may have been a genuine wanderer from elsewhere.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE. *Lanius e. excubitor* L.

Several have been reported from the Tring district, but in most cases without a definite locality being stated.

An exception is the case of a bird seen by the dry canal, near Wilstone, from March 23 to April 4, 1942.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE. *Lanius e. collurio* L.

Very much scarcer than thirty years ago.

WAXWING. *Bombycilla g. garrulus* (L.).

One shot in March 1883.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. *Muscicapa s. striata* (Pall.).

PIED FLYCATCHER. *Muscicapa h. hypoleuca* (Pall.).

A male by Wilstone on May 3, 1925.

BRITISH GOLDCREST. *Regulus regulus anglorum* Hart.

CHIFFCHAFF. *Phylloscopus c. collybita* (Vieill.).

WILLOW WARBLER. *Phylloscopus t. trochilus* (L.).

GRASSHOPPER WARBLER. *Locustella n. naevia* (Bodd.).

Occasionally seen or heard by Wilstone in summer.

GREAT REED WARBLER. *Acrocephalus a. arundinaceus* (L.).

Dr. J. S. Carter informed me that on April 27, 1946, whilst listening to Sedge Warblers by the north side of Marsworth, his attention was attracted by a noise somewhat different in character from, and appreciably louder than, the general Sedge Warbler clamour and coming from six feet above him. He had an excellent view from a distance of about thirty feet of the singer perched almost at the top of a hawthorn bush. He says the bird was rather smaller than a Song Thrush, but looked nearly twice the size of a Sedge Warbler. It had a "Robin-coloured" back and whitish-tawny under-parts with a pale lemon wash over all, palest towards the chin and throat. The things which struck him most were the thin, short, well-defined eye-stripe, the relatively long uniform bill and, especially, a number of thin dark lines on throat and breast. When it flew away to another bush, it did so in a very erratic manner and with its tail fanned out.

Mr. B. W. Tucker, editor of *British Birds*, to whom I forwarded a copy of Dr. Carter's letter, informed me that he would not have said there was much justification for speaking of a pale lemon wash on the under-parts, that personally he had never found the "thin dark lines" on throat and breast at all prominent, though they are there, and that he should hardly have described the loud, guttural, croaking song as merely "somewhat different in character from, and appreciably louder than, the general Sedge Warbler clamour," but that apart from these points the characters given do fit the Great Reed Warbler very well.

REED WARBLER. *Acrocephalus s. scirpaceus* (Helm.).

There is a very large breeding colony at Marsworth every summer.

MARSH WARBLER. *Acrocephalus palustris* (Bechst.).

One singing by Wilstone on June 24 and July 4, 1941 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XXI, p. 328).

SEdge WARBLER. *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.).

Many pairs breed in the neighbourhood of the reservoirs.

GARDEN WARBLER. *Sylvia borin* (Bodd.).

BLACKCAP. *Sylvia a. atricapilla* (L.).

WHITETHROAT. *Sylvia c. communis* Lath.

LESSER WHITETHROAT. *Sylvia c. curruca* (L.).

Plentiful in some summers.

FIELDFARE. *Turdus pilaris* L.

MISEL THRUSH. *Turdus v. viscivorus* L.

BRITISH SONG THRUSH. *Turdus e. ericetorum* Turton.

- REDWING. *Turdus m. musicus* L.
 RING-OUZEL. *Turdus t. torquatus* L.
 One shot in October 1886 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 82).
- BLACKBIRD. *Turdus m. merula* L.
 WHEATEAR. *Oenanthe oe. oenanthe* (L.).
 Seen by the reservoirs on the spring passage and, but less frequently, in the autumn.
- GREENLAND WHEATEAR. *Oenanthe oenanthe leucorrhoea* (Gm.).
 There are four records of this sub-species, in late April or early May.
- WHINCHAT. *Saxicola rubetra* (L.).
 BRITISH STONECHAT. *Saxicola torquata hibernans* (Hart.).
 Occasionally seen by the reservoirs in winter.
- BLACK REDSTART. *Phoenicurus ochruros gibraltariensis* (Gm.).
 One at Wilstone on November 6, 1915. A male near the refuse-dump close to Wilstone on March 28, 1942.
- NIGHTINGALE. *Luscinia m. megarhyncha* Brehm.
 BRITISH ROBIN. *Erithacus rubecula melophilus* Hart.
 BRITISH HEDGE SPARROW. *Prunella modularis occidentalis* (Hart.).
 WREN. *Troglodytes t. troglodytes* (L.).
 SWALLOW. *Hirundo r. rustica* L.
 Large numbers of birds of this species, and of House Martins, Sand Martins, and Swifts, are to be seen feeding over the reservoirs when on passage. C. Oldham's observations show that a westward (the general direction here both in spring and autumn) movement of all these four species continues over these waters from the normal time of spring passage right through June and up to the middle of July, from when the passing birds might be assumed to be on their autumn journey. Whence the birds passing from mid-June to mid-July come and whither they go is a mystery.
- HOUSE MARTIN. *Delichon u. urbica* (L.).
 (See notes under Swallow.)
 SAND MARTIN. *Riparia r. riparia* (L.).
 (See notes under Swallow.)
 SWIFT. *Apus a. apus* (L.).
 (See notes under Swallow.)
 KINGFISHER. *Alcedo atthis ispida* L.
 A fairly familiar bird of the reservoirs.
- GREEN WOODPECKER. *Picus viridis pluvius* Hart.
 BRITISH GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER. *Dryobates major anglicus* (Hart.).
 BRITISH LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER. *Dryobates minor comminatus* (Hart.).
 CUCKOO. *Cuculus c. canorus* L.
 Hartert and Jourdain state ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs") that by these waters the Cuckoos seem to lay exclusively in the nests of the Reed Warblers.
- LITTLE OWL. *Athene noctua vidalii* A. E. Brehm.
 Appears to be becoming more plentiful in the neighbourhood.
- LONG-EARED OWL. *Asio o. otus* (L.).
 One was taken at the reservoirs in August 1885 and another in December 1886.
- SHORT-EARED OWL. *Asio f. flammeus* (Pontopp.).
 One seen near the reservoirs on November 8, 1914, and another on February 13, 1920.
- BRITISH TAWNY OWL. *Strix aluco sylvatica* (Shaw).
 WHITE-BREADED BARN OWL. *Tyto a. alba* (Scop.).
 Not uncommonly seen near the reservoirs.
- PEREGRINE FALCON. *Falco p. peregrinus* Tunst.
 There are nineteen records of this bird, either on passage or on its winter wanderings.
- HOBBY. *Falco s. subbuteo* L.
 One at Little Tring on August 20, 1921, one at Wilstone on October 2, 1942, a pair at Marsworth on May 5, 1946, and a pair near Wilstone on May 26, 1946.
- MERLIN. *Falco columbarius aesalon* Tunst.
 Two in immature plumage were obtained in February 1886 and two in mature plumage in January 1887.
 One seen near Wilstone on February 25, 1917.
- KESTREL. *Falco t. tinnunculus* L.
 ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. *Buteo l. lagopus* (Pontopp.).
 Two obtained in November 1891.
- HEN HARRIER. *Circus c. cyaneus* (L.).
 A female obtained in December 1884, one seen on February 14, 1920, and another shot near Wilstone in the first week of December 1923.
- SPARROW HAWK. *Accipiter n. nisus* (L.).
 Appears now to be on the increase in the district.
- KITE. *Milvus m. milvus* (L.).
 One was shot near Wilstone in the sixties of last century ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs").
- OSPREY. *Pandion h. hallaetus* (L.).
 One seen on May 9, 1864, and a male and female frequented the reservoirs during September of that year. Two seen in early September 1886, one on May 9, 1900, one on May 6, 1938, and one from about May 12 to 15, 1944.

COMMON HERON. *Ardea c. cinerea* L.

A number may usually be seen at Little Tring in autumn, or at Wilstone if the water is low; there were seventeen there on October 30, 1943.

BITTERN. *Botaurus s. stellaris* (L.).

A nest, with four eggs, was found at the reservoirs in 1849 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, X, p. 94). There are twenty-eight records of this species having been seen or shot at these waters in winter, mainly within the last thirty years. Two remained all the summer of 1927, one being heard "booming" in March and April. In 1928 three were seen at Wilstone in January, and one about the reservoirs on occasions all through the year, "booming" being heard from mid-March to mid-May. In 1929 one was seen frequently from June till the end of the year.

WHOOPEE SWAN. *Cygnus cygnus* (L.).

Two were shot in the winter months of 1891 ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs"). An adult found dead on the bank of Wilstone on March 31, 1940, had apparently been seen alive a few days previously.

BEWICK'S SWAN. *Cygnus b. bewickii* Yarr.

One was shot from a flock of swans, from which a Whooper was also shot, in the winter months of 1891 ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs"). Four adults and a young bird were seen at Marsworth on March 21, 1942, an adult at Wilstone on November 16, 1943, and three adults on this water on March 7, 1945.

MUTE SWAN. *Cygnus olor* (Gm.).

When the water is not too low a number, apparently as regards those seen in summer mainly non-breeding birds, frequent the reservoirs at various times of the year, but the factors governing the sometimes considerable fluctuations in their numbers are not known.

[GREY LAG-GOOSE. *Anser a. anser* (L.).

One obtained in September 1886, one seen on March 18, 1927, and another on October 13, 1942, are all suspect as "escapes.")

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE. *Anser a. albifrons* (Scop.).

One seen at Little Tring on February 25, 1917, was probably an escaped bird. A skein of grey geese was seen near Wilstone on February 1, 1924, and later in the day a White-fronted Goose was noticed on the water. It was picked up dead next day, and proved to have been shot. Two which alighted in a meadow by Wilstone during hard frost on January 19, 1928, were very wary, and might have been wild birds. A skein of forty passed over the reservoirs, without alighting, on January 24, 1929. Three flew north-west over Wilstone on February 16, 1934. One flew over Startops End on March 21, 1942, and one was seen at Wilstone on April 1, 1942.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. *Anser fabalis brachyrhynchus* Baillon.

One visited Wilstone for a few minutes on January 16, 1926. Two which spent most of the winter of 1928-29 at Startops End were doubtless escaped birds.

BRENT GOOSE. *Branta bernicla* sub-sp. ?

An adult female was picked up dead, but quite fresh, near Marsworth on March 10, 1910. One at Wilstone on December 7, 1913, was probably an escaped bird. Seven at Wilstone on January 29, 1941, were apparently wild birds.

CANADA GOOSE. *Branta c. canadensis* (L.).

In recent years some birds of this introduced species have been seen from time to time at the reservoirs, including a party of forty-one on the ice at Wilstone on February 7 and 8, 1942.

SHELD-DUCK. *Tadorna tadorna* (L.).

There are a number of records, in most cases probably of "escapes," but some of undoubtedly wild birds. In the latter category may be included a very wild male seen on April 28, 1918, a party of eleven which visited Wilstone for about twenty minutes, before flying off to the west, on August 30, 1925, two immature birds which stayed at Startops End for a few minutes on August 24, 1937, and an immature bird at Marsworth on August 6, 1944.

MALLARD. *Anas p. platyrhynchos* L.

The resident population of this species at the reservoirs is reinforced in autumn by immigrants. Artificial rearing and feeding were carried out from about 1890 to 1914, and from 1933 to 1939. Apparently the resident population was large even before artificial rearing commenced, as the "Report on Birds Observed in Hertfordshire in 1887" (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 82) states that there were from 100 to 150 nests by these waters every year.

GADWALL. *Anas strepera* L.

The first record of the occurrence of this species appears to be that of an adult male shot at Wilstone on August 19, 1925. A male and female were at Little Tring from October 9 to November 17, 1927, and in the following year a pair bred at this pool, where they were seen from April 26 to November 13. In the same year another pair was seen at Wilstone in May, and the drake on June 4, but nothing was seen of them later. Since 1935 birds of this species have appeared at the reservoirs on a number of occasions.

TEAL. *Anas c. crecca* L.

Bred in small numbers up to 1887, and from 1918 to 1934, these dates showing the influence on this species of the over-stocking of these waters with Mallards owing to artificial rearing (see under Mallard). A few birds are still to be seen about the reservoirs each summer. It is an autumn and winter visitor in considerable numbers, especially when the water is low, up to six hundred having been seen there on occasion. The autumn influx begins in August.

GARGANEY. *Anas querquedula* L.

Prior to 1918 the only records of this species were of four males and four females which stayed for some days in March 1849, seven of them being eventually shot, and of seven more which appeared later in the same month, but stayed only a short time (*Victoria County History of Hertfordshire*). Since 1918 it has been an occasional visitor on both spring and autumn passages, while a pair bred at Wilstone in 1928, and every spring since 1942, birds—generally one pair but sometimes more—have appeared at these waters and remained for some weeks, but have shown no sign of breeding or attempting to breed there.

WIDGEON. *Anas penelope* L.

A winter visitor and also seen on passage, especially in March. The numbers seen at the reservoirs have apparently increased in recent years, parties of eighty to a hundred at the end of December 1931, ninety-three on March 24, 1937, and 166 on March 28, 1942, having been recorded; whereas C. Oldham, writing in 1921, described flocks of twenty on February 23, 1919, and more than thirty at Christmas 1920 as noteworthy. Birds are occasionally seen up to the end of May—a pair was at Little Tring from May 15, 1933, for ten days—and a male going into eclipse was seen at Wilstone on June 11, 1943. The earliest autumn record is of two at Wilstone on August 28, 1942.

[AMERICAN WIDGEON. *Anas americana* Gm.]

A male was seen at Wilstone on April 5, 1925, accompanied by a female which may have been of the same species, though a number of *A. penelope* were also on the water (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XVIII, p. 153). It is most probable that the bird or birds were not really wild, but had escaped from captivity.]

PINTAIL. *Anas a. acuta* L.

Occurs in small numbers as a winter visitor and passage migrant. Unusual numbers, rising to ten on September 26 and November 11, were seen in the winter of 1942-43.

SHOVELER. *Spatula clypeata* (L.).

As a breeding species this has, like the Teal, declined or disappeared during the years in which these waters were over-stocked with Mallards owing to artificial rearing. Thus, while in 1887 it was said that there were from three to five nests every year, by 1898 the breeding population seems to have fallen to one or two pairs. In 1925 it was recorded that during the past ten years there had been a decided increase in the number nesting by the reservoirs. After 1934, however, none appears to have nested until 1943, when two pairs bred there. Breeding was also recorded in the following three years. This species also appears as a winter visitor and passage migrant, more than fifty being sometimes seen.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD. *Netta rufina* (Pall.).

A flock of about forty, from which four males and two females were shot, appeared at Wilstone in the autumn of 1889 or 1890 ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs"). C. Oldham, in his paper on "The Ducks of Tring Reservoirs" (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XVII, pp. 302-21), expressed the opinion that there is no reason to suppose that these were not wanderers from overseas.

An adult male shot on November 9, 1915, a pair seen on November 4, 1917, and a single bird shot on October 6, 1921, had all possibly escaped from captivity, while two females at these waters in February and March 1945 were ascertained with fair certainty to have wandered from Woburn Park.

COMMON POCHARD. *Aythya ferina* (L.).

A winter visitor in large numbers when the water is not too low, over four hundred having been recorded. The majority of the birds seen are adult males. A few pairs normally breed at the reservoirs.

[BAHR'S DUCK. *Aythya nyroca baeri* (Radde).]

A male was shot on Marsworth on November 5, 1901 ("The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs"). In spite of exhaustive enquiries, no evidence of its having escaped from captivity could be found. It was not, however, admitted to the British list.]

TUFTED DUCK. *Aythya fuligula* (L.).

A plentiful winter visitor, and there are normally a number of breeding pairs. It was not known to breed by these waters until 1893, though it was known as a winter visitor in 1868.

SCAUP DUCK. *Aythya m. marila* (L.).

This species has been recorded as occurring on twenty-eight occasions in winter or spring, usually single birds, but what was described as a "large flock" was seen in December 1900 or January 1901, while there were nine there on March 22, 1942, and six on April 27, 1945. Of a pair which was seen on Marsworth on January 21, 1912, the male, in nearly full plumage, was shot two days later, and the female remained and paired with a Tufted Duck, and reared four young.

GOLDENEYE. *Bucephala c. clangula* (L.).

A winter visitor in small numbers, rarely more than two or three being seen, though up to nine have been recorded. In 1933 an adult drake (able to fly well) was at Wilstone from mid-July to mid-September.

LONG-TAILED DUCK. *Clangula hyemalis* (L.).

There have been several occurrences of this species, as follows: An immature bird "procured" on October 28, 1892, a male shot on November 12, 1906, a young male shot on November 20, 1908 (perhaps the same bird as was seen there on the 8th of that month), a male in moult shot on November 2, 1915, a young male shot on November 16, 1926, after being there for about a fortnight, two young birds—one a male—seen on November 1, 1928, were shot, together with a third—a female—on the 7th of that month, a female seen from November 24 to December 5, 1940, and one seen on October 26, 1945. It will be noticed that virtually all these occurrences are in November and that all but two of the birds recorded met their end at the reservoirs.

COMMON SCOTER. *Melanitta n. nigra* (L.).

There are twenty-one records of this species, mostly of single birds, but there were fifteen—including two adult drakes—there on April 10, 1910. As a number of the other records are for March and April, there is possibly a passage of these birds here at this season. There are five records for the months of June and July, possibly due to "oiled" birds, though at least one is stated to have shown no such signs. Most of the remaining records are for the months of October to December.

VELVET SCOTER. *Melanitta f. fusca* (L.).

The only satisfactory record is of two females seen at Wilstone on November 3 and 4, 1930 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XIX, p. 118).

GOOSANDER. *Mergus m. merganser* L.

Up to about twenty years ago this species was a scarce winter visitor to the reservoirs, but since then it has been seen more frequently and in greater numbers, forty-nine on March 9, 1942, being the most recorded. Very few of the birds seen here are adult males. Hartert and Jourdain record a male shot on August 31, 1903, a very early date. I know of no other record before November.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. *Mergus serrator* L.

A female was recorded as shot "a year or two before 1883," another at Marsworth on November 5, 1901, and a male and female two days later. One—apparently an adult female—was seen at Wilstone on April 6, 1930. At this water a brown-headed bird was seen on December 13, 1936, two from December 20 to 24, 1936, three on January 3 and 10, 1937, two on February 1, 1941, and one among Goosanders on March 21, 1942.

SMEW. *Mergus albellus* L.

A fairly regular winter visitor in small numbers, usually between mid-December and early March.

CORMORANT. *Phalacrocorax c. carbo* (L.).

Of about forty reported occurrences of this species, ten have been in the months of April and May, and twenty-two from August to November. There is no record for January, and only one each for December, February, and March. Its visits vary in length from a few minutes to a stay by three birds from September 26 to November 9, 1937.

SHAG. *Phalacrocorax a. aristotellii* (L.).

Birds of the year were shot on October 14, 1903, October 22, 1908, and January 16, 1917, an immature bird was seen from August 30 to September 7, 1913, and two on December 26, 1926. In 1937 two were seen at Wilstone on February 21, three on March 6, two alive and one dead on March 21, and one from March 24 to June 19; possibly these were "oiled" birds.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE. *Podiceps c. cristatus* (L.).

In a normal year—that is, when the water is not too low—twenty-five to thirty pairs nest at the reservoirs, while as many as seventy-five nests are said to have been counted in a favourable season. The breeding birds arrive between mid-February and mid-March, but hard weather may retard them and severe frost drive them away for a time. They usually leave in October and November. There is a possibility that some of the birds seen in early spring and late autumn may be on passage, while odd birds seen in winter appear not to be the local summer birds. On Startops End in normal summers there is a loosely spread flock of up to thirty non-breeders. This species was first recorded as breeding at these waters in 1867, when a nest was found and the eggs taken.

RED-NECKED GREBE. *Podiceps g. griseigena* (Bodd.).

An immature bird was seen at Wilstone on December 18, 1910. An adult in summer plumage was seen on this water from March 16 to June 22, 1913, and was probably the bird seen at Little Tring on February 8, 1914, and found dying a few days later, having, in addition to recent injuries, an old wound on one wing. One was seen at Wilstone from February 12 to March 19, 1922, one at Marsworth on January 6, 1924, and again a week later, one at Wilstone on November 9, 1924, an oiled bird shot there on January 19, 1925, one seen at Startops End from February 7 to March 5, 1925, one on November 25 and December 16, 1927, one at Wilstone on December 27, 1928, one—an adult—there from mid-September to October 21, 1931, one at Startops End from January 31 to March 21, 1937, and two at Wilstone on December 7 and one on December 15, 1946.

SLAVONIAN GREBE. *Podiceps auritus* (L.).

Two were shot in October 1884, one—an adult—seen on March 14 and 21, 1909, and one seen in 1912. One at Wilstone from April 1 to 9, 1917, one from February 19 to March 9, 1922, one on December 27, 1925, and one in breeding dress from April 14 to 27, 1931. In 1937 one was seen at Wilstone from January 31 to February 27, and two at Startops End from the latter date until March 3, and thereafter one up to March 24, while a bird in full breeding plumage, presumably a different bird and a passing migrant, was seen at Wilstone from April 3 to 13. One was seen at Wilstone on November 29, 1944.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE. *Podiceps n. nigricollis* Brehm.

One of the most interesting events in the history of the birds of Tring Reservoirs is the breeding of this species in 1918 and some of the succeeding years. A brief summary of this is as follows:

1918. On April 28 two birds in breeding plumage were there, by May 17 there were four, and by May 21 seven—three pairs and an unattached male, the party maintaining close association. By June 1 the three pairs had separated, and all three subsequently nested and brought off broods.

1919. Three pairs at the reservoirs in the spring, but probably not more than two pairs brought off young.

1920. One pair seen in March, and possibly two pairs about during the summer. Apparently no young were hatched.

1921. A pair nesting at Marsworth apparently brought off no young. A pair at Wilstone had two young. An unmated adult was also often seen at Wilstone during the summer.

1922. No young were reared. The reed-beds were dry and far from the water's edge in April, but the water rose rapidly in June. One in breeding plumage was seen at Marsworth on April 23, one at Wilstone on April 20, and a pair there ten days later. A pair at Wilstone were in courtship display on June 5, and two pairs were seen there on June 12 and 18, but none was seen at the reservoirs thereafter until September 10, when a single adult was at Wilstone.
- 1923-27. No evidence of any attempt at nesting.
1928. One pair nested, but only one young was seen.
1929. One in breeding dress seen at Wilstone on March 29, and it and sometimes another were seen on and off through the spring and summer, but it is not known whether they nested.
1930. A single bird was seen in April and May, and a pair at the end of June and beginning of July. Their behaviour suggested nesting, but no young were seen, so they may have been frustrated by the drop in the water-level.
1931. One appears to have spent the summer at Wilstone, but as far as is known there was no nest. In the years since then there has been no sign of nesting, nor have any spent the summer at the reservoirs, though a single bird in summer dress was seen at Wilstone from April 1 to 12, 1932, and a pair was seen at Startops End on May 29 and 30, 1935, and at Wilstone in the first week of the following month.
- This species has occurred fairly frequently as a passage migrant and as a winter visitor.
- LITTLE GREBE.** *Podiceps r. ruficollis* (Pall.)
This species breeds at the reservoirs, but is scarce at, or absent altogether from, them during the winter months. A remarkable concourse takes place at Little Tring every autumn except when, as in 1942, 1943, and 1944, the water-level is too low. The concourse was resumed in the autumn of 1945, when there was slightly more water, up to ten birds being present, while in 1946 a maximum of twenty-one was recorded. This gathering has not been witnessed at any of the other Tring waters. Bertram Lloyd suggested (in *Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XX, pp. 338-9) that this pool may be a "tribal halting-place." The assembly commences sometimes at the end of July and sometimes late in August, and the birds are there in fluctuating numbers, rising sometimes to sixty or seventy, throughout September and October, then in dwindling numbers through November and into December.
- An apparently migrant party of six birds seen at Little Tring on April 1, 1946, is the only evidence available of spring-passage birds being seen here.
- GREAT NORTHERN DIVER.** *Colymbus immer* Brünn.
One—an immature bird—was "obtained" in December 1841, one shot in November 1885, and another on January 1, 1887, one seen on February 15, 1887, one picked up dead near the reservoirs on November 8, 1913, was probably the bird seen there six days earlier, one—an adult—was seen for the first three weeks of December 1930, another adult seen from November 15 to 28, 1931, one (immature) seen on December 21, 1940, and one seen from November 26 to December 11, 1941.
- BLACK-THROATED DIVER.** *Colymbus a. arcticus* L.
A female was shot at Wilstone on December 27, 1910. One bird was seen at the reservoirs in 1912. Three were seen at Wilstone on January 30 and 31, 1937, and thereafter one up to February 28.
- RED-THROATED DIVER.** *Colymbus stellatus* Pontopp.
One was seen at Wilstone on January 10, 1909, and another—an adult—there on July 3, 1910. A female was shot at the same water on January 14, 1910. One was seen in 1912. An adult at Wilstone from January 13 to 23, 1934, was never seen to dive, and was probably oiled. One was seen at this reservoir on February 10, 21, and 28, 1937, and one on February 2 and February 20 to 23, 1941.
- WOOD PIGEON.** *Columba p. palumbus* L.
STOCK-DOVE. *Columba oenas* L.
TURTLE-DOVE. *Streptopelia t. turtur* (L.).
BAR-TAILED GODWIT. *Limosa l. lapponica* (L.).
One shot in December 1880. An adult male shot at Wilstone on May 6, 1907, was in nearly full summer plumage, but a bird seen there on April 29, 1917, was still in winter dress. One seen at Wilstone on May 6, 1938, one at Little Tring from May 6 to 13, 1942, and one at Wilstone on May 2 and two on May 8, 1946.
- BLACK-TAILED GODWIT.** *Limosa l. limosa* (L.).
Up to a few years ago this species was an uncommon autumn passage migrant, there being only six records prior to 1937. Within the last few years, however, it has appeared more frequently, and has also been seen in the spring; two birds being seen at Wilstone on April 21, 1938, two from April 10 to 12, 1943, and two on April 26 and one on May 10 and 12, 1946. The autumn records range from July 24 to October 4, the earliest dates referring to immature birds.
- COMMON CURLEW.** *Numenius a. arquata* (L.).
A fairly plentiful passage migrant in spring and autumn, more frequently heard—often at night—than seen. Birds passing in the winter have also frequently been recorded. It seldom alights at the reservoirs, though sixteen were seen on the mud there on October 16, 1897.
- WHIMBREL.** *Numenius ph. phaeopus* (L.).
An uncommon spring and autumn passage migrant, usually heard or seen passing over, though one was seen on the mud at Wilstone on August 27, 1942, and two on May 28, 1946. The available records range in spring from May 5 to June 16, and in autumn from July 15 to August 27.
- GREAT SNIPE.** *Capella media* (Lath.).
One seen at Wilstone on November 5, 1941 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XXI, p. 333).

COMMON SNIFE. *Capella g. gallinago* (L.).

Large wisps are seen at the reservoirs in spring and autumn, the autumn parties sometimes numbering over fifty birds, while on January 10, 1925, about one hundred were seen at Wilstone, many more than are normally there in winter. Parties at these waters in August are presumably of British breeding birds, it being too early for migrants from overseas. Until 1944, when two pairs nested near Wilstone, there was no proof of breeding here, though "drumming" was heard in 1923 and 1943.

JACK SNIFE. *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brünn.).

In 1922 Charles Oldham in his paper on "The Wading Birds of the Tring Reservoirs" (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XVII, pp. 341-52) recorded this species as a regular winter visitor, though in smaller numbers than the Common Snipe, and said that birds on passage were often seen in the first half of April. There are few records during recent years, and, in fact, I have only once seen a bird of this species by these waters.

GREY PHALAROPE. *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.).

A young bird was shot on October 20, 1891, single females were shot on November 2, 1904, and November 18, 1911, and a bird was seen on September 29, 1919.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. *Phalaropus lobatus* (L.).

Hartert and Jourdain state in "The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs" that a bird of this species shot in October 1885 was erroneously recorded as a Grey Phalarope in *Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 83.

TURNSTONE. *Arenaria l. interpres* (L.).

Unknown at the reservoirs until 1928, this species has since then been recorded on a number of occasions.

One—a young bird—was at Startops End from September 4 to 12, 1928, one at Wilstone on May 26, 1934, one at Startops End on August 15, 1937, another at the same reservoir on May 21, 1938, and another from August 28 to September 2, 1941, one at Wilstone on May 11, 1942, one at Marsworth on August 2, 1942, and single birds at Wilstone on August 30, 1943, May 6, 1944, May 9, 1945, and July 22, 1945, while in 1946 a definite passage was witnessed from April 28 to May 19, the greatest number seen being four on the latter date.

KNOT. *Calidris c. canutus* (L.).

Prior to 1938 there were only two records; the first being of several seen, and a young male shot, at Wilstone on September 15, 1904, and the second of an adult seen on September 12, 1909. Two immature birds were seen on August 7, 1938, one bird on the 30th of the same month, one in winter plumage on September 19, 1938, two (one retaining traces of summer plumage) on October 2, 1938, one on February 1, 1939, one on October 26, 1939, one from August 12 to 23, 1942, one on September 13, 1942, one in grey plumage on November 15, 1943, a party of seven—an unusually large number for these waters—on September 7, 1944, one in grey plumage on November 10, 1945, and in 1946 one on May 3, four on May 8, and one on May 10.

DUNLIN. *Calidris alpina* sub-sp. ?

A visitor on both the spring and autumn passages when the water is low enough for feeding conditions to be favourable, and occasionally seen in winter (twenty-five were there on December 4, 1921, and the same number on December 20, 1938). The spring passage normally extends from mid-March to the third week of May, but birds have been seen as late as the first week of June. The autumn passage commences in the second or third week of July and sometimes continues till November. Numbers on the spring passage are not usually high, about twenty seen on May 4, 1944, and on May 3 and 9, 1946, being exceptional, but thirty or more may sometimes be seen in autumn; of twenty-six which I saw on July 25, 1942, all but two were adults.

No Dunlins at Tring have been identified as to sub-species, but it is probable that birds seen in July, particularly birds of the year, are of the Southern form (*Calidris a. schinzii*), while those seen in winter are most likely the Northern form (*Calidris a. alpina*).

CURLEW-SANDPIPER. *Callidris testacea* (Pall.).

The only spring-passage records are of one at Wilstone on May 6, 1938, three there on May 9, 1946, and one on the following day. There are a number of autumn-passage records, mainly of birds of the year, ranging from August 6 to October 13, but mostly in the last week of August and throughout September. Exceptional numbers were seen in 1943, the peak being twenty-one on August 29.

LITTLE STINT. *Calidris minuta* (Leisl.).

The only spring-passage records are of one at Startops End on June 10 and 11, and four on June 13, 1938, one there on June 10 and 11, 1942, and one at Wilstone on May 3, 1946. Occasionally seen on the autumn passage from early August to the end of October, one shot on July 29, 1893, being very early, while in 1940 two were seen as late as November 2. Most of the records refer to single birds.

TEMMINCK'S STINT. *Calidris temminckii* (Leisl.).

One was seen on May 24, 1939, and one on August 28 and 29, 1943 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XXI, p. 249, and XXII, p. 71).

SANDERLING. *Crocethia alba* (Pall.).

Has been recorded on the following occasions: One in 1886, one (an adult male) on August 18, 1902, two on May 9, 1909, two on September 5, 1920, one on May 21, 1922, one in nearly full winter dress on April 26, 1931, and another in nearly full summer dress on May 18, 1931, one on May 5 and three on May 17, 1934, one on May 19, 1935, one on October 12, 1935, one (probably a winter vagrant) on March 6, 1938, one on May 7, 1938, one on August 23, 1940, two (very white birds) on April 22, 1943, one on August 28, 1943, and in 1946 two on April 30, one on May 3, and one on May 8 and 9.

RUFF. *Philomachus pugnax* (L.).

Classed by C. Oldham in 1922 as an uncommon passage migrant at these reservoirs, this species appears since then to have become increasingly more frequent in its visits when feeding conditions are favourable on the autumn passage, usually from mid-August to mid-October, though single adult males were seen in mid-July in 1938 and 1939. The greatest number of birds recorded was ten on September 15th, 1945. Those seen on this passage appear to be mostly birds of the year. There are nine spring-passage records, ranging from March 28th to June 3, one being of a party of eight on May 5, 1938, and only one of which occurrences was prior to 1938. There is one winter record; a male seen from November 19 to December 19, 1937.

COMMON SANDPIPER. *Actitis hypoleucos* (L.).

A common spring- and autumn-passage migrant, the spring dates ranging from the first week of April to the first week of June, and the autumn dates from as early as the last few days of June until early October, while one was seen on November 8, 1944, and one on October 20, 1946. Though sometimes up to thirty may be seen at the reservoirs at one time, they rarely gather into flocks, parties of ten on May 4, 1912, and eleven on August 25, 1941, being exceptional. A single bird was seen from mid-November 1941 to January 9, 1942, and another—or possibly the same bird—through the winter of 1942–43.

WOOD-SANDPIPER. *Tringa glareola* L.

One shot in August 1886. Hartert and Jourdain state that several were observed between 1892 and 1900, but that the dates were not noted. One was seen on September 2 and 3, 1922, one on September 12, 1929, and for a week after, two on May 26, 1930 (the only known spring record), one on September 5, 1933, one on August 8, 1934, four on August 11 and one on October 14, 1938, six on August 21 and nine on August 22, 1943, the numbers seen on these last two occasions being exceptional. Three were seen on August 11 and 12, 1944, and two from September 11 to 17, 1945.

GREEN SANDPIPER. *Tringa ochropus* L.

Frequently seen on both spring and autumn passages, and has several times been recorded in winter.

BRITISH REDSHANK. *Tringa totanus britannica* Math.

Has bred at the reservoirs when sufficient vegetation-covered mud was available, as in 1909, 1935, 1936, 1938, and 1944, and probably in 1922, 1943, and 1945. In 1946 one pair nested on a reservoir bed and was flooded out by rising water, while three pairs nested in nearby fields, and brought their young to the reservoirs on hatching.

Redshanks have been recorded in every month of the year as passage migrants or winter visitors, though to which sub-species these are referable I cannot say. More birds are seen on the spring passage, mainly from March to May, than in the autumn, while there are fewest records for the months of January and February and September and October.

CONTINENTAL REDSHANK. *Tringa t. totanus* (L.).

A male shot on April 10, 1934, in the vicinity was the first bird of this sub-species to be identified with certainty in the British Isles (*British Birds*, XXXIII, p. 225).

SPOTTED REDSHANK. *Tringa erythropus* (Pall.).

A party of five spent an hour at Little Tring on August 25, 1918. One was seen at Wilstone from September 22 to 25, 1929, one by the same water on October 6, 1938, one at Marsworth on October 6, 1941, one at Wilstone on August 15 and 16, 1942, and two there on August 23, 1945.

GREENSHANK. *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.).

Now a not uncommon visitor on the autumn passage when feeding conditions are favourable, its appearances having apparently become more frequent during recent years. The autumn occurrences range from mid-July to the second week of October, the greatest number of birds recorded being eleven in mid-September 1945. On the spring passage it has been seen occasionally in May, while in 1946 birds were seen on many dates from April 30 to May 22.

MARSH SANDPIPER. *Tringa stagnatilis* (Bechst.).

One, the first bird of this species recorded in Britain, was shot near the reservoirs in October 1887 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 78).

RINGED PLOVER. *Charadrius hiaticula* sub-sp. ?

A plentiful passage migrant when feeding conditions are favourable. On the spring passage it has been seen from mid-March to the second week of June, while the autumn-passage records extend from July 18 to the end of November, though it is rarely seen in the latter month. It occurs singly or in small parties, though I saw a party of twenty-five on August 26, 1942, while forty-one were counted on August 21, 1943.

ARCTIC RINGED PLOVER. *Charadrius hiaticula tundrae* (Lowe).

Of this sub-species one bird, shot at Marsworth in November 1904, has been identified (*British Birds*, XXVIII, p. 175).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER. *Charadrius dubius curonicus* Gm.

In 1938 a pair nested and reared three young at Startops End (*British Birds*, XXXII, pp. 90–102). This was the first breeding record for Britain. In 1944 one pair nested at Startops End, probably rearing two young and another pair at Wilstone reared four young (*British Birds*, XXXVIII, pp. 102–10). An immature bird at Startops End from August 2 to 5, 1946, was identified independently by four experienced ornithologists.

GOLDEN PLOVER. *Pluvialis apricaria* sub-sp. ?

Rather scarce in the district, though odd birds or small parties have been seen in winter, especially in the last few years. At the end of last century it was apparently not so scarce, as large parties were recorded from Tring in the winters of 1896, 1897, 1898, and 1900. The earliest-dated autumn record

is of two birds (one still retaining a lot of summer plumage) which I saw on the mud at Wilstone on August 23, 1942. There is no evidence as to the sub-species to which Golden Plovers seen by the reservoirs are referable.

GREY PLOVER. *Squatarola squatarola* (L.).

One was shot in March 1885, another on December 12, 1897, two seen on October 24, 1934, one on May 29, 1935, two on October 6, and one on October 8, 10, and 23, 1939, and one from May 9 to 13, 1946.

LAPWING. *Vanellus vanellus* (L.).

Many pairs breed round the reservoirs, and very large flocks are seen there in winter, especially when the water is low, but severe weather will drive them all away.

BRITISH OYSTER-CATCHER. *Haematopus ostralegus occidentalis* Neum.

One—a female bird of the year—was shot on September 7, 1897, two were seen on March 12, 1898, and single birds were seen on March 20, 1915, October 18, 1931, July 11 and 13, 1938, September 4, 1939, August 23, 1944, and September 21, 1946.

BLACK TERN. *Chlidonias n. niger* (L.).

A regular passage migrant, the greatest numbers (for example, sixty on May 11, 1896, seventy to eighty on May 9, 1897, and over fifty-seven on May 4, 1928) being seen on the spring passage, which commences sometimes just after mid-April and lasts until early June. The status of a bird—an adult—seen on June 22, 1945, is hard to determine. Numbers on the autumn passage are much fewer, ten on October 13, 1907, and eleven—apparently mostly, if not all, birds of the year—on August 25, 1943, being unusual. The earliest-dated record on this passage is of an adult on July 21, 1918, while on three occasions birds have remained until early November.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN. *Chlidonias leucopterus* (Temm.).

An adult and a young bird, both in winter plumage, at Startops End on October 7, 1929 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XIX, p. 76).

SANDWICH TERN. *Sterna s. sandvicensis* Lath.

Two were shot in October 1886, five seen on October 9, 1929, one on May 8, 1932, eight seen passing on May 19, 1935, two seen on September 23, 1940, and two on September 13, 1942, while in 1946 one was seen on May 9, one on June 2, and two on October 20—a very late date.

COMMON TERN. *Sterna h. hirundo* L.

Seen on the spring passage from mid-April to early June (latest recorded date June 15, 1913), but most plentifully during the first three weeks of May, when parties of twenty to thirty birds are occasionally seen, while one of "nearly fifty" was recorded on May 6, 1895. Fewer birds are seen on the autumn passage, though twenty were noted on August 25, 1941, the end of August appearing to be the peak period of this passage, which extends from the third week of July to mid-October.

ARCTIC TERN. *Sterna macrura* Naumann.

Owing to difficulties of identification, the exact status of this species at the reservoirs is hard to determine, but the following occurrences have been recorded: One—an adult female—was shot on May 9, 1893, the remains of one were found on September 13, 1925, single birds were identified on May 6, 1936, May 5, and July 3, 1938, two on July 21, 1938, one on August 23, 1940, and one on May 13, 1946.

LITTLE TERN. *Sterna a. albifrons* Pall.

Occasionally seen both on the spring and autumn passages, usually in small numbers, though about forty were seen at Wilstone on September 26, 1946. A party of eight was seen fishing at this water on June 24, 1944, a very remarkable date. One seen on June 18, 1941, was probably a late spring migrant, and the earliest date recorded for the autumn passage is July 12, 1941.

LITTLE GULL. *Larus minutus* Pall.

A young bird in first plumage was shot on September 16, 1927, an immature bird seen on May 3, 1936, and an adult seen on November 16, 1941 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XVIII, p. 203; XX, p. 29 and XXI, p. 336). Three—two of which were adults in full summer plumage—were seen at Wilstone on May 9, 1946; of these a detailed account appeared in the Hertfordshire Natural History Society's Bird Report for 1946.

BLACK-HEADED GULL. *Larus r. ridibundus* L.

This species was known at the reservoirs practically only as a passage migrant up to the winter of 1930-31, during which a few birds remained there. In the following six winters a fluctuating number of birds, but apparently never more than one hundred, wintered there. From the winter of 1937-38, however, there was a decided increase, and in that of 1938-39 it was definitely ascertained that they were roosting at Wilstone. This winter roost, though fluctuating somewhat in numbers from year to year, has now grown to a great size—for instance, there were about 3,500 birds there on December 22, 1943. The wintering birds commence to arrive in early October, and have nearly all gone by mid-March. Passage birds going on a course approximately from south-west to north-east have been noted from February to May, while the autumn passage in the reverse direction commences in July. During the summer a few immature birds may be found loafing about the reservoirs.

COMMON GULL. *Larus c. canus* L.

Passage movements of this species, the general directions being the same as those taken by the preceding species, have been noted from March to early May—with six immature birds passing north-east on June 2, 1930—and from August to early November. The numbers seen at the reservoirs in March sometimes run into hundreds. A few birds of this species join the Black-headed Gulls in their winter roost at Wilstone.

HERRING-GULL. *Larus a. argentatus* Pont.

Prior to 1939, records of this species at the reservoirs refer merely to its rare appearances as a passage migrant or on winter movements. Small parties appeared in the early months of 1939, since when

a few have been seen there throughout the winter, joining the gull roost at Wilstone, apparently for the first time, in the winter of 1941-42.

SCANDINAVIAN LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus f. fuscus* L. BRITISH LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus fuscus graellsii* Brehm.

Though the records cover every month of the year, Lesser Black-backed Gulls (not in many cases identified as to sub-species) are seen mainly on the spring passage in April and the first half of May, and on the autumn passage from mid-July (two identified occurrences of birds of the British race being among the July records) to the end of September. Large parties are not often seen, a flock of thirty or forty on September 4, 1910, being exceptional. It is unusual for birds of this species to make a prolonged stay at the reservoirs, but an adult of the British race was seen there from August 29 to September 25, 1943. Only one possible bird of the Scandinavian race has been recorded during the periods of passage mentioned above, a dark-mantled bird at Wilstone on August 31, 1939. Among winter records appears one of a dark-mantled bird seen on December 7, 1940, while birds with intermediate-shaded mantles were seen on December 6, 1938—one which spent fifteen minutes there and then went off south-west—and on December 27, 1939.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus marinus* L.

One—not quite mature—flew south-west over Wilstone on January 6, 1935, an immature bird—apparently sick—was seen there from October 26 to 29, 1939, single adults were seen on December 5, 1941, on January 31 and during February 1942, and on May 17, 1945, and an immature bird on June 12, 1946.

GLAUCOUS GULL. *Larus hyperboreus* Gunn.

An immature bird was identified at Wilstone on March 6, 1942, having probably been in the neighbourhood since the previous November (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XXII, p. 39).

KITTIWAKE. *Rissa t. tridactyla* (L.).

There are sixteen records of Kittiwakes having been found, sometimes dead and usually either exhausted, oiled, or sick. On the other hand, an adult in good condition dropped to Marsworth, where it splashed and bathed, on March 14, 1926.

POMATORHINE SKUA. *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temm.).

One seen flying steadily south-west near Little Tring on November 22, 1928 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, XIX, p. 35).

ARCTIC SKUA. *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.).

An adult seen leaving Wilstone on a north-east course on May 12, 1946.

LITTLE AUK. *Alle a. alle* (L.).

Hartert and Jourdain quote a record of one "taken on reservoirs near Drayton Beauchamp in December 1841." This probably refers to Wilstone.

CORN-CRAKE. *Crex crex* (L.).

Has been becoming rarer since the beginning of this century. The only record since 1933 is of an adult male shot (having been mistaken for a rabbit in the vegetation!) at Marsworth on September 6, 1944.

SPOTTED CRAKE. *Porzana porzana* (L.).

One shot in September 1883 and another in October 1885.

[LITTLE CRAKE. *Porzana parva* (Scop.).

One said to have been shot near Marsworth on January 5, 1887 (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc.*, V, p. 79). In view of the unusual date, the accuracy of this record must be considered doubtful. Hartert and Jourdain, in their "The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs," put it in square brackets and say that the specimen cannot be traced.]

WATER-RAIL. *Rallus a. aquaticus* L.

Seen frequently in winter, but I know of no record of its having bred at the reservoirs, or even being seen there in summer. Hartert and Jourdain, in "The Birds of Bucks. and the Tring Reservoirs," state that it has been obtained near the reservoirs as late as April 13, though definite proof of breeding in the district is wanting.

MOORHEN. *Gallinula ch. chloropus* (L.).

Common, especially at Wilstone. On this water an apparently migrant party of sixty-seven birds was seen on October 14, 1945.

COOT. *Fulica a. atra* L.

Breeds in some numbers and, unless the water is very low or the reservoirs entirely frozen, there are a large number of immigrant birds there in winter. There appears to be a large influx in September; in 1935 there were 300-350 at Wilstone on the 14th, and in 1937 there were 805 on this water on the 4th of this month, but by November 5 of that year the numbers had fallen to about 300.

PHEASANT. *Phasianus colchicus* L.

COMMON PARTRIDGE. *Perdix p. perdix* (L.).

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE. *Alectoris r. rufa* (L.).

Reported occasionally as seen on Miswell Farm, near Wilstone.

QUAIL. *Coturnix c. coturnix* (L.).

Birds were heard calling in the district on June 9, 1938, June 7, 1941, and July 13 and 16, 1942.

POSTSCRIPT.—A Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola f. falcinellus*) was seen by W. E. Almond at Wilstone on October 6, 1946 (*British Birds*, XL, p. 154). There is no previous record of the occurrence of this species at the reservoirs.