

The Annual Report of the Wildfowl Trust, 1967

The Wildfowl Trust

Patron HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

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Trust Activities, Development and Finance

The Officers, Council and Committees of the Trust as at 31st December 1967 are listed on page 167. The Council met in the Headquarters of the Nature Conservancy in London on 4th April and 6th July and the Finance Committee on 14th March, 19th July and 20th December. The Scientific Advisory Committee met in the Department of Zoology, Bristol University, on 22nd March.

The Nineteenth Annual General Meeting was held at the Royal Geographical Society, London, on 16th May. The Annual Dinner was at the Hyde Park Hotel the same day. The Hon. Director presided and the speakers were Sir Stanley Rous, Mr. Max Nicholson, Sir Milner Holland and Mr. Laurens van der Post.

To mark the 21st anniversary of its foundation the Trust held a luncheon party at the New Grounds on 11th November 1967, which was attended by 272 Members. The health of the Trust was proposed by Mr. James Fisher and the Hon. Director replied. Visitors were conducted round the grounds and showings of Wild Wings were arranged.

There was an increase in overall membership of 507 over 1966. Thus:

	1966	1967
Life	326	317
Full	4238	4581
Associate	1638	1643
Parish	217	254
Junior Compounded	15	13
Gosling	626	751
Corporate	92	99
Contributors	31	32
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	7183	7690
	<hr/>	<hr/>

The Council has learned with regret of the death of 72 Members and Associates since March 1967.

Twenty-three Members of the Trust kindly opened their collections to fellow Members on various dates in 1967. These were C. J. and A. J. Bird, Arthur Cadman, T. Curtis, J. O. Death, A. W. E. Fletcher, Major I. Grahame, B. E. Greenwell, R. Law, Miss E. Manasseh, E. A. Maxwell, A. McLean, Mrs. B. Michell, Lt.-Col. R. B. Moseley, George Newman, F. W. Perowne, R. E. M. Pilcher, G. R. Pryor, Peter Short, Shrewsbury School, E. O. Squire, Mrs. P. V. Upton, J. Williams, D. Wintle.

The sixth annual Wildfowl Identification Competition for Schools was held on 18th March. Leighton Park were the win-

ners in Groups A and B and Beaudesert Park in Group C.

Borough Fen Decoy was opened to the public on 20th and 21st May.

The Gosling Party fixed for 23rd December 1967 was cancelled on account of foot-and-mouth disease.

To help defray the considerable costs of harbouring, feeding and studying the growing herd of Bewick's Swans wintering at the New Grounds and frequenting the Rushy Pen, Members were invited to become Swan Supporters at an annual subscription of £5. By the end of the year 135 enthusiastic and generous Members had enrolled. They are each allocated a named swan and receive a coloured portrait of their bird. Its subsequent arrivals and departures, details of its breeding record and other personal information are passed to its Supporter at intervals.

The two main developments in 1967, the acquisition of the Welney Washes Reserve and the completion of the Tropical House, are described in detail elsewhere (pp. 130 and 169). The latter was opened for the 21st Birthday Party as was the new glassed-in Swan Observatory adjoining the Hostel building overlooking the Rushy Pen. This is for the use of Members and Swan Supporters only. The latter may reserve places therein by notifying the Trust before the day of their visit.

The grounds at Peakirk were once more expanded by an additional 2½ acres, again through the generosity of Mr. W. R. Neaverson. Mrs. Annie Williams kindly gave the Trust a pair of cottages next to the Goshams, which will make an excellent house for staff.

The accounts, which have been circulated to Members, showed that income exceeded expenditure in 1967 by £2,781. In addition, £5,053 received in special donations and legacies were credited direct to General Reserve. As a result it was possible to increase the Special Reserve to £7,500 and to carry forward a general reserve of £10,964 available for further development.

By 10th November all the private loans which had been advanced to help finance its early development had been repaid and the Trust came of age clear of debt and with the above reserves totalling £18,464 in hand.

In addition, by the end of the year £21,772 had been raised towards the total

of some £33,000 needed for purchase of the Welney Wildfowl Refuge.

As a precaution against the spread of foot-and-mouth disease the grounds at Slimbridge were closed from 25th November to 26th December 1967 and

the gardens at Peakirk from 30th November 1967 to 6th January 1968. Nevertheless there was a record number of visitors to Slimbridge and a second best total at Peakirk:

	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Slimbridge	130143	151180	141841	200231	209243
Peakirk	29434	43678	42735	46514	46181
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	159577	194858	184576	246745	255424

C. E. H. SPARROW

1967 Breeding Season

The 1967 breeding season was not particularly outstanding and a number of species which usually lay did not do so. We did, however, have our best year with the Ne-nes, forty goslings were hatched of which thirty-five were reared. Mr. Jack Williams reared another fifteen, bringing the total in this country to fifty. Nine Trumpeter Swans were raised, eight by hand and one by the parents. Hottentot Teal were reared for the first time

at the New Grounds. Large numbers of the commoner species of duck were allowed to incubate their own eggs as a measure to keep the production of ducklings down to practical numbers (by avoiding repeat clutches). Incubators were then used to hatch out these eggs. The young were reared firstly in the indoor unit and subsequently under infra-red lamps in our brooders.

The Tropical House

The building of our Tropical House was made possible by the munificent anonymous gift of £5,000. We have to thank two of our members, Mr. Len Hill and Mr. Harry Horswell, for their help in building the main structure, and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew, for their advice in planting up and for a fine collection of plants. We are indebted to Mr. Ian MacVicker for his help with the heating and ventilation system.

The building covers an area of some 3,600 square feet, and half of this is water. There are three ponds at different levels connected by waterfalls and cascades. The surface of the highest pond is at eye level and the lowest at that of the external water. (Plate X *a* and *b*, facing p. 109).

The water is circulated by an electric pump from the lowest to the highest pond which it enters over a twelve-foot waterfall and thence back to the low pond. Incorporated in the pumping system is an arrangement for producing a rain-storm for dampening the vegetation. The temperature is maintained in winter at

70°F by two Wanson Thermobloc hot air heaters which are oil-fired and electrically controlled. Oil is pumped from the main entrance through a pipe line to a tank on the site, adjoining the African Pen. The possibility of electric power failure is taken care of by a Lister generator which starts automatically in that event. In summer the heating unit is used to blow cool air into the building and warm air is removed by six extractor fans.

There are at the moment twenty-six ducks of the following species in the house: Spotted Whistling Duck, Eyton's Whistling Duck, Javan Whistling Duck, Hottentot Teal, Galapagos Pintail, African and Indian Pygmy Geese, and African White-backed Duck. The upper air space is utilised by seven kinds of tanager, two of humming bird, and some Robinchats. The African and Indian Pygmy Geese seem to be benefiting greatly from their salubrious surroundings. We hope these will encourage them to multiply exceedingly.

S. T. JOHNSTONE

Conservation, Research and Education, 1967

The main conservation achievement of the year was the securing of 500 acres of the Welney Washes, Norfolk, as a Wildfowl refuge (p. 130). On the international front the first continental mid-winter sample census of wildfowl was carried out, the results, other than those from the U.S.S.R., being collated at Slimbridge by Mr. Atkinson-Willes and Mr. Beale. More than 4,500 sites were covered and six million wildfowl counted (p. 157). Mr. Atkinson-Willes attended the Technical Meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature at Ankara, in November, aimed at stimulating the conservation of wetlands in the Near East. He was also present at the annual meeting of the International Wildfowl Research Bureau at Morges, Switzerland, as was Dr. Matthews. The latter was returning from an advisory visit to the University of Pisa, Italy, and shortly afterwards was chairman of a group of visiting experts advising the Government of Northern Ireland on the conservation of their main wetlands. Together with Dr. Kear he also attended the International Ethological Conference in Stockholm. The Survival Service Commission of the I.U.C.N. met at Slimbridge under the chairmanship of Mr. Scott.

The widespread foot-and-mouth restrictions interfered somewhat with the monthly duck counts, but fortunately did not greatly impinge on the goose censuses, now organized by Mr. Ogilvie (p. 156). The extensive survey of the breeding distribution of ducks in Britain was continued, as was the intensive study of breeding biology at Loch Leven (p. 159).

After 18 years with the Trust Mr. Hugh Boyd departed to take up the post of Research Supervisor, Eastern Region, Canadian Wildlife Service. Our very best wishes go with him, together with our gratitude for all that he has done for the Trust's research programme. He would be the first to be embarrassed by fulsome tributes, with their air of termination. On the contrary, we look forward to years of linked activity, slightly tinged with envy at the research funds he now has at his disposal! The Nature Conservancy had offered Mr. Boyd a permanent post with them in Scotland, to ensure that research on geese, and in particular their relation to agriculture, could go forward on a long-term basis. They appointed Dr. I. Newton, formerly of the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, to fill this post in October. The Trust's contribution to the

joint team was strengthened by the appointment in September of Mr. I. K. Marshall to work at Loch Leven. He had been carrying out a Ph.D. study on the breeding biology of the Common Eider on the Farne Islands. Another new appointment to the research staff was that of a botanist, Dr M. Owen. He obtained his Ph.D. at Leeds University and succeeded, in October, Dr. Pollard who had also joined the Brain Drain to Canada. Dr. Owen is being concerned primarily with the feeding ecology of geese and, on the new Welney Refuge, with the ecological aspects of transitory flooding of grassland.

The ringing programme (p. 147) continued at the three long-established centres, Slimbridge, Abberton and Borough Fen Decoy. In addition ringing with Trust assistance was carried out at Dersingham Decoy, Norfolk, and the former market-decoy at Nacton, Suffolk, was also used for ringing. Negotiations for a long-term lease of this decoy are in progress. Large numbers of Canada Geese were ringed with our support, and long-term studies of the Mute Swan, particularly that of Dr. C. D. T. Minton (p. 41), continued.

Advice was given, and supporting research carried out, on many projects concerning the management of wetland areas. These ranged from the restoration of habitat after opencast mining to the assessment of conflicting recreational usages. The integration of wildfowl with agricultural requirements is an important aspect of management, and Dr. Kear rounded off a long series of grazing trials with penned geese on winter crops by two runs of 'spot' checks in Scotland. She continued to advise the Department of Agriculture on further researches such as the effects of goose droppings on pasture usage by farm animals (p. 117). Further studies were made on the innate behavioural factors concerned in food selection.

Dr. Kear was also concerned with research into the breeding periods, clutch sizes, egg weights and so forth, for all the wildfowl, coupled with an intensive study of the Hawaiian Goose at Slimbridge. Nutritional aspects of infertility were investigated by a programme of differential feeding. A more direct approach, by the examination of sperm production, was begun by a veterinarian, Mr. P. N. Humphreys, who hopes to develop this into a full scale study.

Post-mortem examinations were made as usual by Dr. Beer on all birds dying at Slimbridge, and a start has been made on the analysis of the past ten years' records on pathology. The reference collection of skins and skeletal material expanded further. An extra burden was assumed in attempts to rehabilitate some of the unfortunate victims of the *Torrey Canyon* oiling disaster (p. 120).

The long-term investigations of the orientation of wildfowl were continued. Dr. S. Miles reversed the Brain Drain and returned to Britain from Canada to work on orientation at Slimbridge for a year. His main interest was the orientation of eels, which are plentiful in the Severn, both the adults and the young elvers. Our other acquisition from North America, Maya Scull, married an Englishman and therefore had to be replaced, by Mr. T. Pitcairn, for the continuing study of the Bewick's Swan visitors to Slimbridge (p. 162).

Besides research studies by its own staff, the Trust continued to supply materials and provide facilities to workers in other institutes. These included the National Agricultural Advisory Service, Poultry Research Station, Medical Research Council, Institute of Laryngology

and Royal Radar Establishment. Similar research links were maintained with the Universities of Bristol, Bath, Oxford, Cambridge, Liverpool and Reading.

On the educational front, courses of lectures were given at the Universities of Bristol and Cardiff, while students also came for day courses from London and Manchester. A most significant development for the future was the allocation of sufficient funds by the Carnegie Foundation and the Dulverton Trust for the Youth Hostels Association to establish a Field Studies Hostel at Slimbridge. Its 50 beds will solve the present problems of accommodating students and school-children for more than day-courses; it is hoped it will be ready in 1969. A most successful four-day course for school-teachers was organized in conjunction with the Department of Education, Bristol. Some 770 parties of children were given conducted tours of the grounds and a start made on a more instructive 'nature-trail' method of using their time here. A new Guidebook for the Trust grounds was completed and published. Displays were mounted at the Exhibitions of the Royal Horticultural Society, the Game Fair, the Harrogate Festival and the School Boys' and Girls' Exhibition.

Publications in 1967

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- KEAR, J. Experiments with young nidifugous birds on a visual cliff. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 122-4.
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- MATTHEWS, G. V. T. Some possibilities for co-operation in wildfowl research throughout Europe. *Proc. Int. Conf. Wildfowl Res. & Conservation, Brno (1965)* : 137-42.
- MATTHEWS, G. V. T. Some parameters of 'nonsense' orientation in Mallard. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 88-97.
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- OGILVIE, M. A. and R. J. F. TAYLOR. Summer records from West-Spitsbergen, 1964. *Ibis* 190 : 299-309.
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- POLLARD, D. F. W. Comparison of techniques for the analysis of wildfowl foods. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 158-9.
- POLLARD, D. F. W. Techniques for rapid extraction of ingested food from wildfowl viscera. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 156-7.
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- POLLARD, D. F. W. Wildfowl Conservation. *Forestry Suppl.* : 78-84.
- SCOTT, D. The Bewick's Swans at Slimbridge, 1966-67. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 24-27.
- WAINWRIGHT, C. B. The results of wildfowl ringing at Abberton reservoir, Essex, 1949 to 1966. *Wildfowl Trust Ann. Rep.* 18 : 28-35.

G. V. T. MATTHEWS

CONTRIBUTORS

Organisations which do not qualify for Corporate Membership may become Contributors by subscribing not less than 1 guinea a year. Receive a free copy of **WILD-FOWL** and bulletins.