

ABBERTON RINGING STATION

THE assumption by the Trust of some of the functions of the Wildfowl Inquiry Sub-Committee of the British Section of the International Committee for Bird Preservation, which was dissolved in April 1954, has included the provision of financial assistance to other ringers of ducks in Britain. First among them is Major-General C. B. Wainwright, C.B., who has achieved an outstanding success in ringing 8082 ducks between the autumn of 1948 and 31 December 1954. In future a report on ringing at Abberton will be included in the accounts of the Trust's activities. General Wainwright has been good enough to contribute the following history of his ringing station.

ABBERTON

By C. B. Wainwright

I have been ringing birds since 1933, and when I retired, in 1948, I tried to find somewhere to ring ducks.

After trying many authorities I wrote to the Wildfowl Inquiry Committee who put me in touch with Captain H. A. Gilbert, who was one of the starters of duck ringing at Orielton in 1934. Captain Gilbert suggested many places among which was Abberton Reservoir. In spite of this being near Colchester, a sanctuary for retired soldiers like myself, I decided, after visiting various other places, that Abberton was the best bet. Through the good offices of Mr Stanley Allderidge, the Resident Engineer, the Directors of the South Essex Waterworks Company gave permission for the Ringing Station to be established, and the success at Abberton has been due to their great kindness and help.

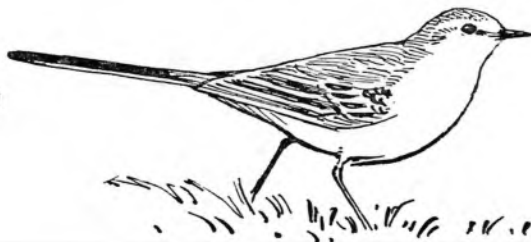
Captain Gilbert took me to Orielton to study the permanent stationary duck traps there and from these the Abberton moveable traps have been developed.

From a modest beginning with seven traps in 1949 the traps and methods have been and are still being improved.

I built all these traps myself. The daily visits to the traps, which take many hours—in snow and ice as many as five or six hours—by boat and on foot were done by me and Lady Craven, and after that the ducks had to be ringed and the records written up. Sometimes twice a week, as the water level alters, the traps (12 feet square) have to be moved up or down, very often struggling in a foot of mud.

By the end of 1951 this work, day in—day out, had become too much and it became essential to employ a whole-time assistant. The Duck Adoption Scheme which had hitherto refunded part of the expenses was not able to bear the whole of the extra expense. However, with the very generous help of the

Yellow Wagtail



Directors of the South Essex Waterworks Company, of Mrs J. Coulthurst of Gargrave and of Captain G. Fane, it was possible to employ Mr B. Winchester in March 1952, and he has taken on a large amount of the outside work, though I still do most of the duck ringing and all the record keeping myself.

With the ever increasing numbers ringed and consequent numbers recovered it becomes daily more necessary to have secretarial help.

A large number of all kinds of birds go into the duck traps and these have also been ringed. From May 1949 to 31 December 1954 20,573 birds of 106 species have been ringed including 8082 ducks of 13 species, (Tables I and II), as well as 32 ducks and 11 other birds ringed at subsidiary stations.

Many migratory birds, such as Yellow Wagtails and Common Sandpipers return like ducks, year after year to the traps ; very many within a few days of their original capture in previous years. A large number of ducks and other birds have been recovered elsewhere. Table III shows that nearly 7% of ducks have been recovered outside the British Isles.

TABLE I

NUMBERS OF DUCKS RINGED AT ABBERTON, 1948-1954

(Single Chilean Pintails ringed in 1951-52 and 1952-53 have been excluded from the table as exotic ; the Red-crested Pochard are regarded, with reservations, as respectable. The second entries in the 1953-54 column record ducks caught in October-December 1954.)

Species	Season (1 Oct.-30 Sept.)						Total
	1948-49	1949-50	1950-51	1951-52	1952-53	1953-54	
Mallard	3	165	334	558	760	213+104	2137
Teal	8	401	1580	501	1216	1193+178	5077
Garganey	—	1	4	13	34	4	56
Gadwall	—	1	—	5	1	4	11
Wigeon	—	6	21	35	176	261+8	507
Pintail	—	—	5	4	29	23	61
Shoveler	4	7	1	3	20	15	50
Red-crested Pochard . .	—	1	—	—	1	—	2
Scaup	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
Tufted Duck	—	44	30	25	9	31+3	142
Pochard	—	2	—	—	11	3+3	19
Shelduck	—	2	—	2	8	4	16
Total	15	630	1975	1146	2267	1751+296	8080

Common Sandpiper

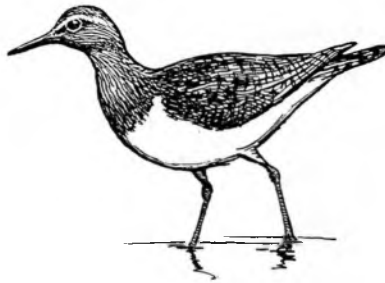


TABLE II
NUMBERS OF BIRDS OTHER THAN DUCKS RINGED AT ABBERTON,
1948-1954

Season (1 Oct.-30 Sept.)	No. of Species Caught	No. of Birds Ringed
1948-49	15	340
1949-50	40	1482
1950-51	29	629
1951-52	63	2747
1952-53	63	3110
1953-54 (including Oct.-Dec. 1954) ..	69	4183
Total	93	12,491

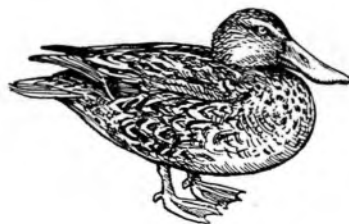


TABLE III
RECOVERIES (OVER 30 MILES DISTANT) OF BIRDS RINGED AT ABBERTON, 1948-1954

	Mallard	Teal	Garganey	Gadwall	Wigeon	Pintail	Shoveler	Tufted Duck	Pochard	Shelduck	Little Grebe	Kestrel	Moorhen	Coot	Lapwing	Ringed Plover	Common Snipe	Common Sandpiper	Redshank	Black-headed Gull	Turtle Dove	Blackbird	Pied Wagtail	Yellow Wagtail	Starling	Greenfinch	Chaffinch
England	27	224	1	1	3	2	1	—	—	1	1	1	4	7	—	—	1	1	2	8	—	—	2	—	7	2	—
Scotland	1	8	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wales	2	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ireland	—	45	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Siberia	—	1	—	—	3	1	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Russia	6	35	—	—	2	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Finland	7	30	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Sweden	10	24	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norway	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Iceland	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Denmark	11	42	—	—	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Poland	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Czechoslovakia	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Germany	15	25	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Holland	38	43	—	1	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Belgium	1	3	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	1
France	20	152	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	—	—	6	2	—	3	—	—	3	—	—	—	—
Channel Islands	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Spain	—	11	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
Portugal	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	4	—	—	—	—
Azores	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Italy	—	5	3	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sicily	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Algeria	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Morocco	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—

Willow Trust