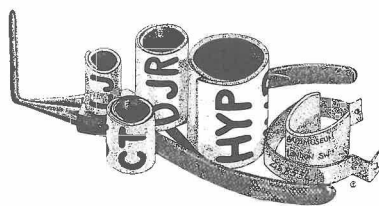


Progress in bird ringing by The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust during 1993.

CARL MITCHELL



The number of swans, geese and ducks ringed by The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in 1993 is shown in the Table over page; the total (5761) is up 17% on 1992 (by 855), and ringing targets were maintained for Teal *Anas crecca*, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Tufted Duck *A. fuliga*.

Numbers of wildfowl caught at Abberton Ringing Station were down on 1992 (by 42%) although the total included 32 Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* and four Golden-eye *Bucephala clangula*. In addition, nine Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* and three Great-crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* were trapped and ringed. In an attempt to understand better the movements of Ruddy Ducks, 17 were marked with yellow plastic wing-tags. Sightings of these birds have, so far, been received only from Abberton Reservoir and Hanningfield Reservoir, some 30 km to the southwest. It is hoped to extend the wing-tagging programme in 1994 and to birds caught at other sites.

The pipes used at Abbotsbury Decoy and operated by Dick Dalley provided few ducks in 1993, largely as a result of increased disturbance through alterations and floods towards the end of the year. A very successful Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* catch at the end of July involved over 700 birds. Most were already marked, although their existing rings, both metal and engraved plastic, were checked for wear. In addition, cygnets of the year were ringed in September. The duck trap at Blunham in Bedfordshire continues to catch a very valuable number of ducks, particularly Pochard and Tufted Duck. Once again this station, under the supervision of Arnold Zwetsloot, provided the largest number of wildfowl caught at any site. Borough Fen Decoy caught more ducks than in 1992 but these were mostly Mallard. The attraction of large expanses of flood water close to the decoy drew many birds away.

Fewer birds were ringed in the Slimbridge swan pipe than during any year since 1975. A relatively small swan catch in February provided few ducks and, in addition, the main gate was broken in a gale during December. The swan pipe was completely rebuilt in 1994. On the whole, the decoy at Slimbridge had a reasonable year, notably for Mallard, although the only three Mandarins *Aix galericulata* caught in 1993 were trapped there. Martin Mere had a very good year overall, the swan pipe proving particularly useful at catching Pochard (172). All three attempts to catch migratory swans were successful and, in addition, good numbers of Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* and Pintail *Anas acuta* were trapped. Caerlaverock had only one swan catch and the small number of wildfowl caught there, together with the many re-trapped swans, is reflected in the low ringing total.

Liaison with other ringing groups continued and was expanded in 1993. A large 'Wainwright' trap was constructed at Loch Eye in Easter Ross by the Highland Ringing Group, with advice from Roy King, and proved to be immediately successful. The duck trap at Derwent Ings run by Tim Dixon had only limited success, largely due to water levels; however, Tim was most surprised to catch two nearly-fledged Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* when trying to take, by hand, flightless young ducks - these are believed to be only the third and fourth individuals of this species to be ringed in Britain and Ireland. Steve Rumsey and John Wilshire at Pett levels, East Sussex, continue to run the main duck trap built in 1991; amongst the 174 ducks ringed there, four Garganey *Anas querquedula* were a bonus.

Once again, two expeditions sought migratory swans on their breeding grounds. Eileen Rees, John Bowler, Charlie Liggett and Jane Claricotes were successful in their attempts to catch Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* in northern

Russia and this has yielded many sightings during autumn migration and from the winter quarters. Olafur Einarrson continued the excellent effort in catching Whooper Swans *C. cygnus* in Iceland - 179 being newly-ringed there.

Continued attempts to catch and mark Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* were fairly successful in 1993. Cannon nets were set on four occasions at Martin Mere although were fired only once - a catch of 63 birds in March. In addition, 34 birds were caught in Aberdeenshire with the help of Grampian Ringing Group and, of these, 18 were marked with plastic neck-collars - the first time we have used collars on Pink-footed Geese in Britain. Other ringing groups were successful as well. Highland Ringing Group caught ten in the spring and Gordon Wright and Alan Lauder caught 47 at Loch Leven in March. Bob Swann, Brian Etheridge and the Highland Ringing Group provided another excellent boost to our attempts to catch wintering Icelandic Greylag Geese *A. anser* in Scotland, with a total of 278 captured in 1993.

In July and August, I was fortunate to spend six weeks with The British Schools' Exploring Society in Svalbard. A total of 379 Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* was newly-ringed during the expedition - one round-up involving over 400 birds. Special thanks for the success of this catch must go to Keith Brookie, another leader of the expedition. The catching attempts took place in Sassendalen and Gipsdalen, perhaps two of the easternmost breeding areas of Barnacle Geese on Spitsbergen, and included 15 birds that had been ringed previously, 11 in Svalbard during earlier expeditions and four from Caerlaverock. In addition, 51 Pink-footed Geese were newly-ringed - these coming from the population that win-

ters in Denmark and the Low Countries.

The three-year study of Canada Geese *B. canadensis* undertaken by Stephanie Warren is nearing completion with the last catch of geese at Frampton-upon-Severn, Gloucestershire taking place in July 1993. Results are now being analysed and written-up and the work should be completed during 1994. South West Lancs Ringing Group excelled at their attempts to catch Shelduck on the Ribble Estuary, with 115 newly-ringed birds coming from cannon-net catches on only three days in March. WWT cannon-nets were fired four times in 1993 over a total of 129 wildfowl (96 Pink-footed Geese and 33 Wigeon).

Five 'Wainwright' traps were constructed by Roy King, Barry Hughes and myself at Rutland Water, Leicestershire in December. It is hoped that these will provide Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Shoveler *A. clypeata* and Ruddy Ducks during 1994. An application for funding to re-establish the waterfowl ringing station at Mahee Island, near Castle Espie Wildfowl & Wetlands Centre on Strangford Lough, was submitted towards the end of the year. If successful, and with a small amount of additional funding from WWT, the traps could be constructed in the summer of 1994 and operating by September.

Ringing by staff on a voluntary basis and by volunteers at WWT Centres makes a contribution to the British Trust for Ornithology's programme. The Slimbridge Decoy 'constant effort site' was run again with a total of 432 birds newly-ringed. The Durham Ringing Group, operating at Washington Wildfowl & Wetlands Centre, caught 35 young Herons *Ardea cinerea* there - all were also fitted with individually engraved plastic rings to aid identification of birds dispersing from the Centre.

Numbers of wildfowl ringed by WWT in 1993. Some of these were ringed as part of The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust's projects but with rings from other groups.

	Abbe	Abbo	Blun	Boro	East	Mart	Slim	Other	Total
Mute Swan									
<i>Cygnus olor</i>		247			23				270
Bewick's Swan									
<i>C. columbianus bewickii</i>						26	5	48	79
Whooper Swan									
<i>C. cygnus</i>					46	118		179	343
Pink-footed Goose									
<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>						62		142	204
Greylag Goose									
<i>A. anser</i>					3			281	284
Canada Goose									
<i>Branta canadensis</i>					9			74	83
Barnacle Goose									
<i>Branta leucopsis</i>								542	542
Shelduck									
<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>				8		26	7	121	162
Mandarin									
<i>Aix galericulata</i>							3		3
Wigeon									
<i>Anas penelope</i>	1		78	9				263	351
Gadwall									
<i>A. strepera</i>	43		29	9			8	19	108
Teal									
<i>A. crecca</i>	98	5	4	120	2	3	48	187	467
Mallard									
<i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	101	39	10	483	35		362	282	1312
Pintail									
<i>A. acuta</i>	2		2	1		29	9	4	47
Garganey									
<i>A. querquedula</i>								4	4
Shoveler									
<i>A. clypeata</i>	6			20			7	19	52
Pochard									
<i>Aythya ferina</i>	3		475			172	4	5	659
Tufted Duck									
<i>A. fuliga</i>	64		655				4	21	744
Goldeneye									
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	4								4
Goosander									
<i>Mergus merganser</i>								10	10
Ruddy Duck									
<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>	32		1						33
Total	354	291	1254	650	118	436	457	2201	5761

Abbe Abberton, Essex (Roy King, George Brown, Graham Ekins)
 Abbo Abbotsbury, Dorset (E.G.I, Dick Dalley and others)
 Blun Blunham, Bedfordshire (Arnold and Peter Zwetsloot, Ivan Newton)
 Boro Borough Fen Decoy, Cambridgeshire (Ivan Newton, Tony Cook)
 East Eastpark Farm, Caerlaverock WWT, Dumfries (Richard Hesketh and others)
 Mart Martin Mere WWT, Lancashire (Chris Tomlinson, Andy Wooldridge, John Turner and others)
 Slim Slimbridge WWT (Decoy and Swan Pipe), (Richard Chappell, Dave Paynter and others)

Other includes: *WWT overseas expeditions*; **Iceland** (Whooper Swans); **Russia** (Bewick's Swans); **Svalbard** (Barnacle Geese, Pink-footed Geese); *other sites*; **Frampton**, Glos (Canada Geese); **Grampian Ringing Group** (Pink-footed Geese); **Highland Ringing Group** (duck trap and grey geese); **Icklesham**, Sussex (duck trap); **Islay** (Barnacle Geese); **Ribble Estuary** (Shelduck); **Derwent Ings**, Yorks (duck trap); **Chew Valley Lake**, Avon (duck trap); **Mid-Wales** (Goosanders); **Nottinghamshire** (Wigeon); **Loch Leven NNR**, Tayside (Pink-footed Geese); **Castle Espie WWT**, Co.Down (ducks)

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