

## THE AUTUMN MOVEMENT OF TITS

BY BARBARA WHITAKER

The tit invasion experienced this October was unprecedented in the history of the Lundy Field Society and, what is of greater interest, an event not witnessed before by Mr F. W. Gade during his twenty-seven years residence on the island. It was not a local affair, but was part of an irruption, reports of which have come from many parts of England.

The movement started with Blue Tits which arrived on October 4th, when *c.* eighty were present on the island. The flocks appeared to come in from the south or south-east from 0745 hours throughout much of the day, and feeding flocks of approximately twenty-five birds were moving slowly northwards over the island. But on the following day, when an estimate of sixty-five birds was made, the feeding flocks seen in the morning were moving southwards. It seems probable that many of the birds of the 4th had stayed overnight, as three of thirteen trapped on the 5th were re-traps from the day before. Further evidence is supplied by the degree of infestation, for none of the thirty-six birds caught on the 4th carried ectoparasites, while four of the thirteen captures of the 5th had ticks attached round the gape.

On the 8th twelve Blue Tits were estimated to be on the island, but by the following day *c.* forty were present. All those caught and examined were free of parasites and they were apparently new arrivals. After the 9th the numbers slowly dwindled.

The two waves seemed to consist of slightly different sized birds. Those trapped on October 4th-5th having an average wing length of 61.6 mm. (45 specimens) and an average tail length of 48.7 mm. (46 specimens), whereas those trapped from October 9th to 15th had an average wing length of 63.4 mm. (27 specimens) and an average tail length of 51.5 mm. (25 specimens). None of the wing measurements for the first movement exceeded those given for British Blue Tits in the Handbook, but three of the tail measurements were in the Continental range. During the second movement four individuals had wing measurements above 65 mm. (the maximum for the British race) and seven had a tail length of over 52 mm. Most birds of both movements were in their first winter.

The second species to arrive in any numbers was the Coal Tit. Although a few were recorded on the day the Blue Tits arrived, the first sizeable flock was present from October 7th to 9th when between ten and fifteen were recorded daily. On the 10th numbers had dropped to three, but on the following day at least thirty birds were present, being seen as feeding flocks moving southwards over the island, but not being observed to leave. After October 11th records were of six or less except on the 19th when there were ten. Observations ceased on October 22nd. Unfortunately only four Coal

Tits were trapped. These were all fairly small birds, one having a wing measurement and another a tail measurement below the British range. Possibly they were Irish birds, which are somewhat smaller than our own.

Great Tits were the last to arrive on the island, appearing on October 9th. From that date until the 15th ten to fifteen were recorded daily. The bill size suggests that these were of the British race.

## NOTES ON NESTING SEA BIRDS

BY BARBARA WHITAKER

### (1) SHAG

One hundred and thirty-one pairs. Twenty-nine nests were located at 'new' sites not occupied during the previous three years. Thirteen out of thirty-one nest sites 'new' in 1956 were re-occupied this year. Eighteen nest sites first found in 1955 were reused this year. The remaining seventy-one nest sites have been used in all years from 1954 to 1957 except for three nest sites which were abandoned in some of the intervening years. There was a high rate of breeding success among Shags this year.

### (2) GUILLEMOT

The Devil's Chimney has been selected for special study because it suffers no human disturbance and yet the whole rock is easily visible for counting. Before the eggs are laid counts have to be made at a long range, or the birds start flying off, so the degree of accuracy is not very great before May 2nd when the first eggs were seen. The following are the results of counts on the Chimney :

Date	Time	No. Adults	Date	Time	No. Adults	No. Chicks	No. Eggs
Feb. 26	0855	c. 113	May 21	1000	115		
Mar. 1, 6 12	0.845-0900	0	June 3	1300	113	} 3	c. 85
March 22	1320	c. 80		1500	112		
April 6	1040	0		1600	122		
Apl 19, 30	1415-1430	0	June 5	2030	111		
May 2	0955	97	June 23	1100	118	67	7
	1430	31	June 26	1400	140		
May 3	1620	74	July 2	1000	124	24	1 new
May 7	1100	102	July 8	1800	6		
May 13	0915	107	July 10	1130	0		

The count of eggs on June 3rd was in part an estimate as some birds during the four-hour watch had not shifted sufficiently for the object of their broodiness to be seen. But such close sitters were presumed to be incubating eggs and from the number of chicks counted on June 23rd it is believed that the egg count was fairly accurate. An interesting feature of the count has been the consistency of numbers throughout the incubation and chick rearing stage.