

**American Pectoral Sandpiper.** The bird seen on 12th October was unexpectedly tame and allowed approach to within seven to eight yards. It was feeding at the edge of a small pond on the air-field and, when alarmed, would run up onto the grass returning to feed after a few seconds. What was probably the same bird was seen at the Lighthouse Field Pond earlier in the day but was not then identified.

### COUNTS OF NESTING SEA-BIRDS

Work this year was devoted to three main tasks: (1) a census of the birds in the sample area at the south-west corner, (2) a census of the breeding population of the Kittiwake, (3) a census of the breeding population of the Shag. In addition to this several samples of Guillemots were examined for 'Bridled' individuals.

1. The sample area in the south-west extends from the Rattles to Goat Island and there are available for comparison counts made in 1939 by Perry, in 1942 by Alexander and others and in 1948 and 1949 by Hugh Boyd. This year's counts were made on the mornings of 14th June and 4th July, the writer being assisted on the latter date by Hugh Boyd. The figures given in the table below under 1949 and 1950 are the maxima of all the counts made.

	June 14th	July 4th	1950	1949	1948	1942	1939
Cormorant	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
Shag	30	30	30	50	32	43	72
Oyster-Catcher	2	0	2	4	2	2	4
Herring Gull	332	262	332	348	171	464	1000
Lesser Black-Back	12	10	12	21	14	1	2
Great Black-Back	27	22	27	27	20	16	26
Kittiwake	0	0	32*	0	0	84	80
Razorbill	167	408	408	415	290	364	1390
Guillemot	68	46	68	137	116	265	1010
Puffin	0	0	0	5	0	0	0

*Remarks.* \*The gully in which the Kittiwakes bred was not visited until the middle of July owing to its being rather difficult to approach. Sixteen occupied nests were then seen and the figure given under 1950 is based on this observation. The status of the Kittiwake is discussed in more detail below.

The decline of the Razorbill appears to have been checked, at least in this area; indeed the figures for 1949 and 1950 would tend to indicate a slight increase since 1942 but whether this is really so is a matter of some conjecture. The figures for the Guillemot, however, indicate a continued decrease but it would be desirable to have a greater number of counts over the period before one could assess the accuracy of the figures given above when discussing the actual breeding population. The Gull populations would appear to be relatively stable.

2. The census of Kittiwakes was carried out in July by counting all the occupied nests round the coast. The late date is far from ideal, as by then, some of the nests that were occupied earlier in the season have lost their contents to Gulls and other causes. This inaccuracy was partially offset by including in the census those empty nests that had an adult bird standing on them.

The final figure arrived at was 1387 nests which gives a total of 2774 birds for the breeding population. In 1939 Perry counted 3,000 nests and as he labelled his figure 'exact' he presumably arrived at it by a similar method to that used this year. The decline thus indicated, although considerable, is not of the same alarming proportions as that of the Auks. A comparison of this years' distribution with that of 1939 shows that the decrease has been fairly uniform round the whole of the coast. In the south-west corner there is no record of breeding since 1942 but this year sixteen occupied nests were seen in a gully to the east of the Great Shutter. The actual site of the colony appears to be different from that of preceding years.

3. The census of the Shag was carried out at the same time as that of the Kittiwake. The final figure arrived at was thirty-seven pairs for the total breeding population. Last year between seventy and seventy-five pairs nested and in 1939 Perry noted one hundred and ten pairs.

If we study the figures for the Shag given in the table recording the populations of the south-west corner we find that there is a fairly uniform decline in numbers from 1939 to 1948. There is then a sudden and fairly considerable increase in 1949, but the figures for 1950 fit into the pattern of the decline in previous years. This would seem to indicate that 1949 was a good year for the Shag with numbers above the average. The figures for Gannet's Rock show a similar decline but the population is rather small to be of much significance. In 1939 nine pairs were recorded, in 1948 there were four pairs, in 1949 there were five and this year there were only two. We may thus conclude that, although there has been a decline over a period of years it has not been as sudden as a comparison of the figures for 1949 and 1950 would show.