

Visible Migration 1952

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

After the Second World War interest in bird migration was increasing considerably and various different methods were being tried out to study it. The Bird Observatories were already recording from their areas but migration was being seen in action all along the coast especially later in the autumn. So an attempt was made to see if a co-operative survey would be able to obtain useful information for this in particular. The Scientific Advisory Committee set up a subcommittee (under the chairmanship of David Lack) to look at organising, recording and in due course publishing, studies of visible migration. In autumn 1952 they tested certain techniques with a few specially invited observers and prepared a summary of existing knowledge. This latter was published in *Ibis* in April 1953. Specifically observations were received from six sites along the south and east coast during October and November 1952. These were successful. However the subcommittee realised that a large-scale co-operative survey was unlikely to produce useful information. More useful would be a series of intensive local studies by small organised groups of observers, rather than either single observers or a mass participation survey. They thought that the most useful work that could be done by the BTO would be to assist such small local groups.

Methods of Data Capture

The idea was to obtain counts of birds at various coastal observation points during October and November.

Two forms were completed. Form A asked for the date and time of a visit, the place of observation, a description of the area (open country, escarpment, steep valley, river or canal bank, sewage farm or lake or reservoir, high buildings, coastal promontory, a straight stretch of coast, lightship and equivalent, or other) and the weather. Form B recorded the numbers of a species recorded over one hour with a different form for each species, and related to Form A for that period. Numbers seen flying in each direction and their height above the ground were recorded in each 15-minute period.

Purpose of Data Capture

To find out if regular observations of visible migration at particular points would produce useful information for the study of bird migration.

Geographic Coverage

Records were received from Bradwell, Minsmere, St Mary's Bay, Langney Point, Dungeness and Beachy Head.

Temporal Coverage

The autumn of 1952 with records received from October and early November.

Other Interested parties

None.

Organiser(s)

H E (Bert) Axell and Miss Van Oestveen and some others took part in the trials.

Current Staff Contact

archives@bto.org

Publications

No publication was produced as a result of the trials. However the April 1953 issue of *Ibis* included several papers on the subject including:

Thomson, A.L. 1953. The study of the visible migration of birds: an introductory review. *Ibis* 95: 165-180.

Notice of the trials was made in *BTO Bulletin* no. 46 of September 1952.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 archive box containing record forms. All have been scanned.

Notes on Access and Use

Other information

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis