

c. ESTACA DE BARES, AUG. 21 - 24 1967.

Description of area. Punta de Estaca de Bares, the most northerly point of Spain, is in Galicia, the northwest corner of the Iberian peninsula. The point itself terminates in a great trailing heap of rocks, whose traverse is blocked by the results of several landslides. A powerful lighthouse on top of the cliffs is five minutes walk from the point; the lighthouse in turn is reached by a road which is in fine condition apart from the last 1.5 km. The Expedition camped close to the lighthouse; the keeper and his wife supplied us with water and were very friendly despite a complete language barrier. For those who prefer more expensive surroundings, a campsite and hotels are sited at Vivero, 25km distant, and a good restaurant may be found at Ortiguera, a similar distance from Bares.

Aim of visit. Bares was first developed for watching seabirds flying into and out of the Bay of Biscay by Garth Pettitt and the Belgians Huyskens and Maes in 1965 (see references at end of report). The Expedition planned to carry out observations there as part of the Atlantic Seawatch 1967, to be followed at Bares by other observers in September and October.

The Atlantic Seawatch. (Organized by the Seabird Group). Observers watch seabirds from headlands and islands off the west coast of Europe, mostly the west coasts of Ireland and England. Records of the numbers seen, together with details of wind speed and direction, are analysed. The special task in Autumn 1967 was to establish the causes of accumulations of seabirds which occur in northwesterly airstreams on north-facing coastlines of the Atlantic Seaboard. Bares, at the western tip of the north coast of Spain, is ideally situated for observing such concentrations as they move west out of the Bay of Biscay, and large numbers of interesting birds have in fact been seen there in previous years.

RESULTS OF SEAWATCHING.

From a total of 11 hours during August 21-24th 1967. W and E indicate directions in which the birds moved.

Manx Shearwater, Balearic race (*Procellaria puffinus mauretanicus*)
77 W, 19 E.

Cory's Shearwater (*Procellaria diomedea*) . 2 W.

Gannet (*Sula bassana*) 97 W, 9 E. All these were immature birds, except for an adult flying W. on 23rd. This latter was possibly a non-breeder or a failed breeder, since the nearest breeding colony is in NW France, 800 miles away. This absence of adults fits in well with observations made from the Berlengas.

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*). By far the most abundant species observed, with a total of 3193, an average of 290 per hour, passing W. The highest total in an hour was 870, on the morning of the 23rd. Most birds passed in flocks of between 10 and 50, but several flocks of over 200 were seen. When flocks passed close to the point, it was noticeable that the vast majority of the birds were drakes, the much browner ducks standing out quite plainly. This well-marked passage of Scoter is visible right down the west coast of Europe.

Arctic Skua. (*Stercorarius parasiticus*). Four definite birds, and two skuas probably of this species, flew W. on 22nd, the day when most of the terns were moving.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*). 40 W, 6 E.

Common/Arctic Tern (*Sterna hirundo/macrura*). 49 W.

Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) 151 W.

Unidentified terns (*Sterna sp.*) 50 W.

Conclusions

As on the Berlengas, the weather was too good, with the wind never rising above force 2 after the first afternoon, and the visibility invariably excellent. Under these calm conditions, seabirds were either not moving at all or on a broad front not visible from the land. Apart from the scoter movement, passage was so slight that longer periods of observation would have been a waste of time.

Other Birds seen in the Bares area.

A) Passage migrants. On arrival (21 August) some small migrants (10 pied flycatchers, 5 whitethroats and a redstart) were present around the lighthouse. They had presumably been attracted to the light during the previous night, probably in overcast conditions. In the absence of such conditions and the presence of an almost full moon no such attraction was noted on subsequent nights, but it may well be that this lighthouse will prove to attract many small migrants on cloudy nights, particularly with a new moon.

Several dozen yellow wagtails were always present around the lighthouse, often feeding close to cattle, and on one occasion two were seen picking insects off the lighthouse glass in the early morning. A tree pipit was present on 22nd and 23rd, but 15 around the camp on 25th seemed a definite increase.

B) Resident passerines. Birds present on or near the point included: Skylark, Raven, Magpie, Chough, Wren, Stonechat, Whitethroat, Dartford Warbler, Dunnock, Linnet, Cirl Bunting. Of these, Dartford Warblers were new to most members of the Expedition and were watched with special interest.

C) Birds of Prey. Excursions in the neighbourhood of Cape Bares when seawatching palled proved that the area was good for birds of prey. A family party of peregrines was watched on several occasions on the high ground to the SE of the point, and had presumably bred in the vicinity. A peregrine was also seen at Cabo Ortegale, 15km. distant. This very slight evidence suggests that the peregrine falcon is perhaps still a fairly common bird on this coast. Good views were also obtained of harriers, both of a 'ring-tail' (female or young) and a very dark male. This latter proved a bit of a puzzle - much darker than any male harrier in the observers' previous experience - and was presumed to be a melanistic Montagu's, as described in the 'Handbook of British Birds'. Field characters were very dark plumage relieved

only by a grey rump and greyish front to the wing. Identification as a Montagu's, rather than a Hen Harrier, is based on the absence of any reference to melanistic Hen Harriers in the literature consulted. Other birds of prey in the area were Sparrowhawk, Buzzard, Hobby and Kestrel.

SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED ABOVE IN CAPE BARES ACCOUNT

- Procellaria puffinus mauretanicus
- Procellaria diomedea
- Sula bassana

Berlengas, etc. Ibis, 94, 144-157.

C) CAPE BARES.

HUYSKENS, G., and MAES, P. 1967. An important passage of Sooty Shearwaters around north-west Spain. Seabird Bulletin 3, 41. *

PETTITT, R.G. 1966. Sea-watching in North-west Spain in early September 1965. Seabird Bulletin 2, 28. *

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D) GENERAL.

BERNIS, F. 1966 onwards. Aves Migratorias Ibericas.

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