

Activities of Finnish bird stations in 1969

OLAVI HILDÉN

Department of Zoology, University of Helsinki

HILDÉN, O. [Zool. Dept., Univ. of Helsinki, 00100 Helsinki 10, Finland] 1971. — *Activities of Finnish bird stations in 1969*. *Ornis Fenn.* 48:125—130.

The article is a brief report of the main results of the work done at Finnish bird stations in 1969. Among the irregular migrants, the most interesting phenomenon was the large-scale irruption of Willow Tits. The spring movement of Great Spotted Woodpeckers was stronger than normal, but no autumn irruption occurred. Bullfinches migrated in exceptional numbers both in spring and in autumn, House Sparrows occurred at the bird stations more frequently in autumn than ever before. The list of rarities include three Pallas' Sandgrouse, the first Finnish record since 1888, and the second observation of the Dusky Warbler in Finland. A total of 34,750 birds were ringed at the Finnish bird stations in 1969. Some interesting recoveries are mentioned.

Introduction

During 1969 all nine bird stations located along the Finnish coasts (see HILDÉN 1968) were manned for at least some weeks during the migration seasons. Observations were, however, more or less intermittent at all stations except Lågskär, which was manned continuously in spring from 12 March to 4 June (except 21—22 May) and in autumn between 21 August and 31 October. Table 1 shows the monthly distribution of days of observation at each station. Unfortunately, almost all notes made at Säppi in 1969 were lost by accident; only a few observations of rare birds remain.

This article is a brief report of the main results of the work done at Finnish bird stations in 1969, and is presented in the same way as the two earlier reports of 1967 and 1968 (HILDÉN 1968, 1969). It is based on the station reports published in the first issue of 'Lintumies' 1970, with some supplementary information from the archives of the original observations. It must be emphasized, however, that the published reports are too concise and heterogeneous to permit any detailed review. Moreover, lack of uniform approach or detailed instructions for the different observatories reduce the scientific value of the work carried out at Finnish bird stations.

TABLE 1. Monthly distribution of days of observation at the Finnish bird stations in 1969.

	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	Total
Hailuoto	—	—	20	4	—	28	11	1	—	—	64
Tauvo	—	1	15	2	24	31	21	4	1	—	99
Valassaaret	—	7	31	30	31	28	9	2	2	—	140
Säppi	20	18	9	20	22	30	8	18	22	1	168
Isokari	—	3	22	20	4	14	4	9	2	1	79
Signilskär	—	8	11	—	—	—	16	4	4	—	43
Lågskär	20	30	29	4	—	11	30	31	—	—	155
Jurmo	—	11	27	11	6	20	16	12	19	5	127
Rönnskär	5	12	25	6	—	3	8	22	8	—	89
Total	45	90	189	97	87	165	123	103	58	7	964

Irregular migrants

All Tits occurred in greater numbers than in the two previous autumns. The eruption of Willow Tits *Parus montanus* reached quite exceptional proportions. The great majority of them were recorded at Tauvo, as a result of its northern position and favourable location on the mainland coast (cf. HILDÉN 1968, HELLE & MIKKOLA 1969). The migration started in late August, reached its peak in mid-September and declined gradually during October–November. On the peak day, 12 September, approximately 4000–5000 Willow Tits passed Tauvo in a SE direction between 0800 and 1400 hrs. Most flocks, the largest consisting of some 60–70 birds, migrated along the coast just above the tops of the bushes, and frequently dropped into them; but some were seen flying at great height. During the peak period, between 10 and 16 September, nearly 8000 migrating Willow Tits were counted and about 600 were banded at Tauvo. One of these birds, ringed on 9 September, was caught on 28 September near Pori, about 400 km SSW. This corresponds to an average speed of 21 km a day.

At more southern stations, Willow Tits were recorded in small numbers (15–20 on peak days) at Isokari and Rönnskär only, which are located close to the mainland coast or large wooded islands. Not a single bird was observed at Signilskär, Lågskär or Jurmo situated farther away across open sea (about 10, 20 and 30 km, respectively, from the mainland coast or large wooded islands). Thus the open sea effectively stops migrating Willow Tits even in years of large-scale irruptions, as already concluded by LINKOLA (1961). In this respect the species differs from the Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit and Long-tailed Tit, which regularly cross the Baltic during their irruptions.

Of the other Tits, Long-tailed Tits *Aegithalos caudatus* migrated in fairly large numbers, Great Tits *Parus major* and Blue Tits *P. caeruleus* in moderate, and Coal Tits *P. ater* in small numbers. Treecreepers *Certhia familiaris* were much more numerous than in 1968, though the numbers fell short of those for the big irruption year of 1967. The occurrence of these species in 1969, compared with the two previous years, is illustrated by the following tabulation showing the numbers ringed at bird stations (Hailuoto and Säppi excluded):

	1967	1968	1969
<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	5	9	306
<i>Parus major</i>	125	209	362
<i>P. caeruleus</i>	12	11	36
<i>P. ater</i>	6	13	27
<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	215	4	75

The Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* was a very scarce visitor at the bird stations in the autumn of 1969, in contrast to the two preceding autumns. The spring movement, on the other hand, was stronger than normal, probably due to the mass irruption the autumn before. It may be recalled that Great Spotted Woodpeckers also frequented bird stations in the springs of 1967 and 1968, following large-scale irruptions in the previous autumns. The intensity of spring movement thus seems to be determined in part by the strength of the preceding irruption. These spring movements probably involve birds which have halted in Scandinavia or the Baltic countries during the autumn irruption and then migrate back to their native regions in spring. The spring migration of 1969 took place conspicuously late: first vagrants appeared in mid-April, the peak was in May, and the last birds were seen as late as early June. The following data illustrates the occurrence of the species at three stations:

- Lågskär: about 50 recorded and 19 ringed during the whole spring (17 April–2 June); at least 12 seen on the peak day, 11 May.
- Jurmo: between 25 April and 8 June 1 to 8 almost daily; the ringing total 13 individuals.
- Isokari: in May 3 to 12 daily, the last two on 11 June; the ringing total 12 individuals.

Only a few Three-toed Woodpeckers *Picoides tridactylus* visited the bird stations in 1969, two of them in spring: at Isokari a ♀ on 24 May, at Rönnskär a ♂ on 25 May. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos minor* was recorded only at Lågskär (20–21 September).

The Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* occurred in very small numbers at the bird stations, as in 1968. During the autumn, 8 were ringed at Tauvo and 5 at Isokari, whereas only single individuals were observed at Lågskär, Jurmo and Rönnskär.

Crossbills *Loxia curvirostra* were seen in small numbers, mainly during the normal peak periods in May–June and October. Two-barred Crossbills *L. leucoptera* were recorded at Lågskär: 6 + 1 + 1 on 17–18 October. The occurrences of Redpolls *Carduelis flammea* were about normal. Owing to the extremely good berry crop of the rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Waxwings *Bombycilla garrulus* stayed longer than normal in the north and were seen therefore in very small numbers at bird stations. Large flocks comprising hundreds of birds did not arrive in South Finland until late December and January, by which time the bird stations were no longer manned. Pine

Grosbeaks *Pinicola enucleator* were not recorded at all.

The Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula* and the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* can also be included among the irregular migrants in Fennoscandia. It is true that, to some extent, they migrate each year, but the numbers seen show wide annual fluctuations. Usually the spring migration of the Bullfinch is weak and inconspicuous, as is usually the case with irregular migrants. During the springs of 1953 and 1954, for instance, P. Linkola observed a total of 44 and 49 Bullfinches at Signilskär and Lågsjär, respectively (v. HAARTMAN *et al.* 1968—). The movements in spring 1969, however, were exceptional. At Lågsjär about 300 Bullfinches were recorded and 77 ringed during the spring, the peak days being 10 April (26 ringed) and 26 April (16 ringed). From Jurmo, too, exceptional numbers of Bullfinches were reported. The autumn migration of the species likewise reached greater proportions than normal, but regrettably the late autumn observations were insufficient to permit a detailed review. At Rönnskär, 500—600 migrating Bullfinches were counted on 31 October, and appreciable migration continued during the first half of November.

House Sparrows occurred more frequently at the bird stations than ever before. Previously, at most some dozens are seen at each station during the autumn, but in 1969 much greater numbers were reported. At Isokari, at least 200 Sparrows were counted migrating southwards on the peak day, 11 October; the greatest flock consisted of no less than 90 birds. At Lågsjär, the autumn's total to the end of October was 115, 60 of these in one flock on 11 October. At Rönnskär, about 125 House Sparrows were recorded in spite of the fragmentary observation. The wide annual fluctuations of migrating Sparrows are illustrated by the following tabulation, showing the autumn's totals at Signilskär and Lågsjär during autumns of complete observation:

Signilskär		Lågsjär	
1952	2	1965	38
1954	54	1967	65 ¹
1956	0	1968	35
1957	56	1969	115 ²
1959	88		
1961	5		¹ 6 Oct.—11 Nov.
1967	12		² up to 31 October
1968	38		

During spring migration, from late March to late May, House Sparrows are always rare visitors at bird stations. Thus, in the spring of 1969, only 9 were recorded at Lågsjär, 3 at Jurmo, and 1 at Isokari and Valassaaret.

Special features

Among special features reported from bird stations, two phenomena deserve to be mentioned.

1. Day migration of typical night migrants was observed on several occasions at Lågsjär in the first half of May, most conspicuously on 7th. In the morning of this day the island was almost devoid of night migrants and only few Robins were trapped. But in the course of the day, great numbers of night migrants descended on the island, as illustrated by the day's ringing totals: e.g. *Erithacus rubecula* 224, *Ficedula hypoleuca* 34, *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* 23, *Jynx torquilla* 19 (normally a very scarce visitor at bird stations), *Phylloscopus trochilus* 11, *Sylvia curruca* 8, *S. communis* 7 and *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* 6. Many of the birds were in very poor condition. Two days later, after a heavy thunderstorm and pouring rain, great numbers of passerine migrants were found dead. Even close to the wall of the station building, no less than 24 dead birds of 9 species were collected.

2. The Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* is mainly a night migrant and usually a scarce visitor at bird stations, with at most a few dozens recorded on peak days. An exceptionally strong day migration was observed at Jurmo in late August: 107 birds migrating S—SW were counted on 22nd, about 500 on 26th (80 in a single flock!) and about 400 on 30th.

Rarities

Of the rarities recorded at the bird stations in 1969, only the most remarkable are included in the following list, with reference to their former occurrence in Finland. It is to be noted that eastern rarities were much less frequent than in 1967 and 1968; the Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, for instance, was not recorded at all.

Gavia adamsii. On 25 May one migrating bird was recorded at Valassaaret. Several observations during recent years in the outer archipelago off the Finnish coast indicate that the species regularly migrates through the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia, the main passage routes of arctic birds.

Phalacrocorax aristotelis. On 7 May one juvenile passed Isokari together with a Cormorant. Fourth Finnish record.

Aythya nyroca. On 29 August two birds in a flock of Tufted Ducks and Scaups at Valassaaret. Fifth record in Finland.

Anser caerulescens and *Branta canadensis*. On 25 April two Canada Geese and one Snow Goose were resting at Lågsjär. The birds were

rather tame and the Snow Goose was ringed, which indicates that they had escaped from captivity.

Circus macrourus. On 19 April a male visited Jurmo. The species is an irregular vagrant in Finland and has been recorded more than 30 times, mainly in late April and May.

Falco rusticolus. On 14 March one bird was observed at Lågskär. The species is very rare in Finland outside its breeding range.

F. vespertinus. On 28 May a migrating juvenile passed Jurmo.

Coturnix coturnix. Heard at Hailuoto on 3—4 July, and at Valassaaret on 29 August. At present the species is a very rare visitor to Finland, perhaps not occurring even annually.

Phalaropus fulicarius. One bird in a flock of Dunlin on 22 May at Jurmo. Of the 9 previous records in Finland only 2 birds were seen during the spring migration, both in June.

Sterna sandvicensis. Observed at Lågskär on 28 August. Fourth observation in Finland.

Syrnhaptes paradoxus. Very surprisingly the species was observed in 1969 in Finland for the first time since the large irruption in 1888. Between 22 May and 4 June, at first two and later three birds stayed at Jurmo. At least two additional observations of the Pallas's Sandgrouse were reported from Fennoscandia in 1969: one bird near Kokkola on the west coast of Finland on 31 May (E. Söderström), another at Amarnäs in Swedish Lapland on 23—25 June (LAVSUND & ROSQVIST 1969). These observations, together with several made in the Netherlands and England (FERGUSON-LEES & SHARROCK 1969), indicate a minor irruption westwards of the species into Europe after an interval of 50 years.

Streptopelia turtur. Seven records, including five at Lågskär (3 in May, 2 in September) and two at Jurmo (10 May, 2 June). The 1960's have produced more records for this species (about 60) than all previous decades together (46). This is without doubt due mainly to the recent increase in bird-watching activity, especially the foundation of several new bird stations (cf. HILDÉN 1968, ERIKSSON 1970). No less than about 45 % of all records made in 1960's come from the bird stations.

Corvus corone corone. One individual stayed at Jurmo between 11 and 23 May and was compared in detail with Hooded Crows, Rooks and Jackdaws. The former records of this race in Finland are all considered more or less uncertain.

Saxicola torquata. Three observations of juvenile birds: at Lågskär a ♀ on 6—7 and a ♂ on 8 October, at Isokari a ♂ on 12 October. An additional juvenile was recorded near Helsinki on 9 October. The total of Finnish observations is now ten, most of them made in October.

Phoenicurus ochrurus. Five observations at Säppi, Lågskär, Jurmo and Rönnskär between 17 April and 18 May.

Sylvia nisoria. Two further late summer records, far outside the breeding range of the species: one juvenile was caught at Valassaaret on 21, another at Tauvo on 22 August (cf. HILDÉN 1969).

Phylloscopus inornatus. Only 3 observations compared with 11 in 1968: Tauvo on 25 September, Jurmo on 20 October, Säppi mid-November.

Pb. proregulus. Two individuals were caught at Isokari on 9 October.

*Pb. fuscatu*s. On 2 November after a snow storm, one individual was caught at Säppi. Second Finnish record.

Anthus campestris. During 27—31 August, 3 to 7 birds were seen daily at Lågskär and 1 to 3 at Jurmo, apparently driven north by strong southerly winds. In addition, one individual was observed at Lågskär on 15 and 16 May. There are only 15 former records of this species in Finland; additionally, it has been found nesting near Turku in 1966—68.

Motacilla citreola. Two observations: Isokari on 21 September, Jurmo on 7—8 October. A third bird was seen near Helsinki on 8 November. These records bring the total of Finnish observations to seven, all concerning juvenile birds in September—November.

Lanius minor. Observed at Säppi on 24 April. There are now about 20 Finnish records of this species, among which this is the earliest date in the year.

L. senator. Seen at Isokari on 15 May. This was the sixth Finnish record.

Coccothraustes coccothraustes. The Hawfinch, a very rare but apparently annual breeding bird in South Finland, is at present a regular visitor at bird stations. Exceptionally many were reported in 1969: 7 from Lågskär, at least 5 from Jurmo and 4 from Rönnskär.

Emberiza rustica. Occurred far less frequently than in 1968: from the southern stations only ten birds were reported during the autumn, compared with several dozens in 1968.

E. pusilla. Single birds were recorded at Tauvo, Isokari and Jurmo during the autumn.

Ringling

A total of 34,143 birds were ringed at the Finnish bird stations in 1969, about as many as in 1968. This number does not include the totals from Säppi due to the loss of the ringling data, but it is known that approximately 600 birds were ringed at this station. Table 2 shows the 15 most numerous species on the ringling list and the totals for each station.

Some interesting recoveries of birds ringed in 1969 at the Finnish bird stations deserve

TABLE 2. Numbers ringed of the 15 most numerous species and ringing totals for the Finnish bird stations in 1969.

	Ha	Ta	Va	Is	Si	Lä	Ju	Rö	Total
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	710	3550	132	204	30	458	304	61	5449
<i>Erethacus rubecula</i>	71	107	1	126	196	1895	365	243	3004
<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	95	551	14	49	170	1792	83	105	2859
<i>F. montifringilla</i>	201	999	35	22	85	933	18	21	2314
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	359	324	15	212	99	608	55	56	1728
<i>Regulus regulus</i>	4	5	6	269	87	570	547	49	1537
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	77	232	34	111	56	374	363	87	1334
<i>Carduelis flammæa</i>	130	1093	—	3	8	11	—	—	1245
<i>Sylvia borin</i>	3	180	28	92	5	317	416	12	1053
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	54	304	5	54	51	361	111	19	959
<i>Parus montanus</i>	38	810	—	9	—	—	—	33	890
<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	40	105	14	141	41	232	147	24	744
<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	138	167	2	30	8	168	215	14	742
<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	69	58	—	323	80	120	11	24	685
<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	25	511	25	13	40	30	1	2	647
Total	2955	11084	984	2450	1214	10837	3387	1232	34143

mention. An adult Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, ringed at Tauvo on 21 August, was controlled two days later at Varberg in Sweden, a distance of 1060 km. The first two recoveries of Finnish Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* were reported from Malta; the first was ringed at Isokari on 16 May and caught on 29 September, the second one was ringed at Jurmo on 30 August and captured on 9 October. A Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, ringed at Isokari on 6 September, was reported from Poland on 13 October. (There are five previous recoveries of Finnish Goldcrests, all ringed at bird stations: from the USSR (Kaliningrad), Poland, Italy and two from Belgium.) A Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, ringed at Lägskär on 16 September, was caught in Ghana on 12 January 1970. Two Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*, ringed at Hailuoto on 28 and 30 August respectively, were both killed in Egypt on 13 October, which indicates an average speed of about 80 km a day. A third individual, ringed at Tauvo on 30 August, was recovered in Bulgaria in December. Three additional recoveries, of Willow Warblers ringed in 1968 at Isokari and Tauvo, may also be mentioned: one was reported from the Congo in April 1970 (remains found), the other two were found in Saudi Arabia in the spring of 1971.

Selostus: Toiminta Suomen lintuasemilla 1969.

Vuonna 1969 kaikki maamme 9 lintuasemaa olivat toiminnassa, mutta vain Lägskärillä havainnointi oli aukotonta koko kevään ja pää-

osan syksyä (havaintopäivien kuukausittainen jakautuma taulukossa 1). Kirjoituksessa tarkastellaan eräitä toiminnan päätuloksia.

Vaelluslintujen esiintymisestä kiintoisin oli hömötiaisen suurinvaasio, joka todettiin voimakkaimpana Tauvossa. Huippupäivänä 12.9. täällä laskettiin 4000—5000 vaeltajaa. Yli 800 rengastetusta linnusta yksi tavattiin Porissa 19 päivää myöhemmin. Muilla asemilla hömötiaisia havaittiin pikkuparvina vain Isokarissa ja Rönnskärillä, jotka sijaitsevat lähimpänä maa- tai isoja metsäsaaria. Muiden taitesten ja puukiipijän esiintymistä valaisee taulukko rengastusten yhteismääristä lintuasemilla 1967—69 (s. 126). Käpytikän syysvaellus oli olematonta, mutta keväällä laji liikehti tavallista lukuisampana, mikä ilmeisesti johtui edellisen syksyn suurinvaasiosta. Punatulkkuja vaelsi poikkeuksellisen runsaasti sekä keväällä että syksyllä, varpusia tavattiin lintuasemilla enemmän kuin koskaan aikaisemmin (taulukossa s. 127 yhteismäärät Signilskärillä ja Lägskärillä täyden havainnoinnin syksyinä).

Erikoisista ilmiöistä mainitaan ensimmäinen arokanahavainto maastamme sitten vuoden 1888 vaelluksen, hyönteissyöjiä poikkeuksellisen kiihkeä päivämuutto Lägskärillä 7.5., jolloin satoja lintuja ”putosi” saareen päivän kuluessa, ja peltosirkkujen joukkomuutto Jurmossa elokuun lopussa (huippupäivänä 26.8. n. 500).

Vuoden aikana rengastettiin lintuasemilla n. 34750 lintua. Eri asemien tulokset sekä 15 eniten rengastetun lajin määrät on esitetty taulukossa 2 (Säpin tulokset puuttuvat). Eräitä näiden rengastusten tuottamia merkittävimpiä löytöjä mainitaan, mm. ensimmäiset löydöt Suomessa rengastetuista käistä (2 Maltalta).

References

- ERIKSSON, K. 1970. Lintuharrastuksen kehitys ja havaintojen määrä Suomessa. (Summary: Development of ornithological activity and its effects on the number of records) *Ornis Fenn.* 47:20—29.
- FERGUSON-LEES, I. J. & J. T. R. SHARROCK 1969. Recent reports. *Brit. Birds* 62:452—456.
- HAARTMAN, L. VON, O. HILDÉN, P. LINKOLA, P. SUOMALAINEN & R. TENOVUO 1968—. Pohjolan linnut värikuvin. II. — Otava, Helsinki.
- HELLE, T. & H. MIKKOLA 1969. Hömötiäisen (*Parus montanus*) vaelluksista Keski-Suomessa 1965—68. (Summary: On invasions of the Willow Tit (*Parus montanus*) in 1965—1968 in central Finland.) *Ornis Fenn.* 46:136—139.
- HILDÉN, O. 1968. The bird stations of Finland and their activities in 1967. *Ibid.* 45: 58—65.
- 1969. Activities of Finnish bird stations in 1968. *Ibid.* 46:179—187.
- LAVSUND, S. & G. ROSQVIST 1969. Stäpphöna *Syrhaptes paradoxus* i Lycksele lappmark 1969. (Summary: Pallas's sandgrouse *Syrhaptes paradoxus* in Swedish lapland.) *Vår Fågelvärld* 28:257—258.
- LINKOLA, P. 1961. Zur Kenntnis der Wanderungen finnischer Meisenvögel. *Ornis Fenn.* 38:127—145.

Received November 1971.