



## REPORT

THIS is the third Trust Report in succession to appear belatedly. Unlike its recent predecessors it covers a period of two years instead of one. Only in this way does it seem possible to dispose of the increasing lag between events and their recording and to permit the future production of Annual Reports that are both annual and up-to-date.

On 20 April 1956 the Trust was honoured by a visit from the Queen, our Patron. Her Majesty spent nearly an hour and a half of a glorious spring morning among the ducks and took a number of photographs with her own camera, including shots of her Trumpeter Swans.

The period May 1954 to August 1956 dealt with in this Annual Report has seen continued expansion along each of the three main lines of the Trust's activity. The importance of the Trust's research programme has received increasing outside recognition as the results of our earlier work have become known. The Nature Conservancy has been enabled to make financial contributions on a larger scale than hitherto and other, non-governmental, bodies have also offered valuable assistance, although most of our scientific work continues to be paid for by the Trust itself. In the educational field the value of the Trust's Collection has been recognised by a spectacular increase in the number of Schools and organised parties visiting Slimbridge. This number rose from 374 in 1953 to 464 in 1954 and 719 in 1955. The recreational value of the Collection and the wild birds on the estuary has also been reflected in a great increase in the number of visitors, to about 40,000 in 1954, more than 90,000 in 1955, and over 120,000 in 1956.

The numbers of wild geese seen at Slimbridge in 1954-56 show no such striking increases, but the ringing of geese and ducks, there and elsewhere, has expanded considerably. In the season 1955-56 1144 geese and 5882 ducks were newly ringed by the Trust, or by ringers collaborating with us.

The population study of the Pink-footed Goose, discussed at some length in the Seventh Report, continues to be the main Trust investigation. This Report includes brief accounts of the results of comparatively small-scale ringing of Greylags (pp. 51-54) and White-fronted Geese (pp. 80-84). These are perhaps most valuable for the indications they give of the general resemblances between the population dynamics of all three species, despite the differences in their breeding places and migration routes and the extent to which they are pursued by man, in this country and abroad.

Graham Cooch's study of the Blue and Lesser Snow Geese of North America provides a very important parallel to our Pinkfoot inquiry and we are very pleased to be able to publish his account of the technique of catching these geese during the flightless period of the moult (pp. 58-67).

We are glad, too, to have obtained permission to reprint the report by F. C. Bellrose and T. G. Scott on the present state of wildfowl conservation in North America (pp. 68-71). The problems of conservation in Europe are essentially similar, although the social, historical and legal backgrounds to the practice of conservation in the two continents are so different, and it is most desirable that we should learn all we can from American experience. The short paper on the problems of restocking with hand-reared ducks (pp. 91-95) is an attempt to apply such experience.

It is hoped that later Reports will contain surveys of wildfowl conservation in other countries. The assessment of the potentialities of north-west Russia as a home for breeding ducks (pp. 86-91) is a step in that direction.

This is not a scientific journal, although it endeavours to maintain scientific standards of accuracy and impartiality. Accordingly, we do not need to remain always wholly serious and can find room for the informal and even the downright lighthearted. It would be pleasant to think that the researches of Messrs. Brownlow and Maxwell (pp. 96-98) on the language of rocket-netting will add to the vocabulary of a larger audience.

A substantial part of this Report is devoted to the list of Trust Members. The merit of such lists has been questioned, especially by those Members accidentally omitted from, or incorrectly cited in, them, but the length of this one surely constitutes important evidence of the strength of interest in wildfowl, and its low rate of turnover shows that such interest is not ephemeral.

In the *Seventh Annual Report*, p. 214, the occurrence of a wild drake Ringed-necked Duck on the Rushy Pen pond in March 1955, was briefly reported. Since this was the first recent European occurrence of this species it seems proper to repeat the note of its appearance in the appropriate volume of the Report. The bird, first seen by Mr P. Scott on 12 March 1955, remained for only three days.

