

*Autumn migration, resting behaviour, biometry and moult of small birds in Central Europe* by P. Berthold, G. Fliege, G. Heine, U. Querner, and R. Schlenker 1991. Vogelwarter 36, Suppl. 221 pp.

In Europe during the 1960s it became apparent that populations of many small birds were decreasing and so needed investigation. The Mettnau-Reit-Illmitz programme was a long-term bird trapping project, in which 37 species of small birds were trapped at three central European ringing (banding) stations during autumn (June to November) over the 10 years from 1974 to 1983. This supplement is a preliminary presentation of the migration data from the programme. More detailed analyses and interpretation about specific aspects of the study will appear in separate publications, but not for several years, and so this publication also serves to make the basic information available sooner.

To reach a wider audience, the results are presented in English and German, and the authors are commended for this action.

The contents are arranged like a large scientific paper, with sections covering aims, methods, data analysis and results. The last are ordered species by species. For each species, the authors provide a summary of the status, moult, body mass and wing length, trapping pattern and migratory behaviour, plus three full pages of graphs (one page for each of the three trapping stations). The graphs show the trapping pattern, body mass, wing feather length, retraps, minimum stop-over period, body moult and wing moult for the autumn period; as such, they provide the key information gained from the study.

From a NZ perspective, perhaps the most important sections in this publication are those which deal with the organisation of the project, and the methods used. About 400 people (mainly volunteers) took part in the project over the 10 years and so training ensured that standardised methods were used throughout the project. For example, the normal measure for wing length was replaced by measuring the feather length of the third primary from the outside, which reduced the rate of mistakes by about two-thirds. This method is now recommended in all countries under the EURING convention.

And what of the results? They indicate just what depth of information can be obtained by undertaking a long-term project with well-conceived aims and a dedicated enthusiastic team.

Paul Sagar