

DISCUSSION: The lack of evidence of infection at post-mortem together with the failure to isolate any likely disease-producing agent in an extensive series of cultures makes it unlikely that an epizootic was responsible for this die-off. The nematode infestation of the stomachs can hardly be regarded as sufficient alone to have caused these deaths and, further, it is not known whether the birds dying had a heavier infestation than the survivors and it is thought that the causation was probably complex.

The amount of feed for birds off the coast of Otago and Southland has been reported to have been very poor during the first half of 1957 and a very high mortality among juvenile mutton birds which has been reported by the mutton-birders has been attributed to this cause. It is probable that the shags were poorly fed when the severe gales of May 17-20 occurred and that during that time they were unable to feed. As a result of this period certain of the birds, possibly those carrying a heavy parasite load, may have been so weakened that they were unable to fish in the open sea and, therefore, died from starvation.

It is possible that the Otago peninsular was spared a similar die-off because the weakened birds were able to fish the sheltered waters of the harbour until they had recovered sufficient strength to return to their usual feeding grounds.

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LETTER

Dear Sir,

I see the name "Dunnock" used for *Prunella modularis* in a recent number of your journal. I hope you will allow me to call your attention to the fact that this name for the Hedge Sparrow is not generally accepted by British Ornithologists. It does not appear, for example, in the Check List published in 1952. The name "Dunnock" is a local folk-name used in a very restricted area of England. The oldest accepted name, used by Chaucer, is "Haysuck" but Hedge Sparrow was used by Shakespeare and by all literary and scientific writers until the Editors of British Birds arbitrarily adopted "Dunnock" as a preferred alternative name a few years ago.

Yours sincerely,

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