

A Bibliography of the Natural History Publications by the Rev. J.M. McWilliam

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This bibliography of the natural history writings of the Rev. J.M. McWilliam contains all his known publications, but two rather unusual features require comment: the surprisingly late date of his first personal publication, and the obviously truncated format of his major work, the *Birds of the Firth of Clyde*.

McWilliam's first separate natural history note was apparently not published until 1915, when he was age 31, a surprisingly advanced age to commence publication for someone who was so intensely interested in natural history, particularly birds, from his earliest boyhood. I have long wondered whether this late date was correct, but despite intensive searches over many years I have been quite unable to trace any earlier reference.

Evidence of Jack McWilliam's early and continued interest in natural history comes not just from his own personal reminiscences but from the writings of others. For example, in 1907 McWilliam's important discovery of the Tree Sparrow nesting in County Donegal was reported in the *Irish Naturalist* not by McWilliam himself but by Robert Patterson, so that although clearly active in natural history research, at that period in his life for some reason McWilliam was not personally publishing the results of his investigations. This remains unexplained.

As Mr. Roger Ratcliffe has indicated in his splendidly detailed biography of McWilliam, which precedes this bibliography in the *Transactions* (25, 68-77), McWilliam spent almost his entire early life in Ireland, so to avoid any possible later doubts or queries, it is important to state that, in the hope of discovering any additional publications by McWilliam, over the years I have repeatedly searched the *Irish Naturalist*, *Irish Naturalists' Journal*, the publications of the Belfast and Dublin societies, and all other local Irish natural history organisations, but entirely without success. Most surprisingly, it does genuinely appear that McWilliam only commenced serious personal natural history publication in 1915, after he came to live on the Island of Bute. To my eternal regret, although I had numerous opportunities, I never once asked him about this, nor did I do the obvious thing, to ask him to write out a list of his publications, so I do not know the reason for this late start.

The second point concerns McWilliam's book on the *Birds of the Firth of Clyde* (1936), undoubtedly his most significant publication but markedly different from his usual style of writing, a fact which has perplexed many later ornithologists. The original manuscript, however, which was well over twice the length of the final book, had to be severely truncated for reasons which McWilliam eventually told me in confidence - his inability, on his modest stipend as a Minister of the Church of Scotland, to subsidise the cost of the book's publication. Most natural history books of that period were written by authors who also possessed considerable private means, so that their books were heavily subsidised to enable them to be made available to the general public at an affordable price, but since McWilliam could not do this, his publisher, Harry F. Witherby, in an attempt to produce a non-subsidised affordable volume, ultimately drastically reduced McWilliam's carefully crafted Clyde text to a bare catalogue of essentials, a precise enough account in its own way, but always a matter of the deepest lasting regret to its author.

Since over thirty years have now passed since Jack McWilliam's death, in my view it is only fair to his memory and reputation to disclose these facts, so the detailed background to the publication of the *Birds of the Firth of Clyde* has been set out in some detail in Roger Ratcliffe's accompanying biography. In his later years McWilliam passed on to me virtually all his Clyde natural history papers, including his working manuscript of the *Birds of the Island of Bute*, but what became of the original *Birds of the Firth of Clyde* manuscript I do not know. Possibly it never came back from H.F. Witherby, whose premises were bombed during the last war, with destruction of a great many

documents. Even at this late date, however, if it should ever surface, funds would undoubtedly be made available for publication in its original form.

Books

McWilliam, J.M. (1927). *The Birds of the Island of Bute*. Pages 1-128. London: H.F. & G. Witherby.

The title of this book was originally *The Birds of Bute*, but following a suggestion by Harry Witherby the title was changed to *The Birds of the Island of Bute*. By this time, however, the dust-wrappers had been printed as *The Birds of Bute*, and so had to be reprinted. Out of interest, McWilliam kept a few copies of the original *The Birds of Bute* dust-wrappers, which he later passed on to Dr. J.A. Gibson. As far as is known, no copies of *The Birds of Bute* dust-wrappers were intentionally issued to the public, although it is just possible that some may have been distributed in error.

McWilliam, J.M. (1936). *The Birds of the Firth of Clyde*. Pages 1-164. London: H.F. & G. Witherby.

Gibson, J.A. and McWilliam, J.M. (1959). *A Supplement to 'The Birds of the Firth of Clyde'*. Pages 1-96. Glasgow: Duncan & Co.

Originally published as *Glasgow Bird Bulletin*, Volume 8: 1-96 (complete), 1959.

Manuscripts

McWilliam, J.M. (c.1932). *Notes on the Mammals of the Island of Bute*. Glasgow: Unpublished manuscript.

Later presented to Dr. J.A. Gibson, and incorporated into the pioneer paper on the Mammals of the Island of Bute; see *Buteshire Transactions*, 18: 5-20 (page 7).

Papers, Notes, &c

McWilliam, J.M. (1907). Nesting of the Tree-Sparrow in County Donegal (quoted in an account by R. Patterson). *Irish Naturalist*, 16: 239-240.

McWilliam, J.M. (1915). Notes on the Tree-Sparrow in Donegal. *Zoologist*, 1915: 297-302.

Apparently the first separate natural history item published by J.M.M.

McWilliam, J.M. (1916). Notes on the birds of Linlithgow Loch. *Zoologist*, 1916: 100-107.

McWilliam, J.M. (1916). Bartram's Sandpiper in Ireland. *Zoologist*, 1916: 194-195.

McWilliam, J.M. (1916). Notes on some Irish birds. *Zoologist*, 1916: 348-351.

McWilliam, J.M. (1916). Gannet's method of diving. *Zoologist*, 1916: 353.

McWilliam, J.M. (1916). Rats and eggs. *Zoologist*, 1916: 395.

McWilliam, J.M. (1917). The Brent Goose in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1917: 99-100.

McWilliam, J.M. (1918). Notes on some of the birds of Bute, including records of their passage to the mainland. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1918: 25-29.

McWilliam, J.M. (1919). The Yellow Wagtail in the Seine-Inférieure. *British Birds*, 13: 76-77.

McWilliam, J.M. (1923). The open winter and early nesting - young Starlings in December [on Pladda]. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1923: 46.

McWilliam, J.M. (1923). Notes on some of the birds of Buteshire and Ayrshire. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1923: 47-53.

- McWilliam, J.M. (1924). The roosting habits of the Rooks of Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1924: 5-7.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1924). Great Black-backed Gull breeding in Buteshire. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1924: 126.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1924). Great Black-backed Gull nesting in Clyde area. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1924: 126.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1924). Nesting of the Wigeon on Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1924: 162.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1924). Breeding of Eider in the Clyde area. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1924: 165.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1925). Increase of Eider Ducks in Firth of Clyde. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1925: 95-96.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1925). Slow-Worm on Ailsa Craig. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1925: 159.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1926). The Continental Song-Thrush (*Turdus philomelus philomelus*) in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1926: 60.
- Wild, O.H. and McWilliam, J.M. (1926). Field notes on the Twite and the Linnet. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1926: 159-160.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1926). Colour of bill of Twite. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1926: 188.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1927). Some abnormal eggs of wild birds. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1927: 108-110.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1927). Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1927: 189.
- McWilliam, J.M. (unsigned). (1928). In memoriam - John Paterson. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1928: 129-130.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1929). The Corncrake in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1929: 38.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1929). Breeding of the Water-Rail in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1929: 63.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1929). The Grasshopper-Warbler in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1929: 63.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1929). Diving-powers of the Herring-Gull. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1929: 63.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1929). Some considerations on bird fluctuation. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1929: 81-83.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1930). The problem of the Ringed Guillemot. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1930: 155-158.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1931). On the breeding of the Black-throated and Red-throated Divers in south Argyllshire. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1931: 161-164.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1932). Arctic Tern nesting in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1932: 145.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1932). Census of Black-headed Gulls nesting in Bute. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1932: 150.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1934). Letter re "Territory Reviewed". *British Birds*, 27: 307.
- McWilliam, J.M. and Duncan, A.B. (1934). Colour of bill of Hebridean Twite in nesting-season. *British Birds*, 28: 170.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1934). The Water Shrew (*Neomys fodiens*) on Pladda Island. *Scottish Naturalist*, 1934: 99-100.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1935). Roost of Twites in Outer Hebrides. *British Birds*, 29: 78.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1936). Colour of Lesser Black-backed Gull affected by angle of light. *British Birds*, 30: 56.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1937). The Irish Dipper in Argyllshire. *British Birds*, 31: 236.
- White, C.M.N. and McWilliam, J.M. (1938). Irish Dipper in Bute. *British Birds*, 32: 17-18.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1938). The birds of Inchmarnock, a Clyde island. *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society*, 12: 5-21.
- Reprinted 1938, and issued to members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club as a Club publication.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1939). Breeding of the Gannet on the Scar Rocks, Wigtownshire. *British Birds*, 33: 105-107, 142.
- McWilliam, J.M. (1941). On the relation of the Short-eared Owl to the Common Vole. *British Birds*, 34: 203-204.

- McWilliam, J.M.** (1942). The Scar Rocks gannetry, 1942. *British Birds*, **36**: 62-64.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1945). The birds of the Scar Rocks: the Wigtownshire gannetry. *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society*, **13**: 63-83.
- This paper was originally read to the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society on 26th March 1943 (see *Dumfriesshire Transactions*, **23** (3rd series): 65), and later to the Buteshire Natural History Society on 14th March 1944, but was later published, by arrangement with the Buteshire Natural History Society, in the *Buteshire Transactions*. Later that same year (1945) it was reprinted and issued to members of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club as a Club publication.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1946). Increase of Siskins in Dumfriesshire. *British Birds*, **39**: 53.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1946). Four days on St. Kilda. [Abstract]. *Transactions and Proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, **23** (3rd series): 136.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1947). Mochrum Cormorants and other west coast sea birds. [Abstract]. *Transactions and Proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, **24** (3rd series): 67.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1948). Bird territory as a "fixed address". *Scottish Naturalist*, **1948**: 8-10.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1950). What is a sub-species? *Bird Notes*, **24**: 183-188.
- Gibson, J.A. and McWilliam, J.M.** (1952). Notes on the birds of the Sgat Islands, Loch Fyne. *Glasgow and West of Scotland Bird Bulletin*, **1**: 2-3.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (unsigned). (1952). *The Birds of the Firth of Clyde* - a proposed revision. *Glasgow and West of Scotland Bird Bulletin*, **1**: 18.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1952). The birds of Sanda Island: note. *Scottish Naturalist*, **1952**: 60.
- Gibson, J.A. and McWilliam, J.M.** (1953). Notes on the birds of the Burnt Islands, Kyles of Bute. *Glasgow and West of Scotland Bird Bulletin*, **2**: 18-19.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1958). Comment on possible nesting of the Long-tailed Duck in Kintyre. *Glasgow Bird Bulletin*, **7**: 65-66.
- Gibson, J.A. and McWilliam, J.M.** (1958). A list of Clyde seabird colonies. *Glasgow Bird Bulletin*, **7**: 87-88.
- McWilliam, J.M. and Congreve, W.M.** (1958). Lesser Whitethroat nesting in the Clyde area. *Glasgow Bird Bulletin*, **7**: 88-91.
- Gibson, J.A. and McWilliam, J.M.** (1958). Some Clyde bird 'records'. *Glasgow Bird Bulletin*, **7**: 169-177.
- McWilliam, J.M.** (1959). Preface to *A Supplement to 'The Birds of the Firth of Clyde'*, pages 5-6. Glasgow: Duncan & Co.
- ".....This is the last thing I shall write on Clyde birds" (J.M.M.).

In addition, particularly in his later years, J.M.M. wrote many items on Family History and Genealogy, Antiquities, Churchyards, Parish Registers, &c. These were either circulated privately or were published in the Dumfriesshire Society's *Transactions*.