

Ayrshire Rookeries

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For some time I have been curious about the number and size of Ayrshire rookeries. Accordingly, during the last week of March and at week-ends in April, 1956, I made a quick survey of the county.

Owing to limited time and the large areas to be covered my one-man census could be only approximate. Some rookeries were inaccessible, either due to the military or to barbed wire, and I had not the time to obtain permission. This entailed some counts from a distance by binoculars. It should be realised also that old nests are sure to be included, that some nests (and even rookeries) have likely been missed, that some nests may have been inadvertently counted twice, and that some nests were not yet built. Despite these limitations, however, I feel that these notes may be of value for future reference.

With such a large number of nests it was too arduous a task to note the individual trees in use, but I place the Scots pine as the most popular, more being used than all the other trees combined.

Rather than number each rookery in the figure, I have ruled off sections, marked with Roman numerals, and have given a four-figure reference for each rookery. Thus, in conjunction with the relevant one-inch Ordnance Survey map, it should be possible to locate any rookery.

As anticipated, the rookeries were situated near arable and pasture land. The only ones at altitudes of above 600 feet were at Raithburn Farm near Fenwick (600+ ft.); Kaimes, Muirkirk (700 ft.); Duncanziemore Farm (700 ft.), and Kyle Farm (850 ft.), both near Cumnock. The last-mentioned has existed for only a few years and is surrounded by more moorland than is customary.

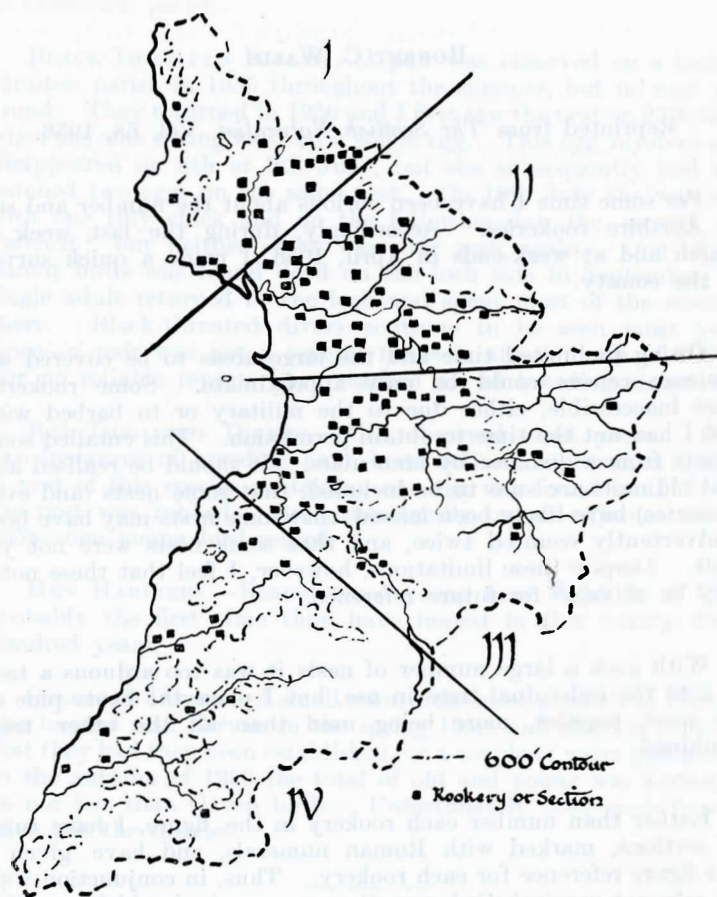


FIG. 1.—Distribution of rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) colonies in Ayrshire.

DENSITY

The total number of nests is 25,851. In some it is difficult to judge where one rookery ends and another begins. The average size of each rookery is 205 nests, if we assume that there are 126 rookeries. Assuming two adult rooks per nest and the total area of Ayrshire to be 724,523 acres (*Third Statistical Account of Scotland*), this gives nearly 46 adult rooks per square mile.

The area of crops, hay and pasture grass was 288,939 acres in 1948 and this gives, what seems to me to be more practical, a density of 114 adult rooks per square mile of this farm land.

The Handbook of British Birds gives the average for the country as 16 nests per square mile as against my 23 nests per square mile. This is probably accounted for by the fact that Ayrshire is above average as an agricultural county.

Sect.	Details.	Map Ref.	No. of Nests.	Sect.	Details.	Map Ref.	No. of Nests.
I.	Largs...	2059	138	II.	Cunninghamhead		
	Fairlie ...	2155	86		House ...	3742	634
	West Kilbride and Seamill...	2148	351		Annick Lodge ...	3642	358
	Ardrossan (South Beach)	2442	54		Montgreenan Station ...	3443	36
	Saltcoats ...	2642	27		Kennox ...	3845	504
	Stevenston ...	2742	24		Stewarton—Lainshaw ...	4145	133
	Smithstone House (2 sections) ...	2944	63		Lochridge ...	4144	79
	Monkcastle ...	2947	263		Peacock Bank ...	4244	49
	Blair House ...	3048	451		Dunlop ...	4149	54
	Dalry (2 sections) ...	2949	118		Money Acres ...	4350	10
	Dalry (Highfield House and Hillend) ...	2950	286		Raithburn ...	4846	94
	Kilbirnie (Moorpark) ...	3155	242		Oldhall ...	4444	105
	Spiers School ...	3553	120		Fenwick (2 sections) ...	4643	104
	Trearne House ...	3753	133		Hillhouse Lodge ...	4741	145
	Gillies Hill (2 sections) ...	3853	114		Tour ...	4140	498
	Blaelochhead ...	3953	43		Thorntoun ...	3838	249
	Caldwell House (4 sections) ...	4153	858		Bankhead ...	3738	7
	Barrmill ...	3651	81		Annanhill ...	4138	111
	Maulside ...	3352	504		Kilmarnock (4 sections) ...	4237	52
	Highfield ...	3150	50		Hurlford (3 sections) ...	4536	30
II.	Eglinton Estate (by gate and behind hospital)	3141	358		Holmes (2 sections) ...	4736	31
	Irvine ...	3139	7		Loudoun Castle ...	5138	552
	Stane Castle ...	3440	69		Newmilns ...	5437	14
	Bourtrees Hill ...	3439	225		Lanfine ...	5637	283
	Dreghorn ...	3538	4		Wood ...	4835	40
	Perceaton ...	3540	134		Treesbank ...	4134	135
					Newfield (2 sections) ...	3835	196
					Drybridge ...	3636	18
					Townend ...	3831	567

<i>Sect.</i>	<i>Details.</i>	<i>Map Ref.</i>	<i>No. of Nests.</i>	<i>Sect.</i>	<i>Details.</i>	<i>Map Ref.</i>	<i>No. of Nests.</i>
	Coodham			III. Glengall			
	(3 sections) ...	4033	594		(2 sections) ...	3518	557
	Craigie				Martnaham House	3917	554
	(2 sections) ...	4232	144		Carbieston Byres	3920	323
	Adamhill ...	4330	155		Raithhill ...	4222	119
	Dollars				Stair ...	4424	813
	(3 sections) ...	4633	698		New Coylton ...	4219	661
	Carnell ...	4632	197		Drongan Pottery	4419	39
	Bruntwood ...	5032	46		Barturk ...	4922	119
	Righead ...	4932	76		Auchinleck House	5023	72
	Milrig ...	5034	179		Ochiltree		
	Sornhill				(2 sections) ...	5021	52
	(2 sections) ...	5134	262		Dumfries House	5420	423
	Auchencloich ...	5332	16		Lugar ...	5921	71
					Duncanziemore	6121	17
III. Kaimes ...		6926	60		Kyle ...	6519	105
	Sorn Mains ...	5427	298		Craigbank ...	6012	329
	Black Dyke ...	5328	80		Ardnith ...	6013	70
	South Logan ...	5524	20		Auchincloigh ...	4916	284
	Ballochmyle				Sinclairston ...	4716	109
	Hospital ...	5226	50		Waterside		
	Netherplace ...	4927	407		(4 sections) ...	4308	124
	By Railway Bridge				Hollybush ...	3914	234
	over road ...	4727	89		Doonside Mill ...	3814	573
	Auchinweet ...	4529	63		Dalrymple		
	Parkhill ...	4527	201		(3 sections) ...	3614	207
	Barrhill ...	4527	52		E. Mains Hill ...	3412	227
	Westhill				Monkwood and		
	(3 sections) ...	4728	462		Minishant		
	Montgomerie			IV. Sauchrie House			
	(2 sections) ...	4426	152		and Otterden		
	Westfield ...	4227	75		(2 sections) ...	3014	726
	Drumley Hospital	4025	524		Maybole ...	3010	21
	Adamton ...	3727	118		Nether Culzean	3111	48
	Enterkine				Blanehead ...	2508	445
	Entrance ...	4123	50		Trochrage ...	2100	21
	Auchincruive				Killochan		
	(2 sections) ...	3823	61		(2 sections) ...	2200	380
	Craigie House				New Dailly ...	2601	235
	and Holmston				New Dailly		
	(2 sections) ...	3521	103		Station ...	2602	109
	Seafeld Hospital	3521	40		Kirkmichael		
	Belleisle ...	3320	132		House ...	3408	311
	Newark Castle...	3218	254		Straiton		
	Doonholm and				(2 sections) ...	3805	351
	Doonside				Barr ...	2794	17
	(3 sections) ...	3318	368		Auchlewan ...	2392	297
					Lendal Water ...	1490	54
					Grosecays ...	0985	548
					Colmonell ...	1586	133
					Barrhill		
					(2 sections) ...	2381	82