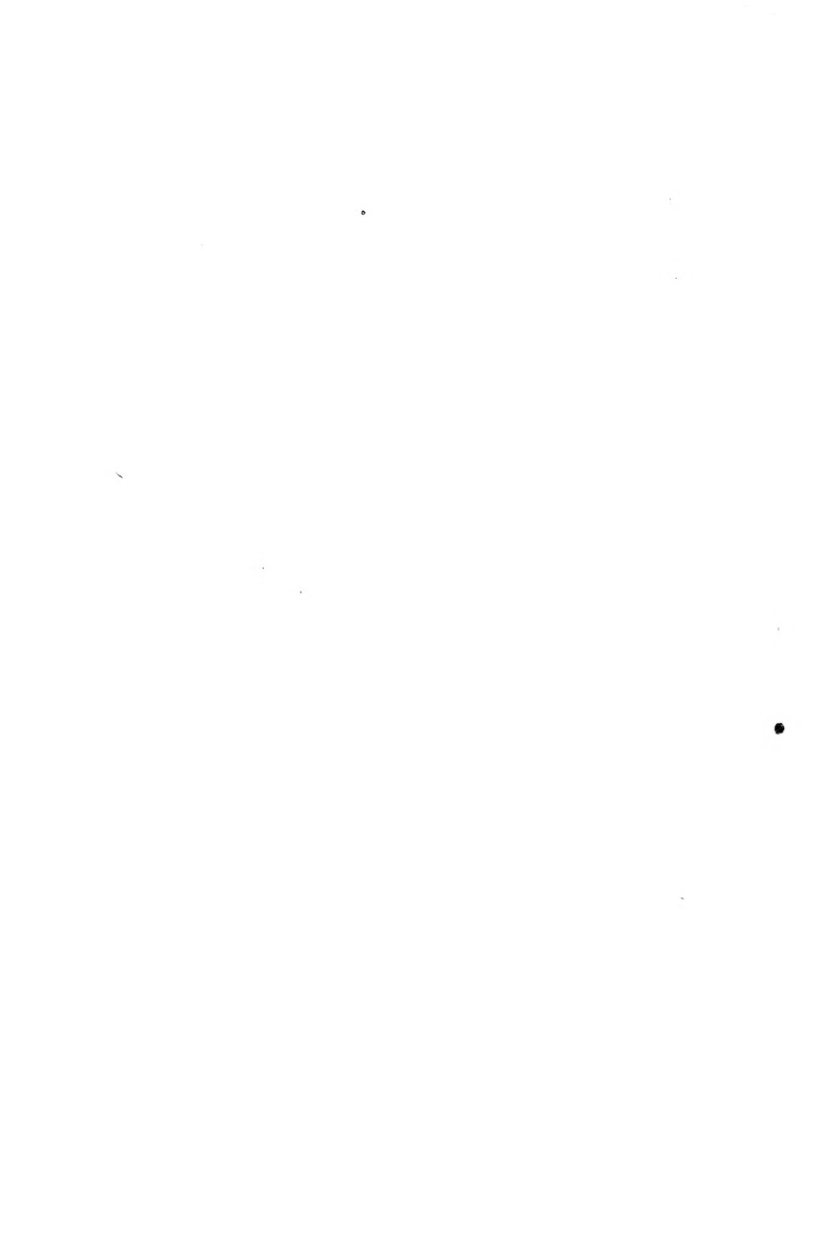


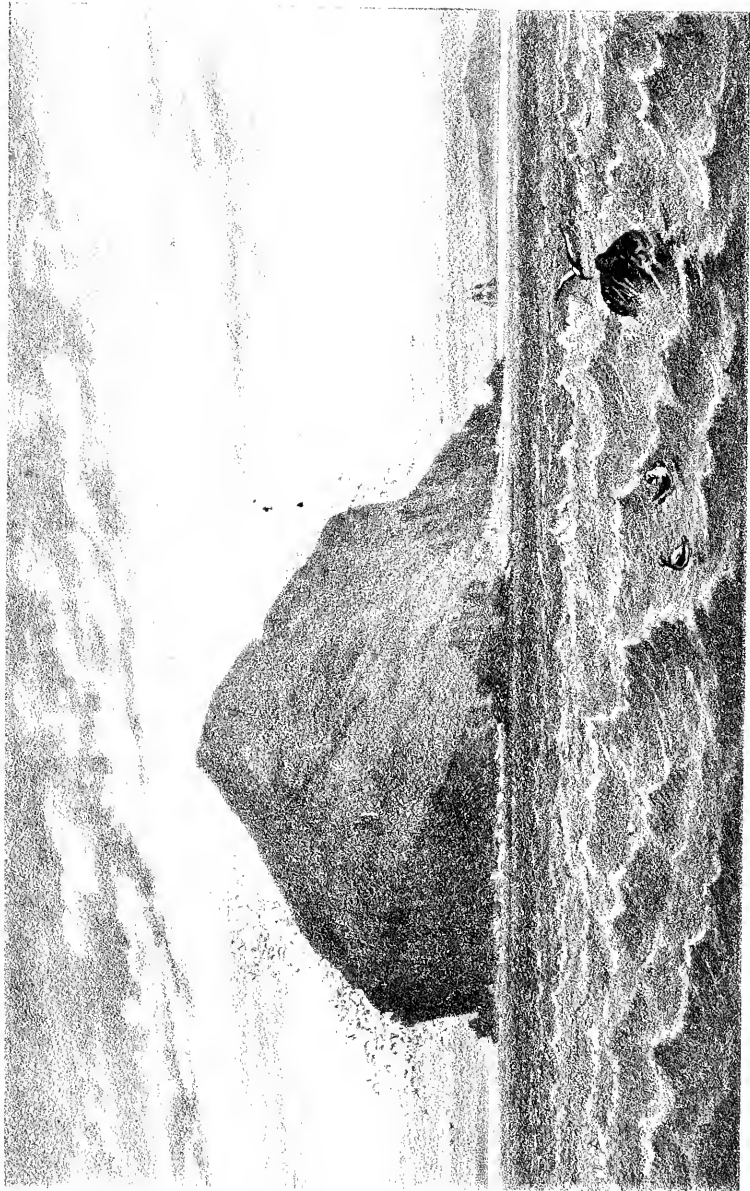
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THE
BIRDS OF AYRSHIRE AND
WIGTOWNSHIRE

BY

ROBERT GRAY

SECRETARY TO THE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF GLASGOW

AND

THOMAS ANDERSON

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF GLASGOW

WITH A LITHOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION

GLASGOW: THOMAS MURRAY AND SON

MDCCLXIX

I wish every county had its ornithological biographer, for we should thus not only become better acquainted with the habits and manners of our feathered neighbours, but much light would be thrown on a point which is confessedly obscure—viz., their local and general migrations, and the causes by which they are influenced.

—W. J. STERLAND.

P R E F A C E.

THE counties of Ayr and Wigtown present many interesting features, which appear to be intimately associated with a profusion of bird life. A glance at the position and configuration of the districts of Kyle, Carrick, and Galloway, will show that the entire coast outline indicates a variety of locality sufficient to attract, and in many instances retain, species of a wandering habit elsewhere.* Luce Bay, and the Bay of Wigtown, with their far-stretching sands, and Loch Ryan, with its sheltered nooks and shores, draw large numbers of waders and waterfowl. Burrow Head and the Mull of Galloway furnish haunts for cliff-building birds, and for the peregrine and lively chough; while the many caves which intersect the precipitous rocks from Ballantrae to the entrance to Glen App, afford shelter to the rock-dove and cormorant. In inland quarters, on the other hand, the numerous lochs scattered over both counties draw flocks of fresh water species, and not a few rarities, as the black tern, garganey, osprey, and wild swan; the high rocky cliffs harbour the raven and eagle; the moors the merlin and hen harrier, dipper and ring ouzel; while the glens and valleys, from their extremely inviting aspect, give encouragement to a number of soft-billed birds, among which may be noticed the grasshopper warbler and lesser whitethroat.

In addition to its many other attractions, this district possesses two isolated breeding places for gulls and guillemots—viz., Ailsa Craig in the Firth of Clyde, and the Scaur Rocks in the Bay of Luce. The former, being one of the most extensive nurseries for sea-fowl in Great Britain, is in some respects peculiarly interesting—the Iceland gull and little auk having been seen there

* We may here recommend to the notice of ornithologists, in consulting this or any future catalogues that may be published, “Philips’ Travelling Map of Scotland,” in which the various headlands, lochs, and islets are very correctly named and indicated.

moors, ruined castles, and the banks of our brawling rivers, as if telling us, in their changed notes of autumn, that they are reluctantly preparing to quit our shores.

It only remains to be added, that considerable care has been bestowed in authenticating the information contained in this catalogue. We have traversed a large extent of both counties in quest of species, and have, for the last fifteen years, been almost daily adding to our observations from which the short notes on each of the birds have been selected. These pleasant rambles and excursions, undertaken of late years for the twofold object of investigating the ornithology and palæontology of the glens and hills of Ayrshire, have enabled us to give a somewhat accurate idea of the species to be found within their boundaries. A considerable number of the birds enumerated have been procured by ourselves, and preserved as cabinet specimens, and we have seldom introduced a species that has not come under our own personal notice. For some of the specimens obtained, we have been indebted to Dr William Anderson, now of Brigus, Newfoundland, whose observations have likewise been of service to us.

One or two remarks on certain birds injurious to farmers have been inserted on the authority of Mr Anderson, who has for some years directed his attention closely to their habits, and who has now matured these at a time when a full knowledge of the subject is of some importance both to the bird student and agriculturist.

R. G. AND T. A.

GLASGOW, *October, 1869.*

THE

BIRDS OF AYRSHIRE AND WIGTOWNSHIRE.

RAPTORES.

FALCONIDÆ.

THE GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*).

THIS splendid bird of prey, formerly so well known in many parts of Scotland, is now extremely rare. A stray visitant is seen at uncertain intervals on Ailsa Craig, especially in spring, when the rabbits are being trapped and disembowelled on the rock. It still breeds in Kirkeudbrightshire. In a work entitled, "General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr," etc., published by William Aiton, writer, Strathavon, in 1811, the following passage occurs:—"Eagles formerly abounded so much about Loch Doon, in the higher parts of Carrick, as to prove formidable enemies to the helpless sheep for many miles round their haunts. They have been much reduced in their numbers by the shepherds, but they are by no means extirpated. They still hatch in the most inaccessible rocks, and occasionally carry off, in their powerful talons, a lamb to feed themselves and their young."

THE WHITE-TAILED SEA EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

Within the last thirty years this eagle has been gradually becoming scarcer, and can now only be regarded as a very rare straggler. Wandering examples of the bird are still met with in the Firth of Clyde, resting occasionally on Ailsa Craig, where the species formerly had an eyrie. These probably come from Islay, which is yet frequented by two or three pairs, although it is doubtful if they now breed there. A specimen was obtained early in May at Dunoon a few years ago; and so long as the species maintains

its hold of the numerous romantic headlands in Western Scotland, we may expect to meet with stray specimens at that season of the year when eagles are most inclined to wander from their ordinary haunts.

THE OSPREY (*Pandion haliaëtus*).

About fifteen years ago the osprey frequented Loch Doon with some regularity. One bird at least might have been seen fishing in the loch, and perching at times on the boulders near its banks. This was thought to be a male in quest of prey to carry to his mate incubating on an islet in a small loch in Wigtownshire, where we have good reason for saying a frequented eyrie still exists.

THE PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*).

This handsome falcon, although much reduced in numbers of late years, is found in both counties, frequenting places where it has been known for many generations. There are still two eyries at the Heads of Ayr, and one on Ailsa Craig. Mr Gray has also seen one at Burrow Head. In the wilder parts of some of the inland districts it is also familiar to game preservers as a destructive enemy to grouse and black game. The peregrine is yet comparatively common in Kirkcudbrightshire.

Mr Ewen, of Ewenfield, Ayr, some months ago communicated to the *Sporting Gazette* a somewhat interesting incident which occurred within his own observation when out hunting with his hawks. His falconer had let off a two-year old tiercel at some partridges, when a wild peregrine made its appearance, intending, no doubt, to secure one of the birds. As soon as the tiercel had struck his prey to the ground, the wild bird singled out another of the partridges, clutching it in the air, and was carrying it off triumphantly, when Mr Ewen's bird caught sight of the stranger, and at once gave chase, causing it to drop the partridge; the tiercel then pounced upon the falling bird, and caught it before it reached the ground.

THE MERLIN (*Falco aesalon*).

Found in both counties, but is less common in Wigtownshire. Even in Ayrshire it appears to be in a measure restricted to the moors facing the sea. Its favourite prey is the snipe; it also kills dunlins, dotterel, and other shore birds. In the cultivated parts

of our district, and also those of Kirkcudbrightshire, it is only a winter visitant.

A very beautiful adult male, measuring not more than nine inches in length, was shot on the farm of Drummuck, near Girvan, in the summer of 1869.

OBS.—The Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) has occurred several times in the south of Scotland, viz., in Dumfriesshire, Roxburghshire, and Kirkcudbrightshire. In the last named county, Mr Tottenham Lee procured two specimens, and saw a third.

THE KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*).

Common. A favourite resort for this species is the line of cliffs between Lendalfoot and Ballantrae, where we have seen many nests comparatively easy of access. Several pairs breed on the cliffs at the Mull of Galloway. The kestrel is quite harmless as a bird of prey to the game preserver, feeding on moths, beetles, and even worms. We have seen it in small groups on the public road near the edge of the cliffs referred to, apparently on the look-out for *Geotrupes stercorarius* burrowing in its favourite mounds. The kestrel appears to live on good terms with the starling and jackdaw, both of which are its daily associates during the breeding season.

THE SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter nisus*).

Of frequent occurrence, and much persecuted on account of its destructive ravages among game and poultry, keepers and farmers alike waging war against it. Its partiality for barn-door chickens and partridges has given the bird a bad name, and, indeed, its thefts are offences not easily overlooked. It breeds on the cliffs at the Mull of Galloway, but is perhaps better known as a native of old plantations, where it frequently makes use of the deserted nests of other birds.

OBS.—The Goshawk (*Astur palumbarius*) has been observed repeatedly in Kirkcudbrightshire by Mr Tottenham Lee, who found its nest in at least two instances. See *Naturalist* for 1853, vol. iii., p. 45; also Mr A. G. More's paper in the *Ibis* for 1865.

THE KITE (*Milvus vulgaris*).

Formerly bred in Glen App, a beautiful district in the south of Ayrshire, but it is now doubtful if even a stray bird is at any

time visible. This fine species appears to be more sensitive to persecution than other birds of prey, judging from the very rapid diminution of its numbers throughout Scotland during the last twenty years.

Mr Gray lately examined a beautiful specimen shot near Beith many years ago. It is now never seen there.

THE COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo vulgaris*).

Very uncommon, having doubtless yielded to the wide-spread persecution which has been practised since the excessive protection of game became common. In the upland ranges of both counties the nest is sometimes found. Specimens of both young and old birds are occasionally taken to Newton-Stewart from the neighbourhood of Loch Trool—a charming bit of scenery about sixteen miles north-east of that town. Mr Gray lately examined a specimen of this buzzard shot near New Cumnock.

THE HONEY BUZZARD (*Pernis apivorus*).

A young male bird of this species was shot on 21st September, 1864, at Wellwood, near Muirkirk, Ayrshire. It had been seen in the neighbourhood previously, and the keeper who shot it states that he trapped a bird of the same species in September, 1863, but that it broke away on his approach, leaving part of one of its legs in the trap.

OBS.—The Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*) has occurred in Lanarkshire on the confines of our district, but not, so far as we are aware, within the limits we have prescribed for ourselves.

THE HEN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*).

Even of greater rarity than the preceding. A solitary pair may yet be seen frequenting some of the wilder moors of Wigtownshire, but so soon as their whereabouts is discovered, means are used for their destruction. The conspicuous appearance of the male bird against the brown heath, especially during flight, has no doubt tended to the discovery of the nest, and consequent capture of both birds. Keepers, on finding a nest, usually wait until the eggs are hatched, and are in the habit of killing all the young birds except one, which they fasten by the leg to a stake, and thus oblige to remain there, even after being fully fledged until

an opportunity occurs for shooting the old birds. This is sometimes but too easily accomplished, as they continue bringing prey to the tethered captive long after it should have been hunting the moors on its own account. From a published list of "vermin" destroyed by Lord Ailsa's keepers, within a limited area, between 25th June, 1850, and 25th November, 1854, we find that 310 "ash-coloured hawks" were killed in that interval.*

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus Montagui*).

Our only authority for recording this species is a notice by the late Mr Thompson in his "Birds of Ireland," vol. i., p. 83, where it is stated that a specimen—a male bird—was shot on a moor near Ballantrae in 1836.

STRIGIDÆ.

THE LONG-EARED OWL (*Otus vulgaris*).

Sparingly distributed in Ayrshire, and some parts of Wigtownshire, frequenting fir woods, especially where the trees are of some age. As a rule, this species is characteristic of the eastern side of Scotland.

THE SHORT-EARED OWL (*Otus brachyotos*).

Well known in the higher grounds, where it probably breeds, although we have not heard of any authentic discovery of its nest of late years. It formerly bred on the moors above Portpatrick. This bird occasionally takes voluntary flights by day, and appears to hunt over turnip and potato fields in quest of field mice, thus proving itself a useful friend to the farmer.

THE WHITE OR BARN OWL (*Strix flammea*).

This beautiful owl is not uncommon, taking up its abode in ruined castles, which are numerous scattered throughout Ayrshire. Some of these ruins are situated in very romantic places

* To show the ignorant and indiscriminate nature of the slaughter referred to, we may state that the list likewise includes thirty-three "Fern Owls," catalogued as offenders, with Brown Owls, Horned Owls, and Barn Owls—all innocent of the destructive propensities ascribed to them. Making the usual allowance for the proverbial diligence of keepers in general, we cannot but regard the destruction of the poor Nightjar as the result of a melancholy, but fortunately unusual, ignorance of the bird's habits.

on the borders of desolate moors, and the banks of fertile glens, where the bird is alike at home, trusting to the nearest clachan or homestead for a sufficient supply of its favourite prey.

THE TAWNY OWL (*Syrnium stridula*).

Frequently obtained. It seems to prefer woods where the trees are of some height, but its nest is seldom more than a few feet from the ground. It is merely a handful of withered leaves laid in a cavity where the larger branches diverge from the main trunk. The tawny owl is often procured by parties practising shooting at rooks. We have long noticed the partiality of this owl for rookeries.

THE SNOWY OWL (*Surnia nyctea*).

A splendid male bird of this species was shot near Kilmarnock in February, 1863, and exhibited by Dr Colquhoun at a meeting of the Natural History Society of Glasgow. It may not be out of place to state that two other examples of the snowy owl occurred in the Firth of Clyde about the same time. One of these, captured near Greenock, is now in the collection of Mr W. C. Angus, Aberdeen.

OBS.—The Hawk Owl (*Surnia funerea*), having twice occurred near the Clyde estuary, is likely to be met with accidentally in our district. Examples of this bird, no doubt, find their way to the shores of Scotland by means of Clyde ships, on which they alight when at a considerable distance from land, and remain until nearing the coast.

INSESSORES.

DENTIROSTRES

LANIADÆ.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*).

It is only of late years that the grey shrike has appeared in our district, or indeed in any part of the West of Scotland. Mr Oliver Eaton, bird preserver, Kilmarnock, has informed us that he preserved a specimen which was shot on the Kilkerran estate on 10th December, 1868, by George Blacklaw, gamekeeper there, and Mr Gray has examined two which were obtained near Kilbirnie in 1863. It has likewise been shot in Renfrewshire on one or two occasions. This species is now a regular winter visitant to the eastern counties of Scotland.

MUSCICAPIDÆ.

THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa grisola*).

A quiet and unobtrusive species, generally distributed. It builds in gardens, sometimes close to dwelling-houses; at other times in rocky niches, and on the main stems of trees at a distance from such habitations. It feeds upon various insects, including moths and butterflies, and is fond of a conspicuous perch from which it can easily detect its passing prey.

MERULIDÆ.

THE COMMON DIPPER (*Cinclus aquaticus*).

Very common on most of the rivers and streams of both counties, on the banks of which it breeds in various situations. We have seen its nest on inaccessible walls of rock, underneath bridges, in abrupt banks, on moss-covered rocky boulders, and in holes of trees. In severe winters the families of the previous summer appear to re-assemble, and forage together at open pools. We have noticed as many as five perched on the ice, and diving into holes broken by ourselves to admit of their access to the water. One of these birds frequented for some months the beams of a wooden bridge thrown across the water of Girvan at Enoch farm. It roosted every night in the same spot, and its first act in the morning was to take a "header" into the stream, and re-appear at a little distance from the bridge, after which it flew off to its ordinary haunts.

THE MISSEL THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*).

Now tolerably common, although a somewhat rare bird thirty years ago. Flocks of ten or twelve assemble in autumn, and frequent the fields about the time the crops are gathered. They seem partial to potato lands. It is now a very common species in the neighbourhood of Girvan. We observed about twenty feeding daily on Knock-a-vallie, near the shore, in June, 1869.

THE FIELDFARE (*Turdus pilaris*).

A familiar winter visitant, resorting to the coast line in hard weather, where it turns over the rejectamenta left by the tides in search of larvæ, etc.

THE SONG THRUSH (*Turdus musicus*).

Generally distributed. Near Girvan it resorts, during the autumn months, to the sea-shore, frequenting pasture lands in the immediate vicinity, and feeding on a small species of *helix* conspicuously plentiful at that season. It breeds upon Ailsa Craig, where its song may be heard strangely in contrast to the other sounds of various quality to be heard on that lonely rock.

THE REDWING (*Turdus iliacus*).

A winter visitant, appearing about the same time as the Fieldfare, and associating with it in its shore haunts.

THE BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*).

Abundant. Between Girvan and Ballantrae numbers of these birds may be seen, after the breeding time is past, frequenting the beach, and seeking refuge on hot days below the rocky boulders. We have ejected as many as fifteen and eighteen blackbirds from underneath one rock. This species is found on Ailsa Craig, where it breeds. Dr Anderson found a nest with five eggs built in one of the turret holes of the old castle a few years ago.

THE RING OUZEL (*Turdus torquatus*).

A very common species on many of the wildest moorland tracts of Ayrshire, but much less common in Wigtownshire, as far as our own observations enable us to judge. Mr Anderson has observed it frequenting his garden at Girvan late in autumn. This species migrates southward as winter approaches. Mr M'Donald, one of the keepers at the Mull of Galloway lighthouse, captures an occasional specimen on the lantern about the time the flocks are quitting Scotland.

SYLVIDÆ.

THE HEDGE ACCENTOR (*Accentor modularis*).

The confiding Shufflewing is everywhere known. It lives upon Ailsa Craig, among the kittiwakes and guillemots, and jerks about among the rugged stones as contentedly as if in the near neighbourhood of a stack yard.

THE REDBREAST (*Erythaca rubecula*).

Abundant. A fine specimen with a pure white head was shot

by Mr Anderson at Girvan, about three years ago, and is now in Mr Gray's collection.

THE REDSTART (*Phœnicura ruticilla*).

Not common. It is, indeed, even rare in some parts of Ayrshire. Mr Oliver Eaton, during a long experience as a bird preserver at Kilmarnock, mentions that he has only had one specimen through his hands; it was shot by himself, at a coal pit at the Grange, in the end of October, and had been seen there two weeks previously. It frequents sheep-farm steadings in retired upland districts, and is often found at an elevation of 1,500 feet above the sea level.

THE STONECHAT (*Saxicola rubicola*).

This lively bird is very abundant on the coast line extending from Ayr to Burrow Head, with the exception of spots here and there where the cliffs are of great height. In sheltered recesses, however, where a breach in the cliffs occurs and vegetation gets a hold, the Stonechat is sure to be there, perching on weeds and bramble stems, and uttering his monotonous "chuck-chuck" as he turns round to look at the intruder.

THE WHINCHAT (*Saxicola rubetra*).

Not nearly so common as the preceding species, but nevertheless occurring in considerable numbers. It is seen mostly in pairs, and often draws attention to its movements by its habit of fluttering over a particular spot, and snapping at insects while at rest on grassy stems, etc.

THE WHEATEAR (*Saxicola œnanthe*).

Very common. On Ailsa Craig it is also numerous, frequenting the summit of the island, where it breeds in crevices and rabbit holes. It sometimes lingers till October, both on the shore and on the upland sheep pastures.

THE GRASSHOPPER WARBLER (*Salicaria locustellu*).

This warbler is very common in the neighbourhood of Kilmarnock. Mr Gray having recently observed this species in the collection of Mr Eaton, bird preserver there, made inquiries as to the localities frequented by the bird, and was informed by that

diligent collector that he had been familiar with it for the last nineteen years. "Almost all the young plantations," writes Mr Eaton, "are frequented by a pair; they arrive with our other summer visitors." We are also satisfied of the species being a native of Wigtownshire. It is stated in a communication by the late Rev. Thomas B. Bell, published in the Proceedings of the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, that it breeds in the parish of Leswalt in that county. We took notice of this interesting species near Girvan in the beginning of July, 1869.

THE SEDGE WARBLER (*Salicaria phragmitis*).

One of the commonest warblers in Ayrshire, and, so far as we can judge, a common species also in Wigtownshire. It is a very conspicuous bird on the banks of the Water of Girvan, where its unceasing mirth is sure to attract the most careless observer. It breeds in some numbers on the farm of Enoch, near Girvan, and is also very common near the curling pond. We have often observed this bird singing while on wing mounting into the air, and descending again with jerks to the hedge or growing grain from which it rose.

THE BLACKCAP WARBLER (*Curruca atricapilla*).

Wherever a soft, sylvan spot occurs throughout our district, the blackcap is a well-known element in the bird life of the locality. Being, in appearance at least, a firmly-built and hard-billed warbler, it might be expected to combat the rigours of a blustering autumn or early winter; hence we find that even when the woods are fast losing their tints, and all other warblers are gone, the blackcap lingers in young plantations and orchards, garden plots and sheltered nooks, feeding upon small fruits and insect prey, in searching for which it exhibits great restlessness. It may at these times be heard uttering a hard but clear note, reminding the observer of the habits of some of the larger Tits.

THE GARDEN WARBLER (*Curruca hortensis*).

Found sparingly in cultivated districts, chiefly frequenting orchards and cottage gardens, and taking up its perch regularly on some old apple tree, from the top branches of which it may be seen, morning and evening, pouring out its rich notes, to the delight of the listener. The song of this warbler, indeed, is only

surpassed by that of the nightingale. It is, however, of comparatively short duration, as the bird becomes silent when the first brood is hatched, and is only heard for a little while should a second nest be built.

THE COMMON WHITETHROAT (*Curruca cinerea*).

Very commonly distributed, arriving early in May, and enlivening almost every hedge-row in the two counties. It sometimes rears two broods, the nest being placed in tufts of coarse grass, bramble or briar thickets, or among rank plants near the base of a hedge. These birds arrive in full plumage, and are for a time very diverting from their liveliness and loquacity. As the season advances, however, the feathers become faded and worn, and the birds quit our coasts in a costume so ragged as to cause one to wonder how the little fellows, imperfectly clad as they are, can undertake the fatiguing journey they have in prospect. We have seen this warbler continually haunting the grassy patches occurring on the coast line between Girvan and Lendalfoot, where one would little expect to find a bird of sylvan habits.

THE LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Curruca sylvicola*).

Sparingly met with, and much less obtrusive in its habits than the preceding species. This warbler was well known as an Ayrshire bird thirty years ago. We are not, however, certain of its being a native of Wigtownshire.

THE WOOD WARBLER (*Sylvia sylvicola*).

A well-known, though not abundant, summer visitant to both counties. Being much quieter in its habits than the next species, it is not so often observed, although of brighter tints. It is also later in making its appearance, and is in consequence not so easily perceived among the dense foliage of the trees which it frequents.

THE WILLOW WARBLER (*Sylvia trochilus*).

This welcome little summer bird is very common, arriving some seasons about the middle of April. It visits the glens in both counties extending to some height above the sea level, and remains there during the season, building its nest in heathery tufts, and lining it with game bird feathers. We have heard this species singing blythely in the middle of July.

THE CHIFF CHAFF (*Sylvia rufa*).

Of much rarer occurrence with us than the preceding species. We have identified it near Girvan, both on its arrival and previous to its departure. It prolongs its stay until the beginning of October, and may be then observed flitting anxiously among the birch and alder trees in some of the glens, uttering a cheeping note, and sallying out after passing insects.

THE GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN (*Regulus cristatus*).

Common. Great numbers are seen late in autumn frequenting fir woods in the south of Wigtonshire. They are apparently congregations assembling before migrating southwards. Mr McDonald, light-keeper at the Mull of Galloway, informs us that he captures quantities of these little creatures in the lantern about that season, and also again in spring when they return.

PARIDÆ.

THE GREAT TIT (*Parus major*).

Tolerably common, and extremely restless in its habits, seldom remaining above a few minutes in one place. It often breeds in holes of walls, and sometimes in straw stacks. Old birds and young broods appear in gardens in July.

THE BLUE TIT (*Parus cæruleus*).

Very common; travelling in lively companies from place to place in the autumn and winter months. The nest is frequently found in gardens, placed generally in any suitable crevice in an old wall or hollow tree. It is a vigorous little bird in defence of its young.

THE COLE TIT (*Parus ater*).

Common in woods and belts of plantations. In the winter season it takes up its quarters in private policies, where the woods are old, and finds plenty of sustenance on the old trees infested with insects. We have often seen it hopping among the withered leaves on the ground, which it diligently turns over in search of prey.

OBS.—The Marsh Tit (*Parus palustris*), although known to occur in Renfrewshire and Lanarkshire, has not yet come under our

notice in our own district. It will, no doubt, however, be found in both counties.

THE LONG-TAILED TIT (*Parus caudatus*).

Common, frequenting woods and hedge-rows. Very conspicuous in autumn and the beginning of winter, when they assemble in troops and travel long distances in company.

AMPELIDÆ.

THE BOHEMIAN WAXWING.

Has occurred in Wigtownshire. A specimen seen and examined by Mr Gray was taken alive at Portpatrick in the winter of 1866. As a rule, this species is but seldom met with in the western counties of Scotland.

MOTACILLIDÆ.

THE PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla Yarellii*).

Very generally distributed. Large flocks gather in some of the shore districts of both counties, preparatory to a general migration. Great numbers of these birds roost in alder bushes growing upon the banks of the Girvan Water throughout the month of September. They come in at nightfall from all parts, and assemble in clusters, taking up their perches five or six on a branch. As many as thirty or forty may on these occasions be dislodged from one bush. After rain, they sally forth in companies in the morning to the nearest grass park, where they diligently devour the smaller larvæ and insects that may have been disturbed by the shower.

THE GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla bairuli*.)

Permanently resident. It is found on the high lands as well as the low grounds, and is very partial to clear, running water, frequenting alike the margins of drains, brooks, rivers, and ditches. The situation of the nest varies according to circumstances. It is found under bridges, in holes of walls and tree roots, sometimes within reach of a flood, and there are two broods in the year. We have seen as many as seven or eight of these beautiful wagtails in Girvan Harbour at low tide, and in August.

1869, we took notice of an equal number together at once in the stony bed of the Stinchar, near Daljerrock.

RAY'S WAGTAIL (*Motacilla Rayi*).

A common summer visitant, and found distributed in pairs throughout our district. We have seen it frequenting the pebbly bed of the Girvan at mid-day throughout the summer months. In the month of July, but more especially in autumn, we have repeatedly observed it on the sea-shore, generally at the mouth of a small rivulet. The plumage of the bird has then lost its lustre, and the bright yellow of the spring dress has entirely disappeared.

ANTHIDÆ.

THE TREE PIPIT (*Anthus arboreus*).

Found breeding near Girvan. Several pairs may be seen throughout the summer frequenting the outskirts of Killoop Wood. It is also met with at Braehill, and other localities in the district.

THE MEADOW PIPIT (*Anthus pratensis*).

There appears to be a partial migration of this species southwards in autumn, many flocks at that season descending from the higher grounds to the fields skirting the shore. These congregations disappear, and come back in the following spring. The meadow pipit, like some of the buntings and warblers, looks much altered about the close of autumn when the plumage becomes faded.

THE ROCK PIPIT (*Anthus petrosus*).

Strictly confined to the sea-shore, where it appears to be uniformly distributed from Ayr to the Mull of Galloway. In some places where the shore is flat it constructs its nest among the rough stones beyond high water mark, and at the line where tufts of grass appear in summer time. In rocky situations it is placed in crevices, sometimes at a considerable height in the front of the precipice. We have taken it in exceedingly picturesque spots on the line of rocks near Carleton Fishery—the nest being often placed under a tuft of wild roses or other flowers, and completely screened from observation.

INSESSORES.

CONIROSTRES.

ALAUDIDÆ.

THE SKY-LARK (*Alauda arvensis*).

The familiar laverock is abundantly distributed. Some winters ago immense flocks of larks appeared during hard weather in some fields close to the town of Girvan. On rising from the ground, the cloud of birds appeared so dense as to obscure objects in the line of their flight. Large numbers were killed on the telegraph wires, and after the flocks passed it was found that many birds had been mutilated, their wings being torn off by the wires.

THE WOOD-LARK (*Alauda arborea*).

The late Rev. Dr Landsborough informed Mr Gray that he had found this species at Stevenston. It has never come directly under our own observation. Various records of its existence as a familiar Scottish species have from time to time been published, but many of these, it is to be feared, refer to some other bird. The wood-lark, however, has certainly been found in many parts of Scotland, satisfactory instances of which are given in Mr Gray's "Birds of the West of Scotland,"* etc.

EMBERIZIDÆ.

THE SNOW BUNTING (*Plectrophanes nivalis*).

A winter visitant only, occurring at times in solitary specimens along the coast. As a rule, it is much commoner on the shores of the east of Scotland. In April and May the birds assume the breeding plumage, which in the male contrasts strikingly with the sober tints of the hill sides, where small flocks are seen flitting in advance of any intruder on their haunts.

THE COMMON BUNTING (*Emberiza miliaria*).

Very abundant in both counties, especially near the coast between Girvan and the borders of Kirkcudbrightshire. Mr Gray has observed it to be particularly common in the southern districts of Wigtownshire, where the pasture lands are irregularly broken with protruding masses of rock.

THE BLACK-HEADED BUNTING (*Emberiza schoeniculus*).

Common, and generally distributed. It breeds in some num-

* In the press, and will shortly be published.

bers in the neighbourhood of Girvan. In a nest taken by Mr Anderson one of the eggs was not much larger than a pea. It is permanently resident, and, so far as we can learn, there are no winter flocks in our district from other quarters.

THE YELLOW BUNTING, or YELLOW HAMMER (*Emberiza citrinella*).

This bunting is very common in all the lower grounds under cultivation. During the warm season of 1868 it appeared to be unusually abundant in Wigtownshire, and attracted notice by its assembling on the public roads during the excessive heat. They seemed to be the only birds visible, and harmonised curiously with the golden tints pervading all surrounding objects.

FRINGILLIDÆ.

THE CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs*).

Very common everywhere, and a familiar visitant to farm steadings even when situated in moorland localities. Mr Anderson found a nest of this species built on the top of a wall at Enoch Farm, beside a bit of turf. Two other nests were situated in a tree only a few feet from the spot. A tame chaffinch at Penkill Castle lived in confinement upwards of seventeen years; it was taken from the nest, and carefully supplied with insect food, which doubtlessly accounts for its prolonged life in captivity.

THE MOUNTAIN FINCH, or BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*).

A regular winter visitant, but only in small numbers, except in unusually severe weather. It then appears at farm-steadings, mixing with sparrows, chaffinches, yellow hammers, and green linnets; and is often caught by country boys, who cage their captives in triumph, as the *Cock o' the North*.

THE HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*).

Extremely common. A colony of these birds have taken possession of a number of holes in a broken embankment above a deep pool in the Water of Girvan on Enoch Farm. Dr Anderson turned out many of their nests containing eggs; these had been placed on beds of material laid there by a colony of sand martins, the original owners of the holes. Frequent battles were fought by the martins and sparrows for possession, and these were in one

or two cases settled by the two species sharing a hole between them—the martins' nests being placed at the very extremity of the hole, and the sparrows' about midway from the entrance.

Mr Gray has examined two cream-coloured varieties of this species in the possession of Mr John Jamieson, Ardrossan.

THE GREENFINCH (*Coccothraustes chloris*).

Permanently resident, and generally distributed. During the autumn months very large flocks of these birds congregate in fields adjoining the sea-coast, and feed upon the seeds of various plants, also upon left grain. Swarms of them are seen on the mounds of chaff visible here and there along the shore, the record of visits of itinerant threshing machines. Sparrow-hawks and other birds of prey often stoop into the midst of these multitudes, and carry a bird to the nearest rock, where it is plucked and devoured. During this process the linnets re-assemble on the chaff, and are again pounced upon, the hawk, in this second instance, flying off to a distance with his victim.

Mr Eaton has in his possession a specimen of the green linnet of a pure bright yellow, with the quill feathers entirely white.

THE GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis elegans*).

There can be no doubt that the great improvements effected in the agriculture of the two counties have materially lessened the number of goldfinches throughout the country. Its favourite food is the seed of plants now carefully destroyed by the husbandman, so that the bird's haunts are, for the most part, now confined to glens penetrating some distance into the uplands, where these plants are yet tolerated, or where their growth is not a hindrance to profitable farming.

THE SISKIN (*Carduelis spinus*).

Although we have not yet taken the nest of this bird in either of the counties, we are inclined to think it may yet be found. It breeds in the adjoining county of Kirkcudbright. Siskins are captured by the country bird catchers in small numbers, chiefly during the autumn season. As a rule, these birds are much commoner in the eastern counties.

THE COMMON LINNET (*Linota cannabina*).

Common throughout the district. "In some parts of Ayrshire linnets are gregarious to some extent, even in the breeding season, both on the sea-shore and in the pebbly beds of rivers and smaller streams, which they frequent at certain hours, coming and going together in flocks with apparent regularity." See "Birds of the West of Scotland."

THE MEALY REDPOLE (*Linota canescens*).

This species, occurring, as it does, frequently in Kirkcudbrightshire, may also occur in our district in some numbers. At present, however, we can only record with certainty a single example: it was shot at Caperton, near Kilmarnock, in April, 1864, and is now in the possession of Mr Eaton, bird preserver. We may state that, in the same year, many specimens were taken in the south of Scotland.

THE LESSER REDPOLE (*Linota linaria*).

This interesting and familiar bird is sparingly distributed in localities suited to its habits. It breeds in both counties, and in Renfrewshire and Dumfriesshire. The habits of the lesser redpole may be easily studied, as it is exceedingly tame, and heedless of observation.

THE MOUNTAIN LINNET, or TWITE (*Linota montium*).

This, the "heather lintie" of most rural districts, is generally distributed, frequenting chiefly the higher grounds beyond the limits of high cultivation. It is a much more plentiful species in the western counties than those of the east of Scotland. Mr Gray has given an account of its habits, as observed by himself in the Outer Hebrides, where it is extremely numerous. See "Birds of the West of Scotland."

THE BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula vulgaris*).

Is found in considerable numbers throughout Ayrshire. It is nowhere more plentiful than in some of the glens within a few miles of Girvan, where groups of five or six may be heard piping from the alder thickets after the young are fledged. We have observed it to be particularly common on the farm of Drumnuck,

in the parish of Dailly; indeed, the whole of the valley of Girvan seems peculiarly attractive to the species.

THE COMMON CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*).

A yearly visitant, and probably a permanent resident in some places. It breeds in the woods on Drummuck farm, the nest having been found there as late as May—probably a second brood. We have seen specimens of the bird that were killed there at that season. In the adjoining county of Kirkcudbright the crossbill is equally well known; and a record dated as far back as 1792 states that it then was known to breed in the parish of Buittle. Mr Gray has been informed by a gentleman well acquainted with birds, that he has every reason to believe that it breeds there still.

THE PARROT CROSSELL (*Loxia pityopsittacus*).

This rare species has been obtained on the confines of Ayrshire, a specimen having been killed at Wemyss Bay in the spring of 1862, as recorded in “Birds of the West of Scotland.”

STURNIDÆ.

THE COMMON STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

Has become very common of late years, chiefly owing to the protection afforded it. It appears to have spread itself in all quarters, although thirty years ago it was comparatively rare. This bird seems partial to the sea-shore during the winter season.

CORVIDÆ.

THE CHOUGH (*Fregilus graculus*).

Inhabits the cliffs near Ballantrae, also the Mull of Galloway and Burrow Head. Its numbers of late years, however, have become greatly reduced. Mr Gray has visited its haunts repeatedly for the express object of seeing the birds, but has almost invariably been disappointed. One was shot near Burrow Head in the beginning of November, 1868. Along the shores of the southern part of Kirkcudbrightshire it occurs in small flocks; and Mr Gray has been informed by Mr Watson, Stranraer, that he has seen it frequently, during the last few years, in the parish of Kirkmaiden. Mr M'Donald, of the Mull of Galloway lighthouse, states his

opinion, that in his neighbourhood the chough was much oftener seen some years ago than it is now; indeed, he believes that at present there are only one or two pairs. The Rev. Thomas B. Bell of Leswalt, Wigtonshire, in a communication made some years ago to the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, says that the chough “annoys the farmers by digging up the sprouting wheat and tearing off the roofs of their stacks.”

THE RAVEN (*Corvus corax*).

Now greatly thinned, being greatly and justly disliked by the sheep farmer, on whose lands it commits its worst depredations. Notwithstanding the rigorous persecution to which it is subjected, the raven seems even yet less likely to be totally extirpated than many other birds whose lives are in constant danger. The best time to shoot the vagabond is at dusk, when he and his mate are returning from a day's foray to their favourite roosting place. The following lines are taken from an address to the bird, probably written by some half-poetical and watchful keeper, in the prospect of a revengeful shot:—

“Say, weary bird, whose level flight,
Thus, at the dusky hour of night,
Wends through the midway air—
Why yet beyond the verge of day
Is lengthened out thy dark delay,
Adding another to the hours of care?”

THE CARRION CROW (*Corvus corone*).

Not common, but seen occasionally in autumn frequenting the sea-shore, sometimes in company with the Hooded Crow. *Hoody Crow* is the name given to this bird in most parts of Scotland.

THE HOODED CROW (*Corvus cornix*).

About equal in numbers with the preceding bird, but both are well kept down by the game preservers. As the two birds are perfectly identical in form, size, habits, and general mode of living, and are *known to breed freely together* in the middle districts of Scotland, it is difficult to believe in any specific distinction between them. The grey-backed bird is believed by Mr Gray to belong to a northern race of the carrion crow, and it has been ascertained that the boundary line where the two unite stretches from Argyleshire through Perthshire and Forfarshire. In the Outer Hebrides

the grey markings become permanent. See "Birds of the West of Scotland," where the question of unity is more fully dwelt upon.

THE ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*).

Abundant. Recent discussions in agricultural quarters have placed this bird in a somewhat doubtful position. That rooks commit mischief cannot, we think, be called in question; but that they also do great service, in devouring noxious larvæ and other farm insect-pests, is equally true. The question is, on which side does their daily habit preponderate? The following fact, communicated to an Edinburgh newspaper during a late controversy on this point, seems to show that their appearance on newly-sown fields is not necessarily associated with bird damages:—"I put a boy," says the writer, "to keep them off a field of six acres sown with wheat in October. The season was wet and cold, so the boy got under a tree in the corner, made his little fire, and enjoyed himself. So did the rooks on every part of the field except that within stone-throw of the corner. In this portion of the field the wheat was wretched; but wherever the rooks had eaten up the slug or the wire-worm, the crop was plentiful."

THE JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*).

Very abundant in both counties, frequenting old castles, rookeries, and rocky headlands, such as the Mull of Galloway and Burrow Head. In both the last-named localities it is feared that it has been the means of nearly exterminating the chough. Dr Anderson shot a specimen which had its mandibles crossed like those of a *loxia*. The bird is now in the University Museum, Glasgow.

THE MAGPIE (*Pica caudata*).

This beautiful bird has of late years been very much shot down in game-preserving quarters. We were lately interested in observing as many as twelve or fourteen magpies, on the farm of Littleton, near Girvan, where no keeper had been employed for some years. These birds kept strictly within the limits of their asylum. We have been informed, however, that a few weeks ago the keeper on the surrounding estate (Culzean), invaded their sanctuary, and shot several birds after having destroyed the nests.

THE JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*).

Even less numerous than the magpie, although rivalling it in beauty of plumage. Its thievish habits form the universal apology for its destruction; but no sensible ornithologist, we think, would object to a few jays being left to enliven and beautify our woods.

INSESSORES.

SCANSORES.

PICIDÆ.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Picus major*).

This Woodpecker, which of late years has become rather a common winter visitant to the eastern districts of Scotland, has been obtained several times in Ayrshire, and once on the outskirts of the county. One was shot at Cumnock; another at Fullarton, near Troon, on 2d November, 1868; and a third, about five weeks later, near Ayr. For these notices we are indebted to Mr Oliver Eaton, bird preserver, Kilmarnock. A specimen was shot at Inverkip, Renfrewshire, in October of the same year. This locality is very close to the boundary of our district.

CERTHIADÆ.

THE COMMON CREEPER (*Certhia familiaris*).

Well known in both counties, and permanently resident in woods and patches of plantation attractive to a bird of its habits.

THE WREN (*Troglodytes vulgaris*).

Common everywhere. It frequents Ailsa Craig, where it apparently remains all the year. Great numbers of winter nests are found underneath the abrupt banks of the water of Girvan. These structures are of small size, and without any lining.

There is a cream-coloured variety of this bird in the collection of Mr Eaton, Kilmarnock. It was shot near that town.

THE HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*).

Mr Yarrell states, in his "British Birds," that a specimen of the hoopoe was killed in Ayrshire, without, however, specifying any particular locality. This record probably refers to a specimen shot near Coylton, in Ayrshire, on 16th October, 1836—an occurrence which is noted in the "Magazine of Geology and Botany," Vol. I., page 491, on the authority of Mr P. W. Maclagan.

Mr Gray was lately informed by Mr Stewart of Tonderghie,

Wigtownshire, that one of these birds frequented his policies in 1862 for about ten days, and was frequently seen near the house. It has once occurred in Renfrewshire—a specimen having been shot near Port-Glasgow in October, 1863.

CUCULIDÆ.

THE COMMON CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*).

Very common throughout the whole district. In passing northward it halts for a time on Ailsa Craig, and enlivens that isolated spot with its familiar salutation. These visits, however, are brief and uncertain. Mr Anderson has observed that all the specimens yearly killed by him immediately after their arrival appear to be in the moult.

INSESSORES.

FISSIROSTRES.

MEROPIDÆ.

THE ROLLER (*Coracias garrula*).

The late Dr Landsborough informed Mr Gray many years ago that a specimen of this rare bird was shot near Stevenston, in Ayrshire, about the year 1833. It has occurred in some of the neighbouring counties, but not elsewhere in our district.

THE BEE EATER (*Merops apiaster*).

In the summer of 1832 a bee eater was shot at Logan Garden, in the parish of Kirkmaiden, Wigtownshire. The species has occurred frequently in the eastern counties of Scotland, but is decidedly rare in the west.

HALCYONIDÆ.

THE KINGFISHER (*Alcedo ispida*).

The brilliant kingfisher is not uncommon on all our streams, preferring, however, those whose banks are clothed with birch and alder trees, or other overhanging bushes, in which it can perch and look out for prey. It breeds on the banks of the Stinchar and Girvan Water, and other picturesque streams, and delights the rambler in its romantic haunts as it whirrs past him when changing its pools. We have seen it fishing in company with the dipper in severe weather, when both were glad to avail themselves of an opening in the ice. On one occasion four or five dippers—probably a brood of the previous summer—had assembled at such an opening, and were perched in a half-circle, when

a kingfisher, which had been sitting on a twig overhead, an unobserved "companion of the bath," flashed like an emerald into the water, and almost immediately reappeared with a minnow, which it battered on a little ice block, and then devoured. In this group of tiny plungers a beautiful grey wagtail sat in disconsolate silence, the whole of the birds forming a somewhat interesting winter assembly.

HIRUNDINIDÆ.

THE SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).

Very common everywhere, extending to lonely and unfrequented shielings on the hill sides, and breeding in the rafters, or under bridges spanning moorland burns. Mr Anderson took a nest of this bird in an outhouse at Penkill farm, which was built on a tree branch hanging from the roof. This nest is now in Mr Gray's possession. It is composed of the usual materials, but is circular in shape, and profusely decorated with peacock's feathers. After the nest had been removed, the birds constructed another in a similar situation, and bedecked it in the same ornamental manner. A somewhat unusual site was selected by a pair of these birds this year at the Killochan Station, on the Maybole and Girvan Railway. The nest was built on the top ledge of a frame of an advertising placard, about eight or ten feet from the ground.

THE MARTIN (*Hirundo urtica*).

This familiar species is, as may be supposed, common over both counties, frequenting towns, villages, and farm-steadings. On some country mansions we have counted as many as eighteen and twenty nests built under the projecting eaves, and clustered, in some cases, closely together. A large colony frequents a part of the rocky cliffs near the port of Currarie, a few miles south of Ballantrae. Their nests are placed in fissures of the rock above the mouth of a large cave frequented by cormorants and rock-doves. In wild weather these nests are sometimes in danger of destruction by the masses of spray dashed over their surface.

THE SAND MARTIN (*Hirundo riparia*).

The haunts of this early summer visitant are met with in our district from the vicinity of the sea-shore to an elevation of ten

or twelve hundred feet on the hills surrounding the moorlands of Ayrshire. It lives in colonies sometimes numbering twenty or thirty pairs, but is often found in single pairs in small quarries and abrupt river banks in retired places. We have seen their occupied burrows on the summit of Mulloch Hill and elsewhere, in the face of the little cuttings made by the road makers, and have watched them during our intervals of rest while exploring these places for Silurian fossils. In these upland haunts we have never found more than one pair inhabiting a quarry.

On the banks of the Water of Girvan, near Drumrannie, a numerous colony existed some years ago. Dr Anderson carefully examined upwards of a dozen of their burrows, most of which he found occupied by two pairs of birds, each passage branching into two about a foot from the outside. This particular bend of the river was frequented by the martins regularly for years, although every winter large masses of the banks were carried away by the floods. A few pairs still remain, and may be seen disputing the occupancy of the holes with a colony of impudent sparrows who lately took possession of them before the martins arrived.

Mr Gray has seen an albino of this species in the possession of Mr John Jamieson, Ardrossan.

THE COMMON SWIFT (*Cypselus apus*).

Extremely abundant. Towards the close of summer very large numbers congregate in the south of Wigtownshire, before finally quitting our shores.

The numerous old castles whose ruined towers are so conspicuous throughout Ayrshire, are all frequented by numbers of swifts, and occupied as nurseries during their brief summer stay. From these ancient ruins the birds take long excursions, especially in dull weather, returning to their cold and *erie* quarters at night-fall. The eggs of this species are very difficult to procure, the nest being almost invariably placed in holes and crevices with an extremely small entrance. We have found a long tobacco pipe useful for extracting them from these cracks and fissures, but even with such an instrument there is always a risk of breakage, unless the eggs can be seen.

CAPRIMULGIDÆ.

THE NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus Europæus*).

Sparingly distributed, but nowhere numerous. It is, however,

familiar enough to most collectors, and is a native of both counties. The nightjar is, perhaps, oftener recognised in its moorland quarters, from which it descends at the gloaming to the lower grounds in quest of moths and beetles, which we have seen it dexterously snapping from the surface of a grass field.

RASORES.

COLUMBIDÆ.

THE RING DOVE, OR WOOD PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*).

Of late years this bird has become very numerous, and is now looked upon as a feathered nuisance throughout the agricultural counties of Scotland. In Ayrshire it has been for some years past a destructive farm pest, devouring the ripening wheat and other cereals in great quantities. In Wigtownshire, where turnips are cultivated to a large extent, it is equally mischievous, by eating up the tender blades, and destroying the growth of the bulb. It even picks up the sprouting seed of the turnip shortly after it has been sown; and as it feeds voraciously from early dawn to sunset, its depredations are not easily checked. Some years ago Mr Anderson found it a good plan to visit the turnip drills about sunrise, when the pigeons were found even at that hour dozing half-asleep, after an early breakfast, and, by taking them in a line, give them a good charge of No. 6 at fifteen yards. The ravages committed by wood pigeons in East Lothian have been met by a most extraordinary but unavailing slaughter of the birds on the part of the farmers of that district. This district is fully considered in the "Birds of the West of Scotland."

THE ROCK DOVE (*Columba livia*).

Plentiful along the coast between Ballantrae and the entrance to Loch Ryan, and also along the range of cliffs forming the Mull of Galloway. In these localities there is the usual admixture of the domestic breed, judging from the number of parti-coloured specimens noticeable in the flocks frequenting the line of caves on both Ayrshire and Galloway coasts. Last year we found a single pair breeding in the roof of a cave under the ruins of Turnberry Castle. A number of pairs frequent the caverns of Ailsa Craig.

Like the wood pigeon, this bird is occasionally destructive on farms in the vicinity of its haunts.

THE TURTLE DOVE (*Columba turtur*).

Has occurred several times in Wigtownshire. The late Dr Landsborough mentioned to Mr Gray that a specimen was shot at Stevenston, Ayrshire, in 1834.

PHASIANIDÆ.

THE COMMON PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*).

Abundant in all the preserves of both counties, and nowhere more numerous than in some parts of Ayrshire, where the protection of all kinds of game is encouraged to an injurious extent. In the preserves at Culzean Castle, and also on the estate of Kilkerran, there is a handsome breed frequenting the woods, viz., a cross between this species and Diard's pheasant (*P. versicolor*).

TETRAONIDÆ.

THE BLACK GROUSE (*Tetrao tetrix*).

This handsome species is very common on all the moors, especially those of the higher grounds of Ayrshire. In Wigtownshire it extends to the Mull of Galloway, and has been seen near the Lighthouse. It has also been found on the moors above Portpatrick, within sight of the Irish coast. Various attempts have been made to naturalise the species in Ireland, but without success.

A fresh egg of this bird was found about two years ago near the summit of Ailsa Craig, but it had probably been carried thither by some vagrant gull.

Mr Anderson has remarked, that in the neighbourhood of Girvan (Cuddystone Glen), he has seen young broods near cultivated fields, and at a long distance from the usual haunts of the old birds. In June, 1869, we sprung a grey hen in this locality, attended by a brood of seven healthy chicks.

OBS.—The Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) has, in one instance, been met with near Auchengray, in Lanarkshire, which is sufficiently close to our boundaries to merit remark. The specimen—a fine male bird in beautiful plumage—was shot by Henry Lees, Esq., in December, 1868.

THE RED GROUSE (*Lagopus Scoticus*).

Abundant on all the numerous shootings in both counties.

Very handsome birds are bred on some of the Ayrshire moors. The disease to which this fine bird, for the last twenty years, has been more or less subject, appears to be intimately associated with the destruction of birds of prey frequenting its haunts. (See "Proceedings of Nat. Hist. Soc. of Glasgow," page 226).

THE COMMON PARTRIDGE (*Perdix cinerea*).

Also very common, and well distributed, extending in Wigtownshire to the verge of the cliffs at the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse, where we saw a covey last year in a small patch of oats in the enclosed piece of cultivated ground belonging to the Commissioners.

In ordinary seasons this bird is useful to farmers as a destroyer of *aphides* and other larger insects, which adhere to and injure the leaves of the turnip. Mr Anderson has seen a covey leisurely traversing the turnip drills, and picking the insects from the under side of the leaves; and we are gratified to learn from Mr J. A. Harvie Brown—an excellent observer, resident in Stirlingshire—that he has made similar observations on this habit of the partridge, during the present summer. "The *Green Fly*," writes Mr Brown, "is abundant on turnip leaves in some places this year, and the partridges seem to feed largely on it. I observed a covey, the other day, feeding along the edge of a turnip field, underneath the leaves; and Mr Drummond observed the same thing this year. I don't remember having actually seen them doing this before." A beautiful albino of this species was shot in Wigtownshire some years ago, by H. Stewart, Esq., of Tonderghie.

THE COMMON QUAIL (*Coturnix vulgaris*).

Well known both in Ayrshire and Wigtownshire. It is not uncommon near Girvan, frequenting grass fields, where, on summer nights, it is often detected by its soft and liquid note. Among rural people it is known by the name of *wcet-my-feet*, these words being well expressed in the sounds emitted by the bird. Mr Gray has in his collection a specimen in summer plumage, shot near Kilmarnock, in May, 1868, by Mr Eaton, who states that it must breed somewhere in that neighbourhood. The nest has been frequently found in other parts of Ayrshire. Mr Gray has in his collection two very prettily marked eggs, taken along with other nine in a nest near Ardrossan, by Mr John Jamieson.

The nest was found by a party of mowers while at work in a rye-grass field. Quails were abundant in some districts of Wig-townshire about seventy or eighty years ago.

OBS.—It may here be remarked, that in the Statistical Account of the parish of Maybole, published in 1836, the Great Bustard (*Otis tarda*) is mentioned in a list of the birds of that district prepared by Dr M'Tyer. We have no means, however, of now proving the authenticity of this record.

GRALLATORES.

CHARADRIIDÆ.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER (*Charadrius pluvialis*).

Very abundant, and resident all the year, frequenting the moors in summer during the breeding season, and the sea-shore at low tide in winter. When the tide is full they repair to fallow grounds in the interior, sometimes travelling inland to a considerable distance. They seem to know instinctively at what hour to leave, so as to reach the coast when the rocks and sands are being exposed as the water recedes. On these occasions the flocks are immense, covering many acres of the shore, and sometimes packing so closely as to form a vast ornithological causeway. In the months of February and March, about the time when plovers partly assume their breeding plumage, Mr Anderson has seen flocks alighting in grass fields on Enoch Farm, and literally covering about eight or ten acres of ground. A noted haunt for this species in Ayrshire is the farm of Turnberry Warren, about five miles north of Girvan, where many thousands congregate in the pasture lands near the sea about the middle of July.

THE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius hiaticula*).

One of the commonest shore birds from Ayr Heads to the Mull of Galloway wherever a stretch of sand occurs. Large migratory flocks appear to congregate on the shores of the Mull of Galloway in autumn. These flocks break up and disappear as winter approaches.

THE SANDERLING (*Calidris arenaria*).

About the beginning of August this species is found in considerable numbers on the shore near Girvan, but does not remain there longer than two or three weeks. We have repeatedly, and in some seasons invariably, found it in pairs, resting on the wet sand at low tide.

THE GREY PLOVER (*Squaterola cinerea*).

Very sparingly met with on the coasts. It appears to be much commoner in the eastern counties than with us.

THE LAPWING, OR PEEWIT (*Vanellus cristatus*).

Extremely common in the autumn months, congregating in pasture lands and the sea shore alternately. It disappears to a great extent in November, and returns in April, when the breeding haunts are occupied. They breed in communities of twenty or thirty pairs. In the last week of July, 1869, we observed a number of pairs of lapwings on the farm of Turnberry Warren, near Girvan, and being attracted by the behaviour of the birds as they plunged in the air while we drove past, we made a search in the field, and were surprised to find concealed among the rushes eight or ten broods in the down. These young birds were not more than ten days old. We have often observed this bird on moonlight evenings travelling in companies at a late hour, and at a considerable height in the air. Rural people in Ayrshire speak of the peesweep as a restless and "ill-conditioned brute." A properly seasoned dish of lapwings, however, about the close of autumn, when their flesh is really palatable, might help to dissipate this prejudice.

THE TURNSTONE (*Streptilas interpres*).

Although the Turnstone cannot be called a common species in Ayrshire, it is never altogether absent. It is generally seen flying in flocks of five or six birds, and is somewhat restless in its habits, owing, probably, to the beach being unsuitable for a prolonged stay. Very fine specimens, nearly in the full breeding plumage, have been obtained by Mr Eaton at Ardrossan, where it appears to linger every year until May. In its winter dress it is common in some parts of Wigtownshire, such as the Bay of Wigtown, Garielstown Harbour, and the shores of Loch Ryan, etc.

THE OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*).

Very common. On Fairlie Sands as many as fifty or sixty may be seen at a time, ranged along the oozy shores at low water. Southward on the Ayrshire coast, however, it becomes less numerous, and from Ayr to Ballantrae it occurs mostly in pairs, the small sandy bays offering but little temptation to a greater num-

ber to remain. In Loch Ryan, Wigtown Bay, and Garliestown, it again appears in abundance. We have seen flocks of twenty to thirty, flying at a great height, passing Girvan on their way to another feeding ground; and have counted, in the month of July, as many as sixty resting together on the sandy beach near Turnberry Castle.

ARDEIDÆ.

THE COMMON HERON (*Ardea cinerea*).

Common everywhere, from the sea-coast to the source of the moorland burn, many miles inland, and more than a thousand feet above the sea level. There are one or two heronries in Ayrshire. Towards nightfall, in the month of August, we have seen as many as six herons flying in company, and following the windings of the Water of Girvan, looking out for an attractive pool. They are at times very destructive to fish.

THE COMMON BITTERN (*Botaurus stellaris*).

Formerly bred in Bruntwood Loch, near Mauchline. This species is now, however, of very rare and uncertain occurrence in both counties. We have not, indeed, seen a recently killed specimen for some years.

THE NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax Gardeni*).

Mr Eaton has informed us that a specimen of this heron was shot, many years ago, within a mile of Kilmarnock. We know of no other instance of its occurrence in any part of our district.

SCOLOPACIDÆ.

THE COMMON CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*).

The well-known whaup is very abundant, breeding on all the moors of both counties, and frequenting the entire coast line, at low water, from Fairlie banks to the shores of Kirkmaiden. When the young are fledged, and begin to congregate in autumn, they frequent pasture lands, and are then easily obtained, not having acquired the characteristic wariness of the old birds. We have seen them in July traversing the line of high water mark, and feeding upon sand hoppers, which at that season are exceedingly abundant; and in the same month immense flocks collect in

the pasture lands of Turnberry Warren farm, from which they make daily visits to the beach. On 24th July, 1869, we noticed a flock in which there could not have been fewer than 500 birds.

THE WHIMBREL (*Numenius arquata*).

Almost never seen with us but in May, during its migratory flight northwards. A few are tempted to travel along the shore as far as the Clyde estuary, where they linger about two weeks. The principal flocks appear to take a more direct line to their breeding quarters, by steering for Islay, Jura, and Mull, and thence to the outer Hebrides, where they make a longer stay.

THE COMMON REDSHANK (*Totanus calidris*).

Breeds in both counties, and is nowhere more common than in the Bay of Luce, from Port-William to the Drumore coast. Its summer haunts are numerous throughout the district, and present a variety of scenery, from the low lying marshes of the south of Wigtown to the chain of moorland lochs lying embosomed among some of the finest mountain ranges in our district. We have observed it in small flocks on the coast as early as the beginning of July.

OBS.—The Green Sandpiper (*Totanus ochropus*), and the Wood Sandpiper (*T. glareola*), have both occurred in districts bordering upon our limits, but not exactly within the prescribed boundaries.

THE COMMON SANDPIPER (*Totanus hypoleucos*).

This lively species is very common from April to September, frequenting every stream, and many of our moorland lochs, on the banks of which they breed in considerable numbers. On the Girvan Water, which is subject to frequent floods, these birds instinctively avoid places for nesting inside the embankment, and invariably betake themselves to the adjoining turnip and potato fields, where the nest is often found under shelter of the leaves of the growing plants. The young, on being hatched, are led by both parents to the water's edge, where they remain almost continually until able to shift for themselves. We have also found the broods in drains and ditches communicating with the river. In the autumn the families assemble, and follow the stream to the sea, where they remain a week or ten days before finally leaving the coasts.

THE GREENSHANK (*Totanus glottis*).

Sparingly distributed along all the shores in autumn and winter. In the months of August and September we have seen it ascending the courses of our larger streams, and coming to a distance from the sea-coast. Two very fine specimens now before us were shot by Dr Anderson in the pebbly bed of Girvan Water, on Enoch Farm, some years ago.

THE BAR-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa rufa*).

In the Bay of Luce and also in Wigtown Bay this bird finds an agreeable resting-place in its flight southwards at the close of summer. On the coast of Ayrshire, however, it is much seldomer observed, probably from the fact of the western migratory flocks coming down from the Hebrides, and taking the southern point of Scotland as their guide to the Solway Firth, where considerable numbers remain during the whole of the winter months.

OBS.—The Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa melanura*) has occurred on two occasions on the confines of our district. One was shot on the Renfrewshire side of the Clyde estuary on 25th November, 1867; another was killed on the Castle Semple Estate, near Lochwinnoch, in the last week of August, 1869.

THE RUFF (*Machetes pugnax*).

So far as we can judge, this species is rare in any part of our district. The Solway Firth appears to check its progress northward in autumn, or rather to divert the line of its flight eastward through the southern portion of the counties of Roxburgh and Berwick to the shores of Haddington and Fife. The Ruff has occurred in Renfrewshire, and we lately heard of a specimen having been shot near Kilbirnie, in Ayrshire—an inland situation. The female is apt to be overlooked by ordinary sportsmen, owing to its small size.

THE WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*).

A common winter visitant. It arrives generally in September, and leaves in April. Many of these birds are taken in lighthouses about the time they pass northward. We have not yet heard of the nest having been taken in any part of our district.

THE GREAT SNIPE (*Scolopax major*).

A specimen of this bird was shot by Mr W. Boyd of Greenock, in September, 1868, on the lands of Corsehouse, in the parish of Stewarton, as narrated in Gray's "Birds of the West of Scotland." The species has likewise been shot in Renfrewshire, on the borders of our district.

THE COMMON SNIPE (*Scolopax gallinago*).

Abundant in suitable localities over the district. The great amount of drainage, however, which has been effected during the last twenty years, has been the means of banishing the snipe from former waste lands now under cultivation. Numbers are yet observed in the larger drains and ditches bounding the grain and grass fields of the low country.

THE JACK SNIPE (*Scolopax gallinula*).

Strictly a winter visitant, and found in some numbers in small marshes and moist meadows.

THE CURLEW SANDPIPER (*Tringa sub-arquata*).

Not commonly met with, although it is probably seldom absent, during the winter months, from Loch Ryan, Luce Bay, Garliestown shore, and the Bay of Wigtown. It can only be regarded as a straggler on other parts of the coast of either county, and is, for the most part, seen there on its arrival in the beginning of autumn.

THE KNOT (*Tringa canutus*).

So far as our observations extend, this species is rather rare in our district. It never appears on our shores in flocks of more than three or four birds. One was taken on the lantern at the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse, in September, 1866; but Mr Gray, who happened to be there at the time, was informed by the keeper that he had never seen one in the district before.

THE DUNLIN (*Tringa variabilis*).

This extremely variable species, as regards size, colouring, and length of bill, is found in great numbers on the sea-coast, in sandy bays, and muddy estuaries, and is also met with, sparingly, during summer, breeding on the margins of little fresh water

lochs and pools among the hills. Mr Gray is inclined to regard the dunlin of the Outer Hebrides as belonging to a northern race, being darker in colour and much smaller in size than that found on the south-western mainland.

THE PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Tringa maritima*).

Occurs in irregular flocks on the rocky parts of the Ayrshire coast, and has also been found in Wigtownshire. Dr Anderson killed five of these birds at a shot, near Girvan, a few years ago. We have also seen specimens killed near Ardrossan.

THE GREY PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*).

Of very rare occurrence in any part of our district. Single examples have been obtained on the northern shores of Ayrshire. It has also occurred in Renfrewshire. The Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*) has never, to our knowledge, been met with in Ayrshire or Wigtownshire.

RALLIDÆ.

THE LANDRAIL, OR CORN CRAKE (*Crex pratensis*).

Abundant everywhere. With us it calls throughout the whole of the night, from the time of its arrival till the end of July. In warm seasons numbers of corn crakes frequent the Water of Girvan about mid day, and appear to delight in bathing in the little pools among the pebbles of the stream. During excessive heat, we have seen these birds anxiously traversing the dusty roads in quest of water.

THE SPOTTED CRAKE (*Crex porzana*).

In both counties this bird has several times been captured, and it has been taken in Renfrewshire. Mr M'Omish, bird-stuffer, Stranraer, showed Mr Gray a specimen killed near that town in 1867. From its quiet and unobtrusive habits, the spotted crane is but seldom observed anywhere.

THE WATER RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*).

Occurs sparingly in suitable localities. It seems to prefer marshy spots of inconsiderable extent, where, if unmolested, it remains a long time, seeking occasional refuge in covered drains

and thick tufts of herbage. From such places of concealment it is very difficult to dislodge the bird. There is a great difference in size between the sexes.

Mr Thomas Anderson, jun., informed us some time ago that he captured a water rail, which flew on board one of the Cunard steamers in December, 1867, when about 450 miles from land. The ship was on an outward voyage from Liverpool.

THE MOOR HEN (*Gallinula chloropus*).

The familiar water hen is very common in all the streams, lochs, and pools of our district, frequenting also mill-dams, ditches, and other water courses, especially such as are fringed with a profusion of water plants, where the birds can hide themselves from observation. The eggs of this species are, in some districts, subject to considerable variation in size, markings, and general appearance.

LOBIPEDIDÆ.

THE COMMON COOT (*Fulica atra*).

Found with the preceding species in the larger lochs, but not, so far as we have observed, in water courses or drains.

NATATORES.

ANATIDÆ.

THE GREY-LAG GOOSE (*Anser ferus*).

Stray birds of this species are occasionally found during the winter months on the larger inland lochs and marshes. Their appearance, however, is uncertain. The attractions of the western islands as a feeding ground are sufficient to prevent these birds wandering to any great extent. A portion of both counties is visited by small flocks in passing southward in the beginning of winter, and again in March and April as they return. On these occasions they often alight on Ailsa Craig, and pitch upon a marsh there.

THE BEAN GOOSE (*Anser segetum*).

Of occasional occurrence in moist ground in retired moorlands, and sometimes seen in flocks on the sands at the Bay of Wigtown and near Glenluce. The following note is taken from Thomson's "Birds of Ireland":—"A sporting friend, residing in the south of

Ayrshire, has occasionally met with Bean Geese in the bogs there, and sprung them from among beds of wild roses, on the fruit of which (a small mountain species) they must have been busied feeding, as proved on dissection of those killed."

THE PINK-FOOTED GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhyncus*).

Of rare and uncertain occurrence only; one or two specimens, at most, being all that are identified during the course of a season.

THE WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*).

Occurs in small flocks on the low-lying grassy shores of Wigtownshire, and is sometimes taken, with other wild fowl, by keepers and others who practise loch-shooting for the market.

THE BERNICLE GOOSE (*Anser leucopsis*).

Numbers of this species frequent the Firth of Clyde in winter, and are also observed on the sands at Luce Bay. The passing flocks going northwards assemble at a pool of the estuary near Dumbarton Castle, where they seem to have attracted the notice of the curious nearly three hundred years ago.

THE BRENT GOOSE (*Anser torquatus*).

Much less common than the preceding species, occurring, perhaps, in the proportion of one to fifty. It is better known in the eastern counties. Small numbers are every winter sent, along with other wild fowl, from Ayrshire shootings to the Glasgow market.

THE CANADA GOOSE (*Anser Canadensis*).

Has been once or twice observed on some of the larger lochs of both counties. A specimen shot on Tarbolton Loch, 11th March, 1865, is now in the collection of our friend Mr William Sinclair of Glasgow.

THE HOOPER, OR WHISTLING SWAN (*Cygnus ferus*).

At the close of last century, flocks of this species appeared every winter on Loch Inch, and other similar sheets of water in Wigtownshire. These lochs are still visited by passing flocks, but not regularly. Considerable numbers annually visit Lochwinnoch in Renfrewshire, which is on the borders of our district.

In this beautiful loch there are about fifty tame swans, and it is a sight of no ordinary interest to see the fleet of noble birds sailing together on the blue waters. Persons resident in the neighbourhood inform us that the winter visitants are much smaller in size, darker in colour, and much more active on the wing than the usual residents. Many of these are, of course, referable to the next species.

BEWICK'S SWAN (*Cygnus Bewickii*).

This species is sometimes recognised in lochs and ponds in severe winters, many of the birds being in the plumage of the first year.

THE COMMON SHELLDRAKE (*Tadorna vulpanser*).

This showy and handsome bird is not uncommon in rabbit warrens on the coasts of both counties. It appears, however, to be more plentiful in Wigtownshire. We have obtained the eggs from near Garliestown. It also breeds in Kirkcudbrightshire. A number of pairs used to breed on the Horse Island, off Ardrosan, but of late years these have become reduced, on account of the frequent visits made to the locality by boating parties from the harbour, and this year (1869) only one pair has been observed.

THE SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*).

Has occurred but in three instances in our district. A pair—male and female—were shot on the Cree, near Newton-Stewart, in the spring of 1865, by James Hamilton, keeper. Another was shot in the month of May, 1860, in a small burn on the farm of Drummuck, near Girvan, by a son of Mr Davidson, farmer there.

THE GADWALL (*Anas strepera*).

With the exception of a single specimen—a male—shot on the loch of Tarbolton a few years ago, we cannot trace the occurrence of this species anywhere in our district. It is, notwithstanding, a bird of tolerably wide distribution in western Scotland.

THE PINTAIL DUCK (*Anas acuta*).

Of occasional and uncertain appearance only; appearing singly, in most cases, on the larger streams and inland lochs.

THE WILD DUCK (*Anas boschas*).

Abundant everywhere. We have seen very large flocks coming up from the coast at twilight to the potato pits on some Ayrshire farms, where they committed much mischief. On the private ponds they take up their quarters throughout the winter months, and, if unmolested, often remain to breed in the vicinity.

THE GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*).

We have been informed by the Rev. George Wilson of Glencuce, that a specimen of this beautiful duck, which he had an opportunity of examining, was shot in the Bay of Luce in 1867.

THE TEAL (*Anas crecca*).

Also common. In hard winters it ascends the course of the frozen rivers, and is often taken in the neighbourhood of mill-pounds where the water is kept running. Dr Anderson procured several beautiful males, by making an opening in the ice, a few winters ago, and keeping a look-out for the birds as they halted in their flight before alighting at the spot.

THE WIGEON (*Anas penelope*).

A very common winter visitant, appearing in September or October, and leaving in March or April. This species sometimes pairs early, and in these particular seasons they disappear sooner.

THE EIDER DUCK (*Somateria mollissima*).

This large and conspicuous bird is very seldom procured. It may occur much oftener than we suppose, but being strictly of marine habits, few persons have an opportunity of shooting it. So far as we can learn, it does not breed anywhere in our district.

THE VELVET SCOTER (*Oidemia fusca*).

Very rarely observed on the coast, and very few specimens are ever obtained. It is better known as a winter visitant to the eastern shores of Scotland.

THE COMMON SCOTER (*Oidemia nigra*).

Equally scarce with the preceding, and almost never procured, although readily enough distinguished when seen.

THE POCHARD, OR DUN BIRD (*Fuligula rafinus*).

A well-known winter visitant to our estuaries at twilight. During the day-time it frequents fresh-water lochs at some distance inland, and is sometimes procured in quantities by poachers, who watch their opportunity for a raking shot.

THE SCAUP DUCK (*Fuligula marila*).

Frequents the open sea chiefly during the day-time, coming shorewards in the evening. It appears to be somewhat irregular in numbers—some winters the flocks are tolerably numerous; at other times a pair or two only are seen.

THE TUFTED DUCK (*Fuligula cristata*).

Strictly a winter visitant; frequenting the open sea in fine weather, and coming up the larger rivers during storms. It is also found on our lochs and ponds, especially those not far from the coast.

OBS.—Although the Long-tailed Duck (*F. glacialis*) is found in considerable numbers in the Hebrides, we have never had an opportunity of seeing it in our district.

THE GOLDEN EYE (*Fuligula clangula*).

This fine species is rather common with us at times. It is, perhaps, more frequently met with in Wigtownshire than in Ayrshire, but cannot be called rare in the latter county. Most of the specimens we have seen were young birds and females.

THE SMEW.

So far as we know, this beautiful bird has occurred but once in Wigtownshire, a male having been shot, in March, 1855, on Castle Kennedy Loch, near Stranraer. For this record we are indebted to the Rev. George Wilson of Glenluce.

THE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*).

Breeds sparingly in both counties. In the winter season it is often shot on the sea-coast.

THE GOOSANDER (*Mergus merganser*).

In spring time very handsome specimens of this fine bird are obtained on our lochs and rivers.

COLYMBIDÆ.

THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*).

Very rarely met with in either of the counties. Being resident all the year in Ireland, it is somewhat singular that few, if any, of the young birds hatched in the loughs there find their way to the western shores of Wigtown.

THE RED-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps rubricollis*).

Equally rare with the preceding; very few specimens being obtained. It is occasionally seen in the estuaries, and at some distance up the rivers, but not later than the month of April. One of these birds in the breeding plumage was shot, a few years ago, at Caldwell in Ayrshire, and is now in the collection of Mr Orr, Kilbirnie.

THE SCLAVONIAN GREBE (*Podiceps cornutus*).

Uncommon, and generally seen at sea when it does occur. It turns up occasionally on fresh water lakes in spring and autumn, but is entirely absent during the summer months.

THE LITTLE GREBE, OR DABCHICK (*Podiceps minor*).

Even this species, which is so numerous in almost all other parts of Scotland, is not common. Mr Gray saw one lately in the possession of H. Stewart, Esq. of Tonderghie, near Burrow Head, and was surprised to learn from that gentleman that it was extremely rare in his neighbourhood. In Ayrshire, however, it is more frequently obtained.

THE GREAT NORTHERN DIVER (*Colymbus glacialis*).

Very common in both counties. It is, indeed, found in great numbers off the coast of Wigtownshire in autumn and winter. We have seen it also in summer near Girvan, in pairs, about a mile off shore on warm days during a dead calm, when their hoarse conversation was distinctly heard. When in pursuit of prey, they are at this season occasionally taken in the salmon nets near the town. Mr Anderson saw two very fine specimens in the last week of May, 1869. One of these—a brilliant bird in full summer dress—is now in the possession of Mr Murray, banker, Girvan. In August, old birds, still partly clad in this

plumage, have been seen near Ballantrae, each attended by a young one about the size of a wild duck. Mr Watson of Stranraer informs us that he repeatedly sees three or four at a time off the Galloway coast, near Kirkmaiden.

THE BLACK-THROATED DIVER (*Colymbus arcticus*).

Occurs off the coasts, chiefly in spring and beginning of summer, about the time of moving towards the breeding localities to the north-west. We have seen pairs of this beautiful bird also off Girvan. Mr Anderson had a splendid specimen, in the breeding plumage, presented to him by Mr Murray. It was taken alive in the salmon nets, and has lately been transferred to Mr Gray's private collection in Glasgow.

THE RED-THROATED DIVER (*Colymbus septentrionalis*).

So far as we can learn, this species is only a winter visitant; it is frequently taken in fresh-water lakes, deep pools in rivers, and still oftener on the sea-coast, close to the shore, where it finds its favourite food in suitable quantity. It is very rarely met with in the breeding plumage in our district.

ALCADÆ.

THE COMMON GUILLEMOT (*Uria troile*).

A very common species off the coasts of both counties. Its breeding haunts are at Ailsa Craig, in Ayrshire, and the Scaur rocks, at the entrance to the Bay of Luce, in Wigtonshire—at both of which places it is found in great abundance. Vast numbers were at one time killed yearly on Ailsa Craig, during the breeding season; but since the passing of the “Sea Birds Preservation Bill” the practice is believed to have been discontinued. At the Scaur Rocks the birds were seldom if ever molested.

Towards the close of summer, large companies of these birds occasionally congregate near the shore, and remain there for days in calm weather, over the sand banks where their food is obtained.

THE RINGED GUILLEMOT, OR BRIDLED GUILLEMOT (*Uria
luchrymans*).

Occurs at Ailsa Craig and also at the Scaur Rocks, in the proportion of one to five hundred of the commoner species. We have

proved this at various times on the Craig, by counting the slaughtered birds taken in the tacksman's nets. In 1867 we counted over 1500 of *Uria troile*, in which we found two specimens of this bird; but one of the men stated that he had obtained a third, which he had taken out of the net alive, and tethered to a stone. On returning, however, to the place, he could not hit on the exact spot, and so lost the bird.

THE BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Uria grylle*).

We have seen this bird in summer, near the entrance to Loch Ryan, and also in the Bay of Luce, but have not been able to find it incubating either on Ailsa Craig or the Scaur Rocks. From the frequency of its occurrence at this season, however, it is probably a native of both places. During the winter months it is found in small numbers in the Firth of Clyde, from Ayrshire to Port-Glasgow, and small numbers have been observed, in the full breeding plumage, off Ardrossan. Mr Gray examined a very fine one which had been shot by Mr Steedman near the Horse Island. We have reason to believe that one or two pairs breed in the rocky fissures near Kildonan, in Arran.

THE LITTLE AUK (*Mergulus melanoleucos*).

The late Mr Thompson, in his work on the "Birds of Ireland," states that, on 19th May, 1849, "Mr Darragh, of the Belfast Museum, saw four little auks on Ailsa Craig;" but during a long experience in the estuary of the Clyde, and numerous visits to the Craig, it has never come under our observation. In one or two instances examples of its occurrence in winter have been made known to us. In the season of 1867-68, a number of little auks were driven inland at various places. One of these was picked up at Kilmarnock, and given to Mr Eaton there, in whose hands Mr Gray saw it.

As a rule, this bird is found much more plentifully on the eastern coasts of Scotland.

THE PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*).

Occurs in immense numbers on Ailsa Craig during the breeding season, and is found plentifully on all parts of the coast between Ayr Heads and the Mull of Galloway from February to October. On Ailsa Craig its burrows are found under the broken rocks

piled at the base of the island, and also on a part of the grassy slopes about half way towards its summit. The young are fed, for the most part, on sand eels, quantities of which are brought by the old birds to the burrows—each having from six to eleven of these fishes at a time. These are often procured at a considerable distance from the rock, as any one accustomed to make repeated visits to that celebrated breeding place may easily testify by observing the puffins, many miles away from it, rise from the water and steer straight homewards, with their bills quite full. The male of this bird is said to have a larger bill than the female; and with the view of ascertaining whether the former took part in the duties of incubation, we turned over upwards of 500 dead ones during the occasion of our last visit, but found not more than half-a-dozen large billed specimens in that number. These puffins had been taken out of the nets in the course of three days' fowling, and in many of the burrows we found eggs and newly-hatched young birds—the former in many instances being addled, and the latter dead. Mr Gray has elsewhere dwelt on the habits of the puffin in this locality.*

THE RAZORBILL (*Alca torda*).

A very common species on Ailsa Craig in the breeding time, and also a native of the Scaur Rocks in Luce Bay. In September, 1859, a very extraordinary mortality occurred among the sea fowl of the Craig, which was largely shared in by this species. A number of razorbills are taken annually by the Girvan fishermen when drawing their nets, which are sometimes floated within a mile or two of the rocks.

PELECANIDÆ.

THE COMMON CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).

The gaunt figure of this well-known bird is seldom wanting on our sea beacons and isolated rocks within a short distance of the shore. At any season the cormorant is nowhere more abundant than along the shores of Wigtownshire, especially that part of the coast between Glenluce and Port-William, where fifty or sixty are constantly seen, either fishing, in the winter months, or, in summer, drying their wings preparatory to their inland flight. Their

* See "Birds of the West of Scotland."

nursery is, or was until recently, situated on the banks of the Castle Loch, about seven miles inland.* Another very important breeding station is at Loch Moan, in Ayrshire, and is frequented by several hundred pairs, which lay their eggs on a small island in the middle of the lake. The nesting haunts of this species, however, are not confined to inland districts. A pretty extensive colony may be seen hatching on a part of the cliffs between Ballantrae and the entrance to Glen App, and a few pairs are also found breeding on Ailsa Craig.

THE SHAG, OR GREEN CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax graculus*).

The green cormorant occurs much less frequently than the preceding species; it is, however, a common bird of the coasts. Its breeding haunts with us are strictly confined to Ailsa Craig and the numerous caves which exist southwards of Ballantrae, and again at the Mull of Galloway and Burrow Head.

THE GANNET, OR SOLAND GOOSE (*Sula alba*).

Off the Ayrshire coast the gannet is a daily object of attention as it sweeps its pure white figure against the blue sky or the dark cloud. Occasionally it comes very near the beach; we have observed it in shallow bays diving after whittings, in a depth of water not exceeding three or four feet. On such occasions the plunge was made at an acute angle, the gannet appearing almost immediately, and before its body had time to be fully submerged. Its mode of fishing was very skilful and guarded. The gannet appears off our coasts early in February, and generally leaves about the close of September; its movements, however, are considerably influenced by the abundance or scarcity of the various fish upon which it is known to feed.

LARIDÆ.

THE SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna Boysii*).

We have recognised this fine species in flight off the coast near Girvan, and have seen an occasional specimen shot in our district. We have not, however, been able to discover it breeding on any of the rocks frequented by the other species.

* This loch, one of a group, is situated in the parish of Mochrum, and throughout the district these birds are known by the name of "Mochrum Elders."

THE COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*).

A comparatively common species in the Firth of Clyde, but a very few pairs only breed with us.

THE ARCTIC TERN (*Sterna arctica*).

More common than the preceding species. At low water occasional specimens are seen along the shore near Girvan, picking up the slender fishes on which they feed. Mr Anderson came upon a small flock of these birds some years ago in very peculiar circumstances. He was driving his dog-cart within a mile of Girvan one winter afternoon, during a thick fall of snow, when the terns suddenly made their appearance, flapping around the horse's ears. Using his whip vigorously, he struck down three of the birds, and captured them.

THE LESSER TERN (*Sterna minuta*).

So far as we can ascertain, this beautiful species is of somewhat rare and uncertain occurrence in either county. It is probably found every year in limited flocks when travelling southwards from their breeding stations, but these are nowhere numerous on the west coast. Mr Eaton, of Kilmarnock, has in his collection a specimen in the first month's plumage, which was shot on the Water of Irvine a few years ago.

THE BLACK TERN (*Sterna fessipes*).

Of very rare occurrence. It has been observed on one or two occasions, and in one instance at least a specimen has been obtained. The bird referred to was shot on 29th August, 1868, at Broadstone, near Stranraer, and preserved by Mr M'Omish, bird-stuffer there.

THE LITTLE GULL (*Larus minutus*).

In the Transactions of the Wernerian Society of Edinburgh it is recorded by Mr Selby that a specimen of this bird was procured in Wigtownshire.

No other example of the species has come under our observation.

THE BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*).

A very abundant species throughout both counties. There are many breeding stations in our district—such as Loch Doon in

Ayrshire—which are frequented by thousands of birds; and as the eggs are not farmed out as in England, these nurseries are seldom invaded, except by mischievous boys in quest of adventure, or some prowling fox desirous of giving her cubs a change of diet.

In the heat of the summer months we have often observed a pair or two of this gull hunting over the potato fields near Girvan with great regularity, and picking up worms and snails, thus proving themselves useful friends of the farmer. One of these birds is at present living as a familiar pet in a house at Girvan, where it has been confined for the last thirteen years. It assumes the black cap regularly, like a wild bird, in spring, and becomes white in winter.

THE KITTIWAKE GULL (*Larus tridactylus*).

This beautiful gull is very common along the shores of Ayrshire during the spring months. In May the flocks assemble on Ailsa Craig, their chief breeding place, and become dispersed after the duties of incubation are past. The greater number migrate to other countries in the month of October, but many remain throughout the entire winter. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that these winter birds are visitants from more northern latitudes. In the Firth of Clyde they are seen in flocks near the beach and in harbours, where they appear to subsist principally upon the remains of fish, and other substances thrown out by the fishermen.

THE IVORY GULL (*Larus eburneus*).

Although the ivory gull has never, to our knowledge, been actually obtained in our district, there can be little doubt of its having occurred off the coasts. Various examples have been met with in surrounding localities, namely, Islay, Argyleshire, Arran, and Renfrewshire. In June, 1854, Mr William Sinclair saw an ivory gull on Ailsa Craig, and was near enough to recognise it.

THE COMMON GULL (*Larus canus*).

Also a very common species, breeding on Ailsa Craig, the Scour Rocks, and the Mull of Galloway. They also nest by the side of some of the inland lochs in Wigtownshire. It is a well known frequenter of the beach near Girvan from September to April.

THE ICELAND GULL, OR LESSER WHITE-WINGED GULL (*Larus
Icelandicus*).

Has been repeatedly observed on Ailsa Craig. The late Mr Thompson procured two specimens from Ballantrae, and the species has been observed by Mr Gray in other parts of Ayrshire. It appears to be an indolent bird during the day time, admitting of a near approach, and consequently, where it does occur, it is not difficult to obtain.

THE LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*).

Extremely common throughout our district, breeding upon Ailsa Craig in great numbers, and also on the borders of the Castle Loch, and other similar patches of water in Wigtownshire. In the harvest months great numbers betake themselves to grass fields at some distance inland about nightfall, and remain there until daybreak, when they again get on wing, and repair to the sea shore. In wild weather, however, they linger in the field until the day is well advanced, and come back in the afternoon much earlier, taking up their old position, as if reluctant to expose themselves to the storm. This bird, like the black-headed gull, is often seen at Girvan beating over the potato fields daily in the middle of summer, and alighting every minute or so to pick up the snails, worms, and caterpillars for which it so diligently searches.

THE HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*).

The herring gull is a very common species throughout the year, but appears to be strictly confined to the sea coast. In the breeding season it haunts the cliffs at the Mull of Galloway, the Seaur Rocks, and Ailsa Craig. This bird is a notorious egg-lifter, and will even devour young grouse, and other game, when it gets an opportunity. On Ailsa Craig it rivals in this respect, if it does not exceed in rapacity, its congener, the lesser black-back, and pounces upon the unprotected eggs of the guillemot or razor-bill with unfailing success. The curlew, and its kindred, are equally molested during the breeding time. In the winter season they subsist entirely on what the sea shore affords them.

THE GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*).

This bird has even a worse reputation than the preceding

species. It is hardly so common with us, but is still sufficiently numerous to form an important item in the bird life of our district. At Girvan we have observed several pairs coming apparently from Ailsa Craig, and proceeding with strong-winged beats, high in the air, in the direction of some of the largest sheep farms on the hills, and have watched their raven-like flight until they disappeared beyond the top of the Saugh Hill. Their prey, we doubt not, was variously suggestive.

THE POMERINE SKUA (*Lestris pomarinus*).

This species, easily recognised by its superior bulk from Richardson's skua, has been observed in various parts of Ayrshire. It has, according to the late Mr Thompson, occurred at Ballantrae, and Mr Gray has observed it off the coast on more than one occasion. It has likewise been obtained in Wigtownshire.

RICHARDSON'S SKUA (*Lestris Richardsonii*).

Occasionally observed along shore chasing the sea gulls. It visits Ailsa Craig early in the season—probably before retiring to its breeding quarters—and delights in molesting the kittiwakes, among whom he is a most unwelcome intruder. About this time also it scours the coast line as far as the Mull of Galloway in the same pursuit, but is seldom or never observed in June, July, or August, when the birds are hatching.

BUFFON'S SKUA (*Lestris Buffonii*).

Can only be ranked with us as a rare straggler. The last and most recent specimen coming under our observation was one shot on the Cree, near Newton-Stewart, in the spring of 1863.

THE MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus anglorum*).

As this bird seldom approaches the coast nearer than a mile's distance, it is not often observed, except by those who go in quest of birds, or are interested in their movements. It may, however, be seen regularly passing and repassing even as late as the end of June. There are probably no breeding stations of this species nearer us than the islands of Mull, Staffa, or Iona; yet it is possible that they may extend their daily excursions to the Ayrshire coast, as their flight is extremely easy and buoyant.

THE FORK-TAILED PETREL (*Thalassidroma Leachii*).

Occasionally cast on shore in rough weather. A specimen was taken at Stranraer in the winter of 1863. In the west of Scotland generally this species is found to be about as numerous as the storm petrel.

THE STORM PETREL (*Thalassidroma pelagica*).

During the severest winter storms, this diminutive bird of the ocean occasionally loses its reckoning, and is blown on shore. We have seen specimens taken at Kilbirnie and Kilmarnock, and other towns at some distance inland. It breeds in limited numbers on Ailsa Craig; and we have seen it flying in small groups about midway between that rock and the mainland.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In closing this catalogue of the Birds of Ayrshire and Wig-townshire, we cannot withhold the expression of a belief, in which we trust that most persons interested in ornithological pursuits will readily join, that the time has now arrived when the protection of various classes of birds has become a paramount duty. We have only to consider the vast diminution of species that has taken place during the last thirty years in order to learn the mischief that has resulted from one cause alone—viz., the over-zealous destruction of creatures that are supposed to be enemies to game. In the exercise of their daily avocations, gamekeepers throughout the whole of these districts have, in fact, done more to thin our bird population than any other class of men. Birds of prey especially have suffered to an almost inconceivable extent—eagles, falcons, buzzards, hawks, and owls having been subjected to such continual persecution as to be now in some places on the verge of extinction as native species. Making due allowance for the ravages committed by some of the Raptorial and Corvine species, we believe that many of the birds which fall victims to the game preserver's vengeance are totally innocent of the charges laid against them. Owls, for example, are for the most part guiltless—their principal prey consisting of rats, mice, and other vermin that require to be kept in check. Nightjars and dippers are also harmless; and even the Kestrel falcon, which shares the fate of the hooded crow or the polecat, is not only harmless but useful as a devourer of mice and beetles, thus proving itself a friend instead of an enemy.

But apart from these considerations, it must be admitted that the destruction of certain groups of birds tends to derange that nicely-balanced harmony which is everywhere apparent in the dominion of Nature. Ample proof of this has been experienced in our own country, where the banishment of owls has been known to result in an inordinate increase of the various species of field mice, which constitute the ordinary food of these useful birds, and also in other countries, where the disappearance of insectivorous species has been followed by insect plagues—these examples, and many others which could be cited, tending to shew that Nature's plans are, at least, incapable of amelioration through man's interference.

To advocate the protection of eagles and falcons, therefore, for a time at least, would appear to us to be but a reasonable duty; and to influence our landed proprietors, with whom the power chiefly lies, in their favour, we would regard as only a just compensation for injuries already inflicted. It is certainly a matter of regret that some of our Scottish proprietors should actually have lent their influence against the protection of bird life. From these nothing can be expected but an unwilling obedience to laws already enacted for the preservation of certain maritime species that throw themselves entirely on the mercy of man during the breeding season; and naturalists may indeed congratulate themselves that the recent opposition brought to bear against the passing of this humane and salutary law was signally defeated.

We still cling to the hope that similar enactments may yet be framed for the protection of land birds, from the soaring eagle to the timid thrush; and until this takes place, proprietors would earn the gratitude of all true naturalists by resolving to discontinue the deadly practice of exterminating what their keepers have branded as vermin, and let our woods, fields, and mountain sides regain what has now for many years been wanting to give a charm to some of the finest, and, at the same time, the wildest scenery in the British Islands.

In a volume of 220 pages now before us, relating to the "Game Laws of the principal States of the United States and Canada," we find that Section VI. of the laws of the State of New York provides for the protection of a large number of land birds, including the eagle, fish hawk, night hawk, whip-poor-will, swallow, oriole, woodpecker, bobolink, *or any other harmless bird*. The penalty for violating the provisions of this Act is stated at fifty dollars for

each offence, and it may be presumed that the exemption in favour of naturalists desirous of studying their habits or history and having them preserved as cabinet specimens, will commend itself to the most fastidious collector. Such an Act, if applied to our own country, would operate favourably in many ways, and lead to a restoration of bird life that would prove welcome not only to students of nature but to those very persons who, under a mistaken prejudice, are at this moment its worst enemies.

Believing that its insertion here may serve a good purpose, we take the opportunity of furnishing our readers with a copy of the "Sea Birds Preservation Bill," which became law throughout Great Britain on the 24th of June last.

An Act for the Preservation of Sea Birds.—[24th June, 1869.]
32 and 33 Victoria, Chap. 17.

WHEREAS the sea birds of the United Kingdom have of late years greatly decreased in number; it is expedient therefore to provide for their protection during the breeding season: Be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same:

1. That the words "sea birds" shall for all the purposes of this Act be deemed to include the different species of auk, bonxie, Cornish chough, coultorneb, diver, eider duck, fulmar, gannet, grebe, guillemot, gull, kittiwake, loon, marrot, merganser, murre, oyster catcher, petrel, puffin, razor bill, scout, seamew, sea parrot, sea swallow, shearwater, shelldrake, skua, smew, solan goose, tarrock, tern tystey, and willock; the word "sheriff" shall include steward and also sheriff substitute and steward substitute.

2. Any person who shall kill, wound, or attempt to kill or wound, or take any sea bird, or use any boat, gun, net, or other engine or instrument for the purpose of killing, wounding, or taking any sea bird, or shall have in his control or possession any sea bird recently killed, wounded, or taken, between the first day of April and the first day of August in any year, shall, on conviction of any such offence before any justice or justices of the peace in England or Ireland, or before the sheriff or any justice or

justices of the peace in Scotland, forfeit and pay for every such sea bird so killed, wounded, or taken, or so in his possession, such sum of money not exceeding one pound as to the said justices or sheriff shall seem meet, together with the costs of the conviction; provided always, that this section shall not apply where the said sea bird is a young bird unable to fly.

3. The Home Office as to Great Britain, and the Lord Lieutenant as to Ireland, may, upon application of the justices in quarter sessions assembled of any county on the sea coast, extend or vary the time during which the killing, wounding, and taking of sea birds is prohibited by this Act; the extension or variation of such time by the Home Office shall be made by order under the hand of one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; after the making of which order the penalties imposed by this Act shall in such county apply only to offences committed during the time specified in such order; and the extension of such time by the Lord Lieutenant shall be made by order to be published in the Dublin Gazette, and a copy of the London Gazette or Dublin Gazette containing such order shall be evidence of the same having been made.

4. Where any person shall be found offending against this Act, it shall be lawful for any person to require the person so offending to give his Christian name, surname, and place of abode; and in case the person offending shall, after being so required, refuse to give his real name or place of abode, or give an untrue name or place of abode, he shall be liable, on being convicted of any such offence before a justice of the peace or the sheriff, to forfeit and pay, in addition to the penalties imposed by section two, such sum of money not exceeding two pounds as to the convicting justice or sheriff shall seem meet, together with the costs of the conviction.

5. One moiety of every penalty or forfeiture under this Act shall go and be paid to the person who shall inform and prosecute for the same, and the other moiety shall, in England, be paid to some one of the overseers of the poor, or to some other officer, (as the convicting justice or justices may direct,) of the parish, township, or place in which the offence shall have been committed, to be by such overseer or officer paid over to the use of the general rate of the county, riding, or division in which such parish, township, or place shall be situate, whether the same shall or shall not contribute

to such general rate; and, in Scotland, to the inspector of the poor of the parish in which the offence shall have been committed, to be by such inspector paid over to the use of the funds for the relief of the poor in such parish; and, if recovered in Ireland, such penalty shall be applied according to the provisions of the Fines Act (Ireland), 1851, or any Act amending the same.

6. All offences mentioned in this Act, which shall be committed within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty, shall be deemed to be offences of the same nature and liable to the same punishments as if they had been committed upon any land in the United Kingdom, and may be dealt with, inquired of, tried, and determined in any county or place in the United Kingdom in which the offender shall be apprehended or be in custody, in the same manner in all respects as if they had been actually committed in that county or place; and in any information or conviction for any such offence the offence may be averred to have been committed "on the high seas"; and in Scotland any offence committed against this Act on the sea coast, or at sea beyond the ordinary jurisdiction of any sheriff or justice of the peace, shall be held to have been committed in any county abutting on such sea coast, or adjoining such sea, and may be tried and punished accordingly.

7. Where any offence under this Act is committed in or upon any waters forming the boundary between any two counties, districts of quarter sessions or petty sessions, such offence may be prosecuted before any justice or justices of the peace or sheriff in either of such counties or districts.

8. The operation of this Act shall not extend to the island of Saint Kilda.

9. It shall be lawful for Her Majesty, by an Order of Council, where, on account of the necessities of the inhabitants of the more remote parts of the sea coasts of the United Kingdom, it shall appear desirable, from time to time to exempt any part or parts thereof from the operation of this Act; and every such Order shall assign the limits of such part or parts aforesaid within which such exemption shall have effect.

Two years ago a similar law, transgressors of which are visited by a penalty of £5, was passed by the Manx House of Keys for the protection chiefly of sea gulls, on the plea that these birds were

found to be of great service in removing dead fish and other animal remains from the shores; in guiding the fishermen to the fish shoals in the exercise of their usual occupation; and in acting as warning signals to mariners during the prevalence of fogs at a time when the precipitous headlands and other rocky ledges are occupied by the birds for breeding purposes; so that, apart from mere motives of humanity, the preservation of sea fowl may involve other questions of public utility. The larger gulls are well known as sea side scavengers, consuming quantities of garbage that might, if not removed, prove both injurious and offensive; and the united clamour of a legion of guillemots during the time they are hatching upon the rocks is sufficient in itself to prove a friendly warning to the bewildered seaman who hears the sound at a considerable distance, and so avoids the danger of closer contact.

In connection with the district to which many of the sea fowl in this catalogue are annual visitants, the chief evil appeared to us to be the wholesale slaughter that was yearly practised on Ailsa Craig—a breeding place which, in extent and importance, ranks next to St Kilda and Barra Head in the British islands. For the last twenty years this celebrated bird hive has, to our knowledge, been, with but a short interval of quiet, the scene of yearly invasion and systematic destruction that seemed to carry with it but a poor palliation in the low sum received as rent from the tacksman; and in the belief apparently that the proprietor could hardly be aware of the perpetration of so much cruelty, a writer in the *Times* drew public attention to the locality, as one affording a good plea why the contemplated Bill should be extended to Scotland. The exposure, however, elicited nothing more from those by whom the island has for some years been farmed, than a series of curious revelations, used, no doubt, as defensive arguments, but all directly admitting, although in somewhat contradictory terms, that “considerable numbers,” and, in some instances, heavy “boat loads,” had been sent shorewards; that solan geese suffered equally with the other species; that it was necessary to keep down the numbers of the birds to save the interests of the local fishermen from being absolutely destroyed (an admission which of itself involves the necessity of an extraordinary bird sacrifice); and that, in spite of the long-continued destruction that had been practised to keep their numbers within due bounds, no perceptible diminution had taken place. From

data in our possession, noted from personal observation, and that of some of our friends—members of the Natural History Society of Glasgow—we are enabled to affirm positively that as many as 1800 birds of all kinds have been strangled during the course of a single week, and that for eight or ten seasons in succession, especially during the tenure of the rock by the tacksman of 1853, and several subsequent years; the weekly number taken out of the nets could not be estimated at less than 150 dozen. With this statement we dismiss the subject, as one which, for the credit of the district, we hope may not require further exposure.

Waiving this digression, therefore, we think that, in common fairness, to adduce no stronger argument, birds of all kinds should have a “close time” during the season of incubation. It is not right that any class of creatures should be killed when brooding on their eggs, or exposing themselves to danger in the protection of their defenceless young. In the case of birds especially, many species wholly throw aside their usual wariness at such a season; and as regards isolated places like Ailsa Craig, exposed as they are to the plundering visits of heartless pleasure seekers, no one, we think, will ever call in question the wisdom or humanity of providing for their future protection.



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