

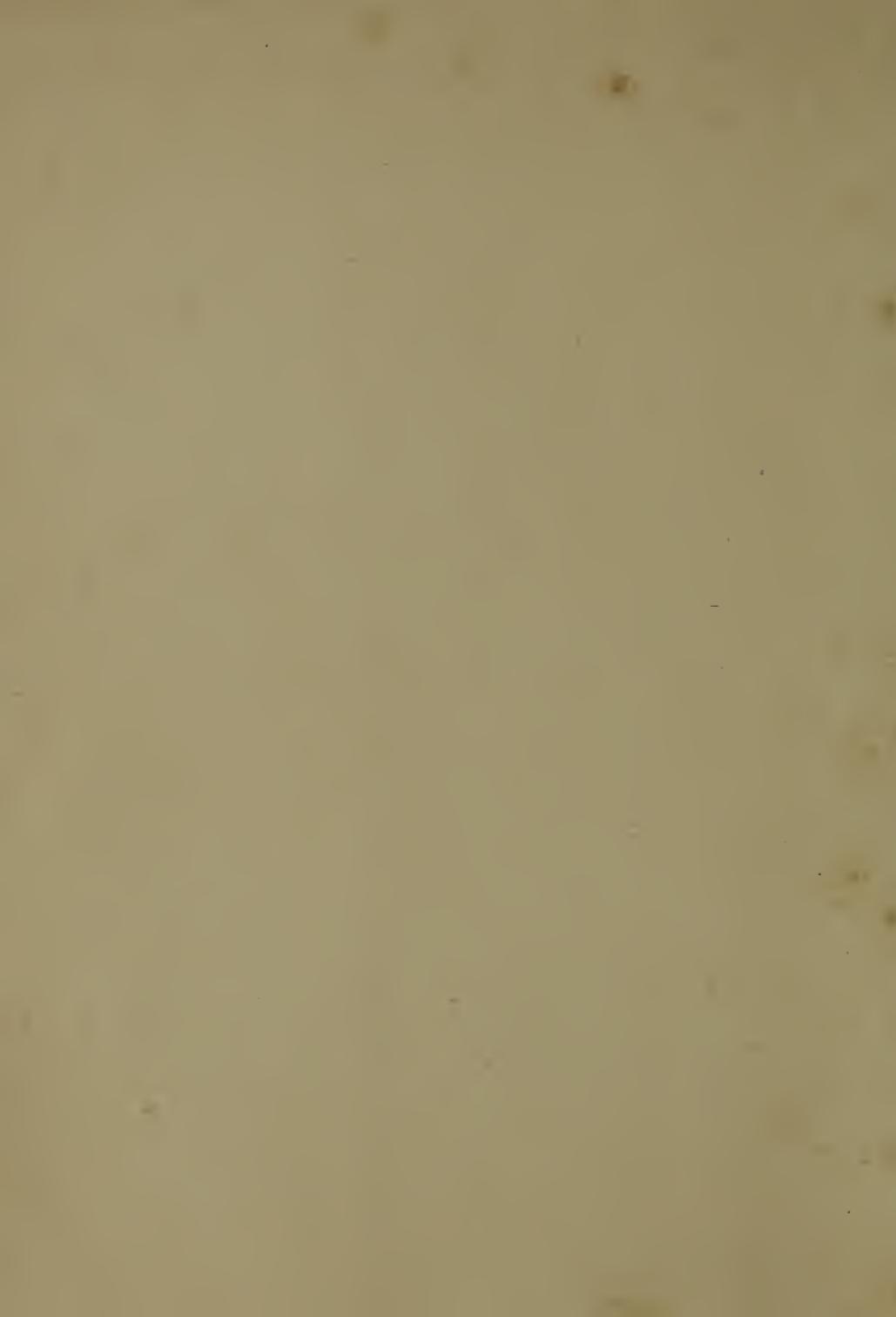
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J. A. Shephard

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2 Vols. vol 1



THE BODLEY HEAD NATURAL HISTORY

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THE BODLEY HEAD
NATURAL HISTORY







BLACKCAP

THE BODLEY HEAD
NATURAL HISTORY
BY E. D. CUMING
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY J. A. SHEPHERD
VOLUME I. BRITISH
BIRDS. PASSERES————



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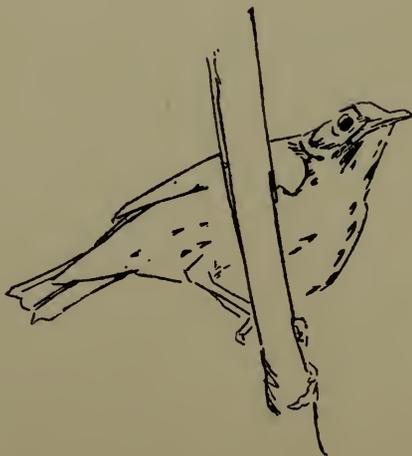
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

MR. SHEPHERD'S illustrations to this volume do not aim so much at scientific accuracy as at giving a general impression of the character, habits, and appearance of the animal depicted. It is believed that in this respect they will be found certainly more artistic and probably more suggestive than elaborate plates or even photographs. All the studies with the exception only of those of one or two very rare birds are drawn from life. The design of the book being decorative as well as instructive it has been found impossible in the reproductions to keep the sizes of the animals proportionate to one another, so that in this respect the studies of each animal must be taken as relative only to themselves.

ORDER
PASSERES

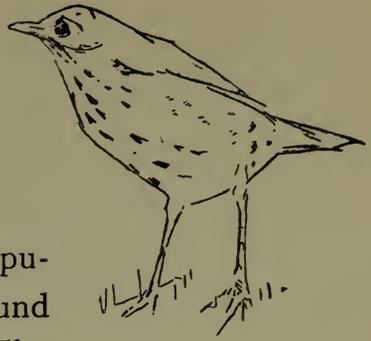




SONG THRUSH

(*Turdus Musicus*. Linn.)

THIS, the most common and most popular of British song-birds, is found throughout the United Kingdom. The great majority of our song-thrushes remain with us the year through, but some seek a warmer climate in winter, returning with the spring to nest. The Thrush is one of the earliest breeders; the nest is built of dry grass, bents, moss and like materials, with a smooth plaster lining—morsels of rotten wood and dung. The usual site is in a bush or hedge-row, three or four feet from the ground; but it is often





placed on the ground under the shelter of bushes. It would seem as though the example of one ground builder made many, for where one such nest occurs you may expect to find others. Occasionally a strange site is chosen; in July, 1906, at Church in Lancashire, a nest was found between the spring and wheel of a goods wagon on a railway siding. The eggs, from four to six in number are laid during the first ten days of March; The normal egg is blue, spotted with black or rusty brown; sometimes the spots are few or, more rarely, quite absent. The cock bears some part in hatching the eggs, but he is a



less devoted parent than the hen who will remain on the nest until you might almost place a hand upon her. Two, or even three broods are reared during the season; and an interesting feature of thrush domestic life is that the young of the first family are required to help in rearing their successors. The young Thrush, by the way, excels all other young birds in the wonderful freshness of his colouring; the golden tints have a purity which is unequalled in the plumage of any other nestling. This peculiar brilliancy fades as the bird grows older.

The Thrush sings on mild days in winter and, save in bad weather, continues until





the moulting season; often to resume in autumn. On fine mornings in early summer he sings before daylight. The song is less remarkable for range of note than for the variety the bird contrives to give its music. Young Thrushes begin to find their voices about October; there can be no mistaking the song of the beginner for that of the older bird.

The food of the Thrush varies with the seasons; insects of many kinds, worms and snails content him during the greater part of the year: the snail-shell is held firmly and broken upon some convenient stone; fragments of snail-shell in quantity



betray a favourite anvil. When fruit is ripe the Thrush turns vegetarian, and the gardener, contemplating the havoc wrought on unprotected trees, is prone to forget the bird's good services. In winter hips, haws, and wild berries furnish a livelihood. Coast-dwelling Thrushes resort to the beaches and find food to their taste in small shell-fish; those of the outer Hebrides, which are smaller and darker than Thrushes of less rigorous climates, live largely on shell-fish, to which it is suggested may be due their darker colour. In Scotland they call the bird the Mavis; "Throstle" is preferred by writers of poetic tendency.



MISTLE or MISSEL THRUSH

(*Turdus Viscivorus. Linn.*)

THIS is a larger bird than the Song Thrush; it is also to be distinguished by the bolder spotting on the breast. Resident with us throughout the year, it has earned the name "Storm-cock" from its habit of singing in weather that silences all other birds. Like the Song Thrush, this bird turns its attention to nursery duties very early in the spring. The nest, placed out on some bough above reach, is conspicuous; it lacks the neatness of careful workmanship; sometimes indeed, it is so slovenly that odds and ends of



material waving in the breeze compel attention. Occasionally a foundation of mud is laid and on this is built the nest proper of bents, grass, small twigs and, it may be, rags, the whole lined with dry grass. Nests on the ground have been recorded, but these are exceptional. The eggs, four or five in number, are beautiful; greenish white or palest brown spotted, blotched and flecked with red-brown and lilac. Two broods are usually reared during the season, in the south; but the further north, the less frequent do two annual broods become. The Mistle Thrush is courageous in defence of its



young or eggs, and should Magpie, Jay or other egg-stealer approach, the parents do not await the attack. I have watched a pair who had their nest near a hollow tree containing several Jackdaws' nests, dash at the passing Jackdaw guileless of evil intent, and drive it off with vigorous buffetings.

This bird swallows the evacuations of its young. Many birds carry the droppings of the nestlings to a distance, to the end that these may not show the whereabouts of the nest, but it is a little curious that a bird which takes no pains to conceal its nest should thus get rid of the droppings

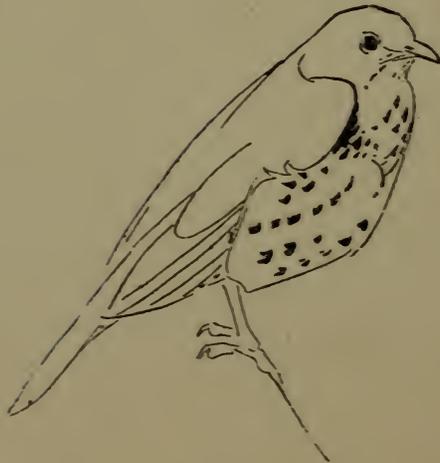


that might betray. The food of the Mistle Thrush is the same as that of the Song Thrush—worms, grubs, insects and snails; wild berries, and fruit when obtainable. Sixty or seventy years ago this bird was rare in Ireland; its adoption of that country is no doubt due to the increase of plantations. Great numbers of these birds come to us from northern Europe in the autumn.

Authorities differ concerning the derivation of the name; some hold it an abbreviation of "Mistletoe" Thrush, from the attributed habit of eating mistletoe berries. William Turner, whose *De*

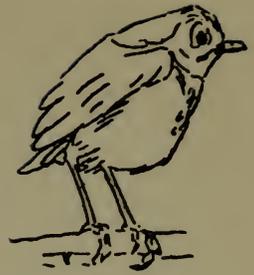


Historia Avium, published in 1544, was the first attempt to treat ornithology in a scientific spirit, says it is "called the Viscivorous since it feeds on naught but mistletoe and gum." Other authorities maintain that, inasmuch as the bird does not eat mistletoe berries at all, the name can only be derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *Missel*=big: as it is the largest of the Thrush family, the latter derivation seems preferable.



BLACKBIRD

(*Turdus Merula* Linn.)



“OF Merulæ” says Turner, “there are two sorts, one black and common and the other white, of equal size.” White, and partly white examples of the Blackbird often occur, but we have long ceased to regard them as distinct species. Like the Song Thrush the Blackbird is widely distributed throughout our islands; some of those that breed with us migrate southward in winter, but their place is more than filled by the number of visitors seeking refuge from the rigours of winter further north.





The nesting site and outer structure of the nest itself are the same as in the case of the Song Thrush, but the Blackbird prefers a neat lining of dry grass to receive the eggs; these are greenish-blue, spotted and streaked with varying shades of brown: from four to six is the usual clutch, but seven and even nine eggs have been known. Sometimes the nest is built on the ground. This would seem to amount to a local habit in some cases, as Mr. Boyes states that in the Beverley district of Yorkshire such nests are attributed to "Bank Blackies." Early nesting is the Blackbird's rule; and two



or three broods are reared in the season ; the members of the first family help with their younger brethren. The young male does not assume the yellow bill until his second year. The cock shares the work of incubation, but to a less degree than the Song Thrush ; he is a combative fowl and two pairs of Blackbirds rarely build near each other ; isolation makes for peace, as two cocks may hardly meet without fighting, particularly in the pairing season. He is a shyer bird than the Thrush but his loud " pink pink " betrays him.

The song is occasionally heard in January,





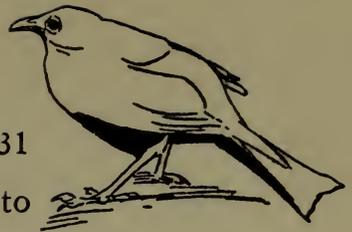
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BLACKBIRD

but February is the recognised month for him to begin: in April and May he is at his best: in July he ceases: he has been heard to sing in September, but the event is so unusual as to deserve a paragraph in the *Field*. A spring shower goes to the Blackbird's head and induces his finest effort. His voice is easily distinguished from that of the Thrush by its flutelike quality; he sings early and late, and, unless the appearance of a rival turn his energies in a new direction, maintains his song for a long time.

The diet of this bird is much the same as that of the Thrush, but he is less





partial to snails and more partial to fruit. Where Blackbirds are many, their services as grub destroyers scarcely atone for the havoc committed in kitchen garden and orchard: strawberries, raspberries, currants—all soft fruits—are one in their acceptability to the Blackbird, and when the apples and pears are ripening he is ready for them. Nor do his misdeeds stop there; he has been known to stoop to cannibalism, killing and eating young birds; but such doings, let us hope, are peculiar to misguided individuals, and not to be written an offence against the whole species.





The occurrence of normally coloured eggs has led to the supposition that Blackbird and Song Thrush may sometimes inter-breed; the hens of either species are certainly capable of strange vagary; the Blackbird has been known to lay in a Thrush's nest which contained eggs of the owner and to take up her position on a Thrush's nest and eggs with intention to perform a mother's part; and the Thrush has been detected doing the same thing. Whether such proceedings are due to absence of mind, or honest but foolish mistake, it is impossible to say. Comes one who would have them neigh-



bourly reproof of neglect; but we will pass by that theory.

The Blackbird's habit of throwing up his long tail as he alights, as if to keep his balance, enables him to be identified at a distance or in the dusk.



RING OUZEL
(*Turdus Torquatus Linn.*)

THIS bird may be described as a Blackbird with a white cravat; a somewhat seedy Blackbird, for his coat is dull and brownish. The Ring Ouzel is a summer visitor; arriving in April he seeks the moorlands and solitude of the hilly districts, by whose streams he prefers to nest: the vast majority go south again in September and October, but a few remain with us the year round, specimens having been found in every month of the winter in England, while at least one December occurrence so far north as Invernesshire has been recorded.





Domestic affairs engage the Ring Ouzels' attention soon after their arrival: a favourite site for the nest is among heather or ling; it may be placed under boulder, in some shallow crevice, or on a rock ledge; often near water. The nest closely resembles that of the Blackbird, and the eggs, usually four in number, might be mistaken for Blackbird's save for their bolder markings. In some cases a second brood is hatched out in July. When rearing their children the parents throw aside their natural fear of man, and if you approach the nest fly about you scolding vigorously; the "tac tac tac" of





the Ring Ouzel expresses anger and alarm.

The song is loud but has neither the flute-like quality nor the variety of the Blackbird's; the Ring Ouzel's habit is to take up his position on some conspicuous crag or point of rock and sing at intervals. Indulgence itself cannot regard it as great music, but it harmonises with the bird's wild surroundings.

His food is that of other Thrushes, with such variety as moor and mountain berries afford. When he visits the fruit garden, to do which he sometimes makes up a large party, he is even less welcome



than the Blackbird: seeming conscious that he is a marauder he devours with haste and greed, eating much but wasting and spoiling more: on these occasions he displays singular boldness for so wary a bird.

Like the Blackbird, the Ring Ouzel throws up his tail when alighting; both on the wing and on the ground his movements are very like those of his better known cousin; in some parts of the country he is called the "Moor Blackbird."





REDWING

(*Turdus Iliacus*, Linn.)

THIS bird, rather smaller than the Song Thrush, is a resident of Northern Europe, whence it comes in large numbers to pass the winter with us. Redwings begin to arrive on our coasts in August, but the great flocks usually appear in the latter part of October, their movements being regulated by the advent of winter. During their stay they are to be seen in flocks: their return to the north begins about the end of March.



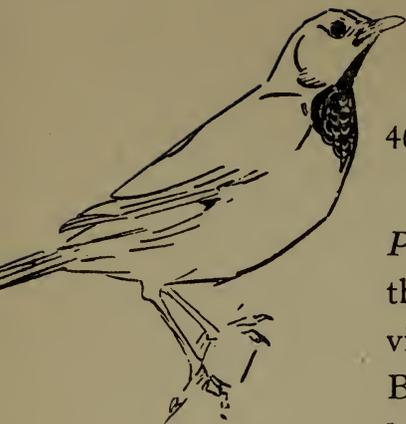
FIELDFARE

(*Turdus Pilaris*, Linn.)

IN size midway between Mistle Thrush and Song Thrush, this bird is easily distinguished by the absence of spots on the lower part of the breast. It arrives in great flocks from September to October; its stay is rather more prolonged than that of the Redwing; if winter lingers it remains till May, and has been seen as late as June. It is popularly known as the "Felt" or "Felfer."

Neither Redwing nor Fieldfare breed in the British Islands.





40

FIELDFARE

WHITE'S THRUSH (*Turdus Varius. Pallas*), an Asiatic species, larger than the Mistle Thrush, is an occasional visitor, generally coming in winter. The BLACK-THROATED THRUSH (*T. Atrigularis, Temminck*); the DUSKY THRUSH (*T. Dubius*), also Asiatic species have been identified; the first on two occasions, the latter once, in winter. The ROCK THRUSH (*Monticola Saxatilis, Linn.*), a central European species, has once been identified as a spring visitor.







WHEATEAR

(*Saxicola Œnanthe*, Linn.,

THIS is a summer visitor and one of the earliest to arrive in spring. There is reason to believe that a few of the birds which nest with us remain throughout the winter, finding in the southern counties climate mild enough. The second week in March is the recognised time to look for the Wheatear's return; in 1906 an example was seen in Richmond Park on 6th March; but there is always the doubt in these cases whether the bird is a migrant or is one of the exceptions which have wintered with us.



Open downs and waste lands are the haunts of the Wheatear; with his white rump and nearly black wings he is a conspicuous bird as he takes his short flights from stone to mound, from mound to wall, uttering the while his sharp "chack chack." Nesting begins about mid-April; the nest is a loosely constructed piece of work, made, we may hardly say "built," of dry grass and lined with feathers, hair and rabbits' fur; the last a very favourite material.

The normal nesting site is some crevice in stone wall or peat-stack, in the mouth of a rabbit-burrow or under a large stone



or clod, but the Wheatear has a soul above rule in the ordering of his domestic affairs; and like his relative the Robin often chooses some such retreat as an old kettle, discarded boot, or castaway pot. The segment of an exploded shell on an artillery range has been turned to account as a convenient nesting place.

The eggs are pale blue, sometimes, says Mr. Howard Saunders, minutely dotted with purple; the clutch numbers from five to seven. The Wheatear is a sagacious bird, and when danger threatens is careful not to betray the whereabouts of the nest. Two broods are reared in the season. The



bird is a purely insect feeder, and may often be seen in the evening hawking gnats and kindred small game on the wing; the larvæ of insects also form part of the Wheatear's diet. The song is not remarkable for volume but is distinctly pleasing; the bird often sings while on the wing. His powers as a mimic are respectable, and in this regard he does not always confine himself to song; Mr. Butterfield, of Wilsden, Bradford, once saw a Wheatear trying to emulate both song and singing method of the Lark; the song was a masterly achievement but the soaring was more than the mimic could manage;



he rose clumsily to a height of seven or ten yards and came down again. Lark-song he could accomplish but the characteristic flight was beyond him.

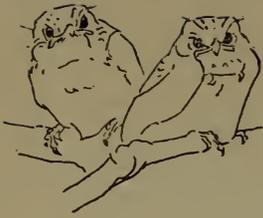
In former days the Wheatear was caught in large numbers at harvest-time by shepherds and sold as larks are sold now, for the tables, says Gilbert White, of "all the gentry that entertain with any degree of elegance" at Brighton, or Brighthelmstone as the place was called in White's time, and Tunbridge.

The end of September and the first days of October see the southward flight of the Wheatear.



Visits to this country of the ISABELLINE WHEATEAR (*Saxicola Isabellina*; Rüppell), the BLACK-THROATED WHEATEAR (*S. Stipazina*, Viellot), and the DESERT WHEATEAR (*S. deserti*; Rüppell) have been recorded.

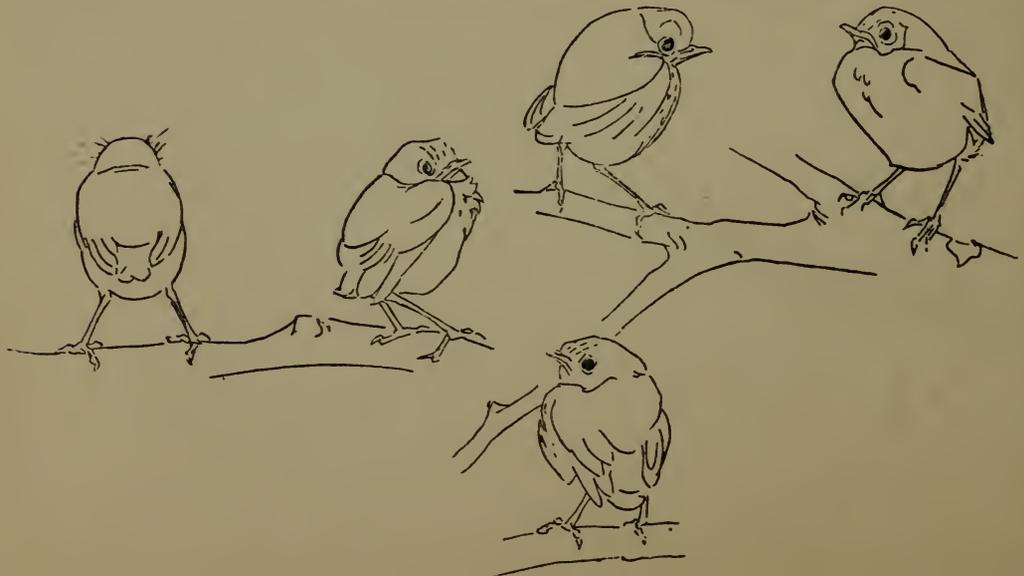




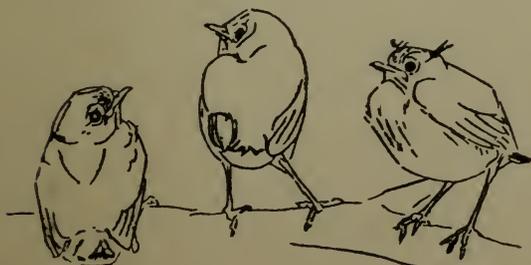
ROBIN

(*Erithacus Rubecula*, Linn.)

IT seems hardly necessary to say the Robin is a resident, inasmuch as it is in the winter that he is most in evidence. A few of those that breed in this country go south in autumn, but the places of these are more than filled by the great numbers that come to us from the northern parts of Europe ; for the Robin in summer is found as far north as the Arctic circle. Nesting begins in March ; the proper place for the bird to select is some shallow hole in a bank, but Robins are no slaves to tradition, and the kind is notorious for the

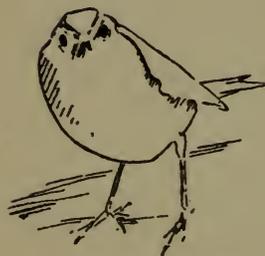


originality and enterprise displayed in choice of nursery. The nest consists of moss and dead leaves, lined with hair and perhaps a few soft feathers. The eggs, from five to seven in number—six is the usual clutch—are white, blotched and freckled with reddish-brown; occasionally a pure white egg occurs. Two and sometimes three families are reared in the season. The Robin's practice of driving away in autumn the children who display inclination to remain in his neighbourhood is quite in harmony with his character. The breast of the young male is spotted; after the moult he assumes





the red breast, the colour appearing from the throat down, somewhat paler than in the adult bird. Some authorities maintain that the Robin pairs for life; but this opinion is not shared by all. Attribution to him of the grace of life-long constancy is perhaps a bye-result of the place he holds in legend and popular esteem. Stripped by merciless truth of the lofty moral qualities with which affection has invested him, we find a bird of strong individuality, bold, self-seeking and pugnacious with a pugnacity immeasurable. Jealous he is also, as he may see who will observe two Robins singing within earshot



of one another; each tries to sing the other down; then dissatisfied with rivalry in song they twain cease music to engage in the fight for which the Robin is ever ready. Nevertheless, it is as a songster that the bird appears at his best; more especially in autumn; the October song of the Robin has a charm entirely its own; it is, as a novelist has said, "the song of sorrow and hope, inspiration surely of Chopin's Funeral March." It breathes the very spirit of evening in the waning year.

The food of the Robin consists largely of worms and insects, but, as he is at pains

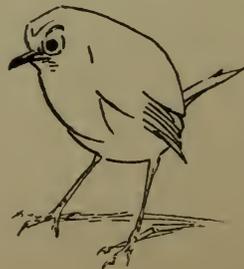




to show in winter, his tastes are catholic; when frost and snow hold the world the Robins leave the woods and lanes to take up his quarters, it may be said, among men; there is always marked increase in the urban Robin population in severe weather.



A list of the abnormal nesting places chosen by Robins would occupy many pages; any likely, or unlikely, situation will serve; an old kettle; an empty jam-pot; the rags of a scarecrow; length of drain-pipe; basket hanging in shed. The nest has been built on the book-ledge of a pew in church; behind the false pipes of



a church organ (the hen sitting through the service), and on a library book-shelf, access granted by open or broken window. These abnormal sites frequently afford evidence of the bird's seeming knowledge that he enjoys peculiar privileges in the sight of man.

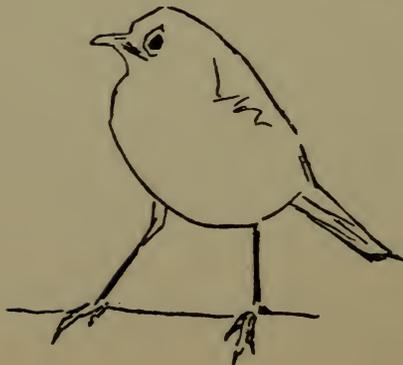
Robert Lovell, who wrote a curious work on Natural History in 1601, averred that between Robin and Blackbird there existed close friendship which found expression in roosting side by side. It is strange that two of our most quarrelsome birds should have been thus paired off as sleeping companions.



NIGHTINGALE

(*Daulias Luscinia*, Linn.)

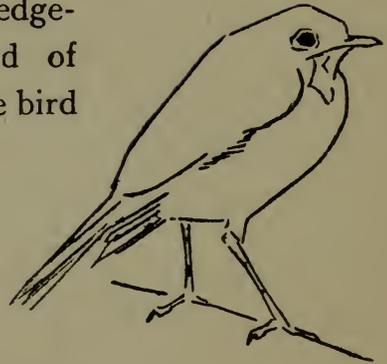
THE first half of April is the time when the returning Nightingale may be expected. The cocks, as in the case of other migrants, come first, and, given warm weather, announce their arrival in song, notably vigorous by day, as though to lose no time giving thanks for a safe journey. It is rare that the song is heard in wet or cold, or when high winds are blowing. Contrary to popular belief the bird sings by day as well as by night; but the day song after arrival is particularly well sustained. After the arrival of the hens a

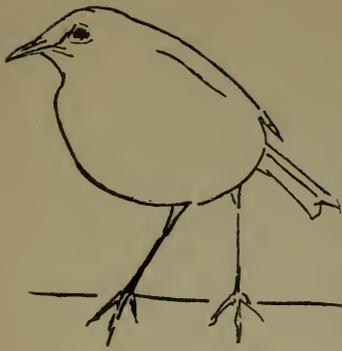


few days later, the song at high noon becomes less frequent, the birds devoting themselves to the serious affairs of life.

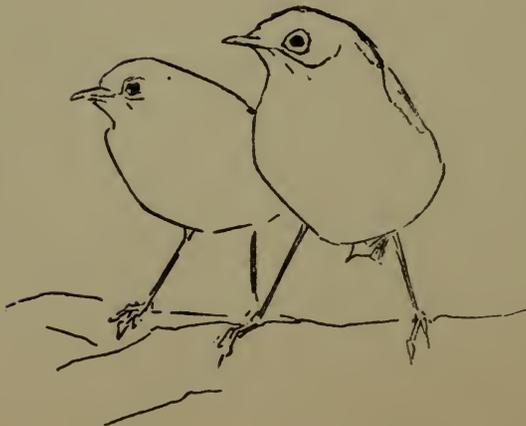
Sobriety distinguishes the dress of the Nightingale; dull russet brown above, brightening somewhat in the tail, and greyish-white beneath, "quakerish" best describes the great singer's attire; it gives his figure the appearance of greater slenderness.

Nesting begins early in May. The site most commonly chosen is on, or quite close to, the ground in some dense hedge-row or thicket; the neighbourhood of water or swampy soil weighs with the bird





in making choice of a home. The nest, large in proportion to the size of the builder, is made of dead leaves (oak preferred) and dry grass; the cup is lined with finer grass, fibres, and often horse-hair. The whole structure is loosely put together and depends upon the support of the surrounding undergrowth to keep it in shape. The eggs, from four to six in number, are olive-brown, the shade varying in some cases to a bluish-green. With the appearance of his young family the song of the Nightingale ceases. This happens during the first fortnight of June; the bird is seldom heard much after the



middle of the month, and the curious rasping croak he utters now comes strangely from such a throat. When the young birds, which as fledglings much resemble Robins of equal age, leave the nest, they remain about the vicinity of their home under the guardianship of the mother; parent and children exchange a distinctive note that may be written "purr."

The distribution of the Nightingale in England has extended during recent years. Aforetime, ornithologists drew a "Nightingale line" from York to Exmouth, which line, roughly speaking, divided the area



patronised by the bird from the regions it ignored. This line, like other frontiers, scientific and otherwise, has required rectification from time to time; for the bird has discovered the amenities of Devonshire as far as Torquay, and of various parts of Wales—Glamorganshire and favoured spots in Cardiganshire. It has also been reported in Northumberland, but that was in the exceptionally hot spring of 1893, and may not be taken as a precedent. The real spread of breeding area has been westward. The appearance and increase of the Nightingale in parts of the country where it was formerly un-



known has been accompanied by a certain decrease in some of those counties where the bird used to be more plentiful. Complaints of neglect have been received from Norfolk, Rutland, Bedfordshire and Bucks; all of them counties much patronised by the bird. The southward movement begins very early; in August the birds of the year take flight, and a few weeks later are followed by their seniors who have remained to complete the moult. Early in September all are gone.



WHINCHAT

(*Pratincola Rubetra*, Linn.)

THIS dainty little bird arrives on our southern coasts during the first half of April, and within three weeks or a month finds its way practically all over England and Scotland, occurring somewhat rarely, however, in Cornwall and the extreme west. About five and half inches long, the cock is easily recognised by the sandy-brown back with darker leaf-shaped markings; most readily by the white streak running from the base of the beak over the eye to the neck; the under parts are buff colour merging into fawn on the



breast, the chin is white, and a white streak runs below the dark cheek to the side of the neck. The hen is more soberly clad, and the streak above the eye is buff instead of white.

The nest is a careless structure of dry grass and moss, lined with finer grass; it is placed on or nearly on the ground in long coarse herbage or, it may be, among the shoots of some low bush. The eggs, generally six, are greenish-blue often dotted or freckled with rusty red. Two broods are reared in the season. The Whinchat has a weakness for building in long grass by the side of path or road, and



the hen's habit of perching close by, to utter for a few minutes her "u-tick, u-tick, u-tick, tic, tic" before she flies straight to the nest renders it easy to find. The song is pleasing but not remarkable for variety of note or volume; it is heard both when the bird is on the wing and at rest.

Waste lands, commons and pastures are the haunts of the Whinchat; its love of the last has earned it the name "Grasschat" in some parts of the country, but this name is become less applicable now-a-days, more especially in the northern counties where the hay harvest interferes with the bird's domestic arrangements. Mr. F.



Boyes, of Beverley, Yorkshire, a very shrewd and careful observer of bird life, attributes the Whinchat's desertion of the grass-lands mainly to the mowing machine which shaves the ground bare in June before the young leave the nest or, it may be, before the eggs are hatched out; sufficient reason to induce a bird of understanding to prefer the wastes where it may rear its family undisturbed.

The food of the Whinchat consists of flies and other insects, small beetles and worms, more particularly the wire worm.

About the end of September or early in October the bird takes flight southward



again. There is some doubt whether individuals remain with us the winter through; Mr. J. E. Harting, to whom have been sent specimens believed to be Whinchats obtained in the winter months has always identified them as Stonechats, a nearly allied resident species. In its winter dress the Whinchat bears tolerably close resemblance to the Stonechat, hence the confusion of the two. Similarly young Stonechats found in April have been mistaken for their migratory cousins who breed quite a month later.



STONECHAT

(*Pratincola Rubicola*, Linn.)

THIS near relative of the last species is resident in Britain, but there is in autumn a well-marked movement from the exposed grounds the bird affects in summer, towards warmer and more sheltered localities, and our native Stonechat population is reinforced by arrivals from the northern regions of Europe. The cock is a conspicuous bird as he perches on furze-bush or thorn; his black head, bright chestnut breast and white neck identify him at a glance; the general scheme of body coloration is not unlike that of the





Whinchat, but the white patch on the Stonechat's wing is noticeable and the bird himself is stouter, with a self-assured air the Whinchat lacks. He is a restless little being, always on the move, darting and diving among the bushes where he makes his home.

The Stonechat, as becomes a resident, begins nesting much earlier than the last mentioned species; the beginning of April sees this bird at work building on the ground among coarse herbage, often under a furze bush against the stem, the materials being the same as those employed by the Whinchat, with the addition of a few

feathers to the lining. The eggs, four or five in number, are very like the other chat's, but the ground colour is a shade darker.

Unlike the hen Whinchat the hen Stonechat is wary, and does not betray her nest to any but the patient and discreet watcher. You may, however, know there is a nest in your near neighbourhood by the behaviour of the parents who flit from bush to bush in manifest alarm, the while crying sharply, "chack chack." Two broods are reared in the season.

The song of this bird is pleasing, but when man approaches he displays less



inclination to sing than to scold; the alarm note, syllabised "h-weet, jur, jur," is very distinctive. The song may be heard from early spring until late in June. The food of the Stonechat is very much the same as that of the Whinchat, with the addition of small moths and butterflies, which are often caught on the wing; this bird also eats seeds on occasion.

Although both Stonechat and Whinchat affect the same kind of ground, wastes and commons, the two species are seldom found together in any number. It may be added that the Stonechat has none of its relative's affection for pasture lands;



it is essentially an inhabitant of the wastes.

The resemblance of the two in their winter plumage has already been noticed.



REDSTART

(*Ruticila Phœnicurus*, Linn.)



THIS summer visitor usually arrives about the middle of April, though in particularly mild seasons it may come earlier. Mr Howard Saunders, in 1893, saw a cock Redstart on the 31st of March, this being one of the earliest dates, if not the earliest date, recorded. The Redstart cannot be mistaken for any other bird; his bright chestnut tail and rump betray him at the first glance, as he flits from spray to spray always near the ground. Approach him more closely if you can, for

he is shy, and you see his white forehead, jet black cheeks and throat, in striking contrast to the slate grey back and chestnut breast. The hen Redstart lacks the brilliant body colours of her mate; greyish brown above and lighter on the underside, she would be inconspicuous but for her chestnut tail, and that is of hue less brilliant than the cock's. The length of the bird is about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

The Redstart breeds in most parts of Britain, but is uncommon in some of the extreme western counties. Formerly it was known in Ireland only as a rare visitor, but during the last twenty or thirty



years it has been more frequently observed and breeds regularly in some parts.

Nesting begins early in May; a hole in some hollow tree within a few feet of the ground is the orthodox site, but a hole in masonry will serve the Redstart, and it is by no means infrequent to find a pair in possession of the box which has been put up for the accomodation of Tits. The nest is loosely constructed of moss, fibres and dry grass lined with hair and feathers. The eggs, usually six, but sometimes seven in number, are blue, paler and a shade smaller than those of the Hedge-Sparrow. Eggs freckled, especially about the larger



end with reddish-brown are tolerably common, and, what is rather curious the clutch may consist entirely of such freckled eggs or some may be pure blue while the rest are freckled.

While the hen is sitting the cock is much in evidence about the premises, raising his voice in modest Redstart song, or flitting to and fro in chase of the insects on which he lives. His alarm note, an almost piteous "wheet," is very familiar. The food of the old birds consists for the most part of flies, gnats, spiders and the like; presumably this diet is too indigestible for the infant Redstart, as when the

family arrives the outer world is apprised of the circumstance by the parents' activity in carrying caterpillars. The young Redstarts in their spotted dress are very like young Robins; but the family badge, the chestnut tail, proclaims them.

The southward movement takes place in September. Occasionally a bird suspected to belong to this species has been shot in winter and submitted to authority in triumph for a proof that the Redstart may remain with us the year round. Such specimens have, however, always proved to be Black Redstarts, which frequently come over here from their mid-



European haunts in winter. Adult males of the two species are easily distinguished, but the difference between hens and birds of the year is much less marked. .

“Firetail” is the appropriate popular name for the bird in many parts of the country.



BLACK REDSTART

(*Ruticilla Titys*, Scopoli.)

THIS species comes to us regularly, though not in large numbers, every autumn, beginning to arrive about the second week of October and remaining until March or April. There is no proof that the bird has ever nested with us, but it is possible that a breeding pair may have escaped observation.

Somewhat larger than the common Redstart, it is a slender, graceful little bird of restless habit and, by comparison with the other species, bold. The cock varies a good deal in colour, possibly with



age; his prevailing hue may be almost sooty black, or it may be ashen grey; there is a conspicuous white patch on the wing. The Black Redstart is most frequently seen on our eastern and southern coasts but it has been observed in Yorkshire, Wales, and also in Ireland. We are not concerned with the domestic affairs of birds that do not breed in this country, therefore the Black Redstart may be dismissed with the statement that it nests in some sheltered hole, or on the roof beam of shed or balcony, and that the eggs are glossy white; rarely the eggs are freckled with reddish dots as in the case of our own species.



BLUETHROAT

(*Cyanecula Suecica*, Linn.)

THERE are two, or possibly three varieties of Bluethroat; the only one known to visit England is the Redspotted Bluethroat; and as this bird is only known as an occasional passenger, halting to rest on our shores before resuming its southward flight in autumn, it demands but passing mention. The fact that the Bluethroats taken in this country are usually immature seems to indicate that lack of strength to make, in one flight, the long journey from the Arctic to southern climes is the sole reason for its appearance here at all.

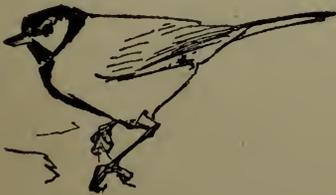
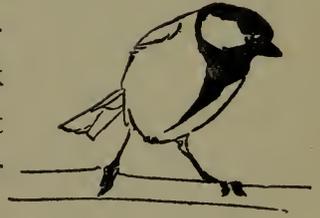


GREAT TIT

(*Parus Major*, Linn.)

THIS, the largest of the family of titmice, is to be found all over the British Islands save in the extreme north of Scotland and in the Western Isles; where, however, it sometimes appears as a visitor. The Great Tit is easily to distinguish; the white cheek and blue-black head betray him; the general colour-effect is bluish grey above and dull sulphur yellow below; the black of the head extending round the neck and continuing in a stripe down the breast to the vent.

Nesting begins in April,—sometimes

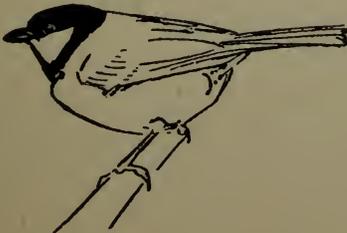


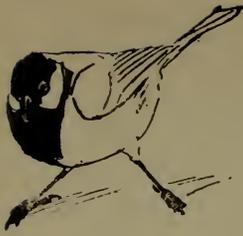


about the end of March; and few birds display greater catholicity of taste in choice of site. It would be incorrect to say that the bird only uses the normal situation—a hole in some hollow tree or in a wall—if he cannot find a site that shall advertise his originality; but it is not far wrong to assert that the normal habit of the Great Tit is to build in abnormal situations. He has been known to nest in the upper part of a hive full of working bees; in letter-boxes; under a flower-pot on a shelf—for eight successive years; inside a pump; in a drain ventilator; under the old nest of a blackbird;



in the body of an occupied magpie's nest ; and, in sheer impudent recklessness, in the base of the nest in which a sparrowhawk was rearing her brood. Choice of the beehive may, perhaps, be explained by the fact that these birds are fond of bees, and haunt hives to pick up the dead insects thrown out by the community ; so fond of bees is this Tit that he does considerable damage to the hive by his endeavours to enlarge the entrance. Very occasionally Great Tits will dispossess the rightful owner of a nest they think will serve their purpose ; a hen tit was once found hatching her own eggs in the nest





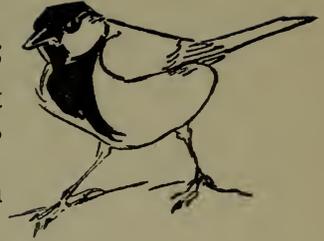
of a Hedge-sparrow who had laid two eggs before she was turned out.

The nest consists of soft moss, lined with hair, fur, wool and feathers; the size of the structure depends on the space to be filled; that taken from the beehive above-mentioned was a solid bed of moss measuring 14 inches square and 8 inches in depth.

The eggs, varying in number from six to a round dozen, are white spotted and blotched with pale red. Two broods are reared in the season. This bird like other members of the family is said to cover up her eggs as she lays them, with



the soft fluffy feather lining of the nest; but that lining is so loose and plentiful it may well be that the eggs are "smothered," sinking into their bed by their own weight.



The spring note, which has been heard as early as January, is likened to the music produced by sharpening a saw with a file; the bird utters a great variety of notes; the call note is best written "zee."

The Great Tit may almost be called omnivorous. He eats insects in quantity, and works no small mischief in the orchard; it has been said—by a sufferer—



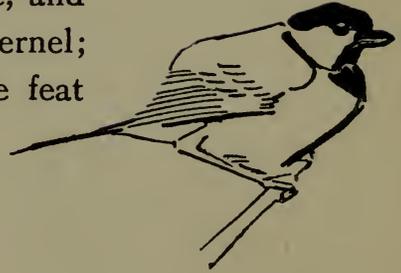


that he will try every apple on the tree, pecking a beakful out of each near the stalk; this single peck in itself would do comparatively little harm, but the Tit never pauses to reflect that rain will enter that small hole and rot the apple ere ever it has time to ripen. Pears are maltreated in the same fashion. Peas furnish another source of misunderstanding between Great Tits and gardening mankind, for the bird loves young peas and his methods are wasteful. The blackest side of his character, however, comes out in his carnivorous tastes; he has been known to attack and kill small birds,



splitting their skulls with his beak to reach the brain. His appetite for a meat diet is shown by the avidity with which he batters on the suet or bone hung out for his delectation in winter. Like the rest of the family he loves the seed of the sunflower.

The muscularity of this bird is well shown in the way he penetrates the shell of the hazel-nut; placing the nut in some convenient fork or cranny, he converts his whole person, five and three-quarter inches, into a pick axe, drives a hole, and works at it until he can dig out the kernel; of course, he can only perform the feat



while the nut is new; an old one would be too hard for the strongest Great Tit to crack. This bird is very commonly called the "Oxeye."

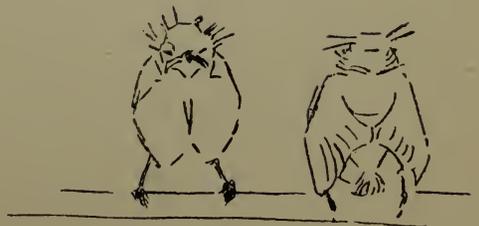


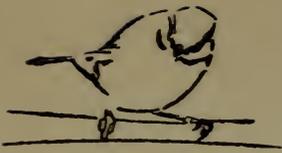


BLUE TIT

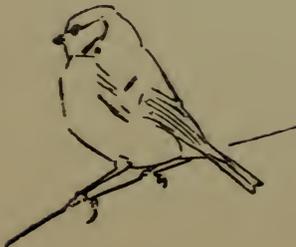
(*Parus Cœrulus.*)

THIS is the commonest of our Titmice ; and, if colour go for aught, the most beautiful. Smaller than the Great Tit—he measures only about four inches and one third—he gives the general impression of green and blue as he flits with short, jerky flight from tree to tree ; his white cheek, barred across the eye with a blue-black line, and blue-black collar distinguish him from his relatives. The Blue Tit breeds in April. Like the Great Tit he ought to nest in some prosaic hole in tree or wall ; but like the Great Tit he is





notorious for the strange places of his abiding, One of the oddest ever selected was the throat of a life-size bronze crane, fashioned with open beak upraised. The nesting box appeals to him and the coconut shell; all he asks of the box is that it be weather-beaten and dirty. The nest consists of moss, or moss and wool, lined with feathers and hair. The eggs are white, finely spotted with pale red; the usual clutch is six or seven, but some individuals are prolific, and as many as eighteen have been found. The hen displays great courage while sitting; she hisses in brave endeavour to alarm, nay,

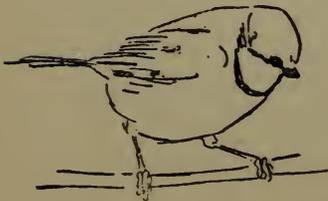


pecks with pecks that would intimidate, the finger of intrusion; whence the bird's popular nickname "Billy-biter." The note is a harsh and monotonous "chee chee," heard at frequent intervals.

Though the Blue Tit shares with his larger cousin that regrettable taste for green peas, and devotes more attention to apples and pears than their owners can approve, it may be doubted whether on the whole, he does not render services that atone. His staple diet consists of the scale insects which harbour in the bark of trees to their large detriment, he preys on the grubs of wood-boring beetles

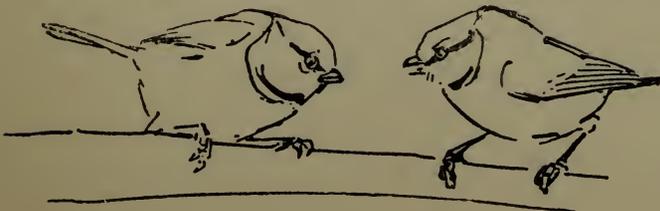


and other injurious insects, and rears the family on the larvae of such unwelcome vermin as the gooseberry and winter moths, aphides and their kind. It is to be feared that in autumn when he succumbs to the temptation of ripening pear and apple his good deeds are often overlooked; man was ever prone to view austere bird sins, and prefers the syringe and insecticide of the agricultural chemist to the uses of the Blue Tit. The bird is somewhat capricious in his winter movements. For years the well chosen meat bone or lump of suet shall bring you Tit visitors in number; and when you have



learned to regard acceptance of your hospitality as assured, no Blue Tit shall appear the winter through.

As the Great Tit is remarkable for the strength enshrined in his tiny body, so the Blue Tit is remarkable for his agility; he is one of the leading acrobats of the bird world; he is as much at home underneath the bough as upon it, and he dines upside down as readily as in the position Nature would seem to have designed for feeding purposes.



COAL or COLE TIT

(*Parus Ater*, Linn.)

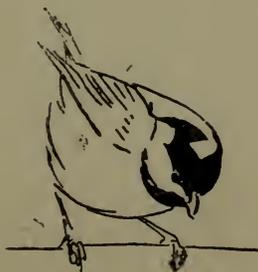
SAVE in the north of Scotland, where it may be called the representative member of the family, this Tit is less common than either the Great or Blue Tits. It is a very little bird, about four and three-quarter inches long; the head, sides of neck, throat, and upper parts of the breast are glossy blue-black; and the conspicuous white cheeks and spot on the back of the neck, lend momentary resemblance to the head of the Great Tit. The back is grey, tinted with olive, merging into brownish fawn on the rump; the breast

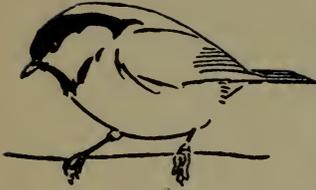


white, warming into fawn on the belly and flanks. Slight differences between the colouring of the Coal Tit found in Ireland and that in Great Britain recently led to discussion concerning the propriety of promoting the Irish bird to the dignity of a species; but the weight of opinion was in favour of regarding it as identical with the British bird. Local conditions of food and climate often produce these slight differences in tinge which lure the ardent among the ornithological brotherhood to creation of new, unnecessary species.



The Coal Tit breeds in March or





April; the time depending much on latitude. The materials used are, as in the case of the last two, moss, wool and feathers, with such additions as the resources of the neighbourhood may offer; as deer's hair and rabbit's fur. The site varies; it may be a hole in tree or wall, in a bank, on the level ground, or inside the burrow of a rabbit or the hole of a mouse or mole. The eggs, from seven to eleven in number, are white, dotted with pale red.

This member of the family is addicted to hunting on the ground. The food consists of insects, seeds and nuts, while



green caterpillars are in request for the nursery. Opportunity serving, the Coal Tit shows partiality for hemp seed, and like his familiar relatives, appreciates cocoa-nut. The note is shrill and somewhat loud for a bird so small.



LONG-TAILED TIT

(*Acredula Caudata*, Linn.)



THIS also is a tolerably common species wherever copse, woodland, or thorn-brake offers breeding resort. If there be water at hand the bird seems to show preference for a nesting site in its vicinity. The distinction conferred by the long tail renders any detailed description of this Tit unnecessary. Five and a half inches long, he is a study in black, white, and brown, with a pinkish tinge on the lower back, belly, and flanks.

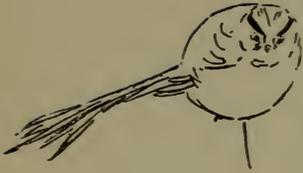
Nesting begins late in March, or early in April; a favourite situation is some



thick bush, thorn, holly, or furze at from three to perhaps eight feet from the ground; but the nest may be hidden in a mass of brambles or stick-heap. It is a beautiful piece of workmanship, moss, wool, spiders' webs closely felted together into an oval which is often flattened; and adorned as to the exterior with grey lichens for its better concealment. A mass of soft feathers forms the lining. The recognised style of architecture provides for a comparatively small hole in the side near the top; but I have found nests with the entrance occupying practically the whole diameter and practically



on the summit; an arrangement in fact which justifies exactly the name "feather poke" bestowed upon the architect. An old nest is sometimes repaired for re-occupation.



The Long-tailed Tit lays from seven to ten eggs, but as many as sixteen have been found under circumstances which pointed to their being the property of the same hen. For there is some doubt concerning the matrimonial system in Long-tailed Tit circles; two hens and a cock have been seen working on the same nest; and three birds have been seen occupying the same nest; it is therefore



an open question whether the bird is always strictly monogamous. When the young birds leave the nest they remain in company until some time after they can fly: you may see the whole family undulating in Indian file from bush to bush with their curious dipping flight, or perching, a compact row, upon some twig. Two broods are reared in the season.

The food consists of scale and other insects, and their larvæ. The note resembles that of the Blue Tit, but is more sibilant.



CRESTED TIT

(*Parus Cristatus*, Linn.)

THIS is the rarest of the Tit family in Britain. It is a Scottish bird and extremely local at that, breeding in the old pine woods of Strathspey and, it is believed, nowhere else. A shade smaller than the Blue Tit, the black and grey crest distinguishes him from others, but at a little distance, the general blue-grey effect of his plumage lends him curious likeness to the Blue Tit. The cock erects his crest when he sings, to do which he ascends to a tree-top.

The Crested Tit nests during the latter



part of April; any rotten stump or decayed tree will serve his purpose; if the hole is not quite suitable he enlarges it. The site may be eight or ten feet from the ground, but an attractive hole a foot above earth or one twenty feet up may harbour the nest. He is a bird of sociable disposition and two nests may be found in the same branch. The materials are moss, wool, deer's hair, and fur, closely felted together. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are white, boldly spotted or belted with pale red. Two broods are sometimes reared in the season. I have watched this bird in the old forests of



Normandy where he is fairly common ; he is much addicted to hunting among the dead pine-needles on the ground for the insects and seeds which form, with larvæ and berries, his staple diet. He has a curious habit of twitching his tail sideways, a motion which makes it easy to identify him in a bad light. In winter he frequently consorts with other Tits and Golden-Crested Wrens.



MARSH TIT

(*Parus Palustris*, Linn.)

THIS also is a very local species. It occurs in various parts of England and Wales, and in Scotland south of the Forth; but is nowhere common. A little larger than the Blue Tit, this bird is to be known by the glossy black head; back olive brown, the wings and tail ash-brown, and the under parts dull white. He is not very happily named; he has liking for a home in the alder or pollard willow to be found on swampy soil, but is in nowise wedded to marsh-land, affecting also orchard, garden, and wood. The



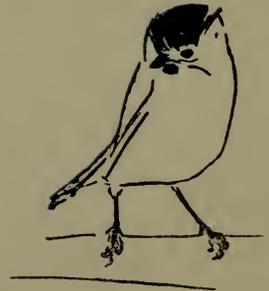
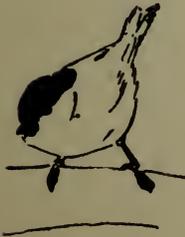


nest, built from mid-April to May, is hidden in a hole in some tree, often enlarged by the bird who discreetly removes the chips that might betray; it has always the narrowest of entrances. The materials are moss, wool, fur, and hair felted together: willow-down is often used as lining. The eggs, from five to eight in number, are white, dotted with dull red.

The note may be written "sis, sis, sis, seee"; but when alarmed the bird utters a rapid and metallic "tay, tay, tay, tay." The food consists largely of scale insects (*Coccidæ*) obtained from the bark of trees. The Marsh Tit is a muscular



little bird and is in the habit of prising off flakes of pine bark in search of quarry. Beech-mast is much to his taste, and he will hold a beech-nut in his claw, after the manner of the parrot, to peck out the contents. Berries of various kinds appeal to him, and hemp-seed is an attraction which will secure his punctual attendance at winter meals in the garden.



BEARDED TIT

(*Panurus Biarmicus*, Linn.)

WHEN is a Tit not a Tit? When it is a Bearded Tit. Science investigating his little inside, finds in his digestive organs and other internal arrangements evidence which prove him no Tit, but the representative of a distant family in no way related to the ancient family of Titmice. They are of the *Paridæ*; he is the one British member of the *Panuridæ*, and stands apart. Unfortunately, he stands apart in more senses than one; aforetime he was fairly common in the meres and fen-lands of the eastern counties,



but drainage has spoiled his old haunts, from the Bearded Tit's point of view, and now he is not known to breed elsewhere than in the Broads district of Norfolk. As a visitor, he occurs rarely in some other parts of England; thirty years ago he haunted the reed-beds of the Hampshire Avon.

The Bearded Tit nests in April; the site is among sedges on fallen reeds, or other water plants, and is built of the dry leaves of the common reed, whose flowers are used for the lining. The eggs, from five to seven in number are cream white, with tiny reddish-brown scratches. It some-



times happens that two hens will occupy the same nest and share the task of incubation. Two broods are reared in the season, the second appearing as late as August.

He is a lovely bird, tawny brown from his head to the end of his long tail, above; dove-grey warming into pink, below. The feature that gives him his name is the long triangular black patch which from between eye and beak tapers to a point well down on the side of the neck. The cock is easily distinguished by the black cheek patches and, when seen upside down engaged in gymnastics among the reeds



by the jet black under tail-coverts; these adornments are lacking in the hen. The length is about six and three-quarter inches.

The note is quite unlike that of any Tit, being a clear, musical "ping ping." The bird in winter lives on the seed of the reeds in which it makes its home; at that season assembling in companies of forty or fifty. "In summer," says Mr. Howard Saunders, "the crops of individuals have been found packed with such small shell-bearing molluscs as *Succinea amphibia*." His local name is "Reed Pheasant."





STARLING

(*Sturnus Vulgaris*, Linn.)

THIS bird just stops short of migration in winter. Great numbers of our home-bred Starlings move westward in autumn, seeking the milder climate of the south and west of Ireland; and our own stock is reinforced by hosts of birds from the north.

He is one of our commonest birds and perhaps the most useful. One authority has said of him that he spends his whole life in good works; that is the voice of the agriculturist; for the Starling consumes vast quantities of harmful grubs,



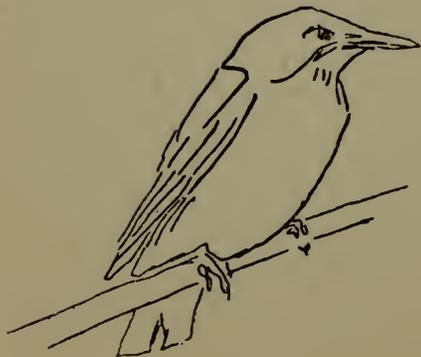
noticeably those of the cockchafer and daddylonglegs, and such pests as the wireworm. Other birds would speak less cordially of him; for he is an inveterate egg-stealer, and has a depraved appetite for young nestlings. I hesitate to write a word in dispraise of a character, by consent accepted as exemplary; but the Starling has been detected eating fruit. When first I saw him pecking at apples I gave him credit for anxiety to relieve them of grub or maggot; but closest examination of the fallen fruit failed to reveal sign that it had harboured such. Let us not insist overmuch on misdeed; he is, with





his faults, the best bird-friend of the farmer.

The Starling breeds early. The nest, an untidy shapeless mass of straw and grass, lined, it may be, with some wool or feathers, or both, is frequently placed in some hollow tree; but the site is a mere matter of convenience; the chimney is a favourite retreat; the cup of water-pipe, a hole in the roof, crevice under eaves, or beam in barn or outhouse—all have merits in the eyes of the Starling. Where trees and buildings are few he will nest in a turf-stack or on the ground itself. The hen lays from four to seven pale blue eggs,



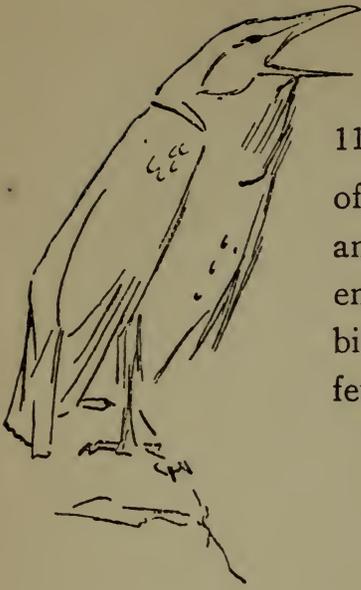
and she will rear two, three, or even more broods in the season.

After the moult Starlings congregate in great flocks, and remain in company throughout the winter, roosting together in the same wood or shrubbery every night. At this time they are much addicted to executing, at a considerable height in the air, evolutions which advertise the extraordinary singleness of mind that animates birds in a flock.

The song of the Starling is pleasing, but he is so determined a mimic it is really a little difficult to say what his natural song is; moreover, his utterances



often suggest less intention to imitate another bird than resolve to strike out an entirely new line of his own. No British bird is more easily reared by hand and few are more easily tamed.





ROSE-COLOURED PASTOR

(*Pastor Roseus* Linn.)

THIS beautiful bird, arrayed in black, white and rose-pink, with long crest, is an accidental visitor from Eastern Europe. Its occasional appearances having, as a rule, occurred in summer.





WREN

(*Troglodytes Parvulus*, K. L. Koch).



THIS bird is resident and immigrant.

There is no reason to suppose that any of our British-born Wrens go abroad in winter, but the autumn brings large flights of their kin to this country from northern latitudes. The Wren is everywhere common, and everywhere restless: he seems never to be still; his life is one of perpetual motion, hopping, flitting, gliding, and creeping mouse-like in the hedge-row. He is essentially a bird of the hedge-row; he shuns the open and



has his being in the hedge, always within a foot or two of the ground.

Nesting begins at the end of March or early in April. Wrens have no cast-iron prejudices in the matter of site; they will build in bush, stump, ivy or hedge; in hole in bank, wall, stack, or thatch—almost any situation, provided it be tolerably safe from observation, will satisfy the Wren. The nest, large for the size of the bird, is made of moss or dry grass and leaves, and the interior may be furnished with feathers; but fine grass is often used for the lining. As to shape, we cannot improve upon Turner's description:—"The nest has the





form of an upright egg, while in the middle of one side there is a little postern as it were, by which the bird goes in and out." The Wren has a peculiar habit of leaving one nest half finished and building a new one, which may or may not be near the abandoned structure. This practice has never been explained; it may be the outcome of the particular wariness attributed to the bird; tradition maintaining that Wrens will forsake their nests, unfinished or complete, if they believe themselves observed. Such unfinished structures are called "cock-nests," and picturesque rural legend has it that they



are built by the cock bird for his own private lodging, removed, we may assume, from family cares. This legend has a basis of truth in it; inasmuch as such nests are occupied on cold winter nights by small parties of Wrens seeking warmth and shelter; but since nests which have been used as nurseries are used in the same way we may not assign definite purpose to the "cock-nest." This uncompleted nest is sometimes taken in hand and finished for occupation by a family in a subsequent year.

The hen usually lays from six to eight eggs; but as many as sixteen young have





been found. The eggs are white dotted with red. Two broods are reared in the season.

The food of the Wren consists for the most part of insects, for which the bird may be seen hunting in its mouse-like fashion among dead leaves; in winter, seeds, crumbs and other matters are gladly accepted.

The Wren's voice is loud and powerful out of proportion to his size; he sings practically all the year round, save during the moult. The alarm note is a sharp "click."







TREE CREEPERS

THE BODLEY HEAD
NATURAL HISTORY
BY E. D. CUMING
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY J. A. SHEPHERD
VOLUME II. BRITISH
BIRDS. PASSERES————



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

MR. SHEPHERD'S illustrations to this volume do not aim so much at scientific accuracy as at giving a general impression of the character, habits, and appearance of the animal depicted. It is believed that in this respect they will be found certainly more artistic and probably more suggestive than elaborate plates or even photographs. All the studies with the exception only of those of one or two very rare birds are drawn from life. The design of the book being decorative as well as instructive it has been found impossible in the reproductions to keep the sizes of the animals proportionate to one another, so that in this respect the studies of each animal must be taken as relative only to themselves.

ORDER
PASSERES



WHITETHROAT

(*Sylvia cinerea*; Bechstein.)

THE "Nettlecreeper," to give him his popular name, usually arrives from the south about the second week in April, and loses no time in spreading all over the Kingdom, even to the Outer Hebrides; he is, however, only a rare visitor to the Shetlands.

The Whitethroat is easily identified by the peculiarity from which his name is derived: he is about $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long: the head and neck of the adult male are smoke grey; the mantle, back and wings rusty brown; tail-feathers the same, save the outer pair which are dull white, and the



next pair which have broad white tips; the chin and throat pure white fading into buff on the breast; abdomen brownish white; legs pale brown. The hen's plumage is somewhat duller.

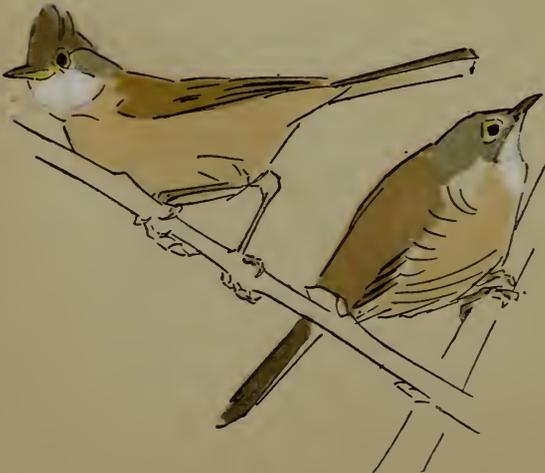
Breeding begins in May: at this juncture the bird utters a note comparable to the sound of a fishing reel and totally different from his song. The nest, which is commonly placed low down in some tangle of bramble and nettles, thorn thicket, or overgrown hedgerow, suggests that the sprightly, restless builder learned the first principles of nest-making and no more. It is a fairly deep cup of fine threads of hay lined with bents and horse-hair, but



the structure is of the slenderest; you can see through it as through a loosely woven basket. Occasionally a Whitethroat of unusual forethought, or, let us suppose, one which remembers the sufferings of his youth in a draughty nest of orthodox pattern, appropriates the nest of thrush or blackbird as soon as the brood has flown: this is relined; or, it were better to say, the orthodox nest is built inside it. Young Whitethroats reared in such a dwelling are fortunate; the practice might with advantage be more widely adopted. The eggs, from four to six in number, are pale greenish white, blotched and spotted with violet, grey and pale brown: the egg has



a peculiar translucency; it is as though the shell were a cloudy soap bubble. One brood is reared in the season. If the hen be disturbed she glides off the nest and vanishes stealthily in the herbage, while the cock expresses resentment at the intrusion after his own fashion, following the offender along the hedge or from bush to bush, with head feathers bristling, outspread tail quivering, and sometimes, says Mr. Howard Saunders, "shooting almost perpendicularly up in the air." The song is sweet but monotonous; often uttered with great vigour for brief snatches and, in May and June, to be heard at any hour of the twenty-four in mild weather: the



bird often sings on the wing as he flits from perch to perch. The food consists of insects, which are often caught flying, and their larvæ: later in the summer, berries and fruit are eaten and soft green corn; individuals have been known to eat the growing peas.

The Whitethroat starts for the south early in September.

In some parts of the country the bird is called the "Hay-chat" after the most conspicuous materials used in the nest.

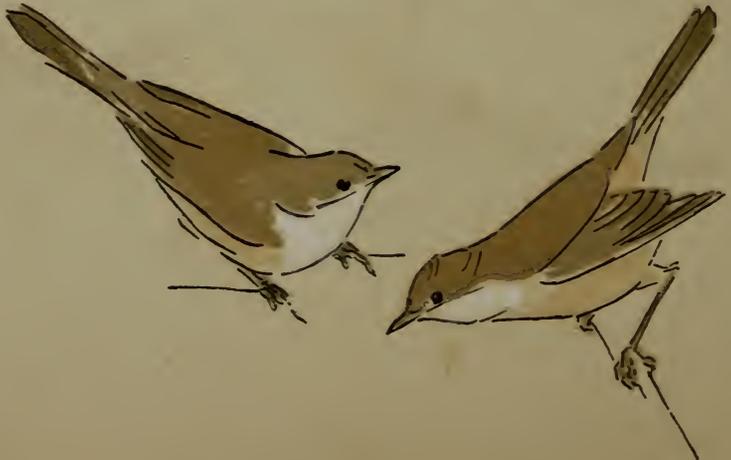


LESSER WHITETHROAT

(*Sylvia curruca*; Linn.)

THIS species arrives about the same time as its larger cousin; it is less common and less generally distributed, being rare and local north of Yorkshire, and also in Cornwall. North of the Forth it is a very uncommon visitor and in Ireland it is practically unknown.

In person the Lesser Whitethroat is much like the other, but the head is a much darker grey and the back and tail are greyish brown: and while the two outer tail feathers are white the next pair lack the broad white tips that



distinguish those of the Whitethroat. Also the legs are short and stout, and are slate-colour. The bird is only about a quarter of an inch shorter from beak-tip to tail-end than the last species, and it is not easy to distinguish between them except in the hand. The nest and nesting site are much the same as those of the Whitethroat; but a place in a hazel hedge is often preferred, whence the Lancashire name "Hazel Linnet." The five or six eggs are creamy white with spots and blotches of grey and brown superimposed, principally at the larger end; they are a little smaller than the eggs of the Whitethroat. The hen is





braver than the larger bird and will sit very closely when disturbed.

Mr. Charles Dixon says he has frequently noticed that the Lesser White-throat will desert the beginnings of nest after nest for no obvious reason, as is the habit of the Wren.

By comparison with the larger White-throat he is shy and retiring; he might be overlooked but for his song, a succession of high notes of the same pitch. As Mr. Warde Fowler says; "the smaller bird, less seen and less showy, makes his presence felt in almost every lane and meadow by the brilliancy of his song." He sings, as he lives, in seclusion, and,



unlike the last, continues singing till late in the summer. The food is the same as the Whitethroat's, but this bird may be seen searching the leaves for insect prey in a fashion of his own; he, too, will take insects on the wing.

The Lesser Whitethroat remains later in England than the last species: he does not start for the south until the end of September, and exceptional cases of his remaining till November are on record.

ORPHEAN WARBLER (*Sylvia orphea*; *Temminck*.) Very rarely a member of this south European species finds its way to this country. That it has bred in



England was proved in 1866 by the capture of a nestling unable to fly: the last of the half dozen authenticated occurrences. was that of a hen bird killed near St. Leonards on 7th August, 1903.



BLACKCAP

(*Sylvia atricapilla*; Linn.)

IN this migrant we have a songster only second to the nightingale. Arriving in mid April, sometimes about the first week of the month, the Blackcap takes up his quarters in England, Wales and the south of Scotland; he breeds as far north as the firths of Forth and Clyde, but beyond that limit is seldom known to nest; in Ireland, his occurrence anywhere as a breeding species is a matter for remark, but the bird has never been known to nest further north than the co. Dublin. In England he is tolerably widely distributed, but is somewhat local.



The Blackcap is easily recognised among warblers by the jet black head from which he takes his name; the neck is ashen grey, the back, wings and tail ash-brown; chin greyish white; throat, breast and flanks ash-grey; legs and feet lead coloured. In the hen the black cap is replaced by one of bright reddish brown. Nesting begins at the end of April or during the first week of May; the sight is in thicket, hedge, gorse or holly. Mr. Howard Saunders has remarked a preference for privet hedges; but the tree, bush, or hedge must be in, or close to, a wood or shrubbery. The nest, a small, neat structure of dry grass lined with horsehair, is usually within three feet



of the ground, but it may be found as much as ten feet up. The eggs, four or five in number, are extremely variable in colouration; the commonest are pale yellowish brown, blotched and spotted with darker brown; sometimes the clutch consists of eggs whose ground colour is cream with markings of lilac and grey: the most beautiful are the cream suffused with pink blotched with warm reddish brown and lilac in different shades superimposed. The red tinge in this variety lends them a distinction of their own.

Two broods are reared in the season. The cock takes a share in the hatching, usually doing his turn of duty during the



day Mr Chas Dixon says he has seen the bird in the act of singing as he sat on the nest. The young cocks assume the black cap after the first moult.

The bird sings by night as well as by day, whereby the song is sometimes mistaken for that of the nightingale; an error not to be repeated after the latter has been heard. More often and more excusably the song of the Blackcap is mistaken for that of the Garden Warbler. From the last it may be distinguished, as Mr. Warde Fowler points out, by the fact that the Blackcap's song "is one lengthened phrase," whereas the Garden Warbler will go on almost continuously for many



minutes: also it may be added the Blackcap's notes are more mellow. The food consists of insects, which are often caught on the wing, of wild berries and fruit in their seasons. Mr. O. V. Aplin noted the consumption of holly berries for several days by a bird which he first observed on 5th April. Soft fruit, more especially raspberries, are favourites of the Blackcap; also red currants.

The general movement southward takes place in September, the time varying in accord with the nature of the season. The bird has been known to winter with us: he has been seen as late in the year as the end of November, and as early as the 5th March after a severe winter.



GARDEN WARBLER

(*Sylvia hortensis* ; *Bechstein.*)

THIS bird arrives about the end of April or beginning of May. It is generally, but locally, distributed throughout England and Wales, save in the extreme west; has been known to nest as far north as Perthshire, and occurs as a breeding species in the south-western parts of Ireland. With regard to the fact that it is locally common and locally rare, it is to be observed that between this bird and the Blackcap appears to be antagonism. Garden Warblers are often numerous in districts where the Blackcap is scarce, and scarce where the Blackcap is common.



The bird is about $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length. The upper parts from head to tail are olive-brown ; the quills of the wing somewhat darker ; the eye is set in a streak of buffish white ; the underside is buffish white darkening upwards to the flanks. The hen is a little lighter than the cock.

Nesting begins in early May and the eggs are laid from the middle of the month onward. The nest is made of dry grass or hay rather loosely put together round what may be called the inner nest ; on the latter the bird bestows much better workmanship ; the cup, of finer grass, sometimes mingled with a few horsehairs, is closely woven and beautifully rounded.



The site is a foot or two from the ground in bramble bushes, thick shrubs, low thorns, or sometimes in a large and uncared-for gooseberry bush; but always well concealed. The eggs, four or five in number, vary a good deal; they may be white or greenish white in ground colour, marbled and blotched with various shades of brown often superimposed; the brown of the markings may be olive, dark, or or buff, but never, Mr. Howard Saunders points out, suffused with the red that sometimes lends the Blackcap's egg its great beauty. The markings very commonly wear the appearance of having been burned in with a blunt, thick wire,



gradually spreading and fading from a spot of intense colour. Only one brood is reared in the season ; the young birds are rather more greenish olive as to the upper parts than their parents.

The Garden Warbler resembles the Lesser Whitethroat in his retiring habits ; by preference he keeps out of sight and is far more often heard than seen, for when singing he takes up his station where the leaves hide him. Less than any of the Warblers does he court public notice ; his soft, melodious song conveys the impression that he is exercising a modest talent for the gratification of his mate and none other. His food is very much



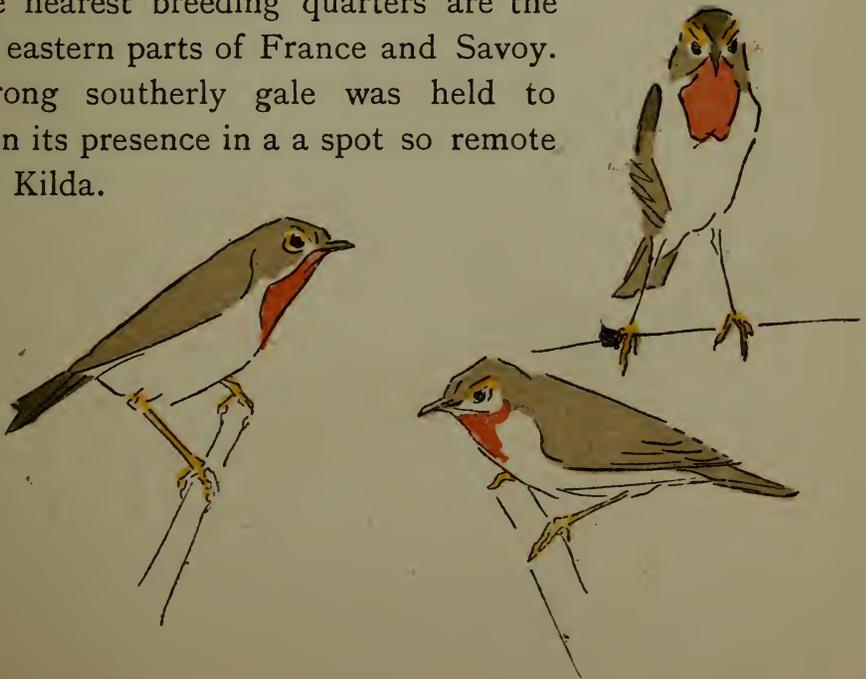
the same as that of the Blackcap, but liberal use of the caterpillar of the white cabbage butterfly for the nestlings has been remarked. At the end of September Garden Warblers leave for the south; it is worth noticing that this species is found in Cape Colony during our winter months; but it would not be safe to conclude that these are the individual birds which summer in England.

BARRED WARBLER (*Sylvia nisoria*; *Bechstein*). The summer home of this bird is south eastern Europe, Persia and Turkestan. During the last thirty years, or thereabout, some fifteen specimens have



been identified in the British Islands. The fact that all were taken between August and November suggests the probability that they were birds which had gone astray while returning to winter quarters.

SUBALPINE WARBLER (*Sylvia subalpina*; *Bonelli*). The claim of this little bird to inclusion in the British list rests on a single specimen shot on St. Kilda in June, 1894. This is a south European warbler whose nearest breeding quarters are the south eastern parts of France and Savoy. A strong southerly gale was held to explain its presence in a spot so remote as St. Kilda.



DARTFORD WARBLER

(*Sylvia undata*; *Boddaert.*)

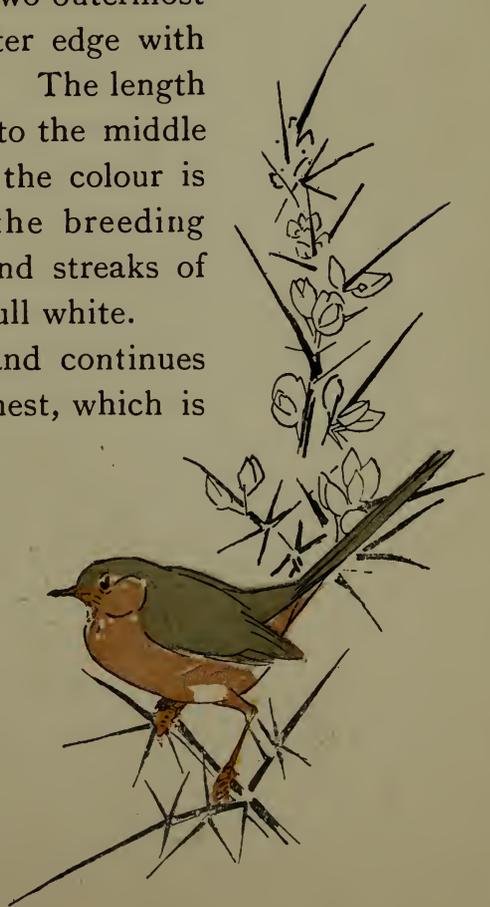
THIS warbler, which owes its name to the fact that it was first identified from a specimen shot near Dartford, in 1773, was for long regarded as rare; but with the increase of competent observers its comparative plenty has been established. It is most often found in the southern counties where it is resident throughout the year, but is apparently extending its breeding range northward and westward. Norfolk is the most northerly county in which the bird has been known with certainty to nest, but like its relatives it is of retiring habit and



may be easily overlooked in the breeding season.

The adult male is about five inches long; his upper parts are dark slate-grey; the short and rounded wings are dark brown; the tail, which is long and somewhat sparse, has the two outermost feathers margined on the outer edge with white and tipped with white. The length of the tail feathers increases to the middle pair. From chin to breast the colour is rufous chestnut during the breeding season; in autumn spots and streaks of white appear; the belly is dull white.

Nesting begins in April and continues until well on in July. The nest, which is

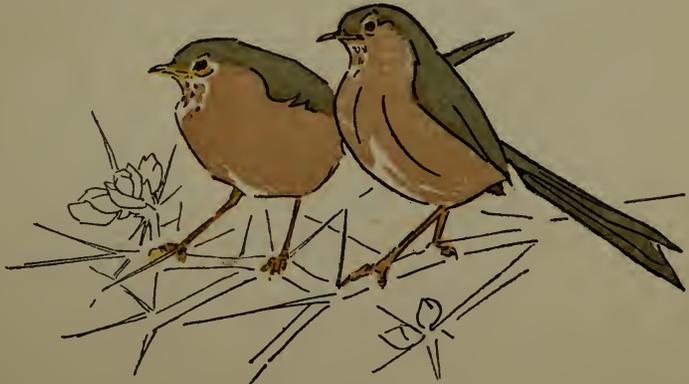


built in furze or in heather, deep down near the ground, is described by Mr. R. B. Wilson as something like that of the Whitethroat, but smaller; one found in a furze bush consisted of sprays of young and tender furze, moss, bents and spiders' webs; its principal resemblance to the Whitethroat's nest lies in the method of construction; it is so loosely put together that the light can be seen through. A little wool is sometimes used for the lining. Seemingly the bird distrusts the strength of the nest for the second brood which is reared in June or July; since for this a new one is built, rather more flimsy than the former. The first clutch is laid early

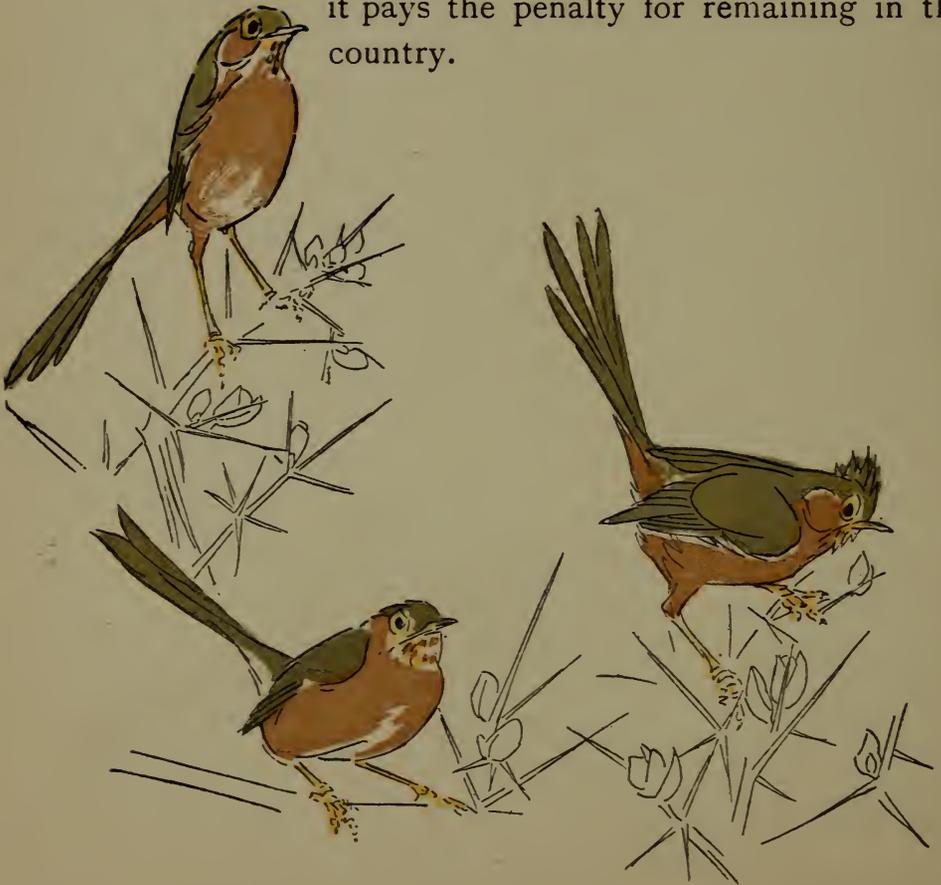


in May; the eggs are four or five in number, greenish white, with olive or brown markings. The food is much the same as that of the other Warblers, but moths appear to figure more largely in the bill of daily fare.

The Dartford Warbler may be seen flitting from bush to bush on the commons, with quick, undulating flight; the method of alighting is characteristic; it has been described as looking "as if the action were the result of an afterthought," and this affords the easiest method of identifying the bird. The note is syllabised as "pit-it-chou"; when alarmed or angry a scolding "cha-cha." When winter



approaches the Dartford Warbler leaves the commons, and resorts to the sea coast where it affects fields, gardens and orchards. At this season the birds loses much of its shyness and frequently falls a prey to the cottage cat. In hard winters it pays the penalty for remaining in this country.



GOLDEN CRESTED WREN

(*Regulus cristatus*; K. L. Kock.)

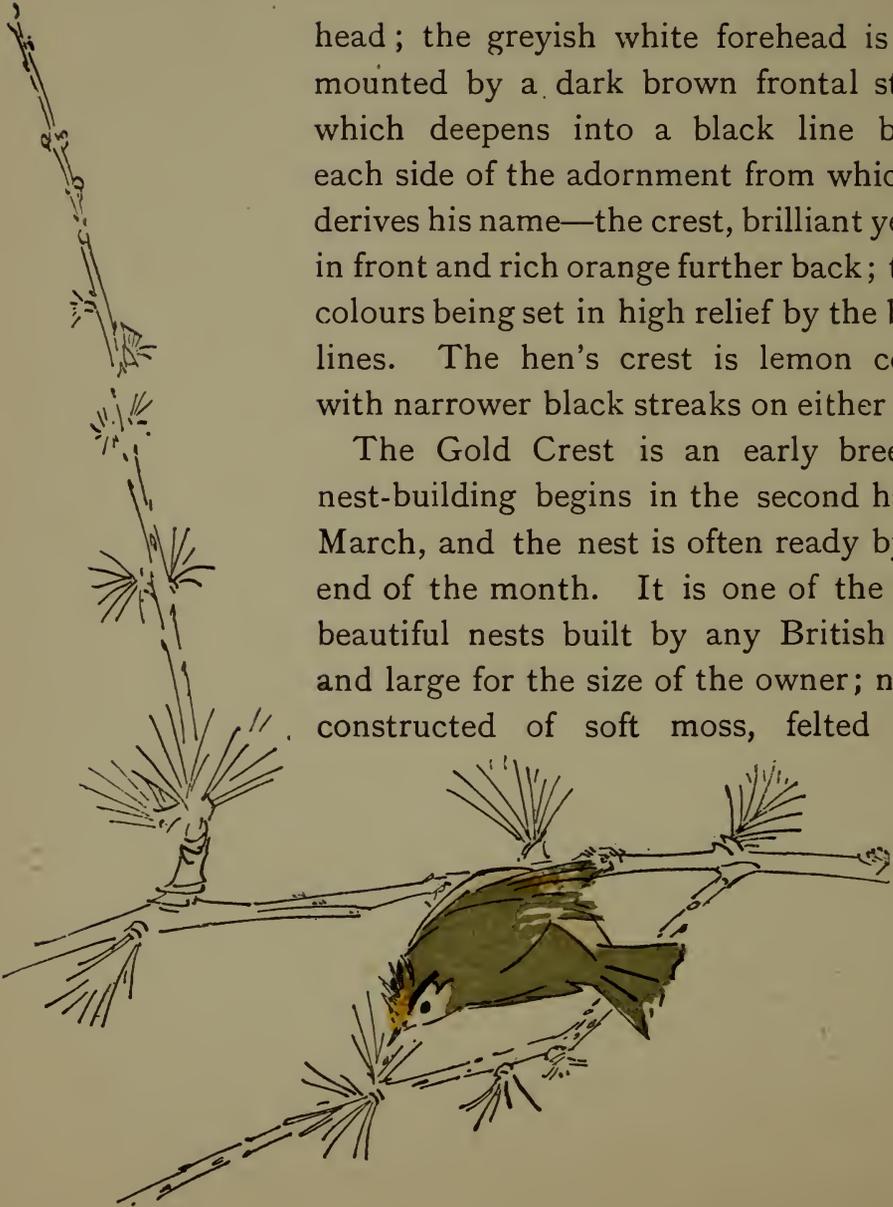
THIS, the smallest of European birds, is a resident, and its numbers in winter are augmented by swarms, often of extraordinary magnitude, from Scandinavia and the north. The bird breeds everywhere in the Kingdom save in the Outer Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands; and no doubt would do so in those islands did they offer the necessary conveniences in the shape of fir woods.

There is no mistaking the Golden Crested Wren; about $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long with yellowish olive-green neck and back, we need look no further than his brilliant



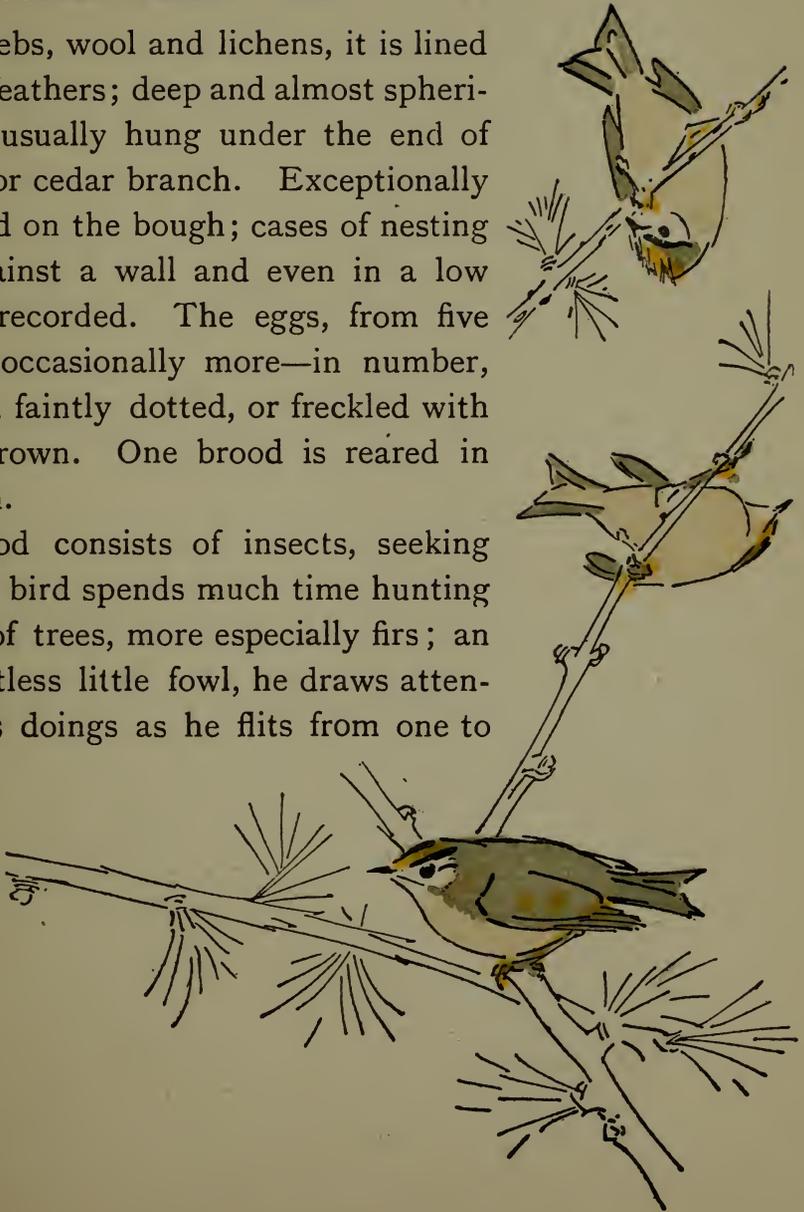
head; the greyish white forehead is surmounted by a dark brown frontal streak which deepens into a black line below each side of the adornment from which he derives his name—the crest, brilliant yellow in front and rich orange further back; these colours being set in high relief by the black lines. The hen's crest is lemon colour with narrower black streaks on either side.

The Gold Crest is an early breeder; nest-building begins in the second half of March, and the nest is often ready by the end of the month. It is one of the most beautiful nests built by any British bird, and large for the size of the owner; neatly constructed of soft moss, felted with



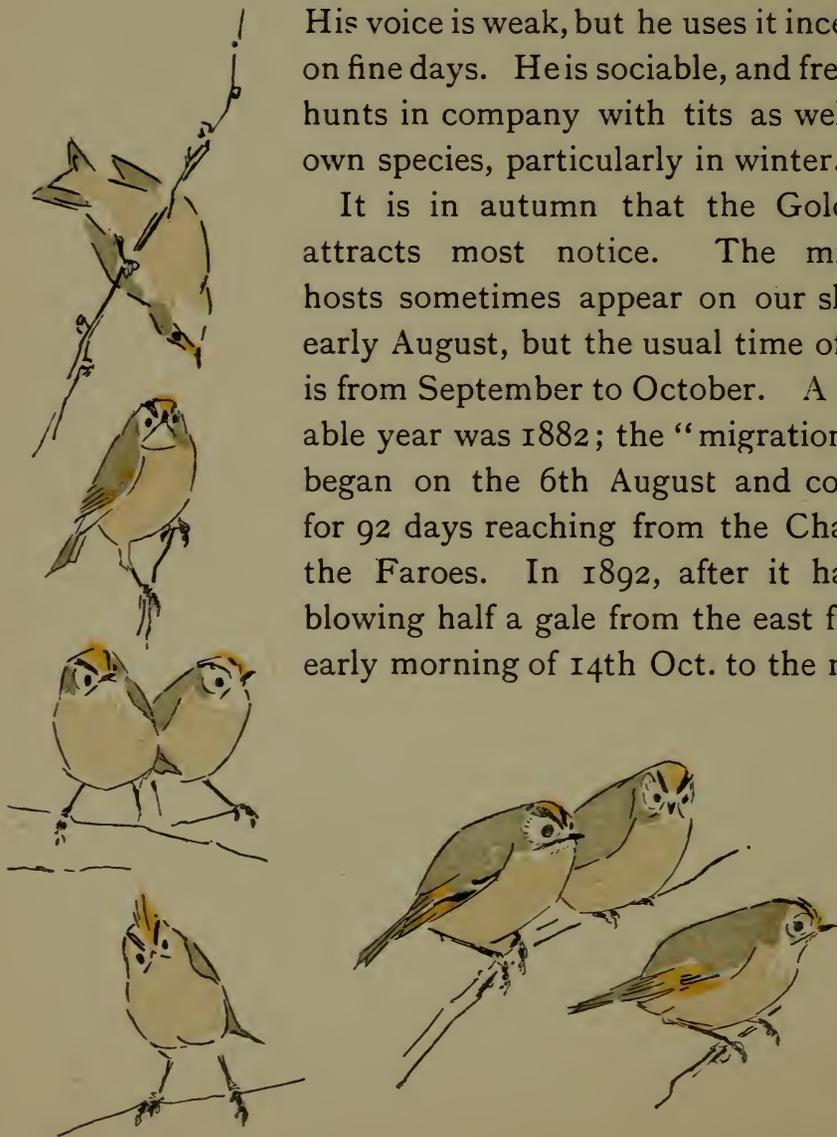
spiders' webs, wool and lichens, it is lined with soft feathers; deep and almost spherical, it is usually hung under the end of fir, yew, or cedar branch. Exceptionally it is placed on the bough; cases of nesting in ivy against a wall and even in a low bush are recorded. The eggs, from five to eight—occasionally more—in number, are white, faintly dotted, or freckled with reddish brown. One brood is reared in the season.

The food consists of insects, seeking which the bird spends much time hunting the bark of trees, more especially firs; an active restless little fowl, he draws attention to his doings as he flits from one to



another uttering his insect-like "si-si-si." His voice is weak, but he uses it incessantly on fine days. He is sociable, and frequently hunts in company with tits as well as his own species, particularly in winter.

It is in autumn that the Gold Crest attracts most notice. The migrating hosts sometimes appear on our shores in early August, but the usual time of arrival is from September to October. A memorable year was 1882; the "migration wave" began on the 6th August and continued for 92 days reaching from the Channel to the Faroes. In 1892, after it had been blowing half a gale from the east from the early morning of 14th Oct. to the morning



of the 16th, Mr. John Cordeaux thus described the autumn influx:—"During this time the immigration was immense; greatest in number were the golden-crested wrens. First I heard their notes on opening my window on the morning of the 14th and soon saw some in the garden below; they swarmed in every hedgerow; but on Saturday the 15th the number had enormously increased. Gold crests everywhere, in hedges and gardens, dead thorns and hedge-trimming, rubbish heaps, beds of nettles, and dead umbelliferæ, the reeds in ditches, sides of haystacks, and the thorn fences of sheds and yards. The sallow thorns were densely crowded, many



found shelter in the long sea-grass, and others again crouched on the bare rain-swept sands between the sea and the dunes. Many might have been taken with a butterfly net."

Inasmuch as exhausted birds sometimes settle in swarms on the rigging of vessels in the North Sea, it is certain that many are lost on the journey over. It is probable that the case of the short-eared owl which was seen to land on the Yorkshire coast carrying a Gold Crest on his back was not isolated. The return journey is made in April.



FIRE CRESTED WREN

(*Regulus ignicapillus* : C. L. Brehm).

THIS near relative of the last species is an irregular but by no mean infrequent visitor. Its true home—if the breeding area of a migrant be its true home—is south and central Europe, Algeria and Asia Minor; in the Taurus range of the last named country it is commoner than the Gold Crest.

This bird is a very little larger than *cristatus* but otherwise is so like that until you have him in your hand it is impossible to distinguish between the two. At close quarters the differences are easily recognised; looking at the Fire Crest in profile, the black bands on mantle and



head proclaim him : one black streak runs from the corner of the beak to the neck ; another runs from the corner of the beak through the eye ; and above the cheek is a wider black band which forms the frame, as it were, of the rich orange crest. The hen is smaller than the cock, and her crest is lemon yellow with narrower black streaks on either side.

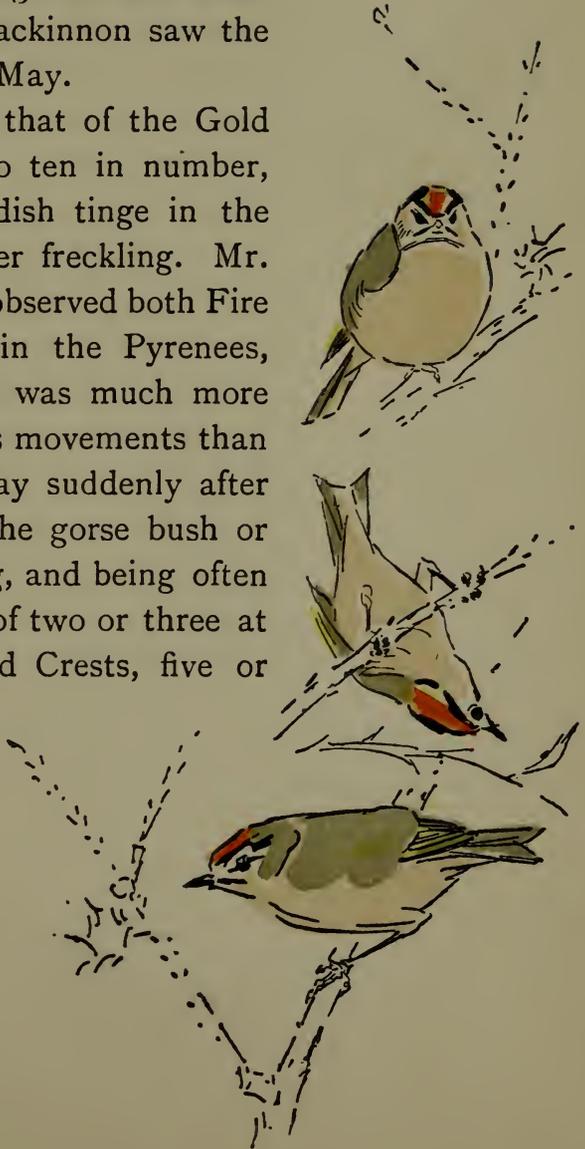
Instances of this bird's nesting in Britain are few. The last I can trace was recorded in 1906 by the Rev. D. D. Mackinnon, who saw, near Portree in Skye, the hen sitting on her nest in a small fir tree about five feet from the ground.

It was subsequently stated that three



other pairs were nesting in the same neighbourhood. Mr. Mackinnon saw the bird sitting on the 19th May.

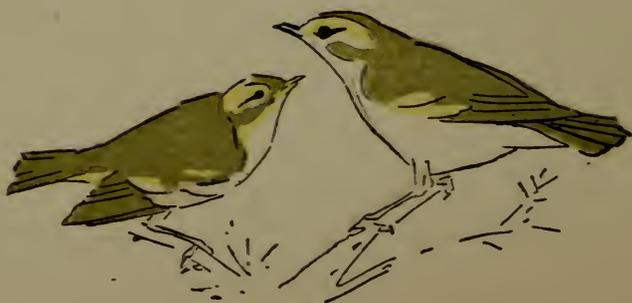
The nest is very like that of the Gold Crest; the eggs, seven to ten in number, have a much more reddish tinge in the ground colour and redder freckling. Mr. Howard Saunders, who observed both Fire Crest and Gold Crest in the Pyrenees, noticed that the former was much more erratic and restless in its movements than the latter; "darting away suddenly after a very short stay upon the gorse bush or tree where it was feeding, and being often seen alone or in parties of two or three at most; whereas the Gold Crests, five or



six together, would work steadily round the same bush, and, if I remained quiet, would stop there for many minutes."



YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus superciliosus*; J. F. Gmelin). About a dozen examples of this bird have been taken in Great Britain and Ireland since it was first identified in 1838. It is believed to breed in the pine forests of N.E. Siberia. Its rare occurrence so far afield as our own country invite the conjecture that individual birds may on occasion lose their mysterious sense of orientation when migrating. The specimens taken in the British Islands were all recorded in the



autumn, when Yellow-browed Warblers would be moving south.

PALLAS'S WILLOW WARBLER (*Phylloscopus proregulus*; Pallas.) A single specimen of this, also an east Siberian, species has been taken in England—a hen shot in October, 1896, on the Norfolk coast.

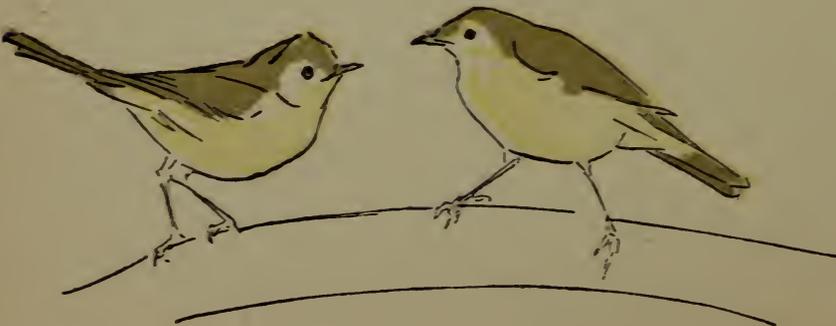
GREENISH WILLOW-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus viridanus*; Blyth.) The claims of this species to mention rest again upon the discovery of one hen-bird taken in Lincolnshire in September, 1896, after an easterly gale. Its summer home is on and beyond the Urals.



CHIFFCHAFF

(*Phylloscopus rufus* ; *Bechstein.*)

THIS little bird is the earliest of our spring arrivals, appearing, in favourable seasons, during the first days of March. A Chiffchaff was seen at Penzance on 9th February in 1906, but as a few of the species remain with us the winter through, particularly in sheltered corners of Devon and Cornwall, this individual, no doubt was one of those which had never been away. The bird is most frequent in the South and Midland Counties; it is scarce in the north and is only known as a straggler in the Outer Hebrides and Orkneys; it is very common in all wooded

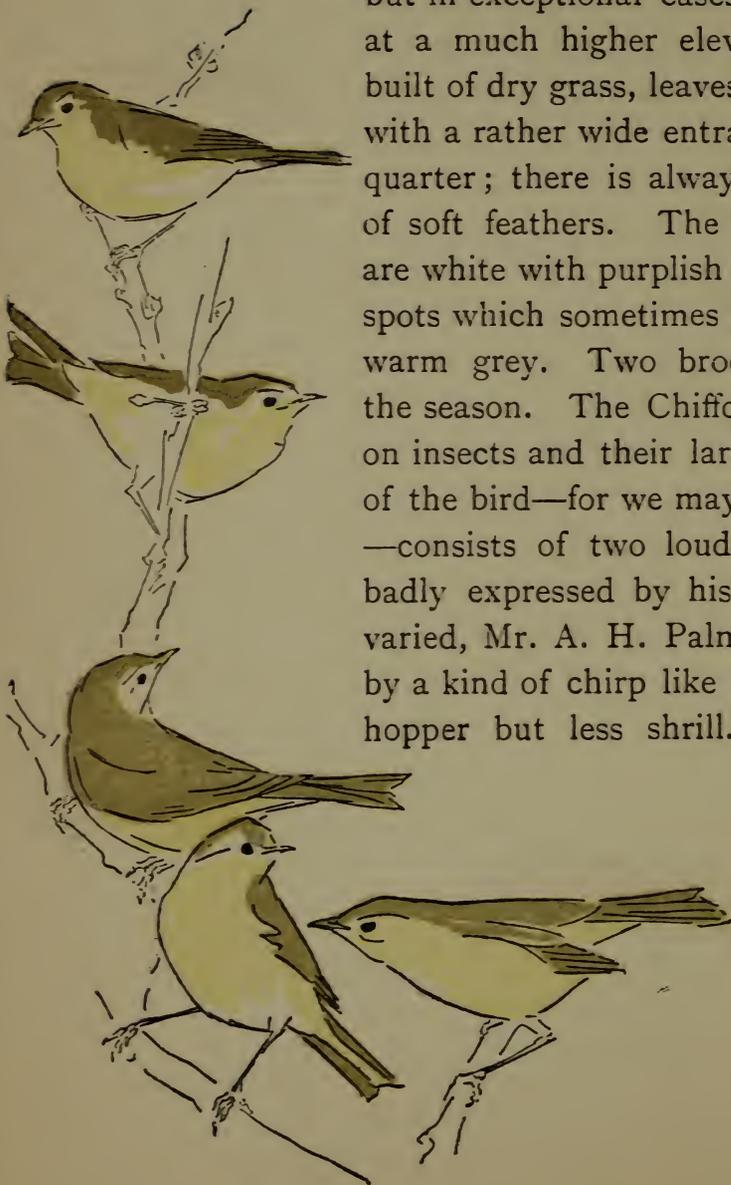


districts of Ireland. The notable thing about this bird (the next species also) is the slender graceful figure; in spring the upper parts are olive-green, brightening to yellowish on the rump; the wing coverts, quills and tail feathers are dull brown edged with olive-green; and the under parts are dull white, tinged with greenish buff. There is a pale yellow streak above the eye which fades into white behind the ear coverts. The plumage becomes markedly yellower after the moult.

The Chiffchaff begins to build in April; the rather loosely constructed nest is placed close to the ground in some clump of rough herbage, ferns, or kindred site;



but in exceptional cases it has been found at a much higher elevation. The nest, built of dry grass, leaves and moss, is oval with a rather wide entrance in the upper quarter; there is always a profuse lining of soft feathers. The eggs, usually six, are white with purplish brown or reddish spots which sometimes overlie blotches of warm grey. Two broods are reared in the season. The Chiffchaff lives entirely on insects and their larvæ. The speech of the bird—for we may not call it a song—consists of two loud sharp notes, not badly expressed by his name, sometimes varied, Mr. A. H. Palmer has remarked, by a kind of chirp like that of the grasshopper but less shrill. Gilbert White



observes that the two notes are "so loud in hollow woods as to occasion an echo." The note is seldom heard after the end of May, but is uttered again in the autumn. It is unusual to hear the note in October, but in 1893 it was remarked in Kent on the 3rd of that month, and in Co. Carlow on the 1st. The Chiffchaff does not court observation; his voice may be heard from the seclusion of tall trees; groves of elms and larches, Mr. Howard Saunders says, being peculiarly attractive to him.

The southward movement begins in September. As already said, a few courageous individual remain the winter through; but courage is akin to indiscretion in so delicate a bird.



WILLOW WREN

(*Phylloscopus trochilus*; Linn.)

OTHERWISE Willow Warbler; a name to which he has more claim than many so-called warblers, but of that anon. He arrives about a month later than the Chiffchaff, usually appearing in the southern counties during the first week of April. He is more common and more generally distributed than the last species, and, by reason of his fearlessness, much better known. Sit still and the Willow Wren may come within arm's length; I have had one enter the balcony and perch on my foot; but that was in Norway where all birds are more confiding



than in this country, possibly because a prolonged winter increases dependence upon man. The Willow Wren is common on the mainland of Scotland, but only occurs as an occasional visitor in the western and northern groups of islands; the fact that these strays most often appear in the autumn suggests that they may be migrants from Scandinavia which have been blown out of their southward course. The bird is very common in Ireland.

In size he rather exceeds the Chiffchaff, being about $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches long; but otherwise the resemblance between the two is so close that one may be mistaken for the other; both are slender graceful little birds



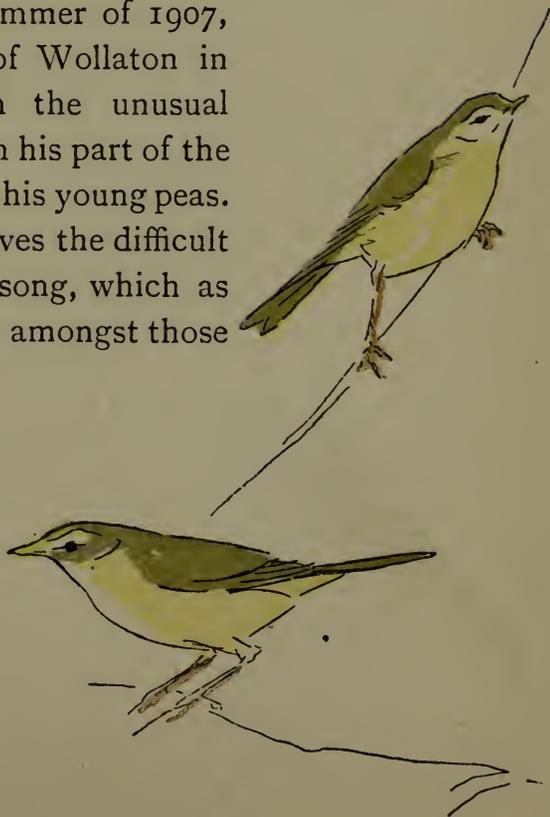
and the colour scheme is much the same; the margins of the tail and wing feathers are more yellowish than in the Chiffchaff, and the underparts are yellowish white. After the moult the general impression is of yellow; particularly in the bird of the year, whose dress recalls that of a canary.

Domestic affairs are begun in the latter part of April; the nest itself is like that of the Chiffchaff but is placed on the ground, not clear of it; and it is very hard to find without the owner's guidance. Exceptions occur—they always do. In 1901, Mr. F. Boyes, of Beverley, recorded the nest of a Willow Wren built in the ivy covering a post in his garden nearly



five feet above the ground. The eggs from six to eight in number, are white, spotted and freckled with very pale red. Two broods are often reared in the season; the first is hatched out about the middle of May, the second a month later. The food consists of insects varied by occasional incursions upon currants and other fruit; and in the summer of 1907, the Rev. H. C. Russell, of Wollaton in Notts., commenting upon the unusual number of Willow Wrens in his part of the county, stated that they ate his young peas.

Mr. Warde Fowler achieves the difficult feat of describing well the song, which as he truly remarks, is unique amongst those



of British birds :—“ Beginning with a high and tolerably full note, he drops it both in force and pitch in a cadence short and sweet, as though he were getting exhausted with the effort ; for that it is a real effort to him and all his slim and tender relations, no one who watches as well as listens can have a reasonable doubt. This cadence is often perfect, by which I mean that it descends gradually, not, of course, on the notes of our musical scale, by which no birds in their natural state would deign to be fettered, but through fractions of one or perhaps two of our tones, and without returning upwards at the end ; but still more often, and especially, as I fancy, after



they have been here a few weeks, they take to finishing with a note nearly as high in pitch as that with which they began." The song is occasionally heard in August. It is to be observed that the Willow Wren is much less addicted to the retirement of lofty trees than the Chiffchaff; at all times he is more at home in comparatively low trees and ornamental shrubs.

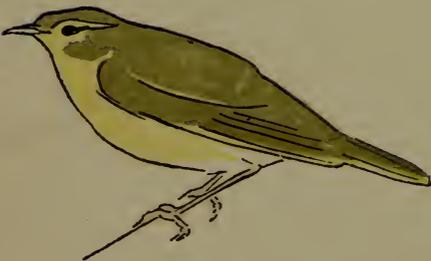
The bird leaves for the south during the earlier part of September, but late stayers have been seen as far north as Yorkshire in the first days of October. This is not surprising since, as in the case of the last species, a few sometimes remain in the warmer corners of the country for the whole winter.



WOOD WREN

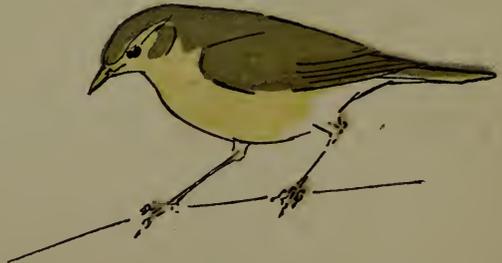
(*Phylloscopus sibilatrix* ; *Bechstein.*)

THIS, the largest and least common of the three greenish yellow Warblers which come to us regularly, arrives in the southern counties during the second and third weeks of April ; being essentially a bird of the woodlands it is local in its distribution, and is familiar only in districts well wooded, more particularly with beech and oak. It is not common in Scotland, but is said to be extending its range ; it has been identified in North Ulster. It is fairly common in the co. Wicklow, but not elsewhere in Ireland. The bird, less slender of form than the



last two species, is over five inches long; the upper parts are yellowish green; the wings greyish brown, the feathers edged with a tinge of yellow; the tail greyish brown; breast and throat sulphur yellow; belly and under tail coverts white. The easiest way to distinguish the Wood Wren from either of the last two species is by the greater length of the wings which, when folded, come within half an inch of the end of the tail.

In May the Wood Wren sets about building; the site chosen is generally a wooded bank with a sprinkling of undergrowth; and if last year's leaves cover the ground it is a further recommendation;

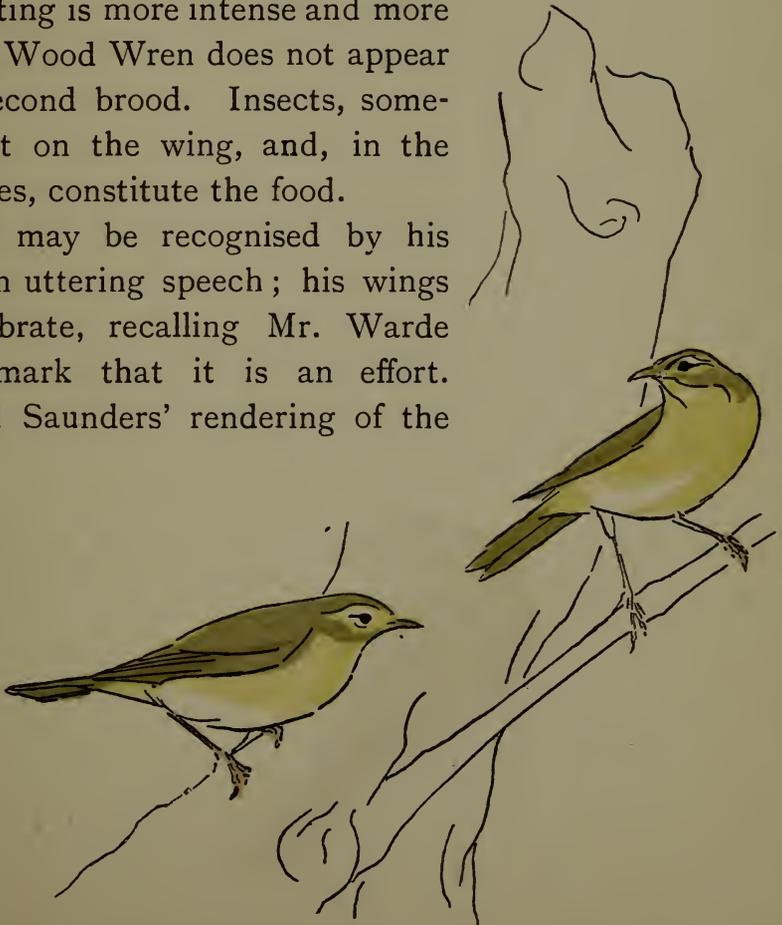


often a slight natural depression is selected, we need not doubt with an eye to the better concealment so secured ; and here the bird builds a nest of dry grass, in shape the same as those of the Chiffchaff and Willow Wren, but lacking the lining of feathers. The hen sits very closely ; I have had one fly out in my face while crawling on all fours up a bank with no thought of Wood Wrens. Many birds sit as closely, but none with which I am acquainted shew the same indifference to observation under these circumstances ; put the bird off her nest and wait a few yards away ; within ten minutes or so she will come back and re-enter it, ignoring your presence ; it is as



though she said to herself, "If he meant to steal the eggs he would have done it before, and there's no sense in letting them get cold." The eggs, from five to seven in number, resemble those of the Chiffchaff, but are proportionately larger and the spotting is more intense and more liberal. The Wood Wren does not appear to raise a second brood. Insects, sometimes caught on the wing, and, in the season, berries, constitute the food.

This bird may be recognised by his manner when uttering speech; his wings and tail vibrate, recalling Mr. Warde Fowler's remark that it is an effort. Mr. Howard Saunders' rendering of the



utterance, "chit, chit, chit, chit, chitr, tr-tr-tr-tre," cannot be bettered.

In some seasons the Wood Wren is plentiful in districts where he is normally rare; thus in the spring of 1902, the number in the Erne Valley and Ivy Bridge districts of Devon was the subject of remark. In the following year the number in Shropshire was noticed to be increasing.

The southward movement takes place in September.

The RUFIOUS WARBLER (*Aëdon galactodes*; *Temminck*) whose habitat is northern Africa and the south of Spain



and Portugal, has three times been taken in England.

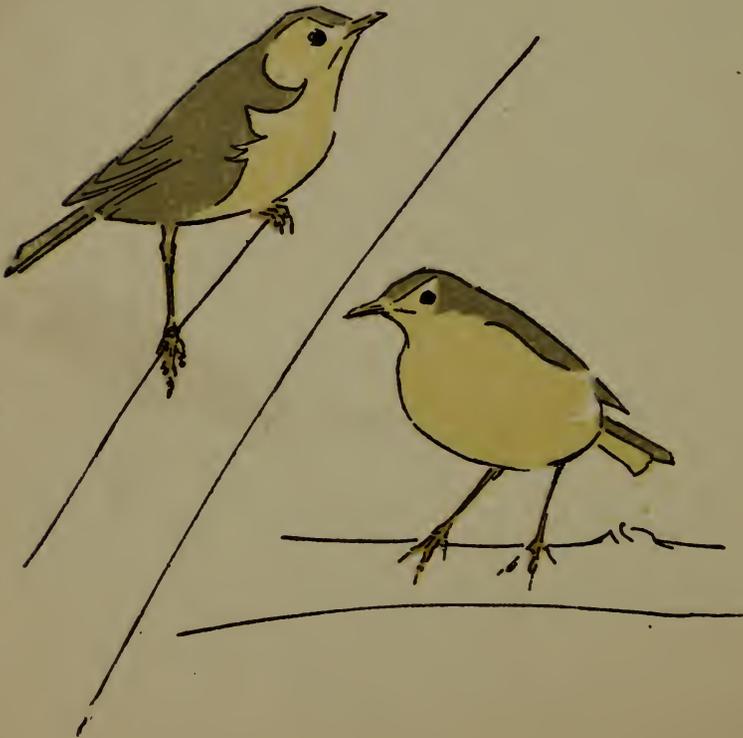
RADDE'S BUSH WARBLER (*Lusciniola schwarzi*; *Radde*), an east Siberian species becomes British in virtue of a single capture made in 1898.

The ICTERINE WARBLER (*Hypolais icterina*; *Vielliot*), common in central and northern Europe, even in Belgium, has been identified some eight or ten times.

The MELODIOUS WARBLER (*Hypolais polyglotta*; *Vielliot*), whose range, roughly



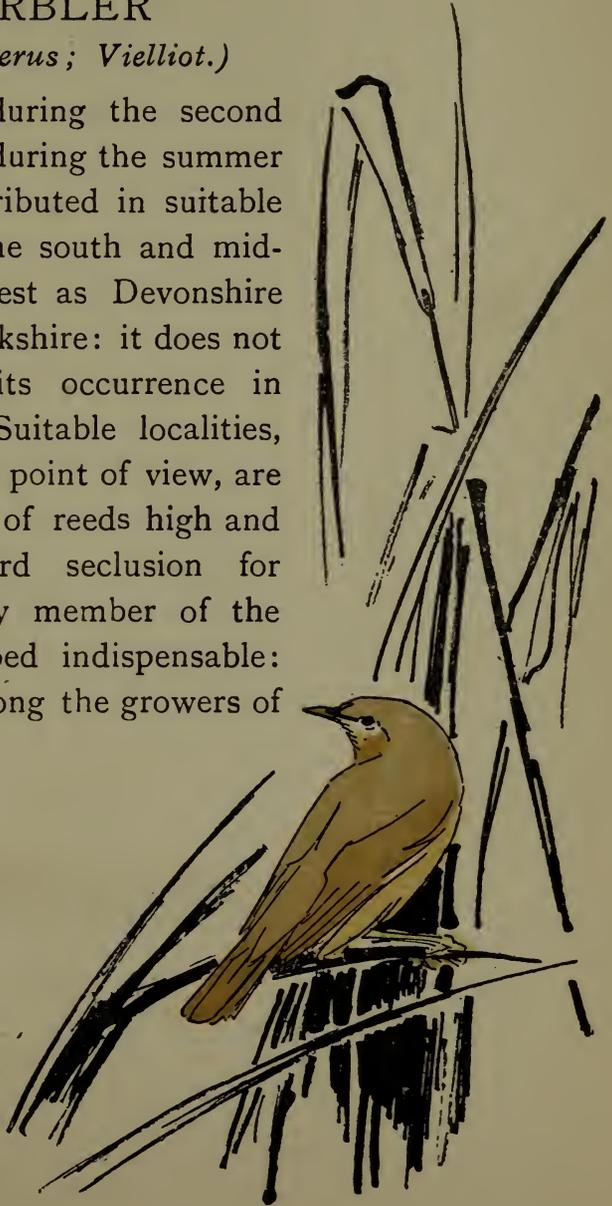
speaking, is northern Africa, the south of Spain and Italy, has been identified with certainty once, and there is reason to believe that a pair bred two or three years in succession in Sussex.



REED WARBLER

(*Acrocephalus streperus*; Vieillot.)

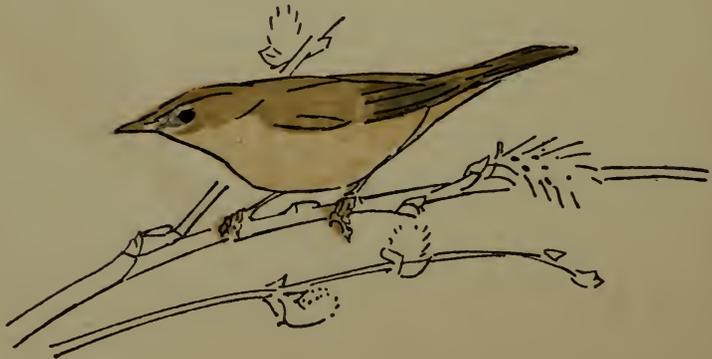
THIS bird arrives during the second half of April, and during the summer is tolerably widely distributed in suitable localities throughout the south and mid-land counties as far west as Devonshire and as far north as Yorkshire: it does not visit Scotland, and its occurrence in Ireland is doubtful. Suitable localities, from the Reed Warbler point of view, are those where exist beds of reeds high and thick enough to afford seclusion for nesting; but not every member of the species holds a reed bed indispensable: nests may be found among the growers of



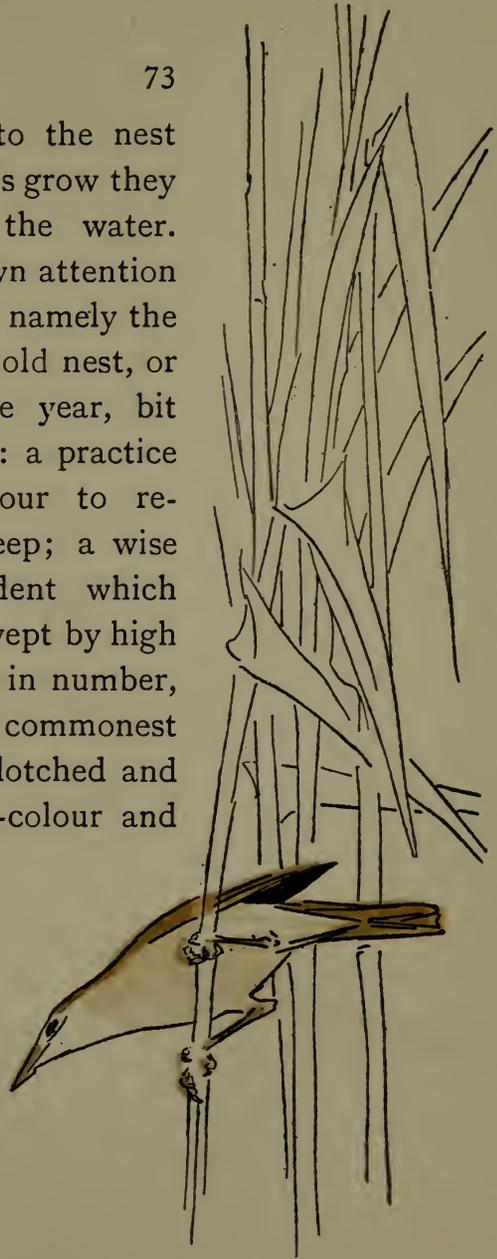
willow and alder by the riverside, and cases of building in lilac bushes in gardens are on record.

The bird is about $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches long; the upper parts are rufous brown with a tinge of chestnut which brightens on the rump; there is a faint buff streak over the eye; the underparts are dull white, tinged with buff which darkens on the sides, thighs and under tail coverts: the young bird is tawny underneath.

Building begins in May; when reeds are the site, the nest is slung or secured to two, three or four stems about which the dry grass of which the outer structure consists is woven; moss, wool, feathers

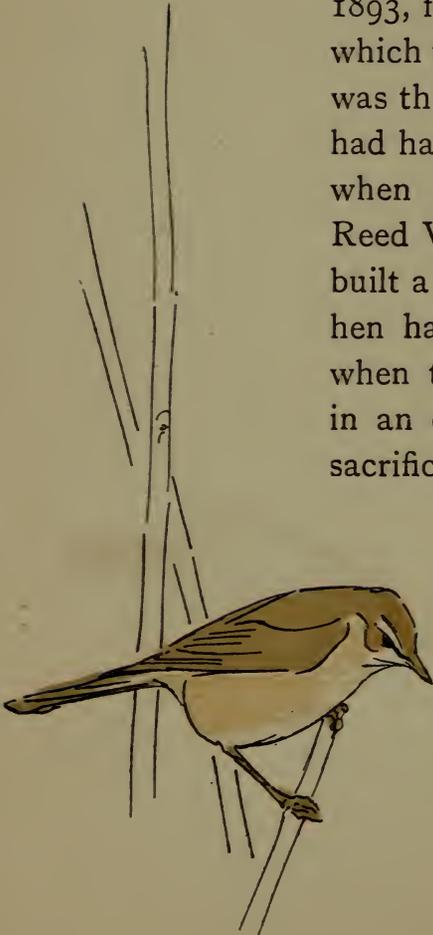


and horsehair are worked into the nest and used as lining; as the reeds grow they lift the nest further above the water. Mr. H. S. Davenport has drawn attention to a curious habit of this bird, namely the removal of the material of an old nest, or a storm-damaged nest of the year, bit by bit, to build the new one: a practice which has economy of labour to recommend it. The nest is deep; a wise precaution against the accident which might befall when reeds are swept by high winds. The eggs, four or five in number, vary a good deal in colouration; commonest are those of greenish-white, blotched and freckled with dark olive, ash-colour and



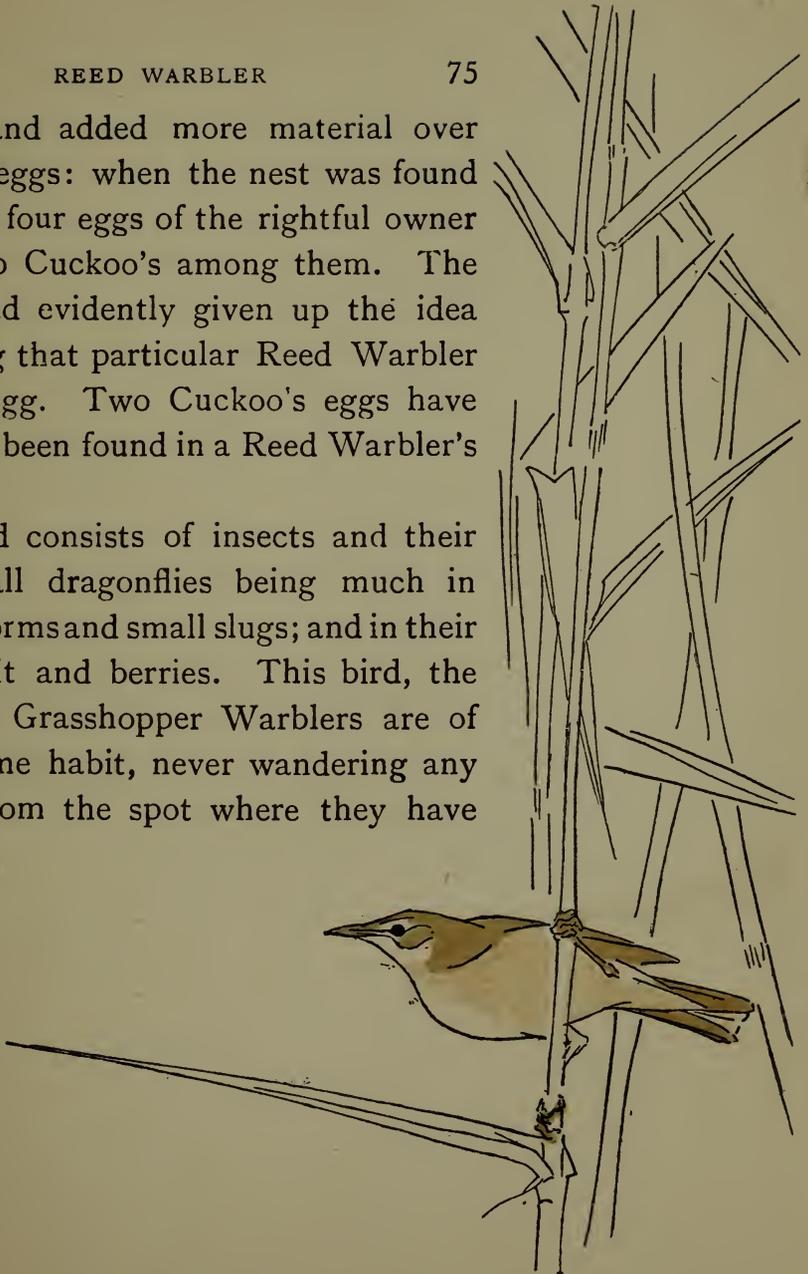
black, most thickly at the larger end. The eggs are laid about the last week of May.

This bird is frequently victimised by the Cuckoo; the Rev. James Hale in July, 1893, found among reeds in the Isis a nest which told its own curious story. The nest was three storied; and it was obvious what had happened: the owner had laid one egg when a Cuckoo put hers beside it; the Reed Warblers, objecting, set to work and built a new lining over the two eggs; the hen had laid two eggs on the new lining when the Cuckoo arrived again and put in an egg; once more the Reed Warbler sacrificed her own in order to baffle the



stranger, and added more material over the three eggs: when the nest was found there were four eggs of the rightful owner in it but no Cuckoo's among them. The Cuckoo had evidently given up the idea of saddling that particular Reed Warbler with her egg. Two Cuckoo's eggs have sometimes been found in a Reed Warbler's nest.

The food consists of insects and their larvæ, small dragonflies being much in request, worms and small slugs; and in their season fruit and berries. This bird, the Sedge and Grasshopper Warblers are of stay-at-home habit, never wandering any distance from the spot where they have



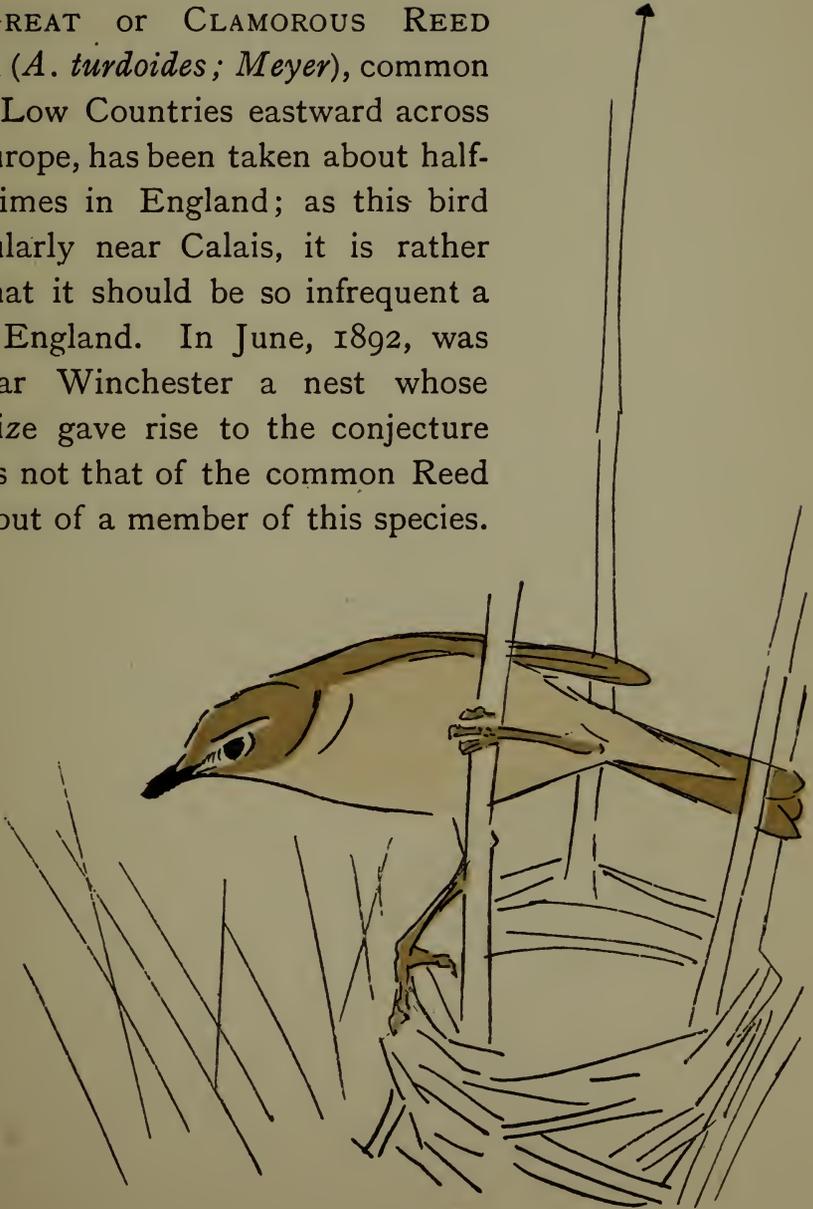
made their summer quarters. Find one of the three once and the bird is found for the season; you may return day after day assured of seeing him again within a radius of a few yards.

The song—it is a pleasure to deal with a Warbler that really warbles—is loud, well sustained and distinguished by considerable variety of note. The bird sings at any hour of the daylight during the summer months, unless it be rough and stormy; he is heard at his best on a quiet evening after sunset; heard but not seen, for he hides among the reeds to sing.

The southward movement takes place in September.



The GREAT or CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER (*A. turdoides*; Meyer), common from the Low Countries eastward across central Europe, has been taken about half-a-dozen times in England; as this bird nests regularly near Calais, it is rather strange that it should be so infrequent a visitor to England. In June, 1892, was found near Winchester a nest whose unusual size gave rise to the conjecture that it was not that of the common Reed Warbler, but of a member of this species.



MARSH WARBLER

(*Acrocephalus palustris*; *Bechstein.*)

THIS bird appears to be most common in the countries of central Europe; but the breeding range extends as far north as Denmark and as far west as Normandy. To England the Marsh Warbler is a somewhat rare visitor; but so nearly resembles the Reed Warbler that it may be mistaken for that bird. The species was first observed in Somersetshire, and has since been reported as breeding in half-a-dozen or more different counties, from Cheshire to Kent. As regards appearance it is distinguished by the distinctly greenish olive brown on the upper

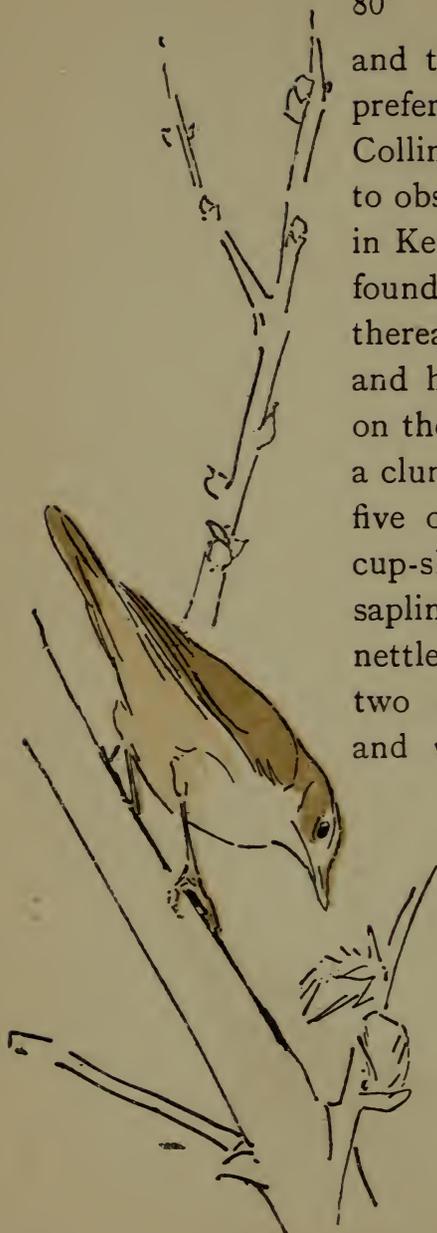


parts which are always less rufous than the upper parts of the Reed Warbler; also by the fact that the white of the underparts is tinged with sulphur buff instead of rufous buff.

Nesting takes place during June. Mr. Warde Fowler, who watched the bird regularly near Oxford for 14 years, until 1905, after which season they did not return to their old haunts, says what the Marsh Warbler "really loves best, and rarely finds in England except in some parts of Cambridgeshire and Somerset, is a large space of flat alluvial ground, with convenient bits of cover, such as thick bunches of tall plants, scattered here



and there." He adds that they show preference for neglected withy beds. Mr. Collingwood Ingram, who was the first to observe the bird as a breeding species in Kent (1905), gives an account of a nest, found in a dense spinney of 2½ acres or thereabout, composed chiefly of ash, elder and hawthorn, with a few large willows on the outskirts. While pushing through a clump of unusually tall nettles, at least five or six feet high, he found a slight cup-shaped nest, slung on two stems of a sapling ash, and as a third support a dry nettle-stalk was included; it was between two and three feet from the ground, and was built of grass bents and hay



somewhat loosely, but securely, twisted round the saplings; the lining consisted of horsehair and cocoanut fibre, the latter obtained from the ties of cocoanut strings used in an adjacent hop garden. The nest contained five greenish white eggs, boldly blotched with lilac and olive brown. The young ones when hatched out on 26th June were very dark skinned and appeared to have no down feathers. Another observer describes a nest, found in a reed bed of a Cheshire mere, as like that of the Reed Warbler, but shallower and less neat. The eggs may be distinguished from those of the Reed Warbler by the clear white ground colour



and the fewer markings which, moreover, are principally at the larger end.

The song of the Marsh Warbler, to raise which he takes up his position in a tall tree, is particularly beautiful; so distinctive that Mr. Collingwood Ingram deems it unlikely that the bird is more common than is supposed; he cannot think it could be mistaken for the song of any other bird. The food is similar to that of the Reed Warbler. The times of arrival and departure are not known with any exactness, but from the fact that nests with eggs are found during the latter part of June it is reasonable to think that the bird is a somewhat late comer.



SEDGE WARBLER

(*Acrocephalus phragmitis*; *Bechstein.*)

ARRIVING in the second half of April, this bird is thenceforth common and generally distributed throughout our Islands; it becomes rather local in the extreme north, and is of rare occurrence in Skye.

The adult male is about five inches long: there is a conspicuous streak of yellowish white above the eye, and the crown of the head is streaked with dark brown on pale brown; the feathers of the neck, back and wing coverts are russet brown, darker in the centre, giving a mottled or variegated appearance; the

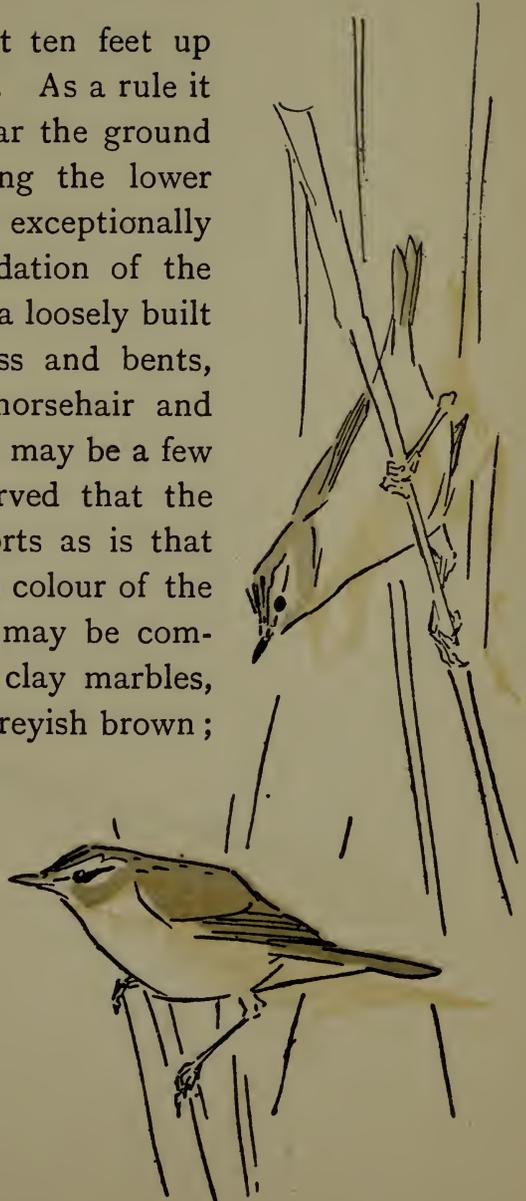


rump and tail coverts are tawny brown, and the tail dark brown with paler edges; the chin and throat are white, the breast and under parts buff. Breeding begins in May, and the commencement of business is marked by much quarreling, arising perhaps over choice of nesting sites.

In suitable localities Sedge Warblers are very numerous; their preference seems to be for low-lying damp places with beds of reed, rush and osier, in the neighbourhood of water; but the bird is often found remote from stream or pond nesting in thick hedges or in shrubs. Mr. Howard Saunders found one in a gooseberry bush in a garden near Hickling Broad, and



mentions the case of a nest ten feet up in a Leicestershire bullfinch. As a rule it is placed quite low down near the ground in coarse herbage, or among the lower branches of some shrub; exceptionally on the ground. The foundation of the nest is moss over which is a loosely built structure of dry grass, moss and bents, with a sketchy lining of horsehair and seed-tufts of plants, with it may be a few feathers. It is to be observed that the nest is never slung to supports as is that of the Reed Warbler. The colour of the eggs, five or six in number, may be compared with certain among clay marbles, faintly mottled brown and greyish brown;



and occasionally traced at the larger end with a very dark brown line or lines.

The bird's food consists for the most part of aquatic insects, their larvæ, small slugs and worms; later in the year the birds eat berries. The loud, merry chatter—there is nothing of music in the Sedge Warbler's voice—may be heard both day and night; it is unmistakable, being kept up for as much as ten minutes at a time without pause; when several individuals are rattling away within hearing of each other there seems to be rivalry. Like the Reed Warbler this bird remains out of sight while singing. At other times he is by no means shy, rather



the reverse; he is far more restless, forward and noisy than the Reed Warbler; and if it be difficult to discriminate between the two by plumage it is easy to do so by conduct and general behaviour. The Sedge Warbler is much addicted to imitating other birds, and will interpolate imitations in the current of his own chatter. Mr. Warde Fowler gives a charming instance of this trait: "I was looking at a pair or two of Sedge Warblers on a bush and wondering if they were going to build a nest there, when a Blackbird emerged from the thicket behind me, and set up that absurd cackle we all know so well. Instantly,



out of the bush I was looking at, came an echo of this cackle, uttered by a small voice in such ludicrous tones of mockery as to fairly upset my gravity. It seemed to say 'You awkward idiot of a bird, I can make that noise as well as you; only listen!' "

The voice of the Sedge Warbler becomes less frequently heard as June draws on; presumably the cares of family occupy the time formerly devoted to vocal exercise. During the latter part of September the birds take their departure for the south; but individuals remain till late in October and occasionally stay the winter with us.



AQUATIC WARBLER (*A. aquaticus*; *J. F. Gmelin*). This south central European bird has occasionally been identified in England; the last occurrence I can trace was the seventh; a specimen shot at Cley Harbour, in Norfolk, in September, 1904. It may be a less rare visitor than is supposed; its extremely shy and retiring nature and close resemblance to the Sedge Warbler favour its escape from notice.

SAVI'S WARBLER (*Locustella luscinioides*; *Savi*). This bird seems to have once been a regular, though never abundant visitor to the great fens of the eastern



counties. Drainage of those areas disqualified the country as a summer residence in the eyes of Savi's Warbler, and the last English specimen was identified at Surlingham, Norfolk, in June, 1856.

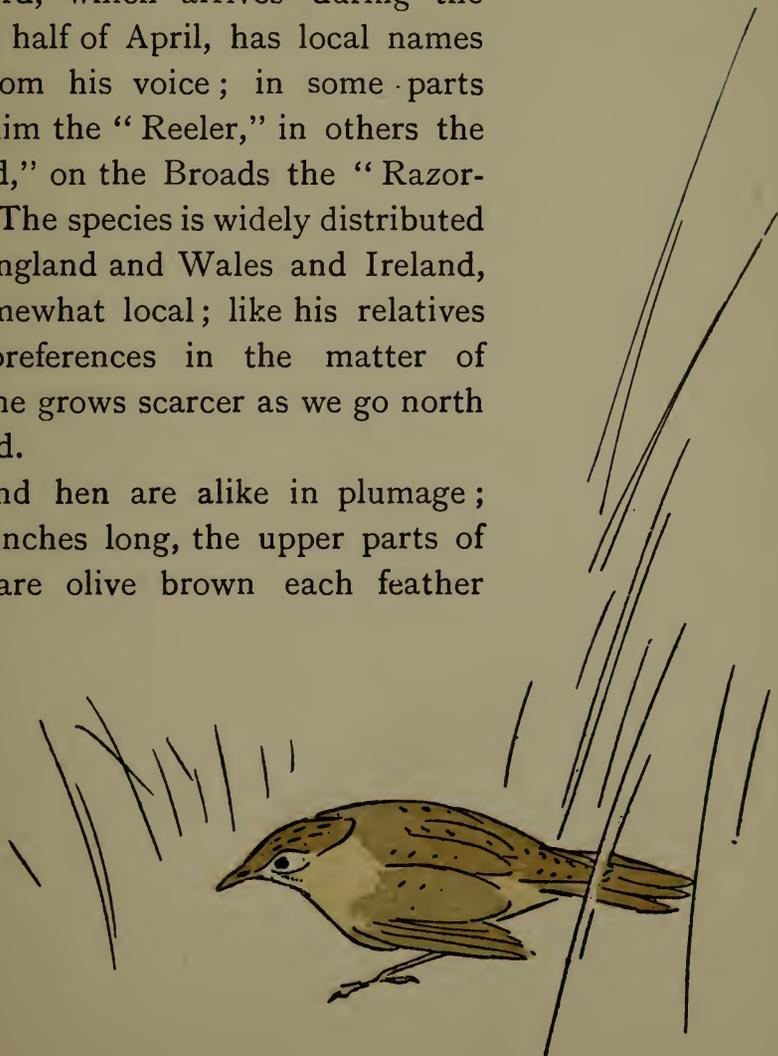


GRASSHOPPER WARBLER

(*Locustella naevia*; *Boddaert.*)

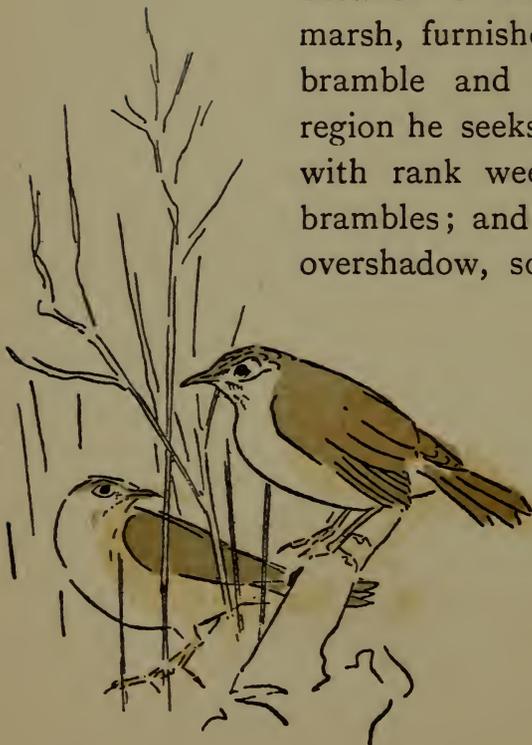
THIS bird, which arrives during the second half of April, has local names derived from his voice; in some parts they call him the "Reeler," in others the "Reel-bird," on the Broads the "Razor-grinder." The species is widely distributed all over England and Wales and Ireland, but is somewhat local; like his relatives he has preferences in the matter of country; he grows scarcer as we go north in Scotland.

Cock and hen are alike in plumage; about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, the upper parts of the bird are olive brown each feather



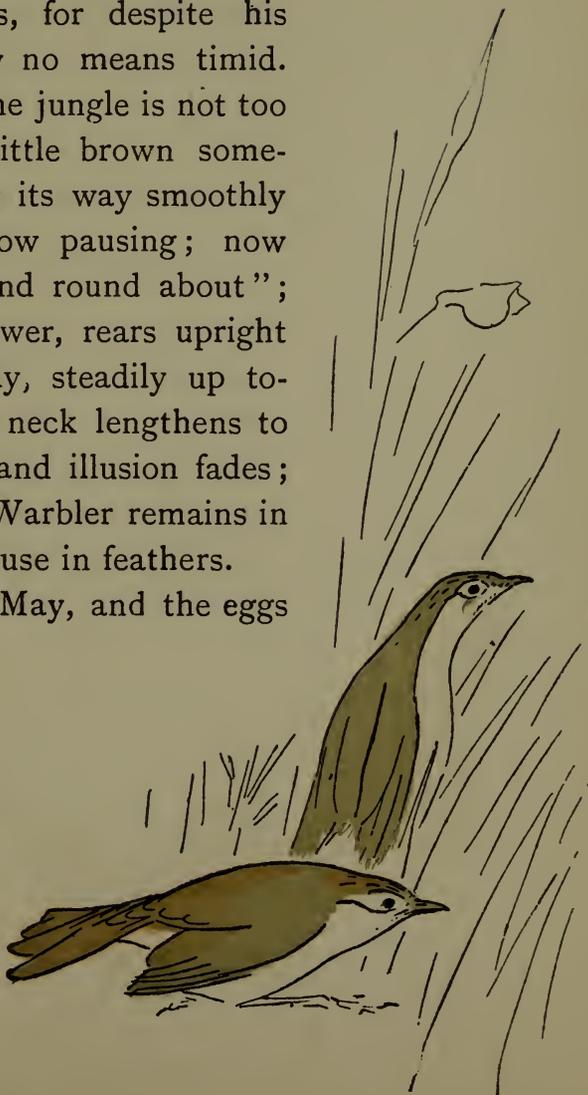
having a darker streak down the middle; the under parts are pale brown with darker spots on neck and breast. He is very like the Sedge Warbler; but apart from his very different conception of the manners becoming in a small bird, the Grasshopper Warbler has no light streak over the eye.

The type of country he prefers is some tract of lowland in the intermediate stage between swampy fen and well-drained marsh, furnished with abundance of fern, bramble and undergrowth; in such a region he seeks out a deep ditch overrun with rank weeds and smothered with brambles; and if a tall and straggly hedge overshadow, so much the better. Here



he lives and lurks; the careful watcher, taking ordinary precautions, may study him at close quarters, for despite his retiring habit he is by no means timid. Choose a spot where the jungle is not too dense, and watch; a little brown something comes threading its way smoothly among the stems; now pausing; now gliding "in and out and round about"; it stops at a thin grower, rears upright and is travelling easily, steadily up towards the foliage; the neck lengthens to peer about the stem, and illusion fades; but the Grasshopper Warbler remains in mind as a veritable mouse in feathers.

Breeding begins in May, and the eggs

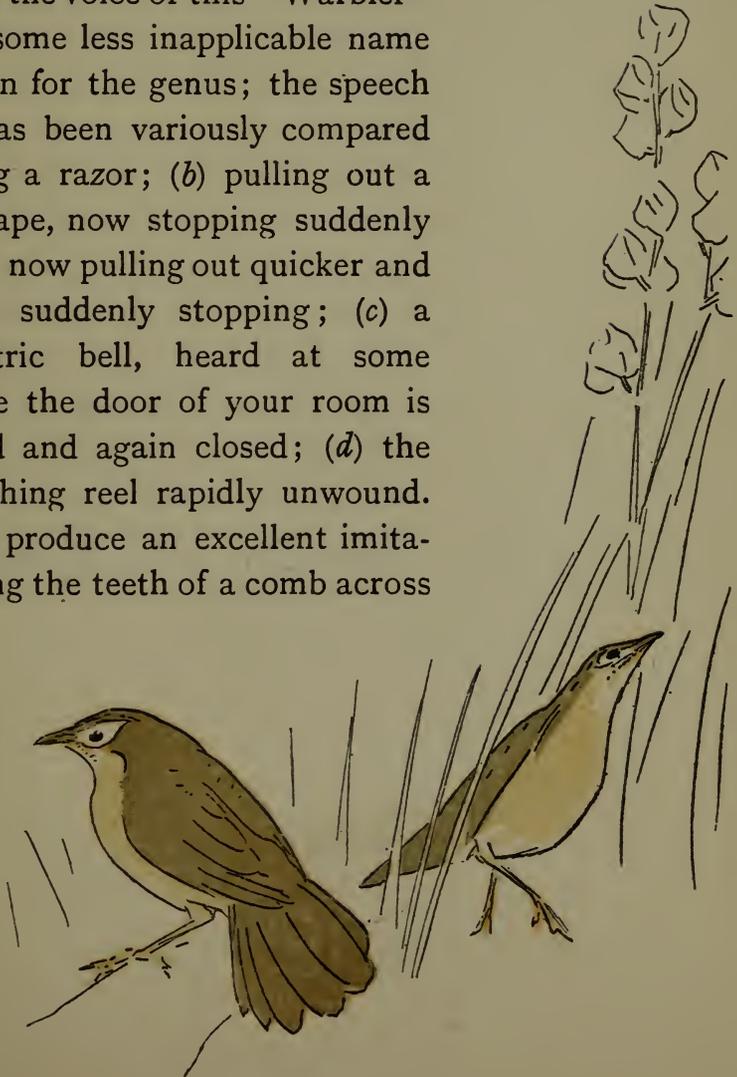


are laid during the latter half of the month ; the nest, a compact structure of moss and dry grass lined with threads of finer grass is nearly as deep as the Reed Warbler's ; it is hidden in a thick tuft of coarse herbage, or in the undergrowth in the bottom of a neglected hedge. The eggs, from five to seven in number, are white suffused with pink, closely and minutely freckled with reddish brown : sometimes the freckling at the larger end is so close as to conceal the ground colour. Eggs may be found at any time from May onward to the end of July, or even later ; whence it would seem that two broods are sometimes reared. The food consists of



insects, among them, dragonflies taken on the wing, and their larvae.

Concerning the voice of this "Warbler"—it is a pity some less inapplicable name was not chosen for the genus; the speech of the bird has been variously compared to (a) grinding a razor; (b) pulling out a spring steel tape, now stopping suddenly for a moment, now pulling out quicker and quicker, then suddenly stopping; (c) a delicate electric bell, heard at some distance while the door of your room is slowly opened and again closed; (d) the music of a fishing reel rapidly unwound. You may also produce an excellent imitation by drawing the teeth of a comb across



a knife blade. I think (*d*) is the best, but the human ear receives impressions as different as the human eye. The "reel" may be heard during the heat of the day when all other birds are silent; but is most vigorous in the evening: the bird often perches on the highest twig of a bush to utter his metallic trill; he does it with his beak raised to the skies and puts his little soul into it, for all the world like a nightingale; his demeanour says: "search the whole hedge and you shall not find such another songster." Which in one sense is true; you cannot possibly mistake him for any other.

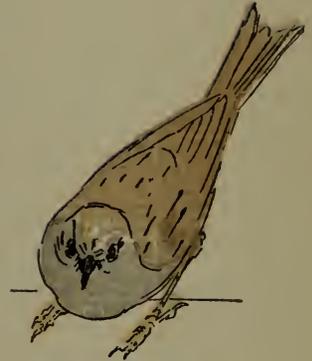
The Grasshopper Warbler leaves for the south in September.



HEDGE ACCENTOR

(*Accentor modularis*; Linn.)

TO use the name set above is to invite the charge of pedantry: "Some well-meaning writers," says a very high authority, "name it the Hedge Accentor, to shew that it is no relative of the obnoxious House-Sparrow." I respectfully submit that good intention in this case is pardonable. We do not accuse of wanton self-advertisement the Thomas J. Smith who writes to the *Times* to say that he is not the Thomas Smith who stands charged with burglary at the Assizes. Popular query to the contrary there is much in a name; and too distinct a line cannot be



drawn between this virtuous fowl and the feathered blend of impudence and villainy for whose heads the farmer cheerfully pays a shilling a dozen, even in these days of—but Mr. Lane will warn me that this is no place for politics. Why should we call the bird a Sparrow when he is not a Sparrow? True, both Accentor and Sparrow belong to the same great Order, the *Passeres*; so, for that matter, do Song Thrush and Nightingale, but we don't call them sparrows. The Hedge Accentor is a member of the, in Britain, small and select sub-family *Accentorinæ* which belongs to the Family *Turdidæ*; whereas the abandoned bird with whom



popular nomenclature would confuse him belongs to the sub-family *Fringillinæ* of the Family *Fringillidæ*. The Accentor is perfectly justified in saying he is no relation at all. Call him, as does Chaucer, "Haysogge"; call him Dun-nock, Dykie, Smoky, Shuffle-wing, or as in Surrey—nobody I ever met knows why—"Isaac"; but not, I pray you, by a name that connotes villainy; lest it make for his undoing.

Needless to say this bird is a resident and widely distributed; but Hedge Accentors come to this country in myriads for the winter and leave again in spring for the north. Nesting begins as early as



March and the nest, made of roots, and moss with hair and wool lining may be found in any and every hedgerow a few feet from the ground, also in clumps of bush and bramble, and stick heaps. On occasion it is built in the ivy covering a wall, but this is rather unusual. A curious proceeding was reported in 1901 of a pair that nested in the ivy on a wall; when three eggs had been laid, the birds deemed a change desirable; they set to work and built a new nest two yards away against the same wall, using the materials of the old nest for the new one.

Few eggs are more beautiful or more familiar than the blue eggs of the Hedge



Accentor; they number from four to six, five being the ordinary clutch: two or even three broods are reared between March and July. The bird is of solitary habit; you rarely see two of the species together: his realm is the hedge and his manner of gliding along among the twigs rather recalls the manner of the Warblers; also he does not wander far from home. The food, and this is the point to be borne in mind by those who would by misnaming confuse him with the House Sparrow, consists of insects, as spiders and small beetles, and of worms; in less degree, of seeds: he may do a little mischief among the seeds occasionally, but on the whole he





is far more useful than harmful. In winter he eats crumbs in company with other birds.

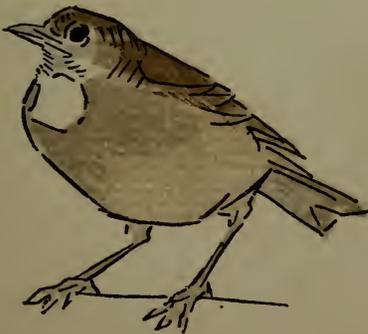
His song, short but oft repeated, may be heard from February onwards; as a rule he is silent in cold weather, but has been heard to raise his modest voice at midday when the thermometer shewed ten degrees of frost. The bird is one of the favourite victims of the Cuckoo.

Like the Thrush and Blackbird the Hedge Accentor is sometimes guilty of eccentricity in the breeding season. At Leven, Fifeshire, in June, 1895, a hen bird was found sitting on young Thrushes in the absence of their mother. Evidently



convinced of the mother's incompetence, she was found on the nest *beside* the hen Thrush on another occasion. The maternal instinct induces strange vagaries among birds as well as animals.

ALPINE ACCENTOR (*Accentor collaris*; *Scopoli*). This dweller among the mountain ranges of southern Europe has several times been identified in England as a stray summer visitor; it is much larger than the last species—seven inches long against the Hedge Accentor's five and a half—and is conspicuous by its chin and throat, which are white speckled with black. It has never been known to breed in this country.

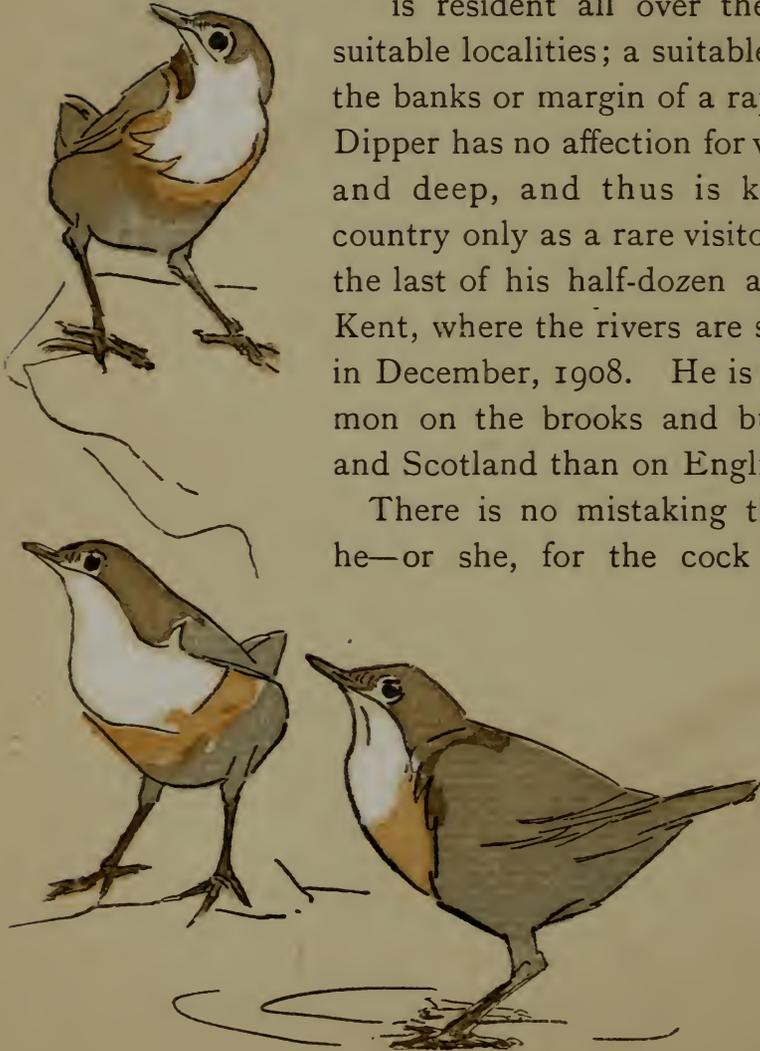


DIPPER

(*Cinclus aquaticus*; *Bechstein*).

THIS bird, often called the Water Ouzel, is resident all over the Kingdom in suitable localities; a suitable locality being the banks or margin of a rapid brook; the Dipper has no affection for waters sluggish and deep, and thus is known in flat country only as a rare visitor; for example the last of his half-dozen appearances in Kent, where the rivers are slow, occurred in December, 1908. He is far more common on the brooks and burns of Wales and Scotland than on English streams.

There is no mistaking the Dipper, as he—or she, for the cock and hen are



alike—skims along a foot or two above the surface of the water; dark brown as to head, wings and tail, slate grey as to back; the pure white of the breast, darkening into ruddy brown on the lower part, and that into black on the flanks and belly. The length is about seven inches.

Breeding begins early in March—fully fledged nestlings have been found in the third week of the month, but that is exceptional. The nest, large for the size of the builder, is a beautiful ball of moss, lined with dead leaves; sometimes leaves are worked in with the moss, and grass also is used on occasion. I have called



the nest a ball, but the shape depends a good deal on the crevice it is required to fit; I have found nests that were better described as bun-shaped. A hole in the woodwork or masonry of a bridge, a sheltered crevice in rock or bank, often under an apron of falling water, are favourite sites; but the bird has been known to build in the boughs of a small tree. Wherever placed it is close to a stream. The eggs, pure white, vary somewhat in shape; you may find them as pointed as the plover's, nearly oval, or any form between; they number from four to six. Two broods are reared in the season, and sometimes a third. The

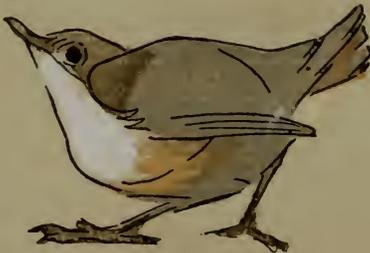


young Dipper is greyish brown above and white below; he can swim as soon as he leaves the nest, and soon learns to dive like his parents. Strictly speaking the Dipper does not "dive," a verb that indicates effort; he possesses the faculty of sinking quietly as though by discharge from his lungs of air that kept him afloat. Under water he uses both wing and legs to swim, and with luck you may see him walking along the bottom of the stream, in search, no doubt of the small molluscs, which together with aquatic beetles and other insects, form his staple diet.

The Dipper has the good will of the angler for that he preys upon creatures



destructive to trout and salmon ova ; but there is some reason to believe that the bird has liking for these things himself. It has been remarked that when the little brook trout ascend the burns to spawn in late autumn, the Dipper seeks change of air in the same direction ; of course he *may* have an eye on the insect foes of trout eggs ; but there be those who attribute this autumn excursion to taste for trout ova themselves. Save at this season the Dipper never strays far from the section of the river he has made his own ; he has his favourite perches on the stones and rocks, and there he stands ducking and bowing in a st fashion that suggests



continually balked intention to take wing. The sound "chit-it" is often uttered by the bird as he flies. The song, so-called, low and not unmusical, gives the impression that the Dipper is singing to himself; it may be heard in winter as well as during spring and summer.

In the Highlands and parts of Ireland, the Dipper is called, and believed by the country people to be, the hen Kingfisher; the idea probably takes birth from the flight which resembles that of the Kingfisher. Other names for him are "Water Crow" and "Water Colly," the latter peculiar to the south-western counties.



NUTHATCH

(*Sitta cæsia*; Wolf.)

THIS interesting little bird is very local in England and Wales; has been reported occasionally in Scotland, and is unknown in Ireland. It is fairly common in the midland and south eastern districts where old timber abounds, for ancient trees are indispensable to the "Nut-jobber," as the country folk call him.

The Nuthatch is about $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches long and of sturdy build; the upper parts are slate-blue, the very short tail somewhat lighter and barred with white and grey, save the middle feathers which are slate-grey throughout; the chin and cheeks are



white, the throat and belly warm buff; a strong black streak runs from the corner of the straight, sharp bill, through the eye and well down the neck; the feet are large. The hen is of duller hue than the cock.

Breeding begins in April; the usual site for the nest is some old hollow bough to which a convenient hole gives access; and if the door be wider than the Nuthatch approves he is at pains to build it up with mud and small stones. The amount of work he puts into this masonry is extraordinary considering his size. The late Mr. F. Bond presented to the Natural History Museum a nest in whose

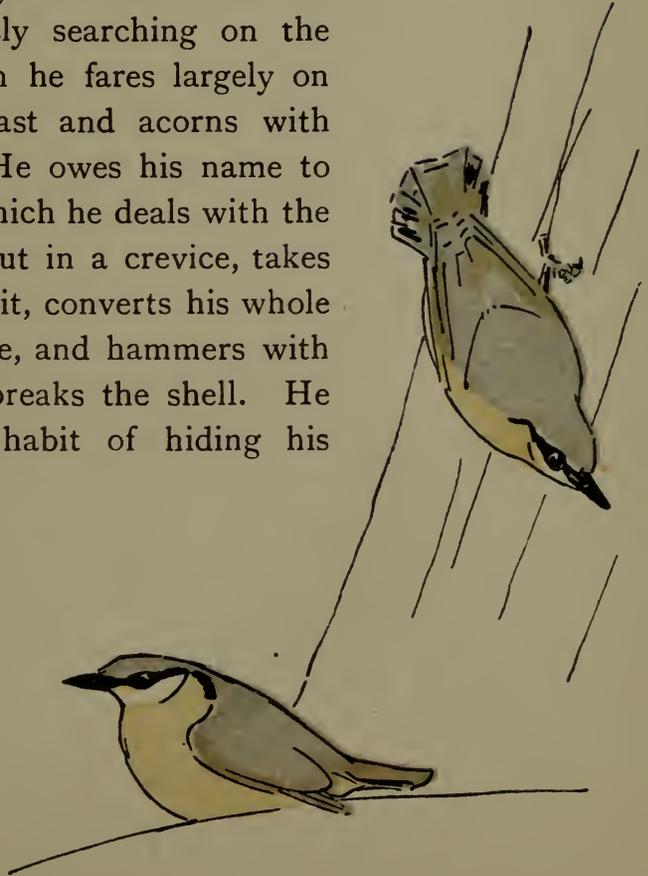


construction no less than 11 lbs. of clay had been used. That nest, by the way, was found in an unusual situation, to wit, the side of a hay-stack. Another curious case was the adaptation of an old nest of a Magpie in the fork of an oak; the dome was mud-plastered within to make the nest accord with Nuthatch requirements.

The nest in the hollow limb of a tree is made some little distance from the entry; it is a mere bed of dry leaves or scales of fir. The eggs, from five to seven in number, are white, variable in shape, spotted and blotched with brownish red and, it may be, flecks of lilac and grey, principally at the larger end.

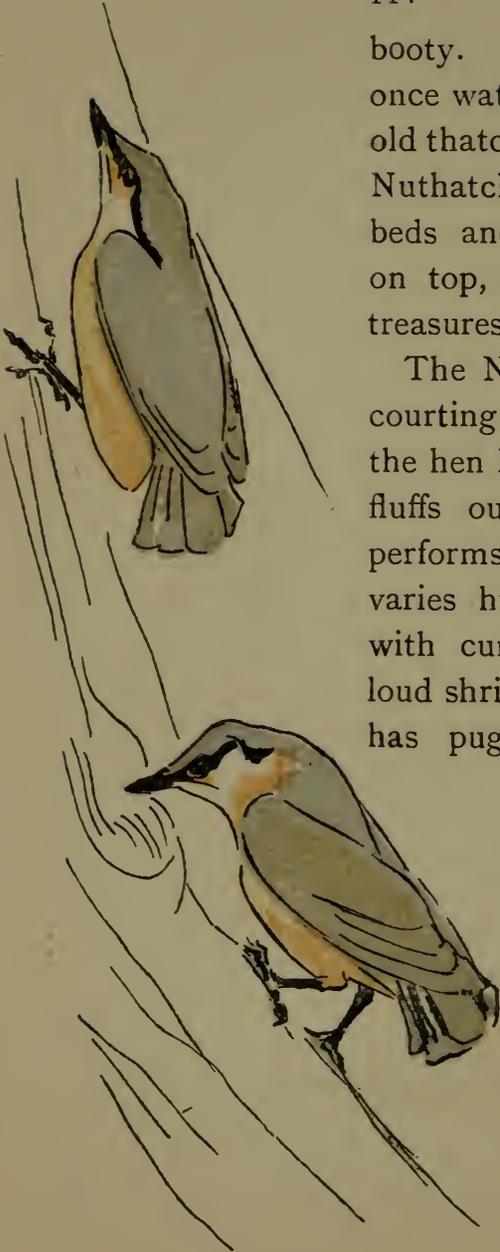


The Nuthatch is not much addicted to flight; he spends most of his time running about the tree-trunks, on which he is as much at home as a Woodpecker, seeking the insects on which he lives during the better part of the year. He is also to be seen industriously searching on the ground. In autumn he fares largely on hazel nuts, beechmast and acorns with other hard seeds. He owes his name to the method with which he deals with the first; he fixes his nut in a crevice, takes up his position over it, converts his whole person into a pickaxe, and hammers with his beak until he breaks the shell. He has a Magpie-like habit of hiding his



booty. Mr. O. V. Aplin has more than once watched the bird hiding a nut in an old thatch; and Mrs. Gore Brown has seen Nuthatches burying nuts in the flowerbeds and pressing little clods of earth on top, exactly as a Magpie hides his treasures.

The Nuthatch is most engaging at the courting season; when he shows off to the hen he spreads his tail and wings and fluffs out his breast feathers while he performs his antics; at this time too he varies his ordinary note, "Tui-tui-tui," with curious bubblings and a frequent loud shrill whistle. Old Turner says "he has pugnacious habits but a cheerful



disposition ; ” as regards the latter, all who know him will agree ; but I do not think pugnacity has been noticed as a conspicuous failing. Perhaps it was so when the bird was commoner than he is now— in the days when so much of England was forest, and more generally suitable for Nuthatches ; in the days when “ men attributed witchcraft to it, since it is cunning in knowledge of affairs.”

In May, 1901, Mr. R. W. Calvert found the nest of a Nuthatch in a crab tree with six eggs ; these had been adopted by a Great Tit who had added nine eggs of her own. To adjust matters, was found in the same locality, Wychwood Forest,



a Great Tit's nest occupied by a Nuthatch who sat on four eggs of the original owner and four of her own. The temptation to believe that there had been a friendly or forcible exchange is strong.

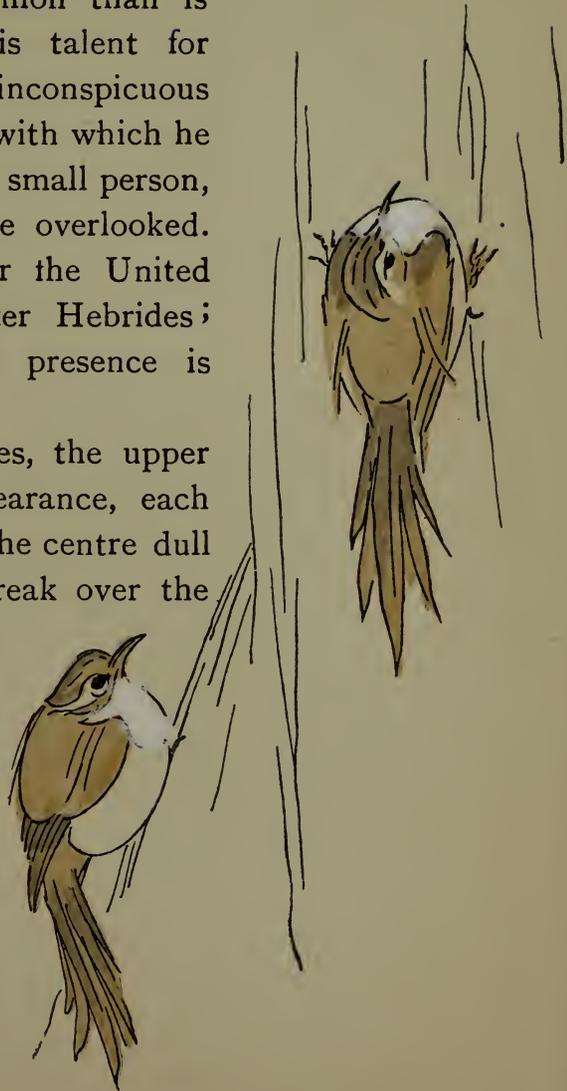


TREE CREEPER

(*Certhia familiaris*; Linn.)

THIS bird is more common than is generally supposed; his talent for keeping out of sight, his inconspicuous colouring and the closeness with which he hugs the tree-trunk with his small person, all render him liable to be overlooked. He is to be found all over the United Kingdom, save in the Outer Hebrides; the one condition of his presence is timber.

In length about $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches, the upper parts have a mottled appearance, each dark brown feather having the centre dull white. There is a light streak over the



eye; the tail is deeply forked and the feathers are stiff to the tips, to meet the bird's requirements, for he uses his tail in climbing; the wings are barred and margined with white; the under side is white, which merges into buff on the flanks; the feet are rather large and the claws long and curved; the bill is slightly curved.

Breeding begins about mid-April; a very usual site is in the cleft made by partial detachment of bark from the trunk of a tree a few feet above the ground, or in some natural crevice in the bole; sometimes the bird chooses a cranny in the woodwork of a disused



outhouse, behind broken plaster; or under the eaves of house or outbuilding: more rarely in the body of the nest of some larger bird, the Rook for instance. The nest consists of dry grass, fine straw, bents, roots, twigs and moss, or some of these materials; with a lining of wool, feathers and shreds of soft inner bark. The eggs, from six to nine in number, are white, blotched, spotted and zoned with reddish brown and dull purple, principally at the larger end. Two broods are often reared. It has been remarked that though the hen is very shy while sitting on her eggs, flitting unobtrusively from nest while a man is still far off, she gains courage when



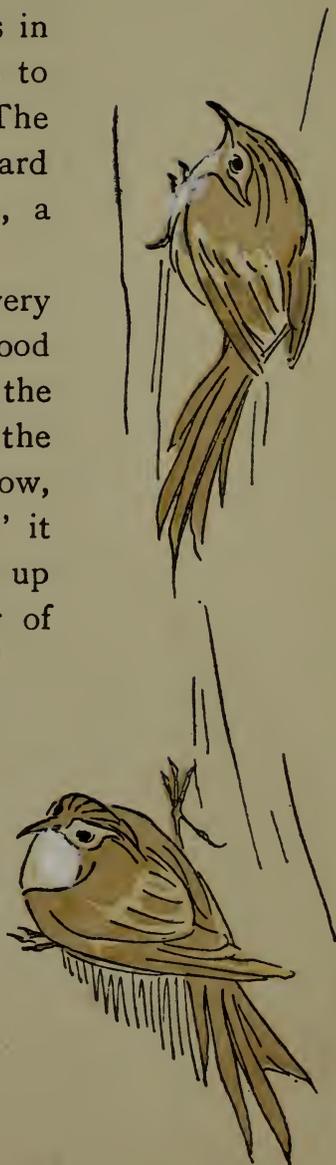
the young are hatched out: both she and the cock bird remain at hand when their children seem to need protection.

Like the Nuthatch, the Tree Creeper lives and has his being on the tree-trunk, running up and down and round it with a jerky but rapid movement, and keeping always the tree between himself and the observer. Your abiding impression of the Tree Creeper is one of vanishing round the corner. Watch him from a distance with glasses and you gain the impression of tireless activity; the food consisting of the small insects found in bark the bird has to work hard for a living. In winter the Tree Creeper associates with other



insect hunters, the Tits and Gold Crests, and may be seen pursuing his business in their company; but he seems always to work lower down on the trunk. The voice is shrill but is not often heard otherwise than in the warning note, a weak "cheep cheep."

Turner calls the Tree Creeper "a very little bird of bold habits;" he was a good observer, so we must conclude that the bird has changed in character since the middle of the 16th century; then, as now, however, this was a busy little bird;" it never rests, but is for ever climbing up the trunks of trees after the manner of the Woodpeckers."



WALL CREEPER (*Tichodroma muraria*; Linn). The honour of British nationality has been purchased with their lives by three Wall Creepers since 1792. The true home of the bird is south and central Europe, where it is found in the mountain regions climbing the rock faces, much as the Tree Creeper climbs trees. This is not a bird of which it may be conjectured that occurrences are overlooked. Though he is only six inches long it would be difficult to overlook the Wall Creeper in his slate-grey dress set off by beautiful crimson wings. There was a specimen in the Regent's Park Gardens ten years ago, and this, the late Mr. Tegetmeier believed, was the only one ever seen in captivity.



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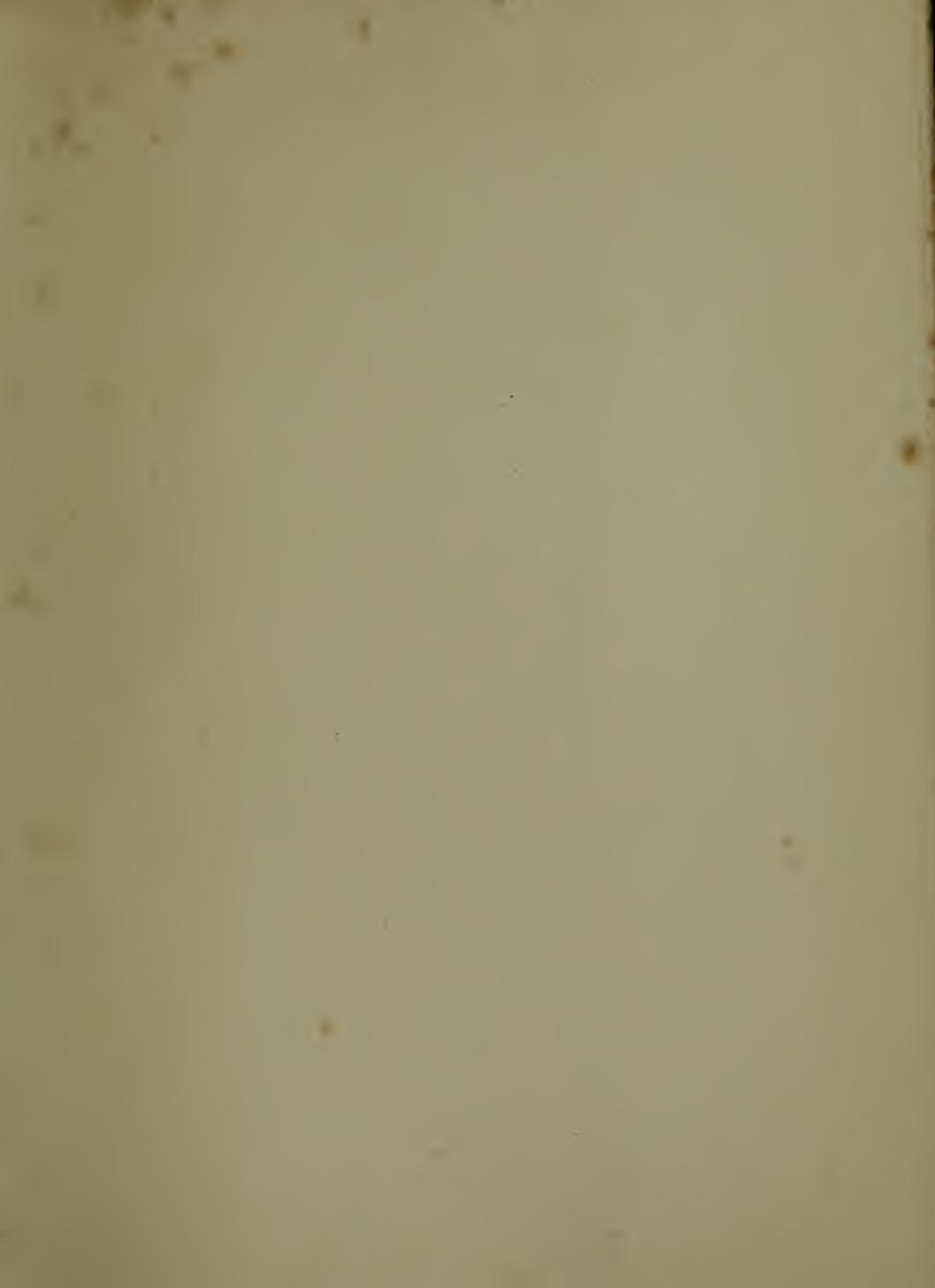
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