



ZS 72





# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

AN ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE DEVOTED  
CHIEFLY TO THE BIRDS ON THE BRITISH LIST

EDITED BY

**BERNARD W. TUCKER, M.A., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.**

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**Volume XXXVIII**

**JUNE, 1944 — DECEMBER, 1945.**



**H. F. & G. WITHERBY Ltd.**

**326 HIGH HOLBORN LONDON**



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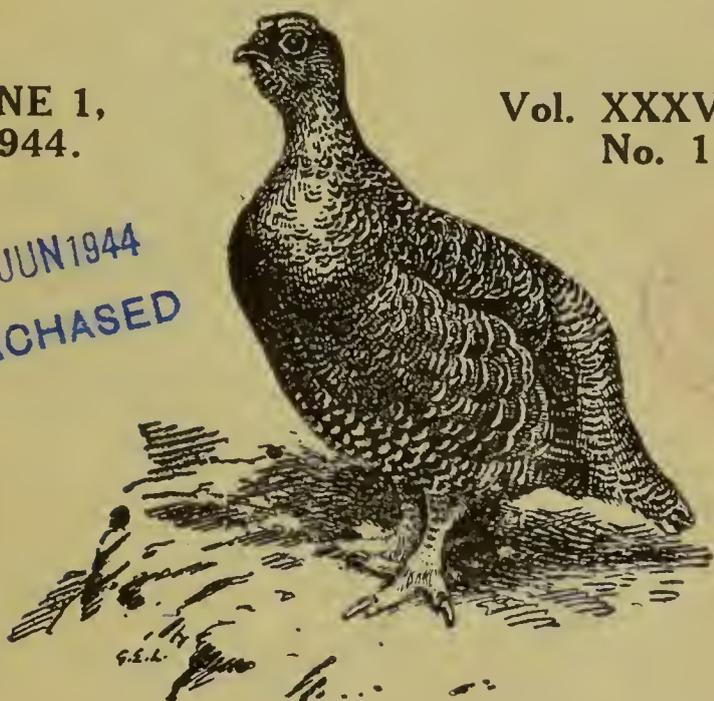
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## EDITORIAL.

AT the beginning of a new volume I take the opportunity of making some announcements with regard to the conduct of this journal. It was always Mr. Witherby's practice, and especially so since the death of the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, to consult ornithologists with special knowledge in particular fields whenever this seemed desirable in connexion with *British Birds*. I now propose to bring such kind helpers into a slightly more "official" relationship with the magazine by forming a panel of honorary consultants whose names will be announced from time to time. For the present this will consist of the following:—Messrs. H. G. Alexander, W. B. Alexander, Miss E. V. Baxter, the Hon. G. L. Charteris, Mr. R. Chislett, Sir Hugh Gladstone, Messrs. G. R. Humphreys, G. C. S. Ingram, N. B. Kinnear, Lt.-Col. R. F. Meiklejohn, Miss L. J. Rintoul, Mr. B. B. Rivière, Lt.-Col. B. H. Ryves, Mr. H. N. Southern, and Dr. A. Landsborough Thomson. Though it will be understood that this arrangement is only giving a rather more formal status to what has in fact long been done, I am sure that our readers will welcome the more definite association of these well-known workers with the magazine. Ornithologists directly engaged on war service have been intentionally omitted for the time being, but it is hoped to add other names after the conclusion of the war with Germany.

The arrangement by which the present volume will run until December, 1945, so that subsequent volumes may coincide with the calendar year, has already been announced. Apart from the intrinsic advantages of the change, the present time is an opportune one for making it, as owing to the necessary war-time reduction in the size of the parts the inclusion of nineteen in the current volume, instead of the normal twelve, will not make it unduly bulky.

Finally, a word is perhaps necessary in explanation of the somewhat increased space devoted recently to Reviews. Owing to the late Mr. Witherby's ill-health the reviewing of local reports, an important function of a magazine like *British Birds*, was somewhat seriously behindhand and it was necessary to occupy some extra space in order to adjust this. I mention this in case any reader has been inclined to think the space devoted to these notices excessive in view of the war-time reduction of the magazine. B.W.T.

# A STATISTICAL INVESTIGATION INTO BIRD-SONG

BY

P. R. COX, F.I.A.

BIRD-SONG may be heard at almost any daylight hour of the year, but its quantity varies considerably. In order to sample such variations, observations were made of the numbers of certain species heard singing during walks along specified routes at fixed times of day. In every ten-day period (i.e. three periods per month), a dozen counts were made of the numbers in song, six on each of two routes, of which three were in the morning (8 a.m.) and three in the evening (6 p.m.) ; these counts lasted for some 25 minutes each, and from one to fifty birds would be recorded, according to the season.

The area of observation was one of Surrey downland, some now cultivated, broken by coppices and fringed with the gardens of houses. One route was about 2,000 yards long, and an alternative was chosen making a detour of 500 yards through a wood.

Attention was fixed on the numbers of each species heard singing. This is a unit of observation which is easily and distinctly counted, thus reducing the possibility of errors to a minimum. Relative changes in the volume of song are not necessarily reflected accurately in the data collected ; to measure them would seem to require more elaborate methods.

It is not possible to define accurately the area from which observations were taken ; for one thing, audibility varies with the strength and direction of the wind. Again, the notes of some species carry much further than those of others ; there is thus little value in comparing one species with another in the data, and attention is confined to song-variations of each separate species in certain conditions, except where a common trend is illustrated in the combined results.

## COMPARISON OF SONG IN THE MORNING AND EVENING.

It is possible to subdivide the twelve observations made in each ten-day period into those of the morning and evening, and it is of interest to see how the two compare. As data for individual species are generally too small for reliable conclusions to be drawn, birds of a family have been grouped together, the only exceptions being the Robin, Blackbird and Song-Thrush. A few observations in respect of pipits have been added to those relating to larks. The group "others" is a miscellany consisting mainly of the Wren, Hedge-Sparrow and Cuckoo.

In the following table, broad periods of two months are shown, and the results are a combination of the observations of 1942 and 1943 :—

		March & April.	May & June.	July & August.	September & October
Finches .. ..	Morning	$\frac{364}{\quad} = 2.2$	$\frac{424}{\quad} = 1.8$	$\frac{112}{\quad} = 2.2$	
	Evening	$\frac{165}{\quad}$	$\frac{241}{\quad}$	$\frac{52}{\quad}$	
Larks & Pipits ..	Morning	$\frac{288}{\quad} = 2.0$	$\frac{330}{\quad} = 1.5$	$\frac{110}{\quad} = 1.2$	
	Evening	$\frac{143}{\quad}$	$\frac{221}{\quad}$	$\frac{89}{\quad}$	
Tits .. ..	Morning	$\frac{339}{\quad} = 1.6$	$\frac{179}{\quad} = 2.7$	$\frac{64}{\quad} = 12.8$	
	Evening	$\frac{215}{\quad}$	$\frac{68}{\quad}$	$\frac{5}{\quad}$	
Warblers .. ..	Morning	$\frac{151}{\quad} = 1.7$	$\frac{445}{\quad} = 1.6$	$\frac{49}{\quad} = 24.5$	
	Evening	$\frac{88}{\quad}$	$\frac{270}{\quad}$	$\frac{2}{\quad}$	
Song-Thrush .. ..	Morning	$\frac{336}{\quad} = 2.1$	$\frac{240}{\quad} = 1.4$	$\frac{41}{\quad} = 1.9$	
	Evening	$\frac{161}{\quad}$	$\frac{170}{\quad}$	$\frac{22}{\quad}$	
Blackbird .. ..	Morning	$\frac{191}{\quad} = 0.7$	$\frac{271}{\quad} = 0.7$	$\frac{0}{\quad} = \text{nil}$	
	Evening	$\frac{288}{\quad}$	$\frac{412}{\quad}$	$\frac{12}{\quad}$	
Robin .. ..	Morning	$\frac{359}{\quad} = 0.9$	$\frac{202}{\quad} = 1.2$	$\frac{108}{\quad} = 4.3$	$\frac{500}{238} = 2.1^*$
	Evening	$\frac{404}{\quad}$	$\frac{172}{\quad}$	$\frac{25}{\quad}$	
Others .. ..	Morning	$\frac{361}{\quad} = 3.1$	$\frac{356}{\quad} = 3.4$	$\frac{191}{\quad} = 7.3$	
	Evening	$\frac{117}{\quad}$	$\frac{106}{\quad}$	$\frac{26}{\quad}$	
TOTAL .. ..	Morning	$\frac{2389}{\quad} = 1.5$	$\frac{2447}{\quad} = 1.5$	$\frac{675}{\quad} = 2.9$	
	Evening	$\frac{1581}{\quad}$	$\frac{1660}{\quad}$	$\frac{233}{\quad}$	

\*This is the only comparison worth making in this period.

Morning songsters are clearly more numerous than those of the evening in almost every species examined. The only consistent exception is the Blackbird. During July and August, when there is much less song, the preponderance of the morning over the evening generally becomes greater.

Variations in the ratios for the Robin are interesting. Evening song is superior in the spring, slightly less in May and June, about half in the autumn, and almost negligible in July and August.

It must be remembered that the times of counting, while fixed by the clock, are at a continually varying distance from the start and finish of daylight. In fact, from about the end of October to the middle of February, under present conditions, it is dark at one or both of these times, and no appreciable song can be recorded.

The following table shows the relationship between sunrise, sunset and the time of counting at the middle of each month of observation: the dates in italics fall within the period of Double Summer Time :—

	SUNRISE		SUNSET	
	Time (Greenwich Mean)	Difference from 8 a.m. hrs. mins.	Time (Greenwich Mean)	Difference from 6 p.m. hrs. mins.
Feb. 14th ...	7.17 a.m.	- 0 17	5.12 p.m.	- 0 12
Mar. 15th ...	6.16	+ 0 44	6. 3	- 1 3
Apr. 15th ...	5. 6	+ 0 54	6.56	- 2 56
May ,, ...	4. 9	+ 1 51	7.45	- 3 45
June ,, ...	3.42	+ 2 18	8.18	- 4 18
July ,, ...	3.59	+ 2 1	8.11	- 4 11
Aug. ,, ...	4.44	+ 2 16	7.24	- 2 24
Sept. ,, ...	5.34	+ 1 26	6.16	- 1 16
Oct. ,, ...	6.22	+ 0 38	5. 8	- 0 8

Thus, in March to October, morning counts were taken from half-an-hour to two hours after sunrise, while evening counts were taken at times varying from four hours before sunset in June and July to sunset itself in October.

Now the volume of song varies through the day, but the extent of the variations is not fully known,\* apart from the facts of a surge of song between dawn and sunrise at certain seasons, and a corresponding, though smaller, peak of song round about sunset. The new observations show that there is a significant difference between morning and evening song at times while the sun is up, and that this difference itself varies from season to season.

In order to draw the diurnal curve of song with any degree of accuracy, it would be necessary to make observations at frequent intervals throughout each day of the year, a task which might need a team of observers. For the present the results obtained can only be considered in relation to the limitations about times of observation. It is fairly plain, however, that the substantial variations in the relationship between morning and evening song can only be affected to a very limited extent by the small changes in time shown in the above table.

#### SEASONAL COURSE OF SONG.†

To represent changes in the numbers singing through the seasons is not a straightforward matter, because of the diurnal variations and also because the lengths of the days are continually altering. Either some representative hour or hours of the day must be chosen, or else perhaps the average daily song should be computed and used as a measure.

Charts have been constructed in respect of certain species from the data of the present investigation, combining the observations made at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and these are appended. The horizontal lines indicate the numbers singing in each ten-day period, on the

\*See *British Birds*, Vol. xxviii, p. 364, Vol. xxxiii, p. 4 and Vol. xxxvi, p. 146.

†See *British Birds*, Vol. xxix, p. 190 and Vol. xxxvi, pp. 65, 86 and 102.

basis of four standard counts : that is, one-third of the total number obtained from twelve counts, representing the aggregate of one count along each route at each time. By joining these horizontal levels with vertical lines a histogram is produced showing seasonal variations : the average of the years 1942-43 is shown and thus no less than twenty-four observations contribute to each level.

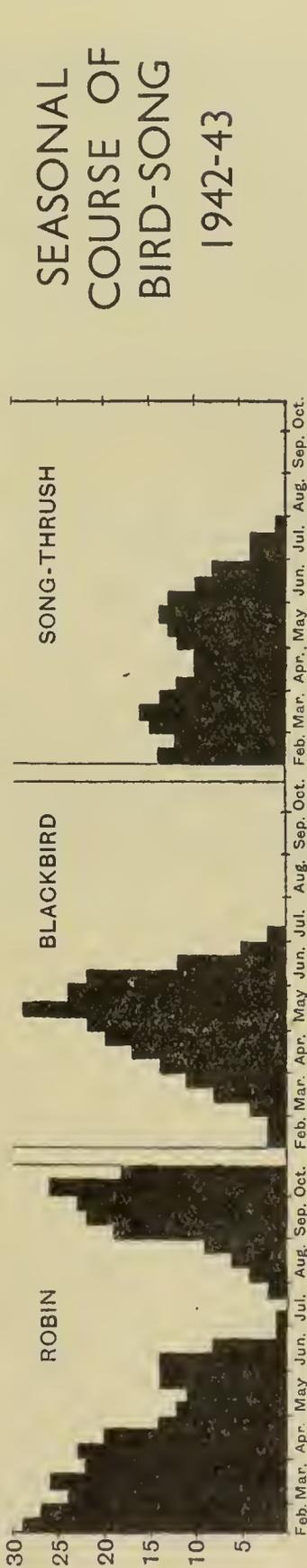
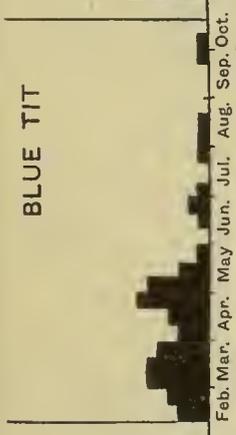
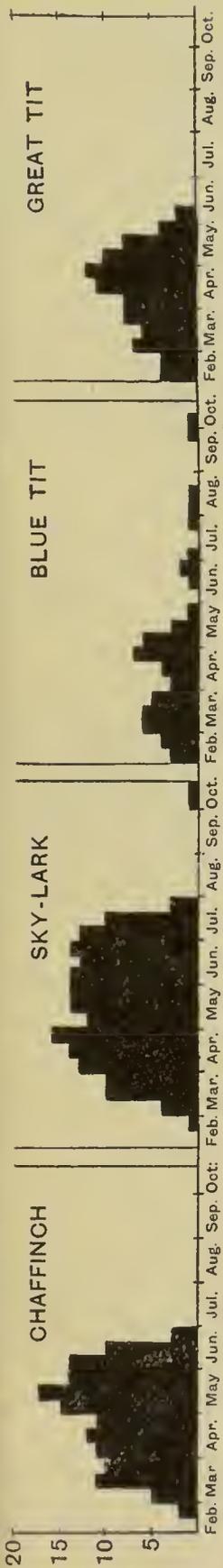
It is of course important to consider how far representative the chosen hours are of the average daily song. Where these times coincide, as they do in February and October, with dawn or sunset, then the data are almost certainly inflated above the average for those months.

In other months the counts have been made at varying times relatively to dawn and dusk, that is, at different points along the curve of hourly changes within the day. The seasonal course of song shown here cannot, therefore, be considered as fully representative, because it may be somewhat altered in shape by the varied time of observation.

There seems good reason to believe, however, that the degree of distortion is small. Direct observation reveals that a change of an hour or two in the morning or evening, while the sun is up, does not substantially affect the data. Various tests made among the mass of statistics (there were in all about six hundred counts) confirm this opinion. Where the size of the results warranted, separate histograms were constructed in respect of the morning and the evening. These exhibited, in the species examined, a general similarity of shape, although based upon times standing in very different relation to the two ends of the day.

Considering only the period February to July, the charts fall into two broad types : those with a single rise and fall, that could be graduated by bell-shaped curves (somewhat skew) and those with more than one peak. The first class consists principally of the Blackbird and warblers, but the Great Tit, Sky-Lark and Chaffinch are also appropriately placed there. On the other hand clear instances of a double hump are afforded by the Song-Thrush, Blue-Tit and Hedge-Sparrow, with the Wren as a probable case. The song of the Robin shows a more or less steady decline throughout, but there is evidence of a small revival at the end of May.

Now these diagrams are not just the experience of a single year ; they are based on the average of 1942 and 1943, and whereas 1942 commenced with a hard winter, the start of 1943 was very mild and the spring and summer were early. In spite of these wide differences however, there is a close similarity of shape (and size) between the curves for the separate years, although the start, peak and end of the 1943 experience often occurred a week or two earlier than in 1942. The only exception worth mentioning is the Chaffinch ; the shape shown is the average of two rather dissimilar curves, one with a late peak (in May, 1942) and the other exhibiting a more or less consistent level of song from March to June, in 1943.



SEASONAL  
 COURSE OF  
 BIRD-SONG  
 1942-43

The double humps are in evidence each year; the effect of combining the two years is generally to broaden the base and diminish the height of a peak, because of differences in the dates of its occurrence.

Since some species rear but one brood in a year, while others have two or more, it is of interest to examine whether these habits can be correlated with variations in the level of song. That the comparison is far from being close may be seen from the following table:—

Species	Normal Number of broods	Number of peaks
Chaffinch ... ..	2	1
Sky-Lark ... ..	2	1
Blue Tit ... ..	1	2
Great Tit ... ..	1	1
Willow-Warbler... ..	1	1
Other Warblers... ..	1	1
Song-Thrush ... ..	2 or 3	2
Blackbird ... ..	2 or 3	1
Robin ... ..	2 or 3	?2
Wren ... ..	2	2
Hedge-Sparrow ... ..	2	2

Of eleven cases observed, there are four at least in which the number of broods and peaks do not correspond. In the case of the Chaffinch and Sky-Lark it is true that the maximum level of song is maintained over a long period, but the sharp single peak of the Blackbird is clearly out of accord; in the case of the Blue-Tit the evidence of a double-hump is strongly supported by observations, giving more copious results, upon its call-notes.

It has been often remarked that the song of an individual male bird follows a different course according to whether it is mated or not. Possibly, therefore, the seasonal histograms are compounds in varying proportions of two basically different types of curve, one flat and steady in respect of unmated cocks, the other having surges of song and periods of silence. On the other hand, the evidence is somewhat discouraging to this theory.

#### INFLUENCE OF WEATHER ON SONG.

A note of the condition of the sky and of the atmosphere was made at each count. In view of the seasonal change in the level of song, however, it is only possible to measure the effect of weather on the data over short periods, calendar months being chosen for the purpose. Further, it is only in months of varied conditions that any useful comparisons can be made.

Distinction between fine and fair, dull and dry, wet and snowy weather was made, with the following results: no subdivision into species or families has been made:—

## AVERAGE NUMBERS HEARD IN FOUR STANDARD COUNTS.\*

Weather	March 1942	April 1943	May 1942	June 1942	July 1943
Fine ... ..	84	134	125	97	29
Fair ... ..		135		82	31
Dull, dry ...	82		144		
Wet (often windy) ...	96	131	113	84	32
Snowy ... ..	32	—	—	—	—

Considering these figures as a whole, it is clear that only one type of weather, snow, was associated with an appreciable change in the numbers singing. More evidence will, however, need to be collected before it can be fully established that song is independent of changes in sky and atmosphere in the spring and summer.

## SONG ALONG THE TWO ROUTES.

The ratio of the lengths of the two routes used is 0.8. The corresponding ratio of the numbers heard was consistently around this figure, taking all species together. Among individual families, larks and pipits and finches showed higher ratios, indicating a preference for the shorter route, while tits and the Robin had lower ratios. This is as might be expected, since the longer route, passing through a wood, contained a higher proportion of trees and shrubs and less open country. Otherwise there was too close a similarity between the two ways for any remarkable differences to be expected.

In conclusion, it is suggested that methods similar to those described might form the basis for a more searching enquiry over a wider range of country which could be the means of acquiring new information about the incidence of bird-song.

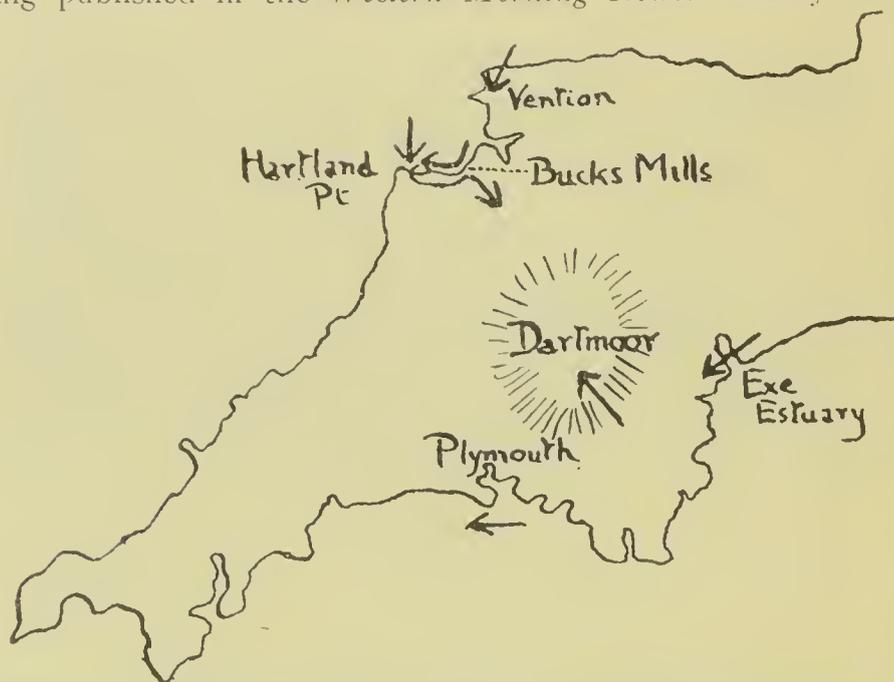
\*Based on a total of 36 counts in each month, or 180 counts in all, covering about 5,000 birds heard. In each entry in the table, the separate experiences of the morning and evening and of the two routes are combined.

## CHAFFINCH MIGRATION IN THE SOUTH-WEST

BY

H. G. HURRELL.

THE interesting point about Dr. Bannerman's notes on the above subject (*antea*, vol. xxxvii, p. 177) is the regularity of the south-westerly migration reported by him at Vention. Bird-watchers who live in Devon and Cornwall have had difficulty in finding any coastal points at which early morning autumn migration can be seen with regularity. The Devon Bird-Watching and Preservation Society carried out many simultaneous watches with the object of tracing migratory movements, especially coastwise ones. On pre-arranged days strategic coastal points were watched from daybreak and all bird movements recorded and subsequently compared; the results being published in the *Western Morning News*. Rarely did we



Sketch-map, illustrating the migratory movements of Chaffinches and other birds described in the text. The arrows indicate the directions of the movements referred to.

succeed in tracing the same movement past two or more observers. There is no regular movement at Bucks Mills, which is situated a few miles further along the coast in the direction in which Dr. Bannerman's migrants were heading. This fact has been ascertained from Mrs. Bergg, who lives at Bucks Mills. Evidently the migrants either turn inland, probably at the mouth of the Taw and Torridge, or else make straight across the sea to a point nearer Hartland. Alternatively they may stop soon after passing Vention.

Simultaneous watches have produced interesting observations on the migration of Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) on certain occasions. On November 4th, 1934, Chaffinches totalling 200

arrived at Hartland Point in parties which came in over the sea from the north. Incidentally on this occasion vast flocks of Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) flew in the opposite direction out to sea.

A year later, November 3rd, 1935, a gale was blowing from the south-east, and with the following two exceptions all our watchers drew blank. In one case thirteen flocks of Chaffinches totalling 80 birds crossed the Exe estuary flying south-west. The other exception was at Bucks Mills, where no less than 3,000 small birds, mostly Chaffinches, coasted westwards towards Hartland Point during the morning. Near Hartland they were seen resting in fields for awhile. Then in the afternoon they flew back again along the coast, but this time they turned inland at Bucks Mills and disappeared south-eastwards.

On two occasions flocks of Chaffinches have been noted in autumn coasting westwards near Plymouth, but this is not a regular movement. A regular movement of Meadow-Pipits (*Anthus pratensis*) has passed my house on the south-east border of Dartmoor every year on favourable evenings in late September and October. At about 7 p.m. (B.S.T.) they may be seen in considerable numbers flying north-west towards the centre of the moor. Several times House-Martins (*Delichon urbica*) and Chaffinches have been seen migrating in the same direction at the same time. It is to be hoped that this and Dr. Bannerman's movements will be followed up in future seasons.

One outstanding thing learnt by the above observations, is, I think, that it is dangerous to assume, in Devon and Cornwall at any rate, that migrants will keep a straight course or continue along a given coast line for a long distance.

## FEEDING HABITS OF THE BLACK-HEADED GULL

BY

GEOFFREY C. S. INGRAM.

THE regular habit of Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*), amongst other species, of hawking flying ants when these insects take their nuptial flights in summer, is well known, but I do not remember having seen any reference to the height to which they rise during the pursuit.

Over my garden in Cardiff on the evening of July 3rd, 1933, after an exceptionally dry and hot day, a big flight of ants took place, the earliest date I have recorded. They immediately attracted a big collection of birds, mostly Swifts (*Apus a. apus*)—some two hundred, I calculated—flying in a cone formation with the base and the largest number of birds nearest the ground, thinning to an apex which was very nearly out of sight to the naked eye. I fetched my field-glass (plus 8) and was then able to see that well above the highest Swifts, and quite invisible to the unaided sight, were five or six Black-headed Gulls which by their erratic movements were evidently also ant catching.

Certain diving species appear to have a curious attraction for this species, and after careful watching I have come to the conclusion that food is the real explanation and not mere curiosity. On December 16th, 1934, a female Goldeneye (*Bucephala c. clangula*) and an immature male Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) were diving together in close company on Lisvane Reservoir, near Cardiff. Every time they went under a solitary Black-headed Gull also present, would either swim or fly to the spot where they had disappeared and examine the place carefully as though looking for them. Watching it, I was pretty certain that actually it was picking up food which rose to the surface of the water as a result of the activities of the ducks below. This observation has been confirmed several times more recently, at the same place. On October 24th, 1943, three Little Grebes (*Podiceps r. ruficollis*) were the centre of attraction for a flight of 15-18 Black-headed Gulls, which constantly hovered and wheeled over the spot where the grebes were diving. Every now and then one or two of the gulls would alight momentarily on the water, and appear to pick up something, while others dabbled at the surface while still in flight. The grebes did not appreciate these attentions and kept under as much as possible, occasionally pushing a beak or head above water, going under again with a vigorous splash. On the rare occasions when they emerged fully, they crash-dived in the midst of a fountain of water whenever a gull passed over.

Later in November and December, 1943, the gulls' attentions were once again directed to Goldeneyes, two immature birds diving together, which they worried considerably as they swooped down to snatch some trifle of food from the water. In all the above cases there was no attempt made at snatching food from the ducks

themselves. All the Goldeneyes and Long-tailed Ducks I have watched diving, with the exception of a female Long-tailed Duck which once brought up a beak full of weed, have risen to the surface with empty beaks, anything they have found below being swallowed there presumably. The only other species of diving ducks I have seen bring food to the surface have been Smews (*Mergus albellus*) and Red-breasted Mergansers (*Mergus serrator*) with fish. The Little Grebes may have brought up their catch occasionally, but they themselves were not the centre of interest to the gulls, neither did I see anything in their bills at any time.

The late Dr. J. M. Dewar, who I suppose had made more close observations on the diving habits of birds in recent years than any other contemporary ornithologist, states in his book, *The Bird as a Diver*, that, with the exception of the Coot (*Fulica a. atra*) "all the other diving birds have bottom time during which they search for food and on finding it swallow it at or near the bottom unless the food-objects are too large or too hard to be prepared quickly into a form suitable for ingestion." My own observations confirm this statement, for the fish I have seen brought to the surface by saw-bills, grebes and divers have been of considerable size, and have given their captors a lot of trouble before they were killed and finally swallowed. The statement in *The Handbook* that on lakes and reservoirs the Black-headed Gull frequently snatches food from diving ducks, grebes and coots, appears to me to be too general.\* In the course of nearly forty years of observation I have never witnessed such an incident, and it would be interesting to know under what conditions the observations which form the basis of this statement were made. I can imagine that in such places as St. James' Park, or Regent's Park, where some of the visiting ducks become tame enough almost to take food from your hand, and Black-headed Gulls grow equally fearless and constantly compete for favours, such food snatching is likely to occur, but under such artificial conditions it can hardly be recognised as a natural habit.

*The Handbook* refers to the diving of Black-headed Gulls as being "recorded occasionally." On November 14th, 1943, and again on the 21st and 28th, I watched at least six, diving repeatedly for nearly half an hour at Lisvane Reservoir. On November the 14th, one of the most expert was an immature bird with mottled wings and banded tail. Facing into a high wind it hovered over the water at a height of about twenty feet, and then, partly closing its wings, it took a vertical header almost exactly like that of a Gannet (*Sula bassana*); in fact its whole appearance was that of a miniature Gannet, disappearing completely under water, wing-tips and all, sometimes for a full second. Other adult birds were almost as expert. The attraction on each occasion was a shoal of small fry swimming about twenty feet off shore.

\*See p. 14.—EDS.

## ATTACKS ON DIVING BIRDS BY BLACK-HEADED GULLS

BY

A. W. BOYD.

[In connexion with Mr. Ingram's observations (*antea*, pp. 12-13) I have asked Major Boyd, who has given particular attention to the subject, to record his experiences. It is clear that, at any rate on some waters, actual robbing of food brought up by diving birds, especially grebes, is not uncommon. Attention may also be drawn to a note by Mr. H. J. Massingham (*antea*, Vol. xiv, p. 260) recording how Tufted Ducks, which are described as, in this case, bringing food, thought to be molluscs, to the surface, were obliged to drop the food, which the gulls secured. Though *The Handbook* statement criticized by Mr. Ingram is perhaps rather too sweeping and the word "snatching," if taken in the most literal sense, might be better replaced by some more general term, such as "robbing," it is nevertheless evident that the essential fact of such robbery, usually by harrying the divers and obliging them to drop what they have brought up, is well established.—B.W.T.]

I HAVE made many notes during the last fifteen years on the attacks by Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) on grebes and diving duck on the Cheshire meres and Staffs. reservoirs and have noted that they often attach themselves to a bird or birds, swimming beside them on the water and rising to hover over them when they dive. Undoubtedly in many cases they are in search of food, but some attacks are apparently the outcome of mere combativeness. Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps c. cristatus*) are the birds most consistently attacked and very active attacks are made when the grebes are feeding young. A gull attached itself to a juvenile (September 27th, 1930) and made the adult drop the fish it was carrying to the young one. Grebes with young sometimes counter-attack and assume the offensive attitude with ear tufts and facial frill expanded and wide open bill (August 27th, 1932); on May 17th, 1926, a pair, one of them an adult with a juvenile on its back, was attacked and the other adult dropped the fish it was carrying, leapt in the air with bill pointed upwards and frill expanded and practically left the water—I saw its feet—almost hit the gull, and drove it off. Attacks on adults are frequent. On November 5th, 1941, eight or nine grebes were attended by a dozen gulls (in this case both Black-headed Gulls and Common Gulls (*Larus c. canus*) were present), which attacked them after each dive; one grebe came up with a fish, which a gull apparently secured. The Dabchick (*Podiceps r. ruficollis*) is less often attacked. On August 7th, 1932, a Black-headed Gull dashed at an adult which was feeding a juvenile, made it drop and at once secured the food it was carrying. An adult carrying a small fish (February 21st, 1936) managed to retain its fish when attacked.

I have seen a Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) (October 11th, 1936) and Goldeneye (*Bucephala c. clangula*) (November 17th, 1942), strike at and drive off gulls which persistently attacked; the Goldeneye appeared actually to strike a gull. On February 14th,

1938, over a flock of some forty Goosanders (*Mergus m. merganser*), which were diving simultaneously, a number of gulls hovered and persistently attacked them when they reappeared and I have seen a gull in attendance on a drake Smew (*M. a. albellus*) (January 27th, 1935).

Both grebes and diving duck when attacked frequently dive instantly and in a far more hurried way than normally to escape the gulls.

That these gulls do at times snatch food from the birds attacked is shown from what I have seen, and the fact that they hover while the grebes are under water and always attack them immediately they reappear seems to show that their primary object is to rob them rather than wait for food stirred up by the birds in their dive. I cannot think that the grebes and duck would resent the gulls' attention so greatly, if the gulls were seeking nothing more than what they had disturbed.

But Black-headed Gulls are evidently naturally pugnacious. On November 11th, 1943, I watched an attack from the air on six Mallard (*Anas p. platyrhynchos*), which were badly flustered and flew off in alarm. Even Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*) are attacked on the water (October 18th, 1928), and in the air (October 30th, 1943); I have seen attacks made on Herons (*Ardea c. cinerea*) on several occasions, one of which was chased for 650 yards, on a Kestrel (*Falco t. tinnunculus*) and on a Barn-Owl (*Tyto a. alba*) flying in the sunshine.

Black-headed Gulls do not often dive in fresh water in my experience: on November 21st, 1926 four or five continually dived head first from a height of two to three feet in rather shallow water, but never entirely closed their wings; again on October 6th, 1938 I saw one dive headlong and become entirely submerged.

## NOTES.

## SOME FOOD REMAINS LEFT IN A BLACK REDSTART'S NEST AFTER THE YOUNG HAD FLEDGED.

APPROXIMATELY two weeks after the second brood of Black Redstarts (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*), which bred at the Temple, had fledged, Mr. R. L. E. Ford, F.R.E.S. and myself obtained the nest for examination purposes.

The following food remains were identified by Mr. Ford :—

- Diptera. Heads and eyes of five individuals of the Common House-Fly (*Musca domestica*).  
 Heads and eyes of three individuals of the Blue-Bottle Fly (*Calliphora vomitoria*).  
 Heads and eyes of seven individuals of other species, unidentifiable, but one probably a Syrphid (Hover-Fly).
- Dermaptera. The forceps of eight Common Earwigs (*Forficula auricularia*).
- Hymenoptera. Odd tergites and ventrites of three individuals of the Hive Bee (*Apis mellifica*).  
 The body of a Rose Sawfly (*Hylotoma rosæ*), the wings being missing
- Coleoptera. One head of a Water-Beetle (*Acilius sulcatus*).  
 Odd elytra of three species of very small beetles, not identified.  
 One elytron (right) of the Two-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella bipunctata*).
- Lepidoptera. Numerous scales of unidentified moths, and heads of three noctua larvæ, all of the same species.
- Myriapoda. One adult "Thirty-Legs" (*Lithobius forficatus*) and one small immature specimen of the same species. Both were intact with the exception of a few pairs of missing legs.

The siftings from the nest also contained a certain amount of indeterminable material, probably the remains of insects or myriapods. The whole task was made very difficult by the quantity of quill sheathings shed by the nestlings.

The lepidopterous larvæ which were seen taken to the nest by the male Black Redstart, being bright green in colour, were most probably fully grown larvæ of the Cabbage Moth (*Mamestra brassicæ*).

Mr. Ford also informs me that the Rose Sawfly has a bright yellow body with black markings, which is thought by entomologists to be an instance of warning colouration. It seems possible that after having carried this insect to the nest, and after also tearing its wings off, the bird was influenced by the colouring or found the insect distasteful—consequently discarding it.

The above list naturally does not prove that the birds had fed on the missing parts of the material analysed, though it might be

presumed that the material found was in some cases the unpalatable part of the body consumed. Unfortunately no excrement was examined, nothing definable being in the nest.

It is regretted that the above analysis was not completed in time to include in Mr. R. S. R. Fitter's account of "Black Redstarts in England in the Summer of 1943," (*antea*, vol. xxxvii, pp. 191-195).

P. A. ADOLPH.

#### GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER BREAKING OPEN ALMOND NUTS.

I SEE in *The Handbook of British Birds* under the Food of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*) the nut of the almond tree is not mentioned, so the following details may be of interest, as in my experience most unusual. In a garden about 200 yards from Yalding Vicarage, Maidstone, is situated an almond tree, the nuts of which had been shed and lay on the ground beneath the tree in great numbers. These nuts were picked up by this woodpecker and carried to a stake about five yards away, to which a *Prunus* is tied; the top of this stake is cleft and in this the nuts are placed and split, the whole ground underneath being covered with the empty shells. It seems an amazing feat that the bird can easily open these nuts, which are almost the hardest to break that I know. Amongst the split ones I found ten which had beaten the bird.

J. R. HALE.

#### GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER IN W. ROSS-SHIRE.

ON April 22, 1943, a male Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*) was seen at Dundonnell, Little Loch Broom, Western Ross, drumming on a 4 ft. fence stake bordering a strip of larches in which it was later heard calling. *The Handbook of British Birds* does not record this species so far north on the West of Scotland, but it has in fact been resident in this locality since 1934 at least.

AVERIL MORLEY, F. FRASER DARLING.

#### GARGANEY IN CUMBERLAND.

*The Birds of Lakeland*, just published, gives very few records of the Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) from Cumberland, so it may be worth recording that a drake Garganey flew close over my head, in company with several Wigeon, at the head of Bassenthwaite, on April 10th, 1942. Unfortunately it settled out of sight among thick rushes, and I could not get nearer to it, but the white eye-stripe and grey wing were clearly visible before it settled.

H. G. ALEXANDER.

#### GANNETS FISHING IN FRESH WATER.

THERE are numerous records of the occurrence of the Gannet (*Sula bassana*) inland in various parts of Scotland, but I am not aware of its having been seen fishing in fresh water. It may therefore be of interest to mention that I have occasionally seen them on Loch Lomond, but the only date I have actually noted

was of a pair which appeared to be adults fishing near the River Fruin on June 24th, 1924. I did not consider the matter of exceptional interest, as I was aware that it had already been recorded in Lumsden and Brown's *Natural History of Loch Lomond* as having been seen on the Loch. I am informed that Mr. Stewart, who was at one time a keeper on Buchanan Castle Estate, once watched a single bird diving near Balmaha, but did not record the date.

Loch Lomond is frequented by enormous numbers of Powan (*Coregonus clupeioides*) commonly known as fresh-water herring, and it is possible the birds are attracted by this species of fish.

The distance from the nearest point on the Clyde where the Gannet occurs to the loch is about four miles. J. A. ANDERSON.

#### RED-BREASTED SNIPE IN HAMPSHIRE.

WHILE walking on the Stanpit Marshes, Christchurch, Hants, on September 5th, 1943, I had the good fortune to see a Red-breasted Snipe (*Limnodromus griseus*), feeding with some Purple Sandpipers and other waders. It attracted my attention at once as a species quite new to me and I was able to get within 20 yards of it and to examine it with a very good pair of Zeiss binoculars. I was struck by its very stocky shape, like an enlarged Knot, obvious snipe's head, and shortish legs, which were dark-coloured, appearing blackish-green. The back was bright reddish-brown with black markings and the light eye-stripe was quite distinct.

I watched it for some time feeding by quick thrusts of its bill right up to the head into the mud. Hoping to see it again in company with other observers who could support my identification, I did not flush or disturb it and therefore did not see the white rump, which is described as a striking feature in flight; but once it stretched its tail and I could see that it and the upper tail-coverts were barred brown and white. Unfortunately I was unable to find it again on any subsequent occasion. CHRISTINE H. POPHAM.

[We have discussed this record with Miss Popham and are satisfied that it can be accepted, though we think it a pity the bird was not put up in order to see the white rump which would have clinched the identification beyond any possibility of question.—EDS.]

#### LITTLE STINT IN DEVON IN WINTER.

ON January 1st, 1944, I was walking by the Exe estuary, opposite Topsham, when I detected a Stint flying in a flock of Dunlins. A few minutes later I found it settled on the saltings. I had excellent views of it within ten or twelve yards distance. It was a Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), which appeared to be in first winter plumage. Its upper-parts were about the same colour of grey as the Dunlins with which it was associating. The centres of the feathers on the mantle were strongly marked. A patch on the wing-coverts was nearly white. The breast and under-parts were white. Only one winter record for Devon is given in *The Handbook*.

H. G. ALEXANDER.

## GLAUCOUS GULLS IN ANGLESEY.

ON February 4th, 5th and 6th, 1943, I had two adult Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*) under observation in the area of Lion Rock beach, Rhosneigr, Anglesey, North Wales. I first noticed the birds on the afternoon of the 4th with a small flock of Great Black-backs (*Larus marinus*) and was immediately struck by their size and colour. As I approached, the Black-backs rose at about 60 yards, but the two white gulls stayed firm and I was able to examine them with field-glasses at about 40 yards.

The back was a pearly grey, the rest of the plumage was a fairly uniform white. The neck bore traces of brown flecks in both, one having more than the other. The legs seemed of a very slightly lighter pink than those of the Great Black-backs. The beaks were bright yellow. The spot on the lower mandibles was slightly smaller than that of the average Great Black-back and a darker red. On closer approach the two gulls rose and I noticed the white primaries and very buzzard-like flight.

On the 5th, I came upon the pair again, eating a dead Lapwing. I noticed that the Lapwing's eyes were out and the brain exposed; otherwise it appeared undamaged. On the 6th, I again came upon the pair amongst a large pack of mixed gulls, but after this date up till the 9th, when I left the district, they were not seen again.

R. C. R. ALLEN.

## REVIEWS.

## LOCAL REPORTS.

*Report of the Oxford Ornithological Society on the Birds of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, 1942.* Edited by B. W. Tucker (University Museum, Oxford).

THIS report, which shows how well the society maintains its activity, contains as usual many interesting records. Among them Aquatic Warbler, Water-Pipit, Rough-legged Buzzard and several waders are worth special mention, and the continued breeding of Marsh-Warbler and Hobby near Oxford is a matter for satisfaction. Three easily accessible localities have merited special attention: the classic locality of Port Meadow has attracted Whcooper and Bewick's Swans, White-fronted Geese and Smew; at Sandford, near Oxford, and at Slough a number of uncommon waders have been seen. Bird-marking and organized work, which in the past have been a valuable part of this society's activities, have necessarily suffered. A.W.B.

*London Bird Report for 1942.* (Edited by R. S. R. Fitter and E. R. Parrinder). Supplement to *The London Naturalist*. 1s. 6d.

APART from the usual annotated list the report contains articles by Mr. Fitter on "Black Redstarts in London and Middlesex in the Summer of 1942" and "Iceland and Glaucous Gulls in the London Area in the Winter of 1941-42." There are also shorter articles on "Pied Wagtails attacking other Birds" and "A Bigamous Mute Swan," by H. J. Burkill and on "Probable Drumming by Green Woodpeckers," by W. A. Wright.

*Annual Report of The Clifton College Natural History Society, 1942.*

THE majority of the notes in the Ornithological Section relate to birds observed in the neighbourhood of Bude, North Cornwall. There are brief sections also dealing with observations in Devon and in the vicinity of Bristol.

*Annual Report of Gresham's School Natural History Society, 1943.*

IN the Ornithological Section the notes deal entirely with observations made at Newquay, Cornwall, from May, 1942 to March, 1943. They conclude with a list of 48 species reliably recorded as having bred within a ten-mile radius. The Report also includes a Paper on the Natural History of Bishop Loch (near Glasgow) by R. J. Cruickshank which is mainly an account of the birds seen on or near the loch.

*Annual Report of the Oundle School Natural History Society, 1943.*

THIS contains a brief section on birds observed between April, 1942 and March, 1943. Perhaps due to the mild season the numbers of ducks and geese seen along the river was much below the average, a pair of Scaup on February 7th being the most unusual visitors. A flock of about 100 Long-tailed Tits was seen in Lilford Park on December 19th. A list of 103 species of birds seen by Major I. R. English in the Middle East (Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Palestine and Cyprus) is printed at the end of the Report. W.B.A.

*Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society: Annual Reports, 1931-42.*

Edited by Lt.-Col. B. H. Ryves and others.

WE have received from the Society a complete set of these Reports, which contain much valuable information on Cornish birds. As might be expected in a publication for which Col. Ryves is largely responsible much attention is given to detailed observations on breeding, and there are also special articles on the breeding of Wood-Lark (1938), Cirl Bunting (1941) and Tree-Creeper (1942), containing valuable original data. From 1936 on the systematic notes are divided into two sections under the headings status and habits. This arrangement has much to commend it, but a tendency to multiply separate short sections of miscellaneous notes by individual observers might, we think, be curtailed with advantage. A large proportion of such notes might well be included in the main systematic section, and their treatment as separate items tends to make the Reports unnecessarily complicated for reference.

The history of the more notable breeding species, such as Chough, Raven, Peregrine and Buzzard, is very carefully recorded from year to year. During the period covered the number of definitely known breeding pairs of Choughs in any given year has not exceeded four, though there may have been five in 1941. In 1942 three sites were known to be occupied, but one was unfortunately wrecked by a landslide.

Some of the most notable of the rare visitors mentioned, such as Spotted Sandpiper (1924), American Bittern (1928), Yellowshank (1936), Red-breasted Snipe (1937), Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1938), Black Kite (1938 and 1942) and Greater Yellowshank (1939), have already been recorded in *British Birds*, and the breeding of Pintail in W. Cornwall in 1938 has been mentioned in *The Handbook*. Under the present severe limitations on our space it is impossible to review the other records and observations at all fully, but mention may be made of the records of: Little Bittern (1922), cliff nests of Heron (1931-1933), Dotterel (1931 and 1938), Rough-legged Buzzard (1932, 1934 and 1941), Marsh-Harrier and Night-Heron (1932), White-winged Black Tern (1933), probable Red-footed Falcon (1935), Rose-coloured Starling (1937), Shore-Lark (1938), Whooper Swans (1938 and 1939), Little Bustard and Crane (1939), Red-necked Phalarope and Common Tern in winter (1940), large number of wintering Chiffchaffs (1941), Ruddy Sheld-Duck and a number of Little Auks (1942). Spoonbills have been reported every year since 1938 and a few Grey Lag-Geese have been recorded with some regularity in recent winters. A record of a flock of about fifteen Kentish Plovers on Lelant Beach on August 31st, 1926, is so surprising that it should perhaps be accepted with a certain reserve, although on the characters given (noted at the time) the identification appears to have been correct. On the other hand a record of a Dartford Warbler in 1940 does not seem to us sufficiently authenticated and more details seem desirable about a Honey-Buzzard recorded in 1939.

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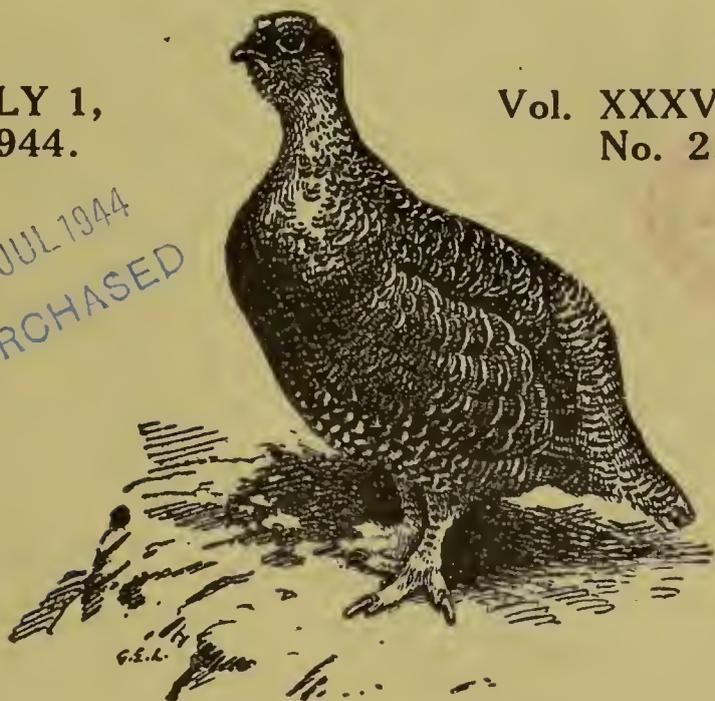
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# A STUDY OF THE INLAND FOOD HABITS OF THE COMMON CURLEW

BY

A. HIBBERT-WARE\* AND ROBERT F. RUTTLEDGE.

THIS investigation of the food habits of the Common Curlew (*Numenius a. arquata*) during the flocking period was prompted by the results obtained in the Redshank Inquiry (*antea*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 29-33).

In August, 1942, Miss Hibbert-Ware agreed to a request by Major Ruttledge to co-operate in an investigation. She undertook to examine all material submitted, while Major Ruttledge carried out the field work. Our investigation covered the periods August, 1942, to February, 1943, and July, 1943, to March, 1944 (*i.e.* the time of year during which large flocks of Curlew occur in the vicinity of Lough Carra, Co. Mayo.). Opportunity for study did not occur at other seasons.

## FEEDING HABITATS.

These vary considerably with the season and with weather conditions in so far as the latter affect water-levels. They are considered only in respect of birds frequenting Lough Carra, about 15 miles from the nearest sea, to which, however, the birds in question do not resort.

From July to October cattle-fields, providing dung-beetles, are especially favoured, and to a lesser extent shores of the lake, adjacent bogs, marshland and the edges of flood-waters.

In November cattle-fields are almost deserted, stubbles being frequented chiefly.

In December fields and stubbles are almost entirely deserted in favour of areas around floods in fields and marshy places.

From January to March the feeding-grounds vary, but are chiefly fields with close-cropped grass, borders of the lake and edges of flooded areas; occasionally newly laid-down land.

N.B.—Both winters during the investigation were very mild, but judging by previous experience, exceptional winters apart, the habitats show little variation from those given.

## ROOSTS AND RESTING PLACES.

In order to understand the problem of pellets, with their proof of food taken, and the problems in connexion with them, it seems essential to give some account of the roosting habits of the Curlew. The roosts and resting places (whence the pellets were collected) are quite distinct, being on rocks, sheet-rock, grassy slopes and

\*It had been intended that Miss Hibbert-Ware should write this joint paper. Most regrettably her death occurred before our investigations were as complete as we had desired. The Rev. G. Hibbert-Ware assisted by Mr. K. Humphries kindly copied out all Miss Hibbert-Ware's notes, which the former placed at my disposal. I have done my best to piece them together and to give the results as far as our investigation went. I cannot express sufficiently my indebtedness to the keenness, skill and enthusiasm which my collaborator showed throughout the investigation.

grass-topped islets. Two large roosts and two smaller ones were kept under special observation. The former had a varying population: max. c.400, min. c.80, average c.180 birds. The smaller had 80-50 birds.

Besides these night roosts, from about October 15th, the Curlew habitually gather by day, after feeding, on various sites in order to preen and digest.

The birds come to these day-roosts at irregular intervals early in the winter, but from December far more regularly. They arrive some 15 minutes after sunrise, rest for about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours, then move into adjacent fields, where they feed for about 2 hours, after which they return to the day-roost, where, with perhaps one or two short excursions to feed, they remain until they fly off to their night-roost. During February the flocks become extraordinarily restless, keeping no regular times, feed perhaps for only a few minutes at a time, then fly round and pitch elsewhere to feed again for another few minutes.

During July, August and September the night-roosts are at their greatest strength. Parties usually start arriving at the roost as early as c.3 hours before sunset, reach a peak between one and two hours before sunset, after which numbers subside gradually, some still straggling in after sunset. Birds leave the roost about sunrise and seem to remain away during the day.

Later in the autumn, however, and during winter, the numbers at large roosts greatly diminish, smaller roosts are formed, and the birds generally go to their roosts about 45 minutes *after* sunset. No doubt change in feeding habitat may have something to do with this change in habit, as both occur about the same period.

There is no reason to suppose that the birds' feeding habits are in any way affected by tides in this locality.

#### METHOD OF OBTAINING FOOD.

When dung-beetles are the main food flocks will move over the fields probing deeply in fairly dry cow-dung, the bill being inserted right up to the base. Sometimes the bill is worked vigorously from side to side. On stubbles birds walk quickly, often running and picking up food with no probing. This is the method used throughout the winter when food is obtained mostly from the surface. On the edge of floods birds stand about and probe to various depths.

The findings of our investigation are dealt with in two sections:—

- (a) The nature of the food material.
- (b) The evacuation of the gizzard-lining.

#### NATURE OF FOOD MATERIAL.

This was determined chiefly by analysis of regurgitated food-pellets. Some account of these pellets is given.

*Pellets.*—These were collected and sent for examination during each month under review; a number of them were critically examined (The series was not, however, completely analysed.)

In appearance the pellets are very like those of the Little Owl (*Athene noctua vidalii*). Most were dung-pellets, sparkling with beetle-shards and when freshly ejected had a covering of mucilaginous secretion.

During July when the birds first return in flocks pellets are usually scarce and small. In August and September they appear to reach a maximum both in size and numbers. In October a noticeable decrease in numbers and size takes place, while in November the pellets are even smaller and scarce. During December it is hard to find any at all, those that are ejected being about the size of a small pea. Often they consist of a few pieces of grit held together by mud. From January to March pellets appear in negligible quantities or not at all.

Field observations showed conclusively that when food changed from the insectivorous and grain types to that of earthworms and other soft foods the pellets diminished in number and size to a marked degree. Grit and stones are the main composition from November to February.

*Size.*—All pellets were measured. They showed a large range in both length and diameter, but were all, large and small, very similar in general shape.

The following are examples:—

- (a) 3.7 x 2.4 cms.
- (b) 2.8 x 1.7 cms.
- (c) 2.3 x 1.6 cms.
- (d) 1.7 x 1.2 cms.
- (e) 1.9 x 1.3 cms.

*Nature of food by months, derived from a summary of pellet contents.*

#### JULY.

Coleoptera abundant:

Preponderance of *Geotrupes*, including *Ceratophyus typhæus*.

Weevils and very many very small beetle fragments.

One small downy bird.

Frogs (small).

Matrix, dung with very few stones.

#### AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER.

*Geotrupes*, usually the only content, embedded in dung.

*Ceratophyus typhæus* very abundant, as well as *G. stercorarius*.

Weevil fairly frequent.

*Pterostichus*.

*Aphodius*.

Some pellets entirely composed of *Tipula* fragments and eggs.

Earwigs occasional.

Fragments of mollusca.

Seeds.

*Lumbricus* sp. A few pellets composed of mud contained heads of worms and portions of body with setæ.

Matrix, dung, mud, moss.

Stones absent from only two out of nine dung pellets, being present in numbers ranging from three to fifteen, in one pellet twenty-two. Size of stones—pea.

## OCTOBER.

Little variation from the two previous months as regards chief contents. Mostly *Geotrupes* in dung matrix, and beetles\* in moss matrix, which is the usual type of matrix to contain them.  
One small pellet contained twenty-one stones.

## NOVEMBER.

Report not available.

## DECEMBER.

Small frogs.	Diatoms.
Earthworms.	Millepedes.
Grass husks.	<i>Pterostichus madidus</i> .
Earwigs.	Small beetles* and insects.
Matrix, moss, moss and <i>Equisetum</i> , mud, soil.	

## JANUARY.

One pellet consisting entirely of tangled lengths of earthworms about 1" long.

## FEBRUARY.

One pellet consisted entirely of woodlice.

It was conclusively proved that pellets and gizzard-linings are ejected in daytime while birds are at their resting places (day roosts) as well as at their roosts. All evidence also pointed to the fact that pellets are not ejected nightly by every bird.

*Items of food found in addition to those given in The Handbook.*

Young birds.  
Fish fry (teeth-bearing bones).  
Insects and larvæ.  
Orthoptera : *Forficula*.  
Hemiptera : *Corixa*.  
Coleoptera : *Carabus*, *Phosphuga*, *Aphodius*, weevils.  
Diptera : *Tipula* eggs.  
Seeds.  
Blackberry.  
Wheat husks.

THE EVACUATION OF GIZZARD-LININGS BY CURLEW.

It came to us as a surprise to find among the pellets large numbers of light yellow pouch-like objects with the consistency of thin rubber. Dr. Percy Lowe kindly identified them as "the rolled-up cuticular linings secreted from the tunica mucosa of gizzards. They are rolled up by the muscular coat of the gizzard wall before ejection."

As the tunica mucosa contains mucous glands only (*i.e.*, it produces no chemically acting secretion) the separation of this mucous secretion must be achieved by mechanical trituration brought about by the action of the gizzard muscles, aided by the friction of the stones, grit, beetle shards and other hard objects swallowed by the bird. The folding and ridging of these linings is also due to muscular action.

The fact that Curlew share this habit with certain other birds was not our discovery. It came to our notice later that this habit was first made known by Macintyre (1913), who found discarded

\*The small beetles remained to be identified.

gizzard-linings in hundreds on a moss in Scotland where Curlew were in the habit of roosting.

A note giving illustrations of ejected lining membranes of Curlew gizzards was also published (Smith, 1913).

*Evacuation of gizzard-linings through the bill.*

It is certain that all linings scattered on a Curlew roost or resting-place have been evacuated by way of the bill. Some of them are entire and pouch-like, enclosing in their folds beetle shards, grass husks, stones, etc.; these, in fact, form pellets. Size and shape vary considerably. Others, folded and ridged from muscular action are incorporated with the pellet contents. Small fragments of linings also occur in many pellets. A view of a hitherto unsearched roost would certainly give the impression that Curlew evacuate these linings on a large scale. Macintyre's (1913) letter might further lead one to the same conclusion.

A roost examined early in November was littered with linings. It must, however, be kept in mind that the number of birds at that roost varied from 80-300 and that it had been occupied from July, so that this litter represented the evacuated linings of at least three months and may therefore have represented not more than one lining ejected by any individual bird.

In smaller roosts under constant observation two to five linings were found to be the normal production in any one night for 50-80 Curlew. There were nights during which no linings were ejected.

An endeavour was made to witness ejection, but this was not accomplished in spite of much watching, nor was pellet ejection actually witnessed. The choking noise (Macintyre, 1913) was never distinguished, which was not surprising when it is considered how few linings were ejected per night, and the difficulty of correlating that sound amongst the continual guttural gurgling and croaking noises uttered by Curlew at roost. During 1942 in August and September it was easy to collect linings, and they were on the whole very fine specimens similar to those portrayed by Smith (1913), whereas later the linings became small or fragmentary. In 1943, however, the reverse was the case and it was not until December that the really good specimens were found in numbers. We had not arrived at any conclusions in this matter.

It was proved conclusively that linings are shed and evacuated through the bill from the last week of July until the second week of March, during which period they are shed spasmodically. When freshly evacuated a mucilaginous secretion adheres to them.

*Evacuation of gizzard-linings through the intestines.*

In the light of McAtee's (1917) experience with duck it seemed advisable to examine the possibility of evacuation of linings through the intestines as an alternative method.

Fæces were collected and examined. They were of two types, the normal guano type devoid of any gelatinous character, and a

very liquid dark brown type (resembling mud) with a preponderance of gelatinous matter.

Both types enclosed abundant small particles of beetles and other foods.

The brown type fæces are found where Curlew habitually perch and roost and when fresh form a distinct run down the slopes of rocks. They are also found where Curlew have been feeding and standing about. When fresh they are very liquid, but after a day or two, according to climatic conditions, the substance dries and cakes to form a hard mat, which rain does not wash away. Naturally the other type also occurs along with it.

On a roost approximately 75 per cent. fæces were found to be the normal white type, 25 per cent. the gelatinous brown type.

Tests as follows were carried out to prove the nature and origin of the brown type.

(1) A clean gizzard-lining was soaked in water for a period. No change took place.

(2) A small amount of fluid derived from some brown fæces was added and in a fortnight the lining was no longer recognisable.

(N.B.—Linings do not disintegrate for a considerable period when exposed to weather.)

There was formed a brown gelatinous mud which caked on drying and which was identical with the fæcal mud collected in the field.

Fragments of linings were eventually separated both from the liquid "mud" and from two solid brown fæces collected later. These remnants were mere films of the original lining, but they retained the characteristic ridges and grooves of the lining.

It seems clear, therefore, that the highly gelatinous brown mud is derived from gizzard-linings which have passed through the intestines.

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## RECOVERY OF MARKED BIRDS

COMMUNICATED BY

E. P. LEACH.

Hon. Sec. Bird-Ringing Committee, British Trust for Ornithology.

No.	<i>Ringed.</i>	<i>Recovered.</i>
-----	----------------	-------------------

**Raven** (*Corvus c. corax*).

- |        |  |                               |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|
| 405787 | Lowgill (W.Yorks), 23.5.42.<br>young, by Sedbergh School.      | Reeth (N.Yorks), 5.12.43.     |
| 405744 | Pontrhydygroes (Cards),<br>23.4.40, young, by W. A.<br>Cadman. | Llanbrynmair (Mont), —.10.42. |

**Hooded Crow** (*Corvus c. cornix*).

- |        |  |                         |
|--------|--|-------------------------|
| 322511 | Rogart (Suth), 24.5.42, young,<br>by R. Carrick. | Culrain (Ross) 26.4.44. |
|--------|--|-------------------------|

**Carrion Crow** (*Corvus c. corone*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- |        |  |                                      |
|--------|--|--------------------------------------|
| 322642 | Sedbergh (Yorks), 24.5.42<br>by Sedbergh School. | Kendal (Westmor), 1.5.43.            |
| 324026 | Ditto 16.6.42.                                   | Long Sleddale (Westmor),<br>22.4.43. |
| 323614 | Gayton (Staffs), 9.5.43, by<br>A. H. Johnson.    | Penkridge (Staffs), —.11.43.         |

**Starling** (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN

- |        |  |   |
|--------|--|---|
| SA.760 | York, 25.1.42, by Bootham<br>School.           | Coventry (Warwicks), 29.1.44.                 |
| WR.343 | Ditto 25.2.39.                                 | Hvalpsund, (Jylland), Den-<br>mark, —.3.43.   |
| OT.731 | Wilmslow (Ches), 6.11.36, by<br>E. Cohen.      | Sale (Ches), —.5.43.                          |
| WX.736 | Wistaston (Ches), 28.12.39, by<br>F. J. Brown. | Wombwell (Yorks), 29.9.43.                    |
| OX.83  | Malvern (Worcs), 28.10.36, by<br>P. Morshead.  | Heerenveen. (Friesland),<br>Holland, 19.6.43. |
| ZS.398 | Ditto 16.1.36.                                 | Rotterdam, Holland, 9.1.41.                   |

**Greenfinch** (*Chloris ch. chloris*).

- |        |  |                              |
|--------|--|------------------------------|
| SC.558 | Brecon, 22.1.42, ad. by J. W.<br>Matthew.          | Lyonsall (Hereford), 9.4.43. |
| TM.847 | Ewhurst (Surrey), 16.3.44, ad.<br>by L. G. Weller. | Hounslow (Middx), 14.4.44.   |

**Yellow Bunting** (*Emberiza c. citrinella*).

- |        |  |                                  |
|--------|--|----------------------------------|
| JT.577 | Evesham (Worcs), 5.4.37, ad.,<br>by A. J. Harthan. | Where ringed, 25.1.39 ; 22.3.44. |
|--------|--|----------------------------------|

**Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla a. yarrellii*).

- |        |   |                            |
|--------|---|----------------------------|
| DM.737 | Ambleside (Westmor), 15.6.43,<br>young, by R. Walker. | Kendal (Westmor), 23.6.43. |
| HX.835 | Malvern (Worcs), 18.12.38, ad.,<br>by P. Morshead.    | Crieff (Perth), 9.4.44.    |

No.                      Ringed.                      Recovered.

**Spotted Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa s. striata*).

- DP.968 Hackthorpe (Westmor), Where ringed, 31.7.43.  
25.6.39, young, by the late  
H. J. Moon.  
CE.503 Melksham (Wilts), 1.7.41, Ditto 22.7.43.  
young, by D. Garnett.

**Song-Thrush** (*Turdus e. ericetorum*).

- TB.281 Cumdivock (Cumb), 28.6.43, Maryport (Cumb), 25.10.43.  
young, by R. H. Brown.

**Black Redstart** (*Phœnicurus ph. gibraltariensis*).

- CJ.594 Charterhouse, London, 11.6.43, New Southgate, London,  
young, by London N.H.S. 26.7.43.

**Swallow** (*Hirundo r. rustica*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- CJ.550 Stocksfield (Northumb), 5.7.42, Where ringed, —.7.43.  
by Mrs. Hodgkin.  
CK.895 Sedbergh (Yorks), 26.6.42, by Riversdale, Cape Province,  
Sedbergh School. 8.12.42.  
DR.776 Andreas, I. of Man, 18.6.39, Onchan, I. of Man, 23.5.43.  
by Manx F.C.  
CL.377 Iden (Sussex), 16.7.43, by Hawkhurst (Kent), 17.8.43.  
T. Bagenal.

**Swift** (*Apus a. apus*).

- EL.687 Canterbury (Kent), 17.7.38, Faversham (Kent), 3.7.43.  
young, by St. Edmund's Sch.

**Kingfisher** (*Alcedo a. ispida*).

- CD.350 Ponteland (Northumb), 11.7.43, Gateshead (Durham), 5.9.43.  
young, by Ash & Ridley.

**Barn-Owl** (*Tyto a. alba*).

- AC.6825 Great Budworth (Ches), 7.8.39, Churton (Ches), 25.12.41.  
young, by A. W. Boyd.

**Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco p. peregrinus*).

- 402306 Cumberland, 9.6.35, young, by Asby (Westmor), 1.4.43.  
R. H. Brown.

**Kestrel** (*Falco t. tinnuuculus*).

- 305611 Rugby (Warwicks), 4.7.38, Lincoln, 8.1.44.  
young, by Rugby School.

**Sparrow-Hawk** (*Accipiter n. nisus*).

- 322446 Ticknall (Derbys), 13.7.41, West Leake Hills (Notts),  
young, by Repton School. 22.11.43.  
RX.8731 Limpsfield (Surrey), 9.7.43, Oxendon (Northants), 19.2.44.  
young, by London N.H.S.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Ringed.</i>	<i>Recovered.</i>
<b>Marsh-Harrier</b> ( <i>Circus æ. æruginosus</i> ).		
402409	Hickling (Norfolk), young, by J. Vincent.	21.6.43, Felixstowe (Suffolk), 29.8.43.

### Heron (*Ardea c. cinerea*).

· RINGED AS YOUNG.

502987	Newport (Salop), by A. H. Johnson.	7.5.43, Frodsham (Ches), 20.8.43.
502996	Ditto	7.5.43, Abergele (Denbigh). 20.10.43.
107347	Llanwern (Mon), by B. Campbell.	29.4.43, Chepstow (Mon). 22.6.43.
125501	Chettisham (Cambs), by Cambs. B.C.	26.5.40, Chingford (Essex), —.12.42.

### Teal (*Anas c. crecca*).

RINGS ISSUED TO WILDFOWL INQUIRY COMMITTEE.

900458	Dilham (Norfolk),	22.11.38.	Holland, 1941.
901138	Pembroke.	22.10.38.	Where ringed, 10.2.44
902493	Ditto	26.10.39.	Karlshamn, S.E. Sweden, 10.4.44.
900716	Ditto	29.12.39.	Nakskov, (Laaland), Denmark, 27.8.40.
900611	Ditto	10.12.39.	Heerenveen (Friesland), Holland, 5.5.43.
900757	Ditto	1.1.40.	Vollenhove (Overijssel), Holland, —.1.41.

RINGS OF THE ORIELTON DECOY, PEMBROKE.

3093	6.1.38.	Otterbourne (Hants), 29.1.43.
2478	19.11.37.	Golden (Tipperary), —.2.43.

### Wigeon (*Anas penelope*).

900271	Strath Bran (Ross), young, for Wildfowl Inq. Ctee.	4.7.39, Chanak-Kale, Turkey, 3.2.42.
Or.3786	Pembroke, 22.12.38.	Ovrö. (Sjælland). Denmark, —.2.43.

### Pintail (*Anas a. acuta*).

925359	Abbotsbury (Dorset), for Wildfowl Inq. Ctee.	24.1.40, Terschelling, W. Frisian Is., —.9.42.
--------	---	---

### Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*).

Or.3303	Pembroke, 24.1.38.	Kampen (Overijssel), Holland, 14.9.40.
---------	--------------------	---

### Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*).

313985	St. James's Park, London, 21.2.42, by London N.H.S.	Staines (Middx), 16.1.44.
--------	--	---------------------------

### Eider (*Somateria m. mollissima*).

113388	Collieston (Aberdeen), ad., by M. Portal.	5.6.34, Where ringed, 11.4.43.
--------	--	--------------------------------

No.                                      Ringed.                                      Recovered.

**Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

122473	Big Scar (Wigtown), by Lord D. Stuart.	5.7.39,	River Dee Estuary (Kirkcudbr)
			31.5.43.
113958	Mochrum (Wigtown), by Lord Dumfries.	30.6.35,	Kilmore Quay (Wexford), —7.43.
107697	Puffin I. (N. Wales), by T. Tallis.	16.6.38,	Menai Straits (N. Wales), 18.7.43.
122083	Ditto	8.7.39.	L. Neagh (N. Ireland), —.6.43.
126343	Lambay (Dublin), by Skokholm Bird Obs.	13.6.39,	Sandy Cove (Dublin), —.6.43.
126375	Ditto	13.6.39.	Roslea (Fermanagh), 2.2.44.
126365	Ditto	13.6.39.	Noya (Coruña) Spain, 21.1.43.

**Shag** (*Phalacrocorax a. aristotelis*).

126000	Calf of Man, Cowan, Ladds and Williamson.	4.6.42, young, by	Lendalfoot (Ayr), 5.3.44.
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**Gannet** (*Sula bassana*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

124514	Bass Rock, Bootham School.	28.7.38,	by Harlingen (Friesland), Holland, 23.8.40.
124270	Grassholm, Skokholm Bird Obs.	31.8.38,	by Soay, I. of Skye, 1.6.43.
123867	Ditto	16.7.38.	Hell's Mouth (Caernarvon), 20.8.43.
502187	Ditto	15.8.39.	Fishguard (Pem), —.8.43.
502490	Ditto	15.8.39.	Wolf Light (Cornwall), 17.6.43.
123716	Ditto	16.7.38.	Harlingen (Friesland), Holland, 3.12.39.
124308	Ditto	10.9.38.	Cape Ortegal (Coruña) Spain, 2.2.43.
502104	Ditto	15.8.39.	Rio de Oro, W. Africa, —.2.43.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

118255	Grassholm, Skokholm Bird Obs.	6.6.40,	by Gwithian (Cornwall), 28.11.43.
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**Wood-Pigeon** (*Columba p. palumbus*).

RX.9950	Arley (Ches), young, by A. W. Boyd.	29.7.42,	Rufford (Lancs), 7.4.43.
323383	Nuneham Courtenay 11.3.43, ad., by M. K. Colquhoun.	(Oxon),	Brook, I. of Wight, 23.6.43.

**Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

230710	Isle of Bute, Lord D. Stuart.	18.5.40,	by Fedamore (Limerick), 3.1.44.
220652	Aberlady (E. Lothian), by Mrs. Greenlees.	23.5.40,	Swansea (Glam), 13.1.44.
231710	Burgh Marsh (Cumb), by R. H. Brown.	7.6.42,	Swinford (Mayo), —.3.43.
AS.7148	Buxton (Derby), the late H. J. Moon.	17.6.36,	by Rainford (Lancs), 14.10.43.

No.	<i>Ringed.</i>	<i>Recovered.</i>
<b>Redshank</b> ( <i>Tringa t. britannica</i> ).		
XT.391	Uldale (Cumb), 26.5.42, young, by R. H. Brown.	Maryport (Cumb), 8.3.43.

<b>Curlew</b> ( <i>Numenius a. arquata</i> ).		
302848	Wolsingham (Durham), 2.7.40, young, by R. Martinson.	Millom (Cumb), 20.1.44.

**Woodcock** (*Scolopax r. rusticola*).

RINGED AS YOUNG

210649	Clackmannan, 15.6.43, for G. Charteris.	Where ringed, 17.12.43.
305058	Arden (Dumbarton), 4.5.38, by Wellington Coll. N.H.S.	Ditto 2.10.43.
309730	Arnside (Westmor), 19.6.41, by J. Barnes.	Appleby (Westmor), 18.4.43.

**Sandwich Tern** (*Sterna s. sandvicensis*).

227168	Salthouse (Norfolk), 11.6.39, young, by E. Cohen.	Accra, Gold Coast, Spring, 1943.
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**Black-headed Gull** (*Larus r. ridibundus*).

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

309910	Westminster, London, 14.12.39, by London N.H.S.	Where ringed, 1.3.43.
323223	Ditto 26.1.43.	Ditto 31.1.44.
323228	Ditto 4.2.43.	Ditto 13.12.43.
323643	Ditto 9.3.43.	Ditto 9.12.43.
AD.1706	Ditto 26.11.42.	Ditto 10.3.44.
AD.1707	Ditto 27.11.42.	Ditto 5.2.44.
322619	Ditto 23.11.42.	Ringsted (Sjælland), Denmark, 12.7.43.
RX.5594	Ditto 20.11.38, by Oxford Orn. Soc.	Where ringed, 15.12.43.
RV.8227	Littleton (Middx), 21.11.35, by P. Hollom.	Peterborough (Northants), 13.3.44.
RT.4675	Ditto 29.1.35.	Gravesend (Kent), 9.5.43.
RX.6786	Ditto 24.1.39.	Nakskov Fjd. (Laaland), Denmark, —.8.41.

**Common Gull** (*Larus c. canus*).

325403	L. Carra (Mayo), 25.5.43, young, by R. F. Ruttledge.	Kilcreggan (Dumbarton), 5.8.43.
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**Herring-Gull** (*Larus a. argentatus*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

AC.9186	St. Abb's Cliffs (Berwick), 9.7.39, by G. Waterston.	Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), 30.10.39.
AC.9850	Calf of Man, 20.7.41, by Cowin, Ladds and Williamson.	Tyrella (Down), —.10.43.
400257	Benbane Head (Antrim), 22.6.34, by T. Kerr.	Portstewart (Londonderry), 10.10.43.
AT.1113	Lambay (Dublin), 12.6.39, by Skokholm Bird Obs.	Maynooth (Kildare), —.5.43.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** (*Larus f. graellsii*).

AB.5824	Foulshaw (Westmor), 23.7.37, young, by the late H. W. Robinson.	Noya (Coruña), Spain, —.3.43.
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## NOTES.

## ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES FROM GALWAY &amp; MAYO.

The following observations are for the year 1943.

**KESTREL** (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).—On July 17th I noticed a female which after landing on the ground started to run about with its body in a crouching attitude and gait a fast lope. The bird appeared to be picking up food, which I failed to identify.

**LONG-TAILED DUCK** (*Clangula hyemalis*).—On February 17th and 18th I watched twenty-six, of which six were adult males, at close quarters in Greatman's Bay, Connemara. Duration of dives varied between 45 and 55 seconds.

**LEACH'S FORK-TAILED PETREL** (*Oceanodroma l. leucorrhoa*).—Day and night search on Inishbofin, High Island, and Inishshark, Co. Galway, did not disclose the presence of any breeding colony.

Messrs. Trant & Roche, Eeragh Island Lighthouse, and Mr. Sullivan, Slyne Head Lighthouse, Illaunimmul Island, report that none breed on these islands.

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Podiceps r. ruficollis*).—"Song" heard at frequent intervals for about an hour on November 21st and persistently from December 26th up to the normal date of commencement at the end of January.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa l. limosa*).—The following appearances on Lough Carra form the only recorded inland occurrences for Co. Mayo, where the bird is rare. A party of 6-8, May 14th; two, August 3rd; two, August 19th; three, September 16th.

**WHIMBREL** (*Numenius ph. phaeopus*).—On May 10th several repeatedly uttered the "flight-call" interspersed with low chuckles while on the ground. Once the bubbling trill, which seemed indistinguishable from that of the Curlew, was also heard from a bird on the ground.

On May 16th I heard several birds flying in a party utter the Curlew-like trill interspersed with their flight-call, whilst a single bird uttered the flight-call from the ground.

**KNOT** (*Calidris c. canutus*).—Of a party of five in Galway Bay on August 5th, four were in summer plumage. It would appear that birds in this plumage are seldom met with in Ireland (*cf. Birds of Ireland*, p. 290).

A Knot seen on the shore of Lough Carra on September 3rd and four on September 4th form the first recorded inland occurrences in either county.

**CURLEW SANDPIPER** (*Calidris testacea*).—The following occurrences on the shores of Lough Carra are the only known instances of its appearance inland in either county, to which it is only an occasional visitor. Four, September 16th; two, September 19th; two, September 21st: as on each occasion the birds eventually flew away determinately to the south it seems improbable that they were the same in each case.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—On December 11th I observed one beside a flood 22 miles from the nearest sea (*cf. antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 160).

COMMON GULL (*Larus c. canus*).—Birds returned to their Lough Carra nesting-site on February 7th.

A juvenile marked on Lough Carra on May 15th was found dead in Dumbartonshire in mid-August. The colony on a marine islet adjacent to Inishbofin, the only one I knew of off the Galway coast, has ceased to exist.

HERRING-GULL (*Larus a. argentatus*).—I found two pairs nesting on Lough Mask, Co. Mayo (*cf. antea*, Vol. xxxvi, p. 244). A further two pairs were in all probability also nesting.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*).—A pair nested successfully on an islet in Lough Carra, 15 miles from the nearest sea-coast.

The only previously recorded inland nesting-site in either county was that on Lough Conn.

POMATORHINE SKUA (*Stercorarius pomarinus*).—An adult of the dark form was killed on October 20th three miles south of Lough Cullin, Co. Mayo, 20 miles from the sea. The bird was killed in the act of attacking a farmyard duck. ROBERT F. RUTLEDGE.

#### WAXWINGS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

WITH reference to the recent incursion of Waxwings (*Bombycilla g. garrulus*) we are able to add the following records to those already published (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 196-7, 213-14).

SUSSEX.—One at Bexhill in early December (Effie Furley, *Bexhill Observer*, Dec. 11, 1943). One at Fishbourne, near Chichester, February 28th (Dr. N. H. Joy). One sent for preservation to G. Bristow from Pett in third week of January; several others reported as seen there at same time and a flock of twenty-four, February 9th to 12th. Five seen by G. Bristow in Alexander Park, Hastings, on January 26th and two later.

KENT.—At least twelve at Dover, January 17th (O. G. Pike). A small party of six or seven arrived in the Bessels Green district, near Sevenoaks, on or about March 8th or 9th and were noted daily till about March 20th. A single bird was seen as late as March 30th in the same district. One of the party of six, a female, was killed, presumably by a cat, and was sent to the recorder (Dr. J. M. Harrison, from particulars supplied by Messrs. Fawkes and Kemp and Mrs. Chancellor, of Bessels Green).

ESSEX.—Three seen near Rettendon, January 24th, by Mr. H. Huggins (H. R. Tutt).

MIDDLESEX.—Twenty-six three-quarters of a mile S.E. of Hillingdon Church, April 7th (H. A. Bilby).

BERKSHIRE.—Two at Old Windsor Lock, January 7th (H. A. Bilby). Two at Abingdon, February 19th (Mrs. M. Brooks). Two reliably reported on Boars Hill, near Oxford, in early March (V. Belfield). One on Boars Hill, February 23rd, and about ten near there on February 20th; also four at Northcourt, near Abingdon, March 14th, and three near same place, March 15th (I. M. Kimbrey, *Oxford Times*, March 17, 1944). One dead in the grounds of Fort Belvedere, Virginia Water, April 14th (Mrs. J. A. Hillman).

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—Two or possibly three seen at Datchet by Mr. L. E. Morris, January 6th (H. Money-Coutts). Two at Drayton Beauchamp, March 7th (W. E. Glegg), and fourteen there on March 8th (Rev. C. E. Martin).

SUFFOLK.—Reported by Mr. J. P. Clatworthy at Bardwell, West Suffolk, January 17th (*East Anglian Times*, Jan. 19, 1944). Two parties of six and twelve between Mildenhall and Thetford, March 18th (R. J. Raines).

NORFOLK.—One at Norwich, inside city boundary, April 3rd (Capt. G. K. Yeates).

WORCESTERSHIRE.—One at Sheriff's Lench, near Evesham, March 23rd (A. J. Harthan).

SHROPSHIRE.—Five seen at Hanwood by Mr. W. Hughes on February 27th and several days subsequently ; over a dozen seen at West Felton on February 29th and still there on March 5th ; single bird seen on the outskirts of Shrewsbury by Mrs. K. Mayhew, March 18th (L. C. Lloyd). Male found dead by roadside about two miles N.W. of Ludlow, March 5th (M. J. W. Irwin).

LINCOLNSHIRE.—Eight to ten seen in the Louth district (D. G. Clarke, *Field*, Mar. 18, 1944, p. 304). Single birds on December 4th and 7th, about a mile apart in the Northcotes district ; about six in the Northcotes area, December 24th (F. Stubbs, *per* Dr. J. M. Harrison).

LEICESTERSHIRE.—Two at Bitteswell, near Lutterworth, February 14th (Leading-Aircraftman G. Giles).

YORKSHIRE.—Mr. R. Chislett has kindly supplied some further notes. On January 29th the big flock had gone from Catterick, but a few birds were still about (Capt. J. P. Utley). Major G. F. Dixon informs us that he saw a single bird there as late as April 17th.

In the Whitby district, ten were reported near Grosmont on January 8th and about thirty seen between Grosmont and Sleights on January 15th (C. E. A. Burnham). Near Robin Hood's Bay about fifteen on January 12th and two on January 29th (J. M. Brown). A late flock of about fifty on the edge of Richmond Moors, March 26th (E. W. Lomas).

East Riding : Seven seen by Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Thistleton, at a road junction in Hull, March 5th, and one in North Hull by the Rev. Beresford Peirse, April 1st (G. H. Ainsworth).

West Riding : One near Pateley Bridge, December 14th (Rev. K. Ilderton) ; one at Harrogate, March 17th (Miss M. Christopher) and one there, April 4th (Ilderton). Fifteen birds at Malin Bridge, near Sheffield, February 13th (N. Slater).

At localities previously reported. Middlesborough : last reported (five birds), February 7th (O. C. Hill). Pickering : last observed (three birds), March 22nd (R. M. Garnett). Scarborough : numerous small flocks during January, February and March, 1944, but numbers in each not so great as in December, most containing less than twenty birds. Last seen (a dozen in a garden on the outskirts of the town), April 8th (W. J. Clarke).

DURHAM.—Fifteen in Rowlands Gill, January 2nd ; reported to have been in the neighbourhood during the previous three weeks (D. Wise).

NORTHUMBERLAND.—One killed against a house at Slayley on May 10th when trying to escape from a hawk was handed to Dr. Hird, of Corbridge and is now in the Hancock Museum ; one seen at Newton Hall, Stocksfield-on-Tyne, May 12th (H. Tully).

CUMBERLAND.—Two at Cowraik Quarry, Penrith, November 14th (M. G. Robinson).

HADDINGTONSHIRE.—One at Dunbar in January (Miss M. Christopher). One at Gullane, April 21st and 22nd, two on 23rd and one on 24th (Sir Harold J. Stiles : also recorded in the *Scotsman*, May 6, 1944).

FORFARSHIRE.—One seen at Edzell, December 12th, and one picked up dead on December 24th (Corpl. P. A. Humble). Single bird seen in the parish of Panbride, March 8th (Robert A. Cant).

ABERDEENSHIRE.—A pair reported at Balmoral on April 8th by Mr. Frank Gordon, head stalker on Balmoral Forest. They had then been in the district for some time (Seton Gordon).

ELGIN.—Some seen in Kinloss area at end of February ; one killed by a boy with a catapult. Three at Forres, March 31st, and one still there, April 2nd (Corpl. P. A. Humble).

ROSS-SHIRE.—Single bird (first year male) in garden at Avoch from December 23rd to 28th (Rev. John Lees).

CAITHNESS.—Party of eleven reliably reported at Berriedale, November 4th (Miss Eleanor O. Armstrong).

FAIR ISLE.—Several hundreds appeared in mid-October and remained for a fortnight (G. Stout *per* G. Waterston). Two seen on April 3rd and 4th (G. Waterston and G. T. Arthur).

## SONG-THRUSH'S DISPLAY AT NEST.

ON April 2nd, 1944, in the company of my son I observed an unusual display at the nest of a Song-Thrush (*Turdus e. ericetorum*). We were visiting a nest of this species in my garden in Gloucestershire and as we approached the nest the hen bird flew off and perched on a tree twelve feet away.

From this perch she adopted a most curious and threatening attitude. She puffed out her feathers until she assumed an enormous size and then proceeded to open her bill to the full extent and then close the mandible with a very resounding snap. This she did twelve times in five minutes, occasionally using the Blackbird type alarm note and wiping the bill on her perch. After this time she flew on to another tree and ceased display and "bill-snapping."

In the afternoon of the same day I flushed the hen again and the same episode occurred.

G. E. TOOK.

## DISPLAY OF BLACKBIRD.

ON April 2nd, 1944, at Charing, Kent, I observed a male and female Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) on the flat top of a brick wall. They were facing each other and both in exactly the same posture, wings and tails, and as far as I could see all plumage, quite neatly in the resting position, *i.e.*, no fluffing, no quiver or movement of wings or tail and tail not erected or fanned. Both birds' heads were elevated at a small angle to the horizontal and the beaks open (say  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch) with the tips about one to two inches from each other. The female was moving forwards with little short, quick steps (not hops): the male was moving *backwards* with precisely the same movements, the position of beaks and plumage remaining as initially in both. After they had moved about two feet, a rapid change took place: the female stopped and crouched, swinging round to a direction almost opposite to her initial movement, whereupon the male mounted, performing coition very rapidly. The female then followed the male along the wall, but after this I lost them in foliage.

H. E. LITTLEDALE.

ON the evening of March 23rd, 1944, as I walked along a footpath at Sidmouth, Devon, my attention was attracted by the song of a Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) in the hedge beside it. The singer was perched 2 feet, sometimes  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, away from and a little higher than a hen. He was *very* softly singing a sub-song, with hardly a pause in it. *All the time* he kept his head below the level of his back, and slowly moved it down on one side to near the front of his feet, then up the other side, and back again—a pendulum-swing along an arc of a circle, without any accompanying swaying of the body. He moved now and again from one perch to another, not always facing the hen—once his tail was towards her. The hen stood stolidly still on a branch all the time, looking straight in front of her. Noisy passers-by caused the cock to stop, but he soon resumed

the song and head-swing. Another disturbance, and both birds flew away. I had watched them for some ten minutes.

W. L. COLYER.

[This observation should be compared with that of M. Brooks-King (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 215).—EDS.]

#### HOOPOE IN CAITHNESS

ON April 16th, 1944, at Dunbeath, Caithness, a Hoopoe (*Upupa e. epops*) was observed by Mr. Alex Thomson. On April 17th it was again seen by Mr. Thomson, accompanied by Dr. Kennedy, M.V.O., Dunbeath. No further news of the bird has been reported to me.

ELEANOR O. ARMSTRONG.

#### WHOOPEE SWANS GRAZING.

CONSIDERABLE numbers of Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) regularly spend the winter on suitable lochs in north Ayrshire and south Renfrewshire.

During February, 1943, there were heavy rainstorms which caused extensive flooding and the levels of the lochs and marshes were raised so much that the swans were unable to reach the roots and weeds on which they normally feed. During this time they repaired to flooded grassfields and fed on the submerged grass. When the water subsided most of them returned to the lochs, but six to eight of them remained on the fields for weeks after all trace of water had disappeared. There were four different fields on which they grazed, the nearest to a loch being about a mile and a half distant and the farthest about three miles. All the fields are bounded by small streams and to them they went to drink and wash. Occasionally they would return to one of the lochs in the neighbourhood, but only for a short time. I noticed that they appeared to feed only on the grass which had been submerged.

I have known Whoopers walk from a loch and feed on grass nearby, but I have never seen them go so far from their usual haunts.

J. A. ANDERSON.

#### BILL-COLORATION OF THE IMMATURE WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE.

WHEN watching wild geese, invariably at a distance of several hundred yards, on the New Grounds in Gloucestershire, I have often gained the impression that the bill-coloration of the immature White-fronted Goose (*Anser a. albifrons*) can best be described as drab-yellow or, as given in *The Handbook of British Birds* for both the juvenile and the 1st winter bird, greyish-yellow. On February 12th, 1944, however, when visiting this noted Severn haunt, I was able, by making use of exceptionally good cover, to view some 20 or 30 birds (adults and immatures in about equal proportions) at the extremely close range of between 10 and 20 yards and was surprised to find that in all cases the bills of the immatures were rosy-pink—differing only from those of the adults in that their nails were brownish instead of white. It should further be stated that a young White-front shot near Kenn Moor,

N. Somerset, on December 26th, 1943 was forwarded to me some days later, when I found its bill showed no trace of having been yellow in life. It was, in fact, dark pink or pinkish-red, and though it had evidently darkened since the bird was killed it differed little from those of the immatures subsequently examined at close range on the New Grounds. It thus appears that, whatever may apply to the juvenile, pink should be recorded as a bill-coloration of the first winter bird.

It is, of course, possible that the bill-coloration of the young White-front is dependent on the origin of the bird for, as mentioned in *The Handbook* and as Dr. John Berry has informed me, there is evidence to suggest that adults from breeding-grounds in Greenland have yellow bills whereas the bills of those from continental areas are pink. Recent observations make it clear that adults visiting the Severn are pink-billed birds.

H. H. DAVIS.

#### GADWALL DIVING.

ON the evening of March 27th, 1944, I observed three Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), a paired male and female and a male, on the northern portion of Wilstone Reservoir, Herts. The appearance of this species on these reservoirs would not justify special recording, but the actions of the paired birds are worthy of notice. Both the male and the female dived several times during the few minutes that I had them under observation. The dives were clean cut actions, the birds disappearing completely under the water and being submerged for several seconds. The diving was clearly a concerted action; if one sex submerged the other immediately did likewise. Unfortunately I did not notice if the lead was given by a particular sex and the hour prevented me from devoting more time to the birds. It is probable that this unusual behaviour resulted from sexual impulse, this idea being supported by the fact that the unmated male was not seen to dive. Millais (*The Natural History of the British Surface-Feeding Ducks*, 1902, p. 32), describing the courtship of this species, does not include diving and states that the display is quiet and self-possessed. J. C. Phillips (*A Natural History of the Ducks*, 1923-6, Vol. ii, p. 148) records that "These birds never dive in true diving habits except when wounded or before reaching maturity. The many notes in which they are referred to as "good divers" must all apply to their behaviour when winged." The birds seen by me are not covered by this statement. Montagu (*Ornithological Dictionary*, 1802, Vol. i), under Gadwall writes "It is said to be a great diver." This view probably arose from ignorance of the species and may be the source from which other writers have drawn their inspiration.

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

#### WOOD-PIGEONS' NESTS WITH THREE EGGS AND YOUNG.

WITH reference to Lt.-Col. B. H. Ryves's note on a nest of Wood-Pigeons (*Columba p. palumbus*) containing three young (*antea*,

Vol. xxxvii, p. 117), I write to record that on April 23rd, 1941, I found, in Herefordshire, near the village of Eardisley, a Wood-Pigeon's nest which also contained three young. The birds were not more than three days old. The nest was only about six feet from the ground. I left Hereford on April 26th, and later I heard from a friend that the birds left the nest on May 17th, twenty-four days after I had found it. I do not know whether one of them became bigger than the other two, but on April 24th, they were all the same size.

Also on May 7th, 1943, in Bedfordshire, there was a nest containing three eggs. Thirteen days later two of the eggs hatched, but the third did not and was presumably infertile.

I. J. FERGUSON LEES.

#### SOUTHERN CORMORANT IN HAMPSHIRE.

At the mouth of the Avon at Mudeford, Hampshire, on February 7th, 1944, amongst some Cormorants fishing in the sea, I saw one of which the appearance was unmistakably that of the Southern Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*). The light was very good. I had Zeiss field-glasses, and was about 100 yards from the bird. The whole head and neck were quite white with the exception of a dark line running down the nape and just a little dark running from the eye and dividing the white throat from the neck. I have seen quite a number of Cormorants here showing many degrees of whiteness, but none so striking or evenly marked as this one.

CHRISTINE H. POPHAM.

#### HERRING-GULLS FEEDING INDEPENDENT YOUNG.

DURING the second week in March, 1940, my wife and I frequently watched from a convenient station just above them a group of Herring-Gulls (*Larus a. argentatus*), which daily haunted the sandy beach (according to tides), at the foot of Castle Hill, Tenby. At this time "courtship" had already begun among the local Herring-Gulls, though there were naturally no signs of it in the particular group of shore-loafers which I have just mentioned. On the contrary there was among the adults of the party a good deal of squabbling and pursuit over the food found by individuals. The party, however, usually contained a sprinkling of immature—perhaps last year's birds—and we were soon struck by the notably different way in which they were treated as regards food found by the adults. These young birds, though now perfectly well able to fend for themselves, were constantly pestering the adults the moment they saw food found, in the characteristic begging posture, that is stretched horizontally from head to tail while uttering their thin piping food-call. This also happened even on the sea, when both ages were swimming together just off the beach towards high tide. This we noted particularly on March 10th and 11th. Sometimes the adults would walk or swim testily away from these importunate young, but we could never perceive that any squabbled with or angrily drove off such food-beggars—though this doubtless occurs

at times. On the contrary; on a number of occasions we saw adults good-humouredly "give up" to one of these pressing youngsters some tit-bit which it had just extracted from the tide-wash, often actually shoving the food well into his throat. Once indeed an adult Herring-Gull at this spot, which had just salved a large starfish, actually shared it amicably with the posturing immature bird, each tugging and tearing at the prey without any sign of bickering, and each in the end swallowing half of it.

This response on the part of adult Herring-Gulls to the stimulus of the food-call uttered by quite independent young (for the young birds which we watched would sometimes deign to collect food in the tide-wash for themselves), is doubtless common enough, though neither the late Charles Oldham, with whom I discussed it, nor I myself had ever noticed it before, despite our very frequent wanderings and watchings on this and many other gull-haunted beaches.

Mr. B. W. Tucker has most kindly drawn my attention to a valuable article by G. J. Broekhuysen on "The Behaviour of sexually mature and immature Herring-Gulls and Great Black-backed Gulls outside the breeding-season," in *Ardea*, 1937. This includes a careful study of the variations and persistence of the food-begging behaviour in otherwise independent immature birds. I quote the following salient passages from a translation of this article which Mr. Tucker has obligingly lent me.

"Immature but perfectly independent birds of both species perform outside the breeding-season an action agreeing precisely with the food-begging of young birds still dependent on the parents, and accompanied by an identical note. . . . . Originally it is simply an expression of emotion in young birds still dependent on their elders, which respond by feeding them. When the young bird has become independent, it retains the behaviour though the emotions which give rise to it are now more general and less specialized."

Apparently the writer did not observe among the adults any feeding reaction to the begging behaviour of independent immature birds since he definitely ascribes the retention of this behaviour by the young birds to "generalized emotion." But it is obvious that the "food-begging" which I witnessed, as described above, could scarcely be classed in this category.

BERTRAM LLOYD.

GLAUCOUS GULL IN INNER LONDON.—Mr. Jeffery G. Harrison sends us particulars of an immature Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) seen flying over the Thames just outside St. Thomas's Hospital on December 11th, 1943. Great Black-backed Gulls (*L. marinus*) were present for comparison of size, so that it was possible to be certain that the bird was not an Iceland Gull. It may be recalled that two or more Glaucous Gulls were recorded in the winter 1941-2.

# BIRD MIGRATION

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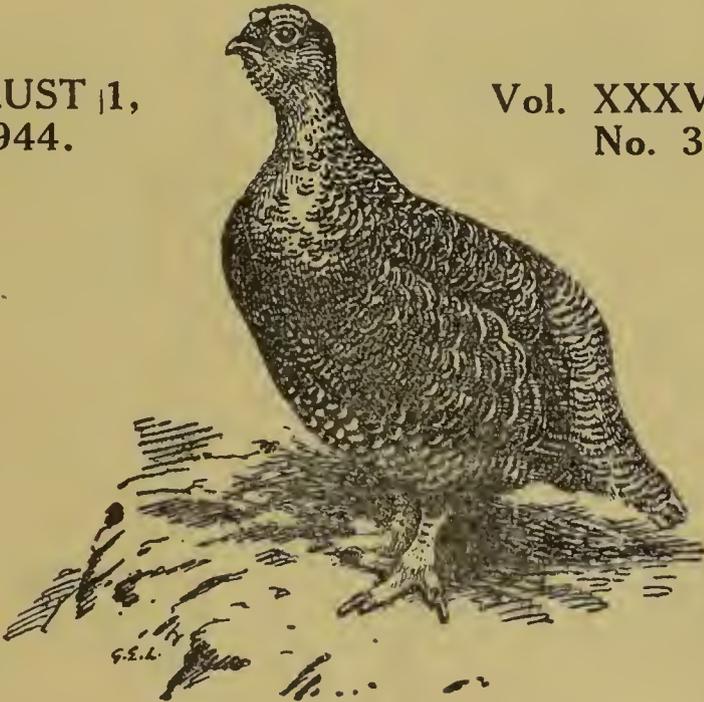
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CHANGES IN STATUS AMONG BRITISH BREEDING  
BIRDS

BY

W. B. ALEXANDER AND DAVID LACK.

## INTRODUCTION.

IN view of the present interest in animal fluctuations, a survey has been made of every bird breeding in the British Isles, to see what proportion of the species have increased, decreased or remained at about the same level during the last one hundred years. Thanks to a large number of county avifaunists and to a smaller number of biographers of particular species, British breeding birds have been well covered during this period, and it is unlikely that any species would have changed markedly in status without the fact being on record somewhere. Knowledge prior to 1840 is much less complete, but any changes recorded before this date are included in the summaries below. Acknowledgment should be made to an earlier survey of the same subject by E. M. Nicholson (*Birds in England*, 1926, pp. 25-110). We are also much indebted to Miss L. J. Rintoul and Miss E. V. Baxter for reading through the present paper and for valuable criticisms and additions in regard to status in Scotland.

The best evidence for fluctuations occurs in those species which have colonized new areas or deserted former haunts. An increase or decrease of a widespread species is less easily detected, and such a species could probably double or halve its numbers without the fact being noticed. However, any really marked change would probably have been recorded. To keep this paper within reasonable bounds only a very brief summary is given for each species, but where a detailed survey has been published a reference is given. Purely local changes are omitted; so are changes which can be inferred to have taken place, but which are not documented. From a knowledge of the distribution of woods, agricultural land, marshes and heaths in, say, the eighteenth century, it would be possible to infer that many British birds have either increased or decreased, but such speculations are omitted unless there is direct evidence for change. Changes during the present war are also not included, as some of them are likely to be only temporary.

Causes of fluctuations are added to the summaries where they are known or can be reasonably surmised. Those causes which are noted should not necessarily be considered the sole factors involved, and in some cases the main cause may be some less obvious factor which has been overlooked.

Thirty-six species for which there is no evidence of any change in status are omitted from the annotated list, but they are given in the summaries at the end of the paper. They include twenty-two passerine and near-passerine species and fourteen others.

## ANNOTATED LIST.

RAVEN (*Corvus c. corax*).

Great decrease in first half of 19th century, when exterminated over a large area of eastern and central England, though a few persisted in Essex till 1890, and in Sussex till a year or two later. Increase in 20th century in W. and N. and recolonized Sussex in 1939. Main factors human destruction, and decrease of carrion in settled districts, and later protection.

HOODED CROW (*Corvus c. cornix*).

Marked decrease in southern and central Scotland, due at least partly to human destruction and perhaps to competition with Carrion Crow; also decreased in many parts of Ireland. But holds its own in wilder parts and in coastal districts of north and west Scotland and islands.

CARRION CROW (*Corvus c. corone*).

Locally decreased through human destruction, especially in S. and E. England, but has increased and replaced Rook in outskirts of London, Birmingham and other large towns. In southern and central Scotland has largely replaced Hooded Crow and has spread to N. Scotland and Isle of Man. The zone of interbreeding between Carrion and Hooded Crows appears to have shifted considerably northward in Scotland, but still remains a narrow belt.

ROOK (*Corvus f. frugilegus*).

Has spread to areas in northern Scotland and Ireland owing to growth of trees in formerly treeless districts, and has colonized Orkney, Skye and Outer Hebrides.

JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula spermologus*).

General increase, especially in Scotland, where it has spread west and north and colonized Outer Hebrides and new islands in Orkney. Cause unknown.

MAGPIE (*Pica p. pica*).

Marked decrease in 19th century in some parts of England, especially S. and E., and throughout Scotland. Increase in Ireland, which was colonized towards end of 17th century. Increase in many parts of England and Scotland since 1914. Main cause human destruction or its cessation.

BRITISH JAY (*Garrulus glandarius rufitergum*).

Marked decrease generally, especially in northern England and Scotland, but with local increases, especially in southern England since 1914. Cause human destruction or its cessation.

In Ireland *G. g. hibernicus* was nearly exterminated early in 19th century and in latter half of that century was confined to a limited area in the south-east, but in 20th century has increased and colonized woods in most counties.

CHOUGH (*Pyrrhocorax p. pyrrhocorax*).

General decrease extending over two centuries. Main cause unknown. In Scotland, where in 18th century it occurred in small numbers in numerous inland localities as well as on the coast, particulars as to dates of disappearance are scanty. It lingered

in Sutherland till early in 19th century, in Berwickshire till about 1850, in Skye till beginning of 20th century, and in the extreme south-west till quite recently, but is now confined to the Inner Hebrides.

In England, where it seems always to have been confined to the coast, it became extinct in Yorkshire early in 19th century, in Kent and Sussex between 1830 and 1850, in the Isle of Wight and Cumberland about 1860, and in Dorset and S. Devon about 1890. It still survives in decreased numbers in Cornwall and N. Devon, and more commonly in Wales, the Isle of Man and Ireland, but is now confined to the coast except in N. Wales. In some of these areas it appears to be holding its own or perhaps even increasing.

STARLING (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).

Decrease towards end of 18th century, when became almost extinct in the north of England and the mainland of Scotland except Caithness, but survived, apparently without diminution, in the Shetlands, Orkneys and Hebrides. In Ireland isolated colonies survived on many islands and also on coastal cliffs and ruins, etc., inland.

Between about 1830 and 1860 recolonized most parts of northern England and southern Scotland and increased enormously in England, extending west to Cornwall and into western Wales. From that time onwards has continued to increase and has spread into the Highlands of Scotland and many parts of Ireland where it was formerly only a winter visitor. Cause unknown. As regards Scotland, see Harvie-Brown, J.A. (1895), *Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.*, pp. 2-22.

HAWFINCH (*Coccothraustes c. coccothraustes*).

Marked spread and increase. Possibly only began breeding in England at beginning of 19th century and in first half of that century was confined to S.E. England and Midlands. Has since spread west to Devon and Wales and north to S. and E. Scotland. Cause unknown.

GREENFINCH (*Chloris ch. chloris*).

Increasing and spreading in woods of northern Scotland.

BRITISH GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis c. britannica*).

Huge decrease everywhere in 19th century, but in 20th century marked increase in England, southern Scotland and Ireland. Important factors have been the extensive catching of Goldfinches as cage-birds and its cessation, also the spread or decrease of thistles, and the incidence of hard winters.

SISKIN (*Carduelis spinus*).

Increasing in Irish woods.

LESSER REDPOLL (*Carduelis flammea cabaret*).

Rather small but definite increase throughout Britain. Possible cause is cessation of bird-catching. Also helped, especially in northern Scotland where increase is very marked, by the planting of trees.

BRITISH TWITE (*Carduelis flavirostris pipilans*).

Marked decrease in N. England and S. Scotland with complete disappearance from some areas, e.g., Cheviots, Pentland Hills. Cause unknown.

LINNET (*Carduelis c. cannabina*).

In 19th century decrease in central England and elsewhere, due mainly to bird-catching and decrease of waste land. In 20th century increasing in parts of southern England and perhaps elsewhere, perhaps due to cessation of bird-catching.

BRITISH BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*).

Spreading in woods in northern Scotland and Ireland.

COMMON CROSSBILL (*Loxia c. curvirostra*).

Fluctuating, but on the whole marked increase, mainly due to immigration from the continent of Europe and the recent planting of conifers. The Scottish Crossbill (*Loxia c. scotica*) also fluctuates.

BRITISH CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs gengleri*).

Spreading in woods in northern Scotland.

CORN-BUNTING (*Emberiza calandra*).

Marked decrease reported in Sussex, Essex, Suffolk, the Clyde and Tay basins, and some Scottish islands, and suspected decrease elsewhere. Hence probable general decrease. Cause unknown.

CIRL BUNTING (*Emberiza c. cirrus*).

Possibly only colonized England at end of 18th century as White did not observe it at Selborne and it was first met with by Montagu in S. Devon in 1800. During the 19th century, it was occasionally found nesting as far north as Yorkshire, but does not now extend beyond the Midlands. On the other hand there is some evidence of increase in southern England.

HOUSE-SPARROW (*Passer d. domesticus*).

Huge increase in Scotland and Ireland; in England the bulk of a similar increase probably occurred before 19th century. Decrease in towns in 20th century owing to replacement of horses by motors.

TREE-SPARROW (*Passer m. montanus*).

Colonies are local and fluctuate markedly for unknown reasons.

WOOD-LARK (*Lullula a. arborea*).

Marked decrease southern England and Ireland and complete disappearance from northern England. Certainly assisted by decrease in waste land and, till recently, by bird-catching.

YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava flavissima*).

Decrease in Scotland and Ireland and complete disappearance from some localities where it formerly nested. In both countries during last 100 years its distribution has been almost confined to limited isolated areas suggesting that it may formerly have been more widespread. In Northumberland it became very rare during 19th century, but has increased during last 20 years.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla f. flava*).

Perhaps increasing somewhat in S.E. England, but very local and perhaps overlooked earlier.

(To be continued).

## FURTHER NOTES ON A TYPE OF INSIGHT LEARNING IN BIRDS

BY

W. H. THORPE. Sc.D.

LAST year I published in *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 29-31, under the title "A type of Insight Learning in Birds" a short account of the ability of three species of tit and of a number of other birds to pull up food which is suspended by a thread; the pulled-in loop being held by the foot while the bird reaches for the next pull. As a result of this note a considerable correspondence reached the late editor, who passed it on to me with the suggestion that I might summarise any records of particular interest.

Firstly, I would like to remedy an omission in my previous article by referring to the interesting article by M. Brooks-King, (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxv, pp. 29-32) entitled "Intelligence Tests With Tits." This describes a number of remarkable performances of Blue and Great Tits, one or two of which suggest insight of the same type and degree as that described in my own article.

Many of the letters received confirm, or amplify in some not very essential particular, examples already recorded. Such observations are interesting to have as confirmation, but do not require any comment. Mr. T. C. Witherby, however, sends some interesting recollections of experiments with caged birds supplied with food and water in trolleys of the usual type. These serve to confirm the statements of other authors that there is great individual variation in learning ability. He says:—"I myself succeeded only with cock Siskins and with seed in a trolley and not with water. I tried also Bullfinches (hand-reared), Redpolls (caught), and probably some other species now forgotten. It always seemed that as Siskins were (*a*) greedier than my other birds (they often died of over-eating) and the cock Siskin far greedier than the hen, and as (*b*) it was easy without starving them, to tempt them with their favourite seeds (hemp and maw)—that this accounted for the greater ease in teaching them tricks." . . . . . "Not all individual cock Siskins could be taught; only those able to concentrate. There was always in all cage birds a marked difference as between the behaviour of different individuals." He describes how cock Siskins could learn to pull out a drawer containing food in an apparatus similar to that used by Mr. Brooks-King, but emphasises that in order for the birds to persevere at learning the trick it seemed necessary for them to be able continually to see the seed in the box. Tits, on the contrary, seem extraordinarily independent of vision in this respect. Mr. Brooks-King remarks (p. 30) "one is almost tempted to believe that a keen sense of smell is manifested." In this connexion it is interesting that of a number of birds proved by Zahn (*Z. vergl. Physiol.*, 19, 785-96, 1923) to possess a sense of smell the Blue Tit was the most rapid learner. Its odour perception,

however, seemed little if at all more sensitive than that of other birds, being of approximately the same order as the human olfactory sense. It excelled merely in the rapidity with which in training experiments with odours as signals, it could profit by its perceptions.

A very interesting record comes from Mr. J. Walker, of Clevedon, who describes how on one occasion only (winter 1932) a cock House-Sparrow after three ineffectual attempts to land a piece of swinging suet, commenced to pull in the string  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches long and, after some failures, succeeded in holding the loops by means of both feet and so secured the food. This is, as far as I can find, the only record of a House-Sparrow solving a problem of this kind and seems at first sight surprising. But there is a certain amount of evidence that the House-Sparrow ranks in intelligence somewhat above the average of common passerine birds, for D. Lack (*The Life of the Robin*, 1943, p. 14) speaking of his Robin traps says:—"Of all the birds which entered the house traps only House-Sparrows and an occasional Blue Tit were able to go in and out regularly without getting caught: House-Sparrows are perhaps more intelligent than most birds." Moreover, L. S. V. Venables (*Bird Banding*, 1936, Vol. vi, p. 45-46) describes how, when working the bird-banding trap on Isle of May, he noticed repeatedly that the House-Sparrow and Starling were more adept in escaping than any of the passage migrants or than any of the other five passerine species resident on the island. He says that when the birds were being driven into the deep *cul-de-sac* of the 36 ft. funnel trap the Starlings, and Sparrows "without hesitation would fly straight towards the noise and danger, dodging our uplifted hands, and make good their escape." He suggests that superior intelligence may be one of the many factors which have played their part in accounting for the great success of these species on both sides of the Atlantic.

Some observations of Mr. Eric Evans on Chaffinches at Shipley, Yorks, serve to confirm Bierens de Haan's statement that individuals of this species occasionally, by vigorous tugs, show evidence of understanding the connexion between string and food, but are unable to hold the string. Mr. A. H. V. Smith, of N. London, however, records a successful pull up by a Greenfinch after preliminary attempts at hovering, the bird using its foot to hold the loop without difficulty. Finally, Mr. Roger Casson and Mr. T. L. Bartlett give accounts from Walkerburn, Peeblesshire, and Harrow respectively, of Rooks pulling up suet—a useful confirmation of Sowerby's statement.

Mr. Trevor Miller, of Riding Mill, Northumberland, in several letters, described in full and exact detail how in 1938 when a boy, he had suspended a conical tit-bell of the usual type 3 ins. in diameter half filled with fat. A fine string was hung centrally through the fat, its end about 4 ins. below the rim of the bell. To this end of the string a light stick of balsa wood 4 ins. long and  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. thick was suspended, tied firmly by its middle. The second day after this apparatus was put up, one or more Blue Tits, failing to reach the

fat by any other means, landed on the bar and, hanging in an inverted position, rolled it up the thread with rapid movements of the feet and so reached the fat. This process was seen "once or twice a day for several weeks" and it is thought that more than one bird was concerned. Mr. Miller has, I understand, since repeated the experiment without success. That such an achievement could have been an example of "insight learning" I do not for a moment believe, but I think some subsequent observations by myself and my friend Mr. T. C. Wyatt in Cambridge suggest how it might have come about. Having fitted up an apparatus similar to Mr. Miller's I found that unless the bell was composed of some extremely hard smooth substance (wood, glass, bakelite and metal bells were all tried) both Great and Blue Tits were able to hang on to the edge. If this mode of access was denied them they climbed up the string even though it was well greased. If fine silk or cotton thread was used they were unable to do this and then the results were very instructive. The varied resources and "ingenuity" displayed by Blue Tits in reaching the fat was astonishing. Some would manage to pull themselves up the thread parrot-wise with beak and foot sufficiently well to make a rapid stab at the fat before falling off. Others would hover below and make quick upward darts at the food, securing a beakful each time. If the string was not too long others would straddle with one foot on the string and the other braced against the bar and so, with effort, would lever themselves up until just within reach. Yet others would stand on the bar and with a rapid stepping movement execute little fluttering jumps carrying the bar a little way with them. None succeeded in rolling the bar up the string, but I think this last performance shows how a bird such as a tit (a bird which is in any case habitually hanging from twigs and righting itself) might accidentally roll the bar up a little way. Having done so we may be sure that such a rapid learner, as this species is, would perceive the advantage and repeat the process.

The absence of any record of the Robin pulling up a string led Mr. Wyatt (who has a number of hand-tame Robins in his garden) and myself to experiment with mealworms suspended by strings from a perch. In every case the Robin secured the bait, not without a little difficulty, by hovering in the air and snatching it off. When (in my experiments) this was prevented by standing on the feeding table below the perch a glass (lamp glass) cylinder 10 ins. high and  $4\frac{1}{4}$  ins. internal diameter and allowing the string to hang down into it the Robins were completely defeated, even though the string was very short (3-4 ins.). The birds would look at the mealworm through the glass, occasionally pecking the glass but, even though they had a moment before been snatching a mealworm from an unprotected string, evinced not the slightest understanding of the potentialities of the string nor of its relation to the food. So far as our observations go, therefore, the Robin seems to be a bird of low problem-solving ability.

To sum up :—The general result of these communications, for which I would like to express sincere thanks, is (1) that individual birds of a species (as with other animals from ants upwards) evidently vary very greatly in their learning capabilities. (2) These records make it appear rather more improbable than before that the performance is dependent on a fully formed inborn automatism. Nothing final can be established till carefully controlled experiments have been carried out on a large scale with hand-reared birds of known experience. But in the meantime observations of wild birds in field and garden are suggestive and provide many valuable hints and indications for future work. It is to be hoped, therefore, that ornithologists will continue to make careful and critical observations on this type of behaviour, always attempting to establish with as much certainty as possible whether the initial step in any problem solving of this kind has been accomplished accidentally or whether true insight is involved. We are still completely without observations on many of our commonest birds ; e.g. Wren and Song-Thrush—birds which often give the superficial impression of a fairly high level of general intelligence.

## THE EJECTION OF PELLETS BY PASSERINE AND OTHER BIRDS

BY

B. W. TUCKER, M.A., M.B.O.U.

THAT predatory birds such as hawks and owls throw up the indigestible portions of their food in the form of pellets is common knowledge amongst ornithologists, and that various others, such as Rooks, Herons, gulls and at least some waders, do so is also fairly generally known. But with regard to Passerine birds and various other groups recorded information is extraordinarily meagre. Definite records are available for a very small number of species, but the data are so fragmentary that when *The Handbook* was in preparation it was thought better not to deal with the subject at all, except in the case of the well-known pellet-producers, such as owls and hawks. It was felt that to mention the habit in a few scattered species where it happens to have been recorded and not in many others of similar habits in which it most probably occurs but has not been described, would give a misleading impression. It is now proposed, however, to make an appeal for further information and observation, and the present communication is intended both to direct the attention of readers to the subject and also to give some indication of what is known already.

There seems little doubt that all insectivorous species eject the chitinous hard-parts of their prey, as has been observed in some cases, but a reasonable presumption is not the same thing as positive evidence, and for many common species no information is available. Certainly the act of ejection is very rarely observed in small insectivorous Passerines; but Mr. W. B. Alexander, who has given the subject considerable attention in Australia, informs me that amongst Australian insect eaters the indigestible matter is frequently not ejected in the form of coherent pellets, but rather as mere fragments and broken bits of appendages. The act of flicking these out of the mouth would very easily escape all but the closest observation and such fragments would be almost impossible to find amongst ground vegetation after ejection. It can scarcely be doubted that the same applies to European birds; nevertheless, at any rate under certain conditions, some species such as the Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), may disgorge tolerably coherent pellets of insect remains. The more predatory or scavenging members of the genus *Corvus*, such as the Raven (*C. corax*) and Carrion Crow (*C. corone*), produce pellets much like those of birds-of-prey, and Rooks (*C. frugilegus*), when feeding on grain, form pellets consisting almost entirely of husks. As to whether the small seed-eating Passerines eject the husks of seeds I have no evidence, but since I can find no single record of this being observed it may perhaps be supposed that they do not ordinarily do so and that the husks are broken up in the gizzard.

It must be borne in mind that the formation of pellets must depend on the amount of indigestible matter in the food. In species with a wide range of diet this may clearly vary a good deal, and in these pellet production may be expected to vary from something substantial to almost, or actually, nothing. In some it may be comparatively rare.

The cases in which to my knowledge pellet ejection has positively been shown to occur—other than the hawks and owls and the Heron, for which there are adequate data—are listed below. It is likely enough that some scattered references have been missed, and the list is in any case purely preliminary and exploratory.

RAVEN (*Corvus corax*), CARRION CROW (*C. corone*), ROOK (*C. frugilegus*).—  
See above.

JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula*).

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Will disgorge stones of olive, cherry and other fruits, but no evidence found of any regular ejection of insect remains (P. Madon, *Alauda*, i, p. 236).

\*PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*).—K. Evetts, quoting observations of W. Rolph, *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxv, p. 332.

\*GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*).—Evetts (*l.c.*).

RED-BACKED SHRIKE (*L. collurio*).—Evetts (*l.c.*) and others.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa striata*).—Harting, *Zoologist*, 1880, p. 292. Also reported to H. F. Witherby by R. A. Houblon.

\*GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER (*Locustella nævia*).—Evetts (*l.c.*).

\*GREAT REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus arundinaceus*).—P. Estiot, *Alauda*, i, p. 52.

\*REED-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*).—Estiot (*l.c.*).

\*SEDGE-WARBLER (*A. schænobænus*).—Evetts (*l.c.*).

\*WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia communis*).—Evetts (*l.c.*).

SONG-THRUSH (*Turdus ericetorum*).—H. Terras, *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxv, p. 364.

BLACKBIRD (*Turdus merula*).—See above.

\*WHEATEAR (*Ænanthe ænanthe*).—Evetts, Estiot (*l.c.*).

\*REDSTART (*Phœnicurus phœnicurus*).—M. Legendre, *Alauda*, i, p. 236.

\*NIGHTINGALE (*Luscinia megarhyncha*).—Evetts, Estiot, Legendre (*l.c.*).

\*BLUETHROAT (*L. svecica*).—Legendre (*l.c.*). Mr. B. B. Osmaston also informs me that a captive Eastern White-spotted Bluethroat (*L. s. abbotti*), which was fed largely on earwigs disgorged a pellet consisting entirely of the chitinous forceps of the insects at least once a day.

ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*).—Legendre (*l.c.*). Reported to H. F. Witherby by J. MacLaughlin, who observed a wild Robin disgorge a pellet, described as the size of a small haricot bean, consisting of the chitinous remains of beetles, etc.

SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).

HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon urbica*).

SWIFT (*Apus apus*).—The Swift family are mentioned as producing pellets by Stresemann (*Aves* in Kükenthal and Krumbach, *Handbuch der Zoologie*, p. 150).

NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus europæus*).

ROLLER (*Coracias garrulus*).—J. L'Hermitte, *Revue Française d'Ornithologie*, vi, p. 28.

WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba palumbus*).—Wood-Pigeons have been recorded as producing pellets about an inch in length composed of "husks of barley and beech-nuts, grass, or clover, and small stones" (J. T. Mann, *Zoologist*, 1880, p. 193) or "chiefly of the husks of oats" (E. W. H. Blagg, *id.*, p. 236).

\*In species so marked the habit appears only to have been definitely recorded in captive birds.

CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*).—For details see A. Hibbert-Ware and R. F. Ruttledge, *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxviii, pp. 22-27.

REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*).—For details see J. F. Thomas, *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 29-32.

GULLS (*Larus*).—Gulls produce pellets with certain types of food, but information is scanty. C. Oldham (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxvii, p. 169) during an abundant emergence of a small chafer (*Phyllopertha horticola*), which was being consumed in quantities by mixed flocks of Herring and Common Gulls (*L. argentatus* and *canus*), with Lesser Black-backs (*L. fuscus*) and Black-headed Gulls (*L. ridibundus*) in smaller numbers, found large numbers of pellets of these birds consisting solely of the chitinous parts of the beetles. Pellets of grain are also disgorged by gulls which have been feeding on farmlands. (A. W. BOYD).

CAPERCAILLIE (*Tetrao urogallus*).—*Tetrao* is included by Stresemann (*l.c.*), amongst birds which produce pellets.

It can hardly be doubted that some readers can supplement this obviously very imperfect list from previous experience and for the future I would commend the subject to the attention of photographers and others engaged on close watching of any species. I should also be glad to receive specimens of pellets of certain or almost certain origin, of any birds other than owls, hawks or the Common Heron, which can be addressed to me at 9 Marston Ferry Road, Oxford. They should be accompanied by the fullest possible data. It may be added that although observations on and material from wild birds are particularly desired, the subject is one upon which aviculturists should be in a position to provide very valuable evidence and a letter asking for information has been addressed to the *Avicultural Magazine*.

A further communication will be published in due course.

## NOTES.

## RAVENS NESTING IN A ROOKERY.

ON March 26th, 1943, K. Williamson and one of the writers, W.S.C., when engaged on a rookery census were surprised to hear a pair of Ravens (*Corvus c. corax*) croaking anxiously and flying around Montpelier Wood in the heart of Sully Glen, Isle of Man. Despite a search for possible alternative sites, such as crags overhanging the river or nearby quarries, no nest was found, and it was concluded that the Ravens must be nesting in the rookery amongst the Rooks.

This year the writers re-visited the site on April 8th and once more the pair of Ravens came croaking to meet us. On this occasion, however, the nest was definitely located about 30 feet from the ground in the branches of a fir tree on the edge of the wood containing a large rookery of approximately 115 nests. The nest held young, but we were unfortunately unable to climb the tree without irons and on paying another visit a fortnight later found the nest empty.

As we are unable to find a similar case of Ravens nesting in a rookery we venture to put the above on record. From previous experience we have known extreme hostility being displayed by Rooks to herons and owls nesting in their rookery, but on no occasion did we see any friction between the Rooks and their larger cousins.

W. S. COWIN AND H. M. ROGERS, JNR.

## JACKDAWS "BILLING."

ON March 30th, 1944, I saw a pair of Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula spermologus*) on a large chimney-stack, a distance of approximately 50 yards from their nesting-site in a church tower, displaying and "billing." One bird, which I took to be the male, was inserting his beak into the wide-open mouth of the other. This behaviour continued for a minute or so, but the birds then flew off following each other in close proximity. I have not seen this behaviour before among Jackdaws and have been unable to trace any references to it in *The Handbook* or other literature.

C. H. COOKE.

## SONG OF FEMALE CHAFFINCH.

ON April 4th, 1944, at Brasted Chart, Kent, I heard a song from a female Chaffinch (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*) which was perching alone, with no male in sight. The song was a rather thin warble, interspersed with a subdued rattle lasting about three seconds. In *The Handbook of British Birds* a rattle is attributed only to the male bird in connexion with display and pairing.

B. FORSYTH.

## SNOW-BUNTING IN SURREY IN APRIL.

ON April 14th, 1944, while on my tractor ploughing at Ewhurst, near Guildford, I was able to observe a male Snow-Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) for several hours, at times at a distance of less than 15 yards. The bird would perch on a clod and then run with an agitated head jerk over the rough earth away from the tractor, until it was obliged to take wing for a few yards. Each

time it stopped it continually jerked its tail and occasionally flicked its wings. The plumage corresponded almost exactly with the summer plumage figured in *The Handbook* except that the head was buffish white rather than white and the back blackish rather than black.

L. G. WELLER.

#### BREEDING OF GREY WAGTAIL IN S.E. KENT.

I AM informed by Mr. Guy Mannering, of Dover, that a pair of Grey Wagtails (*Motacilla c. cinerea*) nested and reared a brood of young in a wall of a water mill in Dover in May, 1941, 1942 and 1943.

There seems to be no previous record of this species breeding so far east in Kent.

G. E. TOOK.

[This is a long way south and east of any previously recorded breeding except for a single record prior to 1908 near Dover. The regular breeding localities appear to be north and west of a line from Maidstone to Tunbridge Wells.—EDS.]

#### ROOSTING BEHAVIOUR OF LONG-TAILED TITS

THE following account of Long-tailed Tits (*Ægithalos caudatus rosaceus*) going to roost, given me by a neighbour, may be of interest.

Early in March she was walking in a narrow Somerset lane at dusk and saw several Long-tailed Tits preening themselves in a bramble thicket. Presently one, having finished its preening, settled down on a branch to roost, and was quickly joined by a second, then a third came and snuggled close to the first; but when a fourth joined them it flew to a twig immediately above and dropped down into the middle of the party, so likewise did five and six, and four more who gathered up from a distance. All flew to exactly the same twig, and by dropping down into the middle of the bunch caused much re-shuffling and waving of tails up and down in the effort of balancing.

DAVID B. GRUBB.

#### CLOACA-PECKING DISPLAY BY FEMALE HEDGE-SPARROW.

WITH reference to the display of the Hedge-Sparrow (*Prunella modularis*) described in *The Handbook of British Birds*, wherein mention is made of the male pecking the cloaca of the female, the following may be of interest.

On March 28th, 1944, in the evening I witnessed a similar display between a pair in my garden, but in this instance the female was pecking the male, who stood with wings spread and quivering rapidly. I have no doubt of the sex of each bird, as the cock, which I have observed singing on several occasions, had recently lost the greater part of his tail, and since this incident I have seen the display with the positions reversed as noted in *The Handbook*.

On March 26th, the hen laid an egg in a last year's nest, but no more eggs were laid and at the time of writing (April 5th) she is building about three feet away from the old nest. C. CLAY KNEALE.

#### EARLY NESTING OF SWALLOW.

ON April 29th, 1943, in company with Mr. E. G. H. Mack, I found a nest of Swallows (*Hirundo r. rustica*) in Tins's boathouse on

the River Cherwell at Oxford, containing four eggs. The nest was freshly lined with feathers and the eggs were warm. *The Handbook of British Birds* gives the period for eggs as "mid-May onwards, rarely earlier."

G. L. BULLARD.

#### DISPLAY OF LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

THE following notes on display behaviour of the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates minor comminutus*) were made near Lowestoft, Suffolk, on April 6th, 1940:—

(1) Two birds, male and female, flew excitedly from the branch of an elm and round in a circular course, one appearing to chase the other. They alighted on the same tree and perched in an attitude with quivering, half-opened wings and tail spread. They moved excitedly from one branch to another or about the same branch, pausing to stand in the attitude described, with the head poked forward. Throughout the performance a loud churr or screech with a suggestion of a hiss in it was given.

The two birds then flew to another elm, where they were joined by two more, also male and female. All four repeated the performance of moving about excitedly with frequent pauses to assume the same attitude, the hissing churr being again given throughout the display. After each bout of displaying the birds fed for about five seconds until one or more of the party started again, but this did not necessarily start the others. After a time the pairs flew off in different directions.

(2) Male feeding on elm; female feeding on next tree adopted the attitude described above, with quivering, half opened wings and hissing-churr note. She flew to the branch above the male and repeated the performance, but the male took no notice and she resumed feeding.

(3) Two birds alighted on an elm and after feeding for a few seconds began the same behaviour with same note, moving wildly about the branches.

The birds in (2) and (3) were almost certainly the same as those in (1).

It is curious that the display action referred to does not appear to have been clearly described before. The display accentuated the barring of the back and outer tail-feathers and was often performed in such a position as to make the back noticeable to the other bird or birds.

E. V. SOUTHAM.

#### LITTLE OWL HOVERING.

IN the late evening of May 26th, 1944, I noticed a Little Owl (*Athene noctua vidalii*) hovering over a marsh in S.W. Kent. I knew there were several young Lapwings on the marsh in question and that a pair of Little Owls had a nest containing young in a nearby oak tree, so decided to take cover and await events. After a short interval a Little Owl flew out of the oak tree and alternatively hovered and quartered the marsh in "kestrel fashion," finally closing its wings and dropping on a young Lapwing, which it later carried to its nest.

In past years I have watched scores of Little Owls seeking prey, but this is the first time I have noticed one seriously hovering and as no mention is made of this in *The Handbook* it may be interesting to place the action of this particular bird on record. T. C. GREGORY.

[For a previous record, see *antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 178.—EDS.]

#### SCOPS-OWL IN KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE.

A SCOPS-OWL (*Otus s. scops*) was captured by Mr. Dickson, Gillhead, Kirkbean, Kirkcudbrightshire, at the end of April, 1944, and he sent it to me. He caught it rather cleverly with a snare on the end of a fishing rod and he found, as I am doing, that it feeds well on mice. It also takes any insects we give it. Mr. Dickson thought by its size that it was a Little Owl, but I find it has all the features mentioned by *The Handbook* as characteristic of the Scops-Owl—the ear “horns,” the slim build, the dark shaft-streaks on the feathers, and the vermiculations on its plumage. Its feet are of the type shown in a figure in *The Handbook*. OLAF J. PULLEN.

[Sir Hugh Gladstone informs us that he has also seen this bird.—EDS.]

#### TAWNY OWL TAKING CARRION.

ON April 24th, 1943, I found a nest of three young Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco sylvatica*) in a hollow ash tree in Lincolnshire.

A number of pellets found at the nest contained the fur and bones of small mammals, but two consisted entirely of lamb's wool indicating that the parent birds had been feeding on a carcase.

Since then, a local gamekeeper has informed me that he has, on several occasions, found Tawny Owls in his traps baited for rats with the viscera of rabbits. E. L. ROBERTS.

#### KITE IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

BY a most regrettable accident, a Kite (*Milvus m. milvus*), was caught in a trap and killed on Little Tosson Moor in Coquetdale near Rothbury, Northumberland, on March 29th, 1944. It was an adult female. This is the first occasion on which a Kite has been recorded in Northumberland for about 75 years. As related by the late George Bolam, in *The Birds of Northumberland*, one was trapped near Featherstone Castle in the Tyne valley above Haltwhistle in or about the year 1869. GEORGE W. TEMPERLEY.

#### GADWALL IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

ON April 24th, 1944, I saw an adult drake Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) at Bedford Sewage Farm. I saw the bird again on April 30th and on May 2nd; it was not there on May 4th. I only saw the bird in flight, but had good views of it and it appeared to be in perfect plumage. The white speculum and the black upper and under tail-coverts were the most distinctive characters. The only previous occurrences of this species in Bedfordshire, as far as I know, were in the last century and have been recorded in Steele-Elliott's *Vertebrate Fauna of Bedfordshire*. J. A. MILLER.

## OYSTER-CATCHER FAR FROM LAND IN THE ATLANTIC.

ON April 4th, 1944, on a voyage across the Atlantic, when we were in position  $45^{\circ} 50' N$ ,  $25^{\circ} W$ . an Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) appeared and made a feeble attempt to settle on the ship. However its courage failed it and after circling the ship twice it flew off again in a south-westerly direction. The position referred to is about 450-500 miles N.E.N. of the Azores and about 700 miles from N. Spain.

E. A. DUFFEY.

## PREDATORY HABITS OF BLACK-HEADED GULLS.

WITH reference to the notes by Mr. Ingram and Major Boyd (*antea*, pp. 12-15), the habit of the Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*) of obtaining food from other birds by direct attack has been known to me for many years. I have witnessed these actions on many occasions, divers generally being the victims, on waters chiefly around London, but as these habits were well known I have never kept notes. I can, however, clearly visualize the Black-headed Gulls in close attendance on the feeding divers and attacking them when they came to the surface. I cannot remember actually having seen the gulls obtain food, as the divers were too quick for them and immediately dived again. I wish to emphasize that the attentions of the gulls were not of a "jackalling" nature, as Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) eat parts of *Zostera* torn up and discarded by Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla*). Black-headed Gulls are also predatory on Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*), their method being to mix with flocks of feeding Lapwings and attack them when they obtain food. Such attacks are in my experience of common occurrence. About six years ago I saw a Black-headed Gull pursue a Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis ispida*), which had just secured a fish, on the Thames near Ham. The last instance of these attacks, which I can remember, was at Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, the victims being Goosanders (*Mergus m. merganser*) and Golden-eye (*Bucephala c. clangula*).

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

[With further reference to this subject, Mr. H. H. S. Hayward has drawn our attention to two notes from Tring by the late Charles Oldham in the *Transactions of the Herts Natural History Society* for 1937 and 1938 respectively. The first records a Black-headed Gull attempting to snatch a fish as it was being passed to a nearly full-grown young Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps c. cristatus*) by the parent. The second describes a party of about a score of Black-headed Gulls harrying a group of eight Goosanders (*Mergus m. merganser*)—though admittedly in this case it could not be seen whether the gulls were robbing the duck or picking up something disturbed by their diving—and also quotes an observation of the late B. Lloyd at Elstree of Black-headed Gulls robbing, or attempting to rob, a Coot (*Fulica a. atra*).—EDS.]

GOLDEN ORIOLE IN MONMOUTHSIRE.—Lt.-Col. L. P. C. Tenison informs us that a male Golden Oriole (*Oriolus o. oriolus*) was seen

by 2nd-Lt. R. H. Tenison at Abercarn, Monmouthshire, on April, 23rd, 1944.

EARLY SPOTTED FLYCATCHER IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—Mr. H. A. Bilby sends us particulars of a Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa s. striata*) which he clearly identified at Eaton Wick churchyard, Windsor, on March 26th, 1944, as it made sallies after insects from a low branch of a tree. *The Handbook* records only one earlier date (March 10th).

EARLY PIED FLYCATCHER IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE.—Mr. H. H. Davis informs us that on April 8th, 1944, he saw a male Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*), at Little Stoke, Patchway, near Bristol. Only two earlier dates (March 12th, Scilly, and April 3rd, Lancs.) are recorded in *The Handbook*.

SWALLOW CROSSING HELVELLYN.—Mr. Alan F. Airey informs us that on May 8th, 1944, he observed a Swallow (*Hirundo r. rustica*) evidently migrating over the summit of Helvellyn (3,118 ft.) in a north-westerly direction in good weather conditions.

EARLY HOUSE-MARTIN IN SOMERSET.—Mr. A. V. Cornish sends us particulars of a House-Martin (*Delichon u. urbica*), which he saw at close range at Minehead on March 19th, 1944.

HOOPES IN CORNWALL, HAMPSHIRE AND MERIONETH.—Mr. C. J. F. Coombs sends us particulars of a Hoopoe (*Upupa e. epops*) which was seen near Bodmin Moor on April 10th, 1944, by a local blacksmith, who had a good view of the bird and whose description left no doubt of its identity. Another was seen by S/Lt. G. J. Lockley, R.N.V.R., in the grounds of Court Royal Hotel, Southampton, on April 24th, and another was observed about Pandy Woollen Mill, near Towyn, Merionethshire, by Mr. E. E. Jones, about the beginning of April. Later the remains of this bird, which had probably been killed by a cat, were found by Mr. Jones and sent by him to Mr. D. Seth-Smith, who kindly forwarded the head to us in confirmation of the record.

GARGANEY IN YORKSHIRE.—Capt. R. C. L. Pilkington informs us that on April 1st, 1944, he saw a drake Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) on a small pond on the borders of Yorkshire and Durham. This species is not often met with in Yorkshire.

UNUSUAL NUMBER OF GANNETS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.—Pte. A. R. Jenkins writes to us from Algeria that on November 23rd, 1943, he saw about a hundred and fifty Gannets (*Sula bassana*) fishing about 300 yards off shore. This appears to be a quite exceptional number for the Mediterranean.

SOOTY TERN IN DORSET.—In *The Field*, Dec. II, 1943, p. 617, Dr. A. C. Coles describes a Sooty Tern (*Sterna f. fuscata*) seen under excellent conditions at Sandbanks, Poole Harbour, on August 30th, 1943. It was watched with powerful glasses from a car for about three-quarters of an hour while resting on the sands and was afterwards seen in flight. The identity of the bird is clearly established

by the careful description, of which the main points are :—" about the size of a Sandwich Tern : forehead white, crown, nape and line through the eye deep black, upper parts and wing black, tail black, but outer tail feathers white, the whole of the underparts white, legs and bill black." We have, moreover, been in direct touch with Dr. Coles and are fully satisfied with the record.

**PUFFIN IN SURREY.**—Mr. Hubert E. Pounds informs us that on February 19th, 1944, a female Puffin (*Fratercula arctica grabø*) was picked up dead by Mr. Alvan G. Willcox, of Addington. It was found crouched against the exposed roots of an old yew bordering a woodland path, and was in a fresh condition, though somewhat emaciated. The weather at the time was bitterly cold with strong north-easterly winds and intermittent snow showers. The skin has been presented to the Natural History Museum.

### REVIEWS.

*The Birds of Lakeland.* By Ernest Blezard (Editor), Marjory Garnett, Ritson Graham and Tom L. Johnston. (Carlisle Natural History Society, 1943) With map, 8s. 6d. ; without map, 6s. 6d.

MACPHERSON'S *Fauna of Lakeland* was published in 1892 and has long been out of date, so that a new account of the birds of Lakeland was much needed. It has been known for a long time that Mr. Blezard and his collaborators were engaged on such a work and it is a pleasure to welcome its appearance, notwithstanding the war. This neat and handy volume, published as Vol. vi of the *Transactions of the Carlisle Natural History Society*, is a good example of what a local fauna should be. The systematic part contains all the essential information about the status and distribution of the various species, concisely and excellently treated without any superfluous padding, and there is a brief but adequate introductory section on the physical characteristics of the area. There is also an account of the breeding of ducks at Netherby, which has affected the status of several species and been instrumental in adding Wigeon, Pintail and Gadwall to the Cumberland breeding list. The addition of sections on migration and on plant ecology as affecting bird-life would certainly have been valuable and welcome, but possibly war-time economy restrictions prevented such expansion.

The area covered is considerably more extensive than the Lake District of the guide books and comprises the whole of Cumberland and Westmorland, with Lancashire north of the Sands. It is also more diversified, comprising not only the region of mountains and lakes which gives it its special character, but also a large area of cultivated lowland, especially in the north, and a long coastline including such famous bird haunts as the English shores of the Solway and the great gullery at Ravenglass.

Counting sub-species, 289 birds are definitely recorded for this area and three more are considered not fully authenticated. Almost our only criticism, and that a minor one, is that a few field records, not previously published, of less readily identifiable species, such as Great Snipe, Red-necked Grebe and Pomatorhine Skua, might perhaps have been accompanied by evidence of identification, though we have no reason to doubt their accuracy.

*The Way Birds Live.* By Edward A. Armstrong. (Lindsay Drummond, 1943). Illustrated. 7s. 6d.

THIS book was written, the author tells us, to meet a need which he felt as a boy for a book telling him not merely what birds looked like, but something " about their singing and dancing, love-making and fighting, and why they do just what they do," in short about their behaviour. This is certainly a praiseworthy object, and the book is without doubt a great improvement on the " pretty dickie " type of bird book for the young. It contains a considerable

amount of interesting information under such headings as "finding a partner," "showing off," "battles and bluff," "courtship gifts," "setting up house," "about eggs," "youngsters," "what's for dinner," "roosting ruses," and so on. Nevertheless we are not sure that it achieves its object as satisfactorily as it might. Any doubt on this score will be settled by the measure of its success with the young people for whom it is written, but to us it seems a weakness that the author fails to make anything like a coherent story. The treatment is too disjointed and fragmentary and often too much like a mere list of examples, and in some ways—though this must not be taken too literally—a large part of the book strikes us as too suggestive of an abridged edition of the author's *Bird Display*. While we would not exclude references to exotic birds, we think that for children more stress might have been laid on familiar ones or at any rate that exotic and British birds might be differentiated when the former are referred to. This is not always done, and youthful readers who go out hoping to meet hornbills, penguins and pelicans in their rambles might have been saved the trouble.

*Somerset Birds and Some Other Folk.* By E. W. Hendy. (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1943). Illustrated. 12s. 6d. net.

THIS is a volume of miscellaneous essays in Mr. Hendy's usual pleasant style, held together by their common setting in Somerset and chiefly in the Exmoor district. They are mostly about birds, but also about country, country folk and four-footed creatures. The bird chapters include accounts of Exmoor Merlins, Chaffinches, Swallow migration in the south-west, and biographies of some garden birds based on colour ringing. These are for the most part essays by a bird lover who is also a reliable observer rather than set studies in the more formal and scientific sense—indeed we notice one or two characteristic digs at scientific ornithologists—but they contain much sound and accurate observation as well as vivid description. There are also some chapters on more general topics such as bird behaviour, and we are tempted outside our strictly allotted sphere to refer particularly to the very pleasing word portrait from life of a Mendip woodman.

*Bird Music.* By A. L. Turnbull. (Faber & Faber). Illustrated. 7s. 6d. net. As a contribution to the study of bird song, even at the fairly elementary level intended, this book cannot be taken very seriously. The author has made no attempt to acquaint himself with the work of others on the subject: for example there is no mention of E. M. Nicholson's excellent account in *Songs of Wild Birds* by Nicholson and Koch, and in the chapter entitled "How and why Birds sing" there is little evidence of any real knowledge of current views. Readers who *have* taken the trouble to inform themselves on such matters and have noted such pretentious chapter headings as "Analysis of vocal expressions" and "Component elements of bird song" will probably be exasperated before getting very far and may never reach the specific section, but they will not lose very much. Such distinct song types as warbles, trills, etc. are nowhere distinguished, and amongst much verbiage there is seldom any clear indication of the diagnostic characters of the various songs: observers hoping for guidance in recognising songs or in distinguishing between those which are more or less similar will find little to help them. Other points of criticism could be mentioned, but it seems hardly worth while.

## LETTER.

### ORNITHOLOGY OF HOLY ISLAND.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—May I, through the courtesy of your columns, state that I should be interested to hear from any of your readers possessing unpublished notes on the Ornithology of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne and its environs.

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## CHANGES IN STATUS AMONG BRITISH BREEDING BIRDS

BY

W. B. ALEXANDER AND DAVID LACK.

(Continued from page 45.)

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla c. cinerea*).

Marked increase in S.E. England (Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hants).

PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*).

Decrease in Scotland in recent years.

BRITISH NUTHATCH (*Sitta europæa affinis*).

Increase and extension of range in N.W. Wales (Merioneth, Caernarvon, Anglesey) and in Cheshire.

BRITISH GREAT TIT (*Parus major newtoni*).

Increase in N. Scotland, due to increase of woodland.

BRITISH BLUE TIT (*Parus cæruleus obscurus*).

Increase in N. Scotland and colonized Isle of Man. Due to increase of woodland.

BRITISH COAL-TIT (*Parus ater britannicus*).

Spreading in woods of northern Scotland, due to increase of woodland.

SCOTTISH CRESTED TIT (*Parus cristatus scoticus*).

Doubtless formerly more widespread in Scotland and there are records of its occurrence in the west and south early in 19th century, though no evidence of its breeding there. In the second half of that century appears to have been restricted to the Spey Valley, but with extensive planting of conifers has now spread to pinewoods throughout the Moray basin.

BRITISH LONG-TAILED TIT (*Ægithalos caudatus rosaceus*).

Numbers fluctuate owing to increased mortality in very severe winters.

BEARDED TIT (*Panurus b. biarmicus*).

Huge decrease, in many counties extinct. Mainly due to big decrease in possible breeding grounds through drainage, also affected by hard winters and collectors.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius c. collurio*).

Marked decrease in northern, western and parts of southern England, also in Wales. Also fluctuates with season. Cause of decrease unknown.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).

Apparently increasing somewhat in northern Scotland.

PIED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*).

Definite increase in northern England and southern Scotland. Cause unknown.

BRITISH GOLDCREST (*Regulus r. anglorum*).

In 18th and early 19th centuries was a comparatively rare bird. White called it "almost as rare as any bird we know" at Selborne. During 19th century increased enormously, partly at least due

to plantation of conifers and perhaps also to milder winters, since numbers are greatly reduced in severe winters and may take several years to recover. Still increasing and spreading in Scotland and Ireland with increase of coniferous plantations.

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*).

Marked increase in Ireland in second half of 19th century.

WILLOW-WARBLE (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*).

Colonized Outer Hebrides and increasing Orkneys in 20th century.

WOOD-WARBLE (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).

Not recorded from N. Scotland (north of Inverness) or from Ireland till second half of 19th century, but was perhaps overlooked. In Ireland is still extremely local and rare, but in Scotland has increased and now breeds in Ross and S.E. Sutherland.

SAVI'S WARBLE (*Locustella l. luscinoides*).

Extinct in mid-19th century soon after its discovery in Norfolk and the fens of East Anglia. Probably due to drainage of fens, the small areas remaining perhaps being too limited to allow of its survival.

SEDGE-WARBLE (*Acrocephalus schænobænis*).

Colonized Orkney in 19th century and Outer Hebrides in 20th, and increasing on mainland of Scotland. Cause unknown.

GARDEN-WARBLE (*Sylvia borin*).

Possibly increased in Ireland in second half of 19th century, but more probably overlooked earlier. Still very local.

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*).

Increased in Ireland in second half of 19th century and increase perhaps continuing.

WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia c. communis*).

Colonized Outer Hebrides in second half of 19th century. Increasing in northern Scotland.

LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia c. curruca*).

Has probably increased in England and certainly in Wales. Spread west to Cornwall, Pembroke and Anglesey in 20th century.

DARTFORD-WARBLE (*Sylvia undata dartfordiensis*).

Widespread decrease, extinct in many counties. Due to clearing of waste-land, collectors, heath-fires and hard winters.

MISTLE-THRUSH (*Turdus v. viscivorus*).

Great increase in first half of 19th century in England, Scotland and Ireland. In N. England and Scotland it was rare at end of 18th century and in Ireland unknown. First recorded in Co. Antrim in 1800 and first nest found in Co. Louth in 1807, it had spread to almost every part of Ireland by 1850. Continued to increase in Scotland throughout 19th century and colonized Orkneys and Outer Hebrides in 20th century. Main cause unknown, but increase in Scotland and Ireland assisted by planting of trees.

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus t. torquatus*).

Marked decrease in 20th century. Cause unknown.

BLACKBIRD (*Turdus m. merula*).

Increasing, particularly in Scotland (especially the Northern Isles) and Ireland, helped by increase in woodlands, but main cause unknown.

WHEATEAR (*Enanthe æ. ænanthe*).

Decreasing in England, S. Scotland and Orkney in 20th century.

STONECHAT (*Saxicola torquata hibernans*).

Decreased locally due to decrease of waste-land; also decreases in hard winters.

REDSTART (*Phœnicurus ph. phœnicurus*).

Very marked decrease throughout southern, eastern and central England, and to a less extent in Scotland; cause unknown.

BLACK REDSTART (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*).

After sporadic breeding for some years, now established as regular breeder in very small numbers in southern and eastern England. See Witherby, H. F. and Fitter, R. S. R. (1942), *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 132-139.

NIGHTINGALE (*Luscinia m. megarhyncha*).

Perhaps decreasing, but evidence meagre.

SWALLOW (*Hirundo r. rustica*).

Probably decreasing, particularly in Scotland, but evidence not quite definite enough.

HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon u. urbica*).

Probably decreasing generally, though still fairly common.

SAND-MARTIN (*Riparia r. riparia*).

Probably decreasing, but evidence not quite definite enough.

SWIFT (*Apus a. apus*).

Claimed to be increasing, including in Ireland, but evidence not quite definite enough.

KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis ispida*).

Decrease in 19th century due to human destruction. Local increases reported in 20th century. Numbers fluctuate owing to heavy mortality in severe winters.

GREEN WOODPECKER (*Picus viridis pluvius*).

Colonized Isle of Wight in 20th century.

BRITISH GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER (*Dryobates major anglicus*).

Became extinct in Scotland and northern England (north of Cheshire and Yorkshire) in early part of 19th century. During second half of 19th century spread through N. England and S. Scotland to central and eastern Scotland and in 20th century colonized Argyll, Inverness, E. Ross and E. Sutherland. Cause of increase unknown.

(See Harvie-Brown, J.A. (1908), *Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.*, pp. 210-216).

WRYNECK (*Jynx t. torquilla*).

Very marked decrease throughout its British range.

LONG-EARED OWL (*Asio o. otus*).

Has decreased in parts of England, especially the Midlands probably through human destruction, and increased in many parts of Scotland with spread of plantations.

SHORT-EARED OWL (*Asio f. flammeus*).

Marked fluctuations, correlated with numbers of voles. In 20th century a very small increase in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and in southern Pennines.

BRITISH TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco sylvatica*).

Decrease in 19th century due to human persecution, and increase in 20th century, particularly noted in southern Scotland, correlated with decline in persecution.

WHITE-BREASTED BARN-OWL (*Tyto a. alba*).

Marked and widespread decrease, due to human persecution. In 20th century perhaps holding its own in most districts, and increasing in parts of southern Scotland, but has not recovered to the same extent as other owls.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco p. peregrinus*).

Marked and widespread decrease, extinct in many counties, due to human persecution. Less marked decline in 20th century and probably holding its own by 1939.

HOBBY (*Falco s. subbuteo*).

Decrease in 19th century due to collectors and gamekeepers, but doubtful if ever abundant. Perhaps now holding its own.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius aesalon*).

Widespread decrease due to human persecution, but in some areas now probably holding its own or increasing where land no longer preserved for game.

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila ch. chrysaëtus*).

In 19th century marked and widespread decrease, becoming extinct in Ireland and some Scottish counties, due to human persecution. Local increases in 20th century due to protection.

COMMON BUZZARD (*Buteo b. buteo*).

Huge decrease in 19th century and extinct over much of Britain, due to human persecution. Since 1914 beginning to recover markedly, especially in west of England and Wales.

MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus æ. æruginosus*).

Huge and widespread decrease, in nearly all counties now extinct.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*).

Although sometimes stated to have greatly decreased, there is no real evidence that this species was ever much commoner than it is at the present time.

HEN-HARRIER (*Circus c. cyaneus*).

Huge and widespread decrease, becoming extinct almost everywhere, due to human persecution. Remnant in Orkney, etc. somewhat increasing, thanks to protection.

SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter n. nisus*).

Though undoubtedly decreased through persecution, it is still not uncommon.

KITE (*Milvus m. milvus*).

Huge and widespread decrease; now extinct in most of Britain. Due to human persecution and decrease of carrion.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus albicilla*).

Widespread decrease and now extinct, due to human persecution  
HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis a. apivorus*).

Decrease due to human persecution. Formerly rare but regular, now only occasional breeder.

OSPREY (*Pandion h. haliaetus*).

Widespread decrease due to human persecution, and now extinct.

BITTERN (*Botaurus s. stellaris*).

Huge and widespread decrease due to drainage of swamps and human persecution. Became extinct in Scotland about end of 18th century, and in Ireland and most parts of England by middle of 19th century. In second half of 19th century occasionally nested in Norfolk Broads and early in 20th century re-established itself there. In recent years has also bred in other parts of Norfolk, in Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Hampshire and perhaps elsewhere.

WHOOPEE SWAN (*Cygnus cygnus*).

Became extinct in Orkney in 18th century. Colonized and slightly increasing in N. Scotland in 20th century.

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*).

Spreading and increasing in Scotland and in Ireland. The view that all the breeding stock were originally introduced is now considered doubtful; probably indigenous at least in East Anglia.

GREY LAG-GOOSE (*Anser a. anser*).

Extinct in England and Ireland in 18th century and decreasing in Scotland in 19th century, due to human persecution.

SHELD-DUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*).

Increasing throughout Britain.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*).

Colonized and increasing in Scotland. Increasing in East Anglia from stock originally introduced. Has also nested in N. Ireland since 1933.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*).

Small but definite increase in southern England.

WIGEON (*Anas penelope*).

Very marked increase Scotland and N. England, and has nested in recent years sporadically in N. Wales and N. Ireland, and in Kent and Essex

PINTAIL (*Anas a. acuta*).

Colonization and marked increase in Scotland, also in Ireland, and has bred sporadically in England in 20th century.

SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*).

Huge increase and spread throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. Perhaps an earlier decrease, as recorded breeding in Kent till 1840.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*).

Marked increase and spread throughout England, Scotland and Ireland, still continuing.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*).

Huge increase and spread throughout British Isles.

COMMON EIDER (*Somateria m. mollissima*).

Very marked increase and spread. Colonized N. Ireland in 20th century.

COMMON SCOTER (*Melanitta n. nigra*).

Colonized and increasing in N. Scotland and N.W. Ireland.

GOOSANDER (*Mergus m. merganser*).

Colonized and markedly increasing in Scotland.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*).

Very marked increase in Scotland and in Ireland, where spread to Wexford in 20th century.

For the increase of the duck, see Baxter, E.V., and Rintoul, L. J. (1922), "Some Scottish Breeding Duck, their arrival and dispersal," and Berry, J. (1939), "The Status and Distribution of Wild Geese and Wild Duck in Scotland," International Wild-fowl Enquiry II.

GANNET (*Sula bassana*).

Somewhat increasing, helped by protection and reduction in former slaughter for food.

MANX SHEARWATER (*Puffinus p. puffinus*).

Many colonies reduced or extinct, due to human destruction or introduced rats, but others, e.g., Skokholm, now protected and flourishing.

FULMAR PETREL (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*).

Huge increase and spread; see Fisher, J. and Waterston, G. (1941), *Journ. Animal Ecol.*, Vol. 10, pp. 204-272.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps c. cristatus*).

Marked decrease, extinct in many counties, in 19th century, due to human destruction; marked increase in latter part of 19th century, until present time, certainly greatly assisted by protection, if this was not the initiating cause. See Harrison, T. H. and Hollom, P. A. D. (1932), *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxvi, pp. 105-113.

SLAVONIAN GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*).

Recently colonized, and somewhat increasing N. Scotland.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps n. nigricollis*).

Small but steady increase in England and Scotland, and probably much increased in Ireland, but may have been previously overlooked.

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

Somewhat decreased through human persecution.

RED-THROATED DIVER (*Colymbus stellatus*).

Decreased in 19th century through human persecution, somewhat increasing in recent years.

WOOD-PIGEON (*Columba p. palumbus*).

Very great increase during 19th century, especially in Scotland, due to increase of woodland, destruction of natural enemies by game preservers and increased growth of green crops providing food in winter. Some decrease in Scotland in 20th century. See Alexander, W. B. (1940), *Journ. Roy. Agric. Soc.*, 100, part III.

STOCK-DOVE (*Columba aenas*).

At beginning of 19th century, confined to S. and E. England.

Increased and spread rapidly and by end of century had colonized S.W. England, Wales, N. England, S. and E. Scotland, N.E. Ireland and Isle of Man. Has continued to increase and spread to N. Scotland and S. and W. Ireland, though not yet established on W. coast of Scotland north of Argyll, nor in Kerry. Main cause doubtful, but has probably benefited by destruction of birds-of-prey and much more general cultivation of green crops in winter. ROCK-DOVE (*Columba l. livia*).

Marked decrease generally, especially in southern parts of range, where now extinct in many places. Main cause of decrease unknown, and particularly curious in view of marked increase of other doves.

TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia t. turtur*).

At beginning of 19th century confined to southern, eastern and midland England, but rapidly increased and extended its range to Wales, Cheshire and Yorkshire before 1865. Has continued to increase and has nested occasionally in the northern counties of England and once or twice in eastern Ireland, but has not greatly extended its range in last fifty years.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa l. limosa*).

Huge decrease and eventual extinction before middle of 19th century, due mainly to drainage of fens and increasing accessibility of breeding haunts. Has bred four times 1937-1942, so possibly about to become re-established.

COMMON CURLEW (*Numenius a. arquata*).

Marked increase in northern isles of Scotland, Inner Hebrides and many parts of England in 20th century. In parts of N. and W. England, where breeding was formerly almost confined to high ground, now breeds regularly in river valleys and on low moors. Has colonized Severn Valley in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire and heaths in Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex and has bred sporadically in Oxfordshire and W. Norfolk. Cause unknown.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius p. phaeopus*).

Decreasing markedly. Cause unknown.

WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*).

At beginning of 19th century confined to certain districts of England, but in first half of century rapidly increased and colonized many parts of Scotland and considerable areas in N. and S.E. Ireland. In latter half of century colonized Wales, the Lake District, W. Scotland and W. and S.W. Ireland. In 20th century colonized Isle of Man and continued to increase in Scotland and N. of England, but decreased in southern England, Ireland and extreme N. of Scotland. Main cause of increase probably the cessation of shooting in breeding season and protection of coverts in interest of pheasants. Recent decrease in Ireland due to break-up of estates and lack of protection.

COMMON SNIPE (*Capella g. gallinago*).

Decrease at beginning of 19th century due to drainage, but marked increase in southern England about end of that century

and beginning of 20th, when it colonized a large area in the South Midlands as well as many districts in southern counties where breeding was previously unknown.

RED-NECKED PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus lobatus*).

Big decrease in 19th century almost entirely due to collectors. Partial revival in 20th century due to protection ; and colonization of N.W. Ireland.

SOUTHERN DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina schinzii*).

Possibly decreasing, but evidence hard to assess.

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*).

Became extinct before middle of 19th century due to drainage of fens and extensive taking for food. Has bred sporadically since. BRITISH REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus britannica*).

Great decrease in England at beginning of 19th century followed by steady increase, beginning about 1865. There is no evidence of any change in numbers or distribution in Ireland or northern and western Scotland, but in southern Scotland, England and Wales the species spread west and south during the sixty years, 1865-1925, till every county but Pembroke and Cornwall had been colonized. Cause of increase unknown. See Thomas, J. F., *Brit. Birds* (1942), Vol. xxxvi, p. 5.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).

Increased in central Scotland in latter half of 19th century. Sporadic breeding in southern Scotland in 20th century possibly indicates extension of range.

KENTISH PLOVER (*Leucopoliis a. alexandrinus*).

Always local, decreased steadily and now almost extinct. Important causes have been the commercial development of seaside resorts, and egg-collectors.

SOUTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER (*Pluvialis a. apricaria*).

Decreasing both in Scotland and in Ireland. Cause unknown.

DOTTEREL (*Eudromias morinellus*).

Widespread decrease, attributable to former extensive shooting of birds on migration and to collectors.

LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*).

Widespread decrease due to decrease in waste-land and extensive taking of eggs. Marked recovery since the passing of the Lapwing Bill in 1926.

AVOCET (*Recurvirostra avosetta*).

Extinct before middle of 19th century due to taking of eggs for food, drainage of fens, etc. Bred Ireland, 1938.

BRITISH OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hæmatopus ostralegus occidentalis*).

Marked decrease in eastern and southern England in 19th century probably due to taking of eggs. Partial recovery in 20th century in Norfolk and a few pairs now breeding in old haunts in Suffolk, Kent, Sussex and Hampshire. Possibly increasing in northern Scotland and N.W. England.

(To be continued).

## SOME NOTES ON THE SONG OF THE WREN

BY

EDWARD A. ARMSTRONG.

THE normal song of the Wren (*Troglodytes t. troglodytes*) is a territorial, advertising song of the single phrase type as distinct from the continuous utterance type of song, but it is subject to interesting modifications as regards its expression and function. The normal song-phrase is quite distinctive and clear-cut, but it may be abbreviated to two or three notes, or prolonged so that it resembles two or more songs run into one another. The prolonged song is the outcome of special excitement and may be heard during territorial competition or when the male is preoccupied with a female. The normal phrase usually lasts about five seconds and the average interval between songs is five-six seconds; thus there are commonly five-six songs per minute when the male is in full and regular utterance. The female as a rule is very quiet and unobtrusive, but some individuals occasionally sing. There is no doubt that Kluijver *et al.* (*Limosa*, Vol. xiii, pp. 1-51) are mistaken in saying that females never sing.

In spring the males in occupation of territories come into full song and may be heard at all hours of the day between their rising and roosting, though the most regular series of songs is commonly uttered in the morning. Cocks usually sing very soon after flying out of the roost, sometimes immediately on reaching their first perch, and go off through the territory singing every now and then. They may have a regular singing station consisting of certain tall bushes or trees, to which they make their way and sing regularly for some time. Singing takes priority over feeding with Wrens as with many other song birds in spring.

This early song is in relationship to the songs of males in adjoining territories and is directed against them, though the possibility should not be excluded that singing against each other may give Wrens social stimulation or satisfaction. The birds respond to each other and the result often is antiphonal singing for longer or shorter periods. This antiphonal singing may be heard at any time of the Wren's day. G. Marples (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxii, pp. 397-398) records this type of song, but it is much commoner than his account would suggest. The listener to a long sequence of counter-singing may notice one bird superimpose his song on the phrases of the other, and both birds may continue to sing thus for some time, but none the less there are indications that this antiphonal singing is deliberate. Two birds starting their morning song will usually begin in this fashion and I have noticed birds making a pause and getting into alternation again after the songs had run together. It would seem that the duration of the song-phrase and length of interval are adapted to antiphonal singing. If it were not for this system the relative loudness of the song and possibly a measure of deafness during utterance would prevent the birds from hearing

each other readily. In the domestic cock we have another exemplar of the antiphonal advertising song. One of these birds usually waits some seconds before answering a rival, but the sequence is regular. It is, of course, a commonplace that some birds listen to and answer each other when engaged in advertising song, but the question of the adaptation of the song-type to counter-singing deserves further investigation.

The song may be uttered from almost on the ground to a height of 35 feet or more on a building, or 40 feet, or even higher, in a tree. Early morning song may for a time be sung from a conspicuous perch on the topmost twigs of a tree, and when in vigorous counter-song there is a tendency for the bird to sing from fairly high perches. Now and then a fragment of song is heard while the Wren is in flight or while moving rapidly from perch to perch up a tree-trunk.

Abbreviation of the song-phrase may take place in various circumstances. Sometimes when Wrens are counter-singing one or both may cut short the song. Abbreviated song occurs in territory disputes. When I placed a mirror where a Wren was wont to alight every evening near its roost the bird sang five times a congested, shortened song, one strophe being particularly brief. In ordinary circumstances a Wren does not sing immediately outside the roost.

A cock Wren in the pairing phase or interested in a female frequently not only abbreviates his song, but modulates it to a sub-song. As the Wren may have several females and may leave a female once she is established at one of the nests he has built I use "pairing phase" here as describing the period during which the male accompanies the female about the neighbourhood of the nest and endeavours to copulate with her. Males vary considerably in regard to the domestic responsibilities they undertake. I have known them help to feed the young in the nest and sing loudly during the intervals of feeding, but usually cock Wrens do not tend the young while in the nest.

The sub-song is a sweet, simplified, quieter version of the normal song. A bird accompanying a female may sing loudly and again very soon afterwards sing the soft song; he may begin his song vigorously and moderate it to a whisper-song. It may be no more than a few tiny notes or may reproduce in sweeter and softer tone a good deal of the usual song. It is usually sung relatively close to the ground and when the female is not far away, but may be heard occasionally at other times, even during territory disputes.

The Wren sings the sub-song and displays on a twig in front of, and near to the entrance of, each nest he builds, and the song appears to play a part in indicating the location of the nest to the female and in stimulating her to enter and busy herself in lining it with feathers. I have seen him singing thus with his beak full of moss, while the female investigated the inside of the nest. He often sings close at hand or overhead while she takes in feathers.

A Wren with which I experimented sang a short, thin, stifled song before and after copulation with a mount. I have noticed attempts at copulation preceded, not by this type of song, but by fragments of the sweet, warbled sub-song as well as by occasional particularly loud and long songs. One bird watching a female intently for some minutes leaned over a branch singing a squeaky, broken song.

It has been stated that fighting Wrens sing "between the rounds," but I have not noticed this, although I have seen two birds with claws interlocked fall to the ground in a combative frenzy. Excitement may facilitate or stimulate song. On February 1st, 1944, I was fixing a nesting-box close to the place where a Wren regularly came to roost; when he approached along a neighbouring hedge, finding that he could not go into his usual roosting place because of my presence he sang loudly. I had noted very little song from this Wren at this date. Once when I put my finger into a nest the bird flew out, knocking against my hand; but a few moments later he was singing his sub-song with draggling wings close above the female. When I released a Wren after ringing him he sang as he flew away.

The Wren's song is an interesting example of a song which can be modified to serve various functions. Study of it suggests the possibility that the psychological significance and function in the breeding cycle of some bird's songs may be more varied than is at present generally realized.

I hope in due course to be able to contribute further notes on other aspects of the Wren's life and would welcome data from other observers.

## OBITUARY.

BERTRAM LLOYD (1881-1944)

THE death of Bertram Lloyd, on June 9th, 1944, at the age of sixty-three deprives us of a familiar and distinguished figure in the world of Natural History. He was one of our best observers and also one of those none too common personalities that are ready to shoulder the less exciting but very necessary part of Natural History work—committees, recording, editing, propaganda—and are capable of doing so wholeheartedly, competently and with initiative. His place will be difficult to fill.

The following brief account will show the wide range of his activities.

He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School and then spent two years in Germany, where he acquired his taste for German classical literature and music. He was fluent in the German language and translated many masterpieces of poetry and drama. For a considerable number of years he worked with his father in an insurance office. This, however, was only drudgery to him, his real interests lying in wholly other directions.

Lloyd was a keen humanitarian from his earliest years, and was a member of the original Humanitarian League, founded by Henry S. Salt and others. In 1932, he was instrumental in founding the National Society for the Abolition of Cruel Sports, of which he was the devoted and untiring Honorary Secretary up till the end of his life.

To readers of *British Birds* he will be best known as a keen field naturalist. His main interest lay in close observation of bird-life and in noting any special features and aberrations of bird-song, for which he had a particularly fine ear. He contributed regularly to *British Birds* from 1920 onwards, his last communication being a note on "Herring-Gulls feeding independent young." For several years he made a close study of the birds of the island of Texel (Holland).

From 1935 until his death he was the Editor of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society's *Transactions*, to which he contributed frequent articles and short notes, being also the Society's Recorder for Mammals, Reptiles and Batrachians. From 1939-1941 inclusive he was responsible for the annual *Report on the Birds observed in Hertfordshire* published in the above-named journal, and for many years past he devoted every available opportunity to the study of British Dragonflies, contributing various papers on this subject.

Lloyd was a member of the B.O.U., a Fellow of the Linnean Society, and on June 7th, 1944, two days before his death, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society.

He was fortunate in his wife, who shared all his activities and lightened his burden. Space is left only to add that his essentially kindly nature endeared him to all who were privileged to enjoy his friendship.

F. B. KIRKMAN.

## NOTES.

INTERBREEDING OF CARRION AND HOODED CROWS  
IN CO. DUBLIN.

As already reported in *Brit. Birds* (*antea*, Vols. xxxiii, p. 194, xxxv, p. 58, xxxvi, p. 143), a female Carrion Crow (*Corvus c. corone*) and a male Hooded Crow (*Corvus c. cornix*) interbred in a wood in south Co. Dublin in 1939, 1940, 1941 and 1942.

In 1943 they mated for the fifth time and built a nest in a Scots pine which was so slender that it could not be climbed. No young left the nest and it is not known whether the young ever hatched out. It was thought at the time that the cause of the failure was the very heavy fall of snow which occurred on May 10th. At any rate after May 10th the Crow was not seen at the nest.

In 1944 they interbred for the sixth successive year, building a new nest in the same wood. On May 6th young were heard in the nest. On May 9th the Carrion Crow was put off the nest, but the young were silent. Some days later it was noticed that the nest was abandoned. On May 23rd, when the tree was climbed, the nest was empty. It was deep and clean, not flattened and dirty as it would be if a family were reared in it. As the tree had certainly not been previously climbed by man this season, the young must have been taken by some animal or bird of prey. P. G. KENNEDY.

## MALE CIRL BUNTING INCUBATING.

It is stated in *The Handbook* that incubation, in the case of the Cirle Bunting (*Emberiza c. cirrus*), is carried out by the hen only.

During the last fortnight in May, 1944, I watched a nest of this species in the Plymouth district, and on every occasion the cock bird was on the nest. The bird incubated the eggs, and later brooded the four young. I am very familiar with the species, as it is common here.

It should be added that I saw the female on the nest before the full clutch was completed, but she was not seen again in spite of frequent visits and it is probable that she came to grief, perhaps as a result of the activities of a pair of Kestrels which nested in an adjoining disused quarry. BRIAN TRUSCOTT.

## TREE-CREEPER CLIMBING A MAN.

THE following incident, I think, well exemplifies the overwhelming and inborn instinct in the Tree-Creeper (*Certhia familiaris britannica*) to climb up anything rather than remain on the ground.

On May 30th, 1944, half an hour after a brood had left their nest in my garden, I was watching one of the fledglings clinging to the trunk of a tree when it spotted a parent and attempted to fly to it. But it missed its mark and fell on the ground about six feet from an old pine.

I at once walked up to it to get a close-up view, but as soon as I stood perfectly still it leapt on to a turn-up of my trousers and, with ease and vigour, climbed my clothes until it reached my shoulder, all the time uttering shrill squeaks. Apparently seeing that it could

go no higher, it fluttered to the base of the pine and forthwith climbed up it until it reached a low, dead branch along which it crept upside down almost to the tip—a distance of ten feet. From there it flew to a nearby tree on which it very quickly climbed to a height of over twenty feet.

I wonder if any other field observer can claim the distinction and privilege of having been climbed by a Tree-Creeper! B. H. RYVES.

#### NESTLING WOOD-WARBLERS KILLED BY SLUG.

ON June 6th, 1944, I found the nest of a pair of Wood-Warblers (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) containing five newly-hatched young. Within the nest was also a very large, brown specimen of the slug *Arion ater* engaged in feeding on one of the nestlings. The latter was still alive, but two others, having been similarly attacked, were quite dead. In each case the surface tissues of the head and neck had been eaten, death ensuing from this and loss of blood. The remaining two nestlings were unharmed, but obviously feeble with cold.

I concealed myself near the nest and watched the parents, who were most anxious to return. One of them dropped to the nest several times, but made no attempt to brood the young or to interfere with the slug in any way. The birds' whole behaviour indicated uncertainty and distress.

A medium-sized specimen of *Arion subfuscus* was also present in the nest, but seemed not to be concerned in the attack.

I may add that I removed both slugs and that the other two nestlings were reared safely. CHRISTOPHER M. SWAINE.

#### BLACKCAP WINTERING IN E. ROSS-SHIRE.

THIS bird was first observed on January 7th, 1943, by the side of the railway near Avoch, feeding on withered elderberries, and was kept under view for 20 minutes, until it took shelter under a bank of old bracken fronds. It was then positively identified as a cock Blackcap (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*). Seen on several days later, it was found only to come out on mild days and to spend most of its time under cover. It was watched for about half an hour on January 15th. On February 1st it was found that the bird's hiding place had been torn up by dogs hunting for rabbits, and the Blackcap had disappeared.

Then on April 7th, some weeks earlier than the normal arrival time of spring migrants of the species, the Blackcap's song was heard from an old garden nearly half a mile away. On the morning of April 8th, watch was kept on the place, and it was found that there was a pair of Blackcaps. Thereafter events proceeded normally, and young birds were seen not far from the place in July.

While it cannot be certain that the cock Blackcaps of January 7th and April 7th were one and the same bird, the species is so rare in this locality that the identity is very probable.

JOHN LEES AND WILLIAM HENDERSON.

[We are not aware of a January record for Scotland, though there are two or three for December.—EDS.].

## GREEN WOODPECKER DRUMMING.

ON April 6th, 1944, at about 8.45 a.m., I heard two woodpeckers drumming about 100 yards apart from each other. I located one in a tree about 250 to 300 yards away (a still morning) and went to look. The bird was a Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis pluvius*). The rate of drumming was ten to twelve taps in about a second and a half. I saw the bird drum three times in one spot, and it then began to climb the tree and drummed again several times, in two different places. It called twice or three times, in between drummings. There was no noticeable difference in the sound of the drummings in the three different spots as I was watching, but when I first heard the bird, at a distance, one drumming sounded considerably louder than others. By the time I had finished watching, the other bird had stopped drumming. At about 11.0 a.m. I heard drumming again in another tree about 100 yards off, and as I went up to the tree a Green Woodpecker flew out, but I did not see it drum.

B. H. BOURDILLON.

[For other recorded cases, see *antea*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 37-39.—EDS.]

## EARLY VOCAL ACTIVITY AND EGG DEPOSITION BY FEMALE CUCKOOS DURING THE SPRING OF 1944.

ON April 16th, 1944, just after 8 p.m. (D.B.S.T.), I observed three male and three female Cuckoos (*Cuculus c. canorus*) flying in and out of several small oak trees bordering a pasture, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent; sex identification was proved by the distinctive call notes of the sexes. During over thirty minutes observation of the birds, the inter-calling between the sexes was incessant; the females, however, were disinclined to move far from the oaks, whereas the males flew low and swiftly around a wider radius of the trees. Coition was not observed. Similar behaviour to the above at exactly the same period of day and in the same habitat, was repeated on the two subsequent evenings.

In another locality over three miles distant two nestling Cuckoos were found in an advanced state in nests of the Hedge-Sparrow (*Prunella m. occidentalis*) on May 26th, and both were seen fledged and being fed by the foster parents on June 3rd. It is likely that the eggs from which they hatched were laid about April 26th and 28th respectively, possibly by the same hen, as the distance between the two nests was under 50 yards.

The details mentioned of vocal activity and egg deposition on the part of the female Cuckoo would appear to be unusually early in the year. E. P. Chance (*The Truth about the Cuckoo*, p. 168) remarks on April 23rd being a very early date on which to hear insistent calls and rapid answers on the part of male and female Cuckoos.

P. A. ADOLPH:

## EARLY HATCHING OF GOLDEN EAGLE.

A FRIEND of mine visited the eyrie of a Golden Eagle (*Aquila ch. chrysaetus*) on April 15th, 1944, and saw in it one newly hatched

eaglet. This seems to be a very early date, although this particular Eagle is an earlier nester than most. SETON GORDON.

### OSPREYS IN HERTFORDSHIRE AND SURREY.

ON May 14th, 1944, an Osprey (*Pandion h. haliaetus*) was watched at Startopsend and Wilstone Reservoirs, Tring.

Twice it was seen to hover kestrel-fashion over the water, and later was found standing on the dried mud holding the remains of a fish under its feet, and tearing at it with its beak. It called three or four times. Two Crows flapped down, and pranced around the Osprey, their wings half opened and legs straddled, bold but uneasy, and ready to retreat. The Osprey rose from the mud, clutching the fish in both talons, and went out of sight. Presently, it returned and spent some time in sailing. Altogether it was under observation for about an hour.

It is understood that the bird was last seen on the 15th, after a stay of about four days. C. B. ASHBY.

ON the afternoon of May 15th, 1944, at Hedgecourt Lake, Felbridge, near East Grinstead, I had an excellent view of an Osprey (*Pandion h. haliaetus*) which was circling and hovering over the water for 25 minutes. Several times the bird came within 60 feet of my position and with binoculars I could clearly see the white and dark head markings and whitish underparts. The bird finally plunged into the water, captured a fish and disappeared with its prey over the trees. F. M. GURTEEN.

### SPOONBILL IN SOMERSET.

THE following is a description given to me of a bird seen on the shore near Minehead, West Somerset, about the second week in May, 1944 : "A tall bird like a Stork (Heron). Plumage white all over, with a topknot. Long dark flat bill like a duck. Long black legs. When feeding worked its bill from side to side. Did not push it into the mud."

This description was given without any prompting, and it seems to me the bird cannot possibly have been anything else but a Spoonbill (*Platalea l. leucorodia*). The observer, who is a Coast Watcher, knows little about birds, but knowing I was interested he took particular notice of it. It was feeding in a shallow pool on the shore some 40 to 50 yards in front of his hut, and he was able to study it through a good pair of binoculars. He failed to note the actual date in May, but the time was about 8 p.m.

As there is no Somerset record the above may be of interest.

A. V. CORNISH.

### SHOVELER NESTING IN AYRSHIRE.

I NOTE from *The Handbook* that the Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) has not been so far reported as nesting in Ayrshire. On May 14th, 1944, I flushed a duck of this species from a rushy field, but had not sufficient time to search for a nest. I returned to the place a week

later and found the remains of the duck, which had evidently been very recently killed by a Fox. It had been taken on the nest which was only a yard away from the carcass. There were no eggs in the nest, but I found one which had probably rolled under a clump of grass when the duck was seized by the Fox. I blew this egg after considerable difficulty, as it contained a well developed young bird. Shovelers are not uncommon here in the spring and I suspect they have nested in recent years.

J. A. ANDERSON.

#### CURLEW NESTING IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

MR. Frank Wycherley, of Weekley, near Kettering, has informed me that in May, 1942, he found a nest of Curlew (*Numenius a. arquata*) containing four eggs in the water-meadows by the side of the River Nene, between Barnwell and Oundle. The nest was in tussocky grass (*Aira cæspitosa*) not far from the river. He also told me that a pair of birds were seen near the same site this year (1944) and suggested that it would be well worth while to locate a possible nest.

The birds were duly seen near the site this May, but the nest was not located until the bird was observed going to it from a viewpoint on the opposite bank of the river. The nest contained four eggs and was situated about 80 yards from the side of the river in an area which had previously been rough grass, but had been ploughed up to take a rather indifferent-looking crop. Most unfortunately on the next visit the nest was found completely robbed, as was also a neighbouring Lapwing's nest.

It is not unusual to see occasional Curlews along the river valley during February, but it appears likely that these observations are the first evidence of their nesting in the county.

I. HEPBURN.

#### AN OVERLOOKED OCCURRENCE OF BLACK-WINGED STILT IN CORNWALL.

A SHORT while ago I was informed of the existence in a farm labourer's cottage near Tamar Lake in N. Cornwall of a stuffed specimen of a Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus h. himantopus*). I identified the bird and found that it had been picked up dead on the Cornish side of the lake in 1917. There was a second bird present at the same time, which was not seen again. This is, I believe, the first and only record for the county.

A. C. LEACH

#### ICELAND GULL IN DUBLIN.

FROM May 6th to May 13th, 1944, an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*), frequented the ornamental pond in Stephen's Green, Dublin. It came daily to the pond at about 9.30 a.m. and left at about 5.30 p.m. During the day it associated with the other gulls, which were mostly Herring-Gulls with an occasional Lesser Black-backed Gull, and alternated between resting on the water and on the island in the pond.

The plumage of this bird was uniform throughout, almost pure white, with perhaps a tinge of cream which was not always noticeable. There were no mottlings of any kind and no sign of ash-grey on the wings. The bill had a conspicuous black tip; the legs and feet were flesh-coloured and the eyes *looked* black. It was evidently a bird in the white phase of the second winter plumage.

As E. M. Nicholson noticed in Greenland, the wing-tips at rest did not cross, but met in a narrow V. This, it seemed to me, gave the bird a neat appearance and, by contrast, made the Herring-Gulls beside it look untidy. In flight one wing showed the gap of a missing feather, such as is often seen in moulting birds.

While the bird was on the island preening itself, it was very aggressive and would not tolerate another gull near it. When people fed the gulls on the water, as they do daily, the Iceland Gull came but remained outside the others, some five or six yards from the bank, and tried to pick up any scraps it could. I fed it on several occasions, always throwing the food near it. Soon it learned to catch the scraps before they touched the water like the other birds, and it gradually came nearer, but it never became quite so tame as the Herring-Gulls. While feeding it viciously drove away the immature gulls, but yielded to the mature birds, usually with a loud protest in the form of a petulant call much like a Herring Gull's, but thinner in volume and more shrill.

Mr. G. R. Humphreys tells me that on February 29th, 1944, he saw a similar, white-plumaged Iceland Gull on a quarry pond at Ardee, Co. Louth, eight miles from the coast. He watched the Stephen's Green bird on several occasions and he believes it to be the same bird which he saw in Co. Louth more than two months previously.

P. G. KENNEDY.

EARLY NESTING OF SUMMER MIGRANTS IN KENT.—Mr. P. A. Adolph sends us the following records for 1944 from the Tunbridge Wells district:—

WILLOW-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*).—Young observed leaving nest on May 26th.

WOOD-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).—Nest completed, but without eggs, May 6th; completed clutch of six on May 12th.

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*).—Complete clutch of five, April 25th.

NIGHTINGALE (*Luscinia m. megarhyncha*).—Young about seven days old in nest, May 24th; nest vacant on June 1st.

HOUSE-SPARROW FEEDING YOUNG BLUE TITS.—Mr. B. R. V. Toop informs us of a case at Sutton, Surrey, of a House-Sparrow (*Passer d. domesticus*) which fed a brood of young Blue Tits (*Parus cæruleus obscurus*) in a nesting-box. The bird had great difficulty in clinging on to the box, but went persistently to and fro, carrying bread! When the young fledged, it was seen still chasing them with food, the parents, which continued to feed normally, apparently not objecting.

5-SEP-1944  
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SWALLOW IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN WINTER.—Miss E. P. Leach sends us particulars of a Swallow (*Hirundo r. rustica*) which was seen and clearly identified by Commander Francis Cadogan, R.N., on the River Coln, near Quenington, Glos. on January 31st, 1944.

LATE DRUMMING OF GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.—Supplementing previous notes on this subject (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 150, 178, 218), the Rev. John Lees informs us that he heard a Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*) drumming at Avoch, East Ross-shire, on October 10th, 1942, and subsequently saw the bird.

YOUNG TAWNY OWL LEAVING NEST AT EARLY AGE.—Mr. L. G. Weller informs us that when visiting a nest of Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco sylvatica*) in a pollard oak at Ewhurst, Surrey, in which only two eggs hatched, he found the older nestling gone from the nest when it was 27 days old. Two days later he noticed the missing nestling sitting on a branch about 10ft. above the nest. It was difficult to understand how it reached the perch as there were very few branches. At his next visit the young bird had gone higher and after a week had almost reached the top of the tree—about 60 ft.—where it perched on quite small branches and must have been difficult for the parents to feed. All this time the second young bird remained in the nest.

GOOSANDER BREEDING IN DUMFRIESSHIRE.—Mr. O. J. Pullen has sent us a sample of down and feathers from a nest of Goosander (*Mergus m. merganser*) in a hollow ash tree, from which a brood was hatched successfully in 1944 in a wood up the valley of the Enterkin burn in Nithsdale, in other parts of which breeding was recorded in 1936 (*antea*, Vol. xxx, p. 87) and 1942 (Vol. xxxvi, p. 59). Mr. Pullen also informs us that he received a dead duckling found in the waters of the Shinnel burn, Tynron, which he is certain, from the position of the nostril, was a young Goosander. Mr. Pullen observes that the species is now breeding up three of the tributary burns of the River Nith, Enterkin, Scaur, and Shinnel, and is still nesting up the Water of Ae, on a tributary of which the first nest was found in 1936.

TURTLE-DOVES USING BLACKBIRD'S NEST.—Mr. L. G. Weller informs us, under date June 6, 1944, that a pair of Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia t. turtur*) at Ewhurst, Surrey, have utilized a Blackbird's nest in an evergreen about 10 ft. high without making any additions whatever. The birds had young at the date mentioned.

MOORHEN CHASING STOAT IN DEFENCE OF YOUNG.—Col. R. Sparrow informs us that on May 9th, 1944, on the bank of the River Wye at Symonds Yat, Glos., he saw a male Moorhen (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*) in charge of a brood of seven young pursue and drive away a Stoat. The bird made a loud clucking noise and half spread its wings and chased the Stoat for 50 yards up the bank.

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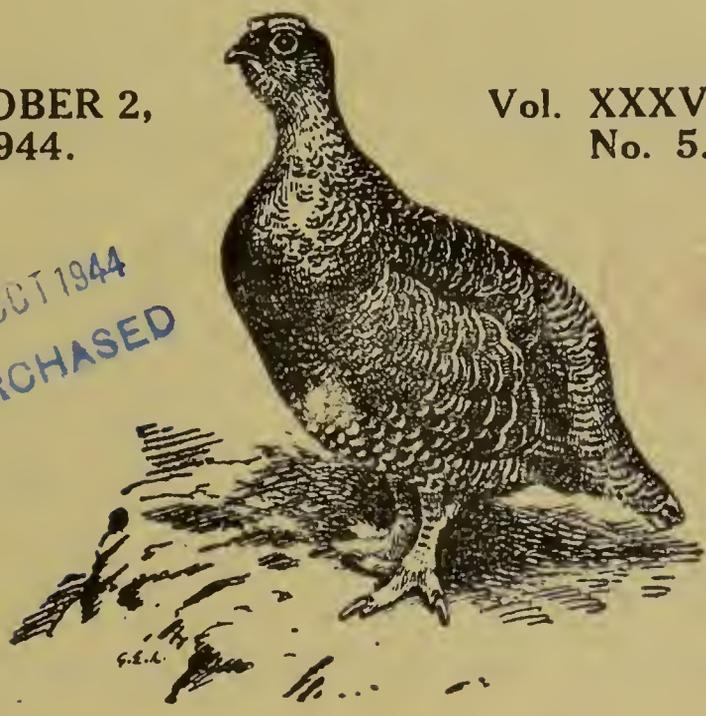
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# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

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## CHANGES IN STATUS AMONG BRITISH BREEDING BIRDS

BY

W. B. ALEXANDER AND DAVID LACK.

(Concluded from page 69.)

STONE-CURLEW (*Burhinus æ. ædicnemus*).

In second half of 19th century became extinct in Cotswolds (Gloucestershire and N.W. Oxfordshire) and in E. Midlands (Leicestershire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire). Has decreased elsewhere (almost extinct in Yorkshire) due to disappearance of breeding haunts through increased cultivation and afforestation.

GREAT BUSTARD (*Otis t. tarda*).

Extinct before middle of 19th century through enclosing of waste-land and human destruction.

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias n. niger*).

Extinct before middle of 19th century through drainage of breeding haunts and extensive taking of eggs.

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna s. sandvicensis*).

Always local. Decrease in 19th century through taking of eggs, etc. Local marked increase in 20th century where breeding grounds protected.

ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna d. dougallii*).

Always local, but great decrease in first half of 19th century, when ceased to breed in Ireland, Clyde area and Scilly Isles. Marked increase in 20th century, when recolonized Ireland, where over a dozen colonies now established.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna h. hirundo*).

Local decreases, particularly through human disturbance, in 19th century, and local increases where protected in 20th century.

LITTLE TERN (*Sterna a. albifrons*).

Decreasing, especially where bungalows occupy former breeding grounds.

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

Great decrease during 19th century, but widespread increase began about the end of the century and has continued. See Hollom, P. A. D. (1940), *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxiii, p. 202.

COMMON GULL (*Larus c. canus*).

Very marked increase in Scotland and in Ireland in 19th century still continuing. In 20th century extended its range to N.E. Ireland (Antrim and Down), bred sporadically in N. England (Cumberland and Northumberland) and established small colony near Dungeness (Kent and Sussex).

HERRING-GULL (*Larus a. argentatus*).

Has increased in Scotland and probably elsewhere, but always abundant.

BRITISH LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus graellsii*).

Increasing in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

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

Very marked and widespread increase since about 1880. Before that was decreasing. See Harrisson, T. H. and Hurrell, H. G., *Proc. Zool. Soc., Lond.*, B, 1933, pp. 191-209; also Oldham, C., (1933), *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxvii, pp. 38-41.

KITTIWAKE (*Rissa t. tridactyla*).

Has increased in Scotland during 20th century.

GREAT SKUA (*Stercorarius s. skua*).

Marked decrease till near end of 19th century due to human destruction, marked increase in 20th century due to protection, and extending range south.

ARCTIC SKUA (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).

Somewhat decreased in 19th century, due to human disturbance; somewhat increased in 20th century where protected.

BRITISH RAZORBILL (*Alca torda britannica*).

Ceased nesting on cliffs of Sussex about 1878 owing to falls of rock.

GREAT AUK (*Alca impennis*).

Formerly bred regularly on St. Kilda, and probably one pair for a few years on Papa Westray, Orkney; extinct by early 19th century due to human destruction.

GUILLEMOT (*Uria a. aalge* and *U. a. albionis*).

Ceased nesting on cliffs of Sussex about 1878 (though a few have since twice nested sporadically) and on cliffs of Kent about 1910, owing to falls of rock which destroyed their ledges.

BLACK GUILLEMOT (*Uria g. grylle*).

Widespread decrease and extinct in former parts of range on coasts of Yorkshire, E. Scotland and N. Wales. Cause unknown.

SOUTHERN PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica grabæ*).

Great decrease in some colonies in southern part of range, perhaps due to increase of gulls, especially Great Black-backed Gull. Ceased nesting on cliffs of Kent early in 19th century.

CORN-CRAKE (*Crex crex*).

Very marked and widespread decrease, probably due to changed methods of agriculture. Western Ireland and Scottish islands apparently not much affected as yet. Numbers also vary much with the season.

SPOTTED CRAKE (*Porzana porzana*).

Decreased with drainage of breeding haunts.

MOORHEN (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*).

Marked increase in Scotland and probably increasing generally, but always common.

COOT (*Fulica a. atra*).

Marked increase in Scotland.

BRITISH BLACK GROUSE (*Lyrurus tetriv britannicus*).

Very marked and very widespread decrease, due to human destruction and to disappearance of breeding haunts. Extinct in most of southern portion of former range.

SCOTTISH PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus mutus millaisi*).

Widespread decrease, and extinct in many areas.

COMMON PARTRIDGE (*Perdix p. perdix*).

Great decrease in Ireland, but recovering in Eire as result of special legislation for protection, 1932.

QUAIL (*Coturnix c. coturnix*).

Very marked and widespread decrease, and now extinct in many of former haunts, except sporadically in good years. Attributed to changed methods of agriculture.

*The following species became extinct before the 19th century.*

GOSHAWK (*Accipiter g. gentilis*)

Occasionally bred sporadically in 19th century and apparently regularly in earlier times.

SPOONBILL (*Platalea l. leucorodia*).

COMMON CRANE (*Grus g. grus*).

CAPERCAILLIE (*Tetrao urogallus* ? subsp.)

*The following species, introduced artificially, have greatly increased.*

LITTLE OWL (*Athene noctua vidalii*.)

MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*). (Probably also some native birds).

CANADA-GOOSE (*Branta c. canadensis*).

CAPERCAILLIE (*Tetrao u. urogallus*).

PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*).

RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE (*Alectoris r. rufa*).

*The following species have bred sporadically or exceptionally, but have not become established.*

GOLDEN ORIOLE (*Oriolus o. oriolus*).

BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*).

TAWNY PIPIT (*Anthus c. campestris*).

ICTERINE WARBLER (*Hippolais icterina*).

MELODIOUS WARBLER (*Hippolais polyglotta*), probably.

REDWING (*Turdus musicus* ? subsp.).

BEE-EATER (*Merops apiaster*).

HOOPOE (*Upupa e. epops*).

LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus m. minutus*), probably.

WHITE STORK (*Ciconia c. ciconia*).

GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala c. clangula*).

SCAUP-DUCK (*Aythya m. marila*).

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*).

PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE (*Syrhaptes paradoxus*).

TEMMINCK'S STINT (*Calidris temminckii*).

WOOD-SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*).

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*).

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*).

BAILLON'S CRAKE (*Porzana pusilla intermedia*).

Other species doubtfully.

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#### SUMMARY OF CHANGES.

In conclusion, it may be of interest to tabulate the fluctuations. This cannot be done with complete precision, as some species come

in more than one category, others are of doubtful category, and it is hard to draw the line between a local and a widespread change.

(A) PASSERINE AND NEAR-PASSERINE SPECIES.

*Marked increase*, 17.

Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Starling, Hawfinch, Lesser Redpoll, Common Crossbill, Cirl Bunting (?), House-Sparrow, Grey Wagtail (local), Nuthatch (local), Pied Flycatcher, Goldcrest, Sedge-Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Mistle-Thrush, Blackbird, Black Redstart.

*Marked decrease*, 15.

Hooded Crow, Chough, Twite, Corn-Bunting, Wood-Lark, Yellow Wagtail (local), Bearded Tit, Red-backed Shrike, Savi's Warbler, Dartford Warbler, Ring-Ouzel, Wheatear, Common Redstart, House-Martin (probably), Wryneck.

*Decrease earlier, increase latterly*. 7.

Raven, Magpie, Jay, Goldfinch, Linnet, Kingfisher, Great Spotted Woodpecker.

*Increasing in Scottish and/or Irish woodland*, 15.

Rook, Greenfinch, Siskin, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal-Tit, Crested Tit, Spotted Flycatcher, Chiffchaff, Willow-Warbler, Wood-Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat.

*No evidence for marked widespread change*, 32.

Yellow Bunting, Reed-Bunting, Snow-Bunting, Tree-Sparrow (fluctuates), Sky-Lark, Tree-Pipit, Meadow-Pipit, Rock-Pipit, Pied Wagtail (decrease Scotland), Tree-Creeper, Marsh-Tit, Willow-Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Grasshopper-Warbler, Reed-Warbler, Marsh-Warbler, Garden-Warbler, Song-Thrush, Whinchat, Stonechat (fluctuates), Nightingale, Robin, Hedge-Sparrow, Wren, Dipper, Swallow (? decreasing), Sand-Martin (? decreasing), Swift, Nightjar, Green Woodpecker, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo.

*Sporadic or exceptional*, 8.

Golden Oriole, Brambling, Tawny Pipit, Icterine Warbler, Melodious Warbler, Redwing, Bee-eater, Hoopoe.

(B) OWLS AND HAWKS.

*Marked decrease*, 11. (Some of these now increasing locally).

Barn-Owl, Peregrine, Hobby, Merlin, Marsh-Harrier, Hen-Harrier, Sparrow-Hawk, Kite, White-tailed Eagle, Honey-Buzzard, Osprey.

*Marked decrease, but increase latterly*, 3.

Tawny Owl, Golden Eagle, Buzzard.

*Increasing in Scottish woodland*, 1.

Long-eared Owl.

*No evidence for marked widespread change*, 3.

Short-eared Owl (fluctuates), Kestrel, Montagu's Harrier.

*Extinct before 19th century*, 1

Goshawk.

*Artificially introduced*, 1.

Little Owl.

(C) SWANS, GEESE, DUCKS.

*Marked increase*, 13.

Mute Swan, Sheld-Duck, Gadwall, Garganey, Wigeon, Pintail, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eider-Duck, Common Scoter, Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser.

*Marked decrease, 1.*

Grey Lag-Goose.

*Decrease earlier, increase latterly, 1.*

Whooper Swan.

*No evidence for marked widespread change, 2.*

Mallard, Teal.

*Artificially introduced, 1.*

Canada Goose (also Mute Swan and various duck locally).

*Sporadic or exceptional, 3.*

Scaup, Goldeneye, Long-tailed Duck.

(D) LIMICOLINE BIRDS.

*Marked increase, 4.*

Curllew, Woodcock, Common Snipe, Greenshank.

*Marked decrease, 8.*

Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel, Ruff, Kentish Plover, Golden Plover, Dotterel, Avocet, Stone-Curlew.

*Marked decrease earlier, increase latterly, 4.*

Red-necked Phalarope, Redshank, Lapwing, Oyster-catcher (local).

*No evidence of marked widespread change, 3.*

Dunlin, Common Sandpiper, Ringed Plover.

*Sporadic or exceptional, 4.*

Temminck's Stint, Wood Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover.

(E) SEA-BIRDS (Cormorants, Gannets, Petrels, Terns, Gulls, Auks).

*Marked increase, 6.*

Gannet, Fulmar, Common Gull, Herring-Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Great Black-backed Gull.

*Marked decrease, 6.*

Manx Shearwater, Black Tern, Little Tern, Great Auk, Puffin (local), Black Guillemot.

*Marked decrease earlier, increase latterly, 3.*

Roseate Tern, Black-headed Gull, Great Skua.

*No evidence of marked widespread change, 11.*

Cormorant, Shag, Storm Petrel, Fork-tailed Petrel, Sandwich Tern (moderate change), Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Kittiwake (some increase), Arctic Skua, Razorbill, Guillemot.

(F) OTHER GROUPS (Hérons, Grebes, Divers, Doves, Bustards, Rails, Game Birds).

*Marked increase, 7.*

Slavonian Grebe, Black-necked Grebe, Wood-Pigeon, Stock-Dove, Turtle-Dove, Moorhen, Coot.

*Marked decrease, 7.*

Rock-Dove, Great Bustard, Corn-Crake, Spotted Crake, Black Grouse, Ptarmigan, Quail.

*Marked decrease earlier, increase latterly, 3.*

Bittern, Great Crested Grebe, Red-throated Diver.

*No evidence of marked widespread change, 6.*

Heron, Little Grebe, Black-throated Diver (some decrease), Water-Rail, Red Grouse (fluctuates), Common Partridge (change in Ireland).

*Extinct before 19th century, 3.*

Spoonbill, Common Crane, Capercaillie.

*Artificially introduced, 3.*

Capercaillie, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge.

*Sporadic or exceptional, 4.*

Little Bittern, White Stork, Pallas's Sand-Grouse, Baillon's Crake.

Group.	Marked increase	Marked decrease	Decrease earlier, increase latterly	Increase Scottish Irish woods	No evidence of change	Extinct before 19th century	Introduced species	Sporadic or exceptional
(A) Passerines and near-Passerines.	17	15	7	15	32	—	—	8
(B) Owls, Hawks.	—	11	3	1	3	1	1	—
(C) Swans, Geese, Ducks.	13	1	1	—	2	—	1	3
(D) Wading Birds.	4	8	4	—	3	—	—	4
(E) Sea-Birds.	6	6	3	—	11	—	—	—
(F) Other types.	7	7	3	—	6	3	3	4
TOTAL.	47	48	21	16	57	4	5	9
Percentage.	22	22	10	7	26	2	2	8

The above tabulation shows that, omitting introduced and sporadic breeding species, 132 out of 189 breeding species, or 70 per cent. have changed markedly in status during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the remaining 57 species (30 per cent.) there is no evidence of marked change, but some of them have changed locally or moderately, and some others have shown short term fluctuation.

The above tabulation also shows that on the whole the gains and losses are about balanced, but this is far from the case within each group. In particular, there has been an exceedingly marked decrease among owls, hawks, marsh birds and English (but not Scottish) coast-nesting birds. The greatest gain is among the ducks, primarily in Scotland, where there has also been a marked increase in woodland species excepting hawks.

#### *Causes of fluctuations.*

In many species human activities have played a large part in causing the fluctuations, the most important factors being the direct destruction of birds or eggs, the drainage of fens and marshes, and the increase of agricultural land and woodland. But there are many other cases of marked change in which human factors do not appear to have been involved, or have played at most a subsidiary

part, and in quite a number of these instances the cause of the change is quite unknown, showing how little is yet known about the dynamics of bird populations. In a number of cases, the change in status has been by no means confined to the British Isles.

The species in which the main cause of change does not seem primarily due to human factors are listed below. Some 40 out of 132 species which have changed come in this category, though in some of them, notably the ducks, human protection has certainly assisted the increase. It also seemed worth investigating whether any general faunal trend was involved, in particular whether there has been on the whole an increase in northern and a decrease in southern species, or the reverse. For investigating the latter problem, those species in which change in status is mainly attributable to human factors must obviously be excluded. Under "northern species" are grouped all British breeding species whose breeding ranges in western Europe extend considerably north of lat.  $60^{\circ}$  N. but little, if at all, south of lat.  $50^{\circ}$  N. Under "southern species" are grouped those breeding considerably south of lat.  $50^{\circ}$  N. and little, if at all, north of  $60^{\circ}$  N. When the birds are grouped in this way, it is seen that there is no general tendency for northern species to be increasing and southern species to be decreasing, or the reverse.

*Species in which marked change does not seem primarily due to human factors.*

(A) INCREASES.

(i) *Southern species*, 4.

Carrion Crow, Black Redstart, Black-necked Grebe, Turtle-Dove.

(ii) *Northern species*, 10.

Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Goosander, Red-breasted Merganser, Fulmar, Slavonian Grebe, Greenshank, Common Gull.

(iii) *Others*, 16.

Jackdaw, Starling, Hawfinch, Pied Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, Mistle-Thrush, Blackbird, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Gadwall, Pintail, Shoveler, Pochard, Curlew, Redshank, Lesser and Great Black-backed Gulls.

(B) DECREASES.

(i) *Southern species*, 4.

Chough, Corn-Bunting, Wood-Lark, Red-backed Shrike.

(ii) *Northern species*, 7.

Hooded Crow, Twite, Ring-Ouzel, Whimbrel, Golden Plover, Black Guillemot, Ptarmigan.

(iii) *Others*, 4.

Wheatear, Common Redstart, Wryneck, Rock-Dove.

## ON FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF BIRDS

BY

H. G. ALEXANDER.

ONE day in May, 1944, I found a flock of over fifty Dunlins by a Midland reservoir. Some had beaks that suggested a Curlew-Sandpiper; others had beaks that suggested a Little Stint. As all were in full plumage with black bellies I had no difficulty in satisfying myself that no Curlew-Sandpiper and no Little Stint was present in the flock. It seemed quite clear, however, that some of the birds were *Calidris alpina alpina*, and others *C. a. schinzii*. So, when I referred to *The Handbook of British Birds*, Vol. iv, p. 233 and read: "Northern race (*alpina*) averages larger and longer billed than present form, but races are not separable in field" I was somewhat disconcerted. I wonder whether the word "always" could not appropriately be inserted between "not" and "separable"; in any case it may be inferred that the statement is intended as a warning against rash identification by impulsive field observers—a very common failing.\* It is likely enough that, if I had inspected this mixed flock bird by bird, I should have found some whose sub-specific identification would have been doubtful.

As it happened, a few days earlier I had been reading in the *Ibis* (Apr., 1944), Mr. F. Ludlow's account of "The Birds of South-Eastern Tibet", where, in writing of a very local Willow-Warbler, (*Phylloscopus tibetanus*), he says: "I have sight records from elsewhere, but such records are of no value when dealing with this difficult genus." Again, I think he over-states the position. In fact, he has just written of *Ph. fuscatus*, a species very similar to *Ph. tibetanus*: "During the next fortnight we saw, and heard, large numbers in willow and holly oak bushes as we marched up the Tsangpo to Lilung." Again, I happened to be particularly

\*Since Mr. Alexander raises the point, it is perhaps admissible to mention that the *Handbook* statement expressed the characteristic caution of the late editor, though I myself would have felt justified in qualifying it. My own view would be that the extremes of the two forms, *viz.* long-billed female *alpina* and short-billed male *schinzii*, are distinguishable in the field by observers of the requisite experience, and this was the opinion of even so critical a worker as the late C. B. Ticehurst (*Birds of Sussex*, p. 353). But to alter "not separable" to "not always separable," as Mr. Alexander suggests, would be going too far, since this would imply that most are separable, which is not the case. A substantial majority are quite indeterminate as regards bills, as reference to the measurements in *The Handbook* will readily show. Moreover, it must not be overlooked that there are other races than these two to which a bird seen in this country might possibly belong, notably the Siberian and North American *C. a. sakhalina* (which has probably actually been obtained here, *cf.* *Handbook*, Vol. iv, p. 240) and *C. a. arctica* of East Greenland. This is not perhaps a very likely contingency, but it is possible, and it serves to emphasize the fact that field identification of even very distinct sub-species is subject to complications that do not arise in the case of species and can seldom be established with the certainty attainable in the case of even "difficult" species, when these are seen under favourable conditions by sufficiently competent observers.

B.W.T.

interested in this, as in the spring of 1943 I had opportunities of watching a number of different species of *Phylloscopus* in south-west China. Although some, even when seen at close quarters in their full spring plumage, seemed to refuse to fit any description in Ticehurst's monograph, and although such important details as leg-colour and the number of visible pale wing-bars seemed to vary within a species, on the whole I was impressed by the ease of distinguishing most of them, *under favourable conditions of light and in their fresh spring plumage*. Every experienced field observer, especially those whose experience among skins is limited, will agree, I think, that sometimes birds seen at close range in the open, seem easier to identify than they are "in the hand."

I believe the late C. B. Ticehurst used to say that Chiffchaffs and Willow-Warblers cannot be identified in the field by the colour of their legs. Again, I take it that he meant they cannot *always* be so identified. I am not aware that any Willow-Warbler has ever been shown to have really black legs, nor any Chiffchaff really pale legs; but no doubt there are occasional indeterminate intermediates. So the field observer should beware.

All of this is leading to two propositions which I would venture to make. First, that it seems likely that almost every separate species, and occasionally even separate sub-species, are in fact normally identifiable in the field, under favourable conditions, if you know exactly what to look for. But—and this is really by far the more important proposition—such identification can only be achieved by observers who know how to observe. To-day there are in this country scores of observers who are very keen, but sadly unreliable, simply because they have not learnt how to observe. I write this as the former editor of a local report, who has received again and again the kind of record that I believe all other such editors receive. The recorder sends in a record, giving certain facts about the bird he thinks he has identified which are all right as far as they go, but which do not go far enough. They are not diagnostic. And when you press him for further facts, which he cannot give, and finally reject his record, he is angry and asks why you do not believe him. The answer is, of course, that you do believe everything he has told you and you often think it probable that his identification is correct, but unfortunately his observational powers are such that he has not been able to produce any proof, and nothing but proof is any good.

To take my "mixed" Dunlins as an example, I am fairly confident that a good proportion of keen but not very experienced bird watchers, if they had seen those birds in autumn plumage, without the black bellies, would have wanted to record some of them as Curlew-Sandpipers, and perhaps others as Stints. And if the unkind editor wrote asking: "Did you see the Curlew-Sandpipers in flight? Did you see the white rumps?", he would probably get an indignant reply: "No, there was no need to put them up: the beaks were much too long and curved for Dunlins"—and the record

would have been rightly rejected. To check the "Stint" record might have been more difficult.

Are there certain common rules that can be provided for assisting observers to be more exact in their observations? I will suggest a few, though I think they are incomplete.

*First*: negative. (1) General accounts of a bird's shape or behaviour are practically valueless: e.g., "it looked too plump for a so-and-so"; "it looked very long in the leg"; "the flight was quite different from—some common bird of the same family": such points are in themselves quite useless. (2) Size: unless the bird in question has been seen close to another of a known species, with which it could be compared, estimates of size are very unreliable. In the case of birds seen in the air they are worthless.

*Second*: positive. (1) Always note as accurately as possible your distance from the bird. (2) Note the conditions of light: were you looking against the light, or with the light behind you? Was the sun shining? Were you looking up at the bird or was it below you? (3) Learn some general anatomy, so that you can give the colour of wing-coverts, under tail-coverts, nape, throat, chin, or other parts of the plumage accurately. "Some white near the tail," "a patch of red on the head" or "the wing looked grey," are much too vague. (4) Give an exact description of the whole plumage of the bird, not only the parts that you think may help to identify it. (5) Try to see the bird from as many angles as possible, and both at rest and in flight. Accuracy in observing birds in flight is often of decisive importance for identification—especially perhaps with waders and birds of prey—and such accuracy can only be acquired by persistent effort. (6) Drawings and descriptions should be made or written down immediately, not written up hours later, after looking at books. It is remarkably easy to confuse one's mind afterwards, and to convince oneself that points were noticed which in fact were not seen at all. (7) Voice can also be a very important aid to identification. But there are many pitfalls. In the first place, in spite of the careful and systematic attempt to describe the notes and songs of birds in *The Handbook* it is still difficult to arrive at a notation that means the same to everyone. And there is far more variety in voice, and much more frequent departure from the normal, than is the case with plumage. To illustrate the danger of identification from sound alone I may give a recent experience of mine. In the summer of 1944, in the Severn Valley, I heard a very liquid three-note call repeated rapidly some twenty times. It did not sound exactly like a Quail, but it was so near it that I thought it could be nothing else. After a pause of some minutes, it began again, and after four or five repetitions, it developed into a Curlew's bubble! On the other hand, it was my good fortune some years ago to see a Siberian Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus c. tristis*) in Kent in winter. It is a much whiter bird than *Ph. c. collybita*, but there is, of course, a good deal of variation in plumage between individual Chiffchaffs, and a sight record of the first Siberian

Chiffchaff might hardly have been acceptable, even though the bird remained in one spot for about a fortnight, and was watched by three different members of the B.O.U. Happily, it frequently uttered a note which was quite distinct from the ordinary call-note of *Ph. c. collybita*. Incidentally, one of the ornithologists who came to see it, on hearing the call-note immediately said: "I understand why it was called *tristis*." A good many years later I had the satisfaction of hearing that same "sad" call-note from a Siberian Chiffchaff in India. Probably, too, Mr. Ludlow would point out that in the field identification of *Phylloscopus fuscatu*s which I quoted from the *Ibis* he was relying on sound as well as sight. In other words, sound *alone* may be misleading (as notoriously it is with early Cuckoo records); but sound can be an invaluable piece of additional evidence to support a good sight record.

Until the beginning of this century and the founding of *British Birds*, field records of rare birds were, I think, always regarded with suspicion and as of dubious authenticity. We owe it largely to the late editor, and to his thorough and ruthless analysis of all records received, that sight records published in *British Birds* are now generally accepted as reliable. If I may give my own experience, he several times rejected records that I sent him. In some cases I now know that I was mistaken; in others I recognize that there was an element of doubt. The history of the Hertfordshire Great Grey Shrike shows how even the best observers may sometimes be deceived by tricks of light, slight variations of plumage, or optical delusions.\* I think all readers of *British Birds* owe it both to the memory of a great editor and to the maintenance of his high tradition under his successor to make themselves as proficient as possible in their powers of field observation. Rejection of one's records is apt to be discouraging; but it ought to be a stimulus to more accurate observation.

Since I wrote the above, my attention has been called by the Editor to the note published by Mr. Witherby on pp. 343-4 of Vol. xxiii (May, 1930). I hope the points he there stressed can be republished. I am, naturally, pleased to find that they correspond very closely to the points I have tried to make.

[The note published by Mr. Witherby in Vol. xxiii to which Mr. Alexander refers was prompted by a letter on sight records. We cannot quote the whole of it here, though the whole may be profitably read by those with access to the volume, as a statement of *British Birds* policy with regard to such records. But we are pleased to re-publish the actual recommendations to observers, for comparison with Mr. Alexander's and to emphasize their importance to all field workers. They are as follows:—

"Do not record a bird as seen unless you have *taken down on the spot* its characteristics *before* consulting a work on ornithology.

\**Antea*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 51-3.

One of the most unsatisfactory methods of identification is to view a bird in the field, taking insufficient notes, or no detailed notes, and then finding its supposed portrait or description in a book at *home*, to proceed to work out an account of what was seen.

Field notes should state :—

1. Distance of bird from you and whether you were using glasses or not, and nature and direction of light.
2. Nature of ground it was on, what other birds (if any) it was associating with.
3. Whether you saw it from different angles, whether at rest or in flight.
4. What were its actions and what was the character of its flight, compared with other birds.
5. Its size and general form as compared with other birds, stating what birds at all like it are known to you, and how it differed from them.
6. Particular points in structure as compared with other birds, such as size and shape of bill, length of legs and feet, shape of wing, length of tail.
7. Colour of bill, legs, and feet. Any distinctive white or colour patches or markings and their *exact* position. General colour above and below.

If possible, a rough sketch or diagram of the bird should be made, showing colour-pattern, distinctive marks and shape."

To these seven points of Mr. Witherby's we would add the following :—

8. Any calls or notes, indicating especially the quality of the sound (harsh, rattling, shrill, hoarse, liquid, etc.) and comparing with notes of other species if this assists the description.—EDS.]

## NOTES.

## CARRION-CROW'S NEST WITH SIX EGGS AND TWO YOUNG.

ON April 24th, 1942, near Bow, mid-Devon, Sgt. H. Huggins, R.A.F., found the nest of a Carrion-Crow (*Corvus c. corone*) containing two young birds just hatched, three eggs just chipping and three which were found to be hard set, evidently about a week from hatching. All the eggs were alike, of a dark, heavily capped and rather unusual type so that they appeared to be all produced by the same bird.

H. R. TUTT.

[The different stages of incubation of the two groups of eggs, indicating a resumption of laying after an interval, implies some disturbance or abnormality of the normal physiological processes, the nature of which, however, we have unfortunately no means of deciding.—EDS.]

## BULLFINCH'S METHODS OF FEEDING.

BETWEEN July 4th and 22nd, 1944, I watched a male Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*) feeding in the garden here. Its method appeared unusual and may be worthy of note. Starting at one end of a long *Cupressus macrocarpa* hedge it worked its way down the whole length of it, some thirty yards. It flew up from the ground and hovered with very rapidly vibrating wings before making a dart at its prey and then returned to the ground, to repeat the performance a little further down the hedge. It appeared regularly each day about 8 a.m. and was also seen in the evening.

I have watched a pair of Hedge-Sparrows (*Prunella modularis occidentalis*) behaving in the same manner, but they do not work down the hedge so systematically.

A. C. FRASER.

AT Hadleigh, Essex, on July 5th, 1944, I watched a cock Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*) from a bedroom window, on the top sprays of a Victoria plum tree about 6 yards distant. These top branches had not been sprayed and the undersides of the leaves were crowded with aphides. With its mandibles the bird cut pieces from the leaves and then discarded the pieces, apparently after taking the insects. From one leaf, where the aphides must have been near the edge of the leaf the bird took hold of the leaf and scraped them off; then it went to a very young leaf at the tip of a twig, cut a piece out and evidently swallowed it, for I did not see it fall, and must have done so had it been dropped, as the bird was facing me and in full view. The hen was working on the other side of the tree out of sight, but now joined the cock, when both flew away.

H. R. TUTT.

SONG OF FEMALE CHAFFINCH ASSOCIATED WITH  
NORMAL SEX BEHAVIOUR.

IN April, 1943—through an oversight I omitted to record the date—in the residential district of North Oxford, my attention was attracted by a curious song from a tree in a garden bordering a road.

It proved to come from a hen Chaffinch (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*) and was much like a poor version of the male song without the flourish at the end: that is it agreed substantially with the female songs recorded by Lack and Warburg (*antea*, Vol. xxxiv, pp. 218 and 261). After several utterances the bird flew across the road to a small tree in another garden, where it was joined by a male. The two birds then flew on to the wall of the garden near where I was standing. The female crouched in the regular solicitation posture, while the male began to display, running round her with the body tilted to one side. At this point a passer-by disturbed them, so that the observation is incomplete. It is of interest, however, because one usually tends to connect female song in species in which this is exceptional with some aberration in the sexual physiology, and here it was associated with sex behaviour which appeared quite normal.

B. W. TUCKER.

#### CHIFFCHAFF RAIDING OCCUPIED NESTS FOR NESTING MATERIAL.

ON May 5th, 1943, I ringed a female Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*) which had a nest in a hawthorn stump in a wood at Langton Green, Kent. Around May 6th, misfortune happened to the nest. On May 9th, I watched a Chiffchaff fly to a Bullfinch's (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*) nest situated in a holly bush in which brambles intermingled, and amidst many alarm notes uttered by the rightful occupiers, proceed to tear at the nest and subsequently fly away with the material so obtained. As she departed I noticed the ring which I had fitted on her leg. Upon immediate examination of the nest, I found that the inside hairs and fibres had been turned upside down with two eggs lying on the rim; the remainder of the clutch (I had seen three fresh eggs a few days previously) were probably hidden in the undergrowth below the nest. After my withdrawal from the nest I watched the Chiffchaff repeat her raid (or raids). The above is recorded more fully in *The Field*, September 9th, 1943, p. 251.

On April 5th, 1944, this same Chiffchaff returned to the wood, her identity being proved by the ring I had fitted during 1943. Up to the beginning of May, I could trace no nest belonging to this bird, although she remained in the wood. On May 8th, I watched her go to the holly bush which contained the Bullfinch's nest in 1943 and proceed to tear at the nest of a pair of Blackcaps (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*), which contained 5 fresh eggs. The owners were not at the time in the vicinity. After several repetitions of this performance by the Chiffchaff, I watched her go to her nest with material from the Blackcap's, which was added to her own.

The following evening, accompanied by Mr. H. W. G. Betteridge, I examined the Blackcap's nest and found the outside pattern entirely altered, with the inside lining deranged by much loss of its original quantity; four of the five eggs were found unbroken on the ground beneath the nest.

P. A. ADOLPH.

## DISPLAY OF WOOD-WARBLER.

ON June 3rd, 1944, whilst searching for a repeat nest of a Wood-Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), I heard the female bird uttering her usual call note with the male singing in close attendance high up in a wooded stretch of a common near Tunbridge Wells, Kent. The first nest of this pair of birds with completed clutch of eggs met with misfortune on May 20th.

The female Wood-Warbler gradually moved through the trees to an approximate distance of 15 yards from where I first observed her, followed by the male. Both birds then flew down on to some birch saplings and the male commenced to display with swift wing beating and accentuated song; the female was unresponsive, but appeared hesitant. The male then rose from one of the saplings with slow wing flapping, at the same time singing softly and slowly, and glided towards the female, who flew away with jerky action and dropped to a bare patch of earth (approximately 1 foot in diameter), where she stayed motionless for a matter of seconds, subsequently flying back towards the male (and as afterwards proved in the direction of her nest). The latter bird joined her and both then flew together in spinning-wheel flight, the female being the first to break away, returning with the jerky flight previously mentioned to the same bare patch of earth. The male then proceeded—without vocal activity—to rise into the air from a sapling, 12 feet above the ground and then floated down in parachute manner towards the female. The latter then flew swiftly to a branch of one of the saplings, hesitated a second and dropped into her nest on the ground beneath; upon inspection this contained 6 eggs, three days incubated.

Though these three forms of display upon the part of the male Wood-Warbler are similar to those described in *The Handbook*, it would appear of biological interest that the male bird adopted consecutively, three distinct phases of display towards a female who showed no invitatory posture, and who all the time appeared anxious to resume incubating her eggs. P. A. ADOLPH.

## EARLY ARRIVAL OF FIELDFARES IN WARWICKSHIRE.

AT 9 p.m. on August 12th, 1944, my wife and I were walking along the bank of the River Leam at Offchurch village, near Leamington Spa, when we noticed five birds alight in the same field. When they moved into the sunlight we were able to observe them clearly with a good pair of 16x glasses at a distance varying from 80 to 50 yards and saw them to be Fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*). Their slate grey head and nape, and golden-buff and cream chest, mottled with black were especially noticeable. We were also able to observe the grey and black tail and chestnut backs. All were much more clearly marked than those we have observed later in the year.

After ten minutes they flew over the hedge into a stooked corn-field, where they were joined by another six or seven that had

flown along the cover of the hedge. Here we were able to observe them clearly from the cover of the hedge as they moved amongst the stubble or half hopped and half flew up the side of a sheaf on to the top of the stook. After a time the flock of eleven to twelve flew up into some oak trees and for a few seconds a subdued "chak-chak-chak" was heard.

Only two earlier dates, August 5th and 10th, are mentioned in *The Handbook*.  
R. F. CHATFIELD.

#### CLIFF-BREEDING OF HOUSE-MARTIN IN KENT.

WHEN searching the cliffs between Ramsgate and Broadstairs on June 8th, 1944, I found three isolated instances of the cliff nesting of the House-Martin (*Delichon u. urbica*); one was on the north side of Dumpton Gap, a second which has since fallen was on the south side and the third was further south.

On revisiting this area on July 7th, I found that by the nest on the north side of Dumpton Gap there were three partially built nests and another completed within a very few yards. All were freshly built and occupied by the Martins.

This area is not mentioned in "Cliff-breeding in the House-Martin" by Jourdain and Witherby (*antea*, Vol. xxxiii, pp. 16-24 and 137). Nest sites abound on the many houses in the district, where the bird is very common.  
M. N. RANKIN.

#### BEHAVIOUR OF GREY LAG-GOOSE.

I SAW a curious performance by a few members of a flock of about eighty Grey Lag-Geese (*Anser a. anser*) on the water at Leighton Moss, N. Lancs. on March 16th, 1944. Occasionally a bird would turn over on to its back, and with almost submerged outstretched wings maintain this position for a few seconds with feet kicking violently in the air. It then resumed its normal position. The capsize and recovery were so rapid that I could not make out how the manœuvre was performed—whether the bird rolled over or somersaulted.

I was reminded of the display of the Red-throated Diver (*Colymbus stellatus*), described by Selous and referred to in *The Handbook*, in which the diver rolls over on to its back. The behaviour of the geese appeared to be an individual performance, and I did not see that it aroused any particular interest in the other birds.

P. J. ASKEY.

[Closely similar behaviour has been recorded in the same district, on the Kent Estuary, by J. A. G. Barnes (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 158.—EDS.)]

#### FIRST BREEDING OF FULMAR IN THE SOUTH-WEST.

THE first Fulmar (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*) ever recorded in the breeding season at Lundy Island, off the Devon coast, was one that flew

past the North Landing on June 11th, 1922 (Loyd, *antea*, Vol. xvi, p. 155). This bird showed no sign of being "interested" in the cliffs; and Fulmars were not seen regularly about them until the summer of 1935 (Perry, *Lundy, Isle of Puffins*, 1940). In 1939 Fulmars were seen about the Lundy cliffs from April 12th to July 10th (Perry, *l.c.*); the greatest number of individuals seen was nine (June 13th) and up to four sites were occupied, though breeding did not take place.

In 1944, on a date before May 21st, Mr. F. W. Gade informs us, a Fulmar at Lundy Island laid the first egg ever to have been seen in the south-west. Shortly after it was laid the egg was taken, in ignorance, by a temporary resident of the island. Three pairs were present in occupation of sites and it was thought that another of these was also incubating, in an inaccessible place. At the end of July, four empty "nest-sites," or scrapes, were found on a thorough examination of the cliff with the use of a rope. The Fulmars had by this time entirely disappeared (as is often the case at a station where Fulmars are simply "prospecting" or have made an unsuccessful attempt at breeding) and there was no evidence that any other eggs had been laid. One adult Fulmar returned and was seen at the cliff on August 3rd.

Fulmars have been present for a long time, in the breeding season, at south-west cliffs. Though the above is the first and only record of breeding, birds have been present at the Scillies since 1937 (Ryves and Valentine, *Rep. Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservn. Soc.*, 1937); on the Cornish mainland since 1936 (Boyd, communication to B.T.O. inquiry) (Land's End first, now several other places on the north coast); on the South Devon mainland since 1943 (Fisher, *antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 140) (Start Point); on Dorset cliffs since 1943 (Gooch, *antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 98); at the cliffs of the Isle of Wight since 1942 (Fisher, *l.c.*); and in South Wales, at Skokholm since 1931 (Lockley, communication to B.T.O. inquiry); and the Pembrokeshire mainland since 1931 (Lloyd, *antea*, Vol. xxv, pp. 81-2).

The British Trust for Ornithology is continuing its Inquiry into the distribution and spread of the Fulmar, and particulars can be obtained from J. Fisher at 39, Museum Road, Oxford.

MARTIN COLES HARMAN.  
JAMES FISHER.

#### BEHAVIOUR OF JUVENILE WOOD-PIGEON.

WHILE watching a flock of Wood-Pigeons (*Columba p. palumbus*), at Bretton, nr. Wakefield, on August 5th, 1944, I observed an apparently independent juvenile soliciting food—or displaying—to an adult by bowing with inflated crop and expanded tail exactly like an adult. After some three or four bows the youngster was put to flight by the old bird.

JOHN C. S. ELLIS.

## PREDATORY HABITS OF BLACK-HEADED GULLS.

WITH reference to previous notes (*antea*, pp. 12-15, 57) on the predatory behaviour of the Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*), the following observation seems worth putting on record. Black-headed Gulls are regular winter residents on the River Severn in Shrewsbury, and I was watching a party of about fifteen of them on December 10th, 1943. A number of Rooks (*Corvus f. frugilegus*) were feeding on the grassy margin of the river, and on several occasions when a Rook found a tit-bit one or two gulls immediately attacked it, with the apparent intention of making it drop whatever it had found. On no occasion did I see them succeed, but they "chivvied" the Rooks persistently and energetically. If the latter flew away, however, the gulls did not keep up the chase for more than fifty yards or so, but soon returned, either to forage for themselves or to watch for another Rook making a "find" when the whole performance would be repeated. L. C. LLOYD.

[Attacks on Lapwings in the fields are not uncommon and we suspect that this is also true of Rooks, though we do not recall having seen this species victimized.—EDS.]

PARASITES TAKEN BY MAGPIES AND JACKDAWS FROM SHEEP AND OTHER ANIMALS.—Mr. Derek C. Barber writes to us with reference to the recent notes on Magpies (*Pica p. pica*) perching on the backs of sheep and other animals (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 159, 199, 217) that he has examined the stomachs of both Magpies and Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula spermologus*) shot when so occupied and can definitely establish that the insects chiefly taken are the "Sheep Ked" (*Melophagus ovinus*). This is as would be expected, as these insects are the commonest parasites of sheep. The much less common biting louse, *Trichodectes sphoerocephalus*, Mr. Barber has only rarely met with in stomachs. A form closely allied to the Sheep Ked occurs on pigs and this is also taken by birds.

GOLDFINCHES USING SAME NEST FOR TWO BROODS.—Mr. Oliver G. Pike reports two cases of this. In May 1942, a pair of Goldfinches (*Carduelis c. britannica*) at Leighton Buzzard reared four young in a nest in an apple tree and three weeks after they had fledged used the same nest for a second brood and reared four more young. In 1944 a pair at the same place reared a family and about three weeks after they had left laid four more eggs in the same nest, which, however, was destroyed by a cat when the bird had been sitting a week.

NIGHTINGALE BUILDING AGAIN AFTER FLEDGING OF YOUNG FROM EARLY NEST.—With reference to the early nest of Nightingales (*Luscinia m. megarhyncha*) recorded on p. 79, from which young appear to have been fledged about June 1st, Mr. P. A. Adolph informs us that on June 4th he and Mr. H. W. G. Betteridge found a half completed nest about 10 ft. away from the previous one and

saw the birds at the site. By June 11th the exterior was finished, but the interior was unlined and misshapen and it was never completed. From the evidence given it seems fairly certain that the birds were the original early breeding pair, and the fact that they finished breeding so early probably accounts for the partial repetition of the breeding cycle in a normally single-brooded species. It is possible that the young came to grief soon after fledging.

SHORT-EARED OWLS PERCHING IN TREES IN WINTER.—Mr. D. Jenkins informs us that Short-eared Owls (*Asio f. flammeus*) which were present in the Marlborough district in the winters of 1941-42 and 1942-43 were several times seen to perch in deciduous trees 20-30 feet high and were more often seen perched on hawthorn bushes than on the ground. Although Short-eared Owls will perch fairly freely in trees in the breeding-season and occasionally do so in winter (*cf. Handbook*), it is in our experience unusual for them to do so at all regularly at that season.

SPOONBILL IN SOMERSET.—In the note under this heading by Mr. A. V. Cornish (*antea*, p. 77) the statement that "there is no Somerset record" should read "no recent record." There are two old records for the county.

ERRONEOUS REPORT OF HERONRY.—In his report on the Index of Heron Population, 1942 (*antea*, Vol. xxvi, p. 207), Mr. W. B. Alexander stated that a heronry of six nests had been discovered in Nidderdale, Yorks. He now informs us that this information has proved to be unreliable. Though birds were seen to fly into the wood no nests were found there.

LITTLE GULLS IN THE CHANNEL, ETC.—Mr. J. A. R. Bickford has sent us particulars of Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*) which he saw commonly in the Channel and off the north coasts of Devon and Cornwall in the winter months of 1942.

ARCTIC SKUA ON HANTS COAST IN LATE JUNE.—Mr. Peter L. Day informs us that he saw an adult Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) of the dark form flying along the beach at Keyhaven, Hampshire, on June 28th, 1944, an unusual date. There was a very strong S.W. wind and rough sea.

QUAIL IN THE SUMMER OF 1944.—Information reaching us from widely separated localities suggests that Quail (*Coturnix c. coturnix*) have been commoner during the past season than for some years. We should be glad if readers would send us records of Quail in 1944, stating especially how they compare with previous recent years in the same districts.

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THE BREEDING OF THE LITTLE RINGED PLOVER  
IN ENGLAND IN 1944

BY

M. D. ENGLAND, E. O. HÖHN, E. G. PEDLER AND B. W. TUCKER.

(Plates 1-4).

IN 1938 a pair of Little Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*) successfully reared a brood at one of the reservoirs near Tring, Hertfordshire and the event was very fully recorded by R. C. B. Ledlie and E. G. B. Pedler in *British Birds*, Vol. xxxii, pp. 90-102. In the subsequent six years the species was not seen at Tring, though birds were reported on passage in spring in Sussex (1939), Norfolk (1940), Kent (two, 1942), and Cambridgeshire (1942, 1943), and one in Berkshire in July 1943. In 1944, however, the breeding of no less than three pairs was proved in Southern England, two at Tring and one in Middlesex. Such an occurrence in the case of a species of which prior to 1938 only about a dozen examples had been recorded in Britain is certainly astonishing, even though the Little Ringed Plover does breed regularly just across the Channel. But especially curious is the fact that one of the Tring pairs bred in exactly the same locality as in 1938, although after a lapse of six years it is hardly conceivable that the birds (or even one of them) were the same as in 1938 or even the young of the original pair. Indeed the latter possibility may be considered definitely disproved, for the 1938 young were ringed and neither of the 1944 birds bore a ring. Even granted that the locality is one very well suited to the habits of the species and at the same time particularly well-watched, it seems very singular that two different pairs of a bird so rare as a breeder in Britain, in two seasons separated by so considerable a gap, should have selected the same place to nest in out of—presumably—a not inconsiderable number of possible sites. It is intriguing, but probably unprofitable, to speculate on possible explanations of this, but most ornithologists will recall somewhat analogous cases of particular breeding sites deserted by a species and re-occupied after a lapse of years by different individuals, though not obviously more suitable than others available. It should, however, be added that a special attraction to the birds, though not obvious, may nevertheless exist.

It may be remarked, however, that the third pair in 1944 bred in a partly flooded gravel-pit, and since such places are certainly less regularly watched by ornithologists than reservoirs it is possible that pairs have bred in other gravel-pits or similar sites in southern England in previous years and escaped notice. Whether this is likely to have been the case and whether in fact the species is actually in process of extending its range or whether the events of the past season must be regarded as merely an abnormal incident due to some chance or accident of migration are questions on which light

will be thrown by observation in future years. It may be suggested that ornithologists in southern England would do well to pay attention in May and June to old gravel-pits containing pools, but not completely flooded, and other possible breeding places, and in this connexion it may be useful to quote my description of the habitat of the species from *The Handbook of British Birds*, which reads as follows:

“Markedly more a fresh-water bird than Ringed Plover, frequenting sand and gravel banks on rivers or borders of lakes and when found breeding on coast usually at the mouth of a river or stream; also breeds by ponds and pools (sometimes quite small) with gravelly, sandy or rubbly waste ground, or occasionally merely dried mud, adjacent, and sometimes in disused sand or gravel pits.”

It is noteworthy that two passage birds have been reported to us in the late summer from other not very far distant localities. Mr. H. Money-Coutts, who saw a Little Ringed Plover at Ham Fields Sewage Farm, near Windsor, on July 8th, 1943 (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 180), saw one there again on July 19th, 1944, and has supplied full and conclusive details of identification, while another was observed at the Brent Reservoir, Middlesex, by Mr. T. Bispham on August 3rd and Mr. W. J. L. Sladen on August 9th. Ham Fields is not many miles from the Middlesex breeding place now recorded and it is possibly significant that the bird observed there in 1943 was a young one. The 1944 bird, though in essentially adult plumage, had the orbital ring and white line above the black eye-band rather dull and was thought to be probably a bird of the previous year.

A number of ornithologists have contributed observations on the three pairs, especially on No. 1 pair at Tring, but it has been thought best to treat the separate reports on each as sections of a single paper covering the whole subject of the breeding of the Little Ringed Plover in England in 1944. B.W.T.

## THE FIRST PAIR AT TRING

BY

E. G. PEDLER AND B. W. TUCKER.

THE birds were first observed at 10.45 a.m. (D.S.T.) on May 15th by Pedler at the same reservoir where breeding took place in 1938, and in the course of this and subsequent days he was able to observe them closely.

The water level was very low, as in 1938, and probably even lower than then, and the whole ground was almost covered with vegetation, but with several more or less bare, stony patches. The birds appeared to have taken possession of a certain belt of stony ground, to which they returned at intervals and made scrapes. One bird so engaged on the afternoon of the 15th was watched repeatedly going down on its breast, kicking up small stones from behind it, making sweeps from side to side with the breast, and

spreading the tail fan-wise. On another occasion on the same day both birds were seen to do this together. It was observed that they used small natural depressions, entering them and excavating a few of the small stones. Both birds kept strictly together; on three occasions the female spread her tail high in the air and once the male came and settled under it, remaining there for a few seconds.\* At 8.10 p.m. coition was observed, the male afterwards flying away for about 50 yards, while the female remained where she was and preened herself. Prior to coition the male puffed out his breast feathers and stamped his feet sharply, holding the head high, as described in the case of the 1938 pair (p. 93), while the female waited in the usual crouching position. On May 16th, at 8 a.m., coition was again observed on the same area, to which the birds returned for this purpose, as well as to display and scrape. The preliminary behaviour was the same as before.

The diagnostic characters of the species were well seen, the wings being sandy brown, showing no wing-bar in flight, the bills black or dark brown, and the yellow orbital ring conspicuous, especially in the male. The female's breast band was narrower than that of the male.

On May 17th, a cold and windy day, one of the birds was seen to bathe at the water's edge, afterwards drying itself in the wind. In the late afternoon, from 6.20 to 6.35, the female on the nesting area appeared to be picking up small stones and throwing them now on one side and now on the other, but eventually flew off to the water's edge calling "pic, pic, pic." This was the only occasion on which the recorder heard either bird call during a week's observation. The flight on this occasion was gliding, with slow wing-beats, recalling the wing action of a Greenfinch in the display flight. The pebble-throwing was observed on numerous occasions at the site which had evidently been selected for nesting; this was also the area in which coition was observed.

On May 18th the female was seen on one occasion to spread her tail, showing the white outer feathers, the male about 15 yards away taking no apparent notice. On this date she was also watched picking up small stones and putting them down beside her while sitting on the ground, evidently in one of the scrapes. The male was seen behaving similarly, but throwing them to one side and the other with jerks of the head.

On May 19th, from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 3.30 to 4.30 p.m. no birds were present at the nesting site, but soon afterwards one of them alighted there, accompanied by a Dunlin. The Dunlin flew away and the Plover approached a growing tuft and sat for about three minutes, during which the mate came and walked

\* This agrees closely with the co-called "symbolic nest-rict" ceremony described by J. E. Sluifers (*Ardea*, 1938, pp. 130-141) and in the Ringed Plover by H. Laven (*Beitr. Fortpfl.-biol. Vög.*, 1938, pp. 49-54, 90-95) but these observers agree in describing the bird which creeps under the other's tail as the female.—B.W.T.

round the sitting bird and then flew away. After the sitting bird had gone off the recorder approached the spot and found two eggs in a hollow lined with small stones all of about the same size and a few pieces of small stick. From 7.12 to 8.25 p.m. the bird sat on the eggs. On three occasions, at 7.27, 7.41 and 8.18, she stood up and appeared to be arranging them with her bill. At 8.25 she stood up and moved away from the nest, stretching the wings high above her, then flew to the water's edge and had not returned at 9.30.

On May 20th a Mallard drake was seen walking towards the nest, on which the female was sitting. The male ran first on one side of the intruder and then on the other in an agitated manner, but failed to divert him, but when he was within a few feet of the sitting bird she rose from the eggs and ran towards him, with tail fanned and depressed, touching the ground. When the duck appeared almost treading on the eggs she actually pecked him and made him jump forward and quicken his speed. He moved well away off the nesting area. The Plovers quickly recovered from their anxiety and within ten minutes coition took place, in the manner already described.

At 7 p.m. on May 21st Pedler visited the nest in order to show it to Double, the keeper; there were then three eggs. On May 22nd he left Tring and had to discontinue his observations.

On May 27th R. H. Ryall visited the locality and saw both birds. The distinctive characteristics, including the pale yellowish flesh-coloured legs, were well seen and the typical "tee-u" (or "pee-o") note heard. On the 28th C. B. Ashby and Miss H. M. Knapp were at the reservoir and found the nest, which now contained four eggs. They noted that the small white stones with which it was lined were about a quarter or three-eighths of an inch across. Earlier in the day a mild form of display was observed, the birds running after one another with fluffed-out feathers and once lifting the outstretched wings high above the back.

On May 30th Ryall again visited the reservoir and has kindly placed his notes at our disposal. At 2.10 p.m. he observed a nest-relief. The relieving bird alighted some distance away and ran in a rather halting and circuitous manner to the nest. As it approached the sitting bird got up and, stepping away in a semi-crouching attitude, made a little display by extending the flank-feathers and twice fanning out the tail. It then ran a short distance and flew away to another reservoir. Another change-over took place at 4.15. On this occasion the returning bird, believed to be the male, flew up and settled about 18 inches from the nest and the sitting mate ran off with no display. Only once was the bird not sitting observed to return for a few minutes to the nesting area, or indeed to the same reservoir, without relieving its mate. Mandibulation of small stones round the nest was observed, as recorded by Pedler.

On June 10th Pedler re-visited Tring. At 11.20 the male was sitting, but after a few minutes he got up and walked a foot or so away, bobbing his head, picked up something, and returned to sit. At 11.30 a change-over took place. The relieved bird walked slowly away from the eggs with head bent low, while the mate alighted on the ground, went straight to the nest, and settled down. The other then flew away. At 4.10, when the male was again on the nest, another relief took place. He walked and ran some yards from the eggs, then stopped and stretched his wings straight above his head, before flying away to the water's edge. On the ground the female passed him hurriedly, went straight to the eggs and settled on them.

On June 11th, B. W. Tucker, with Dr. F. K. Boston and G. H. Spray, visited Tring to see the birds, as did also Ryall and Ashby and R. S. R. Fitter. Both birds were well seen and all the distinctive characters noted, including the distinctive "tee-u" note when the sitting bird was flushed. At 2 p.m. a nest-relief took place. It was accomplished unobtrusively with no ceremonial. On this occasion the relieved bird flew to the water's edge and stopped there for a few minutes before flying away from the reservoir. The eggs were also examined. They were typical of the species, notably smaller than Ringed Plover's, with stone-coloured ground fairly evenly marked with rather fine dark brown spots and here and there faint mauvish markings.

Subsequently Double reported that there were two chicks hatched on June 15th. On June 16th one of the remaining eggs had gone and was presumed to have hatched. Double has recently assured us that he afterwards saw three chicks together at the nest, but it does not appear that a third chick was ever seen for certain by anyone else, and evidently it came to grief: it may have been killed by some predator soon after hatching. On the 17th the parents and two young were seen by Ryall. One adult, believed to be the female, stayed with them and the other now kept fairly near. The chicks ran about with short intervals of being brooded by the attendant adult. Sometimes this took place at the nest and sometimes the young merely ran under the parent where she happened to stand. The remaining egg was quite warm to the hand, as though the bird had just been brooding it, but it subsequently proved to be addled and was taken by Double, by whom it was handed to the Tring Museum, where it provides permanent proof of the record.

The further history of the young is unfortunately not so clearly documented. On July 10th Ryall saw the adults, but failed to find the young and gathered that no one at Tring had seen them recently. However, the keeper, Double, who did good work in keeping a watch on the nest, assures us that he is convinced that the parent birds (probably disturbed by fishing, which began on June 16th), succeeded after a time in leading the young across the causeway to the adjacent reservoir. He saw both adults near the boathouse

here, "squealing and fluttering about" and behaving in a manner which could leave no reasonable doubt that they had the young ones there. Later he saw four birds on the wing, so that it seems to be fairly well established that the two young were reared, though the lack of complete proof is regrettable.

## THE SECOND PAIR AT TRING

BY

M. D. ENGLAND.

ON May 13th, at Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, I saw four Ringed Plovers which I believed to be Little Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*), but as I neither saw them fly nor heard their call identification had to remain uncertain. It was not until over five weeks later that I saw any more of them on this reservoir, but in the meantime, on June 11th, Messrs. B. W. Tucker and R. H. Ryall, in company with two other observers, Dr. Boston and Mr. Spray, had visited the place and seen a pair of Little Ringed Plovers there. They were fully identified, but although they were watched for some time and indulged in a little mild display and chasing, they showed no evidence of having a nest. In the light of the subsequent observations, however, it can be said, since the first egg was hatched on July 5th and the shortest recorded incubation period is 24 days, that incubation must actually have commenced on June 11th at the latest. The birds were watched again by Mr. Ryall a week later, on June 17th, when they were equally successful in concealing the fact that they were nesting. On June 22nd I found a single Little Ringed Plover feeding on the mud. During a considerable time that this bird was under observation it several times settled down and brooded in one or other of two depressions or scrapes which proved to contain nothing but a stone and two rather egg-like lumps of mud respectively. However, eventually, while it was sitting, another flew over calling, and this one led me to a different part of the reservoir where, after a very long search and much watching from various hides, a nest was found with four eggs.

It was on sandy shingle, and the eggs rested on very small pebbles and a few broken shells. It may be significant that it was within a few inches of a rusty broken tin half buried in the mud, recalling the Greenshank's frequent nesting near some conspicuous stone or other object. I should have liked to experiment by moving the tin, but experiments are out of place on a bird as rare as this.

Ten feet away were the remains of a wooden breakwater, and it seemed possible that with care some rather distant photographs might be obtained from a hide built behind this. Ordinary bird-photography tactics were of course out of the question, both from the point of view of attracting undesirable attention and of scaring the bird. Accordingly it was decided that nothing more was permissible than a cloth over the head of the photographer crouched on the ground in an angle of the breakwater. This was not only

almost invisible from a distance, but could be taken down instantly on the approach of strangers.

An assistant was constantly on the watch, and everyone from bathers and anglers to obvious ornithologists was treated with suspicion. I have to record my gratitude to Mr. A. H. Bishop, of the Natural History Museum, for acting as watcher during the photography, and for becoming expert at removing hides in a hurry. The keeper, Mr. Double, very kindly prevented angling in the vicinity, and in fact constantly patrolled the area, and it is largely owing to his help that the eggs hatched in a very public place.

The notes which follow have, for the sake of brevity, been compiled as additions to, or in some cases because of differences from, the very complete report by Ledlie and Pedler (*l.c.*) on the 1938 pair. The differences, where they exist, are, I believe, due in large part to the fact that favourable circumstances made it possible for this pair to be watched almost continuously while in the vicinity of the nest, from a distance varying from 7 to 10 feet, and many of the things seen, and even more the things heard, could not have been otherwise recorded.

*Plumage and Sexing.*—After a few days at close quarters I was able to distinguish the birds apart, and even to make up my mind which was which sex, but in view of the very great danger of false assumption in birds such as these, the word “presumed” should be understood in all references to sex which follow. There were two obvious plumage differences, one vocal difference, and several distinguishing habits. The cock had black ear-coverts, whereas the hen had brown. This seems to coincide satisfactorily with the note in *The Handbook* that “some females have black patch on ear-coverts smaller and more or less intermixed with drab-brown and sometimes black feathers are more or less absent.” The black bands on breast and forehead were roughly the same width in both birds, but each had irregular white feathers along the edges which were sufficiently different to tell the birds apart.

*Voice and Display.*—The call “*pee-u*” was used for many purposes and varied from a soft piping very similar to a Bullfinch to an urgent shrill call in immediate danger. The young began using a wheezy form of it at about three weeks old. The hen, when “injury-feigning,” chattered in a way which was very noticeably like a Little Tern. A different form of this occurred during copulation.

“Injury-feigning” consisted of running in a crouched attitude for a short distance, and grovelling in the sand with one or both wings fluttering and the tail spread, chattering all the time. If the “releaser” of this performance did not play its part, *i.e.* stood still instead of following, the display turned into an elaborate and self-conscious preening.

Nest-relief was accompanied by calls heard at no other times, except on occasions when one or other bird came up to relieve but after display the original sitter returned. The cock flew to within

20 feet of the nest and called very softly "quoyp, quoyp." The hen replied from the nest "quip" almost inaudibly. The cock then approached by short runs calling "quoyp, quoyp, quoy-royp," at the end of each run picking up small white pebbles and throwing them over his shoulder. The hen would then leave the eggs, and, running *away from* (see Plate 4) the direction in which he was approaching, call (not always) "quip, quip quip-pip-pip," and also throw pebbles. She then turned in a wide semicircle (c. 6 ft. diam.) and ran towards him, the two passing each other several times behind the nest, going in opposite directions in a series of runs with much stone throwing. One bird returned to the eggs, throwing as it came, and the other ran away, also throwing, until at about 25 feet it took to flight. The intensity of the stone-throwing increased towards the nest, and it ceased at the circumference of, roughly, a 25 foot circle around it. (Owing to the breakwater this was an incomplete circle). A single bird, returning to the nest after a disturbance, often threw pebbles or picked them up and dropped them, and once only this was seen when the hen was guarding young 50 yards from the nest site. The fixity of the route followed to the nest was remarkable.

If the hen was relieving the cock at the nest, she still called "quip" and he responded with "quoy-royp," showing a noticeable vocal difference. When the young hatched, the "quoyp" turned gradually to the familiar "quip-pip-pip-pip" used all the time during the fledging period.

When one bird was brooding three young about ten feet from the nest, and the other incubating the remaining egg, they still changed places, but without ceremony. The incubating bird rose and *flew* the few feet to the young, and the other ran to the egg.

*Sundry Notes.*—The sitting bird depended on sight rather than hearing when sensing danger. Noises in the hide did not affect them in the least, but the slightest movement of the cloth by the wind caused suspicion. The warning calls of the Redshank and Lapwing registered danger, and the sitter would stand up and look round, but since the breakwater hid the Redshank's area, incubation was usually resumed immediately. Swifts catching flies low over the nest caused a good deal of alarm, but all small birds on the ground were driven viciously away. When suspicious, a bird always left the nest at a crouching run, similar to that of *hiaticula*.

The eggs hatched as follows:—one, July 5th, c. 5 p.m. (D.S.T.); two, July 6th, c. 7 a.m.; one July 8th, 9.40 p.m. This gives a gap of about 77 hours between first and last.

Although the young were led away from the nest almost immediately they were dry, they were constantly brought back, and the site was used as a "rendezvous" for at least a week after.

It was observed that after the young hatched the parents often flew conspicuously higher in the air than they had done previously. All four young were ringed.

It is deserving of note that although we have no absolute proof, there is strong suspicion that three birds, two hens and one cock, were present all the time.\* In addition to the bird sitting on "oddments" mentioned above, an odd bird was seen by several observers at some distance at a time when both cock and hen were known to be near the nest. On the day when one bird was brooding three young and the other incubating one egg, the incubating bird suddenly flew behind the hide and started calls which were quite new to me (a variant on the Little Tern chatter). I groped for a hole behind me and found one just in time to see the finish of coition between two birds. This cannot be taken as absolute proof, as it is just possible that in the moment when I was groping for a hole the bird brooding young flew round behind me (she was back on them when I turned round again). If so, coition occurs after young have hatched—if not, the cock was practising bigamy.

At a fortnight old one adult only was in attendance on the young, which were still at the reservoir on August 23rd, feeding in the company of Common and Green Sandpipers, Dunlin and other small waders. At least one young bird was still present on September 10th, but had gone by September 16th.

### THE MIDDLESEX PAIR

BY

E. O. HÖHN, B.Sc.

ON June 4th, 1944, my wife and I visited a group of three gravel pits in the Ashford district of Middlesex for the first time. At the largest pit, the area of which I estimate at about  $\frac{1}{2}$  square mile water surface, we saw one and later two Ringed Plovers. I thought on seeing the first that it was a belated migratory Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), but noticed at once the absence of a white wing-bar in flight. When seen on the ground absence of white on wing was confirmed and the beak was seen to show no yellow, whereas the legs were pale orange. Further confirmation of the identity of these birds as Little Ringed Plovers (*Ch. dubius curonicus*) was afforded by their call, a monosyllabic "pioo" and distinct from the Ringed Plover's disyllabic "pooeep."

Both birds confined themselves to a broad-based peninsula which projects into the waters of the pit. The base of this area consists of about one acre of gravel, while the southern shore is flat and sandy. We noticed that the birds or at least one of them returned repeatedly to the gravel area and when disturbed here flew about in wide sweeps, anxiously calling. This behaviour suggested nesting, but careful search failed to reveal a nest.

\*It should perhaps be noted that after nest-relief in the case of the other pair the relieved bird generally flew right away and, at least when I saw it, went in the direction of the other reservoir.—B.W.T.



LITTLE RINGED PLOVER.  
The female settling on eggs.  
(*Photographed by M. D. England.*)



LITTLE RINGED PLOVER.

Nest-relief. Male approaching from the right, female running off in same direction.  
(*Photographed by M. D. England.*)

On June 11th we made another visit and again found both birds on the gravel bed, to which they returned repeatedly when flushed by any disturbance. Finally on June 17th the pair was seen now on the sandy shore, from which both flew up to circle round, calling even more anxiously than before. By watching the birds on their return to ground, through binoculars at a distance of about 20 yards, I saw at least one young bird, apparently only a few days old, on two occasions. When I approached it made for cover among the nearby herbage, where I was unable to find it. The adults, however, returned to the spot where I had last seen the young when it reappeared on the first occasion; though it did not come into view when I watched the returning parents the second time. When apparently calling for the young both birds used a softer call which I would render as "trru") (*u* pronounced as in French).

It was thus definitely established that the pair had nested, and it seems probable that the nest was located on the gravel bed. In order to remove any possible question as to correct identification, Mr. R. S. R. Fitter visited the spot with me on July 2nd (at my request) and on this occasion we saw five Little Ringed Plovers, all able to fly. On a later visit on July 8th by myself, under better conditions of visibility, I saw that of the five, three were young birds. Hence the pair had successfully reared three young. The birds must have left soon after, as on July 17th only one adult and one young were seen, while on July 26th none were to be found.

Previous records of the Little Ringed Plover in Middlesex (Glegg, *History of the Birds of Middlesex*) are two, obtained in August 1864. In view of the other cases of breeding at Tring and the possibility that a definite attempt at colonization is taking place, it may be mentioned that there are also a number of other gravel pits in this western area of Middlesex which may be equally suitable for this species, and it is possible that a search of these next spring might reveal other nesting pairs.

I am indebted to the manager of the company which works this particular pit, for permission to explore it.

*STURNUS VULGARIS POLTARATSKYI:*  
A NEW SUB-SPECIES TO THE BRITISH LIST

BY  
JEFFERY G. HARRISON, B.A., M.B.O.U.

On December 23rd, 1943, I obtained a Starling from a flock that was feeding beyond the sea wall on the Wash, at the mouth of the River Witham, near Boston, Lincolnshire. My father and I were at once struck with its unusual reflections. On preservation it proved to be a male; the skull had the appearance of having just ossified, and this would make it a first winter bird.

On comparison, it was found to match examples of *Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi* Finsch in my father's collection. Capt. C. H. B. Grant, who kindly compared the bird with a series of this subspecies in the National Collection, has confirmed our identification. The bird has also been seen by the late W. L. Sclater, Mr. N. B. Kinnear and Col. R. Meinertzhagen, who all agree that it belongs to this race.

The bird is in full winter plumage. A full description of it is as follows:

Upper-parts—crown and nape purple, mantle green, scapulars, rump, upper tail-coverts, green; (under-parts) ear-coverts, cheeks, chin and throat purple, with a tinge of green on the cheeks and a few immature feathers retained on the throat; upper breast purple; flanks blue-purple; belly green; vent and under tail-coverts black, with slight green reflections. Tail-feathers and primaries brown-black, secondaries same, but with brilliant blue-green gloss. Spots on upper-parts golden-brown, on under-parts white. The under wing-coverts are pale sepia brown, with broad pale golden brown edges.

Hartert (*Vögel der Paläarkt. Fauna*, Bd. 1, p. 44) gives the following description of the race—"Distinguished from *Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris* on account of constant purple reflections of head and chin, and more or less purple ear-coverts. The whole back is uniform green, with super-imposed golden-brown spots, only absent in quite worn plumage. The breast and flanks are purple, the flanks brightest. Under wing-coverts in all plumages are brownish, with fairly broad light golden-brown edges, as in *Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris*."

The under wing-coverts serve to distinguish *Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi* from *Sturnus vulgaris balcanicus*, when occasionally this is rather difficult by other means.

Hartert gives the breeding distribution as Siberia, including the Altai as far as Baikal. It is now known to be more extensive. Molyneaux (*Catalogue of Birds*, 1930-31) gives Central Transcaucasia, S.E. Russia (west to Voronezh Gov. (rare)), Kirghiz Steppes (Kustanai district), Aral-Caspian region, Siberia, Semipalatinsk, Altai, and N.W. Mongolia. The same author states that it occurs on passage or in winter in Egypt, N. Caucasus, Transcaucasia,

Mesopotamia, E. Persia, Transcaspia, Aral Sea region, Kizil-Kum, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and India. It has also occurred casually as far north as Obdorsk on the River Ob in N.W. Siberia and accidentally in S.W. Russia.

According to Meinertzhagen (*Nicoll's Birds of Egypt*, Vol. 1, p. 100) this Starling is "probably the most frequent of all races in winter in Egypt," while Whistler (*Popular Handbook of Indian Birds*, Ed. 3, p. 195) states that it is also the commonest of the Starlings visiting India in winter.

The habits of this race in winter do not seem to differ in any important way from that of other races, such as *Sturnus v. vulgaris*, but as regards breeding very little seems to be recorded in works or journals accessible in this country, though probably some information is available in Russian. Stuart Baker (*Fauna of British India: Birds*, Vol. III, p. 34) writes that eggs sent to him from the Scully collection, found "near Lake Baikal" measure about 29.5 x 21.7 mm. and were taken on May 4th and 17th.

It would seem that the Lincolnshire bird must have migrated westwards in autumn and joined up with birds of the typical race which regularly migrate to this country from the Baltic and Scandinavia. Four other Starlings obtained out of the same flock were examples of *Sturnus v. vulgaris*.

This is the first record of the sub-species in the British Isles, its nearest previous occurrence being in south-west Russia, as mentioned above.

Before ending I would like to thank my father Dr. J. M. Harrison for lending me examples of *Sturnus vulgaris poltaratskyi* and *Sturnus vulgaris balcanicus*; also Capt. C. H. B. Grant for taking my bird to Tring and comparing it with those in the National Collection there, and Mr. B. W. Tucker for looking out various references on this sub-species.

## NOTES.

## CARRION-CROWS AND ROOKS NESTING ON ELECTRIC PYLONS.

ALTHOUGH Carrion-Crows (*Corvus c. corone*) and Rooks (*Corvus f. frugilegus*) have been recorded occasionally as nesting on electric pylons, it may be of interest to record that as a result of observations by Mr. A. E. Billett at Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, in 1944, it was ascertained that both species were breeding thus in that area. Single nests were located in mid-April on nine of a total of fifteen pylons over a distance of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles and, though the actual identity of the birds was not then determined, there was evidence to show that all the nests were in use. On May 4th, when visiting the district with Mr. Billett, I found that four of the nests had been deserted. Of the remainder, four were occupied by Rooks and the fifth by Carrion-Crows. In each case the nest was at the top of the pylon—about 55 feet up. Some were bulky structures resting on a conveniently shaped cup at the apex of the framework, and were plainly visible at a considerable distance. Others appeared to consist of little more than a few sticks lining the cup and could easily be passed by unnoticed.

H. H. DAVIS.

## GOLDEN ORIOLE IN INVERNESS-SHIRE.

ON July 13th, 1944, a Golden Oriole (*Oriolus o. oriolus*) was seen by my wife at Bracara on the north shore of Loch Morar, Western Inverness-shire. The bird was on the ground when first seen and flew up into some trees when disturbed. It was described as about the size of a thrush, golden yellow in colour, with black on the wings, and was positively identified by Mrs. Leckie as a male Golden Oriole from a plate in Kirkman and Jourdain's *British Birds*.

The description of the note of the species coincided with a bird-call which I had heard and had puzzled me several times at Bracara, and there is some evidence that the bird had been about in the locality from the beginning of June.

WILLIAM LECKIE.

## EGG-SHELL DISPOSAL OF GREENFINCH.

WHILST watching a Greenfinch's (*Chloris ch. chloris*) nest on July 13th, 1944, in which two of the eggs had already hatched, I noticed the hen bird breaking up and eating the shell of the third and last egg. The paper on egg-shell disposal by C. and D. Nethersole-Thompson (*antea*, Vol. xxxv, p. 196) makes no reference to this habit in the Greenfinch.

J. R. M. TENNENT.

[It may be noted that eating of egg-shells as an alternative to removal is recorded in most other common finches.—EDS.]

## AQUATIC WARBLER IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

ON August 6th, 1944, an Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*) was seen by one of us (W.R.P.) in a reed-bed at Slough Sewage Farm. It was identified by the sharply defined broad buff band

down the centre of the crown, but other characteristics of the species were not definitely observed. The bird was seen by T.B. on August 9th. He paid particular attention to immature Sedge-Warblers in the vicinity. Some of these were decidedly pale on the crown, but the central band appeared broader and ill-defined and in every bird observed contained at least slight brown flecks: there was no trace of this in the Aquatic.

On August 10th R.H.R. spent about two hours by the reeds and located the Aquatic Warbler after about 20 minutes. Subsequently it was seen several times as it came to the reed tops to rest or preen. It kept mostly to one area of the bed, sometimes making short flights of a few yards, and at least twice it was under observation for a couple of minutes or so. Notes taken on the bird were as follows:—"This [crown] stripe and the superciliaries are quite distinct and yellowish: those of the Sedge-Warbler are whitish. Besides this the Aquatic is a distinctly more colourful bird. The upper-parts are more tawny and the under-parts, especially flanks, quite yellowish. After seeing it a couple of times I was able to pick it out by the colour even when it flew. The Sedge-Warblers appeared dull in comparison. On occasions I also had the two species close together and then the striations on the Aquatic's back were seen to be much more distinct against the tawny background."

The striations on the breast were not obvious and from this and the yellowness of the plumage it seems probable that it was a bird of the year. T. BISPHAM, W. R. PHILIPSON, R. H. RYALL.

#### ICTERINE WARBLER SEEN IN WILTSHIRE.

To my complete amazement, on walking out of the garden door of my present residence in a very quiet and secluded part of Salisbury town (practically in the Cathedral Close), at 6.35 p.m., D.B.S.T., on July 11th, 1944, I was greeted by the loud and extremely distinctive song of what I could only ascribe to an Icterine Warbler (*Hippolais icterina*) coming from a dense patch of hawthorn, copper beech, lilac and syringa, on the boundary edge of my small garden. At first all my efforts to get a clear view of the bird failed, as it kept dodging about, as it sang, amid dense greenery some fifteen feet from the ground. Then the song ceased, but I had by now retrieved my Zeiss glasses and I patiently sat down to watch. I was finally rewarded by a quick but very clear view of a conspicuously yellow-breasted Warbler that was larger than any British *Phylloscopus*. This view at once satisfied any doubts lest a Marsh-Warbler or other acrocephaline songster might, by chance, have strayed into the garden from the River Avon some two hundreds of yards away. I should like to add that I knew the Icterine extremely well in France during the last German war and met with it again as a passage migrant just outside the border of S.W. Transylvania, much more recently.

I have never forgotten the remarkable chattering and discordant notes of its cheerful song. I have not overlooked the fact that the

Melodious Warbler (*H. polyglotta*) is almost indistinguishable from the Icterine Warbler by appearance in the field. The song, however, which I knew extremely well in S. Spain in former years, is much less vehement and harsh and I do not think I have made a mistake in identification. Subsequently I again heard a very brief snatch of song from this bird. This was just outside my boundary fence, at 12.45 p.m. on the 12th, but I failed to see it again.

W. M. CONGREVE.

#### UNUSUAL NEST LINING USED BY DARTFORD WARBLER.

ON May 1st, 1944, I found a remarkably beautiful nest of a Dartford Warbler (*Sylvia undata dartfordiensis*) deep down in dense gorse, on a north Hants heath. The four eggs it contained made an amazing contrast against a beautiful *pink* lining. I could see that the lining was of some sort of fibrous root or stem, but it was only some two months later that my botanist brother brought to my house a plant of Heath Dodder (*Cuscuta epithimum*) with reddish, thread-like stems. I at once recognized the fact that the nest in question was thickly lined with stems of Heath Dodder, which grows commonly on the heath where the nest was seen. *The Handbook of British Birds* does not mention this plant as a lining for Dartford Warblers' nests.

W. M. CONGREVE.

#### THREAT DISPLAY OF SONG-THRUSH AT NEST.

WHEN ringing nestlings I have twice seen a Song-Thrush (*Turdus c. ericetorum*) adopt the threat display described by Major G. E. Took (*antea*, p. 36). In each case the bird left the nest reluctantly and assumed a highly inflated appearance with bill-snapping, exactly as described, one on the ground and the other on a branch only a few feet from the nest. Perhaps other bird-ringers will have observed the same performance.

J. A. G. BARNES.

WITH reference to Major G. E. Took's note (*antea*, p. 36), I write to record a similar incident.

On April 29th, 1944, in company with Roger Glover, I visited the nest of a Song-Thrush (*Turdus c. ericetorum*) in an apple tree. When we reached the tree the bird flew on to a branch near the nest and began snapping its beak and giving the alarm-note with all its feathers puffed up in much the same way as described by Major Took.

JOHN CUDWORTH.

#### EARLIER SINGING OF BLACKBIRD IN TOWNS.

I SPENT January 23rd-31st, 1944, in the country near Cuckfield, Sussex, during which time I did not hear any Blackbirds (*Turdus m. merula*) singing. But on my return to London on January 31st, I heard four Blackbirds in full song during an hour's walk in and near St. James's Park. This observation is not conclusive, but supports my previous impression that Blackbirds commence their spring song earlier in the centre of towns than they do in the country. It may be tentatively suggested that the warmer temperature is a factor involved.

DAVID LACK.

## EXTRAORDINARY EGG PRODUCTION BY A ROBIN.

IN May, 1944, a Robin (*Erithacus rubecula melophilus*) built a nest in an old strawberry basket in a garage at West Wickham, Kent, and proceeded to lay no less than twenty eggs. Towards the end of this performance the eggs were three deep in the nest and the bird had great difficulty in balancing herself on the pile. She was quite tame and used to be seen each morning about 8.30 to 9 a.m. (D.S.T.), when she would add another egg, but she showed no inclination to sit. Between about every six or seven eggs she took an interval of a few days. When the number of eggs had reached twenty she was, I think, disturbed by a cat and never returned. The eggs were counted after this and are in my possession.

H. W. SHOVE.

[We do not know of any parallel to this astonishing case. It is known that a number of birds can be induced to lay a large number of eggs by removing one or more daily, and Aflalo (*A Sketch of the Natural History (Vertebrates) of the British Islands*, 1898) induced a Robin to lay ten or more eggs in this manner. It thus appears that when the full clutch is laid some physiological process, operating through a sensory channel, possibly visual, but perhaps more probably tactile, inhibits the laying of further eggs. It is evident that in this case there was a breakdown of the normal inhibitory mechanism, but more than this it does not seem possible to say in view of our present imperfect understanding of the nature of the inhibition.—B.W.T.]

## KITE IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

ON August 7th, 1944, while walking near the Northampton Sewage Farm at Ecton, I saw a large hawk gliding in wide circles rather high up. The flight distinctly reminded me of that of a Buzzard (*Buteo b. buteo*), but the shape, even at first glance, was quite different; instead of the blunt, rounded, moth-like wings of the Buzzard it had longer and less blunt wings, and when I examined it through binoculars I saw that the tail was deeply forked. I watched it for about fifteen minutes, but it came no lower. However, half an hour later I again caught sight of it and this time for about five minutes at a much lower height, low enough to see the large grey-white patch on the underside of each wing, clinching the identification of the bird as a Kite (*Milvus m. milvus*).

I. J. FERGUSON LEES.

## WOOD-PIGEONS' NESTS WITH THREE EGGS.

WITH reference to I. J. Ferguson Lees's note on Wood-Pigeons' (*Columba p. palumbus*) nests with three eggs (*antea*, pp. 38-39), I write to record that on June 6th, 1944, while working for the Wood-Pigeon Investigation I found a Wood-Pigeon sitting on one egg; on revisiting the site on July 15th there was a Wood-Pigeon sitting on three eggs in the same nest. One of the eggs was clearly

far more incubated than the other two and was presumably addled. I have no means of knowing whether it was the same bird or whether another bird had subsequently laid two eggs in the same nest after the first had deserted.

The first egg measured 40.7 x 29.55 mm and the volume was 18.2 cc. The other two measured 37.4 x 28.05 mm, volume 15.4 cc and 37.75 x 27.7 mm, volume 15.2 cc. I am indebted to Mr. H. N. Southern for kindly supplying these figures of measurement.

EDWIN COHEN.

WITH reference to the notes on this subject, I found a Wood-Pigeon's (*Columba p. palumbus*) nest containing three eggs on June 18th, 1928, in the parish of Tilshead, Wilts, on a hedge about 5 ft. up. I still have these eggs and one is *slightly* smaller than the other two.

JOHN S. REEVE.

#### ACQUIRED FEEDING HABIT OF BLACK-HEADED GULL.

BLACK-HEADED Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) follow a plough and have other acquired feeding habits, but the following was new to me. On June 15th, 1944, I crossed from Leamington to Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, on the ferry boat. As the boat started to move down the river, Black-headed Gulls began to collect and to show excitement. They followed along the mud banks of the river, which were exposed as the tide was low, and settled on the edge of the water wherever the bow wave produced by the vessel caused miniature waves. Once the waves ceased at any particular place, the gulls left and followed the ship along to another favourable place. The birds on several occasions anticipated the arrival of the bow wave, flying along rather ahead of the vessel and settling in expectation of its arrival. This indicates that the habit is of long standing. It is an interesting extension of the bird's normal habit of feeding on the edge of the waves with an incoming or receding tide.

DAVID LACK.

#### DIVING OF BLACK-HEADED GULL.

DIVING of Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) for food has been shown to be not uncommon under favourable conditions (*antea*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 183, 228), but on April 22nd, 1944, at a nesting site on a Cheshire mere, I noticed that in addition to the usual display, described in *The Handbook* and in F. B. Kirkman's *Bird Behaviour*, some gulls were giving an exhibition of diving which appeared to me to have definite display significance. A bird would rise from the water to a height of four or five feet, and then dive vertically with almost opened wings. It was a spectacular plunge but it did not carry the bird deep, and the wing tips were usually just visible. The bird was under water for a very short time and came up carrying something in its beak, perhaps weed or a water creature, which it held aloft with upstretched neck. A second gull, perhaps a female, would then swim round the diving bird with neck outstretched in the usual "forward" display, described by

Kirkman. If this was begging it was not often successful, as the prize was usually swallowed by the diving gull.

In the commotion and movement of birds it was difficult to follow the fortunes of individuals, but I had the impression that the diving and subsequent behaviour was confined to relatively few pairs. However, I saw it often enough to be confident of the details described. The performance seemed to me more than diving for the sake of food. There was a more noticeable air of excitement about the birds taking part than among those around them, even taking into account the usual excitement in a gullery.

It is of interest that I saw this behaviour only on this occasion, soon after the gulls resumed tenancy of the gullery (there were no gulls there on April 10th). On visits to the gullery a week later, and subsequently, there was no diving, only the usually described display.

P. J. ASKEY.

#### BREEDING OF KITTIWAKE AND LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL IN DORSET.

To Mr. Levi Green (Portland) and Mr. A. Blinn (Weymouth) must be given the credit of being the first to record the breeding of the Kittiwake (*Rissa t. tridactyla*) and the British Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) in the County of Dorset.

On June 26th, 1937, Mr. G. M. Spooner (Weymouth) saw about eight adult Kittiwakes among thirty birds of the species flying about the cliffs on the west side of Portland near the Bill. On July 10th he only saw two immature birds there and it was concluded that no nesting had taken place. On June 15th, 1944, Blinn lowered Green (who had noticed Kittiwakes in increasing numbers about the cliffs for a few years past), over the cliffs, and eggs were found. It was estimated that about eight pairs were nesting, but many more were about the cliffs, perhaps thirty pairs. On July 5th, Mr. W. J. Ashford (Blandford) went to the cliffs with Green and verified the record, seeing both birds and eggs. Kittiwakes began to colonize Berry Head in Devon some 50 miles west of Portland about the year 1930 and now over 200 pairs breed there, so perhaps the Devon colony is overflowing and colonizing Portland, where, however, breeding has not been established until 1944.

Messrs. Blinn, Green and Ashford have also established the fact that two pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls nested in the west cliffs of Portland in 1944. Green saw a bird sitting on three eggs on June 12th and another pair had eggs not far off, and Blinn and Ashford also saw the birds and eggs, and the identity of the species was verified.

At the end of June, Blinn also saw a Lesser Black-backed Gull sitting on eggs at Bats Head, some eight miles east of Weymouth.

This species has often been seen among colonies of Herring-Gulls on the Dorset coast (where I have noticed them myself), and most probably has bred in past years, though the fact had not been definitely established.

F. L. BLATHWAYT.

GANNET IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE IN JUNE.—Mrs. Audrey Lane informs us that on June 13th, 1944, she identified an adult Gannet (*Sula bassana*) which had been found dead with a broken wing in a field at Aston Subedge, near Campden, Gloucestershire. Mr. A. J. Harthan subsequently opened the bird and found the stomach empty. As the prevailing wind at the time was (and had been for several days) N.E., the bird may have been driven inland from the east coast rather than from the nearer coast of Wales. The time of year is unusual for an inland occurrence.

HERRING-GULLS NESTING ON A HOUSE ROOF.—Mr. W. Walmesley White informs us of a Herring-Gull's (*Larus a. argentatus*) nest on a flat portion of the roof of a house at Budleigh Salterton, Devon. At the time of writing it contained one young bird hatched about July 15th. This is the second case within the recorder's experience at the place named, the first (in 1923) being mentioned in *The Handbook*. Another instance, in Cornwall, is recorded in *British Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 120.

MOORHEN CHASING STOAT IN DEFENCE OF YOUNG.—In connexion with Col. R. Sparrow's observation of a Moorhen (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*) chasing a Stoat in defence of its young (*antea*, p. 80), Mrs. D. A. MacAlister informs us of a somewhat similar incident which she witnessed in June some ten years ago on the River Lark, near Icklingham, Suffolk. She heard a great commotion among a party of Moorhens and saw one of them chasing a Stoat along the opposite bank and then driving it across the river with outspread, splashing wings. The Stoat continued its hunting not at all perturbed.

## LETTERS

### RAVENS NESTING IN A ROOKERY.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With reference to the note under this heading (*antea*, p. 53). I found a pair of Ravens breeding in a similar situation in mid-Wales during early April, 1929. The Raven's nest was situated in a tree about 30 yards from a rookery of eighteen nests.

A. J. HARTHAN.

### CHAFFINCH NORMALLY SINGLE-BROODED.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—Mr. P. R. Cox in his article "A Statistical Investigation into Bird Song" (*antea*, p. 3), assumes that the Chaffinch is double-brooded, but *The Handbook of British Birds* (1938) gives no such authority, as the following quotation shows:—" . . . . .some late nests may be second broods but not general."

Like other species of small passerines, Chaffinches will make repeated attempts to rear a brood, and considering the number of nests that are destroyed one way or another, the number of late nests is no greater than one would expect to find. Certainly the great majority of Chaffinches do not attempt to rear a second brood and I have yet to prove a single contrary case.

If this correction be accepted, then in the case of this species the single song peak corresponds.

G. CHARTERIS.

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## THE MANX SHEARWATER ON LUNDY\*

BY

H. N. SOUTHERN AND B. W. TUCKER

(Plate 5).

THE status of the Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*) on Lundy has long been problematical. It has been repeatedly stated to breed, but only very few observers have been able to obtain positive proof of this and no one has succeeded in establishing that it does so in any large numbers in spite of large flocks being seen off the island and much calling heard at night. The earlier statements about the species are quoted by Loyd (1925), and with regard to these it must suffice to say that it was stated to breed by Moore as long ago as 1837 and that D'Urban and Mathew (1895) mention it as "very numerous" as a breeder, but give no details. Apparently the first ornithologist to examine eggs and young was Roberts at some date prior to 1903, when he published a little volume called *The Bird Book*. As his account is more explicit than that of any other writer and only receives passing notice by Loyd, who had apparently not seen it, it deserves quoting. Roberts writes:—

"Their nesting burrows were situated just under the brow of some loose-faced cliffs, and in some cases, at least, had an exit at the top. About three or four feet down was a chamber excavated by the birds, and the nest itself was nothing but a few dry scraps of bracken. Some of the holes that we examined contained a smooth white egg, others, a young bird resembling a young Puffin, except for a curious tuft on the head, but in every case we found the parent bird at home, and they required careful handling, as some scars on our hands testified for many a day."

The plumage of the birds and their cries at night are also described. Unfortunately no mention is made of the numbers of eggs or young found. Cummings (1909) states, presumably from personal information, that the nesting haunt examined by Roberts was "on the east side of the island near the granite quarries."

Another record of interest has not previously been published: on June 20th, 1903, Dr. H. B. Elton took a single egg from a number of burrows excavated. So far as he remembers, no birds were found in any of the other burrows opened. The site, as Dr. Elton most kindly informs us, was on the east side, perhaps half to a third of the way up towards the north end from the houses, and was approached down slopes overgrown with bracken, amongst which the burrows were. It will be noticed that this was about the same period as that of Roberts's visit, and all the evidence points to the locality having been the same. Dr. Elton was taken there by the gardener to the then owner, the late Mr. Heaven, showing that the colony was known to people on the island.

The next observer to find eggs was Loyd (1925), who writes:—

"Years ago the colony was at the north end of the island, but that ground was deserted, probably during the first decade of the present century or a little

\* Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

later,\* and a new spot chosen, in his efforts to discover which the writer experienced the greatest possible difficulty and weeks of disappointment, but was eventually successful. It is more than doubtful whether anyone else knows the exact or even approximate situation of the nesting site."

The colony was in fact, as Capt. Loyd has been good enough to inform us, on Puffin Slope, which, as will be seen later, was the only locality where we found definite evidence of breeding in 1942. Capt. Loyd also states that a few bred on a slope to the west of Puffin Slope, and that he had also heard birds grunting below the Quarries (on the east side), but had not investigated this area closely. The figure of fifty pairs, given tentatively in his book, Capt. Loyd is now inclined to think may have been an over-estimate.

Evidence of breeding is also available from two or three other sources. Mr. F. W. Gade informs us that in 1934 he found a young Shearwater, evidently on its way to the sea, on the terrace of Millcombe House, and in 1935 he found another in the combe just below the house. He also tells us that one of the lighthouse keepers (H. Woodruff) has found eggs, and once found a young bird inside the North Lighthouse compound. Mr. R. M. Lockley informed Mr. Witherby that he also had confirmation of breeding at the north end of the island from a lighthouse keeper, who stated that eggs were chiefly laid in holes among granite boulders and difficult to dig out. Perry (1940) has further recorded having examined photographs of birds and eggs dug out by the lighthouse keepers from accessible burrows.

It will be seen, therefore, that although there are positive proofs of breeding scattered over a long period of years, none of the observations so far cited gives definite evidence of anything more than a quite small, and possibly rather unstable, breeding population. Indeed Loyd's account of his prolonged search culminating in the finding of a colony of small size is definitely against breeding on any large scale.

Recently, however, Perry (1940) has asserted that great numbers breed on the island. In his map he marks breeding places at three points on the coast, Puffin Slope near the north-east end, Lametry in the south-east and an area on the east coast above Mill Combe. Each of these is credited with "1,000 pairs." In the errata "1,000 pairs" is altered with commendable prudence to "a certain number," but it is stated that approximately 1,000 pairs breed on the island. It is apparent that this is little more than a guess influenced by the numbers of birds, of the order of fifteen hundred to two thousand, seen off the island in July and we shall not lay undue stress on the figure of the estimate, but it must clearly be taken as meaning "a very large number." The assumption of such a large breeding population is, however, in no way substantiated in Perry's account, and it was primarily to try and obtain proper evidence on the problem that our visit to Lundy was made.

\* We do not know Capt. Loyd's evidence for this statement, but it will be noted that it does not appear to square with the experience of Roberts and Elton.

By kind permission of the Admiralty and Mr. M. C. Harman, Messrs. W. B. Alexander, J. S. Watson and the writers spent from July 2nd to 10th, 1942, on the island. Grateful acknowledgement is made of £20 received from the British Trust for Ornithology towards the expenses of the party, this being part of a donation generously made by Mr. Harman for the study of bird life on the island. Observations and conclusions fall under the following headings.

#### I. DISTRIBUTION.

During the night of July 2nd-3rd two of us (B.W.T. and W.B.A.) ascertained that numbers of Shearwaters were landing and calling from burrows at Puffin Slope on the northern promontory of the island (see Plate 5). Accordingly most of our attention was concentrated at this place.

However, with the idea in mind that there might still be a really large colony somewhere else, a considerable amount of time was also spent at other places. The evidence from these was entirely negative, but it is worth mentioning them in some detail in order to illustrate the scope of our observations. Throughout the whole of our stay, conditions were ideal for Shearwaters: the earliest time of moon rising was about 3.45 a.m. (D.B.S.T.), and as calling usually began about 12.45 a.m. this gave plenty of time for investigations. In addition the sky was rarely clear, so that the nights were particularly dark, as those of us can testify, who made the long and rough journey up the whole length of the island about midnight.

(a) Slope on the west coast just south of the North Light. Visits were paid here by H.N.S., J.S.W. and B.W.T. on the night of July 4th-5th: just before midnight this slope was explored thoroughly for about an hour to see whether there were any likely burrows. Another visit was paid for a short while about 3 a.m. to find out whether any grunting birds could be heard. On each occasion results were negative. This is evidently the slope where Capt. Loyd found a few birds in the early nineteen-twenties.

(b) Slope on the east coast between Mill Combe and the rhododendron thickets. This area is one of the three mentioned as breeding grounds by Perry. Night observations were conducted here on two evenings by W.B.A. (July 4th-5th and 6th-7th), who found that birds were passing by the whole time after 12.45 a.m., but were not landing. On the mornings of July 5th and 7th about three hours in all were spent by all four of us quartering this slope to find traces of nesting burrows. There was in fact great difficulty in finding any burrows here at all, certainly none that would support a substantial colony. On the second day every possible burrow was dug out, but nothing at all was found. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Mr. Gade's observation of young birds in 1934 and 1935, mentioned on p. 123, shows that in those years *some* Shearwaters were breeding somewhere in this area.

(c) Eastern Slopes from Mill Combe south to the Castle. These were visited by W.B.A. on the same nights as (b) above, and again,

although birds were passing and calling continuously above and below him, there was no sign of any of them landing.

(d) Slopes below the Castle, west of Lametry Bay. Several visits were paid here at various times, and the ground was carefully examined by B.W.T. and W.B.A. This is another area which Perry marks as the site of a large breeding colony in 1939. On no occasion could we find any trace of burrows, or even of birds. In fact W.B.A. particularly noted, during his night patrols of the cliffs above the Harbour that the Shearwaters seemed to go no further south than the Castle.

(e) Slope on the west coast by the Battery. This point was visited on the night of July 7th-8th by J.S.W., who stayed making observations from 12.30-1.30 a.m. Shearwaters were passing along the cliffs here, just as they were on the south-east side, but were not landing.

(f) Slope on the east coast near the road to the quarries. This place is some distance south of the Gannet Rock, and was visited by B.W.T. on the same night and for about the same period as (e) above. This is the locality where Roberts's colony is said to have been and where Capt. Loyd tells us that he has heard birds grunting. The area is of course a large one, densely covered with bracken, and it was impossible to work the whole of it, so a strategic point was selected for observation about half way along. The result was the same as elsewhere: birds were passing along at intervals the whole time, but there was no evidence of their landing.

(g) Slopes between Puffin Slope and Gannet Rock. For about two hours on the afternoon of July 8th H.N.S. and J.S.W. combed these slopes and dug out a number of burrows (see Table), but no sign of Shearwaters was found.

Thorough searches during the day are probably not as good as being present at night and watching for landing birds, but on Puffin Slope at least there was evidence in the shape of feathers lying around the holes, which would certainly have given away any large colony. Therefore, apart from possible odd birds or insignificant groups (Capt. Loyd mentions one bird inhabiting a burrow near the North Light steps) it is clear that during 1942 the Shearwaters were concentrated only at Puffin Slope and were only passing other parts of the island during their calling flights.

## 2. NUMBERS.

It was impossible to arrive at any worthwhile estimate of the population which was circulating round the island, though it may be said that the general effect of the calling was far less noisy than at regular colonies. During the afternoon of July 8th, numbers of Shearwaters were observed at sea off the north end of the island. A count of those which were positively identifiable as Shearwaters, came to 230, but still greater numbers (of the order of 1,500-2,000) appeared to be present further out, though these were too far away to put their identification beyond doubt. Such flocks as these have

no doubt encouraged other observers (*e.g.* Perry) to assume that there must be a large breeding population on Lundy, but Lockley (1942) has shown how far the feeding grounds of this species may be away from the nesting site.

On Puffin Slope 19 holes were known to be occupied at night. If each of these represents two birds and a further 12 are added for single birds sitting about, we get a minimum figure of 50 for the numbers that were actually visiting the slope.

It is of interest to notice that Mr. Gade informs us that variations in the number of birds heard calling in different years support the view that the numbers breeding, or at any rate visiting the island, fluctuate considerably. Thus, 1943 and 1944, on this basis, have been scarce years, whereas 1934 and the three succeeding years were years of abundance. Mr. Gade's impressions would naturally be based principally on calling heard near his house at Mill Combe, and it may be recalled that 1934 and 1935 were the years in which he came across young birds in that area. He further informs us that notwithstanding what has been said above the number of birds seen off the island by day has been much as usual in 1944, *viz.* about 1,000-1,500, showing that there is no necessary relation between the number of birds seen on the water and those nesting.

### 3. STATUS OF THE PUFFIN SLOPE COLONY.

Observations were made during the following periods:—July 2nd, 4-7 p.m.; July 3rd, midnight-2 a.m. and 3-7 p.m.; July 5th, midnight-2.45 a.m. and 3-5 p.m.; July 7th, 2-4.30 p.m.; and July 8th, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

Generally speaking we aimed to arrive at the colony just before the calling began. This was very regular during the short time that we were on the island and odd birds had generally started by 12.45 a.m.; within a few minutes this had swelled to quite a chorus, and by 1 a.m. calling was at its height. On the night of July 7th, when H.N.S. waited until daybreak before returning from the colony the calling ceased almost as suddenly just about the time the moon rose. On occasions when observers were scattered over the island at different points, there was remarkable coincidence in the times at which they reported the beginning of activity.

As soon as calling was well under way occasional birds would start to land; some of these remained just sitting in one place; on rare occasions one was actually noted to disappear into a burrow. Such a burrow would be marked at once with a peg and a small square of white paper. Generally, however, the way of locating occupied burrows was by listening for the birds calling inside.

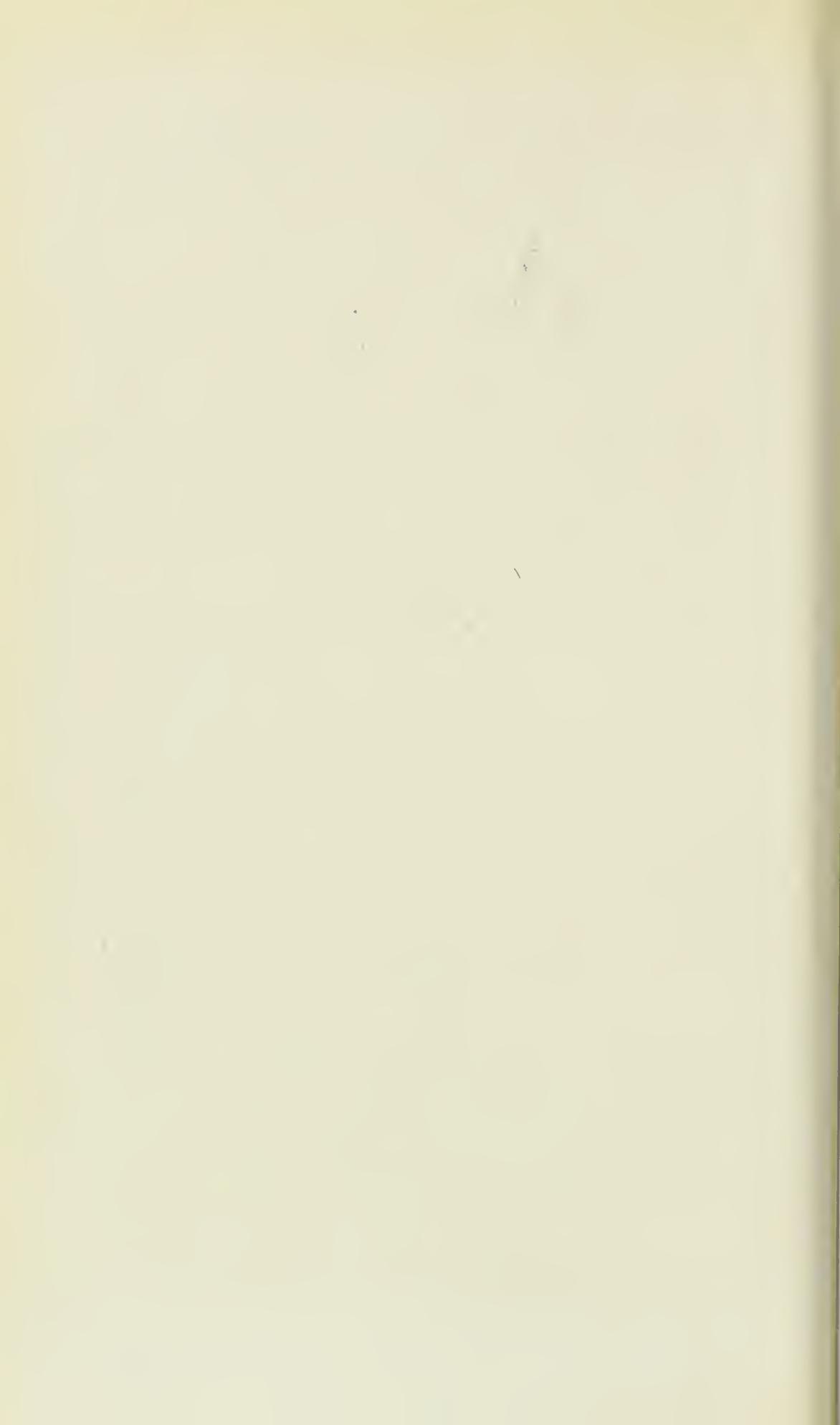
The next day these burrows were excavated, or at least an attempt was made to excavate them, since, especially in the case of the holes higher up the slope, granite boulders sometimes defied any attempts to get to the depths of the burrow. Where digging was moderately straightforward each burrow was excavated to the end, which usually meant for a length of 9-12 feet, since there was commonly a long



UPPER—Site of Shearwater colony, Puffin Slope, Lundy.

LOWER—Nestling Manx Shearwater, Puffin Slope, July 3rd, 1942.

*(Photographed by H. N. Southern).*



extension behind the nest site, sometimes leading out to another exit.

Of the burrows positively known to be occupied 13 were opened up completely and as this number constituted two-thirds of all holes known to be occupied, the results may be considered sufficient to give a proper picture of the stage of reproductive activity in the colony. A number of burrows were also chosen at random for excavation. The results are summarized in the Table.

Number of burrows	Locality	How Traced	Contents
3	Puffin Slope.	By crowing.	Old nest and two birds.
1	do.	do.	New nest, chick and one adult.
1	do.	do.	Old nest and fresh droppings.
1	do.	do.	Old nest and new feathers.
1	do.	Dug at random.	Dead ad. Shearwater.
1	do.	do.	Old nest and chick skeleton.
1	do.	do.	Puffin's sucked egg outside; nothing inside.
1	do.	do.	Two adult Puffins.
6	do.	By crowing.	Nothing.
1	do.	Adult outside.	do.
12	do.	Dug at random.	do.
2	Next slope to E.	do.	do.
5	Slope nr. Gannet Rock.	do.	do.
36			

It will be seen from this summary that only one burrow was found to have a chick. Furthermore when we had become used to the characteristic noise made by this chick at night (a whickering "swee-wee-wee" noise), and to the persistence and carrying power of it, it is highly improbable that we should have missed any other such note on Puffin Slope. It looks therefore as if the proportion of Shearwaters which bred successfully on Lundy in 1942 was very small.

In this case, of course, the main interest centred on the activity of the birds which were occupying empty burrows. Three such burrows retained their occupants during the day, and we were able to examine them and determine that in two cases the two occupying birds were in fact a male and a female. This does not, of course, mean that all the occupied burrows apart from the one with the chick were being visited by a similar pair of birds, but it is probable that a good proportion were.

The problem arises as to whether these birds were pairs, which had attempted to breed and had lost their egg or chick (petrels lay only

once during the season), or whether they were immature birds, which were indulging in preliminary courtship activities before coming into full breeding condition in the following year. Lockley (1942) has shown that there is an interval of a year or two before the Shearwater starts to breed and also that, once started, it breeds every year; therefore the above two possibilities seem the only ones to explain this curious state of affairs.

On the material at present available to us it is probably impossible to settle the matter with complete certainty, but we wish to direct attention to the problem as one of very great interest from the points of view of ecology and reproductive physiology. Our detailed evidence, though incomplete, will be discussed in another publication. Two pairs of these "unemployed" birds were killed and taken back for examination; the testes of the males and the ovaries and oviducts of the females were remarkably small, the former measuring about 7 x 4 mm., the latter about 9.5 x 5.5 mm., while the diameter of the oviducts at the base were 7 and 5.5 mm.

This certainly strongly suggests that they were immature. It is known, however, that the reproductive organs of petrels, which lay only one egg during the season, regress at an extremely rapid rate even as early as during incubation, so the fact that these birds had such small gonads is not in itself proof that they were immature. Comparison with birds which are known to have bred would be necessary to settle this point, and we were not able to obtain any such. On the other hand the fresh-looking, sleek, unworn condition of the plumage and the clean, fresh colouring of the legs and feet lent no support to the idea that they had been engaged in nesting activities earlier in the season, and Mr. Alexander, who has had considerable experience of ringing Shearwaters, tells us that he considered they contrasted markedly in the above respects with typical nesting birds removed from burrows.

We hoped also to obtain some information as to when the burrows inhabited by these "unemployed" birds were last used for breeding by examination of the nests. Both the new nest and several of the ones noted as "old" in the Table were brought back to Oxford and Mr. R. B. Freeman has kindly examined them for parasites. Unfortunately neither category of nest contained any, so no light is thrown upon whether the "old" nests belonged to 1941 or 1942. The fact that the "old" nests were all made of bracken stems, while the new one was made of dry grass, suggests that the former, if they belonged to 1942, must have been abandoned early in the season.

One further factor bearing on this problem must be mentioned, though we were unable to obtain any positive evidence about it. There are many Brown Rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) on the island, and these are known to move about from season to season. It is possible that the Lundy colony of Shearwaters is continually plundered by these animals, since one species or another is known to have been present on the island since at least 1775 (*teste* Chanter, 1877).

However no signs of occupation by rats was found on Puffin Slope during our stay.

The status of the Manx Shearwater on Lundy is therefore rather a curious one. The colony has been there for many years, but there is no evidence that it has ever been large, and in 1942 only one out of 13, and probably out of 19, burrows contained a chick. The situation is similar to that reported by Lockley (1942, p. 145) for Gt. Saltee Island, so it is clear that the condition is not unique. What makes it so remarkable is the length of time during which the birds have been known on Lundy, for this suggests that it is not merely a case of the early stages of colonization.

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## SOME OBSERVATIONS ON A TAME ROBIN

BY

M. BROOKS-KING.

THE following observations on a tame Robin (*Erithacus rubecula melophilus*), covering the period between fledging and breeding, were made in 1943 and 1944. I am indebted to my mother and sister for most of the notes, my own watching being done only during my holidays.

At my home the birds are fed regularly, and several have in the past come into the house for scraps. In July 1943, a young Robin, referred to as C in future, began to come into the house for food. It became very tame, taking food from the table, and even from the plate of a person sitting at a meal. It never, however, became confident enough to take from the hand. The food preferred at this stage was cheese or butter; the latter preference is important, as will be seen. Cake and jam were also favoured.

The moult was very late. Even by September 17th, when I left home, it was not quite complete, some speckled head feathers remaining. But before this the bird had begun to sing; mostly a very faint sub-song, though one or two bursts of full song were heard.

At the beginning of September three Robins were attempting to establish territories round the house. These were A, an old cock, B, another adult, later almost certainly identified as a hen, and C, the young bird. A and B soon settled matters, A occupying the part of the garden south and west of the house, B that to the north and east. C, being so addicted to coming into the house for food (much more so than the other two, though both came in at times), made desperate attempts to remain in the neighbourhood, but was mercilessly chased by both A and B. At this time excellent opportunities were afforded of watching the display actions of the birds, which were so used to human beings that on one occasion A, B and C postured at each other in a group at my feet. While display seemed sufficient to settle the territorial differences of A and B, C was actually attacked, and lost most of its head feathers in consequence. Finally, in desperation, C retreated into the house, where it was artificially protected by keeping the windows shut. If a window was left open, or if C ventured outside, a furious fight with one of the adult birds ensued, the latter coming into the house in search of the youngster, when able to do so.

The subservience of C appeared to be due to its backward state. Once it had completed its moult, and had attained full voice, its efforts to maintain its position became more successful, and eventually it established a territory, this territory being the house itself, both upstairs and down. Within the house C was dominant, and intruders were driven out.

Throughout the autumn and winter C spent practically the whole day in the house, and even remained indoors at night on two occasions. Its food was therefore almost entirely human, though the bird became an adept at picking flies off the ceiling. Displays and fights continued till March, and the territory was extended to the part of the garden adjoining the house on the south and east sides. On occasions C was observed to display to its reflection in a mirror and a brass coal scuttle, though such posturing was feeble compared to that used before a real rival, as though the bird realized there was no intruder, but could not help reacting to the appearance of a red breast. While full song was used in the house only when C caught sight of another Robin through a window, sub-song was almost continuous. A quiet little "conversation" was kept up, as the bird hopped about in search of crumbs, or sat on a screen or other perch.

About the middle of March C was seen to offer, on one occasion a piece of grass, on a second a dead leaf, to another Robin, and then, to quote my sister, to "dance round the recipient." Later it was found that he (his behaviour had at last distinguished him as a male) had mated with a small hen, probably an immigrant; she was not a known visitor to the house till she appeared with him. Courtship feeding occurred, sometimes in the house. When he could get it, C always took butter for this purpose. He would come several times in rapid succession for it, during our meal times. Whether he was feeding his mate with natural food at other times is not known. He continued this feeding during incubation, as there was no pause between his carrying of food to the hen and to his young.

The nest was discovered about three days after the young had hatched, in a tuft of grass at the foot of a tree, about twenty yards from the eastern side of the house. While the hen only came to the house for food now and then, C worked very hard whenever food was available. Again butter or margarine were exclusively taken, when he was allowed to help himself to it. It may be noted here that while C seemed not to discriminate between the two, A, the old cock, when presented with butter and margarine, invariably took butter, being able to distinguish it by sight or smell without tasting. It is of course impossible to say what proportion of the total diet of the young was represented by this food; but from the desperate speed at which C worked when taking it, it would seem that the exceptionally dry weather had seriously reduced the supply of natural food, and that he was making up for the scanty meals that he was able to supply at other times. It was noticed that he would eat a few pieces himself, before flying away with some for his young. I have often wondered how the parent birds find time to feed themselves in the stress of providing food for their nestlings. Perhaps C's method is the one usually adopted. When the young Robins fledged, they were not brought to the house, to

introduce them to their food supply, as I had expected. Indeed, after a few days they disappeared; and soon afterwards C was noticed to be feeding his mate again. Evidently the breeding cycle was being repeated, and a second nest was contemplated. But the frequent appearance of the hen during the following weeks suggested that this event did not take place. Later, when C had ceased to offer food to his mate, she was seen on occasions to go up to him and take food from him.

A few miscellaneous observations may be noticed in conclusion. C's knowledge of the geography of the house was remarkable. For instance, if shut out of the kitchen, by the closing of the window, he would go to the back door and up the passage, or even to a bedroom window on the opposite side of the house, and down the stairway, to reach his goal. In the matter of food, his preferences have been stated; but his interest in new diet led him into some dangerous situations. He was known to sample floor polish; and once, when my sister was spraying plants, he took some of the sulphate of potash that she was using. Finally, it was from watching him that it was learnt how frequently birds bathe. Even in the coldest weather, when the water in the bath was almost freezing, C took two or three baths each day. At such times he would come into the kitchen, and dry himself on the airing line in front of the stove.

## NOTES.

## DISTURBANCE OF COITION BY ROOK.

I HAVE previously (*antea*, Vol. xxxiii, p. 265) given examples from the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and the Blackcock (*Lyrurus tetrix*) of a male attempting to disturb the coition of another pair. Similar behaviour is characteristic of geese and swans, as noted particularly by Heinroth (*Verh. V. Int. Orn. Kong.*, 1910, p. 658). It has also been recorded in the Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) by Yeates (*The Life of the Rook*, 1934), but he considered that such disturbances occurred only in the case of stolen matings. On March 18th, 1944, two pairs of Rooks were feeding about 50 yards apart from each other in a field in Sussex. After brief posturing, one pair copulated, at which one member of the other pair promptly flew the intervening 50 yards and tried to drive the male off the female's back. The intruder then flew back to the bird it was associating with, and both pairs resumed feeding. A few minutes later the first pair left, and the other pair continued feeding. This suggests that disturbance of coition is not confined to stolen matings, as the first couple gave every indication of being a normal pair. The observation also shows that courtship sometimes occurs away from the rookery, which was out of sight from the field in question.

DAVID LACK.

## CURIOUS FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF MAGPIES.

On July 9th, 1944, near Athenry, Co. Galway, I watched a pair of Magpies (*Pica p. pica*), on the trunk of a large ash tree. They were walking up the trunk (which is practically vertical) picking at the bark. On investigation it was found that there were many small wood-lice under the moss which covers a great deal of the bark, and the marks where the birds beaks had picked at the moss were visible.

The Magpies were doing this on and off for an hour—managing to cling to the rough bark, walking up some 9 or 10 feet, and then fluttering down and walking up again. They also searched a rotten stump further up the tree.

KATHLEEN GOUGH.

## A WILD-CAUGHT GOLDFINCH-LINNET HYBRID.

LATE in 1943, Mr. A. K. Gill, of Underwood, Notts, drew my attention to a bird which was caught from a flock of Goldfinches near that village on October 26th, 1943. Careful examination showed plumage detail intermediate between *Carduelis c. britannica* and *C. c. cannabina* and after it died this identification was confirmed by Mr. B. W. Tucker and Mr. W. B. Alexander. The complete absence of wear in plumage and claws, and the bird's responses to cage life, as well as its general alertness and feeding habits with the Goldfinches before capture, suggest that it had been bred in the wild state. The call-note was that of *cannabina*.

J. STATON.

OBSERVATIONS ON CRESTED LARKS' NESTS  
IN SOUTHERN ITALY.

At the end of June, 1944, I located on a rocky, shrub-covered heathland in the province of Apulia, Southern Italy, a small number of nests of the Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) which appeared to differ structurally from the type generally recorded.

The nests in question were sited under short, isolated plants of a species of aromatic shrub, and were composed of coarse heathland grasses, lined with fine rootlets. Each nest was neatly domed with similar materials, the superstructure being roughly woven and incorporating a number of the lower, and generally dead, branches of the shrub. The dome was always so constructed as to give the nestlings the maximum protection from the fierce solar rays.

The area in which the nests were found is extremely dry and arid, and is not infrequently swept by violent dust storms. Larks of other genera, *Melanocorypha*, *Lullula*, *Calandrella*, are found on the same stretch of heathland, but I was not able to observe their nidification.

P. A. CLANCEY.

[It should perhaps be noted that although the subspecific status of the South Italian Crested Larks is somewhat uncertain, they are probably of a different race from that on the British List (*G. c. cristata*).—EDS.]

## STRANGE NESTING SITE OF BEARDED TIT.

On August 31st, 1944, I showed Lord Gage a Bearded Tits' (*Panurus b. biarmicus*) nest built half way up the side of a shooting butt, fenced in with reeds, which contained four fresh eggs. Lesser Reed Mace was growing all round the butt, but the nest was placed inside the butt on the fence. Also only 18 inches away on the same fence a Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus s. scirpaceus*) had built its nest and hatched out. This is a very unusual site for a Bearded Tit. I think 1944 has been one of the best seasons I ever remember for this delightful bird. I saw fifty-two one morning this summer.

JIM VINCENT.

## CLIFF NESTING OF HOUSE-MARTIN IN N. DEVON.

On Saturday, August 19th, 1944, I watched about fifteen House-Martins (*Delichon u. urbica*) collecting mud at Watermouth Bay, about two miles up the Bristol Channel from Ilfracombe and was surprised to see them fly over a neck of waste land to the sea cliffs. On this occasion I was unable, on account of time, to locate the nests. The colony was found on August 22nd, but as the tide was running high, I was unable to count the number of nests except for six which were built on the cliff face over a cave. On August 24th, I climbed down to the cave and found a further fifteen nests in the roof of the cave, the farthest nest being about eight yards inside. The floor of the cave was under water at high tide, when the water also rose to within about two feet of the roof. Three of the nests were still occupied on September 10th, 1944.

This is the only instance of cliff-breeding hirundines in N. Devon that I can trace.

N. V. ALLEN.

## SWIFTS SCAVENGING IN HOUSE-MARTINS' NESTS.

At about 8 a.m. (B.S.T.) on two successive mornings at the beginning of July, 1943, I noticed a Swift (*Apus a. apus*) clinging to the edge of a House-Martin's (*Delichon u. urbica*) nest and apparently feeding on something there. Once it put its head inside the nest and pecked about. There were young in the nest at the time.

Again this year I watched a pair of Swifts on several mornings flying about the Martins' nests and one of these several times clung to a nest and seemed to be either pecking at the mud or devouring insects. Once it entered the nest and remained there for some time with wing protruding.

No Swifts nest on the house where these observations were made, but there are two small colonies in the village nearby. I should be interested to hear whether any reader of *British Birds* has observed similar behaviour on the part of this species. That House-Martins nests are lavishly infested with parasites both winged and wingless is common knowledge and it would seem that the Swifts were attracted by these.

MARGARET V. GILBERT.

## GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER CLIMBING A MAN.

With reference to Col. Ryves's note upon Tree-Creeper (*Certhia familiaris britannica*) (*antea*, pp. 74-75) my own experience in the case of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*) may be of interest.

I had removed four fully fledged young from the nest-cavity in order to photograph them, and placed the birds on the ground while I was erecting the camera. One bird climbed my leg and another ascended the camera-case before any attempt was made to climb a tree. All four young eventually found their way to a tree by a series of vigorous hops, and this they climbed to a height of ten or twelve feet. No attempt was made at flight.

HOWARD BENTHAM.

## OSPREY IN THE ISLE OF BUTE.

ON June 10th, 1944, an Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) was observed by Mr. R. McPhee and myself on Loch Fad in Bute. From then on until August 24th, when it was last observed, it was seen frequently by many people while it was diving for fish, flying around the loch and perched on the tops of larch, Scots pine and Douglas firs. This is the first record of an Osprey in Bute. By watching where it went to eat its prey I was twice able to identify the fish it had caught, and on both occasions it was a Pike (*Esox lucius*). On one occasion the entrails it left contained a Roach five inches long. In *The Handbook* it is not recorded as taking Pike. Loch Fad contains Perch, Roach, Trout and Pike.

I was never able to get close enough to it to satisfy myself whether it was a juvenile or an adult, but my impression is that it was an adult. It got very little peace from other birds and was being attacked a lot by Common Terns, gulls, Oyster-catchers and Lapwing. I am told that it fished in three other lochs in the island as well as in Loch Fad.

DAVID STUART.

## HERONS SWIMMING AND DIVING.

RECENTLY I witnessed an unusual occurrence in connexion with Herons (*Ardea c. cinerea*). I was observing a flock of these birds, numbering about five, when three of them stalked into deep water and swam. I could distinctly see, through binoculars, that the body was entirely in the water and the neck was held high, with the beak horizontal. The birds swam about for at least two minutes and then waded back to the shore.

M. T. HILL.

ON October 23rd, 1938, I was watching a Common Heron (*Ardea c. cinerea*) on a canal bank near Skipton, Yorks. The bird had spent some time walking stealthily along the bank peering into the water, which was about two feet below the level of the bank, but had not secured any fish. Eventually it walked away from the canal, then suddenly retraced its steps. Bending forward and stretching its neck full out, it peered over into the water, immediately withdrawing the neck, but thrusting it forward again after a short pause and then again withdrawing it. Now, as before, it walked away from the canal and then returned to peer over the edge into the depths of the water. This time it thrust its neck down suddenly and plunged head-first into the water with a great splash, disappearing right under the surface. It came up again almost immediately with the bill pointing upwards, holding a Roach, and swam noisily to the bank, flapping its wings frantically on the water. Having scrambled on to the bank, it gulped down the fish, shook its feathers and returned to work again.

It was seen to dive into the water once more, but did not return with a fish.

M. W. PICKERING.

[For previous records of swimming, see *antea*, Vol. xxiii, pp. 39 and 99, also Waterton, *Essays on Natural History* (Edition of 1871, p. 386), and for diving *antea*, Vols. xxxvi, p. 246 and xxxvii, p. 37.—EDS.].

## EARLY NESTING OF MUTE SWAN.

I NOTICE in *The Handbook* that the breeding season of the Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) is the "second half of April, exceptionally rather earlier."

It may be of interest that I found a Mute Swan's nest on March 26th, 1944, six miles S. of Ludlow, Salop. It contained seven eggs, which were being incubated.

M. J. W. IRWIN.

## DISPLAY OF THE BLACK-NECKED GREBE.

DURING the month of April, 1944, we had the opportunity of watching in Cheshire the display of the Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps n. nigricollis*) on several occasions; Mr. R. C. R. Allen also watched the birds closely for some hours on April 28th, and kindly sent us his notes.

A pair was first seen on April 10th, and gave an occasional half-hearted display, but the birds spent most of their time apart. From

April 22nd to the end of the month, however, the birds were displaying whenever the pool was visited. During this period there were always three birds present (and on the 28th four). The third bird was evidently an intruding male and was frequently attacked by one of the pair, which rushed along the surface with outstretched neck, and on several occasions dived and torpedoed the intruder from below. Once the intruder gave a "whitt whitt" alarm-note as it made off.

The display of the pair consisted of several distinct, but in some cases related, actions:—

(1) *Habit-preening*.—Mainly of the flanks and scapulars and also of neck and breast. When the flanks were preened it was noticed that the bird did so on the side nearest to its companion and tended to roll and expose chestnut flanks and white underparts. This flank-preening was not done simultaneously, but alternately as they swam side by side, one apparently imitating the other bird's actions each time. When the breast was preened the birds swam face to face and reared up in the water high enough to show the white lower breast.

(2) *Head-shaking*.—This was done alternately as they swam side by side and also when they were facing one another.

Actions (1) and (2) were closely associated and perhaps should be regarded as one display. The "habit-preening" was the predominant action and the head-shaking took place for a shorter time altogether. This is in contrast to the display of the Great Crested Grebe, where the reverse is the case.

(3) Stretching out of neck low over water and raising of one wing on the side nearest to the other bird; this was seen several times on one day only.

(4) *Billing*.—This was done face to face after the manner of the Great Crested Grebe, and at the same time the crest on the crown was raised. This was observed only once.

(5) *Weed presentation*.—One bird brought up a piece of weed and carried it to the other, but apparently it was not actually presented and the bird soon dropped it.

At the end of the month the intruder on a number of occasions displayed to one of the pair by preening and head-shaking; the bird to which the display was made did not respond, and the other bird of the pair drove it off with some violence. Once a bird, apparently the intruder, presented a small fish, which was refused with a hissing noise. Display was last seen in the second week of June and consisted of one bout of side by side head-shaking.

It was noticed that the pair dived practically simultaneously when feeding. One, which came up with a fish, was attacked by a Black-headed Gull and immediately "crash-dived," but it was not possible to say what happened to the fish. The three birds were still present on June 28th, and no young birds were seen this year.

P. J. ASKEY AND A. W. BOYD.

## LARGE CLUTCH OF STOCK-DOVE'S EGGS.

*The Handbook* states "four also recorded" as an exceedingly rare clutch for the Stock-Dove (*Columba œnas*), while c/3 is not uncommon (I have myself once found that number). On August 3rd, 1944, a young friend of mine, S. R. Glazebrook, collected and sent me a set of four, slightly incubated, eggs of this species, taken from a hole 25 feet from the ground, in an elm tree at his home in the Wrexham, Denbighshire, neighbourhood. All four eggs were equally incubated and none showed any sign of staleness. Another pair was nesting about 100 yards away in an unclimbable site and the birds were always present. The eggs were not particularly even in size, but evenness in size is by no means a marked feature with the normal c/2 of the *Columbidæ*. In this four one might have divided them into a three plus one as regards size consistency.

I am of opinion that this is a genuine lay of four eggs by the same bird, but, naturally, there must be some slight doubt. The presumed same hen bird laid again in the same hole and its first-egg appeared on August 27th, followed by the second next day. No more were laid.

W. M. CONGREVE.

## TEMMINCK'S STINT IN SURREY.

ON August 23rd, 1944, we were able to identify a Temminck's Stint (*Calidris temminckii*), at the Guildford Sewage Farm, Surrey. Much of the time it kept company with Common Sandpipers, compared with which it was strikingly smaller. Identification was made on the following points:—The upper-parts were a uniform greyish colour, the breast and belly were white, with a distinct grey smudge on the pectoral region. The legs were dark.

When it flew, it called frequently: the note was a quiet, short high-pitched trill. It towered to a considerable height, flew around for a few minutes, and then pitched in a nearby pit. We could not get a view of the white outer-tail feathers on the 23rd, but we were in no doubt as to the identity of the bird. It was last seen on August 26th.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON AND DAVID SETH-SMITH.

AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER IN  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

ON August 1st, 1944, in company with Mr. T. Bispham, of Wembley, and Thomas Smith, of the U.S. Army, I saw what was undoubtedly a Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*) at the sewage farm near Slough. We were looking over some waders when this bird came flying past. As soon as I heard the note I said that it sounded just like an American Pectoral Sandpiper. Moreover, as the bird wheeled around us and I checked its shape, size, darkness of the central tail feathers and rump, and the sharp demarcation between the dark streaked breast and whitish underparts I repeated several times that the bird *looked* exactly like our American Pectoral

Sandpiper. I have carefully checked every European species and I can see none that might be confused with this one. For twenty years I have studied birds in the United States, where the Pectoral Sandpiper is a common transient. No experienced observer in our region considers it a difficult trick to identify this species in flight, especially when it gives its diagnostic note. I realize that there is always a possibility of error in a sight identification, yet I cannot help feeling certain that the bird we saw on that day was a very familiar species that had strayed to England.

ALLAN D. CRUICKSHANK.

#### SPOTTED REDSHANK IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

ON the evening of August 25th, 1944, when on the shore of Milford Haven near Dale we heard the call-notes of a Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*) and soon afterwards the bird flew close past us in company with a Common Redshank. Its larger size, darker colouring and the lack of white on the secondaries were all noted.

Mathews (*Birds of Pembrokeshire*, 1894) records the species as an occasional autumn visitor to the county, but this appears to be the first record for a definite locality and date.

H. G. ALEXANDER, W. B. ALEXANDER AND M. C. RADFORD.

LATE FLEDGING OF GOLDFINCHES.—In *The Handbook* the late Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain states of the Goldfinch (*Carduelis c. britannica*): "three [broods] at times, as young found in September." Mr. G. M. King informs us that on September 16th, 1944, at West Hagley, Worcs, he captured and ringed a young Goldfinch which was evidently only just out of the nest and was still only able to cover 12-15 yards at a flight. Later he saw others of the brood with the parents.

TREE-CREEPER CLIMBING A MAN.—With reference to the note under this heading by Col. B. H. Ryves (*antea*, p. 74) the Report of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Committee for Ornithology for 1943 (*Naturalist*, April-June, 1944), contains the following amongst notes on the Tree-Creeper (*Certhia familiaris britannica*):—"Two of a family of young birds being watched by Miss E. Crackels and Miss Brayshaw alighted on the sleeves of the ladies; one bird climbed up the sleeve and on to the lady's shoulder where it remained for about one minute."

DIPPER ON SEASHORE IN AUGUST.—Corporal P. A. Humble informs us that he saw a Dipper (*Cinclus c. gularis*) flying about seaweed-covered rocks at the edge of the sea at St. Cyrus, Kincardineshire, on August 26th, 1944. Though Dippers occasionally visit the shore in winter this is, in our experience, exceptional at other times.

LATE FLEDGING OF SWIFTS.—Mr. N. V. Allen reports that two young Swifts (*Apus a. apus*) successfully left a nest at Ilfracombe on August 28th, 1944.

OSPREY IN NORTH DEVON.—Mr. N. V. Allen sends us details of an Osprey (*Pandion h. haliaetus*) which he saw at Watermouth Bay, Ilfracombe on August 26th, 1944. He informs us that an Osprey, probably the same bird, was reliably reported near Ilfracombe on August 24th, September 18th and 19th.

GREY PHALAROPES IN DORSET, SOMERSET AND CORNWALL.—Capt. A. C. Fraser informs us that on September 2nd, 1944, he and Lt. D. Rowston watched a Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) on the Fleet between Abbotsbury and Weymouth after a strong westerly gale had been blowing for many hours. One was also seen by Mr. H. H. Davis at Blagdon Reservoir, N. Somerset, on September 5th, another by Mr. P. J. R. Clifton at Bude, N. Cornwall, on September 7th, and one, which may well have been the same bird, by Mr. A. C. Leach at Bude on October, 19th.

SPOTTED CRAKE AND GREAT SNIPE IN NORFOLK.—Mr. Jim Vincent writes to us that he has examined a Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) which was caught in a wire cage at Dilham, Norfolk, on September 16th, 1944, and killed in mistake for a young Moorhen. It proved to be a female and a bird of the year. On September 18th Mr. Vincent had a good view of a Great Snipe (*Capella media*) at Hickling. The bird flew past within 10 feet of him and settled about 10 yards away. When disturbed it only flew a short distance before settling again.

### REVIEW.

*The Meaning of the Names of Some British Birds and Their First Use in British Ornithology.* By Sir Hugh Gladstone. Dumfries: Printed for Private Circulation, 1943.

THIS pamphlet of 35 pages contains the substance of a paper read to the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society on 23rd April, 1943. The names discussed are those commonly used for the British representatives of the Pigeon, Grouse and Pheasant families, but in addition to the particulars referred to in the title various other historical facts are included, especially the various alternative names used for the species in the past and the history of the introduction of those game-birds which are not indigenous.

In a prefatory section the author gives a brief account of early books in which lists of the names of British birds appear. We note that Thomas Muffett's *Health's Improvement* contains descriptions and observations of over one hundred wild British birds. Though not published till 1655 (fifty-one years after the death of its author) it was probably completed in 1595. Some of the names used by Muffett antedate the earliest citation by H. Kirke Swann in his *Dictionary of English and Folk-Names of British Birds*, 1913. It is noteworthy that he clearly distinguished the four species of pigeons, though even two centuries later they were still confused by professed ornithologists.

Sir Hugh Gladstone mentions that he had considered writing a book on the subject, but has abandoned the idea on discovering that the Rev. Laurens Sargent had also made notes for a work on the English nomenclature of birds from the aspect of their etymology. Perhaps we may express the hope that these two authorities will co-operate in a work of which the present paper may be considered a sample chapter or chapters. We feel sure that Mr. Sargent will not wish to deprive us of the results of Sir Hugh's prolonged researches on the bibliography and history of British birds and their English names.

W.B.A.

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# SUMMARY OF A REPORT ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF THE CORN-CRAKE (*Crex crex*)\*

BY

C. A. NORRIS.

## INTRODUCTION.

IN the summers from 1933 to 1937 Corn-Crakes were present near Stratford-on-Avon, where they had not been heard since about 1920. In 1935 and 1936 they also re-established themselves in certain areas in Worcestershire. This suggested the possibility that the long decrease which was known to have occurred in many parts of England might have come to an end and it was decided early in 1938 to carry out a national inquiry under the auspices of the British Trust for Ornithology as to the past and present distribution and status of the species, and the probable causes of the decreases and fluctuations in numbers.

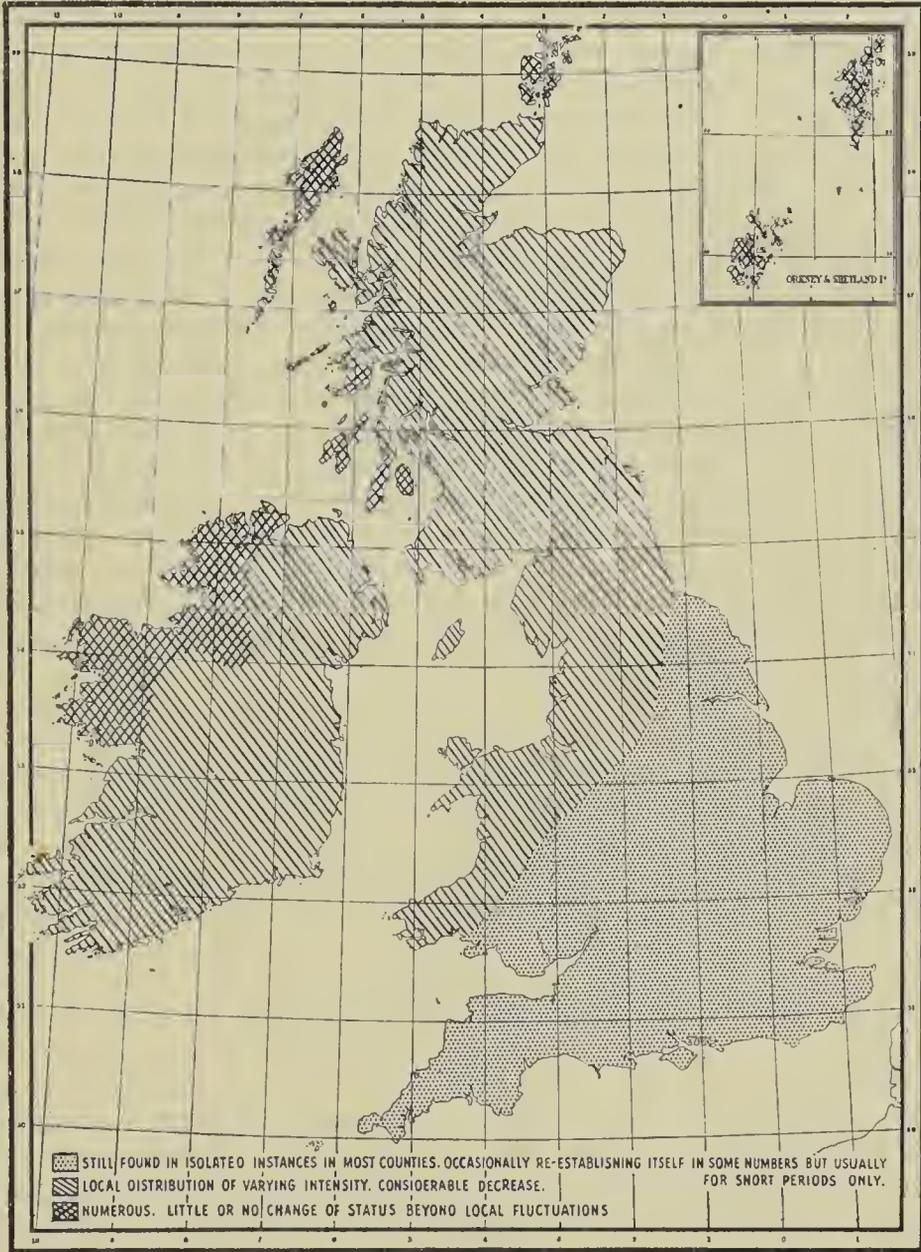
Appeals for information were published in a large number of papers and a short talk was given in the wireless News Bulletin on July 14th, 1938. Questionnaires were also circulated with a number of ornithological journals. In 1939 a special effort was made to fill gaps in the information received in the previous year, to obtain additional information from certain critical areas and to get particulars from the Continent. In 1938, 1,180 questionnaires were filled up and returned and in addition over 800 letters and postcards were received. In 1939 a further 650 questionnaires and nearly 400 letters were received. This does not include the reports from abroad, but owing to the outbreak of war these were unfortunately few, though, as will be seen, they provide valuable information as to the position in several continental countries.

The present report deals only with the past and present status and distribution of the Corn-Crake in the British Isles and its present status in parts of western Europe. It was urged, especially by the late H. F. Witherby, that this information should be summarized and published before it became too much out-of-date. The organizer of the inquiry, having joined the army, had comparatively little time in which to compile a report, but with the help of his wife and W. B. Alexander a fairly complete survey of the literature of the subject was made and a report was completed before he left England. With his permission it has been revised and condensed for publication by W. B. Alexander. It is hoped that after the war a further report on aspects of the life-history of the Corn-Crake and a discussion of the causes of its decrease in numbers will be prepared by Major Norris.

The accompanying map which was prepared by him for *The Handbook* gives a general view of the present status of the Corn-Crake in the British Isles. It divides the country into three areas, though it will be understood that the differences between the status

\*Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

of the Corn-Crake in these areas are not in reality separated by hard and fast lines. In most of the northern and western Scottish islands and north-west Ireland the Corn-Crake is still numerous and there appears to have been little or no change of status beyond



local fluctuations. In the greater part of Ireland, Scotland, northern and north-west England and most of Wales the Corn-Crake still occurs locally, but has greatly decreased. From eastern, central and southern England and south-east Wales the Corn-Crake has

practically disappeared as a regular breeding species, though in most counties pairs or small colonies occasionally establish themselves and breed for a year or two.

#### HISTORICAL.

The earliest mention of the Corn-Crake in the British Isles is that of Turner (1544), who called it the Daker Hen and wrote: "I have not seen or heard it anywhere in England, save in Northumberland alone." In 1602 Carew said it was found in Cornwall and in 1603 Owen recorded that it bred in Pembrokeshire. In 1667 Merrett wrote that though Turner only knew of it in Northumberland "I remember to have seen and heard it at Wheatley five miles from Oxford"; whilst in 1677 Charleton wrote that it "has scarcely ever been observed by more recent observers" than Turner. In 1678 Ray wrote that it was "very common in Ireland but more rare with us" in England and in his *Synopsis* published in 1713 after his death he added: "Tancred Robinson tells us he has often found Land Rails in northern Yorkshire." In 1698 Martin stated that it bred at St. Kilda and in 1700 Leigh in his *Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire and the Peak* said it was "common in these parts." The foregoing statements suggest that in the 16th and 17th centuries the Corn-Crake was very uncommon in the greater part of England south of Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire, but was much commoner in the north (and perhaps also in Wales), and very plentiful in Ireland.

During the 18th century we have records that it was "pretty often met with" in fields in Northamptonshire (Morton, 1712), "very common in summer" in Co. Cork (Smith, 1750), "frequent in vale-meadows" in Northumberland (Wallis, 1769), abundant throughout Caithness (Pennant, 1771) and frequent in summer in Co. Dublin, though rare in England (Rutty, 1772). In 1776 Pennant wrote that "they are in greatest plenty in Anglesea, where they appear about the 20th of April, supposed to pass over from Ireland, where they abound. They are found in most of the Hebrides and the Orkneys." In 1785 he added that they were found in summer in the Shetlands. Latham in the same year quoted Pennant's statements and added: "Few places in England are destitute of them in summer; but no where what may be called common." His contemporary Gilbert White states that at Selborne they were only occasionally met with in autumn, but adds: "Land-rails used to abound formerly, I remember, in the low wet bean fields of Christian Malford in North Wilts, and in the meadows near Paradise Gardens at Oxford." In 1794 Heysham recorded that they nested in Cumberland and Lambert that they bred in Wilts "and I believe everywhere in England." It is clear therefore that in the 18th century, their breeding range in England extended south to Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, though they were obviously local, and much less common than in Ireland, Scotland and Anglesey. In Sussex Markwick only knew of them as autumn visitors, giving the

average of 26 years' observation as: First seen Sept. 1; Last seen Oct. 20.

Writers in the first half of the 19th century did not provide much additional information as to the status of the Corn-Crake. In 1806 Neill stated that it was "exceedingly abundant in Orkney, and also pretty common in Shetland." About 1814 Lamb wrote that in Berkshire it was "common in the summer and autumn," whilst in 1816 Polwhele said that in Cornwall it was "never abundant." In 1824 Latham wrote "nor is this bird at all plentiful in England, though in some parts much more so than in others." In 1826 Sheppard and Whitear wrote that it "occasionally breeds in Norfolk and Suffolk; is most common in autumn, but is by no means abundant." In 1831 Rennie said; "I have never heard it in the vicinity of London, nor in Wiltshire, though it is said to be plentiful in the west of England"; but in 1834 Jesse said they were "far from being scarce" in the neighbourhood of Hampton Court. Remarks such as this may mean only that they were frequently shot by sportsmen in autumn, not that they nested in the vicinity. Hays in 1831 said they were "rather scarce in the neighbourhood" of Shepscombe, Glos.

Selby wrote in 1833: "They are very plentiful throughout Wales, the north of England, and Scotland. In the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebrides, they also abound, and their migration extends to the Orkney and Shetland Isles." He also stated that "upon the banks of the Trent below Newark, the meadows are annually visited by great numbers; and I have, in the course of an hour, killed 8 or 10 in a single field." This statement presumably refers to the autumn. In 1835 Jenyns wrote that the Corn-Crake "is pretty generally distributed throughout the kingdom, though said to be most plentiful in the northern parts of it, and in Ireland."

Statements as to the status of the species during the last 100 years are quoted in the subsequent accounts of the former status in the various provinces.

#### PRESENT DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS.

##### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

No attempt was made in the present inquiry to estimate the actual Corn-Crake population. Reports were grouped under 5 categories:—A. None; B. Isolated reports (i.e. ones and twos); C. A few (i.e. threes to sixes); D. Generally distributed; and E. Numerous. In the present summary reports under B and C have been treated together as "Few" whilst those under D and E have been treated together as "Numerous."

Practically all reports refer to the number of birds heard and it has been assumed, in the light of available evidence, that it is the male bird that produces the once familiar call. The number of birds heard calling regularly has been assumed to indicate the number of breeding pairs. The fact that birds have not been heard in a district does not necessarily indicate that they are

completely absent. A number of reports have been received of isolated pairs successfully rearing their young in the vicinity of houses and farms where no indication of their presence had been observed until the mowing of hay revealed, in one case, a nest and eggs, and in a number of cases a brood of young that must have been reared in the immediate vicinity. The instances reported have all referred to isolated birds remote from any district where the species is at all common.

In preparing the following notes on distribution in the breeding season reports of birds seen after the second week in August have generally been omitted, as these may refer to migrants.

#### 1. PENINSULA (Cornwall, Devon and Somerset).

*Former status.* Carew included the Corn-Crake in his list of birds found in Cornwall in 1602. There is no evidence that it ever nested commonly in that county, where it was described as never abundant in 1816, of rare occurrence in 1856, never abundant in 1880 and not uncommon though somewhat local in 1902. In Devon it appears to have been numerous though fluctuating considerably in numbers throughout the nineteenth century, whilst in Somerset it was described in 1869 as a well known and fairly common summer visitant.

*Change of status.* In Devon there appears to have been a general and widespread decrease from about 1900 onwards; especially rapid before 1920. In Somerset the Corn-Crake was becoming scarce in some districts by 1906, whilst in Cornwall it appears to have remained fairly plentiful up to 1920-25 but a decrease has since occurred.

*Present status.* A very scarce summer visitant in Somerset. Of the 23 returns for 1938 only 3 reported birds heard, though many of the other recorders had heard birds within the last few years. Only one was reported as heard in 1939 and no recent evidence of nesting was received. A scarce summer visitant in Devon, where out of 29 reports received in 1938 only 8 recorded the presence of the bird and these only isolated instances chiefly in the south, except on Lundy where Mr. F. W. Gade reported 6 to 12 birds in 1938 but none in 1939. In Cornwall a few birds still nest annually in widely separated localities. In 1938 their presence was reported from 7 localities but in all these except Penzance they were said to have decreased within the last few years with a considerable drop in 1938 on the 1937 numbers.

In Devon, the Corn-Crake is still fairly numerous on migration, especially in autumn, and in Somerset an uncommon passage migrant.

#### 2. CHANNEL (Dorset, Wilts, Hants and Sussex).

*Former status.* In 1788 the Corn-Crake was recorded as a summer bird of passage in fair numbers in Hampshire, but in the following year White called it a rare bird at Selborne, stating that it was more plentiful near Battle, in Sussex and formerly abounded near Christian Malford, N. Wilts. In 1794 it was recorded as breeding near Heytesbury, Wilts. In 1855 it was said to be rarely found in Sussex in the breeding season, but in 1863 was considered common in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. In Wiltshire and Dorset the species was described as very common or plentiful throughout the 19th century.

*Change of status.* In Dorset a decrease was noted before the end of the 19th century and by 1914 it was regarded as a vanishing species. In Wilts, decrease was noted in the early years of the present century and gradually intensified, though there was a reappearance about 1917-20 which did not continue. Marlborough College reports mention the finding of the nest in 20 years from 1865 to 1910 but not since. In Hampshire 1904 was a poor year, though the birds were again common throughout the county in 1905, but in 1907 none were met with. In 1914 it was very scarce but in 1917 some nests were found. In Sussex there was a slight decrease at the beginning of the 20th century, which became more marked by about 1910. Large numbers

were present in East Sussex in 1915 and it was again fairly numerous near Harling in 1926, but these were probably local fluctuations.

*Present status.* In all these counties the Corn-Crake is now very rare as a summer visitor. In Dorset out of 16 records only 3 recorded birds in 1938 and only near Puddletown, where 6 were located, does breeding seem probable. Of 19 records from Wiltshire only 3 reported birds in 1938 and these were seen in autumn, two in August and one in September. In Hampshire out of a total of 36 reports, 27 were negative, though a number of these report birds as present in earlier years and a nest is recorded for 1937. In 1938 one nest with 3 chicks was destroyed in N.W. Hants and there are records of birds heard in the N.E., as well as one in the Isle of Wight. In Sussex 27 of the 1938 reports were negative, but 6 record isolated birds and one states that the Corn-Crake has been heard regularly near Bognor for the last 40 years.

The species is met with as an autumn migrant near the coast in this region, being only scarce in Sussex, but sometimes common in the Isle of Wight (20 were shot at Shanklin in 1935) and regularly common in the Isle of Purbeck. In the autumn of 1913 76 were shot in one day on an estate 3 miles from Swanage, and in the years from 1932 to 1937 the average bag was over 10, varying from 5 to 20.

3. THAMES (Kent, Surrey, Essex, Herts, Middlesex, Berks, Oxon and Bucks.).

*Former status.* In 1667 Merrett stated that he had heard the Daker-hen (an old name for the species) at Wheatley, four miles from Oxford, and in 1783 the Corn-Crake was recorded as abundant in the meadows round Oxford. Writers during the 19th century recorded it as numerous, plentiful, common or not uncommon in all the counties of this province except Essex, where there is no evidence that it was ever common.

*Change of status.* Decrease is said to have begun in Essex about 1850, about 1875 in Middlesex, 1885 in Oxon, 1895 in Kent, Berks and Bucks and 1900 in Surrey and Herts. Within a comparatively short period the bird became rare in most parts of all these counties, surviving longest in the water-meadows near the Thames.

*Present status.* Out of about 150 reports from this area in 1938 only 17 recorded the occurrence of the Corn-Crake in that year. Only near Hatfield, Herts, was it fairly numerous and the only other pair suspected of breeding was near Amersham, Bucks, but no nests were reported. Records of nests in 1936 and in 1939 come from Kent. It is probable that a few pairs still breed sporadically in most of the counties. At Camb, near Newbury, Berks, no sound of the birds was heard either in 1938 or 1939, yet in both years they were seen during mowing.

Corn-Crakes still occasionally occur on migration, chiefly in autumn, throughout the area.

4. ANGLIA (Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambs, Beds, Hunts and Northants.).

*Former status.* Sir T. Browne recorded the Corn-Crake as a Norfolk bird in 1668 and Sheppard and Whitear said in 1826 that it occasionally bred in Norfolk and Suffolk, but there is no evidence that it was ever a common breeding species in either of those counties. In 1712 Morton said it was pretty often met with in Northants. In the other counties of the area it is described by nineteenth century writers as common.

*Change of status.* Decrease was noted in Norfolk about 1886, in Cambridgeshire about 1890 and in Bedfordshire about 1897 and the species had become rare throughout the area by about 1910. There is no definite record of breeding in Norfolk since 1900.

*Present status.* In this province the species now only breeds occasionally. In 1938 one nest with eggs, destroyed at Towcester, Northants., was the only one reported, but near Grantchester, Cambs, several pairs were present and probably nested. Other reports were received of isolated birds heard in various localities. In 1939 Mr. G. R. Mountfort found 8 or 9 breeding pairs in the vicinity of Brancaster Staithe, Norfolk, where the species was almost unknown four years earlier.

The Corn-Crake passes through the area on migration, especially in autumn, when it is chiefly observed in Norfolk.

5. SEVERN (Glos, Mon, Hereford, Worcs, Warwick, Staffs. and Salop).

*Former status.* The Corn-Crake is included in Dickenson's list of birds of Staffordshire, 1798. It appears to have been common throughout the area during the 19th century.

*Change of status.* A decrease began in Worcestershire before the end of the century and in Warwickshire about 1900. In Staffordshire, Shropshire and Gloucestershire decrease began about 1911 or 1912, in Monmouthshire about 1914 and in Herefordshire about 1918. In most of these counties birds remained in certain areas, especially along the Severn and other river valleys, after they had disappeared from most districts and there are several instances of the re-occupation of areas for a few years after they had once been deserted. For instance at Stratford-on-Avon the Corn-Crake was common before 1914, decreased till 1920 and re-established itself in 1933, remaining till 1937 but again absent in 1938.

*Present status.* Of 129 reports for 1938 only 39 observers record the presence of the Corn-Crake in that year, but about half the others had heard it within a few years before. In Warwickshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire the only reports were of isolated birds, but in the other four counties it still occurs regularly in certain areas. In Monmouthshire in two areas near Cardiff; and in the Wye Valley near Monmouth and Chepstow; in Gloucestershire in the Forest of Dean and in the Severn valley near Tewkesbury; in Worcestershire in the Avon valley near Evesham and also near Stourbridge; and in Staffordshire near Newcastle and in the Trent valley near Burton. In the last-named region the numbers are reported to be slowly decreasing, but at Stourbridge, Evesham and other localities in Worcestershire a considerable increase is said to have occurred in recent years. From this county 6 reports were also received in 1939 and in the 6 areas concerned the number of pairs was 23 in 1938 and 13 in 1939.

6. TRENT (Lincs, Rutland, Leics, Notts and Derbyshire).

*Former status.* There is no evidence that the Corn-Crake was ever generally common in Lincolnshire, though in some localities it appears to have been frequent at certain periods, for instance at Great Cotes from 1864-67 and again in 1872. In the other four counties of the area it was apparently common up to the first decade of the 20th century.

*Change of status.* In Lincolnshire decrease began about 1890 and by 1915 the species had almost disappeared from the county, though still occurring in a few localities. In Rutland decrease occurred before 1907 at which date, it still bred sparingly. In Leicestershire decrease began about 1915, in Derbyshire about 1917 and in Nottinghamshire about 1920.

*Present status.* In Lincolnshire the species is now only a scarce passage migrant, noted in two localities in 1938. Probably the same is true of Rutland from which no information was received. In Leicestershire the only report of its occurrence came from Charnwood Forest, where it is said to have been common till 1928, but 5 other observers had heard birds within the previous five years. In Nottinghamshire the species is now absent from many districts where it was formerly common, but still occurs in some numbers near Mansfield and near Worksop, in both which areas it is stated to have increased recently.

In Derbyshire the Corn-Crake is still to be found in many parts but is nowhere plentiful and would seem to be rapidly decreasing. Of those who reported in 1938 five had last heard the bird in 1936 and nine in 1937. In 9 areas from which reports were received both in 1938 and 1939 there had been a decrease of nearly 45% in the latter year.

(To be concluded).

## SOME OBSERVATIONS ON A REMARKABLY COLOURED HERON

BY

KATHLEEN GOUGH.

ON March 26th, 1944, I was watching with glasses some Herons (*Ardea c. cinerea*) in a small heronry near Athenry, Co. Galway, Eire. There were two birds on a newly started (late) nest. The nest was in a beech tree, and at that time the trees were bare so that it was in full view. The sun was behind me and the light excellent. One bird had just alighted and was presenting the other bird with a stick. This bird that presented the stick I presumed to be the male (cf. *Handbook*, Vol. iii, pp. 128 and 129).

After presentation and some bowing, the two birds started "billing," or "fencing"—their two bills close against and touching each other. It was then I saw to my great surprise that the one bill was yellow, the other *bright red*, the red-billed bird, being the one that presented the stick, the presumed male.

I went again the next day and again had a very good view of the red-billed bird. The third day my husband came with me, and with glasses and in a good light we both saw it, as did also a neighbour who was with us. I then looked at its legs and saw they were bright red too. My husband remarked that the other bird's yellow bill had a pinkish tinge, and when I compared it with a Herons on neighbouring nests, I decided it certainly had a pinkish tinge. Moreover two days later I had a view of this same bird's legs and they were pinkish too. My husband and I took into careful consideration the chance of reflected light, etc., but decided without doubt that the colour was not caused in that way.

At first, I thought that the red-billed, red-legged bird was an aberration, but I found on reading through the descriptions of other herons in *The Handbook* that some species such as the Buff-backed Heron (*Ardeola i. ibis*) and Night-Heron (*Nycticorax n. nycticorax*) have seasonal colour changes in their bills and legs. Reading of these seasonal changes, I wondered if there could be the possibility that the same occurs in some of our Common Herons?

I decided to watch the birds in hope of collecting further data. Unfortunately I did not see as much of them as I had hoped to, but enough to be of interest. On April 4th I saw a Heron arranging sticks on the nest; it was the same pink-tinged female (?) bird. Soon after this, the nest was completed and the bird started to sit, and was difficult to see. Once or twice I had a view of its bill, and it was always the same female (?) bird. I went at different times of day, morning and evening, in hopes of seeing the "change over" and the other bird, but I never succeeded in doing so. If I am right in thinking that the red-billed bird (that presented the stick) was the male, it apparently sat at night and the female by day.

I was away from May 18th-25th and after my return very busy and could not go often. By now there were two young birds, but the nest was entirely hidden by the full foliage of the trees from all sides except the north, and as most of my visits at the time were in the evening this meant a difficult light, looking into the sun. Several times I spent an hour watching and on several occasions saw a parent bird bringing food, but each time the light was bad and the bird's visit very fleeting, so that I could not be certain of the colour of bills or legs. On other visits I drew blank entirely and did not see either of the parent birds. However, on June 21st I was at last lucky and had a good view of a parent bird just leaving the nest as I arrived. I was able to see it in a good light, with my glasses, and I distinctly saw that its bill was an orangeish-red—not so bright and deep a red as in March, but certainly not the normal yellowish colour (and not the colour of the pink-tinged bird). It seemed to me as if the bright red had faded to an orange-red. Since then I have not seen either of the parent birds for certain and the young birds have now flown.

Watching the other Herons in the heronry I have not seen any other with abnormal colouring. I was disappointed at not seeing more of the red-billed bird, but feel I was very fortunate in having the three good views of it in March.

[I think it inconceivable that if the remarkable colouring described by Mrs. Gough was developed regularly in even a very small percentage of Herons it could possibly have been overlooked. But this striking abnormality, as I should regard it, is of special interest in view of the regular colour change which, as Mrs. Gough has noted, takes place in a certain proportion of individuals of some other herons. The yellow and red pigments of birds are evidently closely allied chemically, belonging to the class known as carotenoids (cf. E. Lönnberg, *Proc. 8th Internat. Ornithol. Congress*, 1934, pp. 410-424), and I have myself shown (*antea*, Vol. xxx, pp. 70-73) that in a number of individuals of the Buff-backed Heron (*Ardeola i. ibis*) a change from yellow to red takes place in the bill, iris and legs in the breeding-season. Mrs. Gough has kindly forwarded me a sample of the approximate colour of the bill of the bird described, as seen in March and on June 21st respectively. The former is a scarlet-red near the "Nopal Red" of Ridgway's *Color Standards and Color Nomenclature* (1912) and the latter near "Bittersweet Orange" of the same work.—B.W.T.]

## DEPARTURE OF SWIFTS

BY

H. N. SOUTHERN.

THE arrival and departure of migrants are usually recorded by the dates upon which the first and last birds are seen. The arrival date of the first bird of any migrant species is usually fairly close to the arrival of the main bulk of that species: even so a particularly early bird may give a distorted view of the actual course of the migration. In the autumn records of this kind are far more unsatisfactory. Southward movements are known to be less concentrated and the result is that dates given are more often than not merely those of stragglers, which may have lingered on weeks after the main body of birds has departed.

To rectify this state of affairs is no easy matter because quantitative observations are necessary, and many species do not lend themselves to this form of treatment without a lot of trouble expended by the observer.

In some cases, however, this can be arranged fairly simply and the short observations given below were carried out (*a*) as a preliminary test to see whether satisfactory and informative results could be obtained in this way, and (*b*) to find out whether the species chosen, the Swift (*Apus a. apus*), did leave within a short period of time (this is usually the impression given to casual observation), or whether there was a gradual diminishing of numbers through August.

Observations were made from the top storey of a house in Oxford giving a view over a large part of the city lying between the centre and Port Meadow. This part usually contains a fair number of breeding pairs, and since from this observation point about 50 per cent. of the sky to the west of Oxford is visible, the evening gathering of Swifts can be watched for a constant sample of the Oxford population.

Since these gatherings during and just after the breeding season are usually too great to be sure of accurate counts, watching was not started until August 8th, when numbers had begun to diminish to manageable proportions. The convention was adopted of recording the greatest number each night which could be counted at once. This is a minimum number, but is the safest standard to take.

Watching was done from 5 minutes before sunset to 10-15 minutes after sunset, and the two most marked features of the gatherings at this time of year were their regularity and their shortness.

One or two birds appeared about 1-2 minutes after sunset, the maximum number was seen about 5 minutes after, and by 15 minutes after all had disappeared.

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Greatest number seen at once.</i>	<i>Weather</i>	<i>Wind direction.</i>
August 8.	11	Fine, clear sky.	W
„ 9.	13	„ „ „	W
„ 10.	14	„ „ „	W
„ 11.	14	Overcast with high cloud.	W
„ 12.	5	„ „	N
„ 13.	6	Fine, clear sky.	NE
„ 14.	4	„ „ „	NE
„ 15.	6	„ „ „	W
„ 16.	3	„ „ „	W

Observations made on August 17th-20th were negative, so it was presumed that all but stragglers had departed.

The figures suggest that birds leave in batches, over half of those that were left going between August 11th and 12th, when the wind changed, and the rest going on August 15th/16th and 16th/17th. On the whole, therefore, this is a fairly quick and concentrated departure, but in its details it is definitely progressive.

The Swift obviously lends itself to this kind of observation, especially as the evening gatherings lasted a shorter time than was suspected. Nevertheless there are other species, such as swallows and martins feeding at their favourite ponds and lakes, which might yield interesting comparative figures.

## OBITUARY.

JIM VINCENT

(1883-1944).

MANY of our readers will have learned with deep regret of the death of Jim Vincent, which took place at Norwich after a short illness on November 4th. As head keeper on Lord Desborough's Whiteslea estate at Hickling, Vincent was known to ornithologists all over the country, as well as, before the war, to not a few visitors from abroad, and was something of a national character in ornithological circles.

Certainly he deserved well of British ornithology and ornithologists; it was largely due to him that the Bittern and Marsh-Harrier, after having been extinct as British breeding birds for many years, were able to re-establish themselves in Norfolk and that that most characteristic of Broadland species the Bearded Tit has been able to maintain itself; a whole succession of photographers beginning with Miss Turner owed much of their success amongst the birds of the Broads to his assistance, and many more field observers have benefited by his guidance and genial company in this ornithologist's paradise.

Vincent was not only a highly successful practical protectionist; he was also—or perhaps one should rather say he was successful in that respect *because* he was—an excellent field ornithologist, and he had a good knowledge of plants and insects as well. He added materially to our knowledge of the breeding habits of the Bittern and the harriers, and few of the rare migrants which appeared at Hickling escaped his watchful eye or failed to be accurately identified. A number of his notes have appeared in *British Birds*, and two, received no more than a few weeks ago, only in our last number. Most observers who have been out with him, the writer included, have been impressed by the way in which he would correctly identify some unusual bird at long range without the use of glasses and the facility with which he found nests was no less surprising.

“On the Hickling estate,” to quote Mr. Rivière, “he was given by Lord Desborough for many years an almost free hand in its management . . . . . and he devoted all his energies to making it a reserve and a sanctuary. Long experience and unequalled knowledge of the habits of ducks, waders, bitterns and harriers enabled him by a planned system of flooding, draining, grazing and cutting to enhance and maintain its attractiveness until it has become to-day world famous and a sort of “Mecca” for bird lovers from far and near.”

The maintenance of this Broadland reserve which he did so much to establish will be Jim Vincent's best memorial, but we can only echo Mr. Rivière's words that “Hickling can never be quite the same without him.”

B.W.T.

## NOTES.

## BULLFINCH HOVERING WHEN FEEDING.

WITH reference to Capt. A. C. Fraser's note on this subject (*antea*, p. 94), I have the following note in my diary for December 10th, 1943:—

Watched three Bullfinches (one male and two females) . . . . . They were low down on Snowberry (*Symphoricarpus*) shrubs and at times just balancing on dead weed stems not a foot from the ground, and every now and then took little short fluttering, hovering flights, apparently catching some minute insects on the wing.

KATHLEEN GOUGH.

[A note in the *Report of the Devon Bird-watching and Preservation Society* for 1943 records "A cock and hen [Bullfinch] feeding alternately *on the wing* on blackberries; the bramble spray being too frail to support them."—EDS.]

## DISPLAY OF CHAFFINCH.

ON the afternoon of April 22nd, 1944, I watched a pair of Chaffinches (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*) displaying on the ridge of a tiled garden wall.

The performance appeared to fall into three phases:

1. The male with tail lowered and wings drooping so as to expose the raised rump feathers, and with white wing patches very conspicuous, in a kind of hunched shoulder position was sitting facing the female at about 18 inches distance. The male was facing along the wall and the female perched transversely. The male kept up a thin shrill note while he lurched his body from side to side.

2. The male approached the female slowly in series of slow hops and very short fluttering, almost hovering, flights, and all the while made a rattling noise sounding as if it came from rapid snapping of the beak.

3. Coition took place with the male half-hovering and continuing the bill-rattling noise, the female with head and tail raised uttering a shrill note. She assumed this posture only when coition began, but a few seconds later she resumed it when the male was just beginning phase 1. He continued through phase 2 as before and then coition again took place exactly as on the previous occasion.

Soon after this they flew into the bushes and were lost to sight.

C. J. F. COOMBS.

## WAXWINGS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

THE following Waxwing records have reached us additional to those already published (*antea*, pp. 34-35 and Vol. xxxvi, pp. 196-7, 213-4). All dates are 1944 unless otherwise stated.

SURREY.—Four about a mile and half south-west of Farnham, January 21st (D. T. G. Carter).

HERTFORDSHIRE.—Five or six in Grove Road, Harpenden, February 26th; reported to have been in the district about a week (K. C. Fowler).

OXFORDSHIRE.—One at Arncott, February 27th (Pte. G. A. Todd).

NORFOLK.—Two in a clearing in woods on the Salhouse road about a mile outside Norwich, February 17th (W. Deacon). Two at Stoke Holy Cross,

Norwich, on February 20th; they had arrived about February 10th and remained till the 21st (M. J. Seago).

BEDFORDSHIRE.—Flock of about twenty at Shefford on March 23rd and half-a-dozen in same place next day; also reported at the neighbouring village of Clifton on March 25th (Rev. A. Kingsley-Lloyd *per* Dr. G. A. Metcalf).

WARWICKSHIRE.—One at Northfield, Birmingham in January (T. W. Gray).

DERBYSHIRE.—About six to ten birds at Newton Solney, near Burton-on-Trent, about January 20th (K. Shorthose).

DURHAM.—About six near West Stanley railway station on December 17th and four again on December 20th, 1943 (D. Davies); one, King George Street, South Shields, November 25th, 1943 (J. S. Ash) (*Vasculum*, Vol. xxix, p. 4).

NAIRN.—Two at Nairn, December 25th, 1943, to January 16th, 1944; three seen by another observer (A. Smith).

### RED-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT SEEN IN WORCESTERSHIRE.

IN the second week of April, 1944, at Arley, near Bewdley, Worcestershire, my attention was attracted by a low, sweet whistle outside my caravan, which was just below a wooded bank, a favourite haunt of many birds. Looking out of the window I saw through field-glasses, perched on a fence about ten feet away and facing towards me, a small bird with a bright blue bib covering the whole throat region. The size was about that of a Chaffinch, but it had an insect-eater's bill. The blue bib was interrupted by a reddish band not extending quite across it and was outlined by a pale, narrow yellowish band followed by a reddish colour, gradually paling towards the tail. As I only had a full face view before the bird flew I could not see the colour of the upper-parts.

C. B. NEWBERY.

[In spite of the exceptional date and the fact that the species has never been recorded in the Midlands, Mrs. Newbery's accurate description of the throat pattern leaves no doubt that the bird was an example of *Luscinia s. svecica*. After more than four years of war it seems very unlikely that it was an escape from captivity, and it may be noted that a somewhat analogous occurrence of an undoubted Red-spotted Bluethroat in an inland county at an exceptionally early date is recorded in *British Birds*, Vol. xxxv, p. 273.—EDS.]

### OYSTER-CATCHER FAR FROM LAND IN THE ATLANTIC.

WITH reference to my note on an Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) seen far from land in the Atlantic on April 4th, 1944 (*antea*, p. 57), I have since seen another one in position 55° 48' N, 24° 4' W, about the same latitude as Islay and 540 miles from the nearest land, *i.e.* Ireland. The bird appeared at 7.30 a.m. on July 29th, 1944, and finally left at 12.30. It was obviously tired and when disturbed merely flew to the other end of the ship. When left alone it sat hunched up often with its beak open as if suffering from thirst. Its feathers were generally sleek and tight, but those round the vent were bedraggled, possibly indicating intestinal trouble.

Weather at the time was good and conditions for the previous two or three days had been stable, but with a moderate easterly

wind. The bird finally left the ship on being disturbed and as it flew away gradually lost height, settling on the sea about 250 yards away.

E. A. DUFFEY.

#### BLACK TERN VICTIMIZING COOT.

ON September 18th, 1944, I witnessed feeding behaviour of a Black Tern (*Chlidonias n. niger*) which is, I believe, unusual.

On a large gravel pond near Netherfield, Notts, numbers of Coot (*Fulica a. atra*) were diving, when a Black Tern flew over from the nearby Trent, and began to beat regularly to and fro over the water. Presently a Coot emerged from the depths with its usual bunch of weed just below the flying tern, which immediately dropped to the water close to the Coot. The latter then scurried away, leaving its bunch of weed floating, whereupon the tern made a series of rapid pecks at the disintegrating mass for three or four seconds, doubtless picking out entangled small life, after which period the bird resumed its regular patrolling.

Again and again, whenever an emerging Coot sufficiently close presented opportunity, the same procedure was enacted, the spontaneity of the action leaving no doubt in the mind of the observer that in this Black Tern, at least, it was a regular habit.

J. STATON.

#### ICELAND GULL IN KENT IN JULY.

ON the afternoon of July 16th, 1944, I noticed an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) on the shore just to the east of Ramsgate harbour. Though there was a small number of other gulls around, it kept very much to itself.

It was in a very bedraggled state and allowed of fairly close approach. The plumage showed no brown mottling, but the outer primaries seemed to be tinged with brown on the outer webs. The wings were very pointed and when at rest projected well beyond the tail. The bill was a whitish-flesh colour with a conspicuous black tip and the legs were a light flesh-pink in colour.

The plumage was in a very worn state. The tail-feathers when spread showed very little webbing, as did the inner primaries and most of the secondaries. The head and neck had a very shaggy appearance.

M. N. RANKIN.

EARLY NESTING OF SUMMER MIGRANTS IN 1944.—We have received the following notes from correspondents:—

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*).—Building at Bartley, Hants, April 16th; first egg, April 24th (R. E. Williams).

WOOD-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).—Nest found with six eggs at Kingswood, Surrey, on May 20th. Young fledged on June 4th, so the last egg must have been laid on or about May 11th (Howard Bentham).

SWALLOW (*Hirundo r. rustica*).—Young 7-9 days old at West Willow, Hants, on May 23rd (R. E. Williams). A young bird seen on the wing with two adults on June 3rd in a garage at Rodborough, Glos., where a pair have nested for many years. This would indicate that eggs were laid before April 27th (J. B. Watson).

CUCKOO (*Cuculus c. canorus*).—Juvenile outside Hedge-Sparrow's nest, which it had flattened out, at Romsey on June 10th; tail protruding beyond wing-tips about 1½ ins. (R. E. Williams).

WOOD-LARK ON THE ISLE OF MAY.—Mr. Seton Gordon informs us that he saw several Wood-Larks (*Lullula a. arborea*) on the Isle of May, Firth of Forth, on October 30th, 1944. The first one seen permitted a near approach, and when it flew several others rose from the rough grass near by. There are several previous records for the island.

TREE-PIPIT EATING ROWAN BERRIES.—The Rev. J. E. Beckerlegge writes that on September 27th, 1944, on the edge of the woods at Bolton Priory, Yorks, he watched, through binoculars at close quarters, a Tree-Pipit (*Anthus t. trivialis*) eating berries of the Rowan or Mountain-Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*). The bird was seen to take three or four berries before leaving the tree.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL BREEDING IN LEICESTERSHIRE.—The type-written bulletin issued by the Ornithological Section of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society for July, 1944 records the breeding of a pair of Blue-headed Wagtails (*Motacilla f. flava*) near Croft. The female was seen by Capt. Pochin on June 29th and the pair were watched by the same observer and Mr. A. E. Jolley on the 30th, the distinctive characters being well seen. A day or two later they were watched feeding fledged young and on July 4th a nest was found with a second clutch of eggs. This nest was very closely watched and it is noteworthy that the male "took an almost greater share in incubation" than the female. Three eggs hatched on July 16th, but unfortunately the young came to grief. This is the first record of breeding, and indeed of the occurrence of this subspecies, in Leicestershire.

NEST OF TREE-CREEPER NEAR GROUND.—Mr. Hubert E. Pounds informs us of a nest of the Tree-Creeper (*Certhia familiaris britannica*) found by Mr. W. E. Busbridge, at Blackmoor, Hants, only two feet from the ground in a hole in the base of a tree.

NUTHATCH'S UNUSUAL METHOD OF ATTACKING NUT.—Mr. W. L. Colyer sends us an account of an unusual procedure by a Nuthatch (*Sitta europæa affinis*) at Sidmouth in attacking a nut which it had failed to crack in the ordinary way. It made five or six vigorous forward thrusts with the point of its beak against the nut, first from a position above the groove in which it had wedged it and then from below it. The beak, head, neck and back were in a straight line and rigid; the toes gripped the bark while the legs carried the body forward to deliver each battering-ram like blow. Finally the bird prised up the nut and ran with it up the tree out of sight, but it is not certain whether it had been broken.

SONG-THRUSH REARING TWO BROODS IN SAME NEST.—Mr. Howard Bentham reports a case of a pair of Song-Thrushes (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) at Tadworth, Surrey, which reared two broods in the same nest. The first brood were fledged about April 25th, 1944, and the second clutch of eggs was not laid until early June. A long period of drought may possibly have accounted both for the long

interval and for the fact that no new nest was made, as mud would have been difficult to obtain. This habit appears unusual in the Song-Thrush, but has been observed occasionally.

EARLY SONG-THRUSH'S NEST.—Mr. T. W. Arnold informs us that on February 6th, 1943, at Frieth, Buckinghamshire, he found a Song-Thrush's (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) nest with two eggs. The bird laid its fourth egg on February 8th, but then deserted.

### REVIEWS.

*The Duck Decoys of Essex.* By W. E. Glegg. *Essex Naturalist*, Vol. xxvii, 1943-4, pp. 191-207 and 211-225.

MR. W. E. GLEGG in this scholarly paper brings up to date his extensive knowledge of the Essex decoys and includes an interesting account of the art of decoying, drawn largely from an article written on an Essex decoy in *The Field* of 1868.

Payne-Gallwey's well-known book on decoys gave a list of 29 for Essex; in Mr. Glegg's *History of the Birds of Essex* (1929) the number of used and disused decoys was shown to be 35; and now research has raised the number to 37. A glance at the map in the *History* shows that the majority were placed round the estuary of the Blackwater and that the only two now in use lie close to the sea a few miles south of that estuary. Pipe decoys were not known till the end of the XVIIth century, and the XVIIth and early XIXth centuries were the period of their greatest success. Gradually during the XIXth and later, many fell out of use. J. Whitaker in his account of *British Decoys of Today* (1918) showed that of some 200 only 28 were then being worked, and since then the number has been further reduced. Mr. Glegg's wish that an Essex decoy may be used for ringing is at present unfulfilled, but the outstanding success of the ringing at Orierton in Pembroke makes one hope that an east coast decoy may before long be worked in the same way. A.W.B.

*The Art of Bird Photography.* By Eric Hosking and C. Newberry. 96 pp., 49 half-tone plates. (Country Life, Ltd., 1944). 8s. 6d.

THIS book is written, as the authors state explicitly in the foreword, "to interest the ordinary man and woman. . . . who would like to watch more closely, and sometimes photograph, the fascinating life of the feathered throng." It should have no difficulty in attaining this limited objective, for it is written in a straightforward style and is profusely illustrated with first-class photographs.

There is no claim to offer any serious ornithological observations, and yet there are many of the more scientific ornithologists who would derive benefit from the presence of this book on their shelves. Many of the scientific and semi-scientific articles dealing with field studies are illustrated with photographs, and one can very rarely say that they attain even a moderate standard of excellence. A careful perusal of this book, even if the more expensive types of apparatus recommended are out of the question, will show what is the best type of equipment and how it should be used to the best advantage.

A special mention should be made of the highly successful use of flash-light, both for photographing at night and for reinforcing poor light. Mr. Hosking's studies of owls are already well known, and the illustrations include some of the best of them. The observations on food brought to the nest could not have been made by any other method, and it is a test of the excellence of the photography that the prey can be identified so often. H.N.S.

### LOCAL REPORTS.

*Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society: Thirteenth Annual Report.* 1943. Edited by B. H. Ryves, D. Valentine and H. M. Quick.

THE Cornwall Report again contains much excellent material, but it remains the most difficult of all the local reports to refer to on account of the multiplicity of minor sections, in addition to the main ones, which we have

commented on already (*antea*, p. 20). The two main sections, on status and habits, have, however, been amalgamated.

Perhaps the chief ornithological event was the proof that at least five pairs of Roseate Terns bred in Scilly, though owing to high seas apparently only one hatched off. The Choughs, so far as information goes, had unfortunately a bad year: of two pairs definitely reported on neither reared any young. We may note: a Hobby at Newquay, July 6th, a Rough-legged Buzzard, the remains of which were found at a Raven's nest—a surprising occurrence—a Barnacle Goose on the Camel on November 7th, Spoonbills in both spring and autumn, an Avocet at Trevone Bay, December 7th, a Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gull at Trewornan, March 27th, and more than thirty Little Auks in Swanpool Bay in February. The Little Egret at Lelant has already been recorded in *British Birds*, as has the definite nesting of a pair of Dartford Warblers (in 1940) in the addenda to the new impression of *The Handbook*. Col. Ryves has a special article on observations at a Goldfinch's nest and Dr. R. H. Blair reports on the further progress of the nest sanitation enquiry.

*Sixteenth Report of the Devon Bird-Watching and Preservation Society, 1943.* THIS report contains a number of noteworthy records, mostly satisfactorily authenticated, but two or three not above criticism. We may mention (amongst those not already recorded in *British Birds*): a Chough at Budleigh Salterton on August 14th, the breeding of Crossbills at Minehead (W. Somerset) and Woodbury Common, a Willow-Warbler with combined Chiffchaff and Willow-Warbler song, a Firecrest at Lifton in late July, an unusual date, a Cuckoo reared by Song-Thrushes at Ashburton, three pairs of Short-eared Owls breeding in N. Devon, a Kestrel's nest with young at Manaton on February 20th, a Rough-legged Buzzard near Dartmouth on November 28th, an adult White-tailed Eagle at Wigford Down on July 3rd, and two Ospreys in December. A Killdeer Plover on the Exe Estuary has already been reported in the *Ibis*. Records which suffer from the lack of any accompanying evidence are those of a Marsh-Harrier on June 14th, a Kite at Cheriton Bishop on April 9th, 1941, and a Nutcracker at Wrangaton in July. These are probably correct—indeed the last is stated to be vouched for by an experienced observer, notwithstanding the highly abnormal date—but we cannot insist too strongly that in all records of rare birds the evidence should be published. We also note that the pair of Harriers *thought* to be Hen-Harriers, which bred in 1942; did so again in 1943. It seems a great pity that this renewed opportunity of making certain which species these birds were was not taken.

There is also a special report on selected migrants and we notice no less than three records of Cuckoos, not merely heard but seen, in March, which are evidently considered reliable.

*The Hastings and East Sussex Naturalist: Notes on the Local Fauna and Flora for 1943.* By N. F. Ticehurst.

THE outstanding event recorded in the bird section is the successful breeding of a pair of Kentish Plovers at Dungeness for the first time since 1931. The breeding of Black Redstarts at St. Leonards and probably also at Hastings has already been recorded in *British Birds*. Reference is made to the effect on bird-life of the flooding of Pett Level, now in its fourth year. The breeding of a small colony of Black-headed Gulls here in 1942 and 1943 is of considerable local interest, since this is known to have been a breeding place as long ago as 1638, but prior to the recent re-colonization had been deserted for a great many years. Amongst various visitors of interest a Tawny Pipit shot in September may be mentioned.

*Report on Birds observed in Hertfordshire in 1942.* By H. H. S. Hayward (Reprinted from *Trans. Herts Nat. Hist. Soc. & Field Club*, Vol. xxii, pt. 2).

THIS report, as usual, contains many interesting notes carefully edited, but most of the more important seem already to have been reported to *British Birds*. A Little Stint was seen at Tring on June 10th and 11th, the only previous spring occurrences recorded at the reservoirs having been in 1938. The low level of the water attracted a considerable variety of waders in autumn, including another Little Stint, Curlew-Sandpiper, Knot, Turnstone,

Spotted Redshank, Whimbrel and others, but the level continued excessively low throughout the winter, which naturally had an adverse effect on the numbers of waterfowl.

It seems a pity that publication of this excellent report is so arranged that it is always a year behindhand.

*Ornithological Report for the County of Hampshire, 1943.* By F. H. Haines

(Reprinted from *Proc. Hampshire Field Club & Archæol. Soc.*, Vol. xvi).

NOTEWORTHY records are those of the Red-breasted Snipe already recorded in *British Birds* and a Golden Oriole near Alton about April 20th. A Yellow-browed Warbler is reported at Ringwood on October 24th. It is stated that it was observed at about three yards' range and that the wing-bars and superciliary stripe were seen, but more detailed evidence than this is desirable. Several of the most interesting records, including references to Buzzard, Osprey, Quail, etc. and a melanistic Red-legged Partridge, are hidden away in a section called "General Notes." These would be far better distributed in the systematic section. We can again hardly avoid commenting on the large number of completely trivial records, of which twenty-five Rooks flying over, a Greenfinch singing on April 17th (a male Greenfinch *not* singing on this date would be more noteworthy), and Great Tits visiting a bird table are fair samples. The report would benefit by more critical blue-pencilling.

*London Bird Report for 1943.* Edited by R. S. R. Fitter and E. R. Parrinder.

(Supplement to *The London Naturalist*). 1s. 6d.

CROSSBILLS were seen carrying nesting material at Reigate in March. It is not clear why this is described in the introductory notes as "attempted" breeding, implying lack of success, as it appears from the systematic notes that the further history of the pair is not known. A Blue-headed Wagtail was seen at the Brent Reservoir on September 11th, a Montagu's Harrier in Middlesex on April 16th, a Little Stint at the Lonsdale Road Reservoir on September 17th, up to 15 Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gulls on the Thames at Hammersmith in October, at least two Iceland Gulls on the Thames, and an Arctic Skua passing over South Harrow on May 21st. Other notes of interest refer to the display of the Willow-Tit and Stock-Dove, mimetic song of Goldcrest, and Fieldfares at Chingford (Essex) on August 9th.

Most of the essential data about the Black Redstart in London, on which there is a special article, have already appeared in *British Birds*. There is also a short but interesting account by T. L. Bartlett of recoveries of Black-headed Gulls in Inner London, showing how particular gulls seem to frequent the same precise localities year after year. Finally there is a new "Check-List of the Birds of the London Area," giving "a very brief summary of the status of all birds observed within 20 miles of St. Paul's Cathedral from 1924 to 1943, both dates inclusive."

*Report of the Cambridge Bird Club, 1943.* Edited by P. S. Burns. 1s. 6d.

IN the systematic notes a Marsh-Harrier is recorded at Fulbourne Fen on October 8th, Whooper Swans at Earith Washes in January and February, and a Bewick's Swan on March 12th. A Bewick's Swan was also recorded (for the first time) at the Sewage Farm on November 22nd and 23rd, a Temminck's Stint on September 17th, a Kentish Plover on September 14th to 17th, a Little Ringed Plover on April 26th and four Glaucous Gulls (passing over) on November 18th, in addition to most of the scarcer waders that visit sewage farms. There are also special sections devoted to the breeding birds of Fulbourne Fen and to the Wash, to which members paid several visits. We note that the particulars given about Black Redstarts in Cambridge do not altogether coincide with those supplied to *British Birds* in connexion with Mr. Fitter's paper, and it is a pity that no explanation of this is given: it appears that there is now considered to have been at least one more male present than was thought at first.

The scientific nomenclature in this report has been extraordinarily carelessly treated. There are few pages without one or more errors, and so far as these names are concerned it would seem that the proofs have not been corrected at all. But not all the errors are the printer's: the Common Sandpiper appears as *Actitis macularia*!

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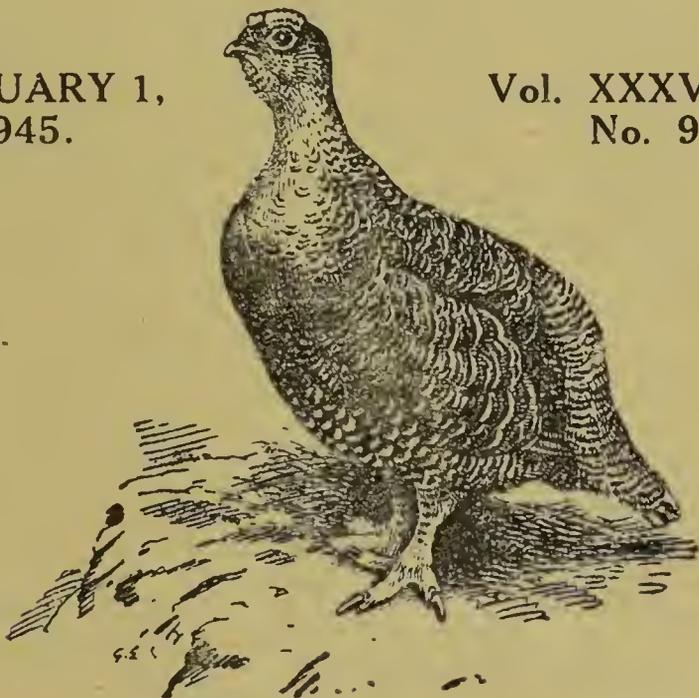
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## SUMMARY OF A REPORT ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF THE CORN-CRAKE (*Crex crex*)

BY

C. A. NORRIS.

(Concluded from page 148.)

### 7. MERSEY (Cheshire and Lancs).

*Former status.* Leigh described the species as common in 1700 and though a decrease was noted in Lancashire as early as 1850 this appears to have been in the nature of a fluctuation and the Corn-Crake remained a common bird in both counties till the end of the 19th century.

*Change of status.* Decrease became marked in Lancashire about 1900 and in Cheshire after 1910 but in both counties marked fluctuations have occurred. In Lancashire the species was again common from 1911 till about 1915 but since that date has rapidly decreased. In Cheshire local fluctuations have been specially marked. In one area it is reported as "particularly uncommon in 1912, then rallied and was heard in many old haunts in 1915-17. Five years later there were fewer but since 1925 there seems to have been an increase again." In another area, not 10 miles distant, it was reported that it was from 1914-16 that the decrease in numbers became most marked. The last year in which the bird occurred in any number was 1930, when 7 were calling in May and June within  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles of the observer's house. In a third area, about 12 miles distant from the two above mentioned, it is reported as frequently heard 1924-27, only one 1930, three in 1934, then slight recovery 1936-38.

*Present status.* In both counties the species still occurs as a breeding species in small numbers, especially on the eastern side. It is very scarce along the coast and scarce in N. Lancashire. Of 116 reports received in 1938, 55 recorded the presence of birds in that year and about half the others were from observers who had heard birds during the last few years. In the neighbourhood of Aldersey, Cheshire, about 12 pairs were reported and in the Bolton area of Lancashire 12 reports indicated that the species was still a regular breeder, little change in numbers having occurred during the past 10 years. The 1939 returns indicated a decrease of 50% in Cheshire and 3% in Lancashire compared with the previous year. Five nests were found near Lytham, Lancs.

### 8. HUMBER (Yorks).

*Former status.* In the 17th century Tancred Robinson informed Ray that he had often found Land-Rails in northern Yorkshire. Early records suggest that the Corn-Crake may not have been as common in some areas before 1850 as it was in the following 50 years. In the Dales it remained abundant till 1914.

*Change of status.* In the East Riding a rapid decrease appears to have taken place before 1914 and the bird had also ceased to be common in the manufacturing districts of the West Riding by 1907. Since 1914 there has been a steady decrease in the county as a whole, though considerable fluctuations tend to confuse the picture.

*Present status.* In the East Riding the Corn-Crake is now only found in very small numbers. In 1938 reports were received from 11 observers of whom only 2 reported single birds and in 1939 one observer reported 2 birds. In the North Riding the species still breeds in decreasing numbers. Of 32 reports for 1938 there were 13 of isolated birds and from the Helmsley district a report of 12 birds, one pair definitely nesting. In 1939 reports from 5 areas showed 17 birds as against 19 the previous year. In the West Riding, except in manufacturing areas, the species is still widely distributed and not as yet uncommon. Reports were received in 1938 from 33 observers who had heard birds that year, as many as 7 or 8 being reported in the Wilsden area. In 1939 reports for 16 areas showed a reduction of 6 pairs.

For the county as a whole comparison between 1938 and 1939 was available for 22 areas and showed a decrease from approximately 43 birds to approximately 33, or about 23%.

9. TYNE (Durham and Northumberland).

*Former status.* In 1544 Turner stated that he had not seen or heard the Corn-Crake anywhere in England save in Northumberland. The statement was repeated by Ray in Willughby's Ornithology, 1678. In 1769 the species was referred to as frequently found in the vale meadows and it remained plentiful in both counties up to 1912, when it still bred on the Farne Islands and Holy Island.

*Change of status.* Decrease began in both counties about 1917 and has continued, with local fluctuations, to the present day.

*Present status.* The Corn-Crake is still met with in most suitable areas in Durham and in Northumberland is generally distributed and breeds commonly. Of 14 reports from Co. Durham in 1938 seven reported the presence of the bird, as many as 4 being heard in the Stanley area. In 1939 there were 15 reports of the birds' presence including 5 in the Darlington area. In Northumberland in 1938 24 out of 27 observers reported the presence of birds, the most being 12 pairs in the neighbourhood of Alnwick. In 1939 21 out of 22 observers reported their presence and there were again said to be 12 pairs near Alnwick. In eleven areas from which reports were received in both years there were approximately 40 pairs in 1938 and 28 in 1939, a decrease of about 25%.

10. LAKES (Westmorland, Cumberland and Isle of Man).

*Former status.* Heysham recorded the breeding of the Corn-Crake in Cumberland in 1794. It was generally plentiful throughout the 19th century and exceptionally abundant in the Isle of Man, though there were periodic fluctuations in numbers.

*Change of status.* In the Isle of Man some decrease was noted by 1905. Figures of numbers in the Peel district are given as: 1934, 37; 1935, 10; 1936, 4; 1937, 5; 1938, 4; but decreases in other parts of the island have only been slight. In Westmorland decrease had begun by 1915 and has become more marked since 1930. In Cumberland a gradual decrease has been taking place since 1920 but there have been marked fluctuations, decreases in some areas being partially compensated by increases in others.

*Present status.* The species is still a regular and generally distributed summer visitor in all suitable areas. In Westmorland in 1938 out of 18 reports 11 indicated the presence of the bird and in 1939 7 out of 10. In 3 areas from which reports were received in both years there was an increase of one bird in 1939. In Cumberland comparable figures for 6 areas showed the same population in each year. In 1939 over 60 reports of Corn-Crakes heard in the county were received. In the Isle of Man 9 out of 10 of the reports for 1938 and 6 out of 7 for 1939 recorded the presence of the species.

11. SOUTH WALES (Glamorgan, Brecon, Radnor, Carmarthen, Pembroke and Cardigan).

*Former status.* In 1603 Owen recorded the Corn-Crake as breeding in Pembrokeshire. The somewhat scanty evidence suggests that it was plentiful in South Wales until the beginning of the present century.

*Change of status.* Decrease was noted in Glamorgan and Cardigan about 1900, in Brecon about 1906, in Carmarthen about 1910 and in Pembroke about 1916. In 1924-25 a slight increase occurred in Glamorgan, Cardigan and Pembroke, but with this exception decline in numbers seems to have been constant and in Brecon the bird was practically extinct by 1926.

*Present status.* No reports were received of the presence of the Corn-Crake in Brecon or Radnor in 1938 or 1939 though it is stated that they are still occasionally heard by Llangorse Lake in the former county. From the four coastal counties about half the reports received in 1938 recorded the presence of one or more birds. The majority of these were of single individuals, but the species was recorded as still numerous in one country district near Aberystwyth, in the north-west of the Gower Peninsula and in the district round St. David's. In Glamorgan comparison for 4 areas showed 11 birds in 1938 and 17 in 1939. The species is a common migrant on Skokholm.

12. NORTH WALES (Montgomery, Merioneth, Caernarvon, Denbigh, Flint and Anglesey).

*Former status.* In 1776 Pennant described the Corn-Crake as being "in greatest plenty in Anglesea" and as late as 1907 the island was still a stronghold of the species. From the mainland of North Wales there is little information, but in 1894 it was a common summer visitor in Flint and fairly common in Denbigh.

*Change of status.* In Flint some decrease took place after about 1900 but since 1920 the numbers seem to have remained fairly constant. In Merioneth there has been a marked and steady decrease since 1910 and in Caernarvon and Anglesey since 1920.

*Present status.* No information was received from Montgomery. In Caernarvon, Anglesey and the greater part of Merioneth the species is now scarce, but in Flint and Denbigh it is still fairly common in the hilly districts and also in Merioneth round Bala and in the Dovey valley. From North Wales as a whole 47 reports were received in 1938 of which 30 reported the presence of the species, while in 1939, 18 out of 22 reported its presence.

13. WEST LOWLANDS (Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, Wigtown, Ayr, Renfrew and Lanark).

*Former status.* The Corn-Crake seems always to have fluctuated in numbers in this area. In the period from 1830 to 1840 Jardine states that it had become almost extinct in the valley of the Annan, Dumfriesshire. In 1869 it was described as common everywhere in Wigtownshire and Ayrshire, but in 1878 a decrease began in the latter county. In 1891 it was plentiful in Dumfriesshire, in 1900 common in most localities in Ayrshire and in 1901 common in Lanarkshire. In 1905 it was scarce in Renfrewshire but before 1914 had again increased. In 1907 it was abundant in Dumfriesshire but was scarce in the following year.

*Change of status.* In view of the fluctuations noted above it is difficult to decide when a definite change of status occurred, but in Dumfriesshire there has been no marked recovery since 1908. In Kirkcudbright and Wigtown there has undoubtedly been a decrease though no dates can be quoted, and in Renfrewshire a marked decrease occurred between 1914 and 1918, since when it has continued to decline in numbers. In Ayrshire there has been some decrease since 1926.

*Present status.* In Dumfries, Kirkcudbright and Wigtown the Corn-Crake is now a scarce summer visitor. In the other 3 counties it is still common in some localities; 17 reports out of 20 recorded its presence in 1938 and 7 out of 8 in 1939. In 1938 it was very common in the Doon Valley, Ayrshire. In that county 50 birds were ringed in 1937 and 20 in 1938. In a district in Lanarkshire 8 miles east of Glasgow there were about 12 birds in six square miles in 1938.

14. EAST LOWLANDS (Peebles, Selkirk, Roxburgh, Berwick, E. Lothian, Midlothian and W. Lothian).

*Former status.* In this area the Corn-Crake was common up to 1911.

*Change of status.* In Berwickshire, Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles decrease began about 1911 and has continued to the present time. In the Lothians decrease began about 1918 and became more rapid about 1929.

*Present status.* The species is now rare throughout the area, though still found in some localities. Of 15 reports in 1938 only 5 reported the birds as present that year, one from Berwickshire, 2 from Roxburgh and 2 from the Lothians.

15. EAST HIGHLANDS (Fife, Kinross, Clackmannan, Stirling, Perth, Angus, Kincardine, Aberdeen, Banff, Moray and Nairn).

*Former status.* In 1793 the Corn-Crake was described as common in Fife, breeding in large numbers. It probably remained so throughout the 19th century, though there have been local fluctuations, which were noted in Banffshire in 1895 as well as in Fife. It was described as plentiful in Aberdeenshire in 1903 and as abundant in Angus in 1906.

*Change of status.* In Nairnshire and Morayshire decrease began about 1900, in Perthshire about 1910, and in Fife about 1914 becoming more marked

since 1929. In Stirlingshire and Aberdeenshire there has been a decrease during the last 20 years and in Angus in recent years.

*Present status.* Though not so common as formerly, especially in Fife, Angus and Aberdeenshire, the species still breeds regularly throughout this area. Of 47 reports in 1938 only 5 recorders had not heard any birds in that year. In 1939, 4 pairs nested in one area in Perthshire.

16. WEST HIGHLANDS (Inverness, Argyll, Dumbarton, Clyde Is. and Inner Hebrides).

*Former status.* In 1785 Latham said the Corn-Crake was found in most parts of the Hebrides and in 1824 and 1833 it was again reported as abundant in the islands. It is probable that it was also plentiful on the mainland as in 1892 it was described as very numerous in Argyll and southern Inverness and in 1928 was still common there.

*Change of status.* Fluctuations were recorded in Inverness-shire as long ago as 1895 and since about 1913 there has been a definite decrease in that county. Since about 1918 there has been some decrease in Mull and in Dumbartonshire a great decrease since about 1930. On Arran and in parts of Argyllshire there have been great fluctuations in numbers since 1936 with a tendency to decrease.

*Present status.* The Corn-Crake is now rare in Dumbartonshire, but still breeds regularly in most suitable districts of Inverness-shire and Argyllshire and in Mull and Skye, though in comparatively small numbers. In Kintyre and on Bute, Islay, Iona, Tiree, Coll, Eigg and Canna it is plentiful. On Canna there were estimated to be 100 pairs in 1938.

17. NORTH HIGHLANDS (Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland and Caithness).

*Former status.* In 1771 the Corn-Crake was recorded as very plentiful in Caithness. In 1868 it was said to be abundant in the cultivated areas of all 3 counties and in 1887 still very abundant in the east though not so common in the west where cultivated areas are small.

*Change of status.* In the Gairloch area of West Ross decrease was noted in 1888 and in Ross-shire generally became marked from about 1914. In Sutherland there has been a decrease during the last 20 years.

*Present status.* In Ross-shire and Caithness the species is now uncommon, though widely distributed. In Sutherland it is still common in many areas. Of 8 reports for that county in 1938 all recorded its presence, but only 2 called it numerous. In 1939 nine reports were received of which 2 again described it as numerous and one was negative. The totals show a decrease of 25% compared with 1938.

18. NORTH ISLES (Outer Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland).

*Former status.* The Corn-Crake was recorded in Orkney in 1693 and as breeding in St. Kilda in 1697. In 1806 it was stated to be exceedingly abundant in Orkney and also pretty common in Shetland. Early records from the Outer Hebrides also state that the species was abundant.

*Change of status.* In Orkney there was believed to be a slight decrease by 1891 but this may have been only a fluctuation similar to those since recorded. In Shetland there has been a decrease over a number of years and in the Outer Hebrides fluctuations in various islands including St. Kilda.

*Present status.* In the Outer Hebrides the species is common throughout but the numbers fluctuate. In 1938 birds were reported as numerous in Lewis, Harris, North Uist and Barra and few in South Uist and Barra Head. In 1939 in Harris there was an increase of about 50% compared with 1938. In Orkney it is numerous, particularly on Sanday and South Ronaldshay. In Shetland it is less numerous than in Orkney, especially in the northern islands, and is absent from some areas. It occurs regularly on Fair Isle.

19. NORTHERN IRELAND (Antrim, Londonderry, Tyrone, Fermanagh, Armagh and Down).

*Former status.* In 1802 the Corn-Crake was described as well known in Co. Derry, in 1812 it was recorded as frequenting Lough Neagh and in 1832 as present in Antrim in considerable numbers. In 1902 it was very common in Antrim and common in Down and it is said always to have been very numerous in Armagh.

*Change of status.* In all 6 counties there are reports of decreases in some localities in recent years and in Antrim and Armagh they began about 20 years ago. One observer in Antrim says that about 1882 there was a pair to every field whereas now he estimates only one pair per square mile.

*Present status.* The species is still common throughout Northern Ireland. Of 43 informants in 1938 only 2 had not heard the bird that year and 19 called it numerous. In 1939 there were 23 reports of which one was negative and 15 recorded the birds as numerous.

20. EASTERN IRELAND (Monaghan, Cavan, Louth, Meath, Longford, Westmeath, Offaly, Kildare, Dublin, Wicklow, Carlow, Leix, Kilkenny and Wexford).

*Former status.* In 1772 Ruddy described the Corn-Crake as frequent in Co. Dublin and it is described as formerly common in Wexford, very common in Kildare, very plentiful in Carlow and very abundant in Wicklow. Doubtless its status was similar in all the counties of this region until the present century.

*Change of status.* Decrease has occurred in every county except perhaps Louth and Longford. In Dublin and Westmeath it began about 1902, in Carlow, Cavan, Kilkenny and Meath about 1918 and in Wicklow about 1928 at which time it became more marked in Dublin and Meath. In the latter county a decrease of 50% is reported to have occurred during the last 10 years.

*Present status.* The species still breeds in every county in the area and remains common or even abundant in many districts. In 1938, 40 reports were received of which 5 recorded no birds, 23 a few and 12 many. In 1939 of 25 reports 15 recorded birds as few and 10 as many. In the district of Clondra, Co. Longford, there were said to be a pair per acre in 1938 and only half as many in 1939. In one area in Co. Kilkenny birds were estimated at 15 pairs per 100 acres and in an area in Co. Meath one pair per 100 acres.

21. WESTERN IRELAND (Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo and Galway).

*Former status.* The little evidence available suggests that the Corn-Crake has always been a common bird in this area.

*Change of status.* There are reports from Donegal, Sligo and Mayo of local decreases in the last few years. In the other three counties there has been little or no change.

*Present status.* The species still appears to breed commonly in almost all parts of this area. Of 17 reports for 1938 one was negative, 7 recorded a few birds and 9 described them as numerous. Of 15 reports in 1939 one was negative, 3 recorded a few birds and 12 described them as numerous. Reports from Achill Island all agreed that the birds were present in 1939 but in other respects differed totally. One said they were decreasing, another that they were increasing and the numbers were variously estimated as few, numerous, 10 birds and 40-50 pairs. In one area in Co. Leitrim the numbers in 1939 were reported to be 50% above those for 1938 and estimated at about 20 birds per square mile.

22. SOUTHERN IRELAND (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork and Kerry).

*Former status.* Smith in 1750 said the Land-Rail or Dakerhen was very common in Co. Cork in the summer months. The Corn-Crake is stated formerly to have been abundant in Tipperary and common in Kerry and was recorded as breeding in Limerick in 1909.

*Change of status.* In Co. Cork a decrease has been noted during the last 20 years; in Kerry and Tipperary during the last 10 years; and in Clare in the last few years. In Tipperary the decrease since 1928 is estimated at about 33%. In Waterford great local fluctuations in recent years are reported.

*Present status.* The species still breeds in almost all parts of the area, especially in wet meadows. Of 24 reports in 1938 three were negative, 12 recorded a few birds and 9 called them numerous. Of 18 reports in 1939 one was negative, 10 recorded a few birds and 7 called them numerous.

Within a radius of 3 miles of Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare, from 76 to 100 birds were counted in 1939 an increase of about 25% on 1938. At Felt-hand S. Riding, Co. Tipperary, 7 nests were found in one 10-acre field. In one area in Co. Waterford there were 15 pairs in 1938 and 20 pairs in 1939.

#### DISTRIBUTION ABROAD.

The Corn-Crake breeds in Europe north to the Faeroes, Norway to the Arctic Circle, Sweden to 61°N but rarely beyond, Finland to 65°N and rarely further north, and Russia to the Solovetski Islands, Archangel and 60°N in the Urals; and in Siberia north to the Ob and Yenisei. In the east its breeding range extends to the Lena and Altai and in the south to Turkestan, Transcaspia, N. Persia, (possibly Palestine), Asia Minor, Bulgaria, Macedonia, N. Italy, the Pyrenees and possibly the Azores.

Evidence obtained during 1938 and 1939 shows that in northern and western Europe the species has decreased in much the same way as in the British Isles, but the decrease has apparently been more recent. The species is now commoner in Sweden, Finland and northern Germany than in Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France.

1. SWEDEN. Dr. E. Lönnberg, basing his statement on 60 reports sent to him from all over the country, notes that the Corn-Crake is now rather rare everywhere and has disappeared completely from large areas where it was formerly common. Decrease seems to have begun in Västergötland about 1910, in Bohnland about 1914, in Södermanland about 1918 and in Ostergötland about 1924. Reports from almost all other districts refer to decreases, particularly in recent years.

2. FINLAND. Dr. Ivor Hortling sent 15 reports and 7 others were received direct. These indicate that north of 65° single individuals occur occasionally and between 64° and 65°N the Corn-Crake is rare and sporadic in appearance. Between 62° and 64°N it occurs only in the cultivated regions, principally in the valleys of rivers running into the Gulf of Bothnia, and is absent from the inland swamp area. Between 60° and 62°N it is still common in the south and west, particularly in the Aland Islands, though considerable decreases in recent years are reported by several correspondents. In the east it becomes less common and is now rarely met with beyond 28°E.

3. GERMANY. Prof. Stresemann in 1938 stated that the Corn-Crake is generally distributed throughout the country and is remarkably abundant in the marshes and rivers fringing the coast. Although slight variations in numbers often occur there is no evidence of any general change. The only other report received, from the Nature Observatory at Monne, near Stettin, is not in agreement with this. It states that in the great meadows of the valley of the Oder, where the Corn-Crake breeds in all kinds of cultivated land, there has been a steady decrease during the past 20 years. In 1936 ten birds were heard in their immediate area of observation, but only one was located in 1938.

A large number of questionnaires were sent to Prof. Stresemann for circulation in the August, 1939, number of *Ornithologische Monatsberichte*, but owing to the outbreak of war none of these was returned.

4. DENMARK. The 6 reports received indicate that the Corn-Crake is still generally distributed but has decreased considerably during the last 25 years. It is noted as still being common on the islands of Anholt in the Kattegat and Amager, close to Copenhagen.

5. HOLLAND. Though not numerous the Corn-Crake is generally distributed as a breeding bird, but has decreased throughout the country over a period of years. On the other hand it has been quick to establish itself on the newly formed polders of the Zuider Zee, where it is frequently met with.

6. BELGIUM. M. Ch. Dupond circulated 60 questionnaires and the following summary is based on the replies received. The Corn-Crake is entirely absent as a breeder in the higher parts of the country though specimens are occasionally shot on migration in the valleys and lower plains of the Ardennes. The species is almost confined to the grasslands of the valleys of the lower Schelde between Antwerp and Termonde, of the Rupel between Malines and the Schelde, of the Dyle south of Louvain and of the Yser between Dixmude and Ypres. Formerly the birds also bred north-east of Antwerp and in the river meadows of the Haine west of Mons, but these two areas have been systematically drained. The Corn-Crake has greatly decreased during the last 20 years, except in the Yser district, where there has been a slight increase.

7. FRANCE. Of 600 questionnaires circulated in *L'Oiseau* only 3 were returned. From these and other information received it is evident that the Corn-Crake is decreasing, though still found in northern Champagne, Normandy and Brittany. To the south it becomes progressively more rare. From Eure et Loire it is reported that it has steadily decreased as a breeding species since about 1920: in 1937 only two breeding territories were located in an area of about 10,000 acres. From Allier it is reported as present in very small numbers, having greatly decreased; whilst in Haute Vienne, Bouches du Rhône and Var it is only known as an occasional migrant.

Two returns were received from Jersey, Channel Isles, one in 1938 was negative, one from another informant in 1939 reported two birds heard on June 16th.

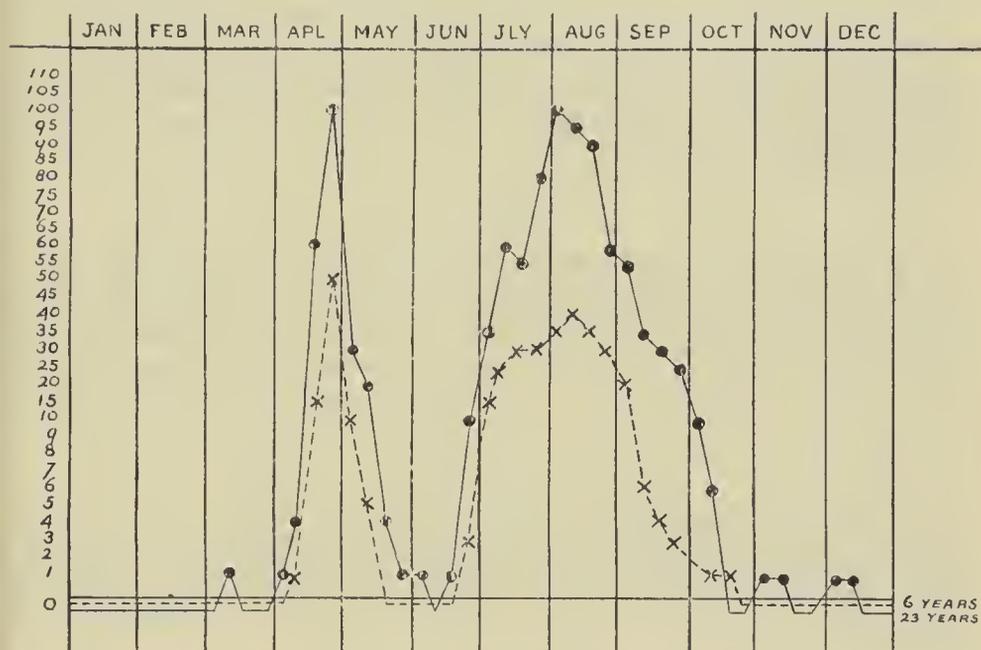
8. HUNGARY. A report received from the Royal Hungarian Institute of Ornithology states that the Corn-Crake is to be found throughout the whole country within the pre-1918 boundaries, except in mountain and forest areas. They have no information of any change in numbers.

## COMMON SANDPIPERS ON MIGRATION IN SOUTH GLAMORGAN

BY

GEOFFREY C. S. INGRAM.

THE Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) is rather rare as a breeding species in Glamorgan, even in the northern half of the county, and has only once or twice been recorded as nesting in the southern half. Birds on passage in spring and autumn are numerous and widely distributed, however, and for the last 23 years—1922 to 1944 inclusive—I have made fairly regular weekly observations on their numbers and behaviour at the Llanishen Reservoirs, near Cardiff. These reservoirs lie inland some two miles from the



Graph illustrating weekly fluctuations in the numbers of Common Sandpipers observed at Llanishen Reservoirs, 1922-1944.

sea, are artificial in construction, faced with stone pitchings all around, and are visited annually by migrating Common Sandpipers, which pause for rest and food on their journeys to and from their breeding grounds further north. The stone pitchings and complete absence of any cover make it easy to obtain an accurate count of the birds present at any visit. Up to the end of September, 1939, Colonel H. Morrey Salmon was regularly associated with me and we are jointly responsible for all observations to that date.

## PERIOD OF SPRING AND AUTUMN PASSAGE.

The above graph has been drawn from material collected over the full period of observation, 23 years, but as many of these years include weeks when absence from home on holidays fell during migration months, a second period of six unbroken years selected from the 23, has been superimposed for the sake of greater accuracy. It will be seen that the difference, except in numbers, is too small to be of any account. Disregarding the records of single birds seen early or late in the year, which can be regarded as exceptional, the spring passage begins in the second week of April and ends during the third week in May, the peak being reached during the last week in April, a period of six weeks. Compared with the autumn passage, beginning in the last week of June and ending in the second week in October, a period of fifteen weeks, it is short and abrupt, the majority of birds arriving and passing within three weeks. The autumn passage, although beginning abruptly, is far less clear-cut, the main movements occupying no less than nine weeks, the peak being reached between the first and second weeks of August. The only exceptionally early date for an individual bird is March 9th, 1924, and there are four late dates, November 6th, 1927, November 10th, 1940, December 1st, 1935, and December 16th, 1934.

## NUMBERS.

Actually 222 birds including stragglers have been counted in spring and 750 in autumn. These figures may indicate that birds on passage in autumn are more than three times as numerous than they are in spring, but when the periods of the passages are compared, six weeks in spring and fifteen weeks in autumn, it seems possible that in autumn a proportion of the birds remain on the reservoirs for two, three or more weeks and are therefore included in more than one of the weekly counts. An examination of the weekly totals rather confirms this supposition, as the following example may show, for it suggests that the six birds present during the first week of July may have remained until the first week of September.

July				August				September			
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
6	8	6	6	12	10	6	10	6	0	0	0

In the absence of any definite evidence it is perhaps safer to assume that the birds *are* more numerous in autumn, but not to the extent suggested by a comparison of the totals. The greatest number counted on any one visit was 22 in spring, April 26th, 1936, and 20 in autumn, August 12th, 1923. Only on 9.4 per cent. of the visits when birds were seen did their numbers reach double figures.

## BEHAVIOUR.

Autumn birds are noticeably less wild than those seen in spring. Observations confirm *The Handbook's* statement "generally seen singly or sometimes 2-3 together." The only exceptions to this are April 29th, 1934, a party of six, and another party of six on April 16th, 1935. A compact flock of 18 which moved about together when disturbed was seen on April 26th, 1936. Autumn birds are more often seen singly, and apart from a few records of 3 together, the only other party was one of 4 on September 2nd, 1934.

Common Sandpipers have been seen in close company with other species on several occasions, as for instance three with one Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*), April 24th, 1932, one in company with an adult male Knot (*Calidris c. canutus*), May 4th, 1941, and four with an adult Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), May 7th, 1944. In autumn there are four records of one or two with Green Sandpipers, and one with a probable Wood-Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), August 13th, 1933.

## TOWERING.

When disturbed they usually fly off low over the water as described in *The Handbook*, but on three occasions towering has been observed. On May 13th, 1934, a solitary bird when flushed towered like a Green Sandpiper and flew around overhead calling repeatedly "wit, wit, wit" before flying right away. Again, on September 2nd, 1934, a party of four were seen together. When flushed two made off with characteristic flight low over the water, but the other two towered immediately, rising and circling around at a considerable height quite silently. On April 18th, 1943, a solitary bird when disturbed towered silently.

## DISPLAY.

I cannot find any records of birds displaying in spring, when such exhibitions might be expected, but on July 22nd, 1944, I found three birds together, one of them displaying continuously while the other two fed. One of the three flew off and I watched the remaining two for roughly twenty minutes. During the whole of this period the displaying bird continued to show off or chase the other without a pause. The display consisted of standing bolt upright facing the other bird, with wings held perpendicularly, points of primaries almost touching overhead; the wings were then revolved with a fanning action, slowly and repeatedly. This pose immediately brought to mind photographs and drawings by W. Rowan I had seen illustrating one of his papers on Alberta waders in *British Birds*.\* I did not hear a note of any kind uttered during this display. The other bird appeared to be unresponsive

\*Vol. xx, p. 191, fig. 15, F. & H. Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*.)

and to resent being followed about at a distance of only 12-15 inches so persistently. It was pressed into flight two or three times, taking off calling " twee-wee " and closely followed by the displaying bird. Each time they circled low over the water and returned to within a few feet of the spot they had left, when the wing-fanning and chasing was resumed. During the last of these flights the displaying bird broke into a torrent of rapid, trilling notes, quite unlike anything I had heard before from this species, and when it alighted it stood bolt upright without raising its wings and began to utter a penetrating, long-drawn note which it repeated several times, thrusting its head forward at the beginning of the note and jerking it back at the end. After this it resumed its attentions to the other bird, only this time it chased it with alternate quick runs or short fluttering flights, the other endeavouring to avoid it by short, dodging rushes. Eventually both flew off together to the other end of the reservoir and I lost sight of them.

The only other hint of autumn display comes to me from Mr. B. W. Tucker, who informs me (*in litt.*) that at Northampton Sewage Farm on September 11th, 1943, he heard two birds " tittering in almost song-like fashion," but saw no definite display.

## NOTES.

## UNUSUAL FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF TITS.

I HAVE recently been particularly interested in the behaviour of Marsh- and Coal-Tits, which together with larger numbers of Blue and Great Tits, have visited the garden here at Llanymynech during about the first three weeks of October, 1944. The garden, and many other places near here, are infested with the little black slug. The Marsh-Tits (*Parus palustris dresseri*) have been most diligent in picking these out of the soil of the flower beds in view of my window. The Coal-Tit (*P. ater britannicus*) has also done the same thing, but not to the same extent. The curious thing is that the birds seem to eat few, if any, at the time. Sometimes they fly away over the boundary fence of the garden with the slugs dangling from the bill. In a very short time a bird will be back for another slug. At first this gave me the impression that there was a late nest of young to be fed. However, as I watched, I soon found that this was not so, for the tits did not always go over the fence. Very often they would enter the hedge and, after moving about in it, go to an ivy-clad stump and push the slug in a crevice in the ivy or the stump. The Blue Tits (*P. cæruleus obscurus*) badgered them considerably while they were in the fence and seemed to search for the caches after the Marsh-Tits had gone. At any rate, searching as carefully as I could, I was unable to find any slugs, although I saw dozens disposed of by the birds. I also noticed Marsh-Tits carrying these slugs to hide several times when I was walking near the village. Sometimes they placed them in the thick stems of dead plants. Slugs are not mentioned among the food items of the Marsh- and Coal-Tits in *The Handbook*.

J. H. OWEN.

## RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHERS SEEN IN WILTSHIRE AND HAMPSHIRE.

ON May 13th, 1944, near Calne, in company with Christine Willis, Rachel Judd, and Anne Tanqueray, I saw a small bird on the edge of a beech-wood behaving like a flycatcher. It flew into a tree whose branches overhung the lane. At first the light was against us and I took it for a Spotted Flycatcher, but when we had gone a few yards on and stopped to look at it again, we noticed that it had a red breast and this was clearly seen by all of us. We watched it flying out some twelve feet or so above us from a bare projecting branch four or five times in succession and returning to the same perch. Finally it flew to another tree and we did not see it again. When it was on the branch we twice heard it give a short rattling note, and we agreed on this description of the call on our way back and before consulting *The Handbook*. We had not got field-glasses and unfortunately did not notice the tail pattern, but we are sure that the bird was a Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa p. parva*). There is not the least possibility that it was a Robin; its whole

behaviour and appearance were unmistakably those of a flycatcher. I visited the place again later, but did not see any sign of it.

SUSAN K. TAYLOR.

ON the evening of May 1st, 1944, a male Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa p. parva*) was identified in his garden in Southsea, Portsmouth, Hampshire, by Dr. P. Hamilton Boyden. The bird was hunting insects in the air with the distinctive flycatcher flight. Its red breast first caught the observer's attention and caused momentary confusion with a Robin, which closer observation dispelled. The bird's slender appearance induced Dr. Boyden to examine it with a glass, and although he unfortunately cannot definitely recall having seen the characteristic tail pattern he verified the identification at once with a text-book. The garden is surrounded by trees, which, although affording good shelter for birds, made observation somewhat difficult. Dr. Boyden also noticed the unusual call-notes of the bird, sounding distinctively tinkling or bell-like and repeated four or five times. These continued for about half an hour in the vicinity after it had left the garden. A bird which may have been a female of the species was seen in the locality a few days later, but unfortunately its identity could not be confirmed.

D. J. GUNSTON.

[It is unfortunate that in neither of the above cases was the distinctive tail pattern seen, but we are satisfied after correspondence with the recorders that the records can be accepted. Indeed in the case of Miss Taylor's record the reason for the omission is clear from her account; the bird was always well above the observers, and the tail pattern is much less striking from below, the white portion appearing merely as a continuation of the white of the belly. The fact that in both instances call-notes of the species were heard and correctly described confirms the identifications. We have some reason for thinking that either the season of 1944 was an exceptionally good one for Red-breasted Flycatchers or that the species is actually becoming a more regular visitor here, as, in addition to the above, we have received two or three other records recently which we think are in all probability correct, though unfortunately not sufficiently certain to publish.—EDS.]

#### LITTLE OWLS FEEDING YOUNG ON NEWTS.

IN June, 1944, when watching the nest of a pair of Little Owls (*Athene noctua vidalii*) containing two young about ten days old in a hole in the bank of a large flooded clay pit at Kempston Hardwick, near Bedford, I found dead newts in the nest hole with them and one with other material in a pellet. The newts were of varying freshness and two were full of colour when collected. I found about seven or eight in all and I formed the impression that they had been caught and brought to the nest over a period of days. *The Handbook* does not mention newts as prey of the Little Owl. As to how the birds obtained them one can only speculate.

H. C. TRIMNELL.

[The newts are the Common or Smooth Newt (*Triturus vulgaris*). The record presents some odd features. In the first place, although birds-of-prey will sometimes bring to the nest more than the young can eat, it seems curious that a number of these amphibians should have been found in the nest untouched—unless, in spite of the parents bringing them, they proved distasteful to the nestlings. Some colour is lent to this possible explanation by the other curious feature of the case, that the newt in the pellet is almost intact, suggesting that although swallowed it was thrown up prematurely. As to the manner in which this unusual prey was obtained it should be noted that newts come out on land after breeding and may well have been secured soon after leaving the water or on moist nights subsequently: it seems improbable that they can have been taken from the water.—B.W.T.]

#### DARK-BREASTED BARN-OWLS IN DEVON AND YORKSHIRE.

WHILE cycling in a lane near Ottery St. Mary, Devon, at 9.15 a.m. (B.S.T.) on October 8th, 1944, I noticed a Barn-Owl coming towards me over the adjoining field, and was at once struck by its unusually dark colour. A moment or two afterwards it topped the hedge and flew directly overhead some 15 feet up, and I was astonished to see that there was no white on its under-parts, all, including the under wing-surfaces, being a light shade of brown, and not so very light at that. Nor did the facial discs show up white, but appeared to be also of a brownish shade. The bird dropped over the opposite hedge, and was seen hawking over the fields for a time before passing out of sight.

My view of the bird as it passed over me, though brief, was a very good one, as the light was ideal, sun behind very light cloud. Unfortunately, I was too obsessed with noting the area of brown under-parts to notice if the breast was spotted, and by the time the bird was far enough away for me to see its upper-parts it was too far for me to be sure of their colour, as I was without glasses.

I may say that I know the Barn-Owl well, as it is still common hereabouts and often to be seen in daylight, both in the early morning and just before dusk, but I have never previously seen one brown-breasted like this. Its appearance agreed closely with that of the dark-breasted form (*Tyto alba guttata*), which according to *The Handbook* has not previously been recorded in Devon.

E. H. WARE.

ON October 14th, 1944, at Goathland, Yorkshire, I was hidden under a bush at 5 p.m., waiting to shoot Wood-Pigeons, when a Barn-Owl (*Tyto alba*) came flopping over the hedge about 5 yards from me. It did not see me and for two minutes or so it played around within 50 yards of me, looking for mice on the grassy bank on which I was. During this time I noticed that it was greyer above than is usual in Barn-Owls in England, with hardly any buff or yellow on the upper-parts. After a few minutes it

came back and stayed hunting on the bank for five minutes, hovering and pouncing, at times within 4 or 5 yards of me, and once sitting upright on a tuft of grass facing me for a minute, 10 yards off: its breast was apricot-coloured. I did not particularly notice the facial disks, nor do I remember any obvious spotting on the breast, the characters already described being what struck me particularly. I think this bird may have been *T. a. guttata*. This is the first time I have seen a Barn-Owl in my immediate area, though one nests about a mile and a half away. W. S. MEDLICOTT.

[Unless they are supposed to have been aberrations of the white-breasted form of an unrecorded kind, there seems no reasonable doubt that these were examples of the dark continental race. It is a pity that Mr. Ware was not able to make sure of the colour of the upper-parts, but the fact that the whole bird appeared dark as it approached him supports the above conclusion.—EDS.]

#### SQUACCO HERON AND OTHER RARE MIGRANTS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

MIGRATION in the Trent Valley, around the Nottingham Sewage Farm, has been watched daily and in great detail during the period July to September, 1944. It was found that considerable passage of all types of birds was in progress.

The most noteworthy visitor was a Squacco Heron (*Ardeola ralloides*). An immature bird of this species was seen by R. J. and T. W. Raines to come over and circle one of the sewage farms, several times at a low altitude, on August 27th. The description noted was as follows:—Small heron about the length of a Shoveler, but body very small. Large, pointed beak, neck streaked with brown, breast streaked as neck, back and scapulars brown, probably also streaked with darker brown, wing almost completely white but some brown on the primaries, tail white, feet stretched behind tail.

Unfortunately this bird did not alight, being put off by the observers; nevertheless excellent views, in very good light, were obtained and it was in full view for about 10 minutes.

Some other migrants are sufficiently rare to be worthy of record and are listed below.

WATER-PIBIT (*Anthus s. spinoletta*).—One seen by a gravel-pit near the sewage farm, on September 6th. It may have been in moult since, although the breast was almost unstreaked, the back was a dark, tawny brown colour, as in winter plumage. The bird was dark, larger than a Meadow-Pipit, had a white eye-stripe, and white outer tail-feathers, and those streaks which were on the breast were in a semi-circular position around the pale throat. The legs were dark brown (R. J. & T. W. Raines).

BLACK REDSTART (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*).—An adult male in winter plumage seen on September 3rd (R. J. & T. W. Raines, J. Staton).

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*).—A juvenile was noted over the sewage farm, on July 13th. This bird was identified by

the whitish area on the upper tail-coverts and the reddish brown, un-streaked breast and under-parts. It hunted over the farm in typical harrier style, but was almost constantly mobbed by Carrion Crows and large gulls.

TEMMINCK'S STINT (*Calidris temminckii*). This species has been rather frequent during the observed period. On July 26th three were identified; on this occasion a Little Stint was present for comparison. Two were again sighted on the 27th. One was seen on August 3rd, another on August 22nd, and two on August 30th and September 3rd.

In all cases the typical call and very small size were noted (R. J. & T. W. Raines, B. K. Montgomery).

PURPLE SANDPIPER (*Calidris maritima*).—One was identified among a flock of Turnstones on August 22nd (R. J. Raines).

LITTLE GULL (*Larus minutus*).—A substantial passage of this species seems to have occurred. An immature bird was seen on August 23rd. Three, two immatures and an adult in winter plumage, were seen on August 30th. Two immature on August 31st and five, three immatures and two adults, on September 1st. Two adults, September 15th (R. J. & T. W. Raines, J. Staton, M. P. Winsler).

SPOTTED CRAKE (*Porzana porzana*).—A great S.W. gale was blowing on August 28th, and hundreds of migrants were held up by it. During the morning on this date three birds of the above species were flushed at the observer's feet. On the following day, August 29th, another was flushed. In all cases the birds were flushed very close and dropped into cover again almost immediately. They were distinguished by small size, spotted back, white edge to first primary, barred flanks and buff-yellow under the tail (R. J. Raines).

R. J. RAINES.

UNUSUAL NESTS OF SWALLOW.—Mr. Hubert E. Pounds informs us of a Swallow's (*Hirundo r. rustica*) nest, examined by him on August 7th, 1944, near Chelsham, Surrey, affixed to a wooden partition in a stable without any ledge or other support below it. There were four nearly fully-fledged young on August 25th. The nest in which the birds had reared their first brood was normally placed on a horizontal beam.

Major A. W. Boyd writes: If many nests are examined sites differing from the normal will be found not infrequently. Nests built like a House-Martin's against a wall without support and just below the eaves or a gable have been recorded (*antea*, Vol. xxxiii, pp. 109-10) and I have seen a number of these at Hartford, Cheshire.

A remarkable nest (June 27th, 1932) was built in an upper room at Antrobus, Cheshire, on a stick shaped like a walking-stick with a rough handle projecting for about 2 feet from a wall. The nest was built on the end of the stick and although it vibrated whenever the sitting bird flew off, a brood of five was reared. In the same building I found a nest with a brood of six built in a lump of straw projecting from the bottom of a pigeon-box, and in

a farm in the same area Swallows nested for three years in a shippon on a plate hung by wires from the roof—originally to hold liquid disinfectant. Other unusual sites could be mentioned.

SHORT-EARED OWLS PERCHING IN TREES IN WINTER.—With reference to the note under this heading (*antea*, p. 100), Mr. B. K. Montgomery reports another case of Short-eared Owls (*Asio f. flammeus*) perching repeatedly in trees in winter. Four birds which remained at Fulbourn Fen, Cambridgeshire, during the latter half of January, 1944, were flushed on each of several visits from some ivy-covered trees, which appeared from the droppings to be used as a regular roost.

RUDDY SHELD-DUCKS AT LUNDY AND IN ANGUS.—Mr. F. W. Gade has written to us from Lundy that a Ruddy Sheld-Duck (*Casarca ferruginea*) visited the island on September 16th, 1944. Unfortunately all birds of this species are nowadays under a strong suspicion of being strays, but Mr. Gade states that this one was rather shy. Another was seen by Corporal P. A. Humble in Montrose Basin on August 8th, 1944.

GADWALL IN YORKSHIRE.—Mr. J. C. S. Ellis sends us details of a pair of Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*) seen by him on October 14th, 1944, on a lake near Wakefield, Yorks.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL DROPPING SHELL-FISH.—Mr. J. A. G. Barnes informs us that on August 31st, 1944, he saw a Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) on the Kent estuary, Westmorland, pick up a small object, presumably a shell-fish, on a mud-bank, fly up to about 20 feet and drop it after the manner of a Common or Herring-Gull. It then alighted, picked up the object and repeated the process in exactly the same way. This behaviour is not recorded for the Lesser Black-back in *The Handbook*.

## REVIEWS.

*The Breeding Distribution, History and Population of the North Atlantic Gannet (Sula bassana)*. By James Fisher and H. G. Vevers. Part I.—A History of the Gannet's Colonies, and the Census in 1939. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, Vol. xii, pp. 173-213, 1943. Part II.—The Changes in the World Numbers of the Gannet in a Century. *Ibid.*, Vol. xiii, pp. 49-62, 1944.

THE title of this paper indicates its contents. In Part I information concerning each of the 39 localities in the North Atlantic where Gannets breed, have bred, have been suspected to have bred, or have occupied cliffs or ledges in the breeding season, is set out in chronological order with references to the sources of information. Particulars about those colonies already fully treated in Gurney's well-known book, or in recent papers by the writers, are supplementary to the accounts already published, but in each case a summary gives the numbers estimated or counted at various dates.

In 1939 an attempt was made to arrange for all the known colonies to be counted and was so nearly successful that figures were obtained for all the 16 gannetries in Britain, the Faeroes and Iceland and two of those in the Gulf of St. Lawrence area. In the latter region two other colonies were last visited in 1934 and 1936 respectively, another was visited in 1940, and a sixth was discovered in 1941. It is concluded that the number of breeding Gannets in 1939 was  $165,600 \pm 9,500$ . This is in close agreement with the figure of 156,000 arrived at in 1936 by Messrs. Wynne-Edwards, Lockley and Salmon (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxix, pp. 262-276)

The information is admirably set out and the paper is illustrated with some excellent photographs of the colonies and numerous maps and charts. Any library which possesses Gurney's *The Gannet: A Bird with a History* should acquire a copy of this paper, which brings the history up to date.

In Part II the authors discuss trends in the Gannet population in the last hundred years. They consider that in 1834 the world population was of the order of 334,000 breeding individuals, of which about two-thirds nested on the Bird Rocks in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Mainly owing to depredations by man at this great colony, the numbers steadily decreased during the next sixty years to a figure of the order of 106,000. Since 1894 there has been a steady recovery of numbers, chiefly owing to increase in the Irish and Welsh colonies since man ceased to molest them. W.B.A.

#### LOCAL REPORTS.

*Birmingham Bird Club: Tenth Annual Report on the Birds of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and South Staffordshire, 1943.* Edited by A. J. Harthan. THE breeding of the Black Redstart in Birmingham has already been recorded. Other noteworthy records are those of four Water-Pipits at Bellfields on October 9th, a Marsh-Harrier there on September 26th (first record for Staffordshire), and a Fulmar seen flying over Bromsgrove on March 8th. A Quail was heard calling in flight over Bromsgrove. This has been noticed by continental observers, but, so far as we know, rarely in this country. There are short articles by H. G. Alexander on a new gull roost in Warwickshire and by A. J. Martin on "Some Birds of Upton Warren."

*Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society: Ornithological Section for Leicestershire and Rutland. County Report of Wild Birds for 1943.* 2s. 6d. AMONGST the general notes we may mention the records of a Great Grey Shrike at Leicester on May 5th, a Firecrest in Swithland Woods on December 29th, six Whoopers at Stanford Reservoir in February and March, three drake Red-crested Pochards (possibly escapes) there in the autumn, a Leach's Petrel at Melton Mowbray on April 6th, several Curlew Sandpipers at Eye Valley Reservoir in September and at least one Oyster-catcher, an uncommon visitor inland, there on March 30th. We also note that there are several records of Great Black-backed Gulls in this inland area.

Under the heading "The Changing Status of Leicestershire Birds" Mr. A. E. Jolley tabulates the species amongst the commoner birds whose status appears noticeably to have changed during the period between the publication of Montagu Browne's *Vertebrate Animals of Leicestershire and Rutland* (1888) and the present.

*Ornithological Record for Derbyshire, 1943.* By W. K. Marshall (Reprinted from the *Derbyshire Archaeol. and Nat. Hist. Soc. Journal, 1943*).

THIS report contains numerous records chiefly of local interest. Six Buzzards seen together at Bretby on June 6th are noteworthy, and Crossbills were present in spring in North Derbyshire, but breeding was not proved. The systematic order adopted is peculiar, with pigeons between shrikes and flycatchers and other species clearly out of place.

*The Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club: Proceedings and Natural History Notes for the Area, 1943.* 1s. od.

THE short section of "Ornithological Notes" contains mostly records of local interest. A Whooper Swan was present on the Dee at Chester during April and a Hen-Harrier is recorded in April. There are also several separate short notes on birds. We note that the Willow-Tit, recorded for the first time in Wirral in 1942, evidently bred in 1943, as a brood was seen in July.

*Yorkshire Naturalists' Union: Committee for Ornithology Report for 1943.* Edited by R. Chislett (Reprinted from *The Naturalist*, April-June, 1944). 1s. od.

THE Yorkshire report again contains a large amount of valuable faunistic data carefully edited and a notable number of interesting records. The chief event of the year was the breeding of two pairs of Black-necked Grebes in the county for the second time on record, the first having been in 1928. Yorkshire

was also the main focus of the Waxwing invasion, but thanks to the courtesy of the Editor, the county records have already been given fairly fully in this journal. Amongst noteworthy visitors not previously recorded in *British Birds* are a Nutcracker near Great Smeaton on March 23rd, a Hoopoe on the unusual date of December 9th (there are also September records for 1942 and 1943), a Marsh-Harrier at Ainderby Bottoms on April 3rd, and an Iceland Gull at Hull on December 20th. An Osprey was unfortunately shot near the east coast on May 22nd and others are recorded as seen. Two nests of Crossbill were found near Thornton-le-Dale and the species also evidently bred in the North Riding and possibly elsewhere. Three pairs of Montagu's Harriers are recorded, but only one is positively known to have bred and these reared two young. Little Owls are now "reported from many localities from south to extreme north," where breeding is recorded, and several nests or broods of Quail are reported.

B.W.T.

*The Peregrine: a publication of the Manx Field Club.* Edited by K. Williamson and W. S. Cowin. 1s. 0d.

ALTHOUGH many members of the Field Club are abroad on active service this publication shows that it does not lack for vigour and enthusiasm.

The Peregrine Falcon, as is proper in an island for which it has long been famous, receives special attention, including a very interesting paper by K. Williamson on historical records—one actually going back to Norse times; incidentally it may be mentioned that the bird's occasional practice of taking birds and animals from the ground is noted in *The Handbook*, although E. F. Ladds, in recording the capture of a feeding Redshank by a Peregrine, seems to be unaware of this.

Articles on the following subjects are of interest to the ornithologist: the Calf of Man, where Chough, Raven, Peregrine and Fulmar breed; the Wood-Warbler, four nests of which have been known in the island; the spread of the Fulmar—a valuable record; a marked increase in the number of nesting Barn-Owls; and the almost complete failure of the tern colonies in 1943.

Entomological and botanical notes also are included.

A.W.B.

## LETTER.

### DOUBLE-BROODED CHAFFINCHES.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With reference to the letter from the Hon. G. Charteris (*antea*, p. 120), I can record three definite instances of Chaffinches having second broods.

1. In 1938 a pair ringed by me with coloured rings for identification nested in a holly just outside my garden; the young were out of the nest by May 17th, and were still being fed on the 24th. On June 11th I saw the same pair in the act of mating. On June 20th I found their second nest, containing two eggs, in the wistaria on my house; the young were hatched by June 29th and were fed by both parents: they had flown by July 9th. Only two eggs were laid.

2. A hen Chaffinch which I could identify by her "scaly" legs and her extreme tameness (she would come to my hand for food) nested in a buddleia in my garden in April, 1936. Four eggs hatched, April 26th, and the young flew on May 11th. On June 10th I saw this bird building a second nest in a rose pergola; it was finished and one egg laid on June 14th; on June 27th it contained three young and one egg, but on the 28th the nest was empty. Magpies probably took the contents.

3. In April, 1937, the same hen built a nest in a macrocarpa hedge in my garden; on May 3rd it contained two addled eggs and one nestling, which flew on May 10th. This fledgling probably died: it was not seen after May 11th, and on May 13th the same hen began building a second nest in my thorn hedge. Four eggs were laid, which hatched June 2nd, and the young flew June 13th.

These facts are given in greater detail in my book *Somerset Birds and some other Folk*, pp. 65-73. My records of the nesting of other ringed Chaffinches are inconclusive, but they suggest that double broods, if not normal, are not uncommon.

E. W. HENDY.

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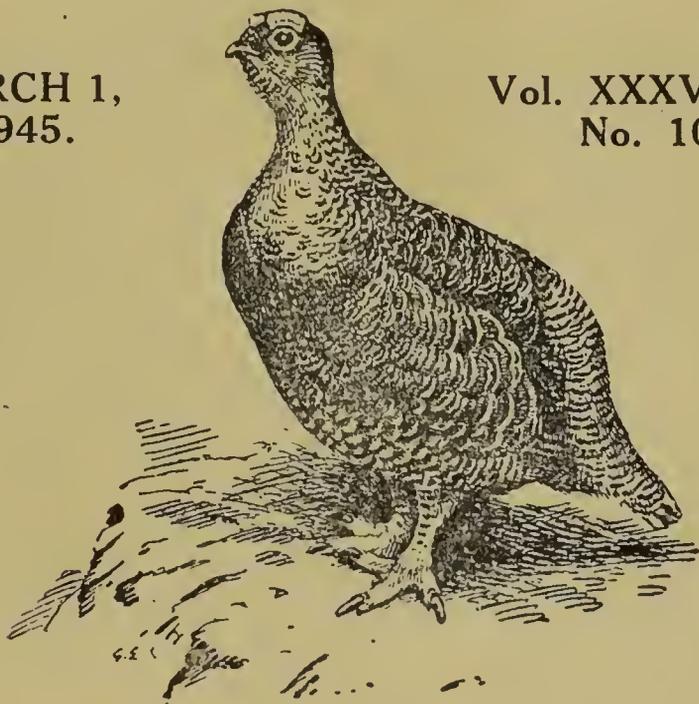
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## THE HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS.

SEPARATE copies of the Supplementary Additions and Corrections appended to the second impression can now be supplied for the benefit of holders of the first impression, whose attention is directed to the advertisement on the inside of the cover for particulars.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE BREEDING BIRDS OF  
LUNDY IN 1942\*

BY

W. B. ALEXANDER, H. N. SOUTHERN, B. W. TUCKER AND  
J. S. WATSON.

THROUGH the kindness of Mr. M. C. Harman, the owner, and by permission of the Admiralty the writers were able to spend from July 2nd to 10th, 1942, on Lundy. The primary object was to investigate the status of the Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*), on which a separate paper has already appeared (*antea* pp. 122-129) but as much attention as possible was given to the other land and sea-birds. We are indebted to the British Trust for Ornithology for a grant of £20 towards the expenses of the trip, this being part of a donation made to the Trust by Mr. Harman for the study of bird-life on the island.

As Lack (1942) has emphasized, the populations of breeding birds on small islands are liable to more exaggerated fluctuations than normally occur on the mainland; consequently even when such islands have been well investigated a re-survey from time to time is well worth while, and indeed desirable. In the case of Lundy, the birds have received a considerable amount of attention from visiting ornithologists. Loyd (1925) gives a good general account in his book *Lundy: its History and Natural History*. Wynne-Edwards and Harrisson (1932) carried out a census on the island in June, 1930, and Harrisson (1932) published a paper with special reference to numerical fluctuations and providing a systematic list supposed to be brought up to the date of 1931, though in fact it is by no means complete. Perry in *Lundy, Isle of Puffins* (1940) gives census figures for the whole breeding bird population, including even the very numerous sea-birds! Lastly, Lack (1942) in his study of the bird faunas of British small islands gives a summary based on published data and personal observations in 1934, showing which of 55 proved breeders are known to have increased, decreased, or fluctuated notably and which appear to have remained stable. In addition to this published data Mr. F. W. Gade has most kindly put at our disposal some unpublished records from his manuscript notes.

The comparative material available for past years is thus substantial, and it will be noted that for two seasons, 1930 and 1939, definite census figures are recorded. On our own visit we therefore made a point of examining every part of the island and making a careful survey of the land-bird population, with a view to ascertaining any changes that might have occurred. We must, however, expressly disclaim having made or attempted a "census." It was in any case too late for a satisfactory breeding census to be taken, but it should be emphasized, quite apart from this, that a census of

\* Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

such an island as Lundy is not a task to be lightly undertaken. Though good and critical census work may produce results of much interest, we feel it is time that a note of warning was sounded against so-called censuses based on crude and slapdash counts undertaken without a proper appreciation of the conditions to be fulfilled if a census is to be of any serious value. There seems to be a notion amongst some less critical observers that by producing any sort of figures and calling them a census the value of the observations is somehow enhanced, or in other words that even figures of doubtful reliability are better than no figures at all. This is a very unfortunate and injurious idea. Inaccurate or unreliable census figures, by giving an appearance of precision which in fact is not justified, may be actually most misleading to future workers. Even Wynne-Edwards and Harrison, who evidently carried out their census with great energy and in a careful and systematic manner, seem to us rather over-optimistic as to the degree of accuracy attained under the conditions they describe. They state:—

We made our census by walking over the whole island in line, noting every male bird in the dimorphic species and every pair of singing birds in other cases—a method which makes no allowance for non-breeding birds. The slopes could be worked in a single sweep, but the top required walking to and fro a number of times. . . . . The whole census took just over 30 hours to make. We think the area was adequately covered with the exception of Rat Island, which we did not visit.

We agree with the authors in not attaching serious importance to the minor sources of error, due to overlapping, etc., which they clearly recognized, but we feel serious misgiving over the statement that “the slopes could be worked in a single sweep.” The slopes of Lundy, more particularly on the east side, are long, broken and often densely overgrown, and we find it difficult to agree that they could be covered adequately in a single sweep by three people, even though the Rhododendron thicket on the east side was probably not as dense in 1930 as now. This consideration leads us to think that their figures for some species are likely to be less exact than the authors appear to have believed. Nevertheless there is no reason to suppose that the results of the census as a whole are not sufficiently accurate to be valuable.

Perry's census is unfortunately of a type which it is very difficult to evaluate, since he gives only bare figures in an appendix to his book, with no information about the methods employed or any indication of a sufficient appreciation of the complexities and sources of error involved. This is the more regrettable because when any considerable change appears to be indicated by comparison with the results of other workers it is difficult to know how much weight to attach to Perry's figures, although in fact they may be substantially correct. One or two specific cases are referred to below.

In an account of the birds of any area some indication of its physical and ecological characteristics is desirable by way of background. In the present case a good concise ecological description is given by Wynne-Edwards and Harrison, to whose paper the reader

is referred. It seems unnecessary here to do more than recall that the total area is 1,115 acres and that the undulating top of the island is divided by three transverse walls, known as the Quarter, Halfway, and Three-quarter Walls, into four sections numbered by Wynne-Edwards and Harrisson as 1 to 4, starting from the south. We have used the same divisions in our own observations.

#### LAND-BIRDS.

The species met with by us which breed in the island are treated in tabular form, so that the observations and conclusions of previous workers can readily be compared with one another and with our own. The first three columns summarize the observations of Loyd, Wynne-Edwards and Harrisson, and Perry. Then in adjacent columns are given the conclusions of the two authors who have systematically considered fluctuations of the island's breeding bird population, namely Harrisson in 1932 and Lack just a decade later. Finally, our own observations are briefly summarized.

Of some of the species listed it is unnecessary to say anything more, but others call for some further comment. These last are dealt with below, together with species not breeding in the island which were met with on our visit. It should be mentioned that W.B.A. revisited the island in September of the same year and in some cases observations made at that time are referred to where they have a bearing on the observations made in July.

**RAVEN** (*Corvus c. corax*).—If there were really only two pairs this seems a sufficiently substantial change to record as "decrease." Nothing was seen in July to favour any supposition that there were more, but in September, Ravens were much more in evidence and there were estimated to be certainly 4-5 pairs. They were always seen in pairs, but might conceivably have been the progeny of two pairs already paired up or even new colonists. The former supposition seems improbable, as Heinroth (1926) states that Ravens do not reach sexual maturity for two years.

**CARRION CROW** (*Corvus c. corone*).—Estimate possibly too small. In September they were concentrated in the harvest field and a flock of over 40 was counted there several times, though there were always also a few towards the north end; estimated total 50-60. Our figures in any case throw little light on the breeding number, as Perry found a number of non-breeders. But the reason for Lack's recording a "probable increase" is not apparent from available figures. The recorded figures in any case require some comment. In 1930 Wynne-Edwards and Harrisson found *c.* 16 pairs, but Harrisson (1932) attributes to Gade the statement that in 1931 "there were believed to be nearly forty pairs nesting." However in Gade's manuscript notes the number breeding in 1932 is estimated at 14-15 pairs and it is expressly stated that "during the past three years this species has neither increased nor decreased." Harrisson's statement is thus clearly based on a mis-understanding: probably the figure quoted refers to a count outside the breeding season, as does without doubt a comparable estimate in Gade's manuscript of 50 pairs in 1929. The description indicated seems to be "fluctuated?" The query is added because we do not know whether the figures of Wynne-Edwards, Harrisson and Gade for 1930-1932 are based on birds or nests. Perry found 5 pairs and 13 non-breeders in 1939 and there is at least the possibility that the breeding population has really been stable at 5-6 pairs for many years.

**LINNET** (*Carduelis c. cannabina*).—Perhaps under-estimated. Flock of over 60 seen repeatedly on stubble in September and total population estimated at *c.* 100. Migrants might have arrived by September, but no evidence of fluctuations was observed.

RAVEN ..	4 (?) 5 prs. c. 6 prs.	4 prs. c. 16 prs.	3 prs. 5 prs. (13 non-breeders).	No marked fluctuations. Increased.	No marked change. Prob. increase.	Apparently 2 prs., W. side. Estimated c. 30 birds.
CARRION-CROW ..	Very numerous.	38 prs.	6 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	Decreased.	Flocks, families and pairs in all sections. Estimated c. 30-50. 2-3 families, confined to E. slope of sect. 1.
LINNET ..	c. 8 prs.	7 prs.	6 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	1 pr., sect. 1. (Artificially destroyed since 1939).
CHAFFINCH ..	5-6 prs., 1922; large increase 1923	22 prs.	40 prs.	Increased.	Increased.	In all sections. Common everywhere.
HOUSE-SPARROW ..	Very numerous.	39 prs.	30 prs.	—————	No marked change.	Few seen round coast.
SKY-LARK ..	Very numerous.	c. 275 prs.	200 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	Family in sect. 1.
MEADOW-PIPIIT ..	Considerable nos.	41 prs.	20 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	Fluctuated.	Breeds in Millcombe.
PIED WAGTAIL ..	Several prs.	6 prs.	2 prs.	No marked fluctuations. Erratic.	Breeds some years, not others.	—————
WILLOW-WARBLER.	None.	4 prs.	—————	—————	—————	—————
MISLE-THRUSH ..	None.	None.	None.	—————	—————	One in Millcombe, July 2, 3, 6; one, N.W. cliff, July 5.
SONG-THRUSH ..	4-5 prs.	9 prs.	6 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	c. 6 families on E. slope, mostly Millcombe.
BLACKBIRD ..	More numerous than Thrush.	34 prs.	12 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	Decreased.	Numerous on E. slope, esp. Millcombe; scattered N. to Gannets Combe.
WHEATEAR ..	4-5 prs., 1922; 1 pr., 1923.	12 prs. (? passage)	—————	Common, but considerable fluctuations. Increased.	Regular; evidence for fluctuations doubtful Fluctuated.	One or two families in S.W., and one in N.E. 4 or 5 scattered pairs.
STONECHAT ..	c. 20 prs., 1922; noticeably fewer 1923.	28 prs.	15 prs.	—————	—————	—————
ROBIN ..	Several pairs.	9 prs.	6 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	None.
HEDGE-SPARROW ..	2 prs.	23 prs.	6 prs.	Increased.	Fluctuated.	c. 6 fauns. on E. slope, sect. 1 & 2.
WREN ..	Number of prs.	11 prs.	35 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	Evidence for fluctuations doubtful.	Numerous along E. slope.
SWALLOW ..	1 pr., 1922; 2 prs., 1923.	1 pr.	1 pr.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	1 pr. with nest in church porch; few others seen.
CUCKOO ..	Breeds.	1 pr.	2 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	One, July 10th.
PEREGRINE ..	2 prs., 1922; 1 pr., 1923.	2 prs.	None.	No marked fluctuations.	No marked change.	One, July 6th.
BUZZARD ..	2-3 prs., 1922; 4 fauns., 1923.	prob. 4 prs.	5 prs.	No marked fluctuations.	Increased.	2 prs., 1 young each.
WOOD-PIGEON ..	Few prs.	2 prs.	2 prs.	Established, 1930.	Increased.	1 or 2 prs.; 1 nest seen.
CURLEW ..	—————	3 prs.	10 prs.	Established 1927.	Doubtful breeder. Increased.	Pr. in sect. 2; flocks of 3-15. Prob. 30-40 birds, prs. in all sects., tending to flock.
LAPWING ..	—————	—————	—————	Common, but considerable fluctuations.	Increased.	4-5 prs. on summit; at least as many round coast.
OYSTER-CATCHER ..	c. 15 prs.	14 prs.	22 prs.	—————	Breeds some years, not others.	One in sect. 2, only heard calling at night.
CORNCRAKE ..	One seen 1922.	—————	—————	—————	No marked change.	Several in sects. 1 & 2; chicks in two places.
PHEASANT ..	At least 2 broods, 1922; more in 1923.	5 prs.	4 prs.	Increased.	—————	—————

CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs gengleri*).—In September thought to be possibly over 20, almost all in Millcombe, so perhaps 4 (or even 5) pairs with young.

MISTLE-THRUSH (*Turdus v. viscivorus*).—Has bred in former years. Particulars are not included in Mr. Gade's notes, but he informs us that he believes that a pair bred every year from 1929 to 1941. The nest was found each year, and each year, except one, a brood was raised. In 1942 an adult was killed through striking a sheep netting fence and the species has not bred in the island since, though single birds are seen almost every autumn.

STONECHAT (*Saxicola torquata hibernans*).—This shows a very severe decrease on any previous figure, due no doubt to the recent severe winters, from which Stonechats have suffered heavily in many places. Entirely absent, 1944 (F.W.G.).

ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula melophilus*).—Though not detected during our July visit a pair bred and the nest was actually seen by Mr. and Mrs. Gade, who observed the birds in the garden at Millcombe until mid-June. They were apparently absent for about two months, re-appearing in mid-August. Apparently two pairs of adults in early September.

KESTREL (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).—None was seen by us and Perry found them present from mid-July to mid-May only. Loyd recorded two pairs and Wynne-Edwards and Harrisson two pairs. Gade (quoted by Perry) states that it has only bred occasionally in recent years, yet Lack gives it as a regular breeder, with no evidence for marked change.

BUZZARD (*Buteo b. buteo*).—There were two pairs in 1928, three or more pairs in 1930, and five to six pairs in 1932 (Gade, manuscript). In 1931 three eyries were located (J. G. Davies, quoted by Harrisson). Lack's "increased," which was correct on the evidence available to him, should be "fluctuated."

CURLEW (*Numenius a. arquata*).—The pair in section 2 were probably breeding birds. Fulford (1941) strongly suspected breeding in 1940 and proved it in June, 1941, when two young about ten days old were found. In 1942 the same observer states that "several pairs successfully nested": some confirmation of the "several pairs" seems desirable. In 1944 Mr. Gade informs us that "one pair bred again, and one observer claims that two pairs nested, but this is not definitely established."

It seems desirable to mention here that Lack apparently overlooked the list on p. 264 of Perry's book of birds which Mr. Gade informed him had bred between 1926 and 1938. This includes seven species not mentioned by Lack, namely Mistle-Thrush (see above), Tree-Sparrow (once), Greenfinch, Spotted Flycatcher, Chiffchaff, Sedge-Warbler, Garden-Warbler. These should be added to Lack's category of birds "Breeding some years not others," with the exception of Chiffchaff and Spotted Flycatcher, which are included in error, and with the addition, to bring the list up to date, of Starling. Mr. Gade kindly gives us the following particulars of the above species:—

STARLING (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).—Bred in 1943 for the first time, but not in 1944.

GREENFINCH (*Chloris ch. chloris*).—Pair, 1934; nest and brood seen.

TREE-SPARROW (*Passer m. montanus*).—Several pairs, 1928; two or three pairs, 1932.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).—Does not breed; only a passage visitor.

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*).—No nest ever found and now considered to be only a passage migrant.

SEdge-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus s. schænobænus*).—Pair with nest, 1934 and 1935.

GARDEN-WARBLER (*Sylvia borin*).—Pair with nest, 1934; present 1938.

In addition to breeding birds the following visitors were noted by us :—

HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon u. urbica*).—One or two seen on three dates. We found nothing to support Harrison's supposition that some breed in the cliffs and no other observer has done so.

SWIFT (*Apus a. apus*).—Seen on several days ; one to four individuals. The same remark applies to this species as to the last.

TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia t. turtur*).—Two seen on July 2nd.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius ph. phæopus*).—One near N. end on July 4th, an early date. *The Handbook* gives "end first week July" for the beginning of the autumn passage.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*).—One on July 9th. Loyd has three records only. Perry records it in spring and autumn.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*).—Single bird seen at ponds on July 4th and 5th.

RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius h. hiaticula*).—One on the top of the island, N. end, July 5th. There is just a possibility that the species bred, as two young ones were repeatedly seen at the N. end in September.

#### SEA-BIRDS.

Apart from general observations on other days, we carried out on July 9th a census of sea-birds on the coast of the south-western corner of the island from Goat Island to the Rattles. If we take Perry's results for the same piece of coast at their face value a severe decrease in a number of species has taken place since 1939. Unfortunately it must be said that Perry's figures and their mode of presentation are by no means satisfactory and it is doubtful whether they afford a sound basis for comparison. At the end of his book Perry gives what purports to be a complete census of the breeding bird population of Lundy. The sea-birds are counted in groups each with a key number corresponding to a similarly numbered point on a large scale map. The numbers of birds are all reckoned in pairs and the figures are presented to the reader without any explanation. One is led to ask how *pairs* of Guillemots and Razor-bills were determined in colonies running into many hundreds, and to this enquiry the book provides no answer. We have, however, consulted Mr. Perry on the point. He kindly informs us that since a number of colonies were watched daily or several times a week he "got to know the average attendance and proportion of eggs to birds pretty well" and that the counts from the other colonies were subjected to the "slight adjustment" for absent birds which this experience seemed to warrant. It appears, therefore, that the number of birds away at sea at any given time is considered to be only a small proportion of the total breeding strength and that the estimated totals are not a great deal higher than were the actual counts. We are indebted to Mr. Perry for his courteous response to our enquiry and regret that we still find it necessary to be somewhat critical of his results. We are not told what the "slight adjustment" was in terms of figures or given the essential background data on which it was based. To be fully convincing these would require to be obtained by a very careful and

critical study with close attention to all possible complicating factors, and it is clear that no such detailed preliminary study was made. Thus we have no direct means of judging how far the figures arrived at can be relied on: they may be substantially correct or they may not. In view, however, of the great discrepancy between his results and ours, it is impossible not to regard them with some suspicion.

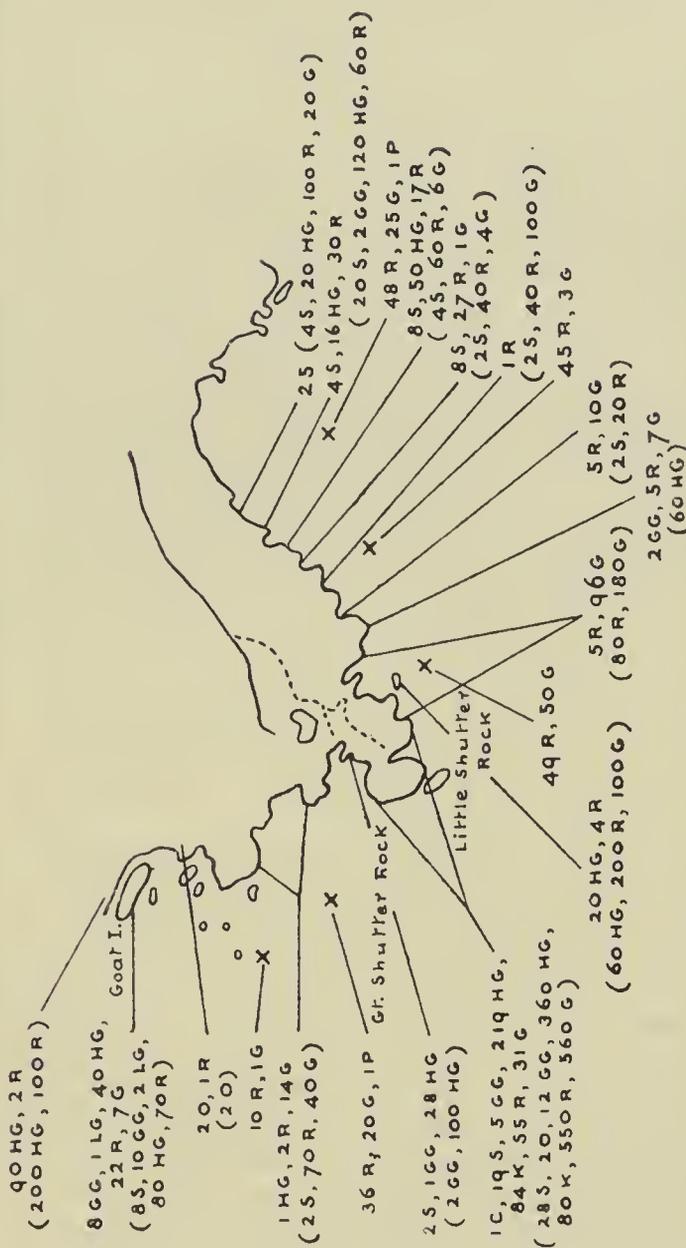
We give below a map of the south-west corner of the island traced from the Ordnance Survey, with our figures for the different points followed by Perry's in brackets. A further difficulty arises here owing to the fact that Perry's map is far from accurate, especially in the region of the Great and Little Shutters, so that an exact comparison of particular groups cannot always be made with confidence, but this does not affect the figures for the area as a whole. It should be added that our counts include groups of birds on the sea off the breeding places, the approximate positions of these flocks being indicated by crosses. In the table Perry's totals and ours for this portion of the coast are compared. It will be noted that our figures are for the total number of birds seen, while Perry's, as already mentioned, are given in terms of pairs. Both in the map and the table, therefore, Perry's original figures in his book are doubled for comparison with ours.

SUMMARY OF TOTAL NUMBERS OF BREEDING BIRDS RECORDED  
BY R. PERRY (1939) AND THE WRITERS (1942) ON THE  
PORTION OF THE COAST SHOWN IN THE MAP.

	Perry.	Present writers.
Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax c. carbo</i> ) .. .. .	0	1
Shag ( <i>Ph. a. aristotelis</i> ) .. .. .	72	43
Oystercatcher ( <i>Hæmatopus ostralegus</i> <i>occidentalis</i> ) .. .. .	4	2
Lesser Black-back ( <i>Larus fuscus graellsii</i> ) ..	2	1
Great Black-back ( <i>Larus marinus</i> ) ..	27	16
Herring-Gull ( <i>L. a. argentatus</i> ) .. .. .	1,000	464
Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa t. tridactyla</i> ) .. .. .	80	84*
Razorbill ( <i>Alca torda britannica</i> ) .. .. .	1,390	364
Guillemot ( <i>Uria aalge albionis</i> ) .. .. .	1,010	265

It will be observed that while the figures for the easily counted Kittiwakes agree the difference in those for the auks is enormous. Our figures would represent a decrease—in both species, curiously enough—of approximately 74 per cent. on those given by Perry. It must be recalled again that his figures represent counts plus an estimated addition for absent birds, while ours are actual counts including birds on the sea off the cliffs. To account for the difference there are three factors to consider:—(1) the number of birds out

\*In this case, unlike the rest, it was possible to count actual nests and the total number of birds represented is obtained by doubling the nest count.



Sketch-map of the south-west corner of Lundy, showing counts of sea-birds made by the writers, with Perry's figures for approximately the same spots shown in brackets. The crosses indicate the approximate position of groups of birds on the sea.

C, Cormorant. S, Shag. O, Oyster-catcher. H G, Herring-Gull. L G, Lesser Black-backed Gull. G G, Great Black-backed Gull. K, Kittiwake. R, Razorbill. G, Guillemot. P, Puffin.

of sight at sea during our counts; (2) a possible actual decrease; (3) a possible over-estimate by Perry. The first seems likely to represent a substantial figure, though we have seen that Perry would not apparently put it very high, and it cannot be doubted that (if known) it would also leave a substantial figure to be accounted for by one or both of the other two. With regard to these it should be stated that considerable fluctuations do occur in cliff-breeding birds; thus Loyd (1923) recorded that the number of Razorbills breeding on Lundy in that year was about double that of 1922. Again, it must be noted that Mr. Harman and Mr. Gade were of opinion in 1942 that, owing to mortality from floating oil at sea resulting from enemy action, the number of auks *had* decreased considerably, and further that *some* decrease in the area under discussion is undoubted, since at several points where substantial numbers of auks are marked by Perry there were none at all, or no more than an odd bird or two, at the time of our count in July, 1942. Nevertheless we think it improbable that the decrease was of the order which the figures would indicate and we have little doubt that Perry's totals are too high. In this connexion it may be noted that his Herring-Gull total is also very large compared with ours. Whether the close agreement in the percentage differences between his figures and ours for the two species of auks is fortuitous or not is difficult to say, but it seems rather unlikely that it is completely so. If it were not it would presumably mean, assuming Perry's figures to be reasonably accurate, that the causes of mortality responsible for the decrease had operated practically identically on the two species. On the other hand, if his figures are unreliable it would mean that he over-estimated the two species to an equal degree. We cannot decide with certainty between the alternatives.

It must suffice to say for the moment that while the determination by sufficiently careful and critical methods of a reliable ratio between the average number of auks present on a cliff at a given time and the total number of individuals breeding—a ratio which might well be different when most birds have eggs from that when most have young—would be valuable and interesting, straightforward counts of the number seen at one time (or better still checked on two or more different days) clearly provide the best means of computing fluctuations from year to year, provided the counts are taken under comparable conditions. It is unfortunate that Perry's figures do not provide this safe basis of comparison with ours.

A special point to which one of us (H.N.S.) gave attention was the percentage of Guillemots of the bridled form on Lundy. Counts were taken along the western side to determine this and to see whether any change had taken place since Perry made his counts for the same purpose. Permission was kindly given for the latter to be used by Southern in his survey of bridled Guillemots (Southern and Reeve, 1941) and the present counts may be compared with those. A notable consistency is to be observed.

Sample counts gave the following results (bridled birds/total) :—

0/11, 0/19, 0/64, 0/50, 1/35, 0/24, 1/83, 2/95, 0/43, 0/27, 1/30, 0/23, 1/32, 1/73, 1/98, 1/49, 0/87, 0/117, 0/30, 0/5, 0/6, 1/52, 1/38. Total : 11/1,092 = 1.01 per cent. (cf. with Perry's count of 15/1,531 or 1.02 per cent. in 1939).

It is obvious from these counts that the distribution of bridled birds in the colony is random.

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## OBSERVATIONS ON A SCAUP-DUCK AND BROOD ON THE LINCOLNSHIRE COAST

BY

FLYING-OFFICER PHILIP E. BROWN.

ON August 7th, 1944, while studying birds on the salt-marsh round Tetney Creek, Lincs., on the Humber estuary, I observed two or three smallish diving-duck which puzzled me ; and on August 8th, independently, S/Ldr. Peter Hill saw the birds in the same place, but on both these occasions the state of the tide prevented more than a distant view. Late on the evening of the 9th, I went out with Hill and his wife in an endeavour to identify these duck, and finally surprised them round a bend in the creek. The seven or eight birds retreated downstream, but as one moved away more slowly and less directly than the others we concentrated on this one. Its most conspicuous feature in the very poor light prevailing was a clear white band at the base of the bill, strongly suggesting a Scaup. At this stage it was not suspected that the other birds, which we had no time to examine, were young ones. It seemed reasonable, however, to suppose that they would prove to be the same species, and as the date seemed so abnormally early for Scaup in the Humber we decided to do our best to confirm this.

It was on August 11th, about 4.30 p.m., that we found them again, where the creek winds through the salt-marsh. Under good conditions it was obvious that only one bird was an adult, the other seven being smaller, with only partially grown wings and clear traces of down. We cornered off the old bird in the creek, and, in this way, as we all had glasses, we got repeated views during brief periods of surfacing. We had the duck under observation for a full 10 minutes and made pencilled notes on the plumage as follows : Conspicuous broad and sharply-defined white band running round base of bill, covering lores, chin and forehead. Crown and nape very dark brown, perhaps a little lighter on hind neck. Mantle brown, but with lighter edgings. Back vermiculated ash and dark brown or black. Whole of under-parts (as far as could be seen) white or ashy, except for well-marked suffusion of cinnamon-brown on flanks, shaded into six or seven vertical bands. Bill almost or quite as long as head, clear leaden blue. Legs, from momentary glimpses, same colour as bill or perhaps slightly darker. Irides, yellowish-brown.

Except that the breast appeared to be whitish or ashy rather than warm brown, the duck appeared to be a typical female Scaup (*Aythya m. marila*). Among the mounted specimens I have subsequently examined, I have seen one which came reasonably close to it in breast colour.

We next cornered off one of the ducklings and by making it dive repeatedly we exhausted and finally caught it. The following description was made at leisure in my room : White band at base

of bill as in adult, but relatively much narrower on forehead. Crown, nape, hind neck and upper-parts generally, brown, but buffish edgings on mantle and ashy-white edgings showing in parts. Wing, though still darkish, more buffish-brown with white edgings. Flanks tinged light cinnamon. Rest of under-parts, white. Generally a certain amount of brownish down, especially about undeveloped tail region. Bill, slaty or lead-blue, evenly coloured; nail, pearly-grey. Irides, rich warm brown. Legs, slaty-blue, not much different from the bill, but perhaps slightly brighter. Length of bill, 1.6 inches. Width at base, .7 inch. Length of body approximately 9 inches. Length of neck with head and bill approximately  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

I had no really full description of a juvenile Scaup to which to refer, but certain points appeared reasonably conclusive. After a considerable mental struggle, I decided that nothing further could be added to the description by killing it. So four hours later I took it back to the creek. In falling some six feet into the water it fluttered its small wings vigorously, but they were so little developed that it fell like a stone. But it bobbed up again and went swimming and diving downstream, apparently none the worse.

We next saw the family on the evening of August 22nd, on the estuary of Tetney Creek where it joins the Humber. The young appeared to be as large as the duck. But the markings on the back of the young were much coarser than the finer vermiculations of the female. On this occasion the ducklings "scattered" away over the water with wings flapping, but I should say they were still incapable of flight. It might be added that both on the 11th and on this occasion the young were examined through glasses at distances below 50 yards. All showed the strong white band at the base of the bill, nor could we find any noticeable variation among them. The family was last seen on August 29th. They were watched through a telescope swimming well out in choppy seas in the Humber, and when last seen were fully 800 yards out to sea.

Tetney Creek reaches the Humber through a wide area of typical salt-marsh, and before this it passes through flat, unwooded agricultural land. I am well aware that these are not surroundings in which one would expect to find Scaup nesting. Nevertheless, as the young were certainly in no state to fly the inference seems unavoidable that they were hatched somewhere in the vicinity.

## NOTES.

## EARLIER SINGING OF BLACKBIRD IN TOWNS.

IN reference to Mr. David Lack's note on Blackbirds (*Turdus m. merula*) singing in London at the end of January (*antea*, Vol. xxxviii, p. 116), in some parts of London such as Kensington, where there are many houses with gardens, it is quite exceptional for Blackbirds not to be singing then. Even in the terrible winter of 1940 a Blackbird sang on January 7th, and I heard several singing on February 5th and 6th during a short break in the cold spell. One year there were so many singing in Kensington by the second week in January that there were discussions as to who had the best songster in their garden. Since I left London in 1940 my dates for the first Blackbird's song have been much later. For instance, in 1943 I heard from friends in Kensington of different Blackbirds singing about January 20th: at Guildford, where I was staying there was no song till February 11th. My latest date for a first song is March 9th, 1942, Haslemere, Surrey.

I believe that Blackbirds also sing much later in the year in London than in the country. In 1939 two pairs of Blackbirds built nests and brought up three families each, in a row of pollarded limes opposite our house in Kensington, where one pair had built every year since 1932. They were singing well in July, when we left town. We returned for a week in August and found one pair still feeding young in the nest, and the cock was singing a little on the 27th of that month, when we went away. E. MACALISTER.

## DIPPER IN SUSSEX.

On November 11th, 1944, I saw a Dipper, presumably *Cinclus c. gularis*, on a stream which borders the Crumbles. It was seated on an empty petrol tin. I cannot find any other record of the birds' occurrence at Eastbourne in recent times, though Walpole-Bond (*B. of Sussex*, Vol. ii, p. 130) records two obtained near there about 1870. E. C. ARNOLD.

## LITTLE OWL ATTACKING AND CARRYING OFF JACKDAW.

AT about three o'clock on the afternoon of Saturday, November 4th, 1944, two Jackdaws (*Corvus monedula spermologus*), flying from a small wood at Caerphilly, Glamorgan, were almost immediately attacked by a Little Owl (*Athene noctua vidalii*). The Owl struck one of the Jackdaws on the back with beak and talons, forced it to the ground, and there overcame it after a struggle lasting about a minute. Both birds screeched loudly during the struggle. The unharmed Jackdaw flew frantically over the scene, but made no attempt to assist or to rescue its unfortunate companion.

With much difficulty the Owl picked up its apparently dead victim, and with laboured flight carried it off into the wood. The other Jackdaw merely continued its flight away from the wood.

On November 8th, in the same locality, a Little Owl was seen to pursue a hen Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter n. nisus*) for a short distance.

RALPH WILLIAMS.

#### OSPREY IN CO. LOUTH.

ON September 17th, 1944, at about 7.30 p.m., Mr. H. A. Collier, of Drummond House, Baltray, Co. Louth, saw what he took to be a small eagle flying in from a north-easterly direction. The bird came to rest on the topmost bare branch of a tall dead poplar growing out of a hedgerow on his farm, a mile from the sea and a mile north of the Boyne Estuary. A large number of turkeys were in a field below the tree in which the bird had perched, and they immediately became noisy and excited. Attracted by the commotion Mrs. Collier became anxious about her turkeys and requested her husband to shoot the bird; this he did after some hesitation as it rose from its resting place on his approach. The bird which has been seen in the skin by me is a young Osprey (*Pandion h. haliaetus*).

G. R. HUMPHREYS.

[Although it appears that there were extenuating circumstances in the present instance we cannot but deplore the continued shooting of Ospreys in the British Isles.—EDS.]

#### WHOOPER SWANS SUMMERING IN BUTE.

EVERY winter a number of Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) frequent the lochs in the Island of Bute. On April 15th, 1943, there were still four of these birds on Loch Fad, but one was unable to fly, having received some damage to one of its wings. A week later there were only two on the loch, one having remained with the one which could not fly when the others migrated. These two birds, both of which were immature, remained the rest of the summer on the loch, and joined up with the wild swans again when they returned next autumn.

I had hoped that the following year these two birds might have reached maturity and nested here, but on April 3rd, 1944, the wounded bird was observed to be alone on the loch. It spent the summer partly alone and partly in the company of Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), and has now joined up again with wintering birds of its own species.

DAVID STUART.

#### RED-NECKED GREBES IN SURREY, BEDFORDSHIRE AND LEICESTERSHIRE.

ON September 19th, 1944, I saw an adult Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps griseigena*) on the Guildford Sewage Farm, Surrey. The bird, which was still in summer plumage, was swimming on a large shallow sheet of water, in which it could not possibly dive, and was keeping company with a party of Moorhens. It was tame, and plainly tired, but while I was there, it got up and flying round in large circles, climbed to a good height and then made off towards the south-west.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON.

I SHOULD like to record that while at the lake in Southill Park, Bedfordshire, on Sunday, October 22nd, 1944, in the company of two friends, I watched two Red-necked Grebes (*Podiceps gris-eigena*) and had them under observation, as they swam and dived, for fully forty minutes. Most of that time they were about a hundred yards away from us, but with a pair of 8x field-glasses I could be sure of enough points to confirm my identification. At the same time on the lake were five Great Crested Grebes (*Podiceps c. cristatus*), with which I was able to compare them. The Red-necked Grebes, neither of which yet appeared to be in full winter plumage, were distinctly smaller than the latter and had thicker and shorter necks, which gave them a more thick-set appearance. Their beaks were shorter and, except for the basal half of the lower mandible which appeared to be a lighter colour, were also dark in contrast to the longer reddish-pink beaks of the Great Crested. The Red-necked had no superciliary eye-stripes and the blackish colour of their crowns came down to eye-level. The rest of their bodies was coloured as follows:—sides of head were a whitish colour tinged with grey; back of neck blackish shading to grey on the front of the neck, which separated the purer white of breast and throat; rest of colouring much the same as that of Great Crested Grebe.

One of the two dived more than the other, but all the dives seemed to me to be extremely short. I am sure that none lasted more than 20-25 seconds and most of them considerably less. One or two were as short as 10 or 11 seconds. Usually they slid under water when diving, but some dives were started with a forward spring.

The Red-necked Grebes kept well away from the Great Crested and appeared to prefer to stay near an edge of the lake rather than to swim in the middle.

According to J. Steele Elliot's *Birds of Bedfordshire* there are only three recorded instances of the Red-necked Grebe in the county, all single birds, the last of which was killed on November 8th, 1885.

I. J. FERGUSON LEES.

ON September 28th, 1944, a Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps g. griseigena*) was seen by one of the recorders (J.P.P.) in company with G. O. Holmes and others, on Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire, but on this occasion only a rather distant view was obtained. On September 30th the same observers, with D. J. Pembleton, were able to close the range to about 20 yards and watched the bird for about a quarter of an hour in bright sunshine. It was much smaller and darker than a Great Crested Grebe and when it "careened" the reddish colour of the neck could be seen to extend below the breast. On the second date all details could be seen, including the yellow base to the bill and dark streaks extending from the edge of the blackish crown region some way over the white sides of the head, showing the bird to be immature. It was seen on and off till October 10th.

The bird was also independently identified by P.A.S. on September 30th, when it was diving freely about 15 yards from the bank and was examined with a telescope. It was seen again by P.A.S. and Miss M. E. Pickles on the following day.

J. P. PAIGE AND P. A. STEVENS.

[Excellent coloured field sketches of the appearance of this bird at long range and close quarters have been submitted by Mr. Paige.—EDS.]

#### REGULAR BREEDING OF WOODCOCK IN BRECONSHIRE AND CARMARTHENSHIRE.

WHEN *The Handbook* came out I was surprised to see that Breconshire was not included as a regular breeding county for Woodcock (*Scolopax r. rusticola*), as I know it is (and also Carmarthenshire), so I got a reliable keeper to keep notes for the last five years. During this period each year he has had Woodcock breeding on a portion of Lord Glanusk's ground near Crickhowell and each year has either seen nests or young until this year, when he had four pairs of birds, but owing to other work could not walk the ground so much and so did not find nests or young. He remarks that they stay on the breeding ground until the end of May, when they disappear—the young he has seen have always been here in April. I also know of nests found in other parts of the county.

In Carmarthenshire I have had young Woodcock reported several times from one locality.

I am much indebted to Mr. W. Hester, keeper to Lord Glanusk for his notes.

H. B. ELTON.

#### PARTIES OF KNOTS INLAND IN YORKSHIRE.

IN *The Handbook*, Vol. iv, p. 228 it is stated of the Knot (*Calidris c. canutus*): "No recent records of more than five inland, except for one highly exceptional record of ten." On September 3rd, 1944, in foul weather, I saw a party of ten Knots flying low (about 20 feet up) at dusk over Heptonstall village, near Hebden Bridge, calling frequently as they went. I was in company with Edward Watson, who had seen parties of Knot locally before and has sent me the following particulars:—

A party of 20-25 at Redmires Dam, Blackshaw Head, near Hebden Bridge, August 6th, 1939. They rose and circled round before leaving; almost all were red birds just beginning to lose their full summer plumage (E. W. and S. Cockroft).

Party of 17 seen at rest at Gorples top reservoir, near Hebden Bridge, October 20th, 1940 (E.W.).

Party of 8, same locality as last, August 24th, 1941. Put up from tussocks of grass; call noted (E. W. and S. Cockroft).

The observers are familiar with Knot and their characteristic call. The area of all these records is a comparatively small one and would seem to be on a favourite migration route. From the hill between the reservoir and the dam one can see the estuary of the Ribble, where it meets the sea about fifty miles away, and close

to this is Southport, famous for its hordes of Knot. In the other direction the waters from Gorple reservoir flow into the Calder, which in turn runs into the Aire and Humber, though the sea is a hundred and ten miles away.

GEORGE R. EDWARDS.

[Knot migrate regularly over land, but this species is one of the rarer visitors to settle at inland wader haunts and over most of the British Isles, as stated in *The Handbook*, it is quite abnormal for any number to do so. Mr. Edwards's notes are of considerable interest and show that the Hebden Bridge district is evidently specially favoured by Knot: probably, as he suggests, it is on a regular migration route between the Humber and Ribble.—EDS.]

#### ACQUIRED FEEDING-HABIT OF BLACK-HEADED GULL.

I HAVE read with much interest David Lack's account of Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) anticipating the waves caused by a boat (*antea*, p. 118). On August 3rd, 1926, I visited the Dutch island of Schouwen, travelling by the daily steam-ferry from North Beveland to Zierikzee. The approach to Zierikzee is by a tidal channel quite a mile in length. At the time of the return journey the tide was dead low. Consequently, the suction of the boat caused a small patch of mud below the stone work of the banks to be uncovered for a second or two, before the wash covered it again. A number of Black-headed Gulls accompanied the boat, flying on to the lowest stones of the wall as the boat came along, then plunging down to seize food from the momentarily uncovered mud, and then they flew ahead again to repeat the process. As the boat only did the journey once each way in the day, it would only occasionally draw the water off the mud; so in this case the acquired habit was not even a habit that, once acquired, could be repeated daily. I was also assured that Black-headed Gulls do not frequent Zierikzee throughout the year. Such a capacity for what must, I think, be described as anticipatory action in coping with an irregular situation seemed to me then, and still seems to me, to indicate a surprising degree of mental elasticity (I deliberately avoid the question-begging word "intelligence").

H. G. ALEXANDER.

#### QUAIL ALIGHTING ON THE SEA.

ON September 9th, 1944, in the eastern Mediterranean, I had the unusual experience of seeing a Quail (*Coturnix c. coturnix*), no doubt tired on its migratory flight, alight on the sea. After *swimming* a little distance—about 4-5 feet—it took off again from the surface like a cross between a duck and a Moorhen, splashing for some distance to get under way. There was very little wind at the time and I was considerably surprised, as I had no idea Quail could do such a thing.

K. A. WOOD.

SHORTAGE OF MARKING RINGS.—Rings are needed for next season of sizes 1, 1a, 2 and 3. If former ringers have any stock (issued not earlier than 1934) which they are not using, the Bird-Ringing Committee would be glad if they could be sent to the

Hon. Secretary at the British Museum (Natural History), London, S.W.7, when a refund will be made for any unbroken series of twenty rings.

THE EFFECTS OF THE COLD SPELL.—The recent spell of severe cold, though not remarkably prolonged, appears to have had a substantial effect on some birds. We should welcome observations from readers on this subject, as well as, in due course, on any observable effects in the coming breeding-season.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE AND WHOOPER SWAN IN CUMBERLAND IN SUMMER.—Mr. A. Graham Brown sends us particulars of a Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius e. excubitor*) which he saw in the Watendlath Valley on June 18th, 1944, and a Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) seen at close range at the southern end of Derwentwater on June 30th, 1944.

LATE SWIFTS IN SURREY AND HANTS.—Mr. A. H. Hall reports a single Swift (*Apus a. apus*) which he saw flying quite low at Farnham, Surrey, on October 14th, 1944, and Mr. R. E. Williams send us details of a bird which he saw at Southampton on October 11th. It was finally seen to swoop up into the Civic Centre Tower belfrey at about 4.30 p.m.

LATE DRUMMING OF GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER.—Mr. J. B. Southern sends us particulars of a Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*) which was seen and heard drumming by himself and Mr. P. Maxwell on November 6th, 1944, near Rostherne, Cheshire. For previous notes on this subject, see *antea*, p. 218 and Vol. xxxvii, pp. 160, 178, 218.

OSPREY IN LEICESTERSHIRE.—Mr. A. E. Jolley sends us details of an Osprey (*Pandion h. haliaetus*) seen by Mr. P. A. Stevens and Miss M. E. Pickles at Stanford Reservoir, South Kilworth, on September 17th, 1944, and one, which it seems possible might have been the same bird, though the interval is considerable, seen at Groby Pool by Mr. W. H. Smedley on October 15th and by Capt. R. E. Pochin on October 16th.

EIDER-DUCKS ON KENT COAST.—Surgeon-Lieut. M. N. Rankin informs us that on September 14th, 1944, he saw an Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) on the Kent coast. It was watched, at first resting on mussel beds on the shore to the west of Ramsgate harbour and later diving in the surf. Subsequently, on September 30th, he saw a first winter drake diving at the mouth of the River Stour.

## REVIEWS.

### LOCAL REPORTS.

*Ornithological Report for Northumberland and Durham for 1943.* Compiled by G. W. Temperley (*The Naturalist*, July-September, 1944).

IN spite of war-time curtailment of opportunities for bird observation this carefully compiled report contains a noteworthy number of interesting records. The occurrence of Two-barred Crossbills in Durham has already been recorded in *British Birds*, and Common Crossbills evidently bred in several localities. Nuthatches bred at Middleton-in-Teesdale, this representing a considerable extension of range in Durham, Green Woodpeckers are

spreading in Northumberland and the Little Owl "multiplying rapidly" in that county. The first evidence of the successful breeding of the Goosander in England was obtained in Upper Coquetdale in 1943, though an unsuccessful attempt took place in 1941. A Curlew-Sandpiper in the Team Valley on the unusual date of January 23rd appears from the particulars given to have been correctly identified and a Red-necked Phalarope is stated to have been identified under good conditions on October 2nd. Though we have no reason to doubt the latter record, it is surely a case where the evidence should have been given. Corncrakes were more in evidence than usual, though many of those heard probably did not stay, and there are several Quail records from each county, with at least one case—a bevy of twelve on September 1st—suggesting breeding. "The closing of the coast to the public has provided security for cliff-breeding species, as is shewn by the establishment of Kittiwake colonies on the mainland cliffs and the nesting of the Herring-Gull in Co. Durham."

*Wild Bird Protection in Norfolk, 1944.*

THIS is another very good report for war-time, and in spite of the inevitably considerable restriction of ornithological work in East Anglia under present conditions is full of interesting observations. The main Sandwich Tern colony (of roughly 1,000 pairs), which is now at Scolt, with only a few at Salthouse, had a successful season, in contrast to the Common Terns at Scolt and Blakeney, which, as has happened before, did extremely badly, with a heavy mortality amongst the chicks. This must indicate a difference in the feeding habits of the two species which merits closer investigation. A pair of Roseate Terns bred successfully at Scolt. One pair of Marsh-Harriers reared one young, but the cocks of two other pairs came to grief (one was actually found shot), as also did apparently a pair of Montagu's Harriers. It is difficult to express oneself sufficiently strongly on the greedy and selfish, not to say half-witted, attitude of persons responsible for the destruction of these birds in the face of all the efforts made at their preservation.

Two pairs of Bitterns bred at Cley, but at Horsey the species was decidedly below par. Major Buxton records the breeding of what is probably the first pair of Bearded Tits at Horsey since the flooding, but a point which this report does not mention is the extremely good season which the species fortunately had at Hickling, as was noted in this journal by the late Jim Vincent shortly before his death. Records of rare visitors are naturally fewer than in peace time. It may be mentioned that one of a probable Little Bunting was also submitted to us, and although we think it in all probability correct it cannot in our opinion be considered quite conclusive.

## LETTER.

### INFORMATION ON THE NESTING OF THE ROBIN.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—I am collecting all the information I can on clutch size and nesting success in the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), and should be very grateful for any unpublished information which readers could supply. Every nest record is of value, both from Britain and from abroad, particularly as some of the differences involved appear to be small ones, so that only the average of a large total is significant. Records should be sent in in the form (i) number of eggs; (ii) date; (iii) locality, to nearest county in Britain or to nearest province abroad. Records of nests with young are also of interest, particularly if a large series is available. Records of nest success are of particular value, in the form (i) number of eggs laid; (ii) number hatched; (iii) number young fledged. It is, of course, essential that records of all unsuccessful as well as all successful nests found should be recorded by any readers submitting data on nest success.

Back records should be sent as soon as possible, but the enquiry is being extended to cover 1945.

DAVID LACK.

5, Carlton Mews, London, S.W.1.

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## NOTES ON THE TERRITORY AND BREEDING BEHAVIOUR OF BLACKCAP AND GARDEN-WARBLER

BY

R. J. RAINES.

THE following observations on the Blackcap (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*) and the Garden-Warbler (*Sylvia borin*) were made in Colwick Woods, Nottinghamshire, an area of wood and parkland about two miles square. Ten pairs of each species were the maximum number under primary, intermittent, observation; later, for more complete study, four pairs of each were under observation.

The first Blackcap was noted on April 16th, 1943, and by the 22nd of the month all the resident birds had arrived. Garden-Warblers arrived, somewhat late, on April 23rd.

The males of each species appeared to set up territories before pairing. Three approximate measurements of the territories of each species were made by pacing out the areas:—

Garden-Warbler	45 by 20 yds.	38 by 30 yds.	40 by 24 yds.
Blackcap ..	32 by 32 yds.	40 by 18 yds.	35 by 28 yds.

Areas are therefore given as:—

Garden-Warbler	900 sq. yds.	1,140 sq. yds.	960 sq. yds.
Blackcap ..	1,024 sq. yds.	720 sq. yds.	1,180 sq. yds.

These areas were marked by clearly defined and well used song posts and defensive behaviour when wandering birds of the species entered the area. It was here noticed that Blackcaps would not allow Garden-Warblers in their territory and vice versa, although other small warblers were tolerated. Some males set up territories, but, apparently not being able to find mates, moved on after a week or more had elapsed. Five Blackcaps and four Garden-Warblers were lost to the area in this way.

“Cock’s nests” were constructed by each species both before and after the arrival of the females and were inspected by them, if so disposed, on arrival. The nests usually consisted of a platform of dry grasses, but variation in the size and shape appears to be considerable, two nests of the Blackcap and one of the Garden-Warbler being found which were of a large size and had a slight but definite cup. In these cases it was ascertained that no female was in the vicinity and the male only was seen to build; they are no doubt due to the late coming of the female, and it is probable that the size of all cock’s nests constructed before the arrival of the female depends on the period of time which the male has to spend alone in the territory. These nests are nearly always situated in the nearest suitable place to the song posts, which are scattered about the territory especially on its borders, and are places of observational advantage to the birds, from which they can easily see and warn off intruders to the territory.

On an occasion when the selection of a cock’s nest by the female was watched in detail, the female joined the male, who was singing

in the nearest song post, and he commenced display, assuming the attitudes of courtship (as described in *The Handbook*), and uttered the sub-song. He then flew down to the nest-site and continued to sing a few phrases of the normal song. The female followed him down and was then led to the nest and left there, the male retiring again to the song post, where he continued to sing a long variant of normal song. This song was timed on several occasions at 30 secs. for the Blackcap and 20 for the Garden-Warbler during later observations of the same performance.

The sequence of behaviour described so far, was much the same on three other observed occasions; however, the female was not always induced to follow the male to the nest-site so readily, cases being noted in which the female did not follow the male. On one of these occasions the male returned to the song post and gave chase to the female, who eventually alighted at the nest-site. On another the male flew to and from the song post and nest-site calling with a strange, rather plaintive note, "pee" or "pu," until she at last followed.

Four nests, two of each species, were selected for further observation; in both cases one in which the cock nest was of slight structure and one where it was a substantial one. At three of these nests the selection behaviour of the female was noted.

The female of one of the pairs of Garden-Warblers, being left at the nest-site by the male when he retired to the song post, hopped around the bramble containing the nest, which was one of slight structure, and then approached it. She commenced to fidget with some of the material, picking up pieces of grass and placing them in new positions, and then flew off, returning later with a straw, which she added to the nest. No other addition was observed that day and the addition of the single straw seems to indicate that the bird had approved of the nest and intended to complete it, since, when (as noted in other observations of the same performance) no addition was made, the nest was not completed and in the case on hand considerable addition to the structure was made on the following day. In the case of the Blackcaps, observations on a similar slightly constructed nest agreed, in detail, with those mentioned above for the Garden-Warbler. At the more substantial nest of the Garden-Warbler, the behaviour was again similar, but the bird sat on the nest and moved around in it, commencing the re-arrangement of material from a sitting position; the addition of material was duly carried out.

A variation in the sequence above described was noticed in that a female Blackcap, being observed to carry a piece of straw, was watched and noted to deposit it in a bed of nettles, growing through the branches of a dead, fallen tree. On later examination no sign of any nest could be found; watch was continued and both birds were seen bringing nest material until, on later re-examination, a nest was beginning to take shape. This appears to have been a

case where no cock's nest had been constructed. In another case of the Blackcap a female appeared in a territory and the male was seen to show her two nests as previously described; yet, disapproving of both, she left the territory, and the male, not able to find another mate, left two weeks later. It therefore seems evident that inspection of cock's nests by the female need not necessarily lead to any result, and in several cases the male had to build many nests, up to seven being noted, before the female approved.

After the choice of nest has been made the female Blackcap was found to be almost completely responsible for the completion of the nest, the male only being seen with material on few occasions. One instance was noted where the male continued to build useless platforms while the completion of the true nest was being undertaken by his mate.

When the true nest had been approved the outlying song posts were vacated; the birds confined themselves to a more restricted area, and outside this song was not heard or either bird seen except on rare occasions. This constitutes a reduction of territory and was observed in all cases under consideration. The reason for this reduction is obscure, since there was no question of congestion, large neutral areas being present between those occupied.

Evening visits were made to the nests between 7 and 9 p.m.; morning ones varied between 7 and 10 a.m. During the laying period the number of eggs was never found to have been increased at the second visit, but was always increased by one at the morning visit. Since evidence in other species indicates that laying rarely occurs in the late evening or at night it may reasonably be presumed that the eggs were regularly laid in the early morning.

## FEEDING OF BLUE TIT NESTLINGS

BY

N. D. PULLEN.

THE occupation last year (1944) of a special nesting box by a pair of Blue Tits (*Parus caeruleus obscurus*) enabled me to observe at very close quarters the feeding of the nestlings. This I was anxious to do in order to find, if possible, what method or methods the parents used to ensure that each youngster received its fair share of food. The nesting box was built in the double wooden walls of a shed some 6-7 years ago. The front was normal, but the back was of glass, flush with the inner wall, and covered with a wedge-shaped hood with an observation slit at the thin end.

Building operations commenced on April 12th; the first egg of a clutch of 10 was laid on April 30th; eight hatched on May 22nd-23rd and all flew on June 10th.

Observations were necessarily limited to evenings and the week-end and ceased on the fourteenth day, when I had to go away. The birds had flown before I returned, but I was able to obtain some very interesting data on the feeding behaviour of adults and young.

## ADULTS.

Both parents took part in the feeding operations, apparently to the same extent, but no attempt was made to note the number of male or female visits, as owing to the dim light inside the box it was often impossible to discriminate; sometimes however, certain actions indicated the presence of the cock or hen.

The most frequent procedure was for the arriving bird to alight on the small perch outside, then enter and stand on the rim of the cup, from which position the young were fed; a few seconds of intense watching followed and then the bird left. Variations of this procedure were as follows. If the cock arrived with food whilst the hen was brooding, such food was always passed to the hen, who then fed the chicks; if, however, the hen was in the nest but was not brooding or was just coming off the cock fed direct. No daytime brooding was observed after the fourth day. Removal of faecal sacs followed the short period of intense watching about once in eight or ten visits. The chick behaved in the usual manner, the parent seizing the end of the sac as soon as it appeared and frequently helped in its expulsion by pulling; the sac was then carried away. As well as watching the sanitation the parents were evidently making sure that the grub or caterpillar could be and was swallowed satisfactorily, as on two occasions the parent removed an extra long caterpillar from one chick who was in difficulties and gave it to another. Another reason for the watching seemed to be inspection of open mouths for foreign particles, etc. This seems to be the only explanation of the series of light pecks which sometimes followed, especially as on one occasion I saw what appeared to be the empty skin of a caterpillar about  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch long removed in this way from one mouth.

The main variation in the "after feed" behaviour, however, was confined to the hen; this consisted of what I have labelled "digging." To do this the bird dived head first to the bottom of the nest and remained there for periods up to five minutes. During this time nothing could be seen but the movements of its feet and posterior and on no occasion was it seen to come up with anything in its beak. This performance went on at irregular intervals throughout the fourteen days I was watching the nest, and I could always rely on seeing it at least twice during any half hour period.

As to the reason for the digging, it may have been to search for insects such as fleas or for faecal matter; if either of these, then anything found must have been eaten at once. The only obvious result was thorough disturbance of the brood.

I have not mentioned the variations in the actual feeding behaviour, as this requires a section to itself.

#### NESTLINGS.

As might be expected, the behaviour of the nestlings changed with increasing age; the most marked change taking place at the end of the blind period. The slight tapping noise made by the arrival of the parent on the perch outside was the signal for five or six mouths to open. During the first few days, when movement about the nest was nil or small, nothing else happened. As the chicks grew stronger, however, they tended to move towards the front and gaping frequently occurred before the parent arrived, but they still reacted to the signal, whether made by the parent or imitated by me. By the seventh day the youngsters were strong enough to climb to the rim of the cup, using their wings as arms. On the ninth, the yellow bar on the wing feathers was quite distinct, several chicks were seen preening and they were heard for the first time. Movement about the nest was now quite lively, with a definite tendency to push for a position nearest the entrance.

The blind period ended on the eleventh day. Now instead of begging for food at a tapping signal the chicks tended to hide in the bottom of the nest and did not open their mouths until the parent actually entered. Movement about the nest was now more orderly in that the youngster(s) to be fed was usually to be found at one particular point—nearest the entrance hole.

#### FEEDING.

The following are the main points observed :-

- (1) Both parents take part.
- (2) Only one ration is brought per visit.
- (3) The average interval between visits was one minute, during periods of half to one hour.
- (4) Food may be offered to more than one youngster, but at no visit was more than one actually fed.
- (5) The parent does not necessarily feed the first mouth to open; in most instances it is not in a position to see.

As stated at the beginning, the real object of this investigation was to discover, if possible, the method used to ensure that each youngster received its share of food. This result could be obtained in two or three ways. The parents could feed in rotation if they remembered which was fed last. They might feed entirely at random, relying on a large number of visits to give uniform distribution, or they are able to select the hungriest from a batch of five or six.

The first suggestion can be ruled out as being highly improbable, especially with two adults at work. The second is possible but dangerous, owing to the irregularity in the feeding of any one which would certainly occur. So it would seem that the parents must have some power of selection which is not dependent on memory.

The results obtained from observations during the first two days were rather confusing, due to the varying number of chicks which appeared to be fed at each visit, the natural assumption being that the parents brought varying amounts of food and divided it out. After more careful watching I was convinced that only one ration, one grub or one caterpillar, was brought per visit and that what seemed to be multiple feeding was really the offering of food to two or more mouths until accepted. The parents' behaviour varied little at each visit. On entering the nest there was usually a slight pause and then the food would be offered rapidly by being placed well in an open beak; if not accepted at once, it was just as rapidly withdrawn and offered to another until a youngster's mouth closed fast enough to retain it. That the parent did not always realize when this happened was shown on a number of occasions when the bird continued its offerings with an empty beak.

To explain this behaviour I would suggest that whilst the visiting parent is able to select with a fair degree of accuracy which of the youngsters should be fed, it is relying on that youngster to indicate whether or not the selection is correct, the method of indication being the speed at which the mouth closes, which speed is controlled by the degree of hunger being experienced at that moment. With hunger at a minimum no reaction to a visit should occur and it is a fact that at each visit two or three chicks took no interest in the proceedings. As hunger increased the first effect would be mouth opening, and as far as I could see the speed of this reaction remained fairly constant. With further increase in hunger the closing speed goes up considerably until at hunger maximum it is almost instantaneous, followed by a diminution until the minimum is again reached. The parent's job obviously is to select the chick at hunger maximum as confirmed by the closing of the mouth immediately food is offered to it. If a mistake is made at the first offer it can be rectified by a second or even third attempt, but at the same time the parents must maintain a certain frequency of visits in order to prevent an undue accumulation of hungry young. This gives rise to a number of interesting problems, such as the relationship between size of brood, frequency of feeding, amount of food brought per visit, etc., which might be investigated with other species.

TABLE I.

## FEEDING RESULTS.

	I.	II.	III.
Date .. ..	May 28th-6th day.	May 31st-9th day.	June 3rd-12th day.
Period of Observation ..	16.43-17.45 hrs. = 60 mins.	18.35-19.05 hrs. = 30 mins.	18.20-20.05 hrs. = 105 mins.
Total No. of feeds .. ..	38	29	70
1st choice .. ..	22	17	63
2nd .. ..	11	8	7
3rd .. ..	4	3	0
4th .. ..	1	1	0
5th .. ..	0	0	0
Average interval between feeds (mins.) ..	1.6 for period. 1.0 first $\frac{1}{2}$ hr.	1 min.	1.5 mins.
Maximum interval between feeds .. ..	16 mins.	less than 3 mins.	7 mins.

TABLE II.

## FEEDING OF MARKED CHICK (Y.S.)

Time, etc. as Table I, Group III.

Sequence of visit when Y.S. fed .. ..	11, 20, 27, 32, 35, 45, 51, 57, 69.
No of visits between Y.S. feeds .. ..	11, 9, 7, 5, 3, 10, 6, 6, 12.
Approx. time between Y.S. feeds (mins.) ..	16, 16, 5, 6, 6, 7, 9, 10, 30.
Average visit frequency between Y.S. feeds (mins.) .. ..	1.45, 1.78, 0.72, 1.2, 2.0, 0.7, 1.5, 1.67, 2.5.
Average time between Y.S. feeds .. ..	11.7 mins.
Average visit interval between Y.S. feeds ..	7.8

TABLE III.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS (TABLE I).

	Group I.					Group II.				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Choice .. ..	22.4	10.3	3.87	1.16	0.27	17.1	7.85	2.96	0.88	0.21
Expected .. ..	22	11	4	1	0	17	8	3	1	0
Observed .. ..										

Probability = 0.9

	Group III.			
	1	2	3	4
Choice .. ..	63.25	6.22	0.5	0.04
Expected .. ..	63	7	0	0
Observed .. ..				

Probability = 0.98.

With this particular brood of Blue Tits my observations indicated that the hunger cycle was completed in about ten minutes. As there were eight in the brood this means a visit frequency of about one per minute. Whether this was maintained throughout the day or not I am unable to say, but it was surprisingly constant over the evening periods when most of my observations were made.

The foregoing suggestions are based on three main groups of observations which are given in detail in Tables I—III. The first was made during the afternoon of the sixth day, the second in the evening of the ninth, and the third at the same time on the twelfth day.

That the feeding is selective and not random is quite evident, in fact a rough examination of the figures seems to indicate that the parent is choosing between one and the rest of the brood with the chances of success in favour of the former. For this to be possible the youngsters must exhibit some sign known to the parent which varies in intensity according to the degree of hunger. The nature of this sign has yet to be investigated. If, for instance, it is possible for the colour intensity of the tongue or palate to vary with the degree of hunger the parent would have a good chance of selecting the correct recipient with a possibility of error decreasing with the colour intensity.

On this hypothesis a statistical analysis of the results was made (Table III) and it was found that remarkably close agreement between theoretical and observed figures was obtained in Groups I and II when the probability of success on the first choice was taken as 0.9, and that similar agreement was obtained in Group III if the probability of success was raised to 0.98.

The hypothesis therefore, can be accepted as being substantially correct. The parents are using a selective method of feeding depending in the first instance on some sign of varying intensity exhibited by the youngsters and then on the speed of mouth closing to rectify any mistakes.

The results also indicate that the method of feeding with its chances of error remains constant over the blind period, but that as soon as the youngsters can see there is an appreciable reduction in the error, which may be, and probably is, due to the formation of a definite feeding point, with the expectation that the hungriest youngster will be found at the head of the queue.

The feeding of one particularly chick is shown in Table II, which is really Group III, Table I expanded. To obtain these results one of the brood was marked on the back of its head, using a soft yellow grease pencil. The observation extended over a period of 105 minutes starting with the first visit after the marked chick (Y.S.) had been fed.

It will be noted that whilst Y.S. received slightly more than its theoretical number of feeds in a total of seventy, the distribution of its feeds both as regards visits and time varied appreciably. The

variation in visit frequency over the period is to some extent responsible for the variation in time interval, but variation in ration size and nutritive value must also be taken into account ; in fact I consider that these figures (Table II) afford further proof of the existence of some indicator which controls the parents' choice of recipient.

The calculations given under Group III, Table III show that the probability of success has been raised to 0.98, that is to say the parent is making fewer mistakes. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the short and long intervals between feeds were due not to neglect, but to the fact that the previous feed was either smaller or larger than average, resulting in Y.S. exhibiting the " feed me " signal sooner or later than might be expected.

To summarize the results, it would seem that the method of feeding used by Blue Tits is as follows :—

- (1) The parents feed by selection, each visit being a separate problem.
- (2) The selection depends on a sign exhibited by the nestlings.
- (3) Mistakes in selection are indicated by the recipient failing to close its mouth.
- (4) Only one ration is carried per visit, so frequency of visits has to be high enough to keep the number of hungry chicks to a minimum.

It is unlikely that this method is peculiar to Blue Tits ; it is probably used by other species having broods of similar size and type particularly where only one ration is carried per visit, in which case an investigation of the feeding behaviour of such species might show that definite relationships exists between size of brood, amount of food carried, frequency of visits, etc.

I should be very glad if any readers interested in the subject and willing to undertake further investigations on the feeding of nestlings would write to me for suggestions.

## NOTES.

## COURTSHIP-FEEDING OF LINNET.

SINCE I find no reference to the courtship-feeding of the female Linnet (*Carduelis c. cannabina*) by the male in the *Handbook of British Birds*, perhaps the following may be of interest.

On April 24th, 1944, a number of Linnets were feeding on weed seeds on my allotment here in Eastbourne. Suddenly a male flew to a female which was perched on a pea-stick and, alighting a little above her, thrust his beak several times into hers, apparently feeding her. Immediately afterwards both flew off, possibly disturbed by me.

D. D. HARBER.

## BULLFINCH'S METHOD OF FEEDING.

I WAS interested to see a note by Mr. H. R. Tutt (*antea*, p. 94) on the feeding habits of Bullfinches (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*). It may be of interest that I can confirm Mr. Tutt's observations, as on several occasions during the latter half of June, 1944, I observed a cock Bullfinch cutting pieces from the leaves of an aphid-infested plum tree at Biddenham, near Bedford, in the manner described by Mr. Tutt, except that I did not observe the discarding of the pieces which he mentions. Presumably the pieces were swallowed, although I cannot be absolutely certain of this.

Incidentally, I also saw Chaffinches (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*), both a mature cock and several juveniles, feeding at various times during the summer in a similar manner, although here again I did not observe any pieces being discarded.

EDWARD R. BULLEN.

## CIRL BUNTING IN YORKSHIRE.

IT may be of interest to record that on August 3rd, 1941, in company with my brother-in-law, Mr. J. C. Barrow, I saw a male Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza c. cirrus*) in the neighbourhood of Gillamoor, near Kirby-moorside, N. Yorkshire. We had it in good view for over fifteen minutes through powerful glasses at a range of not more than thirty yards. It was flitting about among gorse and bracken beside a small stream. The dark cap, throat and eye-stripe were most conspicuous.

ROY P. MACLEAN.

## CIRL BUNTING BREEDING IN LEICESTERSHIRE.

ON August 2nd, 1943, I watched a pair of Cirl Buntings (*Emberiza c. cirrus*) with three fledged young between Burton-le-Wolds and Sixhills, Leicestershire. They were under observation for approximately 20 minutes with binoculars at distances of from 10 to 12 feet. The female and young kept mostly to bushes, but the male seemed to prefer a tree.

On May 14th, 1944, I had a close view of an adult male beyond Wymeswold along a lane leading to Sixhills and heard it singing. Despite a sojourn of an hour I saw no sign of a female.

On September 10th, 1944, I watched a pair at Sixhills feeding a solitary well grown young bird in a nest in a gorse bush, 2½ to 3 ft.

from the ground. The nest appeared to be hastily "thrown together," as have so many late nests found this year. It was lined with very fine grasses, with no trace of hair. During a period of an hour the hen fed the young seven times and the cock once.

This site was about two miles from those of May, 1944, and August, 1943, but as I go over this district very thoroughly once a month and have come across the species only three times in thirteen months I assume that only one pair is involved. G. H. HUNT.

[Mr. Hunt has kindly submitted full details of identification with his note.—EDS.]

#### CIRL BUNTINGS IN LANCASHIRE.

AMONG a mixed flock of finches which were feeding on a newly-sown oatfield at Towneley, Lancashire, on April 11th, 1944, I found a solitary male Cirle Bunting (*Emberiza c. cirrus*), which I watched for some 30 minutes. On one occasion the bird perched on a fence within nine yards in bright sunshine. The grey-green crown, yellow face-markings, dark line through the eye and ear-coverts and black throat were all noted, and as it turned to face me (and utter its little metallic rattle of a song) the striking yellow and green breast-bands were revealed to perfection. On April 12th, accompanied by Mr. A. Welch, I again located and watched the bird and it was also seen on several later dates. After the field was rolled on April 21st, it moved to some rough land about 400 yards away near a by-pass road—a Yellow Bunting haunt—where it sang persistently, as if on a territory. The subsequent behaviour of this bird and its wanderings within a certain area strongly suggested a search for a mate. No female was seen, however, and the bird disappeared on April 28th.

Cirle Buntings have also appeared in West Lancashire during recent years, as has been established by Mr. G. C. Miller, whose notes appear below. Our observations, covering the period 1940-44, indicate a northward extension of the range of the Cirle Bunting, which has hitherto been rare in Cheshire and in Lancashire has been practically unknown. Mitchell's slight references to it in the *Birds of Lancashire* are vague and unsatisfactory. Prior to the present records the furthest north I have personally met with the species is Ashopton, Derbyshire, where I watched a male on April 20th, 1926. CLIFFORD OAKES.

I FIRST identified a pair of Cirle Buntings at Lower Copthurst, Wheelton, near Preston on March 31st, 1940, and had excellent views of the male bird.

In 1941 on May 18th, at Brindle, near the same locality, a nest was found with four eggs, from which I flushed and identified the sitting female, which was smaller and duskier than a hen Yellow-hammer, lacking the rufous rump. The nest, which was on a grassy bank below a hedge, was smaller and slighter than that of a Yellow Bunting and also more neatly built of dried grasses and bents with an inner lining of hair. The eggs were also a trifle

smaller and somewhat rounder than typical eggs of the Yellow Bunting. They lacked the fainter characteristic scroll markings of the latter species—of which, incidentally, I have examined more than 30 nests and many typical clutches during the past three years. The ground colour was greyish-white with bold blotches and streaks of deep blackish-brown—almost black—and a few underlying markings of grey. Unfortunately this nest came to grief, being found deserted a week later with one of the eggs broken.

Again, in 1942, on July 11th, a nest of three eggs was found which was suspected of being that of a Cirl Bunting, but definite identification of the owners was not made in this case. G. C. MILLER.

[Mr. Miller has been good enough to submit one of the eggs from the deserted nest in confirmation of the record, and this has been examined both by myself and by Col. R. F. Meiklejohn. It shows the regular Cirl Bunting characteristics, and although it would probably not be impossible to match it pretty closely amongst some of the rarer Yellowhammer variants the evidence of the egg and the field observations together may be considered conclusive.—B.W.T.]

#### TREE-CREEPERS CLIMBING A MAN.

MAY I add yet another instance of the above fearless behaviour of young Tree-Creepers (*Certhia familiaris britannica*)? My husband, the late Bertram Lloyd, while leaning up against a tree on which a family of Tree-Creepers was moving about, suddenly found two of them climbing up his arms, on to his shoulders, and thence back on to the trunk of the tree. Their motions while on his person were identical with those used when climbing the tree. It seems perfectly clear that for this species, a human being, when motionless, will serve as a natural substitute for a tree-trunk. SYLVIA LLOYD.

#### LONG-TAILED TITS STILL FEEDING PRESUMED YOUNG IN AUTUMN.

WHILE I was watching a small band of Long-tailed Tits (*Ægithalos caudatus rosaceus*) in Cheshire on October 31st, 1944, one of the birds alighted alongside another, which had found something to eat, and started uttering a shrill, high-pitched, twittering note as if begging for food. Upon this the first bird fed it and then proceeded to do the same with two others which begged in a similar way. Evidently the first bird was one of their parents, but the date seems extremely late for feeding still to be going on. I observed identical behaviour on November 9th, but only involving two individuals. J. TAYLOR.

#### RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER IN SHETLAND.

My aviary has been empty of bird life for two years. As it contains a number of trees and bushes I had an idea that by opening the trap door overhung by trees in the garden, perhaps some of the migrants which visit my garden at Lerwick, Shetland, every autumn, would pass through to the aviary and afford me an opportunity of seeing them at close quarters. This is just what has been happening.

Nothing out of the usual had paid a visit until September 23rd, when I noticed a very shy little bird keeping amongst the thickest of the foliage. Its behaviour was that of a small warbler until it darted out, caught a fly and returned. Though definitely a fly-catcher it neither resembled the Pied nor the Spotted. Subsequent glimpses revealed an ashy-brown back with buffish-white under-parts and broad white patches at either side of the basal half of the tail, the latter conspicuous in flight and only a little less so when settled. *The Handbook's* description of the Red-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa p. parva*) fitted the bird perfectly, an adult female. During the past five days it has been passing out and in through the trap door and is inside as I write.

Watching it through a window at close quarters I have noted it feeding exactly like a warbler, for minutes at a time, on green-fly, caterpillars and other leaf insects and then suddenly dart out at a fly. There is no flicking of the wings like the Pied and Spotted, but there is a flicking upward of the tail as *The Handbook* describes.

G. T. KAY.

#### CHIFFCHAFF IN DERBYSHIRE IN WINTER.

ON December 7th, 1944, I had a good view, from about 10 ft. distance, of a Chiffchaff hunting for insects on polyantha roses in a garden at Ashbourne, Derbyshire. The light was good, the blackish legs being noticeable and I was able to observe it for about a minute. The bird appeared to be a normal *Phylloscopus c. collybita* with the under-parts of the usual appearance, not white as in the Siberian or other races. It was silent. The day was still and frosty. Chiffchaffs commonly pass through this garden on their autumn migration, but I have never seen one in the winter here before.

KATHLEEN M. HOLLICK.

#### REED-WARBLERS IN YORKSHIRE.

*The Handbook* records the Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus s. scirpaceus*) as scarce in Yorkshire and on the accompanying map indicates the whole county as being outside the range in which the species can be regarded as widely distributed in suitable localities. The following notes deal with the breeding position in the Humber area.

In 1938 a substantial colony was discovered by the authors near Patrington in the East Riding and reported by Mr. R. Chislett in Additions and Corrections to *The Handbook*. On June 9th, ten nests were located and in nearly all cases laying had just commenced. The same colony was inspected in 1939, when on June 12th four nests ready for eggs and one with a full clutch were inspected. A wetter season prevented as detailed a search as before.

The area of the River Hull was investigated in 1939, and some distance north of Beverley, where reeds replaced sedges by the river's edge, a colony was located. On July 5th, four nests containing eggs were seen and one nest with young birds. For several miles further up the river there is an absence of reeds, but the next

occurrence, a small patch, contained another colony. Nests with eggs and young birds were seen here on July 9th.

The same year birds were seen amongst reeds on the Leven Canal a few miles distant. There was every indication of breeding.

In 1941 another colony was found near Burstwick some miles from the site of the first-mentioned locality. As before, this was in reeds growing in a disused brick pond. Four nests with young were noted on August 9th.

In 1944, on July 15th, near the Humber bank at Melton, in company with Mr. R. Chislett, a nest was discovered with young, and further search showed at least a dozen pairs to be present. This year, too, a nest was examined near Hedon a few miles from the Burstwick colony.

The colony at Hornsea Mere has been known for many years and further afield the colonies at Skipwith and Scarborough Mere are also noted in *The Handbook*.

It thus appears that the Humber Area of the East Riding can be included in the shaded area of the map showing the breeding distribution of the Reed-Warbler in the British Isles.

J. LORD AND G. H. AINSWORTH.

#### SONG-THRUSH HATCHING THREE BROODS IN SAME NEST.

WITH reference to Song-Thrushes (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) rearing two broods in the same nest (*antea*, p. 157 and present issue, p. 220), I observed a case at Burgess Hill, Sussex, in 1941, in which three broods were hatched in the same nest, though the last was unsuccessful. The particulars are as follows:—

Brood 1 (4 eggs) : first egg, March 20th ; all fledged, April 18th.  
 Brood 2 (5 eggs) : first egg, April 27th ; all fledged, May 27th.  
 Brood 3 (3 eggs) : bird on nest, June 5th ; no eggs, nest being re-lined and damp ; first egg, June 10th ; only two eggs, June 21st ; one egg hatched, June 26th ; empty nest and no trace of nestling or egg, July 2nd.

There was no question of drought that year. Moreover, cattle drinking troughs, and consequently moistened earth, as well as hen-runs and water, were close at hand. VERA MAYNARD.

#### NESTING SITES OF THE RING-OUZEL.

THE Breeding section of *The Handbook* states that the Ring-Ouzel (*Turdus t. torquatus*) "haunts moorlands, building among heather-grown banks of water-courses, or by the side of moorland tracks, and in rocky ravines." While this is undoubtedly true over a great deal of its breeding range in Great Britain, we have found that such a description is not typical of the area of the Yorkshire moors best known to us, nor, we believe, of some other areas.

The sides of water-courses and moorland cloughs are naturally much used places, but the nest is no more likely to be near a track than anywhere else, and, in fact, we have found them in such a position only when the adjoining moor is unbroken and the track has small banks on either side. Very favoured sites are in small

out-crops of rock, old walls and particularly derelict farm buildings devoid of all vegetation. The building of reservoirs and the need for an uncontaminated water supply have led to the abandonment of many of the moorland farms, while on the fringes of the moors others have been deserted owing to their remoteness. Ring-Ouzels inhabit such places, especially where the roofs of the buildings have fallen in, and they nest in the vacant holes left in the structure for beams and joists, usually from three to ten feet above the floor level. Another typical site is in the porches of outhouses of the farms, where built into the walls are small ledges formerly used for milk cans. Ring-Ouzels appear to like a light interior, though we have found a nest in a roofed building, this being on the mantelpiece in the disused living room.

Other nests we have found have been in coarse moorland grass and in patches of bracken, though when in this site the nest is usually within a few feet of the edge of the bracken. A rather unusual position was over the centre of a stream on a deserted wooden cart bridge.

SYD COCKCROFT, GEORGE EDWARDS,

ERIC HOSKING AND EDWARD WATSON.

[We agree that the particulars given in Vol. ii of *The Handbook* are not quite adequate, though it is fairly evident that in referring to tracks Mr. Jourdain had in mind sunken tracks or others with banks at the side. It may be noted that old buildings are added to the list of sites in the Supplementary Additions and Corrections in the Second Impression, Vol. v, p. 292.—EDS.]

#### EARLIER SINGING OF BLACKBIRD IN TOWNS.

I WAS interested to read David Lack's note (*antea*, p. 116) on the earlier singing of Blackbirds (*Turdus m. merula*) in towns. This bears out my husband's experience during his many years' residence in London. He frequently heard Blackbirds tuning up during the last week in January, and by February they would be in full and continuous song. He records one individual singing despite the thick snow and icy blast.

Early song is indeed a notable feature among London birds. On January 6th, 1932, my husband records: "there was a loud chorus at 7 a.m. by several Song-Thrushes and Robins in my garden." And in 1934, there is the following note: "As usual, a Ring-Dove was beginning song during the first few days of January, *not much* and irregularly. By the 18th January he was singing at 8 a.m."

SYLVIA LLOYD.

[Compare also *antea*, p. 194. We have also been told by others that their experience has been similar.—EDS.]

#### HERONS SWIMMING.

PERHAPS Herons (*Ardea c. cinerea*) swim rather more often than is generally thought.

Mr. M. T. Hill's note (*antea*, p. 136) describes the actions of three birds which stalked into the water till it was deep enough for them to swim. In the two other records referred to (*antea*, Vol. xxiii,

pp. 39 and 69) the birds in each instance were seen to settle on the surface of deep water. Since May 17th, 1922, when I noted the second of these two instances, I have twice watched Herons drop down to and swim in the middle of Marbury Mere, near Northwich, Cheshire.

May 6th, 1939: several Herons were flying about over the mere; one of them hovered, settled on the water, swam there buoyantly for a time and then rose easily from the surface and flew to the edge of the mere.

October 8th, 1944: two Herons were flying across the mere when one settled on the surface; it rested there for some time with its neck extended and curved, looking in shape, oddly like a very thin, attenuated swan; it swam high in the water and rose and flew off without effort.

A. W. BOYD.

#### SABINE'S GULLS IN COUNTY DURHAM.

IN view of the few records of Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) in County Durham and the unusual occurrence of the species in adult plumage the following account from a reliable correspondent may be of interest.

"On May 17th, 1944, as I was nearing the bridge over Greatham Creek on the Stockton to Hartlepool road, in company with a friend, we observed two Sabine's Gulls. They were in adult plumage. The entire head to below the nape and down in front to the upper breast was slate blue, circumscribed by a distinct narrow border of deep black. The lower neck down to the upper back was white, washed with pale lavender, while the back and wing coverts were darker lavender. The forked tail was very conspicuous in flight, as were the black primaries and primary coverts. The black feet and legs were also noted. They were busily feeding, hovering gracefully over the water and taking their prey from the surface with scarcely a ripple, or, alighting for an instant in the water to make a capture and rising again with ease. One bird only uttered an occasional harsh tern-like cry, grating but not loud. We watched them for over two hours, in flight and resting on the shore, with good glasses; during which time they often came within a dozen yards of us, as they showed no fear.

On a previous occasion, May 9th, 1932, I had seen a couple of these birds at exactly the same spot; but only one of them was in adult plumage, the other being immature. They also allowed me to approach to within a few yards, so that I was able to observe every detail of their plumage. Norman K. Duncan."

GEORGE W. TEMPERLEY.

#### HERRING-GULL FEEDING INDEPENDENT YOUNG.

IN connexion with the note by the late Bertram Lloyd (*antea*, pp. 39-40) on this subject, I wish to state that on January 7th, 1940, on the sandy beach near Allonby, Cumberland, I watched two Herring-Gulls (*Larus a. argentatus*) in juvenile plumage calling to and begging food from an adult. At first the adult walked away

from them, but as they continued following it and pestering it for food it finally disgorged some on the sand which the two juveniles promptly picked up and ate. R. H. BROWN.

WAXWINGS IN GREAT BRITAIN IN 1944.—We have received one more record in connexion with the incursion of Waxwings (*Bombycilla g. garrulus*) in 1943-4 (*antea* pp. 34-5, and Vol. xxxvii, pp. 196-7, 213-14):—

RUTLAND.—Twenty-five near Uppingham, February 16th, 1944 (D. G. Andrew).

EARLY BRENT GOOSE IN NORTHUMBERLAND.—Mr. G. H. M. Peters sends us particulars of a single Dark-breasted Brent Goose (*Branta b. bernicla*) which he saw at Holy Island on August 11th, 1944, a very early date.

MANX SHEARWATER AS PREY OF PEREGRINE.—Capt. O. Edwards has sent us the remains of a Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*) which he found near the eyrie of a Peregrine (*Falco p. peregrinus*) on the Mills of Ord cliffs on Bressay, Shetland, on July 2nd, 1944. So far as we can trace this is the first record of Manx Shearwater being taken by a Peregrine.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT IMMERSING HEAD IN FEEDING.—Major R. F. Rutledge writes that he has frequently seen Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa l. lapponica*) behaving in this manner (which I stated in *The Handbook* I had not observed.—B.W.T.), though not as habitually as in the case of the Black-tailed Godwit (*L. l. limosa*). This has also been reported by Mr. J. A. G. Barnes (Supplementary Additions and Corrections to *The Handbook*). Major Rutledge has also once seen a Bar-tailed Godwit submerge the whole head, neck and breast to the point of the shoulders.

COMMON SANDPIPER PROBABLY BREEDING IN WORCESTERSHIRE.—Mr. John R. Barrow informs us that while canoeing on the Avon between Cleeve Prior and Harvington on August 26th, 1944, he saw a young Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) sitting on a floating plank. It appeared to be nearly fully fledged, but still had a few traces of down adhering to it. Breeding was recorded in Worcestershire at Bittell Reservoir in 1925 and at Shelsley Kings in 1943.

SABINE'S GULLS IN CO. LIMERICK.—In *The Field*, November 18th, 1944, Mr. N. H. Wilson records the presence of two Sabine's Gulls (*Xema sabini*), birds of the year, at Limerick, between September 1st and 9th, 1944. A good description of the birds is given, including the forked tail, size in comparison with Black-headed Gulls and the characteristic coloration, except that any specific reference to the head is omitted. Mr. Wilson has, however, kindly sent us a most accurate description of this, together with a good and unmistakable pencil sketch made at the time. There are thirteen previous Irish records.

BLACK GUILLEMOT IN CORNWALL.—Mr. C. J. Stevens informs us of a Black Guillemot (*Uria g. grylle*) found in an oiled condition on Par Beach, Cornwall, on January 28th, 1945.

## REVIEWS.

## LOCAL REPORTS.

*Report on the Birds of Nottinghamshire, 1943.* Compiled for the Nottingham Natural Science Field Club and the Trent Valley Bird Watchers by J. Staton.

WE are very glad to welcome an independent report on Nottinghamshire which bears testimony to the good work carried out by the above two bodies in 1943. It is chiefly made up of a list of county birds with a brief indication of their present status and notes especially on 1943. Careful observation in the last few years has established the Nottingham Sewage Farm as one of the most ornithologically productive in the country, and as the birds observed here and in the neighbouring part of the Trent Valley have already been rather fully recorded in *British Birds* (Vol. xxxvii, p. 232) the report contains no surprises in this connexion. Mr. Raines's Two-barred Crossbill and the first recorded breeding of Black-headed Gulls in the county have also been recorded here, but the report also supplies useful information on the distribution of various other commoner species, the working out of which is one of the most valuable functions of local organizations. We think, however, that the implication that grey geese visiting Nottinghamshire are probably usually Grey Lags (of which species there is one definite record for the year) will probably prove to be mistaken. There are some misprints in the scientific nomenclature and the not uncommon mistake of putting all the authorities for scientific names in brackets will no doubt be rectified in future issues.

*South-Eastern Bird Report, being an Account of Bird-Life in Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex during 1943.* Edited by Ralph Whitlock. 5s. od.

THIS report contains a considerable amount of useful material, but there are still some records in it which certainly do not conform to the canon that all published records of rarities should be accompanied by the evidence and not rest merely on the opinion of the observer, however competent, or of editors. Such records, as we have had occasion to observe before in these notices, may be perfectly correct, but if the necessary data for forming a judgment are not given they are rendered almost worthless. This applies especially to a wader recorded without question in the Kent section as a Greater Yellowshank: nearly half a page is devoted to inconclusive observations on this bird and we are then simply told that the recorder finally confirmed his opinion of its identity—and this of a bird of which there are four English records! A record of Baillon's Crakes in Kent should also have been accompanied by evidence of identification, since Baillon's and Little Crakes are so similar, and even a record of two or more Little Ringed Plovers which frequented an East Kent Marsh during the summer would have been the better for a few confirmatory details, while one of a small flock of the Arctic race of the Ringed Plover was presumably confirmed by shooting, though this is not stated. In addition to some records which have already appeared in *British Birds*, there are notes on a Continental Jay, Bearded Tits, Marsh Harriers, and other interesting species in the county. Two pairs of Pintail would probably have bred in East Kent if not disturbed by military activities. An increase of Wood-Larks in the Sevenoaks district is attributed to the influence of the "intensive agricultural drive."

The Hampshire section is a reprint of the Hampshire Field Club Report, which we have already noticed, and that for Surrey contains nothing very outstanding. In the Sussex section a Firecrest is recorded at Aldwick on September 19th and there are records of Little Gull, Great Skua and other interesting species, and others quoted from the *Hastings and East Sussex Naturalist*. A record of the breeding of a pair of Grey Wagtails on the Sussex side of the Sussex-Kent border near Tunbridge Wells appears again under Kent.

B.W.T.

*Somersetshire Archæol. & Nat. Hist. Soc.: Ornithological Section. Reports on Somerset Birds, 1942 and 1943.*

THESE reports contain many interesting records, notably of a Chough on the Mendips in the winter 1941-2, and a Kite seen on Exmoor on August 22nd, 1942. The discovery of a small colony of Black-headed Gulls in 1942 provided the first definite proof of breeding in the county. Buzzards bred on the Poldens outside their normal West Somerset range in 1943 and are believed to have done so in South Somerset in 1942. The record of the breeding of Reed-Warblers in the west of the county in 1943 has already appeared in *British Birds*, as has that of a Temmincks' Stint in September, 1943, and the fact that at least two Waxwings reached the county in the invasion of 1943-4. A Waxwing was also seen at West Porlock on February 23rd, 1942. There are also records of Rough-legged Buzzard, Bewick's Swan, Velvet Scoter inland, etc. in 1942 and a Hooded Crow, rare in the south-west, in 1943.

In the 1943 migrant table a House-Martin is recorded on March 11th, a month before the earliest Sand-Martin. To make an adequate "departure" list is difficult and indeed hardly possible; some of the dates quoted, dates on which some of the birds in question are still at the nest in other parts of England, might have been omitted unless the observer was confident that they were actually leaving the district or passing through it, and this, so far as such birds as warblers are concerned, is often difficult to prove.

The county is divided for recording purposes into seven numbered districts, but no indication is given to show to what areas these numbers refer, although doubtless they will provide no difficulty for members of the Society, for whom the Reports are compiled.

• A.W.B.

## LETTERS.

### SONG-THRUSH REARING TWO BROODS IN SAME NEST.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With reference to Mr. Howard Bentham's record of a pair of Song-Thrushes (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) rearing two broods in the same nest (*antea*, p. 157), it may be of interest to report that, in 1944, in my garden in Mawgan-in-Pydar, I obtained my first record, after many years of observation, of a pair of these birds using the same nest for the second brood.

The first brood left the nest on May 8th. On May 22nd, the first egg of a second clutch of four eggs was laid in the same nest. The resulting brood flew on June 20th.

In this case there was no question of any difficulty in obtaining mud, for a muddy stream flowed only 20 yards away. I attribute the birds' behaviour to very strong attachment to "individual nest-territory" (*cf. antea*, Vol. xxii, pp. 87-88 in the case of a pair of Blackbirds).

B. H. RYVES.

### SPOTTED REDSHANKS IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With regard to the above (*antea*, p. 139), the recorders would be correct in saying theirs was the only *published* record for a definite locality and date. Actually three specimens from Tenby are recorded in the Cardiff Museum Report, 1896-1897, and Mr. Colin Matheson, Keeper of Zoology at the National Museum of Wales, has kindly looked up the record card relating to them and informs me that two were received in the flesh from Tenby early in October, 1896. The actual date of the third Tenby specimen is doubtful. These specimens are still in the Museum, and were probably shot in the marsh between Tenby and Penally.

I have a large number of unpublished records relating to South Wales which Colonel H. Morrey Salmon and I have collected during the last twenty years with a view to ultimate publication in the form of county, or revised county, lists.

GEOFFREY C. S. INGRAM.

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## BRITISH RECOVERIES OF BIRDS RINGED ABROAD

BY

E. P. LEACH.

DURING the last twelve years, records of the recovery in the British Isles of birds ringed abroad have been incorporated in a series of articles written and compiled by the late H. F. Witherby and the present writer.\* In these articles birds ringed in the British Isles and recovered abroad were also listed and commented upon, the two sets of records being to a certain extent complementary one to the other. As time went on and the lists became increasingly longer a necessary curtailment was made by omitting the records of British-bred birds, while retaining those ringed in the British Isles in winter, which in the majority of cases might safely be presumed to be of foreign origin. Now that circumstances demand yet further reduction, the present paper gives only records of birds ringed abroad and these are brought up to the end of the winter 1943-44, but it should be borne in mind that the recoveries abroad of birds ringed in this country are all published in the ordinary Recovery Lists.

In the case of Starling, Black-headed Gull and Common Gull, the results are summarized as before, but it may perhaps be emphasized that all these detailed records are carefully kept, and are available for reference at any time.

The obvious difficulties of obtaining ringing details from abroad in war-time call for recognition on our part of the great help we have received in several quarters. First, special thanks are due to the Natural History Museums of Stockholm and of Gothenburg, both of whom have been indefatigable in eliciting information from countries in enemy occupation. Secondly, to officials of the Embassy of the U.S.S.R. in London, who have expedited correspondence to and from the Moscow Bird-Ringing Bureau. The National Museum of Ireland has also obtained many items of information for us.

To the list of Ringing Stations already published, one not previously concerned has to be added.

<i>Abbreviation used.</i>	<i>Inscription on ring.</i>	<i>Organization.</i>	<i>Director.</i>
U.S.A.	Notify Biol. Surv. Wash. D.C.	Bureau of Biological Survey Washington.	F. C. Lincoln.

STARLING (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).

The records of Starlings ringed abroad are summarized rather than set out in detail, as has been the custom in the previous publications

\*Vol. xxv, pp. 110-128 ; pp. 174-192 ; pp. 245-268 ; pp. 357-360. Vol. xxvi, pp. 352-361. Vol. xxviii, pp. 106-112 ; pp. 133-141. Vol. xxix, pp. 132-144. Vol. xxi, pp. 14-24 ; pp. 42-53. Vol. xxxiii, pp. 62-75. The abbreviations used for the various ringing-stations are given in Vol. xxv, p. 111, with additions relevant to the present account in Vols. xxvi, p. 352, and xxix, p. 132.

of this kind. They are very numerous and the new records bear out what has gone before, while the countries of origin remain the same, namely Finland, the Baltic States, Germany, Scandinavia, Holland and Belgium.

Of one hundred and three new records, sixty were of birds ringed as young or in the breeding-season, of which three were reported from Scotland (Banffshire, Kirkcudbrightshire, and Lanarkshire) three from Ireland (Antrim, Louth and Cork) five from Wales (Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, and Glamorganshire two), while the rest were widely distributed over England. Of birds ringed abroad as full-grown in spring and autumn, forty-three records have come to hand, Scotland providing one (Wigtownshire) Ireland four (Mayo, Clare and Limerick two) and Wales four (Pembrokeshire two and Glamorganshire two).

It is of interest to draw special attention to recoveries in Scotland, where they have always been few and far between, so it may be added that the Banffshire bird was ringed in Holland, the Lanarkshire and Kirkcudbrightshire ones in Sweden, and the Wigtownshire one in Memelland.

GREENFINCH (*Chloris ch. chloris*).

This is the first Greenfinch known to have been recovered in this country, with a foreign ring.

RINGED ABROAD AS ADULT.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
L.	B38435	Zuid Holland	6.4.38	Lowestoft, Suffolk 17.11.38

SISKIN (*Carduelis spinus*).

We still have no records of Siskins from their breeding-places, but this is the third one ringed abroad as a migrant.

RINGED ABROAD AS MIGRANT.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
L.	B26719	Texel, Holland	23.10.36	Musselburgh, Midlothian 15.1.38

CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs*).

RINGED ABROAD. BREEDING-PLACE UNCERTAIN.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
L.	B54595	Zuid Holland	13.10.39	Enniscorthy, Wexford 1.40
L.	B45317	Ditto	16.10.38	Eastbourne, Sussex 9.1.41
L.	B56112	Ditto	13.10.39	Dundrum, Dublin 4.2.41
B.	11B3535	Antwerp, Belgium	16.10.37	Bitterne, Hants 30.1.38
B.	10B4752	Brussels, Belgium	2.10.37	Speen, Bucks 23.3.38
B.	11B8910	West Flanders	14.10.37	Watford, Herts 16.2.38

BRAMBLING (*Fringilla montifringilla*).

RINGED ABROAD. BREEDING-PLACE UNCERTAIN.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
L.	B42940	Texel, Holland	28.10.38	Bookham, Surrey 26.12.38

FIELDFARE (*Turdus pilaris*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLINGS.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Hs.</i>	A25670	S.W. Finland	30.5.39	Aberdeen	21.2.40
<i>Stav.</i>	72230	Nordland, Norway	23.6.39	Mosside, Antrim	9.1.40
<i>G.</i>	2694B	Swedish Lapland	8.7.36	Pendeen, Cornwall	7.12.38

SONG-THRUSH (*Turdus e. ericetorum*).

It may perhaps be re-stated that the race of Song-Thrush breeding in Holland is the same as the British one.

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>L.</i>	D34448	Noord Holland	13.5.39	Pickering, Yorks	20.1.40
<i>L.</i>	D37499	Utrecht, Holland	29.5.39	Lymington, Hants	6.3.40

REDWING (*Turdus m. musicus*).

This is the first record for this country of a Redwing ringed in its breeding-place.

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

<i>St.</i>	Y13830	Västerbotten, Sweden	13.6.38	Penzance, Cornwall	15.1.41
------------	--------	----------------------	---------	-----------------------	---------

BLACKBIRD (*Turdus m. merula*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>H.</i>	643805A	Hanover, Germany	30.6.38	Stanton, Glos.	—.2.39

## RINGED ABROAD AS ADULT.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Sk.</i>	T26606	Jylland, Denmark	1.4.42	Ilkeston, Derby	28.2.43

## RINGED ABROAD AS MIGRANTS.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>H.</i>	7089357	Heligoland	18.4.39	Saltburn, Yorks	2.2.40
<i>H.</i>	789205	Ditto	24.10.39	Dorsington, Warwick	—.1.40
<i>H.</i>	7090523	Ditto	18.9.39	Oxnead, Norfolk	19.1.40

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco p. peregrinus*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Stav.</i>	30521	Lofoten Is., Norway	9.7.43	Sleaford, Lincs	2.12.43

KESTREL (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).

The recovery in Yorkshire in June of a bird ringed abroad, seems to show that this was a British-bred Kestrel which had migrated to Europe and returned. Compare with this the case of the bird ringed as young in the Isle of Man and recovered in East Flanders the following autumn (*antea*, Vol. xxxiii, p. 134.)

## RINGED ABROAD AS ADULT.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>B.</i>	D3726	Antwerp, Belgium	7.10.34	Harewood, Yorks	—.6.37

MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus æ. æruginosus*).

This is the first record of a Marsh-Harrier recovered in the British Isles bearing a foreign ring.

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

Ringed.

Recovered.

C.	330218	Jylland, Denmark	13.6.41	Sanday, Orkney	6.4.44
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OSPREY (*Pandion h. haliaëtus*).

This record of a ringed Osprey from its breeding-place is the first for this country.

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLING.

Ringed.

Recovered.

G.	E5754	Smaland, Sweden	30.7.42	Blundeston, Suffolk	19.10.42
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COMMON HERON (*Ardea c. cinerea*).

This list shows a large number of Herons from Norway and is remarkable for the high proportion of first-winter birds, namely 14 out of 19. The bird recovered in Norfolk in July shows a movement at a very early date. The distribution over the country spreads from Shetland to Cornwall. May is an unexpected month in which to find a six-year-old Heron of foreign origin in Oxfordshire, but the bird may have failed to make its spring migration—perhaps from some cause which also led to its death.

## RINGED ABROAD AS NESTLINGS.

Ringed.

Recovered.

O.	012104	Rogaland, Norway	5.6.39	Yell, Shetland	—.2.40
O.	6042	Ditto	10.6.40	Stronsay, Orkney	—
				Winter 1941-42	
O.	011988	Ditto	6.6.39	Lewis, O. Hebrides	—
O.	6178	Ditto	12.6.41	R. Laxford, Sutherland	10.10.41
O.	6472	Ditto	11.6.42	L. Harport, Skye	16.4.43
O.	6385	Ditto	10.6.42	L. Moidart, Inverness	27.1.44
O.	6393	Ditto	10.6.42	Aberfeldy, Perth	8.2.44
O.	6784	Ditto	12.6.43	Bonnybridge, Stirling	—.3.44
O.	6717	Ditto	12.6.43	Melrose, Roxburgh	—
					24.11.43
O.	6162	Ditto	12.6.41	Alnwick, Northumb.	—.11.41
O.	012051	Ditto	5.6.39	Hull, Yorks	—.3.40
O.	6036	Ditto	10.6.40	Retford, Notts	—.1.41
O.	6045	Ditto	10.6.40	Castle Acre, Norfolk	29.7.40
O.	6194	Ditto	12.6.41	Winchester, Hants	—
				Winter 1941-42	
O.	6105	Ditto	10.6.40	St. Teath, Cornwall	—
					12.1.41
St.	M9348	Halland, Sweden	16.6.33	Thame, Oxon	—.5.39
St.	S3816	Småland, Sweden	14.6.43	Rugby, Warwick	30.11.43
G.	E4665	Scania, Sweden	15.6.41	Highbridge, Hants	—
					24.11.41
V.	B1894	Pas-de-Calais, France	10.5.36	Ely, Cambs	5.3.40

GREY LAG-GOOSE (*Anser anser*).

Fifteen Grey Lag-Geese have now been reported, all ringed in Iceland and all recovered in Scotland or Ireland.

## RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Rk.</i>	2.256	North Iceland	26.8.34	Wexford 20.2.38
<i>Rk.</i>	2.165	South Iceland	10.7.35	Ditto 18.1.42
<i>Rk.</i>	2.328	Ditto	8.7.37	Ditto 27.11.37
<i>Rk.</i>	2.106	S.E. Iceland	9.7.37	Lockerbie, Dumfries 25.2.39

MALLARD (*Anas p. platyrhyncha*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS FULL-GROWN.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>L.</i>	175508	Overijssel, Holland	15.3.39	Stockbridge, Hants 27.1.40

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS BREEDING ADULT.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Rk.</i>	4.1798	Myvatn, Iceland	23.6.42	Tralee, Kerry 25.10.43

TEAL (*Anas c. crecca*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Rk.</i>	5.1584	South Iceland	16.7.39	Angus —.1.40

## RINGED ABROAD FROM DECOYS.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>L.</i>	179501	Friesland, Holland	24.9.38	Pickering, Yorks 26.1.40
<i>L.</i>	179492	Ditto	24.9.38	Worsley, Lancs 4.3.41
<i>L.</i>	185152	Ditto	23.8.41	Alfreton, Derby 23.1.42
<i>L.</i>	182572	Ditto	25.2.39	Burton Joyce, Notts 20.3.42
<i>L.</i>	172575	Ditto	24.9.38	Portchester, Hants 11.1.40
<i>L.</i>	179615	Ditto	24.9.38	Sligo —.1.40
<i>L.</i>	171715	Ditto	28.8.37	Foxford, Mayo 18.1.40
<i>L.</i>	171464	Ditto	11.9.37	Loughrea, Galway 19.1.41
<i>L.</i>	179457	Ditto	24.9.38	Nenagh, Tipperary —.12.39
<i>L.</i>	185843	Ditto	4.10.39	Ditto 23.1.40
<i>L.</i>	172325	Ditto	1937	Cashel, Tipperary —.11.41
<i>L.</i>	179526	Ditto	24.9.38	Tullow, Carlow —.9.39
<i>L.</i>	160451	Zuid Holland	25.11.37	Tamlaght, Londonderry 18.11.38

WIGEON (*Anas penelope*).

As can be seen once more from the present list, Wigeon travel enormous distances to visit the British Isles.

## RINGED ABROAD IN BREEDING-SEASON.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>M.</i>	D81517	Perm Prov., Russia	3.8.41	King's Lynn, Norfolk 28.1.42
<i>Hs.</i>	H9576	Petsamo, Finland	26.7.39	Glencaple, Dumfries 12.1.42
<i>Rk.</i>	4.1443	Myvatn, Iceland	3.8.30	Ballybunion, Kerry 2.12.43
<i>St.</i>	T7479	Jämtland, Sweden	6.8.41	Aldcliffe, Lancs 8.2.44

PINTAIL (*Anas a. acuta*).

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
Rk.	4.133	North Iceland	15.7.34	Co. Clare —.1.40

SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*).

This is the first record of a Shoveler ringed in Russia being found in the British Isles in autumn or winter, although there are six parallel cases of birds ringed in winter at the Orierton Decoy being recovered subsequently in Russia in spring and summer.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
M.	E50921	Lake Ilmen, Russia	8.7.38	Gort, Galway 28.9.39

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*).

A large proportion of the recoveries of Icelandic birds (of all the species hitherto recorded for the British Isles) come from Ireland, and the Tufted Duck follows this trend.

RINGED ABROAD IN BREEDING-SEASON.

Rk.	4.602	Myvatn, Iceland	29.6.35	Mainland, Orkney 12.2.40
Rk.	4.2191	Ditto	2.8.43	Barr, Ayrshire 6.11.43
Rk.	4.628	Ditto	10.7.35	L. Neagh, Ireland 16.10.37
Rk.	4.1492	Ditto	29.6.40	Ditto 20.1.41
Rk.	4.1300	Ditto	1939	L. Gowna, Cavan 3.11.40
Rk.	4.1479	Ditto	29.6.35	Bracklagh L., Cavan 11.2.43
Hs.	H5002	S.E. Finland	16.7.37	Olney, Bucks —.1.40

SCAUP-DUCK (*Aythya m. marila*).

RINGED ABROAD IN BREEDING-SEASON.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
Sk.	E2678	Myvatn, Iceland	15.6.37	Aberlady, E. Lothian 26.2.42
Rk.	3.1637	Ditto	26.6.39	Whitstable, Kent —.2.40
Rk.	3.2002	Ditto	20.6.42	Narrow Water, Down —.2.44
Rk.	3 1292	Ditto	20.6.39	Castleblaney, Monaghan —.1.40
Rk.	4.663	Ditto	3.7.35	Lough Derg, Ireland —.5.37

VELVET-SCOTER (*Melanitta f. fusca*).

This is the first ringed Velvet-Scoter to be reported in the British Isles.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
O.	01588	Gudbrandsdal, Norway	21.7.43	Glencaple, Dumfries 22.10.43

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*).

RINGED ABROAD AS ADULT.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
Rk.	3.371	Myvatn, Iceland	10.9.33	R. Tay 20.1.36

(To be continued).

## NOTES FROM FAIR ISLE, 1939-45

BY

GEORGE WATERSTON.

IN the spring of 1944, George T. Arthur (G.T.A.), and the writer (G.W.), visited Fair Isle, Shetland, between March 28th and April 17th. In autumn, the island was again visited by the writer between August 14th and 21st.

Eighty-seven different species and sub-species were recorded during the spring visit. Apart from a movement of several hundred Robins (*Erithacus rubecula*), which reached its height on April 4th, migration generally was on a small scale.

During the week in August quite a variety of waders was seen, but no finches (apart from the resident House-Sparrows and Twites), no buntings, and no warblers.

These notes include several records of interest of birds seen by the well-known Fair Isle observer George Stout (G.S.) from the beginning of the War up to early 1945.

SCANDINAVIAN JACKDAW (*Corvus n. mouedula*).—One or two have been seen each spring since the beginning of the War by G.S. Two distinctly marked birds were seen on several occasions during the first fortnight of April by G.S., G.T.A. and G.W.

JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*).—G.S. saw one at the North Haven in mid-May, 1940. First record for Fair Isle. (This bird probably belonged to the Continental race (*G. g. glandarius*), which has not as yet been specifically recorded from Scotland).

ROSE-COLOURED STARLING (*Pastor roseus*).—A few remained throughout the summer of 1939. G.S.

SCARLET GROSBEAK (*Carpodacus e. erythrinus*).—An adult male seen at very close quarters, February 9th, 1945. G.S.

TWO-BARRED CROSSBILL (*Loxia leucoptera bifasciata*).—Has not been seen for a number of years. Three were seen (one obtained) by G.S. on September 29th, 1939.

RUSTIC BUNTING (*Emberiza rustica*).—One or two seen September 26th, 1938. G.S.

TAWNY PIPIT (*Anthus campestris*).—One seen at beginning of May, 1943. G.S.

PETCHORA PIPIT (*Anthus gustavi*).—One seen in September, 1940. G.S.

NUTHATCH (*Sitta europæa*).—One seen by G.S. at the North Haven on May 1st, 1939. It would seem probable that this bird belonged to the Scandinavian race, *Sitta e. europæa*, which has not been recorded in Britain. This is the second record of a Nuthatch for Fair Isle, the first being in 1936 (*Scot. Nat.*, 1937, p.74).

LESSER GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius minor*).—Two seen May, 1938, one (a female) on November 1st, 1940, one in spring, 1943, and an adult male in the third week of October, 1944. G.S.

WAXWING (*Bombycilla garrulus*).—As already recorded (*antea*, Vol. xxxviii, p. 35), several hundreds appeared in mid-October, 1943 and remained for about a fortnight. This was the biggest movement yet seen of this species on Fair Isle. Two were seen on April 3rd and 4th, 1944 by G.T.A. and G.W. According to G.S., the Waxwing is rarely seen in spring on Fair Isle.

SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*).—A Chiffchaff identified as of this race seen in early December, 1944. G.S.

EVERSMANN'S WARBLER (*Phylloscopus borealis*).—G.S. saw one on April 26th, 1943, which he identified by its distinct double wing bar and its characteristic skulking habits. G.S. has obtained this bird previously in late summer, and several in autumn, and knows it well.

YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus inornatus*).—One seen by James Stout at the end of October, 1944.

ICTERINE WARBLER (*Hippolais icterina*).—One seen, September, 2nd, 1944. G.S.

WHITE'S THRUSH (*Turdus dauma aureus*).—A fine male was obtained by James A. Stout on October 18th, 1944. He described the bird as being very skulking and difficult to approach. The note was heard about twenty times and resembled the noise a Starling makes when it is caught, except that it was longer, sharper, and shriller. The sun was shining when the bird was seen, and it had a habit of always flying into the shade after being flushed. In its ground movements, it resembled the Redwings in the habit of "keeping flattened out" as it ran about. This is the second record for Fair Isle and the fourth for Scotland.

[? RED-TAILED FIELDFARE (*Turdus naumanni*).—In mid-October, 1939, G.S. saw a bird of the thrush family among an enormous flock of Redwings (*Turdus musicus*)—one of the largest flocks of Redwings that he has ever seen on the island. Observation of an individual among so many birds was extremely difficult, but G.S. noticed that this bird was slightly larger than the Redwings, and had a chestnut tail and rump. A frontal view was not obtained. G.S. thinks that this bird may have been *Turdus naumanni*, a species which breeds in E. Siberia and is of occasional occurrence in Central and Southern Europe. It has never been known to occur in Britain.]

DESERT WHEATEAR (*Enanthe deserti*).—Leslie Anderson, of Vaasetter, Fair Isle, obtained a male in its first winter plumage on November 18th, 1940. Mr. N. B. Kinnear to whom the specimen was submitted, writes that owing to the fact that most of the skins at the British Museum are away in the country, he is unable to distinguish the race to which it belongs.

STONECHAT (*Saxicola torquata*).—The severe winter 1939-1940 appears to have taken heavy toll of these birds on the east coast of Scotland and they did not appear on passage at Fair Isle until 1943.

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia svecica*).—Have been rather scarce during the War years until 1943, when they were present in large numbers between September 20th and October 1st—the biggest rush of Bluethroats ever seen by G.S. They were almost entirely young birds, thus making it difficult to differentiate between the two races, *L. s. svecica* and *L. s. cyanecula*, in the field.

WRYNECK (*Jynx torquilla*).—G.S. saw scores of these birds along the island roads on September 20th, 1943; many were also seen on spring passage that year.

WHITE-BREASTED BARN-OWL (*Tyto a. alba*).—One in October–November, 1940; and one on April 11th, 1944. G.S.

DARK-BREASTED BARN-OWL (*Tyto alba guttata*).—One in October–November, 1943. First record for Fair Isle. G.S.

[GYR FALCON (*Falco r. rusticolus*).—G.S. obtained some excellent views at a range of four feet of a pair of this species on the Ward Hill, where they remained for a fortnight at the end of April, 1943. These birds were darker than any Iceland Falcons seen previously and showed no white on the crown of the head. G.S. noted the following particulars:—"Bluish horn bill, yellow at base. Grey bars across tail. Whitish back of neck." He remarks that Iceland Falcons were usually very wild, whereas these birds were relatively tame. Greenland and Iceland Falcons usually appear on Fair Isle after westerly gales, while these birds were seen after a period of S.E. wind and rough weather. This is apparently the first record for Scotland; but in view of the fact that these races of falcons intergrade to such an extent, it seems advisable to retain this record within square brackets.]

EAGLE.—One was seen on April 7th, 1944, by one of the Lighthouse keepers at the North End, but the species was not determined. This bird showed no white on the tail. Another Eagle was seen during the first week in August, 1944.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*).—G.S. saw a fine male on the island in May, 1937. First record for Fair Isle.

PALLID HARRIER (*Circus macrourus*).—G.S. saw an adult male on May 6th, 1942, which remained for a week. This is the third record for Britain and the second for Fair Isle. It may be recalled that G.S. obtained a year-old bird on May 8th, 1931, which was present for at least a fortnight prior to this date (*antea*, Vol. xxvi, pp. 8–11). G.S. states that these two birds appeared to quarter the ground at a higher altitude than the Hen-Harrier. The bird seen in 1942 was very pale.

KITE (*Milvus* sp.).—G.S. tells me that he once observed a Kite circling at a great height over Burryshield in May, 1917. He was unable to identify the species. This record has not previously appeared in print.

LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus minutus*).—Two or three were seen in the early summer of 1940 and a female was obtained by Leslie Anderson on April 10th, 1940, which has been examined by G.W. First record for Fair Isle.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*).—A male was seen on April 10th and 11th, 1944 by G.T.A. and G.W. on the Golden Water. According to G.S. the Pochard is scarce on spring passage.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*).—A pair remained throughout the summer of 1943 at the North Haven. G.S.

SURF SCOTER (*Melanitta perspicillata*).—Two were seen at the North Haven in December, 1940. G.S.

SMEW (*Mergus albellus*).—Two or three were present on the Golden Water in December, 1941. G.S.

FULMAR PETREL (*Fulmarus glacialis*).—These birds have increased steadily as a breeding species up to the end of 1942; but in 1943 there was a decrease—there being noticeably fewer birds in certain localities. Several were seen offshore in an oiled condition and G.S. is of the opinion that oil may be the reason for the diminution.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*).—Two or three were seen by G.S. in May, 1940. First record for Fair Isle.

ROCK-DOVE (*Columba livia*).—G.S. saw a flock of over a hundred on December 20th, 1943.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*).—G.S. saw three in May, 1943. First spring record for Fair Isle.

LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*).—One pair bred in 1943—the first for ten years. They used to be plentiful as a nesting species fifty or sixty years ago. G.S.

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna sandvicensis*).—Has been seen on occasions by G.S. (Hitherto unrecorded).

GREAT SKUA (*Stercorarius skua*).—One pair bred in 1943 and 1944.

ARCTIC SKUA (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).—Seven pairs bred in 1943 and twelve pairs in 1944.

MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*).—A pair nested on the Gilsetter Burn in 1943. This species only nests occasionally. G.S.

QUAIL (*Coturnix coturnix*).—G.S. estimated that eight or nine pairs probably nested in 1943. Two nests were found; one at Vaasetter contained twelve eggs. No Quail were seen in 1944.

## THE INDEX OF HERON POPULATION, 1944\*

BY

W. B. ALEXANDER.

The number of reports on sites occupied by Herons in 1944, which were received at the Edward Grey Institute, was 111. Of these 77 were in England, 6 in Wales, 8 in Scotland and 20 in Ireland. We are indebted to 55 informants, of whom a considerable number have collected information from friends and correspondents. The Rev. P. G. Kennedy sent reports on 16 heronries in 7 counties of Eire and Major A. W. Boyd on the 8 known heronries of Cheshire and South Lancashire. Mr. K. B. Ashton investigated all the recorded sites in Glamorgan, only two of which are now occupied.

A heronry previously unrecorded, containing 10 nests, was reported in Gloucestershire. It is known to have existed for a number of years and is noteworthy as the second reported in that county, where no heronry was known at the time of the 1928 census. Mr. J. H. Owen has also reported a heronry of 16 nests in Montgomeryshire, of which he has known for over 50 years, but which was not included in the 1928 census. Two previously unrecorded heronries have also been reported from Argyllshire, but the heronries in that county have never been completely surveyed.

In 83 heronries counted in 1943 and again in 1944 there were 1,532 nests in the former year and 1,696 in the latter, an increase of about 11 per cent.

Of the heronries counted in 1944 only 63 were included in the census of 1928 when they contained 1,494 nests. In 1944 they contained 1,398 nests, or about 93 per cent. In 1943 the index based on 1928 was 82, so that an increase of about 13 per cent. is indicated.

For 89 of the heronries counted in 1944 we have figures for one or more years when the population was normal (1928, 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939). The average total population of these 89 heronries in normal years was 1,965 whilst in 1944 it was 1,807. This gives an index of 92 as compared with 82 in the previous year, an increase of about 12 per cent.

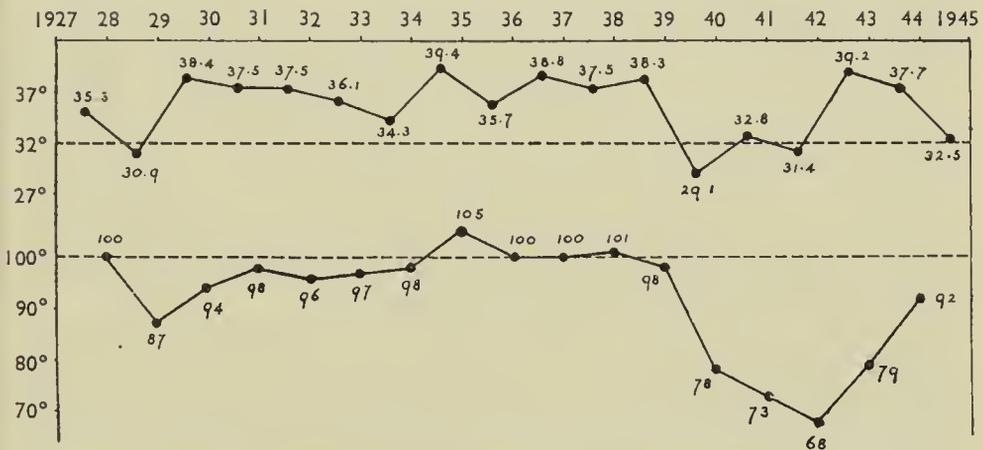
In last year's report it was pointed out that according to the text-books Herons do not breed till their second year and that therefore a large increase in the breeding population might be expected in 1944, the second breeding season after the exceptionally mild winter of 1942-43, which was followed by a second mild winter. In fact, however the increase in 1944 has only been about 12 per cent. compared with an increase of about 21 per cent. in 1943.

The accompanying diagram shows the index of Heron population in England and Wales as calculated from the sample census in each year, together with an index of the severity of the preceding winter.

\*Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

For the latter we have taken from *Weatherwise* by J. H. Willis the mean temperature of the coldest month of the winter whether it was December, January, February or March. These figures are from records made at Norwich and Mr. Willis has kindly provided us with figures for the winters since his book was published. A study of the graphs shows that in the period from 1927 to 1944 there were three winters when for a whole month the mean temperature was below freezing point (1928-9, 1939-40 and 1941-42) and another (1940-41) when it was only just above. It seems evident that when the mean temperature for a whole month was as low as this all stagnant or slow-flowing water must have been frozen for a considerable period.

After each of these severe winters the index of breeding Herons has shown a very marked drop. In each case a rise has occurred at once after a single mild winter. After the single severe winter of 1928-29 it was apparently two years before the population returned to normal. After the three successive severe winters the population in the second year was still 8 per cent. below normal.



Upper : Mean temperature of coldest winter month (at Norwich).

Lower : Index of breeding population of Herons (England and Wales).

Graph of the indices of Heron population, 1928-44, compared with a graph illustrating the severity of the winters during the same period.

The index curve is precisely what would be expected in the case of a small bird species capable of breeding in its first year. We have not succeeded in discovering on what evidence the text-book statement that Herons do not breed till they are two years old is based, though in so large a bird it seems highly probable. If it is true, it seems necessary to suppose that the decrease in the breeding population after a severe winter is not due to mortality but to the fact that after the hardships which they have suffered in such winters many Herons are too enfeebled to breed in the following year.

The percentages for individual regions (omitting those for which the data are inadequate) are as follows :—

	1943	1944	Change
South-west England ..	71	90	+ 19
Thames Drainage Area ..	80	95	+ 15
Eastern England .. ..	52	53	+ 1
Midlands .. .. .	95	96	+ 1
North-west England ..	77	107	+ 30
Ireland .. .. .	103	97	— 6
England and Wales ..	79	92	+ 13
British Isles .. ..	82	92	+ 10

Only two areas were completely surveyed in 1944. In Cheshire and South Lancashire the number of nests in the 8 heronries in 1943 was 206 (this is an increase on the number given in last year's report, as later information showed that the figure then accepted for one heronry was incomplete). In 1944 the figure for these 8 heronries was 279 and, in addition, three single nests were reported. The increase in this area was thus about 37 per cent. In Glamorgan the two heronries contained 24 nests in 1944. In 1928 there were 19 or 20 nests in that county in 3 heronries, but Mr. Ashton informs us that the wood at Treguff Farm, Llanbethery, was felled some years ago and it is common knowledge locally that the birds returned to Hensol Castle, whence they came originally.

As the winter 1944-45 was again a severe one it may be anticipated that the figures for 1945 will show a decrease. Whilst once again expressing our thanks to all those helpers who have supplied the information on which this report is based, we hope that any readers who are able to do so will send particulars of the numbers of nests occupied in any heronry in 1945 to the writer at the Edward Grey Institute, 39 Museum Road, Oxford.

## NOTES.

## SCARCE BIRDS IN AYRSHIRE.

SOME notes of mine, under the above heading, were published in *British Birds*, Vol xxxvi, p. 241. A further two years spent in the same locality have enabled me to supplement them as follows :—

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus t. torquatus*).—There is some evidence that one wintered in a large garden on the southern outskirts of Ayr. It was first reported to me by Mr. J. Baird, a competent observer, on March 7th, 1944. He was first attracted by its "sharp chattering scolding notes" and subsequently had a good view of it. A lady resident in the house afterwards told me that it had been about for two or three months.

GADWALL (*Anus strepera*).—Two immature birds at Doon estuary on September 14th, 1943.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*).—One female at Doon estuary, March 4th, 1943.

SMEW (*Mergus albellus*).—One female or immature, at Penwhapple reservoir, Barr, December 31st, 1944.

SLAVONIAN GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*).—One, near Heads of Ayr, December 18th, 1944.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa l. limosa*).—A regular spring and autumn visitor to the Doon estuary, in very small numbers. Recorded in the following months, February to May (inclusive), August and September. All the birds seen by me have been in red plumage except for one obvious juvenile encountered on September 16th, 1943. I have seldom seen the much commoner Bar-tail in anything but winter grey.

CURLEW-SANDPIPER (*Calidris testacea*).—One, August 26th, 1943.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*).—A few appeared for a day or two in the autumn of 1943, when the following records were made :—One, August 29th ; two, August 31st ; three, September 3rd. I was unable to visit the shore again until September 12th, by which time all had left.

REEVE (*Philomachus pugnax*).—One, September 17th, 1943.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—Regular on autumn passage in the same area. Small numbers only. One remained until January in 1942, otherwise all records are for July and August.

GREY PLOVER (*Squatarola squatarola*).—Scarce, but regular late winter visitor. Not recorded before last days of November. Present until April 13th in 1942, but not recorded after January in either of the following years. It is curious that I have been unable to record this species as an autumn passage migrant.

ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna dougallii*).—The small colony in the Clyde area suspected in 1942, was found to be definitely established in 1943 and again in 1944. Estimated at 25 pairs. I found a clutch of 3 eggs on June 20th, 1944. This is stated in *The Handbook* to be very rare.

GLAUCOUS GULL (*Larus hyperboreus*).—A record on August 1st, 1944, is noteworthy. The bird, which was mottled on its head and neck like a winter-plumaged Herring-Gull and had a few ash grey feathers on the mantle, was very tired and in ragged plumage.

G. HUGHES ONSLOW.

## EARLY COURTSHIP-FEEDING OF ROOK.

WE think it worth while recording that on December 23rd, 1944, at Selsdon, Surrey, we observed full display between two Rooks (*Corvus f. frugilegus*), including the offering of food, which in this case was almost certainly regurgitated bread taken a short time previously from our garden lawn.

According to *The Handbook* (Vol. 1, p. 19), the earliest date previously recorded for courtship-feeding, was January 7th.

F. AND F. M. FIRTH.

[Brown has recorded ceremonial feeding at the end of December (*Ibis*, 1943, p. 138) and the same has been observed by E. W. Hendy (*Lure of Bird Watching*, p. 147).—EDS.]

#### FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF STARLINGS.

ON January 19th, 1945, I was watching some Starlings (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*) feeding in woodland in Co. Galway, Ireland. There had been a fall of snow, but the ground under the trees had only a light covering. The Starlings were pecking round the bases of trees, and about a dozen were working up the vertical trunk of an oak. They had difficulty in doing this, but managed it by fluttering their wings, when necessary to regain balance or to advance a few steps up, and also by short flights, to repeat the fluttering and clinging process a little further up the trunk. Some worked up to a height of six feet. I found wood-lice (under the moss of the tree-trunk), which apparently they were eating.

This is very like the behaviour of the Magpies, which I recently recorded (*antea*, p. 133), but the Starlings had much more difficulty in working up the tree.

KATHLEEN GOUGH.

#### NEST-RAIDING BY LEAF-WARBBLERS.

WITH reference to Mr. P. A. Adolph's note of a Chiffchaff raiding a Bullfinch's nest (*antea*, p. 95), the following may be of interest. On May 14th, 1932, in Gosforth Park, Northumberland, a bird which I think was a Willow-Warbler (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*) but may possibly have been a Chiffchaff (*P. c. collybita*) appeared suddenly at a Chaffinch's nest. The male Chaffinch, which must have been nearby, chased it off immediately, but some ten minutes later the warbler again appeared at the nest and with a struggle pulled the lining partly out. It flew away with some of it and vanished about 40 yards away, presumably on the way to its nest. Shortly after this the hen Chaffinch came to the nest and after gazing at the damage for about 15 seconds, it completed the pulling out of the lining, flew off with it and dropped it about 10 yards from the nest. Neither the Chaffinch nor the warbler returned while I was present.

H. TULLY.

#### EARLY FIELDFARES IN ESSEX.

ON September 8th, 1944, near Elsenham, Essex, while walking by some fields, which had been recently ploughed up, I observed three Fieldfares (*Turdus pilaris*). Their slate grey heads and characteristic harsh notes uttered in flight left no uncertainty as to their identity. *The Handbook* quotes dates up to September 23rd as unusually early.

B. D. M. BOOTH.

## RING-OUZELS IN MERIONETHSHIRE IN WINTER.

ON January 28th, 1945, when very wintry conditions prevailed, my wife and I watched a male Ring-Ouzel (*Turdus t. torquatus*), feeding on the small hips of a rambler rose in a roadside garden at Aberdovey. The light was good, and I was able to see all the plumage markings and satisfy myself that it was not a pied Blackbird—which I confess I at first thought it was. The bird was within fifteen yards range.

A Ring-Ouzel was also seen by Dr. Hugh Wright on the same day about a mile from where I saw mine, and another was picked up dead at Aberdovey on January 26th and identified by a reliable informant.

These observations suggest that more Ring-Ouzels may winter in this country than is generally thought. E. H. T. BIBLE.

## BLACKBIRD CAPTURING MOUSE.

IN a country lane in Oxfordshire in May, 1944, while travelling in an open lorry and looking ahead, I saw a cock Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) attacking a half to three-parts grown mouse in the middle of the road. The bird made repeated attacks with its beak, and succeeded in stopping the mouse and in carrying it off. At this point the lorry passed the scene and the resulting disturbance caused the bird to drop the mouse. I was unable to see if the attack was resumed, though other occupants of the lorry declare it was. It would be interesting to know what would provoke a Blackbird to make such an attack. B. A. TOLLEY.

## WREN HABITUALLY ENTERING HOUSE.

A RATHER unusual habit of the Wren (*Troglodytes t. troglodytes*) is worthy of record. Very regularly from late October, 1944, until the end of January, 1945, a Wren has visited my brother's upstairs bedroom. He comes in through the same open window and moves about the room in perfect freedom, poking behind pictures and furniture, catching spiders, often remaining in the room for half-an-hour and taking no notice when the bed is occupied.

I have also observed on two other occasions when Wrens have entered the house they do not get flurried, but seem quite at home; perhaps the above incident is not really uncommon.

H. E. WHITAKER.

## SWALLOWS OF FIRST BROOD ASSISTING PARENTS TO BUILD SECOND NEST AND FEED SECOND BROOD.

REFERRING to the note on "Bird of first brood of Swallow assisting to feed second brood," (*antea*, Vol. xxxiv, p. 179), Mr. Ronald A. Waller, Chartered Accountant with the Lowestoft Water & Gas Company, has kindly given me the following information to-day, and I have verified the details as far as is now possible.

A pair of Swallows (*Hirundo r. rustica*) re-built a previous year's nest last spring on a horizontal water-pipe under a verandah of

his house at Lowestoft, and hatched three young. These young birds, with their parents, stayed about the house, and all five worked in building a second nest, a few feet from the first, but inside the porch and on the vertical wall facing the door, without any ledge, and close to the ceiling (House-Martin fashion), taking three weeks to complete it.

The sitting bird was fed by several others, believed to number four. Three eggs were hatched, and the second brood was fed by several birds, believed to number five, until able to fly. Two young left this nest, and four days after all seven birds departed.

Upon examination of the second nest to-day, I found one young bird fully fledged, dead inside it.

Mr. Waller was ill during part of the time, and from an adjoining window watched what was going on at the second nest.

EDWARD W. C. JENNER.

#### INTENSE MOLESTATION OF HOUSE-MARTINS BY SPARROWS.

FOR the last twenty years, on my farm near Callington, Cornwall, I have noted that breeding House-Martins (*Delichon u. urbica*) are subjected to severe molestation by House-Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*).

Besides dispossessing Martins of their nests—a persecution apparently common in most districts—I have observed the following further forms of serious molestation:—

1. The repeated tearing of large holes in newly built nests while the clay was still damp.
2. The removal of feathers from lined nests.
3. The ejection of eggs (seen on more than one occasion).
4. The ejection of newly hatched chicks, which are dropped to the ground. I have watched this on several occasions with strong glasses as well as with the naked eye and have picked up the chicks dead or dying.

Martins, formerly plentiful on my farm, have now almost disappeared, and I know the situation is the same on three other farms in my district.

L. RENDELL.

[There appears to be no previous published evidence of House-Sparrows actually throwing young Martins out of the nest, but House-Sparrows have been known to eject young Swallows (*Hirundo r. rustica*) (*antea*, Vol. xxix, p. 15).—EDS.]

#### TRAPPING GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKERS.

GREAT Spotted Woodpeckers (*Dryobates major anglicus*) were almost unknown in the grounds of Bootham School, which is very near the centre of the City of York, before the autumn of 1943, when we were surprised by finding one of these birds in a trap. This trap was a single Potter trap baited with bread and placed under some bushes and young trees. When we found the bird, it was lying flat on the floor of the trap and we were able to identify it

as an adult male. After being ringed he was regularly seen about the grounds for the rest of the year.

He was again seen in the grounds in 1944; and in the autumn we were surprised to see two of these birds chasing each other, but we failed to identify their sex. Some weeks later, on November 11th, we trapped an unringed female. We caught her again six days later—still baiting the trap with bread, but now placing it under a weeping ash on the grass. Several weeks elapsed before we caught the female again, and a week later the male, ringed in 1943, was caught. IAN PRESTT (for Bootham School Ornithology Society).

#### HONEY-BUZZARD IN SUSSEX.

ON October 4th, 1944, a large bird-of-prey, dark brown in colour with a grey breast and with a wing-span estimated at about 5 ft., settled on the wire fencing bounding the West Station at Bexhill and remained there or in the vicinity for about an hour. It was obviously very tired, for although the locality is reasonably quiet it is in close proximity to a main road and trains were coming and going within about 25 yards of the fence on which the bird was resting. It was also evidently very hungry, judging by the way in which it demolished a wasp's nest in the vicinity. This operation was witnessed by my son, who tells me that the bird "savaged" the nest rather like a terrier dealing with a rat. It completely devoured the nest and contents.

I first saw the bird about 15 minutes before it flew off and was able to approach within 10 yards before it showed any sign of alarm. On occasions it left its perch and flew round, only to collide with telegraph wires and return to the same spot on the fence. It was while I was away trying to find a photographer who lives near by that the bird flew off, and nobody seems to have noted the direction in which it travelled.

STANLEY W. COURTENAY.

[It is clear that the bird was a Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*). We are much indebted to Lieut. and Mrs. R. H. W. Mander for kindly putting us in touch with Mr. Courtenay in connexion with this interesting record, and we think that those who saw the bird are much to be commended that they did not rush for a gun in the all too common British fashion.—EDS.]

RUDDY SHELD-DUCKS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE.—Mr. J. F. Thomas sends us particulars of two Ruddy Sheld-Ducks (*Casarca ferruginea*) seen by him at Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, on December 26th, 1944. Unfortunately, as we have had occasion to remark before, such birds are nowadays bound to be under some suspicion of not being genuinely wild.

QUAIL IN THE SUMMER OF 1944.—We propose publishing a brief report on this subject (see *antea*, p. 100) in June. We should be very glad if any readers having records which they have not yet sent us, especially editors of county reports, would forward them without delay.

## LETTERS.

## UNUSUAL NESTS OF SWALLOW.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With reference to the note under the above heading (*antea*, p. 177), it may be of interest to record that nests of the Swallow without any ledge or other support below are by no means unusual in South Gloucestershire. Of 27 nests which remain, more or less intact, in my farm buildings, 16 are shallow structures resting on ledges or horizontal rafters, and 11 are comparatively deep structures, built against beams or other timbers (mostly toward the apex of triangular principals) and are without any support whatever.

The deeper type of nest with no support beneath is probably not uncommon in many districts. Coward (*Birds of the British Isles*, Ser. 1, p. 250) refers to it as approaching in shape the nest of the House-Martin. His statement that "These unsupported nests often fall, though I have known broods reared safely" is perhaps unduly pessimistic. Accidents of the kind do occur, but it will be found that in most instances the young are successfully brought off. Such nests may, in fact, stay put for three or four years, or longer, and are sometimes in use for more than one season.

H. H. DAVIS.

## THE MANX SHEARWATER ON LUNDY.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—With reference to the interesting paper by H. N. Southern and B. W. Tucker on "The Manx Shearwater on Lundy" (*antea*, pp. 122-129), it may be remembered that in 1939 I was puzzled by the fact that the few Puffins' eggs and fewer chicks I located all subsequently disappeared; that with negligible exceptions the carrying of fish to nestlings was restricted to an over-all period of only *eighteen* days; and that I did not observe *one* fledgling go down to the sea (and only *one* Razorbill fledgling from Puffin Slope).

It will be generally agreed that a few thousand Puffins repair annually to Lundy; ostensibly to breed; yet in 1939 it could have been argued that, as in the case of the Shearwaters, only a score or two of Puffins actually laid eggs and hatched out chicks. I suggest that this similarity in the status of the two species in 1939, and no doubt other years, is too significant to be discounted, and that the governing factor is likely to be the same. Bearing in mind the faunal history of Lundy, I suggest that this common factor may be the Brown Rat. (One recalls the unexplained cessation of the Gannet colony.)

In this respect I note that this latest enquiry into the status of Shearwaters on Lundy was conducted from July 2nd-10th—i.e. at a date when marauding rats would have cleared the bulk of eggs and potential chicks, and when consequently few adult Shearwaters would still be landing; whereas when my wife and I, and the late Alan Richardson, spent several nights on Puffin Slope (which is illuminated by the rays of the lighthouse lantern) in May and June, Shearwaters were shooting into burrows all over the Slope, and were in such numbers that we found it impossible to count them, but estimated there to be several scores over the Slope. Not, however, being engaged in a detailed study of Shearwaters, we made no attempt to mark any of the burrows we saw entered, nor did I make any entry of the precise number that bore signs of occupation in daylight, and no excavating was attempted.

Should another enquiry be thought worth while, I suggest that this should take place at the commencement of the laying-season, when results should give a fair idea of the number of Shearwaters actually laying eggs.

RICHARD PERRY.

[We agree that the influence of rats as a possible factor in the Shearwater situation on Lundy cannot be entirely excluded and we expressly alluded to it on p. 128. Nevertheless we do not think on the whole that Mr. Perry's suggestion is very likely: for one thing it does not take account of the fact that a similar situation seems to exist on Great Saltee Island, where we are not aware that rats are prevalent. As regards the question of numbers, we may observe that Mr. Perry's estimate of "several scores" of birds on Puffin Slope is not at all a large number as Shearwater colonies go, or as compared with his own original estimate, and is not seriously at variance with our own conclusions.—H.N.S., B.W.T.]

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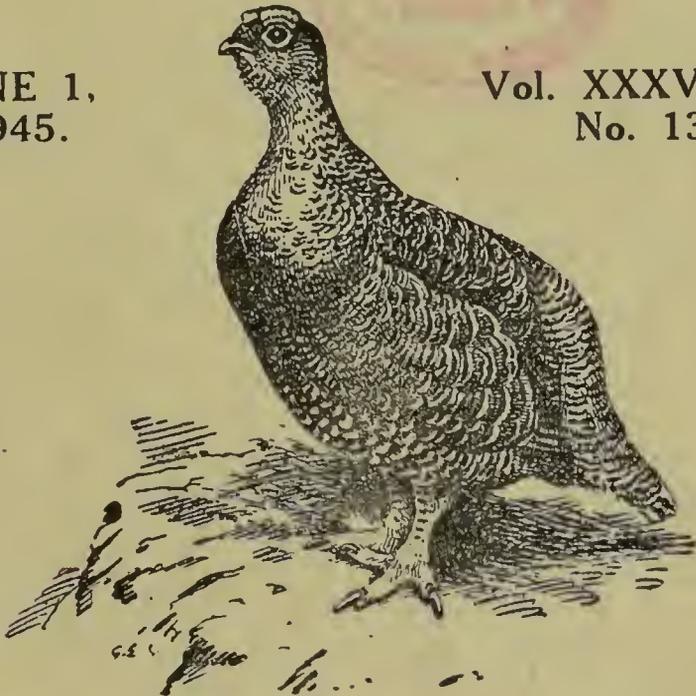
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# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

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FÆROE SNIPE (*Capella g. færoensis*).

There are now thirteen records of this sub-species, and with the exception of two from the west coast of Scotland, all are from Ireland.

## RINGED ABROAD IN BREEDING-SEASON.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Sk.</i>	T2481	Myvatn, Iceland	8.7.32	Rathmullan. Donegal 21.1.40

WOODCOCK (*Scolopax r. rusticola*).

The occurrence of a Woodcock ringed in Czecho-Slovakia opens up a new field from which our winter visitors may originate, all previous immigrants from breeding-places having come from Sweden except one from Leningrad, and one from Latvia.

## RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Pe.</i>	C2321	Eastern Bohemia	16.5.38	Winchester, Hants 26.10.43

## RINGED ABROAD AS MIGRANT.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>H.</i>	5600248	Heligoland	22.10.39	Appleby, Westmor. 2.12.39

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias n. niger*).

## RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

		<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>L.</i>	D7825	Zuid Holland	5.7.36	Tring, Herts 6.6.38

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*).

This first occurrence of a ringed specimen of a very rare vagrant has already been commented upon by H. F. Witherby in a note in Vol. xxxiv, p. 184. There are about thirty records of the Caspian Tern for Great Britain, but whether the birds came from west or east it is impossible to say, for although the American race has been separated, the sub-species is not generally held to be a good one.

## RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

<i>U.S.A.</i>	566280	Lake Michigan	14.7.27	Whitby, Yorks —.8.39
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BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus r. ridibundus*).

The number of recoveries of foreign Black-headed Gulls has been increased by one hundred since the last instalment of the previous series of articles. Ninety-five were ringed as young, and five as adult. In the case of this species and of the Common Gull it is not necessary to set out all records in detail as the existing position is not appreciably affected. The distribution is still very similar, for out of the hundred birds ringed abroad, sixty-six were recovered in the eastern counties, against twenty-one in the western, and six in the Midlands, while Scotland reported two, Ireland had two, and Wales had three. The dates of recovery were in the months of

August to April with the exception of the five given below which are rather less usual.

Helsingfors, Finland	30.5.39	Cheshire	26.6.40
Ditto	30.5.39	Suffolk	21.7.40
Sjaelland, Denmark	27.6.40	Gloucester	9.7.41
Slesvig, Denmark	7.7.41	Suffolk	29.7.43
Zeeland, Holland	29.6.37	Waterford	23.6.38

COMMON GULL (*Larus c. canus*).

Since the last report, thirty-six records of Common Gulls ringed in other countries have been received. Following the precedent of the last instalment of the previous series of articles, details are not given in full, since the recoveries do not, in the main, make any alteration to the conclusions already arrived at. The countries of origin are the same, except in the case of the two gulls from Russia, and being of special interest they are set out below in full. With regard to the distribution in the British Isles, new additions bring the total number for Scotland up to six, for Ireland up to three, and for Wales up to six. These figures show a very slight penetration westward compared with the eastern side of the country, where twenty-five birds occurred out of the total of thirty-six new records, twenty-three south of the Wash and two north of the Wash.

The dates on which the recoveries were made were from November to March except for four which occurred in summer, and are here given in detail as they are interesting.

<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>	
Mecklenburg, Germany	17.6.37	Flint	24.7.38
Stavanger, Norway	8.7.38	Cumberland	4.6.41
Scania, Sweden	11.6.39	Suffolk	19.8.40
Jylland, Denmark	17.6.41	Notts	16.5.42

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>	
M. E88112	Murmansk Area	19.7.41	Walkerburn, Peebles —.1.42
M. E86598	Leningrad Dist.	1940 or '41	Thameshaven, Essex 1.3.43

HERRING-GULL (*Larus a. argentatus*).

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>	
Stav. 41119	West Norway	8.7.38	Stockton, Durham 28.8.39
C. M11643	Alsen, Denmark	2.7.41	Hollesley Bay, Suffolk 12.5.42

SCANDINAVIAN HERRING-GULL (*Larus a. omissus*).

The following records afford proof that the Scandinavian Herring-Gull must be a more usual visitor to this country than was supposed, and are especially valuable when it is noticed that all four birds were in their first year, when they could not have been identified with any certainty, had it not been for their rings.

RINGED AS YOUNG.

<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>	
M. B11524	Murmansk Area, Russia	1.8.40	Strathleven, Dumbarton —.5.41
M. D80784	Ditto	18.7.41	Yarrow, Selkirk —.3.42
M. D69266	Ditto	19.7.39	Leeds, Yorks. 16.2.40
M. C33728	Ditto	18.7.41	Saltfleet, Lincs '26.2.42

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus f. graellsii*).

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Brit. Mus. AD</i>	2171	Færoes		25.8.42	Carmarthen Bay 17.9.42

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

This species does not breed in the Gironde area, so the supposition is that the one from France was originally a native of Orkney, where it was subsequently found in summer, and that at the time it was ringed it was a wandering immature or non-breeding bird.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Hs.</i>	D9008	S.W. Finland		16.7.39	Yarmouth, Norfolk 10.2.41
<i>Stav.</i>	31138	West Norway		6.6.39	Hawick, Roxburgh 1.1.40

RINGED ABROAD AS FULL-GROWN.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>P.</i>	C384	Gironde, France		10.7.31	Kirkwall, Orkney 6.8.34

KITTIWAKE (*Rissa t. tridactyla*).

These are the first records of Kittiwakes ringed abroad in the breeding-place.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>M.</i>	E62497	Murmansk Area, Russia		29.7.39	Port Seton, E. Lothian 2.2.40
<i>M.</i>	E88314	Ditto		23.7.41	St. Abb's Hd., Berwick 26.12.41
<i>M.</i>	E73116	Ditto		28.7.40	Waskerley, Durham —.4.41

GREAT SKUA (*Stercorarius s. skua*).

No other recovery of a Great Skua from its native place abroad has so far been reported.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

<i>Rk.</i>	3.2065	S.E. Iceland		2.8.42	Tallisker, Skye —.1.43

ARCTIC SKUA (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).

This also, like that of the preceding species, is the first record of its kind.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

			<i>Ringed.</i>		<i>Recovered.</i>
<i>Brit. Mus.</i>	323936	Færoes		31.7.42	Waddington, Lincs —.9.42

MOORHEN (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*).

We have now three records of Moorhens migrating to Great Britain from Belgium and Holland, and in each case the birds' penetration has been deep, the recoveries having been made in Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, and the New Forest.

RINGED ABROAD AS YOUNG.

<i>B.</i>	D3942	Antwerp, Belgium		12.5.37	Quedgeley, Glos. 10.3.38

## REPORT OF THE BLACK REDSTART INQUIRY FOR 1944\*

BY

R. S. R. FITTER.

(Plate 6).

THE aim of the Black Redstart Inquiry, which was formally launched in 1944 as a continuation of a private investigation by the late H. F. Witherby and the author, is to trace the increase of the Black Redstart (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*) as a British breeding species. It is intended to trace also the increase of the species as a passage migrant and winter visitor since the first British record in 1829, which has led up to its establishment as a scarce summer resident in south-east England. In addition, it is hoped to analyse all data on breeding biology for the first hundred British nests for which information is available. For that reason I appeal to all ornithologists not only for current information on the distribution of Black Redstarts in the breeding season, but to send me as much information as possible on the breeding biology of pairs which do nest, as well as details of all unpublished records of the occurrence of Black Redstarts in the British Isles at other times of the year.

The current Report is therefore an interim one dealing only with the distribution of breeding pairs and non-breeding birds in England in the summer of 1944. Owing to the great events that began in southern England in 1944, there is less information about Black Redstarts than in 1943, so that it is not possible to tell whether the decrease in pairs reported to have bred is real or apparent. The following table shows the comparative figures for 1942, 1943 and 1944.

Year	No. of pairs recorded breeding.	No. of counties where pairs bred.	No. of non-breeding males.	No. of counties where non- breeding males present.	Total counties where birds present.
1942	6	5	Over 40	7	9
1943	11	5	29	6	10
1944	9	5	11	2	5

The figures relating to counties are different from some of those published before because the County of London has been split up into its constituent parts to conform with the Watsonian system.

The counties in which the breeding of Black Redstarts was proved in 1944, were Kent (Ramsgate), Middlesex (City of London, Stepney, Wembley), Suffolk (Aldeburgh, Lowestoft), Surrey (Croydon) and Sussex (St. Leonards). Reports of non-breeding birds were much fewer than in 1943, both in London and elsewhere. It is particularly notable that for the first time since 1936 no Black Redstarts were seen in Cambridge.

\*Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

I am much indebted to the 47 observers whose records are included in the following summary, and shall be grateful for their continued co-operation in 1945.

CORNWALL.

No information for 1944.

DEVON.

*Burlescombe* : a visit was paid to the locality where a pair nested in 1942, but no birds were seen (A. Darlington).

HAMPSHIRE.

No information for 1944.

SUSSEX.

*Eastbourne* : none seen or heard on repeated visits during the breeding season (D. Lack).

*Hastings* : one singing from May to mid-July (D. Lack).

*St. Leonards-on-Sea* : one singing from June 2nd to about June 16th ; a family party, two adults and three young, was seen from September 16th to the end of the month (H. G. Attlee, P. A. Emmerson, N. F. Ticehurst, A. A. Wright).

KENT.

*Dover* : no information for 1944.

*Medway area* : no information for 1944.

*Ramsgate* : one pair brought off two broods ; two other singing males present ; local information suggests possible presence of Black Redstarts in the town in 1943 (M. N. Rankin, P. L. Wayre).

SURREY.

*Croydon* : a pair were feeding young just out of the nest among ruined buildings near Croydon Aerodrome on July 10th (D. C. H. McLean).

LONDON (Administrative County).

Information has been supplied by the following observers :—  
K. C. Abercrombie, Miss H. Barlow, C. S. Bayne, A. J. Beamish, H. Bentham, T. Bispham, Dr. L. Cooke, Miss M. Curtis, A. Darlington, A. S. Diamond, Miss K. Douglas Smith, R. S. R. Fitter, A. Gill, H. G. Gould, R. W. Hale, F. J. Holroyde, O. Hook, E. J. Hosking, Dr. G. C. Low, E. G. Pedler, W. R. Philipson, Capt. R. C. L. Pilkington, W. S. Pitt, B. H. Potter, Lady Pratt, Mrs. J. B. Priestley, B. A. Richards, A. L. N. Russell, W. J. L. Sladen, A. V. Tucker, Prof. E. H. Warmington.

*City of London* : two pairs proved to have nested, one in the Guildhall-Cripplegate area and the other in the Temple ; at least five other singing males were present, of which two were in the Guildhall-Cripplegate area, two in the Fetter Lane area, and one in the area round St. Paul's Cathedral.

*Westminster* : the only report was of a pair, evidently on passage, in the garden on Carlton House Terrace on March 23rd (C. S. Bayne).

*Holborn* : one singing male in the area between Bedford Row and Red Lion Square, June 28th-August 16th (F. J. Holroyde).



UPPER: Hen Black Redstart, Ramsgate, 1944.  
(*Photographed by Lt. P. L. Wayre.*)

LOWER: Hen Black Redstart with food for young, Lowestoft, 1944.  
(*Photographed by Capt. G. K. Yeates.*) (*Copyright reserved.*)



*Stepney*: one pair nested near the John Knox Church, Stepney Way (A. Darlington).

*Poplar*: one singing on Cahir Street School, Millwall, on June 16th was not observed on subsequent visits (A. Darlington).

#### MIDDLESEX.

*Edmonton*: a male with a slight wing-patch was singing in a timber yard on the east side of the Lea Navigation near Angel Road, N.18, on June 11th; on June 18th, there was no sign of this bird; on October 29th an immature or female bird, and on December 3rd and 10th, a rather darker bird than the October one, were seen in the same place (L. J. Dosseter).

*Wembley*: one pair reared one brood from a nest on the same ledge that was used by three pairs from 1926 to 1941 (Calvert *et al.*, 1944; in August the site was destroyed by a flying bomb (G. W. Calvert). One was singing from the flagstaff on the Empire Pool, May 28th (R. W. Hale).

#### SUFFOLK.

*Aldeburgh*: one pair nested in a bombed building on the sea-front (D. Lack).

*Lowestoft*: one pair reared two, possibly three, broods (L. C. Cook, E. W. C. Jenner).

#### CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

*Cambridge*: none were seen during the breeding season (P. S. Burns, A. Darlington). According to the Cambridge Bird Club's *Report* for 1943, pp. 10-11, at least four unmated singing males were present in the town in 1943, not three, as stated in Fitter (1944).

#### WARWICKSHIRE.

*Birmingham*: H. G. Alexander informs me that no Black Redstarts have been reported to members of the Birmingham Bird Club in 1944.

#### REFERENCES.

CALVERT, G. W. *et al* (1944). Black Redstarts Breeding in Middlesex since 1926. *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 189-90.

FITTER, R. S. R. (1944). Black Redstarts in England in the Summer of 1943. *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 191-95.

WITHERBY, H. F. AND FITTER, R. S. R. (1942). Black Redstarts in England in the Summer of 1942. *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 132-39.

## REPORT ON QUAIL IN THE BRITISH ISLES IN THE SUMMER OF 1944

COMPILED BY

B. W. TUCKER.

IN the autumn of 1944 we stated (*antea*, p. 100), that information reaching us from widely separated localities suggested that Quail (*Coturnix c. coturnix*) had been commoner during the past season than for some years past and invited readers to send in records. The reports received confirm that in some areas Quail were more in evidence than usual or were present in places where they had not been noted for some years previously, and in several the numbers heard were quite noteworthy. Nevertheless this appears to have been by no means general and the prevalence of the species seems to have been hardly so marked or widespread as to constitute 1944 what might be called a Quail year. For example on Fair Isle, where no less than eight or nine pairs probably nested in 1943, not one was met with in 1944. In fact no records at all have reached us from Scotland.

The records received are set out below. So far as is possible some indication of the status of the species in the areas concerned during the last ten years is given; when such information is given after the names of the authorities for the 1944 data it is derived from the county reports.

DEVON.—One calling in young corn in Aylesbeare parish, East Devon, June 23rd (E. H. Ware). Bred, Braunton, 1934; one record (N. E. Devon), 1935; two (N. and E. Devon respectively), 1943.

SOMERSET.—One heard in wheat at Hutton on July 16th and 19th; same bird also heard regularly by a neighbouring market gardener from July 11th regularly till about the end of the month (A. E. Billett). One heard at Kingsbury Episcopi in June (J. H. Symes). There are single records for the county for each of the years 1934, 1941 (winter) and 1942 and several for 1938.

WILTSHIRE.—One calling half-a-mile west of Amesbury—Salisbury road about three quarters of a mile north of High Post aerodrome, June 15th; one heard one mile north of Collingbourne Kingston, June 23rd (E. Cohen). On a large farm near Aldbourne where Quail nest regularly (usually two or three pairs), the owner reports that an unusual number arrived in the spring of 1944, but most of them did not appear to breed successfully. He thinks that some four pairs hatched off and states that there were many birds about at harvest time, but mostly adults. He killed about five during Partridge shooting, but these also were adults (G. Brown).

SUSSEX.—A nest with seven eggs was mown out on Pevensy Marsh on June 29th; earlier in the season Mr. Philip Rickman reported hearing a Quail calling near Wilmington (E. C. Arnold). Two flushed near Bognor Regis on November 1st (S. J. Teideman). A scarce but tolerably regular visitor to the county, definitely recorded in 1934, 1940, 1942 and 1943.

HERTFORDSHIRE.—Though the species appears to have shown some slight increase in numbers within the past few years, being noted nearly every year in the north of the county and at Tring, no evidence was found of its being commoner in 1944. Dr. A. H. Foster reports that he has no records for 1944 against three for 1943. Mr. A. H. Course heard one near Royston on April 28th, but it had apparently gone by May 1st. On June 1st he heard one on the Hertfordshire-Cambridgeshire boundary (H. H. S. Hayward).

OXFORDSHIRE.—Varying numbers, from one to several birds, have been recorded in most recent years (none in 1935, 1936 or 1943), but, especially when allowance is made for reduced facilities for getting about in war-time, there seems little doubt that the species was more widespread and frequent in the county than usual. The following are recorded: One calling at Headington, Oxford, for about a week prior to May 31st, but not subsequently (H. J. V. R. Allin). Four calling near Witney between June 5th and 10th and Hampton Poyle, June 22nd (H. N. Southern). Two calling in two different localities near Benson, May 30th and July 11th respectively and two in different localities near Ewelme in June and July (J. Armitage). One near Nuneham Courtenay, June 17th (B. W. Tucker). One, or probably two, calling near Beacon Hill, Chilterns, June 25th (J. Armitage and B. W. Tucker).

BERKSHIRE.—One calling  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-west of Chieveley, June 1st (E. Cohen). Has been recorded in the county in most recent years, chiefly on the Berkshire Downs, where in 1940 Quail were heard in five localities, but the Downs were much less worked by ornithologists in 1944.

NORFOLK.—One flushed at Baisham at the beginning of August by Mr. E. C. Keith. Has been known to breed in north and north-west Norfolk for some years (*Wild Bird Protection in Norfolk*, 1944).

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.—Several reported heard just over the Cambridgeshire boundary east of Royston by Mr. C. Jobling on July 8th (H. H. S. Hayward). See also under Herts. There have been one or two records in most recent years.

BEDFORDSHIRE.—One heard by the recorder in clover at Burdelys Manor Farm, near Stagsden on July 8th and flushed on July 9th by Mr. D. W. Elliott. It was seen again on July 25th and August 8th. When the crop was cut search was made as far as possible for a nest or traces of one, but without result. Small numbers have been reported in the Bedford district at intervals of several years (H. A. S. Key) and a bevy of about ten in 1942 (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 76).

HUNTINGDONSHIRE.—A nest was found about July 31st in the parish of Wyton, in a field of clover and barley which was being cut for silage. The nest was thought to be deserted and one egg was taken (which I have examined—B.W.T.), but when the nest was subsequently visited again the bird flew off (C. F. Tebbutt).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.—Birds were heard calling by the recorder or reliable observers all round the village of Dyrham (8 miles north of Bath) within a three mile radius on the following dates: May 26th, 28th, June 4th, 17th, 22nd, 24th, and July 18th (Rev. F. L. Blathwayt). Bred in a thin oat crop in the parish of Stoke Gifford, South Gos. Calling was not heard until August 14th, a very late date. On the 16th the recorder flushed the calling bird and close by came on the presumed female with five or six half-fledged young. Calling was heard until the 18th, but not later. Species has only been met with in this neighbourhood once before (bird heard and seen) in June, 1942 (H. H. Davis). One calling near Minchinhampton, July 9th, about half a mile from site where a nest from which young had hatched was examined on October 19th, 1940 (H. C. Playne). Pair bred in Moreton Valence district, where breeding also took place in 1943 (*cf.* p. 257) (M. L. Ridgway).

HEREFORDSHIRE.—Bred at Luston, near Leominster, where an egg was found by a farm labourer and brought to the late Mr. O. R. Owen for identification; it was also subsequently examined by the recorder. A dead Quail was picked up by Mr. Owen close to the 1944 nesting-site in 1942 (A. W. Bolt).

LINCOLNSHIRE.—Two heard calling during the summer, and one of these flushed, at Leadenham. A few are noted in most summers (J. S. Reeve).

LEICESTERSHIRE.—One heard calling at Rothley from July 8th to mid-August and pair seen, but breeding not proved. Only recent records one in 1942 and covey in adjacent county of Rutland, September, 1940 (*Leicestershire and Rutland Report*, 1944).

CHESHIRE.—Heard calling near Kelsall, on the south side of Delamere Forest, in a cornfield on June 26th and 27th by Mr. E. L. Roberts (A. W. Boyd). Two were recorded near Nantwich in 1938 (*antea*, Vol. xxxii, p. 123), one at Shadow Moss, near Wythenshawe, in 1939 and two at Burton, Wirral in 1942 (Lancs. & Cheshire Fauna Committee: *Report for 1939-42*). Also at Antrobus, near Northwich in May, 1943 (A.W.B.).

YORKSHIRE.—At least seven individuals heard calling—six concentrated in a quite limited area—near Burton Fleming, East Riding (H. J. R. Pease). Breeding also recorded at Aldborough, East Riding and on tableland above Ashbury-head, and calling birds heard at Lockton, May 28th, near Thornton Dale, June 13th and 14th, and above Forge Valley, June 26th and July 7th, all in the North Riding (*Naturalist*, 1945, p. 70). There were a number of records in 1943, including definite breeding, and the species has been reported in most recent years.

#### IRELAND.

The following records have been kindly supplied by Mr. G. R. Humphreys or are quoted from the *Irish Naturalists' Journal*.

Co. WEXFORD.—Reported from three localities (C. B. Moffat *per* G. F. Mitchell, *Irish Nat. Journ.*, viii, p. 222).

Co. CARLOW.—A pair bred on the Glebe Land at Urglin, three miles outside Carlow town. The pair were first seen in April in a field of young corn. They were put up several times, always near same spot, by Canon J. C. Nelson's setter. When the corn was cut in September and carried, the pair with five young were seen on the stubble. Later in that month Archdeacon S. Ridgeway, who was anxious to see the Quail, went over the ground with the setter and put up the two old birds twice, but failed to locate the young, though none of them had been shot (There is an Irish Government Order against shooting of Quail for the time being). Canon Nelson states that the last he saw of the Quail was about the middle of October in twos or threes, and once a single bird.

Also one heard near Tullow on July 2nd and one near Myshall, July 5th (Mitchell, *l.c.*).

Co. DUBLIN.—One heard calling at Corduff in north Co. Dublin, at about 7.0 p.m. on June 7th, by Mr. A. T. Maxwell on his land.

One heard near Firhouse, June 25th; one near Old Bawn, June 29th and subsequently and bird seen on July 14th (Mitchell, *l.c.*).

Co. MEATH.—One heard near Rosnar, July 20th (Mitchell, *l.c.*).

Co. LOUTH.—Two heard calling early in June near Baltray (Compare Father Kennedy's note in *Irish Nat. Journ.*, viii, p. 222 of Quail calling in July near Termonfeckin, which is the same locality).

Co. DOWN.—At least three heard near Monlough between May 23rd and 31st by H. G. M'Williams (J. A. S. Stendall, *Irish Nat. Journ.*, viii, p. 222).

## NOTES.

## BULLFINCH AND OTHER BIRDS HOVERING WHEN FEEDING.

With reference to the recent notes on Bullfinches hovering when feeding (*antea*, pp. 94, 154) the following note may be of interest.

While out with B. Brewer at 6.30 p.m. on July 12th, 1942, I watched two Bullfinches (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*), a male and a female, hovering alternately in front of a sprig of birch about 7 ft. 6 inches above the ground for two or three minutes, each time making a few pecks either at the newly-formed catkins or at some small insects on the sprig. Between each hover they perched on another thin sprig.

D. J. MAY.

With reference to the previous notes under this heading, I have on at least two or three occasions seen Bullfinches (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*) hovering, the most outstanding being when a male bird at Newton Hall, Stockfield, repeatedly flew from the ground and hovered while taking seeds from some dock plants. Another occurrence of a male Bullfinch hovering was described by a correspondent in *The Times* of August 29th, 1944, this time honeysuckle berries being the food. It seems that this method of feeding is somewhat characteristic of the species.

I have also seen a Robin (*Erithacus rubecula melophilus*) and a hen Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) take berries on the wing. On December 23rd, 1943, the Robin flew towards a holly bush on which there were only odd berries left. It tried to take one, but failed, and returned for a second attempt, which was successful. A few days previous to this the Blackbird was feeding just after dawn on *Berberis*. She found difficulty in perching within reach of the berries she wanted, so gave up the attempt and twice flew and took berries from the ends of branches. I should add that there were plenty of berries in places accessible from perches.

H. TULLY.

On March 16th, 1945, I watched two Bullfinches (*Pyrrhula p. nesa*) hovering in my garden at Englefield Green, Surrey. The first bird I noticed was a female and she hovered several times for short intervals in front of a small bramble bush. Soon a male flew down and he hovered as well; in fact he not only did this, but moved from side to side, covering about four feet, while hovering.

A. MANNING.

[We now have seven independent records of this behaviour on the part of Bullfinches, evidently showing that the habit is not uncommon in this species, though apparently not previously recorded.—EDS.]

FEEDING HABITS OF A  
GREAT GREY SHRIKE IN YORKSHIRE.

A GREAT Grey Shrike (*Lanius e. excubitor*) was in the close vicinity of my house at Goathland, Yorkshire, from February 20th till March 14th, 1945.

He spent most of his time sitting on the tops of thorn bushes and other higher trees, even in very strong winds, watching the ground below to pounce on beetles and insects; he frequently hovered for 15 secs. or so, almost as easily as a Kestrel, but with rather more wing movement. Many of his favourite bushes were strewn underneath with beetle cases and wings; only one good pellet like a hawk's was found. He ejected the beetle cases and bits, in fragments, ten to fifteen at a time by bending his head right down and shaking them out. He occasionally went out, flying low, over the open moor and perched on rocks.

I never heard him utter any note. He was seen by Mr. Henry Ward, of Goathland, to chase a Blue Tit, like a sparrow chasing a moth, for one hundred yards, through a hay shed, and eventually to the bottom of a dry stone wall, where both birds were out of sight. On going to this spot a quarter of an hour later I found the Blue Tit, beheaded and spiked through the upper part of its body, about 4 feet from the ground in a thorn bush; the body was quite warm and the Blue Tit's mate came and hopped all round the body within a few inches of it; during the chase the shriek could be heard snapping its beak. The spiked Blue Tit had been removed two days after I saw it.

W. S. MEDLICOTT.

[Mr. Medlicott has sent us a tinful of the castings, which consist almost exclusively of remains of the large beetle *Ceratophyus typhæus*.—EDS.]

#### WAXWINGS IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

ON February 22nd, 1945, while walking near pines in Hare Lane, near Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, I was attracted by the trill of a bird. After a few minutes observation I saw five birds and was able to approach within eight feet of one. I identified them as Waxwings (*Bombycilla g. garrulus*) by their brown plumage, yellow on end of tails, crests, white and yellow on wings and black throats.

T. W. ARNOLD.

#### FIRECREST IN BERKSHIRE.

ON November 26th, 1944, I saw a Firecrest (*Regulus i. ignicapillus*) in Ruskin Wood, at Cothill, near Abingdon, Berks. It was in dead bracken and elder bushes on the floor of an open part of the wood, where several elms were growing. Although very active it kept in cover quite a lot and seemed less indifferent to observation than the Goldcrest. The light was rather poor and I had no field-glasses. The crest was not clearly seen, but the white superciliary stripe and the black stripe through the eye were seen plainly and I noticed that the upper parts were greener than those of a Goldcrest (I had just seen several of these). The note, heard twice, was lower pitched than the Goldcrest's and given singly. I was about seven yards from the bird most of the time, but twice I approached much nearer. All the above observations were noted in the field.

I. N. KIMBREY.

## YELLOW-BROWED WARBLERS IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

ON September 9th, 1944, I identified, and had under observation for some time, two Yellow-browed Warblers (*Phylloscopus inornatus*) on Holy Island, Northumberland. The light was very good and at times the birds were from ten to fifteen feet from me, searching for food, and their movements were very similar to those of the Goldcrest. With a good glass the pale superciliary stripe and the double wing-bars were very noticeable. The flight when they left the two sycamore trees on which they were observed was also like that of a *Regulus*. They were silent: I did not hear any call.

STEPHEN E. COOK.

## GARDEN-WARBLER IN MIDDLESEX IN FEBRUARY.

ON the spring-like morning of February 27th, 1945, when I left my house in Hampstead Garden Suburb, a district with many large gardens, little woods and open spaces, I noticed among the songs of the usual birds a rather subdued, fast, sweet warble. It was exactly like the sub-song I used to hear in February and March from a tame Blackcap which I kept for nine years, before it started its full song in April. I soon found the singer on a bush in a neighbour's garden. It looked exactly like a Garden-Warbler (*Sylvia borin*), having no black (or brown) cap, the back darkish brown with an olive tinge, breast and throat very light brown, almost buff-coloured, and the whole appearance more stumpy than a Blackcap. I did not hear it again during the following days, as I had to leave my house early and returned only after sunset. But on March 10th while working on my allotment behind the house at the side of a little oak wood I heard it again. Most of the time it sang only the same sub-song, but twice it burst into full song. It was the typical song of the Garden-Warbler, a very sweet, very sustained warble interspersed now and then with a few scratchy notes. As a high hedge separated me from the wood I could not see the bird, but as I know the song of the Garden-Warbler very well, I was left in no doubt as to the identify of the bird. Whether it was an exceptionally early arrival or whether it had wintered in this country is hardly possible to decide. The date rather suggests the latter alternative.

G. WARBURG.

[The earliest reliable record known to us is of a bird seen on March 20th, 1927, in Oxfordshire. There appears to be no authentic case of wintering on record. The date in the present case certainly suggests this, but on the other hand it may be doubted whether the bird would have survived the severe weather in January.—EDS.]

## ICELAND REDWING IN LINCOLNSHIRE.

I HAVE previously recorded this form of Redwing, *Turdus musicus coburni*, from Kent (*Ibis*, 1934, p. 395), Lincolnshire (*antea*, Vol. xxxvi, p. 222) and Sussex (S.E.B.R. 1940, p. 21). I am now able to place on record a further example from Lincolnshire—a male, obtained at Northcotes on January 17th, 1945. The bird has a

wing measurement of 123 mm., and is a particularly dark individual showing much heavy streaking and suffusion of the pectoral region.

JAMES M. HARRISON.

#### RING-OUZELS IN BERKSHIRE.

ON February 21st, 1945, I was fortunate enough to see three Ring-Ouzels (*Turdus t. torquatus*) near Eversley, Berks. I watched them for about ten minutes flying about in a field studded with little hawthorn trees. They were rather shy, but I eventually got near them. There seemed to be a male and two females; both of the latter had their white gorgets well tinged with brown and the male showed a similar tinge to a much less extent. The wings of all three when closed were characteristically lighter than the rest of the body. They called freely and I heard the loud "tac-tac-tac" note about half a dozen times.

R. C. R. ALLEN.

#### THE SONG-PERIOD OF THE BLACKBIRD.

MY own experience confirms that of other observers that the song period of Blackbirds (*Turdus m. merula*) is longer in towns, and especially London, than in country districts (*antea*, pp. 116, 194, 216). Where I have been living in Kirkcudbrightshire during the war, a few miles from Newton Stewart, it is, on the contrary, remarkably short. Some years I have not heard the first song until the end of April and singing has ceased by the end of June. It is most unusual to hear a Blackbird in song even at the very end of February, although there are large numbers about.

BEDFORD.

[Comparative data on song-periods in the northern parts of the British Isles as compared with the south and Midlands are still very scanty and the subject would repay systematic study.—EDS.]

#### HERON FISHING IN FLIGHT.

IN connexion with Mr. R. M. Walker's note (*antea*, Vol. xxxvi, p. 246) I record the following incident. On May 17th, 1941, when walking beside one of the Cutmill Ponds (Surrey) I disturbed a Common Heron (*Ardea c. cinerea*). It rose and flew over the water towards and to one side of me. I happened to look away as it came level, but was attracted by a splash, and turned to see the Heron just above the water. After flying about twenty yards it dropped from a height of twenty-five feet and, without appreciably submerging any part of the body except the bill, caught a small fish of five or six inches length crosswise. With a pair of binoculars I noted it turn the fish lengthwise while still in flight and swallow it just before coming to ground a hundred yards off.

P. I. R. MACLAREN.

#### ICELAND REDSHANK IN NORFOLK.

FOR some time now I have taken every opportunity of investigating the Redshank populations of the British Isles and have recorded (*antea*, Vol. xxviii, p. 27, Vol. xxxvi, pp. 223, 224, Vol. xxxvii, p. 19) the presence of *Tringa totanus robusta* from various districts. It is

in supplement to these records that the following is noted, viz. : a female obtained at North Wootton, on January 6th, 1945. This bird had a wing measurement (fresh) of 172.5 mm. Previous records for Norfolk (Rivière, *A History of the Birds of Norfolk*, p. 13) mention the following :—a male, wing 172 mm., from Cley, December, 1913; an unsexed specimen from Cley, September 2nd, 1892, with a wing of 165 mm; a further male also from Cley on August 3rd, 1896, with a wing of 169 mm. and again a male, in Rivière's collection, from Cley, September 7th, 1914, with a wing of 163 mm.

In a recent study of breeding Redshank (*Ibis*, 1945, Vol. 86, pp. 493-503) I have shown that the measurements for English and Welsh birds reach 166 mm., and that the average wing length for these birds is 154.4 mm., while Scottish, including Fair Isle and the Orkneys average even higher—158.3 mm. Icelandic breeders, however, give an average of 167 mm. From these observations it is quite apparent that winter birds of up to at any rate 166 mm. can no longer be accepted as undoubted *robusta*, particularly as there is an overlap in wing measurements, Icelandic, 164-172.5 mm., and some of the longer-winged birds represent intermediates.

JAMES M. HARRISON.

#### DOTTERELS IN SOUTH LANCASHIRE.

As the Dotterel (*Eudromias morinellus*) is not now a regular migrant in South Lancashire, it may be of interest to record that I watched a party of fifteen in the grain fields near Southport on April 24th, 1944. I was informed by the head-keeper that the birds arrived on April 15th. In view of the Dotterels' absence from this one-time favourite halting-place since April 29th, 1935 (four birds) the size of the 1944 company is noteworthy. There can be no doubt that the very high percentage of birds shot out of the migratory parties during the period 1901-1912 contributed to the decline in later years. Personal notes give the mean date of arrival in South Lancashire as May 3rd—the earliest April 15th and the latest May 18th. Dotterels have lingered until the fourth week in May.

The late Henry Cookson was of the opinion that the height of the grain crops governed the length of the Dotterel's stay on his beat. I have known the birds to cling for days to a grub-eaten portion of oats. Although the coast is only a few miles from the Dotterels' haunt I have not observed them on the beach or saltings. They spend the night on their feeding grounds. F. W. HOLDER.

#### OBSERVATIONS ON QUAILS IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND THEIR CALLS.

IN 1943 Quail (*Coturnix c. coturnix*) bred at Oakey, Moreton Valence, Gloucestershire, and considerable attention was devoted to the birds by M. L. Ridgway and the writer. On June 30th the well-known "wheet, wheet-wheet" call was heard for the first time. On July 2nd, during a three hour watch from 8.30 p.m. to 11.30 p.m., three distinct types of call were heard : (1) the typical "wheet,

wheet-wheet ” ; (2) “ braw-wow,” which reminded us of a tom cat and was recorded on a later occasion as a subdued, hoarse, vibrating call, which had the semblance of the twanging of a taut stout wire, with a slight similarity to the call of a Guinea-Fowl ; (3) “ pap, ata, pap-pap-pap-pap-pap,” not unlike a quiet call of a Red Grouse and apparently an alarm-note.

The “ braw-wow ” note was heard again at 4.30 p.m. on July 3rd, after an hour's watching. The notes continued at intervals of from one to three minutes, the bird all the while travelling through the corn, a distance of approximately 40 yards. It became silent again at 4.55 and did not start up again till 10.35 p.m.; subsequently it was put up.

Observation was continued on several subsequent evenings. At 10.25 p.m. on July 7th, a Quail was heard calling a faint “ brr-up, brr-up, brr-up,” very much softer than had ever been heard previously. The call, however, proved to be coming from rather farther away than I at first appreciated. Walking round the field, I found that the sound was coming from a patch very much deeper in the corn than on previous occasions and it was now similar to the accustomed “ braw-wow.” This showed that unless one is quite close to the calling bird a distorted or ventriloquial effect becomes evident.

On July 9th, after the “ wheet, wheet-wheet ” call had been going on for a time at intervals of about two minutes, a “ braw-wow ” note was heard at 11.0 p.m., followed by “ wheet, wheet-wheet,” and after this the two calls in alternation became so frequent that I began to suspect that two birds were calling. Several of these calls appeared to originate well outside what I had come to consider the territory, but this may possibly have been an effect of wind, which was rather gusty that evening. As it began to get dark calls became less frequent, and the last call, a “ wheet, wheet-wheet ” quite close at hand, was at 11.10 p.m., this being about the time when calling usually ceased.

During the evenings of July 16th and 22nd no calling was heard. On August 7th cutting of the corn had begun, but had been interrupted by wet weather. The portion of the field which was the suspected nesting-site had, however, been cut. Here I found several small collections of excrement, similar to those left by a Grouse, all within a confined area of about 4 yards square, together with sundry feathers.

On the following day, when reaping was continued, an adult and a juvenile were shot and a second adult secured alive. The two old birds were in identical plumage, and as Dr. Wild, of Cheltenham, in whose collection the skins of the dead birds now are, states that the adult was a female, it is possible that the living bird was a female also. This one was kept by Mr. Ridgway, who informed me a few days later that it was becoming quite tame and that when he imitated the “ braw-wow ” call it would come to him with crouching body and quivering wings.

Mr. Hayden, the farmer, stated that he had heard and seen Quail on his farm the previous season and that they had not been shot.

All the times quoted in the above account are Double Summer Time.

KENNETH D. PICKFORD.

[We welcome Mr. Pickford's careful notes, as observers in this country appear to have paid little attention to calls of the Quail other than the well-known one of the male bird. Probably the most complete account is that of the German ornithologist, Naumann, written over a hundred years ago (see *The Handbook*, Vol. v, p. 251). Mr. Pickford's "braw-wow" (Naumann's "rauau") is a fairly well-known note used by both sexes and sometimes preceding the familiar call of the male. His "brr-up, brr-up, brr-up" is presumably Naumann's "brübrüb," but if so it is interesting to observe that this and the "rauau" are in reality the same note.—EDS.]

NESTS OF TREE-CREEPER NEAR GROUND.—With reference to Mr. H. E. Pounds's note on a nest of the Tree-Creeper (*Certhia familiaris britannica*) two feet from the ground (*antea*, p. 157), Mr. R. Chislett writes that he has notes of a nest found in Yorkshire containing young on May 29th, 1944, less than two feet above ground, between the main trunk and a thick stem of ivy, and another found with young in a hole in a wall only two feet above ground on July 2nd, 1943. Where suitable sites are available as low as this the birds seem to have no disinclination to use them and it would probably not be difficult to find other examples.

INDEX OF HERON POPULATION.—*Correction*.—The figures against the lower graph on p. 223 should read "100," "90," etc., not "100°," "90°," etc.

SCAUP-DUCK IN BEDFORDSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE.—Mr. I. J. Ferguson Lees informs us that he had a good view of and clearly identified a female Scaup-Duck (*Aythya m. marila*) on the Ouse at Bedford on January 31st, 1945. It is of interest to note that a female of this species was also seen on the Thames at Oxford on January 28th by D. Lack and B. W. Tucker.

SPOTTED CRAKE IN SURREY.—Mr. L. S. V. Venables informs us that on December 31st, 1944, he had very clear views of a Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) on the site of Frensham Great Pond, which was drained in July, 1940, and is now overgrown with dense birch and *Salix* scrub, though water remains in the ancient water-courses winding across the bed.

## LETTER.

### SEA-BIRDS ON LUNDY.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—I am much interested in Lundy sea-bird census in the March issue (*antea*, pp. 187-191). Certain comparisons between figures for 1942 and 1939 are misleading.

(1) 1942 report does not state that of 20 weeks in 1939, two in June were devoted exclusively to census work and that the majority of colonies were visited previously and subsequently.

(2) As a full season's work, devoted solely to census work, would be necessary to make a comparatively accurate count of Lundy colonies, my census figures were qualified by term "approximately."

(3) Authors of 1942 survey attribute discrepancy between two sets of figures mainly to over-estimate on my part: but, when station-counts on respective maps are examined in detail, it is found that:—

(a) 8 Razorbill stations, containing 91 birds in 1942, contained 1,210 birds in 1939: *viz.*—2/100; 22/70; 2/70; 55/550; 4,200; 5/80; 1/40; 0/100.

(b) 4 Guillemot stations, similarly, 31 to 780: *viz.*—31/560; 0/100; 0/100; 0/20.

(c) 5 Herring-Gull stations: 134 to 500: *viz.*—90/200; 28/100; 0,60; 16/120; 0/20.

(4) Clearly, it can hardly be supposed that I was capable of multiplying my station-counts again and again by several thousand per cent. Clearly the over-all comparisons of 1,390/364, 1,010/265, and 1,000/464 are meaningless; for, if 1942 survey was complete, there had evidently been a shifting or decrease in population between 1939 and 1942.

(5) To attempt any degree of census comparison between different years for short section only of coast-line was, in any case, an undertaking of doubtful value, for an island's sea-bird colonies must be regarded as annually expanding or contracting links of composite chain. In the case of Lundy main sea-bird colonies—from, and to, which such expanding will operate—are located in northern half of island.

(6) It might have been more satisfactory if my final census had been given in terms of units counted direct instead of in revised figures for pairs. On the other hand, by counting, estimating and calculating on the spot I did arrive at some kind of balanced estimate for each colony, whereas 1942 straight count gives us only a minimum figure for a single occasion, and probably a very low figure; for by July 2-10 a proportion of sea-birds will probably have left the island—for I found that these south-west offshoots from the main colonies arrived later in the season and left earlier—and a still bigger proportion will be visiting ledges only infrequently at this season.

(7) While interesting, counts of sea-birds taken in the course of a few hours at a late season cannot be held to provide sound data for comparison with comparatively long-term counts taken in earlier years.

(8) May I emphasize once again a point already raised by authors of 1942 reports:—Lundy is an exceedingly difficult island to work; future workers are advised to think in terms of weeks or months, not days.

RICHARD PERRY.

[If readers interested will refer back to pp. 187-190 they will see that much of what Mr. Perry says is covered by our original discussion, to which we have little to add. For example, we agreed that *some* decrease had taken place and the complete or almost complete absence of birds from certain points where he found substantial numbers is expressly mentioned. The essential upshot of the whole discussion is simply this: that as a matter of general interest, and without claiming more for our figures than that they were approximately accurate for the date in question, we took a careful count of sea-birds along a substantial part of the coast in early July: on comparison with Mr. Perry's figures we found an immense difference, and we criticized his results not as being *necessarily* wrong, but chiefly as being so unsatisfactorily presented that they did not afford a reliable basis for comparison with subsequent observations. We did, however, state that although his figures "may be substantially correct or they may not . . . . . it is impossible not to regard them with some suspicion." The combination of the great discrepancy referred to (which does appear likely to be outside the limit of normal annual or seasonal fluctuations) with Mr. Perry's generally loose and uncritical treatment of figures (compare his Shearwater estimates, *antea* p. 123) justified this view and we adhere to it. In fact we see no ground for modifying any of our original comments and must leave readers to form their own views.—THE AUTHORS.]

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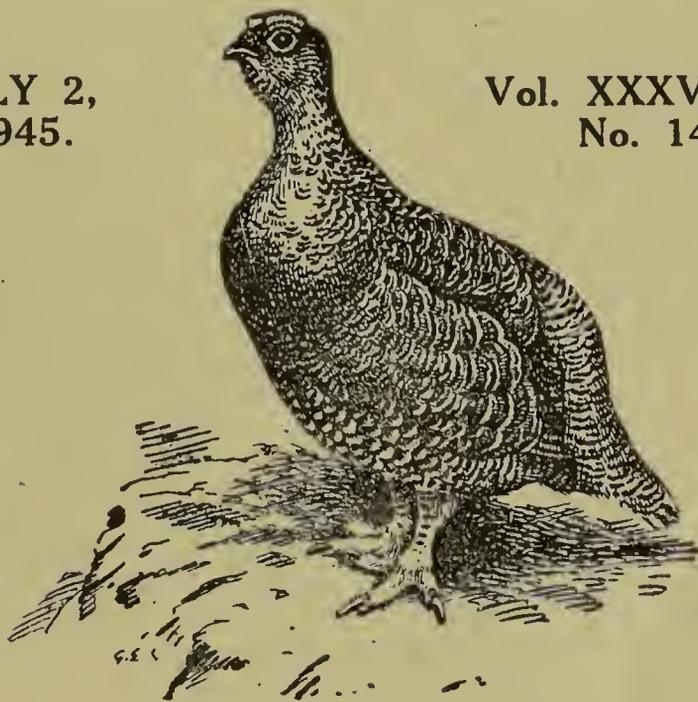
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# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

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## SONG-THRUSH SONG

BY

NOBLE ROLLIN

SOME aspects of Song-Thrush (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) song are dealt with below under the following headings: total output for the day, portion of day used, hour to hour variation, day-time singing, dawn and dusk singing, token singing, singing and roosting, dawn penetration, notes.

The observations were made in Northumberland, at Glanton and at Wallsend, between 1927 and 1944, the penetration records mostly 1927-1933 inclusive and the remaining records 1941-1944 inclusive. All times, unless stated otherwise, are in Local Apparent Time, *i.e.* time by the sun at the place of observation.

### TOTAL OUTPUT FOR THE DAY.

In Fig. 1 are given three Glanton examples of the total output of song at three different stages in the breeding cycle. In these diagrams and the subsequent one in Fig. 3, the first full hour of singing is entered from the time of the first song. The first full hour is thus set partially forward from the first normal hour's timing, *e.g.* the June 13th singer in Fig. 1 began to sing at 1.57 a.m. and its output of song from 1.57 a.m. to 2.57 a.m. is shown as the first full hour. The first normal hour, 2.30 a.m. to 3.30 a.m. is also shown, the two hours overlapping by 27 minutes. The last hour of singing is treated in a similar manner, but in reverse. The diagrams therefore indicate besides hour to hour output, the first and last full hour of output, and an indication of the time of commencement and cessation of the day's singing.

The April 9th record shows the total output hour by hour, of an unmated bird in the Bird Station area at Glanton. The full singing of this bird continued day after day and was very noticeable even to casual observation. So far as I was able to ascertain, this bird never obtained a mate, and eventually abandoned the territory.

The June 13th graph is the total output of a bird observed in a wood a little over half a mile from Glanton. This bird was apparently at the pairing phase of its breeding cycle, as it was seen the previous day with its (presumed) mate sitting opposite it (see Note 1). During the day it passed slowly through its territory, taking the whole day to go from one end to the other and back.

The June 12th graph shows the total output of a bird in the Bird Station area at Glanton, which was feeding a brood of three to five young, three days out of the nest.

The total output for the day in the above instances, together with the length of the singing day (measured from the first song in the morning to the last song in the evening), is given in the following

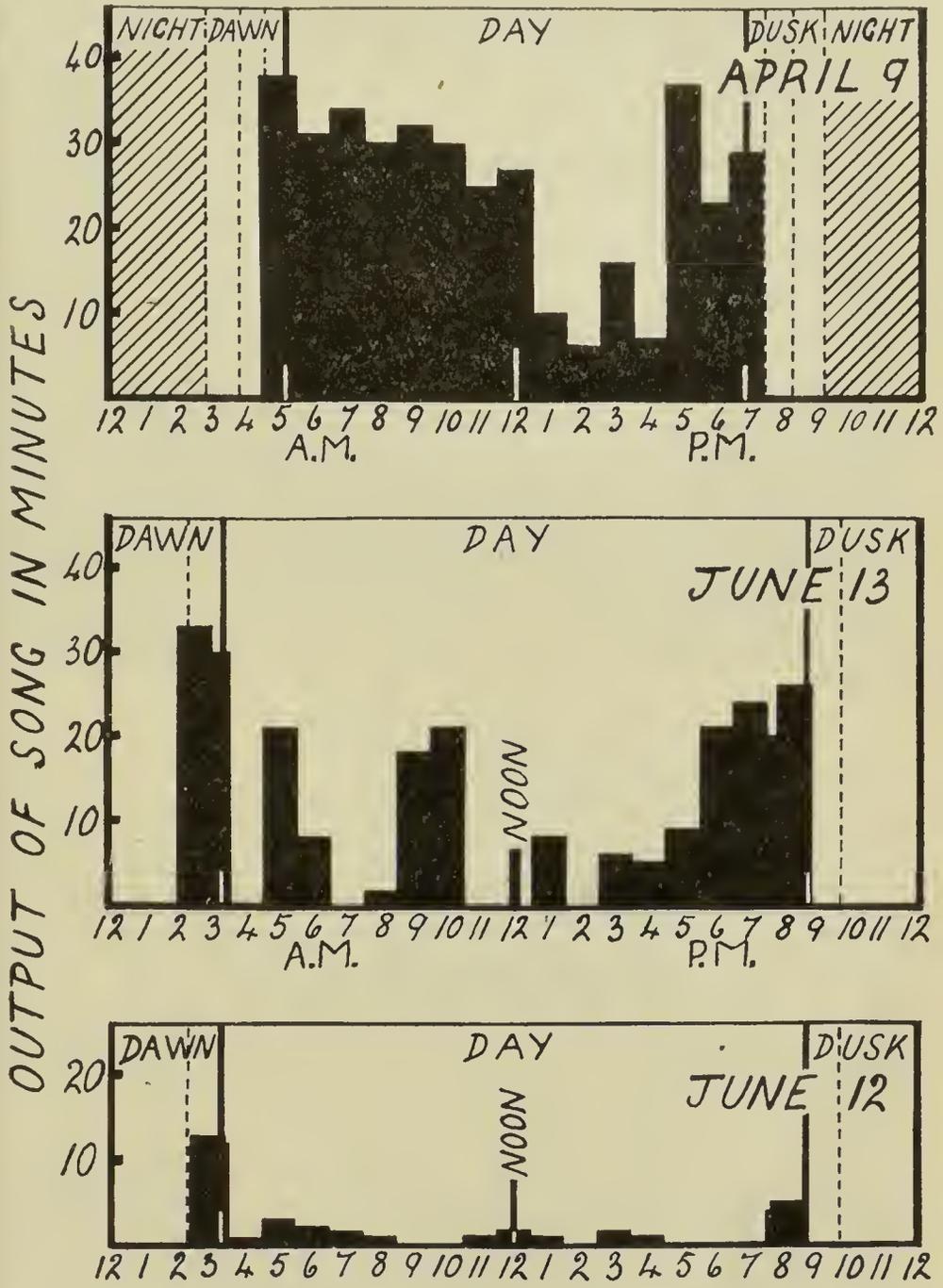


FIGURE 1.—Total Output of Song During the Day.

table. Also included in the table is a record of the last singing of the season in the Station area, July 22nd, which amounted to a quarter of a minute for the whole day, and the output of the Walls-end "token" singing bird (Fig. 3), which is described later.

	<i>Singing Day.</i>	<i>Output of Song.</i>
April 9. Mateless bird in full song.	15 hrs. 00 mins.	377 mins.
June 13. Bird apparently pairing.	18 hrs. 55 mins.	217 mins.
June 12. Bird feeding young.	18 hrs. 16 mins.	33 mins.
July 22. Last singing of season.	10 hrs. 11 mins.	$\frac{1}{4}$ min.
May 17. "Token" singer.	17 hrs. 47 mins.	55 mins.

This makes a somewhat direct correspondence between the stage in the breeding cycle and the output of singing in so far as the Glanton birds are concerned. The output for the day of the mateless bird, 377 minutes, is respectively about twice and three and a half times the maximum figures given for the Sky-Lark (*Alauda a. arvensis*) and the Willow-Warbler (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*) (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 87). Whilst it is extremely unlikely that any of these outputs are the maximum for the species, they suggest that the Song-Thrush occupies a high place for maximum output of song.

#### PORTION OF DAY USED.

The Song-Thrush's song is not continuous in the sense that the Sky-Lark's is, nor cut into more or less set lengths of continuity, as is the Willow-Warbler's. Thus, the unmated Song-Thrush averaged about 38 seconds of output of song for every minute it was occupied in singing and the total amount of time thus occupied in singing was 9 hrs. 55 mins. or 41% of the 24-hour day. This together with the time used in roosting is given in Fig. 2, which shows graphically the relatively small amount (5 hrs. 5 mins. or 21%) of the day remaining for feeding and other daily activities of this unmated bird.

#### HOUR TO HOUR VARIATION.

In regard to the hour to hour variation, in all three graphs in Fig. 1 there is a morning block of song in which the dawn peak is highest (See Note II) and there is a block of song in the evening which reaches into dusk, but whose peak is not necessarily included in dusk. Judging by the all-day records I have made so far, this appears to be the typical construction of a Song-Thrush's daily song. Increased output over this basic pattern appears to be obtained not so much by raising the height of the peaks, though this may be done, as by filling in the space between them by more persistent day-time singing.

## DAY-TIME SINGING.

A rather different type of observation was made on a bird at Wallsend which was kept under observation for a whole season. The first singing began in November and continued into December, when it ceased with the onset of wintry weather. The song was resumed again about mid-February and the bird continued to occupy its territory for the rest of the season. Systematic observations were begun in March. Observations were made on the territory in the morning from approximately 8.50 a.m. to 8.55 a.m., British Summer Time, and later double Summer Time. Out of ninety-one day-time observations from March to the beginning of August inclusive, this bird was heard singing only ten times, once in March, four times in May and five times in June. Some observations were also made near noon and in the afternoon in March and April, but no song was heard in twenty-six such observations. This shows that, for this bird at least, day-time singing was unusual. Similar observations were made on two other territories in the vicinity where the birds also began their singing season in November. A hundred and twenty observations were made on each and the results corresponded closely with those of the first bird. One of them was never heard in the day-time at all and the other was heard only six times.

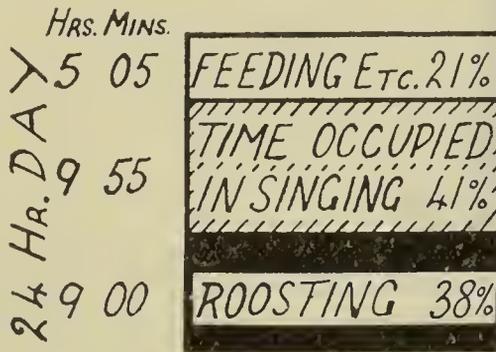


FIGURE 2.—Portion of Day used in Various Activities.

Another Song-Thrush, which took up its territory for the first time in the first half of March, sang more freely in the day-time as it became established, and was heard singing on eight out of seventeen day-time observations during this month. However, in April, May and June, it too lapsed into virtual day-time silence, being heard only four times out of fifty-four observations. In July and early August what I presumed was the same bird came into full day-time singing again, being heard ten times out of twenty-four observations. The loud end-of-season singing of this bird became quite a feature in the area as the "silent month" of August approached, and on July 31st I found that it was singing sufficiently loudly for me to hear it at a distance of three quarters of a mile (over land). The bird continued in full song till August 8th, when it ceased for the season.

## DAWN AND DUSK SINGING.

Dawn and dusk records were also made on the first-mentioned bird, which was so silent in the day-time. It is worthy of note that during eight dawn records and seven dusk records made at intervals from the beginning of March to the beginning of August, not on a single occasion did this bird fail to sing, thus showing it to be a systematic twilight singer which was relatively quiet in the day-time. Similar, though less systematic, observations were made on the other three mentioned birds, and they revealed substantially the same state of affairs.

Finally, three all-day records were made on the first mentioned birds, in April, May and early July. Fig. 3 is an example of these and gives a good idea of the type of singing indulged in by this bird. All three records agreed in conforming to the basic pattern of Song-Thrush song already outlined under Hour to Hour Variation. The total outputs for the day for these all-day records

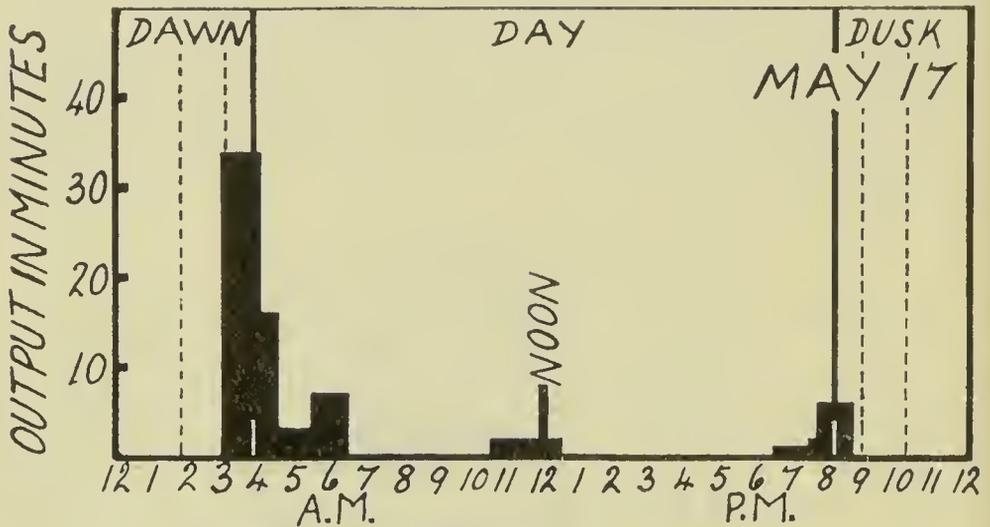


FIGURE 3.—Total Output of Song During the Day.

were 27, 55 and 42 minutes respectively, thus conforming to the type of output found in the Glanton bird feeding young out of the nest.

## TOKEN SINGING.

It is clear, then, that these Wallsend birds, after they have established themselves in their territories with more or less day-time singing, normally relapse for most of the rest of the season into an abbreviated morning and evening reassertion by song of their territorial claim. Three samples of this type of singing show a mean of a little under three quarters of an hour of output per 24-hour day, which is but one ninth of the output of the mateless bird at Glanton. I have ventured to call this "token" singing, and suggest that this three quarters of an hour of song may be in the region of the lowest mean amount of song which a Song-Thrush finds suitable for maintaining its ascendancy in its territory. This

token singing conforms to the basic pattern of song, and suggestions have already been given as to how song may be built up from the basic pattern for other biological purposes, *i.e.* the advertising of the mateless bird and the song during probable pair formation.

It is no doubt the token singing or restatement of territorial right at dawn by nearly every male Song-Thrush, regardless of the stage it has reached in its biological cycle, which makes so effective the wonderful dawn chorus of the Song-Thrush; a performance which adds the necessary volume to the general outburst of song from other species and together with them makes the impressive dawn chorus of the British woodlands. It is not a very wild guess to suggest that token singing may be the basis of the dawn and dusk singing of other species.

#### SINGING AND ROOSTING.

One of the reasons, no doubt, why token singing is a prominent feature amongst Song-Thrushes is that they do not necessarily roost in their own territories. The Station area at Glanton, for instance, accommodates one breeding pair of Song-Thrushes, but is also used by other adults for roosting. Thus I noticed one evening at a season when the two occupying birds were feeding a brood which had left the nest, that two birds (one may have been the owner of the territory) sang against each other within the inner limits of the territory, both apparently intent on roosting in an archway. In the subsequent season the Station bird lost its brood in April and moved to a new territory, the Station area being unoccupied as a breeding territory for the rest of the season. Towards the end of evening singing in May, two singers came to roost in the Station area. Both sang at the same time, and as I stood under the archway mentioned above, both came and fought and buffeted each other over my head. Eventually each retired to different parts of the Station area, long used as Song-Thrush roosts, sang there and then became silent. When the mateless bird mentioned in these notes was singing his evening song, two other birds arrived quietly in his territory from beyond its limits, and perched some ten yards from a bay tree which is a favourite roost. A minute or two afterwards one sang some sub-song and finally a very few snatches of full song and then was silent again. Subsequently one, possibly both, retired to roost in the bay tree, being joined later by the mateless bird, which also roosted there. On several occasions I heard the Wallsend bird, whose singing was described earlier, stopping and singing at two or three points on its way from its territory to its roosting place, and vice versa.

It appears, then, that a bird may roost in its own territory, in the territory of another, or presumably, though no instance is given, in unoccupied ground. The desirability of a statement of ownership prior to retiring in the evening, and particularly of a restatement of ownership after leaving the roosting place in the morning, is obvious.

## DAWN PENETRATION.

The unbroken line in Fig. 4 is based on the mean time of the first singing at Glanton in the morning, through the singing season from March to July. The broken lines show the position of night, relative progress of dawn, and sunrise. It will be seen that up to mid-June the Song-Thrush commences to sing regularly, when the sun is somewhat over  $6^\circ$  below the horizon (actually over a range of means from  $7^\circ 45'$  to  $6^\circ 15'$  below the horizon). The first song varied from a mean of 52 minutes before sunrise in March to a mean of 71 minutes in the first half of June. Owing to the fact that the time of sunrise and the length of dawn both vary throughout the season and at different latitudes, the time of the first song or the number of minutes before sunrise, though specific statements

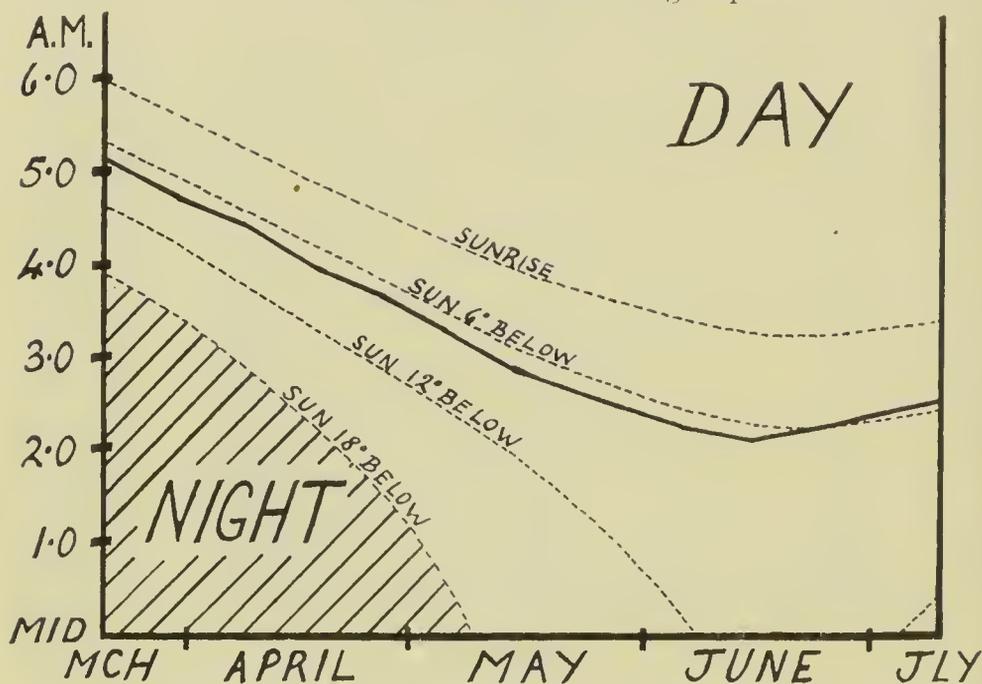


FIGURE 4.—Penetration of Dawn.

of the bird's behaviour, have limitations for certain comparative studies of dawn behaviour. They are, for instance, not readily directly comparable at different times of the year and at different latitudes, and they do not indicate the position of the song in the dawn period nor any direct relationship with the amount of light. The exact statement of the number of degrees and minutes the sun is beneath the horizon at the time the bird first sings is, however, a means of overcoming these difficulties. It gives the position of the bird's first song in the dawn and is in direct relationship to the mean amount of light. It can be directly compared at any season, at any latitude with any other, and, expressed thus in degrees and minutes, can be used as a measure of the amount that a bird's singing penetrates into the dawn (or dusk).

Fig. 5 is a comparison between the time of first singing, expressed in minutes before sunrise, and dawn penetration of first singing, expressed in degrees and minutes. As the penetration gives the actual position of first singing in the dawn, it will be seen that the disparity between this position and the minutes before sunrise is marked between late April and early June.

In regard to penetration and light, if the birds' dawn penetration was constant at different seasons it would show that they were commencing to sing at a constant mean light intensity. If their penetration became less it would indicate that they were waiting until it became lighter before singing. From the penetration line in Fig. 5 it will be seen that as the season advanced from mid-May onwards, the Song-Thrushes waited for successively more and more light before commencing to sing.

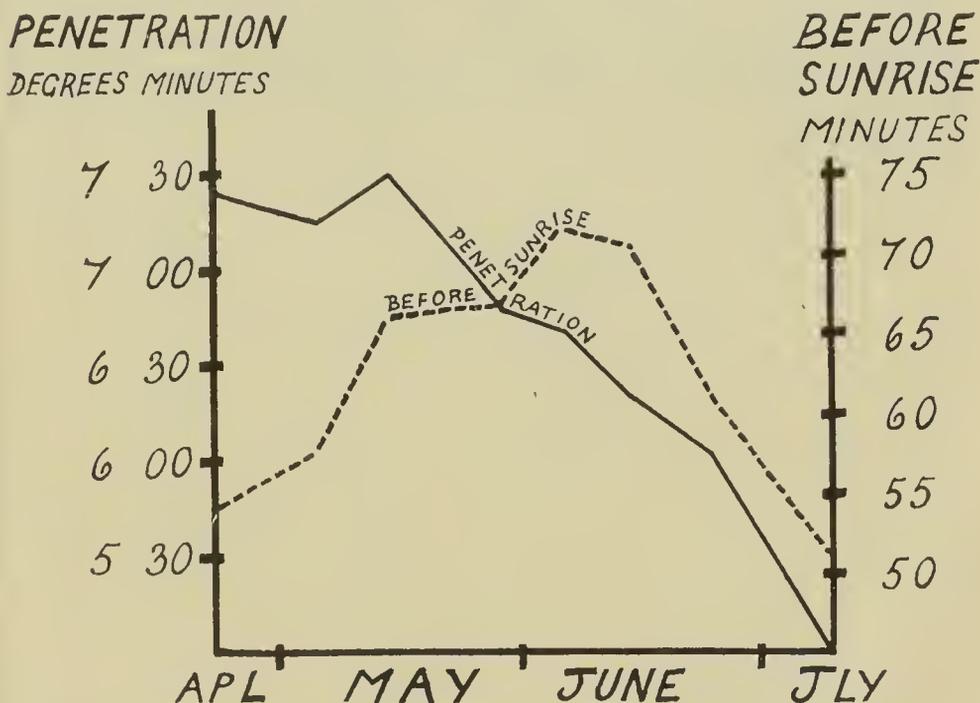


FIGURE 5.—Comparison of Dawn Penetration and Minutes of Song before Sunrise.

NOTE I.—SONG BEHAVIOUR.

A Glanton Song-Thrush (Fig. 1, June 13th) has already been mentioned as having been seen singing with its (presumed) mate sitting opposite it, the silent bird looking as if it were entranced by the singing. I have noticed similar behaviour amongst Wallsend birds. In one instance where a singer was taking up its territory in November, the two birds sat facing each other about two yards apart, one silent and apparently listening, the other singing excitedly. In the other instance, which was later in the season,

the two were closer together on the strut of a telegraph pole. Subsequently the silent bird flew to the ground and began to feed, and was later joined by the singer, which continued to sing on the ground beside it. This behaviour does not conform to the Song-Thrush courtship display described in *The Handbook*, and it seems most likely that it is connected with pair formation, though my data do not prove this.

NOTE II.—OUTPUT IN FIRST HOUR OF SINGING.

Of nine all-day records of the Song-Thrush which I have, all have the largest output of song for the whole day in the first hour of singing. That the output for the first hour should be the highest might seem natural, but it is not necessarily the usual practice amongst birds. For example, of the six all-day records of the Sky-Lark and Willow-Warbler already described (*antea*, Vol. xxxvi, p. 148, and Vol. xxxvii, pp. 85-86), only one has the first hour of output the greatest. Actually in some two dozen all-day records of various species examined, a little under half had the first hour the greatest.

## THE NESTING OF THE LONG-TAILED TIT

BY

J. H. OWEN.

DURING the last five years (1940-1944), at Llanymynech on the borders of Shropshire and Montgomeryshire, I have paid a good deal of attention to this bird, in order to corroborate and extend my previous knowledge of its nesting habits, etc. I have read that the fork of a fruit tree is the favourite nesting site in some districts. This has not been so in any area I have worked. I found gorse the most favoured site in many valleys among the hills of Montgomeryshire: there I have found as many as six nests in gorse during a short walk. Here I have not searched the gorse much, as large areas have been burnt and others are unsuitable. Both in Essex and on the Shropshire border I have found blackthorn the most favoured bush. The bird usually nests between three and five feet from the ground, but occasionally high up in trees. Most of these high nests are only found by accident: *e.g.* I saw a pair nesting at least forty-five feet up in the fork of a huge oak in a wood while I was waiting for pigeons in the evening. In 1943, following a mild winter, I found 35 nests without much searching, and in 1944, when I found still more, I took note of the first 35 for comparison of the sites:—

Blackthorn ..	16	Blackthorn ..	19
Hawthorn ..	6	Brier tangle ..	5
Brier or brier and bramble tangle ..	6	Hawthorn ..	4
Holly ..	3	Bramble ..	3
Oak (45 feet) ..	1	Elder ..	2
Willow (12 feet) ..	1	Privet ..	1
Gooseberry ..	1	Gorse ..	1
Tip of spruce branch (15 feet)	1		
	<hr/>		<hr/>
TOTAL ..	35	TOTAL ..	35
(11 failed)		(14 failed to rear families)	

The site named is given to the chief support of the nest. In many cases there is a subsidiary growth: *e.g.* hawthorn and brier, hawthorn and honeysuckle and so on. Many of the failures to raise broods were due to raiding by natural enemies: of these Jay, Magpie, cat, and rat are the worst, especially the Jay. Quite a large percentage of nests are deserted during building, some when on the point of completion, owing to unsuitable site selection. My brother O. R. Owen also found this to be so. Usually the repeat nest is quite a long way from the first nest. In 1939, however, I had under observation a nest, in blackthorn, which was deserted when barely two inches high and the new nest built within a few inches of it: this must be extremely unusual.

In 1943 six of the nests I had under observation were not used for nesting. Four were in blackthorn, one in withy, one in gooseberry. In every case the shell was completed and the desertion took place at some period of the lining. The withy nest was interesting. It was in a V fork, the branches pointing north and south. When the nest was nearly complete the prevailing west wind began to tilt it forward. However the birds kept on lining it until a stronger wind made it nearly horizontal and then deserted it: it then contained more than 1,000 feathers. Two deserted nests in 1944 were in blackthorn.

In three cases in 1943 three birds were interested in the nests. Owing to accidents to my finger tips I never now try to count the eggs in these nests after the first five or six have been laid, as my hands are clumsy. However, I counted the eggs in one of these nests, with the aid of a tiny net, and found sixteen. I am glad to say I did no harm. This tends to support the statement that larger clutches are the product of two birds, a statement not only applicable to Long-tailed Tits.

The material for the outside of the nest is found not far away. The birds will go a long way for feathers. I have followed them more than a quarter of a mile and they probably go much further. They begin to use feathers as soon as the nest is an inch high. These feathers are worked into the material of the nest, but do not show on the outside. The amount used in this way varies considerably from nest to nest. They are usually small feathers. For the lining any feathers are welcome from those of a barnyard fowl down to (say) a Robin. The bigger feathers must be soft and flexible, but the smallest feathers may be fairly stiff in the shaft. The number used in lining a nest varies tremendously and sometimes reaches astonishing figures. A repeat nest may be much less well furnished, but I doubt whether any nest would have as few as three hundred.

In 1944, after the young had left, I took six nests at random for examination. The girls at Miss Regge's school, at Glanyrafon Hall, Llanyblodwell, very kindly counted and checked the numbers of feathers used in these: 985, 1,154, 1,486, 1,596, 2,041, 2,084, giving an average of 1,558 per nest. In these six nests I only found two unhatched eggs. As the average number of eggs is about eleven this would indicate a fertility of between 96 and 97 per cent. I think, however, that on a large number of nests it will be found slightly less than this: possibly as much as two less.

The rearing of the young is extremely successful. This can be seen to a great extent by the count of the families seen in autumn and winter, for the family keeps together after leaving the nest. I have never found any justification for saying the bird is double-brooded. Late broods are accounted for by the desertion or destruction of the earlier attempts to nest.

The time taken to build a nest is about 21 days for the first attempt. A "repeat" nest is built much more hurriedly. My

brother, O. R. Owen, saw a nest started on April 8th, 1944 and the first egg was deposited April 19th. This was, I am sure, a "repeat" nest, as most of the nests I had under observation contained eggs before this was started. Unfortunately when he went to get it, for a count of the feathers, it had been torn to pieces. A nest I first saw, about two inches high, on March 18th, did not have an egg until April 7th. Another, half-built on March 20th, had the first egg April 8th. These must have taken at least three weeks to build. Soon after the outer nest is completed the two old birds use it as a dormitory and continue to do so until the young are fledged. They usually "go to bed" soon after sunset, but on a cold raw evening "retire" much earlier, even before the first egg is deposited: *e.g.* Birds roosting, 7.5 p.m., April 1st; 1st egg, April 7th. Roosting, April 8th; 1st egg, April 10th. Roosting, 8 p.m., March 30th; 1st egg, April 2nd. Roosting, 8 p.m., April 8th; 1st egg, April 11th. These notes are from nests I chanced to pass as I returned to my rooms in the evening. The period during which the nest is used as a dormitory before laying starts probably varies somewhat with different pairs. Eggs are deposited, at intervals of twenty-four hours, early in the morning. I have, however, known several instances in which a nest received two eggs in one day. This may be merely another item in support of the fact that sometimes two hens will lay in the same nest.

The old birds keep the nest very clean during the nestling period: the minutest portions of egg shells, dung and pellets are removed. A dead youngster is also taken away. Occasionally a fledged bird, probably smothered, is found dead in the nest when it is vacated. I am of the opinion that incubation is sometimes, at least, shared. I have seen one leave and another enter the nest. I have also seen a bird enter a nest already occupied and another emerge shortly afterwards. As the sexes are alike it is impossible to say whether this was the same. On April 28th, 1938, I re-visited two nests in gorse about noon. In each case both birds were inside on well incubated eggs. Previous observations made the incubation period not less than fourteen days and I have not dared to try to check this in recent years. The nestling period I found to be sixteen days or more. If the weather was very inclement it might be as much as three days more; at least I put the extension down chiefly to weather. Thus the whole time from the start of the nest building to the exodus of the young is approximately nine weeks. I have been asked several times to give a reason for the snugness of the nest. My suggestion is "to keep an even temperature during the very changeable weather, mid-March to early June, that these birds have to put up with." Owing to the similarity of sexes, I find it impossible to say whether both birds brood the young. Both feed them and if one is in the nest the bird outside will often hand over its supply of food to the bird inside.

## NOTES.

## SINGING OF BREEDING FEMALE CHAFFINCH.

WITH reference to Mr. Tucker's note on " Song of female Chaffinch associated with normal sex behaviour " (*antea*, p. 94) it may be of interest to record that in the spring of 1944 I had a breeding female Chaffinch (*Fringilla caelebs gengleri*) in my orchard at Aston Clinton, near Tring, which sang persistently. The song was very similar to that of a Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) and was usually delivered from the tree in which the nest was built, or one near it, but I once heard it in flight. The song appeared to puzzle the male and the nuptial chasing often started as a battle. He would fly to the tree in which his mate was singing, in a very belligerent way, with much " spink, spink-ing," and apparently attack her.

Her song stopped after the laying of the third egg. The nest was robbed when the eggs were due to hatch, and she then started singing again, but only in a desultory way. The birds subsequently reared four young in a tree 25 yards away.

I spent some hours in a hide over the second nest, and the hen's behaviour was normal, except that the cock did the major share of feeding and nest-cleaning. He spent a lot of his time chasing her to her duties.

M. D. ENGLAND.

## CIRL BUNTINGS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

IN view of the recent records suggesting that the Cirle Bunting (*Emberiza e. cirulus*) is locally extending its range (*antea*, pp. 211-213), I write to record that in Nottinghamshire I saw a pair near Oxtou on April 14th, 1944, and watched one male singing, while I heard another near Newstead on May 30th. The latter birds were in an excellent breeding site, and since the male was still singing later in the day there is some chance that it might have been nesting.

R. J. RAINES.

## SNOW-BUNTING IN OXFORDSHIRE.

ON October 29th, 1944, in company with F. D. Kelsey, J. C. Leach and J. R. Tayler, members of the Oxford Ornithological Society, I had a good, though brief, view of a male Snow-Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) on arable land near the foot of the Chilterns about half a mile south of Watlington, Oxon. As it flew away it uttered the characteristic " tirririrripp " note.

The Snow-Bunting has not been observed in Oxfordshire for fifty years, the last record being of three seen near Crowmarsh in February, 1895.

B. W. TUCKER.

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER BREAKING OPEN  
ALMOND NUTS.

WITH reference to the note appearing in your issue of June, 1944 (*antea*, p. 17), concerning the splitting of almond nuts by the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates major anglicus*), I have witnessed

a similar incident. In my garden I have an almond tree, and thirty-six yards away a may tree. The bird bored a hole in the living trunk of the may tree, carried the nuts lying round the base of the almond, placed them in the hole and split them in halves. The ground beneath the may tree was littered with halves of the shells, and on examination, all were found to be split. The bird, observed at fifteen yards, was a female, lacking the red at the nape of the neck.

T. O. JAMES.

#### FIGHT BETWEEN LITTLE OWLS AND BARN-OWLS.

IN 1944 a pair of Little Owls (*Athene noctua vidalii*) nested in a hole in a wych elm at North Ferriby, and in the top of the broken main trunk of the same tree was a Barn-Owl's nest. The following note is compiled from observations by Mr. Nivens, in whose garden the nests were.

On September 25th at evening a Barn-Owl (*Tyto a. alba*) was seen returning with a half-grown rat in its claws. Three Little Owls attacked it and the struggling group, joined by the other Barn-Owl, landed in the adjacent field. The next stages were watched from behind a hedge.

The male Barn-Owl flew to a neighbouring perch and remained watching for a few moments. The three Little Owls ran along the grass to attack the female. The prey could not be seen at this stage. The male bird then returned and using his wings buffeted the Little Owls. The latter were driven into a nearby wood with both Barn-Owls in pursuit.

J. LORD AND G. H. AINSWORTH.

#### HEN-HARRIER IN ABERDEENSHIRE IN SUMMER.

ON July 30th, 1944, I saw a female Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) flying over a tract of moorland near Braemar, Aberdeenshire. It was flying in a rather direct and purposeful fashion, without the desultory flap and glide action so characteristic of harriers, and soon passed out of sight round a shoulder of the moor. Nevertheless the date would be extremely early for a migrating bird and naturally suggested the possibility of breeding somewhere in the district. Subsequently, so far as my opportunities allowed, I searched some of the most likely localities without result, but the area of suitable ground in the neighbourhood is too extensive for such a search to have been at all exhaustive. Breeding in Inverness-shire in 1936 has been recorded.

B. W. TUCKER.

#### BEWICK'S SWANS AND RED-NECKED GREBE IN HERTFORDSHIRE.

ON March 7th, 1945, I identified three adult Bewick's Swans (*Cygnus b. bewickii*) on Wilstone Reservoir, Tring. They kept aloof from the Mute Swans, but on one occasion one of the latter flew over to inspect the strangers. A Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisèigena*) appeared on November 23rd, 1944 and was last seen by me on December 5th. It was a bird of the year. The recently published occurrences (*antea*, pp. 195-7) lend additional significance to this record.

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

## PINK-FOOTED GOOSE IN CO. WICKLOW.

ON January 30th, 1945, Mr. C. H. Batt shot a goose from a party of about fifty, all of which he noticed were distinctly smaller than some 200 Grey-lags (*Anser a. anser*) that were feeding separately on the same grassland, about two miles south of Newcastle, on the Murrough of Wicklow. Mr. Batt brought the goose to me in the flesh and it proved to be an adult Pink-footed Goose (*Anser fabalis brachyrhynchus*). The Murrough of Wicklow is a well-known winter resort of the Grey-lag, and while the present record definitely establishes the occurrence of the Pink-footed Goose there, it is possible from a description given to me at the time that a Pink-foot was shot in the same locality in November, 1941.

There is every indication that the Pink-footed Goose is now a much more frequent winter-visitor to Ireland than it was up to twenty years ago. It may be even more widespread than published records go to show owing to the lack of observers in many parts of Ireland.

G. R. HUMPHREYS.

## SMEW IN ABERDEENSHIRE.

As the Smew (*Mergus albellus*) is a comparatively rare visitor to our northern coasts, and the drake bird in particular less frequently seen than the female and immature "brownheads," it seems worth recording that on February 26th, 1945, I saw a male on the Don river near the mouth, under perfect conditions of bright sunshine at 200 yards range, and with a strong telescope. Mr. Waterston informs me that on March 3rd, 1945, he saw a female or immature bird on the Lower Lake, Haddo House, about 15 miles N.W. of the Don Estuary. Sim's *Fauna of Dee* gives five records of this species for Aberdeenshire.

E. T. VERNON.

[In *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxiv, p. 262, Mr. K. A. Wood gives several records for the Don Estuary and expresses the opinion that the bird is probably a more frequent visitor on the Aberdeenshire coast than the scanty records suggest, which we think highly probable.—EDS.]

## MANX SHEARWATER BREEDING ON DURHAM COAST.

IN the late summer of 1944, Mr. Wilfred Robson, of South Shields informed me that he still had in his possession an egg taken on Marsden Rock, which he believed to be a Puffin's. As there is no record of the nesting of the Puffin on the Durham coast, I took the first opportunity of examining this egg, which was roughly end-blown, and was surprised to find it to be that of a Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*). The details of this interesting discovery are as follows:—In June, 1939, Mr. Robson—then a school-boy—succeeded, with several companions, in scaling Marsden Rock, always a rather hazardous undertaking. While on the top of the rock, he came upon the egg in question well in under an overhanging rocky outcrop covered with grass. No bird was seen near the nest.

Marsden Bay having been closed to the public from 1939 to June, 1944, it is impossible to say whether any Shearwaters returned to the locality in the interval. None were definitely identified in the summer of the latter year; but as the beach was closed each evening, the Rock could not be kept under observation during the hours when these birds, if present, might be expected to become most active and noisy.

While the North Durham coast remained closed, there was a marked increase in the numbers of sea-birds breeding around Marsden. In 1944—besides numerous Fulmars and Kittiwakes—at least a dozen pairs of Herring-Gulls nested either on the Rock or about the adjacent cliffs. One pair of Cormorants nested on the Rock in 1939, and others may have done so since; but as these birds resort to an inaccessible part of the sea-face of the Rock, no positive proof of this could be obtained while the restrictions continued in force.

H. M. S. BLAIR.

[We hope it will now be possible to follow up this most interesting and unexpected record—the first of the breeding of the species on the east coast—and to ascertain whether any Shearwaters are still visiting the locality in summer, though it seems unlikely that the case was more than an isolated aberration.—EDS.]

#### RED-NECKED GREBE IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

IN view of the records of Red-necked Grebes (*Podiceps griseigena*) in various localities (*antea*, pp. 195-197, 275), it seems desirable to record that on December 30th, 1944, I saw one of these birds on an ice-bound gravel-pit near Nottingham, swimming on a small area of open water, which it had no doubt kept free of ice during the night. It was watched at close quarters and the distinctive characters well seen, including black bill with yellow base, black on top of head stretching down to the eye, pale cheeks, neck dusky in front and blackish at the back.

The bird was also seen by Mr. J. Staton on January 1st, 1945, when it was on the nearby River Trent.

R. J. RAINES.

#### PARTY OF KNOTS INLAND IN HERTFORDSHIRE.

THE note on "Parties of Knots inland in Yorkshire" (*antea*, pp. 197-8) reminds me that I had under observation for some time and at no great distance a party of seven Knots (*Calidris c. canutus*) on the mud on the south side of Wilstone Reservoir, Herts, on September 7th, 1944. It is only on very rare occasions that I have seen the Knot inland and apart from the above record only single birds have been seen.

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

#### FORMER BREEDING OF COMMON SANDPIPER IN WORCESTERSHIRE.

WITH reference to the recent mention in *British Birds* (p. 218) of Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) breeding at Bittell Reservoirs in 1925 and at Shelsley Kings in 1943, I can state—

though I have no precise record of dates—that from about 1895 to 1910 more than one pair nested regularly at the Bittell Reservoirs. Two sites on Lower Bittell and one on Upper Bittell were occupied for a number of years and I think there may have been others. I do not think this has previously been recorded.

DAVID B. GRUBB.

#### RINGED PLOVER BREEDING IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

IN 1944 a pair of Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius h. hiaticula*) nested by Sywell Reservoir, near Wellingborough. One of the four eggs, which I have examined, was taken by a local lad on May 3rd. Unfortunately the other three appear to have been taken by fishermen. I have also been told by Mr. I. Hepburn, of Oundle School, that a pair nested in 1944 above the River Nene at Ashton.

R. E. BURTON.

[In view of the records of breeding of the Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius curonicus*) in 1944 Mr. Burton kindly borrowed the egg from the lad who took it and submitted it to me for examination. It is a typical egg of *Ch. hiaticula* and measures 36.4 x 26.7 millimetres. The specific identity of the other pair cannot unfortunately be established with certainty, but seems likely to have been the same.—B.W.T.]

#### HERRING-GULLS ROBBING LAPWINGS.

AT Sidmouth on January 23rd, 1945 (during a brief thaw in the long spell of severe weather), seven Herring-Gulls (*Larus a. argentatus*) were on upland grassland in company with thirty-five Lapwings (*Vanellus vanellus*).

The Lapwings were busily engaged in quest of food. The Gulls, dispersed singly at intervals through the flock, remained stationary, with hunched shoulders, alert and watching. Whenever a Lapwing found an item of food, one or more of the Gulls attacked and, screaming, gave chase until either the Lapwing dropped its prey or swallowed it. In the latter event, pursued and pursuers returned together to the feeding flock, but if dropped the Gulls made short work of it.

Such behaviour is well known in the case of Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*) and is referred to in *The Handbook* (Vol. v, p. 64), but not mentioned in other species.

F. J. JOHNSTON.

[We have no other record of Herring-Gulls victimizing Lapwings or other birds in the manner described.—EDS.]

#### STATUS OF CORN-CRAKE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

WITH reference to the recent "Report on the Distribution and Status of the Corn-Crake (*Crex crex*)" (*antea*, pp. 142-148, 162-168), it may be of interest to record the following:

In June, 1942, I was walking down the side of the Severn in Gloucestershire with a man who lives on the river bank and has quite

a good knowledge of birds, and we located seven Corn-Crakes in a distance of perhaps five miles. In one case my companion's dog brought an egg to us in his mouth and in another a dead young bird. His owner told me that this happens every year and he is unable to prevent the dog doing it. I was near Gloucester again in 1943 and I could hear the birds all along the river in the hayfields; the first one I heard was almost within the city limits. The person I was with regularly walks the river bank in connexion with his work and he considered the birds still common there.

To my knowledge the Corn-Crake breeds in three different localities just inside the Radnorshire border. A. W. BOLT.

EARLY SWALLOW IN BERKSHIRE.—Mr. R. C. R. Allen informs us that he had a good view of a Swallow (*Hirundo r. rustica*) at Reading on March 7th, 1945.

HOOPOE IN HEREFORDSHIRE.—Mr. D. H. Naylor sends us details of a Hoopoe (*Upupa e. epops*), of which he had a good view at the bottom of Marcle Hill, near Rushall, on April 9th, 1945.

BEAN-GOOSE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE.—Mr. H. H. Davis informs us that on February 3rd, 1945, he had a good view of a Bean-Goose (*Anser fabalis*) of the "segetum" type amongst White-fronted Geese on the "New Grounds" of the Severn.

UNUSUAL NUMBER OF GOLDENEYE INLAND IN ESSEX.—Mr. T. P. Bispham informs us that on February 23rd, 1945, on the recently constructed large reservoir at Abberton, near Colchester, he saw about two hundred Goldeneye (*Bucephala c. clangula*), of which some 10-15 per cent. were adult males. This is a quite phenomenally large number for any inland water, even if only a few miles from the sea, as in the present case. During the period of 1924-36 the record for any inland water was *c.* 50.

PUFFIN INLAND IN KENT.—Dr. J. M. Harrison informs us that on January 11th, 1945, during the spell of severe weather a young female Puffin (*Fratercula arctica grabæ*) was caught near the railway embankment at Shoreham, Kent.

## REVIEW.

*Birds of the Day.* By Eric J. Hosking and Cyril W. Newberry. Collins, 1944. Price 12s. 6d.

THE *raison d'être* of this book, as the authors expressly state, is its pictures, and very excellent they are, though not more so than we are accustomed to expect from these two photographers. Thirty-nine species are illustrated and a fair balance is maintained between the rarities, such as Marsh-Harrier, Bittern, Bearded Tit, Dotterel, and Greenshank, and commoner, though often not less pictorially attractive, kinds. Most species have one photograph each, though some have several, and the whole forms a very admirable collection of pictures. The letterpress in a book of this sort is obviously subsidiary to the illustrations, but should be readable and accurate as far as it goes, and the text in the present case quite conforms to this standard. A companion volume called "Birds of the Night" is stated to be in preparation.

## LETTERS.

## LATE FLOCKING OF LINNETS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—In the diary of my late husband, Bertram Lloyd, there is the following entry for May, 1944, with reference to Linnets (*Carduelis c. cannabina*):—"During winter a flock of 150-200 Linnets has daily haunted this corner (Buckland Wharf). Of late—during this month—I have several times seen the flock, now thinned down to c.50. On May 26th they were in the field in front of my house, flying about, very loquacious. Now, what is this surely *very late* flock? Can they all be unmated birds? Or is the flock simply breaking up very late in the season?"

It would be interesting if any of your readers can record a similar experience or suggest an explanation.

SYLVIA LLOYD.

## NUTHATCHES AND NUTS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—Having carefully watched Nuthatches on numberless occasions taking hazel-nuts from my bird-table, I venture the theory that in every instance the quality of the nut is subjected to a test before it is carried off to be hacked open and the kernel eaten. Rotten nuts are never carried off. These are left on or below the bird-table. Often I have marked them, mixed them with a fresh supply of nuts, and found them invariably *in situ* after the birds have fed. The bird knows a good nut from a bad with perfect inerrancy.

What is the test? Possibly the criterion is weight; more probably, flavour. If the birds are carefully watched, they will be seen to hold the nut for an instant between the mandibles before arriving at a decision about it. The test may be weight in this case. Far more frequently, however, the bird is seen delicately to hold the nut, and, with its tongue, revolve it between the beak tips, whereupon it is approved or rejected. It is, I suppose, impossible to know to what degree a Nuthatch's tongue is sensitive to taste, but it would seem to be able to detect the mustiness of a decayed nut from the goodness of a nut that is edible. That the bird possesses an inerrant mechanism by which the adjudication is made is a matter which anyone can verify. I have, however, never come across any reference to the matter. In the woods I have watched Nuthatches carrying off oak-apples. On the analogy of the hazel-nuts, I imagine they never waste their time and effort on galls from which the larvæ have emerged.

F. C. BUTTERS.

[Mr. Butters has raised an interesting point, but we doubt whether the case of the oak-apples which he cites at the end of his letter is really parallel. It is intelligible that stale or musty nuts should be detected by taste, but it is difficult to see how a gall from which insects had recently emerged could be recognized in this way. It may also be noted that other insects use these galls after the gall-insects have emerged.—Eds.]

## COLOURING OF BILL AND LEGS OF COMMON HERON.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—In connexion with Mrs. K. Gough's observations (*antea*, p. 149), it may be worth printing some further notes on the subject. On three separate occasions I have seen birds whose bills I considered to be salmon-pink.

(a) A brooding bird at Holkham Park heronry (Norfolk) in March, 1937.

(b) A bird standing beside a small pool in Castle Howard Park (N. Riding, Yorks) on March 26th, 1939. There is no heronry here.

(c) A brooding bird at Scampston Park heronry (E. Riding, Yorks) on April 24th, 1941.

I have not noticed unusual colouring of the legs.

RONALD M. GARNETT.

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# THE HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS

By H. F. WITHERBY, M.B.E., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U., Editor; Rev. F. C. R. JOURDAIN, M.A., M.B.O.U., H.F.A.O.U., NORMAN F. TICEHURST, O.B.E., M.A., F.R.C.S., M.B.O.U., C.F.A.O.U. and BERNARD W. TUCKER, M.A., F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

133 Coloured and 24 Monochrome Plates figuring all the species, 300 Text Figures and 37 Maps.

Each of the 520 birds is fully treated in the following sections :—

HABITAT, FIELD-CHARACTERS, AND GENERAL HABITS,  
VOICE, DISPLAY AND POSTURING, BREEDING, FOOD,  
BRITISH DISTRIBUTION, MIGRATIONS, DISTRIBUTION  
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# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

EDITED BY

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leading to successful coition was seen. (It is unlikely that this was the first occasion on which it occurred, but we were not allowed out before 6.30 in the morning, and so missed the two hours of greatest activity). The hen had just taken some material to the nest. "She comes out, 'ticks.' The cock flies down towards her on the nest-tree, displays in the air in front of her with spread wings, perches near her. They copulate once. The cock flies round the hen three times in a small circle with a bee-like flight uttering excited almost ecstatic, harsh call, and perches on a twig above her. The hen flies lower, and postures with winnowing wings." This description will be filled out a little from further notes, but in essentials this is the complete ceremony.

Nest-building continued next day, May 2nd, and this display was several times noted. A description from my own field-notes may stand as typical. "The hen comes out of the nest into the tree and cleans her beak. The hen goes up near the cock, fans her tail and leans near him. The cock flies up nearer, flattens his body, raises his wings till they probably touch above his back, and quivers them. The tail of the cock is held depressed and widely fanned, the head lowered and neck stretched out. The cock presses his body down on to the branch, and along the branch. He utters a very high-pitched, soft, hissing note all the time.\* The hen also gave this call, which is not unlike the food-call of the chicks." The sequel to this display is either successful copulation, after which the cock flies off in a wild, rapid flight round the hen, and then away, warbling a most sweet song as he flies; or the hen may reject the cock by pecking towards him, stabbing with her beak, but without touching him. If rejected in this way the cock at once resumes a normal posture, and a chase may ensue. Sometimes when the cock flew up to perch near the hen, he already, while in flight, adopted the posture described, so far as possible, holding the tail depressed and widely fanned, a position which results in the flight being noticeably slower than the normal. This display was seen several times next day, and the day after, May 4th, the first egg was laid.

This egg was promptly ejected by a Wryneck (*Jynx t. torquilla*), and on May 5th the second nest was begun. It was not until May 7th that the full pattern of display just described was seen again; and on that day the second nest was completed. Four eggs were laid on May 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th, after which incubation began. May 9th was a wet day, but on each of the other days this display was seen several times. Even when incubation had begun some chases took place, though the full display was not seen after the 13th. On May 16th at 6.15 a.m. this second nest was destroyed, again by a Wryneck. Fifty minutes later a chase was seen, and others followed during the day. At 8.23 a.m. only two

\* This is given with the beak wide open, in such a position that the gape must be visible to the hen, thus adding to the bright colour.

hours after the destruction of a clutch of eggs which the hen had begun to incubate, the full display took place, this time on some railings, and then on the ground. An extremely good view was obtained, and the hen fanned her tail, as she had sometimes been seen to do before, as if in readiness for coition. On the ground the two birds alternately took small, vertical jumps into the air, facing each other in the normal position. This performance was not seen at any other time, but would be less easily performed, and less easily seen, on the branch of a tree, which was the normal place for display. Another variant was seen later this same day (which was a day of the most intense activity), when the cock held his tail raised instead of depressed while in the crouching attitude of the display.

The third nest was begun next day, May 17th, but apart from one or two short chases there was no attempt at coition. On the next two days the cock often adopted the crouched attitude, but the hen, busily nest-building, did not respond. The hen continued to take odd scraps of material to the nest until May 24th, but, apart from one attempt at coition on May 21st, no further display was seen. No eggs were laid in this nest, which was abandoned on June 2nd.

On May 27th the cock began visiting the area near the first two nests and to which he eventually enticed the hen to return, as described elsewhere. A short chase took place on this day, and it should be pointed out that this renewal of sexuality preceded his selection of the site for the fourth nest. On May 29th the first chases took place near the tree where this fourth nest was built between June 2nd and 5th. During these days there were occasional chases, often accompanied by song from the cock while chasing, whereas the earlier chases had normally been silent. The cock also momentarily adopted the crouched attitude of display, but in spite of one or two attempts coition never seems to have been achieved. This was probably due to the decline in the hen's sexuality, for on June 6th "the cock suddenly flew from the wires to a tree, with excited chirrup and song, then advanced towards the hen chattering, and crouching along the branch. He then mounted, but unsuccessfully, flew dizzily round the hen about 3 inches from her "weeting" and "tucking"; the hen did not respond. The cock then flew through the two contiguous trees (in which the hen was perched) several times, singing excitedly, then perched in one of them and "weeted" rapidly for about 2 minutes. The cock then appeared on the branch about a foot from the hen, and advanced very slowly, with tail and wings depressed, towards the hen, faced her for a second and then mounted, and again without achieving coition." Chases, and attempts at coition, continued until June 12th, but then ceased. No eggs were laid in this fourth nest, which was never visited by the hen after June 12th.

Such, then, is the nuptial display of the Redstart. Beginning with chases in and about the trees where the future nest is to be built, the elaborate display, without which coition is not even attempted, was not seen until after nest-building had started. It continues during the days when eggs are being laid, but ceases soon after incubation has begun. As usual where the male is much more brightly coloured than his mate, the role of the hen is almost entirely passive, though she may sometimes call, or fan her tail, and can apparently indicate her rejection of the cock's advances by stabbing towards him with her beak. The displaying male, with his bright tail fanned and pressed down on to the branch, his rosy body flattened, his black face and white cap thrust toward the hen; with his wings held straight up to show their shimmering pink undersides as he excitedly quivers them; his wild, darting flight after the act, accompanied by a sweet warbling song as he flies—all combine to make one of the most strikingly lovely scenes I have ever watched in the lives of birds.

The unusual history of the pair studied in 1943, which after the loss of two nests through interference by the Wryneck, built and abandoned two others without any more eggs being laid, raises many questions which cannot be answered. The display of the male was not (it seems) sufficient to overcome the hen's broodiness once incubation had begun in the second nest, though when the first nest was destroyed in the middle of egg-laying the cock was able to copulate with the hen. It may be that in a species where both sexes display actively such a state of affairs would not occur, and that after the destruction of the second nest coition might have taken place again, and eggs might have been laid. Are we, then, to conclude that in a species where only one sex displays actively, if a clutch is destroyed or deserted after incubation has begun, a brood cannot be raised? And may we suppose that where display is mutual, in similar circumstances a brood might be raised? These questions can only be tested by observation, but they may perhaps deserve such a test.

NOTE.—On suggestions of feeding of the hen by the cock.

On April 21st, 1943, the day on which the hen arrived, the cock had been singing for a long period, but at his 51st song the hen moved higher up the tree towards him. "He stopped singing and fluttered near, his tail being very conspicuous, and went through the motions of feeding the hen (though as he had been singing continuously for nearly 12 minutes he presumably had no food in his beak). The hen crouched while this took place and immediately after the cock tried to mount her, but without success." On May 26th "the cock returns with beak full. The hen approaches: a soft call. Both flew away. I couldn't see if the cock gave food to the hen, but think not." Once the hen seemed to beg food from the cock, craning up her neck, opening her beak and uttering a call like the chick's food-call. The cock hovered

in front of the hen, and then entered the nest (as he did on several occasions, in spite of there being no chicks to feed), and did not feed the hen. She may have begged on one other occasion, but again without success. These are the only notes we have of any suggestion of the cock's feeding the hen, and it should be remembered that, though he helps to feed the chicks, he does not feed the hen on the nest. It may therefore be said that feeding of the hen by the cock is not a normal part of the behaviour of the Redstart.

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## FERTILITY AND MORTALITY IN THE NEST OF CONTINENTAL GREAT TITS

BY

E. J. M. BUXTON.

IN 1944 a record was kept at Eichstätt, Bavaria, of the breeding success of a number of pairs of Great Tits (*Parus m. major*), nesting in nest-boxes. Altogether 13 nests or clutches were begun, and in 9 of these laying was completed and incubation began. The season, owing no doubt to the cold wet weather of the spring, was about two or three weeks later than in 1943. Perhaps for this reason only one pair raised a second brood. Individual birds were identified by coloured rings, kindly supplied by Dr. E. Stresemann.

The following table shows the record for each nest.

TABLE I.

<i>No of nest.</i>	<i>No. of eggs laid.</i>	<i>No. of eggs hatched.</i>	<i>No. of chicks flew.</i>	<i>Date.</i>
1	9	9	8	30.5
2	10	10	1	2.6
3	9	8	8	8.6
4	7	6	2	15.6
5	9	0	—	—
6	16	15	12	18.6
7	9	7	7	28.6
8	7	6	6	10.7
9	0	Nest destroyed by Wryneck		
10	0	Nest deserted: cause unknown		
10	at least 3	Nest destroyed by Wryneck		
—				
TOTALS	79	61	44	
(1st brood nests)				

After the first brood had left nest 1 almost immediately another pair nested in this box, but from the bright state of their plumage it seems likely that this was their first brood. In nest 5, the hen sat for at least 24 days. I then removed the eggs, all of which were without embryos. The nest was slight and the eggs were almost directly in contact with the floor of the box. At nest 4, the cock disappeared (? died) about a week after the chicks hatched. At nest 2, both parents survived and fed the chicks till the end: the ill success of this nest is difficult to understand, and the one chick that left the nest was killed almost at once by a cat. Chicks that died in the nest were always, except once, removed by the parents, but eggs that failed to hatch remained in the nest.

The pair which raised their first brood in nest 1, raised a second brood in 3. Here 7 eggs were laid and 7 chicks flew on 27.7. This was the only brood in which there was complete success.

Before this clutch was laid, a single egg was laid in the old nest in this box, and was then deserted. It is not known to which pair this egg belonged.

Thus in all 87 eggs were laid, or where clutches were completed 83 were laid, an average of 9.2 to the clutch. The clutch of 16 seems to be exceptional since in *The Handbook of British Birds* (Vol. 1, p. 245), the number of eggs given for this race is "6-14, generally 8-10." From these eggs 68 chicks hatched, of which 51 flew.

The danger of destruction of the nest once incubation has begun seems to be slight, but during laying it is considerable, since at that time the birds leave the nest for long stretches, and are not at hand to drive off intruders, as they are in the later stages. It is presumably unusual that in one clutch out of nine all the eggs should be infertile, and in any estimate of the rate of infertility made from these figures it would probably be better to omit this nest. If this is done, and if we also omit the four eggs which were never incubated, we find that out of 74 eggs, 68 (91.9%) hatched. The incidence of infertility is then just over 8%. Of the 68 chicks born, 51 (75%) flew.

These totals and percentages may be summarized as follows.

TABLE II.

<i>No. of eggs laid in all nests.</i>	<i>No. of eggs destroyed before incubation %</i>	<i>No. of eggs hatched %</i>	<i>No. of chicks fledged %</i>
87	4	68	51
	= 4.6%	= 78.2% of all eggs laid (87)	= 58.6% of all eggs laid (87)
		81.9% of all eggs actually incubated (83)	61.4% of all eggs actually incubated (83)
		91.9% of all eggs incubated, omitting the wholly infertile clutch (74)	68.9% of all eggs incubated, omitting the wholly infertile clutch (74)
			75.0% of young hatched (68)

These figures are obviously not sufficient for generalization. They may however be worth putting on record for purposes of comparison.

## REPORT OF THE BIRD-RINGING COMMITTEE\* :

PROGRESS FOR 1944.

A. LANDSBOROUGH THOMSON, C.B., D.SC.

*Chairman of the Committee.*

THIS is the eighth report† issued on behalf of the Bird-Ringing Committee of The British Trust for Ornithology, continuing the earlier sequence by H. F. Witherby published under the title "The *British Birds* Marking Scheme."

## MANAGEMENT.

The headquarters of the scheme remain in the British Museum (Natural History), by permission of the Trustees, and rings are inscribed "BRITISH MUSEUM NAT. HIST. LONDON."

Once again the whole of the headquarters work has been undertaken by the Honorary Secretary of the Committee, Miss E. P. Leach, to whom warmest thanks are due. Through her careful fostering of the scheme during the war, it should be readily possible to expand it again to full activity as soon as conditions permit.

## FINANCE.

Expenses have been low and the financial position continues to be satisfactory. £20 was invested in National Defence Bonds during "Wings for Victory" week. Accounts for 1943 and 1944 will be published with those of the Trust for the latter year.

## PROGRESS OF RINGING.

The number of birds ringed (see Tables) shows an increase of nearly two thousand over the low totals of 1942 and 1943. The proportion ringed as full grown has increased.

Messrs. Cowin, Ladds and Williamson head the list with the largest individual total: they have had much assistance from Mr. M. C. Glasman, who was responsible for 310 of the 783 birds ringed. Mr. K. Williamson had another ringing season in the Faeroes and has had some interesting recoveries. Messrs Ash and Ridley always show a good number of different species—on this occasion 48.

The Little Ringed Plover which were hatched at Tring were ringed by Mr. A. H. Bishop. Of other species seldom ringed, Hobbies are listed by the Oxford Ornithological Society, Hawfinches by Mr. C. Swaine, Mr. A. Darlington and Mr. H. Tully, and Roseate Terns by Commander Hughes-Onslow. Stonechats were ringed by Mr. E. Parrinder, of the London Natural History Society, to the astonishing number of 110—one-eighth of all Stonechats ringed since the inception of the scheme in 1909. Black Redstarts were ringed in Lowestoft and Ramsgate, although not in London.

\*A Publication of the British Trust for Ornithology.

†The previous report was published in *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, pp. 227-231.

Some ringers are failing to observe the rule excluding certain species from the scope of the scheme, and it is hoped that more attention will be paid to this.

#### RECOVERIES.

Among the recoveries are two of Rooks ringed eleven years before, one as an adult and one as a nestling. A Sandwich Tern over thirteen years old was recovered in northern Spain, and another was found after eleven years in the ternery where it was hatched. A Tufted Duck ringed in St. James's Park in February, 1942, was shot in Novaya Zemlya in the following May: this is by far the highest latitude from which a recovery has ever been reported.

Of birds marked by Mr. K. Williamson in the Faeroes, two Oystercatchers have been recovered in Ireland (Co. Donegal and Co. Down), a Gannet in western Morocco, and a Golden Plover in northern Spain.

There have been letters from France since the liberation of that country, bringing reports of a Swallow and a Pied Wagtail from Charente and Morbihan respectively. A Razorbill ringed at Skokholm was found in the Landes five years after ringing, and was wearing one of the experimental double-ended rings devised by R. M. Lockley as a counter-measure to this bird's tendency to erase the inscription within a comparatively short time: it is most satisfactory to note that the inscription covered by the overlap is in perfect condition, while the one at the exposed end is entirely obliterated.

#### PUBLICATION OF RESULTS.

The following publication has been made under the auspices of the Committee since the last report:—

E. P. Leach (1944). "Recovery of Marked Birds." *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxviii, pp. 28-32.

#### NUMBER OF BIRDS RINGED.

				<i>Trapped.</i>	<i>Nestlings.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
In 1944	..	..	..	1,183	5,313	6,496
„ 1943	..	..	..	660	3,920	4,580
„ 1942	..	..	..	1,301	3,266	4,567
„ 1941	..	..	..	3,109	3,990	7,099
„ 1940	..	..	..	14,974	6,208	21,182
„ 1939	..	..	..	27,983	27,834	55,817
„ 1938	..	..	..	24,162	26,162	50,324
„ 1937	..	..	..	21,900	23,281	45,181
„ 1936	..	..	..	19,235	29,428	48,663
„ 1935	..	..	..	16,066	30,364	46,430
From 1909 to 1934	..	..	..	..	..	435,640 ✓
Grand Total (including arrears)				726,713		

## INDIVIDUAL TOTALS FOR 1944.

	Nest-		Total		Nest-		Total
	Trapped	lings			Trapped	lings	
Cowin, Ladds & Williamson ..	12	771	783	C. F. Tebbutt ..	1	30	31
Ash & Ridley ..	156	283	439	W. E. Macve ..	2	28	30
Bedford School ..	23	327	350	W. A. Cadman ..	2	27	29
Oxford Orn. Soc.	146	121	267	M. & D. Rankin	—	27	27
L. G. Weller ..	184	72	256	Uppingham Sch.	—	26	26
J. J. Boon ..	14	239	253	R. Poulding ..	2	23	25
A. E. Billett ..	13	196	209	O. Wynne ..	1	24	25
Miss R. Levy ..	6	147	153	D. Hunter ..	1	23	24
R. H. Brown ..	1	142	143	J. H. Scott ..	2	22	24
J. Bartholomew	2	132	134	H. C. Trimnell ..	2	22	24
C. Oakes ..	1	129	130	A. F. Airey ..	—	23	23
O. Edwards ..	4	103	107	V. H. Spry ..	1	22	23
G. F. Dixon ..	6	95	101	H. Tully ..	8	14	22
M. K. Colquhoun	42	57	99	C. Taylor ..	—	21	21
D. R. Anderson..	58	31	89	R. Martinson ..	—	20	20
Mrs. Hodgkin ..	2	85	87	J. V. Morley ..	—	20	20
H. M. Rogers ..	7	79	86	Clayesmore Sch.	16	3	19
R. F. Rutledge	—	86	86	A. H. Johnson ..	1	18	19
R. Storer ..	19	60	79	Merseyside N. A.	1	18	19
A. Darlington ..	10	62	72	G. Hughes-Onslow	—	17	17
C. Swaine ..	6	66	72	A. K. Weatherhead	—	17	17
E. Cohen ..	8	63	71	H. Davies ..	—	16	16
Edwards, Crapnell & Watson ..	—	69	69	F. E. Keep ..	16	—	16
P. Morshead ..	9	58	67	M. C. Wainwright	—	15	15
Repton School ..	4	63	67	R. M. Band ..	—	13	13
A. W. Boyd ..	5	55	60	R. C. Prideaux ..	5	8	13
L. A. Cowcill ..	12	46	58	Sandford, Stephen & Pollok-Morris	11	2	13
B. Campbell ..	3	54	57	C. Foster-Barham	3	8	11
R. A. Carr-Lewty	—	54	54	W. J. C. Murray	10	—	10
C. B. Wainwright	2	51	53	Miss Ferrier ..	9	—	9
F. J. Brown ..	1	50	51	G. F. Houston ..	—	8	8
Oundle School ..	—	45	45	P. A. Roberts ..	—	8	8
J. Lees ..	27	17	44	Miss Soper ..	2	6	8
Bryanston School	23	19	42	Lord D. Stuart ..	5	3	8
R.N. Coll. Eaton	—	42	42	J. C. S. Ellis ..	—	7	7
"Wippletree" ..	8	33	41	M. Hardy ..	1	6	7
Bootham School	17	23	40	R. Walker ..	—	7	7
Mmes. Anscombe & Read ..	1	33	34	R. Carrick ..	—	6	6
Capt. & Mrs. Hirst	7	25	32	F. W. Fox ..	6	—	6
J. C. Walker ..	8	24	32	Woodcock Inq...	—	6	6
A. H. Bishop ..	—	31	31	J. M. B. King ..	3	2	5
Sedbergh Sch. ..	6	25	31	H. Leith ..	3	2	5

E. D. Knight, St. Edmund's School, M. P. Winsor, G. Brown and R. M. Garnett ringed fewer than five birds each.

The following include totals for previous years :—

London N.H.S. . .	159	276	435	Sir S. Bilsland ..	—	18	18
Cheltenham Coll.	11	263	274	A. McMillan ..	11	5	16
A. J. Harthan ..	19	7	26	M. G. Robinson..	—	10	10

	NUMBERS OF EACH SPECIES RINGED				RECOVERED		
	1909 to 1943	Trapped	1944 Nest- lings	Total	Grand Total	of those ringed 1909-43	Per- centage
Raven .. ..	240	—	7	7	247	19	7.9
Crow, Carrion .. ..	1731	1	44	45	1776	82	4.7
Rook .. ..	5039	3	8	11	5050	253	5.0
Jackdaw .. ..	4072	12	3	15	4087	201	4.9
Magpie .. ..	1215	3	44	47	1262	48	4.0
Jay .. ..	551	5	9	14	565	36	6.5
Chough .. ..	49	—	5	5	54	3	6.1
Starling .. ..	69961	10	44	54	70015	3151	4.5
Greenfinch .. ..	30317	211	150	361	30678	2452	8.1
Goldfinch .. ..	568	4	20	24	592	8	1.4
Redpoll, Lesser .. ..	603	2	4	6	609	6	1.0
Linnet .. ..	10347	5	169	174	10521	70	0.7
Bullfinch .. ..	1608	3	41	44	1652	60	3.7
Chaffinch .. ..	33701	77	28	105	33806	1482	4.4
Brambling .. ..	1011	—	—	—	1011	41	4.1
Sparrow, Tree- .. ..	2513	3	42	45	2558	88	3.5
Bunting, Yellow .. ..	5895	12	77	89	5984	409	6.9
Bunting, Reed .. ..	1947	1	80	81	2028	95	4.9
Lark, Sky- .. ..	3692	7	17	24	3716	47	1.3
Pipit, Tree- .. ..	1841	1	66	67	1908	5	0.3
Pipit, Meadow- .. ..	5566	5	65	70	5636	117	2.1
Pipit, Rock- .. ..	682	—	4	4	686	30	4.4
Wagtail, Yellow .. ..	1095	2	27	29	1124	4	0.4
Wagtail, Grey .. ..	903	1	19	20	923	2	0.2
Wagtail, Pied .. ..	6838	7	108	115	6953	94	1.4
Wagtail, White .. ..	79	—	—	—	79	—	—
Flycatcher, Sptd. .. ..	3483	14	33	47	3530	14	0.4
Flycatcher, Pied .. ..	1456	7	108	115	1571	9	0.6
Chiffchaff .. ..	983	8	17	25	1008	6	0.6
Warbler, Willow- .. ..	10515	41	11	52	10567	52	0.5
Warbler, Wood- .. ..	1075	2	9	11	1086	2	0.2
Warbler, Sedge- .. ..	1302	9	76	85	1387	7	0.5
Warbler, Garden- .. ..	1325	3	23	26	1351	5	0.4
Blackcap .. ..	969	1	21	22	991	2	0.2
Whitethroat .. ..	4876	47	15	62	4938	34	0.7
Thrush, Mistle- .. ..	4880	3	117	120	5000	111	2.3
Thrush, Song- .. ..	68972	56	469	525	69497	1395	2.0
Redwing .. ..	962	—	2	2	964	7	0.8
Ouzel, Ring- .. ..	546	2	18	20	566	5	0.9
Blackbird .. ..	61145	140	39	179	61324	2964	4.8
Wheatear .. ..	1921	2	24	26	1947	39	2.0
Whinchat .. ..	1698	1	63	64	1762	12	0.7
Stonechat .. ..	881	—	128	128	1009	6	0.7
Redstart .. ..	2193	9	107	116	2309	15	0.7
Robin .. ..	23515	14	5	19	23534	2281	9.7
Sparrow, Hedge- .. ..	15298	4	12	16	15314	1420	9.3
Wren .. ..	3796	13	1	14	3810	25	0.7
Dipper .. ..	1628	10	54	64	1692	20	1.2
Swallow .. ..	45508	36	888	924	46432	419	0.9
Martin, House- .. ..	12462	12	115	127	12589	81	0.6
Martin, Sand- .. ..	4724	18	5	23	4747	12	0.2
Swift .. ..	1028	18	31	49	1077	63	6.1
Kingfisher .. ..	740	—	15	15	755	33	4.5
Cuckoo .. ..	777	—	9	9	786	22	2.8

	NUMBERS OF EACH SPECIES RINGED				RECOVERED		
	1909 to 1943	Trapped	1944 Nest- lings	Total	Grand Total	of those ringed 1909-43	Per- centage
Owl, Little .. ..	659	3	40	43	702	59	9.0
Owl, Long-eared ..	228	—	15	15	243	8	3.5
Owl, Barn- .. ..	654	3	18	21	675	63	9.6
Owl, Tawny .. ..	1088	9	42	51	1130	63	5.8
Falcon, Peregrine ..	96	—	—	—	96	9	9.4
Merlin .. ..	265	—	7	7	272	52	19.6
Kestrel .. ..	982	1	61	62	1044	99	10.1
Buzzard .. ..	404	—	5	5	409	15	3.7
Hawk, Sparrow- ..	650	1	36	37	687	91	14.0
Heron, Common ..	2227	—	18	18	2245	278	12.5
Duck, Shield- ..	474	—	1	1	475	22	4.6
Mallard .. ..	6978	4	11	15	6993	1120	16.1
Teal .. ..	3328	—	2	2	3330	410	12.3
Wigeon .. ..	426	2	—	2	428	64	15.0
Duck, Tufted ..	214	28	—	28	242	45	21.0
Goosander .. ..	52	—	—	—	52	10	19.2
Cormorant .. ..	2457	—	—	—	2457	520	21.2
Shag .. ..	1967	—	—	—	1967	198	10.1
Gannet .. ..	10283	—	45	45	10328	357	3.5
Petrel, Storm- ..	576	2	—	2	578	41	7.1
Shearwater, Mx. ..	20025	—	1	1	20026	1011	5.0
Petrel, Fulmar ..	433	—	22	22	455	1	0.2
Pigeon, Wood- ..	3041	30	161	191	3232	123	4.0
Dove, Stock- ..	710	27	43	70	780	61	8.6
Dove, Turtle- ..	680	6	25	31	711	75	11.0
Curlew, Stone- ..	255	—	1	1	256	10	3.9
Oyster-catcher ..	1697	1	93	94	1791	71	4.2
Plover, Ringed ..	1551	—	14	14	1565	20	1.3
Plover, Golden ..	335	—	26	26	361	8	2.4
Lapwing .. ..	40504	8	563	571	41075	870	2.1
Dunlin .. ..	122	—	3	3	125	1	0.8
Sandpiper, C. ..	919	—	8	8	927	3	0.3
Redshank .. ..	2403	1	50	51	2454	81	3.4
Curlew, Common ..	3209	2	38	40	3249	127	4.0
Snipe, Common ..	1720	1	38	39	1768	87	5.0
Woodcock .. ..	5384	2	10	12	5396	413	7.7
Tern, Sandwich ..	18001	—	61	61	18062	321	1.8
Tern, Roseate ..	393	—	7	7	400	1	0.2
Tern, Common ..	19689	—	9	9	19698	471	2.4
Tern, Arctic .. ..	3095	—	13	13	3108	14	0.4
Tern, Little .. ..	816	—	8	8	824	8	1.0
Gull, B-headed ..	14212	76	—	76	14288	683	4.8
Gull, Common ..	1984	1	89	90	2074	66	3.3
Gull, Herring- ..	8705	1	13	14	8719	241	2.8
Gull, L. Bl.-bkd. ..	10794	—	33	33	10827	418	3.9
Gull, G. Bl.-bkd. ..	635	—	1	1	636	25	3.9
Kittiwake .. ..	2024	1	3	4	2028	28	1.4
Skua, Great .. ..	521	—	7	7	528	17	3.3
Razorbill .. ..	4566	—	—	—	4566	97	2.1
Guillemot .. ..	2471	—	—	—	2471	53	2.1
Puffin .. ..	5443	1	—	1	5444	90	1.7
Crake, Corn- ..	554	4	1	5	559	9	1.0
Moorhen .. ..	1743	19	9	28	1771	53	3.0

## NOTES.

## UNUSUAL BIRDS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DURING THE COLD SPELL.

DURING the very cold spell between January 10th and 28th, 1945, many unusual species, most of which are normally maritime, and increases in numbers of normal species, were noted in the Trent Valley near Nottingham. During the latter part of this period all the lakes and most of the smaller rivers in the Midlands were frozen over, the River Trent remaining ice-free.

The birds most affected by the weather seemed to be the ducks. Goldeneye (*Bucephala c. clangula*), which are normally reasonably common, were seen in larger numbers than usual, with a higher proportion of drakes; on January 27th about 40 were seen, at least 10 being adult males. Two adult male Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis*) were seen on January 27th and two females and an immature on the following day. Three Common Scoters (*Melanitta nigra*), two males and a female, were seen on January 28th. Two immature Velvet-Scoters (*Melanitta fusca*) were seen on January 13th and again with the Common Scoters on January 28th. Smew (*Mergus albellus*), another regular species, occurred in larger numbers, at least nine being seen on January 28th, two being adult males.

In addition to the duck, an immature Marsh-Harrier (*Circus æ. æruginosus*) was seen on January 27th and 28th, and, besides odd birds, a flock of 28 Grey Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*) was seen on January 11th.

R. J. AND T. W. RAINES.

## SCARLET GROSBEAK IN CORNWALL.

ON February 12th, 1945, through the kindness of Mrs. Aylwin, of "Trefford," Golant, near Fowey, Cornwall, I was invited to her house to assist her in identifying a bird which had been frequenting her bird-table and garden since February 6th. In her company and that of her cousin, who has had a good deal of experience of birds in different parts of the world, I had a good view of a male Scarlet Grosbeak (*Carpodacus erythrinus*), in what I judged from *The Handbook* to be second winter plumage.

The following particulars were noted:—Size about that of a Bullfinch, with stout bill identical in colour with that shown in *The Handbook*, plate 10. Carmine of crown, nape and rump not so brilliant as in adult. Mantle, scapulars, back and upper tail-coverts uniform brown. Ear-coverts brown, the brown extending back over the nape in two narrow parallel lines and then turning outwards, the whole making a saddle-like pattern. Under-parts of a carmine colouring (not brilliant) becoming whitish towards the abdomen. (At first we did not make out any white on the under-parts, but on subsequent occasions Mrs. Aylwin and I were both able to confirm the coloration as now described.) Tail and wing-feathers dark brown, fringed in outer webs with pinkish-buff. Two pinkish-buff wing-bars formed by the tips of the greater and median

coverts, the lower one fairly conspicuous. Legs palish brown. In addition Mrs. Aylwin and her cousin both remarked on the "dumpy" appearance of the bird at times.

We were within only a few feet of it and also viewed it from a bedroom window. It was watched for at least five minutes. On February 19th I saw it again and it was observed for various periods of up to about three minutes at a distance of only a few feet and with the help of glasses.

It is a sprightly bird and its flight is strong and undulating. It appeared fairly tame on the wall where the malt sweepings on which it feeds were placed, and for the first week it was fairly regular at the food-table. Later it frequented the grounds almost the whole time. A small piece of toasted bread was eaten on one occasion.

On or about February 17th it was first heard to sing and I heard the song on February 19th. I thought it resembled that of a Chaffinch, but lacked the last abrupt notes of that bird. The whole song sounded warbler-like and not so rollicking as the Chaffinch's, nor so loud. It was uttered from a fairly high position in one or other of the trees in the grounds.

The bird has continued to frequent the locality during the summer and is still about at the time of writing (July 7th). On April 21st, in company with Mrs. Aylwin, I observed it on a number of occasions to be accompanied by a hen Chaffinch (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*), which it sometimes chased through the trees and shrubs of the garden. It was even seen to attempt coition in response to solicitation behaviour by the Chaffinch. On June 12th I saw it again in company with Dr. H. M. S. Blair and Dr. Turk, of Camborne, who confirmed my identification. Its head now appeared browner than before, but no other marked change.

C. J. STEVENS.

[Although the behaviour of this bird might seem in some ways rather suggestive of a not genuinely wild individual, we are informed by Miss P. Barclay-Smith, of the *Avicultural Magazine*, that this species is very seldom kept in captivity and that it is most unlikely to be an "escape."—EDS.]

#### CLOACA-PECKING OF HOUSE-SPARROW.

I NOTE from *The Handbook of British Birds* that in the case of the House-Sparrow (*Passer d. domesticus*) pecking of the female's cloaca by males has only been once recorded. The following incident may therefore be of interest.

On April 10th, 1945, a female House-Sparrow pursued by four males alighted on a bush in an Eastbourne garden. Each male in turn proceeded to administer two or three pecks to the cloaca of the female, who remained passive with slightly lifted tail.

Since I was only some four feet away from the birds I was able to see what was taking place with the greatest distinctness.

D. D. HARBER.

## STATUS OF WOOD-LARK IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

A study of the distribution of the Wood-Lark (*Lullula a. arborea*) in Nottinghamshire has shown it to be fairly common in the "Forest country," an area of about 300 sq. miles in mid-Notts. almost resembling the Norfolk Brecks. An area of about 40 sq. miles of this "Forest" was covered and thirty-six pairs of Wood-Larks were found in twelve localities.

*The Handbook* mentions that only a few pairs breed in N. Notts.

R. J. RAINES.

## SHORE-LARK IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

ON March 31st, 1945, a Shore-Lark (*Eremophila alpestris flava*) was seen by Mr. J. Staton, Mr. A. Mason and myself, on a sandy heath near Oxton. The bird was quite tame and we were able to get views from all angles at about 12 yards range in good light. The description noted was as follows: A lark about the size of a Wood-Lark, but with long tail, yellowish head with a black line on the crown, black patch through the eye and crescent-shaped, rather small black mark on the upper breast. Upper-parts brown with a definite pinkish tinge, giving a beautiful almost mottled effect at long range. Under-parts creamy white. Outer tail-feathers with faint white edge.

It was probably just completing the moult, since the head markings were not quite complete. A call, somewhat resembling that of a Meadow-Pipit, was given when the bird was in flight. R. J. RAINES.

## POSSIBLE LIFE-PAIRING OF NUTHATCH.

IN the winter of 1939-40 seven Nuthatches (*Sitta europæa affinis*) were marked with different combinations of coloured rings at Dartington in south Devon. On April 2nd, 1945, two of these birds were found alive and paired together. They are therefore at least six years old. The same two birds were often seen together in the spring of 1940 in the same territory occupied in 1945, but unfortunately I was too busy in that year to make sure whether they were paired together or not; the presumption is that they were. Steinfatt (*Beitr. z. Fortpfl. d. Vögel*, Vol. 14, p. 86, 1938) considers that the Nuthatch probably pairs for life. Incidentally the feeding habits of the Nuthatch seem rather different in south Devon from what I have seen in the Midlands and in south-eastern England. In south Devon the bird feeds extremely commonly on the ground; it regularly comes to the back door and to other sources for human food scraps, and is frequently caught in a house-trap of standard type.

DAVID LACK.

## EXTENSIVE PLASTERING BY NUTHATCH.

ON June 3rd, 1945, Mr. T. A. Baldock showed us what seems to be an unusually large plastering job for a Nuthatch (*Sitta europæa affinis*). A ragged hole 12½ inches long and varying from 4 to 5 inches wide in the trunk of a walnut tree almost touching a house at Wellington, Somerset, had been almost entirely plastered up,

to leave in the middle no more than an entrance of the usual size. Mr. Baldock informs us that in the thirty years he has known this hole in the tree it has never before been occupied by a Nuthatch.

R. E. AND W. M. MOREAU.

#### KITE IN SOMERSET.

ON April 9th, 1945, whilst walking in a wood near Minchhead, Somerset, I happened to look up and saw a large hawk gliding over at about 150 feet. On inspection through binoculars I saw that the wings were longer and less blunt than those of a Buzzard (a common bird in that locality) and also the tail was deeply forked, with a distinctive white patch under each wing.

The bird was thus clearly a Kite (*Milvus m. milvus*). Possibly this will be confirmed by other observers in the district.

J. KNOWLES.

#### FERRUGINOUS DUCK IN DORSET.

ON several occasions between January 4th and 20th inclusive, 1945, I saw a drake Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya n. nyroca*) on the River Stour near Blandford, Dorset. The warm, velvety chestnut colouring of head, neck and upper breast, darker brown back and sharply defined white under tail-coverts were clearly seen. In flight the broad white crescent on the wing was most striking. The eye showed white at close range. The bird was also seen by other observers, namely Miss T. F. Almack, Mr. K. V. Elphinstone and Mr. H. Gifford. It was last seen by Mr. Elphinstone on January 24th, when owing to the very severe weather the water above the weir on the stretch of the river which the bird regularly frequented had frozen and the level below the weir had dropped considerably.

ARTHUR J. BULL.

[Mr. Bull has submitted confirmatory accounts of the bird by the other observers named. Unfortunately we cannot avoid the usual comment that it may possibly have been an escape.—EDS.]

#### FULMAR BREEDING IN CORNWALL.

ON a stretch of cliff between Newquay and Tintagel—I am not permitted at present to divulge the exact locality—I first recorded the presence of one pair of Fulmars (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*) on July 1st, 1939.

Mr. W. Symes Watts, recently resident in North Cornwall, informs me that, in 1944, he paid a number of visits to this station and estimated that about 20 pairs of Fulmars were occupying it. On July 22nd, he saw one "white chick" uncovered by a bird brooding it and, on the 26th, another chick which was "grey white." The former soon disappeared, but the latter reached maturity and flew between September 4th and 8th.

Though Fulmars have been prospecting other sites on the Cornish coasts for some years, Mr. Watts's observations afford the first definite record of breeding having commenced in Cornwall.

B. H. RYVES.

## BLACK TERN IN ABERDEENSHIRE.

ON May 9th, 1945, I saw a Black Tern (*Chlidonias n. niger*) on the River Deveron above Huntly. It was in full summer plumage. When first seen in the morning it was silent, being busily engaged in feeding, ever in motion as it dipped ceaselessly to take insects off the surface of the water. Later, in the evening, when it was still present on the same stretch of water, I heard it utter a typical tern-like "kik kik"—rather softly. At that time it was hawking for insects in mid-air, flicking about in desultory fashion. It only remained for the one day and has not been seen since.

There are few records of this species so far north on the mainland of Scotland.

GEORGE WATERSTON.

## LITTLE GULL IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

WE should like to record that at the Northampton Sewage Farm, on February 25th, 1945, we obtained clear views of an adult Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). On the first occasion the bird, which was in the early stages of transitional plumage, flew past us only a yard or two away and a few feet above the ground. During the time we saw it we noted with 8x field-glasses the following: small size; beak blackish; forehead white; line above eye white; crown and nape deep grey showing sides of black head of the summer plumage; body white except for pale grey mantle, scapulars and back; wings on upper-side pale grey, on under-side very dark grey—almost seeming black; no black on wing-tips; wings more blunt than those of Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*); flight was lighter, more airy and more tern-like.

It seems an odd time of year to see a bird of this species so far inland and is, we think, for that reason at least worth recording.

I. J. FERGUSON LEES AND H. A. W. SOUTHON.

## BLACK-HEADED GULL FEEDING INDEPENDENT YOUNG.

DURING the autumn and winter of 1944-5 I have been watching a young Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*) being regularly fed by an accompanying adult at Arnside, Westmorland. The late Mr. Bertram Lloyd has recorded similar feeding of independent young by Herring-Gulls (*antea*, p. 39), but there are certain differences in this case. It appears from Mr. Lloyd's description that a number of young Herring-Gulls were being indiscriminately fed by several adults, but the striking feature of the present instance was the close attachment of one adult Black-headed Gull to a single juvenile. The young bird would recognise its "parent" in flight and begin bowing and whistling before the adult alighted. It would continue begging, sometimes actually pecking the adult's bill, until the latter either flew off or regurgitated some food. The parent occasionally brought food in its bill or put down before the juvenile something picked up on the shore, but feeding by regurgitation either on land or water was much more frequent. On two occasions the adult responded to begging by adopting momentarily

the attitude Kirkman calls the "forward display." It regularly drove off other Black-headed and Common Gulls near the juvenile and once swooped threateningly at a Great and a Lesser Black-backed Gull some yards away on the water.

The young bird seemed physically normal in every respect and found some food for itself. This behaviour continued from the end of August until the juvenile was last seen on February 18th, 1945.

J. A. G. BARNES.

HOODED CROWS NESTING ON TELEGRAPH POLES.—Mr. Bruce Campbell has forwarded us a photograph taken by Sheriff Wallace of a nest of the Hooded Crow (*Corvus c. cornix*) on a telegraph pole on Yell, Shetland. Mr. Campbell's original informant on the subject was Mr. John Beaton, who saw one bird sitting and another building in a similar site on May 9th, 1945.

HOUSE-SPARROWS EJECTING YOUNG HOUSE-MARTINS.—Mr. R. M. Garnett draws our attention to an account by him in *Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxiv, p. 104, of House-Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*) ejecting and killing young House-Martins (*Delichon u. urbica*), which we overlooked in commenting on the note by Mr. L. Rendell (*antea*, p. 238).

WAXWINGS IN GREAT BRITAIN.—A few belated records of Waxwings (*Bombycilla g. garrulus*) in previously unrecorded areas in the 1944 invasion continue to reach us.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.—A flock was seen by Mr. H. Southwell, Secretary of the Kettering Natural History Society, near Geddington, north of Kettering, on March 6th, 1944 and subsequently. The number of birds was fifteen at first, but gradually declined, mainly through the activities of a bird-catcher. The last was seen on April 4th (R. E. Burton).

SHROPSHIRE.—Three at Maesbrook on March 23rd; remained for at least a week (J. H. Owen).

YORKSHIRE.—The latest record in the county was of a hundred birds seen by C. B. Horsman on Ruston Common, near Scarborough, on April 22nd (*Naturalist*, 1945, p. 57).

BANFFSHIRE.—Two at Forglen, January 6th (A. Watson).

DIPPER IN KENT.—Mr. C. Norman reports that a Dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) frequented the vicinity of the mill at the village of Wickhambreux, Kent, five miles east of Canterbury, for about three weeks in December, 1944, and January, 1945.

## LETTER.

### PARENT BIRDS PROBING AMONGST BROOD IN NEST.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS.—I was particularly interested in the recent account in *British Birds* (*antea*, p. 206) of Blue Tits "digging" in the bottom of a nest amongst the brood. I have recorded the same action on a colour film of five young Jays being visited by one of their parents. Although the young were almost fledged, the parents unfailingly swallowed every dropping and I am quite sure the "digging" had nothing to do with ordinary sanitation. The parent can be seen to stand in the middle of the overcrowded nest and then dive the head down to the bottom and shake vigorously with the effort of reaching something with the bill. The purpose can at present be only a guess. It may, of course, be concerned with parasites, but as an alternative I am considering the possibility that it may have to do with the removal of the young birds' scaled-off feather sheaths. In the course of filming I witnessed this habit of the Jays on a number of occasions.

H. G. HURRELL.

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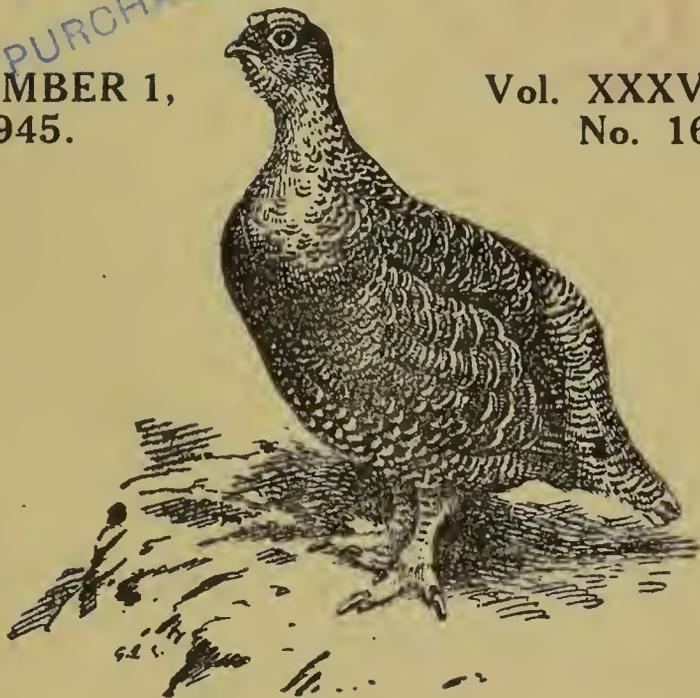
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## FURTHER NOTES ON CHAFFINCH MIGRATION IN NORTH DEVON

BY

D. A. BANNERMAN, Sc.D.

(from data supplied by G. Mitchell-Hedges.)

IN *British Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, 1944, p. 177, I drew attention to the considerable migration of *Fringilla caelebs* which takes place in autumn along the coast of North Devon. My observations had been made in successive Octobers at Vention in Morte Bay, or Woollacombe Bay, as it is locally termed. Further correspondence on the subject followed from N. V. Allen (p. 212), H. G. Hurrell (Vol. xxxviii, p. 10), who published with his remarks a little sketch map showing the position of Vention between the two headlands Morte Point and Hartland Point, another considerable headland, Baggy Point (not shown in the sketch map), lying in between. Dr. Norman Ticehurst in a footnote to my own notes was kind enough to express a hope that I should continue my investigations on the migration of Chaffinches along the Devon coast, as very little appears to be known of this very marked migration in the West of England. I had hoped to be able to return to Vention last October, 1944, but circumstances combined to make that impossible.

Fortunately, there lives at Vention a former member of the B.O.U., Mr. George Mitchell-Hedges, whose knowledge of the local bird-life is much greater than my own, and he most generously came to the rescue and has kept *detailed observations* on the autumn passage of the Chaffinches in 1944. Mr. Mitchell-Hedges's house is situated close to the shore within about 50 yards of high water mark. The ground rises steeply behind the house, downland and agricultural fields, while in front lies the whole wide sweep of Woollacombe Sands with Baggy Point to the S.W. standing out to sea. Lundy Island lies immediately opposite. From Mr. Mitchell-Hedges's house an uninterrupted view stretches in every direction, and no better site could be imagined from which to observe the passage of any birds passing up or down the coast.

Mr. Mitchell-Hedges writes: "Unfortunately I was away for two periods: in October from 19th to 25th and again from October 31st to November 4th. The first large movement of birds took place on October the 9th; the telephone wires and high tension cables in the fields at the back of my house were thick with Brown Linnets. They allowed close approach to immediately under the wires, and with the aid of my glasses I noted they all appeared to be having a general clean up, much preening of feathers and stretching of wings, accompanied by a continuous chatter. They stayed for roughly 1½ hours and then, as if given a signal, all made off *en masse*. Temperature 56°, wind due East, calm. Sky overcast. They departed due south.

" Oct. 10th-11th.

Strong winds, culminating in a gale of 12 hours' duration.

" Oct. 12th.

The first large movement of the Chaffinches. On this, as on subsequent occasions, whilst the majority of flocks were *one* sex, some flocks were *definitely* of both sexes mixed in fairly even proportions. Barometer 29.5. Thermometer 48°. Sky overcast, occasional *slight* showers, wind slight E.S.E. The flight was N. to S."

" Oct. 13th.

Very large numbers passing, *all* Chaffinches apart from one lot of 18 Larks and one lot of about 20 Goldfinches. This was rather an interesting day, as it started with a wind of approximately 12-15 m.p.h., becoming squally and ending up in a violent gale at night. Wind early S.E. veering at night to W.N.W. Temperature 52°. For the first time the Chaffinches, during a squall, settled all along the hedge lining the high road at the back of our house. The wind had increased and they appeared to sense a squall was at hand, as within five minutes of their settling, had they been in flight, they must have been blown out to sea. I went up the fields with my glasses and both sexes were present with much 'pink-pinking' from the males. The squall lasted no more than five minutes and they were on their way once more. It was hard work for them, as they made a lot of leeway. Wind S.E. at an angle of about 45° on their line of flight."

" Oct. 14th.

Heavy gale which lasted throughout the night. Migration stopped."

" Oct. 15th.

The morning was calmer and *large* numbers of Chaffinches took advantage of the better conditions; the day started with a slight S.E. breeze, the glass dropping rapidly, wind backing at first and then veering S. to W. The day ended in another gale from the N.W. accompanied by heavy rain."

" Oct. 16th.

A fair morning, the wind rising once more in the afternoon. A *few* Chaffinches passing, the light too bad to distinguish sex and also too far inland. Gale force of wind stopped all movement after mid-day. Rain and *stormy* S.E. wind continued all day."

" Oct. 17th.

No birds."

" Oct. 18th.

Gale from S.W. No birds."

" Oct. 19th.

(On this date Mr. Mitchell-Hedges went to Exmouth and although the weather was quite fair all the weekend, no Chaffinches were

seen on migration at Exmouth or Budleigh Salterton in South Devon)."

" Oct. 19th-25th.

Absent from Vention and unable therefore to make any observations ; returned that evening."

" Oct. 26th (Vention).

By far the largest movement of the season took place. At 8.30 a.m. the stream was continuous, with few breaks between each party. The Chaffinches were flying much higher than usual, 200-350 feet, and were *all* inland, *none* on the sea side of the house. Very light breeze, overcast, temperature 48°, wind S.E. by E. A few Larks and Goldfinches joined the Chaffinch procession. It was a great day of migration."

" Oct. 27th.

Gales once more and apparently the end of the movement from N. to S."

(Between this date (27th) and the end of the month Mr. Mitchell-Hedges has no entries ; presumably therefore no birds were seen passing until) :—

" Nov. 1st.

Chaffinches again on the move and a striking change of direction noted. Small flights of up to 50 Chaffinches were flying from S. to N. probably under 1,000 in the day, but *none* were seen flying N. to S. Sky clear, very light E. wind, temperature 42°, glass rising."

" Nov. 2nd to 7th.

No noticeable movement."

" Nov. 8th.

Exactly one week from the last noticeable movement, quite *large* numbers of Chaffinches were observed going *south*, flying high, 250-350 feet, wind light, E. and slight rain, temperature 42°, glass dropping. *Through* the southward movement of birds a number of flights were going north. I watched carefully and although some flights went completely *through* others flying in the opposite direction, none appeared to change their course."

" Nov. 9th onwards.

No organised movements took place after 8th November, but every day small parties of Chaffinches, the sexes mixed, may be seen in the hedgerows between Vention and Georgeham (the nearest village about 2 miles inland).

I have *never* seen any movement of Chaffinches here at Vention in the spring, so assume they must go to Wales, etc., by another route."

G. MITCHELL-HEDGES,  
Vention, N. Devon.

Mr. Mitchell-Hedges asks *where* the south-bound Chaffinches cross the Channel (if they do) and whither the north-bound Chaffinches were going observed on the 1st and 8th? It will be remembered that Eagle-Clarke recorded large flights of Chaffinches "regularly participating in the great night rushes" past the Eddystone Lighthouse "between September 30th and November 7th, all flying steadily southwards" (*Studies in Bird Migration*, Vol. 1, p.310). I think there is every probability that the Chaffinches which regularly pass the Eddystone and evidently cross the Channel in autumn are birds which have followed the West Coast route and perhaps, as Mr. Hurrell suggested (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxviii pp. 10-11), strike inland by way of the valley of the Torridge, which, if they continued due south, would bring them to the sea, once more in the neighbourhood of Plymouth (and the Eddystone Lighthouse). I still maintain that these are *not* our native birds, but examples of *Fringilla cæleks cæleks*.<sup>1</sup>

One other point should be stressed regarding the thousands of Chaffinches which cross from Wales to N. Devon. It seems evident that they strike the English Coast somewhere between Lynton and Ilfracombe (or at any rate some point west of Porlock) for Mr. E. W. Hendy, who at my request has kept a special look-out last autumn at Porlock, informs me that he finds "no trace of coast migration" but that there was "an obvious influx of Chaffinches in Porlock Vale during the last week in October and they seem to arrive overland." No movement of Chaffinches was seen during the days when such numbers were passing Vention.

The problem as to where the Chaffinches were heading which Mr. Mitchell-Hedges observed on November 1st and 8th is more difficult of explanation. Could it be that these were British-bred Cornish and Devon birds seeking fresh winter-quarters or were they Continental birds, on their way to winter in Ireland, which had cruised along the south coast of England until reaching a convenient point at which to strike north, possibly using the very same route as the south-bound Chaffinches flying in the reverse direction? We have indisputable evidence of Chaffinches captured and ringed in autumn in Holland and Belgium being recovered later in Ireland, and if some of those birds follow our southern shore-line as I have suggested they could well be seen flying north on their way to Ireland up the north Devon coast. The numbers of south-bound Chaffinches coming from Wales would not deter them from their purpose and (as observed by Mr. Mitchell-Hedges at Vention) we should expect them to fly *right through* any flocks passing in a southerly direction.

Readers of *British Birds* will doubtless have other suggestions to make, such for instance that these north-bound Chaffinches were just

<sup>1</sup>We think it would be legitimate and desirable to endeavour to settle this point by shooting two or three males, though the racial distinctions are not very clear in winter plumage.—EDS.

members of nomad flocks in search of pastures new—either British-bred birds or birds of Continental origin which had settled down in the West Country for the winter. The passage, which lasted all day, seems to have been too purposeful to admit of that explanation to my mind.

Finally I do not believe that the countless numbers of Chaffinches which pass down the North Devon coast in autumn remain in Devon and Cornwall to winter. Such a vast influx to the normal Chaffinch population would surely have been noted by the vigilant members of the Devon and Cornwall Bird Watching Societies, who are justly famed for their activities and careful observations.

[Since writing the above notes I have come across interesting confirmation of the suggestion that the Chaffinches make use of a regular flight-line from North Devon to South Devon in Eagle-Clarke's *Studies in Bird Migration*, where, in Vol. 1, p. 96, that distinguished authority wrote in 1912: "There is an interesting cross-country route from Barnstaple Bay, on the north coast, by way of the Torridge and Teign valleys to the south coast of the county. This "short cut" is much followed in the autumn by migrants seeking winter quarters across the Channel. For this information I am indebted to Mr. A. S. Elliot." D.A.B.]

## BIRDS OF INNER LONDON

BY

G. CARMICHAEL LOW.

No new species have been recorded for Inner London during 1944. The most interesting happening was that of a Water-Rail picked up in a street in Paddington, a quite rare occurrence, and only noted twice before in Mr. Holt Macpherson's lists. Black Redstarts were again in evidence and two broods were reared in the Temple Grounds. More observers have sent in reports this year.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES IN 1944.

CARRION-CROW (*Corvus c. corone*).—A few in all the Inner London Parks as usual.

JACKDAW (*Corvus monedula spermologus*).—The colony in the S.W. corner of Kensington Gardens has considerably diminished this year. Two (possibly three) pairs only nested; fledged young were seen at one of the holes in a big elm tree, June 3rd.

JAY (*Garrulus glandarius rufitergum*).—Bred again in Hyde Park. Mrs. Lilian Cox saw a pair on April 22nd starting to build a nest in a tall poplar tree close to the garden gate of New Lodge; the nest was in a clump of boughs against the trunk of the tree, about 30 feet up and not easy to see. Mrs. Campbell, who lives in New Lodge, watched the site and one day later saw a young one with one of the adults by the nest. Jays are now resident in Kensington Gardens and can be seen at any time; the most seen at one time was a company of five on January 10th (G.C.L.); seen in St. James's Park, July 30th and December 16th (T. L. Bartlett).

GREENFINCH (*Chloris ch. chloris*).—One near Long Water, March 6th (B. A. Richards); a pair in the Flower Walk during the summer, which probably nested (G.C.L.); four, Bird Sanctuary, Hyde Park, November 3rd (A. V. Tucker).

SKY-LARK (*Alauda a. arvensis*).—Prof. E. H. Warmington saw one flying over Fetter Lane, calling, on August 24th.

MEADOW-PIBIT (*Anthus pratensis*).—Two flying over Fetter Lane, October 1st (E. H. Warmington).

YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava flavissima*).—A young bird on low ruins, Fetter Lane, August 26th (E. H. Warmington).

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla c. cinerea*).—Many records. One, empty basins at head of Long Water, January 27th and 29th; one Long Water, March 6th, and November 17th and 25th (B. A. Richards); one, Round Pond, Kensington Gardens, October 14th (G.C.L.); also seen in Temple and Fetter Lane area, October and November (Howard Bentham); one seen and heard over Palace Street, Westminster, November 4th (E. R. Parrinder); one, Duchess Square, W.1 on static tank (W. J. L. Sladen); one in Dell, Hyde Park, September 29th (R. W. Hayman). Sir Cyril Hurcomb noted them also at water tanks in Park Lane and Berkeley Square on several occasions up to November.

PIED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*).—Many records, Kensington Gardens, Temple, etc.

TREE-CREEPER (*Certhia familiaris britannica*).—Frequently seen Kensington Gardens; one near the Tea House, January 13th (Sir Cyril Hurcomb); two, March 10th (Miss van Oostveen and G.C.L.); one, April 9th and 13th (G.C.L.); one, October 5th, 7th and 30th, behind Peter Pan sanctuary (B. A. Richards).

BLUE TIT (*Parus cæruleus obscurus*).—Common in all the parks.

COAL TIT (*Parus ater britannicus*).—Seen in Kensington Gardens, August 24th, September 14th and November 18th (B. A. Richards); three or four in a garden on Campden Hill, September 3rd (Sir Cyril Hurcomb).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).—Not so numerous in Kensington Gardens as last year; two pairs nested (G.C.L.); also seen by B. A. Richards and C. Dolley; a brood near the Albert Memorial, July (Sir Cyril Hurcomb); a pair in Hyde Park, May 23rd (A. V. Tucker); a pair with young, August 19th, Lincoln's Inn (E. H. Warmington); also seen in Earls Court area in blitzed gardens in June (R. H. M. Ryall).

GOLDCREST (*Regulus r. anglorum*).—Mr. B. A. Richards saw one in the Flower Walk, Kensington Gardens, October 4th.

CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus c. collybita*).—Heard as usual on migration in Kensington Gardens (Sir Cyril Hurcomb, G.C.L.); also reported from Lincoln's Inn, Earls Court and Green Park (E. H. Warmington, Miss M. Curtis, W. J. L. Sladen).

WILLOW-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus t. trochilus*).—Several on passage Kensington Gardens; first, April 11th (G.C.L.); one, Elm Park Gardens, S.W.3, April 29th (W. J. L. Sladen); one, Pump Court, May 6th (Howard Bentham); one in the Temple grounds, between the Church and Hall, mobbing one of the young Black Redstarts, July 23rd (G.C.L.); one singing Berkeley Square, August 6th (Sir Cyril Hurcomb); several heard in St. James's Park (T. L. Bartlett, etc.).

WOOD-WARBLER (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*).—One sang all day, April 23rd, in Lincoln's Inn (E. H. Warmington).

GARDEN-WARBLER (*Sylvia borin*).—Miss E. R. Glover saw and heard one singing in the Flower Walk, Kensington Gardens, May 7th.

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*).—One singing, Flower Walk, Kensington Gardens, May 7th (Miss E. R. Glover); one singing in a birch tree, Lincoln's Inn, May 13th (E. H. Warmington).

WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia c. communis*).—Mr. F. J. Holroyde saw one on May 1st amongst the weeds in what used to be Nevill Court, off Fetter Lane, and H. Bentham saw one there, August 9th; one, Hyde Park, May 3rd (G.C.L.); one in the well piece, between the Hall and Church of the Temple, August 6th (G.C.L.); one in the small shrubbery on the Bayswater Road at the junction of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, September 8th (B. A. Richards).

LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia c. curruca*).—Prof. E. H. Warmington saw one on a tree in New Square, Lincoln's Inn, on May 7th.

FIELDFARE (*Turdus pilaris*).—Twenty-five crossed over Nevern Square, March 21st (R. Preston Donaldson); nine passed over Lords Cricket Ground, 11.30 a.m. going N.N.W., October 14th (Mrs. Rait Kerr).

**MISTLE THRUSH** (*Turdus v. viscivorus*).—One singing, Berkeley Square, January 29th (Sir Cyril Hurcomb); a pair nested in Middle Temple Gardens and reared young (Howard Bentham); adult and two young, St. James's Park, July 21st (T. L. Bartlett); brood of young, Regent's Park, September 28th (E. H. Warmington).

**REDWING** (*Turdus m. musicus*).—T. Guthrie, one of the Park keepers, saw a flock of over a hundred, near Speke's monument in Kensington Gardens, March 7th.

**WHEATEAR** (*Enanthe æ. ænanthe*).—One, a male, Nevill Court, Fetter Lane, April 24th (Howard Bentham); one amongst weeds there on May 1st, sex not determined (F. J. Holroyde); one flew up from weeds and crossed Fore Street, over Redcross Street Fire Station, May 8th (H. G. Gould).

**WHINCHAT** (*Saxicola rubetra*).—Mr. J. S. S. Beesley and Mr. Howard Bentham saw one on April 20th in the Fetter Lane area.

**BLACK REDSTART** (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*).—Several again reported during the summer; two broods brought up in the Temple grounds. For full details *vide* R. S. R. Fitter (*antea*, p. 248).

**SWALLOW** (*Hirundo r. rustica*).—One, St. James's Park, April 11th (E. M. Nicholson); two migrants flying over Kensington Palace, August 31st (G.C.L.); uncommon in Inner London.

**HOUSE-MARTIN** (*Delichon u. urbica*).—Three over Flower Walk, Kensington Gardens, October 4th (B. A. Richards); three flying over Gloucester Road, October 18th (R. Preston Donaldson).

**SWIFT** (*Apus a. apus*).—A few seen over the Round Pond and Lancaster Gate area from time to time (B. A. Richards and C.G.L.); six crossing Victoria Street, May 4th (R. Preston Donaldson); four St. James's Park, May 24th (T. L. Bartlett); two over lake, St. James's Park, June 19th (R. S. R. Fitter); four over Serpentine, June 6th (A. V. Tucker); Fleet Street, August 12th, c.30 circling round, 8 p.m. (E. H. Warmington).

**KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo atthis ispida*).—One over lake, St. James's Park, September 18th (W. R. Philipson); one, October 21st and 25th (E. H. Warmington); one, October 20th and December 18th (E. O. Höhn).

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates major anglicus*).—Seen March 6th, 23rd, and April 20th near the Fountains, Kensington Gardens (B. A. Richards); one drumming, January 30th, a pair, April 9th, no nest located this year (G.C.L.); Sir Cyril Hurcomb saw a female bird entering a hole in a tree in Kensington Gardens, April 25th, but no later signs of nesting.

**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates minor comminutus*).—Miss M. S. van Oostveen saw one in Kensington Gardens, March 8th; one drumming, April 13th (G.C.L.).

**CUCKOO** (*Cuculus c. canorus*).—One calling, Kensington Gardens, April 21st (T. Guthrie, Park Keeper); another, April 30th (T. J. Dudley); yet another, May 12th (Miss E. R. Glover).

**TAWNY OWL** (*Strix aluco sylvatica*).—A pair of the Kensington Gardens birds were picked up dead by the crater of a very big bomb by T. Guthrie, one of the keepers, on February 25th; since

then others have been seen, however, and there are still probably two pairs; no nest detected; Sir Cyril Hurcomb reports that the bird constantly seen in Hyde Park last year is still there.

PEREGRINE (*Falco p. peregrinus*).—Mr. B. A. Richards saw one, flying S.W. high up over the Serpentine on November 18th.

KESTREL (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).—Many records by different observers; Mr. P. Stormonth-Darling—*The Times*, Saturday, January 8th, 1944—reports that he saw a Kestrel in New Square, Lincoln's Inn drop on a sparrow feeding on the grass and later fly off with it towards the Law Courts; Mr. Miles Thornewill—*The Times*, January 13th, 1944—saw a Kestrel flutter off a ledge above his room on the river front of the Savoy Hotel and die on the roadway; once or twice noted over Kensington Gardens during the year, but again no nest at the Imperial Institute (G.C.L.); one over Cannon Street Station, April 12th, and one over Kensington Court, W.8, September 3rd (G.C.L.); seen also over the Temple, October 18th and 21st, and November 10th (Howard Bentham); over County Hall, November 6th (T. L. Bartlett), etc., etc.

SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter n. nisus*).—Lord Noel Buxton writing to *The Times*, April 21st, 1944, records that when his daughter was passing along Broadway (Westminster) she saw a Sparrow-Hawk on the pavement, a few yards in front of her, with a sparrow in its claws. It rose and flew off with its victim in the direction of Victoria Street. R. H. Ryall saw one fly over Kensington High Street on January 25th and R. W. Hayman one circling round over New Kings Road, Fulham, on September 9th.

HERON (*Ardea c. cinerea*).—One frequented the Long Water, Kensington Gardens, throughout the year (B. A. Richards, G.C.L.); a pair flying over Lower Regent Street, 9.15 a.m., May 11th (J. P. M. Whipp); one over Camden Town, June 25th (R. S. R. Fitter).

MALLARD (*Anas p. platyrhynchos*).—For some unexplained reason completely deserted the Round Pond and Long Water at the end of November, though at the same time there were plenty on the lake at Regent's Park and in St. James's Park. Possibly due to irregular shooting, though Pochards and Tufted Duck remained.

TEAL (*Anas c. crecca*).—One, a female, on the Round Pond, October 7th (G.C.L.). Mr. T. L. Bartlett reports another, also a female and apparently a wild bird, on the lake in St. James's Park from February 13th to 25th.

POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*).—The usual flock spent the winter on the Round Pond, numbers sometimes rising to 30 or over (G.C.L.).

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*).—Not so many nested on the island in St. James's Park as usual; several young broods seen on July 23rd; one on the lake in Regent's Park with a brood of nine, July 20th (G.C.L.).

SCAUP DUCK (*Aythya m. marila*).—The St. James's Park bird was there at its usual place by the bridge over the lake in January and stayed till March. Mr. B. A. Richards saw a female on the Long Water, Kensington Gardens, January 4th and 14th; a young female was on the Round Pond, March 23rd and stayed till the

end of April (Miss E. P. Leach, G.C.L. and Sir Cyril Hurcomb); another female on the Round Pond, August 13th and December 2nd (Miss E. P. Leach and G.C.L.). Lt. Col. K. A. Macleod in a letter in *The Times*, of December 5th, reported that the St. James's Park bird (the adult male) was back again at its usual place and Mr. T. L. Bartlett saw it there on December 6th.

**CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*).—One frequently seen on the wing and on the rocks in the St. James's Park Lake from the end of July to the beginning of October (T. L. Bartlett).

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** (*Podiceps c. cristatus*).—Sir Cyril Hurcomb saw two on the Serpentine, March 14th.

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Podiceps r. ruficollis*).—Many observers noted this species during the year in St. James's Park Lake; one, March 22nd (B. A. Richards); Mr. T. L. Bartlett counted seven in November and Sir Cyril Hurcomb saw one on December 18th; one, Round Pond, October 7th and 30th (G.C.L.).

**WOOD-PIGEON** (*Columba p. palumbus*).—Much reduced by shooting owing to complaints by allotment holders. In Kensington Gardens they used to abound but are now rare.

**STOCK-DOVE** (*Columba cenas*).—One pair started a nest in Kensington Gardens, April 11th, but then disappeared, shot no doubt by the official Wood-Pigeon killer (G.C.L.).

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*).—Miss M. J. Tetley saw one on the north side of the big island in St. James's Park, May 6th, Sir Cyril Hurcomb saw one in the dell at end of Serpentine, May 11th, and Mr. E. G. Pedler heard one calling, east of Waterloo Bridge, on the south bank of the river, August 16th.

**LAPWING** (*Vanellus vanellus*).—Party of 15 flying over the Long Water in S.W. direction, November 11th (B. A. Richards).

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus f. fuscus* and *graellsii*).—Both forms were seen on the river, on the lake at Regents Park, on the Long Water and Round Pond in Kensington Gardens during the year (G.C.L.).

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus marinus*).—Seen on barges, with Lesser Black-back, between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges, February 2nd, August 29th and October 2nd (T. L. Bartlett).

**WATER-RAIL** (*Rallus a. aquaticus*).—One was picked up by the police in a street in Paddington on November 28th and was taken to the Zoo. On December 5th it looked all right, but the keeper thought it had a slight damage to one of its wings. For two earlier occurrences in Inner London, see *antea*, Vol. xxiii, p. 266, and xxx, p. 368 (G.C.L.).

**MOORHEN** (*Gallinula ch. chloropus*).—Mr. E. M. Firth reports that on February 20th, a very distressed Moorhen flew behind a chimney stack on the roof of Portland House, eight stories above the ground after bombs had been dropped in St. James's Park.

**PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*).—Mr. Howard Bentham flushed a female from amongst tall weeds in a wrecked basement close to the Temple Church on November 13th.

## OBITUARY.

FREDERICK BEEVER KIRKMAN

(1869-1945)

F. B. KIRKMAN, whose death on May 1st, 1945, we regret to record, is chiefly known to ornithologists as editor and part author of *The British Bird Book* (1910-13) and the author in much more recent years of *Bird Behaviour*, based on his studies of the Black-headed Gull.

Kirkman was born on February 16th, 1869, at Equeefa, Natal, and was the son of John Kirkman, J.P., and his first wife, Lizzy Beaver. His grandfather was the Rev. T. P. Kirkman, a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was educated at Beaumaris Grammar School, Lincoln College, Oxford, and the University of Paris. By profession he was a schoolmaster in his earlier years and was an assistant master at Bromsgrove, Radley College and Merchant Taylors' School, but in 1898 he gave up teaching on medical advice. He remained, however, actively in touch with scholastic affairs, especially in connexion with modern languages, and for many years he examined for Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities. He played an active part in the introduction of reformed methods of modern language teaching in English schools and was the author or editor of a number of French and other school books. In 1910 he married Kathleen Helena Willis, and they had two sons, both now in the R.A.F.

Though he had published a few short notes and papers previously, Kirkman was first really brought to the notice of ornithologists by his leading part in the production of what must be regarded as one of the major ventures in British ornithological literature, *The British Bird Book*. This ambitious work, in which he was assisted by the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, W. P. Pycraft, Miss E. L. Turner and other well-known ornithologists, appeared in twelve sections in the years 1910 to 1913, eventually forming four bulky quarto volumes. A feature of it was the detailed treatment of the habits and mode of life of the members of each group of related species in a single general article, though other matter was dealt with in the form of classified notes under species headings. The work did not escape some criticism, to which the somewhat extravagant style of an article by Edmund Selous in the first section undoubtedly contributed, but in many ways it was admirable. For the first time a serious attempt was made to record as much as possible about the displays and "behaviour" of British Birds and the work was also notable for the care with which not only British, but foreign, literature was searched for information on habits, a feature no doubt not unconnected with Kirkman's own proficiency in languages. The plan of the coloured illustrations, by A. W. Seaby and a number of others, was also original, in that instead of being merely, as it were, studio portraits, they showed the birds, so far as possible, engaged in some characteristic activity in a natural setting, though

it must be admitted that by no means all of them were good. Finally, the coloured figures of eggs, by Henrik Grönvold, a past-master in this most difficult branch of zoological draughtsmanship, were some of the best that have ever been produced. Thus, in spite of faults, *The British Bird Book* remains, even after thirty years, a valuable work of reference. Much more recently the plates have been re-issued in a useful single volume with a sectionalized treatment of the species by Kirkman and Jourdain under the title *British Birds* (1932).

For many years after the completion of *The British Bird Book*, ornithologists heard little of Kirkman, but in 1937 he published his *Bird Behaviour*, embodying the results of long and intensive study of the Black-headed Gull. The study of behaviour was his primary interest in relation to birds. For this he was well equipped, for he had a very good knowledge of comparative psychology and a critical mind, and there can be no doubt that this book was his most important original contribution to ornithology.

So far as his ornithological interests and activities were concerned Kirkman led a rather isolated and detached existence. Though he did a certain amount of lecturing on birds to schools and societies, he was not a member of the B.O.U. or of any organized ornithological body, and comparatively few ornithologists knew him, though those who did found him by no means uncommunicative. It is perhaps true that many of the aspects of bird-life which attract the majority of ornithologists did not appeal to him particularly, his interest being pre-eminently in behaviour and its interpretation. Nevertheless, especially considering the increased preoccupation of some of the ablest ornithologists with this very subject in recent years, it is probably also true that, excellent as his work was, it would have benefited by rather more contact with others of kindred interests. He was, however, drawn rather more into such contacts by the establishment in 1936 of the Institute for the Study of Animal Behaviour, of which he became Honorary Treasurer and Librarian and in which he was keenly interested, and it is probably as one who has helped materially to advance the scientific study of the behaviour of birds that he would best like to be remembered.

B.W.T.

## NOTES.

## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE BIRD NOTES FOR 1944.

IN addition to items already recorded (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 214, Vol. xxxviii, pp. 156 and 176), the following occurrences in Nottinghamshire in 1944 may be of interest. No attempt at full treatment of the waders is given here, but some exceptional numbers and species are given.

TWITE (*Carduelis flavirostris*).—Several with other finches on Nottingham sewage farm on November 11th.

BRITISH WILLOW-TIT (*Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti*).—Definite breeding records at Bilsthorpe (central), Felley, (south-west), Colwick (south) and Fiskerton (south-east). The latter pair were exceptional in nesting in a nest-box hollowed from balsa wood, resembling decayed wood in texture, the site being in an osier holt at alluvial level in which no decayed stumps were available.

RUDDY SHELD-DUCK (*Casarca ferruginea*).—One watched and sketched at a gravel pond, Netherfield, September 17th. Possible escape.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*).—Pair on Nottingham sewage farm on August 29th and on September 23rd.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*).—Two males, one female, at Attenborough gravel ponds, April 7th-10th. One male, two females, April 22nd, one male, May 7th and 10th, party of six, August 4th, and smaller numbers until September 10th, all Nottingham sewage farm.

PINTAIL (*Anas a. acuta*).—Besides smaller numbers, twenty on January 2nd, twenty on September 23rd, sixteen on December 15th, all in Trent Valley between Nottingham and Gunthorpe, and twenty on February 2nd, at Moor-green Reservoir, are of interest.

CURLEW (*Numenius a. arquata*).—Still increasing in Trent Valley as winter visitor, and passage peak there was 260 on September 26th.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius p. phaeopus*).—Besides smaller numbers, approximately 200 were seen passing up Trent Valley in S.W. direction at Bulcote on August 6th. They were in a straggling formation of small parties.

TURNSTONE (*Arenaria i. interpres*).—Exceptional year for this species. First seen (one bird), on July 22nd, flock of twenty-two on stones in Trent on July 24th, two August 19th, nine on the 22nd, eighteen on the 23rd, eight on the 25th, seven on the 26th, nine on the 27th, six on the 28th, two on the 30th, four on the 31st, three on September 3rd, one on the 5th, all, except where stated, on Nottingham sewage farm, where they chiefly kept to an area of dried mud, feeding by direct pecking and by turning over small dried cakes of mud.

KNOT (*Calidris c. canutus*).—Numbers unusual. One on July 22nd, two on the 27th and August 4th, twelve on the 7th, four on the 28th, five on the 31st, one on September 1st, ten on the 2nd, two on the 3rd and 23rd, all on Nottingham sewage farm.

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*).—Small number wintered as usual on Nottingham sewage farm, and the outstanding figure during autumn passage was 84 in one flock on August 28th.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (*Tringa erythropus*).—Complete passage notes on Nottingham sewage farm as follows—one on August 1st, eight on the 7th, four on the 25th, two on the 30th and 31st, three on September 1st, one on the 5th, three on the 15th, one on the 16th and 20th, four on the 23rd, one on the 27th, five on the 30th and two on October 1st.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—Present on Nottingham sewage farm from July 13th to October 1st, peak number being forty on September 1st, including a flock of twenty-six.

OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hamatopus ostralegus occidentalis*).—One on Nottingham sewage farm on August 27th.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna h. hirundo*).—Besides passage birds through the area, a party of 11 were present in that part of the Trent Valley which includes Nottingham sewage farm from mid-May to mid-August, and from May 28th the fish-carrying display was constantly seen throughout the rest of the period. Definite fishing places in the Trent were established, and from these there was a regular flight-line to a lagoon-like expanse of water on the sewage farm, where there was strong aggressive behaviour towards other birds and human beings and much "fish-fighting." The whole sequence was that of a breeding colony, but time to search for breeding proof was unfortunately not available. A pair were noted feeding young capable of flight on August 3rd and 6th, but these of course, may have been passing from elsewhere.

KITTIWAKE (*Rissa t. tridactyla*).—Two immature birds over the Trent at Bulcote on September 27th.

PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica grabæ*).—An immature bird picked up in excellent condition at Stoke Bardolph on November 7th was sent by train to Mr. R. M. Lockley on the Pembrokeshire coast, who kindly fed, ringed, and released it on the sea in good order.

QUAIL (*Coturnix c. coturnix*).—One heard in a regular haunt near Hucknall on June 4th and one heard several evenings in mid-July, near Rainworth.

These notes are from the records of Messrs. H. G. Alexander, C. Best, A. K. Gill, J. T. Peck, R. J. and T. W. Raines, to whom I am indebted, as well as from my own. J. STATON.

#### GOLDEN ORIOLE IN CAERNARVONSHIRE.

ON May 1st, 1945, I received by post a male Golden Oriole (*Oriolus o. oriolus*) in excellent condition, which had been picked up freshly dead on the island of Bardsey, Caernarvonshire, by John Evans of Cristin, Bardsey, on April 25th, 1945. This specimen is now in the collection at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

R. M. LOCKLEY.

#### DISPLAY-FLIGHT OF CHAFFINCH.

I CANNOT find any reference to a display-flight of the Chaffinch (*Fringilla cælebs gengleri*) other than that of E. M. Nicholson quoted in *The Handbook*, and it may be of interest to record that a cock performed a very similar flight in my garden from March 15th, 1945, to the end of the month, when a hen arrived. The display was last seen on March 30th.

In addition to the actions already recorded, he regularly flew up in the air in the "bouncing" way of a Common Whitethroat, head and tail depressed in a position very similar to that adopted by a Kestrel hovering in a light breeze, and just before landing broke into song. The flight was usually over a distance of about twenty feet, from one fruit tree to another. The same bird was also exceptionally persistent in his use of the "gurgling rattle" recorded in *The Handbook*.

M. D. ENGLAND.

### BLUE-HEADED WAGTAILS IN DENBIGHSHIRE AND MONMOUTHSHIRE.

IN view of the fact that there does not appear to be any record of the occurrence of the Blue-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla f. flava*) for Denbighshire, it might be of interest to report that I saw an adult male in full breeding plumage, on the foreshore at Llanddulas, on May 15th, 1945. I watched the bird from a few yards' distance for three-quarters of an hour, noting the greyish-blue crown, conspicuous white eye-stripe and chin, greenish upper-parts and deep yellow under-parts.

IRVINE WHITTAKER.

ON June 13th, 1945, I had an excellent view for two or three minutes, at 15 yards' range through glasses, in bright sunlight, at Pontnewydd, Monmouthshire, of a male Blue-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla f. flava*). The plumage of the head corresponded with the figure on Plate 23 of Vol. 1 of *The Handbook*. The clear-cut junction of the blue-grey nape and the greenish brown mantle at the hind neck was noticeable, as were the white chin and pale superciliary stripe.

I revisited the spot 1½ hours later, but could not find it again. Yellow Wagtails were nesting all round in the hay and corn fields, so it is quite possible that this bird was foraging for a family.

There appear to be no previous records for Monmouthshire.

BRUCE CAMPBELL.

### MARSH-TIT BREEDING IN BERWICKSHIRE.

ON April 27th, 1945, while working an area of Berwickshire, near Coldstream, my attention was drawn to sounds made by a tit which could only have been a Marsh- or Willow-Tit. Investigation proved the bird to belong to the former species, *Parus palustris dresseri*. The distinctive call note, "pitchuu", was used exclusively when feeding, and the noticeable light patch on the secondaries of the Willow-Tit—in my opinion the best field indication—was absent.

After some hesitation, the bird entered a natural hole twelve feet from the ground in an elm tree, carrying food, with which the sitting mate was fed. When I looked into the nesting hole, the bird could be seen sitting, and my appearance was the signal for a demonstration of violent abuse from the bird.

A visit the following day enabled me to determine that the nest contained eight eggs, and the pair were feeding young on May 9th. This is considerably earlier than the breeding season as laid down in *The Handbook*, though geographically this pair are some miles south of the northernmost point of England.

On the same day as my last visit—May 9th—I located another Marsh-Tit also in Berwickshire and on the approximate latitude occupied by Berwick-on-Tweed, a further step northwards, though in this instance I was unable to prove breeding, the single bird seen, contenting himself by feeding along the hedgerow.

It is interesting to note in both cases that marshy ground was being covered by these birds.

GEORGE EDWARDS.

#### GREAT GREY SHRIKE TAKING SWALLOW.

ON May 2nd, 1945, Capt. J. P. Kyd and I saw a Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius e. excubitor*) take an adult Swallow (*Hirundo r. rustica*) and fly with it held in the claws for at least 300 yards. The Swallow was taken from a large flock that were feeding over the River Isar in Bavaria, and was caught near a patch of reeds, on which the Swallows were resting from time to time. It was not possible to see whether the Swallow was caught in flight or when perched, but the latter is much more likely. There does not seem to be any previous record of the Great Grey Shrike taking Swallows, even when just out of the nest, and the capture of an adult seems likely to be quite exceptional.

E. J. M. BUXTON.

#### PIED FLYCATCHER BREEDING IN DERBYSHIRE.

ALTHOUGH remarking, "In former times there is little reason to doubt that the Pied Flycatcher bred in the dales of the Peak," F. B. Whitlock, in *Birds of Derbyshire* (1893), is only able to record a few occurrences of the species on migration. W. K. Marshall, who now reports birds for the Derbyshire Archæological and Natural History Society, also informs me that he knows of no breeding record for the county.

On May 6th, 1945, as we passed through a hillside wood in North Derbyshire, taking courses some 50 yards apart as usual, my wife signalled she had seen something interesting—a pair of Pied Flycatchers (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*), and after confirming the identification I left my wife to watch the birds. They were quite tame, and the hen was soon carrying nesting material to an old hole of Great Spotted Woodpecker, 20 ft. up in a damaged birch-tree. Moss from an adjacent stone wall was the principal material. The cock bird was in attendance, singing occasionally, but took no part in the building.

With the cock singing close by, on May 9th, the hen entered the hole thrice in about two hours. On May 29th, only the cock bird was seen, entering the hole a number of times; and we concluded the hen was still sitting. Unfortunately we were unable to pay another visit until June 17th, when a Jay flew away from the birch trunk close to the hole as we approached. Soon afterwards the cock flycatcher showed himself, and entered the hole, and after coming out remained perched on a dead branch in the next tree for some time. On the 24th neither flycatcher was visible. Having had experience of a Jay which waited at the nesting hole of Coal-Tits and plucked out the young tits as they came to the entrance to be fed, shortly before they were due to leave, we think it probable that such was the fate of the young flycatchers. Although I have watched birds in Derbyshire regularly for 40 years, I have only once seen an odd Pied Flycatcher there before—in 1917.

RALPH CHISLETT.

## LATE REDWINGS IN ABERDEENSHIRE.

ON June 6th, 1945, I observed three Redwings (*Turdus m. musicus*) flying out of a stunted fir wood near Turriff, Aberdeenshire.

ADAM WATSON.

[In view of the fact that the breeding of the Redwing in Scotland has been proved in recent years (*antea*, Vol. xxvi, p. 132 and xxvii, p. 51) and that singing birds have been identified in various localities, the above observation might appear suggestive, but Mr. Watson informs us that there was nothing positive to indicate that the birds were anything but very late migrants, and they have not been seen again.—EDS.]

## NIGHTINGALE BREEDING IN CARMARTHENSHIRE.

IN mid-June, 1945, I examined a Nightingale's nest containing two typical eggs in a lane side near Brechfa, in the valley of the Cothi, Carmarthenshire, and at the time of writing (June 28th) the nest contains fledglings. The parent bird has also been carefully watched. Odd males have been heard singing in Carmarthenshire in previous years, but this season there are several pairs in the district, the males all singing lustily, and the nest is, I believe, the first to be discovered in the county.

A. LINDSAY.

INTENSE MOLESTATION OF HOUSE-MARTINS  
BY SPARROWS.

WITH reference to the note by Mr. L. Rendell under this heading (*antea*, p. 238), I have seen House-Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*), near Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, ejecting eggs, young and feathers from House-Martins' (*Delichon u. urbica*) nests. I have not noticed them tearing holes in the newly-made nests. Also, although they have attempted to serve Swallows (*Hirundo r. rustica*) in a similar fashion the sparrows have always been driven away, whereas martins apparently put up no resistance. J. V. TAYLOR.

## SNOWY OWL IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

JUST before dusk on May 16th, 1942, I watched a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*), as it quartered a field near Alnmouth, Northumberland. It was a big white owl and the upper-parts (which were all I could see as it was flying low), were fairly strongly barred brown.

The flight was much stronger than the usual owlsh flit. *The Handbook* has recorded only three for Northumberland.

ANDREW NOEL.

BLACK-HEADED GULLS BREEDING IN  
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

SINCE I recorded the breeding of the Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*) in Nottinghamshire in 1943 (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 78), additional facts concerning this colony have come to light, and are here recorded.

It seemed unlikely that a colony of the size recorded should be a first attempt, and enquiry amongst the staff and workmen of the Nottingham Sewage Farm elicited the information that they have seen the nests and eggs of this gull in that area annually for the past 15 years, and that they believe the colony was well established even then. The Notts. colony has therefore definitely been in existence since 1930, and probably longer.

Variation in the areas being drained or flooded in the nesting period has unavoidable detrimental effects, but the number attempting breeding in 1944, and again this year, is 100-150 pairs, the first eggs in both years being found at the end of the first week in May. The site of the colony varies according to which area of the sewage farm (stretching over 4-5 miles of the left bank of the Trent) is most suitable at the appropriate time. J. STATON.

#### ICELAND GULL IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

ON April 16th, 1945, we had excellent views of an Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) in Belfast Lough. The bird was feeding among Herring-Gulls (*L. a. argentatus*) and several times passed our ship below deck level. In size it was slightly smaller than the Herring-Gulls; the whole upper plumage was creamy white, the bill yellow with a red spot at the angle of the lower mandible, and the legs flesh-coloured. H. R. ALLEN AND P. I. R. MACLAREN.

#### GREAT SKUA IN THAMES ESTUARY IN SPRING.

ON May 13th, 1945, we obtained a close view of a Great Skua (*Stercorarius s. skua*), flying over the Thames Estuary near High Halstow, Kent. When last seen the bird was circling and was being mobbed by several gulls.

*The Handbook* states that there are very few spring records of the Great Skua from anywhere in British waters.

C. W. GEOFFREY PAULSON AND E. R. PARRINDER.

SISKIN IN NORTH WALES IN SUMMER.—Mr. J. E. S. Ellis informs us that on July 18th, 1945, he had a good view of a female Siskin (*Carduelis s. spinus*) in the Lledr Valley, Caernarvonshire, feeding on the seeds of roadside weeds, a regular habit of this species in summer. The seeds in this case were those of the Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*).

SCARLET GROSBEAK IN CORNWALL.—*Correction*.—The reference to Dr. H. M. S. Blair under this heading (p. 296) should have been to Dr. R. H. Blair.

HOOPOE IN ORKNEY.—Provost J. G. Marwick, of Stromness, informs us that a Hoopoe (*Upupa e. epops*) was seen in Orkney on May 9th, 1945.

QUAIL IN THE SUMMER OF 1944.—The following notes are additional to those published on pp. 250-252.

CORNWALL.—Lt.-Col. B. H. Ryves informs us that a pair certainly bred in Scilly (where breeding also took place in 1938), but that there is no evidence that Quail were more frequent in Cornwall than in recent years. Mr. E. R.

Parrinder writes that one was heard calling in barley at Tregorden, Wadebridge, by Mr. T. J. Willcocks on June 22nd, and that he himself heard the bird on June 24th. The Quail evidently did not breed at Tregorden and was apparently not heard again. A Quail was also heard by Mr. Willcocks at St. Minver on June 17th.

FLINTSHIRE.—Two heard in cornfield at Rhosnesney, Wrexham, in the last week of June and throughout July (F. R. Oldman).

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.—*Cf.* p. 315.

## REVIEW.

*A Highland Year.* By Seton Gordon. Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945. Price 12s. 6d.

Mr. Seton Gordon's latest book on the Highlands has a chapter for each month of the year. The author wanders from topic to topic rather after the fashion of an agreeable, desultory conversation, not always, it must be admitted, with a very close connexion with the month. Though this is not strictly a bird book Mr. Gordon has probably more to say about birds than on any other one subject: but he also discusses many other things Scottish, the changes of the seasons in the Highlands, Hebridean crofters, Highland pipers, the Loch Ness animal, fishing, occult experiences, and a variety of others.

With such a book, not professing to be an ornithological treatise—though with plenty of evidence of the author's close observation of birds—it would be ungenerous to be too critical on subsidiary ornithological points. Nevertheless, it might be pointed out that the Capercaillie became extinct in Scotland in the 18th, not 19th, century, that the statement that the Common Wheatear differs from the Greenland form in "never perching on anything higher than a wall" is much too sweeping (as a matter of fact Common Wheatears probably perch more frequently in trees in at any rate some parts of the Highlands than anywhere else in Britain), and that in several cases Mr. Gordon fails to recognize the very real and important distinction between species and subspecies by applying the former term to mere local races—that is subspecies—such as the Hebridean Thrush. But these are minor slips in a very pleasant and readable book, which, like its predecessors, is charmingly written, vivid in its descriptions, and full of the atmosphere of the Highlands.

We can sympathize with the author over the two irritating misprints of well-known Cairngorm place-names which have crept into the title of the frontispiece, an example of the trials of war-time authorship.

## LETTER.

### INFORMATION ON THE BIRD-LIFE OF THE OUTER HEBRIDES.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—Before the war I had been collecting material for a book on the bird-life of the Outer Hebrides. It is hoped to resume work on this as soon as circumstances permit, in order that the publication of an up-to-date account, already long overdue, may not be too long deferred. It is almost six years now, since I was able to carry out any field work in the Islands. During this time there have been changes in the environment which must have had important effects on the bird-life, and from correspondence received, it is evident that there have already been changes in the status of some species.

Whilst information dealing with the war years will be especially valuable, any notes or observations, on even the commonest species, however trivial they may seem to the observer, made at any time, will be much appreciated. Information on habits, distribution, times of arrival and departure of migrants, Gaelic and local names, folklore—in fact on all aspects of bird-life in the Outer Hebrides—are required. Notes, which will be gratefully received, should be addressed to me at Layer Marney Hall, Colchester, Essex.

JAMES W. CAMPBELL.

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Contributors are asked to observe the following points, attention to which saves the waste of much editorial time on trivial alterations.

MSS. if not typed should be clearly written. Authors of papers, especially those containing systematic lists, lists of references, tables, etc., should consult previous papers on similar lines in *British Birds* as a guide to general presentation and set-out, including use of particular type, stops, and other conventions, such as date following the month (January 1st, etc., not 1st January), names of books and journals in italics, not inverted commas, and so on. Capital initial letters are to be used for proper names of definite species, but not for names used in a general sense or covering more than one species: thus "Great Tit," but "flocks of tits." [In systematic lists the whole name should be in capitals.] The scientific name (underlined in MS. to indicate italics) follows the English name in brackets without any intervening stop. Scientific nomenclature follows *The Handbook of British Birds* or H. F. Witherby's *Check-List of British Birds* based on this. When the subspecific name (if this is used) repeats the specific name the initial letter only should be used for the latter; otherwise the whole name should be given in full: thus "*Parus m. major*," but "*Parus major newtoni*."

Notes should be drawn up in as nearly as possible the exact form in which they will be printed, with signature in BLOCK CAPITALS. Though suitable headings and scientific names can be added by the Editor, if necessary, they should be inserted by authors as far as possible. Communications should always be as concise as possible, though reasonable detail can be given where this is important. Notes or records of subsidiary importance may be abbreviated or otherwise modified by the Editor for inclusion in the section of "Short Notes." Maps or graphs must be neatly and boldly drawn in Indian ink, with due allowance for reduction when necessary.

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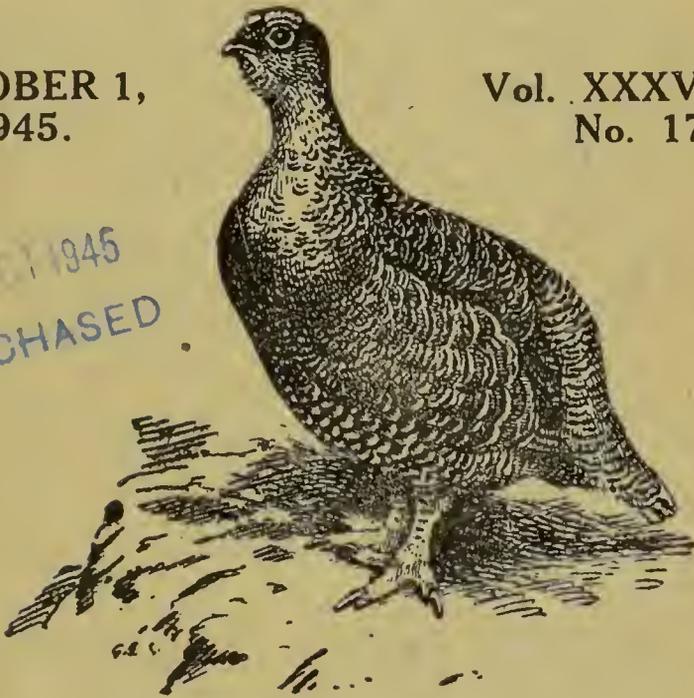
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Notice will be given in these columns shortly before the third impression is ready.

# BRITISH BIRDS

WITH WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN JANUARY, 1917, "THE ZOOLOGIST."

EDITED BY

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## THE BREEDING OF BLACK-WINGED STILTS IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE IN 1945

BY

J. STATON.

(Plates 7-10).

It has been the privilege of the writer and others to observe, during the summer of 1945, the first breeding of the Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) to have occurred, so far as is known, in the British Isles, and the following chronological account of the event is based on the notes, (often made jointly), of the writer, P. W. P. Browne, R. J. & T. W. Raines. At various times during the stay of the birds, a number of other observers, sometimes in company with the above, visited the nesting area, and as their notes, though small individually, have enabled better continuity to be achieved, a list of these is appended at the close of this paper.

The manager of the Nottingham Sewage Farm is thanked especially for periodical permits to visit the area (which is not normally accessible to the public), and for allowing steps to be taken to save a threatened nest. The diary begins:

*May 13th, 1945.*—9 a.m. Writer, passing a section of the Nottingham sewage farm, noted one adult female Stilt, with brownish-black mantle and wings, which flew by and settled about 70 feet away. The bird then rose calling "kiweuk-kiweuk." Left to fetch two other observers, and on return put up three Stilts from this area. One went away out of sight, and of the two visible birds, one was identical with the first described bird, but the wings of the other were decidedly blacker, and in addition there was a *small* black patch on the back of the head, from which the bird seemed to be an adult male.

*May 19th.*—Excellent views of three Stilts on a sewage area one mile from the original area, but detailed examination for sexing purposes could not be made, as the birds were continually harassed by Black-headed Gulls, in the midst of whose nests the Stilts were. Call was now "kik-kik-kik."

*May 20th-26th.*—A period of wandering for the Stilts, during which *four* were seen in the air together. Associations of twos and three were also noted, the birds moving about between the different areas of the farm over a distance of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 miles. Two females were identified, and beside the male already identified, a second was seen with scanty dark shading on nape and hind neck. Though out of sequence, it may now be said that by early in the second week in July, the very slight dark areas on the heads of the males had completely disappeared, so that sex was only distinguishable by the browner wings and mantles of the females.

*May 27th onwards.*—The two pairs now definitely settled in a small corner of one section of the sewage farm, not being seen outside an area roughly 200 x 150 yards. Very aggressive to other



BLACK-WINGED STILT.

UPPER —Bird in flight over breeding territory.

*(Photographed by H. N. Southern.)*

LOWER—General view of the breeding territory. The figure is near the nest-sites.

*(Photographed by J. Staton.)*



BLACK-WINGED STILT.

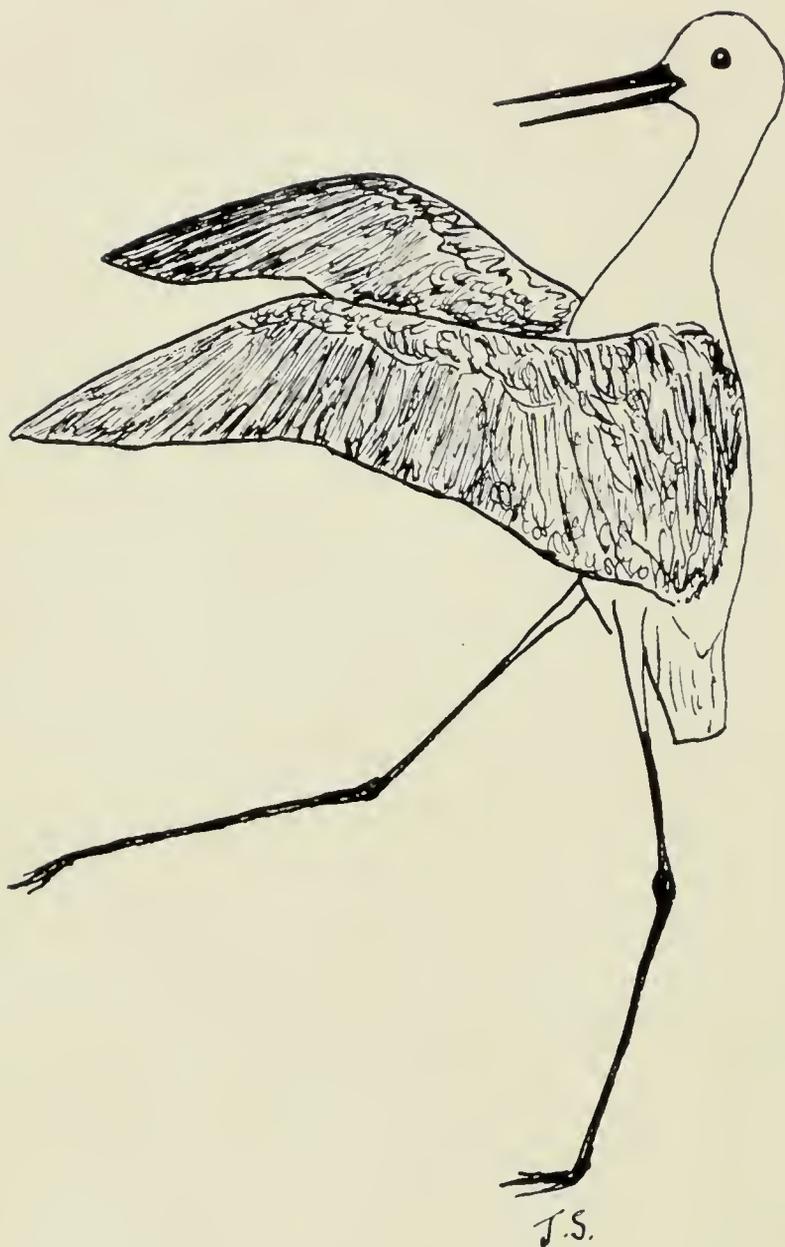
The undisturbed nest and eggs on June 17th.



BLACK-WINGED STILT.  
Young bird, found dead on July 9th  
(c. 14 days old.)  
(*Photographed by J. Staton.*)



BLACK-WINGED STILT.  
Same nest on June 21st, showing rapid growth of  
vegetation during incubation.  
(*Photographed by J. Staton.*)



BLACK-WINGED STILT.

Field sketch of flapping display, Notts., July 1st, 1945.  
(Drawn by J. Staton.)

birds, notably Carrion-Crows and Black-headed Gulls, passing through the area, and continually mobbing human intruders. Considerable variety of vocal expression, and short display noted (see special notes). Possibility of breeding first suspected, and from the general behaviour of the birds, a likely site was defined.

*June 14th.*—Party of three searched the likely area, unsuccessfully, the birds rising at too great a distance for accurate marking down. The birds were much distressed, and when one of the observers left, the other two made a further search. They were rewarded by the finding of two nests in the suspected area, containing three eggs each, and watching from a distance showed the return of the Stilts to the approximate site of the nests, though owing to intervening vegetation it was not possible to see the birds actually on the nests.

*June 17th.*—Same party of three observers and one other went to verify identity of nests and eggs. Four birds rose from the nest area on approach. Arrival at the nest-site revealed partial tragedy, for the area was being slowly submerged as a new soakage bed, one set of eggs being already completely submerged and stone cold. In these circumstances a detailed examination was held in abeyance; the submerged eggs were taken up and wrapped safely pending a decision on the best procedure. A workman was found, who kindly stopped the inflow of water and breached the bank on the lower side to drain out the water, and while this was in progress a detailed examination of the nests and site was made.

The two nests were in diagonally opposed corners of an oblong sewage bed roughly 40 feet x 15 feet, there being a distance of 20-25 feet between the nests. The bed had only recently been prepared and was bounded by low earthen ridges, while the floor was fairly well covered with young growth of persicaria, mayweed, dock and chickweed. The nest which had escaped damage was next examined. This contained three eggs of a pale "stone" ground colour, with blackish spots distributed fairly evenly over the egg except for a fairly clear zone at the small end. They resembled a common type of Lapwing's egg very closely, and but for their decidedly smaller size and less clearcut spots could have casually been mistaken for such. The nest was a barely perceptible scrape amongst the stems of a chickweed plant growing on a slight ridge of bare soil. Other nearby plants were mayweed and common dock. There were a very few dead stems of herbage lining the scrape, but a most noticeable feature was the presence of about half-a-dozen small white stones of  $\frac{3}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter in the nest hollow. One of these is noticeable in Plate 8, a little to the right of, and in line with the top of the nearest egg. No similar stones could be seen anywhere in the vicinity of the nest, the inference being that the birds placed them there after bringing them from some distance.

By now the water was subsiding somewhat, but was still an inch or two deep over the second nest. Several small white stones

could be seen in this nest also, and the possibility of there being some ceremony in connexion with these should not be overlooked by future workers. It was now decided to build up a small mound of dry soil on this nest site, and fashion a rough scrape on this in which to place the eggs. One of the eggs was found to be damaged, and was later submitted to Mr. B. W. Tucker, but the remaining two were placed in the artificial nest. These two closely resembled the clutch in the other nest, but the damaged egg had a heavily blotched zone in the form of a ring towards the larger end.

The observers then retired a good distance, whereupon the Stilts returned, one of them being seen to go right on to the undisturbed nest and commence incubation. Another Stilt then approached the "built-up" nest within a few feet, whereupon it was decided to leave the birds to themselves after so much disturbance. Later, the damaged egg was found to contain a specifically recognizable embryo. At intervals while near the nests, *five* Stilts were noted in the air together.

*June 21st.*—On a brief visit by one observer, four Stilts were seen to rise from the nest area, which on approach was found to have dried out completely. The eggs in both nests were warm, and a very few strands of vegetation had been added to the reconstructed nest.

*July 1st.*—Area not visited since last date. Four Stilts extremely vociferous as nest site approached, continually circling and swooping down almost on to the heads of the observers, and were shortly joined by a fifth bird. The undisturbed nest was found empty, save for a considerable number of very small fragments of eggshell. From the appearance of these, and the behaviour of the adults, it seemed certain that hatching had taken place, and this was confirmed a few minutes later by one of the farm workers who knew of the nest, but not its identity. This man stated that all three eggs in this nest hatched on June 25th, and that he saw the three young in the nest on that day, but not afterwards. The other nest was now examined, and was found to contain a few shell fragments only. The workman stated that this nest contained one egg only on June 27th, and that this was damaged by Crows on June 30th. From this it seemed possible that one egg from this nest had hatched about the same time as the three in the other nest, supporting evidence being the minute pieces of shell in the nest and the present behaviour of *all* the adults. A search revealed the crow-damaged egg, in the portions of which was a full-term embryo.

Shortly after, a torrential downpour of rain brought the adult Stilts to ground, and from the posture of two of them it was evident that they were brooding young. The nearest of these, a male with faint flecks of dark feathering on back of crown and hind neck, was marked down, and was walked up when the rain eased a little, when a single young one was found crouching on the spot. This was obviously only a few days old, and stilt characteristics were

noted in the long bill and long legs with no hind toe. The down was a cold shade of ashy brown with fine black speckling about the head, a dark line from bill to eye, and dark longitudinal lines on the body. The legs and feet were a darkish olive brown. More detail was not obtained, as further torrential rain made undue exposure of the young one risky, so this was returned to the brooding place, and the party retired. One or other of the adults occasionally broke into display during this period, great anxiety doubtless finding expression in what was, at such a time, a most inappropriate manner! For details see section on display.

*July 8th.*—There was much fresh excreta on the vegetation surrounding the nests, and examination of the undisturbed nest proved of interest. All the old nest debris had been removed, all eggshell fragments cleared away, and the scrape considerably deepened, the largest white stone originally in the nest alone remaining. This suggests a carrying over or resumption of sexual activity some days after the hatching of the young.

A long watch suggested that the young were in a wet meadow adjoining the nesting area, but the adults refused to brood, and a short search did not reveal the young. The party then moved off, leaving one member in concealment, who was able to see one pair of adults alight and call up three young ones, and another pair of adults call up one young one. This was the first real evidence that the one egg left unaccounted for from the built-up nest had hatched, and the only sight obtained of all four young.

*July 10th.*—Writer received from the manager of the sewage farm a dead young Stilt found crushed on the morning of the 9th. Later evidence showed this to be one of those hatched on June 25th, and it was therefore 14 days old.

*Description*—down ashy brown above with two dark lines half-an-inch apart down the back. Head, speckled dark above, with dark line from crown to hind neck, and dark line either side from just above gape to eye. Dark line along front edge of wing. Tail tuft black, dark line coming forward either side from this, dividing early, one branch passing to abdomen over leg-joint, the other passing towards hinder part of sternum. Tips of wing-coverts showing dark brown with pale buff tips. Down of under-parts white, with line of white feathers showing either side of breast. Bill, dark blackish brown, 27 mm. in length from forehead to tip. Legs, greyish olive, inclining to dull orange hinder edge and inside toes. Tarsus 40 mm. No hind toe. Toes webbed at base, outer two to first joint. Iris pale grey. The bird was photographed, and then preserved for a local collection.

Between this date and July 26th, the adults remained in the wet meadow adjoining the nest site, and were exceedingly vociferous and demonstrative on human intrusion, but in spite of much watching on many occasions, no further sight of the young was obtained in the period.

*July 26th.*—Two young Stilts flew up from near the nest site, and were immediately joined by two adults, who flew in close attendance calling excitedly. These were of those hatched on June 25th, the casualty referred to above being the third of the brood. It is known that no flight had taken place on July 24th, but as they seemed fairly competent in the air, they may have flown first on the 25th, or early on the morning of this observation. Thus, the fledging period ended on either the 30th or 31st day from hatching.

The two young were but two-thirds the size of their parents, and the legs shorter proportionately. The wings were distinctly brownish, and shorter proportionately, as well as rounder, than those of the adults. The head, neck, upper back and scapulars, appeared palish buff at 100 yards range, rump and tail much as adult at same distance. The legs had changed much since the dead young one was received, being now about the same shade as those of the adults figured in *The Handbook*, which, it may be added, is much paler than the adults present here.

The young flew round and settled in the wet meadow. They were again flushed, when curious behaviour of adults was noted. All four adults flew up, one pair in close attendance on the young ones. One of the other adults repeatedly flew down to, and several times struck one young one on the back, buffeting it with wings and bill, and seemingly with the legs on two or three occasions, until the young one dropped several feet in the air. The parents then intervened, and a "free-for-all" fight developed in mid-air. Eventually the two young came down on a mudflat, and the attacking pair went back to the wet meadow. Their behaviour here suggested that the single young bird not yet accounted for was still there, not yet able to fly.

*July 29th.*—Four adults and *three* young now in flight in a flock.

*August 2nd.*—On arrival at the breeding ground, complete silence greeted the observers instead of the noisy demonstration of the past few weeks, but a quarter of a mile further along the sewage beds the familiar sound was again heard, and first the family of four appeared, and then the three joined them, forming an excited flock above the observers heads. One juvenile went down to a pool ahead, and after wading belly-deep, passed out of its depth and swam a few yards to shallower water. It swam high in the water, in gull or phalarope fashion, with wings and tail high out of the water, giving meanwhile a call rendered as "wicki-wicki-wicki-wicki." The tie of the breeding ground was now evidently broken, the Stilts ranging over two large sewage areas half-a-mile apart.

*August 5th.*—The seven Stilts using both areas as above, and taking long, high flights over a considerable area around.

*August 9th.*—Two adults and one juvenile only on all areas.

*August 16th.*—Three adults and three juveniles again. From this date, variable numbers were seen, as though the birds frequented

some other place frequently, and at times some of these were thought to be other than those of the local breeding area.

*August 26th and 30th.*—One juvenile only.

*September 2nd.*—These notes concluded; on this date the one juvenile was still present, but was not seen subsequently.

#### SECTIONAL NOTES.

*Habitat.*—The Nottingham Sewage Farm lies in the Trent Valley close to the river on the alluvial plain, here about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 miles wide. The nests were on an area of newly-formed sewage beds, but closely adjoining old beds in which the formal shape was largely lost owing to growth of vegetation, with lagoon-like expanses and mudflats, which were the main feeding area. A wet pasture adjoining was much used when the young were hatched.

*General Habits.*—The four adults (and sometimes the fifth adult, which was lost sight of later) invariably mobbed intruders as a group while incubating and rearing was in progress, coming out 150 yards from the nest sites on being approached, for this purpose, and "seeing off" visitors to a like distance.

The skulking habits of the young were remarkable, for in spite of much watching for the purpose, no sight of them was obtained between July 8th, and the date on which two were first seen to fly, July 26th.

On one occasion, an adult was flying in the normal way, with the legs trailing behind, when it brought one leg forward to scratch the region of the gape, an amazing performance to witness in so long-legged a bird.

*Voice.*—Considerable variety of notes were heard, but as these were mostly heard under stress of the excitement due to approach or proximity of observers, it was not possible to relate them, except in a few cases, to special phases of behaviour. The normal "kik-kik-kik" became under excitement a rapid "kiwikiwikiwiki" with an occasional preliminary "kee-kee-kee" and intermixed medley of low notes and rather whistling notes. Commonest anxiety note while incubating and when the young were about was a loud croaking "urk-urk," audible hundreds of yards away. The note of the young is given in the diary section.

*Display and Posturing.*—The only joint display noted was when two males and one female were on the ground together. After a chase of one male by another, with head lowered and neck outstretched, a male returned to the female and began dancing from one leg to another and flapping wings in the display described below, whereupon the female lowered her head till the bill touched the ground, and then jerked it up quickly. The other male then approached, whereupon the displaying male flew at him with violently beating wings, and struck him in the back with forwardly stretched legs.

The wing-flapping display consisted of any individual bird prancing up and down on one spot, with the body in a curious,

almost vertical position, and the wings extended forward and beating slowly and rhythmically (see sketch). It was almost an exact parallel of the wing-waving of unmated Starlings, and though it doubtless occurred earlier, was seen by observers chiefly in the late stages of incubation and during the early days after the chicks were hatched, particularly when nest-site or vicinity of chicks were approached. In these circumstances it seemed that thwarted desire to incubate or brood found outlet in inappropriate display, much as Kirkman's Black-headed Gulls adopted irrelevant behaviour in like circumstances (*Bird Behaviour*, 1937). Occasionally the wing-flapping was done with the whole tarsus resting on the ground, varied with springing in the air at intervals.

*Conclusion.*—Such, then, are the notes obtained on 'the first breeding in the British Isles of the Black-winged Stilt. The small number of observers, and their very limited time available,' prevented much interesting detail being obtained in the early stages of the event, but the essential thing is that the Stilts were successful in rearing three young on British soil.

Towards the close of these observations it became known that a clutch of three eggs was taken in ignorance by a local boy, on another section of the farm, and earlier than the successful clutches, though he could not remember the date precisely. Two of these eggs, unblown and rotten, were seen in July by one of the chief observers, and were instantly recognized as Stilt's eggs. This clutch may have been laid by the fifth bird which disappeared during the breeding cycle of the others or a mate of this bird. With regard to this possibility, it is of interest to note that two of the intermittent observers are fairly confident that there were six birds present early in the proceedings.

Besides the observers responsible for the main notes, the following saw the birds intermittently, or on single occasions: W. B. Alexander, G. Felstead, P. Gamble, T. A. M. Hill, F. Hind, A. E. Jolley and the Ornithological Section, Literary & Philosophical Society of Leicester, B. K. Montgomery, G. H. Spray, A. R. Stone, H. N. Southern, B. W. Tucker, A. Whitaker and R. G. Williams.

## NOTES ON THE ROOSTING OF CERTAIN BIRDS

BY

CHRISTOPHER M. SWAINE, B.Sc., F.Z.S.

The following notes concerning the roosting of birds are from personal observations made within the last eleven years and all but one refer to Britain. They deal mainly with unusual or unrecorded roosting-sites or with species whose roosting habits are but little known.

**MAGPIE** (*Pica p. pica*).—Twice recorded roosting singly in disused but domed nest of its own species, once in August in Flintshire hill-country and once in November in the Derbyshire Peak foothills. In both cases small hawthorns were the only trees in the immediate neighbourhood, so that there was a lack of more normal roosting-places.

**BRITISH JAY** (*Garrulus glandarius rufitergum*).—Recorded on more than fifteen occasions settling to roost in, and subsequently disturbed from, hollies, hawthorns and ivy-covered trees in two mixed woods in Flintshire. The numbers of birds in any one situation varied from one to ten, the larger numbers occurring immediately after the breeding season. Hawthorns, apparently, are not used after leaf-fall.

**HAWFINCH** (*Coccothraustes c. coccothraustes*).—Three birds were observed settling to roost in top of larch tree, which offered but little cover, in late April. On another occasion two birds roosted, in January, in a very thick ten-foot hawthorn bush on common land; both were in north-east Wales.

**GOLDFINCH** (*Carduelis c. britannica*).—Five instances of roosting in mixed hawthorn and hazel hedges, in October, January, February and April, the numbers varying from one to about fifteen. One instance of roosting in a thick yew-tree, in June—a pair, apparently non-breeding; and one instance of roosting among dead leaves on an oak tree in October (three birds). All the above records from Flintshire.

**SISKIN** (*Carduelis spinus*).—A flock of seventy or more roosted in Scots pine and spruce trees in Flintshire for several successive nights, in December, 1935. Alders are considered to be the usual winter roosting-haunts and could have been used by these birds if desired.

**CROSSBILL** (*Loxia c. curvirostra*).—A party of eight to fifteen birds roosted fairly regularly in August and early September, 1935, in a small cluster of spruce and redwood (*Sequoia*), in central Flintshire. On one occasion a party of six roosted at the top of a larch in a rather open situation.

**YELLOW BUNTING** (*Emberiza c. citrinella*).—Four together in bracken in Pennine foothills, in April. Neighbouring thorn bushes could have been used.

HOUSE-SPARROW (*Passer d. domesticus*).—Birds near Glossop, Derbyshire, quite often roost in their own nests in ivy on walls, at all seasons. Some nests seem to be kept in repair in winter for the purpose. Usually only one in a nest in winter, but four cases of a pair using the same nest, and one of three birds together, in November.

SKY-LARK (*Alauda a. arvensis*).—Recorded in open fields of long or short grass and either singly or in groups of three to about eight. Sometimes several birds occupy the same field without any attempt to associate with each other.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).—Recorded roosting in ivy on old walls, in north-east Derbyshire, on many occasions. Usually singly, unless associated with the nest, but on one occasion there were two within a foot of each other, in late July. Several times a whole family (from four to seven birds) has used a short stretch of wall, but the individuals have not clustered together. Young birds may use the nest for some nights after first leaving it, if it is easily accessible, but this habit does not seem to be very usual. Roosting birds are generally between seven and twenty-five feet above ground.

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus t. torquatus*).—Twice recorded roosting in thick heather (*Calluna*) on the steep sides of gullies in the Derbyshire Peak District, and once in a cleft in a small quarry in Flintshire.

DIPPER (*Cinclus c. gularis*).—Frequently recorded settling to roost under over-hanging stream-banks in the Derbyshire Peak District, usually resting on stones and sometimes in cavities of the bank amounting almost to holes. Twice recorded roosting behind vegetation hanging from the bank of a lowland stream in Flintshire, in June and August, and once under an iron bridge, just before the breeding-season.

SAND-MARTIN (*Riparia r. riparia*).—In April, 1944, four pairs roosted regularly in deep holes in the roughly-built support-wall of a cutting in north-east Wales. The place was later used for breeding purposes, but at the time in question nesting had not begun.

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus m. melba*).—In August, 1934, a large number (two hundred or more) were watched prior to roosting at dusk, in the cliffs of a gorge some miles from Grenoble in France. After a prolonged flight, they selected crevices, both horizontal and vertical, in the rock-faces. Many were seen to enter such places and remain there, but many more were still on the wing, at a considerable height, long after it was too dark to continue clear observations. There was a good deal of musical screaming and twittering from birds in flight and also from others as they settled down in the cliff.

SWIFT (*Apus a. apus*).—Two birds were seen to squeeze under a window-ledge, fifty minutes after sunset, in mid-June. There was no nest there at that time, nor later in the season. A single bird entered a similar site a couple of minutes later, there being a nest there in this case.

A peculiar instance of roosting occurred in May, 1936, when, some time after sunset, a Swift entered a dormitory in Kingsmoor School, Glossop, and roosted until the following dawn under the pillow of an occupied bed.

NIGHTJAR (*Caprimulgus e. europæus*).—On a gorse-clad limestone common, altitude 750 ft., in Flintshire, the birds regularly use small hollows, two to three feet in diameter and more or less lined with limestone, which crops out through the grass. These hollows are usually fairly well-screened by living or dead gorse-stems.

KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis ispida*).—Twice recorded roosting in December in yew (*Taxus*) overhanging a pool and once in a dense bamboo-clump at the same place (north Derbyshire). The pool is darkened by neighbouring trees and the bird retired before sunset on each occasion.

TAWNY OWL (*Strix aluco sylvatica*).—In central Flintshire, ivy-covered trees, where numerous, form much the most favoured site. In N.W. Derbyshire, on the edge of the Pennines, conifers (*Pinus*) are preferred in winter, but these are deserted in favour of broad-leaved trees, such as sycamore, as soon as sufficient foliage has developed. Once recorded roosting deep in a Flintshire cave, in October.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius æsalon*).—A pair was watched in June on the north Derbyshire moors. For twenty minutes immediately before sunset both birds indulged in a kind of aerial display flight above the nest, which was in dead bracken on the almost precipitous side of a deep clough. Both birds then alighted on boulders some thirty yards apart and forty yards from the nest and began to preen. This lasted for about half an hour, after which the female suddenly flew straight to the eggs. The male almost immediately flew up to a cliff-like outcrop on the sky-line above the nest and settled to roost in a cleft in the rock.

On another occasion, this time in April, in the Clwydian range, North Wales, the male was seen to fly to a thorn-bush shortly after sunset and there to preen for ten minutes. He was then joined by the female and, after a brief interval of conversational noises, both birds settled down in the centre of the bush and remained there. There was apparently no display flight on this occasion.

STOCK-DOVE (*Columba œnas*).—Those which breed well out on the moors in the Derbyshire Peak apparently roost in the cracks and holes of gritstone or limestone cliffs. Of this there are four proved instances during the breeding-season, one of the pair, in each case, roosting on the nest and the other in a neighbouring rocky outcrop.

CURLEW (*Numenius a. arquata*).—One bird put up from its nest at midnight in June in North Derbyshire and a second from heather (*Calluna*) about forty yards away. The latter may have been feeding, but the ground did not look suitable for this purpose, while the heather was thick enough to provide some concealment and shelter.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*).—Twice recorded settling to roost (singly and both times in June) on stones under overhanging banks of a moorland stream in Derbyshire. In one case the other bird of the pair was incubating three eggs eighty yards away.

PARTRIDGE (*Perdix p. perdix*).—A covey of about fifteen in a field was stalked to within twenty-five yards (in Flintshire, late summer). Bright moonlight permitted observation through field-glasses and it could clearly be seen that the birds were resting in an arc, and fairly close together, with the semblance of a circle being produced by a single bird standing alone between the two ends of the arc. All the heads were pointing more or less outwards, except that the solitary bird was facing diagonally inwards. There was no wind.

## NOTES.

## COURTSHIP-FEEDING OF LINNET.

WITH reference to Mr. D. D. Harber's note under this heading (*antea*, p. 211), I observed similar behaviour in a pair of Linnets (*Carduelis c. cannabina*), which nested in my garden at Sale in 1943.

On May 1st, I saw the cock alight beside the hen in the top of a lime tree and their bills touched, food apparently being given, after which the two birds flew off. R. H. DUNT.

WITH reference to Mr. Harber's note (*antea*, p. 211), on April 23rd, 1945, I was watching a pair of Linnets (*Carduelis c. cannabina*) when the male suddenly flew on to a spray of gorse on which the female was perched and, facing her, put his bill against hers, presumably passing a morsel of food into it. Immediately afterwards both flew off. I searched the bushes for a nest, but could not find one. D. J. MAY.

I WAS interested to see a note on courtship-feeding of the Linnet (*Carduelis c. cannabina*) by Mr. D. D. Harber (*antea*, p. 211). It may be of interest that I am in a position to confirm Mr. Harber's observation.

On April 17th, 1945, I saw a pair of Linnets together on the top of a wire fence by some waste ground. The cock was obviously feeding the hen, who was shivering her wings. After some seconds they both flew off. B. H. ALABASTER.

[It will be observed that whereas Mr. Harber saw the male actually thrust his bill into the female's, these observations are somewhat less definite. In the cases recorded by Messrs. Dunt and May the bills were merely seen to touch and the transference of food was not positively observed, so that they are somewhat inconclusive, but, so far as we know, previous to Mr. Harber's note there were no recorded observations even suggesting the occurrence of courtship-feeding in this common bird.—EDS.]

## DISPLAY OF SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

ON May 25th, 1945, I watched with interest a short display of the Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa s. striata*) which is not recorded in *The Handbook*.

The hen was perched on a bar in a humped up attitude, taking no notice of the performance; the cock was at right angles to her, about a foot away in a horizontal position, beak pointing downwards while he waved his wings in a deliberate, butterfly-like manner but with a forward rotary movement.

The wings were raised quite high, but not vertical, and the whole display lasted probably 12-15 seconds, when they flew to the ground out of sight. S. M. BUTLIN.

IN May of this year I observed for the first time a closely similar display of a male Spotted Flycatcher to that described by Miss Butlin, with a waving or flapping of the wings in a peculiar "loose-jointed" fashion, lasting for a few seconds. For two or three

days after arrival the male was much excited, uttering the curious feeble song constantly and sometimes chasing the female, which on the whole was not much in evidence. Once when sexually excited the male was observed to run along a ledge with a peculiar crouching, almost horizontal carriage of the body.

B. W. TUCKER.

#### COURTSHIP-FEEDING OF HOOPOE.

STRANGELY little seems to have been recorded of the displays of the Hoopoe, despite its bright plumage. A "display feeding" was observed between birds of the Egyptian subspecies (*Upupa epops major*) on March 26th, 1944, at el Tabbin, some twenty miles south of Cairo.

A cock Hoopoe carrying the coiled body of a worm or large caterpillar in the tip of his bill, sat in a bush calling the mellow "poop, poop, poop" at intervals. At each call he bowed his head a little forward, so that his beak pointed vertically downward and the closed crest straight up. After a while he flew to a house and thence to a low palm bush, where he called many times. Then he flew down behind a mud hut. A hen Hoopoe now appeared overhead. The cock took wing and rose to meet her, and the two flew round fairly high up, hissing excitedly. Both birds flew to the base of the branches of a large palm and there perched near together, the cock with his tail widely spread. There was much hissing. The cock then fed the hen: while she gulped down the food the cock flew out from the tree and then circled back again.

P. H. T. HARTLEY.

#### HOBBY EATING BIRDS IN THE AIR.

*The Handbook of British Birds* states with reference to the Hobby (*Falco s. subbuteo*): "Insects are seized with claws and held to beak while eaten, and W.-Bond states that even birds if small enough may be eaten in the air in this manner."

On August 26th, 1939, when at Slough, Buckinghamshire, with C. B. Ashby and C. A. White, we observed a Hobby flying towards a flock of Starlings which massed tightly together in formation at its approach. The falcon disappeared from view, but a few moments later it returned carrying a bird about the size of a Starling in its talons. It then proceeded to sail easily in circles above us, while it leisurely bent under and pulled the prey to pieces, causing a number of feathers to float downwards. It was still thus engaged when it disappeared from view. It did not perch at all.

G. BEVEN.

#### OBSERVATIONS ON MONTAGU'S HARRIER.

THE following observations on Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) were made in Cornwall.

##### FOOD CALL.

I note that in *The Handbook of British Birds*, the "begging" or "food" call of the female Hen-Harrier is described, but that of the

Montagu's is recorded as similar, without any other details. It may therefore be useful to give my impressions of this call, and the occasions on which it is used. I have found that the call is a thin, drawn-out whine or squeal, rather like that of a dog which has been locked up or is otherwise miserable—a drawn-out "weeh" best describes it.

I heard females calling thus on the ground and in the air, during the courtship period, when territory had been taken up, but egg-laying had not commenced. I never heard the call used by the males. The females appear to use it to incite the males either to bring food or to carry on courtship.

After nesting had commenced I found this call was used by the females on the nest whenever they saw the male approaching with food. On one typical occasion I was hidden in thick undergrowth in an area in which I knew there was a nest, though I had not yet found it, when I saw the male Montagu's Harrier approaching with food. As he came over, this high-pitched whining started from the invisible female, hidden somewhere near on the nest, and shortly afterwards she flew out and the "pass" took place.

#### DISPLAY.

One "pass" which I saw was rendered more interesting by the fact that an aerobatic display accompanied it. The male arrived carrying food, over the nesting area, and then proceeded to soar in circles to a considerable height, still carrying the food. He then dived down almost vertically, with half-closed wings, making a spiral turn as he did so. At the bottom of the dive he "zoomed" up steeply and looped right over on to his back, whence by a "half roll off the top of the loop" (as we should describe it in the R.A.F.) he resumed normal flight. The female then came off the nest, which contained three eggs, and the "pass" took place.

#### "PASS."

All the "passes" I have seen have taken place either claw to claw or by the hen simply catching the food dropped by the male in more or less level flight. I have never seen her turn over on to her back to do so, as described by some observers. J. G. DAVIS.

#### HERON ALIGHTING ON WATER.

WHILE walking along the Thames just above Putney bridge, I saw a Heron (*Ardea c. cinerea*), which was flying down the river on the London side, suddenly swerve, come down, half-settle on the water like a gull, apparently pick up some object, and then resume its flight in the direction from which it had just come. This action, which I have never before observed, somewhat resembles that recorded by Capt. P. I. R. Maclaren (*antea*, p. 256). BEDFORD.

#### GARGANEY AND WHOOPER SWANS IN CAERNARVONSHIRE.

As the Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) is described in *The Handbook* as a rare visitor to Wales, I write to record that I had a drake under

observation on several occasions in March, 1945, on Llyn Ystumlllyn, near Criccieth, North Wales. I first saw it on March 16th and was able to get a good view through glasses. I rather suspect that two drakes were present, but cannot be certain. Five Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) were also present on Llyn Ystumlllyn.

R. L. VERNON.

#### FULMAR COLONIES ON CLARE ISLAND, Co. MAYO.

ON April 26th, 1945, we discovered two hitherto unrecorded colonies of the Fulmar Petrel (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*) on the cliffs on the N.W. side of the island.

One colony had at least 80 pairs present, the other was estimated to have between 100 and 200 pairs present at this date.

JOHN BARLEE AND ROBERT F. RUTTLEDGE.

#### BREEDING OF WOODCOCK IN CENTRAL FLINTSHIRE.

THE map in *The Handbook* which shows the breeding distribution of the Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), in Britain, does not include any part of Flintshire in the regular area of nesting. The following notes suggest that the shaded area on the map should be extended to include central Flintshire.

For several years Woodcocks have been observed roding near Hendre (Mold), in April and in June, and breeding has been suspected. In 1945 a fuller investigation was accordingly made in an area of three square miles running through well-wooded limestone country between the Mold-Denbigh main road at Hendre and the Loggerheads. In this area, roding was observed to occur more or less regularly in seven distinct places during late March and the first half of April. About two acres of woodland, over which roding occurred every evening, were then carefully searched and a nest was found, from which the young hatched in the second week in April.

It is perhaps of interest to note also, that roding during the night is apparently not unusual, at least in this district. Three of the seven males noted above were recorded roding at various hours in addition to the regular dusk performance, the times being 21.20, 22.30, 22.40, 22.50, 23.00, 03.15, and 06.20 hrs. (B.S.T.).

CHRISTOPHER M. SWAINE AND J. LORD.

#### THE 1945 IMMIGRATION OF BLACK-WINGED STILTS.

IN May 1945, there was a small, but notable immigration into this country of Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus h. himantopus*), which appeared in several widely separated localities. As recorded by Mr. Staton on another page, two pairs bred successfully at Nottingham. The other occurrences are dealt with below.

#### IN KENT.

ON May 9th, 1945, we had a close view of two Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) in a shallow pool on Cooling Marshes, North Kent. The long legs were often partially concealed by the

depth of water in which the birds were wading, but together with the black and white plumage they made the birds unmistakable. Both Stilts had similar plumage with black mantle and wings and the rest of the body white except for a dark grey smudge above and behind each eye; this smudge was rather more pronounced in one bird than in the other. The birds were not seen on May 13th, when E.R.P. again visited the marsh. This appears to be the fourth occasion on which Black-winged Stilts have been seen in Kent.

R. S. R. FITTER AND E. R. PARRINDER.

IN DEVON.

The *Western Morning News*, May 14th, 1945, published a letter from Mrs. D. Jones, Bovisand, dated May 10th, enquiring the identity of a flock of ten birds which from the description were unmistakably Black-winged Stilts, seen in a sandy cove near Bovisand. It is stated that the birds were very shy and were being harried by gulls. As a sandy cove is a quite unusual type of place for Stilts to frequent, it may be supposed that they had just arrived. They evidently soon passed on, as the Rev. F. C. Butters kindly informs us that no other Devon observers have reported them.

IN BERKSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

ON May 17th, 1945, two Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) were seen by myself and other members of the Eton College Natural History Society at Ham Fields Sewage Farm, near Old Windsor, Berkshire. The birds also flew over on to the Buckinghamshire side of the Thames and so can be claimed for both counties. One bird had the back dark brown with grey on the head and down the back of the neck; the other had the back black.

On June 22nd, two Stilts were also watched on Slough Sewage Farm, Buckinghamshire, by R. A. Whistler, of Eton College. It may be mentioned that whereas the legs of the birds seen at Ham Fields were definitely reddish, the legs of those seen at Slough were pink.

PETER GLADSTONE.

IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND.

ON May 26th, 1945, in company with three boys of Kingswood School, D. A. Clutterbuck, C. G. Jackson, and D. J. Short, I had good views of two Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) at the Eye Valley Reservoir on the borders of Leicestershire and Rutland. The salient features, black wings, white head and underparts, straight black bill, and long red legs, were clearly seen with field-glasses, though owing to the absence of cover it was not possible to approach very closely. The tremendous length of leg was not apparent at first, as the birds were wading, but when they flew they drew up the legs like herons, so that they projected, it seemed, at least six inches. At the time we were not aware that the sexes differed and, owing to the distance and the fact that we did not specially look for the point, we cannot be certain that there

were no dark feathers on the nape of either, though the heads of both birds were definitely white.

The birds were first observed on a spit of land presumably on the county border, as the Eye Brook, which is the county boundary, runs through the centre of the reservoir. They shortly afterwards flew to the far bank, which is in Rutland, and on our approaching them more closely they flew in a wide circle, crossing the Leicestershire border and back into Rutland again. On May 27th, I re-visited the reservoir, but there was no sign of the birds and they had evidently left.

P. G. SUMMERS.

#### IN SUFFOLK.

ON July 13th, 1945, I first observed a pair of Black-winged Stilts (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) on an extensive marsh at Dunwich, Suffolk. Though I visit the marsh almost daily I cannot guarantee when the birds arrived, owing to its large area. The male bird had a broken leg when first seen. It appeared to improve during his stay and he certainly became far more inclined to fly of his own accord before he left. I searched the whole marsh to the best of my ability and could find no sign of a nest or young and I personally am satisfied that breeding was not attempted. The female left on July 28th and the male on August 6th.

It has been suggested that in flight stilts use their long legs as a balance. I have watched the female on many occasions give a wonderful display of aerobatics: she combined all the amazing powers of flight so characteristic of most waders with the "tumble" of the Peewit, but try as I might I was never able to discern the slightest suspicion of leg movement.

I may also mention my belief that the birds swim occasionally. They certainly wade, like Black-tailed Godwits, well up to their bellies, and on one occasion I observed them in water which I believe was too deep to allow them to walk. I afterwards measured the depth and found it 10 inches, which, if not conclusive proof, must be near the limit at which the birds could touch the bottom.

PETER PARDOE.

#### OYSTER-CATCHER BREEDING IN EAST SUSSEX.

IN view of the fact that Walpole-Bond in *The Birds of Sussex* considers the Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus occidentalis*) to be a very rare breeding species, we thought the following would be of interest: a pair have been frequenting a very suitable breeding site at Rye Harbour this spring, and on May 18th, 1945, we were told by one of the harbourmen that three eggs of the "Olive" (local name of the Oyster-catcher) had been taken the day previous and that he himself took three eggs from the same spot last year, and ate them. The man in question has been known personally to one of us for many years, and there is no doubt whatever as to the correctness of this record.

Later, the birds were seen with two flying young, so that they evidently nested again.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON AND NORMAN W. MOORE.

## GUILLEMOT USING WINGS ON SURFACE OF WATER.

THE following is an extract from notes recording the behaviour of Guillemots (*Uria aalge*) off Hope's Nose, Torquay, on February 4th, 1945.

"At close quarters we noticed that some birds swam on the surface, using their wings.

One bird especially, began to swim with both wings at about 150 yards from the shore; it immediately doubled its speed, and came head on to us with a surging motion: neck fully outstretched, chin and beak making a slight hollow in the water. The wings reached well forward, half bent and scooping the water back; body half submerged, and progress so fast that a distinct wake was left. It was not possible to see whether the legs were used as well. A very rough estimate of its speed would be some four m.p.h.

The sea was quite calm at the time and the sun shining."

BERNARD F. HARVEY.

[So far as we are aware this behaviour has not been recorded before, though Richard Perry (*Lundy, Isle of Puffins*) has described parties of Guillemots and Razorbills threshing over the water with rapidly beating wings and breasts raised off the surface, in a kind of play. The action now described is clearly quite distinct, though probably of the same nature.—EDS.]

SONG-THRUSH USING NEST THREE TIMES.—With reference to earlier notes on Song-Thrushes (*Turdus e. ericetorum*) rearing two or three broods in the same nest (*antea*, pp. 157, 215, 220), Mr. P. Rymer reports a case near Cheltenham in 1941 in which a pair reared a brood, laid a second clutch in the same nest, which was robbed, and then laid a third clutch, which was successful. The three layings consisted of four, four, and three eggs respectively.

## REVIEWS.

*The Blackbird.* By A. F. C. Hillstead. Faber & Faber, 1945. 8s. 6d. net.

ALTHOUGH this book contains a few more or less useful observations on the Blackbird which could be incorporated into a proper life-history of the species, it cannot be pretended that it even remotely approaches the standard of the best modern studies of single species of birds. Several such studies spring to mind, and in all of them a feature which can hardly fail to impress the reader is the care and thoroughness of their documentation. Every statement or opinion is backed by precise and accurately observed facts and even if a conclusion is frankly tentative or an alternative interpretation possible we have a clear presentation of the evidence and a closely reasoned discussion. In short, it is obvious to an attentive reader how much close and often laborious observation and critical thinking lie behind a few score or a few dozen readable pages.

The impression left after reading *The Blackbird* is the exact opposite of this. There is hardly anything in it which any observer of very moderate powers could not have written after watching Blackbirds rather casually for a few seasons, and the author seems scarcely even aware of a good many of the problems which arise in connexion with the life-history of any bird. This kind of treatment may satisfy the casual reader with a mild interest in natural history and an hour or so to spare, but it will satisfy very few others. In fact it is really surprising how little solid and original material the book contains.

The author objects, not entirely without justification, to a tendency of some workers to over-emphasize the automatism of bird behaviour without sufficient recognition of the variability in behaviour of different individuals, on which he lays great stress. On this last point, which he appears to regard as novel, we should have thought almost all the closest observers of the behaviour of birds were now agreed; but on the broader problems of the interpretation of behaviour the author's discussion shows such an uncritical and woolly-minded approach to the subject and so little understanding of the aims, methods and conclusions of better qualified observers that it is scarcely worth serious attention.

The photographs, by several well-known bird photographers, are excellent.

*Bird Portraiture.* By C. F. Tunnicliffe. The Studio, 1945. 15s.

FROM time to time we have admired the excellence of Mr. C. F. Tunnicliffe's woodcuts of birds. Here were woodcuts which were not only technically and artistically admirable, but were really like the birds they portrayed. It has been our loss that hitherto we have not come across Mr. Tunnicliffe's work in other media. The illustrations in this book, in colour and monochrome, show him to be in the first rank of present day portrayers of birds. His birds are beautifully drawn and their shapes and poses—the test of the really good bird artist—are usually quite excellent and give evidence of the closest observation combined with a first-rate eye for such things. The colouring of the plates is not in all cases above criticism (perhaps in part due to war-time reproduction), and in some of these the background is rather more stylized than seems to us in keeping with the accurately drawn birds, but this is purely a matter of personal taste. It is only quite exceptionally that a detail of drawing is at fault—for example the heads of the flying Lapwings on page 18 and the bills of the Rooks on page 59—and a great many of the figures could hardly be better. There are some very good studies of the same species in different plumages, of which we like particularly the Dunlins in colour on page 35.

The volume is one of the "How to do it" series published by The Studio. The rather slight text can hardly be said to provide a comprehensive guide to the drawing and painting of birds for anyone led by the title of the series to expect it, though it includes some valuable hints. It is the illustrations themselves which are the outstanding justification for the book and we hope to see much more of Mr. Tunnicliffe's work.

## LETTER.

### HOUSE-SPARROWS DESTROYING YOUNG BLUE TITS.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—Concerning the note on molestation of House-Martins by House-Sparrows (*antea*, p. 238), I once saw a family of young Blue Tits (*Parus caeruleus obscurus*) destroyed by this species. In 1936, a pair of Blue Tits nested in a hole high in the wall of a house in Ashbourne. On June 11th, the young tits being nearly ready to fly, House-Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*), sometimes up to six in number, began to molest the parent tits as they brought food to the young. A sparrow would cling to the nest-hole, which was too small for it to enter, preventing the tits from coming in with food, while others would harass the tits as they approached. I repeatedly drove the sparrows away, but they always returned to the attack. The persecution continued all the following morning, the sparrows being very persistent in spite of my stoning them at intervals, and in the afternoon I was away for about one hour. When I returned I found that the sparrows had enlarged the entrance hole by moving a loose piece of brick which had formed one side, and thrown out the nest and five young ones. The parent tits had gone. The sparrows began to carry straw into the hole the same afternoon, but I blocked it up and prevented their nesting.

KATHLEEN M. HOLLICK.

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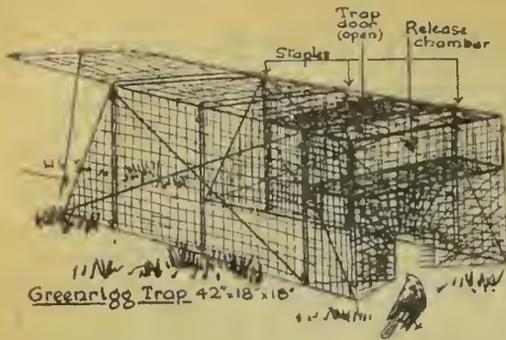
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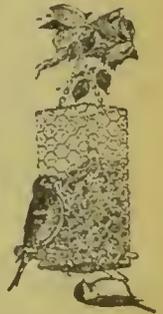
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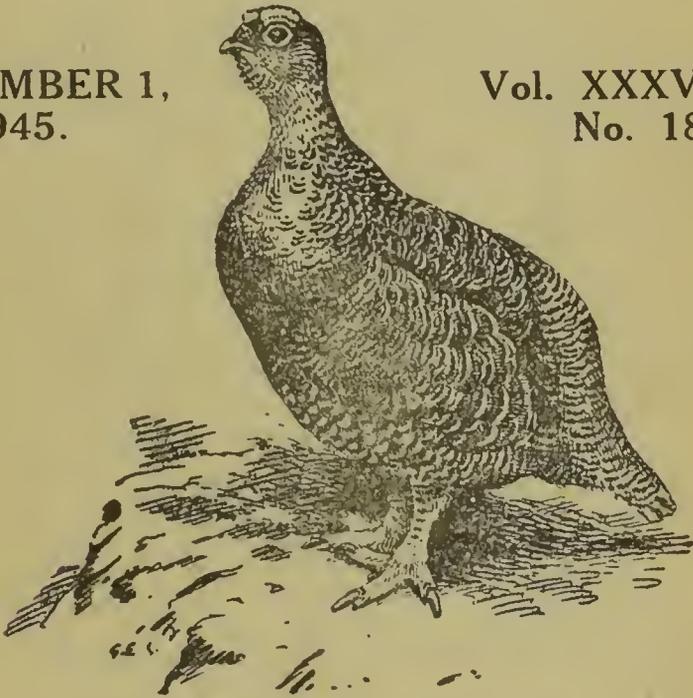
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# THE STATUS OF THE LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL IN NORTH-WEST ENGLAND AND NORTH WALES

BY

J. A. G. BARNES.

SOME years ago Mr. W. B. Alexander, Director of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology, drew my attention to the difference of opinion between the present-day authorities and the local avifaunas of the late 19th century about the status of the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*). Recent county lists agree with *The Handbook* that it is a "Summer-resident and passage-migrant." *The Handbook* adds that "a few stay winter most years," but the following quotations from earlier works show a very different view of its regularity and numbers in winter.

Macpherson's *Fauna of Lakeland* (1892): "The Lesser Black-backed Gull is at all seasons a common bird upon our coast-line . . . . Some probably depart before winter, but at that season this Gull is plentiful all along our coast-line, even in such coarse situations as the western side of Walney, since it is more indifferent to bad weather than the Herring Gull."

Hancock's *Catalogue of the Birds of Northumberland and Durham* (1874): "An abundant resident."

Mitchell's *Birds of Lancashire* (1885): "It is a well-known resident, and may be seen on the coast, especially about Morecambe Bay, at all times of the year, and, in stormy weather, frequently occurs inland." This is repeated in the second edition edited by Howard Saunders in 1892.

Coward's *Fauna of Cheshire* (1910): "A winter resident and non-breeding summer resident; met with inland at all seasons."

Rodd's *Birds of Cornwall* (1880): "During the winter and early spring not uncommon on the coast of Cornwall."

It should be remembered, of course, that in these works the authors make no distinction between the British race (*Larus fuscus grællsii*) and the Scandinavian (*Larus f. fuscus*), though in the *Check List of Fauna of Lancashire and Cheshire* (1930) Coward records *L. f. fuscus* as "winter visitor. Not common." However, it appears from the following notes that *L. f. fuscus* only occurs in small numbers in North-West England. There may have been some tendency in recent years to record winter Lesser Black-backs as Scandinavian without sufficiently careful identification.

The discovery of a considerable number of Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Morecambe in January, 1944, suggested an enquiry into the present winter status of the species in North-West England, and detailed notes from a number of generous correspondents have made possible the following summary, which may throw some light on the quotations above. My original intention was to deal only with midwinter occurrences, but in practice it is not always possible to distinguish between residents and late autumn and early spring migrants, and, as published accounts of the

migration dates of this species show some disagreement, definite information on the subject seems worth including.

**SOLWAY AREA** (E. Blezard). Wintering Lesser Black-backs of the British form seem to be irregular and few in number: 3 at Anthorn, Jan. 2nd, 1933, 6 at Bowness-on-Solway, Nov. 16th, 1939, and single birds in three winters from 1933. From 1 to 4 Scandinavians have been seen rather more frequently in winter on rubbish tips near Carlisle. Mr. Blezard has several times seen British birds, singly or in pairs, on the Eden from March 2nd to 4th, probably the first spring migrants, and 50 were noted flying over Carlisle from the S.S.E. on March 7th, 1937 (*Birds of Lakeland* p. 144).

**WINDERMERE** (M. Garnett). These gulls generally leave before the middle of October, but Miss Garnett has seen single birds November-January on four or five occasions since 1934. She has often seen *grallsii* in the last week of February (22nd, two years), but sometimes not till March (11th, two years). Occasionally very dark birds in spring, probably *L. f. fuscus*.

**KENT ESTUARY, MORECAMBE BAY.** Large flocks are seen on the mud-banks adjoining Foulshaw Moss Gullery in the first half of September but the great majority have left by the end of the month. A few, including young, linger into October and there have always been one or two adults present through the winter since 1937. I have no regular observations before that date, but noted 2 or 3 in December-January, 1927-8. There were 4 together Dec. 27th, 1943, and during the winter 1944-5 6 adults on Oct. 23rd, Dec. 30th and several days in February, and smaller numbers almost daily.

I have noticed a small influx early in March in recent years (*e.g.*, 6 on 5th, 1937, 6 on 6th, 1938, 20 on 10th, 1939) and regular counts in 1945 gave these figures: March 1st, 6 (probably the winter residents); 2nd, 12; 4th, 40; 5th, 70; 6th, 116 on the estuary and 24 more flying in from the south in small groups; 12th, 296. After this it was impossible to detect any further increase for some time, as many are foraging inland during the day, but a flock of over 200 further down the estuary on April 3rd and over 500 in the same place on the 17th were certainly new arrivals. In previous years there has been a similar large arrival in the first half of April (*e.g.*, "several hundred" April 7th, 1938, and April 11th, 1942). By the middle of March most of the Lesser Black-backs are associating in pairs. A very small number of immature birds appears with the immigrants.

With the possible exception of a dark bird on Feb. 18th, 1944, all the Lesser Black-backs I have identified on this estuary have been *grallsii*.

**MORECAMBE.** From Jan. 1st to 10th, 1944, I saw a considerable number of Lesser Black-backs each day and a count on Jan. 7th made a total of 35, all adult *grallsii*, along two miles of shore. This count was made at full tide, but I learnt later that the maximum numbers are usually to be seen two or three hours before or after high water.

The same winter Mr. A. D. Wilkinson saw several "of both forms" on the Lune at Lancaster in November and December and two or three on many occasions in January 10 miles further up the river.

A count on a full and rough tide on Jan. 3rd, 1945, gave a total of 19 adults and one first-winter juvenile. On Feb. 5th, when the rising tide had collected all the gulls on a narrow strip of beach, there were 69 adults and one first-winter juvenile along the same stretch of shore. They were all seen at close range in bright sunshine and all the adults showed mantles of the normal shade for *L. f. grallsii*, though the degree of streaking on the head varied from heavy markings to practically none. On Feb. 20th in similar tide and weather conditions there were 73 adults and one first-winter juvenile along the usual stretch of beach, but an extension of the search for another half mile brought in another 24 adults, 2 second-winter birds and one first-winter juvenile, making a total of 101. Again all the adults and the two second-winter immatures appeared to be *L. f. grallsii*. On the same afternoon I saw a further 12 adults on the Lune at Lancaster. On March 26th the numbers at Morecambe had risen to 190.



INLAND WATERS OF CHESHIRE (A. W. Boyd). Large numbers of adults and young arrive in July (once over 100 on July 1st). These flocks persist in August and September, but dwindle to small numbers in October. Major Boyd has seen November-February birds only since 1928. He has November records in 14 of the 17 years 1928-1944, the largest numbers being in 1932 (8 or 10 adults with juveniles on 13th, 6 on 26th), 1935 (25 on 4th), 1938 (maximum 36 on 21st) and 1941 (9 on 14th); December in 8 years (6 on 2nd 1939, 1 to 3 through the month 1941); January in 10 years (only ones and twos, but often on several days in the month), and February in 9 years (mostly singles but several on 8th, 1942, 3 on 17th, 1944). A few are always seen in March, and though the arrival of the first migrants varies from the 3rd to the 30th they are usually not seen till the second half of the month and then only in small numbers. The biggest flocks are seen in May, or sometimes June.

In the last 5 or 6 years Major Boyd has recorded *L. f. fuscus* annually, mostly in October, but only ones and twos. He has also occasionally seen birds presumably of an intermediate form, too dark for *grallsii*, but not dark enough for *fuscus*.

MERSEY. Mr. W. Griffiths reports that "only a few individuals are present through the winter months." Mr. Blezard and Major Boyd saw single winter birds in 1929 and 1940.

NORTH WALES (T. S. Williams). In the course of frequent railway journeys along the North Wales coast, from Chester, sometimes as far as Holyhead or Pwllheli, Mr. Williams kept detailed records of gulls seen in December, January and February, 1944-5. The number of Lesser Black-backs seen naturally varied from day to day with conditions of tide, weather and visibility, but there was a large flock on Mostyn Sands at the mouth of the Dee on several occasions and small numbers at scattered points along the coast. The following are noteworthy extracts from his records—*December*: Between 30 and 40 on Mostyn Sands on 4th and 18th. *January*: Mostyn Sands: 50 or more on 2nd, about 30 on 8th, 12th and 30th, 12 on 19th in a gale of sleet, the only gulls on the shore (*cf.* Macpherson: "more indifferent to bad weather than the Herring Gull"), 15 on 24th in severe cold; 4 at Rhyl, Clwyd estuary, on 8th, 4 in flight one mile inland near Pwllheli on 9th. A typical count on 31st shows distribution along the coast: 1 Holywell, Dee estuary, 26 Mostyn Sands, 2 Rhyl, 1 near Llandulas, 2 Penmaenmawr, 1 near Holyhead, 1 or more Bodorgan, Anglesey. *February*: Mostyn Sands: 14 on 5th, 20 on 13th, 12 on 27th; Clwyd estuary: 30 on 7th, 20 on 12th, 12 on 27th; Menai Straits: 3 on 27th. These figures seem to indicate a move westward during February. In March and April only one pair remained on Mostyn Sands and very few at Rhyl.

Except for those seen in flight at Bodorgan and near Pwllheli Mr. Williams saw no Lesser Black-backs more than half a mile inland, even where gulls of other species were numerous. As his observations were made from the railway he could not identify immature birds or be certain of the race of adults, but he had the impression that most of them were of the British form.

WINTER RECOVERIES OF RINGED BIRDS IN BRITISH ISLES (E. P. Leach). Miss Leach has sent details of 7 Lesser Black-backed Gulls recovered in Britain between Nov. 1st and Feb. 28th. Six of them were recovered in their first winter, as follows: 2 from Walney recovered at Garstang, Lancs., Nov. 23rd, and Grimsby, Feb. 3rd; 2 from Foulshaw at Kendal, Nov. 9th, and Bolton, Lancs., Dec. 8th; 1 from Farne Islands at Willington, Northumberland, Nov. 2nd; 1 from Ailsa Craig at Prestwick, Ayrshire, Jan. 31st.

All but one of the first-winter birds were thus recovered within 50 miles of the native colony. The second-winter recovery, from Walney, was at Littleton, Middlesex, Jan. 29th.

It should be noticed that the great majority of recoveries of Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been of first and second year birds and the winter recoveries of adults have been too few to give any real indication of the proportion of residents. The notes above show that the movements of adults and immatures present rather different problems.

## CONCLUSIONS.

Movement from the nesting colonies begins in late June or early July and reaches its height in most districts in September. After local stragglers have left early in October a considerable migration continues past Southport till mid-November. This is sometimes seen on a smaller scale inland in Cheshire, but the coastal passage as a whole is later and suggests a regular migration from further north, perhaps the Faeroes.

Small numbers of British Lesser Black-backs occur from time to time in mid-winter at many different places; coastal and inland, in North-West England and North Wales. These occurrences have become more frequent in the last 10 to 15 years and in some places are now regular.

During the winter 1944-5 there were two large groups of winter residents, one on the south shore of Morecambe Bay and the other at the mouth of the Dee. Although most of these birds are sedentary through the winter there is some local movement, not immigration, in February. The origin of the winter residents is unproved, but it may be significant that there are 3 large breeding colonies within 15 miles of Morecambe — Walney, Foulshaw and a colony of some hundreds recently discovered by A. D. Wilkinson on the Pennines—and there are other nesting places in S. Lancashire and N. Wales. Taken with the ringing results above, this may suggest that the winter residents come from the local breeding colonies. The great majority of these residents are adults, less than 4 per cent. of those at Morecambe being in immature plumage.

While there may of course be other large groups undiscovered, the total actually reported in N.W. England and N. Wales in the winter 1944-5 approaches a minimum of 200. Much more information is still required, but if the proportion of residents continues to increase it might imply that the 19th century ornithologists were describing, though probably exaggerating, a previous peak period. A species which fluctuates in its migratory behaviour would obviously be of great interest.

*The Handbook* mentions "Passage north by E. and W. coast routes mid-March to end April with smaller numbers to end May." At least in recent years there has been a definite influx at the breeding colonies early in March and a small movement is seen at that time in E. Lancashire and sometimes elsewhere. The largest numbers arrive at the north-west colonies in the first half of April, but adults continue to pass through Cheshire and Lancashire in May, probably to breeding places further north. In June there is a considerable arrival in S. Lancashire of immature gulls which do not go on to the nesting colonies.

The Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gull has occurred from September to April at many places in the north-west and is fairly regular on the Solway and in Cheshire, but it is only seen singly or in very small numbers.

## RECOVERY OF MARKED BIRDS

COMMUNICATED BY

E. P. LEACH.

Hon. Sec. Bird-Ringing Committee, British Trust for Ornithology,

No.	<i>Ringed.</i>	<i>Recovered.</i>
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**Rook** (*Corvus f. frugilegus*).

RINGED AS NESTLING.

RT.7008	Carlton (W. Yorks), 24.4.34 by C. Wontner-Smith.	Where ringed, —.2.45.
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RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

315462	Largo (Fife), 18.7.39, by W. G. Eggeling.	Where ringed, 10.4.45.
AG.436	Great Budworth (Ches), 18.7.33, by A. W. Boyd.	Ditto 10.4.44.
AG.609	Ditto 2.6.38.	Ditto 9.4.45.

**Starling** (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*).

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

SH.891	York, 5.11.44, by Bootham Sch.	Crewe (Ches), — 2.45.
XM.892	Ditto 9.2.39.	Aarhus, Denmark, 5.4.40.
OV.10	Wilmslow (Ches), 12.10.37. by J. Buxton.	Where ringed, 14.8.44.
YW.727	Hagley (Worcs), 31.12.38, by G. M. King.	Arjäng (Värmland), Sweden, 25.4.40.
XE.404	Oxford, 2.8.38, by Orn. Soc.	Where ringed, 19.10.44.
WS.177	Strood (Kent), 13.11.39, by Rochester N.H.S.	Sneek, (Friesland), Holland, 17.10.43.
XS.657	Worcester Park (Surrey) 17.12.38, by London N.H.S.	Where ringed, —.4.45.
XS.631	Ditto 23.1.39.	Feltham (Middx), 21.2.45.

**Greenfinch** (*Chloris ch. chloris*).

ON.393	Beckley (Oxon), —.11.42, ad., by Oxford Orn. Soc.	Dinton (Bucks), 6.7.44.
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**Chaffinch** (*Fringilla caelebs gengleri*).

XR.393	Malvern (Worcs), 15.7.38, juv., by P. Morshead.	Where ringed, —.6.44.
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**Pied Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*).

DK.312	Brougham (Westmor), 7.6.39, young, by Moon & Cooper	Languidic (Morbihan), France, 23.1.40.
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**Whitethroat** (*Sylvia c. communis*).

CH.566	Mortimer (Berks), 5.7.43, ad., by Oxford Orn. Soc.	Where ringed, 9.8.44.
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No. *Ringed.* *Recovered.*

**Song-Thrush** (*Turdus e. ericetorum*).

RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

- TA.247 Kirkby Lonsdale (Westmor), Pallasgreen (Limerick), 22.1.45.  
22.5.39, by Moon & Cooper.  
SH.59 Padigham (Lancs), 23.7.44, by Ayle (Mayo), 25.1.45.  
J. J. Boon.  
XT.701 Styal (Ches), 21.6.41, by T. Cashel (Tipperary), 28.1.45.  
H. Bell.  
SH.343 Rugby (Warwicks), 2.7.44, by Northampton, 14.7.45.  
Mmes. Anscombe & Read.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

- SD.424 Blagdon (Northumb), 2.7.43, Kilkeel (Down), 2.2.45.  
by Ash & Ridley.  
TS.932 Marton (Lancs), 24.1.45, by Dalry (Ayr), 27.4.45.  
J. V. Morley.

**Blackbird** (*Turdus m. merula*).

RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

- XX.748 Watermillock (Cumb), 27.4.39, Where ringed, —.3.45.  
by Moon & Cooper.  
SF.242 Mytton (Lancs), 14.5.44, by Ryefield (Cavan), 19.11.44.  
C. Oakes.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

- SH.626 Blagdon (Northumb), 18.8.44, Banbridge (Down), 10.1.45.  
by Ash & Ridley.  
SH.325 Pilling (Lancs), 24.6.44, by Coolcarrigan (Kildare), 25.1.45.  
L. A. Cowcill.  
WN.736 Wilmslow (Ches), 18.11.39, by Where ringed, 17.6.45.  
E. Cohen.  
WA.725 Ascott-u-Wychwood (Oxon), Meriden (Warwicks), 4.2.45.  
8.12.38, by Oxford Orn. Soc.  
ZP.972 Hilton (Hunts), 27.3.39, by Where ringed, 19.3.45.  
D. Garnett.

**Swallow** (*Hirundo r. rustica*).

RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

- CP.898 Blagdon (Northumb), 6.8.44, Where ringed, —.5.45.  
by Ash & Ridley.  
CM.647 Cumdivock (Cumb), 9.8.43, 5 m. North, —.6.44.  
by R. H. Brown.  
DX.177 Oswestry (Salop), 21.6.43, by Dealesville, Orange Free State,  
P. Hirst, —.3.45.  
CN.941 Selly Oak (Warwicks), 8.7.43, Alvechurch (Wores), 11.5.45.  
by C. Q. Phillipson.  
CD.74 Alconbury (Hunts), 25.8.44, Spaldwick (Hunts), 14.5.45.  
by C. F. Tebbutt.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

- ED.294 Laugharne (Carms), 20.7.38, Where ringed, 23.6.39; Valence  
by J. F. Thomas, (Charente), France, —.10.40.

**Swift** (*Apus a. apus*).

- DX.806 Douglas, I. of Man, 2.6.43, ad., Where ringed, 1.6.44.  
by Cowin, Ladds & William-  
son

No.	Ringed.	Recovered.
<b>Little Owl</b> ( <i>Athene noctua vidalii</i> ).		
321066	Stagsden (Beds), 21.5.44, young, by Bedford Sch.	Bletchley (Bucks), 13.9.44.

<b>Merlin</b> ( <i>Falco columbarius æsalon</i> ).		
RX3272.	Windermere(Westmor).8.7.45, young, by Miss M. Garnett.	Ormskirk (Lancs). 14.8.45.
77168	Goathland (Yorks), 20.6.38, young, by R. M. Garnett.	Corbridge (Northumb), 7.9.44.

### **Kestrel** (*Falco t. tinnunculus*).

#### RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

RV.3112	Gt. Mell Fell (Cumb), 25.6.44, by M. G. Robinson.	Muirkirk (Ayr), 21.11.44.
326722	Hebden Bridge (W. Yorks), 2.7.45, by F. Dean.	Hazlehead (W. Yorks), 13.8.45.
322001	Flinton (E. Yorks), 23.6.44, by C. Taylor.	Rothwell (Lincs). 24.2.45.
324204	Minster (Kent), 30.7.44, by M. & D. Rankin.	Dover (Kent), 15.11.44.
324205	Ditto 30.7.44	Laughton (Sussex), 18.11.44. (The last two were of the same brood).

### **Common Buzzard** (*Buteo b. buteo*).

AD.1089	Sedbergh (W. Yorks), 27.6.44, young, by Sedbergh Sch.	Frynp (N. Yorks), 9.12.44.
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### **Sparrow-Hawk** (*Accipiter n. nisus*).

#### RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

325252	Blagdon (Northumb), 22.7.43, by Ash & Ridley.	Angerton (Northumb), 17.7.45.
324823	Andreas, I. of Man, 22.7.44, by Cowin, Ladds & Williamson.	Ballasalla, I. of Man, 19.4.45.
326437	Willington (Derby), 29.6.44, by Repton Sch.	Dunstall (Staffs), 2.4.45.

#### RINGED AS ADULT.

310951.	Oban (Argyll), 10.3.45, by J. Fraser.	Kingussie (Inverness), 2.5.45.
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### **Common Heron** (*Ardea c. cinerea*).

#### RINGED AS NESTLINGS.

114529	Crofton (Cumb), 9.5.35, by R. H. Brown.	Langwathby (Cumb), 16.8.44.
502669	Eaton (Ches), 27.4.41, by G. K. Robinson.	Rolleston (Staffs), 2.12.44.
503067	Bromham (Beds), 4.5.44, by Bedford Sch.	Billericay (Essex), —.1.45.
503070	Ditto 4.5.44.	Tallington (Lincs), early 1945.
502794	Tollesbury (Essex), 2.5.45, by J. Simister.	R. Corve (Salop), 26.7.45.
502608	Llanmartin (Mon), 29.4.44, by B. Campbell.	Mountain Ash (Glam), 26.3.45.
122584	Cleggan (Galway), 25.6.38, by S. Marchant.	Tarbert (Kerry), —.8.45.

No. Ringed. Recovered.

**Mallard** (*Anas p. platyrhyncha*).

925135 Abbotsbury (Dorset), 20.12.38, Sulkava, South Finland, —.9.44.  
ad., by Wildfowl Inq. Ctee.

**Teal** (*Anas c. crecca*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

326719 Corple (W. Yorks), 23.7.44, Elland (W. Yorks), 17.9.44.  
by Edwards, Crapnell &  
Watson.

327461 Ditto 18.6.45 Todmorden (Lancs), 15.8.45.

312288 Rathlin I. (Antrim), 3.7.39, Where ringed, winter, 1944-45.  
by M. & D. Rankin.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

Or.1284 Pembroke, 7.11.36 Mjölby, Östergötland, Sweden,  
9.9.40.

RINGS ISSUED TO WILDFOWL INQUIRY COMMITTEE.

901564 Pembroke, 8.12.38. Sorbie (Wigtown), 20.1.45.

900733 Ditto 30.12.39. Asele, Swedish Lapland, 25.8.44.

901116 Ditto 18.10.38. Dettern (Västergötland), Sweden,  
4.8.40.

902345 Ditto 22.9.39. Lessebo (Smaland), Sweden,  
1.8.44.

900735 Ditto 30.12.39. Lemvig (Jylland), Denmark,  
21.10.41.

900679 Ditto 23.12.39. Boxtel (N. Brabant), Holland,  
30.7.45.

902000 Ditto 29.12.38. Ravenna, Italy, 22.12.41.

**Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*).

AC.4700 Newport (Fife), —.7.44, h.-r. Comber (Down). 1.2.45.  
young, by J. Berry.

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

401682 Leswalt (Wigtown), 28.1.38, Glenluce (Wigtown). 20.12.44.  
by J. Law.

900190 Somerleyton (Suffolk), 26.1.38, Pawlett (Somerset), 24.1.45.  
by Wildfowl Inq. Ctee.

**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fuligula*).

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

315826 St. James' Park, London, Chorleywood (Herts), 28.7.45.  
1.4.44, by Lond. N.H.S.

323254 Ditto 2.2.43. Novaya Zemlya, —.5.43.

324794 Ditto 29.12.43. Nyköping, Sweden, 16.4.44.

**Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax c. carbo*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

113963 Mochrum (Wigtown), 30.6.35, Eden Estuary (Cumb). —.8.44.  
by Lord Dumfries.

122449 Big Scar (Wigtown), 5.7.39, Cambados (Pontevedra), Spain,  
by Lord D. Stuart. 27.2.45.

122022 F a r n e I s . , 27.7.38, by Berwick-on-Tweed, 1.6.44.  
Bootham Sch.

121362 South Pembroke, 16.6.38, by Ile de Sein (Finistere), France,  
Skokholm Birds Obs. —.7.40.

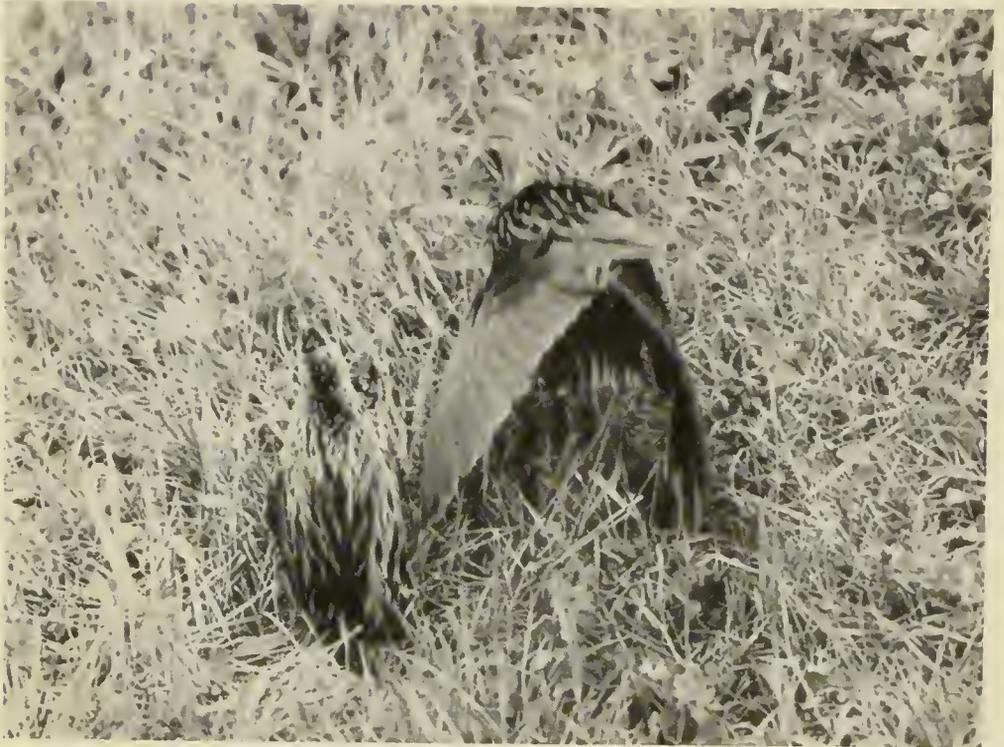
(To be continued.)



CORN-CRAKE.

Male displaying before stuffed decoy.

(*Photographed by Capt. A. G. Mason.*)



CORN-CRAKE.

UPPER—Male displaying before stuffed decoy.

LOWER—Male offering caterpillar to decoy.

*(Photographed by Capt. A. G. Mason.)*

## THE DISPLAY OF THE CORN-CRAKE

BY

A. G. MASON, B.Sc.

(Plates 11-12).

THE accompanying photographs of the courtship display of a Corn-Crake (*Crex crex*) were made during a series of experiments which the writer has been carrying out, with the help of friends, during the past few years. The experiments consist in calling up Corn-Crakes to a stuffed dummy by imitating the crake-crake song with a pair of bones. The bones are about seven inches long, and one has notches filed in one edge (about three notches to the inch was found best). When the plain bone is rubbed hard across the notches a very good imitation is obtained. The reactions of the bird are watched from a hide of sacking which is erected close to the dummy.

When the bird answers our call and approaches our usual practice is to stop calling and not to use the bones again unless the bird hesitates and seems to need more stimulation. Usually the bird answers our call and then approaches without craking, but uttering an occasional "growling-mew" note (see below). When they see the dummy, around which the grass is removed, most birds stop and utter a few crakes. They then make a courtship display and finally attempt coition. At this point a clap net, operated by string from the hide, is sprung and the bird caught and ringed.

In a full display the head is held low with the neck outstretched. The wings are fully spread and directed slightly backwards, with the tips touching the ground. The flank and neck feathers are puffed out and the tail-coverts erected vertically like a fan. Not all displays observed were as complete as this. The neck and flank feathers were not always puffed out, but the wings were in all cases fully extended and the tail-coverts, whenever they could be seen, were erected. Most birds craked on seeing the decoy and on receiving no answer went into display immediately. They may have approached in order to drive off the supposed intruder which they heard craking, but unless the craking was repeated, their normal reaction to the silent and passive dummy was to treat it as a female.

A full aggressive display was twice seen, once directed at the dummy and once at the reflection of the bird in a mirror, reinforced by the artificial craking. It was closely similar to the sexual display, with head held low and tail-coverts erected, but the extended wings had the ends directed somewhat forward and clear of the ground. The bird made several lunges towards its "opponent." As it lunged it erected its body feathers and brought its wings forward and twisted them so that the leading edges were directed downwards and the rear edge raised.

On the occasion when the photographs were taken the net was not used, and after the first attempt at coition the bird stood and preened for a minute or two and then made another display followed by a second attempt at coition. This was repeated again and again. After twenty-three attempts at coition it went away and returned with a green caterpillar, which it offered to the dummy. It eventually ate the caterpillar and resumed its display and attempts at coition. When I had exposed all my plates the bird was driven away after it had made twenty-seven attempts at coition in thirty-five minutes.

The results of the experiments are described in detail elsewhere (*Irish Naturalists' Journal*, Vol. vii, pp. 226-237 and pp. 321-333). A definite cycle of behaviour was observed. During the first fortnight of May many of the birds tested ignored the calls, suggesting that they had not yet established territories. Of the rest about half made a courtship display; the others generally ignored the dummy, but one definitely attacked it and at least one other made what appeared to be a threat display. From the middle of May to the middle of June over half the birds tested approached our call and all of these made a courtship display followed by an attempt at coition. A few birds in May attempted coition without a preliminary display. In the last fortnight of June less than a third of the birds tested approached and displayed, and in July all birds ignored our calls.

Two notes other than the "crake-crake" were heard. One, a high pitched "cheep," is uttered by the female. The other, which is uttered by the male, varies considerably from bird to bird. Its commonest form is a "growling-mew," but other variants have been recorded as a "purring grunt and whistle," "grunt and whistle," and "growling squeal." It is uttered, with the beak closed, when approaching our call, during fights with other males, and during the courtship display.

## NOTES.

## WOOD-LARK IN ESSEX.

As *The Handbook of British Birds* states that the Wood-Lark (*Lullula a. arborea*) is "apparently not now found in Essex," I write to record that on April 23rd, 1945, I saw and heard one singing in Hainault Forest. On May 12th I saw the pair and on this occasion I was near enough to see the colour of the legs with the naked eye, and the eye-stripe meeting at the back of the head. On June 12th I saw one bird again, this time with food in the beak. One was also seen on two other occasions during the summer.

The birds were in a portion of the forest that is free from trees and is dotted with numbers of bushes, wild rose, blackberry, etc., with cultivated country close at hand. EDGAR R. BAKER.

[Capt. G. K. Yeates recorded a nest near Colchester in 1943 (*antea*, Vol. xxxvii, p.17).—EDS.]

## DISPLAY OF PIED WAGTAIL.

ON May 28th, 1945, near West Molesey, Surrey, I watched the display of a Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*) which was probably a form of the "bowing" display mentioned in *The Handbook*. The female was crouching close to a post on a small wooden foot-bridge. The male was facing her and bowing in a very springy, spasmodic fashion. The bowing action was made by bending the legs, not by tipping the whole body, and the point of the tail remained almost touching the ground throughout. The interval between bows was 2-3 seconds, and during these intervals the bird danced excitedly about, once, in fact, making a lightning, sideways jump of about 9 inches in length and 6 inches in height with closed wings. The whole display, seen with binoculars at 10 yards range, gave the impression of intense emotion. Unfortunately it was broken up by the approach of a passer-by before coition occurred.

B. A. RICHARDS.

ON July 9th, 1938, as recorded in my notes at the time, I watched a pair of Pied Wagtails (*M. alba yarrellii*) at close range in my garden at Frandley, Cheshire. The male, facing the female, dropped his bill to the ground and then rose erect on "tip-toes," doing these two actions time after time. He then ran round the female more than once with tail spread and depressed, wings shivering and spread out, and feathers on back and wings standing up ruffled. The female walked with tail erect. Coition took place very quickly and display continued for a few moments after.

It seems probable that the action which I described as dropping the bill and then rising on tip-toes was similar to Mr. Richards's "bowing in a very springy, spasmodic fashion."

On another occasion at Frandley, April 11th, 1926, a pair of Pied Wagtails were standing near one another on a low wall. The male repeatedly bobbed his head and then stretched his neck up as if to show off the black throat. This continued after the female

had gone down to the ground and finally the birds flew to an ivy-covered wall, where there was an open nesting box in which wagtails had nested the previous year.

This last observation appears of interest because Boase (*antea*, Vol. xx, pp. 20-22) concluded that the display of the throat patch by stretching up the neck occurred only in the preliminary stages of "courtship" and not in paired birds. A. W. BOYD.

#### NUTHATCH IN STIRLINGSHIRE.

ON April 21st, 1945, we had good and unmistakable views for about five minutes of a Nuthatch (*Sitta europæa*) between Dumbrook Loch and Mugdock village, some five miles from the Glasgow city boundary. One of us had  $\times 5$  field-glasses and the other a telescope and the bird was watched at ranges from about 20 to 30 yards. We noted the blue-grey upper-parts, black line through eye, whitish sides of face shading to buff, chestnut buff under-parts, and sharp, pointed bill. The bird was on the road when first seen and flew up on to a tree, where it ran about a foot down the trunk. It seemed very inquisitive, for as we moved towards Dumbrook it more than once flew down on to the road again, looked at us for a minute, and then flew on again to a tree or post, until finally it flew away with an undulating flight.

PETER ROURKE AND R. J. STIRLING.

#### COURTSHIP-FEEDING OF MARSH-TIT.

ON April 29th, 1945, a pair of Marsh-Tits (*Parus palustris dresseri*) was watched in a small wood at Gunley, Leicestershire. Both birds were searching for food and calling frequently "pit-ti-choo, pit-ti-choo" or "pit-ti, pit-ti" as well as more ordinary notes. One then flew up to the other perched on a branch and presented food, which was accepted with rapidly vibrated wings. The meeting was only momentary. The recipient did not look like a young bird and in spite of 3-4 hours' watching in this spot, no more than two birds, both adults, were seen. Later one of them was observed to be carrying a small green caterpillar on two occasions and once more the two were seen to meet momentarily with some excited notes, but what actually occurred was hidden from view by the foliage. G. BEVEN.

#### GOLDCREST BREEDING IN ORKNEY.

ON April 5th, 1945, in company with Lt. E. Gowlland, R.A., I watched a pair of Goldcrests (*Regulus regulus anglorum*) in Binscarth Wood, Finstown, Orkney, busily carrying feathers and lichen with which they were completing a nest. This was of the typical hanging variety, but built under a tangled mass of small twigs in a fallen pine tree. In due course young were reared successfully. *The Handbook* mentions two previous breeding records, but I gather these are not very satisfactory G. H. E. YOUNG.

[This nest was also examined by Mr. G. T. Arthur, who writes that this is the first time to his certain knowledge that the species has

bred in Orkney. The two records above mentioned are given by Harvie-Brown and Buckley (*Vertebrate Fauna of the Orkney Islands*, p. 101), but one is very old (c. 1830) and the other based only on an old nest attributed to this species.—EDS.]

#### ICTERINE WARBLER IN SHETLAND.

ON the evening of May 21st, 1945, I noticed a strange warbler in my garden here. The following night I was fortunate in getting it from a cat which was mauling it. The brownish-olive upper-parts, pale yellow under-parts, lead-blue feet and legs, bright orange inside mouth and particularly the wing formula agree exactly with *The Handbook's* description of the Icterine Warbler (*Hippolais icterina*). On dissection it proved to be a female.

G. T. KAY.

[Mr. Kay has been good enough to send me the skin for examination and I can confirm the identification.—B.W.T.]

#### ROBIN FEEDING FLEDGLING BLACKBIRD.

ON May 11th, 1945, I watched an adult Robin (*Erithacus rubecula melophilus*) feed a fledgling Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*), which had been perhaps two or three days out of the nest. There were actually two young Blackbirds, but I only saw the Robin feed one, thought I suspect it also fed the other. The Robin fed the youngster on four occasions in about ten minutes. A few minutes after the third occasion, when the Robin was not in sight, two adult Blackbirds appeared, a cock and apparently an adult female: they paid no attention to the only young one then in view, but almost at once something disturbed them and they flew off. Three or four minutes later the Robin appeared again with green caterpillars in its bill. It definitely called the fledgling, which hopped out from under the nearby hedge and took the proffered meal. The same evening both my wife and I on different occasions saw a similar feeding incident, though only one fledgling was observed. The next morning I watched again: this time I saw no feeding by the Robin, but both fledglings were again present and one was twice fed by a hen Blackbird in full view of the Robin—or at any rate a Robin which was probably the same bird as before—which was perched close by in a young beech, in which it had been singing strongly, and it seemed now to take no interest in the proceedings.

G. L. REID.

[A number of cases are recorded of birds feeding the young of other species, probably in the first instance in response to food-begging behaviour of the latter, and perhaps more especially at times of heightened sensitivity owing to recent loss of their own young. Mr. D. Lack (*Life of the Robin*, p. 89) quotes a previous record of a pair of Robins feeding a fledgling Blackbird, as well as one of Robins feeding a young Cuckoo, and we are indebted to him for kindly drawing our attention to two other cases, in which Robins fed young Song-Thrushes (*Zool.*, 1874, p. 4033 and Loudon's *Mag. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. vi, 1833, p. 69).—EDS.]

## POSTURING OF GREEN WOODPECKER.

On April 23rd, 1945, at Sway, Hampshire, between 2 and 3 p.m. (D.B.S.T.), I watched two Green Woodpeckers (*Picus viridis pluvius*) posturing in a field for some minutes. They sat facing each other about one and a half yards apart with beaks raised in line with the body, making an angle of over 45 degrees with the ground. They jerked their bodies from side to side several times, describing an arc in the air, then rested, then began jerking again, sometimes varying the movement by bowing forward. The wings were folded most of the time, but fluttered once or twice. After several repetitions of this performance they flew off. They uttered no noise during the performance.

JEAN COHEN.

## SHELD-DUCK BREEDING IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

SHELD-DUCK (*Tadorna tadorna*) are regular visitors to the Trent valley east of Nottingham in autumn, and to a less extent in spring, so that no surprise was felt at the report of a pair during the last few days of March, 1945, on the sewage farm of the Nottingham Corporation, where they were seen by the observers below on April 1st. From that date until April 12th, the two birds were noted to use, for feeding or rest, all of the four big areas of sewage beds comprising the farm, which, except for the formal shape of some of the pools, resembles a natural fresh marsh with shallow lagoons, some hundreds of acres in extent. After this date, however, the pair took up permanent residence on one of these areas closely adjacent to the Trent. The male was very aggressive to the Shoveler and Mallard already nesting there, while the female spent much time on the river at a point near the opposite bank from the sewage farm where the steep bank, 6-8 feet high, is riddled with rabbit holes, this being in the parish of Shelford.

On April 26th, the male was resting on an islet on the sewage farm, alone. Half an hour later he was joined by the female, which came from the rabbit area of river bank. After a period of feeding, the pair flew up and over the Trent, the female dropping out of sight behind the steep banks of the rabbit area, while the male came round in a circle to alight by his islet.

Short feeding spells, and long absences of some hours of the female, and the fixed station of the male on the islet were then regularly observed, as well as the dual flight out, and return of the male, at intervals of two or three days until May 29th. On this date, one of the observers (P.W.B.) found both adults with 10 very small young, certainly not more than a day or so old, on the Trent at the foot of the rabbit-riddled bank, thus confirming breeding, which from previous behaviour had been suspected since late April.

This is, I believe, the first recorded breeding of the species in Notts, and in order that the birds might be entirely undisturbed, no serious attempt was made to locate the precise nesting hole, which was known to be within a certain small area. The sequel

entirely justified the restraint and caution exercised. It is of interest to note that the breeding site is roughly 60 miles from the nearest coast.

It may be added that the young flew strongly (making several circuits of about half a mile in diameter at 80-100 feet up) on July 12th, the forty-fifth day after their emergence from the nest burrow. This is distinctly less than the period of "about 8 weeks" given in *The Handbook*.

The details are from notes by A. R. Stone, R. J. and T. W. Raines, P. W. Browne, and myself.

J. STATON.

#### GREY PLOVER IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

IN early May, 1945, we observed a Grey Plover (*Squatarola squatarola*) in full summer plumage on the Northampton sewage farm and a second bird was seen by one of us (I.J.F.L.). A single bird was seen under rather poor conditions by R.E.B. on May 5th and again, in company with three other observers, under good conditions on May 12th. I.J.F.L. in company with R. M. Jones, of Bedford, watched two together on May 7th. Both were in summer plumage. While they were under observation something alarmed them, so that they took flight, and the second bird was not seen again. The distinctive characters of the species were well seen by both of us: the very striking white forehead, crown and shoulders, the silver-grey upper-parts mottled with black, the black of chin, ear-coverts, throat and breast sharply demarcated from the white under tail-coverts and not bordered by white on the flanks. R.E.B. noted that in the single bird seen by him the nape of the neck also appeared white, with a creamy tinge. I.J.F.L. also observed the black axillaries and whitish rump in flight.

R. E. BURTON AND I. J. FERGUSON LEES.

#### LAPWING NESTING ON COASTAL BEACH.

IN view of the fact that coastal beaches are not mentioned as breeding sites of the Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) in *The Handbook*, it may be of interest to record the following occurrence.

On April 24th, 1945, I received an egg of this species for identification and on investigating the circumstances I was informed that a nest of the bird containing four eggs had been robbed on the beach at Par, Cornwall. I was unable to discover the nest, but on subsequent dates up till May 19th, I saw a pair of birds on the beach. I may add that the part of the beach where the nesting-site was is partly grass-covered and that the beach had for the last four years been a prohibited area. A friend of mine also observed two birds there during the spring and summer months of 1944.

C. J. STEVENS.

[Although the habit is evidently uncommon, or at any rate extremely local, it may be noted that Lapwings have been known for many years to nest regularly on the shingle at Dungeness.—EDS.]

## REVIEWS.

## LOCAL REPORTS.

*Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society : Fourteenth Annual Report, 1944.* Edited by B. H. Ryves, D. Valentine and H. M. Quick.

THE Cornwall Society again produces a substantial Report with much useful material. There are some regional reports from particular areas, apart from the main systematic list, and several sections dealing with various special observations. We are glad to see that subsidiary small sections of the kind which helped to complicate the Report in previous years have now been avoided, though we are inclined to think that even the regional reports might well have had their records distributed in the general section.

Only one pair of Choughs (seen with three young) are positively known to have bred, though others probably did so.

Amongst records of interest in the systematic section may be mentioned :—two Whooper Swans at Hayle Estuary in January and early February ; an Eider off the Mouls on the unusual date of July 30th ; a Grey Phalarope at St. Endellion on September 24th and another at (apparently) Tregorden on October 30th ; and a Yellow-legged Herring-Gull, presumably *L. argentatus omissus*, at Reskadinnick on October 20th. A Hoopoe and a Little Gull are also reported. There are several records of Spoonbills, including one which wintered, and it may be noted that the Little Egret already recorded in *British Birds* was last seen for certain on February 7th (reported seen February 10th). The proved breeding of Fulmars at one locality has already been recorded in *British Birds*, and particulars about (as yet) non-breeding colonies at other places on the coast are given. A record of an Iceland Gull on Hayle Estuary, February 3rd, may be perfectly correct, but no evidence to show that it was not a small example of the less rare Glaucous Gull is given.

Major Dorrien Smith's notes on Scilly record :—an immature female Rose-coloured Starling in November ; a Golden Oriole on the early date of March 31st ; a Great Spotted Woodpecker which was present on Tresco from November, 1943, to March, 1944 (first record for Scilly) ; a Wryneck on April 30th ; a probable White-tailed Eagle on September 11th, 1943 ; a Purple Heron, April 25th ; a Night-Heron, May 6th ; a Ferruginous Duck shot on January 15th ; a Bonaparte's Gull shot December 16th, and the astonishing record of three American waders, Red-breasted Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper and Yellowshank, all seen on the same day, September 12th. It is of interest to note that the three waders were also seen and identified by Sergt. Garrison of the U.S.A. Further details about these and some of the other interesting species recorded would have been welcome.

[In the notice of the 1943 Report (*antea*, p. 158) reference was made to a Rough-legged Buzzard, " the remains of which were found at a Raven's nest." We are informed that the remains were in fact not found at the nest, but a few yards away from the quarry in which the nest was built. The statement in the Report that the remains were found " when visiting a Raven's nest " is, we think, misleading and should surely have read " when on the way to visit " or some such phrase.]

*Seventeenth Report of the Devon Bird-Watching and Preservation Society, 1944.*

THE Devon Society, like the Cornwall one, is fortunate in still being able to produce a very full Report in spite of war-time conditions. Many interesting observations are recorded. Amongst breeding records may be mentioned those of Hobby in the Honiton district (1941 and 1942) and Short-eared Owl on Exmoor (1939). In 1944 harriers, presumably Montagu's, were seen during the summer in one area and probably bred, though this was not proved.

Of rarities, three Cranes on the Otter at Budleigh Salterton on September 10th, which may well have been wild as the escape of three full-winged captive birds seems rather unlikely, a male Marsh-Harrier on September 23rd and two other records of the species from Lundy (October and November), a

Kite in the Molland area of the Barle valley, March 24th, a Slender-billed Nutcracker seen and subsequently found dying at Paignton in November, and a Dark-breasted Barn-Owl at Ottery St. Mary, October 8th (already recorded in *British Birds*, Vol. xxxviii, p. 175), are the most noteworthy. A Waxwing found dead at Chudleigh on February 28th provides the only record we know of for the South-western Peninsula during the 1943-44 invasion. Other records which may be mentioned are those of: some Mealy Redpolls identified by their very grey plumage in a flock at Sidmouth on April 1st, several records of Nightingales in the Minehead-Porlock district of West Somerset and some evidence of a westward extension in Devon, several records of Hoopoes, an Osprey at Watchet, West Somerset, in May, three Barnacle Geese on Lundy, September 6th, remarkable numbers of Black-tailed Godwits in the Exe Estuary (up to over 150 on September 30th), a Grey Phalarope on the Exe Estuary, October 15th, and another at Ilfracombe, October 21st. Records of Spoonbill at Minehead, Ruddy Sheld-Duck on Lundy, Osprey at Ilfracombe, a Little Stint in January, the breeding of the Fulmar on Lundy, etc. have already been mentioned in this journal. There are also two Devon records of Quail in 1944, which did not reach us in response to our request for information on this subject.

There are also reports on the local migration of several species, a subject to which the Society has paid a good deal of attention, and several other special sections.

*Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Committee: Twenty-sixth Report for 1939-42. Part II, March, 1945. Report on Birds, 1939-42.* By A. W. Boyd.

THIS Report, delayed as a result of the war, contains many useful records for both counties, especially of ducks, waders, etc. from the Cheshire meres and the coast, but the most noteworthy, such as the Black-eared Wheatear at Lytham, Lancs, in April, 1940, the Long-tailed Skua at Bolton-le-Sands on November 9th, 1940, and the breeding of Cirl Buntings in Lancashire, of Pochard in the north of that county, and of Black-necked Grebes in Cheshire, have nearly all been published in *British Birds*.

We note that a Marsh-Harrier was seen at Leighton Moss, Lancs, on July 18th, 1942, that a pair of Garganey summered there in the same year, though breeding was not proved, that a remarkable number of Bewick's Swans (up to 164 counted) were seen in East Cheshire in March, 1942, that Curlew have begun to breed in the Cheshire plain, that in addition to an Iceland Gull recorded in *British Birds*, another gull identified as this species was seen at Formby Point on March 8th, 1940, and that, amongst several records of Great Skuas, one was seen at Hilbre on the surprising date of June 30th, 1940.

There is also a report on the distribution of species recommended for special study, namely, Goldfinch, Sand-Martin, Stock-Dove, Teal and Curlew, but the editor states that the appeal for information on these "selected species" met with little response, which we think has been a common—if not the general—experience amongst editors of county reports.

*The Liverpool Naturalists' Field Club: Proceedings and Natural History Notes for the Area, 1944.*

THE section of "Ornithological Notes" is very short and contains records of mainly local interest. Several separate short notes follow and Mr. H. G. Alexander's paper "On Field Identification of Birds" is reprinted from *British Birds*, by permission.

*Report on Birds observed in Hertfordshire in 1943, and ditto, 1944.* By H. H. S. Hayward (*Trans. Herts. Nat. Hist. Soc. & Field Club*, Vol. xxii, pt. 3, pp. 63-83).

WE are glad to observe that the *Transactions of the Hertfordshire Natural History Society* for August, 1945, contains the bird reports for both 1943 and 1944, thus bringing this well and carefully compiled record up to date and into step with the other county reports.

As usual, the Tring Reservoirs provide the majority—though by no means all—of the records. In 1943, after a temporary rise in the early months, the water level at the reservoirs was again extremely low in the autumn and winter, and numerous waders were seen on the autumn passage. The most notable feature of the wader migration was the number of Curlew-Sandpipers, the highest number being twenty-one on August 29th. Six Wood Sandpipers at the Marsworth Reservoir on August 21st and nine on August 22nd are also noteworthy, this species being uncommon at Tring. A Temminck's Stint at Tring on August 28th and 29th and a Glaucous and Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gull at Watford Sewage Farm have already been recorded in *British Birds*. A pair of Garganey was present at Tring up till at least June 9th, and a single bird was seen on June 15th, but there seems to be no evidence of breeding. A single Bewick's Swan at Tring on November 16th and a Golden Oriole at Cassiobury Park, Watford, in June may also be mentioned.

In 1944, the water level was again very low in all the reservoirs except Marsworth and Mr. Glegg found "no evidence that a single pair of Pochard, Great Crested Grebe, Dabchick or Coot nested," though some Tufted Ducks did so. The event of the year was the breeding of two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers at the reservoirs, already recorded in detail in *British Birds*.

A single Snow-Bunting was seen at Wilstone on November 6th and two on November 7th, an Osprey on May 14th and 15th, and three Wood-Sandpipers on August 11th and 12th. Some Garganey were again present in spring, and a pair was seen as late as May 16th. It is of interest that the Turnstone, unknown in Hertfordshire until 1928, "now occurs at the Tring Reservoirs nearly every year."

## LETTER.

### PARENT BIRDS PROBING AMONGST BROOD IN NEST.

*To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.*

SIRS,—I was interested to read H. G. Hurrell's letter (*antea*, p. 300) and his suggestion that the Jays which he observed were removing the scaled off feather sheaths while "digging" in the bottom of the nest.

I have seen Tree-Pipits, Willow-Warbler, Garden-Warbler and Blackbird behaving in a similar way after feeding their young, and also while brooding them. The action appears to be a rapid poking or tugging at the lining of the nest, the sides of the cup as well as the bottom. Owing to the rapid movement of the bird's head I have not been able to determine whether it does it with its bill closed or whether it takes hold of the lining. In the case of the Blackbird, the whole nest shook.

After a few seconds, the bird stops and picks minute objects from the nest lining and swallows them. Then it tugs or pokes at the nest again and so on. On one occasion the Garden-Warbler was occupied with the nest in this way for eight minutes. It ignored the two young that kept begging for food.

I watched the Blackbird poking at her nest when the young were only two days old, so she could not have been removing scaled off feather sheaths. I suggest that the tugging or poking shakes any fleas or other vermin present into a state of activity, so making them easier to see and dispose of.

N. C. HICKS.

[Miss Hicks's observations suggest that the behaviour under discussion is fairly widespread, but the explanations put forward remain only tentative. Mr. Hurrell in a letter to us notes that another suggestion might be that by this action the "bed" is aired and remade, so that the brood is prevented from squashing the lining too flat. The habit is one on which photographers should be able to contribute some observations.—EDS.]

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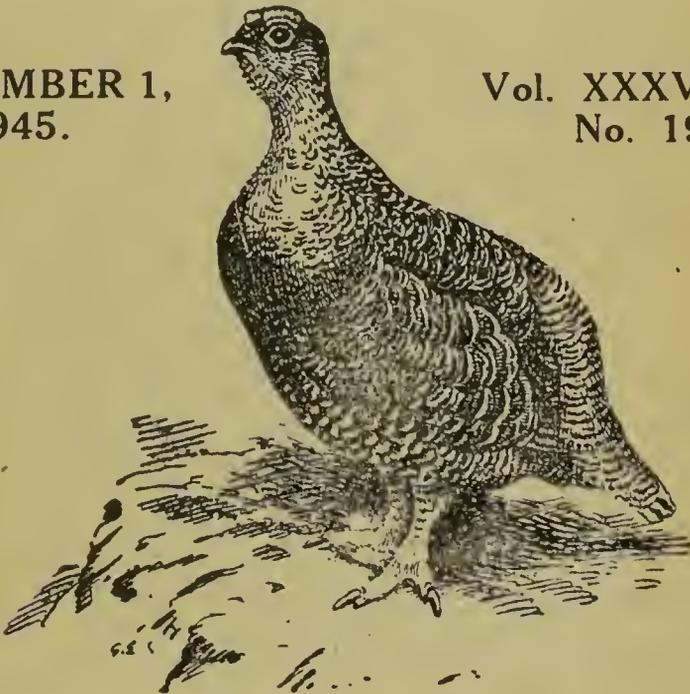
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## SOME OBSERVATIONS ON STONECHATS IN NORTH CORNWALL

BY

E. R. AND E. D. PARRINDER.

DURING 1944 we located fifteen pairs of Stonechats (*Saxicola torquata hibernans*) breeding on the five mile stretch of cliffs between Backways Cove and Trevalga, in the neighbourhood of Tintagel, North Cornwall. We were able to keep a fairly close watch on most of these birds and found twenty-two nests of twelve pairs. One of the remaining three pairs was inside private property and the two others, each of which appeared to have only one brood, were not located until after the young were fledged. Some less detailed observations were made in part of the same area in 1943, when five nests were found.

Our watching in 1944 began in March, when breeding territories were already occupied, and continued until September, when the breeding season was over and most of the young had dispersed. Most of our observations had to be made in the late afternoon and evening and much of our time was taken in locating the pairs, finding the nests and ringing the young; thus the notes and data which follow do not pretend to be complete or to cover more than a few aspects of the breeding biology.

### DISTRIBUTION AND TERRITORY.

The cliffs at Tintagel average 300 feet in height and vary from sheer bare cliff to steep, grassy and boulder-strewn slopes, with areas of gorse and bracken. Between the enclosed fields and the cliff edge is a public footpath and a narrow strip of land, widening out on the headlands, consisting of rough pasture, gorse, bracken, brambles, heather and golf links. The Stonechat normally nests on or close to the ground, and nests were found in cropped gorse, in heather and in long grass; but gorse bushes, even if a few only, were an essential feature of every territory. The restriction of breeding Stonechats to areas containing gorse bushes was probably correlated with the territorial habit and the need for a song and look-out post (Lack and Venables, 1937), but our observations showed that the gorse bushes were much used as look-out posts for food. Along the five-mile stretch of cliffs under observation there were nineteen areas, varying in size from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 22 acres and totalling  $107\frac{1}{2}$  acres, which we classified as apparently suitable breeding territory for Stonechats, *i.e.* territory containing heather or long grass and a large or small number of gorse bushes. Table I gives a list of these areas with the acreage of each. In 1944, we located fifteen breeding pairs of Stonechats; thus the density was fifteen pairs, or thirty adults, to  $107\frac{1}{2}$  acres of apparently suitable territory. No non-breeding birds were seen. The pairs were distributed fairly evenly along the coast, twelve of the nineteen areas being occupied by one or more pairs.

TABLE I.  
SUITABLE AREAS AND BREEDING TERRITORIES.

Area	Miles from Area A	Breeding Pairs 1943	Breeding Pairs 1944	Pair Ref. 1944	Acreage of Area	Approx. acreage used as Territory 1944	NATURE OF AREA	NEST SITES 1944
A	0	3	1	1	22	2	Mainly gorse.	On ground under gorse.
B	.2	—	—	—	5½	—	Mainly gorse.	—
C	.4	1	—	—	2	—	Gorse and grass.	—
D	.5	1	1	2	4	2	Gorse and grass.	In low gorse.
E	.9	1	1	3	3	1½	Mainly gorse.	In low gorse.
F	1.0	—	—	—	¾	—	Mainly gorse.	—
G	1.3	—	1	4	5½	2	Gorse and grass.	6" off ground, in gorse.
H	1.5	—	1	5	6	2	Mainly gorse.	Nest not found.
I	1.7	—	1	6	¾	¾	Gorse, grass and heather.	Natural hole in grass bank.
J	1.9	—	—	—	2¾	—	Gorse, brambles.	—
K	2.0	—	1	7	4	2	Gorse, brambles.	Nest not found.
L	2.1	—	3	8, 9, 10	9½	2, 2, 2	Gorse, heather, grass.	(8) In tuft of grass. (9) 2' 0" high in gorse. (10) On ground in heather.
M	2.4	1	—	—	10	—	Gorse and bracken	—
N	2.8	1	1	11	7	2	Rough grass, brambles, gorse.	In tall grass.
O	3.2	2	2	12, 13	15	2, 2	Gorse and heather.	(12) In low gorse. (13) Two in gorse, one in heather.
P	3.7	1	—	—	3	—	Mainly gorse.	—
Q	4.1	1	—	—	¾	—	Mainly gorse.	—
R	4.6	—	1	14	3	2½	Gorse and grass.	Nest not found.
S	4.8	1	1	15	3	2	Mainly gorse.	In low gorse.
TOTALS.		13	15		107½	28¾		

Column 3 of Table I gives partial census figures of breeding pairs in 1943. In that year we visited areas F-L one or two times only and although we did not see Stonechats in these areas we cannot be certain that none bred there. Thirteen pairs were counted along the remainder of the cliffs and another pair inhabited an area half a mile up coast from area S; this pair was not present in 1944. Seven of the thirteen pairs occupied territories almost identical with those again occupied in 1944; the remaining six pairs held territories vacant in 1944. Area A, the largest area, held three pairs in 1943, but only one pair bred there in 1944.

Each pair under observation in the breeding-season held a well-defined territory. The size of the territory depended on the area

of gorse and heather, or grass, and varied from approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres. The average size of territory was 2 acres; this compares with  $1\frac{2}{5}$  acres for the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) given by Lack (1943). The approximate size of each territory is shown in column 6 of Table 1. The individual territories totalled up to nearly 29 acres or 35% of the twelve occupied areas and 27% of the suitable territory. There was no obvious reason why some areas were occupied and others not or why some areas were only occupied to partial capacity. Linnets (*Carduelis c. cannabina*), Meadow-Pipits (*Anthus pratensis*) and Hedge-Sparrows (*Prunella modularis occidentalis*) were breeding in the same areas as the Stonechats, but did not compete with them for nest-sites and no aggression was seen; one pair of Linnets had a nest within a few yards of a Stonechat's nest and others were tolerated inside Stonechat territory (and *vice versa*), but the Linnets had a much looser territory and obtained their food from outside the nesting area. Possible predators included several pairs of Kestrels (*Falco t. tinnunculus*) and Buzzards (*Buteo b. buteo*); an adult of one pair which deserted their nest was probably taken by a Kestrel. A cat is known to have caused the death of a young bird in 1943.

Nests of the second and third broods were always within the original territory and usually within 50 yards of the first nest. Between broods birds were occasionally seen outside their territories and in the territories of other pairs, but they did not wander more than 300-400 yards from their own territory. On May 14th three males were seen in the territory of Pair 13; one was being chased out of the territory. At this time Pair 13 had young still in the nest, but the young of the two adjoining pairs were fledged. The only other example of aggressive behaviour was on June 22nd, when both the male and female of Pair 9 were seen chasing young Stonechats out of their territory. In the two instances where more than one pair occupied a fairly small area no friction was observed although their feeding territories overlapped.

#### SONG.

Song was heard on only three occasions (it should be remembered that most of our observations were in the late afternoon or evening). A cock was heard giving a tinkling, wheezy song on April 5th, and on April 7th the same cock was twice seen dancing in the air in the song-flight. This was about five days before the hen laid her first eggs. Another cock was heard singing on May 5th.

#### BREEDING.

The limitation of our watching to evenings and week-ends prevented us from finding the nests until after the clutches were complete or until the young were being fed and we have no data on incubation periods. Details of breeding are summarized in Table 2: the dates given for the completion of the clutches are approximate only and have been calculated from the incubation

and fledging periods quoted in *The Handbook*. The brood sizes given in the last three columns of the table are, of course, exact. Clutch sizes are known for eight nests. It is our experience that eggs of Stonechats which fail to hatch are not removed, but are left in the nest even after the young have flown, and we think it can reasonably be assumed that the remaining clutch sizes were the same as for the brood.

TABLE 2.  
LAYING DATES AND SIZE OF BROODS.

Area	Pair	ESTIMATED DATE CLUTCH COMPLETED			SIZE OF BROODS		
		First Brood.	Second Brood.	Third Brood.	First.	Second.	Third.
A	1	April 4	—	—	6	—	—
D	2	„ 20	—	—	6*	—	—
E	3	„ 15	June 6	—	5*	6	—
G	4	„ 17	„ 5	July 11	6	5	4
I	6	„ 20	—	—	C/5 (robbed)	—	—
L	8	„ 17	June 4	?	4	6*	?
L	9	„ 13	—	—	5*	—	—
L	10	„ 17	June 1	—	3 <sup>1</sup>	6	—
N	11	„ 13	?	July 27	6	?	4
O	12	„ 6	May 20	„ 5	6	6	5*
O	13	„ 15	June 1	„ 18	5	4 <sup>2</sup>	4
S	15	„ 6	—	—	5	—	—

\* Nest found with eggs, which all hatched.

<sup>1</sup> C/5, 2 failed to hatch.

<sup>2</sup> C/5, 1 failed to hatch.

*First Broods.*—Breeding started in late March and early April; at this time the adults were very elusive and it took us some time to mark down the territories and acquire the technique of finding the nests. Eventually twelve first brood nests were located—five during incubation and seven after the young had hatched. Two more nests were found at Tregardock, a mile down coast from Area A, but we were not able to re-visit these after the first brood and they are not included in Table 2. We found one of the Tregardock nests on April 23rd, when it held three eggs. When we re-visited it on May 7th, we found two young about 10 days old, and a third young bird dead in the bottom of the nest with part of its entrails eaten away. The other two young were dirty (there were excreta at the bottom of the nest) and did not seem very healthy, but they were being fed by the adults. The second nest at Tregardock, found on May 7th, had a brood of four. The nest of Pair 6 was found on April 25th, when it held a clutch of five: on May 3rd, we found it empty; there were several feathers, possibly from the tail

of one of the adults, outside the nest, but there were no Stonechats about and we did not see any again in this area. Two eggs of Pair 10 failed to hatch: all other clutches hatched and the young were successfully reared. The nest of Pair 13 was found on April 29th, when the young were very newly hatched; we ringed the young on May 8th and they were still in the nest, although obviously nearly ready to fly, on May 14th; thus the fledging period was at least 15 days.

*Second Broods.*—Of the twelve pairs in the Tintagel area whose first brood nests were found, Pairs 2, 6 and 15 left their areas and were not seen again. Pairs 1 and 9 stayed in their territory, but there was no evidence of further broods. The remaining seven pairs nested again in late May and early June and reared second broods. Six of the nests were found and the adults of the seventh pair were seen feeding young. The second clutch of each pair was laid about three weeks after the first brood had left the nest. Three of the clutches were bigger than in the first brood. One egg of Pair 13 did not hatch. The other clutches all hatched, and the young were successfully fledged, except for two nestlings, each about 10 days old, of Pairs 4 and 8, which were found dead at the bottom of the nests.

*Third Broods.*—After the second broods were fledged Pairs 3 and 10 disappeared from their territories, but the other five pairs remained and all five nested again and reared third broods. Four third brood nests were found and on August 9th the hen of the fifth pair was seen feeding young out of the nest. All the broods were smaller than the first or second broods. Pair 4 laid its third brood eggs about twelve days after the young of the second brood had left the nest, but the interval of the other three pairs whose nests were found was about three weeks—the same as between the first and second broods. The latest nest (Pair 11) was found on August 22nd, when the four young which it held were 12-14 days old. All the young of the four nests found left the nest without accident.

*The Handbook* states that the Stonechat "has two broods normally; probably three occasionally." More than one year's evidence is, of course, required, but it seems possible that in Cornwall, and perhaps in other southern counties, a large proportion of Stonechats have three broods normally rather than occasionally.

*Summary of Broods.*—Fifteen pairs of Stonechats were located in the area under observation. The first brood nests of twelve of these pairs were found. Seven pairs nested again and raised a second brood and five of these seven pairs nested a third time. The average clutch size was 5.0 for the first broods, 5.7 for the second broods, and 4.2 for the third broods. In all, and including the two nests at Tregardock, 122 eggs were laid and 114 hatched (93.4%). Of the 114 nestlings born 111 flew (97.4% or 91% of the eggs laid). There was, therefore, a high degree of success in both hatching and fledging. Mrs. Nice (1937), who summarized

the data from published studies up to that date, showed that the fledging success (calculated as a percentage of the eggs laid) which these indicated for open-nesting birds was 40.5 to 46.7% (average 43), with the exception of the Corn-Bunting (*Emberiza c. calandra*), for which data given by Ryves (1934) indicate a success of over 60%, and for hole-nesters 55 to 76%. The figure for the Stonechat thus appears to be remarkably high.

#### NEST-CONSTRUCTION.

Most of the twenty-four nests were built on or near the ground in low gorse or heather. The nest of Pair 9 was 2 feet off the ground in a tall gorse bush. No nest was used more than once, but there was a close similarity between first, second and third brood nests. Thus all three nests of Pair 4 were lined with scraps of red wool from the dust heap of a nearby garden. Pair 8, whose territory included gorse bushes, built its first nest in a tuft of grass at the foot of a small bramble, and the second nest was in an identical position about 50 yards away. The territory of Pair 11 was a steep grassy slope with only a few gorse bushes. Two nests of the pair were found; each was built on the ground among tall grass. A similar nest was found in the same territory in 1943.

The only record we have of the rôle of the male in nest construction is of a cock carrying nesting material on March 27th, 1943.

#### FOOD.

Both sexes were seen feeding young birds, in the nest and after they were fledged. Grubs, winged insects and small moths and butterflies were the chief food. Lack and Venables (1937) say that the bird obtains its food from the ground, and occasionally on the wing: in Cornwall most of the food, especially during the pressure of feeding the young, was obtained off bushes or in the air; only two pairs were seen frequently on the ground and in each case their territory contained a large area of short grass. Stonechats are very wary when feeding young and our presence in the territory, without a hide, disturbed them too much for it to be possible to keep a valid record of the frequency of feeding, but the number of feeds in the first two or three days after hatching appeared to be less than subsequently.

#### NEST SANITATION.

Both male and female Stonechats were seen removing capsules of excreta: in each case they were carried away from the nest and dropped; there was no evidence of swallowing. Young birds excreted in capsule form as soon as they were handled, and would sometimes excrete again in unencapsuled form.

No eggshells were seen being removed, but there was never any sign of them in or near the nest. Eggs which failed to hatch were not removed and were still in the nest after the young had flown. Dead young were also left in the nest.

## DISPERSAL OF THE YOUNG AND WINTER TERRITORIES.

More than one hundred young were safely fledged by the fifteen pairs breeding along the five mile stretch of cliffs. We have no record of how long the parents fed the young after they had left the nest. When the parents stayed in the territory and had another brood the young of the previous brood remained until after the next eggs were laid. In one case they were still in the territory three days after the young of the next brood had hatched. But usually the young birds disappeared from the territory about a week after the laying of the next clutch.

We have little data on which to hazard where and how far the young birds travelled after they had left their territories. One or two were seen in late summer within a mile of the nesting areas. A nestling ringed on June 9th, 1943, was killed by a cat one mile from the nest on August 9th of the same year. But most of the young seemed to leave the immediate neighbourhood. Unfortunately we left Tintagel soon after the young of the third broods were fledged and were unable to follow the subsequent movements of the adults and young.

In the winter 1943-4, we made a census of Stonechats seen along the five mile stretch. Our notes show that not all the pairs which bred in 1943 remained in the area during the winter. Some of the adults and most, if not all, of the young completely disappeared from the area. It is interesting to compare the observation of Selby quoted in Montagu's *Ornithological Dictionary* (2nd Edition, 1831), "I . . . am inclined to think that the greater part of the young of the year do migrate in the course of the winter, having repeatedly noticed (in places where the species is abundant) the disappearance of the young as winter approached, whilst the parent birds remain attached to their spot."

More recently Lack (1943-4) has shown that in all those partially migratory species in which the question has so far been investigated, a greater proportion of first year birds migrate than adults. This is true for Song-Thrush (*Turdus e. ericetorum*), Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and other species and is almost certainly true for Stonechats, but there have not yet been sufficient recoveries of ringed birds to show the direction of the migration or whether there is anything in the migratory behaviour comparable to the tendency which Lack found in some other birds for a higher proportion of juveniles to migrate in one direction than in another. Miss E. P. Leach informs us that only two of the seven recoveries of ringed Stonechats have been at any distance from the place of ringing. A nestling ringed at Largo, Fife, on May 11th, 1929, was recaptured 74 miles W.S.W. at Georgetown, Renfrewshire, on January 19th, 1933. and another nestling ringed at Aberlady, East Lothian, on May 6th, 1935, was picked up exhausted in a storm 45 miles W. at Riggend, near Airdrie, on December 21st of the same year.

It is impossible, without colour ringing, to be certain that birds seen in the winter were the same individuals as those known to have

bred in the area in 1943. But the evidence strongly suggests that at least seven of the fourteen breeding pairs located in 1943 were resident throughout the winter, and bred again in approximately the same territories in 1944. During the winter the territory of these pairs was somewhat enlarged, but the extent of their wandering appeared to be confined to a radius of about half a mile from the summer territory.

#### NEST FINDING.

Stonechats normally nest on or very close to the ground, and it is important not to trample down the gorse or grass when searching for the nests. We located all twenty-four nests by observation of the adult birds. It is easy to do this when the young are being fed, but not quite so easy when the hen is brooding the eggs. The best method, once the general confines of the territory were known, was to sit just outside the territory and wait until the hen came off the eggs. She incubated for half to three quarters of an hour at a time and then left to feed. The hen was not usually seen in the act of leaving the nest, and once she was seen it was necessary to keep a very close watch on her. She would flick about, accompanied by the cock, and continually fan and slightly cock her tail as she searched for food. After about ten minutes, if we were not too close, she would fly back to the nest with a low, direct flight, and by marking where she went down it was fairly easy to find the nest.

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## RECOVERY OF MARKED BIRDS

COMMUNICATED BY

E. P. LEACH.

Hon. Sec. Bird-Ringing Committee, British Trust for Ornithology,

*(Concluded from page 350.)*

No.	<i>Ringed.</i>	<i>Recovered.</i>
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**Gannet** (*Sula bassana*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- |        |   |   |
|--------|---|---|
| 501762 | Ailsa Craig, 18.7.39, by Lord D. Stuart.  | Machrihanish (Argyll), 16.6.44.           |
| 502116 | Grassholm, 15.8.39, by Skokholm Bird Obs. | Saunton (Devon), 30.9.44.                 |
| 502296 | Ditto                                     | 15.8.39. San Sebastian, Spain, 5.10.44.   |
| 126206 | Ditto                                     | 11.7.45. Cape Finisterre, Spain, 28.9.45. |

RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

- |        |  |                               |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|
| 118244 | Grassholm, 6.6.40, by Skokholm Bird Obs. | Portreath (Cornwall), 6.8.45. |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|

**Manx Shearwater** (*Puffinus p. puffinus*).

- |        |                                  |                                       |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| AT.296 | Skokholm Bird Obs., 14.5.39, ad. | Audierne (Finistere), France, 2.8.44. |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|

**Wood-Pigeon** (*Columba p. palumbus*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- |                            |  |                                    |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 325040                     | Glenorchard (Stirling), 8.6.44, by J. Bartholomew. | Invergorden (Ross), 1.2.45.        |
| 326181                     | Ditto  | 8.6.44. Montgreenan (Ayr), 9.1.45. |
| (These two in same brood). |  |                                    |
| 323798                     | Blagdon (Northumb), 1.7.43, by Ash & Ridley.       | Stocksfield (Northumb), 8.7.44.    |
| 322822                     | Ewhurst (Surrey), 15.6.41, by L. G. Weller.        | Chilgrove (Sussex), —.1.43.        |

**Oyster-catcher** (*Hæmatopus ostralegus occidentalis*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- |        |   |                                    |
|--------|---|------------------------------------|
| 309721 | Arnside (Westmor), 3.7.40, by J. Barnes.                | Where ringed, —.1.45.              |
| 325698 | Smeale, I. of Man, 5.7.44, by Cowin, Ladds & Williamson | Port St. Mary, I. of Man, 16.1.45. |

**Lapwing** (*Vanellus vanellus*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

- |         |   |   |
|---------|---|---|
| 228788  | Bressay, Shetland, 20.5.44, by O. Edwards           | Pordic (Côtes-du-Nord), France, 4.1.45. |
| AS.7821 | I. of Oronsay, 1.6.38, by Oxford Orn. Soc.          | I. of Tiree, 30.8.44.                   |
| 219907  | Glenorchard (Stirling), 21.6.38, by J. Bartholomew. | Where ringed, 20.5.45.                  |
| 224084  | Southwaite (Cumb), 1.6.39, by Moon & Cooper.        | Newtownards (Down), —.12.44.            |

No.	Ringed.	Recovered.
222187	Calthwaite (Cumb), 16.5.39, by Moon & Cooper.	Larrabezua (Vizcaya), Spain, 28.1.45.
234040	Skelton (Cumb), 4.7.43, by R. H. Brown.	Acklington (Northumb), —.10.44.
223007	Wolsingham (Durham), 17.6.42, by R. Martinson.	Roweltown (Cumb), —.8.45.
234331	Sabden (Lancs), 14.6.44, by J. Boon.	Reddish (Lancs), 19.5.45 (on nest)
222355	Hornby (Lancs), 22.5.39 by Moon & Cooper.	Lancaster, 7.9.45.
230588	Mytton (Lancs), 18.6.44, by C. Oakes.	Sintra, Portugal, 7.1.45.
232041	Harrogate (Yorks), 7.6.41, by P. Hirst.	Preston (Lancs), 31.12.44.
230152	Banbury (Oxon), 5.7.44, by A Darlington.	Irun, Spain, 20.3.45.

### Turnstone (*Arenaria i. interpres*).

SD212	Portballintrae (Antrim), 1.1.42, ad. by M. and D. Rankin.	Proven, N.W. Greenland, 30.5.45.
-------	--	----------------------------------

### Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*).

SH.491	Gorple (W. Yorks), 16.6.45, young, by Edwards, Crapnell and Watson.	Stotfold (Beds), 29.7.45.
--------	---	---------------------------

### Curlew (*Numenius a. arquata*).

#### RINGED AS YOUNG.

AB.5915	Greystoke (Cumb), 11.6.38, by Moon & Cooper.	Baie de Goulven (Finistere), France, 11.11.44.
325287	Carlton (Cumb), 28.7.44, by R. H. Brown.	Ravenglass (Cumb), 4.9.44.
322380	Sebergham (Cumb), 11.7.43, by R. H. Brown.	Clonbur (Galway), —.1.45.
AB.3253	Shap (Westmor), 24.6.36, by Moon & Cooper.	Ballynacally (Clare), —.1.45.

### Sandwich Tern (*Sterna s. sandvicensis*).

#### RINGED AS YOUNG.

AP.9054	Ravenglass (Cumb), 11.6.33, by late H. W. Robinson.	Where ringed, —.6.44.
P.6340	Salthouse (Norfolk), 27.6.31, by R. M. Garnett.	Coruña, Spain, 23.9.44.

### Arctic Tern (*Sterna macrura*).

XN.73	Point of Ayre, I. of Man, 3.7.38, young, by Manx F.C.	Where ringed, 14.6.44.
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### Black-headed Gull (*Larus r. ridibundus*).

#### RINGED AS FULL-GROWN.

310816	St. James' Park, London, 18.2.39, by Lond. N.H.S.	Where ringed,	23.2.45.
323272	Ditto	30.11.42.	Ditto 8.12.44.
324782	Ditto	13.12.42.	Ditto 11.12.44.
229267	Ditto	26.1.43.	Ditto 31.1.44; 13.11.44.
323231	Hammersmith, London, 16.3.43, by Lond. N.H.S.	Ditto	15.1.45.

**Common Gull** (*Larus c. canus*).

RINGED AS YOUNG.

324127	L. Carra (Mayo), 14.6.42, by R. F. Ruttledge.	Where ringed, 21.5.45 (at nest).
324131	Ditto	14.6.42. Ditto 1.5.45 (at nest).
324144	Ditto	14.6.42. Ditto 23.5.45.
325414	Ditto	9.6.43. Ditto 24.5.45.
325507	Ditto	29.5.44. Killagoola (Galway), 9.9.44.
325525	Ditto	29.5.44. Glendavolough (Mayo), —.8.44.
324153	Ditto	14.6.42. Woodlawn (Galway), 27.10.45.
325469	L. Mask (Mayo), 26.6.43, by R. F. Ruttledge.	Castlebar (Mayo), —.5.44.

**Herring-Gull** (*Larus a. argentatus*).

402615	Berriedale (Caithness), 8.7.35, young, by E. Cohen.	Kilmacolm (Renfrew), 9.11.44.
308568	Skokholm Bird Obs., 18.8.38, ad.	Dale (Pembs), 31.7.45.
AT.253	Ditto	8.5.39, ad. Angle (Pembs), 13.8.45.

**Great Black-backed Gull** (*Larus marinus*).

123328	Skomer (Pembs), 1.7.38, young, by W. A. Cadman.	Milford Haven (Pembs), 13.5.45.
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**Great Skua** (*Stercorarius s. skua*).

AC.8635	Noss, Shetland, 15.7.39, young, by N. Rankin.	Lunnasting, Shetland, 26.7.45.
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**Razorbill** (*Alca torda britannica*).

AV.914	Skokholm Bird Obs., 6.7.40, young.	Hossegor (Landes), France, 4.2.45.
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**Southern Guillemot** (*Uria a. albionis*).

AT.2827	Skomer (Pembs), 14.7.45, young, by Skokholm Bird Obs.	Portreath (Cornwall), 1.8.45.
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## NOTES.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLINGS IN DEVON, SOMERSET,  
CAERNARVONSHIRE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE,  
DUMFRIESSHIRE AND SKYE.

AN adult male Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*) appeared in a Seaton garden on July 28th, 1945, and was seen by me on July 30th. It haunted a garden within 200 yards of the sea coast, just off the busiest street of the town, attracted by the fruit of a mulberry tree and the company of a small flock of common Starlings. It was also seen to feed on dog-biscuits. The bird left on July 31st.

F. C. BUTTERS.

ON July 25th, 1945, a Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*) was seen at about noon on Porlock Marsh, West Somerset, by Mr. Michael Dawson, of Brighton. Later in the afternoon it was not there. The bird was feeding with a flock of Starlings and was the last to rise each time they were approached. It was seen repeatedly at close range through binoculars and the observer noted "black head, tail and wings; body above and below pure rose-pink; size very slightly larger than a Starling."

F. L. BLATHWAYT.

ON June 21st, 1945, at about 10.30 p.m., my sister and I looked out of a window of our house at Criccieth when a group of birds which were evidently Starlings alighted with a rush on the bushes in the garden. Amongst them was a beautiful bird with pink body, black wings and tail and black head. We have since been shown volume 1 of *The Handbook of British Birds* and on plate 4 easily recognized the bird we saw, the Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*). We could not see any crest, but the light was not very good. The distance from the window to the bushes was about 24 feet. The birds rested for perhaps a minute and then suddenly rose and flew off eastwards.

M. H. MOSS.

IN the Trent Valley several Rose-coloured Starlings (*Pastor roseus*) were repeatedly seen on the Nottingham Sewage Farm in July and August, 1945. An immature bird was seen amongst a flock of Starlings on July 22nd. It closely resembled a young common Starling, but was sandy brown on the head and back, paler on the breast, and darker brown on the wings and tail. Subsequently the species was frequently seen amongst the common Starlings: one adult and two immatures on July 24th, an immature on July 29th, three immatures on July 31st, one immature on August 3rd, and one moulting into adult plumage on August 14th.

R. J. AND T. W. RAINES.

A Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*), the first of its kind to be recorded from Dumfriesshire, was seen in a garden, in Sanquhar, on June 15th, 1945. It was feeding, with sparrows and other birds, on scraps which had been thrown out. On the following

day it was caught, when it appeared to be undoubtedly a wild bird ; a male in full plumage.

After feeding well and thriving in captivity for about three weeks it escaped. HUGH GLADSTONE.

ON September 4th, 1945, I had a good view of a Rose-coloured Starling (*Pastor roseus*) at Sligachan, Skye. The bird perched for about two minutes on the upright of a fence, looking very bedraggled and lethargic. GORDON WILSON.

#### GOLDEN ORIOLE IN CHESHIRE.

ON May 22nd, 1945, I identified a female Golden Oriole (*Oriolus o. oriolus*) in a strip of mixed woodland on Arley Estate. The bird was under observation approximately one hour, and almost all the time it kept to the tree-tops, but I managed to note the following details on the spot : size slightly larger than a Starling with long, slim outline ; upper-parts bright yellow-green ; under-parts whitish with bright yellow flanks and under tail-coverts ; wings brownish with short whitish bar across edge of wing, presumably whitish tips to primary-coverts ; bill pink. The bird kept uttering a short musical but guttural warble, also a harsh note resembling squalling of a cat cut short. J. TAYLOR.

#### SNOWY OWLS IN CORNWALL, DEVON, SOMERSET AND YORKSHIRE.

DURING the early spring of 1945 I observed Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*) in three comparatively widely separated areas of Cornwall and Devon.

The first was the area comprised within a radius of about two and a half miles round Cleave Camp, Cornwall, bounded to the north by Morwenstow and to the south by Coombe. Here a Snowy Owl was seen on a number of occasions, and I believe that two birds were present, for one was seen by myself at Morwenstow and by myself and others at Coombe or in the camp itself at quite short intervals. Though it did not work out that one was seen in Morwenstow and in Coombe or the camp at exactly the same time, a bird was seen in both places within an hour on three occasions. The latest occasion on which I saw one was May 19th, when one of these birds flew across the road as I was cycling about a mile from the camp area and I was able to keep it in view for some little time. As on previous occasions I was impressed by its large size and very strong flight. It was pure white, with no markings that I could see and with a dark, probably black, bill.

When I was travelling by train early in April I saw one perched on a fence by the railway line about six miles from Cullompton, Devon. Though the view was brief I am in no doubt that it was this species ; I was able to see part of the upper side of the wing clearly and it was white without a trace of colour. On April 12th, near Hatherleigh, Devon, one of these birds flew across the

road about five yards in front of my car and I was again impressed by its majestic, deliberate flight.

I may add that I have seen Barn-Owls (*Tyto a. alba*) too often for there to be any confusion in my mind. M. H. THOMAS.

DURING the hard weather in January, 1945, I several times observed a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) on the high ground of Exmoor near Simonsbath, Somerset. It was probably first seen on January 25th, but I did not see it myself until January 27th. It was a very large white owl with brown-barred wings, so large that I feel confident it must have been an adult female. It was only seen during the daytime and as there was deep snow at the time the area over which I could observe was somewhat limited. It was seen either sitting on a hedge or post or slowly hawking up and down beside hedges. It was not very shy: on one or two occasions I got to within about 20 yards of it and once I was able to observe it at about 10-12 yards range when I was hidden close to a post on which it often perched.

I saw it for about five days, after which I left the district, the deep snow having by then thawed. I. A. BONAR.

On January 24th, 1945, C. R. B. King, a member of the Sedbergh School Ornithological Society, observed what was clearly a Snowy Owl (*Nyctea scandiaca*) in a valley in the Yorkshire fells near Sedbergh. He described it as a very large white owl with grey brown spots on the back. What chiefly impressed him, apart from its whiteness, was its size and slow wing-beats. It was first sighted on the ground about 150 yards away and when it took wing flapped slowly away southward. C. K. MYLNE.

[It is evident that the cold spell in January was marked by the appearance of Snowy Owls in several widely scattered localities in England. One or two additional reports which have reached us might have seemed to fall just short of complete certainty if isolated, but in view of the other undoubted records are probably also correct. Thus, Mr. M. D. England informs us that on February 16th, near Tring, his wife and brother-in-law saw a very large owl which appeared pure white in flight except for "mottled brown" on the upper surface of the wings, which appeared "rounded and immense." Neither of the observers is an ornithologist, but Mrs. England states that the bird was certainly much larger than a Barn-Owl. It was seen flying along the canal as though hunting, afterwards quartering the fields only a few feet from the ground, and passed quite close to them. Again, Mr. L. G. Peirson informs us that a Snowy Owl was reported near Marlborough College by one of the boys, P. D. Holmes, on January 29th, but he considers that the record should be qualified as "probable" owing to the inexperience of the observer. The bird rose off the snow-covered ground and was twice seen to settle again, on the first occasion at a distance of about 30 yards. The boy was positive that it was an owl and described it as very large and pure white, with the eyes showing as black dots.]

A record from the mainland of Scotland, of a bird trapped on the Knockando Estate, Morayshire, appeared, together with a photograph in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, February 27th, 1945, and subsequently in *The Field*, March 17th, p. 275.—EDS.]

#### RINGED TURNSTONE RECOVERED IN GREENLAND.

A TURNSTONE (*Arenaria i. interpres*) was ringed by M. N. and the late D. H. Rankin on January 1st, 1942, at Portballintrae, Co. Antrim, and news of its recovery has been received from Dr. Finn Salomonsen of Copenhagen.

The bird was found on May 30th, 1945, at Proven, N.W. Greenland (Lat. 72.15 N., Long. 56.00 W.) This district lies on the extreme western limit of the range of the typical race, and from the date of the recovery was almost certainly the breeding-ground of the bird. Considering that in the thirty-six years of the Scheme only two Turnstones have ever been ringed, it was by the merest chance that one of them was recovered. E. P. LEACH.

#### BLACK-WINGED STILT IN SUFFOLK.

ON August 22nd, 1945, I had a good view of a Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus h. himantopus*) flying inland along the south bank of Breydon Water. The remarkable leg-length was made particularly conspicuous by the fact that one leg, presumably injured, was carried at an angle of 45° from the horizontal. This peculiarity suggests that the bird may have been the male of the pair seen at Dunwich in July (*antea*, p. 338). J. A. G. BARNES.

#### HERRING-GULL NESTING IN CHESHIRE.

RECENTLY there came into the possession of the keeper on Hilbre Island, an egg of the Herring-Gull (*Larus a. argentatus*) which had been found on or about June 9th, 1945, by boys on Little Hilbre, the middle isle of the Hilbre group. The nest contained two eggs, but one was broken by the boys. This egg is on the small side, but otherwise is typical of the species. On being blown it showed no signs of incubation.

It should be noted that the general public have been prohibited from these islands for the greater part of the war. This is the first record of the Herring-Gull nesting in Cheshire.

NORMAN F. ELLISON AND WM. WILSON.

PIED FLYCATCHER IN BEDFORDSHIRE IN SUMMER.—The Duke of Bedford informs us that a male Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*) was seen in Woburn Park on June 15th, 1945. From its actions it might have been one of a breeding pair, though no definite evidence of breeding was obtained.

GANNET IN MONMOUTHSHIRE.—Mr. D. R. Lysaght informs us that a Gannet (*Sula bassana*) was found exhausted on the bank of the Wye at Chepstow on February 2nd, 1945. Attempts to revive it were not successful and it died the following day.

QUAIL BREEDING IN DERBYSHIRE.—Mr. W. K. Marshall informs us that a Quail (*Coturnix c. coturnix*) nested in clover in Radburne parish, South Derbyshire, this year, but unfortunately deserted when the field was cut. There were twelve eggs.

## REVIEWS.

### LOCAL REPORTS.

*Report on Dorset Natural History, 1943.* By the Rev. F. L. Blathwayt. (Reprinted from *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Archæol. Soc.*, Vol. 65, pp. 144-149).

IN the short section on birds, in addition to occurrences such as the Sooty Tern and the presence of Fulmars on the coast which have already been reported in *British Birds*, there are records of Hoopoe, Osprey, Whooper Swan, Avocet and other interesting species. We are glad to note that Dartford Warblers are still "breeding in small numbers," as we understand that in Surrey they have suffered very severely from the combination of successive hard winters and military activities on the heaths.

A probable, but not absolutely certain, record of a Yellow-browed Warbler in August, 1937, is also mentioned.

We note that some doubt is thrown on the record of a Marsh-Harrier at Poole Harbour on October 24th, 1943, by J. R. M. Tennent published in *British Birds*, Vol. xxxvii, p. 158. It is stated that it "was seen also by T.F.A. and a friend who consider the bird was a Hen-Harrier, 'as the point that struck us most forcibly was the white rump.' Perhaps both species were present." In fact there seems no doubt that the latter explanation is the correct one. We learn that the Hen-Harrier seen by Miss Almack (T.F.A.) was not seen until November 5th, and that it not only had a white rump, but was "a grey bird with very black wing tips," that is to say an adult male. Mr. Tennent stated clearly that his bird was "dark brown all over" and he has recently repeated to us categorically that this was unmistakably so. Any possibility of confusion thus appears quite excluded and it seems obvious that two different birds were involved. It would surely have been better if these facts had been ascertained before the comment in the Report was published.

*The Hastings and East Sussex Naturalist: Notes on the Local Fauna and Flora for 1944.* By N. F. Ticehurst.

IN Dr. Ticehurst's notes it is recorded that Pett Level "remained flooded until the end of January, but by mid-February most of the water had drained away and the marsh began to revert to its pre-war condition." Reference is also made to the destruction of many roosting birds by the fall of a flying bomb at the Rabbiting Farm heronry in July. "A curious feature of many of them, particularly of the Pigeons, was that the blast had completely stripped them of their feathers."

Wood-Larks bred at Hurst Green, a pair of Marsh-Warblers in Romney Marsh, and Common Terns on Pett Level in both 1942 and 1943. The terns appear in both years to have been probably the Dungeness birds breeding a second time after a failure at their usual site. Black Redstarts bred at St. Leonards, as already recorded in our pages.

Amongst rarer visitors a Dotterel, found dead under wires at Rye on May 9th, may be mentioned.

*Caradoc and Severn Valley Field Club: Record of Bare Facts for the year 1942.*

THIS record, delayed by printing and other difficulties, contains several pages of ornithological records compiled by Mr. L. C. Lloyd. Most of these are of local interest, but one of about a hundred Cormorants roosting nightly in Rossall Grove in February is noteworthy. A record of three Tengmalm's Owls, very properly enclosed in square brackets as doubtful, might well have been omitted entirely, as there is nothing whatever in the description to justify the recorder's belief that the birds were not Little Owls.

*Birmingham Bird Club : Eleventh Annual Report on the Birds of Warwickshire, Worcestershire and South Staffordshire, 1944.* Edited by A. J. Harthan.

THIS report, though not very long, includes a number of records of interest. A Mealy Redpoll was identified in company with a Lesser Redpoll at Powick on February 13th and a Snow-Bunting is reported at Upton Warren Pool on May 11th, a very odd date. Buzzards bred successfully in Worcestershire for the first time since 1836, and Common Sandpipers on the Avon near Evesham. A male Pied Flycatcher "playing about" a Nuthatch's nesting hole in Wyre Forest suggests breeding, though this was not proved. Turnstone, Knot, Little Stint, Sanderling and other waders are recorded from the reservoirs, and an assemblage of about seventy Dunlin at Bittell on May 5th is remarkable. There are several records of Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A Red-Spotted Bluethroat at Bewdley in April and the Waxwing invasion have already been recorded here.

There is a short paper by H. J. Tooby on the Birds of the Old Hills, near Malvern, and two other short communications.

We do not like the practice of using numerals for the months, which we think easily leads to errors both in the correcting of proofs and in subsequent quotation.

*Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society : Ornithological Section for Leicestershire and Rutland. County Report of Wild Birds for 1944.*

THE Report of the energetic Ornithological Section for Leicestershire and Rutland has in a very few years taken its place amongst the best of the county reports, and includes many interesting records. The breeding of Gull Buntings and Blue-headed Wagtail and occurrences of Waxwings, Osprey and Red-necked Grebe have been recorded in *British Birds*. A Rose-coloured Starling is reported at Loughborough on October 1st and a Firecrest near Swithland Reservoir on February 12th and 25th. Amongst duck, a pair of Garganey were seen on Swithland Reservoir on June 12th, and two drakes on July 10th in addition to spring records, a drake Red-breasted Merganser was seen at Stanford Reservoir on December 17th, and Smew were commoner than usual in the early part of the year, apparently about twenty in all being recorded, of which we note "approximately half . . . were fully plumaged males." Amongst waders the most unusual record is certainly that of eight Grey Plover, fully identified between Sibley and Mount Sorrel on February 19th, and twelve more near the Quorn Sewage Farm on March 3rd. Three Bar-tailed Godwits at the Eye Valley Reservoir on August 27th, two Dotterel at Snarestone on May 4th and several records of Knot may also be mentioned. Some evidence of identification of the last-named might well have been given. We observe that a record of a Great Grey Shrike in 1943, the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence for which we unfortunately overlooked when noticing the Report for that year, is now rightly queried.

Messrs. Jolley and Storer publish a preliminary report on investigations of the breeding biology of Sand-Martins, which shows that a considerable amount of useful original data have already been obtained.

*Report on the Birds of Nottinghamshire for 1944.* Compiled for the Trent Valley Bird Watchers and the Nottingham Natural Science Field Club by J. J. Staton.

OWING to the rather full treatment of occurrences in Nottinghamshire, and particularly at the Nottingham Sewage Farm, in *British Birds*, most of the more noteworthy records in this interesting Report have already appeared in this journal.

There can be no doubt that the Trent Valley near Nottingham is at once a migration route and a halting place on which a quite remarkable number and variety of migrants converge, and it seems in a fair way to establishing the reputation of a kind of "inland Fair Island," in respect of the number of unusual visitors and the numbers and regularity of occurrence

of others, which is almost without parallel in any other inland locality in Britain.

To mention two cases not referred to in the recent notes in *British Birds* (*antea*, pp. 176, 314), the Bar-tailed Godwit and Grey Plover, usually reckoned as amongst the most uncommon waders at inland localities, appear to be regular passage migrants in small numbers on the Nottingham Sewage Farm and single Grey Plovers are recorded also on two dates in December, 1944. The comparative frequency of occurrence of Knot, Turnstone, and the usually rare Temminck's Stint, though already noted in our pages, will also bear stressing. The two first named were more in evidence than usual in 1944.

*Ornithological Report for Northumberland and Durham for 1944.* Compiled by G. W. Temperley (*The Naturalist*, July-September, 1945).

RECORDS of Yellow-browed Warblers on Holy Island and a Kite trapped near Rothbury have already appeared in *British Birds*. We note that two Great Grey Shrikes observed near Birtley on November 4th were the first recorded in the county for many years. A case of an immature Honey-Buzzard which alighted in King's College Botanical Gardens, Newcastle, on September 18th, is curiously parallel to the one reported from Sussex in the same autumn in this journal (*antea*, p. 239). We think, however, that from a scientific, and presumably enlightened, institution this rare British breeding bird might have expected a better fate than to be promptly shot, though in fact it proved to be much emaciated and probably would not have survived. Records of at least thirty Long-eared Owls flushed from a single young plantation at Blagdon on December 27th, and of a Goosander diving from the air, a trick recorded of the American race, but not, so far as we know, of the European one, are also of interest.

We note that the statement in the "Summary of a Report on the Distribution of the Corn-Crake" by C. A. Norris (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. xxxviii, p. 163) that up to 1912 the Corn-Crake "still bred on the Farne Islands" is erroneous, and "probably arises from the fact that, until recently, it bred commonly on Holy Island (Lindisfarne)."

*Yorkshire Naturalists' Union: Committee for Ornithology Report for 1944.* Edited by R. Chislett (*The Naturalist*, April-June, 1945).

THE Yorkshire Report, as usual, contains a wealth of material for workers on the county avifauna. Black-necked Grebes again bred, but only "one young bird was reared, after four nests had been found only to be destroyed by floods, a fate that befell the second attempts also." Amongst other records the occurrence of Hoopoes (one September 10th, three September 24th) at Swanland in September for the fifth year in succession is remarkable and the records of two quite considerable flocks (28 and 48) of Common Scoters on fresh waters far inland (both as matter of fact much nearer the western seaboard than the eastern) would be considered phenomenal in most districts. Two pairs of Montagu's Harriers are reported, one of which, at any rate, attempted to breed, though without success. A pair of Oyster-catchers bred in Wharfedale and Herring-Gulls have nested during the war on the North Pier at Bridlington, which was closed to the public. A Dark-breasted Barn-Owl at Goathland on October 14th has already been recorded in our pages and an Ortolan is reported near Kilnsea Warren on October 9th. Notes on habits include:—Rooks nesting between chimney-pots and Tree-Sparrows in hedges, Woodcock nesting (apparently regularly in the locality referred to) in bracken "on a hillside with no tree within several hundred yards and no wood within a mile," and a Kestrel seen carrying the remains of a Black-headed Gull.

*The Peregrine: a publication of the Manx Field Club*, Vol. 1, No. 3, Sept., 1945. Edited by K. Williamson and W. S. Cowin. 1s. od.

THIS contains several interesting short articles and notes on birds. The Editors have a valuable short paper on Manx rookeries and show what appears to be a valid correlation between fluctuations in the annual nest counts from

1938 to 1945 and the number of hours of sunshine in the late winter (February and March), the suggestion being put forward that a higher proportion of first-year birds are induced to build nests in the sunny seasons. The writers reach the conclusion that the rookery is a very unstable unit and that birds which have nested in one colony may readily shift to another in a subsequent year. A case of multiple nests of a pair of Grey Wagtails is reported and observations are recorded on the breeding of Long-tailed Tits in the island, where nesting was first proved in 1942. Two male Golden Orioles were seen near Peel on July 3rd, 1944.

*Clifton College : Annual Report of the Natural History Society, 1943.*

THE Ornithological Section notes cover, in addition to the Bristol district of Gloucestershire, the neighbourhood of Bude, Cornwall (to which the College was evacuated), with a few from Devon and Somerset. The records are mostly of local interest, but we note that a Great Skua was seen in an exhausted condition on the beach at Bude on April 28th, 1943, and found dead a few days later.

*Annual Reports of the Oundle School Natural History Society, 1943 and 1944.*

THESE reports cover the period from the Summer Term of one year to the Lent Term of the next, a somewhat inconvenient arrangement for recording purposes. The notes on birds include counts at the local heronries and some observations on Starling roosts. A Little Auk was picked up at Nassington on October 25th, 1943. The breeding of Curlew near Barnwell in 1942 and 1944 and of Ringed Plover near Ashton in 1944 have been recorded in *British Birds*. A statement that Short-eared Owls are established in woods between Lyveden and Lowick seems to require some explanation.

Some bird records for 1944 are also given for the Ecton (Northampton) Sewage Farm. A statement that a Kite observed there in August, 1944 (as recorded in *British Birds*) was "also seen by Mr. B. W. Tucker" is without foundation, and we must add that we cannot accept certain of the other records for this locality, to which we have ourselves paid considerable attention; but as it is proposed shortly to publish some notes on the subject in *British Birds*, it is not necessary to particularize further. We must, however, stress once again that records of uncommon birds should not be published without proper authentication.

*Reports of the Marlborough College Natural History Society for the years 1943 and 1944.*

THE 1943 Bird List records that Cirl Buntings were present, and evidently bred, at Marlborough in that year, and they were seen in definitely two, if not three, localities in 1944. A Hoopoe in April and a Black Tern in June are recorded for 1943, and in 1944 a pair of Garganey were definitely identified in May and a Black-tailed Godwit in August. The Reports benefit by the critical editing of Mr. L. G. Peirson, which ensures that records admitted can be relied on.

*Bryanston School Natural History Society : Report for 1944.*

As space in *British Birds* is limited our usual practice has been not to notice typewritten reports, but we make an exception in this case owing to the high standard of the report and the interesting notes which it contains.

We may mention a pair of Gadwall at the mouth of the River Piddle on April 21st, two Grey Phalaropes at Shillingstone Hill in September, Montagu's Harriers seen during the summer, a Hen-Harrier in October (but we should have liked to know the sex and evidence of identification), Hobbies on several occasions in September, a Great Grey Shrike in November, and a flock of about 200 Black-tailed Godwits between Wareham and Stoborough on October 17th. A chart is given illustrating annual fluctuations in the numbers of Curlew in Poole Harbour based on observations "during the last three years" and some observations at the school rookery are recorded.

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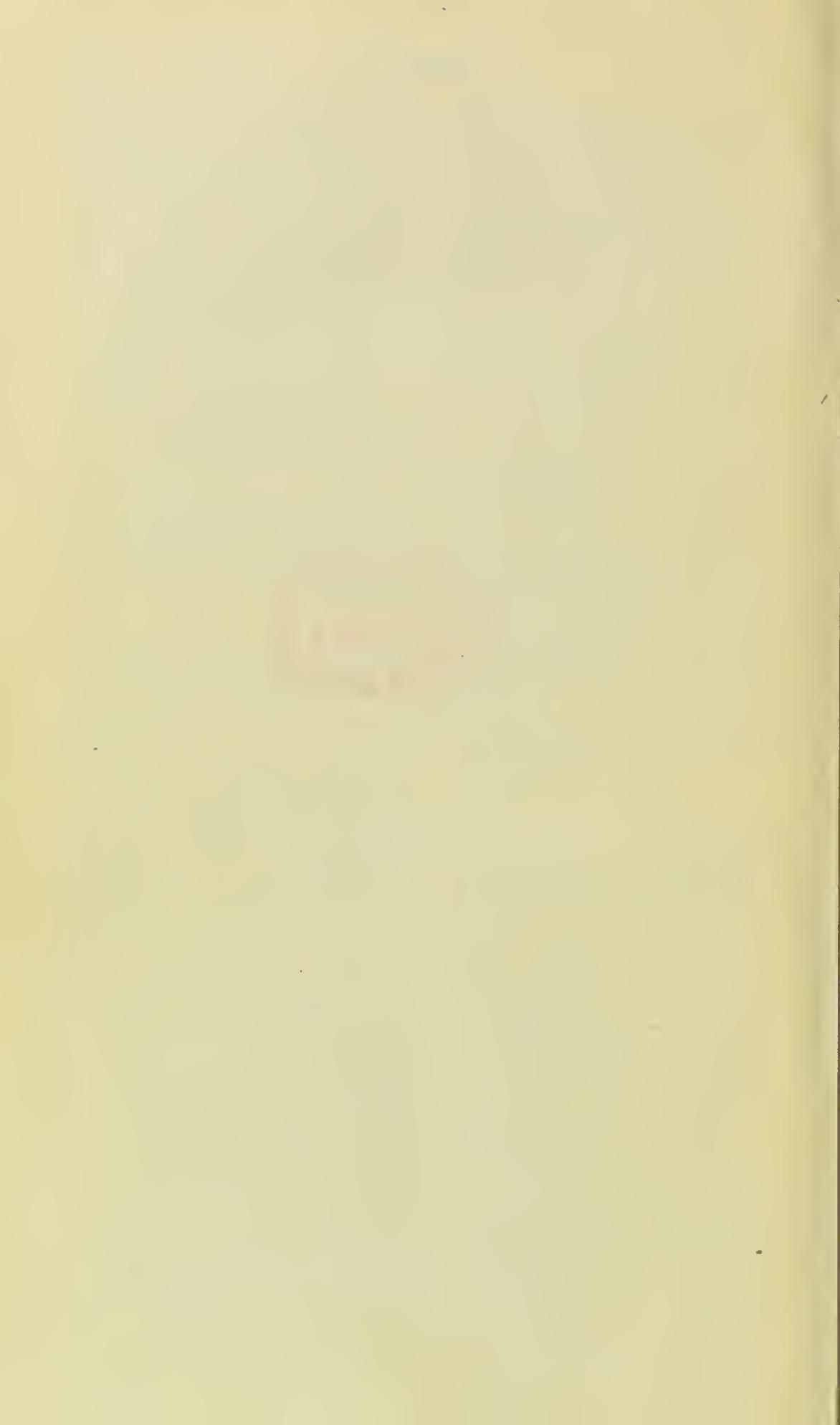
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