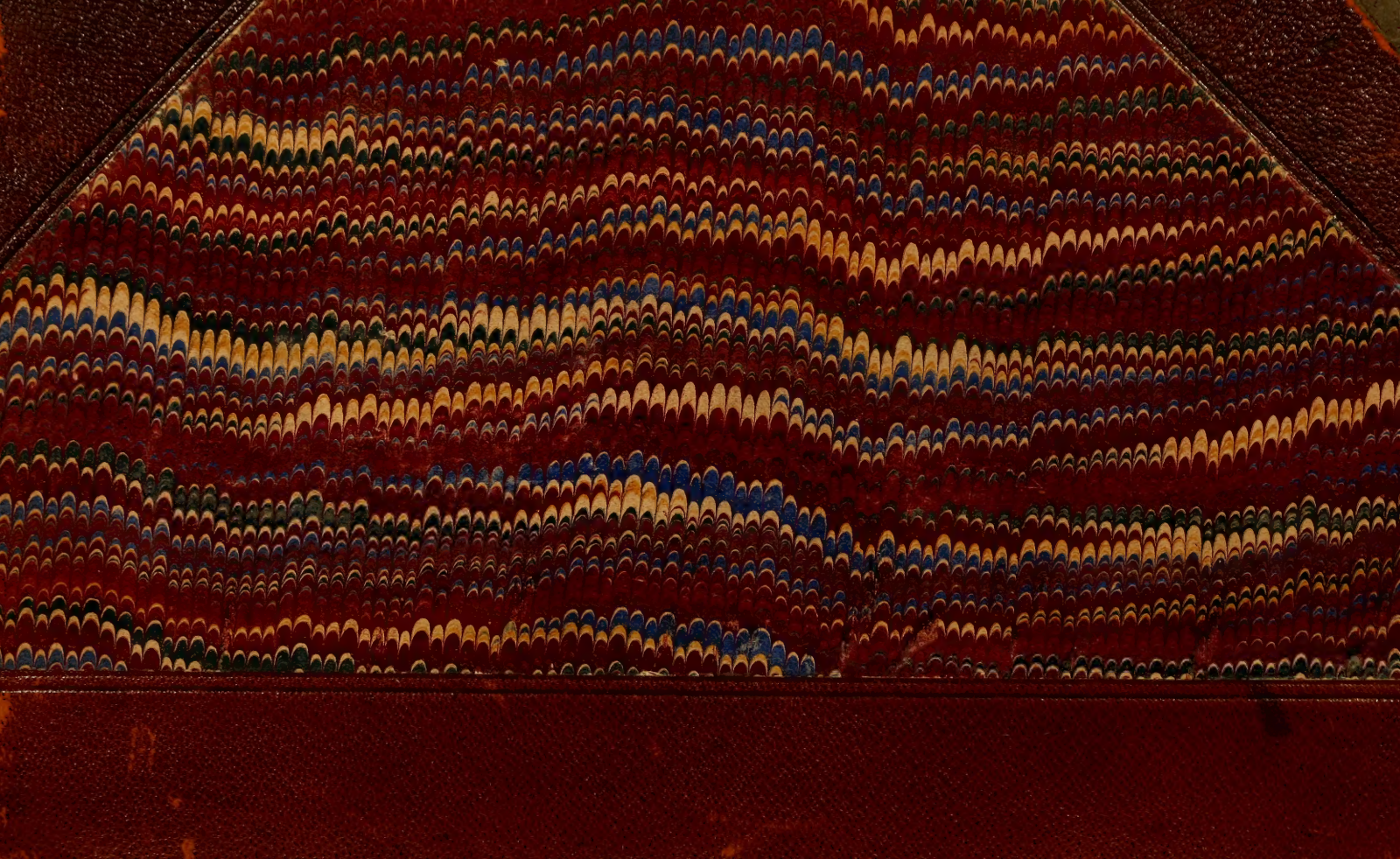

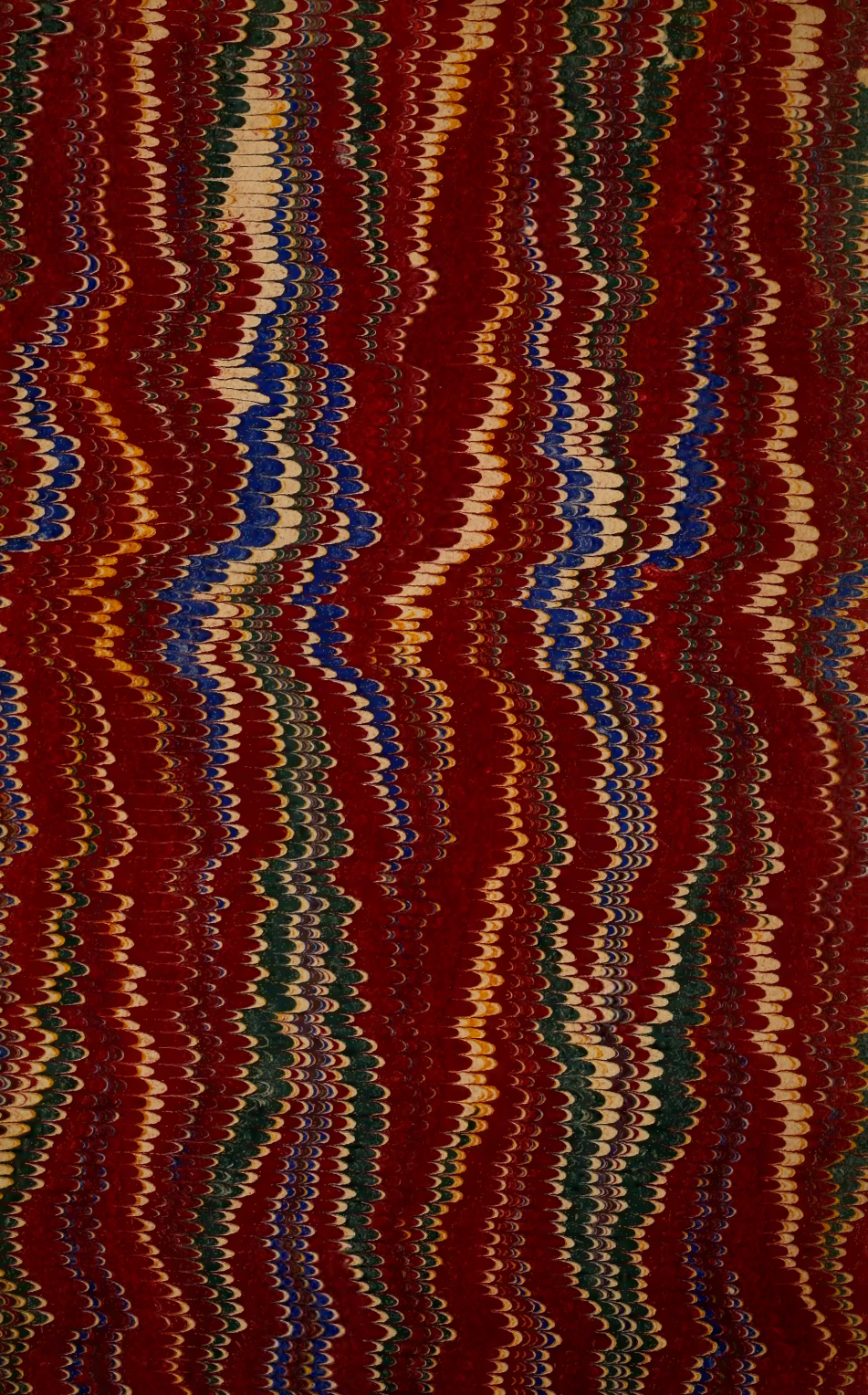

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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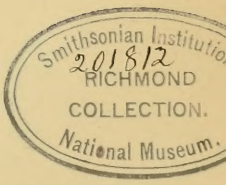
EDITED BY

H. KIRKE SWANN.

FIRST SERIES.

MARCH, 1896, TO FEBRUARY, 1897.



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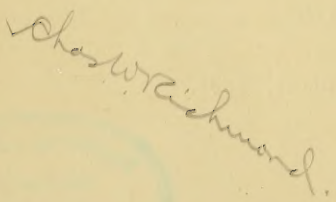

PREFACE.

IT is with regret that I have to announce that, with the completion of this first volume, the publication of THE ORNITHOLOGIST will be suspended—at least so far as I, personally, am concerned.

There are many reasons for this; reasons, too, which form obstacles too weighty to admit of removal by my single-handed action. I may indicate lack of time and lack of sufficient support as standing preëminent among these reasons, although I in no wise ignore the efforts of a percentage of my subscribers to aid me in attempting to establish this magazine, for I shall always gratefully remember their aid.

However, if THE ORNITHOLOGIST has not been quite an "outsider," nor quite useless, there may be one among us with more leisure and a greater income than I, who will not suffer its death, and to such a one I commend it. I have made some new friends during the past year, and have renewed my intercourse with old ones, and to these, as also to all my readers, I wish A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

H. K. S.

London, November 12th, 1896.

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Vol. I. MARCH, 1896. No. 1.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST:

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF

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EDITED BY

H. K. SWANN,

With the assistance of

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O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.
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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. J. H. Gurney's paper "On the Effect of Westerly Winds on the Flight of Gulls (*Laridæ*) and other Birds," which was intended to appear in this Number, will appear next month.

The Book Reviews are also held over until then.

In reply to several correspondents it may be stated that the Editor will be glad to receive Ornithological Notes of interest if authenticated by addition of name and address of sender.

This opportunity is taken to thank the various subscribers who have assisted in the launching of THE ORNITHOLOGIST by making it known to their friends. It is hoped, however, that their kindly efforts will not cease yet, as it is necessary that every bird-lover should be made acquainted with the magazine.

All communications, including subscriptions (one year, 6s.; half-year, 3s. 3d.); Books for Review; MSS.; or Advertisements; must be sent to H. K. SWANN, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. It may be mentioned that the gentlemen who are lending their assistance to the Editor have a literary connection only with THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

BOOKS RECEIVED.

"British Birds' Nests." By R. Kearton. London: Cassell & Co., Ltd.

A CONCISE HANDBOOK OF BRITISH BIRDS.

By H. K. SWANN, Author of *The Birds of London, Nature in Acadie*, &c.

This Handbook will be by far the most useful work on British Birds ever published at the price; it will, in fact, prove invaluable as a handy text-book for reference. Every species occurring in the British Islands will be included; a concise but careful account being given of the distribution and habits of each, together with accurate measurements of the bird and brief descriptions of its plumage at all ages and seasons, especial care being taken to render the information sufficient for identification. Attention is paid to the nidification of species found breeding in British Islands, the descriptions of their nests and eggs being intended to be of practical service for purpose of identification.

It will be sent to press March 15th, but as there are still over 50 orders short of the 250 asked for, those willing to subscribe are particularly requested to send their names at once to H. K. SWANN, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. Price of work (fcap. 8vo, cloth, gilt lettered) will be 2s. net. Remittance should not be sent until book is received.

ESTAB. 1868. *Telegrams*—"Thorpe, Naturalist, Croydon."

CHARLES THORPE, Naturalist *(late of the Crystal Palace)*,

College Buildings, George Street, CROYDON.

Every description of Apparatus for the Entomologist, Taxidermist, &c., supplied at lowest London prices. Birds, Animals, and Fish Preservation a speciality (Chas. Thorpe is famous for his artistic treatment of Birds). Animals' heads and horns mounted as wall trophies. Fur Skins dressed and made into carriage and other rugs. Collections of Lepidoptera, Birds' Skins (and well-stuffed specimens of Birds), Birds' Eggs, &c., on sale.

Extract from *Daily Telegraph* on Sporteries Exhibition, 1894.—"Great praise is due to Mr. Charles Thorpe, for his collection of Deer, Buffalo, Zebra, Wild Boar, Leopard, and other specimens, but still greater honour is due to him for the admirable group of British Wildfowl."

G. W. Bradshaw] [*Photo., Hastings.*

NEST OF THE WHEATEAR BUILT IN AN OLD TIN CAN.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

VOL. I. MARCH, 1896. No. 1.

BIRD NOTES BY THE WAY.

By O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.

WE sailed from London the day the cold spell set in—December 28th, 1894—but with the exception of some Herring Gulls and Kittiwakes at Plymouth, I saw nothing in the bird way until we rounded Cape Finisterre early on the morning of New Year's Day. There might or might not have been Petrels in the Bay (we had a dozen following us across in September, 1892), but what with squally winds and flying snow-storms, the weather was so extremely uncomfortable that I found my berth the only place I could keep warm in. Perhaps, on this voyage, we stood in too near the shore to see many ocean birds, for in the same latitude in which, in September, 1892, we had about a hundred Stormy Petrels following us, and a good many Shearwaters (*P. kuhli*) were to be seen, on the present occasion I only noticed on this day one apparently water-logged Petrel. But possibly the Shearwaters had gone further south. The only other birds identified were some Kittiwakes (*chiefly* adults) and an old Gannet.

The next day we were running along the S.W. coast of Spain. Some Kittiwakes followed us, and I saw a few Gannets off Cape Trafalgar. As we entered the broad part of the Straits, and, blue and hazy, on our starboard, the peaked hills of the African coast came into view, we fell in with a

great many Gannets sitting on the sea, contrasting well with the dark blue it assumed in the late afternoon. Occasionally one rose lazily as we passed, but only a few remained on the wing. They were nearly all adult, but I noticed one or two very dark immature birds. The day following we were in the Mediterranean in mild, bright, sunny weather. I was up early to see the snowy Sierra Nevada, and kept a good look out, but on this and the next day (4th) could only see a few Kittiwakes and a lesser Black-backed Gull. But the cold weather was following us. On the 4th we had snow, and on the 5th saw the mountains of Sardinia snowcapped. Here we fell in with Yellow-legged Herring-Gulls (*Larus cachinnans*). The next day we reached Naples. In the bay were a few Yellow-legged Herring, Black-headed and Slender-billed Gulls (*L. gelastes*). I went ashore, but found the place destitute of birds. I had quite a difficulty in finding even sparrows, but at last fell in with a few (*P. italiæ*) in the Aquarium Garden and on the sea promenade.* No naturalist should miss an opportunity of seeing this Aquarium. The only other bird I saw was a Starling on the wing, just as I was going off to the steamer which was to carry me over to Sicily.

After a very rough and unusually protracted passage of twenty-one hours, I found a stroll in a lovely garden on the outskirts of Palermo, in the late afternoon of January 7th, more than refreshing. Geraniums, stocks, pansies and roses had lingered in bloom to meet the narcissi already coming into flower. Many *Phylloscopi* (Willow Wrens chiefly, to judge from their familiar call-notes) were feeding in the trees and shrubs around a piece of ornamental water, or hawking insects over the surface. The low grating song and harsh alarm note of the Sardinian Warbler (*S. melanocephala*) soon drew attention to these pretty, restless little birds as they crept and flitted about among the agaves, cacti, &c. I noticed a Robin and a great many Spanish Sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis*) noisily going to roost in a clump of Eucalypti. It was delightful in the brilliant sun and clear air next morning, and

* On asking my guide why there were no small birds about, he pointed to a sportsman (!) with a gun slung over his back who happened to be passing, and added that they ate all they could in Naples.

I was in the garden by eight o'clock, but could see no fresh birds. In the afternoon, I started to cross the north-west corner of the island by rail, but my way, until it got dark, lay through miles of olive, orange and lemon trees, loaded with fruit, and I saw no birds save a Hawk, probably a Kestrel, in the distance when we touched on the coast of the Gulf of Castellamare.

I went on board my steamer late at night at Trapani, the strong southerly gale which had sprung up, making the steamer calling at Marsala (where I had hoped to join it) next morning, out of the question. In Trapani we lay weather-bound for twenty-six hours, but as we expected to go out every hour, we could not go ashore, so I had to content myself with watching a little flock of the pretty Slender-billed Gulls, while the rain came down in torrents at intervals, varied with hail stones as big as horse-beans! Some of the mountains were snow-capped. There was only one other saloon passenger on board, and as he, according to his usual custom, had come south to escape the English winter, he made some very hard remarks about the sunny south.† On shore some of the people looked comfortably and appropriately clothed in their sheep-skin trousers. But we had fresh green peas to eat, and as the cook was the best I have ever met on board-ship, we managed to pass the time. The next morning we went to sea, and I bid adieu to Europe for some months.

In the dazzling noontide of the 16th June, I landed again in Sicily, at Marsala. The only birds seen since daylight having been one or two *Larus cachinnans* at the little island of Pantellaria. Sicily was fast scorching up. The railway line by which I travelled to Palermo passes through some corn lands, where harvest was in full swing or finished; and here I saw Calandra, Crested and Short-toed Larks (*A. calandra.*, *A. cristata* and *A. brachydactyla*), with the appearance of all

† I may, perhaps, be excused a passing tribute here to the memory of one of the pleasantest travelling companions I ever came across. Little I thought when we parted in Tunis ten days later, I to go down the Gulf of Gabes, and he to Algeria on his way to Minorca and Spain, that actually while preparing these notes for publication, I should read the announcement of his lamented death in December last.

of which I was at that time very familiar. But beyond these I saw no birds save a Serin (*Serinus hortulanus*), which was singing in the station garden of Partinico—a garden gay with geranium hedges and vermilion pomegranate flowers. I stayed three or four days in Sicily, but the summer heat was scorching up the vegetation, and the birds had chiefly retired to the mountains, leaving but few species to share the sun with the numerous lizards, true gluttons in the matter of sunshine. But the Serins, ever lovers of hot gardens, were still singing, and besides the numerous Sardinian Warblers (*S. melanocephala*) I heard, as well as saw, the Blackcap (*S. atricapilla*). These, with plenty of Spanish Sparrows, were all the species I could find, even in the beautiful gardens and shrubberies of the Villa Bellemonte, &c., &c. The male Spanish Sparrow in summer dress is a really handsome bird. The white cheeks are very conspicuous, even as the birds fly past in a flock. I spent the 21st in Naples, and it seemed to me, in my haste, that there could not be a better proof of the mean sordidness of this city than the absence of Swifts and the Swallow kind. Indeed, I do not remember seeing a bird of any description.

The next day I moved to Rome early in the morning. The Nightingale sings regularly later in the season in the south than one would expect. At, or near, Taoni, as the train moved slowly through a fertile country, with the maize just in bloom and vines trailing in garlands between the trees, the song of this bird burst from some bushes with startling loudness. Swallows were wheeling about the little stations. Just after we came in sight of the Eternal City we passed a long-ruined aqueduct frequented by Jackdaws and Kestrels, and there had been Crested Larks about the little hay-fields just previously. Soon after this we were in Rome, and heard Swifts screaming. I always fancy that Swifts love a fine open city, and I was not surprised to find Rome swarming with them. I remembered saying four years before, that Berne seemed to me like what I should expect Rome to be; and I found that Rome was loved by Swifts as they loved Berne, and indeed, if anything, fuller of them. I scrutinised dozens at close quarters as they went in and out under the eaves of a

building in the hopes of seeing *Cypselus pallidus*, but without success, and I believe it does not occur there. The Swifts were like bees round St. Peter's and, as I drove back in the evening, like bees they swarmed, and made the air full of their screaming, about the houses lying parallel with the muddy Tiber. Indeed, they dashed and screamed round most of the finer buildings. About the gardens on and near the Tarpean rock were Goldfinches, Blackcaps and Jackdaws. Ancient Rome itself was inhabited by *Passer italiæ*, and Rock Doves, perhaps not wild; and I was delighted to see an old male Serin with two young ones, come down and peck about among some weeds on the old dark grey walls at the foot of the three arches of the Basilica of Constantine, on the site of the Temple of Peace. Scores of times I have listened to the Serin's little sibilant strain among the palms and fruit trees of the desert oases, or along the oleander and myrtle-clad banks of some stream winding among the wild olive woods, but I was glad to hear the little twitter again in this unexpected place; nor shall I readily lose the pleasing impression made by that touch of bird-life among those grey ruins, or how pretty the little birds looked in the sun and shade of that blazing afternoon. House Martins were about, and I could hear the Blackbird and Blackcap singing. And then a sweet rippling whistle with which my ear had grown familiar, came to me, and I looked up to see a Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola cyanus*) sail from the Temple of Antonius and Faustina to that of Rolomo di Massenzio; just as I had often seen him sail along the face of some rocky cliff or precipice, singing as he went. Later on he obligingly sailed down, singing again as he flew, and gave me a good view of his pretty blue form as he sat on a bit of the low ruins of the Forum. I mention particularly his singing, because a recent writer in the *Ibis* intimates that whereas the Rock Thrush (*M. saxatilis*) sometimes sings on the wing, the Blue Rock Thrush does not. My small experience of the two species differs from his strangely, for, as it happens, on the only two or three occasions that I have heard the Rock Thrush sing, he was seated. On the walls of the Colosseum, I noticed another Blue Thrush singing; Jackdaws, too, were there and *P. italiæ*, and Swifts, of

course. As I drove out to the Basilica di S. Paolo, I saw Crested Larks, and the Church was surrounded with House Martins.

Travelling northwards, and leaving the broad Campagna, we entered a more varied country, with cork woods and an undergrowth of cistus or bracken, rough ground dotted with cork trees, and golden flowered pastures. Crested Larks were the only birds I had noted up to this time, but hereabouts I saw Magpies, Carrion Crows, and a Buzzard flying low and close to the train. The scenery near and past Piza is so lovely and varied, that perhaps it is not wonderful that I find no birds noted in my journal as seen that afternoon.

The 24th I spent in Tornio. Again a noble city, and again many Swifts. Our kind and courteous distinguished Honorary Member of the British Ornithologists' Union residing here, showed me the birds in the splendidly housed Royal Zoological Museum during the heat of the early afternoon, and I spent there some most interesting and instructive hours. There were several local specimens of *Anthus cervinus*, which occurs in numbers in some years, but not at all in others. Both *Saxicola stapazina* and *S. melanoleuca* occur, and both Ring Ouzels (*M. torquata* and *M. alpestris*). The birds are beautifully arranged for convenience of seeing them—*facing* the observer instead of broadside on to him as is usually the case. In the morning I had a hot walk along the (then) muddy river Po, under fine rows of plane, poplar, acacia, &c., and then along meadows with mulberry trees, acacia thickets, &c., seeing twenty-one species of birds. By far the most interesting, to me at least, was the Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*). An adult (possibly I saw both adults) with a distinctly rosy flush on the breast, was feeding two dull-coloured young in the tops of some poplars by the river, flying to the gardens and haygrass near at hand for food. I understand that this bird is not common in the vicinity of Tornio. Had it been otherwise I should have considered that I subsequently watched two more adults in the meadows lower down the river, perched on mulberries, willows, &c. As it is, perhaps I encountered the same bird twice, albeit those I saw were at some little distance apart. The Lesser Grey Shrike is a bold and thoroughly

Shrike-like looking bird (contrasting with the Woodchat, which is not); it sits with a vigilant appearance on the topmost twigs, dropping occasionally into the grass for food. The black on the face is very noticeable. The flight is strong and glancing, with but little undulation. I saw only only one red-backed Shrike—a male—which is a common bird in that part of Northern Italy, I believe. Of Nightingales I heard two in poor song in some bushes on the river bank, and another in good song in a thicket of acacia, mulberry, &c. Among the other birds met with were Tree Creepers, Blackcaps and Blackbirds (both in song), a Blue-headed Wagtail, Spotted Flycatchers, Goldfinches (numerous and in song), Great and Blue Tits, &c. In the late afternoon I went up to Superga by funicular railway, catching the steam tram-car train which runs to the foot of the ascent by pursuing it in a cab! Swifts were whirling round the Basilica at the top (672 metres above sea level) in great enjoyment. I came down on foot by the zig-zag carriage road, as the thick shrub of oak, acacia, &c., seemed to promise birds. The songs of the *many* Nightingales were magnificent. Yet in England we hardly expect to hear them at that date. A possible reason for their singing late in the South is that they may habitually rear more than one brood there. Bonelli's Warbler (*Phylloscopus bonellii*) was well suited by a locality like this, and was in song, as also was one Sardinian Warbler and the Blackcap.

On the 25th, as the train gradually rose to the Mont Cenis tunnel, it passed through some thoroughly Swiss scenery; grey stone châlets with galleries, embowered often among Spanish chestnut, cherry and walnut trees; later on the pines came quite down to the railway. But the country was remarkably birdless. I could hear Blackbird and Chaffinch, and a Green Woodpecker with a call like *G. viridis*, but no Black Redstarts sat conspicuously on the roof ridges, as would surely have been the case in Switzerland. After passing Modane, we descended rapidly. We passed a flooded marsh with a thin growth of reeds, on one of which I saw a Great Reed Warbler (*A. turdoides*) clinging in true Acrocephaline fashion. At Epierre (369 metres) I was reminded that on entering France I had immediately exchanged the company of *Passer italiæ*

for that of *P. domesticus*. At Cruet, two Goldfinches were twittering about some trees. As we got fairly into agricultural France, where the people were busy carrying hay in the light summer evening, which had been daily lengthening with rapid strides for me, Magpies (birds which you are more likely to see than any others when travelling on a French railroad) became common, and just before we reached Macon, where I proposed to stay the night, I heard the song of the Lesser Whitethroat at a small station.

On the 26th, I got up at five a.m. to get a walk in the meadows along the Saone before my train left for Paris at 8.30. A good many Swifts were to be seen; House Martins predominated in numbers over the Swallows. It has become a habit with me to notice in every town or village, which of these three species seems to be in possession of the place. The predominance is curiously well marked in some instances, and doubtless depends largely on the character of the buildings. The Swallow is, of course, always at a disadvantage in a town; but this solution is not always sufficient to account for the superiority in numbers of one or other of the three species. A Black Redstart—a male, in not very good plumage—flew down from one of a row of trees on the river Boulevarde, and settled on the ground in front of me. I crossed the bridge and walked down the meadows, but the only birds of any particular interest which I saw were a couple of Meadow Buntings (*Emberiza cia*). This, however, was more than sufficient reward for my walk, as I had never before seen the bird alive. Goldfinches—so much more numerous in parts of the Continent than they are with us—twittered and sang in the trees. On the day's journey I twice noticed the Blackcap—my almost constant companion on my way north—before reaching Beaune. Beyond Dijon, in the agricultural country, still cultivated in "lands," were Carrion Crows, Rooks, Yellowammers, Chaffinches, Whitethroats and Magpies. The long lines of poplars help to make France a suitable country for the last-named bird. I have seen their bulky nests in the tops of some poplars less dense in foliage than usual, and doubtless there were plenty more hidden from sight.

In Paris, I naturally spent a good part of my time in the

Jardin des Plantes and the Jardin d'Acclimatation. Among the wild birds in the former were the tamest Wood-pigeons I ever saw, with Swifts, Chaffinches, Jackdaws, Blackbirds, and of course, House Sparrows. The beautiful grounds of the latter yielded Wood-pigeons, Magpies, Blackbirds, Blackcaps, Chaffinches, House Martins, and a Reed Warbler in song on a little shrubberied island in one of the ponds. These wonderful gardens, practically part of the Bois de Bologne, would doubtless afford a considerable list of wild birds ; for my part, I had more than enough to do seeing the captive birds and animals. Soon after leaving Paris, in the open agricultural district, I saw some Crested Larks. But the marshes and poplars about Amiens and Abbville, which I always long to explore for aquatic species, only showed Rooks and the eternal Magpie.

NESTING HABITS OF THE OYSTER-CATCHER, *HÆMATOPUS OSTRALEGUS.*

By F. B. Whitlock.

For several seasons during the last few years I have visited a part of the north of England coast where the Oyster-catcher is a common breeding species.

The district to which I refer consists of a stretch of sandy and shingly beech of no great width, but of some seven or eight miles in length, and flanked partly by rough pastures, and partly by an extensive rabbit-warren. The pastures call for no remark, but the warren is a most interesting district by reason of its extensive range of sand-hills, which cover a large area. and have been blown by the wind into most fantastic shapes, Most of them are more or less thickly covered with a growth of marram grass, especially those nearest the shore, others are quite naked, but the intervening valleys are clothed with a thin turf-like growth of vegetation on which the rabbits feed. In some parts shingle banks take the place of these patches of turf. For a distance of more than a mile the warren is divided from the mainland by a broad estuary, and during high tides the lower parts are liable to be flooded.

The Oyster-catchers are here resident throughout the year, and breeding operations commence towards the end of April; by the first week in May laying commences. Though the whole of the district described might be called one large colony of breeding birds, it must not be supposed that nests are to be found close together. Perhaps, on certain favourite shingle-beds two or three pairs may be breeding within a space of one hundred yards square, but, as a rule, the nests are at some distance apart, and in a variety of situations. The site most favoured seems to be a stretch of sand, lying between the normal high-water mark and the first line of vegetation, and well littered with stones of the size of a hen's egg, and upwards. Nests may be found close to the marram grass, but more often a yard or two nearer the sea. Here a hole is scratched of moderate depth, sometimes amongst a cluster of stones, but quite as often in the open. The eggs, as a rule, lie on the bare sand, but sometimes stones are met with when the parent birds are excavating the sand; in such cases they serve as a lining to the nest. Other situations, which are almost as much favoured, are banks of the roughest shingle, over which walking is most fatiguing. Here any chance hollow is made to do duty for a nest, and the eggs lie on their bare bed of stones. Sometimes a lining of small mussel shells is added, if any happen to be near, but the Oyster-catcher takes but little trouble in carrying material to its nest; often a pair select a more airy site for their home and excavate a nest amongst the tufts of marram grass on the ridges and summits of the highest sand-hills. In such cases the eggs lie on the bare sand. These elevated stations are of great advantage to such a wary bird as the Oyster-catcher, for an intruder can be seen at a great distance, and, on the first alarm, the female quietly leaves her charges, and joins her watchful mate on the tide-line below. It is almost impossible to mark these nests by watching the flight of the female, as she slips away long before it is possible to get anywhere near.

Sometimes the nest is placed on the flatter portions of the warren, amongst the sparse growth of herbage, and generally where some high tide has left its mark in a line of *débris* comprising broken sticks, reeds, corks, and such light objects;

some of these may be roughly arranged by the parent birds in the form of a nest.

The eggs are usually three in number; out of some forty or fifty nests I have examined at different times, I have only known one to contain four. These, from their even character, were undoubtedly the production of one female, but they were rather smaller and rounder than the average. I have also heard of a nest containing five, but had not the opportunity of examining them. In ground colour, the majority of eggs are of a pale stone colour, much resembling dry sea sand, but in some cases this gives way to a pale greyish green. The spots are as a rule bold, and either black or purplish brown, with occasional blotches of grey. Sometimes several spots will be found merged into one large patch of colour. An exceptionally beautiful clutch of three eggs found by myself has the ground colour pale olive green, slightly glossy, and the usual black spots replaced by cloudy blotches of brownish red. One remarkable egg I had given to me was thickly incrusted with a chalky substance, due, I suppose, to the ill-health of the parent bird. I have not yet seen a perfectly plain egg, nor one profusely spotted over the entire surface; neither have I seen an egg on which the markings form a zone. Very frequently purplish streaks take the place of spots, but an entire clutch of this character is uncommon.

A walk along a beach where Oyster-catchers are breeding is a very entertaining experience. Let us suppose the tide is in. As we tramp over the rough shingle and loose sand, keeping a good look out well ahead, our eyes are presently attracted by two black looking objects, perhaps half a mile away, quietly resting half-way down the beach. As we advance nearer we see that they are birds, and a closer inspection reveals a pair of Oyster-catchers which, after taking stock of us, slowly walk away to the tide-line. Marking the spot they have left as well as we can, we commence a careful search on arriving there. We soon notice an empty nest and perhaps a second; other evidence also exists in the nature of little masses of finely comminuted shells lying on the sand, which the birds have ejected in the form of quids. Just as we are on the point of coming to the conclusion that this pair have not yet got eggs,

we come across a nest containing the objects of our search, and now we are surprised we did not find it at once, so conspicuous does it look when we know where it is; but, as an experiment, let us walk away without marking the surroundings, and then try to find it again. It is soon clear that we were mistaken, for another careful search is necessary before we re-find it, so closely do the eggs assimilate to their surroundings. If we continue our walk until the tide is quite out we may notice pairs of Oyster-catchers feeding amongst the rocks and stones exposed at low water, or perhaps a flock of forty or fifty may fly past us to some favourite mussel bed, for at feeding time the species is gregarious. If we wish to find a nest now our search must be a close one, and any signs of scratching or footprints must be carefully examined. At length we come across a second nest, and as we stoop to examine the eggs we are startled by a loud, clear "Klēēp, klēēp, klēēp," rapidly and clamorously uttered, as the parent birds come flying around trying to lure us from their treasures after the manner of Lapwings. As we retire we observe first one and then the other skims over the nest to satisfy itself that the contents are safe, but they soon return and escort us until we are at a safe distance away, no doubt congratulating themselves that their artifices have quite deceived us. Perhaps further on we may unconsciously walk near a brood of young which are squatting amongst the surrounding stones. Here the anxiety of the parents is redoubled, and they boldly settle on the sand and run for a few yards just in front of us before taking wing again, but all the time trying to lure us from the spot. The downy young resemble more those of the Lapwing than any other British species, and they soon learn to pipe loudly in response to their parents, when taken in the hand. In such a walk perhaps four or five nests may be discovered in a few hours. Only once have I surprised an Oyster-catcher on her nest; this I accomplished by peeping round the buttress of a huge sand-hill just as she slipped off in response to the warning note of her mate on the beach below; on another occasion I noticed three nests, on which the female was quietly brooding, as I passed near the beach in a railway train; afterwards visiting the spot and examining the eggs.

BRITISH BIRDS AT WIESBADEN (GERMANY).

By Graham W. Kerr.

I have always found it interesting to compare notes with friends living in different districts to myself, and therefore hope that this list and notes on the British birds I have observed in this town will be of interest to fellow ornithologists.

Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*).—I have only seen two; in the severe weather of last winter they were feeding on some mistletoe berries.

Blackbird (*Turdus merula*).—A very common resident. It is noteworthy that the Song-thrush (*T. musicus*) has never occurred.

Dipper (*Cinclus aquaticus*).—Seen once last summer on a mountain stream.

Common Wheatear (*Saxicola œnanthe*).—Fairly numerous, being found particularly near quarries.

Whinchat (*Pratincola rubetra*).—Arrives in the middle of April, and is common throughout the summer. It likes to rest and sing on some tall stem of grass or twig in the middle of a meadow.

Redstart (*Ruticilla phœnicurus*).—Arrives before the end of March, and is very conspicuous until September.

Black Redstart (*Ruticilla titys*).—I was surprised to see this handsome bird arrive in the middle of March. It likes to perch on the vine-poles, and individuals will chase one another along the house-roofs. A most persistent songster, the song being short but pleasant. The nest is made in holes in walls, or in the nesting boxes set up for it. It breeds twice in the year.

Redbreast (*Erithacus rubeculus*).—The Robin never becomes so tame here as in England. It is more a woodland bird, and is rarely seen, even in the quietest gardens.

Nightingale (*Daulias luscinia*).—Very plentiful.

Whitethroat (*Sylvia cinerea*).—Curiously rare! Have seen it once, and found it nesting on another occasion.

Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*). — Found in great numbers throughout all the country.

Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*). — More common than any other warbler. It builds in low forks of small bushes, especially lilac; nesting twice.

Garden Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*).—Occurs in small numbers, nesting in the same districts as the Blackcap.

Golden Crested Wren (*Regulus cristatus*).—This little bird is a resident, though rather scarce.

Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus rufus*). — Arrives very early in spring, and remains to breed, first brood being hatched at the end of April or early in May.

Willow Wren (*Phylloscopus trochilus*).—Common.

Sedge Warbler (*Acrocephalus phragmitis*).—Entirely absent, which seems strange, as there are many places apparently well suited for it.

Hedge Sparrow (*Accentor modularis*).—Rarely seen, and then only in the woods, generally near some stream.

Long-tailed Titmouse (*Acredula caudata*). — Common in the woods, especially in autumn, when many family parties are seen.

Great Titmouse (*Parus major*).—Very numerous. I lately saw about fifty, all hopping about on a plot of grass with Blackbirds and Chaffinches, in search of some special food; several times I saw them fly direct to the ground, though they mostly flew to a bush and hopped down from the lowest branches. It is said by some writers to be an uncommon thing to see this bird on the ground, but such is not my experience.

Continental Coal Titmouse (*Parus ater*).—A resident, not differing in any habits from the English form.

Marsh Titmouse (*Parus palustris*).—The bird will go anywhere for sunflower seeds: in autumn I collect large quantities and feed the birds on these during winter.

Blue Titmouse (*Parus cæruleus*).—Perhaps the rarest of the Titmice found here, still it is quite plentiful.

Nuthatch (*Sitta cæsia*). — This interesting bird is very common. I have on several occasions seen it hopping on the ground under beech trees in search of food.

Tree-creeper (*Certhia familiaris*). — Large numbers are

noticed during autumn and winter, but in spring comparatively few remain. I am convinced a movement of migration or emigration takes place.

Wren (*Troglodytes parvulus*).—It is a resident, but not very often seen, being shy and skulking about small bushes in the woods.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*).—Great numbers pass the summer here, but I have never observed it in winter. Throughout September small parties of five to twelve were migrating.

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla melanope*).—Arrives at the end of March and hatches its young a month later; frequents rocky streams on the mountain sides.

Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*).—Met with only once or twice, and then in heather at some altitude.

Woodchat (*Lanius pomeranus*).—Fairly numerous, using the same nesting materials and much the same sites as *L. collurio*, but the eggs are more pointed at the lower end.

Redbacked Shrike (*Lanius collurio*).—A most common and conspicuous summer migrant. Nests in almost any bush or hedge, and on one slope covered with bushes I found eleven nests within the space of a mile. The male is noisy on the nest being approached, but the female sometimes sits very closely. The bird destroys great numbers of insects and moths, for I have watched it for hours perching on the topmost twig of a bush, and then darting out upon them, but before all things it prefers small lizards. I have never seen it attack a bird.

Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*).—Seen from time to time.

Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa grisola*).—A summer visitor. Most often seen on the ground after a shower.

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*).—Found here in large numbers; arrives a few days later and departs a few days earlier than the martin. My observations in England exactly reversed this order.

Martin (*Chelidon urbica*).—Also found in great numbers; they wade about in puddles and collect mud for the nest from the sides.

Sand-martin (*Cotyle riparia*).—Rather uncommon; I only know of one small colony.

Goldfinch (*Carduelis elegans*).—Resident here. Last spring I saw about twenty of them mobbing a pair of Jays.

Siskin (*Chrysomitris spinus*).—In winter flocks of twenty to forty are met feeding on alder berries; in spring they pair and visit orchards and gardens. The song is monotonous. When feeding they are very quiet and apt to be overlooked, but allow an approach to within a few yards.

(To be continued.)

OBITUARY.

THE LATE MR. HENRY SEEBOHM, F.L.S., F.Z.S., &c.

ALL lovers of nature have felt a deep sorrow in the loss they have sustained by the death of the above gentleman, and, in his particular line, a loss that cannot be replaced. It is not often that a rich man will undertake a long, trying and perilous journey of many hundreds of miles to find

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a clutch of eggs not previously discovered. This journey he undertook, sleighing through hundreds of miles of snow, and in almost continual darkness, to distant Siberia, and, though he did not succeed in his object, yet many interesting facts new to natural history were discovered, and

one result was that most delightful book, "Siberia in Asia." The companion volume, "Siberia in Europe," is a most capital account of his and Mr. Harvie-Brown's trip after the eggs of Grey Plover and Little Stint, several clutches of each being taken, and also other eggs not previously known. But the book I most delight in is his "British Birds." Here he is thoroughly at home, and, as in nearly every case he writes from personal knowledge, he has compiled a work that ought to be in every natural history lover's possession. This book takes a very high standard both for letter-press and also on account of the coloured plates. Most books on birds, previously to this, are compiled from many authors; but here, in almost every case, the work is the author's own—the result of journeys to almost every country in Europe. Mr. Seebohm also gave much help to the classification of birds in the Natural History Museum, and has left his magnificent collection of over 16,000 specimens to the nation—by far the finest collection ever given. It is particularly rich in Thrushes (a group Mr. Seebohm took the greatest interest in). I had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. Seebohm several times at Rainworth, and shall always look back on those visits with pleasure. I am also indebted to him for some specimens in my variety collection, and many of his books, which I treasure much; and I shall ever cherish the memory of this true lover of birds.

J. Whitaker.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Notes on the Eggs of the Cuckoo *(Cuculus canorus).*—The following notes will, I think, be of interest to readers of the "Ornithologist," as all collectors of cuckoo's eggs must have frequently had their faith greatly tried, and any certain test of genuine specimens should be gladly accepted. In common with other collectors, amateur and professional, I receive a fair number of real or alleged eggs of *C. canorus* every year, but until now I have found that the greater the number, the greater has become my uncertainty in deciding on the authenticity or otherwise of some of them. Many "cuckoo clutches" have been sent me by correspondents of whose *bonâ-fides* and truthfulness I have no possible doubt, but amongst them have frequently been specimens that I could not believe genuine, and when investigation was made as to their origin, these clutches proved not to have been found by my correspondents, but either taken in exchange, or "pointed out" to them by paid country assistants. It would be an interesting question to know whether some of these "assistants" are actuated by purely mercenary motives, or merely with a humanitarian desire to give their friends the pleasure of believing they are taking what they evidently seem to desire.

What puzzles me much is that practically all the false "Cuckoo's" eggs I have received have been of English origin. I have had many sets from the Continent—roughly I should say two to every one received from British correspondents—and only one of the foreign ones has been fraudulent; whereas quite half of those received from this country have been forgeries. Whether the German and other Continental collectors are more honest than the English "pointer out" I cannot pretend to say; but one solution of the question may be that my foreign supplies all come through second and scientific hands, and they may reject the frauds before sending me the genuine eggs. During 1894 and 1895 I received from various British sources many clutches with a "Cuckoo," or alleged "Cuckoo," included. Many were palpably quite right on sight alone, some were equally visible frauds and rejected forthwith, but there remained a residuum about which I could not make my mind up with certainty, nor could my English friends help me. "They may be right, but I think they are only so-and-so." In this dilemma I decided to consult a correspondent in Sweden who has made the eggs of the *Cuculidæ* his study for many years; I understand he has had some 600 genuine eggs of *C. canorus* through his hands, and his present collection is of more than half that number. He most kindly examined my suspicious eggs. Amongst the lot of about twenty sent him were purposely included three or four of the genuineness of which I had no doubt, and which he verified as correct, but nearly all the suspected ones proved, as I feared, frauds. Here, however, comes the reason of my writing this article! *How to test a doubtful egg alleged to be a Cuckoo's.* I believe the information will be new to most oölogists in this country, as some of our first authorities whom I have consulted know nothing of it. Eggs of the *C. canorus* are abnormally small for the size of the parent bird; this is so well known that it would not be worth while repeating, but that from this comes what follows. A German collector, whose name has not been given to me, considering this, mentally asked: Is there any compensation for this small size? He also noticed, what hundreds of other collectors must have noticed without observing critically, that when a clutch of eggs containing a Cuckoo's egg is blown, the Cuckoo's is harder to drill than the eggs of the foster-bird. Then the egg must be denser in texture; and so what the shell of a Cuckoo's egg loses in size is compensated by greater density and weight. With this theory he started a series of experiments, with the result that it is known that the empty eggs of *C. canorus* weigh from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. more than those of a similar size laid by any other Passerine bird. If this theory is correct, here we have a certain test of a genuine Cuckoo's egg. It must also be borne in mind that Cuckoo's eggs are on an average more globular than those of the various species they make their hosts; but this is a very partial test. Also, and a more valuable one—a Cuckoo's egg has *no* gloss, or only

very little. I shall conclude this article with extracts from the table o weights my friend kindly made of the eggs sent him for identification, showing some of the most noticeable frauds thereby verified. Twenty-two eggs were sent, including, however, about half-a-dozen genuine Cuckoo's. I take ten of the "frauds," and would remark that the identification of the species in all cases agreed with the "I think they are only so-and-so" of myself and English friends referred to before. The weight given is in centigrammes (roughly, rather over one-seventh of a grain).

Species.	Weight. c. gr.	Cuckoo's of same size ought to weigh. c. gr.
A. arvensis	21 ...	24 to 26
,, ,, ...	17 ...	,, ,,
,, ,, ...	18 ...	,, ,,
,, ,, ...	19 ...	,, ,,
,, ,, ...	22 ...	28 to 30
(Abnormally large egg.)		
P. domesticus	21 ...	24 to 26
(Very heavy for Sparrow's.)		
,, ,, ...	19 ...	22 to 24
,, ,, ...	18 ...	,, ,,
A. arboreus	16½ ...	20 to 23
P. montanus	13 ...	20 to 21

One egg identified as that of *A. arvensis* weighed 25 centigrammes, but on examination it proved to be imperfectly blown.—H. W. Marsden (40, Triangle W., Bristol, February 11th, 1896).

Little Auks Inland.—During the severe weather of the early part of 1895, two examples of the Little Auk *(Mergulus alle)* were found in Oxfordshire in an exhausted condition. I do not know the exact date, or what kind of weather was experienced on our coasts about that time, for I was out of England myself. The Little Auk, I think, is not blown, or does not wander inland so often as some other purely sea-coast birds, but Puffins in winter, or immature, dress have more than once been recorded as examples of the former species.—O. V. Aplin (Bloxham, Oxon, February 4th, 1896).

[Lord Lilford records the occurrence in Northamptonshire of seven Little Auks during January and February, 1895 ("Zoologist," February, 1895, pp. 47, 48, 59).—Ed.]

Birds at a Northamptonshire Reservoir.—When staying with my brother in Northamptonshire in the early part of last August, I paid several visits to Byfield Reservoir, in the southern division of the county. I was glad to find the Great Crested Grebe was still fairly numerous (it has bred there to my knowledge for some years). I saw perhaps a dozen pairs of adult and a good many young birds, but not more than two in any one brood. I think pike must destroy a great many young Grebes on these inland reservoirs, as I do not at this moment remember ever having seen more than two in a brood on the reservoirs of the present county, Warwickshire, and Oxfordshire. Byfield, which is about 70 acres in extent, is preserved for

fishing, and probably contains some monster pike. Besides the Grebes, there were the usual Coots, Moorhens, and Wild Ducks, and also some Teal. A few Common Sandpipers frequented the banks one day. But by far the most interesting birds were a pair of Pochards (*Fuligula ferina*). They kept close together, but I saw no young ones, and I think that for some reason or other they had not bred. The male was in full spring dress, and had not altered at all. I know of no instance of the Pochard breeding in Northamptonshire. In the two splendid volumes on the Birds of Northamptonshire just published, Lord Lilford does not mention any instance of its being observed in that county during the summer months. I have omitted to say that my brother saw the Pochards in June.—O. V. Aplin (Bloxham. Oxon, February 4th, 1896).

NOTES AND NEWS.

Mr. H. Mead-Briggs reports ("Science Gossip," December, 1895) that the Golden Eagle reported to have been shot in December, at Minster, in Thanet, Kent, has turned out, upon inspection, to be an immature white-tailed or sea eagle.

At a meeting of the Natural History Society of Glasgow, held December 23rd, 1895, Mr. John Paterson exhibited a specimen of the Spotted Crake (*Porzana maruetta*) which had been shot on the river Add, Argyllshire. Although included in Mr. Harvie-Brown's "Vertebrate Fauna of Argyll," the bird is of extremely rare occurrence in the county, and in the Western Highlands generally.

At the meeting of the Linnean Society, held on January 16th, Mr. J. E. Harting exhibited, on behalf of Mr. W. R. Ogilvie Grant, some eggs and skins of two rare Petrels from the Salvage Islands, lying between the Canaries and Madeira. These islands were stated to be of volcanic origin, faced with steep rocks from 100 to 300 feet in height, and covered with loose, sandy soil, with but little vegetation. The Petrels exhibited were *Pelagodroma marina* and *Oceanodroma cryptoleucura*, which were found nesting in burrows after the manner of the Shearwater (*Puffinus kuhli*), of which great numbers were also breeding there.

In his "Notes on the Ornithology of Northamptonshire," in the "Zoologist" for February, Lord Lilford records the fact that an adult Greyhen was shot upon the manor of Wigsthorpe, and brought to him. He remarks that he is only acquainted with one previous occurrence of Blackgame in Northamptonshire (see Zool., 1851, p. 3278). He also mentions some interesting albinos—a white Swallow seen near Peterborough, August 31st; a White Starling near Lilford, October 6th; and a white Chaffinch which frequented his pleasure grounds from June until December.

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The Naturalist, Nos. 246, 247, 248, Jan.—March, 1896. The Editors, Leeds.
The Nidologist, Vol. III., No. 7, March, 1896. H. R. Taylor, New York.
"A Natural History of the Nests and Eggs of British Birds." By the Rev. F. O. Morris and W. B. Tegetmeier. Vol. I., part 1. London: John C. Nimmo.
Knowledge, No. 125, March, 1896. The Editor, London.
The Naturalist's Journal, No. 45, March, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Huddersfield.
The Irish Naturalist, Vol. V., No. 3, March, 1896. Eason & Sons, Dublin.

INTERNATIONAL NATURALISTS' DIRECTORY FOR 1896.—Now ready, price 6d. The list of British Naturalists has been re-classified, and contains the names and addresses of collectors and students in the departments of Zoology, Microscopy, Botany, Geology, Palæontology, Mineralogy, &c., the particular study of each being further specified. The Trade Directory has been made as complete as possible, and there is a list of Natural History Societies and Field Clubs, and of Natural History Magazines. Copies may be ordered through any newsagent or bookseller.—London: Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row.

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It has now been sent to press, but as there are still over 40 orders short of the 250 asked for, those willing to subscribe are particularly requested to send their names at once to H. K. SWANN, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. Price of work (fcap. 8vo, cloth, gilt lettered) will be 2s. net to subscribers, but will be raised to 3s. 6d. on publication. Remittance should not be sent until book is received.

ESTAB. 1868. *Telegrams*—"Thorpe, Naturalist, Croydon."

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Instantaneous Photograph by Benjamin Wyles, Southport.

GULLS FLYING SLOWLY AGAINST THE WIND.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

VOL. I. APRIL, 1896. No. 2.

ON THE EFFECT OF WESTERLY WINDS ON THE FLIGHT OF GULLS (*LARIDÆ*) AND OTHER BIRDS.*

By J. H. GURNEY, F.L.S.

IN all birds it appears that wind, or the force of wind, is the prime mover in flight—that is to say, the action of the wings is greatly regulated by the direction and velocity of the wind, though, joined to this, the actual motive power is gravitation to the earth's surface. If there is absolutely no wind a bird cannot fly its fastest; its flight is, on the contrary, often somewhat listless, and locomotion probably becomes laborious. It follows that it is easier for a bird to make headway where there is some slight opposition—to fly against a gentle wind rather than with it. The truth of this hypothesis has not been recognised by many writers, but it may be especially tested on the coast of Norfolk. This juts out into the North Sea like a great rounded peninsula, and just in the middle of the bend lies the little town of Cromer, where, or in its neighbourhood, most of the following observations have been made. From its position Cromer is peculiarly adapted for watching the direction and effect of wind and all the autumnal migratory movements of the lower-flying birds, so

* Reprinted, with author's revisions, from "The Ibis," for October, 1895.

many of which come in from the sea or shoot down from the clouds, but in either case make land hereabouts.

Readers of the veteran Herr Gätke's "Heligoland," recently translated into English, and edited by Mr. Harvie-Brown, will observe the importance which is attached at that ornithological observatory by the author to wind in its bearing on migration, especially in the 5th chapter, "On Meteorological Conditions which influence Migration." He sums up the result of continued personal observation by saying:—"Whereas birds appear in great number when the wind is in a particular direction, they are scarcely seen at all when it is in some other quarter" (p. 74). The particular direction which suits the Island of Heligoland may not by any means be the one which brings them to Norfolk, which, according to my observations, is a gentle wind from the west. The number of remarkable migrations to Norfolk and the east coast of England generally, which have had no ascertained simultaneous counterpart in Heligoland, is very large indeed; therefore it must be borne in mind that there is not that similarity between the two places which some have supposed. In the same way there have been many migrations to Heligoland which could not be correlated with any in England. For instance in October, 1870, there were thousands of the Great Tit (*Parus major*) in Heligoland; in 1874 enormous numbers of Shore-Larks (*Otocorys alpestris*); in 1876 tens of thousands of Sky-Larks (*Alauda arvensis*); in 1879 Red-throated Divers (*Colymbus septentrionalis*) almost by the million; in 1880 countless numbers of the Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa atricapilla*); but none of these hosts, so far as was observed, came to England. Other writers besides Herr Gätke have insisted on the importance of wind in its relation to migration. By Mr. John Cordeaux its influence was recognised years ago. Writing from the Humber-mouth in 1881, he laid down as an axiom that, "with southerly or westerly winds, not amounting to gales, normal migration (to the east coast in autumn) is the rule, but with winds in the opposite direction the results are very opposite" ("Third Report on the Migration of Birds," p. 39). In 1883 he writes of "the prevailing winds in the autumn, westerly and south-westerly—such as we know are

specially favourable for the passage of the North Sea" (Fifth Report, p. 59), that is to say, for the passage of birds which come from Norway, Denmark, and Holland.

Although, when I lived at Cromer, my attention, like Mr. Cordeaux's, used to be directed to all kinds of birds, I endeavoured to exercise special supervision on Gulls, particularly the Herring and Lesser Black-backed gulls (*Larus argentatus* and *L. fuscus*), the most plentiful and the easiest to watch. I think it will be shown that these Laridæ give a key to what obtains in most other birds, for the wind which suits them—and I shall show presently that in autumn it is always a contrary wind—is most acceptable to nearly all species under similar conditions.

To what extent the Laridæ are birds of passage on and over the North Sea it would be hard to say, but it has been over and over again remarked that as regularly as autumn comes round, great numbers of them, chiefly of the two species just named, are to be seen at Cromer *passing along the shore and always flying west*, and more or less in the teeth of the wind, which is very seldom absent at that gusty watering-place. Many have been the surmises as to their destination and why they should almost invariably adopt the same course and go in the same direction, and several times I have corresponded with Mr. Cordeaux about this subject. It is fortunate that on the coast of Lincolnshire there should be a naturalist who for a long period of years has made the migration of birds a close study. In 1884 both Mr. Cordeaux and I, being on the look-out, observed, though not simultaneously, a very great migration of Gulls (albeit the word "migration" is not altogether applicable)—he in Lincolnshire and I in Norfolk. Mr. Cordeaux had his attention drawn to the movement, for that is a better expression, on September 25th, and from that day to the 28th he and his friends were absorbed spectators of very great numbers of Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls flying in the teeth of a strong south-west wind. The passage lasted four days, ten hours each day, and possibly during the night also (see the account of it in the Sixth Report on Migration, p. 65).

A fortnight later, October 11th, very nearly the same thing

was to be seen in Norfolk. On that day one of the largest flights passed Cromer and the adjacent village of Overstrand. There had been a very high wind, in fact a gale, in the night from north-north-west, and at 11 a.m. not a single Gull was visible from the cliff. When the great flight or passage of Gulls began I cannot say, but it certainly must have commenced soon after 11 a.m. I did not go to the shore again from that time until 3 p.m., when the wind was still blowing from the west, but greatly moderated, and numbers of Gulls were passing. How many hours they continued going by I do not know; but if they continued filing past for nine hours, 11,880 must have gone by. This is reckoning that a flock passed every minute, and that the average number in a flock was twenty-two. They were chiefly young Herring-Gulls and Lesser Black-backs with some common Gulls (*L. canus*) and a few adult Great Black-backs (*L. marinus*), and now and then a Black-headed Gull (*L. ridibundus*). All were going in the same direction, west-north-west. The next day the wind was in much the same quarter, but the Gulls had all disappeared. On the 10th (the day before this great flight) the wind had been from the north; on the 9th I believe it was north or north-west, and on the 8th north-north-west. On the 7th it was north-north-east—that is, straight on shore at Cromer, so that Gulls would have no advantage whichever way they went, and accordingly only three were seen; but these three were going in the customary direction, viz., westwards, against the wind.

On the 26th of the same October great numbers of gulls were again flying west as before, and, being desirous of gaining an accurate notion of their numbers, I stood for two hours by my watch on the shore at Overstrand and counted them roughly as they passed. In the first hour, commencing at 3.20 p.m., as near as I can say, about 415 passed; in the second hour about 345 passed. They were very close to the shore, and consisted of the same species as before, and were nearly all in flocks of from ten to twenty, but Common Gulls preponderated, with many young Herring-Gulls and Black-backs. At 5.30 their regiments were still defiling past as steadily as ever, and every little company took exactly the

same course. How long this had been going on it is impossible to say, but probably from early in the morning, as the wind had been high, and there is every reason to suppose that they continued passing far into the night. The wind was north-north-west. The next day it was still in the same quarter, but there were no Gulls—for the time they had all passed.*

The following day, October 28th, the wind shifted to west-north-west and blew hard, and Mr. Cordeaux registered a great flight of Woodcocks. Fresh relays of Gulls had come up and were all going west as before. Probably from 2,000 to 3,000 passed on that day, and pretty nearly 5,000 on the 26th. It is a speculation in my mind whether those on the 28th were the same individuals which passed on the 26th or others. The former theory may be accepted on the supposition that they had occupied the 27th in making the return journey, which would have been in an easterly direction, far out to sea; but in that case they must have gone with the wind, which it is quite certain they do not like to do. On the other hand, if they were fresh individuals they had probably come from the shores of Essex and Kent, or from Belgium, and the hundred miles of sea between England and Belgium would furnish its contingent to the army.

Besides the occasional appearance of Gulls in these great numbers, as in the two instances which have just been related, there may be seen almost every day throughout October and November at Cromer, single Gulls and Gulls in twos and threes, and if the wind be west, so invariably is the direction of their flight the same—that is, against it. As a rule they fly high in fine weather and low in bad weather, but be it high or low they always go towards Blakeney, which is a small town and harbour further west.

To show how prevalent westerly winds are on the east coast of England, it is only necessary to refer to the meteorological table annually contributed to the "Transactions of

* Some account of this "migration," and other notes on the same subject, will be found in the "Norfolk and Norwich Nat. Soc. Trans.," iv., p. 326, and in the appendix to W. Rye's "History of Cromer."

the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society" by Mr. A. W. Preston, in which the direction of the wind is noted from the vane on the spire of Norwich Cathedral. In 1883, we had in Norfolk 173 days of west wind, in 1884, 165; but I prefer to give for comparison, eight years in a tabular statement, as a sample of what generally takes place.

1883	W. 173 days	1887	W. 186 days.
1884	W. 165 ,,	1888	W. 171 ,,
1885	W. 147 ,,	1889	W. 180 ,,
1886	W. 170 ,,	1890	W. 191 ,,

Nor is the west wind confined to England alone; all round the globe it is the prevailing wind north of latitude 30°, and doubtless the Gulls of the Atlantic often fly against it

Tracks of Birds Flying Against a West Wind.

or commit themselves to its mercy and allow themselves to be whirled away with it. From latitude 30° southwards to the equator north-east winds prevail round the globe, and probably the direction of flight is reversed by these birds, which, it may be, go east when they get into these "trade winds." Birds of any kind seldom cross the North Sea to Norfolk in

spring, which is just what we should expect, because in the months of April and May we have not much west wind (see Mr. Preston's tables before referred to).

It may, I believe, be laid down as a law that the direction of the wind is the key to the movements, not only of Gulls, but of all birds which migrate at a low altitude (and especially those which journey by day), such land-birds, for example, as *Corvus cornix*, *C. frugilegus*, *C. monedula*, *Alauda arvensis*, *Fringilla cœlebs*, *Sturnus vulgaris*, *Turdus musicus*, *Scolopax rusticula*, *Accipiter nisus*, and *Falco tinnunculus*. The annexed map will make my meaning more plain, as it shows the wind from the west, the bending outline of our coast, and the course taken by the Gulls. When these Gulls have flown as far as the salt water goes, I believe they generally remain until the wind drops in such estuaries as the Humber-mouth, the Wash, and the mouth of the Thames; but land-birds, *e.g.*, Crows and Larks, indicated on the map by the larger arrow-heads, go inland, still, in most cases, flying against the wind.*

In my opinion the west winds of autumn indirectly are the cause which brings the Pectoral Sandpiper (*Tringa maculata*), Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabinii*), and many other North American birds enumerated in Saunders' "Manual"—especially among the Scolopacidæ—to the east coast of the British Isles, instead of landing them in Ireland, which is much nearer to the United States. Or, if Sabine's Gull does occur in Ireland, it is on the east side, as all the records show, where it has a wind to fly against. Certainly, if it were not for the west wind there would not be that annual east-to-west autumnal migration which there is to Norfolk and on the

* The late Mr. N. F. Hele, writing of the Woodcock in his "Notes or Jottings about Aldeburgh, Suffolk" (1870), says: "It always appears under the circumstance of a north-west wind. I have not been able to trace its advent at any other time. Living as we do, close to the seaside, we have often the opportunity of observing these birds actually under way from over the sea towards the land. The flight is exceedingly rapid, directly against the wind" (*l. c.*, p. 122). In 1883 I had three or four from light-houses which were killed during westerly or north-westerly winds. In 1884 I distinctly noted a flight at Cromer on November 6th; the wind the day before was south-south-westelry, and the Woodcocks had doubtless arrived in the night.

east coast of England generally. The direction taken by Rooks and other birds would be changed if the prevailing winds blew from any other quarter than west, for they like flying against it, account for it how we may, though it is not to be denied that there are now and then exceptions. But a cause for such may be guessed at, if sought for.

On the other hand, a gale of even moderate strength, from whatever quarter, has a very different effect, bearing all the sea-birds and land-birds alike before it if strong, and for the smaller land-birds a very slight puff will suffice. The memorable flight of Blue-throats (*Cyanecula suecica*) to the coast of Norfolk in September, 1884, was considered by those on the spot to be immediately after an east wind increasing in force and very gusty, which the Blue-throats must have flown with, and not against. The vast incursion of Gold-crests (*Regulus cristatus*) in the autumn of 1882, which extended far beyond the limits of Norfolk, and was "like a snowstorm" in the island of Heligoland, was pretty clearly shown to be owing to high winds from the east. The sixty Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*), recorded by the late Henry Stevenson in 1870, were drifted in before the violence of a north-east gale, and so were the Pomatorhine Skuas (*Stercorarius pomatorhinus*) in October, 1879. Gales like these, and hurricanes like that described by Mr. A. C. Chapman in "The Naturalist" for February, 1886, must be taken into account by those who would study the movements of birds; but these phenomena somewhat complicate the subject of migration by their irregularities.

It may be broadly said that the two great factors in avian migration are the direction of the wind and food; and of these the former is much the more potent, inasmuch as wind continually retards migration a good deal more than it helps it. Few will be found to deny that birds on migration move fast or slow according to its velocity, and certainly they move on or go backwards according to its direction. Before long the wind drops, and the wished-for night of stillness comes, which, to the smaller feathered pilgrims especially, must be most welcome. Then, as Herr Gätke tells us—in the results of a life's observation, now for the first time made accessible to

English readers—they rise high in air, often probably to an immense height, and speed away south at 100 miles an hour (Swallows are said to do 120) and in nine hours they are in Africa. This is what happens to the multitudes of Scandinavian migrants which come across the North Sea to the British Isles in autumn. If they always continued flying west they would find themselves in the Atlantic (and a case was mentioned in "The Field" newspaper of March 3rd, 1894, in which that actually happened to some Rooks), but they wait their opportunity and then they go south.

BRITISH BIRDS AT WIESBADEN (GERMANY).

By Graham W. Kerr.

(Continued from p. 16.*)*

Serin (*Serinus hortulanus*).—Has been noticed several times, singly or in pairs.

Greenfinch (*Ligurinus chloris*).—A common resident, very fond of sunflower seeds.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).—Everywhere abundant.

Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*).—Generally distributed throughout the district, but in small numbers only.

Chaffinch (*Fringilla cœlebs*).—In no other place have I found it so common as here.

Linnet (*Acanthis cannabina*).—A pair once seen.

Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula europæa*).—Last winter during severe weather three visited the Kur Gardens for about a week in search of food.

Common Bunting (*Emberiza milaria*).—Is seen feeding in the roads after every fall of snow.

Yellow Bunting (*Emberiza citrinella*).—Very numerous; on the approach of cold weather flocks can be seen feeding on the horse-dung in the roads; if the cold be of long duration, they become very tame.

Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza cirlus*).—A pair seen one evening in a meadow bordering a small stream.

Crested Lark (*Alauda cristata*).—Believed to have been seen on several occasions in winter.

Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).—To be seen everywhere; in winter numbers feed in the streets, visiting even the market-place in the middle of the town and running under horses' feet. A characteristic I have never noted elsewhere is that it frequently perches on house-roofs, often remaining so perched for hours; as it does this at all times of the year, it cannot be that it is resting during migration.

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Only seen on three occasions, and these were all solitary individuals; considering the times of occurrence (two in autumn and one in spring), I put them down as merely wandering migrants.

Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*).—Very common and noisy; in winter it leaves the woods and visits gardens, retiring again as soon as the weather becomes milder.

Magpie (*Pica rustica*).—Often seen near the Rhine.

Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*).—Breeds in the towers of the Roman Catholic Church and in the roof of the Rath House.

Carrion Crow (*Corvus corone*).—A common resident. I cannot do better than give extracts from my notebook as to a migration of this species which I observed last autumn:—*October* 28*th*.—A large migration of Crows. Weather dull, moist and somewhat foggy. Among the birds travelling within sight were both Hooded and Carrion Crows. I first noticed the migration about noon; it continued with varying strength until evening, the birds going in a S.E. direction. These are the first Hooded Crows seen this autumn. *October* 29*th*.—Weather the same, but somewhat colder; small parties of Crows passed by all day. *October* 30*th*.—No Crows! *October* 31*st*.—Windy. Flight edging to S.W. Crows passing until about four o'clock; more went by to-day than ever, especially about noon. They flew low, often having to rise to clear the houses. *November* 1*st*.—Much colder, bright and clear. Crows passed all day in small numbers. *November* 5*th*.—Small parties of Crows pass daily. *November* 13*th*.—The migration of Crows has almost entirely ceased. The usual flocks seen here during autumn and winter seem to have been in no way affected by this large migration passing over them.

Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*).—Have only observed it in autumn and winter, when it is common in the fields.

Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*).—There are several very large rookeries. The birds suffer badly in winter, and visit private gardens in large numbers.

Raven (*Corvus corax*).—Only seen or heard in the fields in the most severe weather.

Common Swift (*Cypselus apus*).—Arrives at the end of April, and is common throughout summer, nesting under the eaves of houses, both in and out of the town. I believe it to be polygamous.

Green Woodpecker (*Gecinus viridis*).—Only once seen.

Wryneck (*Iynx torquilla*).—Heard during summer, but rarely seen.

Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*).—Noticed once.

Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*).—Common in the woods some way out of the town.

Barn Owl (*Strix flammea*).—Occasionally met with.

Long-eared Owl (*Asio otus*).—I have often watched it in the evening, standing on some corn-sheaf, and from thence sweeping noiselessly down on a chance mouse.

Tawny Owl (*Syrnium aluco*).—Also frequently met with.

Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*).—Once seen in summer.

Common Buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*). — Very often seen, especially all along the Rhine.

Goshawk (*Astur palumbarius*).—Not seen anything like so often as the Buzzard, but still can be observed almost daily on the Rhine.

Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*).—There are a great many, and they seem to make Pigeons their especial prey. I have watched some grand flights between them, and not all have been to the advantage of the Hawk.

Kite (*Milvus ictinus*).—During summer one can watch its graceful, circling flight.

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*).—Once seen perched on a tree.

Merlin (*Falco æsalon*).—Somewhat rare, but easily recognised from its small size.

Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*). — Very abundant; it nests with the Jackdaws in the towers of the Roman Catholic Church, and apparently does not interfere with them.

Common Heron (*Ardea cinerea*).—Found in secluded parts of the Rhine.

Little Bittern (*Ardea minuta*).—Once when boating on the Rhine, one flew over our boat on to a swampy island, where it almost at once began to call.

White Stork (*Ciconia alba*).—Pairs are seen all through summer, although I have never seen more than fifteen birds together, even on migration.

Mallard (*Anas boscas*).—On the lakes of the Kur-house it breeds annually, and early in the morning flies in flights to the Rhine, a distance of about three miles. They spend the day in feeding there, and return in the evening.

Ring-dove (*Columba palumbus*). — Very common in the woods, especially among fir.

Turtle Dove (*Turtur communis*)-—Several times seen and heard in the fields and woods.

Common Partridge (*Perdix cinerea*).—Very numerous. In cold weather they run about in private gardens.

Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*).—Only found in preserved places.

THE HAWFINCH (*COCCOTHRAUSTES VULGARIS*) IN MIDDLESEX.

By The Editor

This scarce and local species is, I am glad to say, still quite a common bird in a certain wood near Highgate—within six miles of the City of London. As the wood in question is strictly barred to all comers it seems likely to be a stronghold for this interesting bird for some time to come. The species also formerly bred in several smaller woods in the vicinity, but I rather fancy it may have ceased to do so during the last four or five years.

When I last visited the first-mentioned wood, however, on April 27th, 1893, the birds were so common that quite half a dozen of them were to be counted at one time in the trees around where my friend and I stood. Their usual note might

be syllabled as *pit, pit, pit,* often repeated, but occasionally the call note, a peculiar prolonged whistle, was to be heard.

We noticed one nest in the top of a blackthorn at a height of fourteen or fifteen feet, and on climbing up to examine it I found it contained five eggs of a dull light olive-grey, with a few bold spots of deep blackish olive and some thick streaks of light purplish-grey. The nest was cup-shaped internally, but rather shallow and very lightly made. It was constructed externally of small twigs (partly interlaced), fine fibrous roots, and strips of the inner bark of some tree, with some horse-hair neatly worked in as a lining.

On May 18th, 1888, I examined a similar nest at nearly the same height in the fork of a hawthorn in a neighbouring wood. This nest was even more slightly made than the one just described and was lined with fine fibrous roots without any horsehair. It contained four eggs similar to those described. On May 15th in that year, however, I found another nest in the same wood, placed in the fork of a small mountain ash at a height of about seven feet. This was a most unusually bulky nest, being constructed of twigs, roots, and a good deal of dry grass, lined with finer roots and grass. It contained two eggs.

Some nests in these woods have been placed at a rather greater height in small oak trees, generally in the fork of a more or less horizontal branch—but I consider a thick thorn bush to be the most usual site in this locality. In the winter it undoubtedly wanders, either from here or some other haunt, as examples have been taken at that season in various parts of Middlesex.

The additions to the Zoological Society's Gardens during the early part of March included a Lesser Kestrel (*Tinnunculus cenchris*), captured at sea, presented by Mr. A. J. Leith; a Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), British, presented by Mr. G. Smith; a Slender-billed Cockatoo (*Licmetis teniurostris*), from Australia, presented by Mr. John J. Sapp; a Laughing Kingfisher (*Dacelo gigantea*), from Australia, presented by Mrs. Hillier; a Hawfinch (*Coccothraustes vulgaris*), British, presented by Mr. C. Bates; and two Black Swans (*Cygnus atratus*, ♂ and ♀), from Australia, purchased.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

The Eggs of the Common Cuckoo.—Mr. Marsden's article on the eggs of the Cuckoo has doubtless been read with much interest, as his experience with them must be a very large one. Perhaps in some future number he may tell us if he has met with many instances of assimilation of the Cuckoo's egg to those of the foster-parent, and if he has had a blue specimen of the egg from any part of this country. Our own series of Cuckoo's eggs only contains about forty examples, of which fourteen were found by myself, and of the rest, all but three came into my hands unblown; about one-third have more or less gloss on the shell. The hardness of the shell seems to be an invariable feature, and not unfrequently the yolk is somewhat peculiar in colouring, with either a greenish or brownish tinge. One day in June, 1894, I found a Pied Wagtail's nest, containing four eggs of the owner and one Cuckoo's egg, in a garden in this village, and later in the day a second Pied Wagtail's nest, also containing four eggs of the owner and one of the Cuckoo, in my own garden, less than half-a-mile from the first nest. The two Cuckoo's eggs were so exactly alike that I felt almost certain they were laid by the same hen, and when I blew them I found each egg had a brownish-yellow yolk, in colour much resembling a dark-coloured pheasant's egg. Three times in the last few years clutches of five eggs of the Skylark have been brought me, in each case containing an "odd egg," but only one of these odd eggs was at all doubtful, and though at first we hoped it might be a Cuckoo's egg, it showed, when blown, the thin shell and richly-coloured yolk of the Skylark's egg. I think there is reason to fear that sometimes a genuine Cuckoo's egg is placed with a clutch to which it was never added by the Cuckoo herself, for, if the eggs are blown, one must be entirely dependent on the integrity of the person from whom they are received. Perhaps the most interesting egg we have is one with a clutch of three Bullfinch's, which were brought me by a boy in May, 1893. At first I was rather inclined to be incredulous, but when it came to blowing the eggs all proved to be in the same stage of incubation, and I have always believed the clutch to be perfectly genuine. One of the finest eggs we have I found in a nest containing two lively young Hedge-sparrows, about three or four days old, and in this egg the embryo was dead and partly decomposed. It is difficult to understand why the Cuckoo's egg should be so frequently found in the nest of the Red-backed Shrike on the Continent, and so rarely in England; only one instance has occurred here, and then the Shrike's nest contained no other egg than the Cuckoo's, and was possibly deserted when visited by the hen Cuckoo. I should like to try experiments in weighing eggs like those described by Mr. Marsden, but the lack of necessary apparatus

at present prevents my doing so.—JULIAN G. TUCK (Tostock Rectory, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.)

Notes from Wigan, Lancs.—I may mention that the Rook, which is common around Wigan, has begun to build to-day (March 7th). This is the second time it has made an attempt this year. It was busy with its nest about January 27th, but the following frost and hard weather put an end to its duties till now. On March 3rd a flock of Gulls flew over towards the sea on the approach of a storm. I have seen stragglers fly over before on different occasions, but as it is 12 or 14 miles inland from the nearest sea, it is not of frequent occurrence. I have never been able to ascertain what species they are, but fancy them to be the Common Gull. The Lapwing is numerous about here, flying in great flocks about the ploughed fields.—J. H. SMITH.

Lancashire Bird Names.—I think it would be of interest if readers of the ORNITHOLOGIST would send a list of local names given to birds in their respective districts. It would be a great addition to the knowledge of all bird lovers to have a good reliable record of the many different names a bird may have in different parts of the country. I herewith send a list of names given to some of the birds around Wigan. A Blackbird is an Ouzel, while the Song Thrush is called a Throstle. The Blue Tit is a Tom Tit. The Great Tit is a Blackcap. The Whitethroats are Peggies, and the Redbreast is called a Cock Robin. The Chaffinch may be either a Pink or a Spink, which, with the Landrail, seems to have earned its name on account of its call, the latter being called a Bakecake or a Corncrake. The Lapwing is another bird which has got its name in the same way; it is called a Peeweet or a Tewitt, pronounced "Chewitt." The Common Bunting and the Goldfinch share the name of Scribbler, on account of their eggs being scribbled over in the markings. The Meadow and Tree Pipits are also partners under the name of Titlark or Chittie. The Hedge Accentor is a Dunnock. The House Sparrow is a Spadger. The Starling is a Shepster or Sheppie, and the Wren is sometimes called a Jenny Wren. The Pied Wagtail is a Water Wagtail, but in company with other of its species they are called Waggies. The Mistle Thrush is a Shercock, while the Kestrel goes under the name of Kisstrill. The Rooks and Crows are all bundled together as Crows, and the Jackdaw only escapes the same title on account of its peculiar voice.—J. H. SMITH (Mariebonne Place, Wigan.)

Dartford Warbler Nesting in Yorkshire.—Mr. Charles Milburn, of Middlesborough, having recently intimated to me that the Dartford Warbler bred near that town last year, I wrote him for further particulars, and in reply he writes me as follows:—"I found the nest myself on the 1st of June in a large furze brake. There were three eggs, and I took one. I

had a look at the birds, and as I had not seen them before I went to the Museum and recognised the birds to be Dartford Warblers; they seemed to be brighter coloured than the Museum ones. To make sure, I sent the egg to Mr. Jeffreys, at Tenby, who also said it was an egg of that bird. I afterwards exchanged it with Mr. Ford, Bawdsey House, Suffolk. The nest was like a Whitethroat's, placed in the middle of a thick furze bush. The birds did not rise when I came upon them, but dropped to the ground and crept away. The next time I visited the spot there were four young ones."—H. Kirke Swann.

"Nesting Habits of the Oyster-Catcher."—The article under this heading in the first number of the "Ornithologist" I read with much interest, as the coast described is very similar to a stretch of ten or twelve miles running from here north, where the bird is common, and I send a few supplementary notes in case they may be of interest. Like the writer, I have found four eggs a very unusual clutch, and amongst several hundreds examined have only met with it twice. But I have been most fortunate in varieties, having taken several with the markings forming a zone round the larger end (but never the smaller, as is common with the Ringed Plover, Stonechat, and many other birds). In one clutch of three the markings were in fine lines of a pale reddish-brown—thickest about halfway above the middle of the egg—another, a pale cream ground, with faint red dots sparingly interspersed with larger dark blotches. In addition to the large blotches of reddish-brown or black (which are partially removable if rubbed when wet), many eggs have an under-pattern of faint markings of smaller size printed *in* the shell, as it were, which add greatly to its beauty. Eggs laid on the sand I have found particularly easy to discover, especially in dry weather, from the footprints of the birds converging to a common centre. I can generally "spot" the nest at from 50 to 100 yards distance. Finding them on shingle is, however, another matter. This bird is also fairly distributed along the low cliffs in the breeding season, and I have taken eggs both on the mainland and on all the islands as far as Bardsey. Curiously enough, the eggs I have seen on the rocky coast of Carnarvon are all of one type and distinctly smaller than most found on the longshore here. The writer's description of the cry of the Oyster-catcher is an instance of the difficulty (nay, impossibility) of conveying in writing (or indeed by human sounds) an *exact* idea of the cries of birds. To my ear it sounds like "Quip, quip"—a sharp, whip-like cry as though abruptly cut off at both ends. Other birds met with in the same haunts (longshore) are the Ringed Plover and Lesser Tern, and occasionally the Common Sandpiper. Eggs of this bird I have always found in a *nest* well made of seaweed and bents, never on the bare shingle.—F. C. Rawlings (Barmouth).

Early Occurrence of Motacilla Raii.—On the 9th of March, at mid-day, a Yellow Wagtail was seen on a hill about three miles south-east of Bath. The bird was perched on a low thorn bush at the side of the road, its brilliant yellow very conspicuous in the sunshine. It was jerking its tail and uttering continuous "chirrups," apparently quite comfortable in the warm spring air. After some two or three minutes it flew straight towards the writer, who was seated twenty yards away; its two white tail feathers showing very plainly as it passed over a hedge into a rough field with spongy and seedy spots here and there. It there walked up and down searching for insects. The next day it was seen again in the same field, though not to such advantage. It has been suggested that the gales of the last few days had carried him hither involuntarily, as it is so much earlier than the bird's usual date for re-appearance in England.—W. Gee, Freshford, near Bath.

[Occurrences of this species in winter, although infrequent, are not unheard of. I have known it to occur at least twice in the vicinity of London between January and March ("Birds of London," p. 23), one example being seen by myself at Ilford, and the other shot near Putney and obtained by a friend. I cannot find it recorded elsewhere. It is, possibly, passed over for a Grey Wagtail when it does occur owing to the latter losing its black throat in winter; the Yellow Wagtail, however, looks smaller, with a shorter tail, and is pale olive above instead of slate-grey, while there is no distinct yellow on the upper tail-coverts, although the general tint above and below seems much yellower at a little distance. The flight-notes seem to me distinct enough; I have syllabled *M. raii's* as *chee, chee, chit-up* and that of *M. melanope* as *chip, chip, chip, chiz-ip*.—H. Kirke Swann.]

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

A Natural History of the Nests and Eggs of British Birds, by the Rev. F. O. Morris, B.A. Fourth edition. Revised and corrected by W. B. Tegetmeier, F.Z.S. Part 1. (London: John C. Nimmo). Price 2s. 6d.

The present edition of this well-known work is the fourth, and it appears to me to be at least equal to the previous editions in point of letterpress, both paper and printing being all that could be desired. The plates are also for the most part fairly well executed, but one or two are a trifle over-coloured. While allowing that Mr. Tegetmeier has apparently discharged his somewhat delicate task in an able manner, one can scarcely commend his judgment impartially when one finds that he has retained under the name of "Jer-Falcon" no less than three species of birds, two, at least, of which have long been recognised as totally distinct from one another. We read that "there

are several forms of the Jer-Falcon, which, according to the views of different authorities, are regarded as one species, or described as distinct and regarded as the Jer-Falcon, the Greenland Falcon, and the Iceland Falcon respectively. Neither can be regarded as British, though specimens of each have accidentally occurred in the British Isles." Possibly the true Gyr-Falcon may be regarded as non-British, but I have hitherto been of the opinion that the frequent occurrences of the two latter species decidedly entitled them to a place in the British list. Still these are but differences of opinion, and they scarcely detract from the value of this attractive and popular work. It is to be completed in eighteen monthly parts, containing 248 plates, "chiefly coloured by hand"; the March part includes twelve of these. H. K. S.

British Birds' Nests: How, Where and When to Find and Identify Them, by R. Kearton. Introduction by R. Bowdler Sharpe, LL.D. Illustrated from Photographs by C. Kearton. (London: Cassell & Co., Ltd.) Price 21s.

Although I do not find a great deal of originality in the letterpress of this volume, I must allow that the author has given us a useful sketch of the plumage, nidification, etc., of all our commoner birds, the arrangement being alphabetically—on the lines of Montagu's Dictionary. The chief interest of the work, however, lies in the capital illustrations, which are nearly 130 in number. These are reproductions of photographs of nests and eggs, taken *in situ*, and many of them are most admirable and more or less unique. There is a wide difference between these charming illustrations and the stiff, unnatural woodcuts with which many natural history books of the popular kind have hitherto been adorned. It is a work, in fact, which should be in the possession of every bird-lover, scientific or otherwise.

H. K. S.

NOTES AND NEWS.

Dr. Paul Leverkühn, Director of the Scientific Institutes and Library of H.R.H. the Prince of Bulgaria, sends us a copy of his "Vogelschuk in England," dealing with the various Legislative Acts for the Protection of Wild Birds, and also the work done by private individuals in the same direction. That it is a very carefully prepared brochure is evidenced by the numerous references to the literature and periodicals which have relation to the subject.

An order has been made by the Home Secretary, which prohibits the taking or destroying of the eggs of the following species of wild birds throughout the administrative county of Durham:—Blackheaded Gull, Common Buzzard, Kestrel, Merlin, Owls (all species), Bittern, Curlew, Dipper, Dotterel, Dunlin, Golden Plover, Goldfinch, Heron, Hawfinch, Kingfisher, Martins (all species), Nightjar, Nuthatch, Pied Flycatcher,

Peregrine Falcon, Raven, Ring Ouzel, Snipe, Swallow, Treecreeper, Water Rail, Wagtails, Woodpeckers (all species), Woodcock. It is also ordered that the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1880, shall apply throughout the county of Durham to the following species of wild birds:—Bearded Tit, Buzzards (all species), Hobby, Kestrel, Martins (all species), Merlin, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Swallow, Swift, Wryneck.

The power granted to the Home Secretary for the affording of further protection to birds and their nests and eggs, appears to be as follows:—(1) Under section 8 of the Act of 1880, he may extend or vary the close time; (2) under section 3 of the Act of 1894, he may order that the protection afforded by the Act of 1880 shall be conferred on any birds which he thinks fit to include in his Order, just as if they had been originally scheduled to that Act; (3) under section 2 of the Act of 1894, he may prohibit by Order the taking or destroying of the eggs of any specified kind of wild bird within a whole county, or any part or parts thereof; and (4) he may set apart definite areas within a county in which it shall be unlawful to take or destroy any wild birds' eggs for a specified number of years.

Twenty-one counties have now obtained Orders of the third-mentioned description and have promulgated lists of birds, the taking or destroying of whose eggs exposes the culprit to a fine of one pound for each egg. These counties are:—Bedfordshire, Cheshire, Cornwall, Devonshire, Durham, Essex, Glamorganshire, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, the parts of Kesteven, London, Middlesex, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, South Hampshire, Staffordshire, Warwick, West Suffolk, and Westmoreland. The species protected in this way are chiefly those detailed above, but the list varies in different counties, and Cornwall, it should be mentioned, has obtained an Order especially protecting the eggs of the Chough throughout the county.

The new Bill drawn up for submission to the House of Lords by the Society for the Protection of Birds, and entitled "An Act to Amend the Wild Birds Protection Acts (Trespass in Pursuit)," has for its object the providing of "summary means of suppressing a long-existing nuisance, caused by professional bird-catchers and other unauthorised persons trespassing in pursuit of wild birds with nets, guns and snares." It appears that, within the Metropolitan Police District, this kind of bird-taking has long been "a cause of irritation and danger to owners and occupiers of land, and the source of much complaint." Clause 2 will provide that the Bill shall extend to the Metropolitan Police District only—a radius of about 16 miles from Charing Cross—a region which, more than any other, stands greatly in need of the strictest protection; but, following the precedent of the Act of 1894, it can, when it becomes law, be adopted by the Council of any county or county borough, and enforced by an order of the Home Secretary. The new Bill "will not interfere with rook shooting or sparrow thinning."

Several reports of early nests have reached us. We heard of a Robin's nest with eggs near London on March 1st. Mr. C. E. Wright, of Kettering, reports a Hedge-Sparrow's nest with one egg on January 4th, and in the "Naturalists' Journal" for March, Mr. E. Fisher, of Huddersfield, records a Blackbird's nest with one egg on January 1st. Rooks and House-Sparrows commenced building near London during the first week of March. Mr. R. Warren reports ("Zool.," March, p. 100), Herons' nests with eggs on February 1st, in Co. Mayo.

"The Irish Naturalist" for February reports an occurrence of the Squacco Heron (*Ardea ralloides*) in Co. Kerry, September 17th, 1895.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All Editorial communications and Books for Review or MSS., must be sent to H. K. Swann, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. To be dealt with in the following issue, communications must be received by the 12th of each month.

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D. P., Leyton.—The Editor thanks you for your letter, the perusal of which afforded him sincere pleasure.

W. M. P., Newcastle.—We have given some information upon the subject of Protective Orders under "Notes and News," and we hope to add to this in other issues.

W. B. J., Sheffield.—Instruments needed are a pair of scissors with very slender points to cut embryo, a pair of fine forceps to remove it, and a needle (in a handle) with which to make a circular orifice in side of shell as it cannot well be drilled. Thin paper may be pasted round orifice to strengthen the shell before proceeding. Eggs far advanced in incubation should not be taken, as it is usually impossible to extricate their contents, while if the female has brooded long she will not generally reproduce the set, as would be done when fresh eggs are taken. If you could write us a short article on your ornithological observations in the Orkneys it would no doubt be acceptable. Thanks for interesting yourself on our behalf.

V. J. S., Nottingham.—Subscription list for the Handbook will not close until it is ready for issue; your name has been added for a copy.

Mr. J. H. Knowles, 15, Rush Hill Road, Lavender Hill, S.W., sends us a catalogue (No. 22) of works on Zoology, &c.

Subscriptions received and not otherwise acknowledged;—C. H. A., Altrincham (half year); A. B. W., Nottingham (half); A. R. W., Oxford; J. G. T., Tostock; E. S., Sidmouth (half); J. B. W., Sheffield; Miss H. G. F., Exmouth; W. W. F., Portlaw; Miss M. A., Gainsboro'; J. W., Calne (half); J. H. S., Wigan; R. J. W., Lowestoft (half); E. T. A., Sheffield.

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N.B.—Mr. Marsden's business was entirely removed from Gloucester in 1889.

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"The Standard American Egg Catalogue," a True Basis for the Exchange of Nests and Eggs. H. R. Taylor, New York.
Nature Notes, No. 76, April, 1896. London: John Bale & Sons.
The Naturalist, No. 249, April, 1896. The Editors, Leeds.
The Naturalist's Journal, No. 46, April, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Huddersfield.
The Irish Naturalist, Vol. V., No. 4, April, 1896. Dublin: Eason & Sons, Ltd.
Natural Science, No. 50, April, 1896. London: Rait Henderson, Ltd.
Yorkshire Weekly Post and Glasgow Herald.
Society for the Protection of Birds. Fifth Annual Report, 1895. Hon. Sec., Redhill.
The Nidologist. Vol. III., No. 8, April, 1896. H. R. Taylor, New York.

INTERNATIONAL NATURALISTS' DIRECTORY FOR 1896.—Now ready, price 6d. The list of British Naturalists has been re-classified, and contains the names and addresses of collectors and students in the departments of Zoology, Microscopy, Botany, Geology, Palæontology, Mineralogy, &c., the particular study of each being further specified. The Trade Directory has been made as complete as possible, and there is a list of Natural History Societies and Field Clubs, and of Natural History Magazines. Copies may be ordered through any newsagent or bookseller.—London: Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row.

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It has now been sent to press, but as there are still over 30 orders short of the 250 asked for, those willing to subscribe are particularly requested to send their names at once to H. K. SWANN, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. Price of work (fcap. 8vo, cloth, gilt lettered) will be 2s. net to subscribers, but will be raised to 3s. 6d. on publication. Remittance should not be sent until book is received.

ESTAB. 1868. *Telegrams*—"Thorpe, Naturalist, Croydon."

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VARIETY OF BARTAILED GODWIT.

See page 56.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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BREEDING HABITS OF THE SPARROW-HAWK.

BY H. S. DAVENPORT.

ORNITHOLOGISTS of the present day owe so much to the researches and publications of men of generations past, that it seems ungenerous to find fault with statements which fail to stand the test of practical examination in more recent times. Still, in spite of the weight of literature against me, I propose to offer a few remarks on the nesting economy of *Accipiter nisus*, believing that the truth is the main point to be kept in view, and strong also in the conviction that my own observations and experiences touching this particular phase in the life-history of the Sparrow-hawk, extending as they do over a period of twenty-five years, and resulting from persistent study of the species in its native haunts, cannot be one long tangle of confused blunderings and self-imposed deceits.

A paragraph which appeared in a recent review of Mr. W. H. Hudson's "British Birds" in the "Athenæum" of March 7th, arrested my attention, and I read, with not a little surprise, the appended criticism:—"But we can hardly pass unnoticed the statement that 'it is probable that in nearly all cases the Sparrow-hawk takes possession of an old nest of some other bird,' for the fact that the Sparrow-hawk and Gos-hawk generally make a large nest of twigs for themselves is

one of the strong points in which these short-winged species differ from the long-winged Falcons."

With regard to the breeding habits of the Gos-hawk, I can offer no first-hand observations; but though it is the fashion to treat of this species as building its own nest,* it appears to me not a little significant that Lt.-Col. Irby, in "The Ornithology of the Straits of Gibraltar," when speaking of the only nest he ever met with, remarks that it did not appear to have been built by the Gos-hawks, but was seemingly the ancient nest of some other species.

With regard to the nesting economy of the Sparrow-hawk, however, I feel no diffidence in throwing down the gauntlet to the teaching of books and reviews alike, and unreservedly assert that Mr. Hudson only gave expression to an apparently *little-known* fact when he wrote as he did in connection with the breeding habits of this short-winged Hawk. Personally, I am emboldened to discourse on the point at issue with even less restriction, and I distinctly say that in my life-long experience it has been the *invariable* custom of the species to appropriate the nests of other birds.

Reference to almost any work on British Birds will prove that the author pledges himself to the statement that the Sparrow-hawk rarely appropriates the nest of some other species, but generally builds one for itself; indeed, not a few writers take their stand upon an unconditional assertion, alleging that the species never appropriates but always erects a nest for itself. Now I do not propose to anticipate here what I have already written on this vexed question in my "Original Sketches of British Birds," the MS. of which is in the publisher's hands; nor could space be found for a series of extracts from the numerous ornithological publications which adorn my bookshelves; I will rather content myself with a brief quotation from the late Mr. H. Seebohm's "British Birds," a deservedly extolled work, and of comparatively recent origin, wherein, at page 138, he writes:—"Notwithstanding

* Most authorities appear to state that it *frequently* does so. In the case of the closely-allied American species (*Astur atricapillus*) it, so far as we know, always builds its own nest without, moreover, founding it upon the remains of a nest of some other bird.—[Ed.]

the belief to the contrary, the Sparrow-hawk always builds its own nest." Now whether the eminent author I have quoted ever personally studied this species in its woodland haunts in the breeding season or not, seems to me, from the internal nature of his dogmatic teaching, a very open question. Nevertheless, no matter how worthy the aim and object which prompt a man to spend endless time and trouble in writing a comprehensive history of all the birds of these islands, it is inevitable that errors should arise from the inherent impossibility of any one author being able to verify from adequate personal experience one-tenth of what he has undertaken to describe. Hence (while fully recognising their unquestionable merit in certain instances) my distrust of compilations, and, on the contrary, my unbounded belief in monographs.

Mr. Seebohm and other justly-famed *savants* have stated that Sparrow-hawks always build their own nests, and the information has been seized upon and transplanted into numerous ornithological works of modest repute, the authors of which, little dreaming, apparently, that such master-hands could be found tripping over so simple an issue, have obviously purloined their wares without acknowledgment, and assisted to perpetuate and propagate error. If my assumption seems scarcely justified, I would ask, how comes it, then, that fallacies of the kind quoted continue to the present day? The answer surely is plain enough. The great majority of books on birds are compilations, pure and simple, and though the authors of the same may pretend with questionable taste to scoff at the labours of so-called closet-naturalists, here and there in these very productions may be found indisputable evidence of the writers having gone elsewhere than to nature for their alleged facts. Otherwise there must have been a strange lack of intelligent observation in not a few instances, which is all the more surprising from its marked unanimity. I have found and critically examined many scores of Sparrow-hawks' nests, and have taken hundreds of their eggs, and in the whole of my experience (which, by the way, has not by any means been confined to Leicestershire woodlands) I cannot recall to mind a single case in which the parent birds had not resorted to the old and discarded nests of some other species.

These same nests, erstwhile the possessions of Ring-doves, Carrion-crows and Magpies, generally presented a very ragged appearance previously to adaptation, being tattered and torn by the storms and gales of winter. The breeding season, however, is at hand, and I say to all who are interested in the question, go out into the woods and form your own conclusions by a minute examination of the nests of this species. I do not wish to plead for a fairer or more impartial tribunal.

My experience of the breeding habits of the Sparrow-hawk has been as follows:—long ere the leaf is out, sometimes, indeed, as early as the end of March, *mental selection* is unquestionably made of the nest that is eventually to be utilised as a breeding site. At dawn, and again at the approach of dusk, the birds are frequently to be found in its vicinity, either soaring high in the air and occasionally uttering sharp screams as they wheel to and fro, or else perched in the trees beneath. With the advance of spring they will be found busy at the nest itself, apparently cleaning and patching it up, while in course of time there is superimposed a shallow and very extended structure of twigs and sticks, in which receptacle the eggs are laid. The substructure or basis is entirely the handiwork of some other species; the super-structure that of the Sparrow-hawks themselves. The birds gather the supplementary materials chiefly from beneath the tree, flying up and down in turn, as I have repeatedly proved by watching them from an ambush.

Considering, then, that I have known many a nest belonging to an alien species one year converted into a Sparrow-hawk's the next; that I have invariably found an ancient basis beneath the structure formed by the Sparrow-hawks themselves; that I have never met with an instance myself, nor *heard* of an instance, wherein one of this species had been detected in the act of carrying the initial sticks and twigs to a *vacant* site; and lastly, that the connection between the ready-made foundation or appropriated substructure and the newly fashioned super-structure is so transparent as to be obvious to anyone possessing sense and sight:—I repeat, considering all this, I think that I am abundantly justified in repudiating the unsubstantiated assertions of anonymous reviewers, who may,

or may not, be competent for their work, and in electing to scrupulously abide by the evidence of my own researches.

The eggs are laid on alternate days, six being the largest clutch I have taken, though I have secured as many as fifteen and sixteen from single nests, the first egg of the latter number having been laid on May 1, and the last on May 31, so that by judicious manipulation of the nest and its contents, I had seduced the bird into laying an egg on every other day throughout that traditionally merry month. It will generally be found that one egg in a clutch differs in a remarkable degree in markings from the remainder; sometimes it is altogether devoid of colouring matter, while at others a considerable portion of its bluish-white ground is blushed over with brown of a much paler shade than that with which the rest of the eggs in the clutch are usually so handsomely clouded and blotched. So far as I have been enabled to test the point, the eggs are seldom hatched before the expiration of five weeks.

One word more: the ultra-extended platform built by the Sparrow-hawks themselves and superadded to the relics of the nest of some other species, is assuredly a beautiful expression of the instinct when considered in relation to its use at a subsequent stage. Nevertheless, the fact that this roomy plateau not only does duty as a repository for freshly killed prey, but as a family banqueting table, whither the young periodically return for many days after they are fledged and gone out into the world, appears to be too notorious a feature in the economy of the species to be even cursorily discussed, so far as I am aware, by any writer, whether field- or closet-naturalist, on British birds, Knox only excepted!

In conclusion, though far from wishing to speak disparagingly of reviewers, the fact that in so many instances their notices labour under the disadvantage of being anonymous, detracts, in my opinion, from the store we might otherwise set by them; nor is this detraction modified when we find an undoubted truth opposed by a flat and unverified contradiction to which we can assign no paternity. I think Mr. Hudson is greatly to be commended for having ignored ancient lore and struck out a line of his own; and I can only hope that his repudiation of a time-honoured and much-copied fallacy

touching the nesting habits of the Sparrow-hawk, will lead future historians to cull their so-called facts more from nature herself than from the publications, excellent though they be, which may chance to lie on their book-shelves.

EFFECT OF WINDS ON THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS.

By F. B. Whitlock.

I am interested in the paper on the above subject by Mr. J. H. Gurney, which is reprinted from the "Ibis" in the current number of the Ornithologist. I do not, however, quite follow him when he writes—"The action of the wings is greatly regulated by the direction and velocity of the wind, though, joined to this, the actual motive power is gravitation to the earth's surface." The first part of this quotation is no doubt true enough, but I fail to see how the actual motive power of flight can be gravitation to the earth's surface.

It seems to me that if this were the case, birds would have great difficulty in rising from the ground, unless the direction of their flight during the first few strokes of their wings were always directed towards the point from which the wind happened to be blowing at the time. We know that this is by no means a necessity, though ducks usually, in rising from the water, adopt this course. With the latter species, however, flight is commenced by a sort of upward spring rather than by power of wing.

To me the motive power of a bird's flight always seems to be attained in a similar manner to that used in propelling a rowing boat. To illustrate this we have only to substitute wings in the place of oars, and the air for the water. There is one important distinction, however, the air being so much less buoyant than the water, a downward as well as forward stroke of the wings is also necessary to prevent the bird from sinking to the earth; but at the same time the wings act in a similar manner to the oars of the boat and propel the bird

forwards and upwards as its desire may be. If the flight of a Rook be closely followed by the eye, at a convenient height from the earth, it will be seen to be slightly undulatory, not a perfectly level forward movement as might be thought from cursory observation. This is due to the downward stroke of the wings.

That gravitation, even aided by a contrary wind of the requisite nature, can alone furnish a motive power, is difficult of belief, though certain species, such as the Herring-Gull, seem to have the power of sustaining themselves in the air for lengthened periods, without visible movements of the wings. Herr Gätke's remarks in his work on "Heligoland," referring to this subject, are very interesting. According to his observations, the above species soars and glides about in any direction it chooses, and in almost all states of the weather. The only times on these occasions when it is seen to use its wings is when an individual darts down to the water to pick up food; two or three rapid strokes seem then to be necessary to enable it to ascend to its former height. How a flight of this nature is accomplished is most puzzling, and observations to be of any value must be constantly carried on. After years of study Herr Gätke has come to the conclusion that birds are possessed of some motive power the nature of which we are as yet quite ignorant.

Perhaps the flight of wounded birds may throw some light on the question of gravitation being the motive power of a bird's flight. It often happens that a Partridge or other species, when shot, has still sufficient strength to keep its wings expanded for some considerable time; it may also be travelling at a high rate of speed when hit, but this is soon lost, and it falls to the earth as soon as its impetus is exhausted. Now in such cases, if gravitation supplied the motive power of flight, and the wings being spread, this speed ought not only to be maintained for some time but the bird ought also to be able to maintain itself in the air. We should expect as a natural consequence a tendency on the part of a wounded bird to fall, through the shock, in spite of its desire to escape, but the very act of falling should increase its speed, and the expanded wings should still keep the bird afloat. As

a matter of fact a wounded bird seems to fall through lack of momentum. On one occasion I witnessed a curious fall of a Rook. I shot at it as it was flying past me from left to right. As far as I could judge—and I was only some forty yards away—it was killed on the spot, but it so happened at the moment of death that its wings were expanded. Instead of travelling further by its own momentum, it slowly described a spiral of several turns as it fell to the ground, its wings being still expanded as it lay. Thus as soon as the motion of its wings ceased its forward movement came to an end.

Opinions differ greatly as to the direction of the winds which are most favourable to the arrival of migratory birds in different localities, and the evidence is very contradictory. Some observers have also changed their views in the light of greater experience. Mr. Cordeaux is perhaps amongst the latter number. If Herr Gätke quotes him correctly, he expresses the opinion that light east and south-east winds are the most favourable to the arrival of autumnal migrants from central Europe on our east coasts ; quite a contrary view to that quoted by Mr. Gurney, but agreeing with the observations of the Heligoland veteran. But of this more anon. I am, however, inclined to think with Mr. Gurney that birds prefer to migrate against the wind rather than with it. I have formed this opinion from long observations conducted in the Trent Valley, where spring migrants pass through most abundantly during the prevalence of winds from some point of the west. Many of our most conspicuous species reach us at this period of the year from some district in the north-east, probably the Humber, which latter locality they have reached from winter quarters in north-east Africa by a S.E. to N.W. line of flight. We are, however, confronted with a difficulty here. How do we know that a favourable wind has prevailed over the whole course of their journey? A study of the weather charts in the "Times" will soon show how the currents of air vary in localities only comparatively short distances apart. I cannot admit, however, that the greatest speed of flight is attained when directed against a moderate wind ; one has only to watch the flight of such a species as the Hooded Crow to be convinced that this is not the case. It may,

perhaps, be admitted, however, that these conditions are the most favourable to the maintenance of a bird in the air with the least exertion. I have always thought that one advantage gained by flying against the wind is the ease with which a bird can preserve its true course. We know how much more sensitive to the rudder a boat is—to return to our old simile—when steered against the stream compared with the opposite direction.

With regard to the westerly flight of the Gulls alluded to by Mr. Gurney, I can only say that in certain years, notably 1894, Herring-Gulls were unusually numerous in the Trent Valley during the hot calm weather in September. They all seemed to travel in the same direction, about N.E. to S.W., and at a height of from 800 to 1,200 feet, as near as I could judge.

49, *Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham.*

THE WILD BIRDS' PROTECTION ACT, 1894.

By the Editor.

The following table sets forth the orders for the protection of wild birds' eggs which have (upon the application of the various County Councils) been issued up to March, 1896, by the Home Secretary, under the powers conferred by the above Act.

The period (if any is mentioned) for which the order remains in force is given in brackets ; also the particular districts if the order should not apply to the whole county. The species whose eggs are protected are numbered as follows:—Mistle-thrush (1), Ring Ouzel (2), Wheatear (3), Whinchat (4), Stone-chat (5), Redstart (6), Nightingale (7), Blackcap (8), Garden Warbler (9), Dartford Warbler (10), Goldcrest (11), Firecrest (12), Wood Warbler (13), Willow Warbler (14), Chiffchaff (15), Reed Warbler (16), Sedge Warbler (17), Grasshopper Warbler (18), Whitethroat (19), Lesser Whitethroat (20), Dipper (21), Nuthatch (22), Coal Tit (23), Blue Tit (24), Longtailed Tit

(25), Bearded Tit (26), Wren (27), White Wagtail (28), Pied Wagtail (29), Yellow Wagtail (30), Grey Wagtail (31), Rock Pipit (32), Golden Oriole (33), Spotted Flycatcher (34) Pied Flycatcher (35), Swallow (36), Martin (37), Sand Martin (38), Goldfinch (39), Hawfinch (40), Linnet (41), Corn Bunting (42), Cirl Bunting (43), Reed Bunting (44), Crossbill (45), Starling (46), Rose-coloured Pastor (47), Chough (48), Raven (49), Magpie (50), Woodlark (51), Skylark (52), Nightjar (53), Swift (54), Wryneck (55), Great Spotted Woodpecker (56), Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (57), Green Woodpecker (58), Kingfisher (59), Hoopoe (60), Barn Owl (61), Long-eared Owl (62), Short-eared Owl (63), Tawny Owl (64), Marsh Harrier (65), Hen Harrier (66), Montagu's Harrier (67), Buzzard (68), Honey Buzzard (69), Kite (70), Peregrine (71), Hobby (72), Merlin (73), Kestrel (74), Osprey (75), Gannet (76), Little Bittern (77), Bittern (78), Night Heron (79), Heron (80), Rock Dove (81), Turtle Dove (82), Quail (83), Oyster-catcher (84), Golden Plover (85), Ringed Plover (86), Kentish Plover (87), Stone Curlew or Great Plover (88), Curlew (89), Ruff (90), Redshank (91), Common Sandpiper (92), Green Sandpiper (93), Woodcock (94), Common Snipe (95), Dunlin (96), Coot (97), Corncrake (98), Wild Ducks and Teal, all species (99), Sheld-duck (100), Great Black-backed Gull (101), Lesser Black-backed Gull (102), Black-headed Gull (103), Terns, all species (104), Razorbill (105), Common Guillemot (106), Great Crested Grebe (107), Loon or Diver (108), Common Tern (109), Tree-creeper (110), Water Rail (111), Dotterel (112), Arctic Tern (113), Lesser Tern (114), Great Grey Shrike (115), Lesser Grey Shrike (116), Redbacked Shrike (117), Cuckoo (118), Lapwing (119), Herring Gull (120), Kittiwake (121), Common Gull (122), Mallard (123), Teal (124), Eider Duck (125), Merganser (126), Grebes, all species (127), Richardson's Skua (128), Pochard (129), Tufted Duck (130), Bullfinch (131), Redpole (132), Siskin (133), Redbreast (134), Shoveller (135), White-tailed Eagle (136), Great Skua (137), Whimbrel (138), Rednecked Phalarope (139), Rednecked Diver (140), Gadwall (141), Great Bustard (142), Meadow Pipit (143), Tree Pipit (144), Marsh Tit (145).

England and Wales.

Cambridgeshire (three years from September 7th, 1895).—Wicken Sedge Fen :—*all species.*

Cheshire :—59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 74, 78, 80, 84, 96, 100, 103, 109.

Cheshire.—Within a defined portion of the Hundred of Wirrall :—*all species.*

Cornwall :—48.

Derbyshire :—39, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 74.

Devonshire :—2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 28, 33, 35, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 83, 84, 93, 94, 95, 96, 101, 102, 105, 106.

Devonshire (1896—1900, both inclusive).—Lundy Island, Baggy Point district, Parishes of Lyton and Countisbury, Slapton Ley and Start district :—*all species.*

Durham :—2, 21, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 49, 53, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 71, 73, 74, 78, 80, 85, 89, 94, 95, 96, 110, 111, 112.

Essex.—Harwich Lighthouse to Shoeburyness :—*all species.*

Essex.—Metropolitan Police District :—as for Middlesex.

Glamorganshire :—39, 59.

Hertfordshire :—Metropolitan Police District :—as for Middlesex.

Huntingdonshire :—7, 22, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 99.

Kent :—7, 26, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 54, 55, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 82, 87, 88.

Kent (two years from March 20th, 1896).—Five defined areas at Romney, Folkestone, Deal, Sittingbourne and Isle of Sheppey :—*all species.*

Kent.—Metropolitan Police District :—as for Middlesex.

Lincolnshire.—Parts of Lindsey :—84, 86, 91, 92, 100, 109, 113, 114.

Lincolnshire.—Parts of Kesteven and parts of Lindsey :—7, 36, 37, 38, 39, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 90, 99.

London :—as for Middlesex.

Middlesex:—3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 97, 98, 115, 116, 117, 118.

Norfolk:—26, 45, 61, 84, 86, 88, 90, 99, 104.

Norfolk (1 year from May 1st, 1895).— From North Wootton to Cley-next-the-sea, Hickling and neighbouring Broads, and Ormesby, Rollesby, Hemsby, Filby, and Burgh Broads (areas specified):—*all species.*

Northamptonshire:—7, 22, 39, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 92.

Oxfordshire:—61, 62, 63, 64.

Southampton (County of):—7, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69.

Staffordshire:—7, 22, 39, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 72, 73, 74, 75, 89, 92, 107, 108.

East Suffolk (1896, 1897, and 1898).—From River Blyth to Landguard Point (area defined):—*all species.*

Surrey.—Metropolitan Police District:—as for Middlesex.

Westmorland (5 years from June 25th, 1895):—21, 39, 49, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 71, 73, 74, 78, 80, 85, 94, 103, 112.

West Suffolk:—2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74, 78, 80, 82, 83, 88, 91, 94, 95, 98, 107, 110, 111, 117, 124, 127, 132, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145.

Yorkshire, E. Riding (5 years from March 31st, 1895).—Promontory of Spurn (area defined):—*all species.*

Scotland.

Aberdeenshire (1 year from Sept. 1st, 1895):—45, 52, 53, 61, 62, 63, 64, 71, 73, 74, 103, 120, 121, 122. Also "common Plover."

Aberdeenshire (1896 after April 15th):—119.

Argyllshire (1 year from Oct. 1st, 1895): Islands of Islay, Colonsay, Coll and Tiree:—48, 95, 96, 104, 119, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129 130.

Berwickshire (1 year from July 1st, 1895):—1, 5, 6, 21,

23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 39, 52, 56, 59, 61, 62, 64, 71, 80, 86, 92, 95, 96, 109, 118, 124, 131, 132, 133, 134.

DUMFRIESSHIRE (1 year from June 1st, 1895) :—21, 39, 45, 48, 52, 53, 56, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 74, 75, 83, 84, 86, 100, 103, 107, 122, 129, 130, 133, 135.

KIRKCUDBRIGHT and WIGTOWN :—as for Dumfriesshire.

SHETLAND :—128, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140.

We shall be glad to receive a copy of any order, relating to the eggs of wild birds, which has not been included in the above list.

ORCADIA.

By J. B. WHEAT, M.A.

THE group of islands known as the Orkneys forms an interesting field for the ornithologist, not only on account of its extensive sea-board, which harbours countless numbers of sea birds, but also on account of the diverse nature of the islands themselves; for it would be difficult indeed to find many points in common between the island of Hoy, with its precipitous cliffs and generally barren appearance, and such an island as Sanday, in whose soil the "Burrow Duck" delights, and which is extensively given over to cultivation. But the accommodation is not first-class—indeed it is difficult to find any except at Kirkwall and Stromness on the mainland (where it is good), and at Kettletoft in Sanday, and Pierrowall and Pierrogill in Westray. I know of no other "pubs," though there are one or two known houses where the natives will take in the traveller.

That rare and conspicuous bird, the Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) breeds here, though in rapidly diminishing numbers, owing, no doubt, partly to the ease with which it can be trapped, but chiefly, I think, to the greed of the trading collector; and the same remark applies to the Short-eared Owl (*Asio accipitrinus*). We had an interesting conversation with one of these "gentlemen," and it appeared he was in the habit

of scouring the braes on each weekly holiday during the season, supported by a terrier dog and a shrill whistle, when no doubt every nest of Hen Harrier, Short-eared Owl and Merlin would be ruthlessly swept up. But to return to the Hen Harrier. We came across the male bird one day when out on the hills, and having watched him on the sky-line of the hills above us for a bit, he undoubtedly betrayed the whereabouts of the nest by hovering some seventy or eighty feet in the air, and on proceeding to the spot over which his attention appeared to be directed, the female rose from her eggs about ten or a dozen yards to my right. The nest, which contained five eggs, was not, as usual, in thick heather, but placed in the open, though just beneath a slight ridge. The eggs were but slightly incubated (May 29th).[1] We saw two or three more Harriers subsequently, but only one Short-eared Owl.

We observed a Pintail Duck on a loch in Sanday, and I believe satisfied ourselves, by inquiring, that it was not a pinioned bird.

I found a nest of the Ringed Plover (*Ægialitis hiaticula*) upon a heap of dry horse-dung—surely a curious site!

It may perhaps be worth mentioning that the two or three clutches of eggs of the Lapwing (*Vanellus vulgaris*) which we examined, each contained one egg very far advanced in incubation, the remaining three being apparently fresh, though no doubt in fact unfertile.

We were interested in watching a pair of Turnstones (*Strepsilas intrepres*) busily engaged on the shingle near the holms of Ire, Sanday, but there was no evidence that they were breeding (2nd June).

One very wet day (June 3rd) we observed a male Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) on Loch Longmary in Sanday.

On a certain loch in a certain island we observed two, probably three, pairs of the red-necked Phalarope (*Phal. hyperboreus*). These birds will allow of the close approach of an intruder. I will not contribute further towards the extinction as a British breeding species of this rare and confiding little bird; we satisfied ourselves that they had not yet got eggs (June 4.)

The Arctic Tern (*Sterna macrura*) breeds here in numerous

large colonies—indeed, they were far more numerous than I have ever observed them in the Shetlands; but we saw no other terns, though we were told, on what appeared to be excellent authority, of the whereabouts of a colony of Sandwich Terns.

We were interested one day in watching the alarm of a pair of Peregrines at our approach to one of the western cliffs of Westray. They evidently had young. Besides the Merlin the Kestrel is represented in these islands.

We found all the British breeding species of the Laridæ represented: *Larus marinus* by a colony of half a dozen pairs or so; *L. fuscus* by a large and scattered colony on Hoy and a smaller one on Ronsay; *L. argentatus* by several large colonies chiefly on the cliffs; *L. canus* by two or three colonies and numerous scattered pairs; and *L. ridibundus* by two large colonies.

The fowl craig on Papa Westray affords a sight not easily forgotten by the lover of bird life, being tenanted by countless swarms of Kittiwakes, besides Razorbills, Guillimots, Puffins and Shags, and there are other sites perhaps as interesting. The Cormorant is represented in the Orkneys, though evidently not nearly so common as the Shag.

The Oyster-catcher (*Ostralegus hæmatopus*) is common here, and no where else have I observed so many black Guillemots (*Uria grylle.*) One spot at least affords a considerable colony of this bird.

We heard a Diver on Ronsay, and I found an egg of the Red Throated Diver (*Colymbus septentrionalis*) on Hoy (19th June), of course much incubated.

A few pairs of Richardson's Skuas inhabit Hoy, but they had evidently been interfered with, as on the first day on which we visited the breeding ground we found three nests with but one egg in each, far advanced in incubation; next day, however, I discovered a very fine pair of green grounded, boldly marked eggs, belonging to a pair of light coloured birds.

A few Red Grouse are to be met with on the mainland and on Ronsay. They appeared to be very large birds. I saw four Ravens together on Westray, and the Hooded Crow is fairly numerous. The Landrail nests freely in the growing crops,

and so does the Corn Bunting, and the Starling favours the rough walls and banks. The Skylark is numerous, and the Meadow Pipit and its congener, the Rock Pipit, are well represented. We found three nests of the Twite, and the Wheatear is not uncommon. The true Rock Dove is a common breeding species in many of the sea caves. The Golden Plover is, of course, numerous, and we saw three nests of the common Sand Piper (here called the Bundy). I should say that the Curlew is not a common breeding species here. We had, I think, evidence of only two pairs. The Whimbrel is said to breed on Hoy; we did not see it there, though we did in one or two other places. We saw one or two specimens of the Common Snipe, and the Redshank is so frequently met with as to be quite a nuisance; the Dunlin is also a common breeding species.

Of the Anatidæ the Common Eider (*Somateria mollisima*), the Sheld-duck and the Red-Breasted Merganser (*Mergulus serratus*) are well represented in suitable localities. Of the Petrels the Manx Shearwater has, at least, one recognised breeding station—probably others—and several of the islands are tenanted by the Stormy Petrel. These birds had, however, not resorted to their holes by the middle of June.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Arrival of Migrants at Wiesbaden.—February 12th: Grey Wagtail; March 6th: White Stork; 7th: White Wagtail; 10th: Crane; 11th: Woodcock; 16th: Black Redstart, Redstart, Stonechat; 17th: Willow Wren, Chiffchaff; 20th: Wheatear, Hedge-Sparrow, Starling.—Graham W. Kerr.

Pomatorhine Skua in Kerry.—In the "Irish Times" of December 21st, 1895, T. W. McCormick records a Pomatorhine Skua (*Stercorarius pomatorhinus*) recently shot on the River Laune, Co. Kerry.—G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton.

Variety of Bartailed Godwit.—A beautiful variety of this species was shot on November 26th, 1896, by Mr. Kirkwood on the sands of the Island of Bartrough, about a mile from the town of Killala, Ireland. The bird is

white, the head and neck having a buff tint, the markings on back pale brown, flight feathers slate grey; bill, flesh colour; legs, pale brown. Through the kindness of Mr. Robert Warren, of Moy View, Ballina, I have been able to add this *very rare* variety to my collection. It is the first variety of this species I have ever heard of, and shall be glad to hear if any of your readers have seen or heard of one.—J. Whitaker.

Spring Birds in Notts.—Though the winter has been so mild and the spring early, the spring birds at any rate in these parts are after their usual time, and up to now, April 9th, I have only seen Chiffchaff and Tree-pipit. Our resident birds are in good numbers, and it is a blessing for them the winter has been so mild, as they suffered to a very great extent last year, and will now have a chance to get up their average again. I counted thirteen Tufted Ducks on the lake here yesterday. Snipe are drumming, and I saw the first young birds (Thrushes), in nest on April 6th.—J. Whitaker (Rainworth, Notts).

Call Notes of Birds.—I quite agree with your correspondent, Mr. F. C. Rawlings, as to the great difficulty of writing down in syllables the notes of birds. No two authors will, perhaps, represent the same sounds in the same manner; as an instance, I see our Editor describes the flight-notes of *M. raii* as resembling the syllables "chee, chee, chit-up." Now I have seen and listened to many thousands of this species, but have never heard any other call-note than a clear liquid "wēē-sit," with the accent on the "wēe," and the remaining syllable uttered rather softly. The call-note, too, of *M. melanope* always sounds to me rather metallic. I should write it down as "ching-ip." With regard to the reported early appearance of *M. raii*, without saying Mr. Gee is wrong, the fact that the individual in question "jerked its tail" is more suggestive of the manners of *M. melanope* than of *M. raii*. I have never met with the latter before April 1st in this locality, but that of course is no argument against its earlier appearance elsewhere.—F. B. Whitlock (Nottingham).

[Mr. Whitlock rather mistakes me. I attempted to render the flight-note, not the call-note. The note uttered on the ground, to my ear, resembles the last two syllables of my rendering of the flight-note, the two prefixed syllables being uttered softly as though the birds were gaining breath—much as a man does when crying *hip, hip, hurrah.* I doubt if Mr. Whi lock ever heard a wagtail of any species utter a flight-note which was not preceded by two or three of these softer sounds.—H. Kirke Swann.]

The Birds of Surrey.—As I hope to publish shortly the above work I should be much obliged if any persons interested in county natural history would draw my attention to any published or unpublished sources of information, or would send me any notes of unusual visitors to Surrey. I

should also be very grateful for details of any private or public local collection of birds, as there must be without doubt many rare and interesting specimens obtained in the county of which I at present have no knowledge.—John Bucknill (Hylands House, Epsom).

Eggs of the Redstart.—Most oological works describe the eggs of the Common Redstart as "blue, unspotted." One writer says, "It is said that the eggs of this species are 'occasionally speckled with reddish,' but surely this must be a mistake." It may be worth while recording the fact that in 1894 I found two clutches (of five each) which were very decidedly speckled at the larger end with reddish. In anticipation of the sceptics, I may further state that the identification was beyond question. In each case the female was sitting on the eggs, and was most certainly a Redstart, *not* a chat. I still have one of the clutches.—W. Shelley (Swymbridge, Devon).

Notes from South Devon.—I have lately ascertained that the Storm Petrel bred last year not far from here (the egg having been taken by a boy), and that a colony of Cornish Choughs has been re-established at a place some ten miles away, which I hope shortly to visit.—J. H. Comyns (Newton Abbot).

Robin's Nest in December.—While staying with some friends during Christmas holidays at Shipley, Derby, I had brought to me a nest and six eggs of the Robin, which had been found by a labourer in a haystack on the estate of E. M. Mundly, Esq., Shipley Hall, Derby. Upon enquiry of the man into the particulars, he stated that he found the nest on December 10th, 1895, while at work cutting hay from the stack, by the bird flying out and hovering excitedly around.—Hy. Beeston.

Early Nesting of Song Thrush.—I copy the following note from my diary of March 15th, 1896, written on the spot. "To day I found the nest of Song Thrush, and near the nest, in same bush, the dead female bird. Upon examining the body (or rather skeleton, for nothing remained but a few bones and feathers) I found inside the abdominal cavity an egg of rather unusual proportions. The bird had probably been either too weak or the egg was too large to produce extrusion, and the poor creature had thus died on or near the nest. From the appearance of the nest and the carcass of the bird I infer that this must have been a very early nest, at least a month or six weeks old."—Hy. Beeston (Langstone, Havant).

The late Mr. Tukes's Great Auk's egg, offered for sale at Stevens's on Monday, April 20th, was knocked down to Mr. Noble for 160 guineas. It is a fine egg, but slightly damaged on one side.

NOTES AND NEWS.

At a meeting of the Natural History Society of Glasgow, held in the Society's rooms, 207, Bath Street, on Tuesday, March 31st, Mr. John Paterson exhibited a Bittern, *Botaurus stellaris* (L.), killed on 17th February by coming against the telegraph wires near Banton, Stirlingshire; also a Buffon's Skua, *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.), shot about thirty-five years ago in Dalserf parish, opposite Mauldslie Castle, Lanarkshire, and not previously recorded. Mr. Paterson also showed, on behalf of Mr. M'Culloch, taxidermist, a common Scoter, *Œdemia nigra* (L.), a bird abundant on some parts of the British Coasts, but seldom met with in Clyde estuarine waters. The specimen shown was from the Dorling Sandbank, near Campbeltown. Thanks were moved to two gentlemen who had enabled the Society to add the "Ornithologist" to its list of scientific journals.

Mr. R. B. Lodge, of Enfield, has sent us some specimens of his photographs (from life) of wild birds and their nests. We understand that in many cases Mr. Lodge has used a Dallmeyer Tele-photo lens. He has certainly produced some clever photographs.

As some of our subscribers are desirious of starting an "exchange basket" we shall be glad to hear from a few oölogists who wish to be included in the round. Those who are unknown to us are asked to refer to a known correspondent.

In the "Naturalist's Journal" for April, Mr. S. L. Mosley continues his "Annotated Catalogue of British Birds, Nests, and Eggs," which he is publishing as a monthly supplement. The author says that "bound up separately in limp cloth it will be very convenient for the field oölogist to carry in his pocket, by which he will be able to identify the birds before disturbing the eggs." Truly a most useful guide but here is the *full* description of the Black Redstart, "Adult 6 in.; ♂ head and back dark slaty-grey. ♀ brown in these parts. Eyes dark brown." Will this serve to "identify the birds before disturbing the eggs?" This same Black Redstart is dubbed *Sylvia tithys*, yet even half-forgotten Macgillivray, and others before his day, used the generic designation *Ruticilla* of Brehm; Mr. Mosley, however, is evidently uncompromising, for we find no less than eighteen common species—a truly wonderful assortment—grouped in this "happy family" (or genus) of *Sylvia*.

In the "Zoologist" for March (p. 101), Mr. F. Coburn, of Birmingham, records the obtaining of an adult male example of the Redthroated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) near St. Leonards on November 13th last. It has been examined by Professor Newton and Dr. Sharpe, and is now in his possession.

Mr. G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton sends word that he saw Wheatears in

Regent's Park on Sunday, March 22nd. Mr. C. E. Wright, of Kettering, writes that he found a Chaffinch's nest with four eggs April 10th, a rather early date.

In the "Naturalist" for April, Mr. E. Hawarth, of Sheffield, records *Larus sabinii*, *L. minutus*, *Puffinus griseus* and *P. major* at Bridlington in November, 1895.

Mr. W. P. Pycraft has in "Natural Science" for April a second paper on "The Wing of *Archæopteryx*" based upon a study of the two fossil birds existing in the London and Berlin museums. He combats the view generally held that the manus was composed of five digits, three of which were used for climbing, while the remaining two supported the remiges, and seeks to prove that, like that of modern birds, it was made up of but three digits; he concludes that the first had two phalanges and the second three, the last phalanx in each forming a claw, while the third digit was also armed with a claw, a very rare feature in existing birds, it being also peculiar in having four phalanges.

The additions to the Zoölogical Society's Gardens since March 9th, included a Maguari Stork (*Dissura maguari*) from South America, purchased (E. Aviary); a Guira Cuckoo (*Guira piririgua*) from South America, purchased (W. Aviary); a Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*) from South America, purchased; a Brown Milvago (*Milvago chimango*) from South America, purchased (Kites' Aviary); a Ruff (*Machetes pugnax*), British, purchased (Fish House); a Condor (*Sarcoramphus gryphus* ♀) from South America, presented by Mr. C. J. W. Ogilvy (Vultures' Aviary); six Mexican Quails (*Callipepla squamata*) from Mexico, purchased (W. Aviary); three Scarlet Ibises (*Eudocimus ruber*) from Para, purchased (E. Aviary); a Scarlet Tanager (*Rhamphocœlus brasilius* ♂) from Brazil, purchased (W. Aviary); two Redshanks (*Totanus calidris*), British, purchased (Fish House); and a Guillemot (*Uria troile*), British, presented by Mr. J. L. Palmer (Fish House).

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Photo. by W. Raine.

NEST AND EGGS OF THE GADWALL (*Chaulelasmus streperus.*)

See page 67.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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BREEDING HABITS OF THE SPARROW-HAWK.

BY W. RUSKIN BUTTERFIELD, M.B.O.U.

AFTER thrice reading the paper of Mr. H. S. Davenport on this subject (*suprà*, p. 42), I find myself wholly unable to assent to his designation as an "apparently *little-known* fact," the appropriation and adaptation of other birds' nests by the Sparrow-hawk, and I much regret that "space could not be found for a series of extracts from the numerous ornithological publications which adorn" his bookshelves. Limiting the enquiry to British authorities, and to the writings of such of these as are accessible to myself, I have sought the justification of my dissent in the following extracts, the brevity of which has emboldened me to ask the editor's indulgence. I do not fear that a more comprehensive enquiry than I have been able to make would have caused me to alter my opinion.

Pennant and Montagu both are explicit, the former asserting ("British Zoology," 1776, i., p. 199) of the Sparrow-hawk, that it lays its eggs in "old nests of crows," and the latter ("Ornithological Dictionary," i., *s.v.*, Hawk-sparrow) that it "seldom makes a nest, but generally takes possession of that which has been deserted by a crow"—an opinion shared by his editor Rennie (*op. cit.*, ed. 1831, p. 487).

Without observing chronology, I will next quote from the late Mr. E. T. Booth ("Descriptive Catalogue of Birds," ed. i.,

p. 33—and elsewhere), to the effect that the Sparrow-hawk "generally makes use of the nest of the Crow or some other large bird in which to rear its ravenous brood." Mr. Borrer states ("Birds of Sussex," p. 13) in reference to the point in question, "It is said to construct its own nest, but, like the Kestrel, it is partial to the old ones of the Carrion-Crow or Magpie;" Mr. Muirhead ("Birds of Berwickshire," i., p. 314), that "sometimes" the eggs "are deposited in the deserted nest of a Magpie or Crow;" Hewitson ("Eggs of British Birds," ed. 4, i., p. 35), that "for the most part" the eggs are to be found "occupying the usurped nest of a Crow or Magpie;" Mr. Dresser ("Birds of Europe," v., p. 627), that "the Sparrow-hawk prepares its nest in April, and either builds it itself or makes use of a deserted Crow's nest;" Mr. Howard Saunders ("Manual," p. 324), that "this species usually builds its own nest . . . . sometimes, however, it adapts and adds to the deserted abode of a Crow, Wood-pigeon, or other bird;" and Yarrell ("British Birds," ed. 4, i., p. 89), that it "generally builds its own nest, but often takes possession of that of some other bird, generally a Crow."

Amongst (according to Mr. Davenport) "not a few writers" who "take their stand upon an unconditional assertion alleging that the species never appropriates, but always erects a nest for itself," only three* find a place on my shelves; of whom one (the late Mr. Seebohm, "British Birds," i., p. 138) Mr. Davenport has saved me the necessity of quoting. Mr. W. E. Clarke writes of the species:—"It deposits its eggs in a nest of its own construction, contrary to the statements of some authorities, who aver that a deserted nest is usually selected; this is very rarely the case, and indeed when it happens is an exception to a very general rule" ("Trans. Yorks. Nat. Union," Ser. B., p. 25). The third writer, Mr. F. S. Mitchell, has the following:—"It almost invariably builds a nest for itself, and returns to the same every year;

* I think Mr. Davenport will not require me to place under this heading Lord Lilford, who states ("Birds of Northamptonshire," i., p. 28):—"The Sparrow-hawk generally, I think, builds a nest for itself."

should this be destroyed in winter, a new one will be constructed, but if this be robbed, then the nearest Magpie's or Carrion Crow's will be occupied, and a few fresh strips of bark just added as a lining" ("Birds of Lancashire," original ed., p. 102).

Many authorities do not allude to the mode of nesting in this species in the works to which I have made reference. This is unfortunate, as the list comprehends the names of such unquestionably competent observers as Hancock, Stevenson, Wolley (in the work edited by Professor Newton), Rodd, Knox, Cordeaux, Harvie-Brown and Buckley, Harting, Mathew, &c.

Are we to understand from Mr. Davenport's interesting paper that the Sparrow-hawk "*invariably*" resorts, for breeding purposes, to an old and discarded nest of some other species? If so, I take the liberty of dissenting a second time, and that for reasons I will proceed to briefly relate. In the spring of last year I found a nest not far from Battle Abbey, which on my ascending the tree turned out to belong to the Sparrow-hawk. The eggs were of that not uncommon variety which is nearly devoid of colour, and I took them. About a week thereafter I was again birds'-nesting in the neighbourhood of the nest, when it occurred to me to make a closer examination thereof, so as to satisfy myself whether it was entirely the work of one species. I climbed the tree, and seating myself on a branch, carefully took the structure to pieces by removing the sticks separately. I have a distinct recollection of the impression created by my examination, and I have no fear in asserting that there was no evidence that the late occupants had adapted a nest constructed by some other species.

I may perhaps further state that for many years I lived in a part of Yorkshire* where the Sparrow-hawk outnumbers the Crow by many individuals to one; indeed, in the birds'-nesting experience of my brother and myself, we never found (nor heard of) a single nest of this latter bird in the woods around our village, while it was by no means uncommon to

* At Wilsden, near Bradford.

hear from the gamekeepers of Sparrow-hawks' nests. The Pie is certainly as numerous as the Sparrow-hawk, but only in very rare cases does its nest escape the eyes of the keepers, when built in the preserved woods. When the keepers detect a nest they destroy it by shooting at it from underneath. Now I have known of nests of the Sparrow-hawk in such positions that it is impossible that a nest of the Pie or Crow or Ring-dove could have escaped detection if built there, when it would have been destroyed, especially if belonging to either of the birds first mentioned. The keepers allow the Sparrow-hawks' nests to remain undisturbed until the young are hatched, when the parents fall victims to their noblest instinct.

I think it will be found that the Sparrow-hawk generally makes use of the nest (which is a deserted one in most cases, but may be usurped) of the Crow and Pie, where such nests are of frequent occurrence; but in places where these are infrequent, the species for the most part builds its own. It will have been noticed that of the three ornithologists whom I have quoted as stating that the bird makes its own nest, two—Messrs. Mitchell and Clarke—are describing the avifauna of counties where Crows and Pies are less numerous than in many parts of England.

Mr. Davenport's paper is a valuable one, if only for calling attention to a point in connection with the Sparrow-hawk which cannot but be regarded as unsettled, and I am sorry I am unable to agree with its main conclusions. I will, however, bring this note to an end by expressing my entire agreement with Mr. Davenport's injunction to those interested in the question "Go out into the woods and form your own conclusions."

St. Leonards-on-Sea.

By A. Holte Macpherson, B.C.L., F.Z.S.

My experience of Sparrow-hawks' nests is extremely limited as compared with that of Mr. Davenport, but it does not quite coincide with his. Of the three nests of which I can speak positively, one was, without a doubt, built by the birds themselves. This was a nest close to the outskirts of Saver-

nake Forest in 1883, in a tree in which there was, to my certain knowledge, no nest whatever till the Sparrow-hawks went there and built one. In both the other cases there was a new and complete nest, but the remains of an old one—in each case, I believe, that of a Magpie—was used as a foundation. I have seen other nests up to which it was impossible to climb, and of which it is impossible to speak with certainty. But the point raised appears to me to be one upon which there should not be much doubt, for there must be many competent field-naturalists, let alone *savants*, who can tell us about the nests of the Sparrow-hawk, though I sincerely trust there are very few who can boast of having taken "hundreds of their eggs." Habits vary, no doubt, according to the nature of different localities, but the inference suggested by Mr. Davenport's paper is that the Sparrow-hawk *invariably* appropriates the nest of another species, and I fancy that few naturalists will go so far as to support this view. Mr. Kearton's "British Birds' Nests" is obviously the work of a student of birds in their natural haunts. Yet I see that Mr. Kearton's experience is diametrically opposite to that of Mr. Davenport. He says he has taken "some eight or ten nests personally" (p. 270), and the nests were made by the birds themselves "in every single instance."

My friend, Mr. J. J. Baldwin Young, an able and experienced oologist, commenting on Mr. Davenport's paper, writes to me as follows:—"Two nests I examined near Stonyhurst were certainly built by the Sparrow-hawks themselves. Another I knew of in Lincolnshire was almost entirely, if not quite, built by the Hawks. The fact that there are sometimes remains of an old nest underneath is really a detail, it is certainly not the rule."

Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park.

Mr. C. E. Wright, of Kettering, writes that the Chiff-chaff arrived on March 14th, and that the Fieldfare was still there in large numbers on April 21st.

COLLECTING AT SHOAL LAKE, MANITOBA.

By W. Raine.

Shoal Lake contains several islands, on one of which a colony of White Pelicans formerly nested in great numbers. Mr. R. Hunter on June 1st, 1878, counted six hundred eggs on a small island of about half an acre in extent,* but since that time their numbers have considerably diminished.

The second week in June, 1894, Mr. Edward Arnold, myself and two assistants spent five days collecting at Shoal Lake, and although we visited several islands we did not fall in with the colony of White Pelicans. As Mr. Arnold's time was limited we returned to Reaburn, and he went westward to Qu'Appelle while I went north to Lake Manitoba. After spending a week collecting at Long Lake and Lake Manitoba, I made up my mind to return to Shoal Lake, as it had proved to be a splendid collecting ground, for we had taken a fine series of eggs of American Bittern, Holbœlls, Horned and eared Grebes, Forster's Tern, Double-crested Cormorant and several species of Duck's eggs.

So on June 17th I hired a young farmer and his buckboard, and taking my canvas boat, gun, camera, and provisions for three days, we drove twenty-eight miles northward, reaching Woodlands in the evening, and put up at the farm house for the night, and next morning we arose early and proceeded three miles further, when the lake appeared glistening in the morning sun. We drove to a point on the east side of the lake near which we had been camped on our previous visit. Off this peninsula is a rocky island, separated from the point by a shallow channel of water. We waded across to the island and found that the great wind storm of June 12th had caused the water to wash over a portion of the island, destroying hundreds of eggs of the Terns which Mr. Arnold and myself had found nesting in vast numbers on our visit ten days previously. The colony of Ring-billed Gulls had also forsaken their nests owing to the waves having played sad havoc with their nests and eggs, and broken eggs of Terns, Gulls and Ducks were scat-

* Thomson's Birds of Manitoba.

tered between the rocks. On the highest part of the island many beautiful young Terns in downy plumage were observed, and I also flushed a Spotted Sandpiper off its nest containing four very well marked eggs.

After taking a photograph of the island we waded back to the point, and while my man unhitched his horse so it could browse, I examined the tall grass and shrubs on the peninsulas, thinking it was a likely place to find a Duck's nest. I had not gone far before a Gadwall flushed up right in front of my feet, and there was its beautiful nest of down containing ten eggs; these I took and had not proceeded twenty yards or so before another Gadwall arose in front of me, and this nest contained six fresh eggs. I called my man to come and help to look for Ducks' nests and we paced over every part of this small elevated peninsula, flushing Ducks up every few minutes, and the excitement was intense, for in less than an hour we had several sets each of Gadwall, American Widgeon, Mallard, Shoveller and Pintail, and I was also fortunate in flushing a Wilson's Phalarope off its nest and four heavily spotted eggs.

Having examined the point thoroughly and photographed a beautiful nest of the Gadwall, containing ten eggs, built among the briars and white convolvulus and other vines, we proceeded to search for Grebes' nests in the marsh and soon found two nests of Red-necked Grebe containing five eggs in each, which is the regular number. The nests consisted of a mass of decayed damp weeds and aquatic plants, two feet in diameter, and the eggs are always covered with weeds in the absence of the female.

After dinner we drove three miles around the lake to another peninsula and were caught in a thunder storm on the way, so we took shelter at a settler's cabin, from whom we learned that the Pelicans nested on Reed Island which lies three miles out in the lake off the point.

As soon as the storm was over we drove to the end of the peninsula and could see several islands out in the lake, and as the water was calm and it was only five o'clock we decided to row out to the islands. So my man hobbled the horse's fore feet with a piece of rope so that he could not run away, while I put my canvas boat together, and taking my gun and camera

we pushed from the shore. As we approached nearer the first island I saw it was white all over with Pelicans. The birds remained on the island until we approached quite close ; they kept perfectly motionless with their heads erect staring at us until the boat touched the island, and then they arose in a mass and the noise from their wings was like the roar of a torrent. They flew above our heads with their long necks and beaks stretched out in front, and then forming into a line they flew away gracefully towards Reed Island.

In a moment both of us were on the island, and there a sight met our gaze that would gladden the heart of any oologist, for the ground was dotted all over with eggs of the Pelican, Cormorant and Herring Gull. The Pelicans' nests consisted of mounds of sand hollowed at the top, with the eggs resting on a few bits of weed and small pebbles. The Double-crested Cormorants' nests were made of twigs and weeds, and the nests of the American Herring Gull were large structures of weeds and moss.

I took a photograph of one corner of this small island where the nests were thickest, and then we proceeded to collect a series of eggs of the three species, and all the eggs proved to be fresh, for no doubt this was their second laying, as the storm of June 12th must have washed every egg off this low sandy island.

After taking sufficient eggs we rowed across the channel to Reed Island, which we found to be about three-quarters of a mile in length and swarming with bird life. In the elevated parts of the island amongst the dry grass we found nests and eggs of Gadwall, American Widgeon and Mallard, and on another elevated grassy ridge we found thousands of Forster's Terns breeding. We secured a fine series of their eggs, and then after taking the eggs we had collected back to the boat, we decided to walk around the island. We found some portions very marshy, and had to wade across several channels. On reaching the south end of the island and emerging from a thicket of rushes we beheld another immense colony of Pelicans on a sand bar, but on arriving there we saw no signs of any more Pelicans' nests. The nests of the American Herring Gull were scattered all over the island, and we only took about a dozen clutches of extra well marked eggs.

As it was beginning to get dusk I looked at my watch and found it was half past nine. This caused us to get a move on, for we had three miles to row to shore, and a wind had sprung up and a swell had appeared on the lake. It took us nearly half an hour to reach the boat, as we were heavily loaded with eggs and had to wade across several marshy channels.

It was just ten o'clock as we stepped into the boat and pushed off the island, and it was becoming dark. We found the water very choppy, and as our canvas boat was heavily laden with eggs which I had put in the bow, instead of raising her bow on the approach of the waves she cut through the waves and immediately began to ship water. My man was at the oars, and by the time we had reached the channel of water running between the islands, we found ourselves in a sad plight. I suggested we had better turn back, but my man replied, "if he attempted to turn round, we should at once fill with water and sink," so we kept the bow of the boat facing the white caps and by this time it was half full of water; however, we ran the gauntlet and in five minutes had crossed the worst part of the channel, and breathed more freely when we approached the Island where the Pelicans nested.

On reaching the Island, I suggested that we remained there all night as it was nearly dark, and I doubted if we could find the place on the mainland where we had left the horse and buckboard. Besides, we had got over two miles of rough water to cross before we reached the point. However, we thought if the water became much rougher it might wash over this low island, so we decided to risk it and pull for the mainland. We took everything out of the boat, tipped her over and emptied out the water and then packed all the eggs in the stern of the boat, and we arranged that if the boat should fill with water and sink, each should seize an oar and swim to shore; but perhaps this would have been no easy matter with our clothes and boots on. However, we pushed off into the rough water, but were pleased to find the bow of the boat rose as she met the waves, for all the eggs and weight were now in the rear, so we did not ship so much water as before in crossing from Reed Island to Pelican Island. In half an hour the mainland appeared, and after some difficulty

we made out the outline of the buckboard against the sky; we were soon on terra firma with our clothes soaking wet. So I instructed my assistant to hitch up his horse while I packed the canoe and eggs, intending to drive back to the settler's cabin to dry our clothes and sleep there for the night.

As my man had disappeared in the darkness and been gone ten minutes, I called out but got no answer. I then attempted to light a fire, but the grass was wet, so I climbed on top of the buckboard and struck several matches so my man could see the light and find his way to me, for he had got into a patch of tall rushes and could not find his way back in the darkness. I could hear the rushes cracking under his feet as he approached nearer, and soon learned that he could not find the horse, so all we could do was to remain there until morning. Unfortunately we could not make a fire as there were no trees around for miles, and the grass and rushes were damp. We leaned the boat against the buckboard, and spreading our rugs alongside of the boat we lay down to rest, but the mosquitoes soon found us out and came about us in myriads, and we were glad to hide our heads under the rugs to escape their bites.

Just as we were dozing off to sleep it began to rain in torrents, and the thunder and lightning were terrific. We pulled the boat over us, and there we were crouched underneath it, feeling very miserable in our damp clothes, with the thunder cracking over our heads. This was not the only trouble, for the water began to rise from the lake and threatened to wash over us; but at last the storm passed over, the rain ceased, and we fell asleep through mere exhaustion.

At four o'clock day broke and I was awakened by the great noise made by the birds and muskrats—the latter have a peculiar scream—while several Bitterns were pumping close to us in the Marsh, and all the Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Red-winged Starlings in the neighbourhood seemed to come and perch on the rushes around us and begin to whistle. I crawled from under the boat, leaving my young companion fast asleep, for the poor fellow was tired, having done all the rowing, and I spent three hours blowing the Pelican and other eggs.

At seven o'clock I aroused my man and he mounted the buckboard and saw the horse a mile away, and while he went after

him I proceeded to pack my specimens, and after refreshing ourselves with Ducks' eggs beaten up in sugar, we drove away from this spot to the farmhouse three miles away, where our wants were attended to by the kind farmer and his wife.

They inquired if we had seen any Moose at the Lake, for on the day previous the farmer's wife, with one of her daughters, was driving along the trail east of the Lake, when a bull Moose and female with its young one got up out of the Marsh, splashed through the water and ran off into the woods. I told her I would have paid five dollars to see such a sight. Moose are quite plentiful between Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba.

We did not stay long at the farm, but drove twenty-eight miles southward to Long Lake, talking most of the time over our disagreeable experience of the day previous, and now, although I am a thousand miles away from Shoal Lake, when I open my cabinet and gaze on my series of eggs of White Pelican, Cormorants, Gulls and Ducks, my memory takes me back to one of the roughest times I ever experienced in North West Canada.

Toronto, Canada.

The Chiffchaff.—It is Sunday morning. How peaceful all nature seems as we wander by the stream gurgling between its deep banks, where the Kingfisher nests in the old water-vole holes, and the spotted trout lies under the roots of the overhanging willow, in which the Wood-pigeons are giving forth their soft notes, while every now and then they fly up with much flapping and soar round, and after settling commence to "Ta too coo taphy" with renewed energy, which is answered by the shrill whistle of the Kingfisher as he darts along the brook course like a flash of prismatic light. The busy "caws" from the rookery near by lend a charm to the sounds, as we slowly wend our way over the freshening turf. But hark! That sounds like—it is the Chiffchaff!! Once more those tiny wings have brought you over the sunny land of France and into the Midlands of England, far from your wintering place. Ah! what tales you might unfold, of the gentle breeze rustling through the dry grass, the herds of shapely antelopes, the crouching lion, the forest swaying to the rush of the mighty elephant! Why should you leave that solitude for this smoky busy patch of land? Why risk the hardships and dangers of that long, long voyage over sea and land? But you are welcome with your oft repeated note, simple yet pleasing, as it tells of soft and balmy days to come, when the Cuckoo wakes the echoes of the grove with his mellow cry. You are the first to visit us after the dreary winter days, and we are pleased to have you. "Chiffchaff, chiffchaff," comes from the top of the high elm, as we wander along the hedge sweet with opening violets, while the rattling song of the Chaffinch follows as we reluctantly turn our steps homewards in one of March's most glorious days.—J. R. Whitaker, Junr. (March 22nd, 1896.)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Kites in Wales.—In the catalogue of Mr. Stevens' sale of natural history specimens, on April 13th, 1896, lot 315 is "A superb nest and two eggs of Kite, with photo of nest *in situ*, taken last April in mid-Wales, data given." If "whole clutch" egg collectors are allowed to have a free hand much longer, this nest is worth putting on record in the ORNITHOLOGIST, for in a very short time there will be no more Welsh Kites for mercenary collectors to rob.—O. V. APLIN (Bloxham, Oxon).

Abundance of Little Auks in January, 1895.—The occurrence of Little Auks in Oxon and Northants is mentioned on p. 19. Since writing the note on the subject I have read my copy of "The Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society" (vol. vi., part 1), to which Mr. J. H. Gurney has contributed a valuable paper on the abundance of this bird in the northern parts of Norfolk during the prevalence of strong northerly and north easterly gales, straight off the sea in January, 1895. No less than 285 Little Auks were actually received by the Norfolk taxidermists, the greatest number being picked up between the 10th and the 27th of January. About the same time great numbers were seen on the Yorkshire coast; one observer writes that he must have seen considerably over 1,000 swimming, flying or lying dead on the sands.—O. V. APLIN (Bloxham, Oxon.).

Eggs of the Redstart.—In corroboration of Mr. Shelley's note on this subject in the May issue of the ORNITHOLOGIST, it may be of interest to observe that, though I have kept no actual statistics, a quarter of a century's assiduous birds'-nesting has left me with the impression that Redstarts' eggs spotted with faint brown are not to be looked upon as altogether unusual varieties. Speaking generally, I should say that in my experience spotted eggs have occurred in the proportion of one nest to perhaps half-a-score containing the normal type. At the moment of writing I am located in the heart of North Wales, and labour under the disadvantage of being far away from all books of reference; nevertheless, I think that I recognise the source from which your correspondent has extracted an opinion bearing on the question, and commendable though the object be to popularise natural history, quotations from works which sacrifice scientific accuracy on sundry points to what I can best designate as an *ad captandum vulgus* sort of style, are of little value. Much less, if there is any warrant for my conjecture, can a writer be regarded as an *authority* on matters pertaining to the ornithology and oölogy of these islands, who indulges in such flights of fancy as that the Pied Wagtail is essentially terrestrial in its nesting habits; that the Carrion-crow wings its way at early dawn to distant feeding grounds; that

the Starling's notes are strictly its own, implying thereby that the species is devoid of the gift of mimicry—not to dwell on other literary nuggets of an equally apocryphal nature. If Mr. Shelley is an ardent field-ornithologist, he will doubtless have observed many points of interest concerning which books are for the most part silent.—H. S. Davenport.

Bearded Titmouse in Middlesex.—No doubt it is worth recording that on May 3rd I saw a Bearded Tit by the River Brent (near Stonebridge Park). There was no mistaking it or uncertainty, as I had it under observation for nearly a quarter of an hour.—H. T. Booth (Upcerne Road, Chelsea).

Arrival of Summer Migrants at Staines.—March 27th: Chiffchaff, Willow Wren; April 2nd: Cuckoo, Wryneck; 8th: Redstart; 10th: Swallow; 13th: Common Sandpiper; 18th: Yellow Wagtail, Sedge Warbler; 24th: Whinchat, Nightingale, Sand-Martin, Landrail; 25th: Blackcap; 29th: House-Martin, Swift; 30th: Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat; May 6th: Turtle Dove.—Graham W. Kerr (Staines).

Arrival of Summer Migrants at Malahide, Co. Dublin.—March 15th: Wheatear; 23rd: Chiffchaff; April 11th: Sand-Martin, Swallow; 18th: Willow-Wren; 21st: Landrail; 25th: Cuckoo, Swift; 26th: Lesser Tern; 30th: Common Sandpiper; May 3rd: Whitethroat; 10th: Spotted Flycatcher, Sedge Warbler.—J. Trumbull.

Notes from Co. Donegal.—I have seen in the shop of Mr. Rohn, Dublin, a Grey Phalarope sent him by his brother, the principal lighthouse keeper, Tory Island, Co. Donegal, on November 18th, 1895, also a pretty variety of the Rock Pipit from the same place, marked with white on the forehead and neck.—G. E. H. Barrett-Hamilton.

Lincolnshire Notes.—Having seen in the Ornithologist for April, 1896, a note on Lancashire bird names, I venture to hope that the following short list of provincial bird names in Lincolnshire may not be without interest to readers of the Ornithologist. The list is partly compiled from Mr. Ed. Peacock's "Glossary of Words used in the Wapentakes of Manby and Corringham, Lincolnshire." Mr. Peacock's list is much fuller, but most of the following I have heard used myself, and the rest are taken from a list made by my grandfather:—Kite: Gleäd, Gled. Kestrel: Windhover. Owl: Hoolet, Jenny Hoolet. Fieldfare: Felfur. Missel Thrush: Stormcock. Whitethroat: Peggy Whitethroat. Blue Tit: Billy Biter. Long-tailed Tit: Featherpoke, Bottle Tit. Pied Wagtail: Dish Washer. Yellow Hammer: Gooly. Chaffinch: Pink. Goldfinch: Redcap. Starling: Starnel. Hooded Crow: Royston Crow, Norway Crow. Magpie: Nanpie,

Maggot. Swift: Devilin. Green Woodpecker: Nickill. Wren: Jenny or Gilliver Wren. Cuckoo: Gowk. Lapwing: Wipe, Pywipe. Heron: Hern. Bittern: Butterboomp. Landrail: Midda' Creäk.

The Cuckoo was first heard in this village on April 23rd, and to-day (May 3rd), a Nightingale was singing; it was first heard yesterday. Young Thrushes, Blackbirds and Missel Thrushes are fledged, and Hedge Sparrows, Chaffinches, Starlings, &c., are sitting. We have a Starling's nest in a disused pump, and two long-tailed Tits are sitting in the garden.—MARGARET L. ANDERSON (Lea Hall, Gainsbro').

The Rook as a Corn-stealer.—Mr. C. E. Wright, of Kettering, has preferred a strong case against the Rooks in his neighbourhood. He says that the male birds have been feeding the females with corn while they were incubating, and he has sent me up a parcel of pellets which were cast up by the latter and I find they quite confirm his evidence. Mr. Aplin, who examined some, writes that "the castings consist largely of the remains of corn—almost entirely oats—with other vegetable matter; in one there are many remains of small beetles. In dry springs like the present Rooks have great difficulty in getting sufficient worms and grubs, and all they *can* get are given to the young birds. It is always in dry springs that they are seen taking seed on the newly drilled fields."—H. KIRKE SWANN.

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

A Handbook to the Birds of Great Britain, by R. Bowdler Sharpe, LL.D., &c. Vols. 1, 2 and 3. (London: W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd.) Price 6s. per vol.

The issue of a Naturalists' Library on the lines of the so long popular series of volumes published under the editorship of Jardine and Selby was a happy idea on the part of Messrs. Allen & Co. The style of typography adopted in the three volumes now before us leaves little to be desired, the different sections of the information given being side-headed in bold type to facilitate references. I wish, however, that the coloured plates contained in these volumes were as well entitled to words of praise as the manner in which their author has performed his somewhat tedious task of presenting in the space of a couple of pages or more a complete, accurate and useful history of each species of bird on the British list. Dr. Sharpe has not only done this creditably, but in such a manner as to leave but little ground for fault-finding.

In the matters of nomenclature and classification, however, he decidedly leaves room for criticism, if only through the very drastic manner in which he deals with these difficult subjects. I am, nevertheless, quite at one with Dr. Sharpe in his unwavering adherence to the law of *priority* in respect to nomenclature, for it is only by recognising this as a fundamental law, and one which must be strictly adhered to, that we can in any measure attempt to produce order amongst what is too frequently confusion. For example, I note that the Eagle Owl rightly appears here as *Bubo bubo* (Linn.), so paying due recognition to its original describer, and preserving the specific name he conferred upon it, instead of figuring as *Bubo ignavus*, Forster, or *Bubo maximus*, Fleming.

I regret very much that Dr Sharpe should be numbered amongst the opponents of trinomials. I grant that they may constitute a rather "clumsy" method, but I cannot agree that they are "unnecessary." In fact, there seems to be as yet no other means of giving a name to a recognised sub-species or race without elevating it to the rank of a species. I find, for instance, that the British form of the Marsh Titmouse, separated by Dr. Stejneger as *Parus palustris dresseri*, is treated of by Dr. Sharpe under the name of *P. dresseri*, as though it were a full species, although the Doctor remarks that it is a barely distinguishable race.

I have already indicated that the only real fault in these volumes lies in the very mediocre coloured plates, one third of which, in my opinion, might well have been omitted since they are (to say the least) not up to the standard one is entitled to expect in a work of such value as the present. Still it must be admitted that a volume which contains over 300 pages of letterpress and about thirty plates is worth many times six shillings if the plates are to be good enough to escape adverse criticism.

Vol. 1 contains the whole of the "Passeriformes;" vol. 2 the "Piciformes," "Coccyges," "Coraciiformes," "Striges," "Accipitres," "Pelecaniformes," "Phænicopteriformes," and "Anseriformes;" Vol, 3, the conclusion of the "Anseriformes," and the "Ardeiformes," "Gruiformes" and "Charadriiformes." Dr. Sharpe's classification, needless to say, is largely peculiar to himself, its principal features being the predominance of sub-orders and genera. Still, I am far from advocating a return to the very expansive genera of the older systematists.

Dr. Sharpe has undoubtedly placed both students and bird-lovers very much in his debt by the production of what is at once a valuable and interesting addition to the already long list of works on the British avi-fauna.

H. K. S.

NOTES AND NEWS.

Two Magpies, both male birds, are to be found frequenting the Regent's Park, in London. One was recently observed by us in the act of preparing a nest near the Zoological Gardens. A keeper has informed us that they are escaped birds, and that during the four years they have frequented the park they have built several nests—apparently in readiness for the mates who never yet have come.

To the "Irish Naturalist" for May, Mr. Barrett-Hamilton contributes some remarks on Mr. W. J. Knowles' interesting discovery (Proc. R.I.A., vol. i., no. 5 and vol. iii., no. 4) of bones of the Great Auk (*Alca impennis*) in sand-hills (or more probably kitchen-middens) at Whitepark Bay, Co. Antrim. Mr. Knowles remarks that "from the number of bones [of the Great Auk] which have been found, it must have been a common inhabitant of the North of Ireland at the time when the people of the Stone Age occupied Whitepark Bay and other parts of the coast."

The May number of the "Naturalist" contains the Bird-Bibliography for 1892 for the northern counties of England, compiled and arranged by Mr. Denison Roebuck.

We have received copies of the following orders for the protection of wild birds' eggs, additional to the list given in the last issue of the ORNITHOLOGIST (for numbered list see p. 49): CUMBERLAND:—21, 35, 39, 49, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 71, 73, 74, 91, 99, 101, 104, 112. GLOUCESTERSHIRE:—7, 22, 39, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 64, 68, 69, 72, 73, 74, 75, 92, 93. DUMBARTON (one year from January 15th, 1896):—53, 61, 62, 63, 64, 75, 89, 94, 95, 96, 103, 109, 112, 121, 123, 124, Wigeon and Little Grebe. Also for year 1896 (after April 15th) 119. ROSCOMMON (five years from May 10th, 1896):—5, 9, 11, 17, 18, 21, 22, 34, 40, 53, 59, 61, 62, 80, 83, 85, 91, 94, 96, 108, 110, 126, 127, also Hedge-sparrow and all species of Gulls, Sandpipers and Snipe. Dr Trumbull, who sends us this last order, remarks that the Nuthatch (22) has not yet been obtained in Ireland! But the same lamentable ignorance of the distribution of the British avi-fauna is displayed in many of the orders included in the list we gave last month.

At the Zoological Society of London's meeting held on April 21st, Mr. E. Beddard, F.R.S., read a paper on the "Anatomy of a Grebe" (*Æchmophorus major*) and added some remarks upon the classification of the Charadriiformi birds, to which he considered the Auks to be more nearly related than to the Grebes.

At a meeting of the Natural History Society of Glasgow, held in the Society's rooms, 207, Bath Street, on Tuesday, April 28th, Mr. John Paterson

son read a paper entitled "Ornithological Notes—Clyde Faunal Area, 1895," in which he made reference to the following points:—The irruption of little Auks early in the year; the duck-life of our estuarine waters, with statistics; the movements of Gulls in Glasgow harbour; the appearance of our summer migrants; the nesting of the Sheld-duck, and its status as a Clyde species; the occurrence in summer of the Tufted Duck and Shoveller on Possil Marsh; and of the appearance of the Cormorant there in winter. A list of the birds of Douglasdale, and some notes on Waders in the Clyde estuary—on which latter subject information is very meagre—concluded the reading of a most interesting and valuable paper, for which the author, on the motion of the chairman, was heartily thanked.

At the meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club, held on April 15th, Mr. Howard Saunders exhibited a female example of a new British Petrel (*Oceanodroma cryptoleucura*) which was picked up on the beach close to Littlestone, a small village six miles north of Dungeness, on December 5th last. It was taken to Mr. Bristow, the taxidermist at St. Leonards', and was there seen in the flesh by Mr. Boyd Alexander. The species inhabits the South Atlantic, and has recently been found breeding in the Canaries by Mr. Ogilvie Grant.

The additions to the Zoölogical Society's Gardens up to April 30th, included two Amherst's Pheasants (*Thaumalea amherstiæ* ♀) from China, received in exchange (Pheasantry); two Swinhoe's Pheasants (*Euplocamus swinhoii* ♂ and ♀) from Formosa, purchased (Pheasantry); a Bar-tailed Pheasant (*Phasianus reevesi* ♀) from N. China, purchased (Pheasantry); a hybrid Japanese Pheasant (*P. versicolor* × *P. colchicus* ♀); purchased (Pheasantry); two Rosy Parakeets (*Palæornis rosa* ♂ and ♀) from Burmah, purchased (Parrot House); two Musky Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus concinnus* ♂ and ♀) from Australia, purchased (Parrot House); a Leadbeater's Cockatoo (*Cacatua leadbeateri*) from Australia, presented by Miss E. S. Young (Parrot House); two Elliot's Pheasants (*Phasianus ellioti* ♂ and ♀) from China, purchased (Pheasantry); two Great American Egrets (*Ardea egretta*) from America, purchased (E. Aviary); three Canarian Laurel Pigeons (*Columba laurivora*) from Island of Gomera, Canary Islands, presented by Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo (W. Aviary); a Vinaceous Pigeon (*C. vinacea*) from S. America, purchased (W. Aviary); a Porto Rico Pigeon (*C. corensis*) from West Indies, purchased (W. Aviary); a Common Mynah (*Acridotheres tristris*) from India, presented by Mrs. S. E. Kennedy (W. Aviary); a Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Hedymeles ludovicianus*) from North America, deposited (W. Aviary); a Redbacked Weaver Bird (*Quelea sanguinirostris*) from W. Africa, deposited (W. Aviary); a Java Sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*) from Java, deposited (W. Aviary); an

Alexandra Parakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*) from Australia, presented by Mr. W. Pritchard Morgan, M.P. (Parrot House); and a Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*) from India, presented by Mr. A. Kemmis-Betty (Kites' Aviary).

GLEANINGS.

In the "Naturalist" for May Mr. B. B. Haworth-Booth records the obtaining of a Little Bustard (*Otis tetrax*) at Holderness in the last week of December, 1895.

Mr. Walter Gyngell records, in the "Naturalist's Journal" for May, the finding of a nest of the Redbacked Shrike near Scarborough last year.

Mr. H. Chipperfield reports in "Nature Notes" for May that a pair of Dabchicks (wild birds) nested last year in one of the small lakes in Clissold Park at Stoke Newington, London.

In the "Zoologist" for May Mr. J. H. Gurney records the occurrence of a pair of Broad-billed Sandpipers and a pair of Black-winged Stilts in Norfolk during the autumn migration of 1895.

ROUGH NOTES FROM NORTH WALES.

By John A. Bucknill, B.A.

The few following observations have been compiled partly from note-books kept during several shooting seasons in Wales, and partly from memory, and although there is not much original in them, they may be interesting as descriptive, to some extent, of the bird life to be met with in one of the wildest corners in Carnarvon.

The district in which they were made may roughly be described as a triangle, of which the three corners are the towns of Capel-Curig, Bettws-y-Coed and Blaenau Festiniog. Notwithstanding the fact that the two former places are quite in the ordinary tourist route, the high moors lying in the centre of the triangle are seldom traversed except by the farmers and sportsmen, whilst the precipitous nature of some of the hills, particularly the Dolwyddelen side of the mountain Moel Siabod, forbids a close approach and harbours unmolested several interesting species of birds.

A single footpath, which might be used for very rough vehicles, is the only roadway across the moor from Capel-Curig to Dolwyddelen, and a single road (a good one) divides the farms of Hafod Gwenllian and

Gorddinan between Dolwyddelen and Festiniog on the other side of the River Lledr, which it crosses at Roman Bridge ; so the moors themselves are quiet enough. The following are the birds that I have thought worthy of remark :—

The Common Buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*) is the most striking bird in the district and holds its own well. It is fairly numerous, and in a long day's walking after grouse one or two are nearly always to be noticed—probably the same birds always frequent the same beat. They have several eyries in the district, notably on the Rose Quarry or Bettws side of Moel Siabod mountain, also on the side of Benar, opposite Dolwyddelen. I have seen more than one in captivity, taken when young in the nest, and their eggs may sometimes be seen in the cottages on the hills.

There seems to be an idea that the Common Buzzard does not harm the game, but I have been informed by a keeper that he has himself taken two freshly-killed young grouse from the ledge of rock where a Buzzard was nesting—which seems rather damning evidence.

No one, however, ought to wish for a few more grouse at the expense of the disappearance of this splendid bird, which is not likely to be exterminated at present owing to the inaccessibility of its eyrie.

This is not always the case, as I saw one nesting place which was perfectly easily reached, and from which I understand one nestling is taken every year.

To see one of these big birds, which look enormous on the wing, sitting motionless on the top of a rock watching you straggling across the moor, and when you get about a hundred yards off slowly flapping away, is a very fine sight. They will seldom allow you to come within gun-shot, and I only recollect one instance when I could certainly have killed one. On that occasion we came round a sharp corner and surprised a huge fellow feeding on a recently deceased sheep ; it was slow in getting up and could not have been more than about ten yards away from us ; partly from surprise, chiefly, I hope, from charity, we did not fire.

From what I have been told I am inclined to think that they may do more harm to the grouse than is generally suspected, and from what I have seen I am certain that they will feed on the carcases of sheep—not uncommon objects on the hills.

Peregrine Falcon (*F. peregrinus*).—I have no evidence that the peregrine breeds in the district, but it is occasionally seen, and I am informed on good authority that there are at present three of these birds to be seen on the north side of the river Lledr, near Dolwyddelen.

The Merlin (*Falco æsalon* (and the Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) are the only other Hawks that have come directly under my notice. The latter is

the commonest Hawk in the district, but curiously enough I have never seen the Sparrow-hawk, which seems to be conspicuous by its absence, and although the eggs of the Kestrel are common objects in the cottages, I have never seen an egg of the Sparrow-hawk in the place. The Merlin breeds on the moors not uncommonly, and has a bad name.

(*To be concluded.*)

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All Editorial communications and Books for Review or MSS., must be sent to H. K. Swann, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. To be dealt with in the following issue, communications must be received by the 12th of each month.

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G. E—W., Warrington.—(1) The specific distinctions are so slight that they can only be appreciated by a comparison of individuals of each species. *Corvus americanus* seems to differ from *C. corone* more in note and habits than otherwise. We have found the note to be very different, being sharper and more querulous, while the bird seems to approach somewhat to our Rook in being distinctly gregarious, often even nesting in company. (2) The case of the Sparrow-hawk roosting on your friend's house for so long a period is to be in part explained by the fact that it had not found a mate; it was probably a young bird just sent forth by its parents when first noticed.

A. E. S., Surbiton Hill.—We have a large number of photographs of the commoner British birds' nests, and are therefore unable to use those sent. If you make any of very rare or curious nests or birds we shall be pleased to see them. We do not pay for photographs by amateurs, but are always pleased to acknowledge the photographer.

We stated last month that we should be glad to receive names of a few oölogists who desired to form a circle for starting an "exchange basket," but we find that an insufficient number of names have been sent in. If any more subscribers wish to send in their names, will they kindly do so at once. Dr. Gunning, of Montrose, N.B., has kindly undertaken the formation of this exchange club.

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST:

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H. K. SWANN,

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O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.
F. B. WHITLOCK.
Rev. H. A. MACPHERSON.
W. HY. HEATHCOTE, F.L.S.
G.E.H. BARRETT-HAMILTON (Ireland).

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Ornithologische Monatsberichte, Vol. IV., Nos. 1 to 6, Jan.-June, 1896. Prof. Dr. Reichenow, Editor.

The Naturalist, No. 251, June, 1896. W. Denison Roebuck, Editor.

The Victorian Naturalist, Vol. XII., No. 11, February, 1896. F. G. A Barnard, Editor.

The Naturalist's Journal, No. 48, June, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Editor.

Nature Notes, No. 78, June, 1896. London: J. Bale & Sons.

The Irish Naturalist, Vol. V., No. 6, June, 1896. Dublin: Eason & Son, Ltd.

Science Gossip, New Series, No. 25, June, 1896. John T. Carrington, Editor.

Catalogue of the Birds of Prey (Accipitres and Striges), with the number of Specimens in Norwich Museum, by J. H. Gurney, F.Z.S., 8vo., cloth, 1894. From the Author.

Memoir of the Late John Henry Gurney, by Thomas Southwell, F.Z.S. From J. H. Gurney, F.Z.S.

A Concise Handbook of British Birds, by H. Kirke Swann. Small post 8vo., cloth, pp. viii, 210. London: John Wheldon & Co., 58, Great Queen Street, W.C., 1896. 3s. 6d.

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COLLARED TURTLE DOVE (Turtur risorius).

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

VOL. I. JULY, 1896. No. 5.

BREEDING HABITS OF THE SPARROW-HAWK.

BY F. B. WHITLOCK.

MR. DAVENPORT'S paper on "The Nesting Habits of the Sparrow-hawk" has opened up an interesting subject for discussion. I wish to call attention to the writings of many of our earliest ornithologists, who seem to be pretty unanimous in stating that this species generally or frequently nests in the deserted home of a Crow or Magpie; for it seems to me that the Sparrow-hawk has changed its habits in this respect within the last generation. Although this may be partly owing to the scarcity of nests of the former species at the present day, the latter fact will not altogether explain the Sparrow-hawk's habit of building in oaks, firs, or other forest trees at a comparatively low elevation, as it now does in the Midland Counties of England. I am not able to claim so extensive an acquaintance with the nests of the present species as Mr. Davenport is able to do, but I have met with a moderate number in the counties of Northumberland, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire. In the former county the Carrion Crow is fairly plentiful in the district I know best, viz., the Cheviots, and old nests are readily available, but still such Sparrow-hawks' nests as have come under my notice have been built in oaks, firs or birches, and only at a very moderate height from the ground. During one visit I met a collector who had known the district for many years, and he related

how in one morning's walk in a wood—a remnant of the old Northumbrian forest—he had found three Sparrow-hawk's nests, all of which were built in oaks.

Only this spring, in a certain locality in Leicestershire, where Magpies are a little too numerous in the opinion of the shooting tenant, I had taken the eggs from two nests of the latter species, built as is customary at the tops of fairly tall trees, but a Sparrow-hawk which bred in the same wood a little later on chose to construct a new nest in a small fir, in preference to adapting one of these empty nests of the Magpie. In Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire all the nests I have seen have been placed in firs or oaks, chiefly the latter, and generally on some stout branch and near to the main stem. As a rule I think the Sparrow-hawk constructs a new nest every year, and though in many cases the parent birds undoubtedly utilise an old Wood Pigeon's or other nest as a foundation for their superstructure, still on the other hand, I believe they at other times construct their own home in its entirety. As an instance of the latter fact, I can point to the last nest I found. This was in a tree which a gamekeeper had passed several times during the spring without observing a trace of a nest, and on further examination I found, close at hand, but further in the wood, two previous nests, one of which contained a large accumulation of small bones of mammals and birds, the young having got off in this case in the previous year.

49, *Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham.*

By J. J. Baldwin Young.

On the 24th ult. I found a Sparrow-hawk's nest in a small wood by Lough Coun, Co. Mayo. Having in mind Mr. H. S. Davenport's article in the then current number of the Ornithologist, a friend who accompanied me, and I, examined the nest and its surroundings most carefully. The result was that we satisfied ourselves that there was not a trace of old nest underlying the new. The whole structure was composed of fresh material. I may say that the nest was built in a tall thin spruce.

Richmond Park, via *Sheffield.*

Erratum.—Page 62, line 10, for "ed. 4" read "ed. 3."

By H. S. Davenport.

It might seem to savour of discourtesy were I to pass unnoticed the correspondence under this heading in the June issue of the Ornithologist, and yet, beyond essaying to elucidate one or two apparently obscure points in my original paper, I have practically nothing more to say that can be considered rigidly pertinent to the discussion. First and foremost, however, most assuredly is no such inference warrantable as that the Sparrow-hawk *invariably* resorts for breeding purposes to an old and discarded nest of some other species. The late Mr. Seebohm is regarded, I believe, as one of our most valued standard authorities, and I for one should think twice before presuming to oppose his dictum that the "Sparrow-hawk *always* builds its own nest," with the statement, in effect, that it *never* by any chance does anything of the kind! On the other hand, the inference that may be legitimately drawn from my remarks is that the Sparrow-hawk, *according to my own individual experience*, invariably founds its nest on the ancient basis of that of some other species, and if Mr. A. Holte Macpherson will glance at my paper again, I think he will perceive the value of a qualification which has seemingly escaped his notice.

Mr. W. Ruskin Butterfield joins issue with me on another count — well, what did I aver was an "apparently little-known fact?" Simply this, to requote Mr. W. H. Hudson, "that it is probable that in nearly all cases the Sparrow-hawk takes possession of an old nest of some other bird" in contradistinction, be it observed, to the alleged fact, as stated by an anonymous reviewer in the *Athenæum*, that it *generally* builds its own nest. And so most deferentially I aver again. Moreover, instead of assisting to disprove my contention, the excerpts from Mr. Howard Saunders' invaluable "Manual" and from the fourth edition of Yarrell's "British Birds, with which Mr. Butterfield concludes a list of quotations intended for my discomfiture, most surely serve to prove it. Therein is laid down the precise teaching which Mr. Hudson traverses. Indeed, the only extracts (as I think) confirmatory of Mr. Butterfield's argument are those from Pennant, Montague,

Hewitson and Booth; the rest, exclusive of the two already quoted, are neither one thing nor the other. Nor can I believe that the four authors last-named have been as widely read in the aggregate, of late years at all events, as "Birds'-nesting and Bird-skinning," by Edward Newman, revised and re-written for a second edition so recently as 1888, by Mr. Miller Christy. In this little and cheap *brochure* the Sparrow-hawk's alleged habit of adopting the deserted nest of some other species is pooh-poohed as seemingly "only partially true, if true at all." As for publications devoted almost exclusively to the avifauna of the different counties and comparatively local districts, I much question if the same are extensively read outside the restricted geographical areas of which they treat, though I of course except such notable and attractive works as Gray's "Birds of the West of Scotland," Saxby's "The Birds of Shetland," Stevenson's "Birds of Norfolk," Lord Lilford's "Birds of Northamptonshire and Neighbourhood," and a few others which may well be of national worth. All this, however, has reference to a side issue. The tendency—to hark back a moment—seems to be to represent the Sparrow-hawk as "usually," or "generally," or "commonly," or "for the most part," building its own nest; only as "occasionally," or "sometimes," appropriating that of some other bird. Mr. Hudson, in my opinion, scored a strong point when he re-shuffled the above qualifying terms and characterised the far more prevalent habit as appropriation pure and simple. Nor, in this connection, should I be unmindful that of the three nests of which Mr. Macpherson is in a position to speak positively, *two* were admittedly founded on the relics of those of another species.

Circumstances alter cases, 'tis true, and in Leicestershire we are more concerned about the preservation of the fox than the pheasant, and consequently the insensate craving to extirpate winged vermin is not so pronounced as elsewhere. The many woodlands adjacent to my own home are certainly not lacking in old nests, but because Sparrow-hawks appropriate sundry of these season after season for breeding purposes, I should indeed be demented to associate myself with the doctrine that the species *invariably* adopts similar tactics in districts where different conditions prevail!

However, whether *Accipiter nisus* is more addicted to appropriating nests than to building entirely *de novo*, or whether the exact converse holds good, is a matter of less moment with me just now than the *soupçon* of acrimony which seems on occasions to creep into present day ornithological criticisms. Personally, I do not object to hostile criticism so long as it is unaccompanied by misrepresentation. I can assure Mr. Macpherson that nothing was further from my mind than to *boast* of having taken hundreds of Sparrow-hawks' eggs; my sole and only motive in mentioning the fact was to show that I was not presuming to discuss an interesting topic in public print without some little qualification. How far I merit obloquy, as his comment unmistakably implies, for taking, as opportunity offered, my fill of the eggs of a species which is notoriously baneful to shooting interests and against which gamekeepers with one accord wage a war of extermination at all seasons, I will not stop to consider in detail. I only know that on many an occasion my plundering of a nest has sufficed to save a Sparrow-hawk's life, whereas, had I not been present to plead for mercy and climb to the nest, the brooding bird would have been ruthlessly shot on the spot, and the beautiful eggs left uncared for where they lay. Such interposition profited the owners of the various nests equally with myself, seeing that they were allowed to escape with their lives and subsequently laid eggs elsewhere for my appropriation.

Even Lord Lilford, than whom our feathered friends know no more staunch, more enlightened, or more illustrious champion, advocates, unless I mistake not, in one or other of his delightful publications, the keeping of these lawless little freebooters within due bounds by *destroying their eggs* rather than by slaying the old birds. I conceive it a pity that Mr. Macpherson did not confine his remarks to the main question without indulging in a kind of veiled and very inapposite stricture at my expense. Had the eggs plundered been those of almost any other species, I should have felt little justified in attempting to defend my action.

In conclusion, it must be obvious that my paper was written in the most perfect good faith, and whether or not my

observations—in a two-fold sense—commend themselves to the subscribers to the ORNITHOLOGIST, it is certain that the evidence of others can in no wise invalidate testimony born of my own personal experience. I must apologise for encroaching a second time at such length on the limited space at the Editor's command; such was not at all my intention at the outset, while even as it is, I feel that I have dealt inadequately with some of the conflicting issues raised. I will merely add that if there are any readers who, following the example of the friend referred to by Mr. Macpherson, deem it profitable or even expedient, to generalise as to what is "a detail" and what "the rule" from (as it would appear) *three nests only*, respecting one of which, by-the-bye, according to Mr. Young's own showing, there was a doubt as to its being the undivided work of the Sparrow-hawks themselves, they will show presence of mind by forbearing to give the fact publicity.

BIRD LIFE ON THE COAST.

By GEORGE F. ELY.

AT a secluded spot on the north-west coast of England lies a favourite breeding place for certain kinds of sea birds, and in June last year we decided to pay them a visit. Between the village and the sea is an estuary where three rivers meet and fall into the sea, high sand-hills with a flat expanse of sand beyond. The colonies of Terns, &c., breed chiefly on the points where the waters unite, and a grand sound it is to hear the cries of the various fowl in the distance, when the ebbing tide leaves the sands bare, and to see them throwing themselves headlong into the water to catch the fish, while others are sailing about in small parties to find the food they like, their numbers being swelled in the evening by the Curlews from the mountains inland.

We started on the morning of an ideal summer day, with clear blue sky overhead, and wending our way along pretty lanes arrived at the warren which lies behind the sand-hills; just before passing through the gate on to the warren a Lapwing

arose in great agitation limping along with an apparently broken wing, but it was in fact only trying to lure us away from its young, which were lying under a bank by the road-side. Coming on to the warren a Skylark flew up, and amongst the grass we discovered its nest containing three eggs. Farther on a pair of Stockdoves, emerging from a rabbit hole, at once arrested our attention, and by looking in we could just discern part of the nest showing round the corner about four feet down. At length, after climbing over the sand-hills, we reached the wild coast, where nothing was to be heard or seen excepting the birds and sea, and the sands quivering in the heat. On our arrival a pair of pretty Oyster-catchers came whistling over our heads evidently in a state of great agitation, and on careful search we espied first one, then a second, and still a third young bird crouching close amongst the stones with their eyes closed and head and beak laid flat on the sands, each of which in turn we took up and examined. They were very odd-looking little things with fluffy bodies and long legs and beaks, and when liberated they ran away with marvellous agility to the sea. After wandering along about a mile we sat down against the sand-hills to refresh the inner man, and recall to mind all that we had seen and heard. Whilst thus agreeably engaged, our attention was constantly drawn to groups of the same birds running along at the margin of the sea in parties of seven or eight, whistling in a merry tone, and keeping close together. One pair of Oyster-catchers were very busy initiating their young into the mysteries of swimming, and the smallest of the babies apparently strongly objected, for after its parents had made many attempts to drive it into the water, it made off at its utmost speed across the sands. The old ones followed it for a few moments as if to catch it and turn it back, but shortly desisted, and looked at one another in such a puzzled way, as if at a loss to understand such rebellious conduct, that we were compelled to indulge in a burst of laughter.

After several false alarms and fruitless searches for nests we came to the haunt of the Common Tern behind the sand-hills, when a grand sight met our interested gaze; thousands of these birds which had risen at our approach sailed round and round

overhead *en masse*, uttering their peculiar note, while their white plumage contrasted exquisitely against the deep blue sky. The ground was thickly strewn with their nests, composed of a few dry bents arranged in a circle; in the centre on the sand were the eggs, some with one, some with two, and others with three, of every shade in ground colour from a bluish white to a dark dull green, with handsome dark streaks, or covered with blotches, others marked at one end only. One nest contained sixteen eggs arranged in an irregular oval shape, probably that of four or five birds together; in some the young were hatched, and in truth there was every stage of hatching to be seen.

Walking along, and picking our way amongst the thickly placed nests, we came to an adjoining colony of Black-headed Gulls, a very different scene, for the nests were all empty, larger, and more compact, and emitting a very strong odour from the excrement of the young birds. The young were running about in all directions, and we continually came upon them in the rank herbage, some seeming to have a difficulty with their long wings, at times catching them amongst the thistles, etc., in their endeavours to escape, and some rolling down the steep sand banks in their hurry to get away. Overhead the old birds were making a bewildering din, one or two hovering over our heads and pouncing down in their anxiety for their young. These birds appeared to nest on the tops of the sand-hills, and not so much on the lower ground as did the Common Terns.

Moving on again the scene was changed, and we found ourselves in a colony of the Sandwich Terns. These handsomely marked young birds were also hatched and running about; the nests were composed of a few bents arranged in a hollow in the sand on the highest sand-hills. Overhead these large Terns became very excited, one or two now and then, following us and swooping down within a foot of our heads, uttering a kind of screech, whilst the impetus of the rush carried them up again; they scarcely ever moved their large wings, but floated about in the air. In the midst of all this confusion the Oyster-catchers kept on rushing from the sea amongst them with their shrill piping; they had not such power over their wings as the Terns, and consequently had to

make a wide circle back again, contrasting strongly with the graceful buoyant flight of the birds overhead. It seemed to us that the Oyster-catchers made their incursions simply for the fun of the thing and to increase the noise.

Descending to the level beach, we came upon a few of their nests in which were two or three large eggs, merely a hollow in the sand with a few pieces of coloured shell arranged round the edge ; there were young of these also running along at the edge of the water.

Close under the sand-hills, and partly behind as well, were scattered colonies of the Lesser Tern, elegant little birds showing almost a transparent white against the sky. Their note is more musical, something like that of a Swallow, and the nests were scattered about and very difficult to see, the one or two handsome eggs being simply laid in a hollow in the sand amongst the stones.

Farther on again we discovered a Ringed Plover's nest containing one egg, the bird running along the sand a short way in front.

We were much interested in being able to catch and examine some of the young of each kind of the Terns, and also of the Gulls, Ringed Plovers, and Oyster-catchers, and although most of them crouched down flat on the sand previously, thinking, doubtless, that they would escape observation, yet upon being liberated they ran off in an amusingly active manner.

Getting away from all these colonies it was a great relief to be once more in the quiet, after being for about five hours in such a babel, and to watch a few Oyster-catchers piping and whistling. On repeated visits we continually found fresh nests of these birds, so difficult are they to see amongst the stones even with the closest scrutiny.

Each kind of bird appears to have its peculiar breeding place, for the Oyster-catchers were near the sea, the Lesser Terns farther up below the sand-hills, the Common Terns behind them in the hollows, the Black-headed Gulls on the top of the sand-hills, and the Sandwich Terns on the highest points.

Kent Lodge, Lower Addiscombe, Croydon.

ROUGH NOTES FROM NORTH WALES.

By John A. Bucknill, B.A.

(*Continued from* p. 80.)

The country people, however, only distinguish two sorts of Hawks, the "red" and the "blue," the former being the Buzzard, and possibly any other big Hawk, such as the Hen-harrier, which may occasionally visit the moors, and the latter including the two small Hawks above mentioned.

The Raven (*Corvus corax*) is still to be found, and nests in one place that I know of on the side of Moel Siabod, but no doubt elsewhere as well. It is on the decrease, as in 1886 there were certainly more than in 1894 and 1895, and indeed, last year I only noticed them on three or four occasions.

The Carrion Crow (*C. corone*) is the pest of the place and the chief *bête noir* of the farmers. It does one good service in making very short work of the many dead sheep one sees lying about—often, after a flood, in the middle of the beds of the rocky streams, caught up by some ledge of rock. It is, however, a great nuisance both to the sheep farmer and the sportsman from its habit of attacking the lambs and destroying the eggs and young ones of the Grouse.

The Rook (*C. frugilegus*) is not, I think, a resident in the immediate neighbourhood of Dolwyddelen, but the Jackdaw (*C. monedula*) is. Rooks, however, are to be seen and probably come from the better-wooded district towards Bettws.

The Dipper (*Cinclus aquaticus*). This bird, to a person living in Surrey (where it has only been recorded on one or two occasions), is one of the most interesting features of the scenery. It is quite common and frequents the Lledr and the smaller streams right up to the top of the moor, and I have noticed it on a very small stream, not a yard in width, right up in the mountain.

The Curlew (*N. arquata*) is common and breeds freely on the peaty bogs on both sides of the river, particularly on the "flats," some low-lying marshy, and in some places dangerous, peat bogs, lying below Siabod on the Dolwyddelen side.

They are wonderfully wary, and one which was shot last year created considerable astonishment in the village, most of those who saw it not having ever seen one dead before.

The Heron (*A. cinerea*). The upper portion of the Lledr which runs quietly between meadows for some distance, is frequented by one or two of these birds, as also is the Lake Diwaunnedd which is a very lonely piece of water about four miles from Dolwyddelen.

Occasionally they are seen on other of the smaller lakes which abound in the district. I do not know where they come from as I know of no

heronry near, nor is any heronry mentioned in Carnarvonshire in the list of heronries compiled by Mr. Harting in the *Zoologist* (*Zool.*, 1872, p. 3261). The nearest would appear to be at Machynlleth in Merionethshire (*Zool.*, 1872, p. 3264), but it would be interesting to know if there is one closer, as Machynlleth is a good way off and the mountains on the south side are very high for a Heron to fly over every day for food.

The Mallard (*A. boscas*) breeds but sparingly; in winter, however, it is of course much commoner. The Snipe (*G. coelestis*) breeds sparingly. The Woodcock (*S. rusticula*) is fairly common in winter, but is not, I think, a resident, as I have never seen one in summer. The Landrail (*C. pratensis*) breeds not uncommonly on the moors; and the Teal (*Q. crecca*) is a winter visitor.

The Pheasant (*Ph. colchicus*) is rarer towards Festiniog than lower down towards Bettws, where in the woods it may often be seen. On the moor it is of very rare occurrence, and last year the only bird seen was a young hen on the edge of the heather.

The Partridge (*P. cinerea*) frequents the low-lying moorlands and the cornfields at the base of the hills. They lie very close indeed in the rough scrub on the side of the moor, and are very hard to find, even with a dog. They are fine big birds, and have a very strong flavour, owing, no doubt, to the heather which they feed on. They are never found on the very high parts of the mountain.

The Red Grouse (*L. scoticus*) is the chief attraction of the place. They are very large, strong, and healthy birds, and disease (Grouse disease) is unknown in the district.

Hatching seasons vary very much, a wet year swamping the nests on the boggy parts of the moor, and only giving the second broods a chance, with the result that the twelfth finds the birds about as large as Thrushes.

On some farms there always seems to be a larger number of "Squeakers" than on others, particularly where the ground is rocky and without much good heather—for example, near Festiniog.

There is not really sufficient heather to support a large head of game, but with careful preservation and hard vermin killing for several years the stock would be vastly larger than at present. The birds pack very early, and are then unapproachable. They are always rather wild and very strong on the wing, and as they are not numerous enough to drive (the nature of the ground besides renders driving very awkward) anything like a "bag" is impossible. As it is you have to work very hard to get ten brace a day, and you do not often get that.

In winter, when the snow is very deep, the wooded sides of Bertheos afford shelter to the Grouse from the moors all round, and I have been told that the number to be seen on some occasions packed together in this shelter

is quite incredible to a person who only knows the hills in their normal state and the number of birds usually seen. On one occasion in 1894 a very handsome pied variety was shot with breast and wings nearly pure white.

The Golden Plover (*C. pluvialis*) is occasionally shot and I found it breeding this year. The Lapwing (*V. vulgaris*), though seldom obtained, is fairly common, and breeds much in the same places as the Curlew.

Some few waders from the Conway Estuary sometimes stray up the valley and find their way to the borders of the mountain lakes; for example, the Ringed Plover (*Ægialitis hiaticula*) which has been shot at Diwaunnedd Lake. Sometimes, too, in rough weather small parties of Gulls make their appearance from the coast. Some years ago a small number of Ptarmigan (*L. mutus*) were turned down[1] on Moel Siabod, but for some reason or other they were not a success and quickly disappeared.

Of the smaller birds the Meadow Pipit (*A. pratensis*) is the commonest bird on the moor, but the Tree Pipit (*A. trivialis*) is distinctly rare, though it does inhabit the woods bordering the moors in a few places, *e.g.*, between Pontypant and Bettws.

The Swallow (*H. rustica*) and the Martin (*Ch. urbica*) are both common, but the Sand Martin (*Cotile riparia*) is absent entirely, owing to there being no sand-banks in the neighbourhood.

Though the Yellow Wagtail (*M. raii*) is not uncommon, the Grey Wagtail (*M. melanope*) is almost as generally distributed, and is in marked contrast to the Surrey and South of England distribution of this class.

(*To be concluded.*)

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Notes from the Thames.—The spring here has been marked by two important features. The first has been the strength of the migration of the Common Sandpiper (*Totanus hypoleucus*); commencing on the 13th April, it has continued until the beginning of June, single birds or pairs being seen almost every day along the banks of the river. During spring migration this species seems to me to move up stream, and to come down again in autumn, but on account of their migrating at night, it makes it very hard to say with certainty if it really is so; however, their movements during the day-time strongly support the theory. The other feature has been the large num-

[1] I do not know who turned them down, but was informed that they were so by a keeper.

ber of Kingfishers (*Alcedo ispida*). It is not often, even on a most secluded stream, that one can count 10 nests within the space of seven miles, yet this is the number I have found on the Thames, and am glad to say that in spite of the number of people about only one nest has been interfered with, the others all succeeding in hatching their young—news which will be very welcome to ornithologists. At Wraysbury, near the spot where Mr. Yarrell has recorded seeing a Dipper, I have obtained two nests of the Water-rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), and at the same time, and in the same place, I found eggs of the Landrail (*Crex pratensis*), so that Mr. Dixon's statement in his "Nests and Eggs of British Birds," that "the breeding grounds of the two birds are totally different in character," does not appear to meet all cases. I have never before met with or heard of the Water-rail in this district. I noticed the first young Cygnets on the 20th May, but in spite of an apparently favourable season they are hatching very badly, and three broods have only yielded two, two, and four respectively; six is about the general average, but I once saw as many as 10. The *Sylviinæ* were somewhat late in starting to nest, probably owing to the east winds. However, nests of the Willow-wren, Whitethroat, and Garden, Reed, and Sedge Warblers, have been met with. Nightingales were very late to arrive, and have been scarcer than usual, for which I am at a loss to account, but on the other hand Whinchats and Yellow Wagtails have been unusually plentiful. Towards the end of May many young Starlings were in the meadows, and the screeching of both young and parents was abominable, and it is with relief I notice that the young have left the neighbourhood, and the old birds are settling down for the second brood.—Graham W. Kerr (Staines).

Notes from Barmouth.—Now that the season of 1896 is drawing to a close (alas!), it would be interesting to hear from field-naturalists—oologists especially—in other districts, what effect (if any), the mild winter has had upon the birds, particularly in regard to their time of nesting. In this neighbourhood the difference was most marked amongst the early breeders, and, curiously, all were not affected alike, some being earlier than usual, others abnormally late, and previous experience was no guide whatever, so that a day's nesting was a day of surprises. For instance, the Stonechat had young several days old on April 5th (three nests, all with young). The Chough had full clutches, and was sitting on the 14th, while the Dipper and Raven were later, the first of the former taken on April 3rd, and one pair of the latter observed on the 9th not having laid. A friend informs me he was told last year by a man who takes their eggs for collectors in the Cumberland districts, that these birds (Ravens), are always later after a mild winter than following one more severe, and I should like to know whether this has been remarked by others. The Carrion Crow was also much later than

usual. A Nightjar was flushed from one egg, on May 23rd, amongst the sand-dunes on the shore, and I should be glad to know whether it has been observed nesting in a similar situation, as in my experience—some twenty years—both date and site are unprecedented. Curlews were sitting on April 25th, and the Buzzard on the same date. All the earlier migrants, Chiffchaff, Wheatear, &c., arrived later than usual.—F. C. Rawlings (Barmouth, June 9th).

Nomenclature in Ornithology.—In a review of Dr. Sharpe's "Handbook," the editor expresses a regret that the learned author should be amongst the opponents of trinomials as applied to birds. The bestowal of a trinomial on every race or sub-species (so-called), is not only "unnecessary" and "clumsy," but its attempt would be attended by bewilderment and chaos. No one has to my knowledge explained with much show of success what a "sub-species" is; and if the editor is able to do this he will confer a real blessing on naturalists. Indeed, until this is accomplished—and its accomplishment seems to me impossible—such names will often be misleading as well as valueless. If it were possible to make an examination of every Ring Ouzel (employing the word in its widest sense), inhabiting Eurasia at this moment, ornithologists would be greatly exercised in assigning the exact number of species and races, and it seems a not too violent declaration to say that no two of them could arrive at a common conclusion. The ideas involved in the use of such words as "race" and "sub-species" are necessarily more or less misleading because such use is arbitrary, and hence it would perhaps be as well—for the present at any rate—to dispense with these worda.—W. Ruskin Butterfield (St. Leonards-on-Sea.)

Mr. Butterfield's remarks in no way affect my arguments. To repeat the illustration I adopted in the review referred to, I should like to ask Mr. Butterfield whether he accepts *Parus dresseri* of Dr. Sharpe's Handbook as a valid species, or as a geographical race? If the latter, he can surely not intend to defend its retention as an *apparently* valid species, when at any day the Continental form may occur with us, thus rendering necessary the inclusion of *two* apparently distinct species of Marsh Titmice in the British list. If Mr. Butterfield's opinions are well grounded, he must defend the system of leaving all but *valid species* nameless; a system which not only directly discountenances the natural process of evolution, but to my mind places the student at a disadvantage by referring to two markedly different forms, from widely-separated regions, under the same name. I think the dictum is inevitable that *no naturalist who admits the truth of evolution can refuse to recognise the existence of differing geographical races.* Having got so far must we not give a name to such geographical races or sub-species if they are

to be identified and studied? Some workers may be satisfied with making apparent species of a selection of them, and leaving the remainder unnamed, but personally I prefer trinominals, and I have adopted them in my "Concise Handbook," although well aware that my action will subject me to a storm of censure. In reply to Mr. Butterfield's question, I may say that I regard the terms "race" and "sub-species" as almost but not quite synonymous. Mr. Butterfield can scarcely need me to explain what a geographical "race" is, as he can doubtlessly appreciate such an one in the *P. palustris dresseri* referred to. The term sub-species is apparently used in its strictest sense by many systematists to distinguish a race or form which constantly differs to a more than usually marked extent from the type, and so seems to justify its recognition as a *good* sub-species, and entitled to the name of a *species*. The race just mentioned even becomes under the name of *P. dresseri*, to all intents and purposes a valid species in the judgment of those anti-evolutionists who cannot otherwise recognise natural variations from the type, however constant. The example of the Ring-Ouzel affords an argument *for* me, inasmuch as it proves the extent to which certain types of avian life are affected by geographical distribution, or by climate, which amounts to much the same thing, as evidenced by the fact that at the same latitudes, in widely different places, such forms as the Ring-Ouzel exhibit precisely the same variation from the type, and in this case it seems desirable and proper to refer to examples from both districts as being of the same race. After all a name is a name, and I think that the very origin and usage of scientific designations justify the adoption of trinominals. I cannot see, moreover, why trinominals should be more "clumsy" in scientific than in trivial nomenclature; we fear not to speak of the "Scandinavian Rock Pipit," and so on *ad infinitum*.—H. Kirke Swann.

Scarcity of the Black Crow in Sussex.—War has been waged so successfully (if the results be rightly described as success), against the "formerly very abundant" Black or Carrion Crow in Sussex, that the chronicler of the avifauna of the county fears that the species "bids fair to become altogether extinct." I have been at some pains to become acquainted with the real state of affairs, and I have found the truth of Mr. Borrer's remark increasingly evident. There are parts of the county where the species has not been seen for ten years, and, indeed, I was recently told by an old resident in the eastern part that he had not seen a Black Crow for over double that space of time. It would be of interest to know how general has been the decrease of the bird in Britain of late years, and perhaps I may be allowed to invite readers of The Ornithologist who live in different parts of Britain to contribute to the solution of the question by stating in a com-

parative way what their experience is in the matter.—W. Ruskin Butterfield (The School, Mercatoria, St. Leonards-on-Sea).

Abundance of Little Auks in January, 1895.—As a supplement to Mr. Aplin's notes on this species, I may say that a Nottingham bird-stuffer received over fifty little auks from the neighbourhood of Marske, in N.E. Yorkshire, where they had been picked up dead on the beach.—F. B. Whitlock.

Spotted Eggs of Redstart.—A friend in Shropshire having reported a nest of the Redstart containing eleven eggs, I wrote and asked him to send them to me for inspection. I found them separable into six spotted ones and five unspotted, the product evidently of two females. This is not the first time I have seen spotted eggs of this species, but I have been interested in finding similar rust-coloured spots on an egg of the Pheasant.—F. B. Whitlock.

Local Bird Names.—I have no doubt that a few Cleveland bird names will prove acceptable, so here are a few of the commonest. A Blackbird is a "Blackie"; a Thrush a "Throllie"; a Hedge-Sparrow a "Cuddy"; a Chaffinch a "Spinkey"; Rooks and Jackdaws are "Crows"; a Yellow Bunting is a "Yellow Yowley"; Blue Tits, Great Tits, Cole Tits, and even Wood-Wrens, Willow-Wrens, and Chiffchaffs are "Tom Tits," simply because they lay very little eggs. When a Robin nests in a bank it is a "Bank-Lark."—C. Milburn (Russell Street, Middlesbro').

Owls' Pellets Wanted.—I should be much indebted to anyone who will send me Owls' pellets, stating (if possible), the species to which they belong, the locality, also whether there is game in the neighbourhood, and, if so, of what sort. The amount of postage will be returned.—Lionel E. Adams (77, St. Giles' Street, Northampton).

White Variety of Bullfinch's Eggs.—Last year two boys brought me some perfectly white eggs, which they had found in a nest described by them as a Bullfinch's. Never having heard of a white variety of the eggs of that bird I was inclined to think the lads had made some mistake about the nest. This year, however, the same lads found a similar nest in the same hedge, containing four eggs of exactly the same variety as those discovered last year, though somewhat smaller in size. The bird was recognised by one of the lads in flying off the nest of a Bullfinch, and the nest, which I have seen, is unmistakably the work of that bird. I can find no record of this pure white variety of Bullfinch's egg having occurred before. I may mention a parallel case of an unusual variety of egg being laid, evidently by the same bird, in two consecutive seasons. A few years ago I found a Chaffinch's nest

at Reading, containing a clutch of pale blue eggs; the following year I found a similar clutch in the same garden, in each case the hen being on the nest.—J. E. Tarbot (Weybridge).

I have known of the frequency of these pure white eggs of the Bullfinch in Surrey for the last three years, but solely from my own experience, and I curiously enough just anticipate Mr. Tarbot's remarks as to the absence of records, for in my "Concise Handbook," which is probably being issued to the public at the moment of writing, I have observed (p. 80), that "pure white eggs, usually with normal markings, are rather common in Surrey," this remark being based upon the fact that I found as many as three identified sets of this variety in 1893 near Epsom. To go farther back, I have recorded ("Birds of London," p. 17) the finding, by myself, of a supposed set of Great Tit's eggs in a Bullfinch's nest in Richmond Park on May 24th, 1891. The presence of a Great Tit near the nest, and the absolute resemblance of the eggs to those of this Titmouse justified my record, but I have long since become convinced that they were really eggs of the Bullfinch. It would be interesting to know whether ornithologists have met with whole sets of these pure white eggs in other counties than Surrey, and if so, with what frequency.—H. Kirke Swann.

NOTES AND NEWS.

We regret to hear of the death of Mr. J. A. Cooper, which was due to a cold contracted last Easter. He was well known in London, and also out of it, as an ardent student of ornithology.

From Galesburg, Illinois, comes the prospectus of yet another American magazine of Ornithology and Oölogy. It is to be a monthly magazine, entitled the "Osprey," and No. 1 is to appear on September 1st, 1896. Walter A. Johnson, Dr. A. C. Murchison, and Chester Barlow are the editors.

To the "Victorian Naturalist" for February, 1896, Mr. Robert Hall contributes some very interesting "Notes on the Bird Fauna of the Box Hill District," which lies some twelve miles to the eastward of the city of Melbourne. Of a total of nearly 400 species of Victorian birds, 74 have been found breeding in the district referred to, the Passerine birds, however, comprising seven-tenths of the total, thus showing the wooded nature of the country, the most numerous families being the Meliphagidæ, the Compephaginæ, and the Luscinidæ.

The veteran Irish ornithologist, Mr. Robert Warren, of Ballina, contributes to the "Irish Naturalist" for June a valuable paper on "The

Terns of Killala Bay," with particular reference to the Sandwich Tern (*Sterna cantiaca*), a colony of which he discovered breeding at Cloona Lough in 1857; this being the same colony which removed in 1858 to Rathrouyeen Lough, where it still exists in increased numbers.

The Röntgen "X" ray photograph which we are able to present to our readers this month was taken from a dead example of the species mentioned (*Turtur risorius*), which had escaped from its cage and been killed by the cat. The bird showed no external signs of injury, saving a slight puncture on the breast. The excellent result shown was obtained by Messrs. Newton and Co. by the aid of one of their special "focus" tubes. It will be observed that the shafts of the wing and tail quills are distinctly visible.

Our valued friend and correspondent, Mr. W. J. C. Miller, contributes to the "Educational Times" for June, 1896, an interesting article on his observations of the gulls and other birds in St. James's Park during the past winter and early spring. It is entitled "Nature Studies in London."

Messrs. A. B. Meyer and L. W. Wiglesworth's magnificent "Birds of Celebes and the Neighbouring Islands," to be published by Messrs. R. Friedländer and Sohn, of Berlin, will be a history of the birds of Celebes and the surrounding islands, such as Talaut, Sangi, Sula, Togian, Saleyer, and, geographically, it will adjoin and form a western continuation of Count Salvadori's famous "Ornitologia della Papuasia e delle Molucche." About 350 species will be treated of, and of these 50 or 60, most of which have not yet been figured, will be represented on about forty plates. A series of maps will illustrate the geographical distribution of certain genera, the meteorological conditions of the archipelago, &c.

In "Nature Notes" for June, "G. H. P. B." gives a brief account of a visit to the well-known "Wideawake Fair" (the breeding resort of *Sterna fuliginosa*) at the island of Ascension.

The "Memoir of the late John Henry Gurney," by Thomas Southwell, F.Z.S. (reprinted, with some revisions, from the "Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society," vol. v.), pays fitting tribute to the memory of that justly-famed Norfolkshire naturalist, who passed away on the 20th of April, 1890, in his 71st year.

In the "Naturalist's Journal" for June Mr. S. L. Mosley, in combating our criticism of his "Annotated Catalogue of British Birds" (*supra*, p. 59), says that "in both the arrangement and nomenclature used we were advised by one of our best ornithologists, who for 75 years had been an ardent student of bird-life, and well able to give an opinion." He does not favour us with the name of this "best ornithologist," but, whoever he was, we take the liberty of saying that a man who includes a number of such widely-divergent genera as *Erithacus*, *Ruticilla*, *Pratincola*, *Saxicola*, *Locustella*, *Sylvia*, *Daulias*, *Phylloscopus*, and *Melizophilus*, in one grand jumble of *Sylvia*, is *not*

an ornithologist, whatever else he may be. Mr. Mosley remarks that we have called his "Annotated Catalogue" "a most useful guide." May we observe that we *sometimes* indulge in *ironies!*

At a meeting of the Linnean Society of London, held on May 7th, Dr. J. E. Aitcheson, C.I.E., exhibited some specimens of an Indian Woodpecker (*Dendrocopus himalayensis*) obtained on the Murree Hills at an elevation of 7,000 feet, for the purpose of calling attention to an unrecorded habit of this bird of fixing walnuts in the bark of trees in order to extract the kernels. Dr. P. L. Sclater, and Mr. J. E. Harting made some additional remarks on a similar habit of storing acorns recorded of a Californian Woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*, Bonap.) So far as had been ascertained, no such habit had been observed, or at least recorded, in the case of the European *Dendrocopus major*, which is closely allied to the Indian species.

ADDITIONS TO ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION DURING MAY.

Two Spotted Tinamous (*Nothura maculosa*) from Buenos Ayres, purchased (W. Aviary); a Canary Finch (*Serinus canarius*) from Madeira, presented by H. B. Hewetson, Esq., F.Z.S. (W. Aviary); an African Tantalus (*Tantalus ibis*) from E. Africa, presented by Captain Dugmore (E. Aviary); two Blue-headed Pigeons (*Starnœnas cyanocephala*) from Cuba, purchased (W. Aviary); two Auriculated Doves (*Zenaida auriculata* ♂ ♀) from Chili, purchased (W. Aviary); two Picui Doves (*Columbula picui* ♂ ♀) from S. America, purchased (W. Aviary); four Cape Doves (*Œna capensis*, 2 ♂, 2 ♀) from S. Africa, purchased (W. Aviary); two Crowned Pigeons (*Goura coronata*) from New Guinea, purchased (W. Aviary); a Chinese Goose (*Anser cygnoides* ♂) from China, presented by L. G. Leverson, Esq., F.Z.S. (Goose Paddocks); a Southern Fruit-Pigeon (*Crocopus chlorogaster*) from India, purchased (W. Aviary); a White-Crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua cristata*) from the Moluccas, presented by Mrs. Crofts (Parrot House); two Pennant's Parrakeets (*Platycercus pennanti*) from Australia, presented by Clifford Brooks, Esq. (Parrot House); a Nicobar Pigeon (*Calœnas nicobarica*) from the Indian Archipelago, purchased (W. Aviary); a Lesser Kestrel (*Tinnunculus cenchris*) captured off the Coast of Sicily, presented by Miss M. J. L. Spaull (N. Aviary); two Undulated Grass-Parrakeets *Melopsittacus undulatus* ♂ ♀) from Australia, purchased (Parrot House); a Pied Crow Shrike (*Strepera graculina*) from Australia, purchased (Crows' Cages); two Whooper Swans (*Cygnus musicus*) from Europe, purchased (Duck Ponds); a Blue-bearded Jay (*Cyanocorax cyanopogon*) from Pará, presented by Captain H. C. T. Beadnell, F.Z.S. (W. Aviary); two Indian Tree-Ducks (*Dendrocygna javanica*) from India, purchased (E. Aviary); an Ash-coloured Falcon (*Falco concolor* ♂) from S.E. Africa, purchased (N. Aviary); a Hawk

(*Asturina*, sp. inc.) from S. America, purchased (N. Aviary); four Gouldian Grass-Finches (*Poëphila gouldiæ* 2 ♂, 2 ♀) from Australia, purchased (Parrot House); two Crimson Finches (*Estrelda phaëton*) from Australia, purchased (Parrot House); two Green-winged Doves (*Chalcophaps indica*) from India, purchased (W. Aviary); two White-backed Pigeons (*Columba leuconota*) from India, purchased (W. Aviary); two Rüppell's Vultures (*Gyps rueppelli*) from Egypt, received in exchange (Vulture Aviary); four Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) from Egypt, received in exchange (Vulture Aviary); a Blue-and-Yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) from S. America, presented by Mrs. Browning (Parrot House); seven Shovellers (*Spatula clypeata* 3 ♂, 4 ♀) from Europe, purchased (Duck Ponds); four Golden-eyes (*Clangula glaucion* 2 ♂, 2 ♀) from Europe, purchased (Duck Ponds); six Common Teal (*Querquedula crecca* 6 ♀) from Europe, purchased (Duck Ponds); two Brown-throated Conures (*Conurus œruginosus*) from S. America, presented by Mrs. Harry Blades (Parrot House).

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All Editorial communications and Books for Review or MSS., must be sent to H. K. Swann, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. To be dealt with in the following issue, communications must be received by the 12th of each month.

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R. A., Dumfries.—Shall be glad to have occasional Bird notes as suggested. You might send paper on Common Sandpiper and Dipper for consideration. When the Editor has more leisure he will write some articles like that you mention; he has a partly-written paper on "A New World Titmouse" somewhere.

May we remind those subscribers who have not yet remitted their subscriptions that these are due in advance. "Every little helps," and we are not independent of help, so will they kindly remit at once.

Owing to delays while in the press, the Editor's "Concise Handbook of British Birds" (London: John Wheldon & Co., 58, Great Queen Street, W.C., 3s. 6d.) was not published until June 26th, and was, therefore, too late for review in this issue.

Mr. Hermann Rolle has sent us a copy of his "Normal Catalogue" of eggs of birds of the Palæarctic region.

"The Ornithologist" may be ordered through any bookseller on mentioning the Trade Agent, *i.e.*, Elliot Stock, Paternoster Row.

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ORNITHOLOGY AND OÖLOGY.

EDITED BY

H. K. SWANN,

With the assistance of

J. WHITAKER, F.Z.S.
O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.
F. B. WHITLOCK.
Rev. H. A. MACPHERSON.
W. HY. HEATHCOTE, F.L.S.
G.E.H. BARRETT-HAMILTON (Ireland).

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

VOL. I. AUGUST, 1896. No. 6.

THE AMERICAN ROBIN.

TURDUS MIGRATORIUS, LINNÆUS (1766).
No. 761, MERULA MIGRATORIA, A.O.U. CHECK LIST, 1895.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE fact that this familiar North American species has occurred in the British Islands—whether as a genuine visitor or not, being, however, a matter of opinion—should make a slight sketch of the bird, and of its habits and nidification, of interest to those who have not had an opportunity of observing it in its native haunts.

It has been obtained on one occasion near Dover, and twice near Dublin; the last instance being that cited in the "Zoologist" for 1891 (p. 217), of a bird shot at Springmount, Shankill, co. Dublin, May 4th, 1891, and now in the Science and Art Museum, Dublin. It would be unwise to declare that these examples must have been escaped birds; yet, on the other hand, the mere fact of their capture does not entitle us to say that the species has occurred on "such-and-such" occasions in the British Islands, and so to add it to the British list, on the strength of these occurrences. Yet I must, for my own part, distinctly disavow any intention of inferring that the species could not be a genuine visitor to us; for it must be remembered that it is a migratory species, which pushes its migrations regularly so far to the northward as Labrador, and so far to

the eastward as St. John's, Newfoundland, from whence the journey to Europe might possibly be accomplished in much the same way, as in the case of the wandering Snow-buntings (*Plectrophenax nivalis*), which I have known to settle upon the deck of the steamer I was upon when nearly 200 miles eastward of St. John's. Were it not for these facts, I should scarcely trouble to mention the occurrences of the American Robin in our islands; for the localities mentioned so strongly favour the theory that these particular examples were escaped birds, that I felt justified in omitting the species from my recently-published Handbook. Dr. Sharpe, however, includes it in his "Handbook to the Birds of Great Britain," 1894, on the ground that it is "by no means an unlikely bird to wander eastward, and has occurred in Heligoland."

The authority just cited, strangely to say, includes this species in the genus *Turdus*, although allowing and making use of Leach's sub-genus *Merula* (which he says is unrepresented in the Nearctic Region) for the Blackbird, and other Old World forms. To my mind, however, the American Robin is so nearly related to our Blackbird in form and plumage, that I prefer to retain both in the genus *Turdus*, rather than to separate the Blackbird by placing it in the doubtfully separable sub-genus *Merula*, which is founded almost wholly upon the more or less black plumage of the males—a poor justification in the absence of other characteristics. It has always been evident to me, also, that the Fieldfare (*T. pilaris*) is as nearly allied to the Blackbird as to the type species of Turdus (*T. viscivorus*). Again, the habits of the American Robin remind me very much of the Redwing (*T. iliacus*); although in gait when upon the ground, and also in appearance, the former is very suggestive of the Blackbird; even the ruddy tint of the under parts in the "Robin" cropping out upon the breast of an old female of our Blackbird. On the whole, therefore, I prefer to remain of the opinion that *Merula* is not separable from *Turdus*.

Although known throughout North America as the "Robin," this species is also frequently known as the "Migratory Thrush." On this side of the Atlantic it is usually called the "American Robin," but Dr. Sharpe, with very questionable

taste, has rejected the name "Robin," and has re-named it as the "American Thrush"—an exceedingly ill-chosen name.

The bird is absent from Canada and the northern portions of the United States during the winter months, usually commencing its southward migration in Canada early in October, while the last stragglers have usually departed by the beginning of November. I have noticed that at this season they feed chiefly upon the ground in the woods, and on being disturbed they fly up, uttering a low *chuck* (similar to the alarm note of our Redwing), and settle on the bare limbs of the neighbouring trees, where they appear to be reconnoitring. The call-note is a shrill whistle.

The return migration takes place directly the snow begins to melt. About the 2nd or 3rd of April it arrives in Nova Scotia in small parties, which frequent chiefly the outskirts of the forests, as, like the Old World Blackbird, the American Robin dearly loves to be near meadow or pasture land whenever possible. For about two weeks the birds are but little occupied, unless it is in pairing; and, during this time, the favoured parts of the woodlands resound towards dusk with the song of the males. The song is loud, and possessed of little variation, but still attractive; it is certainly inferior in mellowness and compass of voice to that of the Blackbird. It may be readily syllabled as *gie-it-up*, *gie-it-up*, *gie-it-up*, *pilly*, *pilly*; but it is strange what an amount of rivalry and assertion it conveys, for the birds will sing one against the other with a surprising vehemence and vigour for an hour at a time.

About the 24th or 25th of April, just when the snow is finally vanishing in the woods, the American Robin commences nest building, the nest being usually completed by the 3rd or 4th of May. A variety of situations are adopted for the nest, which is usually, however, placed at no great height, although I once found a nest at the extremity of a branch high up in a pine, about thirty feet from the ground, this being the greatest altitude at which I ever saw it. A common situation is on the drooping branch of a hemlock, six or eight feet from the ground, but it may be found in young firs or other trees and not uncommonly in the forks of the still leafless silver birches. The nest considerably resembles that of the European Mistle

Thrush, although not quite so bulky, the exterior being constructed of small twigs and tassels of green tree-moss (*Usnea*), while the lining is a neat cup of fine dry grasses. In almost every case the nest is secured to the branches with a small quantity of moist loam, while the usual intermediate wall of the same is always present in the nest itself. The eggs appear to be usually four in number, and are unspotted, of a uniform and rather deep greenish-blue, measuring about 1·10 by ·85 in.

The "Robin" is the first to commence breeding among the smaller species of Nova Scotian birds; and as the period in which it commences nest-building corresponds exactly with that in which the Old World Blackbird and Mistle Thrush commence, it may be readily imagined how much later the spring commences in Nova Scotia, in spite of the fact that it is five or six degrees farther to the southward than England.

The male bird is 9 ins. in length, from the base of the bill to the tip of the tail; tail, 3·75; wing, 5·00. Head, nape, ear-coverts and lores blackish, with a whitish stripe above latter; upper parts dusky-grey, deeper on the wing-coverts, which are edged with ash-white; wing-quills and tail feathers nearly black, edged with ash-white, the tail-feathers being also noticeably tipped with white; cheeks white, with a broad moustache-like streak of black; chin and upper throat white, spotted with black; rest of under parts uniform light chestnut, turning to white on the vent and under tail-coverts, the latter having a narrow dusky shaft-streak to each feather; bill yellow, with a blackish tip; iris brown; tarsi brown. The female scarcely differs, except in being slightly duller, and with more white below.

A note in the *North British Agriculturist* reports that much damage has been committed in turnip fields in Annandale during the past few days by crows. The crows, in their search for wire-worms, pull up the young turnips, probably finding a worm at the root of one out of 150 or 200 pulled up.

ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES FROM ROMNEY MARSH AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

By Boyd Alexander, M.B.O.U.

"Times are not what they were" is a saying that might well be applied to Romney Marsh and its neighbourhood, as regards the numerical distribution of species now breeding there as compared with formerly. Disturbing influences of one kind and another have come about, which have sadly thinned their numbers. Indeed, in the case of the Kentish Plover and Thicknee, it well nigh approaches extinction, since the Lydd Beach, the breeding resort of these species and of several others besides, has long been threatened. This locality can hardly, at the present time, be described as a wilderness or the home of many rare birds. The direct causes may be attributed to the increased firing of both artillery and small guns during the height of the breeding season, and also to the Dungeness railway, which has opened out a considerable portion of it.

On the other hand, there are portions of the shore-lines between Pevensey and Dungeness quite as rich as they were in the days of Knox in the visits of summer migrants, that pass northward to breed. On May 9th, a Temminck's Stint, female, was obtained in the Pevensey levels, and during the following day a number of Bar-tailed Godwits appeared near Rye Harbour. Several were shot. The last of the Godwits was seen on May 28th, when a small party, consisting of five immature birds, alighted on the sands at low water. One of these, a male, was shot. This bird was still assuming the pale plumage. Several Grey Plover with black breasts were obtained on May 10th, and individuals of this species continued to arrive, off and on, up to June 13th, when I saw two birds in company with a knot on the Midrips.* By the next day, however, all these had disappeared. On May 22nd, a flock of six passed over my head. They were making in a northerly direction. A pair of Black-tailed Godwits appeared on the Pevensey levels on May 13th. This seems somewhat a

* The Midrips are a series of shallow ponds on the Lydd Beach.

favourite spot for these birds. A pair were obtained in the same place last year, on May 11th. The Pevensey levels are also mentioned by Knox in regard to the occurrence of this species in Sussex.

From May 15th onwards, a number of young herons, covered with undeveloped quills, continually invaded the dykes and shallow pools here* in search of eels. This is frequently the case during a dry season, like the present one, when the water has become low. These birds must chiefly hail, I think, from the Heronry at Brede. On these partial migrations in search of food, many are shot by the farmers, who esteem them good eating.

The breeding numbers of the Redshank have decidedly decreased here. Increased drainage and the dry weather of the last two summers have done a great deal towards the banishment, not only of this species, but especially of the Coot and Little Grebe. The Little Grebe is locally known as "Spider Diver." Many parts of the large dykes and pools, that were, only a few years back, favourite breeding resorts of these three species of birds, have dried up, and are now nothing more than thick reed beds. In these reedy places, the Reed Warbler has found a home. Any sudden noise will cause this bird to sing vehemently, while the footsteps of a passer-by invariably draws from him a song.

When considering the decrease of the Redshank, the taking of their eggs for eating, by the country people, must not be lightly disregarded. The immediate locality of the nest is soon discovered, for no bird, with the exception of the Lapwing, betrays the whereabouts of its nest more readily than does the Redshank. It flies overhead in concentric circles, uttering alarm notes, which are for all the world, in tone, like a string of plaintive sobs, that become wilder and more heart-rending as the nest is approached. A short search will soon find the eggs.

On May 22nd, a pair of Thicknee Plovers appeared on the Lydd Beach. After carefully watching them for some days,

*"Here," in this article refers to the Lydd Beach, and its immediate neighbourhood.

I was rewarded in finding their two eggs. They were deposited amongst some flowering fox-glove—altogether a pretty site, but, all the same, unhappily selected, since the locality was continually being subjected to a "dropping" artillery fire. I had hopes of being able to see the young, but after four days of sitting the birds deserted the nest. The extraordinary sense of smell possessed by the Thicknee renders a near approach to the nest, without disturbing the bird, difficult.

Of the two species of Tern breeding here, the Common and Lesser, the latter is by far the most numerous. But the numbers of both have sadly diminished of late years. Both species keep separate in their breeding haunts, the Lesser Tern preferring rather the close proximity of the sea. The restricted breeding area taken up by the Common Terns is distinctly prejudicial to the safety of their eggs. The children of the fishermen and coastguard officers soon discover these spots, and the eggs are robbed right and left for purposes of eating. Over these places, sheep have invariably been feeding, and where they have poked their noses, forming small stone-padded hollows, the eggs are more often than not deposited. On May 21st, a nest of the Common Tern was found containing the unusual number of five eggs. They were of the reddish-buff variety.

On May 23rd, I was fortunate enough to discover, with the aid of my field glasses, a pair of Sandwich Terns breeding here. The birds, however, deserted after the first egg was laid. I am inclined to think that the Common Terns must have driven them away. A pair of Black Terns were seen on May 24th, following the sea-board.

The sandy portions of the Rye Coast attract, now and again, a certain number of Oyster-catchers. When going northwards to breed, the Oyster-catcher makes a rapid journey, rarely tarrying by the way for any length of time, like other members of the Scolopacidæ. At 5.30, on May 29th, six of these birds appeared here. They shelved into the sand, and immediately made for safety along the nearest groyne. They "bunched" themselves up together and remained almost motionless for nearly an hour, after which they aroused themselves and began to dabble in the nearest pools. Shortly

before seven o'clock, one of the birds, presumably the leader, uttered its call-note, whereupon the little flock formed once more into close order and got up like one bird, making in a north-westerly direction. A solitary pair of these birds may be found breeding annually on the beach, not far from Dungeness. But it is doubtful whether any young are ever raised.

The presence of the Wheatear here can hardly escape the notice of the most unobservant. The curious sites chosen by these birds for their nests, and especially is this the case down here, is no safeguard against intrusion, but rather, if anything, the exact opposite, for it seems to linger in the memory of the bird-nesting boy, with the result that every tin can, kettle, or empty shell are zealously turned over and examined, wherein the Wheatear's treasure is very often found. Though the first nest be taken, it is not uncommon to find the same site occupied again for the second lay. I came across a nest on the Lydd Beach this summer under a disused pig trough, which had been turned over. The hole by which the bird gained access to its nest was no larger than that of a mouse. Another was found in an empty 4-pounder shell—a pretty example, truly, of peace and war. The crevices in the gabion casemates here are also frequently chosen. Again, it is not unusual to find the Wheatear's nest in a depression on the beach. In a case like this, dry grass alone is used, the nest resembling then a large edition of the lark's. The normal feather lining is absent, and, in this way, conspicuousness is nicely avoided. If not disturbed, the Wheatear returns annually to the same nesting site.

The Ringed Plover breeds on the Lydd Beach in fair numbers, and seems to be the least affected of its genus by the artillery practice. These noisy little birds course over the beach all day long, uttering their whistling cries. Even the Skylarks of the locality have caught their plaintive notes, and they reproduce them amongst their own with startling accuracy.

Four pairs of Kentish Plover bred this season on the beach, not very far from Dungeness Lighthouse. The nest of this species is, to my mind, by far the most difficult to find of all the

plovers. The bird seldom makes any demonstration in the way of a call-note, it creeps away like a mouse through the dry beach grass, which it resembles so closely in colour. To lie down flat on the beach, armed with a good pair of field glasses, is the only chance of success, and then one may be rewarded, after a considerable period of watching, by seeing a little brown thing wending its way back to its nest, stopping now and again, and, when in close proximity of its treasure, standing motionless for many minutes together. When the eggs are hatched the bird is even still more wary. It often drops the food close to the young without even alighting. I have found that the male of this species undertakes the sole task of incubation.

On May 29th, the first flock of Sanderling appeared. They were in full summer dress. The female of this species seems more backward in assuming the nuptial dress than the male. A female out of this flock was obtained with plumage hardly differing from that attained in autumn. The last flock of these birds were seen here on June 2nd.

A pair of Dotterel appeared here on May 29th—a rather late date for this bird. They remained in a field of young peas, close to the shore, for several days.

On May 30th, two pairs of Common Sandpiper appeared along one of the dykes, but disappeared a few days later. I have searched in vain for the nest of this species in many portions of Kent, and have carefully watched the birds, but they never remained for any length of time in the locality. Knox in his *Ornithological Rambles*, p. 231, says of this bird, "It is frequently met with on the banks of inland streams, among the grassy borders of which the nest is placed." This can hardly be taken as evidence of this species having nested even in Sussex during his day. The breeding haunts of the Common Sandpiper must be looked for on higher altitudes than are to be found in Kent and Sussex.

June 3rd: saw a number of Dunlin, with black breasts—a somewhat late date. As far as my experience goes, none of the adults remain here during the entire summer. When feeding, the Dunlins seem convinced of the justice of the rule, "Share and share alike." Extended order is either formed, or,

when in flock, the rear portion alternately comes to the front, and in this way each bird partakes equally of what the tide lays bare.

On June 4th, I made an expedition to the Hoppen "Petts" for the purpose of inspecting the colony of Black-headed Gulls. These "petts," which lie about four miles south-east of Lydd, consist of two large pieces of water of unknown depth. They are, furthermore, fringed with treacherous reed beds, which possess all the qualities of a dangerous bog. They are also the home of many leeches. When within a mile of these "petts," I could discern numbers of Black-headed Gulls lining the banks, and looking like so many lumps of white chalk. On a nearer approach, they all rose up, full of clamorous consternation—a veritable sea-rookery, and circled above the water. They numbered about 200, and at least a quarter of these wore the dress of immaturity. I discovered over twenty nests, all containing eggs, with the exception of two, which had young. These nests were invariably placed close to the edge of reed bed nearest the water. On one small reedy promontory there were no less than eight, situated hardly a yard apart. Of late years, this colony of Gulls has suffered much persecution, but the owner—Mr. Samson, of Lydd—exercises now a strict surveillance over it, with the result that the colony is rallying.

On June 12th, a Spoonbill appeared near the Midrips. Its appearance created considerable excitement amongst several of the fisher folks. I have the following records of the occurrence of the Spoonbill in this locality. Two adult males were shot, May 9th, 1889, by two of the Southerden family. One of these specimens was subsequently sold to Mr. Gray, of Dover, for £7. In June, 1890, a party of five appeared, but, to use the words of the fishermen, "we were too greedy, we wanted the 'blooming' lot and ended by getting none." On May 24th, 1891, an immature bird was obtained. There is also another specimen, still in the possession of the Southerdens, shot some twenty years ago. This is a very perfect one. The broad suffused rust-coloured ring at the base of the neck is remarkable for its intensity. The above records will show that these visits have become fewer and farther between of late years.

The bird now in question was, at the time of its being seen, feeding along with five herons. I have also observed this species on the sands in company with Gulls.

The shore-line, now (June 16th), is a perfect blank, save for a few immature Gulls of all sorts, who are regular attendants at such times when the tide lays bare the mackerel nets, waiting in the hope of seizing some of the small fry which the fishermen may leave. Terns are also there to swell the company, and it is wonderful with what precision they dart into the nets and carry off their prey, while there are others not so bold, who keep out at sea, hovering all the while upon its surface, watching for the floating remnants of small fry, which have been washed by the current through the net-meshes. After these they dart, falling into the water like so many ounces of lead.

On June 16th, two Skylarks' nests were found in a meadow, containing four and two eggs respectively, perfectly white, a variety identical with the texture of the Kingfisher's egg. The nest of four eggs were quite good, but the others had been deserted.

MEMOIR OF THE LATE LORD LILFORD, F.L.S., F.Z.S.,

PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

JUST as the July number of THE ORNITHOLOGIST had gone to press we received the quite unexpected intelligence of the death of this distinguished ornithologist, who passed away at his Northamptonshire seat—Lilford Hall, near Oundle—on June 17, in his sixty-fourth year. Although his death was the immediate result of a chill caught a fortnight previously, he had been for years an invalid, having been latterly quite crippled by rheumatic gout.

The loss of this genial and kind-hearted gentleman, and true ornithologist, will be very widely regretted, both by those who knew him personally and by those who knew him only by his published books and papers, as an accomplished and zealous

naturalist. The present writer has on more than one occasion benefited by his kindly assistance and advice in the carrying out of his projects.

Although no mean authority upon geology and other subjects, Lord Lilford was primarily, and by choice, devoted to ornithology. Lilford Hall has, indeed, for long been the home of one of the finest collections of living birds in this country, the raptorial birds in particular being extremely well represented. Lord Lilford also possessed a fine collection of stuffed British birds, although he did not collect foreign species except as living examples. His literary contributions to ornithological knowledge are exceedingly numerous, although consisting chiefly of papers and notes in the "Ibis," "Zoologist," and the "Proceedings of the Zoological Society," to all of which he has contributed regularly for many years.

His recently-published work on the "Birds of Northamptonshire" and his magnificent "Coloured Figures of the Birds of the British Islands," now almost completed, will, however, form his chief monuments.

Thomas Lyttelton Henry Powys, fourth Baron Lilford, a son of the third Baron by his marriage with Miss Mary Fox, only daughter of Lord Holland and the celebrated Lady Holland, was born on March 18, 1833, and was educated at Harrow and at Christ Church, Oxford. He succeeded to the title in 1861, and married, first, Emma Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. Robert William Brandling, of Low Gosforth, Northumberland, who died in 1884, and in the following year he married Clementina Georgiana, daughter of the late Mr. Ker Baillie Hamilton, C.B. Although he had for a long period made Lilford Hall his home, he also owned a magnificent property near Preston, in Lancashire, while he inherited respectively from his aunt, the last Lady Holland, and his brother, the Hon. Leopold Fox-Powys, the lands of the Fox family, in Wiltshire, and the historic home of Charles James Fox, St. Ann's Hill, Chertsey. He was fond of travelling, and was able to indulge in it to a limited extent since he became an invalid, but he never took a conspicuous part in public life. He is succeeded by his son, the Hon. J. Powys.

H. K. S.

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

A Concise Handbook of British Birds, by H. Kirke Swann, Editor of "The Ornithologist." (London: John Wheldon & Co., 1896.) Foolscap 8vo., pp. viii. + 210, cloth, price 3s. 6d.

Here, within the space of 210 pages, we have a carefully-condensed, and, for the most part, reliable account of the British Avifauna. The volume is a handy size for the pocket, is excellently printed, and the price brings it within the reach of all. In his treatment of the subject, Mr. Swann has adopted the plan of giving the *habitat* (*i.e.*, "the region inhabited during the breeding season," to which "the winter range of migratory species has usually been added") of the different species, followed by a description of their plumages, their distribution in the British Isles, facts as to their nesting and songs, and records of rare species. The book will doubtless enjoy a wide circulation, and we have little hesitation in recommending it to the notice of the reader. This much we will say, that for its size and general usefulness, it is as cheap a book on British Birds as we know of.

In reading through the volume, the following omissions have been noticed. Coues' Redpoll, *Linota exilipes*, has no place in the list, although a reference to "The Naturalist" for 1894, p. 84, will show that such rightly belongs to this species—a specimen having been shot by Dr. H. B. Hewetson in Yorkshire. More recently the Subalpine Warbler, *Sylvia subalpina*, has been added to the British list (see Bull B. O. Club, iv. p. ix.) by Mr. J. S. Elliot, but this species too has been overlooked. Moreover, the Hawaiian Storm Petrel, *Oceanodroma cryptoleucura*, is dismissed without a word of description, although it runs very close in plumage to *O. leucorrhoa*. The omission is unaccountable, as a description is accessible in the latest British Museum Catalogue of Birds (vol. xxv., p. 350) as well as in "Avifauna of Laysan" (Pt. I. p. 53).

We are sorry to find (p. 22) that the Dartford Warbler is recorded as having bred in North Yorkshire. The evidence is of the slenderest description, and it is impossible at present to regard the authenticity of the occurrence as established beyond the possibility of doubt.

Mr. Swann names the White-spotted Bluethroat *Cyanecula wolfi*. This, however, is properly the scientific name of the race whose throat is wholly blue—a bird which has no claim to a place in a work on British Birds. The White-spotted form of the Bluethroat should be named *C. leucocyanea*.

A feature in the book before us that will commend itself to the notice of ornithologists, is that the records of our rarer birds are here carefully collected. It is to be regretted that the space at the disposal of the

author has precluded a fuller treatment of this part of the subject. In some cases a greater accuracy might perhaps have been expected. For instance, it is stated (p. 56) of the Tawny Pipit that the "first recorded example was taken near Brighton in 1858, and a dozen or more have since been obtained there." As a matter of fact, Mr. Borrer has accounted for no fewer than 19 of these birds from that part of the county. Again, the Serin is stated (p. 71) to have occurred seven or eight times in Sussex, whereas we have failed to find more than five records.

We conclude as we began, by heartily recommending the volume to the notice of ornithologists.

W. C. J. R. B.

My reviewer's fault-findings are so few in number and so much the reverse of hostile, that I do not wish to let it seem that I am opposing his criticism, and yet I cannot omit to add a few words. In the first place I must say that the absence of Coues' or the Hoary Redpoll from my list was a pure accident. Following the precedent in the new A.O.U. "Check List," I disallow separate rank to this closely-allied form of *Cannabina hornemanni*, and it should therefore have appeared (p. 79) as 96a, *C. hornemanni exilipes* (Coues). I did not discover the omission until too late for correction; readers can, however, easily insert in pencil. *O. cryptoleucura* was added when the contingent portion of the work was actually in type, and to have given further particulars was found to be an impossibility. As to the Dartford Warbler's supposed nesting in North Yorkshire, I merely mentioned that I *believed* that it had done so. The White-spotted Bluethroat appears as *C. wolfi* in the B.O.U. List, and I allowed this name to stand simply because it has the right of priority *if* the entirely blue-throated bird is *not* separated from the white-spotted form, but I am by no means sure, by the way, that it should be regarded as not separable. I might take this opportunity of drawing attention to the following misprints:—Page 22, line 26, for "north-west" read "south-west"; page 78, lines 19 and 24, and page 79, lines 12 and 13, for "*A*" read "*C*"; page 84, line 22, for "(1868)" read "(1869)"; page 161, line 25, for "Rednecked" read "Ringnecked"; page 172, line 23, for "3" read "4"; page 210, line 19, for "51a" read "50a." Mr. Armstrong has pointed out that another example of the Whiskered Tern (No. 332) was shot at Friar's Carse, Dumfriesshire, May 28th, 1894.

H. K. S.

In *Nature Notes* for July, Mr. Eldon Pratt reports a Golden Oriole at Holmbury Hill, near Abinger, Surrey, on May 24th last.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Breeding Habits of the Sparrow-Hawk.—Living, as I do, in one of the most thickly-wooded portions of the Weald of Kent, I have had opportunities of studying the breeding habits of both Sparrow-Hawk and Kestrel. I can safely say that all the nests of the former species I have met with within the last six years—and these number over a score—have invariably been built by the birds themselves. In this locality the larch or fir are chosen in preference to the oak for the nest, which is generally placed at a height of 25 to 30 ft. from the ground, and always possessing a south aspect. The back of the nest is placed against the main limb of the tree, while the structure itself rests on a couple of jutting-out branches. The following is a description of a Sparrow-Hawk's nest, which I take from my diary for May 15th, 1896 :—"Found a nest of *Accipiter nisus* in the Bedgebury Woods. It was placed at a height of about 20 ft., upon a joint (close to the main stem) of two minor branches of a fir tree, which was situated within half a mile of a pheasantry. Larch and fir predominate in the immediate locality. The bulk of the nest consisted of freshly-plucked larch-twigs, while scraps of fir-bark and green moss constituted the lining. Diameter measured 1 ft. 6 in. The rim of nest covered with down, easily visible from the ground. This affords a mark to the keepers when looking for their nests." Before concluding, I may add that the Bedgebury Woods harbour, during the breeding season, many pairs of magpies. The Crow also breeds there sparingly.—Boyd Alexander.

On May 23rd I examined a Sparrow-Hawk's nest built in a birch tree on Bowness Moss, which had been robbed a fortnight before. Having read Mr. Davenport's article I took special pains to examine the nest. The basis of the nest was an old one, probably a Carrion Crow's, as there are plenty of them about, and the superstructure was the work of the Hawks themselves. The next I examined was one in Ringmoor Woods, on May 26th. This wood is chiefly composed of birch trees, but at the side of the wood there are three fir trees. In one of the fir trees this Hawk built its nest. The nest was built throughout by the birds themselves. There was no foundation for it to begin on of any description whatever, neither were there any twigs lying on the branches to serve as a foundation. I may also state that it was built on the lateral branches and quite a yard from the trunk of the tree.—T. L. Johnston (35, Lorne Street, Carlisle).

I notice that Mr. Kearton says, in his "British Birds' Nests," that he has taken some eight or ten nests of this bird, and in every instance the nests were made by the birds. Now, in a paper called "Chums," Mr. Kearton, to use his own words, says "the Sparrow-Hawk is, as far as nest-

building is concerned, a lazy fellow, and often makes the old home of a Crow or Magpie suit his purpose." I think that Mr. Kearton has copied some book in the latter instance, when his own experience teaches him to believe that Sparrow-Hawks build their own nests. I am inclined to believe Mr. Davenport's paper to have, as nearly as possible, solved the mystery which has been connected with this bird.—C. MILBURN (Middlesborough).

I must apologise to Mr. Davenport if I misunderstood his remarks on the Sparrow-Hawk's well-known habit of utilising other birds' nests. I certainly derived the impression that he considered the birds always adopted this course, though he does not say it in so many words; and Mr. Ruskin Butterfield seems to have found the paper open to the same construction (p. 63). Moreover, having just carefully read through Mr. Davenport's interesting paper again, I may say that my original interpretation of it would remain unchanged but for the author's assurance that it is erroneous. —A. HOLTE MACPHERSON.

Nomenclature in Ornithology.*—I much fear the purport of my remarks in the last issue of this Journal (p. 94) was misunderstood by Mr. Swann. Now-a-days a denial of the mutability of species is tantamount to an expression of inability to understand the evidence which the examination of a large series of specimens of one species of bird from widely different areas of its range affords. If evolution be a fact (and of this no one can feel more confident than myself) the number of individuals belonging to what Mr. Swann calls *valid species* must be immeasurably smaller than the number of varietal forms. It is just the difficulty of drawing the line between a species and a race that led me to hazard the opinion that the consistent application of a trinomial to races "would be attended with bewilderment and chaos." To quote from an editorial comment on a kindred subject, contained in the July number (vol. ix., p. 4) of "Natural Science," "If the process of evolution is going on under our eyes, surely it is not correct to treat the *evolving* species as though already *evolved*." A very distinguished ornithologist† affirms "that the boundaries between a race (that is a local variety, which may be of the slightest) and a species are at present indeterminable." The same writer, also, quotes with approval the statement that "Hereafter we shall be compelled to acknowledge that the only distinction between species and well-marked varieties is that the latter are known, or believed, to be connected at the present day by intermediate gradations, whereas, species were formerly thus connected." Dr. Elliott Coues, who may be taken as fairly expressing the views of American naturalists in regard to trinomials,

* ERRATA.—Page 94, line 25, for "these worda," read "trinomials." Page 95, line 20, for "latitudes" read "altitudes."

† Professor Alfred Newton, *Zoology*, new edition, p. 126.

gives, in his "Key to North American Birds," the following rule for their employment:—"We treat as 'specific' any form, however little different from the next, that we do not know or believe to intergrade with the next one,—between which and the next one no intermediate equivocal specimens are forthcoming, and none, consequently, are supposed to exist. This is to imply that the differentiation is accomplished, the links are lost, and the characters actually become 'specific.' We treat as varietal of each other any forms, however different in their extreme manifestation, which we know to intergrade, having the intermediate specimens before us, or which we believe, with any good reason, do intergrade. If the links still exist, the differentiation is still incomplete, and the characters are not specific, but only varietal, in the literal sense of these terms. In the latter case, the oldest name is retained as the specific one, and to it is appended the varietal designation." Dr. Coues finds himself obliged to admit that "no infallible rule can be laid down for determining what shall be held to be a species, what a con-species, sub-species, or variety. It is a matter of tact and experience." In accordance with the view of a sub-species expressed above, Dr. Stejneger, in 1886, separated our Marsh Titmouse under the name of *Parus palustris dresseri*. Now, without committing myself to a definite answer to Mr. Swann's question as to the specific validity, or otherwise, of our bird, I will say that at present it seems to be wisest to regard it as a local variety of the Continental bird, but if it should turn out that our bird *does differ constantly* from that of the Continent, then of course it will be entitled to specific rank, and should receive a name accordingly. In July, 1894, a meeting (called at the instance of Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe) was held at the British Museum, whereat Dr. Coues was invited to meet a number of British naturalists to consider whether it was expedient to adopt trinomial nomenclature in Zoology. A report of the meeting will be found in "Nature" for that year (vol. xxx.) It will suffice here to say that the views of the American Zoologist on this subject met with very qualified approbation.—W. C. J. Ruskin Butterfield (St. Leonard's-on-Sea).

The quotation from Dr. Coues's "Key" almost expresses my view of the matter, and is again synonymous with Canon XI. of the A.O.U. Code. I am, however, inclined to disagree with the rather strained application of the rule indicated, which confers *binomials* upon what are really poor sub-species merely because intermediate forms, although suspected to exist, do not happen to have been proved to do so; several cases of this occur in the new A.O.U. Check List (for instance, No. 232, *Macrorhamphus scolopaceus*), and it is a proceeding which I, for one, much regret. To return to *P. palustris dresseri*, Mr. Butterfield seems to me to be quite at fault in his application of the rule he cites. The British form of *P. palustris* is decidedly merely a

"local race," and, although it may differ constantly *as such*, yet the existence of intermediate forms between it and the typical form seems to be indisputable, and our bird is therefore *certainly not* entitled to take rank as *Parus dresseri*. The greatest puzzle in the application of the A.O.U. Code rule is why the Western Dowitcher should figure as *M. scolopaceus*, and the Brown Creeper as *C. familiaris americana*, for in the first case intermediate forms *may* exist, while in the second case they *cannot*.—H. KIRKE SWANN.

Local Bird Names.—Can any reader say in what particular counties or districts the Carrion Crow goes under the name of "Gor Crow" (*i.e.*, "bloody" crow, or, more probably, "filthy" crow)? Also where the Hooded Crow is known as "Bunting Crow"? What is the origin of the latter name?—H. KIRKE SWANN.

Albino Jay.—I saw to-day (June 22nd) a white Jay bird; a beautiful bird, not quite full-grown, but able to feed; all white, with the exception of the wings, which are tipped with light brown; legs light yellow; eyes light blue. It was caught close to Kettering.—C. E. WRIGHT (Kettering).

Local Bird Names in S.W. Scotland.—Mallard: Mire Duck. Wigeon: Golden Teal (on Solway). Ring Dove: Cushie Doo. Skylark: Lévĕrock. Buzzard: Gled. Owls: Hoolets. Blackbird: Blackie. Thrush: Mavie. Missel Thrush: Felty Flee'er. Rooks: Craws. Carrion Crow: Corbie Craw. Jackdaw: Kyăw. Dipper: Water Pyat, Burn Becker. Heron: Craigie or Jenny Heron. House Sparrows: "Spўugs" or "Spags." Hedge Sparrow: Hedgie and Hempie. Gold Finch: Gooldie. Bullfinches: Bŭllies. Chaffinch: Shilfie; in Galloway, Snabbie and Brichtie. Brambling: Cock o' the North. Snow Bunting: Snaw Fleck. Wagtails: Wullie Wagtails. Wheatear: Dyker (Galloway) (Dyke=Stone Wall). Whin and Stone Chats: Whun and Stane Cherker. Yellow Hammer: Yellow Yoit; Thornhill name, "Gunner." Gold Crest: Basket Hinger. Wren: Cutty Wran. Long-Tailed Tit: Bellringer. Creeper: Tree *Speeler* (i.e., *Climber*). Meadow Pipit: Moss Cheeper. Tree Pipit: Wood Lark. Tits and Willow Wren: Ox Ee's. Curlew: Whaup. *Sandpiper*: Saun' Léverock. Lapwing: Peasweep, Teewheat; in Galloway, Deil's Plover. Water Hen: Stankie. Oyster Catcher: Sea Pyat. Ring Plover: Ringie. Dunlin: Pirr. Cormorant: Scart; in Galloway: Black Dooker, Cow'en Elder, Mochrum Elder.—R. ARMSTRONG (Thornhill, Dumfries).

Notes from Dumfriesshire.—In two localities in this district *Jackdaws* build in young fir-woods, on the trees, like Rooks. The nests are placed high up, sometimes two or three in one tree, on firs 15 to 25 feet high. They

are bulky structures, lined with dry dung, cow-hair, and sheep's-wool, loosely laid together. The "cups" of the nests are very large and deep, compared with those of the Rook and Carrion Crow, and seem out of all proportion to the size of the bird and its eggs. I don't know whether this habit is common with the Jackdaw or not. I have not seen it noticed in any book on birds, except in an old "Cyclopædia," where it is said they sometimes do so in the neighbourhood of rookeries. This would apply to one of my localities only. The old nests, which stand the winter well, are the favourite nesting-places of the Long-Eared Owls in late March. *Re* the Sparrow Hawk, my experience is too slight to have any weight, but the nests I have seen were undoubtedly the work of the birds themselves, and with no old foundation. They resembled gigantic Wood Pigeons' nests, with a slight hollow for the eggs. The Long-Eared Owl lays in them, too. In the case of the Kestrel, we read in many books that it either lays in old nests or builds on rock-ledges, etc. Now, I have seen very many Kestrels' nests in ruins and in rocks (as well as in old Magpies' and Jackdaws' nests), but in no case was there the slightest scrap of nest brought by the bird itself. In holes in ruins the eggs were laid among the *débris* of old 'Daws' nests, and where the Carrion Crow builds on rocks the Kestrel will, no doubt, appropriate an old nest, when deserted. My experience is that of the (Editor's) Handbook: the eggs are laid on the bare soil.—R. Armstrong (Thornhill, Dumfriesshire).

Cuckoo's Eggs.—As the eggs of the Cuckoo are now so much engaging the attention of naturalists, a few notes on those I have obtained this year, twenty in all, may be of interest. The first egg was brought in on May 18th, and the last on June 28th, and they are from the nests of the following species:—Yellow Bunting, five; Hedge Sparrow, four; Meadow Pipit, four; Pied Wagtail, one; Spotted Flycatcher, one; Robin, one; Sedge Warbler, one; Greenfinch, two; and one from an old nest put up by my brother as a bait for the Cuckoo. The four from the nest of the Meadow Pipit were all taken by the same person at the same place, and are so precisely alike that there can be little doubt as to their having been laid by the same hen Cuckoo; one from the same locality, in the nest of the Yellow Bunting, is quite unlike the other four. Those from the Hedge Sparrows' nests are of three different types; two from one bird (same neighbourhood), the others quite distinct. The egg laid in the Sedge Warbler's nest is interesting from the fact that I took it quite fresh on June 20th, and on June 20th last year I found a similar egg, also quite fresh, in a Sedge Warbler's nest within five minutes' walk of the spot where this one was taken. Both are large eggs, and quite unlike any others we possess. The egg from the Pied Wagtail's nest was taken from the same ivy wall in which I found the Pied Wagtail's nest with the Cuckoo's egg in 1894 and

1895, and I think that the three eggs were laid by the same Cuckoo, though I am not so sure about the identity of the Wagtail. On June 27th I had a fresh Cuckoo's egg with a clutch of four Yellow Bunting, and the following day a second was taken, also fresh, with two Yellow Bunting; these two are undoubtedly the eggs of the same Cuckoo. The egg from a sham nest is interesting in its way; last year I put up a Greenfinch's nest in my garden here and got a Cuckoo's egg from it, and this year my brother successfully tried the same experiment. He put up a Hedge Sparrow's nest with two or three House Sparrow's eggs in a fruit tree on a sunny wall; the Cuckoo turned out the eggs and left her own in the nest. This egg, again, is so exactly like the one I obtained in a similar manner last year that I have been obliged to put a distinguishing mark on them. Of the twenty eggs obtained this year, there was only one about which there could be the least doubt, a very Sparrow-like egg brought me with the eggs of the Greenfinch, but, when put to the test of blowing, it proved to be all right. One of my friends has more than once had two Cuckoo's eggs from the same nest, having this year obtained a Pied Wagtail's nest with two eggs of each bird, but this prize has never yet come in my way, and if I ventured to make it known that such a thing was of special value or interest, it might possibly be "made to order." Perhaps it may save needless correspondence if I add that I am not parting with any of my Cuckoo's eggs.—Julian G. Tuck (Tostock Rectory, Bury St. Edmund's).

Teal Nesting in Worcestershire.—It may interest some of your readers to know that on June 11th I saw here a Teal's nest containing ten eggs, much incubated. Four years ago a brood of eight were hatched out in the same neighbourhood.—K. A. Deakin (Cofton Hackett, Worcestershire).

NOTES AND NEWS.

At the time of his death Mr. Seebohm had almost completed his exhaustive monograph on the "Family of Thrushes." We understand that Dr. Bowdler Sharpe undertook to finish the work, and that it will shortly be published by Messrs. Henry Sotheran & Co. It will be illustrated with nearly 150 coloured plates, and the edition will be limited to 250 copies.

As the editor of this magazine is at work upon a dictionary of trivial and provincial names of the birds on the British list (with their origin or meaning, and notes on the folk-lore of many species), he will be very glad if readers will send him lists of the less-familiar local or dialect bird-names used in their districts, with any comments thereon. He is particularly in want of

such information from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the North of England, &c. Any such assistance will be acknowledged if accepted.

The Rev. H. A. Macpherson's exhaustive "History of Fowling" is, we learn, now virtually finished, and the MS. will go to press as soon as a sufficient number of subscribers (at one guinea each) have sent in their names. It is *not* intended to serve as a manual of instruction for *killing* birds, like the excellent works of Sir R. Payne-Gallway and Mr. Abel Chapman. On the contrary, the history of the subject is mainly occupied in furnishing a recondite account of the ruses by which men of different races contrive to trap, net, and snare birds.

Mr. Robert Warren follows up his contribution to the June "Irish Naturalist" on "The Terns of Killala Bay" by a paper in the July issue on "The Gulls of Killala Bay."

To the same periodical Mr. R. F. Hibbert, of Scariff, Co. Clare, contributes a note on his identification of the Stock-Dove (*Columba ænas*) in Co. Galway, although the locality is not named. This seems to be the first recorded occurrence on the west coast of Ireland.

The "Nidologist," quite the most interesting of American magazines relating to natural history, has returned with its editor to its old home at Alameda, California, from whence it will in future be published. The change has thrown its issue somewhat behind, but we have no doubt this will soon be rectified.

At a meeting of the Zoological Society of London, held on June 16th, Mr. P. Chalmers Mitchell read a "Contribution to the Anatomy of the Hoatzin (*Opisthocomus cristatus*). He stated that from the characters of the alimentary canal, the Hoatzin might be placed either between the Sand-Grouse and the Pigeons, or between the *Gallinæ* and the *Cuculidæ*. He described some interesting individual variations in the condition of the ambiens muscle, and referred to other points in the muscular anatomy.

No more useful pamphlet could be devised than one which we have just received from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, and which is reprinted from the Yearbook for 1895. This pamphlet treats of the "food habits," and consequently the economical status of "Four Common Birds of the Farm and Garden" (*i.e.*, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Mocking Bird, and House Wren), by Sylvester D. Judd, and of "the Meadow Lark and Baltimore Oriole," by F. E. L. Beal, the information being based upon an examination of the contents of the stomachs of several hundreds of each species, and being therefore authoritative. Of the four birds treated of by Mr. Judd, the House Wren is found to be the most beneficial and the Cat-Bird the least, while Professor Beal comes to the conclusion that both the Meadow Lark and Baltimore Oriole are "eminently useful to the farmer." Illustrations of all six species are given. The value of such pamphlets as

these cannot be over-estimated, more especially as the department spares no pains to place the information in the hands of those it is intended for. In this country the economical side of ornithology is absolutely and invariably ignored by the State, as may be expected when the literary work of its paid ornithologists is looked upon as mere recreation, while its unpaid ornithologists are allowed to starve, or do anything else they please. Possibly the State thinks we know all that can be known about our British birds. Perhaps we do *about their skins*, but the work of the field ornithologist (not sportsman) seems to us to have only just commenced.

In the recently published "Report on the Work of the Horn Scientific Expedition to Central Australia" (London: Dulau, 1896), the bird skins obtained during the expedition by Mr. G. A. Keartland are reported upon by Mr. North, the ornithologist of the Australian Museum, Sydney. They are referred to seventy-eight species, amongst which are five novelties already described in *The Ibis* for 1895. Mr. Keartland's useful field-notes are given, as also his remarks on twenty-two other species observed, but of which no specimens were obtained. As a rule, the species belong to well-known Australian genera. One of the most remarkable is the Alexandrine Parakeet (*Polytelis alexandræ*), described by Gould in 1863, of which little, however, was known until recently. This beautiful bird appears to be a characteristic inhabitant of the Eremian district, and was met with in abundance at Glen Edith. Mr. North has made a new genus of it—*Spathopterus*.

ADDITIONS TO ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION DURING JUNE.

A Roseate Cockatoo (*Cacatua roseicapilla*) from Australia, presented by Stanley S. Flower, Esq. (Parrot House); a Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) from Moluccas, presented by Stanley S. Flower, Esq. (Parrot House); a Short-toed Eagle (*Circaëtus gallicus*) from Egypt, presented by Dixon Bey (Vulture Aviary); two Short-eared Owls (*Asio brachyotus*) from Ireland, presented by Capt. R. A. Ogilby, F.Z.S. (Owls' Cages); a Vulturine Eagle (*Aquilla verreauxi*), from South Africa, presented by J. Clark, Esq. (Vulture Aviary); six Upland Geese (*Bernicla magellanica*), bred in the menagerie (Goose Paddocks); two Indian Drongos (*Chibia hottentota*) from India, presented by Mrs. Firman (Western Aviary); five Common Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax carbo*, jr.) from Isle of Mull, presented by the Maclaine of Lochbuie (Fish House); one black-headed Conure (*Conurus nanday*) from Paraguay, presented by Mrs. Baird (Parrot House); two Common Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) (albinos) ♂ ♀, from Transvaal, presented by F. A. Noyce, Esq. (Pheasantry); two West African Love-birds (*Agapornis pullaria*), from West Africa, deposited (Parrot House); one Ring-necked Parakeet (*Palæornis torquatus*) ♂, from India, presented by Miss

Smith (Parrot House); two Golden Eagles (*Aquilla chrysaëtus*) from Isle of Mull, N.B., presented by the Maclaine of the Lochbuie (Eagle Aviary); two Peregrine Falcons (*Falco peregrinus*, jr.), from Isle of Mull, N.B., presented by the Maclaine of Lochbuie (North Aviary); 2 Wood-owls (*Syrniumaluco*) and one Short-eared Owl (*Asio brachyotus*), from the British Isles, presented by Farquhar Wilson, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); two Spotted Pigeons (*Columba maculosa*), two Triangular-spotted Pigeons (*Columba guinea*), two Vinaceous Turtle-doves (*Turtur vinaceus*), and one Japanese Greenfinch (*Chloris kawarahibi*), bred in the enagerie, (Western Aviary); one Occipital Vulture (*Vultur occipitalis*)* from Africa, purchased (Vulture Aviary); two Burmeister's Cariamas (*Chunga burmeisteri*) from the Argentine Republic, purchased (Eastern Aviary); two Crowned Partridges (*Rollulus cristatus*) from Malacca, purchased (Western Aviary); two Chilian Teal (*Querquedula creccoides*) from Antarctic America, purchased (Duck Ponds); twelve Spotted Tinamous (*Nothura maculosa*) from Buenos Ayres, purchased (Western Aviary); three Indian Stock-doves (*Columba eversmanni*) from India, presented by Frank Finn, Esq., F.Z.S. (Western Aviary); a Baer's Duck (*Fuligula baeri*†) from India, presented by Frank Finn, Esq., F.Z.S. (Eastern Aviary); three Dussumier's Hemipodes (*Turnix dussumieri*†) from India, presented by Frank Finn, Esq., F.Z.S. (Western Aviary); two Shamas (*Cittocincla macrura*), and one Malabar Green Bulbul (*Phyllornis aurifrons*) from India, purchased (Western Aviary); two Ostriches (*Struthio camelus*) ♂ ♀, from Africa, deposited (Ostrich House).

BOOKS, &c., RECEIVED.

Ornithologische Montasberichte, Vol. IV., No. 7, July, 1896. Prof. Dr. Reichenow, Editor.

The Naturalist, No. 252, July, 1896. W. Denison Roebuck, Editor.

The Naturalists' Journal, No. 49, July, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Editor.

Nature Notes, No. 79, July, 1896. London: J. Bale & Sons.

Science Gossip, New Series, No. 26, July, 1896. John T. Carrington, Editor.

The Irish Naturalist, Vol. V., No. 7, July, 1896. Dublin: Eason & Son, Ltd.

The Nidologist, Vol. III., No. 9, May, 1896. H. R. Taylor, Editor.

Ornithologisches Jahrbuch, Vol. VII., Nos. 1-3, Jan. to June, 1896. V. R. von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen, Editor.

Ueber den Begriff Species und Subspecies in der Ornithologie, by V. R. von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen. From the Author, 6 pp., royal 8vo, 1890.

Four Common Birds of the Farm and Garden, by Sylvester D. Judd; *The Meadow Lark and Baltimore Oriole*, by F. E. L. Beal. 8vo, 30 pp. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1896.

* No example has been in the Gardens since 1865.

† New to Collection.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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W. B. R. CLIFTON. — Russell & Sons, Photographers, Baker Street, London, W.

C. M., MIDDLESBORO'.—The breeding-grounds of the Curlew-Sandpiper are undetermined. They probably lie to the northward of Siberia, not Europe.

A NUMBER of subscriptions expire with this No. Will those, therefore, who have subscribed for the half volume please remit their renewal subscriptions to the publishers (as above). We wish to ask our subscribers also to induce all their ornithological friends who do not already take the ORNITHOLOGIST to either subscribe or order it from their bookseller (mentioning Elliot Stock). It is quite impossible for us to effect improvements and extensions unless we receive a proper amount of support. As the only monthly journal of its kind, it is surely entitled to the support of all British ornithologists. Some readers have helped us much already; will the others do likewise?

READERS who wish to be enrolled as Foundation Members of the proposed FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' SOCIETY are asked to submit their names to Mr. Swann (Sec. *pro. tem.*) before August 15th, after which date (if 100 names are obtained) the election of officers and Council will be proceeded with. The subscription (*i.e.*, 14s. yearly, including the ORNITHOLOGIST), will be payable to the Treasurer on September 29th. A good library is to be formed, from which both town and country members may borrow books. A general meeting would be held monthly; members who could not attend could send exhibits or papers to a friend, or to the Secretary. Field excursions could be arranged at the meetings. For further particulars send a stamped envelope.

WE are unable to give a portrait of the late Lord Lilford this month since the additional 4 pp. of text in this No. makes up the maximum weight, and prevents us from adding a plate.

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H. K. SWANN,

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O. V. APLIN, F.L.S.
F. B. WHITLOCK.
Rev. H. A. MACPHERSON.
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G.E.H. BARRETT-HAMILTON (Ireland).

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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ORNITHOLOGICAL NOTES FROM ICELAND.

By CHARLES D. HEAD.

THE first peculiarity which will strike the visitor to this remarkable island is the total absence of forest trees and the great scarcity of all vegetation. It is a land of slumbering volcanoes, ice mountains, lakes and rapid rivers. So much of the interior is composed of sandy deserts and volcanic mountain ranges, where no vegetation—not even grass—can grow, that bird life is condensed, as it were, around the lakes and on the adjacent moorlands, where vegetation is produced in sufficient abundance to provide food for themselves and their young.

About 30 miles from the sea coast, in the north, is situated Myvatn, or Midge Lake, the second largest lake in Iceland. It covers an area of about 30 square miles, stands at an altitude of 900 feet above sea level, and is studded with many volcanic isles, all now green with vegetation. In the east, south and south-west it is surrounded by ancient lava, and this forms the bed of the lake in many places. During my tour in Iceland last year I spent nearly three weeks around this lake, and in no other place have I seen birds breeding in greater numbers. I brought back with me eggs of the following birds, and skins of many of them.

Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*).—Scarce. I only saw one bird,

but had a nest and three eggs brought to me; this had been taken among willow scrub growing upon one of the islets.

Wheatear (*Saxicola œnanthe*). — Common, breeding in holes among the lava, &c.

Raven (*Corvus corax*). — Fairly common; the breeding season being over they were congregating together in small flocks.

Mealy Redpoll (*Acanthis linaria*).—I found one empty nest built in the fork of a very small birch tree, growing upon an islet.

Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*).—One of the most abundant of all the birds I saw, but through breeding in holes and crevices of the lava, the eggs were difficult to obtain; they vary greatly in markings, no two sets being alike. The nest is made of dead grass and lined with feathers; number of eggs, four to six. The male in its breeding plumage is a handsome bird, and has quite a pleasing little song. Its favourite perch is a prominent pinnacle of rock, and to which, if disturbed, it soon returns. This bird must be very hardy. I found a nest with young ones at an elevation of over 2,000 feet, and nothing visible but masses of snow and bare rock.

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*).—Very common; nest generally near water.

Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*).—As common as the last.

White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaëtus albicilla*).—I had a grand view of a pair of these fine birds; they were perched upon blocks of lava about fifty yards apart; both were in mature plumage.

Swan.—I saw a large number on the wing, but they were too far off to determine the species. The natives say they breed commonly in the interior of the island.

Mallard (*Anas boscas*).—Common.

Teal (*Querquedula crecca*).—Common.

Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*).—Common.

Tufted Duck (*Fuligula cristata*).—I never saw this bird alive, but had two dead specimens brought me.

Scaup (*Fuligula marila*).—Most abundant of all the ducks, breeding in every suitable place; on one island they were sitting upon their eggs not more than eight feet apart; one nest I found had nineteen eggs—probably the laying of two birds.

Goldeneye (*Clangula glaucion*).—Common ; breeds in holes and in the shelters put up for the sheep.

Long-tailed Duck (*Harelda glacialis*).—Almost, if not quite, as common as the Scaup. According to the natives, one female will take charge of two or three broods of ducklings soon after they are hatched, and bring them up as her own.

Harlequin Duck (*Cosmonetta histrionica*).—This beautiful duck is never seen on the lake, but breeds abundantly along the shores of the Laxa, the river running from the lake ; from this peculiarity the natives call it the " Stream Duck."

Scoter (*Œdemia nigra*).—Common.

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*).—I never saw this bird, but had a few of their eggs brought to me.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*).—Very common.

Golden Plover (*Charadrius pluvialis*).—Abundant on all the moors ; I frequently disturbed flocks of more than a hundred, which did not appear to be breeding, although in full breeding plumage.

Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*).—This was the commonest bird I saw ; they were there in thousands, the eggs in all stages of incubation, and young ones from a day to nine days old.

A slight hollow in the ground, lined with a few blades of grass, is all that is done in the way of nest building ; in it are deposited four eggs, varying a great deal in markings, but easily recognisable ; they are generally placed near water. The old birds were remarkably tame, running and swimming within a yard of my feet.

Common Snipe (*Gallinago cœlestris*).—I was first made acquainted with the presence of this bird by hearing it " drumming " overhead, and afterwards had several of their eggs brought to me ; it did not, however, appear to be common.

Dunlin (*Tringa alpina*).—Abundant over all the moors.

Red-shank (*Totanus calidris*).—Common in the marshes ; eggs very difficult to find.

Curlew (*Numenius arquata*).—Common.

Whimbrel (*Numenius phœopus*).—More common than the last, the eggs of both these birds were very hard to find. The Whimbrel prefers the marshy ground, laying her eggs upon one of the numerous hillocks rising above the water.

Arctic Tern (*Sterna macrura*).—These birds were extremely bold when their young were about. I have stood by their nest whilst the old birds actually struck me on the head so smartly that I could feel the blow through the cloth cap I wore at the time.

Richardson's Skua (*Stercorarius crepidatus*).—Not so plentiful, but very destructive to the eggs of the other birds. I found one nest with two eggs—it was merely a slight hollow lined with a little grass and leaves; the ground chosen was a small hillock rising out of the surrounding marsh. The old birds were very clamorous, almost brushing me at times with their wings, then fluttering along the ground as if unable to fly, and uttering their peculiar mewing cry. Whenever I saw this Skua flying in pairs, one was a *dark* and the other a *light* bird.

Great Northern Diver (*Colymbus glacialis*).—Rather scarce, there might have been half a dozen pairs breeding about the small lakes; I managed to secure four eggs.

Red-throated Diver (*Colymbus septentrionalis*).—Commoner than the last, and breeding in similar situations. I was fortunate in taking both eggs and young; the latter are covered with thick down, dark grey in colour; they can swim and dive as soon as hatched. Both this and the following bird carry the young on their back when any danger threatens them.

Sclavonian Grebe (*Podicipes auritus*).—Common upon every sheet of water; the birds looked very handsome in their breeding plumage, and were wonderfully tame, sitting upon their nests until I could almost reach them with the gun barrel. The nests resembled those of the Little Grebe, but about twice the size; eggs three to six in number, and carefully covered over when the birds were absent from the nest.

Although I had occasionally seen the Iceland Falcon (*Falco islandus*), it was not until a few days prior to my departure that I obtained certain information of a pair having their young in a mountain, about two hours' ride to the west.

Four of us started on this expedition—Dr. Riemscheider, from Russia, Mr. Chas. Jefferys, of Tenby, an Icelandic priest, and myself. We rode over to the farmer who rented the land, to obtain permission to take the Falcons, and also to borrow ropes and a bag; these were obtained and we set out again,

but reinforced now by five workmen, all mounted upon ponies (Icelanders will never walk far). Fifteen minutes' ride brought us to the base of the mountain where the Falcons had bred for some years past. Here we all dismounted and proceeded on foot about three hundred yards; one of the men then pointed out a cave in the face of the cliff, fully four hundred feet above us, where the young birds were believed to be, and still higher we could just make out one of the parent birds watching us from a ledge.

The only way to get at the cave was to climb a steep and rugged slope leading up to a substantial mass of rock, directly over the cave, but some eighty feet above it.

After considerable labour and no small risk, my friend from Tenby, myself, and an Icelander safely accomplished this feat. The next business was to arrange a means of descent to the cave below. The rope we had borrowed was of hide, thin but very strong; one end was fixed to my waist and the other my companions took charge of. Having had considerable experience in taking eggs of Peregrine Falcon, Buzzard, Raven, &c., along the coast of South Wales, I had no great difficulty to descend here. I should certainly have preferred one of my own ropes, for this was so thin that I must have looked uncommonly like a spider hanging from the end of its silken web. The cave was nearly six feet in height, and about four deep; there was no nest, but the floor was strewn with dead and mangled bodies of ducks. There were three young Falcons, about three parts grown, with the feathers showing strongly through the grey down. They put forward many objections with voice, beak, and talons, to entering the bag, but I managed to overcome their scruples and brought them safely to the top.

I am pleased to say these birds travelled safely to Aukereyii, and from there to England.

Should any readers of the ORNITHOLOGIST be tempted to visit Iceland, I shall be happy to give them any information in my power.

Candler Street, Scarborough.

OÖLOGICAL ECCENTRICITIES.

By H. S. Davenport.

There can be few who have brought an intelligent perception to bear on the nesting economy of some of our more familiar birds, who have failed to be struck by a certain irregularity which, to my thinking, is more constant than otherwise, and which is outwardly demonstrated by the fact of one egg in a clutch differing appreciably in character from the remainder. Those who have served a lengthy apprenticeship at birds-nesting will have met with many a stirring experience, for not a little of the charm that pertains to this hobby consists in never knowing what aberrant type of egg—aberrant in size, shape, or markings, as the case may be—may turn up before a day's ramble through meadow or woodland, or by hedgerow or stream, comes to an end. For all that I am aware of to the contrary, no such delightful uncertainty attaches to the collecting of moths, butterflies, beetles, and such like; this, however, by the way. Nevertheless, it was not my intention to make any observations concerning abnormal types or varieties of eggs such as are to be periodically met with, to wit, Song Thrushes' with red spots, Blackbirds' with a ground of pale blue and entirely unspotted, Jays' of a lovely pink or salmon-coloured hue, Redbreasts' of a pure unspotted white, Linnets' unspotted, Chaffinches', Spotted Flycatchers', and Lesser Redpolls' of a beautiful and unruffled blue ground, Kestrels' white, Blackcaps' pink, Lesser Whitethroats' of a pale blue ground and unspotted, Carrion Crows' spotted and streaked with red, and so on, for I am inclined to regard such variations, in the majority of instances quoted, as more or less accidental. On the other hand, however, be the cause what it may, the rule—if such a term is applicable—as I understand it, holds good far too often in the matter of the odd egg in a clutch, whether it be in the size, shape, or colouring that the variability exists, to justify the assumption that its presence in a nest is attributable to chance.

These and the following observations have been prompted by a perusal of some remarks by the late Mr. Henry Seebohm,

in his "History of British Birds," concerning the Tree-Sparrow. That famous author expressed himself to this effect:—"The eggs of the Tree-Sparrow are from four to six in number, and vary considerably in colour. The eggs in each clutch are usually pretty uniform in colour, except one egg, which is generally much lighter than the rest. These light-coloured eggs may be the produce of the bird when its colour-producing powers are getting exhausted." Now I have observed this tendency, viz., the laying of one egg differing from the rest of the clutch, in the following species:—Blackbird, Whinchat, Wheatear, Redstart (only when the eggs are spotted with brown), Redbreast, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Willow-Wren, Great Titmouse, Blue Titmouse, Nuthatch, Wren, Yellow Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit, Tree-Creeper, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, House- and Tree-Sparrows, Linnet, Bullfinch, Jay, Magpie, Carrion Crow, Common Buzzard, Sparrow-Hawk, Kestrel, and Landrail.

Considerations of space will not admit of my going into details concerning all the odd eggs belonging to the different species enumerated on the above list, but it will serve my purpose equally well if I single out and comment on a few of them. I have frequently found the Magpie's "irregularity" represented by an egg of a greyish character; in other words, one very much lighter in its general aspect than all the others. The Nuthatch, Great Titmouse, and Blue Titmouse, again, not seldom lay one egg which displays a considerable amount of the whitish ground-colour, the spots being altogether fewer in number and on occasions so pronounced as to approximate to blotches. At other times, the odd eggs of each of these three species will be characterised by the surface markings being of a much fainter—a kind of washed-out—hue. The Carrion Crow not unfrequently deposits an egg of a bluish cast amidst three, or four, or five others of a dark green. The Sparrow-Hawk diversifies its clutch on occasions by laying an egg entirely unspotted, or else one that is blushed over the greater part of its milk-white surface with lovely shades of pale brown. The ground-colour of the odd egg in a Landrail's nest is at times of quite a different drab as compared with the others; while the Lesser Whitethroat now and again gives

variety to the contents of its nest by depositing therein an egg so dissimilar in most respects to the rest of the clutch that unless one had actually seen it *in situ* and was acquainted with its history, grave doubts might justifiably be entertained concerning its propriety to belong to the clutch. And pretty much the same may be said at times of the variety egg of the Tree-Creeper. In some instances where there is no real or fancied dissimilarity in the markings, the odd egg will be found to differ in size, being larger or smaller as the case may be. Last May, within the space of a few days, I examined the nests of the following species, viz., Great Titmouse, Blue Titmouse, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Kestrel (an appropriated nest, of course), Yellow Wagtail, Goldfinch and Willow-Wren, and, with the solitary exception of the last-mentioned, what I have designated the odd egg was present in each nest, represented either by a difference in size or in colouring. Where this irregularity is represented rather by size than by distinctive markings, it will, I think, be generally found that the tendency of the odd egg is to rather dwarf its fellows ; I mean that the remaining eggs in the clutch will all be smaller than the variety type. Nevertheless, having kept no actual statistics, I write subject to correction, though I must confess that this seeming rule has been honoured in the breach in two nests that I have recently inspected, wherein, in the case of a Blackcap and Lesser Whitethroat, the odd eggs were markedly smaller than those amidst which they reposed.

Now, that the broad fact is pretty much as I have stated will, I think, be conceded by all who are conversant with the subject, but can anyone establish a theory in explanation of it that shall be so free from plausibility as to meet with popular assent? Certainly I have never come across any explanation of a seeming, though by no means invariable, law of nature that will stand the test of practical application, and for myself I may state candidly that I neither hold one nor can I conceive any absolutely reliable theory being put forward to account for what appears to be much on a par with the singular nesting economy of *Cuculus canorus*. Apparently both are mysteries of nature for which no really satisfactory explanation is forthcoming.

However, with regard to Mr. Seebohm's idea that the light-coloured egg generally found in a Tree-Sparrow's nest may be the result of exhaustion on the part of the colour-producing powers, such an hypothesis is scarcely to my liking, though doubtless it may be considered presumptuous in me to differ from so eminent an authority on matters where birds and their habits and economy are concerned. Still, it seems to me not a little strange, with odd eggs so frequently represented in the clutches of other species, either by way of a few comparatively large blotches instead of innumerable small spots, or else by an altogether distinctive colouring, that the author quoted should have rested content with the theory he has suggested, more especially as it is certain that the particular egg under discussion is not invariably or necessarily, as some people seem to think, the last one laid. And yet, in the case of a Wheatear's nest wherein the seventh and last egg laid was freckled with brown—though I had here proof positive of the date when the variable egg made its appearance in the clutch, and this fact may seem to tell against my contention that the normal eggs are not necessarily laid first and in due order—such an experience goes to disprove Mr. Seebohm's hazarded explanation, and to show, on the contrary, that in this particular instance the Wheatear's colour-producing powers were, so to say, just on the point of being brought into play, for the remaining six eggs were of the more usual type, that is, without spot or speck of any kind.

However, I must cease. And yet the problem is so replete with interest, and has, so far as I am aware, met with such slender consideration at the hands of historians, present as well as past, that I have been emboldened to toy with it myself, chiefly, I may add, in the hope that some of those to whom we are accustomed to look for light and leading where birds are concerned may feel inclined, when in the possession of a few leisure moments, to set forth their own ideas and hypotheses thereanent.

It is interesting to find that in the highest latitude (*i.e.*, 85·5° N., due north of Franz Josef Land) reached by Dr. Nansen's vessel, the *Fram*, the only birds that could be observed were Guillemots and Fulmars.

THE PURPLE SANDPIPER.

By Edmund A. S. Elliot, M.B.O.U.

From November to the end of May, by which time they have assumed their nuptial garb, these birds are tolerably common along the coast of the south-west peninsula, seldom entering our estuaries, except accidentally in company with Dunlin, &c.

To watch this active little fellow seeking its food amongst the rocks, with the waves constantly dashing over him, is quite interesting; running along, in and out, over the slippery weed, ever and again crouching in the inequalities of the rock as a wave higher than usual dashes over him, and if by chance he should be washed off, creeping up again like a mouse as he is brought back on the succeeding billow, makes this confiding wader an especial favourite. Like all other birds whose food depends on the ebb and flow of the tide he seems more busy when the waters are rising—warned, no doubt by experience, that he will have to wait some hours ere he will feed again. As the weed-encumbered rocks cover, the various groups of three and four flock together and wing their way to their resting site, some exposed and bare stretches of rock out of reach of the foaming breaker or angry billow; and here also they may be approached quite closely, and seen with their heads tucked away over their backs, quietly resting till the restless wave has receded from their favourite feeding-ground.

During the autumn months (I have obtained specimens as early as August) they are continuously winging their way down from their breeding grounds, and by November are found in small flocks all around the coast, their favourite haunts being where long low stretches of rocks are left uncovered for some hours by the tide. Their sombre grey dress, redeemed from tameness by the beautiful shot-like purplish reflections over the back requires little comment, but as winter passes and spring advances the stages of moult towards the nuptial dress are particularly interesting to watch. Early in April new feathers, black, edged and barred with white, peep out from the smoke grey gorget and along the

sides and flanks, whilst some of the feathers of the mantle and head will be found edged with rufous; this moult is completed before the birds leave us towards the end of May, and by that time the feathers on top of the head, in common with those on the back, have a distinct rufous border, whilst the black feathers of the gorget and flanks are boldly edged with greyish white.

American ornithologists separate the Purple Sandpipers found in Alaska and neighbouring islands into two forms distinct from ours, which occurs, it may be noted, on the eastern sea-board of Canada and the United States, as well as on the inland lakes from East to West. Specimens of Coues' Sandpiper collected in Sanak Is., Alaska, are very much more heavily edged rufous than ours, and of deeper tone, indeed in some, the crescentic white edgings of feathers of the gorget even are rufous, and the throat and cheek are almost entirely white; whilst in the Prybilof Sandpiper the tone of red is still deeper, and the gorget and flanks become almost wholly black, invading the white throat patch, simulating in fact a well-marked Dunlin or Red-backed Sandpiper in summer dress as regards its back and breast. The sexes are alike in plumage, but the female is the larger; a female obtained on May 22 weighed as much as four ounces, the average being a trifle over two ounces. By far the largest examples obtained are from the Orkneys, where, as far as can be ascertained, they are not seen after the beginning of May until the autumn again.

ROUGH NOTES FROM NORTH WALES.

By John A. Bucknill, B.A.

(*Concluded from page* 92.)

A short trip to Dolwyddelen, and a long tramp over the moor, at Whitsuntide this year, gave me an opportunity of hearing and seeing a good many summer migrants which I had never previously come across during my autumn visits; noticeably the Cuckoo (*C. canorus*), which was everywhere, even on the high flats—though, of course, much more plentiful towards the wooded river valley. The Willow-warbler (*P. trochilus*) and the Sedge-warbler (*A. phragmitis*) were both very common; and I heard the Reed-warbler (*A. streperus*) in one spot on the river near Roman Bridge.

I see in this month's *Zoologist* that the nightingale was heard on the border of Wales, and it reminded me of what was told me this year by a Welshman—a bard, by the way. Some years ago it was reported that a Nightingale (*D. luscinia*) had been heard near Festiniog, and hundreds of men—quarry men from the Slate-quarries—went out to listen for it, and hear what they had never heard before. Several declared they heard it, but the majority did not, and had to return disconsolate. However, my informant says it was no doubt there; but I expect it was a Reed-warbler, which might deceive not a few. I was also told—and I believe this is correct—that one farm, which I have mentioned before, named Bertheos, means, translated, "The Bush of the Nightingale," because the bird was believed to have been heard there. As, however, I am no Welsh linguist, I can only repeat what I have been told, and cannot vouch for the truth of the correctness of the interpretation.

The Yellow Hammer (*E. citrinella*) and the Corn Bunting (*E. miliaria*) were both common, and I saw several Reed Buntings (*E. schœniclus*) near the river.

Vermin, or, as they call it there, "Vernim," has been very bad this year, owing chiefly to the non-preservation—or, perhaps, I should say bad preservation—of the moors close by; but the increase is rather in Crows and ground vermin than in the Hawks.

Several Dotterels (*E. morinellus*) were noticed on the moor on Benar in the spring of this year by a gentleman who is well acquainted with birds, and I should think that it is quite possible that one or two might breed.

I must conclude with what I am afraid will be disbelieved, but which was certainly the most extraordinary and unaccountable occurrence that I ever came across. Last year, 1895, on September 6th, whilst returning from shooting with my brother, I saw a little bunch of birds flying about some low oak trees on the side of Benar, and uttering notes which I have always associated with the Fieldfare (*T. Pilaris*). There were five, and I at once said, "Those are Fieldfares," and followed them to try and shoot one, to make certain of their identity. We got close to them amongst the trees, and actually were under one tree in which one sat chattering; and as it flew about amongst the upper branches I had several good glimpses of it, but I never got a shot. We saw the others fairly close, and I watched them at about sixty yards, as they flew in a straggling line, with a pair of field glasses; and I must say that if they were not Fieldfares, I do not know in the least what they could have been. I have watched Fieldfares feeding in hard weather often in Oxfordshire within twenty yards of me, and I know them, I believe, and their notes as well as I know any bird; and my impression at this time left no doubt whatever on my mind as to their identity. What, however, they could have been doing at that date in that place, unless by

some possible chance they might have bred there, I cannot say, but I should suggest very humbly that it is just possible that the party might have been two old and three young birds. In any case, however, the occurrence, so far as it is satisfactory, is worth remarking on, as it may lead to others besides myself keeping a sharp look out this year for a recurrence of this very unusual sight.

NOTICES OF NEW BOOKS.

The Eggs of the Limicolæ, by F. Poynting. (London: R. H. Porter, 7, Princes Street, Cavendish Square.) Four parts, demy 4to, 54 plates; price £5 net.

The recent issue of Part IV. of Mr. Frank Poynting's "Eggs of the *Limicolæ*," completes what we trust is the first instalment of a work which will deal with the eggs of all the British Birds. We should greatly value illustrations of the beautiful eggs of the *Falconidæ* from the same accomplished artist. No praise can be too high for the manner in which the eggs of the Plovers and Sandpipers have already been delineated. They are confessedly difficult to illustrate, with all their numerous shades of stone, buff, buffish red, green, chocolate, brown, &c., and with their various blotches and markings; but so faithfully have these been rendered by Mr. Poynting, and by Mr. Wilhelm Greve, the well-known lithographer of Berlin, that we seem to have the very eggs before us, and not their mere figures. The eggs of the *Limicolæ* are very dear to Oölogists, both on account of their extreme beauty, and also on account of the mystery which still clings to the nidification of some of the species; and all collectors of these eggs will value Mr. Poynting's most successful work, which represents their favourites with a faithfulness that cannot be surpassed. A great merit in Mr. Poynting's work is that he gives illustrations of so many varieties; all eggs are given to variety, none more so than those of the *Limicolæ*, so that a single figure of the egg of any species would convey a very inadequate idea; but Mr. Poynting presents as many as a dozen figures of some of the most variable eggs, illustrating all the chief varieties; his plates of the extremely beautiful eggs of the *Purple Sandpiper*, the *Wood Sandpiper*, the *Green-shank*, and some others, are "joys for ever." There is only one of the plates in which he appears to us to have omitted a typical variety, and this is his plate of the eggs of the *Jack Snipe*, in which we should have been pleased to have seen the uniform chocolate egg sometimes laid by this minute *Scolopax*. Among the earliest specimens of the Jack

Snipe's eggs brought from Lapland by Mr. Wheelwright, there was a clutch of this variety, and we have one in our cabinet which we should have been glad to have lent to Mr. Poynting. Some of the eggs figured are exceedingly rare, and only exist in the wealthy collection of the Smithsonian Institute in America. These were drawn for Mr. Poynting by Mr. J. L. Ridgway, and consist of the eggs of the *Yellow-shank*, some of the eggs given of the *Grey Plover*, with those of the *American Golden Plover*, the *Pectoral Sandpiper*, the *Buff-breasted Sandpiper*, *Red-breasted Snipe*, *Sanderling*, *Bonaparte's Sandpiper*, *American Stint*, and *Eskimo Curlew*. Specimens of these eggs are very unlikely to find their way into the cabinets of English collectors, so that they are fortunate in having these beautiful figures within their reach. The eggs of four species remain unillustrated, undoubted specimens never having been yet secured; these are the *Sharp-tailed Sandpiper*, the *Curlew Sandpiper*, the *Knot*, and the *Solitary Sandpiper*.

The letter-press is excellent. Mr. Poynting's object has been, "as far as possible, to quote authorities who write from personal observation." He has succeeded in obtaining all the up-to-date information which can be gleaned from the most recent accounts of ornithological discovery and exploration.

In conclusion, we have to state that the work is very handsomely printed on the best paper.

MURRAY A. MATHEW.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

On Sub-species.—Mr. W. Ruskin Butterfield has made some remarks *contra* sub-species, ORNITHOLOGIST, vol. i., p. 94. There he declares that nobody has ever, to his knowledge, explained with much show of success what a sub-species is. Therefore, he declares it an arbitrary thing and condemns sub-specific names as "valueless," "arbitrary," and "misleading," followed by "bewilderment and chaos," &c. That article, to my mind, clearly showed that the writer was not then acquainted with the idea involved in the use of the word sub-species, or the literature relating to it. In the ORNITHOLOGIST, vol. i., p. 116, the same author expresses his fear that he was misunderstood; and he shows that now he *has* troubled about the meaning of the word sub-species, and he most graciously admits the existence of sub-species, and now his only objections to its use in ornithology are, that it is difficult to draw the line between a species and a sub-species, and that British ornithologists have not yet generally adopted the recognition of sub-species. May I ask all true ornithologists

whether they consider the fact that in some, or may-be many, cases it is difficult to decide whether a form is to be treated as a species or as a sub-species, sufficient to neglect and treat with contempt the undeniable existence of sub-specific forms—to leave out of consideration a most important fact in nature? As I have said elsewhere,[1] "scientific systematic treatment of living animals *demands* the recognition of sub-species, if systematic zoology is to be more than a pastime." It is, of course, "more trouble" to study *sub*-species as well; but no *real* zoologist will leave them aside for that reason, I hope! Their recognition is followed by bewilderment to those only who do not understand, or do not want to understand them." The unpretending amateur—whose services to science are so important and indismissible — who cannot devote much of his time to his hobby, must not necessarily go in for the differentiating of sub-specific forms at once—if he discovers, for example, a curious nest, or egg, or habit of a Marsh-Titmouse in England, let him call the bird Marsh-Tit, or *Parus palustris*, *Poecile palustris* or *dresseri*, or trinominally if he likes—he will always be understood by the ornithologist, and his observation will always be equally valuable; but he must not scorn the sub-specific forms because he does not understand them. In the British Isles there are, after all, not very many sub-species of birds; and Mr. W. Ruskin Butterfield's theory that "the number of individuals belonging to what Mr. Swann calls *valid species* must be immeasurably smaller than the number of varietal forms," is, in my opinion, without foundation. Though evolution goes on, it need not go on everywhere; and, in fact, the cases in ornithology where it goes on under our eyes, at present are not so very numerous in our countries. When a species is well-established, and the conditions and surroundings remain the same always, we cannot expect it to evolve any more without reason; therefore, the majority of species in this country may, without hesitation, be treated as "valid species"; but the opposite cases, too, require most careful attention of all painstaking systematical specialists.—Ernst Hartert.

Albino Starling.—A white Starling was killed near Ross, about the middle of July, and brought to me. I am having it preserved.—Wm. Blake (Broad Street, Ross, Herefordshire).

Spotted Eggs of Martin.—While examining a row of twenty-five House Martins' nests this spring, I found a nest of eggs with a plentiful sprinkling of *red spots* on the lot; the spots are of rather a pale red, and small. It is a case of identity certain; I caught the Martin on the nest. —W. Hy. Heathcote (Preston).

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[1] *Ibis*, 1896, p. 366.

The Green Woodpecker.—I should like to have the experience of your readers on a point connected with the nesting economy of the Green Woodpecker, In Mr. H. Witherby's interesting little book on "Forest Birds," I find the following statement:—"The chips are not left . . . in a white, staring heap at the bottom of the tree, to mark the position of the hole above, but each chip is carried to a distance by the industrious bird." Now, without wishing to cast any imputation upon the truth of Mr. Witherby's observation, I should like to ask, Is this commonly the case? During the last two seasons I have examined some seven or eight nests of this interesting species, and in every case my experience has been exactly opposed to that of Mr. Witherby; the chips being invariably littered about the ground in such a conspicuous heap as to make it impossible for the most casual observer to pass the nests by unnoticed. I may say that my observations were made in Herefordshire, while Mr. Witherby mentions that he pursued his researches in the New Forest, Hampshire. It would be interesting to know if this characteristic of the bird differs in the two counties.—D. E. McCausland (42, Shooter's Hill Road, Blackheath, S.E.)

Breeding Habits of the Sparrow-Hawk.—In spite of the papers that have appeared, it seems to me that this subject is still shrouded in a certain amount of perplexity. Writing in the June number of the Ornithologist, Mr. A. H. Macpherson quotes, with apparent approval, Mr. J. J. Baldwin Young's dictum to the effect that "the fact that there are sometimes remains of an old nest underneath, is really a *detail;* it is certainly not the *rule*"; while, in the August issue, Mr. Macpherson remarks on "the Sparrow-Hawk's *well-known habits* of utilising other birds' nests." Contrariwise, in the same issue, Mr. Boyd Alexander says that all the nests, upwards of a score, he has met with during the last six years have *invariably* been built by the birds themselves. Mr. C. Milburn has nailed to the mast a discrepancy in Mr. Kearton's teachings; and Mr. H. S. Davenport declares that, in his experience, Sparrow-Hawks make a rule of founding new nests on the battered-down remains of those of other birds. It certainly seems strange that what Mr. Macpherson has characterised as a "well-known habit" should have been falsified in every single instance in Mr. Alexander's experience of the last six years! *Can it be that in many cases the ancient relics are so sparse as to be entirely hidden by the new structure?*—R. C. Davenport, 24, Princes Square, W.)

I do not question the accuracy of the observations of those of your correspondents who state that this bird generally builds on the old nests of Owl, Magpie, or Woodpigeon, nor take part in the discussion, beyond merely stating my experience of the building habits of this Hawk in Ireland, in the counties of Cork and Sligo. When a boy, residing in the former

county, I was well acquainted with the nests of Sparrow-Hawks built in the demesnes of *Coolman* and *Ballybricken*, and *invariably* found that they built *their own nests*, generally on the lateral branches close to the bole of a fir-tree of some kind, though in several instances the nest might be some distance from the main stem, and at no great height; perhaps ten to twenty feet from the ground would be about the average. The nest was constructed of small twigs, principally larch, with a *well-formed* cup-shaped cavity about three inches deep, in which the eggs were laid; then, during the hatching and the rearing of the young, this cavity became flattened, and by the time the young were fledged the nest had all the appearance of an old and deserted nest of the Owl—a mere dilapidated, flimsy platform. Here, at Moyview, Co. Sligo, I have had a pair or two of Sparrow-Hawks building every year since 1853, and in every instance I have seen the birds build a new nest every year, and *never* on the old nest of other birds, though we have plenty of Magpies and Rooks, in the old nests of which the Long-eared Owls lay their eggs every season, and in early spring the melancholy, long-drawn moan of the male Long-eared Owl can be heard all about the place.—Robert Warren (Moyview, Ballina).

As a final contribution to a subject which has given rise to a certain amount of controversy and misunderstanding, I must say that I entirely repudiate the inference which Mr. F. B. Whitlock has ostensibly drawn from my original paper, to wit, that Sparrow-Hawks appropriate Magpies' nests *of the year*. Such is altogether foreign to my experience, and diametrically opposed to my belief. Kestrels, breeding late from some cause or another, occasionally resort to newly-built Magpies' nests after they have served their lawful owners' purpose; and I have, moreover, been an interested spectator of right royal battles betwixt Magpies and Kestrels for the possession of brand-new nests, completed and just ready for eggs, belonging, of course, to the former species—invariably, I may add, terminating in favour of the Kestrels. But it never for a moment entered my head that anyone could interpret any single sentence of mine as meaning that Sparrow-Hawks either deposit their eggs actually in Magpies' nests *of the year*, or superimpose nests of their own on the bulky and imposing structures appropriated in all their quasi-pristine newness. If one or other of these eventualities be not contemplated by Mr. Whitlock, I am wholly at a loss to know what construction he wishes placed on his pointed allusion to the two nests (he knew of) belonging to Magpies, and built during the spring of the *present* year, neither of which had proved attractive to a pair of Sparrow-Hawks subsequently breeding in the same wood. I might almost say that the very essence of my original contention was to the effect that Sparrow-Hawks only have recourse to the bare relics of ancient nests as foundations for their own, and I was quite under the impression that I had emphasised

this salient point with due adequacy all through my paper. The less obtrusive nests of Ring-Doves are by far the most frequently chosen in my experience; and when those of Carrion-Crows and Magpies are appropriated, they are so reduced in size and altered in shape by the inclemencies of the preceding winter, or winters, as only to deserve the name of mere remnants; being, when utilised, frequently obscured from view by the more commanding structures of the Sparrow-Hawks themselves. Nevertheless, the connection between these appropriated structures and the newly-fashioned superstructures is obvious enough to anyone who realises its probable existence, and will investigate closely; though it is my conviction that countless times in the past the ancient foundation has been overlooked, simply because not suspected to exist. For this very reason, too, hurling authorities at one's head carries little weight, since in so many cases there must be a doubt as to what is a pilfered assertion and what an original observation. I am quite sure that Mr. Whitlock has strained, not to say perverted, my meaning unwittingly; but for all that, I wish to draw attention to the fact that I distinctly spoke of these appropriated nests as presenting "a very ragged appearance previously to adaptation, being tattered and torn by the storms and gales of winter." Again, I wrote: "Long ere the leaf is out, sometimes, indeed, as early as the end of March, mental selection is unquestionably made of the nest that is eventually to be utilised as a breeding site." I also said that I had known "many a nest belonging to an alien species one year, converted into a Sparrow-Hawk's the next" and, finally, I alluded to "the ultra-extended platform built by the Sparrow-Hawks themselves, and superadded to the *relics* of the nest of some other species." I submit, then, that quotations such as these from my original paper demonstrate, beyond all possibility of cavil, that the fact of Sparrow-Hawks disdaining to utilise Magpies' nests *of the year* has no bearing whatsoever on, or affects in the slightest degree, the specific issue raised by me. They conclusively prove that my thoughts were concentrated on the appropriation, not of modern nests, as inferred by Mr. Whitlock, but of the *remains* of ancient ones; and I will only add that I regret having had to supplement what I wrote in May with such copious explanations in July and September—to the exclusion, it may well be, of infinitely more interesting matter from other sources.—H. S. Davenport.

A Moorhen's Nesting Site.—A rather curious site for a Moorhen's nest came under my observation on the date of writing (July 31st). On the large lake of the park of this town a wooden raft has been moored to the bank, and at the end of the raft a "Waterhen" is sitting on its nest.—Chas. Milburn (Russel Street, Middlesbro').

Andersonian Naturalist's Society.—At the fifth meeting of the twelfth session of this society—held in the Andersonian Buildings, Glasgow;

Mr. James Murray, Vice-President, in the chair—Mr. George Mitchell showed a collection of birds' eggs made in the Crieff district, chiefly woodland species, including the Redstart, Garden Warbler, Chiff-chaff, Yellow Wagtail, Bullfinch, Tawny Owl, and Oyster-Catcher, which last-named maritime species breeds on the Earn, as it does in other inland localities in Scotland. Mr. H. B. Watt, Vice-President, read a paper, entitled, "Glimpses of the Bird Life of Ailsa Craig, Inch Moan, the Bass, and Isle of May," giving an account of recent visits paid by him to these island breeding-stations, the homes and haunts of large numbers of sea-fowl and other birds. A brief topographical description was given of each island, and observations made on the habits and appearance of the birds. The Razorbill (*Alca torda*), and Guillemot (*Uria troile*), the familiar Dookers of the Clyde; Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*); and the different Gulls—Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), the most abundant on the rocks; Herring (*Larus argentatus*), Greater and Lesser Blackbacks (*L. marinus* and *L. fuscus*); the last-named being the only bird found common to all of the four islands. The continued absence of the Black-headed Gull (*L. ridibundus*) from its old quarters on Inch Moan, and the presence still of Terns (*Sterna fluviatilis* and *S. macrura*) in some numbers was recorded. On the Isle of May, the Eider Duck (*Somateria mollissima*) and Oyster-Catcher (*Hæmatopus ostralegus*) were found breeding, the first-named in considerable numbers. Some remarks were also made on the habits of the Gannet or Solan Goose (*Sula bassana*), which from old up till now has been the most prominent inhabitant of the Bass, and Ailsa Craig. It is mentioned as frequenting the Bass, by John Major, in his "History of Greater Britain" (1521), and Hector Boece, in his "History of Scotland" (1527), has a well-known passage on this grand and interesting bird. Boece also knew of the colony on Ailsa, information of which Willughby, one of the fathers of British ornithology, writing 150 years later (1678), was ignorant. Several land-birds were also noted as having been seen on these islands, and doubtless, a lengthened period of observation would result in a full list of our Scottish birds being obtained on any one of them. Specimens of most of the birds named above, and their eggs, were on exhibition, and also some photographs from nature of the birds and their breeding places.

The Wall Creeper (*Tichodroma muraria*) in Sussex.—Mr. William Mitchell, of "The Look-out," Winchelsea, invited me, while on a visit to that town on July 31st, to inspect a bird in his possession, "the like of which he had never seen before." His description of the bird's appearance as it climbed about a ruin, and of the crimson and white on its wings, rendered identification almost certain even before seeing the specimen, and on reaching the house I at once saw that the "strange bird" was an

example in breeding plumage of the Wall Creeper (*Tichodroma muraria*). His attention was called to it by some men who had noticed its bright colours, and he shot it near the ruin of the Grey Friar's Chapel, on the property of Major Stileman. It was set up by Gasson, of Rye. It is unfortunate that no note was made of the date of the occurrence, but Mr. Mitchell feels sure it was in late spring about ten years ago, *i.e.*, about 1886. This is the third recorded occurrence in Britain, and is an addition to the Sussex avifauna. The specimen is now in my possession, and it will be exhibited at a meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club.—W. C. J. Ruskin Butterfield (St. Leonards-on-Sea).

Nesting of the Willow-Warbler.—Mr. H. S. Davenport (*epis.*) and Mr. Moffat (*Irish Naturalist*), have expressed surprise that I should have stated in my recently-published Handbook (p. 27) that the nest of this bird is "rarely on ground." After glancing over some of my notebooks, I can only reiterate my statement with emphasis, as, so far as my own experience is concerned, I can only find one instance noted of a nest being in actual *contact* with the earth, and that one was on a bank, while nearly all the nests are noted as being from three or four to six or eight inches from the ground in grass, brambles, rank herbage, or the bottoms of small bushes. I have even a nest recorded as found near Harrow, June 21st, 1891, which was placed in a little bush at a height of very nearly *two feet six inches* from the ground. The nest of the Chiffchaff is, I admit, *commonly* placed *on* the ground, but it is hardly likely that there should be a race of Willow-Warblers unknown to me at present which differ from nearly all those I have met with in placing their nest *in contact* with the ground. Possibly, however, I have erred in being too nicely discriminative, and my critics mean that when the lower surface of a nest is six inches from the ground, it is "on the ground."—H. Kirke Swann.

American Robin* in Connaught.—During a recent visit to Carrick-on-Shannon, I was informed by Mr. C. C. Beresford Whyte that his keeper at Newtown Manor, near Lough Gill, had shot there and preserved a strange thrush with a red breast. On visiting the place, I was shown the bird by Mr. Robert West, whom I found to be a most observant and careful man. I placed him in communication with Dr. Scharff, and the result is that the bird is now in the Science and Art Museum, Dublin, the second example obtained in Ireland; the previous one, also in the Museum, having been shot in Co. Dublin on 4th May, 1891. Mr. West writes about his bird—"The Thrush was shot on or about 7th December, 1892, in a large water-meadow, very near the shore of Lough Gill, Newtown Manor side, feeding with a similar bird, also with Snipe, Lapwing, Fieldfares, and

* Erratum.—Page 101, line 13, for "twice" read "once."

Redwings. By my diary, I find the heavy snow began to thaw on the 5th." Unlike the previous occurrence in May, this specimen was obtained at the end of a very severe period of frost and snow in December.—R. J. Ussher, in the *Irish Naturalist*, August, 1896.

NOTES AND NEWS.

Dr. R. W. Shufeldt, commenting in the "Nidologist" on the question of the changes of colour in the plumage of birds without moult, and on the remarks on the subject made at a recent meeting of the British Ornithologists' Club, remarks very pertinently that "the *moulting* of birds is, at this time, attracting most closely the attention of ornithologists in all quarters, and it will be for the highest interests of the science that collectors, instead of taking male birds in *full breeding plumage*, devote their attention for a time, to *moulting plumages* of both *sexes*, at *all ages and every season* of the year." Dr. Shufeldt, like several other eminent American ornithologists, is, we may remark, an opponent of the theory so long held in this country that certain birds change the colour of their plumage "through a pigment circulation in the feathers."

Recently the cormorants, which were brought from the Farne Islands, nested again in St. James's Park, but although the one young bird which was hatched from a clutch of four eggs appeared to be doing well, and would, it was thought, be reared successfully, yet it was found dead one morning recently in the enclosure.

Mr. C. B. Moffat contributes a paper to the "Irish Naturalist" for August on the "Quail in Ireland," dealing with its recent visits and with its re-appearance in 1896 in the southern half of the island.

As a further addition to the list of orders protective of wild birds' eggs, which we published in tabulated form in the May issue, we may add the following (for numbered list see page 49): Dorset, five defined areas at Wareham, Chesil Bank, Lodmoor, Lulworth Cove and St. Alban's Head, and Poole Harbour:—3, 5, 32, 48, 49, 80, 84, 86, 89, 91, 92, 97, 100, 109, 111, 113, 114, 129, 143, 144 and Little Grebe. Dumfriesshire and Galloway (after April 15th in each year):—119.

The death at Shoal Lake, Manitoba, on July 27th (as the result of a most lamentable accident) of Charles Doncaster Swann removes a most promising and enthusiastic field-naturalist and collector. He was the younger brother of the editor of this magazine, and was only in his nineteenth year; he left England four months ago.

Vol. I. of Captain Shelley's valuable work on the "Birds of Africa" comprises a list of all the species known to occur in the Ethiopian region up

to the date of its publication, with a reference to a good figure, and to the page and volume of the British Museum Catalogue, where the species is mentioned. No less than 2,534 species are included in the list. Vol. II. will be devoted to the classification and diagnosis of all the species.

We learn from the "Animals' Guardian" that the French Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has determined to take active steps to put a stop to the wanton destruction of small birds in France. There are already laws dealing with the matter, but one need only look at the poulterer's shop windows, or read the *menus* at a *table de hôte* in almost any French department to know that these laws are so many dead letters. No bird is protected, either by the melody of its song or the loveliness of its plumage, and it is often remarked that the woods in France are much more silent in the early spring than those of Great Britain. In many parts of France, however, the farmers complain now that their harvests are endangered by the ravages of the insects on which the wild birds used to feed, and it is beginning to be understood that protection to the birds means protection to the crops. It is now hoped, therefore, that a law may be passed absolutely forbidding the destruction, the sale, or the exportation at any season of the year of any birds recognised as useful to agriculture, and also that it may be made penal to rob or destroy their nests. The promoters of the movement see, however, that their end cannot be attained by repressive measures alone, and that the war against cruelty to animals can be best fought in the schoolroom. They recommend, therefore, that in the primary and secondary schools, the teachers should frequently call attention to the subject, and remind them of the serious loss that agriculture suffers from this wanton slaughter of small birds.

ADDITIONS TO THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION DURING JULY.

Two Pratincoles (*Glareola pratincola*), bred in the Gardens (Superintendent's Office); two Red Ground-Doves (*Geotrygon montana*) from S. America, and one blood-breasted Pigeon (*Phlegœnas cruentata*), Philippine Islands, deposited (W. Aviary); one Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Europe, presented by James Boorne, Esq. (E. Aviary); one Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*) from Australia, purchased (West Aviary); one Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), captured off the coast of Tierra del Fuego, presented by T. W. Hubble, Esq. (North Aviary); one Blue-fronted Amazon (*Chrysotis æstiva*) from S. America, presented by A. E. Corsbie, Esq. (Parrot House); one Great-billed Rhea (*Rhea macrorphyncha*) from Brazil, deposited (Emu Paddocks); two Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis falcinellus*), born in the Menagerie (Heron Aviary); three Common Sheldrakes (*Tadorna vulpanser*), 1 ♂, 2 ♀) from Europe, purchased (Duck Paddocks); one Iceland Falcon (*Hierofalco islandus*) from Iceland, deposited (North Aviary); two Lettered

Aracaris (*Pteroglossus inscriptus*)* from Brazil, purchased (Parrot House); three Yellow-bellied Liothrix (*Liothrix luteus*) from India, presented by Robert E. Graves, Esq., F.Z.S. (Western Aviary); one Gold Pheasant *Thaumalea picta* ♂), from China, presented by R. C. G. Pollock, Esq., F.Z.S. (Pheasantries); one Black-necked Swan (*Cygnus nigricollis*) from Antarctic America, purchased (Duck Paddocks); one Passerine Owl (*Glaucidium passorinum*) from Europe, presented by Miss Bloxam (Owls' Cages); one Patagonian Conure (*Conurus patagonus*) from La Plata, purchased (Parrot House); one Raven (*Corvus corax*) from British Isles, presented by Wm. Soper, Esq. (Crows' Cages); one Yellow-headed Conure (*Conurus endaya*) from S.E. Brazil, deposited (Parrot House); one Boobook Owl (*Ninox boobook*) from Australia, presented by Dr. R. Broom (Eastern Aviary); one Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) from British Isles, presented by the Rev. A. Greaves (Crows' Cages); one New Zealand Parrakeet (*Cyanorhamphus novæ-zealandiæ*) from New Zealand, presented by Miss A. Malcolm (Parrot House); one Bare-eyed Cockatoo (*Cocatua gymnopis*) from S. Australia, presented by Mrs. M. E. Huntley (Parrot House); two Ypecaha Rails (*Aramides ypecaha*), bred in the Menagerie (Emu Paddock); one Black-tailed Flower-bird (*Anthornis melanura*) from New Zealand, presented by the Hon. Walter Rothschild, F.Z.S. (Parrot House); two Amaduvade Finches (*Estrelda amandava*) from India, and one Paradise Whydah-bird (*Vidua paradisea*) from West Africa, presented by Miss M. von Laer (West Aviary); one Martinique Gallinule (*Ionornis martinicus*) from S. America, presented by A. W. Arrowsmith, Esq. (West Aviary); eight Amherst's Pheasants (*Thaumalea amherstiæ*), two Himalayan Monauls (*Lophophorus impeyanus*), and two Peacock Pheasants (*Polyplectron chinquis*), bred in the Managerie (Pheasantries); four Arctic Terns (*Sterna macrura*) from British Isles, presented by Col. Davies Cooke (Fish House); one Gentoo Penguin (*Pygosceles tæniatus*) from Falkland Islands, deposited (Fish House).

BOOKS, &c. RECEIVED.

Notes on some species of the families Cypselidæ, Caprimulgidæ and Podargidæ with remarks on sub-specific forms and their nomemclature, by Ernst Hartert. Reprinted from the "Ibis" for July, 1896. With 2 plates.

Communicaciones Oologicas. Par el Doctor Carlos Berg, Director del Muses Nacional de Buenos Aires. From the "Anales del Mus. Nac. de Buenos Aires, Tomo v., p. 33 á 38.

Science Gossip, New Series, No. 27, August, 1896. John T. Carrington, Editor.

* New to the Collection.

The Naturalists' Chronicle, No. 19, July, 1896. Albert H. Waters, Editor.

Ornithologische Monatsberichte, Vol. iv., No. 8., August, 1896. Prof. Dr. Reichenow, Editor.

The Naturalist, No. 253, August, 1896. W. Denison Roebuck, Editor.

The Naturalists' Journal, No. 50, August, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Editor.

Nature Notes, No. 80, August 1896. London: John Bale & Sons.

The Irish Naturalist, Vol. v., No. 8, August, 1896. Dublin: Eason and Son, Limited.

The Nidologist, Vol. iii., Nos. 10 and 11, June and July, 1896. H. R. Taylor, Editor.

Ornithologisches Jahrbuch, Vol. vii., No. 4, July—August, 1896. V. R. von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen, Editor.

The Animals' Guardian, No. 68, May, 1896. London: 32, Sackville Street.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All Editorial communications and Books for Review or MSS., must be sent to H. K. SWANN, 10, Harrington Street, London, N.W. To be dealt with in the following issue, communications must be received by the 12th of each month.

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R. G., EDINBURGH; J. W., CALNE; R. H. READ, BEDFORD PARK; T. L. JOHNSTON.

CARLISLE.—The Editor acknowledges with thanks lists of local bird names, many of which are interesting and acceptable.

J. W., CALNE.—Your theory of the origin of the name "Gor Crow" is ingenious, but we prefer our own explanation (p. 118). We imagine that in most counties a farm labourer would say *gor* (or *gaw*) for caw, as yours did, but in etymology similarity of pronunciation does not indicate similarity of derivation.

W. M. (Junr.), BIRKENHEAD.—The present price of the ORNITHOLOGIST does not preclude the insertion of an occasional coloured plate, but the present *circulation* decidedly does. We have done our "level best" to convince people that owing to its restriction to *one* subject this magazine cannot pay a profit, even if it escapes showing a loss, and that as a matter of fact it is utterly impossible for us to give expensive plates or an increase of size unless we get enough new subscribers to meet the extra expense. Those unreasoning individuals who complain that they do not get enough for their money and consequently refuse to subscribe, are, therefore, not only injuring us personally but are injuring their fellow bird-lovers. Nevertheless, it is possible that we may be enabled to give a coloured plate in our next number.

THE proposed FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS' SOCIETY will not be formed at present, as considerably less than the 100 names asked for were sent in. It was out of the question for the Society to be formed with a smaller membership than that indicated.

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST:

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF

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EDITED BY

H. K. SWANN,

With the assistance of

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G.E.H. BARRETT-HAMILTON (Ireland).

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THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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THE STORMY PETREL AT HOME.

BY ROBERT GODFREY.

EARLY in July last, whilst rambling in Shetland, I heard that eggs of the Stormy Petrel had been procured on an island not far from where I was at the time residing, and being anxious to add this species to my own collection, I sought out the parties concerned, and readily gained their consent to accompany me on a second trip to the island. The three of us —including a boatman, Tammie—pushed off from shore, hoisted our sail, and with the wind in our favour, reached the island, on which a "Brough," or Pictish fortress stands, in safety. As we drew near, a Richardson's Skua was flying about, and the Arctic Terns became lively and excited, whilst an immense gathering of Shags swam seaward from its shore.

The heaps of stones, relics of the ancient fortress, have in several places no sod upon them, but lie heaped in wild profusion together, whilst in other parts they are covered with pasture grass, growing thick and close so as to obliterate the nature of the underlying masses. Leaving the boat to be cared for by my two more expert companions, I passed along a narrow grassy slit between two banks, and began a search for the object of my visit. The Oyster-catcher had joined the screamers, and in wild excitement flew around, whilst Starlings were only too evidently showing their distress at our intrusion of their breeding haunts. Off darted a rabbit that

had been lying up amongst some long grass growing at a rock-side, and rabbit-burrows became conspicuous as I slowly moved along. I tried several of these, and found them of limited depth and without contents. Having examined three or four burrows, I came to a small hole running between two stones embedded in the bank, and on looking in I saw a Petrel's egg lying on the bare earth with no bird in sight. With some difficulty I forced my hand into the crevice and extracted the egg. At the same time I recognised the peculiar musky odour emanating from the hole, which brought to my mind the allusion to the "vild smell dü kens," and I had a clue that could be used to purpose. I found no other tenanted hole along that hollow, and was soon joined by my companions, who shared in my delight.

Meanwhile, the Starlings were as excited as ever, and young ones were chirping wildly in their concealment. The noise revealed to us the tenanted hole, and looking into the crevice amongst the stones, we saw the brood reclining on a nest of hay, and occasionally raising their long necks for food.

Resuming our search for Petrels, I let my companions have the secret about the musky odour, and we were soon all testing the various cracks for it. I soon detected it again, and directed their attention to it, but on closely interrogating Tammie, learned that he felt only the smell of the "soorocks." This hole threatened much digging, and was left alone. We crossed a few stones built up like a wall, and reached the spot where eggs had been taken on the previous visit. Suddenly a curious low grinding cry was heard to proceed from under the stones, and known by my companions to come from a Petrel. Directing attention to this quarter, and locating the spot from which the sound proceeded as exactly as possible, we raised stone after stone and rolled them aside, being encouraged in our work by the continued calling beneath, and convinced as we dug on that the bird must have an intricate path to traverse ere she reached her lair. At length we came on a large flat stone, underneath which we deemed her to be sitting, and I was in readiness to capture her when my associates raised the stone. Up they heaved it, and exposed the little bird sitting close to the ground. She did not stir when the

full light was thus let in upon her. I was too eager to grasp her, however, and in doing so, chipped the egg beneath her. She stopped crying, and lay quietly in my hand without squirting any oil upon me. Shortly after I had killed her the oil began to flow from her bill and to damage her head feathers.

I laid the bird on a piece of paper, and went across the brough to the point in quest of the Oyster-catcher, which now resumed its uproar. We examined a nest of the Arctic Tern, containing three eggs, and formed of long pieces of dry seaweed and zoophytes, placed on a bed of chickweed. Amongst some low rocks at hand was a nest of the Common Gull, containing a rotten egg. We did not succeed in finding the Oyster-catcher, and reached again the hollow where I had found the first Petrel's egg.

Climbing the slope from this, and testing the various holes for the characteristic odour, we halted at a small opening which led various ways into the grassy bank, and we were soon confirmed in our decision by a repetition of the grinding note, which may be represented on paper as "ki-yaa-it." We set to work, and were quickly showing evidences of our labour in the hole we were forming in the side of the bank; but we had to dig deeply before receiving any award of our toil. Presently a rotten egg, last year's, apparently, was laid bare, then a Petrel sitting on her egg. The Petrel retired, and we abstracted the egg with difficulty; we could then safely loosen other material, and I gripped the bird. On being removed from the hole she squirted some oil out of her mouth. On being released she fluttered to the earth, where she lay for a second or two amongst the grass, then rising again a foot or so above the herbage, she fluttered from side to side, beating her long sharp wings with regular moderate speed, and disappeared over the bank. Her flight was silent and easy, and could hardly be compared with that of known species.

Others were crying in the same cavity, and encouraged us to dig on. The next Petrel discovered also left her egg when daylight was let in upon her, and retreated further into the hole, so that I had to bring her out by a wing. The third bird taken here proved more vicious than the others, and gripped my finger tenaciously; when held in the hand she

uttered a short squeak, which differed from the long grinding cry. Again we watched the soft easy flutter, with its uncertainty of direction, as we allowed her to take flight. Digging further into the same cavity, we discovered a fourth, which, along with its egg, I took, and having procured sufficient for our purposes, we stayed our search.

We found another Starling's nest with young, deep down amongst the stones, and noted two great Blackbacks and an Eider-drake pass during our sojourn on the island.

All the Petrel's eggs proved more or less incubated, and in five out of the six cases, they had been laid on the bare earth; in the odd case the egg rested on a little hay. The two birds taken were male and female, so that both birds incubate.

46, *Cumberland Street, Edinburgh.*

THE BIRDS OF THE HAVEN.

By G. Moir.

The "Haven," as it is called, is a long but narrow piece of water lying just opposite to Cowes (Isle of Wight), two miles from Titchfield, and fourteen from Portsmouth.

The length is about three-quarters of a mile, and it is in no part more than 500 or 600 yards wide. It is formed by the outlet of the river Titchfield, which after passing the Haven flows into the sea. The banks on either side are covered with reeds, &c., and so afford a most suitable nesting ground for many aquatic and other birds. It is the private property of Colonel Delmé-Ratcliffe, by whom it is shot over, and carefully preserved, therefore being a safe nesting and resting ground for many species of birds not otherwise found on this part of the coast, which is everywhere low and exposed to the violence of every storm. It is shut off from actual communication with the sea by a bridge.

Dealing first with the birds which are in it continually, from the fact of its being an inland lake, the foremost are the Coots (*Fulica atra*), of which there are several hundreds, and any day in the whole year at least a hundred may be counted swimming on the water. Moorhens are also present in large

numbers, but not nearly so plentifully as the Coots. The Water-rail is rather uncommon, being indeed but seldom seen. Moreover, it does not nest on the Haven.

The Kingfisher is represented by a solitary bird, which has been here for the last two years, before which there were none. I was talking to an old inhabitant one day about the scarcity of this bird—as not only is it unrepresented, except by this solitary bird on the Haven, but it is also not found along the banks of the river—when he informed me that as a boy, he used to catch five or six of a morning in a gin-trap!

Coming to the sea-birds I may remark that the Cormorant comes over here from the back of the Isle of Wight, where it breeds. It usually comes in February, to the number of about eight or ten. The curious thing about it is, it never settles on the Haven until the shooting for the year is over. A young one appeared this year on August 1st. The Shag is very rare indeed, here; this year it appeared in April, and went away directly. The Gannet is never found anywhere near here, but about eight years ago one was shot after a severe storm on the coast; this is the only time it has been found that I can recollect. The Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) stays here all the year round, generally about ten at a time, but it breeds in Botley Wood, about eight miles from here.

I might here mention that the last Little Egret (*Ardea garzetta*) is said to have been shot in Tapnadge Wood, about five miles from here. The Little Bittern came here in January, 1893, when it was shot; it has not occurred before or since. The Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), also came here in February, 1893.

The Spoonbill, I am glad to say, is often seen here; last winter (1895) two were seen, and in 1892 Mr. Pearce shot one near here.

The Geese seen here are very numerous; large flocks come over the Isle of Wight, and settle either in the Solent, just outside, or else in the Haven. The Grey Lag, Bean, and Brent Geese nearly always come every winter, the latter in flocks of about 100, in March generally. Wild Swans usually come every few years. This year eleven birds stayed from June till August 1st; they were not always on or near the

water, they sometimes went away for a day or two, sometimes altogether, and sometimes only one or two, but they always returned until their final departure on August 1st. In 1894, three were present for six weeks; coming in the latter end of February, it was hoped they would stay to breed, and we still hope they will do so.

The Wild Ducks are a very numerous class here indeed. The Pochard, under the name of "Norwegian Duck," from time to time occurs; this year there was but one. Widgeon also are few, there were twenty in 1894 and in 1895, only two. It is said that during the Russian War, in 1854, wild geese were so plentiful here that they were sold for 6d. each! Wild Duck (*Anas boscas*) come in in huge flocks in the winter; this year twenty-eight stayed to nest. They go away again after nesting, indeed, the Mallards depart directly the young are hatched and return again in October in small quantities. Teal are generally present, but although the most numerous of the Ducks in the winter, only a few stay to nest; which they do in the little ditches which drain the surrounding meadows. The Tufted Duck was present this winter to the number of eight. One had its wing broken, and so is still present, but although it was hoped it would nest, it did not do so, the rest departing soon after. The Long-tailed Duck is always regular, but generally only one or two appear.

The Plovers are generally fairly numerous. The Golden Plover (*Charadrius pluvialis*) is usually not seen till November, but this year it occurred in July. The Ringed Plover is usually resident throughout the year, as also is the Dotterel, which comes in in small flocks on the mud-banks during low-tide. The Lapwing is very common, and nests both here and right up the valley to Whitley, about seven miles away. The Turnstone appears in the spring, but is most numerous in the winter. Snipe were first seen this year on July 6th.

A Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) was shot here on August 1st; this is a very rare bird indeed here, indeed it is questionable whether this was not the first bird ever shot here. The Common Snipe and Jack-Snipe are regular visitors, the former breeding here. The Great Snipe (*Gallinago major*) was last shot here, in 1868, on Titchfield Common.

NESTING HABITS OF THE WILLOW-WARBLER AND CHIFFCHAFF.

By H. S. Davenport.

I cannot find words which will adequately express the amazement I felt on perusing the editor's remarks anent the above subject in the September issue of The Ornithologist. In this connection we are confronted with two common summer migrants, concerning whose normal nesting habits I am prepared to show that the most widely-divergent opinions are held, and consequently I am glad to think that the question now stands a chance of being thoroughly ventilated, and I only hope the discussion will not pall until some unimpeachable settlement of the true facts has been definitely put on record. It is quite the case that I wrote to Mr. Swann expressing my astonishment at and dissent from his teaching with regard to the Willow-warbler's nest being located, as he alleges in his recently-published Handbook, "rarely on (the) ground," and I fully anticipated his replying that it was "an unaccountable oversight"—the identical phrase used in a letter (in connection therewith) to me by a bird-nesting friend. That Mr. Swann should stick to his guns, however, and further volunteer that he is prepared to admit that "the nest of the Chiffchaff is *commonly* placed *on* the ground," comes to me, figuratively speaking, as a bolt from the blue! From my own individual point of view, there is no question at all, as voluntarily suggested, of too nice a discrimination on Mr. Swann's part, for I consider that when the lower surface of a nest is even less than half "six inches from the ground," it cannot be correctly defined as "on the ground."

Before proceeding further, however, I may briefly state that, during upwards of thirty years' experience in manifold parts of the kingdom, I have never known a Chiffchaff's nest to be built *on* the ground, and only on one solitary occasion a Willow-warbler's to be built *off* it. This language, surely, will not lend itself to misinterpretation. Indeed, with regard to the Willow-warbler's nesting site, it seems to me that it might almost as accurately be characterised as *in* the ground as *on* it. I have, as may readily be imagined, found scores

and scores of nests of both species, while, apart from the dissimilarity of the eggs on most occasions, an appreciative ear will at once detect the difference in the alarm-notes; that of the Willow-warbler is a plaintive kind of *t-wheet*, the initial letter all but imperceptible; that of the Chiffchaff an equally plaintive kind of *tewy*. I am not cognizant of any single author who has commented on the difference in the two alarm-notes, or who has drawn attention to this reliable test for discriminating betwixt the two species, which are, I admit, vastly alike at even the shortest of ranges.

Two or three years ago—I have the whole of the published correspondence by me—I raised the question in the Natural History columns of *The Field* as to whether ornithologists generally were agreed as to the *normal* site for the nest of the Chiffchaff? At that time I was on the point of commencing my "Original Sketches of British Birds," and finding my experience respecting the nesting site of the species above mentioned opposed to the verbal descriptions of most authors, and diametrically at variance with Dr. Bowdler Sharpe's teaching in the first volume (then recently published) of "A Handbook to the Birds of Great Britain," wherein he wrote with regard to the nest of the Chiffchaff, "This is generally placed on the ground"—I repeat, finding an array of erudite and accomplished authors against me, I began to have qualms about the reliability of my own observations and researches, so forthwith decided to ascertain, if possible, the views of other field-naturalists. Mr. F. Boyes, of Beverley, wrote thus:—"It is, I think, pretty generally believed that the Chiffchaff usually nests on the ground. I wish to state that, after many years of careful observation, *and by catching the birds on the nests in most cases*, I have long since come to the firm belief that the Chiffchaff rarely, if ever, nests on the ground; at least, I have never found its nest so placed. On the contrary, I believe the Willow-warbler never nests off the ground—that is, it nests as close to the ground as the herbage will allow, and never in a bush like the Chiffchaff." Mr. Alfred C. Chapman, of Moor House, Leamside, Durham, expressed himself on the question as follows:—"There can be no doubt whatever that on or *in* the ground itself, or as near to the ground as the

herbage will permit, is the normal position of the Willow-wren's nest. With regard to the Chiffchaff, I think it may be fairly said that it never breeds actually on or in the ground. I believe that the nest is generally raised about half a foot or a foot from the actual ground, and sometimes it is considerably higher." Mr. James Carter, of Burton House, Marsham, wrote to this effect:—"My experience tallies with that of Mr. F. Boyes and Mr. H. S. Davenport. I do not remember ever having seen a nest of the Chiffchaff placed on the ground. And although I have seen *hundreds* of nests of the Willow-warbler, I cannot recollect ever having found one actually off the ground; but I have occasionally observed one in such a distinct cavity that the aperture of the nest was below the surface of the earth." Mr. W. J. Horn, of The Bank, Hinckley, was no less brief than emphatic in his reply to my query; he wrote as follows:—"I should like to be allowed to mention that I have never found the nest of the Chiffchaff *on* the ground." One other letter only appeared, and this certainly raised a dissentient note. Colonel T. M. Ward, of Sibton, Yoxford, Suffolk, testifies his surprise at Mr. F. Boyes and myself never having found a Chiffchaff's nest on the ground. He added that he could only suppose that we did not look for it in such a situation, for it was certain that the bird in question did nest on the ground, and, in his opinion, did so as a rule; moreover, that nests at any elevation above the ground were exceptional.

On the majority of extracts given I will offer no passing comment; they speak for themselves, and are the outcome of the practical experience of the various writers, and, as such, are ten thousand times more valuable as affecting a specific issue than all the painstaking efforts of compilers put together. That they were, withal, personally most welcome, as tending to thoroughly re-establish confidence in the accuracy of my own researches, goes without saying. On the other hand, though I am far from denying that Willow-warblers may occasionally nest off the ground and Chiffchaffs on it, I hold an unalterable conviction that such situations are entirely abnormal to the respective species. I am also of opinion that much unwitting blundering has been generated with

regard to the due authentication of the nests of each of the species; moreover, that such blundering is easily possible at times unless the vital test of differentiating the alarm notes is applied on the spot, for I have on occasions found Willow-warblers' eggs closely approximating in the colour of their markings to those of Chiffchaffs'. Lastly, the notion that there can be two races of Willow-warbler in this country, breeding on and off the ground according to their respective instincts—from what has gone before it will be seen that a similar hypothesis might with an equal show of reason be put forward with regard to two races of Chiffchaff, breeding on and off the ground in like manner—is not, in my opinion, to be entertained for one single moment. I stoutly contend that, even as the Chiffchaff sings at a higher level than the Willow-warbler, so also does it nest at a higher level.

By W. J. Horn.

The editor's note on the nesting of this bird is most interesting to me, and I am sure he will be equally interested to learn that, in the Midlands and South of England—the only districts with which I am acquainted—there *is* a race of Willow-warblers unknown to him at present* which differs from nearly all those he has met with in placing its nest *in contact* with the ground, and (writing without reference to my note-books) I may say that, in the districts referred to, not only *in absolute contact with the ground,* but in some cases, where the ground favours it, *partly sunk therein.* And he will be equally interested to learn that, in the aforesaid districts, the nest of the Chiffchaff *is invariably placed some inches from the ground,* and in just such situations as he finds the Willow-warbler's nests—in brambles, rank herbage, or the bottoms of small bushes.

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* See Dr. Sharpe's "Handbook to the Birds of Great Britain" (Vol. i., p. 211) for an interesting reference to the late Mr. Swaysland's supposition that a second species of Willow-warbler existed in England, which laid distinguishable eggs in a nest built *off* the ground. Mr. Horn, however, affects to take my remark (*ante*, p. 144) rather too seriously, as it should be plain that the invoking of an unknown race of Willow-warblers was merely a figure of speech in which I embodied my incredulity. —H. K. S.

From the reference to Harrow, I assume the nests of which Mr. Kirke Swann writes were found in Middlesex, and, in corroboration of his experience of the peculiarities of some birds of that county, I quote the following from Mr. J. E. Harting's (author of "The Birds of Middlesex") article in *The Zoologist*, November, 1867, p. 968, on "The Distinguishing Characters of some Nearly-allied Species of British Birds." Under the heading "Reed and Sedge-warblers," he writes: "The nest of the Sedge-warbler is placed *on the ground*, formed of dry grass and lined with hair." In the Midlands I have found scores of the nests of this bird placed, I may say almost invariably, at from one to three feet, and sometimes as much as four and even five feet, from the ground. I have never found one *on the ground*, and very seldom with a hair lining. Mr. Harting exactly describes the situation and the nest of the Yellow Wagtail as found in the Midlands. I notice that the same author, probably with a wider experience, in "Our Summer Migrants" (1875), p. 84 writes, "*S. phragmitis* builds on the ground or *very near it*."

Many readers of THE ORNITHOLOGIST would be still further obliged to the editor if he would also give particulars of the markings of the eggs found in the nests of these Chiffchaffs and Willow-wrens nesting in what I cannot but regard as abnormal sites; for it would be a most interesting fact, worthy of being placed on record, should it be proved that the two species have, in the different districts, not only reversed their usual nesting sites, but also the colour of the spots on their eggs.

BY THE EDITOR.

In spite of the astonishment manifested above by my two critics, I can only say that I am satisfied as to the correctness of the rules I laid down in my handbook (pp. 26-7) as to the nesting-sites of these two species.

Indeed, I must in turn express *my* astonishment that my critics should never have found a nest of the Chiffchaff in contact with the ground, and I will therefore afford the following instances from Middlesex of what is to them such an astonishing occurrence:—May 16th, 1888, nest with three

eggs *on* ground in wood; June 11th, 1888, nest with two eggs *on* ground in wood; May 24th, 1889, nest with six eggs *on* bank in meadow; May 30th, 1891, nest with eight eggs *in* bank in wood. As these nests all contained eggs, their identity was absolutely certain, for, in spite of the implication contained in Mr. Horn's closing remarks, I may be trusted to distinguish the eggs of the two species under consideration; although it is a fact that many seemingly competent ornithologists may *not* be so trusted. Thus, in a recent note to Dr. Bowdler Sharpe, I had occasion to point out that there was a set of Chiffchaff's eggs among the eggs labelled as Willow-warblers' in the cabinet collection placed in the British Room at the Natural History Museum. The set in question belonged to the type having rather large and light spots in place of small dark specks; and this leads me to ask Mr. Horn whether he does not rely mainly upon the shell surface in distinguishing the opaque white eggs of the Chiffchaff from the somewhat semi-transparent, as well as differently-marked, eggs of the Willow-warbler. It must not be forgotten that I describe the Chiffchaff's nest as "on or near the ground," for I am willing to concede that there may be actually more nests off the ground than on it; yet I have never seen a nest at a greater height than 10 inches, while in the case of the Willow-warbler I have on several occasions found a nest at twice that height, and even more.

IN QUEST OF THE ERNE.

By Robert Godfrey.

During a tour in Shetland last summer, I was exceedingly anxious to see the Erne or Sea-eagle, in her native haunts, and in my constant ramblings from place to place, ever made this bird one of my chief objects of enquiry. The natives appeared to be familiar with it as a spring migrant, and were generally able also to refer to one or more eyries reputed to be occupied by these birds. I was told of at least thirteen different eyries distributed amongst six islands, but as a fair number of these were traditional, we may safely limit the number of existing

eyries to six or seven. For several weeks I met with no success, being either prevented from reaching particular eyries at all, or finding those I did reach forsaken at the time of my visit.

One morning in July I set out to examine a line of cliffs asserted to contain an eyrie, and as by this time my prospects were being dimmed by the continually decreasing extent of the country still untraversed, I searched this rocky shore with the mingled feelings of fear and hope more deeply emphasised than hitherto. Following the zigzag course of cliffs is a slow proceeding, but the only sure one of discovering a rare and local species. I relied on noise to frighten up the more wary tenants of the cliffs, and regularly hurled down stones as I advanced. The cliffs were irregular, with stony and grassy patches upon them, and were tenanted chiefly by Herring-gulls and a few lesser Blackbacks, with the inevitable Shags. Other rock-frequenting species, as Hooded-Crow, Raven and Rock-pipit, were sparingly distributed, and at the rock base and off shore Black Guillemots, Oyster-catchers and a single Eider-drake were observed. Cliff succeeded cliff with jagged edge and sheer descent, but in vain did I shout or roll down stones. Shags were resting on small rocky borders, or a Raven would be scared, but the eagerly sought for Erne appeared not. Before and above a cliff away ahead of me the Herring-gulls were in wild commotion, and with ever increasing din were hailing my approach to their home. Presently an apparent rock, revealed for a moment by the tide, drew my attention off shore, but not again appearing at the regular motion of the tide made me suspect its nature; it proved to be a large porpoise, but it did not at succeeding blows rise so prominently into notice. On reaching the colony of Herring-gulls, I rested on the grassy summit of a headland to watch their actions. Like huge snowflakes, rising and falling and twisting in and out amongst one another's trackless paths, they heaved up and down, surging now this way now that, in front of the rocky precipice, and maintaining a ceaseless din not unpleasing to the ear, and suiting in its wild melody their terrible home.

My attention was presently arrested by the tameness of

the Twite on the edge of the cliff, and I suspected its nest was at hand. The little bird, so graceful in appearance, and so alert in action, would seize one of the tiny flowerets of the sea-pink in its bill, and, lowering it to the ground, hold it in its foot and extract the seeds one by one, allowing the scales to fall away. Presently she flew to an adjoining fence, hemming in the headland, and then disappeared for a time. I turned to watch the Gulls again, and saw the young birds running along the ledges, and one more advanced than the others attempting flight. As I lay still I heard the merry noise of young birds being fed close at hand, and was so guided to the Twite's nest amongst the rocks just opposite the spot where I lay. But it was safe from my intrusion, placed on a shelf between two perpendicular slabs of rock, and sheltered behind a patch of silene. The five young birds were fully feathered, almost ready to fly, and they sat in a line, clamouring whilst their parent fed them. The old bird again resorted to the sea-pink, and took short flights from one jutting stone to another, but instead of again feeding them, departed, to remain away during my stay, and the youngsters, after fidgeting on the edge, settled down in peace and quietness. On my departure, however, both Twites were calling beside me.

A long detour was necessary round the next cliffs, which from their lack of life failed in interest. A few Gulls were about, a Shag and a Black Guillemot were seen, and Rock-pipits, as hitherto, were on the landward portion. The scenery, however, was made more impressive in the absence of anything to detract from it. Following this came a long point which might perhaps be passed without any loss, but it must not be omitted if we are to be able to say afterwards that we searched the shore carefully. The rocks in our immediate vicinity are not prepossessing, but as we move outwards a spot is reached where the grass-clad cliff sends forth a huge jutting boulder with a downward slope into the bank. This surely is the proper ground at last. I stand still on the crest a few moments, and clap my hands sharply several times, when from beneath my feet there issues at once a huge uncouth bird. It differed entirely from the picture I had beforehand formed, but it was the Erne at last. From

my position above her I am afforded a full view of her—stout white head, short white tail, brown body, black primaries—and as I watch her flying, with slow wide swoop of her mighty wings, I deem her a rough and rugged bird. She has left her home but a little way, when she is followed by a Seagull, and another, and another. Her hugeness now is apparent by contrast. With measured beat she flies back and forward in front of her home, unheeding the Herring-gulls that noisily swoop upon her in turn, and uttering her short cry several times. At length she comes landwards, sailing in for the cliffs, and as she passes in front of them her very ruggedness is beautiful. Deserted now by her screaming attendants, she flies along a gulley and disappears.

I varied my standpoint to judge of the eyrie as fairly as possible, but I could not see the contents. The ledge she left was well adapted as a perch for such a bird, and behind the masses of sea-pink a nestling Eagle might easily have been resting unseen in the depression. I lingered by the cliff-head in indescribable delight at having attained my long desired object, and then rambled off to raise the bird a second time. I had meanwhile, however, to be content with what I had seen of her, and a fortnight elapsed before I fell in with another Erne.

46, *Cumberland Street, Edinburgh.*

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Broad-billed Sandpiper in Kent.—An immature female of the Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola platyrhyncha*) was obtained, on September 6th, between Littlestone-on-Sea and Dungeness. It was sent for preservation to Mr. Bristow, of St. Leonards, who kindly permitted me to examine the specimen in the flesh.—L. A. Curtis Edwards (31, Magdalen Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea).

White Sand Martin.—A bird of this species was shot near Blackwell on August 27th, 1896. It was seen flying near the River Caldew for nearly three weeks, and was shot by a farmer when resting on the telegraph wires. —T. L. Johnston (35, Lorne Street, Carlisle).

Nesting Economy of the Green Woodpecker.—In answer to Mr. McCausland's enquiry, I can only say, speaking of the Midlands, that "an old hand" at bird-nesting would, in searching for eggs of the Green Woodpecker, never risk a dislocation of the neck by looking *upwards*, he would invariably look for the fresh chips lying at *the foot of the tree*.—W. J. Horn (Bank House, Hinckley).

In reply to Mr. McCausland's note (p. 140), I should say that the idea of this bird carrying away the chips made in excavating its nesting-hole, is a very pretty one, but one not founded upon facts. I have not found many Green Woodpeckers' nests, but in the case of those few of which I have preserved notes the chips were lying under the trees; and so far as my recollection goes this is always the case.—O. V. Aplin (Bloxham, Oxon.).

My experience of this bird's nesting economy coincides with that of Mr. D. E. McCausland, as recorded in the September number of The Ornithologist. That "each chip is carried to some distance"—as is positively alleged by Mr. H. F. Witherby in "Forest Birds"—I can, with equally uncompromising positiveness, characterise as *purely apocryphal*, so far as the normal habits of the species are concerned. Having ascertained that a pair of birds are breeding in any circumscribed area, I can recommend no simpler or more effectual *modus operandi*, frequently employed by myself, for discovering the nesting site than examining the base of each tree in the vicinity; the tell-tale chips lying scattered about on the ground reveal the secret in no time. Mr. Witherby informs us in his "Preface" to "Forest Birds," that his "chief aim has been to accurately record his own experience and observations in the life-history of the species described in its pages," but it is impossible not to suppose, with regard to this particular issue, that he has blundered owing to an altogether inadequate experience—or can it be that infelicitous veneration for an ancient ornithological fiction has led him so hopelessly astray! The absence of chips from the base of any tree in which Green Woodpeckers were breeding would surely indicate, in the great preponderating number of instances, that the birds had selected a ready-made cavity; not that the chips had been removed. However, it is puerile to waste words over so obvious a contingency, and, as I have nested in both Herefordshire *and* Hampshire, I am in a position to assure Mr. McCausland that the Green Woodpecker's economy differs not at all in those two counties, nor therein from my experience of it in various other parts of the kingdom.—H. S. Davenport.

Breeding Habits of the Sparrow-hawk.*—Mr. H. S. Davenport, in his rejoinder to my notes on the breeding habits of the Sparrow-hawk, has

* Errata.—Page 141, line 2, for "*Coolman*" read "*Coolmore*"; line 11 for "Owl read "Crow."

attached a far greater importance to my mention of the two Magpies' nests of the year, which a pair of the former species passed over in favour of constructing a new nest for their own use, than ever I intended to convey. He seems also to have quite missed the drift of my paper. It never for a moment entered my head that Mr. Davenport contended that Sparrow-hawks selected any but old nests as foundations for their own structures. I must also point out that what I wrote was not in criticism of anything Mr. Davenport had previously written, though I did just allude, at the conclusion of my paper, to the manner in which, in my experience, this species builds its nest. My mention of Mr. Davenport's name at the outset was merely an informal manner of thanking him for initiating an interesting discussion on the latter question.

Perhaps I had better explain that the point of my paper was—that there is evidence of a change of habit, as regards the *situation* of the nest, in the nesting economy of the Sparrow-hawk, during the last generation, in the district with which I am most familiar, and probably in other parts as well. After first alluding to the fact that all, or nearly all, of our older writers state that the Sparrow-hawk breeds in the *deserted* nest of a Crow or Pie, I then, as an illustration of a change from this habit at the present day, amongst other instances, referred to the case to which Mr. Davenport takes exception. I think nests from which I had taken the eggs a month or so previously might be fairly termed *deserted* nests. It might also be reasonably inferred, though I did not think it necessary to mention the fact, that where Magpies are fairly plentiful their old nests would be found in sufficient numbers to accommodate several pairs of Sparrow-hawks. Now, whether a Sparrow-hawk wished to adapt an old or a new Magpie's nest to its present use, I see no difficulty in either case in its being able to do so. By "adapt," I do not necessarily mean a further addition to a "bulky and imposing structure" as Mr. Davenport seems to think must be inevitable, but a pulling to pieces after the manner of a Kestrel, which species Mr. Davenport admits sometimes seizes upon a brand new Magpie's nest, but which never, in my experience, breeds in one with the dome intact.

I see no reason, therefore, why, in the particular instance to which I alluded, the Sparrow-hawks should not have utilised one of the Pies' nests, ready at hand, unless, as I think is the fact, the species prefers to breed at a much lower elevation than was formerly the case. How my remarks to this effect should be interpreted as "straining or perverting" anything Mr. Davenport had written on quite another question I am at a loss to surmise. I quite agree with Mr. Davenport that "Sparrow-hawks disdaining to utilise nests of the year has no bearing whatsoever on, or affects in the slightest degree, the specific issue raised by him." I only mentioned the occurrence in connection with quite another point.—F. B. Whitlock.

NOTES AND NEWS.

It is seldom that a popular work on British birds has been devised and published with such a blind eye to *profit* and with such a sumptuous appearance as the new work on "British Birds, with their Nests and Eggs," by various well-known authors, which Messrs. Brumby and Clarke, Ltd., of Hull and London, are now issuing. The work is to be completed in about 100 sixpenny parts, published weekly, or 25 monthly parts. The list of authors of different sections includes O. V. Aplin, H. A. Macpherson, Murray A. Mathew, John Cordeaux, A. G. Butler, H. O. Forbes, W. B. Tegetmeier, and H. H. Slater. The black and white illustrations from drawings by that very competent artist, F. W. Frohawk, are deserving of the highest praise, while the coloured plates of eggs are also good, allowing occasionally for tints which must be more pleasing to the artist than the oölogist.

The "Osprey" (*supra*, p. 97) has hatched successfully. No. 1, which now lies upon our table, is a very creditable production indeed. Judging from the size of the magazine and the number of illustrations, the new-comer evidently relies upon having about eight times the amount of support which the naturalists of this country can give to the Ornithologist.

In these days of decadence (?) it is gratifying to learn that there is still one experienced and infallible ornithologist amongst us. Such a one is the present editor of the *Naturalists' Journal*, and our reason for advertising him in the present paragraph is that he especially desires to have the MS. of ornithological works submitted to him by authors, as he appears to be willing to come down from his "pinnacle" so far as to *improve* the work of the said authors for them, and erase the many errors which their strict adherence to their own experience in difficult questions leads them into. It is strange, however, that in "reviewing" Mr. Swann's "Concise Handbook" recently (N.J., September, 1896), the only reputed mistakes pointed out by this *savant* were *precisely the same* as those to be found indicated in the reviews in the "Irish Naturalist," Ornithologist, &c., for it might have been expected that he would have given a fresh list of all the egregious blunders which his unequalled experience would make manifest to him.

Strange to say, this *savant* is also the *first* to regret the absence of an index to the trivial names as "an inconvenience which will be felt by those not versed in Latin names." Most people who are not so versed do not make an open acknowledgment of it! Still we call to mind that this "experienced ornithologist" is the gentleman who recently wrote some sort of a list of British birds, in which *Saxicola*, *Ruticilla*, and other such names were deemed too atrocious for ordinary folk, and nearly all the *Turdidæ* in

consequence were included in the genus *Sylvia*. Another bitter complaint is that "its usefulness is marred by an attempt to make it appear scientific." This last is so funny that we are tempted to ask the redoubtable *savant* if he will help us to get subscribers for a revised edition of Mr. Swann's Handbook in which no Latin (or even Greek ? ?) names shall be used, while we will also include gratuitously a list of the meanings of all the "hard" words used in the book; indeed we would endeavour to use only such words as might be suited to the mental calibre of our bewildered complainant, and we would take especial care to call a bird's tarsus its leg, since the latter is such a nice *homely* word, no matter whether correct or not.

ADDITIONS TO THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION DURING AUGUST.

One Raven (*Corvus corax*), Europe, presented by A. H. Cullingford, Esq., F.Z.S. (Crows' Cages); two Ypecaha Rails (*Aramides ypecaha*), bred in the Gardens (Eastern Aviary); one Common Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), British Isles, presented by Miss G. Howell (Eastern Aviary); two Passerine Parrots (*Psittacula passerina*), S. America, presented by Miss L. Scott Moncrieff (Parrot House); one White-browed Amazon (*Chrysotis albifrons*), Honduras, purchased (Parrot House); two Sclater's Curassows (*Crax sclatera*), Brazil, presented by E. Sumead, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); one Common Sandpiper (*Tringoides hypoleucus*), British Isles, presented by E. C. Sprawson, Esq. (Fish House); one Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaëtus*), Spain, presented by F. Leathly Holt, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); three Common Blue-birds (*Sialia wilsonii*), N. America, presented by A. T. Binny, Esq. (Western Aviary); two Stone-Curlews (*Œdicnemus scolopax*), British Isles, presented by W. J. Kidman, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); two Common Blue-birds (*Sialia wilsonii*), N. America, presented by Percy Cockshut, Esq. (Western Aviary); two Brush-Turkeys (*Talegalla lathami*), Australia, deposited (Brush-Turkeys' Enclosure); one Black-necked Grackle (*Gracupica nigricollis*), China, presented by Dr. Nowell (Western Aviary); three Ivory Gulls (*Pagophila eburnea*) and one Richardson's Skua (*Stercorarius crepidatus*), Spitzbergen, presented by J. T. Studley, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); one Chinese Mynah (*Acridotheres cristatellus*), China, received in exchange (Western Aviary); two Variegated Sheldrakes (*Tadorna variegata* ♂ ♀), New Zealand, presented by Sir Walter L. Buller, K.C.M.G., C.M.Z.S. (Duck Ponds); one Beccari's Cassowary (*Casuarius beccarii?*), S.E. New Guinea, deposited (Cassowaries' House); two Streaky-headed Grosbeaks (*Poliospiza gularis*),* S. Africa, presented by Miss Jessie Porter (Western

* New to the Collection.

Aviary); one Oyster-catcher (*Himantopus ostralegus*), British Isles, presented by R. Gurney, Esq., F.Z.S. (Night-Herons' Aviary); four Cayenne Lapwings (*Vanellus cayennensis*), S. America, purchased (Western Aviary).

BOOKS, &c. RECEIVED.

The Osprey, Vol. i., No. 1, September, 1896. The Osprey Co., Galesburg, Ill.

Science Gossip, New Series, No. 28, September, 1896. John T. Carrington, Editor.

Ornithologische Monatsberichte, Vol. iv., No. 9, September, 1896. Prof. Dr. Reichenow, Editor.

The Naturalist, No. 254, September, 1896. W. Denison Roebuck, Editor.

The Naturalists' Journal, No. 51, September, 1896. S. L. Mosley, Editor.

Nature Notes, No. 81, September, 1896. London: John Bale & Sons.

The Irish Naturalist, Vol. v., No. 9, September, 1896. Dublin: Eason & Son, Limited.

The Nidologist, Vol. iii., No. 12, August, 1896. H. R. Taylor, Editor.

Ornithologisches Jahrbuch, Vol. vii., No. 5, September—October, 1896. V. R. von Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen, Editor.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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G. M., Titchfield.—See pp. 152-4. Your article is acceptable, but we do not pay for contributions, neither does any other scientific magazine that we are acquainted with; most of them have as much as they can do to pay their printers' bills. The Editor is much obliged to you for the local birds' names from your district, also for good wishes.

R. W., Ballina.—Received and shall be inserted.

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H. K. SWANN.

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NEST AND EGGS OF GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL.

THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

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RICHARDSON'S SKUA IN ITS NESTING HAUNTS.

BY ROBERT GODFREY.

THIS commonly occurring species along our coasts in autumn is during summer restricted, in the British Islands, to a few spots in the Outer Hebrides, Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney and Shetland; with its most important and most densely-populated haunts in the last mentioned group of islands. There he is widely distributed; and, wherever present, is sure to attract attention, either by his piratical actions, or by his characteristic mewing-call.

In the long voes of Shetland, when a party of Gulls discovers a shoal of sand eels, the fact is soon made known to the rest of the Gull community, who come from all quarters to join the throng, until a dense, living mass is soon hovering and clamouring above the abundant food supply. One or more Skuas—we have seen as many as six at one time—are generally at hand, hovering on the edge of the throng, or perched on the top of an adjoining skerry, watching the success of the birds, and waiting their opportunity to spoil some successful fisher. Inland the Skua is as well known as by the shore, and his wild mewing call, as he dashes along overhead on the way to his home, is one of the most distinctive of Shetland bird calls.

The Skua is strong and swift on the wing, and bears some resemblance to a Falcon. Frequently a party of two or three

attracts notice in passing through a valley, and as they rise and plunge together with splendid swooping flight, their long, thin wings and elongated tail-feathers are very noticeable; their swooping is accompanied by the wild "yi-hoo, yi-hoo," and their dashing flight quickly carries them again beyond our reach. When standing, the Skua keeps his body parallel with the ground, and his thickly-set neck erect; he walks slowly, and his short legs give him a low, dumpy appearance. He occasionally rests on the surface of a loch, and in such a position his back is not so level as a Gull's, but humped. He cannot dive; but he splashes about vigorously when bathing, repeatedly fluttering his wings and lowering his head, and assuming fantastic attitudes as he performs his toilet. He sits lightly, but not peacefully; he is constantly rolling about and preening his feathers, and, at short intervals, bounds from the surface a few inches with wings outspread upwards, and settles again; sometimes he rises higher and vibrates his wings rapidly to cast off superfluous water from his feathers, and, circling on motionless wings, descends to the loch again, allowing the tips of his outstretched wings at one time to touch the water before he closes them, and keeping them at another time at an upward angle as he settles.

Gulls and Terns chiefly are subjected to the Skua's piratical practices, and the Arctic Tern is the most harassed of all. The agility of this little bird in avoiding swoop after swoop of the Skua is delightful to behold, and it generally enables him to foil his would-be robber in the end. From no bird does the Skua readily procure spoil when attacking singly; and the frequency with which we have seen his attacks successfully evaded, have led us occasionally to think he would have fared better had he fished for himself; but as they generally hunt in twos or in threes, and swoop in turn upon their victim, they quickly compel him to disgorge, and, fluttering down after the rejected food, seize whatever each can of the spoil.

The parasitic nature of the Skua—the reasons for it, and the extent to which it is carried—forms one of the most interesting questions regarding our native bird life; a question, however, we are not qualified to discuss. We have observed the adult Skua in its nesting haunts picking up food—probably spiders—

and, by dissection, we have found the stomach of a downy nestling crammed with spiders; but, except in the breeding haunts, we have not personally seen the bird foraging for himself.

The Skuas retire to the wildest mosses during the breeding season, and are, in consequence, somewhat local in their distribution. Odd pairs are found in many haunts throughout the islands, and several colonies of at least twenty pairs occur in suitable localities. In sparsely populated districts and uninhabited islands they are less particular in their choice of a nesting-ground, though they usually prefer a more or less mossy region. Their associates vary in different haunts; their more important fellow-dwellers being Golden Plover, Dunlin, Whimbrel, Curlew, and Lesser Blackbacks.

One morning in June, Mr. James Baxter and I set out in quest of the Skua to a known haunt, and on our arrival soon had the black bird flying above us. Its mate, a white-breasted bird, came into view shortly afterwards; but, during our selection of a suitable spot on the knowe-face from which to watch them, disappeared again, and the black bird alone kept prominently before our notice, alighting at one time on the crest of the knowe beyond the moss, and at another within the moss itself, and again flying around above the nesting-ground, and varying its actions by pursuing a passing Gull. We supposed the white bird would be sitting, and, advancing a few yards into the moss, we succeeded in rousing it again. Baxter now kept the black one under scrutiny, whilst I paid heed to the white one. The latter bird soon alighted on a tussock in the moss, and after a brief halt rose again and settled on another tussock where it was well-nigh hidden from view. It seemed now to be sitting, and kept bobbing its head up and down as it peered over the grass in our direction. Often the black forehead alone would be visible, at other times the white chin also was displayed, and finally nothing could be seen at all as the bird had drawn in her head. The black bird meanwhile stood stationary in the moss and in full view. We were convinced that the white bird was on the nest, but we did not wish to act too hurriedly, and, setting the birds on the wing once more, we passed further into the moss and rested again.

The birds displayed little alarm, and the white one, which I followed as before, soon settled, remaining on the spot chosen a short time, then, rising, alighted directly on the nest again. We were now perfectly certain of the spot, and I watched her as before, bobbing her head above the grass and finally resting quietly. Arranging a code of signs with Baxter, I lay still with my glass on the spot and guided him to the nest, knowing by the way he threw up his hands on reaching it that he had found the eggs all right, and I then rushed wildly across the intervening ground to reach his side. The birds settled on a small knowe bordering the hollow, and from it they watched our proceedings without any attempt to attack us. The nest was situated on one of the small mounds that rise so profusely all over the moss, and was a very simple structure, composed of the dry stalks of a slender sedge, placed upon a depression formed by the bird's breast. No sign of prior preparation was visible, as underneath the nesting material was the flattened heather. The nest measured five inches across, and was barely over half-an-inch in depth. On retiring from the spot we saw the black bird flying enquiringly over the moss, and the white one standing on the ground, and as we departed both were standing together not far from us.

Several hours afterwards we reached another moss that seemed suitable for this bird, and clapping our hands sharply on entering were delighted to see a black Skua rise from the hollow. By a repetition of the tactics adopted before we found the nest in a few minutes, which, like the last, contained two eggs. The Skua was alone, and acted quite differently from the former birds. She flew straight towards us, and behaved in a most threatening manner, though she passed over our heads without touching. In great excitement she passed and repassed above us, the whirring of her wings being distinctly audible as she approached, and she caused us to keep a constant look-out lest she should strike. She then alighted quite near to us, and raising her wings beat them once or twice and ran along the ground, the white shafts of her primaries showing plainly as she raised and lowered her wings. She would disappear in a depression and emerge again, and flutter and toss about in full view, then rise and swoop close

overhead to repeat the same manœuvres on a tussock beyond us. She kept complete silence, and both when running and flying kept her bill slightly open. Considerable time elapsed before her mate—also a black bird—appeared, and he too showed his concern by running about with upraised and quivering wings. The nest consisted of a few scraps of heather placed on a slight mound, and measured six inches across, and the two eggs appeared to be deeply incubated.

In subsequent cases, where nests still contained eggs, one or other of the birds kept up a constant tyik, tyik, tyik, tyecho, tyecho, during our presence; and once a Skua beat about helplessly, uttering the piteous moan of a young bird, behaving in a ridiculous attitude for a bird whose flight at a Gull is so often the object of admiration.

When the young are hatched, and during their period of running about the moss, the adult birds become, if possible, more demonstrative, and beat and tumble in the most conspicuous manner near the intruder, often accompanying the performance with a low, piteous moan; and should there be a loch on the moss, one of the old birds will sometimes beat along through the shallows, or rest on the surface and strike the water with its wings the while. The young birds may at first be noisy, but they soon learn to be quiet, and to skulk in the presence of an intruder. They snap at a finger presented to them, and when tormented run off unsteadily across the heather, using their wings to aid them.

A Skua-haunted moss is the scene of perpetual warfare. The Skuas pay no heed to the smaller tenants, such as the Golden Plover and the Dunlin, but relentlessly harass some of the larger species that may be breeding on the same ground as themselves, and generally warn chance visitors to their quarters to avoid their haunts in future. In the case of birds of allied genera, as Lesser Blackbacks, or of birds with instincts somewhat akin to their own, as Hooded Crows, the enmity may be regarded as merely the result of food quarrels; but in the case of species that can in no way be considered rivals, it must be laid down to the sheer tyranny of the Skua. We had been tramping about a moss one day in quest of young Skuas, whilst the old bird—one only being present—was watching us

from a tussock. We chanced to lose sight of her, and on scanning the region with our glass to rediscover her whereabouts, we detected a Mallard Duck walking slowly up the hillslope. The Duck, from her actions, had evidently young or eggs somewhere near, and for the time she claimed our attention. She stood on the slope a minute or so, and waddled to the top of the low knowe, then rose and flew in proper unagitated manner. Keeping near the ground she passed round the moss, and as she was flying in our direction she was struck severely on the back by the Skua with a thud distinctly audible to us. No cry was uttered by either party; the Duck flew on to a mosshole and alighted there, whilst the Skua returned to her perch on a small mound.

In another region we saw a Goldeneye rise from a lochside and fly rapidly over the water; its speed attracted the notice of a Skua, who swooped down upon it, and forced it to descend with great rapidity to the loch and dive at once to escape the blow, whilst the Skua passed on unconcerned.

Concerning the phases of plumage in this bird we cannot speak, but we may say that the few birds of the year seen in flight by us before leaving Shetland belonged to the dark form. Pairs of breeding birds generally consisted of a black and a white bird.

THE SKUAS OF KILLALA BAY, CO. MAYO.

By Robert Warren.

Only three species of the Skua family have as yet been known as visitors to this bay. The Pomatorhine, Richardson's, and Buffon's Skua.

Pomatorhine Skua (*Lestris pomatorhinus*). Up to the publication of the late William Thompson's "Birds of Ireland," in 1851, very little was known of this Skua as an Irish visitor; only nine specimens being recorded by him, of which two were obtained in Belfast Bay—one in the autumn of 1834, and the second on October 16th, 1848, both immature birds; and the remaining seven were obtained at various times up to 1850 in

the counties Cork, Dublin, Antrim, and Kerry; and all in the autumnal or early winter months, showing that they were only stragglers from the great October migration.

My first acquaintance with this Skua began in October, 1862, when large numbers visited the bay on their way southwards. For several days previous to the 22nd of October, the weather had been very stormy, the wind blowing in wild squalls from the south-west, accompanied by heavy showers of rain. On that morning, having just risen from the breakfast-table, I was standing at the parlour window of Moy View, looking down the estuary towards Bartragh, when suddenly a flock of ten or twelve dark-coloured birds appeared in view, flying slowly up the river from the sea. I immediately took my gun and ran down to the shore, but only reached it in time to see the Skuas pass out of shot. My disappointment, however, did not last long; for in a few moments after a flock of five birds passed, out of which I was so fortunate as to secure a fine specimen of the Pomatorhine Skua in nearly perfect adult plumage. Several other flocks passed on afterwards, and I was able to obtain a second bird in a like stage of plumage. Soon after I shot the second bird I was called away to attend to some business matters, and when I returned to the shore I found the flight had ceased for that day.

On the morning of the 23rd the gale still continued, but had changed round to the west-north-west, and, consequently, the Skuas, on their second day's flight up the river, kept along the western and Mayo side, none coming within shot of the Sligo shore, on which Moy View is situated.

On both days the Skuas, after keeping along the tidal course of the river for about two miles, directed their flight across the country to the south-west.

I had an excellent opportunity for observing those that passed on the 22nd, and have little or no hesitation in considering the greater part, if not all, to have been Pomatorhines; the first flock of ten or twelve birds were, undoubtedly, of that species, their great size and clumsy-looking tails clearly pointing them out as such, and all exhibiting white underneath; and long tails prove them to have been

adults. Very few dark-coloured birds were seen on either day; probably not one to ten of the white-breasted birds. When seen during flight the Pomatorhine Skua's tail presents a very clumsy, awkward appearance, in contrast to the elegantly-pointed tails of the smaller Skuas: this is caused by the two elongated tail feathers being bluntly rounded at the ends, and twisted for nearly half their length, at almost right angles to the plane of the short tail feathers, so that where a side view of the bird is taken, the full breadth of the long tail feathers is shown, giving the tail that thick, clumsy appearance which so easily identifies the Pomatorhine Skua on the wing.

I could not be quite certain as to which species the birds seen on the second day belonged, for they passed at too great a distance for us to judge of their size and appearance; but as the first day's flight was undoubtedly made up of Pomatorhines, it may be safely inferred that the second day's was a continuance of the first, and, therefore, was of the same species.

A very interesting letter from Mr. J. C. Neligan, of Tralee, was read at a meeting of the late Dublin Natural History Society, in March, 1863, describing his meeting with a large flight of Skuas (many of them Pomatorhines) in Tralee Harbour, on the 25th of October, 1862—just two days after the last of the Skuas left this on the 23rd—and, I think, satisfactorily proving that the Skuas after leaving this bay, and crossing the island, continued their flight along the coast to Tralee Harbour, where they took shelter, and remained while the stormy weather lasted.

Since the above date, this Skua, as far as I am aware of, has only occasionally occurred in this and the adjoining county of Mayo. In October, 1890, my friend, Mr. John Garvey, of Ballina, showed me an adult specimen of the black variety of this Skua, which he had shot on Lough Corne, Co. Mayo, the 24th of that month; and on the 8th November same year, the late Dr. Burkett sent my friend, Mr. R. J. Ussher, of Cappagh House, Co. Waterford, an adult bird that he found dead in a field close to his house, near Belmullet, Co. Mayo. Then, during the last week of November, 1890, Dr. H. Scott, of Enniscrone, gave me an immature specimen of the black

variety that was shot by his nephew as, in company of two or three others, it was flying over a bog at Killasser, twelve or fourteen miles from the sea; and a fourth specimen, a very fine adult bird, with a long tail and white underparts, was found dead on the Enniscrone sands by my sister, Miss Amy Warren, on the 2nd of October, 1892.

Richardson's Skua (*Lestris crepidatus*) visits the bay and estuary much oftener than either of the other two species; occasionally in the spring, as well as on the autumnal migration. This Skua first came under my notice in October, 1851, when residing with my brother, Mr. E. H. Warren, on the island of Bartragh, Killala Bay. We observed the first of the flight on the 8th, when returning from Killala to Bartragh, two flocks of six and eight birds were seen coming at a great height from the bay, and passing across the country to the south-west, but these appeared to be only the advanced guard of the large numbers that followed on the 15th and 16th; for early on the morning of the 15th, my brother saw four Skuas flying in from the bay; about 9.30 a.m., nineteen birds passed, one of which I shot (an immature, dark-coloured Richardson's); at 11 o'clock we saw twenty-two passing; about 12, I saw ten; and at 1 o'clock, seventeen; these flocks, together with the stragglers that passed singly while we were watching, altogether made up the number to seventy-two birds, counted without mistake. The wind was very high, blowing in wild squalls, with heavy showers of rain all day, and continued increasing all night, so that on the morning of the 16th a regular gale was blowing, compelling the Skuas to keep their flight very low when crossing over the land, so that we had a good opportunity for observing them; but, although we were only able to remain till 11 o'clock on the watch, we noted upwards of 100 birds passing. The greater part were dark-coloured birds, very few individuals with long tails or white breasts appearing amongst the others. Some birds appeared tired, and occasionally one would alight on the water, rest for a few minutes and then rise, and follow its companions, but none appeared in want of food, for although there were numbers of gulls about the sands and channels, they were never molested by the passing Skuas, though close to them.

The next occasion on which I had the pleasure of seeing Skuas on migration was on the 18th of September, 1869, a fine, bright, calm day, as I was in one of my fields looking at men cutting oats, when chancing to look upwards, my attention was drawn to a flock of fifteen Skuas passing at an immense height on their usual course to the south-west, if the day had not been so clear I could not have recognised them as Skuas, for I was only just able to make out their long tails against the clear, blue sky. Again, on the 3rd of October, 1874, I was fortunate in witnessing a small flight, or part of a flight, of Skuas migrating in the usual direction. The weather had been very stormy, with heavy showers from the north-west for some days before, and on this morning it was still blowing hard, when about 10 o'clock a.m. I observed a flock of about twenty Skuas flying up the river from the bay; a short time afterwards four birds passed, then a little flock of three, which were followed by four; and in about a quarter of an hour a solitary bird (that, I think, was a Pomatorhine) brought up the rear, and as far as I saw, ended the flight for the day. I have frequently observed and shot solitary birds of this species during the two autumnal months of September and October; but their spring visits are rare. In May, 1877, a party of six birds accompanied a large flight of Common and Arctic Terns visiting the bay and estuary. Three of the Skuas were in light-coloured plumage, and three in the very dark or black stage; and I imagined at the time, from seeing a light and a dark bird keeping company, that these colours marked the male and female, and in order to ascertain if my surmise was correct, I shot three birds—one having the pure white throat and breast, the white extending round the back of the neck, forming a sort of collar that caused the dark back of head and crown to look like a dark cap; the second having only the white breast and belly clouded with a tinge of brown; and the third bird was nearly pure black all over, but of a lighter shade underneath, and having a few yellowish, hair-like feathers on the sides of the neck, and all three had long tails, showing they were adult. However, much to my surprise, on skinning and dissecting them, all three proved to be females; the ovaries of each containing eggs varying in size from No. 8 to B shot.

Buffon's Skua (*Lestris parasiticus*) is of very rare occurrence on this part of the Irish coast, and has only on two occasions come under my notice. First, on October 24th, 1862, I was on the shore near Scurmore, looking out for any rare birds that might have been driven in by the gale on the two previous days, when a small Skua flew past, which I fired at and wounded, but it escaped on the sand hills. On the following day when walking over the Enniscrone sands on the bay side of the sand hills, I picked up a small Skua lying dead, near high-water mark, and fancied it was the bird I had fired at the day before. After I got home, and when skinning it, I found it was wounded with No. 6. shot, and as that was the kind of shot I used, I felt sure it was the bird I had fired at on the Scurmore shore.

The second specimen was given me on October, 18th, 1867, by the late Mr. N. Handy, of Ballintubber, near Killala, who told me that he met the bird when out Grouse-shooting, and shot it as it rose from the carcase of a dead horse upon which it had been feeding. This, like the first specimen, was in the immature plumage, but, being kept too long before I got it, was unfit for preservation.

The only instance that I am aware of, of this Skua being seen on its spring migration in Ireland, is from a letter of Lieutenant Crane, of the 67th Regiment, read at a meeting of the late Dublin Natural History Society, on February 7th, 1862, of which I give an extract :—

"The specimens of Buffon's Skua were shot by me on May 16th, 1860, on the Shannon, about four miles south of Athlone. I was out with two other brother officers, shooting Landrails, which are very plentiful on that part of the river. The day was very stormy and cold for the season, the wind from the north-west. I was sitting in a boat at a place called Long Island, when a flock of about twenty Skuas passed over. I saw at once that they were not common birds; long tail-feathers marked them at once; but, as I was sitting in the bow, the flock had nearly passed over before I saw them, but I succeeded in killing one. Some time after another flock of about the same number passed, but I could not get a shot; but a third flock came over, out of which I killed one bird

with each barrel, making three in all. I gave two of them to the late Mr. Glennon, and he then showed me another, which he told me had been killed from a flock in the Co. Donegal, on the 17th, the day after I got mine. The birds were following the course of the Shannon, flying north. I gave the third specimen to Major Newton, R.A., who sent it to his brother, Alfred Newton, Esq., so well-known for his work on eggs ; I saw between sixty and seventy in all."

BIRDS OBSERVED DURING A CYCLING TOUR THROUGH THE NORTH OF FRANCE.

By F. B. Whitlock.

To form one of a party making a cycling trip is, perhaps, not the best situation for an ornithologist who wishes to learn something of the avi-fauna of the country through which he is passing.

Our party consisted of three, two gentlemen and one lady; and our plan, which we carried out as far as the elements allowed, was to ride from Calais to Fontainbleau and return by a route lying a little more to the west—*viâ* Abbeville and Boulogne. We landed at Calais about 12.30 a.m. on Friday, September 11th, and commenced our first stage of the journey to St. Omer about 9.30 the same morning, in squally and showery weather.

From Calais to St. Omer the country is pretty level and freely intersected with broad drains. There are no hedgerows, and the timber is for the greater part confined to the immediate neighbourhood of villages and the interminable avenues of elms and poplars through which all French roads seem to run. As might be imagined, bird-life in such a district is not much in evidence. To my surprise I saw no Lapwings in the marshes near Calais, though the ground looked very suitable, and the day was one to rejoice the soul of a Peewit. The most conspicuous bird near all the French roads we traversed was the Magpie. From Calais to Fontainbleau they were abundant ; as many as seven or eight rising from some small patch of turnips or mangolds on many occasions, and there

were nearly always a pair or two in sight. I suppose they breed in the roadside trees, but I only observed one old nest. I noticed a pair of this species in the Bois-de-Boulogne, in the suburbs of Paris. Of other Corvine species the Carrion Crow was fairly common, indeed more so than the Rook. I saw very little of the latter species except near Amiens and Beauvais. I must mention that at the latter place there are some extensive woods, the valley of the Noye forming a most pleasant oasis in the midst of the surrounding cultivation. At St. Omer—our first stopping-place—at the rear of the chief hotel, is the ruin of a very large church still in good preservation, but near the summit of the sustaining walls the brickwork is pierced with a long row of niches. These niches were occupied by a very large and noisy colony of Jackdaws. I counted over sixty of this species on the slope of the roof facing my bedroom window alone. Of Jays I only saw, or rather heard, two pairs; the first in the Bois-de-Boulogne, the second near Samer, a town about thirteen miles from Boulogne-sur-Mer. Starlings were quite uncommon, though I saw a few small flocks.

After leaving St. Omer, and just beyond the village of Wizerne, I heard the notes of a Lark that were strange to me. This individual, however, was very wild, and it was not until I heard others in different localities that I was able to identify the bird as the Crested Lark. I found this species not uncommon, but rather local. There were a fair number near the little town of Doullen, but still more a few miles south of Amiens. I met with others about midway between Paris and Fontainbleau, as well as single birds at intervals along the whole route. At the coast they were fairly common between Boulogne and Ambleteuse-le-Bain. The note seems to me to be shriller and, at the same time, sweeter than that of our Skylark, tri-syllabic in character, but impossible to write down on paper.* I heard nothing of the song, owing to the time of the year, and, generally speaking, found the species very wild and wary. Of the Skylark I saw very little. On

* Mr. Aplin renders it "Kay-see-sweet-weet," or "Sweet-a-weet" ("Zool." p. 325).

some very high ground, some miles out of Fauquemberg, I met with a few Meadow Pipits, but the species was very infrequent. Under an archway at the hotel in the latter place were half-a-dozen House Martin's nests, two of which contained young nearly full grown. I had already seen a Swallow's nest, containing young of a similar age, on an estaminet midway between Calais and St. Omer. This nest was situated in the position ordinarily selected by the House Martin, and was affixed to the wall like the nest of the latter—without any support from below. I saw a few Sand Martins at wide intervals, but found the species very local. The principal roadside birds of the smaller class were Chaffinches, Yellow Buntings, and occasional flocks of Sparrows. Blue Tits and Great Tits were not infrequent. I noticed one of the latter clinging to the trunk of a poplar, after the manner of a Nuthatch. Of Warblers I saw or heard very little, perhaps owing to the boisterous weather; but in the Bois-de-Boulogne I identified the Willow Wren, Garden Warbler and Blackcap. I also observed an occasional Spotted Flycatcher. I was both pleased and surprised to find the Green Woodpecker fairly common along the whole route. I saw also a single individual of *Picus major*.

Birds of prey were infrequent, but in a lonely district I observed a brown hawk beating the stubbles with a steady, measured flight. From the mode of the latter and the size of the bird, I concluded this was a young Montagu's Harrier. I once or twice noted Sparrow Hawks, also an occasional Kestrel; but I had one treat that an Englishman does not often enjoy at home—a good view of a Common Buzzard. I met with the latter when riding between two extensive woods, some eight miles from Villeneuve St. George. The latter place lies about twelve miles south-east of Paris. It was a grand bird in very dark plumage, but with a few white feathers about the vent. It flapped lazily across the road, only a few yards in front of and above me, so close that I could distinguish the yellow colouring about the bill. In these woods I heard Pheasants crowing, and close at hand saw a large covey of the common Partridge. At Montreuil we dined off the Red-legged species.

I identified both the Pied and White Wagtails, but neither were plentiful. The same remarks apply to Ray's Wagtail. At the cascade in the Bois-de-Boulogne was a family party of the Grey Wagtail, and I also recognised this species near a small stream at Abbeville. In riding from the latter place to Montreuil we passed an extensive beech forest and got a glimpse of a large Hawk. At Vron, midway between the before-mentioned towns, are a series of nice-looking ponds and marshes; but I could make out no water-fowl on their surfaces. On enquiring the French name of a caged Goldfinch the owner dubbed it "Chadron Rouge." Amongst one or two stuffed specimens of birds met with in hotels we called at was a male Garganey. This was at Frévent.

We spent the last few days of our trip in making short excursions from Boulogne-sur-Mer into the surrounding country. Our first ride—to Ambleteuse-le-Bain—was productive of a pleasant surprise to me. As I was crossing a small bridge I observed a grey and white bird swimming in a little pool below. Quietly dismounting, I peeped over the parapet and discovered a lovely Grey Phalarope, feeding at a distance of only a few feet. It was remarkably tame, and when disturbed rose with a sharp "wick," only to return to its favourite spot again in a few minutes. I spent half an hour watching it. The gales blowing from 21st September to about 25th brought a small flock of Terns into the harbour at Boulogne. As far as I could make out, both the Common and Arctic species were represented. One or two Kittiwakes also came in. We crossed to Folkestone on 23rd, during a heavy gale, and, though I remained on deck in preference to seeking shelter in the saloon, and witnessing and probably sharing in the sufferings of my fellow passengers, I was only compensated for the wetting I got by the sight of a pair of Guillimots, which which were doing their best to make headway against the wind.

FROM the annual Report (1894-5) of the Director of the Field Columbian Museum, Chicago, we learn that an expedition to San Domingo, conducted by Mr. Geo. K. Cherrie, Assistant Curator in the Department of Ornithology, resulted in the collection of 1,958 bird skins, among which two species proved new to science, and a number of others are very interesting as representing rare and little-known forms.

OBSERVATIONS AND QUERIES.

Strange Freak of Captive Bullfinches.—For the last two or three years I have kept bullfinches in a small aviary; last spring I had four altogether, two cocks and two hens. About the beginning of April I noticed that one pair had paired, so I took the others out, and placed a bush of gorse in the aviary, hanging it up in one of the corners, and placed plenty of building material about the aviary. After a few days the hen commenced to build, and in two days constructed a nest chiefly out of dried roots, without the cock's aid at all. Three eggs were laid, but on the fourth day, on going to feed them, I discovered only one egg in the nest. Thinking this rather curious, I went in on the following day and found that there was nothing in the nest. At the time I thought the eggs had been destroyed by the cock bird. After three or four days, again going in, I found a new nest containing seven eggs in a different part of the gorse. This nest was extremely well hidden. The hen bird then began to sit, only leaving the nest to feed now and again. After about ten days I was surprised to see her about the aviary, not feeding as usual, so I entered the aviary, and looking into the nest saw part of it had been torn away, and the eggs had rolled on to the ground, all being smashed, and each containing a young bird about three parts formed; whether this was done by the cock bird I do not know. This pair laid about sixteen or eighteen eggs altogether, some light and some fertile. Is not it rather unusual for bullfinches to lay fertile eggs in captivity? Also the hen bird must have conveyed the three eggs from one nest to the other. These bullfinches were captured young, before they had obtained any plumage.—A. C. Norman (Bank House, Oakham).

Supposed Occurrence of Turdus Migratorius.—Early in the spring this year, while dressing one morning, I saw on the "gutter" outside my dormer-window a bird, its back being turned to me, which appeared like a large thrush. Whilst looking, it turned its breast to me, and what was my amazement to see that it had a ruddy breast, for all the world like an overgrown robin, except the red was ruddier. On going down to breakfast I mentioned to my housekeeper that I had seen a most rare bird, and before I could describe it she said, "Was it like a big thrush with a red breast?—for I have just seen one fly into the chestnut tree." I made enquiries of all my naturalist friends, but could not find any who could name it. Since I have met two amateur ornithologists, who both declare it was the American robin, or *Turdus migratorius*, and that I have seen a sight rarely vouchsafed to naturalists in this country, it generally being supposed that it exists here only as a cage bird, and those which have been seen are escaped ones. But I do not think that anyone in this neighbourhood is likely

to have had such a bird. We did not see it again, but that is not to be wondered at, as just at that time some "sporting" biped was regularly shooting birds every morning, and if my *rara avis* did not fall a victim to his gun, in all probability it would be frightened away. I think as this bird is so rare a visitant to this country it behoves me to inform the ornithological world of this instance. Perhaps you will insert my communication in the ORNITHOLOGIST, and I shall be delighted to receive any information as to whether this bird has been seen elsewhere in this country this year. I was wildly excited about it for several months, and am more so now I have reasonable grounds for believing I have at last succeeded in giving it "a local habitation and a name."—FREDERICK R. TAYLOR (Birch Fold Cottage, Fallowfield, near Manchester).

The late John Wolley.—John Wolley—a hero to all oölogists—died on November 20th, 1859. An obituary notice written shortly after his death contained the following:—"His vast collection of eggs has been handed over to Mr. Alfred Newton, whose intention it is to publish a full catalogue of the treasures it contains *as a fitting memorial of him who formed it*" (the italics are mine). And in the *Ibis* for 1860 (the publication is not at hand, but the following is believed to be *verbatim*):—"The sale of a portion of the duplicate eggs from the collection of the late John Wolley took place at Stevens' Rooms on the 30th and 31st May last; 376 lots made £329 5s. 6d. . . . . The proceeds of the sale are to be applied to the publication of Wolley's Notes, which will be edited by Mr. Alfred Newton, and will form a catalogue of the collection as now in the possession of the gentleman last-named. This work, the 'Ootheca Wolleyana,' cannot fail to prove of great interest to all naturalists, and will, we hope, make its appearance in the course of a year." This was written in 1860. Four years later the first part of the "Ootheca Wolleyana" was published, and now in 1896, an interval of *thirty-two years*, we are vainly awaiting the completion of the "fitting memorial" by him who inherited the treasures. Alas! poor Wolley. You deserved a better fate.—W. J. HORN (Hinckley), Oct. 11th, 1896.

"The Birds of the Haven."—It would be interesting to know what species of bird the author of the paper on "The Birds of the Haven" meant by "the Dotterel," which, as well as the Ringed Plover, is, he says, "usually resident throughout the year" in the locality he was treating of. The Dotterel of British ornithology (*Eudromias morinellus*) is certainly not resident on the Hampshire coast.—O. V. APLIN.

The White Wagtail.—On August 29th, this year, I saw two White Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) near Lake Talyllyn in North Wales. There

was no mistaking them; they were much paler than *M. lugubris*, being ash-grey on the upper parts instead of black, and more white about the sides of the head and the neck.—Basil W. Martin (Hampstead).

In spite of Mr. Martin's assurance, I may point out that there *is* a danger of mistaking these birds in the month of August, as young Pied Wagtails at that time so much resemble White Wagtails that I should not care myself to accept the above identification as beyond dispute. The spring is the safest time to identify White Wagtails, and even then it must be remembered that there exists in this country a form of *M. lugubris* which is practically intermediate between typical examples of that species and of *M. alba*. Indeed, were I to come across an observer whose ideas of Pied Wagtails were confined to the more than sooty examples he would meet with on the South Downs, and were I to ask him to accompany me to the valley of the Trent after the arrival of the Wagtails in spring, he would probably see there birds which he might, with justice, pronounce at first sight to be his idea of *White* Wagtails.—H. Kirke Swann.

Late Nesting.—I found the nest of a Greenfinch with four eggs on August 23rd—rather a late date. A Yellow Bunting's nest and two fresh eggs were found on the 24th.—C. Milburn (Middlesbro').

The Ringdove.—In the spring of 1894 I found, within a short distance of each other, two nests of the Ringdove, which, in addition to the ordinary platform of sticks, were thickly lined with some sort of vegetable down. Is not this very unusual? I can find no instance of it mentioned in any work on ornithology, and I have never myself since met with a similar case.—D. E. McCausland (Hereford).

Double-Yolked Egg.—I have in my collection a double-yolked egg of the Chiff-Chaff, taken with three others from a nest at Dinedor, near this town, in 1894. Perhaps this is worth recording, as double-yolked eggs are rarely laid except by birds kept in confinement.—D. E. McCausland.

Notes from Herefordshire.—Owing to the recent gales we had visits from marine birds. On September 26th a Tern (*Sterna fluviatilis*) was shot on the River Wye near Ross. Three days later a second (of the same species) was obtained. Both are in my possession. On October 10th I saw a flock of at least twenty common Gulls flying over the town, apparently from one bend of the river to another.—William Blake (Ross, Herefordshire).

The Grey Phalarope.—A fine specimen of the Grey Phalarope was shot here on September 27th by a farm labourer.—J. Ward (Blacklands, Calne, Wilts).

Nesting Habits of the Willow-warbler and Chiffchaff.—In support of the Editor's contention of the Chiffchaff nesting on the ground, I may mention the fact of finding a nest, containing six eggs, placed on the ground in a double hedge, in the Harrow district. I have also found one or two others quite near the ground, without actually resting on it. During a few days' stay at Aberdeen in 1891, I found Willow-warblers' nests placed on the ground on the outskirts of the pine woods at Hazlehead, but at Tertowie, near Buxburn, on the Grampians, I found a small plantation of firs literally teeming with Willow-warblers' nests placed in the lower lateral branches of the young trees, especially the spruce fir. Some were unfinished, some finished, but no eggs, and others with eggs of varying numbers. I should say no mistake is possible about the identity, as the Chiffchaff is unknown in the district.—H. T. Booth (30, Homestead Road, Fulham, S.W.).

On referring to my note books I find that the only two Chiffchaff's nests I have found were both about a foot from the ground. Of very many Willow Wrens' nests of which the situation is recorded, the great majority were on the ground, often in the side of banks. There were only three exceptions—one six to ten inches above the ground, in a clump of coarse grass, another in a yew tree four or five feet from the ground, and a third about fifteen feet high on the top of an old (wood pigeon's ?) nest in a dead fir. Of those not recorded certainly all would be on the ground.—John P. Thomasson (Woodside, Bolton).

I very well remember the discussion in *The Field*, about the position of the nest of the Chiffchaff, and the impression left on my mind was that the bird usually placed its nest at some little height from the ground. I do not myself claim any extensive personal experience of the nests of these two species, but I have found the nest of the Chiffchaff on a bare stem of ivy growing on a wall, about two feet from the ground; and I have never found a Willow Wren's nest which was not either on the ground (except when built among old matted grass and prevented by this from coming within an inch or so of actual contact with the ground) or partly underground. I found two nests on the ground (one on the side of a ditch) in Arctic Norway last June. Neville Wood, as long ago as 1836, while stating that the Willow Wren's nest was always placed on the ground, mentioned several other situations for the nest of the Chiffchaff, although he thought that it was "more commonly on the ground, in a thick tuft of grass, and very often in a certain herb, with a sweet-smelling flower." In the fourth edition of "Yarrell," nests two feet from the ground are mentioned.

Mr. Davenport points out a difference between the alarm-notes of these two birds. The differences between the alarm-notes, and also the call-notes of the Chiffchaff and Willow Wren, have exercised me for years, and I find

several entries in my note books on the subject; but they do not record much result from my observations, and are, indeed, to some extent, contradictory. The difference is always clear to my ear, but I have always found the greatest difficulty in expressing or writing down the difference satisfactorily. When talking the matter over with Mr. Warde Fowler, I found we agreed upon this point. I am far from feeling that I have come to a satisfactory conclusion even now, and the only result of my observations, so far, is the impression (quite open to correction) that both the call- and the alarm-notes of the Chiffchaff are sharper and louder than those of the Willow Wren, which are softer and more inclined to be drawn out into *tu-it* or *wee-ep*, or *twee-et*—the syllables are hardly divided. It is worth notice that these birds will utter their call- as well as their alarm-notes when agitated by your near approach to their nest (some other species will actually sing under these circumstances). But this statement as to the difference between the notes is purely tentative; I should not have published it had not the question been opened, and I am quite prepared to find I am wrong. One difficulty attending observations of this kind consists in the fact that individual birds undoubtedly have slightly different voices; and a difficulty in comparing the observations of others with one's own arises from the fact that different people hear and write bird notes differently. Meyer makes the alarm-note of the Chiffchaff *hoo-id*. I am the more inclined to doubt the correctness of my impression, because Seebohm, who has commented on the difference in the two alarm-notes, wrote:—"The alarm-note of the Chiffchaff is a *whit* not unlike that of the Willow Wren, but not so loud, somewhat more prolonged, and slightly shriller."—O. V. Aplin.

British Birds' Eggs in Public Museums.—The Editor has incidentally drawn attention, in the October issue of the Ornithologist, to the fact of some error having been committed in connection with the identification of a clutch of Chiffchaff's eggs in the South Kensington Museum. I looked over what foreigners, I suppose, would regard as our National Collection not very long ago, and in addition to faulty identification of an egg here and there, I was disappointed to find the contents of the various drawers reflecting no astonishing wealth of credit on those who should be responsible for their well-being and attractiveness. The contemplation of cracked and dirty and dusty and ill-arranged and altogether sorry-looking eggs, is a very qualified joy to a keen oölogist. And yet the South Kensington Museum is not by any means singular in displaying eggs with a faulty identification to a gullible public, for I have in my mind a favourite resort of the same kind where a Wood-warbler's nest—with an egg inside, too—does duty as a Willow-warbler's. Lesser Redpoll's eggs are labelled Linnet's; Tree-pipit's as Meadow-pipit's; and so on; but though the majority of Curators of

Museums may be wondrously competent in a certain branch of ornithology, it does not necessarily follow that oölogy is also their *forte!* By the way, I was glad to see so favourable a notice in the ORNITHOLOGIST touching the new work on "British Birds, with their Nests and Eggs," now being issued by Messrs. Brumby and Clarke. At the price it is simply a gift to the public, and, as such, should be exempt from harsh criticism; but now that I am on the question of the identification of eggs, there can be no harm in my pointing out the blunder that has occurred with regard to the naming of the eggs of the Whinchat and Stonechat on the first coloured plate of the new enterprise, especially, too, as I have had a letter from the publishers thanking me for pointing out "a grave error," and intimating that a slip correcting it will shortly be issued. I should much like to know *who* passed the proof of this plate, for it is absurd to suppose it was not first submitted to some oölogical expert!—H. S. DAVENPORT.

Breeding Habits of the Sparrow-Hawk.—I cannot acquiesce in Mr. F. B. Whitlock's suggestion, that I have misapprehended the drift of his paper on the above subject. It was a side issue to which I took exception, and do so still. It seems impossible to read Mr. Whitlock's concluding paragraph in the July number (page 82) of the ORNITHOLOGIST without reflecting that surprise is ostensibly implied at a pair of Sparrow-Hawks having neglected to repair to one or other of a couple of Magpies' empty nests *of the year* for breeding purposes. The word "only" in the very forefront of the paragraph in question either possesses some sort of significance, or else, surely, is wholly without meaning. In my experience, Sparrow-Hawks never by any chance breed in *new* (though empty, or deserted, or term them what you will), nests, erstwhile the property of Carrion-Crows and Magpies, nor do they have recourse to "the tops of fairly tall trees" for rearing their offspring. I am far from wishing to raise a verbal quibble over what, or what not, may be defined as *deserted* nests, but there is generally a vast spectacular difference betwixt a Magpie's nest, from which the young have recently flown, and the same structure a year or two later, after it has been subjected to the rude buffetings of the storms and gales of intervening winters. Is this weighty fact to be entirely lost sight of? Nevertheless, the concluding paragraph of Mr. Whitlock's paper in the October number (page 165) of the ORNITHOLOGIST, not only supplies the key to the reason of my uncompromising dissent from the theory with which he has apparently identified himself, but goes a long way to emphasise the justice of my contention that I have *not* missed the essence of his remarks. He writes: "I see no reason, therefore, why, in the particular instance to which I alluded"—and it was against the seeming inference drawn therefrom I beg to parenthetically point out I argued so strongly—"the Sparrow-Hawks should

not have utilised one of the Pie's nests, ready at hand, unless, as I think is the fact, the species prefers to breed at a much lower elevation than was formerly the case." I repeat, this is precisely the reasoning I called in question, and do so again. I have never once met with an instance of Sparrow-Hawks breeding at the tops of trees, nor have I yet come across an author of repute who alleges that it was ever their habit so to do, nor do I believe that they ever did so of yore, or do so now. Moreover, with the utmost deference for Mr. Whitlock's opinion, I see the very best of reasons why, in the particular instance to which he has referred, the Sparrow-Hawks should *not* have utilised one of the Pies' nests, ready at hand, and the reason is this :—The species is rigidly constant *in its neglect of nests of the year*, so far as Magpies and Carrion Crows are concerned, for breeding purposes. At all events, this has been my unvarying experience from boyhood. Consequently, I maintain that one or other of the two—hitherto unrecorded—eventualities I named must have "inevitably" taken place had Mr. Whitlock's particular pair of Sparrow-Hawks bred otherwise, under the circumstances, than was absolutely the case. It is agreed that it is the rule for the species to build a structure of its own in woodland districts, and that it not unfrequently superimposes the same on the battered-down legacy bequeathed by some other species ; but it is, on the contrary, by no means agreed that it ever actually lays *in* Magpies' nests of the year. However, I quite understand that in future I must dissociate my own personality from Mr. Whitlock's original paper, though I cannot honestly deny that the latter still leaves me with the impression that it approximates to the construction I placed upon it. I fear this discussion is becoming very wearisome—it is so to me—but I wish to add that I fully and unhesitatingly accept Mr. Whitlock's disclaimer, and that I trust he will not for one moment regard anything I may have written—in the confusion and turmoil incident on changing houses I have perforce written *currenta calamo*—in the light of a discourtesy.—H. S. Davenport (Ormandyne, Melton Mowbray).

Local Bird Names from Arundel, Sussex.—Barn Owl: White Owl. Tawny Owl: Brown Owl, Woodowl. Red-backed Shrike: Butcher Bird. Spotted Flycatcher: Bee Bird. Missel Thrush: Storm Bird. Common Thrush: Thrusher. Blackbird: Blackie. Whitethroat: Nettle Creeper. Great Tit: Tomtit. Blue Tit: Tomtit. Long Tailed Tit: Bottle Tit. Pied Wagtail: Dish Washer. Reed Bunting: Reed Sparrow. Greenfinch: Green Linnet. Green Woodpecker: Yuffle. Creeper: Tree Climber. Wren: Scutty. Swift: Squeaker. Night Jar: Night Hawk, Eve Churr. Ring Dove: Wood Pigeon. Turtle Dove: Wood Dove. Lapwing: Peewit. Common Heron: Hern. Land Rail: Corn Crake. Moor Hen: Water Hen. Kestrel Hawk: Fanner Hawk.—Leslie Lewis (Binstead Rectory, Arundel).

NOTES AND NEWS.

THE recently-published "Transactions of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society" (vol. vi., part 2), contains a paper on an "Early Notice of Spoonbill Breeding in Norfolk," by Professor Newton. The notice is contained in the lately-published Patent Rolls of King Edward I.; the entry is for the year 1300, and the bird is referred to by its ancient name "Popeler." There is also a note by Mr. C. T. M. Plowright, of two Black-winged Stilts seen by him on Wolferton Marsh, October 8, 1895, and of one shot at Castleacre, October 12, 1895.

In the *Irish Naturalist* for October, Mr. E. Blake Knox records his obtaining two specimens of the Wood-sandpiper (*Totanus glareola*), in Co. Wicklow, last August.

A noteworthy event has been the recent occurrence of Macqueen's Bustard, in East Yorkshire. It was first seen on October 17, in a vetch-stubble at Kilnsea, by Messrs. W. Eagle Clarke and Harry F. Witherby, and was shot at without effect the same day by Colonel White. Mr. G. E. Chubley killed it the next day in a wheat-stubble at Easington. The bird was 28½ inches in length, and weighed 3 lbs. 11 ozs.

Other recent occurrences of rare birds include an Icterine Warbler, shot on September 7 by Mr. Robert Gurney, in the marram-bushes at Cley, Norfolk; a Rose-coloured Pastor, near Liss, in Hampshire, on May 4, this year, and a White Stork, (*Ciconia alba*) near Coleshill, Warwickshire, about the end of September.

At the recent annual meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Report of the Committee appointed by the Zoological Section for the purpose of drawing up a digest of the observations on migration made at lighthouses along the British coast, was submitted. The Committee, which consisted of Professor Newton, Messrs. John Cordeaux, J. A. Harvie-Brown, R. M. Barrington, W. Eagle Clarke, and the Rev. E. P. Knubley, dealt, among other things, with the subject of intermigration between the south-east coast of England and the coast of Western Europe, and pointed out that some entirely new facts had been ascertained in connection with this matter. After dealing fully with the sources and destinations of the migration streams, particularly those to be observed off the coast of East Anglia, in autumn, the report submitted that the conclusions to be drawn from a careful study of the subject were, that the direction of the wind had no influence whatever as an incentive to migration, but that its force was certainly an important factor, inasmuch as it might make migration an impossibility, arrest to a greater or lesser degree its progress, or even blow birds out of their course.

A "Bird day" for America, on the same lines as the "Arbor Day," was suggested some two years ago by Mr. C. A. Babcock, of Pennsylvania, and approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Its observance has again, says "Natural Science," been pressed upon the attention of the National Education Association, in a circular dated July 2, 1896, which points out that the object of the Government is "to diffuse knowledge concerning our native birds, and to arouse a more general interest in bird protection." It is also stated that "one of the greatest benefits of Arbor Day is the sentiment and interest aroused in the subject of trees and in the broader study of nature." As appeals to the humanity of woman are fruitless, and the ignorance of the farmer is still deplorable, perhaps, the best means for the preservation of feathered beings is to interest the young in birds in general, stress being especially placed upon their more interesting habits, their foods, and uses. The circular fully recognises the harm done to agriculture by the "Scalp Act" of Pennsylvania, of 1885, and the uselessness of waging war against noxious animals, because it almost invariably leads to the wholesale destruction of life, and the destruction therefore of many animals of inestimable value to the agriculturalist.

ADDITIONS TO THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTION DURING SEPTEMBER.

One Carunculated Bell-bird (*Chasmorhynchus niveus*),* Guiana, purchased (Parrot House); one Long-tailed Glossy Starling (*Lamprotornis æneus*) and two Yellow-backed Whydah-bird (*Coliopusser macrurus*) ♂ ♀, W. Africa, purchased (Western Aviary); two Lanner Falcons (*Falco lanarius*), E. Europe, presented by W. Glynes Bruty, Esq., (Eastern Aviary); one Glaucous Gull (*Larus glaucus*), Franz-Joseph Land, presented by the Jackson-Harmsworth Polar Expedition (Eastern Aviary); three Capoeira Partridges (*Odontophorus dentatus*), 1 ♂, 2 ♀, Brazil, purchased (Western Aviary); one Raven (*Corvus corax*), British Isles, presented by O. L. Pegler, Esq. (Crows' Cages); two Triangular-spotted Pigeons (*Columba guinea*), one White-backed Pigeon (*Columba leuconota*) and two Half-collared Doves (*Turtur semitorquatus*), bred in the Menagerie (Western Aviary); one Two-wattled Cassowary (*Casuarius bicarunculus*), Aroo Islands, deposited (Cassowaries' House); one Naked-throated Bell-bird (*Chasmorhynchus nudicollis*), Brazil, purchased (Parrot House); one Nightingale (*Daulias luscinia*) ♂, British Isles, purchased (Western Aviary); one Tawny Owl (*Syrnium aluco*), British Isles,

* New to the Collection.

presented by C. A. Lowes, Esq. (Eastern Aviary); four Common Quails (*Coturnix communis*) N. Africa, presented by J. Rooney, Esq. (Western Aviary); one White-crested Touracou (*Corythaix albocristata*), S. Africa, deposited (Parrot House); one Little Grebe (*Tachybaptes fluviatilis*), Suffolk, presented by Mr. Howard Bunn (Fish House); one Ariel Toucan (*Ramphastos ariel*), Brazil, purchased (Parrot House); three Maguari Storks (*Dissura maguari*), Chili, deposited (Eastern Aviary); one Orange-cheeked Amazon (*Chrysotis autumnalis*), Honduras, presented by Mr. Baratti (Parrot House); one Common Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), British Isles, presented by E. J. Foyser, Esq., F.Z.S. (Eastern Aviary); four Montagu's Harriers (*Circus cineraceus, juv.*), Norfolk, presented by W. J. Laidlay, Esq. (North Aviary); three Pin tailed Sand-Grouse (*Pterocles alchata*), Spain, presented by G. P. Torrens, Esq., F.Z.S. (Western Aviary); two Ruffs (*Machetes pugnax*) ♂ ♀, British Isles, purchased (Western Aviary); one Levaillant's Amazon (*Chrysotis levaillanti*), Mexico, purchased (Parrot House); seven Pratincoles (*Glareola pratincola*), Europe, deposited (Western Aviary); one Long-tailed Glossy Starling (*Lamprotornis æneus*), W. Africa, purchased (Western Aviary); one King Parrot (*Aprosmictus scapulatus*) ♂, Australia, presented by Mrs. Lyons (Parrot House); one Australian Wild Duck (*Anas superciliosa*), four Mandarin Ducks (*Æx galericulata*) and one Rosy-billed Duck (*Metopiana peposaca*), bred in the Menagerie (Duck Ponds).

BOOKS, &c., RECEIVED.

The Osprey, Vol. i., No. 2, October, 1896. The Osprey Co., Galesburg, Ill.

Science Gossip, New Series, Nos. 29 and 30, Oct. and Nov., 1896. John T. Carrington, Editor.

Ornithologische Monatsberichte, Vol. iv., No. 10, October, 1896. Prof. Dr. Reichenow, Editor.

The Naturalist, Nos. 255 and 256, Oct. and Nov., 1896. W. Denison Roebuck, Editor.

The Naturalists' Journal, Nos. 52 and 53, Oct. and Nov., 1896. S. L. Mosley, Editor.

Nature Notes, Nos. 82 and 83, Oct. and Nov., 1896. London: John Bale & Sons.

The Irish Naturalist, Vol. v., No. 10, October, 1896. Dublin: Eason & Son, Limited.

The Nidologist, Vol. iii., No. 13, September, 1896. H. R. Taylor, Editor.

The Birds of the Lower Brent Valley, by Robert H. Read, M.B.O.U. Reprinted from Reports and Transactions of Ealing Nat. Sc. Soc. for 1896.

ERRATA.—Page 151, line 10, for "zoophytes" read "polyzoa." We omitted to state in our last issue that Mr. Godfrey's "In Quest of the Erne" was reproduced from *Science Gossip*. The publishers have taken exception to the reproduction, but we have yet to learn that the copyright of an article which is supplied *gratis* belongs to other than the author of the article.

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T. L. J., CARLISLE.—We regret to say that Dr. Gunning was forced to abandon the Exchange Club, and return specimens to their owners through an insufficient number of members having come forward. Dr. Gunning went to some trouble over his thankless task, entirely with a disinterested wish to benefit those of our readers who are collectors. We believe he has written to you.

W. M. P., NEWCASTLE. — The Editor is obliged for your letter of October 28, but is not now able to deal with the matter.

B. W. M., HAMPSTEAD.—List of local bird names received with thanks. Will you oblige by mentioning the *title* of Sir John Hill's book.

G. W. M., MILNTHORPE.—Received with thanks. The Editor has been too busy to write to you.

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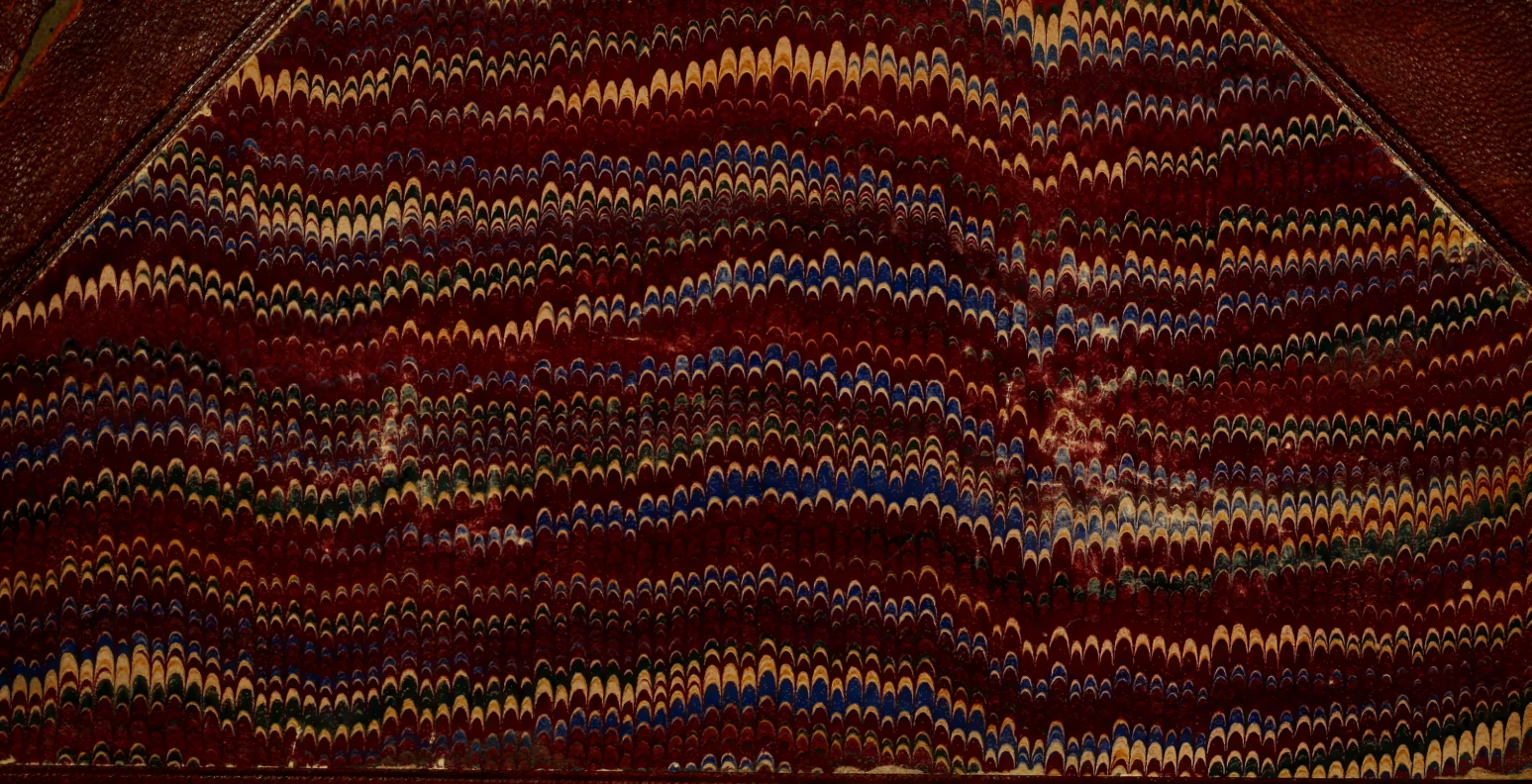
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