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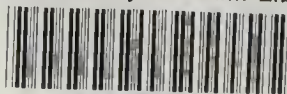
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GOWANS'S NATURE BOOKS, No. 5



WILD BIRDS AT HOME

SECOND SERIES



YOUNG SONG-THRUSHES
(*Turdus muscivorus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.

WILD BIRDS AT HOME

SECOND SERIES

*Sixty photographs from life, by Charles Kirk, of British Birds
and their Nests*

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YOUNG BLACKBIRDS
(*Turdus merula*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



HEN BLACKBIRD ABOUT TO COVER YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



COCK BLACKBIRD FEEDING YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF KING-OUZEL
(*Turdus torquatus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF REDBREAST
(*Erethacus rubecula*)



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

KEDDREAST



YOUNG WHITETHROATS IN NEST
(*Sylvia cinerea*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG WHITETHROATS



WHITETHROAT REMOVING EXCREMENT FROM NEST

Chas. Kirk, Philadelphia



YOUNG GREAT TITMICE
(*Parus major*)

Chas. Kirk Photo.



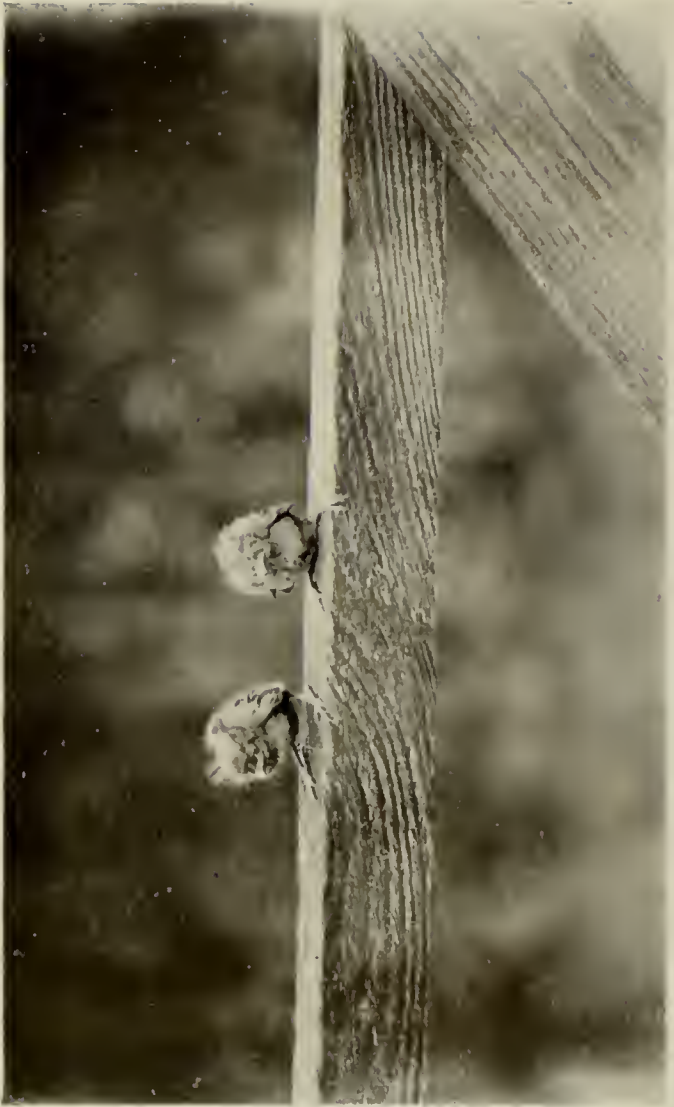
GREAT TITMOUSE LEAVING NEST

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST OF WREN IN DEAD BRACKEN
(*Troglodytes parvulus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG WRENS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



WREN ENTERING NEST IN HAYSTACK

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



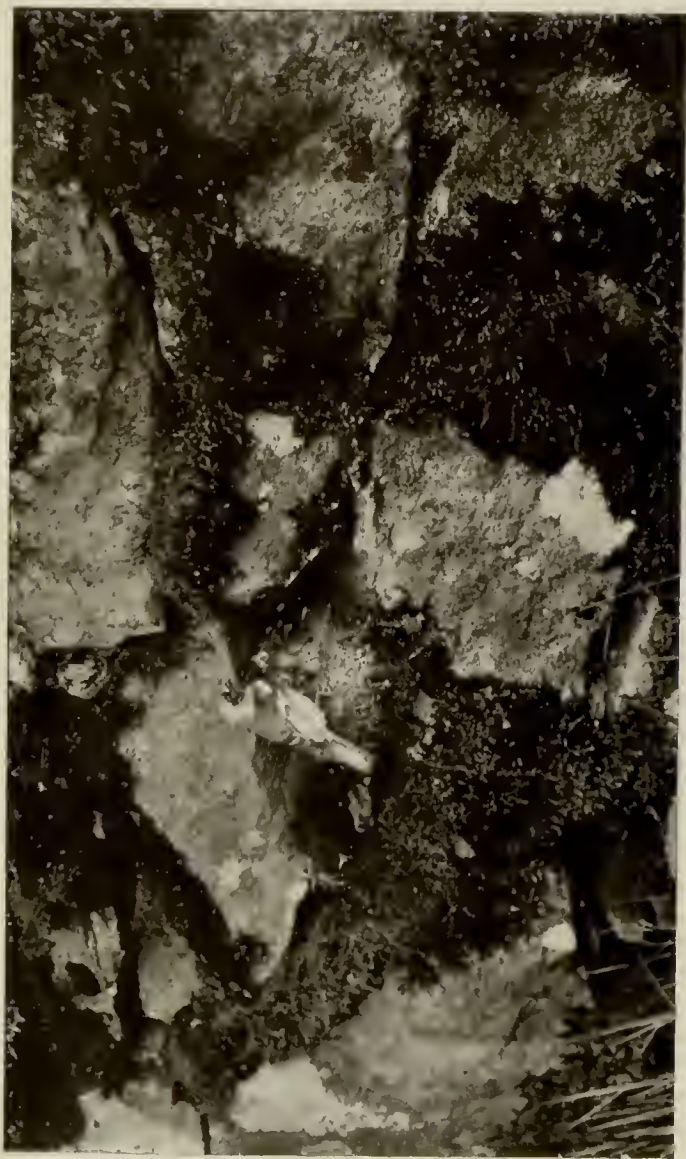
ROCK-PIBIT ON NEST
(*Anthus obscurus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG CHAFFINCHES IN NEST
(*Fringilla caelebs*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



COCK CHAFFINCH FEEDING YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF REED-BUNTING WITH
CUCKOO'S EGG
(*Emberiza schenckii*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



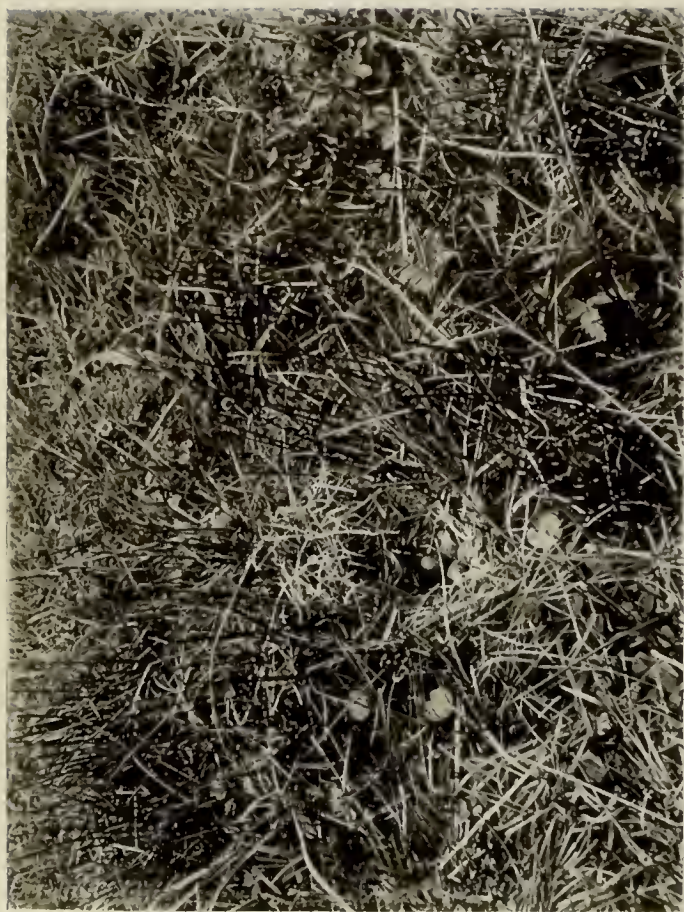
REED-BUNTING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



ROOKS AND NESTS
(*Corvus frugilegus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



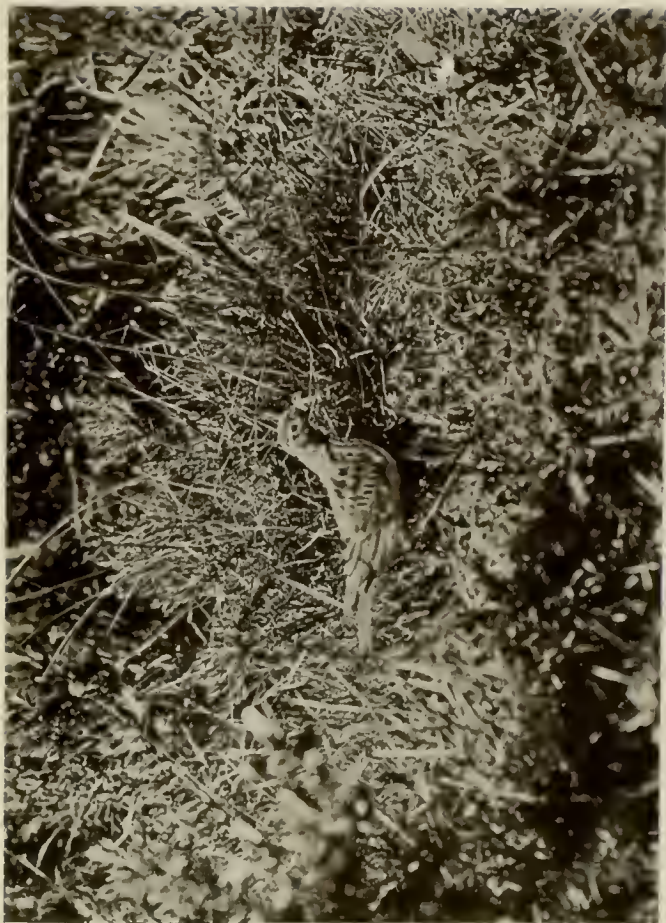
NEST AND EGGS OF SKY-LARK
(*Alanda arvensis*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



FOUR YOUNG SKY-LARKS IN NEST

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



SKY-LARK ABOUT TO FEED YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG LONG-EARED OWLS
(*Asio otus*)

Clas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG LONG-EARED OWLS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG LONG-EARED OWLS

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF TAWNY OWL
(*Syrnium aluco*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG TAWNY OWL

Chas Kirk, Photo.



NEST OF BUZZARD
(*Buteo vulgaris*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF MERLIN
(*Falco esalon*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG MERLINS IN NEST



YOUNG MERLINS IN NEST

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



MERLIN AND YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



MERLIN AND YOUNG

Clas. Kirk, Photo.



MERLIN ABOUT TO FEED YOUNG WITH MEADOW-PIPIT

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



MERLIN FEEDING YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



EGG AND NEWLY-HATCHED YOUNG OF KESTREL
(*Falco tinnunculus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



A FLIGHT OF GANNETS
(*Sula bassana*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



GANNETS FLYING AGAINST THE WIND

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



GANNET FLYING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



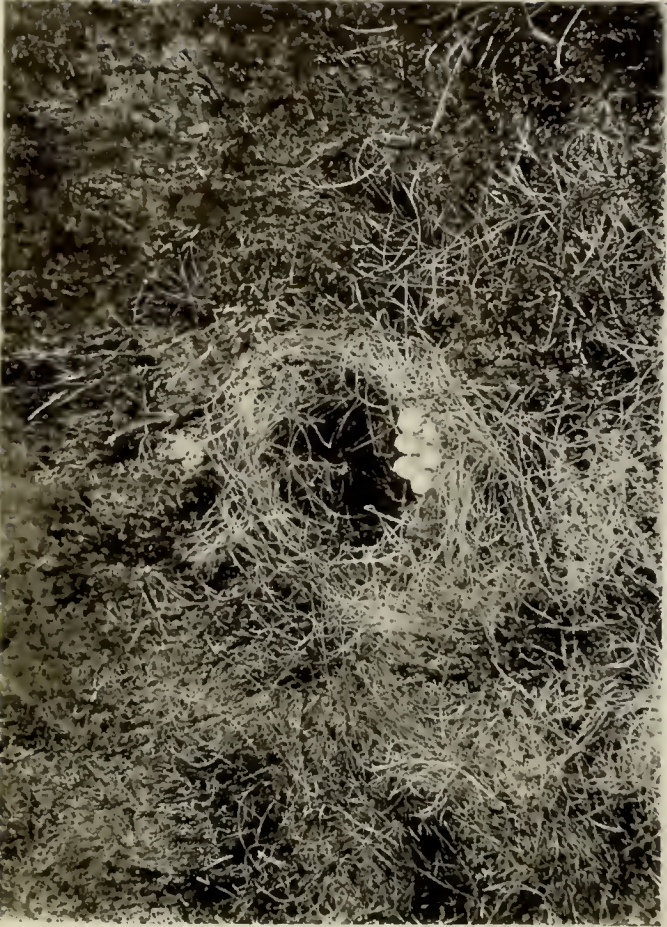
GANNET FLYING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



GANNET FLYING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF TEAL
(*Nettion crocca*)

Clas Kirk Photo.



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

TEAL ON NEST



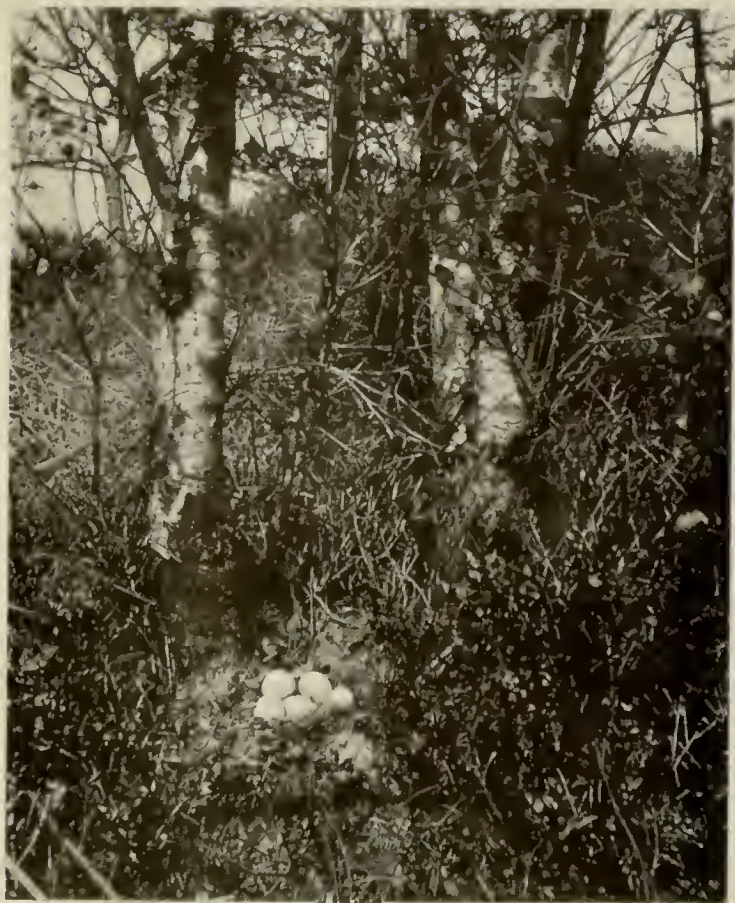
Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF RED-BREADED
MERGANSER
(*Mergus serrator*)



YOUNG STOCK-DOVES AT ENTRANCE
OF NEST
(*Columba ænas*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF CAPERCAILLIE
(*Tetrao urogallus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

NEST AND EGGS OF RED GROUSE
(*Lagopus scoticus*)



Chas. Kirk, Photo.

YOUNG RED GROUSE



NEST AND EGGS OF DUNLIN
(*Tringa alpina*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NESTING HAUNT OF THE BLACK-HEADED
GULL

(*Larus ridibundus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL IN HIDING
(*Larus fuscus*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



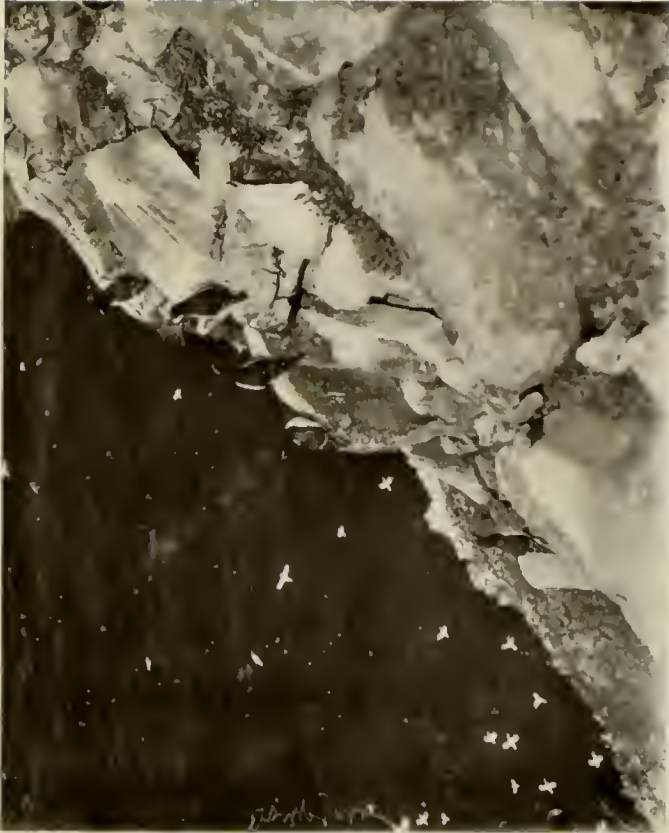
KITTIWAKE GULL FLYING, SEEN FROM BELOW
(*Rissa tridactyla*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



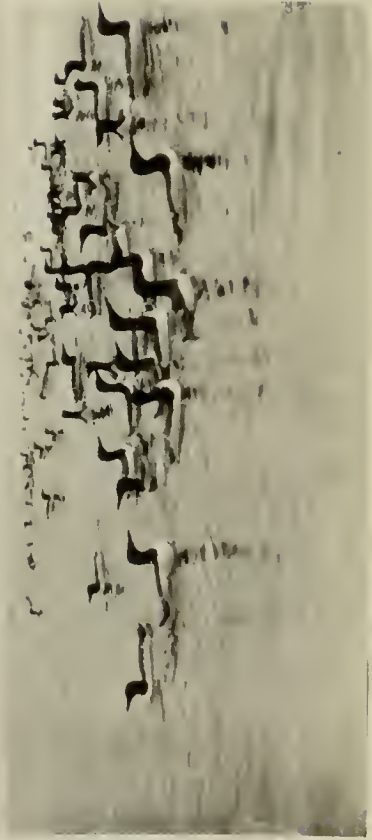
KITTIWAKE GULL FLYING

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



RAZORBILLS ON ROCK, GANNETS ON THE WING
(*Alca torda*)
(*Sula bassana*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



GUILLEMOTS
(*Uria troile*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



RING-EYED AND COMMON GUILLEMOF WITH YOUNG

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



YOUNG PUFFIN
(*Fratercula arctica*)

Chas. Kirk, Photo.



NEST AND EGGS OF GREAT CRESTED GREBE

CHAS. J. H. BENT

Some Notes on the Birds

OF WHICH

PHOTOGRAPHS APPEAR IN
THE FOREGOING PAGES . .

BY

GEORGE GIRDWOOD.

Blackbird—This sable-coated songster with its yellow bill is familiar to everyone. The species is resident with us all year, is widely distributed, and is to be observed commonly in all wooded neighbourhoods. Though guilty of taking a toll from the ripened fruit of the currant bushes, he amply repays this by services to the gardener, and by the delight of his mellow, flute-like song heard from early spring late into summer. The nest is placed in a hedge or shrub, about five feet from the ground, and contains four or five eggs of a pale green ground-colour, thickly covered with brown spots.

Bunting, Reed.—This bird is frequently alluded to as the Black-beaded Bunting, but this is a misnomer, as the Black-headed Bunting is a bird inhabiting Southern and Eastern Europe, which has been recorded in Britain only three times. The Reed-Bunting on the other hand is a resident in Britain, frequenting marshy localities, and lake or river side, where the male bird in summer with his rufous coloured back and jet-black head and throat, may oft be noticed perched on the top of some low bush, uttering his low twittering song. This bird is about six inches in length, and is not unlike a sparrow with a black head, with a narrow collar of white dividing the head from the reddish brown colour of the shoulders and back. In winter the Reed-Bunting may be found in small flocks, associated with chaffinches and other small birds in the stubble fields. It is largely a seed eater, though in the summer months and especially when feeding its young, it is like so many other of the smaller birds, almost entirely insectivorous. The nest is usually carefully concealed, and is oft-times placed among rushes, in clumps where the stems have been broken down and lie horizontal, sometimes in whin bushes, but always in the vicinity of water. The eggs, from four to six in number, are stone colour, spotted and broadly scolloped after the manner of those of the Yellowhammer, but with thicker lines, of very dark purple, almost black.

Buzzard—The Buzzard occupies a place in nature between the hawk and the owl. It is somewhat heavy both in appearance and habit, though when in flight its long wings appear it with great ease, as it circles round and round in graceful curves watching for its prey. Its food consists of young rabbits, field mice and frogs,

and occasionally it may destroy young birds. The colour above is ashy-brown, the under parts dull white, the breast clouded with a shade of brown, the wing and tail feathers dark brown crossed with bars of darker brown. The Buzzard is deserving of careful protection, but unfortunately its numbers have been very greatly reduced through lack of consideration on the part of game preservers. Originally this bird built its nest in trees, often a fir tree, but of late years it has retreated, during the breeding season at least, to more inaccessible spots where it nests in cliffs. The foundation of the nest is constructed of rough sticks, the upper portion of twigs, and a peculiar habit of the species is to line its nest with fresh green leaves. The eggs are usually three in number, though occasionally four may be found, and are often very handsome. They vary from a dull white without markings, to those where the ground colour is almost obscured by rich blotches and spots of reddish brown.

Capercaillie—The Capercaillie is much the largest of the British game birds, the male attaining to the length of 35 inches, the female being some 10 inches shorter. The former is a very handsome bird, dark slate grey in colour, with each feather finely vermiculated with white. It is possessed of an extremely powerful bill, curved in shape, and has a habit of distending the feathers of the throat, the combination giving to the bird a somewhat fierce look, which is however altogether belied by its nature and habits, which much resemble those of the black grouse. The colour of the female is chestnut, barred with black, the tips of the feathers being touched with white. This species was at one time indigenous to Great Britain, but became extinct. It was, however, re-introduced to Scotland some 50 years ago, and has within late years greatly increased in numbers, and in its range; occurring now frequently in counties much farther south than that into which it was re-introduced. The food of the Capercaillie consists very largely of the needles of the Scots fir, a diet which imparts to its flesh a strongly resinous flavour. In dissecting a mature male, it is not uncommon to find its crop distended with an enormous mass of these needles, so hard and dry as to cause admiration of the extraordinary digestive power which can reduce and assimilate such unlikely material. This bird also feeds on berries and acorns, and the young shoots and buds of a variety of trees. The Capercaillie is polygamous, and in the breeding season the males are said to indulge in severe fighting, at which time they may be easily approached. The nest of the Capercaillie consists of a mere scraping in the ground in which are laid from five to eight eggs, or in the case of older females from eight to twelve, though as many as sixteen eggs have been found—in the last case probably the product of two hens. They resemble the eggs of the black grouse, being of a dull cream ground colour, spotted with reddish brown, and are rather over 2 inches in length.

Chaffinch—This finch is one of the most brilliantly coloured of our British birds, and the male in spring, when the varied colours of his plumage are at their brightest, with his blue cap, and bright contrast of black, white, and saffron on wings and breast, presents a handsome appearance as he pours out his short but melodious song, or utters his characteristic cry of "pink-pink." The Chaffinch is a resident with us throughout the year, is widely distributed, and in many districts is abundant. The habit of this species, from which it derives its scientific name of "Bachelor-Finch," is that shown in the winter months, when the males and

females separate, gathering at that season in flocks, each flock composed solely of the one sex. The Chaffinch is a seed-eater, but during the breeding season becomes largely insectivorous, feeding its young on caterpillars, flies, and grubs. The nest of the Chaffinch is exquisitely constructed of moss and lichen, and coarsely lined with hair and feathers, and it is not at all uncommon to find worked into the outside small bits of newspaper, oft-times the relic of a paper chase. The nest, often built in the lichen-covered fork of an apple tree, assimilates so closely to its surroundings, as often to be difficult of discovery. The eggs are usually four in number, greenish in ground-colour, and streaked and marled with brown and black.

Dove, Stock.—This dove is more numerous than is usually supposed. It is very widely distributed in England, and also is not infrequent throughout Scotland and Ireland, and appears to be increasing in numbers. It is a bird more of the open ground than of the woodland, nesting in cliffs and rabbit burrows, though occasionally in holes in trees. It is a seed feeder. In colour the Stock-Dove is grey, with, on the head, neck and breast, the metallic lustre common to its race. It may be distinguished from the rock-dove by the absence of the white rump possessed by the latter, and from the wood-pigeon by its smaller size, and the lack of the white neck ring and shoulder mottle. The length of the Stock-Dove is 14 inches. In Scotland, where the rock-dove is usually to be found haunting the rocky coast line, the Stock-Dove on the other hand is to be observed inland on the hill pastures, and in the open hill glens. The precipitous side of the latter is a favourite haunt, and here it may be often found nesting in solitary pairs. The eggs are two in number, and pure white.

Dunlin—The Dunlin as a breeding species appears to be increasing in numbers in Scotland, where, as in the northern counties of England, it is a resident and breeding species. The male is close on seven inches in length, with a longish bill, and is of a brownish colour with black centres to the feathers. The throat, foreneck, and chest are white with small streaks of black, and in the summer there is a strongly marked horse shoe of black upon the breast. The Dunlin during the winter is common on all our coast lines, where it is to be noticed frequently in large flocks which form an interesting spectacle, as in flight they whirl and turn. In sunlight, at one angle, when the underparts of the birds are visible, the flock would seem to disappear, again suddenly coming into sight, as the other angle of their flight reveals their brownish backs. In summer the Dunlin betake themselves in pairs to the high moorlands and hillsides to breed, where in a slight depression their nest is built of dried grass and moss, usually in a tuft of grass or heather, sometimes in rushes, and it is usually well concealed. The Dunlin is a great wanderer, many go as far north as Iceland and Siberia to nest, and in the winter, pass as far south as California and Zanzibar. Those that do frequent our shores during the winter months, are probably those which have bred in far northern latitudes. Their food is largely insects, which they appear to obtain from the margins of lakes and in winter on the muddy shores of our estuaries and coast lines. The eggs are four in number, and are pear shaped, as are those of most of the birds of the wader family to which the species belongs. The ground colour is of greenish grey, richly spotted and blotched with reddish brown and black.

Gannet—The Gannet or Solan Goose presents on flight a noble appearance, as with straightly outstretched wings, it circles round its baunts high above the sea. Again, its plunge is impressive, as it curls itself from a height of over a hundred feet into the sea, which it strikes with great violence, disappearing in a cloud of spray; this is its method of catching the herring on which it feeds, and as the fisherman starts off on a similar pursuit, he eagerly looks for direction to where these natural fishers are at work. The Gannet is provided with a wonderful apparatus in the shape of a series of small sacks lying immediately beneath the skin of the breast. These sacks it can at will inflate, thus forming a pneumatic cushion to enable it to resist the impact caused by meeting the water after its headlong descent from on high, and also rendering its return to the surface more easy on account of this added buoyancy. The Gannet breeds in colonies, notably on Ailsa Craig, St. Kilda, and the Bass Rock. It builds a somewhat large nest of seaweed and grasses, and in this lays a single egg of a very pale blue colour, but this ground-colour is quite obscured by a thick deposit of a chalky nature.

Grebe, Great Crested—This bird is not common, though owing to the protection afforded of late years to birds, it appears to be increasing in numbers. It is found breeding in many of the lakes of England and Ireland, and in certain of the lochs of southern Scotland. The colour of the bird is black above, with the undersurface of the body white. The crown of the head is black, and extends to a tuft of long feathers running down each side of the neck. The Great Crested Grebe is a strong swimmer, and when pursued usually escapes by diving, though capable of a powerful and sustained flight. In the marshy lakes of Pomerania, it is said to be numerous, and is there gregarious, but in Britain as a rule, only one pair is to be found breeding in one locality. The nest is composed of dead flags and reeds, of which a flat and floating mass is constructed among the growing reeds. On this are deposited the eggs, three or four in number, of a greenish white, covered with a chalky substance, which during incubation becomes discoloured to a dirty brown.

Grouse, Red—This bird is peculiar to the British Isles, and has been of no inconsiderable advantage to the development of the wilder and, lacking its presence, the otherwise unproductive parts. The pursuit of the "little red bird" brings to the Highlands of Scotland many sportsmen, and the rental of the moors where they are found, the building of shooting lodges, the keeping up of servants, game-keepers, etc., distribute moneys in neighbourhoods towards which no other means would divert wealth. The plumage of the Red Grouse is variable, there being three distinctive forms, a red, a black and a white spotted form, and even in these the colouration is not constant, varying much in different seasons. The food of the Red Grouse consists largely of the young tops of heather, but it also feeds on insects and in the autumn months is extremely fond of the ripened corn, descending at this season to the lower ground, where coveys may often be seen perched and feeding greedily upon the sheaves of corn. The crow of the cock grouse is loud and clear, and as the wanderer over the moor in spring hears this rich cry resembling in sound "Come back, Come back," his advance usually results in the flushing of the birds, which rise strongly on the wing with a loud whirring noise. The careful preservation of the grouse by the destruction of its enemies, the peregrine falcon, the weasel and the fox, has enabled the species to largely increase its

numbers. Here nature steps in to preserve the balance, and of late years we have heard much of grouse disease, when numbers are found dead upon the moors, through the ravages of some internal parasite. The nest of the grouse is built in a clump of heather upon the open moor, and contains from seven to ten eggs, of a pale buff ground colour, which usually is almost entirely concealed by a rich mottling of dark reddish brown spots and blotches.

Guillemot—The Guillemot is probably the most common of the diving birds which visit our coasts each spring to breed. It is this bird which, known as "The Ducker," is to be seen from March to August at the mouths of our larger estuaries, and along such parts of our coast-line as afford the rocky cliffs on which it rears its young. It permits a comparatively near approach of boat or steamer, but at the last moment shows a clean pair of heels; disappearing below the surface, to reappear after what seems to the observer a very long time, in a possibly quite unexpected direction. The Guillemot lays her egg on a rocky shelf high above the water, and without anything in the shape of nest, and in this connection is seen one of the wonderful provisions of nature for the preservation of a species; the egg, a single one, very large for the size of the bird, is possessed of a thick shell, and while broad at the one end is much elongated, and runs to quite a sharp point. This long pointed shape causes the egg when disturbed, as by the hurried departure of the sitting bird, to roll round in a circle, and it thus remains upon its ledge, which is often but a narrow one. Were the egg round like that, say, of the owls, which nest in boles, the species would in a comparatively short number of years become extinct, unless, of course, the bird changed its habits with regard to the site of its nesting place. The eggs of the Guillemot vary in colour, being often of a dark blue, others of a lighter blue, greeny blue, or creamy white, while a rare type is of a dark claret colour, all being blotched with black markings.

Gull, Black-headed—This bird should really be called the Brown-headed Gull, the feathers of its head being dark brown, though in contrast to the white of the rest of its plumage appearing black: or better still, the Common Gull, as it is this bird which is most commonly to be seen of the Gull tribe. But this last name has been given by ornithologists to "*Larus canus*," a comparatively rare bird which is to be observed only on our remoter coasts, and out-lying isles, and is not very plentiful even there. The Black-headed Gull is to be seen on our tidal rivers, feeding at such points as where the sewage of our towns enters, and in winter it haunts the neighbourhood of our riverside towns, where it has become very tame of late years, frequenting at that season even such busy places as the Thames Embankment, where it is fed by the benevolent. In spring this bird resorts to marshy moors and lochs, where it breeds, usually in colonies, making a nest of rushes and grasses sufficiently high to raise its eggs clear of the water. The eggs, two, three, or rarely four in number, are variable in colour; a common type is darkish green in ground-colour, spotted and blotched with black and brown. This bird is a good friend to man, and in spring and autumn may be seen following the plough, picking up grubs and worms as they are upturned, and by the contrast of the silver-white of its plumage against the dark earth ever providing a pleasing picture.

Gull, Kittiwake—This charming sea bird derives its name from the resemblance of its cry to the syllables "Kit-i-wake." It is a summer visitor in large numbers to our coasts and islands, where it nests usually in conjunction with Guillemots and Razorbills, but

this bird builds on the ledges of the cliff-face a nest of seaweed and grasses, in which it lays its two or three eggs, stone colour, spotted and blotched with grey and brown. In colour this bird is a delicate grey on the back with the breast and under parts pure white, the eye is large, full, and dark, and the bill greenish-lemon. On its first arrival on its nesting ground, before its plumage is soiled by contact with the nest or rocks, it is exquisitely dainty in its purity of colour. A visit to the breeding haunt of a colony of sea fowl, is to many memorable, and dominant above many points of recollection may be that of lying on the short wind-swept turf, blue sky above, blue sea below, while the gentle cry of "Kit i-wake, Ki-hi ti-wake." sounds ceaselessly as the gleaming white birds circle round their nests. The young of the Kittiwake resemble their parents in general colour, but are marked with black amid the grey of the back and wings. In August they begin their southward flight, and by the end of September, the thronging, busy colony is tenantless and deserted, to be so till spring again comes round.

Gull, Lesser Black-backed—This bird, a resident in Britain throughout the year, is numerous and widely distributed along our coast lines. It is a large and handsome bird, white in colour but with, as the name denotes, back and wings of blue black colour, and with a large and powerful beak. The young do not become mature until their fourth year, and are until then of a dull white colour, speckled with grey. The Lesser Black-backed Gull has few, if any, good qualities, nay, is indeed both thief and murderer. Their nest most usually in the vicinity of other sea fowl, and are ruthless robbers of the eggs and young of such species as Guillemots and Kittiwakes, selecting a moment when the parent bird is absent, to make a dash and seize their prey. Their nest is a slight structure of dry grasses, placed upon the green slopes of the cliffs along our coast-line and islands, but occasionally they will select an island on some fresh water lake, or even the heather of the open moorland. The eggs are three in number, somewhat variable in shade, but usually of a greenish stone colour, spotted and blotched with grey and black, and are not to be distinguished from those of the Herring-Gull, save by identification of the bird as she rises from the nest.

Kestrel—The Kestrel is the commonest of our British hawks, and is a harmless inoffensive bird, but alas! to the indiscriminating eye of the game-keeper, a hawk is a hawk, and the mouse-loving "windhover" has oft-times to fall the victim of his gun. The food of the Kestrel consists almost entirely of mice and beetles, and it is while in pursuit of the former, that it may so frequently be seen hovering high in air, there poised for a few seconds absolutely motionless, ere it darts down to seize the mouse it has been watching. The Kestrel is a handsome bird, the general colour above dull chestnut, with a black spot in the centre of each feather, in the male bird the head and neck are steely blue, as is also the tail, the latter being tipped with white; the throat is buff, the breast and undersides reddish fawn, streaked with black. In the female the blue of the head and tail is absent. The Kestrel is partially migratory, but is found in Britain throughout the year. In the winter it will leave the high lands and descend to avail itself of the less severe conditions of the lower lying parts. A number migrate to the continent while an immigration of a certain number takes place to the British Isles from more northern countries. The Kestrel nests in cliffs, old ruins, or even in the old and deserted nest of a crow or wood-pigeon. The

eggs, four, five, or even as many as seven in number, are white in ground colour, but often this is so thickly blotched and spotted with brownish red as to be barely visible.

Lark, Sky.—This species is resident in Britain throughout the year, save in the far north, where it is not to be found during winter. It is however, to a certain degree migratory, as vast flocks reach our shores from the Continent in the autumn months. These strangers seem to be rather larger in size and slightly darker in colour than our native birds. Contemporarily with the invasion of our shores by these visitors, large swarms of our native birds have been seen passing over Helgoland, in a south easterly direction; in fact at this point two distinct flocks of this one species have been observed passing each other, *i.e.* Sky-Larks, from probably the Baltic provinces, passing westward to the shores of Britain, crossing on their way British Sky-Larks moving east en route for warmer lands, in which to spend the winter months, possibly the Mediterranean or North African coasts, via: the Rhine Valley. The Sky-Lark measures some seven inches in length, and is of a brown colour, the feathers being streaked with black in the centre, and edged with buff; on the head the feathers reach a short crest. The hind toe of the Sky-Lark is probably its most distinctive feature, being of great length. This species is believed to be increasing in numbers, and if this be so, it is a matter for great rejoicing, as must be the thought of everyone who has listened to its ecstatic song poured forth as the bird soars up and up above the corn land or meadow till it is almost lost to sight. When one reads "Larks on Toast," on a modern menu, one cannot but wonder at either the lack of thought, or else the limited nature of the out-door life of the partakers thereof. The food of the Sky-Lark consists of seeds of various kinds; the young are fed on insects. The nest is always placed upon the ground in some slight depression, oft-times in the footprint of a cow or other animal, and is not particularly well concealed. The eggs are three or four in number, the ground colour of greenish white, but usually almost entirely obscured by the dark brown spots and mottling with which it is profusely covered.

Merganser, Red-breasted—This duck breeds commonly in Scotland and Ireland, and in winter wanders down the coast line of England. It is comparatively numerous on the western side of Scotland, where it breeds on both the sea and inland lochs, a favourite situation being on a small island. The plumage of the male is handsome, the general colour of the upper part black, with the under shoulder white, forming a line leading down each side of the back; the head is purplish black, with a crest of narrow feathers; there is a collar of white round the neck, with a stripe of black from the nape to the shoulder; a chestnut wash passes across the top of the breast the remainder of which, with the under parts, is white; the bill which is long and narrow is of a bright red, with a down turned tip of black. The female is much duller in colour than the male, giving the impression generally of a dull brown hue. The Red-breasted Merganser feeds chiefly on fishes, and is an expert diver, resembling in many of its ways the Cormorant. In winter it may be found in small flocks, frequenting the sea lochs and coast line. The nest is always well hidden, a favourite situation being on the ground under the branches of a small tree, or bush, or in the heather growing on the small rocky islands of the sea or inland lochs. The nest consists of a hollow scraped in the ground, and is as usual with the ducks, lined with the down from the breast of the female. The eggs are from six to eleven in number, of an olive or stone colour, and are unspotted.

Merlin—This little falcon is the smallest of our British birds of prey. Though small in size it is powerful and daring, attacking fearlessly and oft-times successfully birds considerably larger than itself. It is a bird of the moorland, where it may be seen perched upon some stone standing above the heather; hence its other name of "Stone Falcon." It is considered by the gamekeeper an enemy, and no doubt the Merlin takes, like the bold pirate that he is, a tribute from the humbler folk inhabiting his domain. The Merlin makes its nest upon the ground amid the heather and there lays its four or five eggs, white in ground-colour, but this barely visible through the suffusion of reddish-brown, with which the eggs are thickly covered. The plumage of the Merlin is blue-black above, the breast dull white with black markings, and the bird with his hooked bill and proud carriage looks what he is, a bold and dashing fellow.

Ouzel, Ring.—The Ring-ouzel is a summer migrant, arriving early on our southern shores, from which it quickly betakes itself to higher lying ground, where it frequents the open moors and hillsides, and may often be observed in the glens and by the sides of mountain streams. The Ring-ouzel is about the size of a blackbird, which it resembles in other respects, being sooty black in colour, but with a broad band of white stretching across the breast, and ending on each side of the neck. The female is in colour browner than the male, with the neck ring less distinct. The song resembles that of the Blackbird, though rather harsher in tone. The Ring-ouzel is largely insectivorous, save in the autumn, when it feeds chiefly on berries, being particularly fond of those of the mountain ash. The nest, which may well be taken for that of the blackbird, is usually placed upon the ground; a favourite situation being on the bank of a mountain stream, hidden by overhanging heather. The eggs are four in number, occasionally five, and closely resemble those of the blackbird, but often one of the clutch is in ground colour of a much clearer blue with rich brown markings.

Owl, Long-eared—The Long-eared Owl is a resident in Britain throughout the year, and is widely distributed over the entire country with the exception of the Orkneys and Shetlands, where it is but a visitor. In winter its numbers are considerably added to by immigrants from more northern climes. In colour it is dark brown above, mottled with buff, and with tiny spottings of darker brown; the head is dull orange, each feather centred with black, and edged with tiny dusky spots; the facial rings are dull white, black round the eye; the breast dull white with each feather streaked with dark brown. The length of this owl is rather over 13 inches, and its distinguishing feature is the two long ear tufts of feathers from which it derives its name, and which renders it distinct from the other members of the family. It is much more slender in body than the Short-eared Owl. The Long-eared Owl conceals itself through the day; unlike its short-eared relative it is never to be seen abroad save at night. Its food consists chiefly of mice and rats. This owl breeds early in the year, laying its eggs in the old and deserted nest of some other bird. These number four to six, sometimes seven, and are pure white, rather glossy, and more oval in shape than those of the other owls. This species has not the hoot of its congeners, but is said to have a note of a barking sound, and also occasionally to mew after the fashion of a kitten.

Owl, Tawny—The Tawny Owl is now the most numerous representative of its family in Britain, where it is resident and widely distributed. It is a lover of the woodland, from the dark recesses of

which at dusk its eerie cry of "Who-who" may be heard. The species varies a good deal in colour, but is generally ashy grey above, permeated with a tinge of reddish brown, each feather having a dark centre, with zig-zag cross lines, giving a mottled look to the back. The breast is ashy white, with black centres to each feather, which are also barred and speckled. Unfortunately this bird has been much persecuted by the game-keeper, and while it may occasionally destroy a young rabbit, or even a young pheasant, there can be no reasonable doubt that the species is of great service generally to man, living as it does almost entirely on mice and rats, and for this reason should be unfailingly preserved. The eggs are usually placed in a hollow tree, but may be discovered in a variety of sites, such as an old nest of a rook or magpie, in out-houses, in the thick ivy covering an old ruin, in rabbit burrows, or even on the ground in some dark well hidden spot, or in the broad fork of some old tree. They are three or four in number, pure white and round in shape.

Pipit, Rock.—This bird is close on seven inches in length, olive brown in colour, mottled with dark brown centres to the feathers, and with the under surface of a dull white. It is resident in Britain, and widely distributed along the rocky coast lines. Inland it only appears as a migrant. It is larger and darker in colour than the more common meadow-pipit, which it otherwise closely resembles. Its food consists of insects and the seeds of marine plants. Its song is musical, though not strong. The nest is extremely difficult to find, being usually placed in wild and inaccessible situations, sometimes among rocky cliffs, often in a tuft of grass, but always near the water. It is a slight structure built of dry grass, and lined with hair. This bird is very wary in regard to its nest, and will remain for hours at a time without returning to its eggs or young, if aware of the presence of an observer. Its dull hue and the tininess of its size in relation to its usual surroundings makes the task of noting its return to its nest, one of great difficulty. The eggs are usually four in number, sometimes five, the ground colour greenish white, but is so thickly covered with spots and markings of dark brown, as to be almost invisible. Occasionally, but very seldom, a variety with light reddish brown markings may be found.

Puffin—This bird presents in the breeding season when its beak is much enlarged, quite a humorous appearance. It is one of the marine diving birds with habits similar to those of the Guillemot and Razorbill, and breeds in similar localities. The Puffin, however, lays its solitary egg at the end of a short burrow in the peat which usually covers the tops of the small islands round our coast-line, or the cliff-heads of the coast itself. The egg, when newly laid, is white with faint under-shell markings of pale brown, but speedily through contact with the peat, becomes stained and discoloured. The colour of the bird is black above, and white underneath, the sides of the head a pale lavender, and the feet a brilliant red. The salient point of the bird is its bill, very large for the size of the bird, and in shape resembling that of the parrot. It is brilliantly coloured with red, blue, and yellow. The Puffin is in its habits pelagic, save at the breeding season, when it resorts in countless myriads to the remoter parts of our isles to breed. The Puffin feeds its young on the fry of certain fishes, and is particularly fond of the sand eel. The parent bird may be seen returning to the nest with numbers of this latter protruding from either side of the bill, each little fish neatly held just behind the head. The movements of sand eels are not wanting in alacrity, and it is interesting to conjecture how the bird retains its hold of, say, the first nine caught, while capturing the tenth.

Razorbill—This bird derives its name from the likeness in shape of its bill to that of a razor, and this resemblance is greater than are many characteristics from which other birds have derived their names. In general habits and appearance the Razorbill closely resembles the Guillemot, but a visitor to its rocky haunts, where both species are invariably found associated, will soon perceive the two distinguishing features by which the Razorbill may be identified from the Guillemot, viz.: its blunt bill instead of the awl-shaped weapon of the Guillemot, and by the former's dense black colour as against the sooty brown of the latter. The Razorbill lays its solitary egg, reddish-brown or white in ground-colour, usually thickly spotted and speckled with black and brown, in a somewhat similar position to that affected by the Guillemot, but seeks a situation of greater safety, selecting a cranny or nook beneath some boulder, instead of the open, naked shelf on which the Guillemot deposits her egg. It is a moot point as to how this bird brings her young from the nesting-place, possibly 200 or 300 feet above the sea, down to the water. Some observers insist that they have seen the parent bird bearing the young one down perched on its back, but this seems improbable; it is more likely that instinct will teach the nestling the confidence necessary for it to trust to its outspread wings, and by that means to convey itself down to that element thereafter to be so largely its home: for this bird spends all the rest of the year from nesting season to nesting season at sea.

Redbreast—The Robin or Redbreast is one of the most familiar of our British birds, being widely distributed and abundant. Its tameness and its approach to the habitation of man during the winter months, render it a general favourite; no bird is, however, more pugnacious. It is more migratory than is generally supposed, considerable numbers leaving our country for more southern climes during the winter. In spring the Robin generally deserts the immediate neighbourhood of man's dwelling, retreating to nest in the woods and roadside banks, where, concealed in the herbage or ground ivy, the nest, constructed mostly of dead leaves and moss, and lined with hair, may be discovered. The colour of the robin is too familiar to need description, but the young until the autumn moult, are, in plumage, quite different to their parents, being buff-brown in colour, each feather with a central spot of light buff, and tipped with black, giving a mottled appearance. This bird indulges occasionally in very odd sites as nesting places, such as an old tin can or pail, often a hole in a wall. The eggs, five, six, or even eight in number, are of a pale buff ground colour, clouded with dull red markings, occasionally these markings are more distinct, taking the form of reddish spots, while at rare intervals clutches of white unmarked eggs have been discovered.

Rook—The Rook, often erroneously called the Crow, is one of the most familiar and widely distributed of British birds. It is to be found everywhere, save in the outer islands, and even to those spots is occasionally a visitor. The plumage of the Rook, as seen in the sunshine of early spring, has a rich dark blue gloss; the length of the bird is seventeen inches, and in the mature form, the face is devoid of feathers, giving it an unsightly and almost repulsive look. As is well known, the Rook is gregarious, both in winter and during the nesting season, which begins early in March, at which time they build their nests in colonies, known as rookeries. In the main the rook is undoubtedly the farmer's friend, ridding his ground of the grubs of many destructive insects. The eggs are three to five in number, pale green in ground colour, spotted and blotched with blackish brown.

Teal—The Teal is the smallest of the British ducks, being only fourteen inches in length. The male is in general colour above of a dusky grey, the undersurface of the body creamy white, with the neck and breast rather warmer in tone, and thickly spotted with black, the crown of the head, the face and throat chestnut, the forehead and chin blackish, the eye surrounded by a black band tinted with green and purple, these eye lines are continued to meet at the back of the head, and are bordered by a narrow line of white. In general appearance this little bird is neat and dainty. The species is resident in Great Britain, and is widely distributed. It is more numerous in the north, and in winter its numbers are largely added to by migrants from more northern lands. In summer it resorts to the moors and hillsides to nest, often at a considerable distance from water, the most usual site being out in the open moor, under a clump of heather. In winter it is found in the company of mallards and widgeon, on the lakes and rivers, but is not so often found on the sea shore as are its congeners. A favourite haunt of the Teal is a small reedy pond. Its food consists of certain water plants and the insects and mollusca found in the spots it loves to haunt. The Teal is common in the loch districts of Ireland and Scotland, though never found in large numbers together. The eggs are eight to ten in number, and of a creamy white colour.

Thrush, Song—The Song-Thrush or Mavis is resident with us throughout the year, is abundant and widely distributed. Being double and even treble-brooded, this species when, free for a few years from the severity of an exceptionally hard winter, rapidly increases in numbers, but it is a somewhat delicate bird, and when the iron hand of the "Frost King" binds the land for week after week in his impenetrable grasp, the Song-Thrush, unable to procure its necessary food, dies in thousands. The bird is olive-brown above, with breast of cream-colour daintily spotted with black. The nest, built early in the year, is neatly plastered round inside with mud, thus forming for the eggs a warm protection from the biting blasts of early spring. It is placed usually from four to five feet above the ground, within the sheltering cover of some evergreen bush, though occasionally placed upon the ground. The eggs, four or five in number, are of a bright clear blue with tiny spots of black. The Thrush is celebrated in song, and worthily so as one of the most exquisite of our bird musicians, its liquid note being in beauty equal to that of any of our songsters save possibly the nightingale alone.

Titmouse, Great—This agile and restless bird is a resident in Britain, is distributed widely, and is in many districts comparatively numerous. The Great Tit is about 5½ inches in length. The breast is yellow, divided down the centre by a black line, the back is greyish yellow, the crown of the head and the throat glossy black, with a large white cheek patch, giving the head an appearance from which is derived the name "Ox Eye," by which this bird is also known. The Great Tit is a bird of the woodland, bedgerow, and coppice. In winter it roves about in little bands, oft-times accompanied by numbers of the other species of the same family, and at this season can be attracted to the vicinity of houses by means of a bone, or piece of fat suspended from a string, on which he will alight, performing antics of an amusing nature. The food of the Great Tit consists chiefly of insects and their eggs and larvæ, particularly during the summer months, while in the winter it will feed on seeds and indeed almost anything of an edible kind which comes its way. The nest is usually placed in a hole, very often in a wall, though sometimes in a hollow tree, or even among the sticks of the lower part of a

rook's nest. It is constructed chiefly of moss, and is thickly lined with hair and feathers. The eggs are from six to ten in number, and are white, closely covered with small spots of palish red.

Whitethroat—The Whitethroat is a summer migrant, reaching Britain in April, is extremely numerous and very widely distributed, and rejoices in a bewildering variety of local names, such as "Chairlie Gabbie," "Whisky Tam," "Nettle Creeper," etc. The song of the Whitethroat consists of a medley, and gives the hearer the impression that the bird is very fussy, and it is uttered in a hurried querulous twittering fashion, almost as though in anger. It is while uttering its song that the distinctive feature to which it owes its name becomes most visible, its head being raised and the pale coloured feathers of the throat distended. The Whitethroat is about five and a half inches long, is greyish brown above, the head ashy grey, while the under surface of the body is white with the breast faintly washed with vinous colour. This species is insectivorous in habit, and is especially fond of the "Daddy Long Legs," but in the autumn months feeds on currants and berries. Favourite haunts of the Whitethroat are the tangled patches of brambles on the margins of the woodland, old country lanes, and overgrown hedgerows, where, in the tangled half open growth of bramble and briar, its deep but slender nest may by careful search be discovered. It is built of dry grass, and lined with horse hair, is frequently placed amid the brambles, sometimes amidst nettle stems, and contains four to six eggs, greenish yellow in ground colour, thickly spotted with faint marks of violet grey.

Wren—The Common Wren or Jenny Wren, is too familiar to require much description. It is a resident in Britain, and widely distributed, being found even in the smallest of the many islands of the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands, though in Shetland and St. Kilda the species has developed a slightly larger size than on the mainland; in fact, the St. Kilda Wren has been elevated on this account to a specific rank of its own. This bird is somewhat of a hideling in its habits, taking refuge from an observer by hiding rather than by taking to flight, an easy object to attain in the case of so tiny a morsel, while its dull brown plumage further tends towards its concealment. The Wren is insectivorous. The song of this bird is extraordinarily loud for its size, and is penetrating and sweet in tone. The nest is to be found in a variety of situations. It is a large structure in relation to the size of its builder, domed in shape, with a tiny entrance in the side. It is usually built of moss, but as a rule is constructed of such materials as will assimilate with its environment. Thus when built, as is often the case, in the crevice of a moss grown wall, it will be constructed of green moss and when in a dead clump of bracken, it will be built of dead leaves. A peculiar habit of the Wren is, that it builds a number of nests, out of which only one will be completed by being lined, which is done in a very cosy fashion with feathers. The unfinished nests are carefully built, and though unlined, still must entail considerable labour on their architects. They are known as cock nests, and have been supposed to be built as roosting places, but this is not at all likely, the more probable explanation being that they are erected to draw attention from the real nest containing the eggs. These are pure white, spotted and dotted with reddish brown, and are usually six in number. It is frequently stated that the Wren lays ten, twelve, or even a larger number of eggs, but out of a very large number of nests examined by the writer, in no instance has one been found to contain more than seven eggs.

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