Notes

Cormorant eating Frog.—On 18th June 1967, on Puffin Island, Anglesey, Ivor McLean, David Greasley and I saw a nestling Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* disgorge a partially digested Frog *Rana temporaria*. On the same visit we found the remains of another Frog embedded in a nest of a Shag *P. aristotelis* containing three young and we thought that this too had possibly been taken for food. *The Handbook* gives the food of both Cormorant and Shag as consisting almost entirely of fish, with crustaceans (chiefly crabs) and some vegetable matter (algae) taken occasionally. E. D. PONTING

[A. W. Shorger in the *Handbook of North American Birds*, vol. 1, edited by Ralph S. Palmer (1962: 325), refers only to molluscs and polychaete worms as additional occasional foods of the Cormorant, but mentions frogs, salamanders and reptiles as taken by other species, for example the Double-crested Cormorant *P. auritus*. Further, A. M. Sudilovskaya in *Ptitsy Sovietskogo Soyuza* ('The Birds of the Soviet Union'), edited by G. P. Dementiev and N. A. Gladkov (1951-54, vol. 1: 21-34), states that amphibians have been recorded in the diet of *P. carbo* in the Soviet Union and, according to H. J. Joubert (*Ostrich*, 14: 1-7), frogs are also eaten by the west and south African race of Cormorant *P. c. lucidus*. We showed Mr. Ponting's note to Dr. G. R. Potts, who has been making a study of the Shag for some years, and he commented: 'I think the Shag record must be discounted since this species will use almost anything as nest material. I have no knowledge of Shags fishing in fresh waters in the breeding season.'—EDS.]

Black Duck in Kent.—On 18th March 1967, with A. Hutson, we saw an unusual duck which had apparently flown up from a lagoon in the Yantlet Creek area of the north Kent marshes. It was accompanied by a female Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and we identified it as a Black Duck *A. rubripes* as it passed us at a range of some 300 yards in bright sunshine. The following description is based on notes made at the time:

> Size and form much as accompanying Mallard, although perhaps with a heavier body. Under-parts all dark (looked nearly black) and contrasting strongly with silvery white wing-linings. Head and neck mainly pale brown, similar to Mallard, and sharply demarcated from black breast; darker line through eye, and crown similarly darker. Upper-parts uniformly dark; speculum blue (perhaps with a slight white trailing edge); no white on tail. Legs bright orange-red and bill yellowish.

The last two features suggest that it was a drake. It soon planed down on to a marsh near-by, giving us a good view of the upper-parts, but almost immediately took off again and headed out to the Thames. It was not seen any more that day, but on 25th March C.E.W. found it

again, this time resting on the lagoon. On the water it was easy to pick out by its predominantly dark plumage, which was actually dark brown rather than black. Pale edgings to the feathers on the back, however, gave a scaly appearance at close range. It again appeared slightly larger than an accompanying Mallard. It was not seen subsequently.

Dr. J. G. Harrison tells us that Black Ducks are rarely kept in captivity in this country; but, on the other hand, M. A. Ogilvie (Wildfowl Trust) informed the Rarities Committee that quite a few were brought over here before the restrictions in the last few years on the import of wildfowl and other birds from America. Subject, therefore, to some possibility of the one we saw having been an escape, this appears to be the third record of a Black Duck in the British Isles, the other two having been in Ireland in February 1954 and February 1961 (*Brit. Birds,* 48: 341-342; 54: 324-325). C. E. WHEELER and P. J. OLIVER

Redstarts nesting in derelict car.—On 1st June 1967 we were told of a nest under the bonnet of a derelict car in an area of mixed woodland at Crook, Westmorland. We found it to be that of a pair of Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* with six eggs. The car was an early Ford Zephyr saloon and the bulky nest, made of dried grasses with some dead leaves and lined with finer grasses, was on top of the radiator behind the radiator grille. The bonnet, which could be raised in order to look directly into the nest, did not fit properly and there were gaps above the grille and the offside mudguard, through which the adults reached the nest. All the eggs hatched on 5th June and all six nestlings were flourishing when we left the area on 12th June. By this time we had obtained a photograph of the female Redstart arriving at the nest, and this and one of the nest itself with the bonnet raised are reproduced on plate 60. Both adults entered above the grille and the female invariably came out the same way during the time that we were watching, while the male usually left by the mudguard gap.

In this area Redstarts usually nest in dry stone walls and in previous years the pair occupying this particular territory have had their nest in a wall about five yards from where the car was. Incidentally, a pair of Blackbirds *Turdus merula* had a nest with four eggs under the bonnet of another old car dumped about ten yards away from that used by the Redstarts. J. B. and S. BOTTOMLEY

Sardinian Warbler on Fair Isle.—On 26th May 1967, at 22.00 hours GMT, W. N. Landells and I went into the garage of the bird observatory on Fair Isle, Shetland, and found a small warbler fluttering against the window. There was little light and we could not see anything more than that it was about the size and shape of a Whitethroat *Sylvia communis.* I caught it by hand and, taking it outside the building, discovered that it had the black head and red eye-ring of a Sardinian

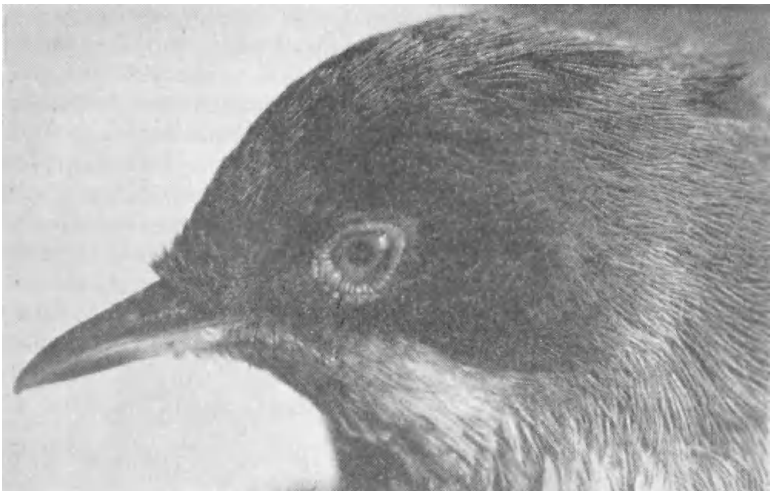

FIG. 1. First-year male Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*, Fair Isle, 26th-27th May 1967 (*photo: Roy H. Dennis*)

Warbler *S. melanocephala*; it proved to be a first-year male.

We kept it overnight in a roosting-box and early the following morning G. J. Barnes, W.N.L. and I examined and photographed it in sunlight (fig. 1). We weighed, measured and ringed it at 04.15 hours and noted the following description:

Upper-parts: head blackish with dark greyish-brown tips to feathers (especially on forehead), this colour extending down to lores and ear-coverts and so below eye; feathering round eye pinkish-chestnut; nape greyish-brown; mantle, back and rump dark grey, suffused dark brown especially on mantle. *Under-parts:* chin and throat white; rest of under-parts dirty white with greyish-brown suffusion across breast, flanks and under tail-coverts; under-wing grey. *Wings and tail:* flight-feathers dark greyish-brown with paler inner webs and fringed grey on outer webs; wing-coverts similar and also old and abraded; bastard wing dark brown and new with neat grey fringes on outer webs; tail-feathers ten in number, graduated and very worn, dark brownish-black except outer pair, which had dirty white distal halves to outer webs and tips to inner webs, and penultimate pair, which were fringed white at tips of outer webs. *Soft parts:* bill black with pale horn base to lower mandible, looking heavy and with slight decurved effect; iris yellow-brown; eye-ring orange-red; legs and feet dirty straw. *Measurements and structure:* wing 59 mm., bill 13 mm. from skull and 4.5 mm. wide at feathers, tarsus 21.5 mm., tail 64 mm. and well-rounded with outer feathers 12 mm. shorter than central ones; distance between tip of wing and tip of tail 45 mm.; 1st primary 5.5 mm. longer than longest primary coverts; 3rd to 5th equal and longest, 2nd —5.5 mm. (between 7th and 8th), 6th —2 mm., 7th —4 mm., 8th —6 mm.; 3rd to 6th emarginated on outer webs, though less obviously on 6th; notch on inner web of 2nd 16 mm. from tip; longest secondaries 10 mm. shorter than longest primaries; weight 12.0 grams (at 04.15, six hours after capture).

At 12.0 grams the bird was rather light and so I put it in the observa-

tory's recuperation aviary where it fed avidly on the larvae of dipterous flies which were crawling in a pile of rotten seaweed brought from the beach near-by. In these surroundings we were able to observe its behaviour and feeding. By 09.00 hours it was becoming very active and so we released it. It was seen feeding near the buildings and in a rocky cliff until mid-afternoon, but was accidentally retrapped at 13.20 when it weighed 12.6 grams. In the field it was rather like a small, black-headed Whitethroat with its white throat, greyish-brown upper-parts and pale under-parts. Its flight and behaviour were also similar, the flight being weak and low over the ground. It skulked in cover and fed while hopping on the ground beside huts and walls; at times it perched on rocks or wire-netting and cocked up its tail. It frequently raised and lowered its crown feathers, but did not call.

Its discovery was associated with the arrival of many other migrants. Heavy rain ceased at mid-day on 25th May and, with south-east winds, there was a large fall of Continental night migrants, especially Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Garden Warblers *S. borin*, Whitethroats and Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*. Unusual birds included six Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina*, three Grey-headed Wagtails *Motacilla flava thunbergi* and a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*. The situation was similar on 26th May and sustained south-east winds produced some new Continental species, although many other migrants had moved on overnight; a female Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* was seen.

The only previous record of a Sardinian Warbler in Britain now accepted was an adult male on Lundy, Devon, on 10th May 1955 (*Brit. Birds*, 48: 515) and this is thus the first Scottish record. Apart from those mentioned above, the bird was also seen by Mr. and Mrs. J. M. S. Arnott, Dr. and Mrs. Simon Cox, Dr. and Mrs. Ivan Draper, Mrs. Marina Dennis, N. Elkins, R. MacIntyre and Miss Catriona Pennie.

ROY H. DENNIS

Apparent nest-sanitation by unfledged Spotted Flycatcher.—In May and June 1967 a pair of Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* nested in half a coconut fixed 9 feet 6 inches above the ground on a wall of my thatched house at Bloxham, near Banbury, Oxfordshire. Building started on 17th May; the first egg was laid on the 27th, and the fifth and last on the 31st; I noted young on 12th June, though they may have started to hatch on the 11th. During the fledging period the parents became very tame, the kitchen door being only a few feet away, and we had ample opportunity of watching them; they frequently removed droppings from the nest.

On 26th June, the day before the young flew, I saw one of the adults bring food and give it to a nestling. The latter then ducked its head down and came up again with a white faecal sac in its beak. This the adult took and flew off with. I could only assume that, as the nestlings

were so big, there was no room for the parents to gain access to the droppings. Next day the young had gone. ROBERT D'O. APLIN

[As this was a single observation, one must be careful to avoid misinterpretation. If the nestling had dropped part of the food brought to it by the adult, it might then have picked up a faecal sac accidentally, in which case the parent would presumably have taken it away. On the other hand, there are already well described records of two separate broods of Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and single broods of Pied Flycatchers *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Spotted Flycatchers repeatedly picking up and passing faecal sacs to their parents in their bills during the later stages of the fledging period (*Brit. Birds,* 45: 98-101; 55: 192-193, 446).—EDS.]

Pied Wagtail building nest on car in regular use.—The following details were reported to me by G. W. Sayle, Headmaster of Peel School, Isle of Man. About 17th April 1967 it was noted that a Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* was collecting nesting material and flying towards a red Austin A40 which was parked each day in front of the school by one of the staff. Mr. Sayle encouraged his pupils to observe the bird and later made some simple experiments. The Pied Wagtail appeared to await the arrival of the car each day and started building as soon as it was left. Varying the parking position in relation to other vehicles and facing the car in different directions showed that the bird always went to this one vehicle, which it possibly identified by its colour, and always to the same recess. If the red car was absent, however, it would fly round all the other cars. Although the red car was there only between about 8.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. each day, a complete nest, already lined, was removed from the front mudguard on 21st April.

The nest was removed because the car was being taken to a garage for repairs and on 24th April the owner arrived in a borrowed blue car of a different make. This car lacked the recess in which the nest had been sited in the other one and the bird made no attempt to build in the substitute vehicle. It evidently then nested elsewhere in the vicinity because it was later seen with fledged young, but in June and again in late July and early August it made further attempts to build in the red Austin A40 and also in a larger vehicle with similar recesses which was parked at the school for a short period. LARCH S. GARRAD

[In this connection it is worth drawing attention to the note on a Blackbird *Turdus merula* which built a nest (and laid one egg) under the offside front wing of another Austin A40 that was being driven daily in Somerset (*Brit. Birds,* 59: 112, plate 18b) and also to the case of a Blackbird which reared young on a tractor in regular use (*Brit. Birds,* 60: 53-54).—EDS.]

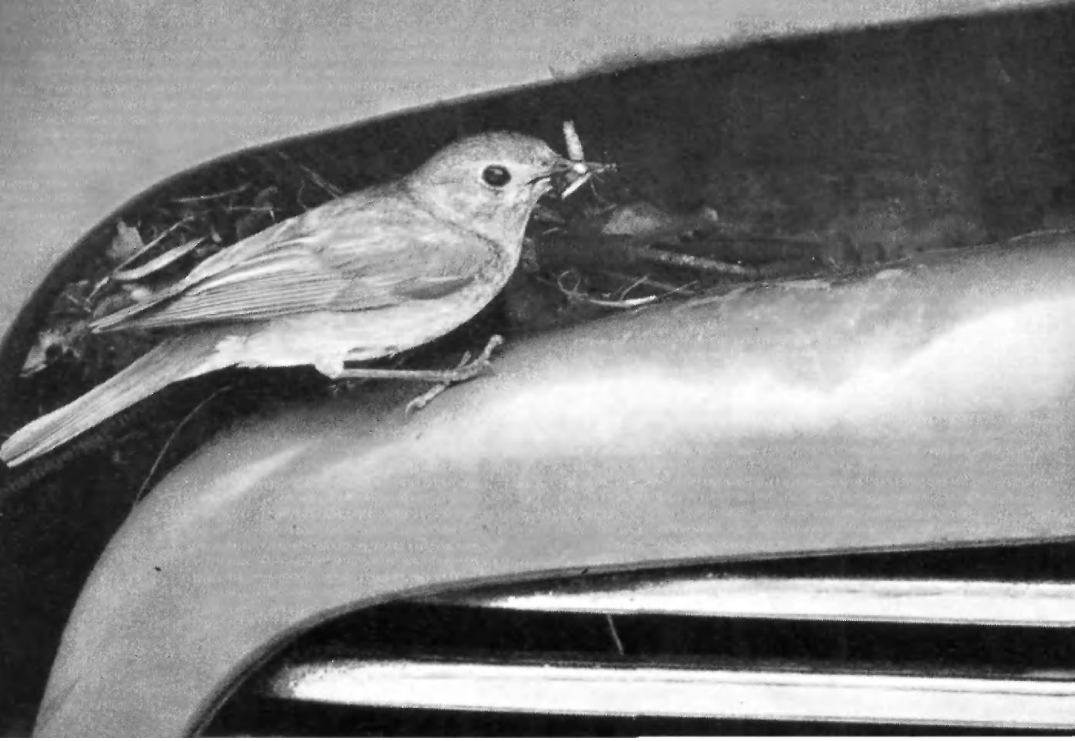

PLATE 60. Nest of Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* in derelict Ford Zephyr car, Westmorland, June 1967. Above, the female carrying food in through a gap between bonnet and radiator grille. Below, the nest and six young, tucked in on top of the radiator, exposed with the bonnet lifted (page 483) (*photos: J. B. and S. Bottomley*)