

BRITISH BIRDS

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EDITORIAL.

BEFORE setting forth our plans, our hopes, and our ambitions for BRITISH BIRDS, we must first express a deep sense of gratitude to all those who have so generously promised their support both in contributions to our pages and to our funds.

It has been impossible to answer individually the many letters of cordial encouragement which have been received, and in thanking those, who have so kindly given us help and promises of help, we can best express our appreciation by affirming that without such encouragement the Magazine could not have been started.

It has been universally conceded that a Magazine devoted entirely to the study of the birds of this country was needed: a Magazine into which all that is of interest concerning British birds should be gathered. It shall be one of our chief aims, but not by any means our only aim, to provide in these pages, month by month, a current history of British birds. Much will come, we trust, by first-hand contributions, but we shall also glean, from every published source available, whatever is likely to prove of permanent value. We beg our readers to help us in making this feature of the Magazine as complete as possible by sending notes of omissions which they may detect in this record, and copies of any communications appearing in the Transactions of local Natural History Societies, or in other publications to which we may not have access.

As a foundation to such a monthly history Mr. Howard Saunders has kindly written for this issue an article which treats of the species added to the list since the publication in 1899 of the last edition of his "Manual of British Birds"; while in following numbers Messrs. N. F. Ticehurst and H. F. Witherby will detail the most important additions which have been made during this same period, to our information concerning the distribution, and occurrences, in this country of birds already on the list.

In a future number the Hon. Walter Rothschild will discuss the position of the Willow Tit as a British bird, a point which is raised in the present issue by Dr. P. L. Selater.

When the Magazine is well started we hope, with the co-operation of our readers, to embark upon a series of more systematic investigations than have hitherto been attempted, with regard to matters concerning the birds of this country. Our plan is to make organized enquiries into such questions as the extension or diminution of the breeding range of certain species, the exact status and distribution of some birds, the effects of protection in certain areas and on different species, the nature of the food of particular birds, and many kindred subjects.

Could observations on such points be conducted on a common basis and made contemporaneously in different parts of the country, results of great interest and of very considerable scientific importance would be achieved. Already over a hundred ornithologists in various parts of the country have promised their co-operation when such an enquiry is set on foot, so that we look forward to being able shortly, with the help of other readers, to prove the plan.

Of late years photography has come greatly to the fore as an adjunct to science, but ornithologists have been led away to a great extent by the charm of being able to take portraits from life of their favourites, and have used the camera more as a picture-maker than as a scientific recorder. We confess to a great liking for illustrations in a journal, but we are anxious that our illustrations shall in every case possess scientific merit, although they need not, for this reason, lack pictorial effect. There are many directions in which photography can be made of great service to ornithology; a photograph of the environment of a nest is, for instance, often of more value than one of the nest itself, and similarly, photographs of birds in attitudes such as flying, feeding, courting, hiding, nest-building, or otherwise engaged, are of more value than pictures of birds in repose. The importance of collecting photographic evidence of living nestling birds will be fully dealt with in a future issue of this Journal.

Besides reviews and notices of books dealing with British birds, we intend to publish each month a list as complete as possible of all the books on the subject which have appeared during the month.

Such, in bare and brief outline, is our plan, and we appeal to the readers of *BRITISH BIRDS* for the means of carrying it out. If the Magazine is to do good work it must have a goodly roll of subscribers, and the longer the roll the more work will it be possible to accomplish, in that funds will thereby be provided to enlarge the Magazine and to carry out those enquiries which will add to our knowledge of the life histories of the birds of the British Islands.

It is with great regret that in our first number we are unable to make good a promise, but owing to great pressure on our space, Mr. W. P. Pycraft's article on "Nestlings" is unavoidably held over.

THE EDITORS.