

NOTES

RARE BIRDS IN SUSSEX.

A PAIR of Lesser Grey Shrikes (*Lanius minor*) were shot at Hollington, St. Leonards, Sussex, the male on May 5th, the female on May 7th, 1912. They were examined in the flesh by Mr. W. H. Mullens and Mr. Ruskin Butterfield respectively. *L. minor* has occurred fourteen times before in Britain, according to the *Hand-List*.

A male Grey-headed Wagtail (*Motacilla f. thunbergi*) was shot at Scotney near Rye on April 28th, 1912. It was examined in the flesh by Mr. Ruskin Butterfield.

Two Western Black-eared Wheatears (*Enanthe h. hispanica*) were obtained near Winchelsea, the first a male, near Dogshill Coastguard Station, on May 16th, 1912, which was examined in the flesh by Mr. L. Curtis Edwards. The second, also a male, but much darker on the back and I believe a younger bird, was shot near Winchelsea on May 19th, 1912, and examined in the flesh by Mr. T. Parkin. Both these specimens are of the black-throated form, of which four previous specimens have been obtained in Britain. The above are now in my collection.

J. B. NICHOLS.

HOODED CROW IN STAFFORDSHIRE.

As it is seldom that we get authentic records of this bird in our county (although there is no doubt that it annually passes along our larger river-valleys on migration), it may be worth while to note that two Hooded Crows (*Corvus c. cornix*) were recently sent to me, one shot at Cresswell, near Cheadle, on Monday, October 7th, 1912, and the other, probably its mate, was shot near Leigh, about two miles distant from Cresswell, a few days later. Both these birds have been preserved for the North Staffordshire Field Club Museum at Hanley.

JOHN R. B. MASEFIELD.

LESSER REDPOLL BREEDING IN KENT.

WHEN wandering through an orchard at Ashford, Kent, on June 3rd, 1911, I discovered a nest of the Lesser Redpoll (*Carduelis l. cabaret*) in the branch of a pyramid pear-tree about five feet from the ground. The five eggs were highly incubated, and four of them were hatched in the next three days. I left the district on the 11th, but was later informed that the young birds were successfully reared. I saw another

pair carrying nesting-materials on the 11th, but the tall, thick trees made observation of their movements difficult, and the time at my disposal did not admit of a thorough search.

Again, this year (1912) I was at Ashford in May, and on the 25th a nest with three typical eggs was found about a quarter of a mile from the orchard, but the lining had been disturbed and partially loosened, and further observation proved it to be forsaken. Not more than a hundred yards from this was a second nest, situated at the top of a hawthorn hedge, some fifteen or sixteen feet high, and bordering a stream, on the opposite bank of which was a row of alders. The bird flew off as I climbed, and came quite near during my examination of the nest. There were four newly hatched young ones and one addled egg.

My friend, Mr. C. F. Stedman of Ashford, has not heard of the breeding of this species for many years, and can only recollect one former nest. Their recurrence in two successive seasons seems to point to an increase of the bird in a south-easterly direction. In this connexion I may mention that I saw three nests at Farnborough, Kent, in May, 1910, where they have bred annually for a few years. H. R. TUTT.

TITS AND HUMBLE-BEES.

THIS summer I had amongst other birds nesting in nesting-boxes a pair of Blue Tits and a pair of Coal-Tits. The Blue Tits' eggs were about due to hatch when I found the nest deserted, but taken possession of by a large female humble-bee (*Bombus terrestris*), which was proceeding to make its own nest in the box, and it seems that the buzzing of the bee had scared away the Blue Tits. In the case of the Coal-Tits nine young ones were hatched and were several days old when I found them all dead, and in this case the nest was occupied by a humble-bee. I could find no trace of injury on the young birds or of their having been stung by the bee, and I surmise that the mother bird had also in this case been scared away. A similar instance occurred in 1910 in the case of a Wren's nest in a nesting-box here, and the humble-bee made her nest of moss in the Wren's nest and a family of humble-bees were brought up in the box. JOHN R. B. MASEFIELD.

BARRED WARBLER IN IRELAND.

So far only two specimens of the Barred Warbler (*Sylvia n. nisoria*) have been recorded from Ireland: one obtained

September 24th, 1884, in co. Mayo, and another on September 25th, 1896, at Rockabill Lighthouse, co. Dublin.

I have to-day received in the flesh a third specimen, caught striking at Rockabill, September 17th, 1912, 2 a.m.

RICHARD M. BARRINGTON.

BLACK REDSTART IN SURREY.

ON September 25th, 1912, I saw a male Black Redstart (*Phœnicurus o. gibraltariensis*) which was frequenting a barren tract of ground on the North Downs near Caterham. The bird showed a decided preference for the bare down-land rather than the hedges and thickets, and was noticeably shy and more difficult to approach than a Common Redstart which I had under observation at the same place. There appear to be very few satisfactory records of the occurrence of the Black Redstart in Surrey. HOWARD BENTHAM.

LAPLAND BLUETHROAT IN FORTH.

THE Misses L. J. Rintoul and E. V. Baxter, while examining their series of skins of Bluethroats, were struck by the shorter and less pointed wing and lighter upper-parts of a specimen procured by them on the Isle of May in 1909. After careful comparison Dr. E. Hartert has identified it as an example of the Lapland Bluethroat, *Luscinia svecica svecica* L., and Misses Rintoul and Baxter now record it in the *Scottish Naturalist*, 1912, p. 236. This race was not included in the *Hand-List*, as no specimen had then been identified, and should be added thus:—

182a. *Luscinia svecica svecica* (L.)—THE LAPLAND BLUETHROAT.

MOTACILLA SVECICA Linnæus, Syst. Nat., ed. x, i, p. 187 (1758—"In Europæ Alpinis." Restricted typical locality: Sweden and Lapland).

Ruticilla svecica (Linnæus), Yarrell, 1, p. 321 (part).

Cyanecula svecica (Linnæus), Saunders, p. 35 (part).

Luscinia svecica svecica, L. J. Rintoul and E. V. Baxter, *Scottish Naturalist*, 1, p. 236 (1912).

DISTRIBUTION.—*Great Britain*.—One, Isle of May, September 14th, 1909 (*ut supra*).

DISTRIBUTION. — *Abroad*. — Breeds in Sweden, Lapland, north Russia and the tundra of west Siberia, east to the Yenisei (66° N. lat.); wintering in north-east Africa and occasionally also western India, and visiting eastern Europe and Transcaspia on passage.

AUTHORS OF THE HAND-LIST.

WHITE-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT IN SUSSEX.

ON the afternoon of September 22nd, 1912, Mrs. E. D. Compton, of "Summerfields," St. Leonards-on-Sea, found a small bird lying dead on the floor of her drawing-room. Seeing that it appeared to be something unusual, she sent it the next day to be stuffed. It turned out to be an immature male Bluethroat, and it seems probable that it must have been caught by a cat, as the right half of its tail is missing. The bird has completed its first autumn moult and the silky-white patch above the lower blue of the gorget is quite well marked. On one side of the white spot there are two or three faint rusty flecks, but the spot itself is so evident that in spite of the great variation that is found in the gorget of young autumn Bluethroats, and the great difficulty and often impossibility of assigning a specimen to a definite race, I have little hesitation in the present instance in recording the bird as a specimen of the Central European form (*L. svecica cyanecula*). "Summerfields" is a large house standing in its own grounds in the centre of the town.

N. F. TICEHURST.

BIRDS BREEDING IN OLD NESTS.

ON a triangular nesting-bracket, fixed some fifteen years ago under a projecting beam outside my house, about eight feet from the ground, Spotted Flycatchers regularly bred for many years; then a pair of Swallows took possession of the shelf, and after adding a mud front, nested there. The next year a pair of Wrens built a nest of leaves filling up the whole space of the shelf. The following year a pair of Swallows built a nest, partly upon the shelf, and the following winter the Wrens' nest fell to pieces and disappeared. Since that date (two years ago) Swallows have regularly nested and brought up broods of young on the shelf. Another pair of Spotted Flycatchers have nested this year on a bracket only six feet from the ground. Another nesting-bracket on this house has been almost continuously used by Spotted Flycatchers for upwards of twenty years.

JOHN R. B. MASEFIELD.

RETURN OF MARKED SWIFTS AND HOUSE-MARTINS
TO THEIR BREEDING-PLACES.

IN BRITISH BIRDS, Vol. V., p. 165, I quoted the interesting results achieved by Herr A. Gundlach and Ritter von Tschusi in proving that marked Swifts returned to the same nesting-places. Two adult Swifts (*Apus a. apus*) marked at a

nesting-box at Neustrelitz, in Mecklenburg, in 1910, by Herr Gundlach, returned to the same box in 1911. Now Dr. Thienemann informs us in the *Ornithologische Monatsberichte*, 1912, p. 156, that in 1912 the same two birds were again found in the box, and that Herr Gundlach was able to handle both specimens and check the numbers on their rings. Like Ritter von Tschusi's female Swift referred to in my previous note, these birds have successfully reared young in three consecutive seasons without any ill effect from the presence of the rings.

Dr. Thienemann also mentions that a House-Martin (*Hirundo u. urbica*) ringed by him as a breeding bird at the nest in July, 1911, at Rossitten, in East Prussia, was again found at the same spot in the same colony in 1912.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

A FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE BREEDING-RANGE OF THE LITTLE OWL.

A CURIOUS point in the spread of the Little Owl (*Athene n. noctua*) seems to be the apparently slow extension that seems to take place in some directions and the very rapid spread that takes place in others from the same original locality. It almost looks as though in some districts the extension of range took place by the migration of one or more pairs from a centre to a new locality at some considerable distance, and the subsequent formation of a subsidiary centre there from which the spread has taken place locally with considerable rapidity. The early establishment of the north Kent centre about Dartford, with very few intermediate steps, would seem to be an instance of this, and now the same thing appears to be happening in Sussex. In Vol. I., p. 341, we pointed out how a considerable area was then populated on the Kent and Surrey border with extensions some distance into Surrey and north-east Sussex, while on the other hand the extension eastward into the Weald had been slow and not nearly so extensive. So far as information is available the direct spread does not seem to have yet reached further than Tonbridge and Cranbrook (*Birds of Kent*, p. 258). On page 19 (*supra*) Mr. S. V. Clark recorded an extension to south-west Sussex and stated that the birds were getting numerous, so that it seems probable that the pioneers must have arrived a year or so previously, while there are no intervening records between Worthing and the Ashdown Forest district.

I now have to record a similar event in south-east Sussex. Until recently nothing was known of the species in this district from nearer than Cranbrook in west Kent. On September 8th and 17th, 1909, two immature birds were sent to Mr. Catt of Iden for preservation, having been picked up under the telegraph wires at East Guildford on the border of Romney Marsh near Rye, and these are the first specimens so far as I know ever obtained in this district. On May 22nd, 1912, Mr. Catt informs me he received an adult male that had been shot by a keeper at Peasemars, where a second bird was seen at the same time. I have since ascertained from an independent source that this is quite correct, and I have little doubt that the birds were nesting there. In July I heard from Mr. R. P. Mair at Udimore (the adjoining parish to Peasemars), who knew the species well in Northamptonshire, that he had seen a pair on his farm "some two years ago" and that this year (1912) they or another pair nested, in April, in his orchard and successfully reared their young. It will be interesting now to trace with what rapidity the spread of the Little Owl takes place in this district.

N. F. TICEHURST.

KESTREL EATING A BAT.

ABOUT 5 p.m. on October 12th, 1912, Mr. W. D. Dovaston of West Felton, Salop, while engaged in gathering apples in his orchard, noticed a Kestrel (*Falco t. tinnunculus*) hovering overhead. Presently it swooped downwards at a Pipistrelle Bat which was flitting about amongst the trees. The bat turned swiftly and avoided the hawk. The latter pulled itself up as quickly as possible and again ascended into the air. It swooped at the bat time after time, the latter dodging it nimbly just at the critical moment; the Kestrel was not to be balked however, and eventually it seized the bat just as it was taking refuge amongst the boughs of an oak. The Kestrel then alighted on the tree and proceeded to devour its prey. Although certain other hawks are recorded as preying on bats, the Kestrel is not known to do so; at least, none of the standard authors that I have consulted mention the fact.

H. E. FORREST.

[A similar instance of a Kestrel capturing a Pipistrelle was recorded in the *Glasgow Naturalist* (Vol. II., p. 137), and noticed in our Volume IV., p. 222.—EDS.]

ABNORMAL BREEDING-HABITS OF SHELD-DUCK.

To Mr. D. Munro Smith's interesting note on the above subject (*supra*, p. 157), I may be permitted to append a

somewhat similar observation. In May, 1908, the late John Cottney discovered an exposed nest among the herbage on one of the maritime islands of co. Down. This nest contained nine eggs of the Sheld-Duck (*Tadorna tadorna*), and two eggs of the Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*). It was copiously lined with down, all of which was undoubtedly Sheld-Duck's. A photograph of this nest is in my possession.

NEVIN H. FOSTER.

NESTING OF TEAL IN SURREY.

WITH regard to Mr. Bunyard's observations in BRITISH BIRDS (*supra*, p. 158) on the nesting of the Common Teal (*Anas c. crecca*) in Surrey, I am rather inclined to think that it is not so rare as a nesting species in that county as is generally supposed. I think that very probably there are a few localities all through Surrey and the adjoining counties where Teal breed. Personally, I know of one little moor, in Surrey, or rather half moor and half marsh, where at least five pairs, possibly more, breed annually. In fact, they remain there the whole year round. I may mention that some of the nests are placed in long heather, and some are amongst coarse grass, short heather, etc.

G. K. BAYNES.

COLOUR OF IRIDES OF TUFTED DUCKLINGS.

IN Mr. A. Chapman's paper on *Spring notes on the Borders* (*supra*, p. 114), the young in down of the Tufted Duck (*Nyroca fuligula*) are described as "darkish with pale yellow eyes." The late Lord Lilford in his *Notes on the Birds of Northamptonshire*, Vol. II., p. 194, described the recently hatched young as covered with smoky coloured down and having "brilliant golden yellow irides."

As this differed from my own recollection of the appearance of the young, Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo, on being appealed to by me, kindly furnished me with the following particulars, and as he sees young in scores every year and has done so for thirty-five years past, it seems impossible for there to be any mistake in the matter. Mr. Meade-Waldo himself describes the downy young as "dark brown with dark eyes." A number were reared in the Zoological Gardens this summer, and both Mr. Seth-Smith and Macdonald, the keeper who reared them, describe the irides as dark. This is also confirmed by Mr. W. H. St. Quintin's keepers, who describe the colour as "very dark brown" and "darkish hazel." I may add that Pastor Kleinschmidt figures the young in the *Neuer*

Naumann, Vol. X., as having brown eyes. When the young are about half grown the irides become whitish, and Mr. Meade-Waldo informs me that the full-grown young have now (October) dull white irides.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

UNRECORDED SNOW-GEESE IN GLOUCESTER-SHIRE.

In the second edition of his *Manual* (p. 406) Mr. Howard Saunders stated that three Snow-Geese (*Anser h. hyperboreus*) appear to have visited Berkeley on the Severn, but no examples were obtained. This was prior to 1885, but for about four days (October 9th-12th) in 1901 five immature birds in greyish plumage and three adults with black primaries visited the same district (cf. *A Treatise on the Birds of Gloucestershire*, p. 55). This information was obtained from Lord Fitzhardinge's head decoy-man, who also watched over the movements of the wild geese on the Severn near Berkeley, and arranged the shoots. His name was Nicholls, but he is now dead. I often used to see him personally, and could trust his statements so far as they went. He was a good observer, and used field-glasses. These eight visitors came about the time of the usual visit of the first lot of winter-geese to the Severn. The latter arrived early in October, in daily increasing numbers until there were calculated to be some two thousand present about October 12th, and as far as could be judged they were chiefly or all Pink-footed. The eight visitors however, kept together and quite apart from the other geese in flight, although they settled down with them to a certain extent when grazing or watering. Suddenly all the geese of every species departed on the 11th, 12th and 13th, except about forty Pink-footed.

In November, 1906, three birds again appeared, and this information was given to me at a personal interview with Purcell, the well-known shore-gunner, who lives close to the river, and against whom Lord Fitzhardinge brought the famous action with regard to the shooting-rights along the Severn. Purcell is a man of superior intelligence and observation. On this occasion all the birds seen were adults, and were present for several weeks. In this case (as also in 1901) great efforts were made to get a specimen, but without avail. An interesting point which indirectly confirms the truth of these reports is that the two witnesses were not merely independent, but were naturally enemies of one another and it is remarkable that all three occurrences were reported from about the same district.

W. LOCK MELLERSH.

WADERS INLAND IN SOUTH LANCASHIRE.

AN unusual number of waders and other birds were attracted during the autumn migration by several stretches of mud and water on a Sewage Farm in the Irwell Valley in South Lancashire. This farm lies in the valley at Clifton, between four and five miles from the centre of Manchester and about thirty miles from the Lancashire coast. Between August 18th (when Mr. T. Baddeley first noticed them) and October 13th waders were present whenever the locality was visited.

Below I give details of the birds I noticed, most of which were also seen by Mr. T. Baddeley, whose notes I include. Mr. T. A. Coward on August 29th and September 23rd, and Mr. A. Urquhart on several occasions in August and September, also visited the locality and saw the birds recorded.

RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius h. hiaticula*).—Usually present; in greatest numbers in August: twenty-five on August 18th, thirty on August 22nd, fifteen to twenty on August 26th, 28th and 29th, five on September 2nd and 4th, seven on September 5th and 7th, nine on September 6th, and in small numbers throughout September—six on the 27th and 29th one or two on October 6th.

GOLDEN PLOVER (*Charadrius apricarius*).—Remarkably few; two on August 27th, six on September 29th, three on October 1st, and two on October 13th.

TURNSTONE (*Arenaria i. interpres*).—I saw a single bird on August 26th.

RUFF AND REEVE (*Machetes pugnax*).—Two birds on August 28th and 29th—evidently ♂ and ♀ from the obvious difference in their size.

KNOT (*Canutus canutus*).—Single birds on September 2nd, 4th, 5th, 10th and 16th.

DUNLIN (*Erolia a. alpina*).—From one to four usually present from August 26th to October 13th; six on September 26th.

CURLEW-SANDPIPER (*Erolia ferruginea*).—Present for five weeks in unusual numbers. On September 7th I saw a single very tame bird. On the 9th there were twelve, fourteen to sixteen on the 10th, nineteen on the 11th and 12th, fourteen on the 14th, 15th and 16th, eleven on the 17th, ten on the 21st and 23rd, five on the 26th and October 1st, two on October 6th, and one on October 13th.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Tringa hypoleuca*).—About eight on August 26th, two or three on August 28th and 29th, four or five on September 2nd, and one or two about till September 12th.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ocropus*).—A single bird seen on September 4th, 5th, 7th, 8th and 10th.

REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*).—In large numbers from August 18th to October 13th. About fifty on August 22nd, twenty on August 26th, 28th, 29th. In numbers varying from four to fifty throughout September—seventy on September 29th. Between fifty and sixty on October 6th.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—Single birds on August 26th, 27th and 28th, and on September 7th (a very tame bird) and September 11th.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT—(*Limosa l. lapponica*). One on September 9th.

Among other birds I observed two Black Terns (*Hydrochelidon n. nigra*) and an Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaca*) together on September 5th, and an immature Kittiwake (*Rissa t. tridactyla*) on the same day. The Black Tern does not seem to have been recorded from South Lancashire for some time, though it has occurred fairly regularly of late on the Cheshire meres.

Two Sheld-Ducks (*Tadorna tadorna*) appeared on September 16th.

A. W. BOYD.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER IN SUSSEX.

ANOTHER example of Baird's Sandpiper (*Erolia bairdii*) was obtained at Rye Harbour on September 16th, 1912. This makes the fourth example obtained in the British Isles, and of these, two have been obtained at Rye Harbour. I examined the bird in the flesh on September 17th, when it proved to be a female. The bird is the size of a Dunlin, but the markings are almost the same as a Curlew Sandpiper in immature plumage; the legs, toes, and bill, are also shorter than a Dunlin, and the wings project beyond the tail.

H. W. FORD-LINDSAY.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT IN CORNWALL.

I SHOULD like to put on record the occurrence of a Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) at Fowey, Cornwall. It was shot on August 26th, 1912, and given to me the following day. I have had it set up.

F. JAFFREY.

ARCTIC SKUA IN SHROPSHIRE.

ON September 13th, 1912, an adult Arctic Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) was observed flying down the Severn at Shrewsbury, by a competent ornithologist who reported it to me. He saw it at close quarters, and noticed the long tail-feathers and that it belonged to the dark form, having very little white on the under-parts.

H. E. FORREST.

UNRECORDED GREAT SKUA IN MEATH.

ON October 2nd, 1908, when walking with my wife along the beach from the mouth of the Boyne to Laytown, I saw for the first and only time a Great Skua (*Stercorarius s. skua*). It approached very near us in chase of an Arctic Tern, and the dark brown plumage and hooked bill left me no doubt as to its identity. This occurrence should go to the credit of co. Meath, which I do not find included in my friend Mr. Ussher's list of appearances of this remarkable bird.

CHARLES W. BENSON.

CUCKOO REARED BY ROCK-PIPITS.—Mr. C. Kirk, in the *Scottish Naturalist* 1912, p. 235, states that he saw a young Cuckoo (*Cuculus c. canorus*) on July 14th, 1912, on Ailsa Craig, which was only able to make short and unsteady flights, and was attended by the foster parents, which were Rock-Pipits (*Anthus spinoletta obscurus*). This appears to be the seventh recorded instance of the Rock-Pipit being used as a foster parent by the Cuckoo (*supra*, p. 156).

LITTLE OWL IN FORTH.—A Little Owl (*Athene n. noctua*) was shot on November 9th, 1910, at East Grange, near Dunfermline, Fifeshire, and is now preserved in the Dunfermline Natural History Museum. With the exception of one obtained near Aberdeen, which is believed to have escaped from confinement, this appears to be the first recorded occurrence in Scotland (R. Somerville, *Scot. Nat.*, 1912, p. 225).

WHITE VARIETY OF THE HERON IN WIGTOWNSHIRE.—The Duchess of Bedford records a Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), which appeared to be almost wholly white with some very pale buff markings on the feathers, and dull chocolate-brown primaries, secondaries and tail-feathers, as seen on September 14th, 1912, on a moor in Wigtownshire (*Scot. Nat.*, 1912, p. 236).

RUFF IN HEREFORDSHIRE.—A Ruff (*Machetes pugnax*) was shot by Mr. J. D. Hatton at Holmer, near Hereford, on September 12th, and a Reeve near the same place on the 14th. Both specimens have been given to the Hereford Museum. According to Mr. J. Hutchinson, who records these occurrences in the *Field* of September 28th, 1912, the last record of this species for the county was that of one shot at Garnstone on August 29th, 1894.

SABINE'S GULL IN FORTH.—Mr. W. Evans observed a young Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*) on September 13th, 1912, just outside Leith Harbour (*Scot. Nat.*, 1912, p. 237).

BUFFON'S SKUA IN HEREFORDSHIRE.—Mr. E. Cambridge Phillips, writing in the *Field* of September 21st, 1912, states

that a Buffon's Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) was shot by Major Cox of Michaelchurch Court on August 28th, 1912, while grouse shooting on the Black Hill, the Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains. It was a bird of the year in brown plumage, and its crop was full of whinberries.