



LETTERS

GREEN WOODPECKER EATING AN APPLE.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—Is it generally known that the Green Woodpecker eats fruit? I watched one on October 23rd making a hearty meal off an apple a few yards from my window, and since then many large apples picked up plainly show the marks of this bird's powerful bill. My gardener, who has lived here all his life, tells me he never saw one touch an apple before, though they frequent the orchard from the adjoining pine-woods.

ARTHUR R. GILLMAN.

HEATH VALE, FARNHAM, *December 12th, 1913.*

BREEDING-HABITS AND YOUNG OF ROSEATE TERNS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—I was much interested in Mr. Humphreys's remarks on the nesting of these birds in Ireland (*antea*, pp. 186-9). His observation on the number of eggs entirely agrees with my own on a large colony in Great Britain. I must have examined upwards of two hundred "nests." My visit was on July 13th, when incubation was in most cases far advanced (in fact several young were already hatched), but only in about a dozen cases was the parent bird brooding more than a single egg, not one clutch contained three. There was a large colony of Common Terns at the same place; their nests were on the higher flat portion of the land, while the Roseate Terns preferred the rocky sides and had in many instances laid their eggs in cracks or small fissures without any attempt at a nest. Whereas the young in down of the Common and Arctic Terns are so much alike that it is exceedingly difficult to separate them, the Roseate Terns are absolutely distinct, the down might almost be described as "hair-like" and of a totally different pattern, far nearer the Sandwich Tern of the same age. I spent six hours watching the Terns, and it was curious to notice how every few minutes the whole colony would rise, as if actuated by a single impulse, and fly far out to sea, only to return and brood immediately. The exodus continued at intervals during my entire stay, and it is a mystery how the eggs ever hatch out. In the midst of this vast assemblage of Common and Roseate Terns, a single pair of Arctics had their nest.

With regard to the number of eggs laid by terns, it may be interesting to note that whilst in Iceland this summer we saw hundreds, if not thousands, of Arctic Terns' nests in all stages of incubation, but not twenty contained so many as three eggs.

TEMPLE COMBE, HENLEY-ON-THAMES.

HEATLEY NOBLE.

HERRING-GULLS DIVING.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—The Scarborough Herring-Gulls, which frequent the harbour in considerable, and increasing, numbers, have acquired the habit of diving for food in the manner described by Mr. S. G. Cummings (*antea*, p. 201). The plunge much resembles that of one of the terns, the bird diving from a height of several yards, with outstretched neck and half-closed wings. Sometimes the bird is completely submerged, but more often the tips of the primaries are not covered by the water. I have not seen the Common or Black-headed Gulls, which are equally abundant, attempt to dive for food.

SCARBOROUGH, *December 5th*, 1913.

W. J. CLARKE.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—I have, during the past summer, frequently watched Herring-Gulls, particularly immature birds, submerging themselves in the manner described by Mr. Cummings, in Beer Bay, South Devon. Through the village runs a very swift-flowing stream, which, at a short distance from the beach, is confined in a large pipe from which it does not escape until some distance out to sea. The reason I had assigned for the diving tactics of the gulls was, that the "tit-bits" being carried along for some distance under water by the force of the stream, the bird which could secure them at the point nearest the pipe, and consequently furthest from the surface, was likely to reap the reward of his daring. I have also watched, and been much amused by, the futile and somewhat inelegant efforts of Herring-Gulls at this spot to dive, like a grebe, from the surface—without the initial tern-like plunge.

LEWIS R. W. LOYD.

MAIDA VALE, LONDON, W., *December 8th*, 1913.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—I have often stood and watched the Herring-Gulls diving in deep water in Lerwick Harbour, in exactly the same manner as described by Mr. S. G. Cummings.

JOHN S. TULLOCH.

LEOG, LERWICK, *December 6th*, 1913.

PLUMAGE OF THE GLAUCOUS GULL.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—The Glaucous Gull (*Larus glaucus*), as is generally known, after the first ash-brown plumage, becomes paler at each moult until it is white, subsequently the adult plumage is attained in which the mantle and the greater part of the wings are pearl-grey.

In a bird of this species in my possession, shot in Shetland early in 1913, the major portion of the plumage is that of the immature bird, but most of the mantle is pearl-grey. This is an interesting specimen, as the bird is evidently going straight from the ash-brown plumage of immaturity to that of the adult, the white phase being omitted. On the theory that the various plumages through which a bird passes in its progress to maturity recapitulate ancestral stages of plumage, in this case the intermediate stages of the recapitulation have been suppressed.

ERIC B. DUNLOP.