

NOTES

PARASITIC WORMS IN RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

ON or about May 23rd, 1916, a male Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) was picked up dead beneath the stump of a withered tree near Chelmsford. Desiring to have it made into a skin, I sent it to Gardner's, in Holborn. After skinning, he returned the body to me that I might see an extraordinary collection of parasitic worms (evidently some species of *Filaria*) he had found beneath the skin of the neck—a thing he had never seen before. These worms, some twenty in number, were white in colour, slender, thread-like, of the same diameter throughout, and each about three inches in length. They were "rooted" (so to speak) in the flesh of the upper part of the neck, around the base of the skull. Some of them had, I believe, actually penetrated into the cranial cavity and reached the brain, passing through the basal orifice. They had been, without doubt, the cause of the bird's death.

I submitted the bird's neck, preserved in formalin, to Dr. A. E. Shipley, F.R.S., who had kindly offered to examine the worms. He reports that there is little doubt they are *Filaria nodulosa* of Rudolph. The species may be known now, he says, by some other name; for systematists have constantly revised the species of this genus, and it is difficult to obtain access to the latest revision whilst so many libraries and museums are wholly or partially closed. The species in question is, however, described in Molin's monograph on *Filaria* and in Schneider's monograph on the *Nematoda* (p. 91, 1866). Both writers describe it as living beneath the skin of the neck of the Red-backed Shrike. The phenomenon is, therefore, clearly not new, though several good British ornithologists to whom I have mentioned it have known nothing of it. As to whether other species of Shrike are affected, I know not.

It would be interesting to ascertain the earlier host of this curious parasitic worm: but, as to this, probably nothing is known. No doubt it is some beetle, or bee, or small vertebrate animal on which the bird is accustomed to feed.

MILLER CHRISTY.

[Out of eighteen Red-backed Shrikes examined by Herr J. Thienemann from different parts of Germany, no fewer than fifteen were infested with thread-worms (*Filaria*). Two

species have been recorded, *F. nodulosa* Rud., and *F. tridens* Molin. Kleinschmidt and Hennicke also state that old birds are usually found to contain thread-worms, frequently five or six in number. *F. nodulosa* has also been recorded by von Linstow from the Woodchat Shrike.—F.C.R.J.]

REELING PERIOD OF GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER.

IN Mr. H. B. Booth's "Notes on the Nesting of the Grasshopper-Warbler in the West Riding" (*Naturalist*, 1916, p. 168), referred to *antea*, p. 69-70, it is pointed out that in the case of the pair watched by Mr. Longbottom, the male Grasshopper-Warbler (*Locustella n. naevia*) ceased to reel after mating until the young had left the nest. It was then resumed until the second nest was arranged, when it again ceased and was finally heard in a weaker form, when the young had got away. Contrasting this behaviour with that of other males which reeled continuously for a couple of months or more, Mr. Booth suggests that they must have failed to find mates.

From observations made by me in the Broad district, the male as a rule reels continuously till the young are hatched. After that his song is regulated by his sense of duty, some males taking a larger share in feeding the young than others. Still, throughout May and June the breeding males may almost always be heard at dawn and dusk. In this district Grasshopper-Warblers remain in their breeding areas up to the time of migration and may occasionally be heard reeling in September.

E. L. TURNER.

SONG-THRUSH BREEDING TWICE IN SAME NEST.

IN the early part of this spring I saw a Song-Thrush (*Turdus philomelos clarkei*) sitting on a nest in an opening in a wall belonging to me, and later on noticed that the young were almost fully fledged. On July 3rd, I saw a Thrush carrying mud and re-lining the same nest, and now (July 10th) she has begun again to sit. Unfortunately I did not notice the date on which the young left the nest, so cannot give the interval between this and the re-lining. I have frequently known Dippers (*Cinclus c. britannicus*) use the same nest twice, but have not previously noticed the Song-Thrush do so.

DOUGLAS A. SCOTT.

[Although this is by no means a common habit of the Song-Thrush, it has nevertheless been recorded occasionally. In 1906 two broods were reared from a nest at Ashburne, Derbyshire. Another occurrence is noted in the *Field* for July 31st, 1875. Mr. O. V. Aplin also mentions an instance

in which the same nest was twice used in the *Zool.*, 1906, p. 312, and Mr. Ruddy records another case from Llandderfel, North Wales, in 1905 (*Caradoc and Severn Valley F.C. Record for 1905*), while Mr. H. E. Forrest records a similar case in the same publication for 1909. The Song-Thrush is not the only member of the genus which has been known to do this, as the same thing has been recorded of the Mistle-Thrush, and more frequently of the Blackbird, which has been known to use the same nest for three broods.—F.C.R.J.]

BLACKBIRD FEIGNING INJURY.

WITH reference to Mr. T. C. Hobbs' note on this subject (*antea*, p. 21), some years ago I observed a female Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) feigning injury when its young were in apparent danger. I am unable to refer to my notes made at the time, but remember the details quite clearly. The young birds had recently vacated the nest, and one had found its way on to a much frequented roadway. On my sudden appearance the female at once alighted on the road, and uttering the alarm cry loudly, proceeded to drag itself along with expanded wings and tail in precisely the same way as a Tree-Pipit will adopt when its eggs or young are threatened.

HOWARD BENTHAM.

HOBBY BREEDING IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND NORTHAMPTON.

A PAIR of Hobbies (*Falco s. subbuteo*) nested and reared a brood of young in a wood not far from Leicester in the summer of 1915. I saw both parents as well as the young. The female was unfortunately shot in August 1915, and came into my possession in the flesh. It has been submitted to the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who states that it is an immature bird, having the feathers of the mantle and wings edged with pale rusty brown. Early this year a pair again arrived at the same wood, but apparently the female was trapped in May, for a wing found in a trap corresponded with the skin in my collection. For a few days after the male was seen flying about in the neighbourhood, but then disappeared. Early in August it was reported that four "blue hawks" were living in a plantation some distance away, and on August 15th the keeper brought me a splendid adult male Hobby and a young female, which could not have left the nest long. He had, I regret to say, killed all four birds in four shots, but the female and the other young bird fell in a field of standing corn, where they still lie.

W. HUBERT BARROW.

A PAIR of Hobbies (*Falco s. subbutco*) has bred for three successive seasons in a wood in the Kettering district. The nest contained four highly-incubated eggs on July 1st, 1916, two of which were not only very small, but also feebly marked. This is the only instance of a clutch of four eggs which I have met with.

PAUL L. PARKER.

[There seems to be no definite record of the breeding of the Hobby in Leicestershire since 1840 and 1841, when nests were recorded by Harley at Houghton and Martinshaw Wood.—EDS.]

EARLY MOVEMENT OF WADERS ON LANCASHIRE COAST.

ON July 29th, 1916, on the shore near Southport, I came across a party of twenty-seven Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) and also a flock of twenty Knots (*Canutus canutus*), these last conspicuous in their full red plumage of summer. As this date is several weeks in advance of the usual period for the appearance of these species on autumn passage, as given in local works of reference, the occurrence seems worth noting.

THOMAS BADDELEY.

DIRECTION OF MARKINGS ON TERNS' EGGS.

ON referring to the figures of Terns' eggs in Seebohm's *Coloured Figures of the Eggs of British Birds* (Plates 29 and 30), I noticed that the characteristic twist so frequently seen in the markings on these eggs is shown from left to right downwards. This is shown more or less clearly in one of the figures of each of our five British nesting species. During the last few years, although I have measured and noted details of the markings of nearly three thousand eggs of Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and Lesser Tern (*S. albigrons*), I have never come across an egg with the twist in the direction indicated by Seebohm, nor have I noticed it in other species, but in every case it has been from right to left. I should be glad to know whether this has also been the experience of your readers.

W. ROWAN.

[I have always attributed the reversal of the rotary markings in Seebohm's plates to the drawings not having been reversed when transferred to stone for chromo-lithography. This supposition is supported by the fact that two or three figures on Plate 46 of Seebohm's *History of British Birds*, which were prepared under his supervision, although very inferior in execution, show the rotation from right to left. The

later work was produced after Seebohm's death, and Dr. R. B. Sharpe, who compiled the letterpress, was not an oologist. It would, however, be easy to settle the point definitely by examination of the eggs from which the figures were drawn in the British Museum, but the authorities have not only closed the egg galleries to the public but also refuse to issue permits to students to work there until further notice, so that the point cannot be definitely settled at present.—F.C.R.J.]

COCK PHEASANT KILLING CHICKS.

THE head keeper on an estate near St. Albans, one of the most persistent slayers of hawks that I know, recently told me that he had a number of coops in which he was rearing young pheasants, in a field which was bordered on one side by a spinney. None of the birds were touched, except those from one coop nearest the wood, where they dwindled from fourteen to eight. Acting on information from a countryman who had twice seen a cock Pheasant come out from the wood and pick up a chick, the keeper, after watching some time, saw the Pheasant come out and seize a chick, but before he was able to reach the wood he received the contents of the keeper's gun. I know the man well and am convinced that he is thoroughly reliable. W. ROWAN.

[The depraved habit in this case was not necessarily for the sake of food, but Pheasants, though mainly vegetarian in their diet, will also take animal food. Instances have been recorded of their swallowing field voles, young vipers, glow-worms and lizards.—F.C.R.J.]

CUCKOO'S EGG IN GOLDCREST'S NEST.—Mr. E. L. Wood (*Zoologist* 1916, p. 275) states that on June 10th, 1916, he found a Cuckoo's egg in a nest of Goldcrest (*Regulus r. anglorum*) which was still unfinished and lacked the lining. The egg was partly embedded in the nest material. The only previous record of this foster-parent of the Cuckoo from the British Isles is Mr. H. S. Davenport's account of a young Cuckoo which was actually reared in his garden at Dunmow, Essex, by a pair of Goldcrests (*cf. Field*, June 3rd, 1911; *British Birds*, V., pp. 58 and 84.)