

LETTER.

ON INCUBATION.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—In Mr. J. H. Owen's second article on the Sparrow-Hawk (*antea*, p. 26) he states that, if the hen is not incubating she will "almost always be on the nest, not covering the eggs but sitting beside them." This guarding of the eggs without incubating them is undoubtedly uncommon, but occurs in some other Raptores. In the case of the nearly-related Cooper's Hawk of North America, Mr. W. De W. Miller of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, informs me that incubation does not commence with the first egg (in many cases at all events), but that the bird is always at hand to protect them.

With regard to the incubating habits of the Jackdaw (*antea*, p. 40) I have not my notes by me, but it is certainly usual for this species to commence to sit as soon as the first egg has been laid. Mr. Owen says, "some sets were all fresh"; but if the clutch had just been completed the embryo would not be visible in the eggs first laid, even though incubation had commenced with the first egg. The formation of a small nucleus on the yolk being all that occurs in the first five days of incubation in many species, this easily escapes observation.

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