

# NOTES

## FOOD OF THE BLUE TIT.

As many people hold the opinion that the Blue Tit (*Parus c. obscurus*) does serious injury to the fruit crop by the destruction of buds, the following observations in a fruit-producing district of Kent appear to be worth recording. At the beginning of December, 1916, I noticed a Blue Tit pecking at a fruit bud on a young Eckleville seedling apple tree in my garden. It remained on the tree for more than half an hour, pecking at the bark in various places and pecking out numerous buds, after which it visited three other similar trees, but only stayed there for about ten minutes. After it had gone I inspected the first tree and found most of the fruit buds untouched, but some had the inside eaten out, which were evidently diseased. One had the remains of a partly eaten maggot. During the next few weeks a Tit, probably the same bird, returned to the trees at intervals, but never remained for more than a few minutes. All the trees cropped well this year, and the first tree had fifty-two apples on it early in June: the others varied from twenty-eight apples upwards. The numbers and healthy condition of the fruit convinced me that only maggot-infested buds had been eaten. I may add that I have often noticed the Great Tit (*Parus m. newtoni*) pulling caterpillars of both species of Cabbage White off Brussels sprouts and eating them in quantities.

FREDERICK D. WELCH.

[The economic status of the Blue Tit cannot, of course, be settled by any isolated observation on its habits, but must depend on the results of careful investigation on the lines followed by Messrs. Newstead, Collinge, Theobald and others. Most of the damage done by this species appears to take place in the autumn, pears being especially liable to its attacks, but Mr. Newstead mentions one case in which fruit buds were extensively taken, but no traces of insects could be discovered.—ED.]

## HOOPOE IN CO. DONEGAL.

IN September, 1917, a Hoopoe (*Upupa e. epops*) was shot by Mr. R. R. H. Nolen at Greencastle, Co. Donegal, close to the shore of Lough Foyle. Mr. R. J. Ussher (*Birds of Ireland*, p. 112) only mentions two previous occurrences in Donegal out of 117 recorded from Ireland up to 1900. The bird recorded proved to be a female. W. H. WORKMAN.

## SNOWY OWL IN CO. ANTRIM.

My friend Mr. Herbert Malcomson had the interesting experience of examining a fine specimen of the Snowy Owl (*Nyctea nyctea*) at Mr. James Robin's, the taxidermist's, which was shot near Glenavey about November 12th-13th, 1917. Mr. Ussher states that over thirty have been recorded from Ireland, but only two of those mentioned in the *Birds of Ireland*, p. 118, are from Co. Antrim, and both date back to 1835 (Thompson, *Nat. Hist. of Ireland, Birds*, I., p. 96).

W. H. WORKMAN.

[We have also received a note from Mr. W. C. Wright respecting the same bird.—Ed.]

BLACK-THROATED, RED-THROATED AND GREAT  
NORTHERN DIVERS ON LAKE WINDERMERE,  
WESTMORLAND.

WITH reference to my note in *British Birds* (Vol. IV., p. 220) on the occurrence of a Black-throated Diver (*Colymbus arcticus*) on Lake Windermere on February 24th, 1910, I regret to state that this record is erroneous, the bird in question eventually proving to be an adult male Red-throated Diver (*C. stellatus*).

However, on January 9th, 1915, an immature female Black-throated Diver was shot on the lake by Mr. T. Battersby as it flew over his boat.

On January 5th, 1917, I shot an immature male Great Northern Diver (*C. immer*). Two other Divers which I saw on the lake the same day were, I believe, of the same species.

It is comparatively seldom that Divers are not present on the lake from November to March, individuals remaining for several weeks, but great difficulty is found in identifying satisfactorily birds so similar in plumage and so shy in nature without securing them, which is, in itself, no easy matter.

Perhaps I may state here that in the Museum at Keswick, Cumberland, there are two Divers labelled Black-throated and Red-throated respectively. Both are *Red-throated* Divers in winter-plumage.

D. G. GARNETT.

BREEDING OF THE COMMON SANDPIPER IN  
OXFORDSHIRE.

HITHERTO the only record of the breeding of the Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleuca*) in Oxfordshire has been that mentioned in Mr. O. V. Aplin's work on the *Birds of Oxfordshire*, p. 159. In this case a nest with eggs was found in 1885 by Mr. A. F. Hall at the junction of the Glyme with the Evenlode. In May, 1904, some eggs were brought for

identification to Mr. G. Tickner, which had been found by a boy between Sandford and Nuneham, close to the river bank. Being too much incubated for blowing, they had been boiled. These eggs were undoubtedly Sandpiper's: one is still in Mr. Tickner's possession, and has been seen by me.

However, in 1910, after considerable search, Mr. Tickner found a pair breeding at Nuneham, and on May 6th flushed the bird from a nest with two eggs on the Oxfordshire side of the river. In 1912, he again found another nest on May 13th, with two eggs, between Pinkhill Lock and Bablockhythe, close to the river which separates Oxfordshire from Berkshire. There is good reason to believe that the birds have bred on other occasions at both places, as Mr. Tickner has seen them accompanied by two and three obviously immature young in July.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

#### GREEN SANDPIPER IN KING'S CO.

IT may be of interest to record that I identified an adult Green Sandpiper (*Totanus ochropus*) seen on the wing on Ballyheishall Bog, near Edenderry, King's Co., Ireland, on November 15th, 1917. I have not seen any of these birds in this locality hitherto, and Mr. Ussher (*Birds of Ireland*, p. 297) gives no record for this species for King's Co.

HELEN M. RAIT KERR.

#### LITTLE AUKS IN KENT, SUSSEX, BUCKS AND HANTS.

IN the *Field* (Nov. 24th, 1917), a Little Auk (*Alle alle*) was reported by Captain Somerset Webb as having been picked up alive but exhausted, at Woodchurch, Kent, on November 11th, 1917. Mr. H. Scarlett (*loc. cit.*) also records another bird, picked up on the downs above Firle, Sussex, on the same day. Dr. Hartert informs us that a third was found also alive in Sir Thomas Barlow's garden near Wendover, Bucks, on November 11th, but died the following day, as recorded in the *Bucks Herald*; while a fourth was picked up dead on the Halton (Weston Turville) Reservoir, Bucks, by Sergeant J. W. S. Toms, R.F.C., on November 17th, which had evidently been dead for several days. This bird is now in the Tring Museum. Mr. R. Edward Coles also sent us some remains of a fifth specimen, found by him at New Milton, Hants, about a mile and a half from the sea, on November 13th. The greater part of this bird had been eaten, apparently by a hawk, but enough remained to enable Dr. Hartert to identify it with certainty. Evidently all these birds must have wandered inland about the same time, probably on the same day.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

ARCTIC SKUA IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.—Mr. O. V. Aplin (*Field*, Nov. 17, 1917) states that he has recently examined a specimen of the Arctic or Richardson's Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) which was sent to be stuffed from Daventry on October 13th, 1917, and which he believes to be a bird of the year.

CLUTCHES OF DWARF EGGS OF BLACK-HEADED GULL.—Mr. P. F. Bunyard sends us particulars of two more clutches of dwarf eggs of this species: one belonging to Mr. Van Pelt Lechner (presumably from Holland), which measures  $36 \times 27$ ,  $34 \times 25$ , and  $33 \times 25.5$  mm., while the other, in his own collection, is considerably larger, the eggs averaging  $44.6 \times 32$  mm., though still much below the average size of normal eggs, which measure  $52.6 \times 37.1$  mm.

REMARKABLE NESTING OF TREE CREEPER.—The Hon. G. E. Graham Murray (*Scot. Nat.* 1917, p. 293) states that this summer no fewer than four pairs of Tree Creepers (*Certhia f. britannica*) nested simultaneously in a small toolshed, measuring 10 ft. by 8 ft., at Stenton, near Dunkeld, placing their nests between the boards and the corner posts of the building. Evidently the birds are still common here and apparently nesting sites are scarce.

SPOONBILL IN OUTER HEBRIDES.—Mr. D. Mackenzie records (*Scot. Nat.* 1917, p. 293) a Spoonbill (*Platalea l. leucorodia*), apparently a bird of the year, which was shot on the shore of Broadbay, near Stornoway, on October 6th. This is believed to be the first known occurrence of the Spoonbill in the Outer Hebrides.

SHEDDING OF STOMACH-LINING BY BIRDS.—Mr. W. L. McAtee contributes an important paper to the *Auk* (1917, pp. 415-421) on this subject. Our readers will probably remember that in *Brit. Birds* (VI., pp. 334-336) Mr. Hammond Smith described the ejection of the gizzard lining in the Curlew. Mr. McAtee now produces strong evidence that among the Anatidæ the gizzard-lining is periodically shed, ground up and passed out through the intestines. This is apparently also the case in many other groups and probably is the usual process by which the stomach-lining is renewed when worn out, ejection being comparatively rare except in the case of the Hornbills.