

NOTES

ARE YOUNG BIRDS WITHOUT SMELL ?

If the fledglings of Passerine birds give out no smell, it must be of great advantage to them during the short but specially dangerous period when they leave the nest, but are as yet unpractised in the use of their wings. When the wings are grown, but before the birds have learnt to fly, they hurriedly flutter from the nest when alarmed and scatter in different directions. Recently I followed a young Song-Thrush (*Turdus philomelus clarkei*), which had left the nest in this fashion, to its place of retreat. I found it crouching, with the neck drawn back, in a patch of grass. It was perfectly still and remained so, although I approached to within a foot of it. I imitated as best I could the mewling of a cat and the barking of a dog, but the bird made no movement; nor did it move when I slowly extended a hand as though to seize it. I intended to take it up to look at the eyes and mouth, but before I could do so my dog, which had been out of sight for ten minutes or so, came up, and as I was anxious not to betray the presence of the bird, I stepped aside. The dog—an exceptionally keen-nosed animal, far too prone to kill small mammals and birds—sniffed about with his nose close to the ground. Although he approached within six inches of the fledgling, it was clear that he neither scented it nor saw it. He then ran off, but was back again soon afterwards, and again he got quite close to the bird without detecting it. I remained standing for some time, to keep the dog in the neighbourhood and to give him full opportunity to scent the bird, but he failed to do so.

“Lookers” (*i.e.*, shepherds) on Dungeness have told me that their dogs can smell even the eggs of shingle-breeding birds, but whether these dogs, which are often trained to find nests, succeed by the aid of smell or of sight I am unable to say.

W. R. BUTTERFIELD.

SNOW-FINCHES IN SUSSEX.

THREE Snow-Finches (*Montifringilla n. nivalis*) were shot at Rye, Sussex, on February 28th, 1916. They proved to be a male and two females, and were examined in the flesh

by Mr. W. Ruskin Butterfield. All three are now in my collection. Only three specimens of this species have previously been obtained, one from Sussex and two from Kent.

J. B. NICHOLS.

WALL-CREEPER IN SUSSEX.

A FEMALE Wall-Creeper (*Tichodroma muraria*) was shot on some rocks near Ecclesbourne, Sussex, on December 28th, 1915. It was examined in the flesh by Mr. H. W. Ford-Lindsay, and is now in my collection.

This is the sixth recorded specimen from England, and the fourth from Sussex.

J. B. NICHOLS.

THE TAIL-MOTION OF THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

ALL observers recognize the Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) at once by the peculiar way in which it swings its tail backwards and forwards as it sits on the top of the hedge. This is particularly noticeable when there is a nest or a young brood to be looked after, and I have always supposed that it indicates anger. I find little with regard to it in any of the best books; even Macgillivray only quotes a reference from Harley on the point, while Miss Turner incidentally mentions the "swishing" movement of the tail as characteristic in the *British Bird Book*. I have just learnt something new about it, which may be worth while recording, for the tail-motions of all birds form an interesting study for a field-observer.

A young brood of these Shrikes is just now in the habit of perching on a fence near my house, where they are very conspicuous objects, and let me approach them within five or six yards. I find that they have exactly the same tail-motion as their parents, though they can be only a few days out of the nest. This raises the question whether the motion really means anger, and is not rather a nervous habit like that of the Wagtails and the Redstart, advantageous perhaps, as with these species, in showing the whereabouts of the individual. I also discovered the exact nature of the method of motion. Shrikes always like to perch facing you, and you rarely see their tails from behind or near enough to see exactly what goes on; but this morning a young one presented his back to me, letting me come so close that I could see every feather as it moved. I found that the motion is largely due to the horizontal expansion of the tail-feathers, but at the same time the whole tail is moved slightly from side to side, and to some extent also up and down. It is in fact much the same motion as that of the Redstart's tail, only very much slower.

W. WARDE FOWLER.

MULTIPLE NEST-BUILDING OF SONG-THRUSH.

ON June 6th, 1916, a pair of Song-Thrushes (*Turdus p. clarkei*) had partly built twenty-four nests on a beam in an outlying cattle shed, nine miles from Knighton, Radnorshire. The Thrush was sitting on an empty nest, while four nests each contained a single egg. Many of the nests were only partly built, and only five had the mud lining. Each nest was made of manure straw, of which there was a liberal supply in the yard, and seven nests contained long pieces of binder twine, which was hanging down quite a foot in two instances.

OWEN R. OWEN.

[In *Brit. Birds*, Vol. V., p. 132, Mr. J. H. Owen described and illustrated a case in which a pair of Robins (*Erithacus r. melophilus*) built in 1911 twenty-three incomplete nests in a stack of drain-pipes. In 1913 several nests were again built, but not used; and in 1914 the same thing occurred, but the birds completed and occupied one nest (*Brit. Birds*, VII., p. 346). In one case which came under my notice a pair of Redstarts (*Phoenicurus p. phoenicurus*) built three nests under adjoining rafters of a cowshed, and eggs were laid in two of them. Instances of "multiple" nest-building have also been recorded from the United States. As in all these cases the sites occupied by the same birds were very similar in appearance, it would seem that the birds were unable to discriminate between them.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.]

ABNORMAL BREEDING OF REDBREAST.

IN April, 1918, a nest of the Redbreast (*Erithacus r. melophilus*) was built in a box, about eight inches square, with an open front, placed on the inside wall of an open shed in the kitchen garden of my house at High Ackworth, Pontefract. The weather at the time was very cold. The eggs were deposited in the nest on the undermentioned dates:—

- The first egg on April 11th, 1918.
- The second egg on April 14th, 1918.
- The third egg on April 18th, 1918.
- The fourth egg on April 20th, 1918.
- The fifth egg on April 22nd, 1918.
- The sixth egg on April 23rd, 1918.

On April 24th, 1918, one of the birds, which had a grey head, whereby it was identified as having been about all the previous winter, coming to the house for food, was sitting on the nest.

Two of the eggs hatched out on the 9th May, 1918, and one the following day. The three other eggs never hatched.

The three nestlings left the nest on May 24th, 1918.

The only old Redbreast observed in connection with the nest during the whole operation was the grey-headed bird.

WALTER B. ARUNDEL.

YOUNG CUCKOO IN BLACKBIRD'S NEST.

I WAS interested to see the account of a young Cuckoo (*Cuculus c. canorus*) being reared from a nest of the Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*) at Norwood (*antea*, p. 46), for on June 29th, 1918, I came across a well-grown young Cuckoo in a Blackbird's nest in a hedgerow in Worcestershire, but could find no trace of any young Blackbirds beneath the nest. Unfortunately the Cuckoo was taken by village boys, and did not long survive their rough handling.

R. E. VAUGHAN.

SHELD-DUCKS AND COMMON SCOTERS INLAND IN LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE.

THE Sheld-Duck (*Tadorna tadorna*) appears locally on inland waters in South Lancashire and East Cheshire casually from time to time, but there seems little evidence here of a definite passage on migration; the occurrence of a bird on a sewage-farm in the Irwell valley not far from Manchester on May 9th, 1918, followed by that of eight birds (seen by Mr. K. Fisher and myself) on Marbury Mere, Great Budworth, Cheshire, on May 10th, possibly points to some movement in progress.

On May 25th Mr. K. Fisher and I saw three Common Scoters (*Oidemia n. nigra*) on the White Holme Reservoir, which is on Soyland Moor, near Littleborough—the boundary line of Lancashire and Yorkshire running just near the reservoir.

A. W. BOYD.

TEAL MARKED IN FINLAND RECOVERED IN SPAIN.

IN December last I received a notice that a small duck like a Teal (*Anas c. crecca*), had been shot on November 25th, 1917, at Ibars, Lerida, N.E. Spain, bearing on its leg a ring No. 184c, showing that it had been marked in Finland. I at once wrote to Professor J. A. Palmèn, of Helsingfors, and his reply, dated January 30th, but not posted until June 5th, because of the revolution, reached me on June 29th.

The bird was ringed on July 25th, 1917, as half-grown young, in the parish of Kuolajarvi, on the small lake of Vaha-Sieminki, in North Finland, just at the Polar Circle, a few kilometres west from the political boundary between Finland and Russia.

Unfortunately the ringer, E. Merikallio, an able and interest-

ing ornithologist, is not quite sure as to rings Nos. 184 and 185. One was put on a Teal, he thinks No. 184, but the other on a $\frac{1}{2}$ sized Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) on July 30th, 1917, on the River Kutsajoki in the same parish, but a few kilometres N.E.

From the description of the recovery it is more likely to be *A. c. crecca* than *A. penelope*. In 1913, 776 birds were marked with Professor Palmèn's rings; in 1914, 1396; and in 1915, 1145.

H. W. ROBINSON.

TUFTED DUCK BREEDING IN LEICESTERSHIRE.

As Mr. Montagu Browne in the *Victoria History of the County of Leicester*, I., p. 142 (1907), gives no evidence of the breeding of the Tufted Duck (*Nyroca fuligula*) in Leicestershire, the following notes may prove of interest:—

Between November 11th, 1917, and March 10th, 1918, many were seen on Swithland Reservoir and a few on Cropston, and on the latter date I met with two ducks on the River Soar. On June 9th at least one pair was seen at the rush and reed-grown end of Swithland Reservoir. The drake was being "chivied" by a Coot on guard close at hand. On the 16th only the drake was seen, but on June 30th the drake was noted right out on the open water, some thirty or forty yards away from the duck, which was accompanied by two young, which appeared to be only a few days old and kept close to the bank.

HUGH G. ATTLEE.

THE SALE CATALOGUE OF THE PORTLAND MUSEUM (1786).—Captain H. S. Gladstone informs us that he has recently acquired a copy of this rare pamphlet, which is of special interest as it contains the names of the purchasers of the various lots. (For a full description see Mullens and Swann, *Bibliography of Brit. Ornithology*, p. 477-8). The specimen of *Picus villosus*, said to have been shot in the park of Sir George Armitage at Kirklees Hall, Yorkshire, and recorded by Latham, was knocked down to one Walker for 7s. 6d., together with some other birds, and what was stated to be the first identified nest and eggs of "*Motacilla hirundinacea*" with the parent birds was bought by one Humphreys for £1 5s. 0d. The latter was the name under which Dr. Lightfoot described the Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia c. curruca*) in the *Philos. Trans.* for 1785. It would be of interest to ascertain the ultimate fate of these specimens, or any further particulars with regard to the purchasers.