

THE DUTCH AND BRITISH LITTLE OWLS.

BY

H. F. WITHERBY.

IN working out the plumages of the Little Owl for the *Practical Handbook*, I was very surprised to find that examples from England, of which I have examined over fifty, were much darker on the upper-parts than those from middle Europe.

As our Little Owls are descendants of birds introduced from Holland by Lord Lilford in Northamptonshire and Mr. E. G. B. Meade-Waldo in Kent, it was necessary to examine Dutch specimens. Unfortunately there are none in Lord Rothschild's collection at Tring and only one in the British Museum, but Mr. P. Hens has very kindly lent me a series of eight from Nord-Holland, Utrecht and Limburg. These and British examples, as well as one which I obtained in Flanders, and also one from near Hamburg, in the Tring Museum, are easily separable from a series of the considerably paler brown birds from Germany, Hungary, Switzerland and Italy, while one from Paris and another from Lyons are like the latter. As the typical locality of Scopoli's *Strix noctua* is Carniola, I propose to separate as a local race the Little Owl from Holland, Flanders (apparently Hanover and probably Belgium and parts of Rhineland, from which countries I have not seen specimens) and the introduced British bird as follows:—

ATHENA NOCTUA MIRA subsp. nov.

Upper-parts dark umber considerably darker and less rufous-brown than in *A. n. noctua* and even darker as a rule than in *A. n. vidalii* (Spain), white streaks on crown usually as white as in *A. n. vidalii* but not so narrow and more drop-shaped. Brown streaks on under-parts darker but ground-colour inclined to be whiter than in *A. n. noctua*. ♂ wing 152-165 (20 measured) ♀ wing 156-165 (20 measured).

Type ♀ ad. Houthem, Limburg, Holland, November 20th, 1919, in my own collection. Collected by Mr. P. Hens.

NOTE.—There appears to be no difference in measurements between *A. n. mira* and *A. n. noctua*.