

# NOTES

## TIME-PERIOD FOR NEST AND EGG REPLACEMENT.

WITH reference to Mr. Symes' note (*antea*, p. 244), two clutches of eggs of the Carrion-Crow (*C. c. corone*) taken in central Somerset, of an unusual blue type, were laid as follows:—  
Four eggs taken April 19th, 1924; five eggs May 5th, 1924.  
Interval sixteen days.

C. J. PRING.

## EARLY NESTING OF HOUSE-SPARROW IN SUFFOLK.

FOUR newly-hatched chicks of the House-Sparrow (*Passer. d. domesticus*) fell from a nest in the thatched roof of a house in Walberswick, Suffolk, on February 4th, 1925. The occupants of the house had been watching the birds building for some time. I believe nests and young of this species have been reported in most months of the year. Is there a record for January?

CHARLES E. ALFORD.

[In the *Birds of Yorkshire*, I., p. 177, it is stated that eggs were found on 27th January, 1874, and young were recorded on 21st February, 1846, near Huddersfield.—F.C.R.J.]

## LESSER WHITETHROAT IN WALES.

DURING a visit to the Lleyn promontory of Carnarvonshire in the first week of June, 1924, Dr. F. B. Smith, of Harrogate, observed a bird in some scrub near the edge of a cliff carrying food, presumably to its young. At first he took it for a Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia c. communis*) which was frequently to be seen. It was silent and difficult to approach on account of the nature of the ground, and hard to see even with binoculars. He saw it on two days at the same spot in brambles at the top of a cliff, and felt certain it had a nest just over the brow. It was smaller than the Common Whitethroat, the white front was more pronounced, and the head and back more grey. All these details seem to indicate that it was a Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia c. curruca*), though up to the present this species had not been recorded in Lleyn. There is, however, an accumulating body of evidence to show that the Lesser Whitethroat is steadily increasing and extending its range westwards in Wales. Along the north coast it is now a regular summer visitor in fair numbers, while Professor Salter tells me that in the Aberystwyth district also, where it was formerly only of casual occurrence, it has become a regular visitor during the last few years. On June 8th three were singing.

H. E. FORREST.

## BLACK REDSTARTS IN N. WALES.

THE Rev. E. Lorimer Thomas tells me he saw a male Black Redstart (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*) on a stony hill near Abergele on May 15th, 1924; and a female near Criccieth on October 23rd, 1924.

With regard to the latter he writes:—"I watched it for half-an-hour, and noted uniform dark brown back, underneath uniform lighter brown. The bird flew, rarely, down to a palisade in the garden of the house, and once thence on to the gravel path. Mostly, however, it caught flies on the roof, returning to four favourite spots thereon. The click of the beak when a fly was caught was distinctly audible. Its ways were just those of a Spotted Flycatcher. The next day it left the roof after we had watched it a few minutes, and went to a wall near, whence it frequently dropped to a grass field. It stayed on the grass a good deal longer than a Stonechat or Robin would have done. The Black Redstart was silent the whole time."

H. E. FORREST.

## MORE LITTLE OWLS IN NORTH LANCASHIRE.

IN my last note on the Little Owl (*Athene noctua vidalii*) in Lancashire I was able to add three more records to the only two authentic ones previously recorded. I now have the doubtful pleasure of recording three fresh records comprising four specimens. Mr. H. P. Hornby informs me that he has recently (January) examined two freshly shot specimens, the one killed at Winmarleigh and the other at Wharles, and that the fellow to the latter is now confined in a bird cage, having been temporarily knocked out by a stone from a catapult. The other specimen is in the collection of Dr. Fred Hogarth of Morecambe and was shot in the autumn of 1922 at Wennington. In priority this bird becomes No. 4.

H. W. ROBINSON.

## HEN-HARRIER IN SHROPSHIRE.

IN July, 1924, a Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) in immature plumage was seen in south Shropshire not far from the place where a brood was reared in 1923 (*Brit. Birds*, XVII., 309).

H. E. FORREST.

## COMMON SCOTER INLAND IN SOMERSET.

ON April 20th, 1924, I watched an adult drake Common Scoter (*Oidemia n. nigra*) on one of the Barrow Gurney reservoirs, north Somerset. In view of some recent notes on oil-clogged Common Scoters inland (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. XVII.,

pp. 281 and 316) it is perhaps worth mentioning that as far as could be seen this bird was in excellent plumage and condition, and it had all the appearance of being a genuine inland loiterer on migration, unhampered by oil or any other disability.

B. W. TUCKER.

#### SMEW NEAR LONDON.

I HAVE previously recorded in *British Birds* the occurrence of the Smew (*Mergus albellus*) in the London district (on each occasion single brown-headed birds), viz. :—Walthamstow Reservoirs, March 18th, 1922 (Vol. XVI., p. 26), and February 16th, 1924 (Vol. XVII., p. 310), Staines Reservoir, December 16th, 1923 (Vol. XVII., p. 209). On March 1st, 1924, I saw two adult males and ten brown-headed birds on Walthamstow Reservoirs, and one brown-headed bird was seen at the same place on March 8th. The latter was the last record for that winter. For the present winter the first record I have is one brown-headed bird at Staines Reservoir on December 26th, 1924. One adult male and three brown-headed birds were seen at Walthamstow Reservoirs on January 3rd and 25th, 1925.

These records, taken in conjunction with those of Mr. A. Holte Macpherson (*antea*, pp. 243-4), suggest the probability of the formation of a regular annual movement by this species to the London district.

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

#### BLACK-NECKED GREBE IN SOMERSET.

ON September 19th, 20th, 29th, and October 4th, 1924, I had a bird under observation on the middle reservoir at Barrow Gurney, which I am satisfied was a Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) and not a Slavonian. I watched it on September 19th with field-glasses and on the subsequent occasions with a telescope. Except on the 20th, when the bird was quite close inshore but this advantage was neutralized by wind and driving rain, it was never within a hundred yards of me. The bill appeared slender and gave a strong impression—falling just short of absolute certainty—of being slightly uptilted. It may be doubted whether at this range a more definite conclusion than this could be expected. It could be clearly seen, however, that the black extended well below the eye and over the ear-coverts, the distribution of black and white on the head being precisely as shown in the figure in the *Practical Handbook*, and different from that of the Slavonian, and also agreeing closely with skins which I have subsequently examined at the British Museum. When the bird was facing away from me with the neck erect it

showed a broad black band down the back, not constricted at the nape, as it usually is in the Slavonian, by the close approximation of the white of the two sides of the head. These characters are sufficient, I think, to warrant recording the bird definitely as a Black-neck. Only two other occurrences in the county are on record. B. W. TUCKER.

#### COMMON SANDPIPER AND WHITE WAGTAIL IN JANUARY IN LANCASHIRE.

ON January 19th, 1925, I was taken to see a Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*) close to Lancaster. It was extremely lively and most evidently no crippled bird. I saw one at Lytham on March 21st, 1909, and it has been notified as late as November, but I think this is the only record between December and February for Lancashire. Whilst examining it through a telescope to see what it was feeding on, I was surprised to see another summer bird trip across the lens in the form of a White Wagtail (*Motacilla a. alba*). Mr. Charles Hodgson, who took me to confirm his identification of the Common Sandpiper, and who also saw the White Wagtail, states that the former has been there all this winter and that one day before Christmas there were two of them.

H. W. ROBINSON.

[Mr. J. F. Peters recorded a Common Sandpiper from Lake Windermere on December 30th, 1923, to January 1st, 1924 (Vol. XVII, p. 248).—EDS.]

#### WHIMBREL ABOUT TO LAY IN JANUARY.

ALTHOUGH Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) in winter are uncommon, their occurrence is hardly worth notifying. One shot at the mouth of the Lune below Lancaster on January 9th, 1925, which I handled in the flesh, seems, however, to deserve some remark, for it was a female containing eggs so well developed that an egg expert gave five days as the period for the deposition of the largest egg. As the Whimbrel does not normally commence laying before the third week in May, it seems rather extraordinary for a bird to be carrying such well-developed eggs so early. H. W. ROBINSON.

#### EARLY BREEDING OF MOOR-HEN IN KENT.

ON February 14th, 1925, the Park Superintendent at Dartford called my attention to a pair of Moor-Hens (*Gallinula chloropus*) which were feeding at the edge of the park lake, accompanied by two young birds. The Superintendent states that he and his men first noticed the young about five weeks ago, when they were very tiny and apparently only a few days old. This

means that these birds were hatched about the first week in January, an extraordinarily early date for this species. I would add that the river Darent runs through this lake, which is quite open, and that the birds are not protected in any way.

F. HOWARD LANCUM.

[For other notes on early breeding of this species see Vol. VI., p. 375, Vol. XII., pp. 21, 48 and 143.—EDS.]

LATE NESTING OF HOUSE-MARTIN IN WORCESTERSHIRE.—Mr. H. G. Alexander informs us that a pair of House-Martins (*Delichon u. urbica*) were still feeding young in the nest at Rednal, North Worcestershire, 700 feet above sea-level, on October 18th, 1924; one young bird had just flown, but two more were still in the nest. Ten days later all had gone.