

NOTES

MAGPIES KILLING FULL-GROWN RABBIT.

ON December 15th, 1925, there were still nearly two inches of snow on the ground at Barton, Cambs, and in the morning it was fine though cold. I passed through a small disused chalk quarry, extensively burrowed by rabbits, and rather more than half an hour later returned to it, seeing, from the top, a pair of Magpies (*Pica p. pica*) fly off the body of a rabbit in the snow; I had previously seen these Magpies fly to the quarry from my position on the hill above, about a quarter of an hour before. Descending, I examined the snow around the rabbit, and found that except for a few marks where the Magpies had hopped round it, and one or two easily distinguishable rabbit tracks there was nothing whatever. A couple of yards up the slope under a small black-thorn bush I found the "form" where the rabbit had been, and a scurry in the snow to show where it had rolled or wriggled down to its present position. Both its eyes were pecked out, though it was lying on its side. Examination showed that it had not been bitten behind the ear, where one would expect to see the work of a stoat, nor had it apparently suffered any other injury than that to its eyes. I "staled" it, found it limp and moderately warm, and, taking it home, it turned the scale at 3 lbs. 11 ozs.

I can only suggest that these Magpies, driven by hunger, and the tempting opportunity presented by a crouching rabbit (for the "form" was quite open above) had dropped down from the bush, and had either singly or together pecked one or other of its eyes out. If it had not been done in the snow I should not have believed it possible, but seeing that there were no tracks in the snow, it must have been done by birds, and presumably by Magpies. Certain it is, however, that the rabbit was not on the open ground where I had passed about 35 minutes before.

G. W. THOMPSON.

[A very similar case is reported in the *Zoologist*, 1845, p. 1072, from the *Lancaster Gazette* of June 21st, 1845, where it is stated that a carter, hearing a strange noise in a field by the roadside between Preston and Blackburn, looked over a hedge and saw a Magpie attacking a half-grown rabbit, and endeavouring to pick out its eyes. It was so intent on its work that it allowed the man to get within a few yards before

leaving. The rabbit was so much injured by the Magpie's attacks that it died shortly after.—F.C.R.J.]

CROSSBILL NESTING IN NORFOLK.

I HAVE recently returned from Norfolk where I saw a Crossbill (*Loxia c. curvirostra*) sitting on her eggs. The nest when found on January 31st, 1926, contained four eggs and the bird had evidently been incubating a few days. When visiting the nest later the female sat so tight, as is frequently the case with these birds, that she could only be induced to show the contents of the nest by coaxing her with a twig.

I was also authoritatively informed that a nest of four eggs was found a fortnight before Christmas, the eggs being shared out amongst the boys who looted the nest!

EDGAR P. CHANCE.

TREE-PIPIT'S NEST IN A HAYRICK.

ON July 17th, 1925, I found the nest of a Tree-Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) in a very unusual site. The nest was situated on the steep side of the roof of an unthatched hayrick, seven feet from the ground, at Bourton-on-the-Water. I caught the bird on the nest to make sure of correct identification. The short and curved hind claw, as compared with the longer and nearly straight hind claw of the Meadow-Pipit, was noted. The nest contained three typical eggs. This is the first instance of an elevated site I have heard of.

A. G. TAYLER.

REDWING SINGING IN ENGLAND.

ON January 6th, 1926, in spring-like sunshine after wet and windy weather, my wife and son heard a Redwing (*Turdus musicus*) in good song at Leighton Park, Reading. From about two-thirds of the way up a fair-sized deodar, the bird sang for over five minutes. The phrases of the song were so varied and the pauses so few and short as to be reminiscent of a well-trained Harz canary.

C. I. EVANS.

[*Vide* previous records and comments, Vol. VII., pp. 322, 345.—EDS.]

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE IN ESSEX.

ON January 17th, 1926, under twenty-three degrees of frost, I drove seventy miles on the chance of seeing an "eagle," which, for the past three weeks, had been frequenting some woods in north Essex. By good fortune I had three splendid views of the bird as it was "driven" from one wood to another about fifty yards high over my head. In its size, general

outline and lazy, flapping flight it might have been a Golden Eagle, but as I could only see it from below and there was no sun it was very difficult to make out its colouring. Of this, however, I was certain, that its under parts were light yellowish and that its legs were bare and yellow. From below, no white was visible on the tail. I have little doubt but that the bird was an immature Sea-Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), though not since my boyhood days have I seen one of these rare birds on the wing. On several occasions it had been seen carrying a rabbit—on one occasion a hare—in its talons, and ground game was plentiful in the district.

SYDNEY H. LONG.

FOR nearly a month an immature White-tailed Eagle has been living in some large woods on a private estate in Essex, where it has been allowed to remain unmolested, and where it finds plenty of food in the shape of rabbits, which abound in these woods. It has been repeatedly seen by a number of people, and yesterday, February 1st, I saw it on four occasions myself. Approaching the wood, which is one of a chain of several, the keeper who conducted me soon drew my attention to the bird sailing over the tops of the trees, which in all these woods are principally small oaks with an undergrowth of hazel; it was a long way off, but had evidently already seen our approach. At this distance it was of course quite impossible to identify it. It flew over the trees and disappeared in the direction of the adjoining wood, where we remained hidden for some time, as the keeper said it generally returned to the first wood; however, seeing no signs of it, we proceeded to a third wood, and very soon saw it sitting on the top of one of the tallest oaks, and were able to get within three hundred yards of it without being seen. After a good look at it through field-glasses I showed myself, and as the bird sailed off the tree both legs for a moment were hanging straight down, and I could clearly see the legs bare of feathers, making me quite certain it was not a Golden Eagle, which species it had been first reported as being. Shortly afterwards, in the middle of the wood, it slowly flew over my head, not thirty feet above me, and gave me a most magnificent view, every feather being clearly visible. The keeper showed me a tree in the middle of one of the woods on which it often sat; the ground beneath was covered with whitewash, but no remains of game could be seen. It is possible that it eats its food on the ground, where it catches it. I am glad to say the keeper has strict orders to protect this splendid visitor, and not to allow anyone to molest it.

G. H. GURNEY.

STOCK-DOVE IN CO. CORK.

MR. C. V. STONEY'S record of the Stock-Dove breeding in co. Donegal (*antea*, p. 235), induces me to add a note on its occurrence at Ummera, Timoleague, co. Cork; the bird was heard by me uttering its raucous coo on the mornings of July 15th and 16th, 1925, among some old timber near by. The only place where I had previously seen these birds in Ireland was flying about the high wooded cliffs over the lake at Glendalough, co. Wicklow, and that was in the early summer of 1889; this fact was mentioned to my friend Mr. Ussher, and the locality was noted in his *Birds of Ireland*, p. 224.

I may mention that I am familiar with the species as I have had over three years' daily acquaintance with its habits at Faringdon, Berks. C. DONOVAN.

TURTLE-DOVE WINTERING IN SHROPSHIRE.

FOR the last nine years or more a pair of Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia t. turtur*) has nested in the grounds of Mrs. Steavenson's house at Bicton Heath, two miles west of Shrewsbury. This lady is fond of birds and feeds them all the year round. In the summer of 1916 the wild Turtle-Doves began to come down to the food put out for the other birds and fed along with them. As soon as the young could fly they too came down with their parents and fed with the others. All were quite tame. Next year they returned and at once came to be fed as before. This has continued every year since then up to the present time. Then came an unexpected sequel. One of the young reared in 1925, instead of departing with the others in autumn, remained behind, and has continued to come to the bird food regularly, right up to the present time. At first it was not very tame, but it survived the cold weather without any apparent inconvenience and is now perfectly tame. It roosts in the ivy on a tree close to the house, and comes down three times a day when called, and feeds with the pigeons. So far as can be seen the bird is quite normal and has no injury to account for its not having migrated. H. E. FORREST.

COMMON SANDPIPER IN BEDFORDSHIRE IN WINTER.

ON January 14th, 1926, when our ponds at Woburn were frozen over and snow lay thickly on the ground, I was surprised to see a Common Sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*) on the bank of one of the ponds. It was restless and very soon flew off, though undisturbed by me. M. BEDFORD.

COMMON TERNS IN SURREY IN WINTER.

ON December 16th, 1925, I saw two Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) on Tooting Bec Common. At that time, after severe storms and extreme cold, Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) were very numerous all over London and were present in hundreds in such unusual places as Streatham, Norbury and South Norwood, and the Terns were among the Gulls, but seemed to be very exhausted, weary birds. They kept constantly to the ground, merely moving a few yards when passers-by came too close. I also saw a small flight of Terns, about a dozen, on the 17th, flying high over West Norwood. These also were, I am sure, Common Terns.

E. C. STUART BAKER.

BLACK GUILLEMOT IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

IN *British Birds*, Vol. XVIII., p. 143, Miss C. M. Acland, referring to the doubtful status of the Black Guillemot (*Uria g. grylle*) in Wales, mentioned that she watched one at St. David's on June 18th, 1924.

It is therefore worth recording that Mr. Charles Oldham and I, while sailing off Porth Clais (St. David's) on July 16th, 1925, at 5.30 a.m., saw a Black Guillemot on the water about a mile from the shore. This bird afterwards flew past our boat apparently heading for Ramsey Island, where there is a large breeding colony of Auks. There were great numbers of Razorbills, Guillemots and Puffins on the water at the time.

BERTRAM LLOYD.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD IN MIDLOTHIAN.—With reference to the note under this heading on page 214, referring to a previous note on page 156, we much regret that a further error appears in this note, as we are now informed, and Mr. Serle agrees, that the Red-crested Pochard was first seen on December 21st, 1924, and not October 21st, as stated on page 214.

INCUBATION PERIOD OF THE REDWING.—Mr. D. G. Hunter states (*Scot. Nat.*, 1925, p. 158) that in a nest of *Turdus musicus* watched by him in Syd Varanger, north Norway, the last (fourth) egg of the clutch was laid on July 5th and three eggs hatched on July 17th and the remaining egg on the 18th, *i.e.*, twelve to thirteen days.