

REVIEWS.

The Food of some British Wild Birds: a Study in Economic Ornithology.

By Walter E. Collinge, D.Sc., M.Sc., etc. 2nd revised edition.

Published by the author. Parts 4-6. 6s. 3d. per part.

THESE parts of Dr. Collinge's work, of which we have already noticed previous ones (*antea*, p. 31), contain detailed discussions on the food of a number of species most interesting and valuable both from an economic as well as from a scientific point of view. There are very few birds which Dr. Collinge condemns utterly, but like others he considers that the House-Sparrow requires very drastic reduction, while the Bullfinch should be destroyed in all fruit-growing districts, and even when it eats seeds of weeds he thinks it does harm by spreading these.

Of the Skylark Dr. Collinge considers that the damage it does sometimes to seed-corn and other crops is far outweighed by its destruction of injurious insects from April to September. The Great and Blue Tits are often condemned by fruit growers, and while acknowledging the harm they do to ripe fruit Dr. Collinge considers that they are nevertheless on the whole distinctly beneficial to fruit growers. The Blackcap, he states, may become a very undesirable pest in fruit districts if it is allowed to increase. Ornithologists will be grieved at this, but Dr. Collinge has found that even nestlings of this beautiful songster contained fruit.

The detailed account of the food of the Kingfisher, based on the examination of a number of pellets and some stomachs, shows that the bird eats trout but only to the extent of 7.28 per cent. of its total food, while to counterbalance this 15.66 per cent. consists of insects most of which are known to be injurious to trout fry and ova. For this reason Dr. Collinge considers the Kingfisher a very beneficial bird. It seems to us that this is somewhat like the cases of the Kestrel and Little Owl, the species being decidedly beneficial on the whole, but under certain conditions doing a considerable amount of damage.

One of Dr. Collinge's most interesting enquiries has been into the food of the Little Owl. Two investigations were made, the first consisting of the examination of 212 adults from nineteen different counties all round the year, and the second (at the instigation of Mr. M. Portal) of 98 adults from Hampshire in June and July, when young game-birds would be most plentiful. We are permitted to quote below the results of these two investigations set out side by side.

	First Investiga- tion.	Second Investiga- tion.	Average.
Seeds of Weeds ... ..	.55	.05	.30
Miscellaneous Vegetable Matter ...	5.96	8.38	7.17
Slugs or Snails ... ..	.02	.04	.03
Injurious Insects	30.62	17.30	23.96
Beneficial Insects ... ..	.99	.56	.77
Neutral	17.63	39.48	28.56
Voles and Mice	31.05	7.71	19.38
Wild Birds	4.45	2.94	3.70
Game-birds ... ..	.51	1.78	1.14
Earthworms	7.83	20.28	14.05
Miscellaneous Animal Matter ...	.39	1.48	.94

The birds other than game-birds noted as having been taken are chiefly Starling, House-Sparrow and Wood-Pigeon, while other species recorded are :—Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Skylark, Mistle-Thrush, Song-Thrush, Blackbird, Wren, Cuckoo and Lapwing, these results being from the examination of stomachs, pellets and "larders." To these we might add Pipit (probably Meadow) remains of which we have twice found in stomachs of this species.

We recommend all ornithologists to study Dr. Collinge's work.

H. F. W.

The Secrets of the Eagle and of other Rare Birds. By H. A. Gilbert and Arthur Brook. (Arrowsmith.) Illustrated. 10s.

IN this book Mr. Gilbert describes the adventures of Mr. Brook and himself in reaching and photographing a number of interesting British birds at their nests. Among these are the Golden Eagle, which has pride of place and space, the Black-throated Diver, Black Guillemot, Arctic Skua and Crossbill. Mr. Brook's photographs are very fine, and we admire especially the one of the Eagle flying into the nest with a Grouse, that of the two Black-throated Divers with their downy young, the Black Guillemot and the Swifts.

The title of the book is perhaps unfortunate, as the authors have evidently not usually spent enough time in observation to be able to reveal many "secrets" of the birds depicted. Except in the account of the Wood-Lark, where they are evidently at home with the bird, there is always the feeling that the authors have rushed from place to place to photograph and make some observations on as many species as possible.

They have, however, produced a very readable book, which, with the really beautiful photographs, will give the reader a good first idea of the appearance and habits of a number of our rarer breeding birds.