

NOTES

THE INCUBATION- AND FLEDGING-PERIODS OF SOME BRITISH BIRDS.

THE incubation- and fledging-periods of the following species were obtained during 1924 and 1925 and are additional to those previously published by me. As regards the Passerine species, the incubation is the time from the day the last egg was laid to the day the eggs hatched, and the fledging-period is from the day of hatching to the day the young left the nest.

	Incubation- Period. Days.	Fledging- Period. Days.
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla c. cœlebs</i>) ...	11	13
Long-tailed Tit (<i>Ægithalos c. roseus</i>) ...	16, 15	16, 16
Spotted Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa s. striata</i>)	14	14
Pied Flycatcher (<i>M. h. hypoleuca</i>) ...	12	13
Willow-Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus t. trochilus</i>)	13, 14	13, 13
Wood-Warbler (<i>Ph. s. sibilatrix</i>) ...	13	—
Whitethroat (<i>Sylvia c. communis</i>) ...	—	12
Song-Thrush (<i>Turdus ph. clarkæi</i>) ...	12	13
Blackbird (<i>T. m. merula</i>) ...	14	13
Whinchat (<i>Saxicola r. rubetra</i>) ...	—	13
Robin (<i>Erithacus r. melophilus</i>) ...	13	13
Hedge-Sparrow (<i>Prunella m. occidentalis</i>)	13, 11, 11	12, 12, 13
Wren (<i>Troglodytes t. troglodytes</i>) ...	16	—
Dipper (<i>Cinclus c. gularis</i>) ...	15-16, 16	—
Tawny Owl (<i>Strix aluco sylvatica</i>) ...	28	32-33
Merlin (<i>Falco c. æsalon</i>)	—	25
Buzzard (<i>Buteo b. buteo</i>)	—	39
Stock-Dove (<i>Columba œnas</i>)	—	24

R. H. BROWN.

WITH reference to the notes on Fledging-Periods (*antea*, p. 249), is it not possible that in some of the instances recorded—*e.g.* those for the Great Tit—a longer or shorter fledging-period may be due to the situation and surroundings of the nest?

I had two Starling (*Sturnus v. vulgaris*) nests under observation in 1920 which suggested this to me. They were in

the same house and not much more than a dozen yards apart. Nest *A* was in a nest-box on the wall among the branches of a plum tree; eggs hatched May 14th, young flew June 5th—fledging-period 22 days (the same as that given in *A Practical Handbook*). Nest *B* was in a hole in the house wall with a sheer drop of 20 ft. to a paved yard, and nothing to break it but a few telephone wires which would give poor foothold for unsteady fledglings. This nest cannot be approached nearer than 8 ft. so the exact date of hatching is uncertain, but the young could be heard squeaking a few days before those in nest *A* were audible at a much less distance. A young bird was picked up dead below the nest on May 28th and was as fully developed as the young in nest *A* on the day they flew. The others left safely on June 6th, so the fledging-period in this case was probably not less than 26 days and may have been three or four days longer. I should add that Starlings had used nest-hole *B* for several years, and I always reckoned they were about four weeks from the time the young could first be heard to the time they flew. MARJORY GARNETT.

WITH reference to the notes on Fledging-Periods (*antea*, p. 249), the following few cases may be of interest. I have picked out only those in which I inspected the nest at least once a day at the period of hatching and fledging, so that they are, at any rate, absolutely accurate.

GREENFINCH (*Chloris ch. chloris*).—(A) Four eggs, hatched on the morning of May 16th, 1923, young fledged morning of June 2nd. Period 17 days. This was probably a quite abnormal bird, as the nest was commenced on April 11th and was still empty on May 2nd. On the 5th it contained two eggs and the bird was sitting on four on the 12th. The weather from May 28th to June 2nd was cold and dismal, with a temporary improvement on the 3rd.

(B) Five eggs, hatched on June 1st, 1925. Young fledged on the morning of 15th. Period 14 days.

BLUE TIT (*Parus cæruleus obscurus*).—(A) Five eggs, hatching at 10 a.m. on June 12th, 1923, two chicks out. Young fledged on July 1st. Period 19 days.

(B) Eleven eggs, hatched on May 16th, 1925. Young fledged on June 4th. Period 19 days.

SONG-THRUSH (*Turdus ph. clarkei*).—Five eggs, hatched April 25th, 1925. Young fledged on the morning of May 8th. Period 13 days.

COMMON WREN (*Troglodytes t. troglodytes*).—Hatched May 15th, 1925. Young fledged on the morning of 31st. Period 16 days.

CHARLES E. ALFORD.

HOODED CROWS KILLING A LAMB.

WITH reference to Mr. Thompson's note (*antea*, p. 252) on a pair of Magpies killing a full-grown rabbit, I saw in June, 1905, on the west coast of Sutherland, two Hooded Crows (*Corvus c. cornix*) actually destroy a lamb that was several weeks old. The animal got into difficulties in marshy ground, at some little distance from its mother. The Crows immediately attacked, and when I had rushed up to the scene of the tragedy from a distance of about 400 yards, both eyes had been pecked out, and the lamb was dying, apparently from injury to the brain inflicted through the eye-sockets. Such incidents are no doubt only observed on rare occasions, but their occurrence is probably common enough. All the Crow-tribe are specially quick to take advantage of exceptional circumstances bringing within their reach victims of a size that would render them ordinarily immune to their attack.

ALAN H. SIMPSON.

SERINS IN KENT.

IT may be of interest to state that on the afternoon of February 23rd, 1926, I chanced with great good fortune upon a small company of Serins (*Serinus canarius serinus*) in the vicinity of Tunbridge Wells. Seven or eight in number, they were perched in the upper branches of a tree in an open field bordering on the Eridge Park cricket ground, and inspired, apparently, by the genial sunshine and warmth of the afternoon, sang their characteristic hissing chorus within twenty yards of me for fully ten minutes without a break, before taking wing.

HENRY S. DAVENPORT.

INCUBATING HABITS OF CROSSBILL.

By observing a nest of the Crossbill (*Loxia c. curvirostra*) in Norfolk from March 19th to 22nd, 1925, inclusive, we found that the hen never left the nest to feed during this time. She was fed at the nest every hour by her mate, who regurgitated yellow oily matter—evidently digested fir seeds, and after being fed she flew away for three to five minutes only. The young hatched on the 21st.

H. A. GILBERT.

CALL-NOTE OF THE CHAFFINCH.

WHILE in the Swiss National Park a bird was heard frequently uttering a single, drawn-out, vibrating note, somewhat resembling the syllable "dwee-e-e": being not unlike that of the Greenfinch. It generally sang from the top of a conifer

in the denser parts of the forest and was very difficult to observe closely, but after a time we found to our surprise that the bird was the Chaffinch (*Fringilla c. œlebs*). The date was early July, 1925, and the altitude about 5,000 ft. I remember having heard the note previously both at Murren and at Wengern Alp in the Bernese Oberland in coniferous woods at a height of about 5,000 feet or more in August, 1921. Later, we noticed that the call seemed general for the district, so that the variation is apparently not due to altitude. In August, 1925, Mr. J. D. Clarke heard the note frequently in pine woods at Heidelberg, but in September noticed a general return to the normal "spink."

Mr. H. G. Alexander tells me that he has heard the note on many occasions, in England as well as on the Continent; and he has very kindly placed his notes on the subject at my disposal. His records are as follows:—

Pine woods above Champéry, Valais, Switzerland, 3450 ft., August 1912. Birds in the lower woods were heard to give the usual "spink"; Pine woods, Frensham, Surrey, April; Pine woods, Broadwater Forest, Tunbridge Wells, Sussex, March and April, various years. Also pine woods of Ashdown Forest, Sussex. Subsequently the note was heard in Ashdown Forest in June.

The note seemed to be so constantly associated with pine woods that Mr. Alexander had come to refer to it as the "Pine note." He has, however, heard the note away from pine trees on one or two occasions, *e.g.*, Winchelsea, Sussex, April 4th, 1913.

It seems that this call has no marked correlation with altitude; nor does it seem to be very markedly seasonal save that I have no records later than August. It may be a geographical variation, but here again the evidence is conflicting; on the other hand, the correlation with coniferous woods does seem very marked, inexplicable as it is.

Although but a small point, it is not without interest and seems worth attempting to clear up. Doubtless readers of *British Birds* will be able to supply further notes on the subject.

W. H. THORPE.

[In my notes under date May 10th, 1903, I find that in the forests of North Jutland, which are almost entirely deciduous and consist largely of beech, one heard in all directions the peculiar, long-drawn, Greenfinch-like notes of the Chaffinch, while, on the other hand, we never once heard the familiar "Pink, Spink," note which is so characteristic of this species in England. These woods are but little above sea-level. On

the other hand, I have not heard an English Chaffinch uttering this note, although it might be occasionally used, but overlooked. In Norway and Germany I have also heard it and regard it as geographical. We can trace no necessary correlation with coniferous woods.—F.C.R.J.]

TAMENESS OF MARSH-TITS.

As I think it is unusual for Marsh-Tits (*Parus palustris dresseri*) to become confiding (as do very often Great and Blue Tits when they are fed at a bird-table) it may be worth while recording that in January, 1925, I tamed a pair of wild Marsh-Tits so that they would come into the dining-room to fetch food. In March they disappeared, but returned on October 13th. Since then they have fed daily from the hand and constantly frequent the room. A. HIBBERT-WARE.

NESTLING OF THE FIELDFARE.

As the down of the nestling Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) is not described in the *Practical Handbook* (see Vol. I., p. 393) the following description of a nestling about one day old may be useful. I took notes of this nestling on May 28th, 1925, at Moen, Surendal, Norway, and brought it home in spirit for Mr. Witherby's re-examination of the down-tracts.

Down, buff, fairly long and plentiful. Distribution, outer (short) and inner supra-orbital, occipital, spinal, humeral and ulnar. Mouth, inside yellow, no tongue-spots; externally, flanges yellowish-white. J. L. CHAWORTH MUSTERS.

BLACK REDSTARTS IN MERIONETH.

AN immature Black Redstart (*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis*) was seen repeatedly at Aberdovey by Messrs. E. H. T. Bible and Edwyn Hughes between December 20th, 1924, and March 1st, 1925. In December, 1925, two were observed—a female and young male; whilst on January 12th, 1926, an adult male was seen about two miles away. Taken in conjunction with recent records in *British Birds* it seems evident that there has been a considerable influx of the species into Britain this winter. H. E. FORREST.

BLUETHROAT WINTERING IN YORKSHIRE.

ON November 15th, 1925, a Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), whether of the Norwegian or Lapland form I do not know, made its appearance in the garden attached to my house, well within the borough boundary of Scarborough. It again appeared on the 16th, the 21st, and 22nd, being very tame and

permitting close inspection at five or six feet distance. Various foods were placed out for it and it preferred very rich pastry to anything else, but on various occasions it foraged on the lawn, capturing leather-jackets and small earthworms. It reappeared on December 23rd, 24th and 26th, and on January 14th and 20th, 1926. It was seen no more for more than a month, but reappeared on February 22nd and 24th, and thereafter every day up to the time of writing on March 16th. It appears to be in very vigorous health and excellent condition and plumage and shows no trace of having suffered any injury which might have prevented its migration. On February 28th it was also seen by Mr. T. N. Roberts, on March 4th by Mr. J. A. Chadwick and on March 7th by Mr. W. Gyngell, three local ornithologists who are all convinced of its identity. At the back of my house is a large neglected orchard, and it is here that the bird makes its home.

The bird is very Robin-like in its actions. It has a habit of sitting upon a spout and darting out several yards to catch passing flies, returning to the same place just as a Flycatcher would.

The blue throat-band above the chestnut patch on the breast seems now to be extending down the side of the breast, but the throat and chin are uniform pale fawn-colour with no blue.

W. J. CLARKE.

NOTES ON NESTING OF GREAT SPOTTED WOOD-PECKER.

WITH reference to Mr. J. H. Owen's article (*antea*, p. 125) on the nesting of the Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dryobates m. anglicus*) the following may be of interest. In the two or three nests I have observed carefully I have always found the birds to be at work, when boring, at 10 a.m.; they may have been at many other times of the day, but this is the time I have always been able to watch them. I have found June 1st to be the time for a full clutch in Lincolnshire, the Green Woodpecker (*Picus v. virescens*) having the same at any time from May 18th to June 2nd. I have not yet come across a Great Spotted Woodpecker returning to an old hole to nest. I feel sure they begin to sit with the first egg, and the following are some notes from 1921:—

May 19th—21st.—Male boring hole (35 ft. up) from outside.

May 22nd.—Male clearing hole from inside.

May 25th.—Female came out of hole 10.15 a.m., mating took place and male went into hole and remained. This seems to confirm Mr. Tracey's note (*antea*, p. 152).

June 5th.—Female on nest and on this date I found that one egg contained an embryo forming, one was just “struck,” and the remaining three were in intermediate stages of incubation.

1922, May 25th, 26th and 27th, both birds taking turns at throwing out chips from inside: this clutch also consisted of five eggs, which were successfully brought off, having, I believe, hatched on June 18th, while the young left the nest on July 6th.

In 1920 I found a pair feeding nearly fledged young on June 21st.

JOHN S. REEVE.

COMMON BUZZARD IN ESSEX.

ON February 22nd, 1926, in Gillwell Lane, Chingford, I had a good view of a Buzzard, but although it flew quite low I was unable to identify the species with certainty. On the 24th I saw the bird again, and so well that no doubt was left as to its being a Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*). On the 28th, when I was in company with Mr. and Mrs. Boyd Watt, the bird left Gillwell Park and circled high up, near enough for us to watch it with our field-glasses. It then settled on a tree and for a quarter of an hour we heard it “mewing,” and we occasionally heard an answering “mew” from a distance.

A. HIBBERT-WARE.

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE IN THE SCILLY ISLES.

IN “The Birds of Scilly” by Clarke and Rodd (*Zoologist*, 1906, p. 299) it is stated that: “No eagles have so far been observed in Scilly, but there is a tradition of a White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) having been seen near the Seven Stones in 1835.” (This is not in Scilly.) In November, 1924, occurred what is the first record of a White-tailed Eagle in Scilly. It frequented the eastern end of Tresco, St. Helens, and the adjoining islands, and was so tame that its identification by two competent naturalists (who do not desire their names mentioned) was easy. It stayed over a fortnight and was not molested.

H. W. ROBINSON.

GADWALL IN SHROPSHIRE.

MISS FRANCES PITT tells me that on October 14th, 1925, two Gadwalls (*Anas strepera*) came down to the ponds in the grounds of The Albynes, Bridgnorth. They did not stay, but left almost immediately. The weather was cold; wind N.E. The species is rare in Shropshire, this being only the fifth recorded occurrence.

H. E. FORREST.

[*Cf.* the Staffordshire records, *antea*, p. 233.—EDS.]

INCREASE OF CURLEW BREEDING IN
HEREFORDSHIRE.

THE Curlew (*Numenius a. arquata*) has increased as a breeding bird in the last five years to a remarkable degree in Herefordshire, and now breeds all over the county. Last year (1925) nests were reported to me at Bromyard on the Worcester border, and at Much Marcle on the edge of Gloucestershire.

H. A. GILBERT.

ROSE-COLOURED STARLINGS IN OUTER HEBRIDES AND PERTHSHIRE.—Dr. W. E. Clarke records (*Scot. Nat.*, 1925, p. 148) the occurrence of an adult male *Pastor roseus* at St. Kilda on July 9th, 1925. The bird has not hitherto been known to occur in either the Outer or Inner Hebrides. In the same journal (p. 180) Mr. R. Kennedy states that an example was shot at Invergowrie on October 5th, 1925.

WHITE WAGTAIL NESTING IN ARGYLLSHIRE.—Mr. J. Bain states (*Scot. Nat.*, 1925, p. 152) that a pair of *Motacilla alba alba* nested in 1925 near Oban, and further that in a quarry in the town a male Pied and hen White Wagtail nested. No evidence for identification is given.

WAXWINGS IN PERTHSHIRE AND WESTMORLAND.—Lord Scone informs us that a single Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*) was seen on February 20th, 1926, on the outskirts of Perth. With reference to the Waxwing seen in Westmorland (*antea*, p. 232) Mr. H. W. Robinson informs us that one or more were seen in the southern part of the county in the last week of January, 1921, and several in the early summer of 1903 in the same locality. These do not appear to have been previously recorded (*cf. B.B.*, VIII., p. 15).

GANNET ATTEMPTING TO BREED IN YORKSHIRE.—As already recorded (*vide antea*, p. 30), a pair of Gannets (*Sula bassana*) frequented the Bempton Cliffs in 1924. In the *Naturalist* (1926, p. 9) it is stated that a pair built a nest in 1925, but no egg was seen.

WOOD-SANDPIPER IN NORTH UIST.—Mr. G. Beveridge reports (*Scot. Nat.*, 1925, p. 179) that he shot a Wader, identified at the Royal Scottish Museum as a Wood-Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*) on October 19th, 1925, at Lochmaddy. The Wood-Sandpiper is a rare visitor to Scotland, and so far as we know, has not previously been recorded from the Outer Hebrides.