

NOTES

ALBINO HOODED CROW IN IRELAND.

A PURE white Hooded Crow (*Corvus c. cornix*) was trapped at Dunsany, co. Meath, on November 12th, 1927. When alive the irides were pale pink, after death they changed to pale grey. Varieties of the *Corvidæ* are fairly common in Ireland, with the exception of Raven, Chough and this species. In fifty years' experience this is the first variety of the Hooded Crow I have met with, and think it is of sufficient interest to record.

W. J. WILLIAMS.

THE 1927 IRRUPTION OF THE CROSSBILL*.

A FEW more notes on the Crossbill irruption have been received, but most of these are from districts from which we have already published reports. I think it may be said that the immigration has now been well recorded from all parts of the country.

Observers should be watchful during the next few months for definite signs of a return movement and also for evidence of nesting, for it must be remembered that in the spring following the last irruption many Crossbills settled down, at all events temporarily, to breed.

I have received from Mons. Georges Olivier of Elbeuf some interesting notes on the appearance of Crossbills in Normandy. He writes that on July 17th and 21st two parties were seen near Fécamp (Seine Inférieure) and on the 21st about a dozen birds near Rouen. He had not seen Crossbills in Normandy since the winter 1911-12. H.F.W.

ENGLAND AND WALES.

SHROPSHIRE.—Mr. H. E. Forrest writes: "Reports of Crossbills continue to reach me from various parts of Shropshire. A flock of thirty to forty were seen attacking garden peas at Brosely in the latter part of September. Two red males were watched tearing cones to pieces at Church Stretton on October 18th; while on the 22nd a small party was seen, similarly employed, in the general cemetery, Shrewsbury. Miss Francis Pitt has not seen any herself, but hears of them on all sides around Bridgnorth."

CARDIGANSHIRE.—Professor J. H. Salter informs Mr.

*For previous notes see *antea*, pp. 90-3, 121-7, 153-5 and 175-7.

Forrest that on August 6th a single Crossbill—very tired and very tame—was seen in a garden at Tregaron.

CORNWALL.—On July 4th Mr. F. S. Chapman found a dead female on the east shore of the Lizard, and was told that several were seen flying in from the sea early in the morning.

DEVONSHIRE.—On October 9th Mr. W. Walmesley White saw four, and on November 22nd eight at Budleigh-Salterton, these being the only birds seen since the end of August.

NORFOLK.—*Correction*.—On page 177, line 6, for "single birds in twos and threes" read "birds singly and in twos and threes."

STATUS OF WOOD-LARK IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

AN editorial note in Vol. XIX. (p. 313) states that the Wood-Lark (*Lullula a. arborea*) "appears to have decreased considerably, and to be chiefly known as a winter visitor, so that evidence as to its present status as a breeding species seems to be important." The following observations may, therefore, be of interest.

I doubt whether this species has really decreased appreciably since T. Dix described it as "very generally distributed, and a constant resident" (*Zoologist*, 1866). It is true that M. A. Mathew in his *Birds of Pembrokeshire* (1894) affirmed that the Wood-Lark was then almost extinct as a breeding species, remarking that during his eight years residence in the county, though he was "constantly driving about," he had never seen or heard one in the summer; but—except with regard to "game-birds"—he is so consistently untrustworthy in questions of distribution, that his opinion is of little or no value. In any case the present status of the species seems to be much what it was in Dix's time.

Mr. Charles Oldham and I have observed Wood-Larks in June in nearly every part of Pembrokeshire at all suited to their habits, from the coast of the Bristol Channel to the Teifi valley on the northern border; and in the well-wooded central districts they are by no means uncommon. On June 27th, 1924, near Boncath, we watched a pair at a nest containing two nearly-fledged young, and heard two others singing; on June 12th, 1927, we watched a pair and heard two others singing near Clynderwen; while in 1926 and 1927, we noted Wood-Larks in song near Eglwyswrw (2); Manorbier (2); Pembroke, Picton (4); Narberth (5), and Letterston (3). Even on the almost treeless moors below Rosebush, some 750 feet up on the slopes of the Precelly mountains, one

was singing on June 13th, 1927, and another on the 14th (5 miles away). It is unlikely that all or most of these songsters were non-breeding birds; and a glance at the map in conjunction with the above list will suffice to show how freely the Wood-Lark is now distributed in the county.

BERTRAM LLOYD.

REPORTED BREEDING OF FIRE-CRESTED WREN IN LANCASHIRE.

IN *Country Life* (September 3rd, 1927, p. 343) and again in *The Ibis* (1927, pp. 732-4) Mr. H. W. Robinson announces the discovery by Major G. Haines and his niece, Miss Ellis, of a pair of Firecrests (*Regulus ignicapillus*) about six miles south of Lancaster. The birds were first noticed on June 3rd, 1927, when the observers "distinctly saw the double black head stripes with the white one between." They were "collecting lichen off the wall and creeper, and flew towards a large ornamental yew-tree on the lawn." A search was made for a nest and one was found by Major Haines on June 6th. This was "suspended about two feet from the end of an outer branch [of the yew-tree] about twelve feet from the ground." The nest was made of "moss and lichen, but had very few spiders' webs in its composition."

On June 14th, when the nest contained eggs, Mr. Robinson visited the place. One of the eggs examined had a rosy tinge. The birds, however, were so quick that Mr. Robinson failed to identify them, and he adds that the nest "might easily have had no connection with the birds seen on the creeper, and might be merely Goldcrests." On July 9th, when the nest contained young, Mr. Robinson went again and saw the parents feeding the young, and states that the markings of the cock were distinct. "Still," he adds, "I was not quite satisfied." Later, Miss Ellis examined at close range the hen bird sitting on the nest, and described "her head as resembling that of a little tiger."

On July 18th, on the nest being approached from a step-ladder, the young fluttered out but were collected to the number of five and replaced. "On putting them back," writes Mr. Robinson "each tiny atom of feathers showed a minute small lemon-coloured tuft on the crown, which is most certainly not found at this stage in the juvenile Goldcrest, moreover the moustachial streak was well developed." Mr. Robinson does not state who made this observation, but it may, perhaps, be assumed that he did not himself examine the young, though even this is not clear. In his view the

fact that the young had a lemon-coloured tuft on the crown clinches the matter of identification, and incidentally shows that the description of the juvenile in Saunders, Dresser and the *Practical Handbook* is wrong. The description in the *Handbook* was made from actual specimens, six in number, and these I have re-examined and can only re-assert that the "lemon-coloured crest" is absent from all of them.

Mr. Robinson also states that "poor, out-of-date and rather despised old Morris gives the true state of affairs." But it is evident that Morris's description of the juvenile Firecrest as having a pale lemon crest was based upon an adult female Goldcrest, since he states that the sides of the head are cinereous without any streaks. Morris makes a further mistake in describing the adult female Firecrest as having a fiery crest like the male, whereas it is yellow.

It is a great pity that one of the young was not taken and preserved in some Museum. This would have afforded definite, scientific proof of the statements made and could not have endangered the status of the bird.

As this definite proof is wanting, we have thought it best to quote all the essential evidence in order that our readers may judge for themselves whether the first breeding of the Firecrest in this country is established. At the same time we would point out that the discrepancy in the description of the young does not necessarily condemn the record.

H. F. WITHERBY.

WAXWING IN PERTSHIRE.

SINCE the middle of November, 1927, a Waxwing (*Bombycilla garrulus*) has frequented the garden at Dalguise, Perthshire. It is very tame, and seems to feed principally on the berries of the guelder rose (*Viburnum viburnum*). SCONE.

WAXWING IN DURHAM.

ON November 19th, 1927, I saw a Waxwing about two miles from the coast near Sunderland. A strong easterly wind had been blowing for some days. The bird flew off inland, with a kind of whistling trill. JOHN BYERS.

LESSER WHITETHROAT IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

AFTER severe stormy S.W. gales at the end of October, 1927, an unusual visitor was noticed on the island of Skokholm. On November 3rd, 1927, a Whitethroat was observed creeping tamely about among some dead nettlestems in a sheltered spot. It remained for six hours, during which time I had

ample opportunity to identify it as a Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia c. curruca*). Mr. Bertram Lloyd records a bird of this species in Pembrokeshire in June, 1927 (*cf. antea*, p. 178).

RONALD M. LOCKLEY.

ECCENTRIC NESTING OF THE MISTLE-THRUSH IN MAN.

MR. J. A. CORTEEN, of Laxey, sends me the following particulars of the nesting of a pair of Mistle-Thrushes (*Turdus v. viscivorus*) at the Dhoon granite quarry between Laxey and Ramsey.

About the middle of May, 1926, a workman called his attention to two nests built on the top of a light flat beam which supported the floor of the platform of a stonebreaker belonging to the Manx Electric Railway, and which for some years had not been used. One of the nests was completed and contained three eggs, the other was a little more than half finished and contained two eggs. It was observed that the bird sat alternately on each nest, and, if disturbed from one, would remove to the other, the nests being about 20 inches apart. "She sat out," says Mr. Corteen, "the full period of incubation, but without result, caused no doubt by the eggs in each nest being so often chilled." The nest with two eggs was at last robbed by a schoolboy, and Mr. Corteen had both nests removed.

In April, 1927, there were again two nests in the same position, a nest almost complete where the incomplete nest had been the previous year, and a smaller nest where the complete nest had been placed in 1926. Both nests were pulled down by a boy, but later, by June 23rd, there were again two nests, one complete and the other incomplete. This time four eggs were laid in the *incomplete* nest and all were hatched out. One young bird fell from the nest and perished, the others left on July 17th.

A high road passes on one side of the platform, and on the other side the electric railway line.

In 1927, Mr. Corteen found another Mistle Thrush's nest in a little square niche in the wall of an old roofless house, and nesting in such situations is indeed very frequent in certain districts of the Island.

P. G. RALFE.

BLACK REDSTART IN MERIONETHSHIRE.

ON December 4th, 1927, when in a little valley near Fairbourne, I saw a Black Redstart (*Phœnicurus o. gibraltariensis*); it rose within five yards of me from the side of a stream and

flew up a high adjoining bank, alighting for a moment every few yards on the bank, and so giving me several good views at short range.

The bird was in good plumage, and from the brightness of the white wing-patch it was probably an adult male.

GREGORY HAINES.

AVERAGE BROOD OF SWALLOWS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE DURING AUGUST.

THE following table gives the average brood of Swallows in Carmarthenshire, within a radius of five miles. All the nests were visited either in August or the last two or three days of July. The averages of the last five years are singularly constant, the mean being 3.95.

| | No. of Nests Examined | Broods of 5 | Average Brood Reared |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1922 | 20 | 2 | 3.71 |
| 1923 | 32 | 7 | 3.94 |
| 1924 | 24 | 7 | 3.96 |
| 1925 | 40 | 12 | 3.90 |
| 1926 | 45 | 12 | 4.04 |
| 1927 | 41 | 15 | 3.90 |

J. F. THOMAS.

STATUS OF LITTLE OWL IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

It may perhaps be of interest to record that on the islands of Skokholm and Skomer the Little Owl (*Athene n. vidalii*) is now resident, whilst on the mainland of Pembrokeshire, at least in the open country about Milford Haven, it is now the most abundant Owl.

RONALD M. LOCKLEY.

BIGAMY IN THE SPARROW-HAWK.

A NUMBER of cases have been recorded during the last few years in which from eight to ten or eleven eggs have been found in nests of the Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter n. nisus*) and evidence more or less complete has been brought forward as to the presence of two females at the nest. A letter

appeared in the *Field* for June 14th, 1927, p. 1034, from Mr. A. M. Emmet, writing from School House, Sherborne, who states that he was shown a Sparrow-Hawk's nest by a keeper who had shot the female already from the nest, and on climbing the tree was surprised to find nine eggs there. Three of them were broken, but the remaining six seemed to fall into two distinct classes, suggesting that they were the produce of two hens. On July 21st, 1927, another letter appeared in the *Field* for that date (p. 87) from Major A. A. Perceval, who records two similar cases which had come under his notice during the last few years. In 1927 a hen was shot from a nest, but, failing to get the cock, the keeper climbed to the nest to place a trap there and found a second hen lying dead, evidently killed by the same shot. There were eight eggs lying scattered about. The other case took place three or four years ago, and on this occasion there were two distinct nests side by side, and the keeper killed two hens and one cock, but there was no sign of a second cock. No locality is given in either case.

The following table summarizes the records referred to above. It is unfortunate that, as is so frequently the case with records reported in the *Field*, no locality is given with Major Perceval's notes.

| Authority | Locality | No. of Eggs | Date | Notes |
|---|-----------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| F. R. S. Bal-four of Dawyck, <i>Field</i> , 24.v.23. Cf. <i>Br.B.</i> , XVII., p. 288 | Stobo, Tweed-dale, N.B. | 10 (Also 1 in oviduct of ♀ shot) evidently 2 clutches | 11th May, 1923 | 1 ♂ and 2 ♀♀ shot from nest |
| J. Hughes Onslow, <i>Scott. Nat.</i> , 1925, p. 95. Cf. <i>Br. B.</i> , XIX., p. 180 | Barr, Ayrshire, N.B. | 8 (Arranged in rows of 4) | 23rd May, 1925 | Two birds flew from nest, subsequently 2 ♀♀ killed near by or at the nest; ♂ escaped |
| N. Greeves, <i>Br. B.</i> , XX., p. 77 | Strandtown, Belfast, Ulster | 9 2 eggs boldly marked others less so | 4th June, 1926 | 5 eggs laid within 7 days, 2 ♀♀ seen subsequently at the nest (June 14th) |

| Authority | Locality | No. of Eggs | Date | Notes |
|--|----------------------|---|---------------|---|
| A. M. Emmet, <i>Field</i> , 16. VI., 27 | Sherborne, Dorset | 9 Two distinct types of eggs in nest | —1927 | One ♀ shot from nest, another bird reported sitting |
| Major A. A. Perceval, <i>Field</i> , 21. VII., 27 | [?] | 8 | —1926 | 2 ♀♀ killed by one shot on nest; 1 ♂ also shot |
| Major A. A. Perceval, <i>Field</i> , 21. VII., 27 | [?] | [Not stated] two nests side by side | 1923 or 24 | 2 ♀♀ and 1 ♂ killed |

Possibly some of the recorded clutches of eight eggs of this species for Hants, Kent, Oxon, etc., may also be due to similar causes.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

COMMON HERON REARING TWO BROODS.

In 1927 two pairs of Common Herons (*Ardea c. cinerea*) nested in a group of spruce firs, and on March 27th one tree held a nest—small in structure—of two eggs, another tree a normal-sized nest with three eggs. On May 1st the small nest held two nestlings about a fortnight old; there was only an addled egg in the other nest, but from the fæces about it and the surrounding branches, young apparently had been hatched, and had died or been killed by Rooks (there is a large rookery less than a mile distant). The place was not visited again until August 21st, when a Heron was seen to fly to the group of firs and, on investigation, a nest of two fledged young was found in the tree which had previously held nestlings. The nest used for the first brood was lying among the branches a few feet below this nest, which was likewise of small bulk, and as the tree and the type of nest were the same for both broods, it seems the two broods were the product of one pair of birds. The other tree held an empty, but very fæces-splashed, nest, and probably a brood had been reared in it, although in this case the young were evidently a first brood from the second laying.

R. H. BROWN.

ALTHOUGH the wide discrepancies between the earliest and latest dates of the breeding of the Heron point strongly

to the rearing of a second brood in some cases at any rate, it is extremely difficult to get satisfactory evidence in a colony, as some birds may lose their first and second layings and thus be forced to breed much later than the rest. When the nests are much harried by Rooks, fresh eggs may be found at any date between February and June, but this merely shows that birds which have lost their eggs will go on laying at intervals for about three or four months. Conclusive proof of double broodedness is most probable in the case of isolated nests, and the late Robert Warren of Monkstown, co. Cork, was, I think, the first to give details of an occurrence of this kind in the *Zoologist* for 1910, p. 341. In the spring of 1896 a pair of Herons bred within 60 yards of Moy View Cottage and reared a brood of young, which were fully fledged by the end of April. On May 7th the old birds were observed building a second nest in a fir tree about 30 yards from the house, and on the next day a great noise of scolding or fighting attracted Mr. Warren's attention. He found that the young of the first brood had followed the old birds to the new nest and were persistently calling for food, while the old birds were scolding and driving them from the nest. The evidence in this case seems to be quite conclusive. In 1926 an isolated pair of Herons bred in a marshy wood in the Waveney Valley, Norfolk, and reared a brood of young. On May 12th I saw one of the birds leave the same tree and on examining the nest found extensive traces of the first brood, the branches and the ground being covered with whitewash. The old birds had relined the nest with fresh beech branches ready for the second brood, which was successfully brought off. In this case both broods were reared from the same nest, while in that recorded by Mr. Warren a new nest was built for the second brood.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE IN KENT.

ON November 27th, 1927, a party of members of the London Natural History Society on the Thames Marshes, near Cliffe-at-Hoo, had excellent views of two White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*). The white "front" was very well seen, especially on one of the birds, and the light bar on the flanks showed up quite well. They were both very confiding and went on feeding until we reached and opened the gate on the neck of land across the dyke separating them from us. They then at once took wing in the direction of the river.

JOHN E. S. DALLAS.

VELVET-SCOTER INLAND IN LANCASHIRE.

ON December 4th, 1927, I found a duck or immature drake Velvet-Scoter (*Oidemia f. fusca*) on the boating-lake of a park on the northern outskirts of Manchester. The ear-patches were well defined and conspicuous, the forward spots diffused. The white secondaries were well displayed when the bird raised its wings, but normally the speculum was only occasionally visible.

As an inland visitor, the Velvet-Scoter appears to be infrequent in Lancashire, and has only once been recorded from the neighbouring county of Cheshire (*Brit. Birds*, Vol. XVI., p. 221).

The bird, which was also seen by Messrs. A. W. Boyd and R. M. Garnett, remained on the water for a few days.

THOS. BADDELEY.

SLAVONIAN GREBE IN STAFFORDSHIRE.

ON September 2nd, 1927, I saw a small Grebe in winter plumage on the Gailey Reservoirs, Staffordshire. I watched it for some time and noticed that the dark colour on the head did not come below the eye, so think there can be no doubt that the bird was a Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*).

B. A. CARTER.

ABNORMAL CLUTCHES IN THE WOOD-PIGEON.

ON p. 19, Vol. XXI. of *British Birds*, is a note of a nest of the Wood-Pigeon (*Columba p. palumbus*) containing three eggs, with an editorial footnote concerning similar cases. Of the several hundred nests I have examined in the course of my "ringing" during the past four years, I have found one nest containing three eggs (May 18th, 1926), and one with four (May 1st, 1927). In the first the eggs were almost certainly laid by one bird; they were as like as three peas, and all somewhat more elongate than usual. This nest hatched safely.

In the case of the second nest, which was in the same wood as the other, it was probably the produce of two Pigeons, as one pair of eggs seemed decidedly smaller than the other. All were, unfortunately, sucked by Rooks. I have known of several cases where only one egg was laid and hatched. Occasionally, an interval of several days elapses between the laying of the eggs; this year I found one nest in which one of the squabs was four or five days older than the other, and another in which the difference must have been about ten days; in the latter case the younger bird left the nest a fortnight after the elder.

In June of this year one of our foresters showed me a Pigeon's nest on the ground, in the middle of a Rhododendron bush.

All these records are from a radius of about four miles round Perth. SCONE.

KNOT IN BEDFORDSHIRE.

As the occurrence of the Knot (*Calidris canutus*) so far inland as Bedfordshire seems to be comparatively rare, it may be of interest to record that a bird of this species spent the day near one of our ponds at Woburn on November 28th, 1927. It had been extremely foggy for two days. The bird was very tame, only taking flight when one approached within a few yards of it, but it did not appear exhausted and was running about briskly in search of food after the manner of its kind.

M. BEDFORD.

BIRDS AT LONDON RESERVOIRS.

MR. J. P. HARDIMAN has handed me an interesting list of birds seen this year at the Reservoirs to the west of London by himself and other members of the London Natural History Society. I extract the following records:—

| Species | Date | Reservoir | Remarks |
|---|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| Hobby (<i>Falco subbuteo</i>) | 7.9.'27 | Staines | 2 seen. |
| Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) | 26.8.'27 | Littleton | 2 seen. |
| Black-necked Grebe (<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>) | 7.9.'27 | Staines | 1 in winter plumage. |
| | 10.9.'27 | do. | 1 in winter plumage. |
| Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) | 10.9.'27 | do. | 2 in winter plumage. |
| Curlew-Sandpiper (<i>C. testacea</i>) | 7.9.'27 | do. | 1 in winter plumage. |
| | 10.9.'27 | do. | 1 in partial summer plumage. |
| Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) | 7.9.'27 | do. | 2 in winter plumage. |
| | 16.9.'27 | do. | |
| Black Tern (<i>Chlidonias niger</i>) | 7.5.'27 | Littleton | 2 in summer plumage. |
| | 7.9.'27 | Staines | 21 in partial winter plumage. |
| | 10.9.'27 | do. | 2 seen. |
| Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) | 7.5.'27 | Littleton | 6 seen. |
| | 14.5.'27 | Barnes | 1 seen. |
| | 1.8.'27 | Staines | 21 seen. |
| Little Tern (<i>S. albifrons</i>) | 19.9.'27 | Molesey | 1 in summer plumage. |

JOHN E. S. DALLAS.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE OFF CO. DUBLIN.—Mr. J. S. Barrington records (*Irish Nat. Journal*, 1927, p. 275) that a specimen of *Lanius c. collurio* was captured near the lighthouse on Rockabill on August 26th, 1927, and forwarded to him. There are only three previous known occurrences of this species in Ireland.

GOSHAWK IN YORKSHIRE.—Mr. B. Morley states (*Nat.*, 1927, p. 236) that on June 6th, 1927, a keeper shot a Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) near Pontefract, when it was in the act of striking at a Partridge with chicks. The bird had been in the neighbourhood some time.

SCAUP-DUCK AND COMMON SCOTER INLAND IN SOMERSET.—*Correction*.—In the note on this subject (*antea*, p. 184), for Berron Reservoirs, read *Barrow* Reservoirs.

SOCIABLE PLOVER IN ORKNEY ISLANDS.—Lieut. Commander P. H. Mackenzie reports (*Scot. Nat.*, 1927, p. 157) that on November 3rd, 1926, he shot a specimen of *Chettusia gregaria* at the edge of a turnip field in North Ronaldshay. The sun was nearly setting and he took the bird for a Golden Plover. It is a female in first winter plumage and is now in the Royal Scottish Museum. This eastern species is a very rare vagrant to the British Islands and has not previously been reported from Scotland.

LITTLE AUK INLAND IN KENT.—Mr. F. Howard Lancum informs us that a Little Auk (*Alle alle*) was brought alive to the Museum at Dartford on December 13th, 1927, having been found on the road side locally.

It was taken to the Park and lived for two days on the ornamental water there, and was seen frequently to feed upon sticklebacks and other small fish.

ON THE DECREASE OF BLACKGAME IN SCOTLAND.—Miss L. J. Rintoul and Miss E. V. Baxter have collected a valuable series of comparative observations, derived from a large number of correspondents and published records, on this subject. These facts have been embodied in a well-planned article, which has been published in *The Scottish Naturalist* (1927, pp. 5-13, 45-52, 69-75). From the reports from various districts it is clear that the Black Grouse (*Lyrurus t. britannicus*) has very seriously decreased in numbers during the last fifty years or so throughout Scotland. There is, however, evidence from a good many districts of a recovery during 1925 and 1926. There is a great difference of opinion as

to the cause of the decrease. Summing the matter up, the authors of this paper consider that Blackgame are unusually susceptible to external conditions, both of climate and environment, and that the principal cause of their decrease has been series of bad seasons; of contributory causes there are many suggestions, but the authors think that the chief factor is change in environment, produced by drainage and cultivation. It may be mentioned that, as pointed out in this article, Blackgame are being exterminated in various districts by order of the Forestry Commissioners and, according to the *Field*, this is actually being done in certain cases in the close season! That this action should be taken when the Black Grouse is in such a parlous state in Great Britain seems a great mistake, and such ruthless economy (if economy it is) could be better directed elsewhere.