



LETTERS

BARK-STRIPPING BY ROOKS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—I read with much interest two notes on the stripping of lime twigs by Rooks (*antea*, p. 36). It would not be wise to conclude that every twig found in this condition had been barked by Rooks. I have watched a squirrel stripping twigs in a similar way for nest-building. She did the job thoroughly. The twigs she selected were young shoots, and she removed the whole of the bark from each, peeling it in narrow strips from top to bottom. Your correspondents omitted to say whether the Rooks did this or whether they took only one strip, leaving the twig still partly clothed.

CHARLES S. BAYNE.

AN AUTUMN HABIT OF THE ROOK.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—Just forty years ago this September I first noticed the peculiar habit of the Rook, exactly as described by the Rev. E. U. Savage (*antea*, p. 57). I was spending three days in a field close to Westenhanger Castle (near Hythe, Kent) and on September 10th, 11th and 12th, about 12 o'clock on each day, witnessed this exhibition with great interest for the first time. Since then, for many years in the same month, I have seen it at the following places: Hunstanton, Norfolk, Albury in Surrey, and more often still whilst living near Farnham, Surrey.

ARTHUR R. GILLMAN.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—I have on several occasions observed the displays of Rooks, very much as described by the Rev. E. U. Savage. The birds that I have noticed belong to a small roost of about thirty pairs, situated about 350 yards from my house in Mawgan-in-Pydar, N. Cornwall.

I have kept no notes of the dates of these antics, but I do know they occur sometime after the parents appear to have ceased to feed the fledged birds.

B. H. RYVES.

MULTIPLE NESTS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—With reference to the various records of multiple nest-building and Mr. Jourdain's note thereon, the Rev. W. S. Picken, rector of St. Martins-by-Looe, wrote to me, on June 7th, 1922, that a pair of Spotted Flycatchers began a nest in a wistaria against his house, but left off, and later on built in an iron shoot that runs round the slate roof of the washhouse. Thinking they might be washed out if it came on to rain, he told the gardener to see if he could not put a projecting slate to carry the roof water over the nest. When he went up a ladder to do so he found six nests, side by side, that the Flycatchers had built during the last week. Three were lined and finished, and one of them contained four eggs; the three other nests were quite perfect except for the lining. The gardener brought down the length of iron-shoot with the nests in it for him to see. After being replaced the hen sat on the one that had the eggs.

A. H. MACHELL COX.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—In 1923, in Mawgan-in-Pydar, N. Cornwall, I made a record similar to that described by Mr. A. W. Boyd (*antea*, p. 85). A Pied Wagtail built three nests in a small disused pigeon coop—there was no room for more—and reared a brood of six in one nest, and a second brood of five in one of the others.

This year (1928), a Blackbird built two nests close to or within the territory of the pair described (*antea*, p. 87), the cock of which objected each time to the intrusion, so a third nest was rapidly built equally close to the established territory of another pair, who did not then appear to resent the trespass, for a brood was reared in it. Undoubtedly territorial rights are sometimes the cause of multiple nest-building.

B. H. RYVES.

[The last case seems hardly to come under the same category as the "multiple" nests already recorded as the three nests were built successively and not simultaneously and each would have been occupied but for *force majeure*.—EDS.]

REPORTED SEX DIMORPHISM IN NESTLING SKY-LARKS.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—An agricultural labourer in the neighbourhood of Andover, Hants, informed me that, before the war, he used to take Sky-Larks (*Alauda a. arvensis*) as cage birds. He stated that it was a matter of common knowledge amongst his friends that the spots at the base of the tongue of male nestlings were much better defined than in the female, in which they might even be absent.

On July 23rd, 1928, four nestling Larks were brought to me. In one of these the basal spots were as intense as that at the apex of the tongue; in another the intensity was not quite so great, and the other two had ill-defined basal spots. The man stated that the first was a male, the other three being females.

I took the opportunity of dissecting these birds, and found that the first and last two birds were males, and that the bird with spots of intermediate intensity was a female. I do not know if the belief in sexually dimorphic coloration of the tongue in the nestling Lark is widespread, but, if it is, this negative observation may be of interest.

Of course I realise that the numbers are not sufficient to make any generalization, but if any nests are destroyed during mowing, perhaps someone would be kind enough to verify my observation.

J. R. GROOME.

FULMAR PETREL NESTING INLAND.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—It is of interest to hear that a Fulmar colony has established itself inland in Scotland, because in Spitsbergen the Fulmar Petrel is mainly an inland nesting species. To the naturalist traversing one of the valleys of that country—Ebba Valley for example—the most noticeable bird is the silent-flying Fulmar. The birds are flying in from the sea, or out into the sea, to search for food for their young, which are reared on the ledges of the precipitous hills. The Fulmars sometimes nest actually above the snow line, and there must be nests at the 3,000 and even the 4,000 feet level. Here the young Fulmars are reared in a region of snow and ice, with glaciers far beneath them, and the eternal snowcap above them.

SETON GORDON.