

**ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FROM NORFOLK
FOR 1928.**

BY

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ONCE again I have to thank a number of correspondents, whose assistance in compiling the following notes on our Norfolk birds for the year 1928 I gratefully acknowledge, whilst for particulars with regard to weather conditions I am indebted to Mr. A. W. Preston.

The opening of the new year saw the break up of the severe frost which prevailed during the last week of the old, and was followed by a period of stormy, but mild weather, with extensive floods along most of the river valleys. The remainder of the winter was unusually open, but spells of frost and snowstorms occurred during the second week in March, and from April 13th to 22nd. The temperature was below the average during May and June, but with the commencement of July began a long spell of warm, dry, sunny weather, which lasted well into October. Severe gales occurred between November 16th and 26th, a velocity of 66 m.p.h. being registered at Gorleston on 16th, 53 m.p.h. on 23rd, and 55 m.p.h. on 25th. The rest of the month was exceptionally mild, and open weather, with very little frost, continued up to the end of the year.

Amongst the more interesting features of the year may be mentioned the nesting of three pairs of Marsh-Harriers, the unusual number of Garganeys which were present during the summer, the attempted nesting of a pair of Whooper Swans, and the occurrence of four Red-breasted Flycatchers in September.

SPRING MIGRATION.

The sudden onset of bitterly cold weather, with N.E. winds, frost, snow and sleet, which occurred between April 13th and April 21st, seemed to put a complete check on the spring migration of our summer visitors. Those species whose arrival had not previously been noted were not recorded until the cold spell was over, whilst those which had already arrived, and particularly the Hirundines, appeared to vanish. Swallows began to arrive on April 7th, on which and each succeeding day up till 13th they were seen by Mr. J. F. Thomas at Hunstanton, coasting down the eastern shore of the Wash. The largest arrival appears to have taken place on April 9th, on which day they were seen by Miss Ferrier coming in from the sea from E. to W. at Hemsby, and their

first appearance was noted at Hickling (Vincent), Saxlingham (B.B.R.) and Stoke (B.B.R.). Between April 13th and 21st there was not, I believe, a Swallow to be seen in Norfolk, but upon the return of warm weather on 22nd the coasting movement at Hunstanton was immediately resumed (Thomas). On 24th and 25th fresh arrivals took place at Saxlingham, and on the latter day numbers had again arrived at Stoke, Caistor, Trowse and Woodbastwick.

First arrivals of other species were noted as follows :—

WHEATEAR.—March 4th, S. Wootton (Tracy); March 18th, Taverham (Lloyd).

STONE-CURLEW.—March 17th, Thetford (Ferrier); March 25th, Taverham (Lloyd).

CHIFFCHAFF.—March 22nd (Ferrier); March 25th, N. Wootton (Tracy).

BLACKCAP.—March 24th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.); April 25th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.); April 28th, S. Wootton (Tracy).

SAND-MARTIN.—March 28th, Taverham (Lloyd); April 9th, Hickling (Vincent).

WILLOW-WREN.—April 5th, Hickling (Vincent); April 9th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.).

SEDGE-WARBLER.—April 8th, Hickling (Vincent); April 25th, Woodbastwick (B.B.R.).

WOOD-WARBLER.—April 26th, S. Wootton (Tracy).

HOUSE-MARTIN.—April 9th, Hemsby (Ferrier); April 28th, Holt, one (B.B.R.); April 29th (Tracy); April 30th, Saxlingham, two (B.B.R.); May 3rd, Saxlingham, fresh arrival (B.B.R.).

YELLOW WAGTAIL.—April 9th, Hickling (Vincent); April 12th, S. Wootton (Tracy); April 14th, Hunstanton (Thomas).

COMMON WHITETHROAT.—April 10th, Hickling (Tracy); April 28th, considerable arrival (B.B.R.).

REDSTART.—April 11th, S. Wootton (Tracy).

CUCKOO.—April 11th, Hargham (Sir H. Beevor); April 10th, Hemsby (Ferrier); April 23rd, Saxlingham (B.B.R.); April 23rd, S. Wootton (Tracy).

TREE-PIBIT.—April 12th, S. Wootton (Tracy); April 25th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.).

GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER.—April 24th, S. Wootton (Tracy).

LESSER WHITETHROAT.—April 27th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.).

REED-WARBLER.—April 28th, Blakeney (B.B.R.).

TURTLE-DOVE.—April 28th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.); May 2nd, S. Wootton (Tracy).

GARDEN-WARBLER.—April 30th, S. Wootton (Tracy).

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.—May 4th, Saxlingham (B.B.R.).

At the Lynn Well light-vessel at the mouth of the Wash, Redwings, Fieldfares, Blackbirds, Starlings and Sky-Larks were noticed travelling north on many days during February and March, whilst on each day between March 18th and 24th large flocks of Rooks and Hooded Crows were passing from north to south (W. S. Sharman). These last were evidently bound for the Suffolk coast, which is a favourite jumping-off place for the return journey across the North Sea, and a

passage of these two species along the Norfolk coast to the S.E. is of regular occurrence every March.

At the E. Dudgeon light vessel, some thirty miles off the north Norfolk coast, on twelve days during March, Chaffinches, Linnets, and other "Finches," Starlings, Sky Larks, Pipits, Lapwings and Waders were observed travelling to the W., W.S.W. and S.W., while on March 24th a return passage of Rooks was noticed flying from W.N.W. to E.S.E. (S. G. Sharman). The trend to the south in the direction of flight of the former migrants is curious at this time of year, but was also noticed at the same station during February and March, 1927.

AUTUMN MIGRATION.

The first indication of the commencement of the great autumnal migratory movement was the arrival of Wheatears, Willow-Wrens and other Warblers at the E. Dudgeon light-vessel on the night of August 11th (S. G. Sharman). These species again occurred at this lightship on August 12th and 17th, and, with the addition of Redstarts, on the 26th and 29th. The same species, with Common Wrens and Goldcrests, were noted on September 3rd and 13th, and with the addition of Chaffinches on the 19th and 20th; whilst Wagtails were passing by day on August 23rd and September 6th, 10th, 26th and 28th. Where the direction of flight of these birds could be determined, it appeared to be to the S.S.W., S. and S.S.E. (S. G. Sharman). At the Lynn Well light-vessel Waders were passing from N. to S., and N.E. to S.W., on August 22nd, and the first Wheatears and Warblers appeared on August 23rd and 24th. On September 11th, 12th and 13th, Finches and Swallows were noted flying from N. to S., N.E. to S.W. and E. to W., and on 19th a host of Wheatears and Warblers were around the lantern at night (W. S. Sharman).

The first Starlings, travelling as usual from E. to W., were seen at the Lynn Well on October 2nd and at the E. Dudgeon on October 5th.

On the coast-line an arrival of Pied Flycatchers, Redstarts, Willow-Wrens, Wheatears, Meadow-Pipits and Pied Wagtails was noted by Col. Payn at Cley at the end of the first week of September; an immigration of Wheatears, Whinchats and Meadow-Pipits, the latter of which were seen coming in from the sea, was in evidence at N. Runton between September 7th and 10th, and a fresh arrival of Wheatears and Redstarts was observed at the same place between September 15th and 17th (M. D. Brindley). On October 2nd a great passage of

Lapwings from E. to W., which lasted almost throughout the day, was simultaneously observed at the Lynn Well light-vessel (Sharman), at Mundesley (Miss A. Johnson) and at Salthouse (Bishop). The first Pink-footed Geese appeared on September 17th; the first Snow-Buntings were seen on September 28th, and the first Woodcock—a very early one—was shot in the sandhills at Blakeney Point on September 29th (L. Lloyd). The last great migratory "rush" of the year was recorded from the E. Dudgeon light-vessel on the night of December 10th, the last of three days of severe frost, the "pick up" next morning including Starlings, Sky-Larks, Blackbirds, Song-Thrushes, Mistle-Thrushes, Knots, Snipe, and one Woodcock (S. G. Sharman).

Woodcocks were rather scarce during the early part of the season, and this was generally attributed to the tremendous gales which occurred between November 16th and 26th. Rumours were current in Norfolk and elsewhere of numbers of drowned Woodcock being met with in the North Sea during this period, and "Cheviot" of *The Field* (January 24th, 1929) writes of a passenger on a steamer running from Norway to Hull having described to a friend "passing through thousands of drowned Woodcocks." Such an occurrence is, to say the least of it, difficult to believe, and the evidence is at second-hand, which is the nearest to all such reports it seems possible to attain. Certainly not a single drowned Woodcock was reported as having been washed up on the Norfolk coast, where the evidence seems rather to point to the normal migration having merely been delayed. From mid-December onwards the number of Woodcocks met with was certainly up to, if not above, the average, and amongst some good days reported to the writer may be mentioned thirty-three killed at Melton Constable, twenty at Houghton, seventeen at Woodbastwick, and thirteen at Hempstead.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

MAGPIE (*Pica p. pica*).—For the third year in succession a pair of Magpies reared a brood at Hickling. Though a few Magpies still manage to elude the gamekeepers in west Norfolk, this is, so far as I am aware, the only pair which now nests in the eastern division of the county.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla f. flava*).—A pair, evidently just arrived, and which were in company with about a dozen Yellow Wagtails and one White Wagtail, were seen by me at Cley on April 28th. A male was also seen by Miss M. Barclay at Felbrigg Ponds on September 4th.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa p. parva*).—No less than four Red-breasted Flycatchers were reported during September. The first was obtained on Cley beach on September 15th (E. C. Arnold,

antea, p. 141). Another was seen by Major Daukes on the watcher's hut at Salthouse on September 16th. A third was seen by A. B. Carter on Cley beach on September 22nd, and on September 30th one was picked up under the window of the lifeboat house at Blakeney Point, against which it had evidently flown (L. Lloyd). The two birds killed were in first winter plumage, the last one proving on dissection to be a male. The number of this species which have now been obtained in Norfolk is seventeen.

BLACKCAP (*Sylvia a. atricapilla*).—A remarkably early male Black-cap appeared in my garden at Saxlingham on March 24th and was again seen on the following day, after which it disappeared. It was not once heard to sing, though it appeared to be in good condition.

DARTFORD WARBLER (*Sylvia u. dartfordiensis*).—On January 9th one was seen at close quarters by Col. W. A. Payn in a patch of gorse on a golf course by the sea. Although it has nested in Suffolk, the Dartford Warbler has very rarely occurred on the Norfolk side of the border. Two specimens have been killed on Yarmouth Denes, the last on February 25th, 1859, and the only other which has been recorded is one in Lord Leicester's collection which was shot on the sea-bank at Wells on December 15th, 1905.

RING-OUZEL (*Turdus t. torquatus*).—An unusually early Ring-Ouzel was seen near Acle by Mr. A. H. Patterson on February 4th.

REDSTART (*Phœnicurus ph. phœnicurus*).—Four pairs of Redstarts bred at Kelling this year (A. P. Meiklejohn). These were the only nesting pairs reported from the north-east of the county, where this species is still very rare.

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia s. gaetkei*).—The only Bluethroat recorded for the year was an immature female on Cley beach on September 15th (W. A. Payn).

HOOPOE (*Upupa e. epops*).—Two Hoopoes were seen on Blakeney golf course on April 15th (Capt. Barker).

SHORT-EARED OWL (*Asio f. flammeus*).—One pair at least nested in the Broads district (J. Vincent) and another pair at Scott Head. These last again proved very destructive to the Common Terns, upon which the young Owls appeared to be fed almost exclusively, the old birds raiding the colony regularly every evening (S. H. Long).

MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus æ. æruginosus*).—This proved a record season for Marsh-Harriers. Three pairs successfully nested in the county, and in view of the fact that nowhere else in Great Britain does this bird now breed, this record is one of which those responsible for their protection in Norfolk may well be proud. The earliest nest, containing five eggs, hatched on May 31st; the second, which had a clutch of four, hatched on June 2nd, whilst the third nest contained four small nestlings on June 19th. From these three nests eight young ones were in all successfully reared. The extremely sporting action of Major E. C. Morel in giving his keepers orders to protect one of these pairs of birds which nested on his estate, and in allowing them to rear their young in close proximity to where he was at the same time rearing his young Pheasants, is greatly appreciated by all Norfolk naturalists. Remains of food sent to me from this nest by Miss Ferrier consisted entirely of Water-hens, and these also formed the bulk of the food upon which the young were fed at another nest which was under observation by Mr. J. Vincent. It is to be hoped, therefore, that Major Morel's hospitality was not greatly abused and that his young Pheasants did not suffer unduly.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*).—Two pairs for certain, and possibly three, nested during 1928.

OSPREY (*Pandion h. haliaetus*).—One was seen at Hickling early in May (J. Vincent).

SPOONBILL (*Platalea l. leucorodia*).—One arrived on Cley Marsh on March 31st but left the following day (Bishop). Another appeared at Hickling about the middle of April and stayed until May 1st (J. Vincent). Two visited Breydon on May 6th and remained until May 14th (Betts).

LITTLE BITTERN (*Ixobrychus m. minutus*).—One was seen by a pond at Wroxham on May 10th by Major S. Trafford, who managed to flush it no less than three times.

COMMON BITTERN (*Botaurus s. stellaris*).—The Bittern appears to be gradually extending its breeding area, and at the same time its numbers in localities already tenanted continue to be well maintained. This year, for the first time, one was heard booming throughout the breeding-season on a marsh in the valley of the Yare, within five or six miles of Norwich (G. E. Ffiske).

WHOOPER SWAN (*Cygnus cygnus*).—One of the most remarkable incidents of the year was the attempt made by a pair of Whoopers to nest on a small mere on the Merton estate. About the middle of March one of the Merton keepers noticed a pair of Swans taking material to a nest at the foot of a willow tree growing in the middle of a small pond, but thinking they were tame Swans from a neighbouring mere thought no more of the matter. Early in April one of the Swans left, the other remaining on the pond, and, when disturbed, flying to a larger piece of water near by. About the end of the month this bird was seen by Mr. H. Wormald, who at once recognized it as a Whooper, and noticed that it appeared to have an injured leg. A few days later, and again on May 6th, it was seen on the same pond by Dr. S. H. Long. It left about the middle of May, but a Whooper, which was in all probability the same bird, was seen by Mr. A. Boyd on a neighbouring mere in the first week of June. The nest was examined on May 17th and found to be empty. It was built of decayed rushes and water-weeds, and stood about two feet above the level of the water.

GARGANEY (*Anas querquedula*).—The year 1928 proved an exceptionally good one for Garganeys, some eight pairs nesting in the Hickling and Horsey area (J. Vincent) and four or five pairs at Ranworth (H. J. Cator), whilst a nest was, for the first time, found at Cley. This last was unfortunately deserted after four eggs had been laid, but on these being placed under a hen by Mr. Colin McLean three ducklings were successfully hatched. At one well-known duck shoot eighteen Garganeys were killed during the month of August—a regrettable fact, but one which can only be avoided by the opening of the duck-shooting season being postponed until September 1st.

COMMON POCHARD (*Nyroca f. ferina*).—As a nesting species the Pochard has always been confined to the neighbourhood of the meres in the south-west of the county, and the only known instance of its breeding on the north-east side was in 1923 and 1924, when two pairs nested on Cley Marsh. In the summer of 1928 several pairs for the first time remained on Hickling Broad. One nest was found, which contained seven eggs on May 24th, and from which five ducklings were eventually hatched, whilst a second pair almost certainly also nested.

PAGET'S POCHARD.—A specimen of this hybrid between the Common Pochard and the White-eyed Pochard (*Nyroca n. nyroca*) was shot at Hickling on November 3rd, 1928. This makes the sixth which has been obtained in Norfolk, four of which, including the above and the first known example, shot on Rollesby Broad on February 27th, 1845,

are now in the Norwich Museum. All those obtained have been drakes, and all are almost exactly similar in plumage.

SLAVONIAN GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*).—One was seen on Hickling Broad on April 7th (J. Vincent).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps n. nigricollis*).—One was shot at Blakeney on January 17th (F. E. Gunn), and a pair were seen on Langmere on July 19th and on September 6th (Miss M. Barclay).

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*).—A considerable number of Ruffs and Reeves, as usual, passed through the county during the spring migration. A remarkably beautiful black Ruff and one Reeve remained at Hickling throughout the first half of May, and hopes ran high that the pair would nest. A second black-ruffed male joined these on May 15th, when a good deal of displaying and fighting between the two Ruffs took place, and all three disappeared a few days later (J. Vincent).

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias n. niger*).—Unusual numbers of Black Terns passed through during the spring migration, many remaining so late in the season as to raise hopes that this year, at least, a pair or two might stay and breed. They began to arrive during the last few days of April, when some were seen at one of the west Norfolk meres by Mr. H. Halls. On April 30th three were seen on Surlingham Broad (F. E. Gunn). Between May 1st and May 5th many were hawking over the river Wensum between Bintree and Billingford (Sir Bartle Frere). On May 4th seventeen were seen at Cley Marsh (Bishop), and on May 8th six at Ranworth Broad (H. J. Cator). On May 30th ten visited Hickling Broad, one was seen at Hickling on June 2nd (J. Vincent), and the last one at Waxham on June 24th (Miss V. Peel).

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna s. sandvicensis*).—Blakeney Point was again the colony most favoured by the Sandwich Terns, the numbers nesting there this year being estimated at 1,000 pairs. In the colony further to the east only some fifty or sixty pairs appear to have bred, whilst at Scolt Head no more than five or six nests were found, only one of which hatched. The recovery of three Sandwich Terns ringed as nestlings at Blakeney Point this year by Mr. A. H. Boyd revealed the interesting fact that all had wandered a considerable distance to the north before starting on the southward journey to their winter quarters. One was reported on September 2nd from near E. Hartlepool, Durham, the second from Eggie, Aberdeen, on August 8th, and the third from Alnmouth, Northumberland, on August 24th (*antea*, p. 187). The only other Norfolk Sandwich Tern which has been reported was a bird ringed by Miss Turner as a nestling at Scolt Head on June 17th, 1925, which was recovered at Esmoriz, near Oporto, Portugal, on October 5th, 1927 (*antea*, Vol. XXI., p. 300).

ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna d. dougallii*).—A pair of Roseate Terns again nested in one of the Tern colonies, and two young were successfully reared. The first egg was laid on May 19th.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus r. ridibundus*).—An adult picked up dead on Cley Marsh in June was found to have a ring which was placed on it as a nestling at Scolt Head on June 12th, 1925 (*antea*, p. 187).

HERRING-GULL (*Larus a. argentatus*).—A Herring-Gull in juvenile plumage was shot at Blakeney on September 5th, bearing the ring: "Museum Nat. Hist., Leiden, Holland, 61042" (F. E. Gunn). I learn from Prof. Van Oort of the Rijks Museum, Leiden, that this bird was ringed as a nestling at Bergen, Holland, on July 22nd, 1928 (*antea*, p. 206).

ICELAND GULL (*Larus leucopterus*).—The identity of some all-white Gulls which were present in the county during May and the early part

of June proved somewhat difficult to establish, though from the weight of evidence I have little doubt they were of the above species and not Glaucous Gulls.

The first was seen on Breydon on May 7th by Mr. Patterson, but at such long range that its identification was impossible. A few days later one was seen by Miss Turner at Waxham, and this bird, being in company with both Greater Black-backed and Herring-Gulls, Miss Turner was able from a comparison in size to identify as an Iceland Gull. On May 24th Messrs. W. G. Alexander, J. Vincent and the writer watched one from a distance of about thirty yards resting on a marsh at Hickling. This was an immature bird, probably in second or third summer plumage, being all white, faintly freckled and barred with pale creamy-brown. It was entirely alone, and having no other bird with which to compare it for size, even at such short range all three observers had to admit the difficulty in deciding whether it was a Glaucous or an Iceland Gull. The following day (May 25th) two similar birds were again seen by Mr. Patterson on Breydon, whilst early in June one was again seen by J. Vincent at Hickling. Upon this occasion it was in company with two Herring-Gulls, which it appeared to resemble exactly in size, and Vincent has no doubt that this bird in any case was an Iceland Gull.

LITTLE AUK (*Alle alle*).—On November 26th, after ten days of almost incessant westerly and north-westerly gales, fifty-two Little Auks were counted by Miss J. Ferrier flying north up the coast-line past Hemsby (*antea*, p. 193), whilst one was picked up alive the same day at Ormsby (A. H. Patterson). Numbers were also seen at sea from the E. Dudgeon light-vessel on November 25th, 26th and 27th (S. G. Sharman).

SPOTTED CRAKE (*Porzana porzana*).—No nest of the Spotted Crake has, so far as I know, been reported in Norfolk since 1890, though a few birds occur from time to time during the spring and autumn migrations. Mr. J. Vincent flushed one this year on a marsh at Hickling on August 3rd, and again on August 22nd and 23rd, and on December 12th one was picked up dead at high-water mark on Palling beach (A. H. Patterson).

QUAIL (*Coturnix c. coturnix*).—Several Quails were reported during the year, though no evidence of their having nested in the county has been forthcoming since 1923. A female which had killed itself against telegraph wires was brought to Mr. Patterson at Yarmouth on June 11th. Three were flushed and one killed near Thetford on September 19th (*Field*, September 27th, 1928, p. 587), and towards the end of October one was shot and another seen at Brancaster (B. K. Wilson).