

## NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF SCILLY.

BY

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SINCE Clark and Rodd's paper on the Birds of Scilly in the *Zoologist* of 1906 there have been several short papers on them in *British Birds*: by Mr. H. M. Wallis (Vol. XVII., p. 55 and Vol. XVIII., p. 73), by myself (Vol. XVIII., p. 106) and by Mr. and Mrs. Seton Gordon (Vol. XXIII., p. 18).

In 1920 I spent the last ten days of September in Scilly, and was there for ten days from September 12th to 21st this year—ten years later.

Notes made on each occasion show that the status at this time of year of many species, both resident and migrant, is apparently quite unchanged. The normal residents: Song-Thrush, Blackbird, House-Sparrow, Stonechat, Linnet, Robin, Hedge-Sparrow, Wren, Rock-Pipit, etc., and the partly-resident: Greater Black-backed and Herring-Gulls, Shags, etc., were just as abundant as ever.

Other species were noted in practically the same numbers as ten years ago: Starlings, not numerous, but in fair numbers; Sky-Larks and Meadow-Pipits, fairly common; Wheatears and Swallows, common; House-Martin, seen only once in each year; and waders, such as Dunlin, Sanderling, Redshank, Curlew, Oyster-Catcher, Turnstone, Ringed Plover, with exactly the same comparative frequency.

Some idea of the limited number of species to be seen in Scilly may be gathered from the fact that we observed on the islands and the sea near by only sixty-eight to seventy species during these ten days, though the actual number of birds seen was very considerable. Most common migrating Passeres were almost altogether absent—only three Willow-Wrens or Chiffchaffs were seen and Common Redstarts twice.

The following notes may be of interest.

**CHAFFINCH** (*Fringilla c. cœlebs*).—A few on Tresco only; never more than four together.

**CROSSBILL** (*Loxia c. curvirostra*).—My wife called my attention to three—one a crimson male—feeding within four yards of us on thistle heads on St. Mary's on September 12th. The keeper on Tresco told me that on September 9th he saw a flock feeding on thistles that he estimated to be fully 200 and that prior to that he had seen a few—exactly how long before he could not remember; he attributed to them attacks on some of the apples. Clark and Rodd record them in 1868 and 1901.

**WHITE WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla a. alba*).—Common on five islands visited. On September 18th they were particularly noticeable on St. Agnes and Gugh, scattered everywhere over the heather-clad headlands and

beaches. I did not identify a single Pied Wagtail satisfactorily; all the adult birds I saw were undoubtedly *alba*. Clark and Rodd: "not uncommon casual autumn visitor coming over with the migrant flocks of Pied Wagtails."

GREY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla c. cinerea*).—On September 19th and 20th at Holy Vale, St. Mary's.

GREAT TIT (*Parus major newtoni*).—Repeatedly seen on three islands. The species seems to have made a slight, but definite, increase.

SEDGE-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus schænobænus*).—One on St. Mary's, September 17th.

GREENLAND WHEATEAR (*Enanthe æ. leucorrhœa*).—Among the numbers of migrating Common Wheatears on September 18th on Gugh I watched a cock feeding with a cock Common Wheatear and the difference in size and brightness was most evident. Doubtless others of the scores of passing Wheatears seen in the islands were also of this form. Clark and Rodd do not mention the Greenland Wheatear.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa s. striata*).—Seen on St. Mary's four times between September 12th and 20th—not more than two together. Clark and Rodd: "probably a regular autumn visitor."

PIED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*).—On September 13th and 15th several together on Tresco. On September 14th and 20th on St. Mary's. Clark and Rodd: "occur not infrequently in twos and threes during autumn migration."

SAND-MARTIN (*Riparia r. riparia*).—One with Swallows on St. Mary's on September 17th. Clark and Rodd: "a casual bird of passage in spring and autumn."

KINGFISHER (*Alcedo a. ispida*).—One at Porth Hellick, St. Mary's, on September 17th.

PINTAIL (*Anas a. acuta*).—One, a brown bird, on September 16th, on the Abbey Pool, Tresco. Clark and Rodd: "appear only in severe weather."

WIGEON (*Anas penelope*).—Two on the Long Pool, Tresco, on September 15th.

LITTLE GREBE (*Podiceps r. ruficollis*).—One on the Long Pool, Tresco, on September 13th.

TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia t. turtur*).—One on St. Mary's on September 20th. Clark and Rodd: "occurs rarely in autumn."

RUFF (*Philomachus pugnax*).—A young and tame bird on September 15th by the fresh-water pool on Bryher, where I saw two in September, 1920. Clark and Rodd record three immature birds. It is, perhaps, worth adding that on September 22nd, on our return to Cornwall, we saw another very tame bird in similar plumage on Marazion Marsh, near Penzance.

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—Several on St. Mary's on September 12th and again later. One on St. Agnes on September 18th.

WHIMBREL (*Numenius ph. phaeopus*).—One only on St. Agnes on September 18th. A boatman called it a "Harvest-Curlew", a name I have not known before. Clark and Rodd say that it was plentiful ninety years ago in early autumn, but by 1906 few in autumn.

TURNSTONE (*Arenaria i. interpres*).—It should, I think, be put on record that Mr. C. J. King, in a booklet *Wild Nature in Scillonian*, most emphatically denies that he has seen the Turnstone nesting in Scilly—a statement attributed to him in Clark and Rodd's list.

COMMON GULL (*Larus c. canus*).—Seen only once—several on the

Abbey Pool, Tresco, on September 16th. In September, 1920, also, I saw Common Gulls only once—several on September 28th on St. Martin's. Clark and Rodd: "small winter parties seem to be not uncommon."

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus graellsii*).—Very few seen: twice on St. Mary's on September 14th, but one of these looked like *L. fuscus fuscus*, or possibly *intermedius*. On September 18th I saw perhaps six *graellsii* on St. Agnes. Clearly Clark and Rodd's statement: "most abundant all the year round" is incorrect. (See also *Brit. Birds*, Vol. XXIII, p. 19).

SANDWICH TERN (*Sterna s. sandvicensis*).—Two on a rock at St. Martin's on September 15th and two flying between St. Mary's and Tresco on September 21st.