

## LETTERS.

## SONGS AND CRIES OF THE NUTHATCH.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS, May 1, in reference to the valuable contribution by Mr. Walpole-Bond on the "Songs and Cries of the Nuthatch" in your August issue (pp. 70-1), offer my notes on the calls of the Hampshire Nuthatch and ask Mr. Walpole-Bond whether his Sussex birds repeat their calls a definite number of times as the birds here seem to do.

1. A sort of level "Trill" or whistle of, sometimes fewer but not exceeding, twelve staccato notes, quickly given. This "trill" call is given many times and replied to by another in the distance.

This seems to correspond to Mr. Walpole-Bond's (2) Song B.

2. "Wheeee," given usually four times, though occasionally five and six. A piercing cry, but not a whistle, the last "ee" higher than the rest of the call.

3. "Tidididi," a fluty call of four quick notes repeated, with raised crest from the top of a tree.

4. "Pwee pwee pwee pwee," rather deliberate, taking four seconds. Almost always four notes, but at times five or six, but this seldom. An ascending scale, each note rather higher than the preceding one. The "p" sound is very short. Given with partly raised crest while hunting for food in branches.

This is, probably, (1) Song A (W.-B.).

5. A quick "Whi," the "i" as in "if." Repeated eight or ten times. Not the "Trill" nor the "Pwee," not so quick as the first nor so slow as the second.

Possibly corresponds to (3) of Mr. Walpole-Bond.

6. A quick staccato "Whi" given when flying and when in a tree seeking food. Repeated, almost always, eight times, though sometimes fewer and at times up to twelve. Not a level series of notes but rising in the scale. The beak opens wide to emit each note, closing to open for the next. It can give this call when the beak is holding food.

Probably (4) (W.-B.).

7. "Peepee--peepee," clear and flutelike; repeated with a short interval between each pair. Sometimes gives one "peepee," then changes to the "whi" call.

This is, probably, (5) (W.-B.).

8. Both birds attacked, in a mild way, a Starling which had intentions on their nesting-box. One called "Wheetwheet--wheetwheet."

9. The young having hatched the song was seldom heard, but a cry of anxiety between "Tip" and "Teep" was made while the nesting-box was being examined, thus "Tip—tip—tip—tiptip (quick)—tip—tip—tiptip," continued.

10. "Chee" repeated one, two, three or four times, but never more than four, at about one per second. Crest erected a little, beak open, given at intervals while searching in leaves for food for young.

11. "Chee" loud; usually four times, at times five, each a little lower than the preceding note, a descending scale. Given while sitting on nesting tree with beak pointing upwards and opening a little at each cry.

All these calls were noted during the month of April.

SWAY, HANTS.

GEO. MARPLES.

## SPEED OF STONE-CURLEW.

To the Editors of BRITISH BIRDS.

SIRS,—Driving one evening recently across an open Suffolk heath, I flushed a Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus a. aedincnemus*) which, for perhaps

half a mile, flew low about thirty yards in front of the car, keeping for some reason to the line of the road. At 25 m.p.h. the bird, flying fairly fast, kept ahead of the car. I gradually accelerated up to 32 m.p.h., at which speed the Stone-Curlew, pretty obviously doing its utmost, was slowly overhauled, and I pushed it off the line of the road, which it left at a small angle. Thirty m.p.h. would appear to be about the limit of its speed under pressure. The speedometer is, I think, quite reliable.

T. G. POWELL.