

NOTES

STATUS OF CORN-BUNTING AND WILLOW-TIT IN ESSEX.

MR. W. E. GLEGG, in his *History of the Birds of Essex* (p. 34), states that the Corn-Bunting (*Emberiza c. calandra*) is mainly a littoral species but extends a short way up the estuaries and is scarce inland except in one area in the north-west of the county. I observed this bird breeding in several instances near Chelmsford, and in that area of the Chelmer between Chelmsford and Little Baddow the bird is as numerous as one can expect to find it anywhere in summer.

In May, 1933, I observed the Willow-Tit (*Parus a. kleinschmidti*) breeding at Woodhill and Writtle Park, Essex. I have also many winter and spring records of this bird from many places in central Essex, including Danbury Common, East Hanningfield, Sandon, Epping Forest and Galleywood. My own experience would have it that this species (which I have always identified by the distinctive grey wing-patch and "tchay-tchay-tchay" note) is thinly, but regularly, distributed throughout central Essex. W. K. RICHMOND.

NOTES ON THE TREE-SPARROW, 1933.

THE following notes on the Tree-Sparrow (*Passer m. montanus*) were made near Great Budworth, Cheshire, and refer to the same small colony as the notes previously printed in *British Birds*, XXV., 278-285 and XXVI., 273-4.

Observations confirmed those of other years in many particulars.

Return to nesting-trees.—First seen in these trees on February 23rd, rather earlier than usual, though they were first seen on the same date in 1930. On March 3rd and 4th there was a noticeable increase round their nesting-sites.

Size and number of broods.—The breeding-season was unusually warm and dry, but despite this the average brood was no bigger than usual; in fact during the last six years it was slightly larger than this year in three separate seasons. But in one important point the birds were much more prolific than usual; almost all had or attempted to have three broods and in consequence the aggregate number of birds fledged was greater than in other years, though the actual broods were no larger.

Size of Broods:—

	No. of broods ringed.	Broods of					Average for each brood.	Total broods for year.	Average for the year.	
		1	2	3	4	5				6
1st brood	18	—	2	3	9	4	—	3.83	} 44	} 3.61
2nd „	16	—	4	4	6	2	—	3.37		
3rd „	10	1	—	3	4	2	—	3.6		
Total	44	1	6	10	19	8	—			

Interval between broods.—As in other years the time between broods varied considerably, but in several boxes the next lot of eggs was laid within a very few days of the flight of the first brood, though usually ten to fourteen days elapsed, and several weeks in one or two cases.

Ringed birds.—Five were recovered during the summer.

Number.	Date ringed.	Adult or juvenile.	Date recovered.		
H5789	28.7.29	juv.	23.4.33	Four years old; the oldest Tree-Sparrow yet recovered.	
{	K8928	4.6.31	nestling	19.6.33	Caught brooding young in Box 16—250 yards away across a meadow. Caught on eggs in Box 1—a few yards away. These two were members of the same brood and were hatched in Box 2.
	K8929	4.6.31	nestling	17.7.33	
L6392	30.5.32	nestling	13.5.33	Trapped about 300 yards from its original nest.	
L6424	8.6.32	adult	29.7.33	Ringed from a trap. Found dead in Box 6 with a brood of young, which were successfully reared by the other adult.	

Insects.—In a list of insects new to Lancashire and Cheshire, published by Mr. H. Britten in the *Nineteenth Report of the Lancashire and Cheshire Fauna Committee* for 1932, the following diptera were recorded, bred from Tree-Sparrows' nests I sent him: *Tephrochlamys tarsalis* Zett. and *Meoneura neottiophila* Coll. A. W. BOYD.

A LIME TREE RINGED BY WOODPECKERS.

THE accompanying photograph of a lime tree (*Tilia* sp.) in Leigh Woods, Somerset, was taken by Mr. H. Tetley, to show the peculiar rows or rings of regularly-spaced pits in the bark, which I first noticed in 1930. Such pits are highly characteristic of the American Sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus*), and Dr. Charles Townsend, to whom I showed the photograph, was convinced that they must have been made by one of these

birds. The resemblance is, so far as one can see, perfect; and there is good reason to believe, as Dr. Townsend has recently shown (*Condor*, 34, 1932, pp. 61-65), that in America no other species of Woodpecker makes these distinctive patterns. This conclusion applies particularly to the Hairy



and Downy Woodpeckers (*Dryobates villosus* and *D. pubescens*), which have sometimes been accused, apparently in error, of "ringing" trees also. They are nearly related to the European Great and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers (*D. major* and *D. minor*).

Through the kindness of the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain my attention has been drawn to a case similar in every detail in

Silesia, E. Germany, described by Herr Juhnke (*Berichte des Vereins Schlesischer Ornithologen*, 18 Jahrg., 1933, pp. 42-44). Here six trees, also limes, were so marked; all were of the American species usually called "basswood" (*Tilia americana*), and native European lime trees close by were entirely free from ringing. Possibly the Leigh Woods tree is a basswood, also. Herr Juhnke was told by the forest rangers, who had had their trees under observation for eleven years, that the pits were worked chiefly in spring, and occasionally at other seasons, by the Great Spotted Woodpecker in particular, and to a smaller extent by the Middle Spotted, Green and Black Woodpeckers (*Dryobates medius*, *Picus viridis* and *Dryocopus martius*).

If this is correct, their habits agree exactly with those of the Sapsuckers, which not only drink sap when it flows in the spring, but also eat the cambium layer underlying the bark, which they sometimes seek also in autumn. Herr Juhnke of course found no sap-flow in July.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers nested in 1930 in the immediate vicinity of the tree in Leigh Woods; and Green Woodpeckers were plentiful, though I never saw the Lesser Spotted there. Trees marked in this way appear to be most uncommon, so that the habit is rarely indulged; and although the rings are undoubtedly due to Woodpeckers, one cannot yet say to which species. Once sap-flow is started, for example in America by Sapsuckers, many sorts of birds (including *Dryobates*) and other creatures are attracted to it, which might account for the varied observations of the Silesian foresters.

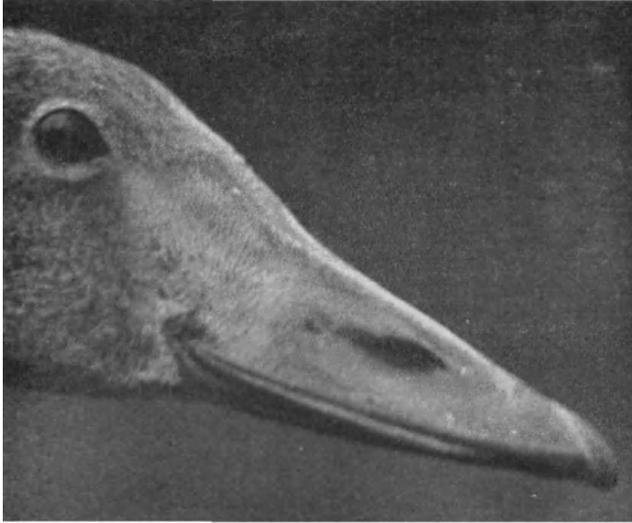
V. C. WYNNE-EDWARDS.

BEWICK'S SWAN IN SURREY.

On Sunday, December 17th, 1933, on a frozen lake at Felbridge, on the Surrey side of the Surrey and Sussex border, I was shown a number of Mute Swans, and amongst them one of very different appearance. It was obviously a young bird, of a buff-grey colour, darker on the head and neck and with the upright carriage, as it stood on the ice, of a Whooper or Bewick's Swan. It had come in a few days before with a number of Mute Swans to join a few of the latter that were residents. The stranger was evidently very hungry and readily took grain thrown to it. I suggested that it might be possible to capture it, and this was done without difficulty by hand the next day, so tame had the bird become owing to the scarcity of food. It was sent to the Zoological Gardens where, now that it is well fed, its tameness has disappeared.

It is undoubtedly a Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus bewickii*). The measurement from tip of bill to end of tail is 46 inches.

The bill is flesh-colour, but the area which, in the adult is covered with yellow skin, is, in this bird, of a dull whitish



Head of immature Bewick's Swan, captured at Felbridge, Surrey, December 18th, 1933.

colour, covered with very short feather shafts which appear to be disappearing, and is of the shape characteristic of *C. bewickii* and not *C. cygnus*. D. SETH-SMITH,

LARGE NUMBERS OF COMMON SCOTERS IN MENAI STRAITS.

ON November 26th, 1933, at twelve noon, the Menai Straits were dotted with thousands of birds. They stretched from opposite Pen-y-Clip corner westwards as far as could be seen with the glass and northwards apparently right across the Straits. The three observers present were agreed that the numbers ran into several thousands. They appeared to be Common Scoters (*Oidemia nigra*) on migration. They were facing in all directions though several short individual flights took place, mostly in an easterly direction. None appeared to be diving though the height from which they were observed and the press of birds in the water made this uncertain.

M. MITCHELL.

NORTHERN GUILLEMOT IN INNER LONDON.

HAVING learnt that the police at City Road were asking about a supposed "penguin", I discovered, after enquiry, that the bird was found wandering in Bunhill Fields Burial Ground by

one of the gardeners on December 15th, 1933. After various delays I learnt that the bird had died and was buried, but at my request it was exhumed by the gardener and I found it to be a Guillemot.

In spite of the fact that it had been dead twelve days, and buried for eleven, the bird could be skinned. It was a female and was in a starved condition. Mr. Witherby, who has examined the specimen, informs me that it is of the Northern form (*Uria a. aalge*) and is half moulted to summer plumage.

I believe this to be the first record for this species in the inner London area. E. MANN.

ARRIVAL OF PUFFINS IN ORKNEY.

I WAS very interested to read Mr. R. M. Lockley's article on Puffins (*antea*, p. 214). In this connexion it may be interesting to compare the dates of their arrival at Sule Skerry in Orkney with his dates at Skokholm, Pembrokeshire.

	<i>First Seen.</i>	<i>Landed.</i>		<i>First Seen.</i>	<i>Landed.</i>
1896 ...	April 15	April 20	1902 ...	April 9	April 18
1897 ...	" 14	" 22	1907 ...	" 9	" 16
1898 ...	" 8	" 22			
1899 ...	" 7	" 16	1931 ...	" 9	" 16-18
1900 ...	" 12	" 18	1932 ...	" 8	" 16-18
1901 ...	" 10	" 18	1933 ...	" 8	" 16

The dates for 1896-1901 were given to me by the late Mr. James Tomison, the head lightkeeper there for several years, and a first-class field naturalist. The method of procedure there is very much the same as on Skokholm and as first related by Mr. Tomison—how they appear off the island some time before they land, coming close inshore during the day and drifting out to sea at night; how they land at last and stay only a few hours, to depart again for two or three days before landing for good. This year, 1933, between April 8th and 9th, there was a heavy gale from the N.E. It will be seen that the dates 37 years ago are not very different from those of the present year. H. W. ROBINSON.

PIED WAGTAIL NESTING ON SONG-THRUSH'S NEST.—Mr. E. Cohen sends us a note on a pair of Pied Wagtails (*Motacilla a. yarrellii*) which built their second nest in 1933 on the top of a nest of Song-Thrush (*Turdus ph. clarkei*). Both species had already brought off one brood from ivy on a wall within a few yards of one another at Mobberley, Cheshire. The use of old nests of other species as a foundation is not uncommon in the case of the Pied Wagtail, and out of twenty-five records, twelve refer to the Song-Thrush, six to the Blackbird, three to the Robin, two to the Dipper and one each to Swallow and House-Sparrow (See *Br. B.*, X., p. 185, etc.).

EGGS OF RADDE'S BUSH-WARBLER.—In the *Bulletin Brit. Ool. Asso.*, IV., p. 24, the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain describes a set of five eggs of Radde's Bush-Warbler (*Herbivocula schwarzi*) from Elho in Manchuria, taken 9.vi.1923. This is one of the few species on the British list whose eggs were unknown until two sets were collected by Smirnow. The average size of the eggs is 16.3 x 12.8 mm. and they somewhat resemble in appearance those of the Eastern Reed-Warbler (*Acr. bistrigiceps*) but are smaller, uniformly marked with small streaks and spots of brownish olive which almost conceal the greyish ground.

BLACK REDSTART IN ESSEX.—Mr. W. K. Richmond informs us that he saw a Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus o. gibraltariensis*) on November 4th, 1933, at Little Dunmow Priory. There appear to be few records of the species in the county.

COMMON BUZZARD IN KENT.—Messrs. Hubert E. Pounds and W. E. Busbridge inform us that on December 10th, 1933, they watched through glasses in a wooded valley near Canterbury, Kent, a Common Buzzard (*Buteo b. buteo*) gliding slowly along at a fair height above the trees. It travelled thus for a considerable distance, following the course of the valley, but ultimately disappeared from view. About two hours later the observers again saw the bird, in almost the same place where they first noticed it, this time being vigorously attacked by a Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter n. nisus*) which succeeded in driving it down into cover. The day was fine and cold with a moderate north-east wind.

BREEDING OF GADWALL AND WIGEON IN IRELAND.—At the meeting of the British Ool. Association on September 22nd, 1933, Mr. C. V. Stoney announced that two new species had been found breeding in Ireland in 1933. A leading Irish ornithologist found a nest of the Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) with ten eggs, and one of the Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) with seven eggs. The eggs and down have been critically examined by Mr. G. H. Lings, who confirms the identification, but no further particulars can be given at present. It is extraordinary that the Gadwall has not previously been observed in Ireland later than April, and has always been regarded as a winter migrant to the country (*Bull. B.O.A.*, IV., pp. 31-2).

SLAVONIAN GREBE IN ESSEX.—Mr. P. A. D. Hollom informs us that he saw a Slavonian Grebe (*Podiceps auritus*) on December 10th, 1933, from the end of Tollesbury Pier, on the Blackwater Estuary. The light was perfect and the bird came very close to him so that he was able to see the

black on the head coming down to the eye, with white on each side of it, and the absence of an uptilt in the bill, very clearly.

GANNET SEEN IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN.—Mrs. H. Cornish informs us that in January, or early February, 1933, she watched a Gannet (*Sula bassana*) flying and diving in the Mediterranean, near Alexandria, Egypt. The bird was carefully examined through field-glasses, and it was undoubtedly an adult. This is very far east for the appearance of this species.

GREY PHALAROPES ON COAST OF FRANCE.—Mr. G. R. Mountfort writes us that he is informed by several French ornithologists that the Grey Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) was observed in considerable numbers on the coasts of Brittany and Finistère during the autumn of 1933, especially in the month of October.

PORTRAIT OF DR. E. HARTERT.—We regret to have omitted to state in the last Number, that the portrait of Dr. E. Hartert, reproduced on p. 224, is the copyright of Messrs. Elliott & Fry, and was reproduced by their permission.