

NOTES

LAPLAND AND ORTOLAN BUNTINGS IN PEMBROKESHIRE.

ON September 5th, 1936, a Bunting was seen by several observers running about rapidly among heather clumps on Skokholm Island, Pembrokeshire. Although a sketch was made of the bird, which was very tame, no definite identification was arrived at. It was still on the island on the 11th, and what was considered to be the same bird was finally secured on that date. It proved to be a Lapland Bunting, an immature bird. The wing measured 93 m.m. ; wing and tail formula (typical buffish white markings on outer tail feathers) as in that species ; legs almost black with long and nearly straight hind claw longer than hind toe. The note of this bird could only be likened to a "quiet chirrup," something between that of a Linnet and a Pied Wagtail. This appears to be the first record of a Lapland Bunting (*Calcarius l. lapponicus*) for Wales.

On September 11th, while observers were looking for the Lapland Bunting, an Ortolan Bunting (*Emberiza hortulana*) was put up from heather. It was an immature bird, and except for the eye "spectacle," which was conspicuous, and the small bunting bill, might have been overlooked at a distance as a Meadow-Pipit, especially as the tail showed white on outer feathers. Head greyish brown uniformly speckled darker brown ; back like Meadow-Pipit but not prominently striped ; pale chin accentuated by dark malar stripe ; a warm or rufous tinge to the under parts below the spotted breast. The slightly pinkish and very small Bunting bill was unmistakable. This is the second record for Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, and South Wales (*cf. British Birds*, Vol. XXV., p. 79).

Both these birds were watched by Messrs. C. C. Doncaster, R. M. Lockley, B. M. Warner, G. A. R. and J. D. Wood. Subsequently, on September 12th, another immature Lapland Bunting was seen on the island by Messrs. Doncaster, Warner and Wood, and this bird was heard to utter a single "twee."

R. M. LOCKLEY.

LONG INCUBATION-PERIOD OF BLUE TIT

EACH year I have a number of Continental Blue Titmice (*Parus c. caeruleus*) nesting in boxes in my garden at Le Vesinet (S. et O.) and have kept accurate records of their incubation periods. These show 13 days as the normal period,

12½ and 14½ as extremes. This year one pair, with 8 eggs, took 15 days and another pair, with 10 eggs took the extraordinary time of 19 days. The weather was not remarkable in any way during this period, and the young were safely reared; the fledging period, from the day of hatching to the day of leaving the box, in both cases being exactly 19 days. The nests were inspected daily until the first egg was laid, also towards the termination of the clutch and again at dawn and dusk when hatching time was due. G. R. MOUNTFORT.

[The only explanation which I can suggest is that steady incubation did not begin till some days after the clutch was completed. Practically all estimates of the incubation period of the British Blue-Tit fall between 13 and 14 days; the fledging period is more variable and ranges from 14-15 days (T. H. and W. R. Harrison) to 16-17, 18, 19 and even 21 days.—F.C.R.J.]

PIED FLYCATCHER IN CO. CORK.

I HAVE received from Mr. McMahon, Principal Keeper, Roanarrig Lighthouse, off the coast of Cork, the leg and wing of a Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa h. hypoleuca*) killed striking the lantern at 3.0 a.m. on September 21st, 1936. This is the twenty-second specimen received from an Irish light-station. Mr. McMahon reports that another bird of this species visited the Rock on September 23rd.

G. R. HUMPHREYS.

BLUETHROAT IN ESSEX.

On September 19th, 1936, at the Walthamstow Reservoirs we had the good fortune to see a Bluethroat (*Luscinia svecica*), apparently an immature bird. Its back and head appeared to conform to the description given in the Handbook and the rump and tail were especially noticeable in flight. The chin and upper breast seemed to be whitish and across the breast was a metallic blue band, below which was a very dark, almost black band. The bird was under observation for about 30 minutes and we were able to approach to within 30 yards. This bird was again seen on the following day.

W. A. WRIGHT, R. W. PETHEN AND E. MANN.

KINGFISHERS' MOULTING PERIODS.

IT might be of interest to record that on examining an adult female Kingfisher (*Alcedo a. ispida*) from Crookston, Renfrewshire, on July 17th, 1936, I found it to be in full body-moult. I have also examined birds which were moulting the body-plumage in April and early May.

The periods of moult are given in the *Practical Handbook* as from August to November and from January to March, so that these examples extend the periods of both moults.

PHILIP A. CLANCEY.

FOOD OF KESTREL AND POSSIBLE SEED-DISPERSAL.

ON June 17th, 1936, I was shown a nest of a Kestrel (*Falco t. tinnunculus*) containing two young, in an elm near Farnham Royal (Bucks). A number of bones, obviously the remains of the Kestrel's prey were found. These bones were identified for me at the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, and they represent approximately the following numbers of individuals:

Twenty-two common field-voles (*Microtus agrestis hirtus*); one water-vole (*Arvicola amphibius*); one field-mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*); four young rats (*Rattus* sp?); four House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*).

A small number of pellets examined were composed of the hair of the various mammals and contained also small bones and the wing-cases of beetles which could, however, not be identified. There were also leathery "skins" containing numerous seeds, and these I regard as the stomach walls and contents of the voles, etc. The dispersal of seeds by being transported on the feet of birds has often been stressed, but it seems that birds of prey (and other birds feeding on seed-eating animals) may act as even more efficient transporters when they eject in pellets the seeds which their prey has not digested. The only question which I have not the knowledge to decide is whether the seeds once inside the vole are still capable of germination. I put some of the seeds into a pot and one of them germinated within a short time. The pot was unfortunately lost later. The germination of one seed only does not, of course, provide sufficient proof from which to draw conclusions.

O. E. HÖHN.

GOOSANDERS SPENDING SUMMER IN SURREY.

I WAS surprised to see a brown headed Goosander (*Mergus m. merganser*) on the upper Pen Pond in Richmond Park, on September 21st, 1936. It was amazingly tame and came on to the much frequented path between the ponds with the many Mallards, when it permitted a very close approach. It did not appear to be a normal bird. The crest was unusual both in shape and colour, springing away from the back of the head like that of a Merganser and having a greyish tinge. On September 26th, I found two more of these birds on the

lower pond. They were in good plumage and very tame, although not so markedly so, as the first bird, which was still on the upper pond. The two birds on the lower pond soon flew off with vigorous flight in a southerly direction. The original bird was seen by me on September 28th, but not after. On the 27th, two tame birds were seen on the reservoirs at Barn Elms, and were probably those I had seen on the previous day. I ascertained later that the first bird had been seen on the 18th, and also that three brown headed Goosanders had been seen on a pond on Clapham Common. I went to the Common on October 2nd and visited the four ponds. On only one of these were duck, including Mallard, Pochard and Tufted Ducks, but no Goosanders. I then interrogated a keeper who informed me that three unusual birds, Goosanders, had been on the pond through the summer and that he had no doubt that they were still there as he had seen them on the previous day, but on accompanying me to the pond they were not to be found. I have knowledge of Goldeneye and Scaup having stayed on through the summer in Middlesex and Essex respectively, but I do not know that Goosanders have ever stayed through the nesting season so far to the south. The first bird was seen to eat bread during its stay in Richmond Park. It is of interest that these birds, generally difficult to approach, should settle down on such a small pond in a much frequented public park and then on the approach of the autumn migration, commence to take flights to neighbouring waters. I am informed that no birds are put down on Clapham Common. The possibility of the birds coming from some other ornamental water to Clapham must not be overlooked, but Goosanders are not commonly kept in captivity.

WILLIAM E. GLEGG.

ON January 16th, 1936, I was informed that three strange ducks had been seen on a small piece of water on Clapham Common, London, known as the Mount Pond. I visited this pond on January 20th, and identified these three birds as immature Goosanders. One bird was slightly larger than the others and was probably a male. They were very tame and successfully competed with the Mallards which were being fed with bread. On my next visit they remained close to the island and did not come for the bread. I saw them several times subsequently, and am told that they remained there until September 24th, when only two birds were seen, the largest having departed about one week previously. So far as I know, they have not been seen since that date.

The question as to how they obtained their food is somewhat puzzling. They were often seen diving, and on some occasions

they brought fish to the surface. On one occasion the pond was visited after dark, and by the light of the headlamps of a car, the birds were seen on the island.

The pond is quite small, about two acres, and although considered to have been well stocked with fish, it is unlikely that these birds could have obtained sufficient food there to sustain them for a period of about eight months.

W. A. WRIGHT.

INCUBATION AND NESTLING PERIOD OF THE FULMAR PETREL.

As the incubation and nestling periods of the Fulmar Petrel (*Fulmaris. g. glacialis*) are not really known, it may be of interest to state what I observed each period this summer. The *Practical Handbook* gives the incubation period as variously estimated as from six to eight weeks, or even sixty days. In the 3rd Edition of Saunders's Manual (Eagle Clarke) it is given as from fifty to sixty days, all this data having evidently been copied from previous authors.

The Fulmar frequents a site for several years before finally nesting there, and for seven or eight years a pair so frequented a small island in Orkney, and sometimes laid an egg there which did not hatch, but this year, for the first time, the egg hatched and the young bird got away.

The egg was laid either on May 29th or more likely, on May 30th, and hatched on July 9th, giving an incubation period of forty or possibly forty-one days at the most.

On August 21st, although full-grown, it was still in the nest, and a wireless message on the morning of September 4th stated that it was still there. On the evening of that day, however, it left the nest for the first and last time, and did not return. This makes the nestling period eight weeks and one day, or fifty-seven days, which added to the incubation period of forty days, gives a total of ninety-seven days, or fourteen weeks all but one day. The nest was under a rock protected on three sides, the opening being about three feet by two feet, and about two feet high. The young one did not leave the nest until it did so for good.

H. W. ROBINSON.

EARLY BREEDING OF STONE-CURLEW.

FURTHER to the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain's note on the above subject (*antea*, p. 133) it may be of interest to record that on May 6th, 1933, I found two young Stone-Curlews (*Burhinus æ. ædicnemus*) in Buckinghamshire. The chicks were estimated to be about twenty-four hours old. Allowing 26 days for incubation, the full clutch must have been complete about April 9th to 10th.

G. K. YEATES.

ON May 10th, 1935, in the Salisbury district, I found two young Stone-Curlews, apparently not more than two days old. Allowing 26 days for incubation, the clutch of eggs must have been complete by April 12th or 13th. This was on the exposed crest of a high, bleak hill.

In exactly the same spot I found two eggs on April 10th, 1936, and the bird was then incubating. R. WHITLOCK.

UNUSUAL NUMBERS OF LITTLE STINTS

As the following observations will show, Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*) have been seen in unusual numbers in various parts of the country this autumn. It would seem advisable to record the movements and numbers of these birds as fully as possible and we shall therefore be glad to have any further observations that our readers may have made.

FIFESHIRE.—Two at Morton Loch, Tayport, on September 8th (G. Carmichael Low).

MIDLOTHIAN.—Four at Threipmuir Reservoir, Edinburgh, on September 12th (G. C. Low with H. F. D. Elder and J. N. B. Munro).

CHESHIRE.—Two at Altrincham Sewage Farm on September 24th and 27th, four on October 4th and one on October 8th (A. W. Boyd).

NORFOLK.—Twenty-seven at Carvel Pool, Weybourne, on September 20th, thirty-five there on the 21st and twenty-one on Salthouse Broad; ten on Salthouse on the 24th (G. Carmichael Low with R. M. Garnett).

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.—Nineteen (with nine Curlew-Sandpipers and five Ruffs) at Cambridge Sewage Farm on September 20th (R. C. Homes with H. A. Littlejohn and L. Parmenter).

ESSEX.—Nine at Chelmsford Sewage Farm on September 13th (R. C. Homes with D. A. T. Morgan and C. W. G. Paulson).

SUSSEX.—Eight and two at the Midrips on September 17th. The eight remained until the 19th but had gone on the 20th, when the two were still present, but left before the 24th (N. F. and R. N. Ticehurst). Two at Chichester Harbour on October 18th (P. A. D. Hollom and B. W. Tucker).

SURREY.—One at Brooklands Sewage Farm on August 24th, September 14th and 16th and three on the 18th (P. A. D. Hollom).

BERKSHIRE.—Five on Windsor Sewage Farm on September 19th (P. A. D. Hollom).

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—About twenty at Slough Sewage Farm on September 11th and twenty-five on the 18th (W. B. Alexander); ten there on the 26th (R. J. Spittle); six on the 27th (R. C. Homes); two on the 30th and one on October 4th (O. Höhn).

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.—One on mud flats below Severn Beach on September 20th (H. H. Davis and H. Tetley).

SOMERSETSHIRE.—Two at Barrow Gurney Reservoir on September 26th (J. H. Savory and H. Tetley).

SPOTTED REDSHANKS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

ON September 20th, 1936, in company with Messrs. H. A. Littlejohn and L. Parmenter, I observed a party of four Spotted Redshanks (*Tringa erythropus*) at Cambridge Sewage Farm, and heard the distinctive call-note. Previous records for the county refer to single birds or pairs. RICHARD C. HOMES.

FLOCK OF AVOCETS IN HAMPSHIRE.

ON August 7th, 1936, Miss N. Shaw saw a flock of 12 black and white birds with upcurved bills about 4 p.m. in Christchurch Harbour. She reported the occurrence to Miss C. Popham who on the 8th saw and identified three Avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) on the wing. On July 9th she again put up two Avocets which flew off and later in the day found eleven about on the mud together with Common Terns and was able to get quite close to them in a boat.

On the 10th I was on the marsh and heard the calls of Avocets among some hundreds of Gulls on the wing. They were in a small, compact flock and finally settled in shallow water. On approaching them later I found they were twelve in number and through the glass some appeared to be immature, judging from the brown markings on the head. They were rather shy and finally flew out of sight. Subsequently Miss Popham again met with the same flock in the Harbour on the 11th but they seem to have left soon afterwards.

There is a previous record of eighteen seen on Southampton Water in 1880, of which twelve were shot; with this exception, this appears to be the largest flock which has reached the county.

F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

LITTLE GULL IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

AT Cambridge Sewage Farm on August 23rd, 1936, in company with Dr. Lack, Messrs. R. C. Homes and C. S. Bayne, I watched an immature Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). When first observed the bird was swimming and feeding with some Black-headed Gulls. On the water the darker mantle, streaked crown and blackish ear-coverts were plainly visible; while the smaller size, upright carriage of the tail, and the curious jerky "phalarope-like" swimming action immediately attracted attention. At close quarters in flight the bold black marking on the upper side of the wing was especially conspicuous. The tail was square, white, with a brownish terminal band. The under-parts showed entirely white. The flight was desultory, the action tern-like, but the shorter and more rounded wings gave the bird the appearance of a small Black-headed Gull.

C. W. GEOFFREY PAULSON.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE IN SURREY.—Mr. Kenneth R. Chandler sends us particulars of a Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) which he watched near Oxted on March 18th, 1936.

ROBINS OCCUPYING VACATED TERRITORY.—Mr. A. G. B. Wainwright informs us that on September 20th, 1936, a Robin (*Erithacus v. melophilus*) was inadvertently killed in a

mouse-trap. During the morning and afternoon of the same day he caught and ringed four different Robins in a Potter trap set near the centre of the territory of the dead Robin. This trap had been working for some time previously in the same place and had failed to catch the owner of the territory or any other Robin. This would seem to provide evidence of severe external pressure on unoccupied territory when eligible.

AMERICAN GOSHAWK IN THE SCILLY ISLES.—Mr. F. W. Frohawk records (*Field*, 30, v. 36, p. 1318) that an adult male American Goshawk (*Accipiter g. atricapillus*) occurred at Tresco, on December 28th, 1935. The bird, we understand, was examined and identified at the Natural History Museum. There is only one previous fully authenticated example, which was shot in Co. Tyrone on February 24th, 1919.

BRENT GEESE IN CO. DOWN IN SUMMER.—Mr. C. D. Deane informs us that on July 23rd, 1936, he observed a flock of nineteen Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla*) swimming near one of the islands of Strangford Lough.

FOUR EGGS IN NEST OF WOOD-PIGEON.—Mr. G. K. Yeates informs us that on September 17th, 1936, at Sherborne, Dorset, he found a nest of Wood-Pigeon (*Columba p. palumbus*) containing three eggs, and on revisiting the site on September 22nd, the number had been increased to four. Mr. Yeates states that it is evident from the stained appearance of the shells of two of the eggs and the condition of the interiors compared with the fresh and clean condition of the other two eggs, that this is a case of two clutches. Mr. Jourdain remarks that he himself met with a similar case in May, 1900, in Staffordshire, where a Wood-Pigeon was sitting on two fresh eggs, and had pushed to one side two discoloured ones.

FIRST BREEDING OF FULMAR ON FARNE ISLANDS AND YORKSHIRE.—*Corrections*.—Attention was drawn in our pages (Vol. XXIX., p. 360) to a statement by Mr. F. H. Edmondson (*Nat.*, 1935, p. 231) that the first proof of an egg being laid by the Fulmar (*Fulmarus g. glacialis*) on the Farne Islands, was in 1935, whereas the date of 1929 was given by the late G. Bolam. Mr. H. B. Booth informs us that the latter statement was certainly founded on an error and must have referred to the mainland, and Mr. Edmondson who visits the Farne Islands every year, affirms that the first egg seen was in 1935.

Mr. Booth desires us at the same time to correct a statement made in our pages (Vol. XVII., p. 40) that the Fulmar bred on the Yorkshire cliffs in 1921. The first eggs were taken

here in 1922, no eggs being found in 1921, although the climbers were keenly on the look-out for them.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN SEEN IN CO. CORK—*Correction*.—In Mr. S. Baron's note on this subject (*antea*, p. 176) the locality was unfortunately printed as Slandore instead of Glandore.