

ON THE MORE IMPORTANT ADDITIONS TO OUR
KNOWLEDGE OF BRITISH BIRDS SINCE 1899.*

BY

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PART X.

(Continued from Vol. I., page 350.)

FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus roseus* Pall. S. page 395.

[On November 22nd, 1902, a Flamingo was shot on the Wash; on November 5th, 1904, another was seen in Norfolk; and in August, 1906, three were shot in the same county. In December, 1904, one was killed in Kent; but so many have been turned out at Woburn with only cut wings (*cf.* Vol. I., p. 91), and probably at other places, that we cannot regard these as genuine migrants.]

We must here record our emphatic opinion that it is contrary to the interests of scientific ornithology to turn out birds of species which visit us or may be likely to visit us as genuine migrants.]

GREY LAG-GOOSE *Anser cinereus* Meyer. S. page 397.

SCOTLAND.—A young bird still unable to fly was obtained in the Tay area in the autumn of 1906, and the bird was considered to have been bred in the district (T. G. Laidlaw, *Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.*, 1906, p. 237). Mr. Harvie-Brown records a decided increase in the numbers of this species in many parts of Scotland, and a distinct expansion of range to certain new haunts (*Fauna N. W. Highlands and Skye*, p. 221).

A bird received from Limerick November 23rd, 1901, has been assigned by Mr. F. Coburn (*cf. Bull. B.O.C.*, XII., p. 80, and *Zool.*, 1903, p. 46) to the supposed distinct eastern form which was separated by Hodgson under the name of *Anser rubrirostris*. Mons. S. Alpheraky, who examined a very

* As was explained in the first instalment of these articles (*vide* BRITISH BIRDS, Vol. I., p. 52), we refer here only to those records and observations which are additions to the Second Edition (1899) of Saunders' "Illustrated Manual of British Birds." It must also be pointed out that nothing which has already appeared in any part of this magazine is included in these articles, so that they must be read in conjunction with the magazine so far as published, as well as with Saunders' "Manual."

large series of this goose, does not, however, admit the validity of this bird even as a geographical form (*cf. Geese of Europe and Asia*, p. 29), and Mr. Coburn's arguments seem to be set aside by the proofs of great variability in size and colouring brought forward by M. Alpheraky.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons* (Scop.).

S. page 399.

There has been a great deal of discussion during the last few years as to the validity of *Anser gambeli* of Hartlaub, the American representative of the White-fronted Goose (*cf. J. H. Gurney, Ibis, 1902, p. 269 et seq.*; F. Coburn, *Zool.*, 1902, p. 337; H. W. Robinson, *t.c.*, 1903, p. 268; J. A. Harvie-Brown, *t.c.*, p. 315, and S. Alpheraky, *Geese of Europe*, etc., p. 45, etc.). Mr. Coburn thinks, with some former authors, that the bird is distinct, and that specimens which he says he received from Ireland belong to it; M. Alpheraky, on the other hand, unites the bird with *A. albifrons*. It must be pointed out that specific characters founded on specimens obtained outside the breeding area of the bird are really of little value. The White-fronted Goose is without question a variable species, and whether it can be separated into geographical races or not, can only be determined by a careful comparison of a large series of specimens obtained within one breeding area, with a corresponding series obtained in another breeding area.

LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser erythropus* (L.).

S. page 400 (also *cf. B.B.*, Vol. I., p. 14).

NORFOLK.—An adult female was shot near King's Lynn on January 24th, 1900, and sent to Mr. F. Coburn (*cf. F. Coburn, Zool.*, 1901, p. 317; *Bull. B.O.C.*, XII., p. 15; J. H. Gurney, *Ibis*, 1902, p. 269, etc.).

YORKS.—A male in the collection of the late Sir H. Boynton was said to have been taken near York (T. H. Nelson, *B. of Yorks.*, p. 413).

BEAN-GOOSE *Anser segetum* (J. F. Gm.). S. page 401.

OUTER HEBRIDES.—One was shot and two others were seen in South Uist in March, 1903 (J. A. Harvie-Brown, *Ann. Scot. Nat. Hist.*, 1903, p. 119). The "Manual" says that its reported occurrence in the Outer Hebrides requires confirmation.

M. Alpheraky's separation (*op. cit.*) of the *Anser arvensis* of Brehm from the *A. segetum* of Gmelin is supported by a considerable amount of evidence. The chief characters lie in the bill, that of *A. arvensis* being "longer and com-

paratively broader at the point, and far more depressed behind the nail of the upper mandible (than that of *A. segetum*). At the same time the lower mandible in *M. arvensis* is less curved and comparatively less depressed in the thickest part (looking at the shut bill from the side) than in *M. segetum*. The nail is considerably shorter, but at the same time also broader and more rounded, both longitudinally and transversely." The colours of the bills of the two birds are also different, but they do not seem to form a safe guide owing to their variability. We have quoted the above passage at length because Mr. F. W. Frohawk affirms that this goose is the usual form of the Bean-Goose to be found in this country, and that the true *A. segetum* is rare (cf. *Field*, 1902, p. 605; *Zool.*, 1903, p. 41). Mr. Einar Lönnberg in discussing the question is inclined to think that variability accounts for the differences, and that there are not two distinct species (*Zool.*, 1903, p. 164).

Mr. Frohawk considers (*Zool.*, 1903, p. 42, etc.) that the bird shot at St. Abb's Head on February 25th, 1896, and described by Mr. F. Coburn at length in the "Zoologist" (1902, pp. 441-448), as *Anser paludosus* of Strickland, is referable to *A. arvensis*. Mr. Coburn laid stress on the great length of the neck of the bird he described, but the specimen being a stuffed one no reliance can be placed on this feature.

The distribution of *A. arvensis* and *A. segetum* is incompletely known, but according to M. Alpheraky *A. arvensis* is far more numerous than *A. segetum*, and the "region of its nidification is larger both in longitude and latitude."

Another species of Bean-Goose, viz., the *Anser neglectus* of Sushkin (cf. *Ibis*, 1897, p. 5) from Novaya Zemlia and Kolguev, is suspected by M. Alpheraky (*op. cit.*, p. 81), and by Mr. Frohawk (*Field*, 1902, p. 1045) to occur in Great Britain.

Many diverse opinions have been expressed as to the specific differences of these Geese and their occurrence in this country, and it appears to us that before a definite decision can be reached more observations and examination of larger material must be made.

These birds undoubtedly vary greatly individually both in size and coloration; moreover, they are usually shot by sportsmen rather than naturalists, and consequently it is difficult to get together a good series with careful notes as to the colouring of the soft parts, which has, perhaps unfortunately, been used as a character for the separation of the species. Thus a bird, which the editor declared to be a Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhyncus*), was sent to the "Field" from Breconshire this year, and this specimen had yellow legs and

feet (*cf. Field*, 1908, p. 182, 410). On this point M. Alpheraky (*op. cit.*, p. 89) remarks that he can find but one record of such an occurrence in the wild bird (Payne-Gallwey, *Letters to Young Shooters*, 3rd Series, p. 69), although it has been recorded that Pink-footed Geese bred in captivity sometimes have both the bill and the feet yellow.

SNOW-GOOSE *Chen hyperboreus* (Pall.). S. page 405.

IRELAND.—A female in excellent plumage was shot in *co. Longford* on October 28th, 1903. It was in company with another bird, also shot, but not preserved, which was described as "dark in the plumage," and may have been a young bird of the same species (Williams and Son, *Zool.*, 1903, p. 459). Four were observed flying overhead within forty yards at Foxford, *co. Mayo*, on December 1st, 1903 (G. F. Knox, *Irish Nat.*, 1904, p. 76, and R. Warren, *Zool.*, 1904, p. 32). On December 30th, 1906, Captain Kirkwood saw a flock of fourteen (four white adults and ten greyish-coloured birds) at Bartragh, *co. Mayo* (R. Warren, *t.c.*, 1907, p. 72).

GREATER SNOW-GOOSE *Chen nivalis* Forster.

(*cf. S. page 406.*)

This form, which is only to be distinguished from the foregoing species by its larger size, inhabits Arctic America, whereas the smaller bird is apparently confined, as a breeding species, to eastern Siberia and the western shores of Arctic America (*cf. Alpheraky, op. cit.*, p. 15). A specimen of this bird was shot near Belmullet, *co. Mayo* (? date), and was exhibited by Dr. R. B. Sharpe on behalf of Mr. R. J. Ussher at the November, 1899 meeting of the Brit. Orn. Club (*Bull. B.O.C.*, X., xv.).

BRENT GOOSE *Bernicla brenta* (Pall.). S. page 411.

An adult female of the American Black Brent (*B. nigricans*) is said by Mr. F. Coburn to have been shot by a wildfowler, named Richardson, in the Wash "deeps" (Norfolk), on January 15th, 1907, and sent to him (*cf. J. H. Gurney, Zool.*, 1908, pp. 121 and 123 and Plate). Mr. Coburn informs Mr. Gurney that a male of the same species was shot by the same wildfowler near Lynn and sent to him on February 14th, 1902. If the occurrence of a bird new to the British list is to be accepted as authentic, it is far more satisfactory wherever possible that it should be examined in the flesh by two or more ornithologists, and recorded at the time, than that it should be recorded for the first time months and even years after it was obtained.

(*To be continued.*)