

NOTES

A "FIVE" CLUTCH OF THE PINE-GROSBEAK.

A WELL-AUTHENTICATED clutch of eggs of the Pine-Grosbeak (*Pinicola e. enucleator*), exceeding four, is so rare that it may be worth recording that a nest containing five fresh eggs of this species was found near Noatun, east Finmark, on June 11th, 1937, by Herr Torolv Schaanning, the well-known east Finmark ornithologist, with whom I am personally acquainted. He informs me (*in litt.*) that he had never previously seen or heard of a clutch exceeding four eggs, during many years of ornithological work, in Finmark. The set is now in my possession and shows no sign of having been produced by more than one hen bird. I see that the *Practical Handbook* states "5 once recorded". W. M. CONGREVE.

[This is a matter on which opinions differ: Lilliesterna states that clutches of 5 "never" occur; Hortling on the other hand says of the eggs "3-4, undantags vis [exceptionally] 5"; Dan Meinertzhagen's collection included a set of 5 (probably taken by a native); Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker took c/5 on June 10th, 1933, which he says was "evidently a second laying as young were already flying"; and I have seen several sets in other collections, but with scanty data; J. A. Sandman told Dresser that he had once found a nest with five eggs.—F.C.R.J.]

GREAT REED-WARBLER IN KENT.

ON August 2nd, 1937, near Appledore, Kent, I was walking along a dyke which had much lush vegetation—rushes, giant dock, water plantain, etc.—along its edges when I saw flitting from stem to stem by the water's edge a bird which was undoubtedly a Great Reed-Warbler and presumably *Acrocephalus a. arundinaceus*. The dyke at that early hour (7 a.m.) was full of Reed- and Sedge-Warblers busily feeding and the large size of this bird, compared with its companions, the coloration and its typical mode of settling on stems and its flight left no doubt on my mind as to its identity, as it is a bird I am very familiar with in many countries. It was not possible, of course, to be certain that the stranger was not *Acrocephalus stenoreus*, a bird not yet on the British list; the colour, however, was too fulvous for *Arundinax aëdon*. I saw the bird on three occasions, flitting in front of me as

I walked along the dyke and finally lost it in a tangle of high vegetation. A visit during the same afternoon found the dyke deserted of bird-life. Dr. N. H. Joy informs me that there was a large movement of migrants at Dungeness Light the previous night.

CLAUD B. TICEHURST.

SEDGE-WARBLER BREEDING IN OUTER HEBRIDES.

ON May 31st, 1937, I found a nest of a Sedge-Warbler (*Acrocephalus schænobænis*) with four eggs, near the Goulaby burn, North Uist. Subsequently Mr. A. R. Thompson and



I erected a hide from which we photographed and filmed the birds at the nest. There appears to be no previous record of the breeding of this species in the Outer Hebrides.

There was also a Sedge-Warbler, in song, near Balranald House, North Uist, on June 13th, 1937. JAMES W. CAMPBELL.

SUBALPINE WARBLER AT MAIDENS LIGHTHOUSE, CO. ANTRIM.

ON June 15th, 1937, I received a bird from Mr. J. J. O'Boyle, an assistant keeper of the Maidens Lighthouse, situated in the North Channel, some eight miles from the Co. Antrim seaport of Larne.

The bird was found dead on the lighthouse balcony at 4.30 a.m. on Sunday, June 13th, at a time when the weather was foggy, with a very light wind, scarcely blowing one in strength.

On examination I could only conclude that the bird was a male Subalpine Warbler (*Sylvia cantillans cantillans*), but realizing it was not right for me to depend entirely on my own determination of species, which was worked out with the aid of the *Practical Handbook* and not by comparison, I sent the bird to London, where Mr. H. F. Witherby was kind enough to examine it and to confirm the naming. This is the second Irish example of the Subalpine Warbler, the first being so recent as September 17th, 1933, from Hook Tower light, Co. Wrexford.

Mr. Witherby informs me that previous records for Britain are all Scottish, numbering four—St. Kilda, June 14th, 1894; Fair Isle, May 6th, 1908; Isle of May, May 30th, 1924; and Tarbatness Lighthouse, Ross-shire, May 3rd, 1935.

The specimen will be included in the Belfast Municipal Museum collection. J. A. SIDNEY STENDALL.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER BREEDING IN YORKSHIRE.

It may be of interest to record that a pair of Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) nested and reared five young, which are now on the wing, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, this year, 1937. W. S. MEDLICOTT.

BIRDS TAKING MOTHS.

In a previous note of mine (*antea*, Vol. XXX., p. 172) reference was made to Gulls taking map-winged swift moths (*Hepialus fusconebulosa*) in North Uist. In the evening of June 29th, 1937, at Newton, North Uist, large numbers of this moth were on the wing and many Black-headed Gulls (*Larus r. ridibundus*) and Common Gulls (*Larus c. canus*) were "hawking" for them. A Corn-Bunting (*Emberiza c. calandra*) and a Sky-Lark (*Alauda a. arvensis*) were also seen to capture these moths and to feed their nestlings with them. On July 4th, 1937, at Newton, an immature Wheatear (*Enanthe æ. ænanthe*) made an unsuccessful attack on a passing moth, which on being "netted" proved to be a map-winged swift.

At Layer Marney, Essex, on July 12th, 1937, a Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa s. striata*) was seen in pursuit of an oak-eggar (*Lasiocampa quercus*). JAMES W. CAMPBELL.

FLIGHT SPEED OF GUILLEMOTS, RAZORBILLS AND PUFFINS.

DURING speed trials of a ship in the neighbourhood of Ailsa Craig in May, 1937, I observed that Puffins, Razorbills and Guillemots (*Fratercula arctica*, *Alca torda* and *Uria aalge*) with beam or following winds were all easily able to pass the ship steaming at approximately 37 land miles per hour. Upon one occasion with the ship steaming at that speed into a direct head wind of 10 land miles per hour a flight of Guillemots came up from astern and were able to pass the ship, though slowly; overtaking speed, calculated on time taken to pass the total length of the ship, estimated at 3 land miles per hour, giving them a total speed of 50 land miles per hour through the air.

H. R. H. VAUGHAN.

BIRDS AT THE ISLE OF MAY.—The Report by the Midlothian Ornithological Club of migration observations in the autumn of 1936 on the Isle of May (*Scot. Nat.*, 1937, pp. 51-5) contains a number of interesting items. The members of the Club were assisted by some fourteen other observers. The most notable bird was an immature example of the Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) which was trapped on September 4th, conveyed to Edinburgh and carefully examined and then released. There are only three previous records of this species—all from Norfolk. Another rarity was a Siberian Lesser Whitethroat which was present on the island from September 17th to October 5th. This was also trapped and carefully examined. Other scarce birds recorded are: Ortolan Buntings in September, single Barred Warblers on September 10th, 11th and 14th and two on the 18th, single Red-breasted Flycatchers on September 17th, 28th, October 5th and two on the 4th, a Yellow-browed Warbler on September 19th, 21st and 22nd and two on the 20th, and a Little Bunting on September 28th.

SCARCE BIRDS IN SHETLAND.—Mr. George Waterston contributes to the *Scottish Naturalist* (1937, pp. 25-31) an important paper on the status of a number of scarce birds (chiefly migrants) in Shetland. The information he has obtained from Mr. Tom Bruce, jun., and from an examination of Mr. Samuel Bruce's collection, though sometimes rather lacking in detail, shows that certain rare migrants, hitherto unrecorded from Shetland, but known to occur at Fair Isle, do visit Shetland, while others of which very few have been recorded for Shetland occur almost annually. Of those not

previously recorded are the following: Scarlet Grosbeak, several, September, 1936, and one, October; a Short-toed Lark obtained on Whalsay some years ago proves to be of the eastern form; two Wood-Larks in October, 1921, and one in March, 1936; two Shore-Larks, October, 1933; a Richard's Pipit, September, 1928; a Lesser Grey Shrike, September, 1929; a Siberian Lesser Whitethroat, October 3rd, 1936; a Temminck's Stint, September, 1921, and a Great Bustard, May, 1936. Of birds previously considered only occasional visitors to Shetland, the following are now considered to be regular passage migrants: Ortolan Bunting, Reed-Bunting, Tree-Pipit, Spotted and Pied Flycatchers. The Barred Warbler is considered regular in autumn but has occurred only once in spring, the Whinchat is regular in spring, but rare in autumn, and the Black Redstart the reverse. Other interesting records are given in this paper, which adds considerably to our knowledge of birds occurring in Shetland.

SCARCE BIRDS AT FAIR ISLE.—Mr. George Waterston gives an account of a number of interesting birds observed at Fair Isle in 1936 (*Scot. Nat.*, 1937, pp. 73-76). The more important of these are as follows:—Petchora Pipit, one seen by G. Stout on November 19th; a Nuthatch seen by the same observer on May 29th and 30th, this being the first occurrence on the island, but the sub-species could not be ascertained, while the same may be said for a Coal-Tit seen by Mr. L. S. V. Venables on September 21st, and a Willow-Tit with "pure white on the sides of the neck and cheeks" seen by Mr. Stout on November 3rd; a Lesser Grey Shrike is recorded on May 25th; a male Rock-Thrush on October 16th; a King Eider on March 31st; an adult drake Surf-Scoter on December 1st; Great Shearwaters on September 14th, 21st and October 8th; Arctic Ringed Plovers (*Ch. h. tundrae*) in September, and Dusky Redshanks in August and September.

ADULT PIED WAGTAILS USING ROOST IN JUNE.—With reference to Mr. M. F. M. Meiklejohn's note (*antea*, p. 85) on the roosting of Pied Wagtails in June, Mr. Graham Hopkins informs us that he spent the summer of 1933 at Chorley Wood, Herts, and on May 16th, while walking on the common, found a roost of (approx.) 50 Pied Wagtails (*Motacilla a. yarrellii*) in some thick gorse bushes. All those he could see were adult birds and he saw them frequently during the next four weeks in the same place. On May 30th their number was increased by several birds of the year. Mr. Hopkins last saw the roost "in being" on June 16th,

and was unable to revisit the site until June 24th, when all the birds had gone, although a few individuals were scattered about the common. Unfortunately these gorse bushes were burnt during the following August.

PIED WAGTAIL AND HOUSE-SPARROW BREEDING IN SOUTH UIST.—We are informed by Lt.-Col. W. A. Payn that he saw a pair of Pied Wagtails (*Motacilla a. yarrellii*) with two nearly full-grown young at Lochboisdale, South Uist, on June 27th, 1923. So far as we are aware there is only one previous record of breeding in the Outer Hebrides. Lt.-Col. Payn also noted several House-Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus*) breeding at the same place in June, 1923. Although known to breed in Barra, Harris, Lewis and North Uist it does not appear to have been recorded from South Uist.

AMERICAN BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER IN SHETLAND.—An example of this small Warbler (*Mniotilta varia* (L.)) was picked up near Scalloway, Shetland, about the middle of October, 1936, and forwarded to the Scottish Museum (A. C. Stephen, *Scot. Nat.*, 1937, p. 46). The species is a native of the eastern half of N. America and winters as far south as northern S. America. We do not consider that so small a land bird could cross the Atlantic unaided.

REED-WARBLER NESTING IN CO. DOWN.—Mr. J. A. Sidney Stendall announces (*Irish Nat. Journal*, 1937, p. 252) that in May, 1935, Mr. E. McWilliams found a nest among reeds in the north of Co. Down. The nest contained five eggs, of which one was taken. The nest was exceptionally deep and built round four or five stems of reeds. The Sedge-Warbler is common in the area and apart from the egg and description of the nest, which have been submitted to the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, Mr. McWilliams states that the birds lacked light stripes on the head and appeared of a uniform colour. There seems little doubt therefore that these birds were Reed-Warblers (*Acrocephalus s. scirpaceus*) a species which has not previously been known to breed in Ireland and indeed has only rarely occurred there.

AMERICAN YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO IN ORKNEY.—Mr. A. C. Stephen records (*Scot. Nat.*, 1937, p. 46) that an American Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus a. americanus*) flew into a farmhouse at Birsay after a period of very severe weather. No date is given, but we are informed that this was on October 22nd, 1936. The bird has only once before been recorded for Scotland.

LITTLE OWL TAKING SPIDER.—Dr. James W. Campbell informs us that a spider found in the “stomach” of a Little Owl (*Athene n. vidalii*) killed at Layer Marney, Essex, on March 31st, 1937, has been identified by Mr. W. S. Bristowe as *Trochosa terricola*.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD BREEDING IN LINCOLNSHIRE.—Mr. E. L. Roberts informed us that on May 19th, 1937, he discovered a nest of a Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*) on the East Lincolnshire marshes whence he had already reported birds of this species (*antea*, p. 27). The nest contained four eggs, and was placed about six feet from the edge of a small marsh pool. It was under bushes and well concealed and was constructed of dry grasses, dead leaves and a few small twigs and had no down. The bird at this and another visit, when the nest contained six eggs, was closely viewed and Mr. Roberts’s description tallies well with this species. Subsequently the eggs were destroyed by rats and portions of the shells and a little down found on the rim of the nest were submitted to Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, who pronounced them as certainly fitting those of the Red-crested Pochard. There can be no doubt that this bird was derived from captive stock and it probably originated from Woburn, where the species has been regularly reared and allowed to go free as previously stated (*antea*, p. 27).