INTERBREEDING OF A HOODED AND A CARRION-CROW IN Co. DUBLIN.

In 1939 in the south of Co. Dublin a Hooded Crow (*Corvus c. cornix*) and a Carrion-Crow (*C. c. corone*) nested and successfully reared their young. I am aware of only two other Irish records of the inter-breeding of these birds, namely at Ballywalter Park, Co. Down, c. 1908 (*Brit. B.*, Vol. XXIX, p. 127) and at the north side of Dublin Bay in 1935 (*I.c.*, p. 238), and in neither case has there been evidence that young reached maturity. In both occurrences the Carrion-Crow was the male.

In the south Dublin instance the Carrion-Crow would appear to have been the female. When the nest was discovered, on April 21st, by Lt.-Col. Charles Scroope, the Carrion-Crow was sitting. On April 24th Mr. P. E. Dunn and I put her off the nest and saw that she was soon joined by a Hooded Crow. Later we watched her returning with the Hoodie in attendance.

On May 6th the young called in the nest when we tapped the tree, but on all subsequent visits, until they flew on May 28th, they remained quite silent.

It was unfortunate that the young were not examined before they left the nest. From various observations, however, which were made afterwards in the vicinity, it was concluded that there were four young in all and that in colour one was like a Carrion, two were of hybrid plumage showing more of the Carrion than of the Hooded Crow and the fourth was either of hybrid plumage like the other two or, more probably, like a Hoodie.

P. G. KENNEDY.

JACKDAW NESTING IN ITS FIRST YEAR.

A Jackdaw (*Corvus m. spermologus*) ringed as a nestling in June, 1935, hatched four young in May, 1936, thus attaining almost its maximum fecundity in its first year, as broods of five do not appear to be frequent. A case is also recorded of a Jackdaw rearing one, three, five and four in successive years so that its maximum fecundity was maintained until what must have been at least its fourth breeding season.

Though, no doubt, most of the Passeres breed in their first year, the case of a Jackdaw having done so is mentioned on account of its near relationship to the Rook (*Corvus f. frugilegus*) which is supposed not to breed until its second year.

C. WONTNER-SMITH.
FECUNDITY OF BLUE TIT AND TAWNY OWL IN RELATION TO AGE.

The following observations might supplement Mr. Charteris's note (antea, p. 162) on fecundity in relation to age of birds.

A Blue Tit (Parus c. obscurus) ringed in December, 1930, brought off a brood in 1938, though its sex and number of young are unknown as the nest was inaccessible.

A pair of Tawny Owls (Strix a. sylvatica) have nested in the same tree in a half-wooded seven-acre garden annually since 1917, or earlier. I have no definite proof that they are the same birds, but as a pair has been continuously resident, no dead bird has been found, and there is no danger of shooting in the neighbourhood, it seems likely. In 1937 the bird was sitting for at least 4 weeks—its head is visible from the ground—but was found to be incubating only a tennis ball, lost in the fork of the tree from a court below. In 1938 two eggs were laid: one hatched and the young one died when about a fortnight old; the other was infertile. In 1939 the bird sat for about three weeks on an empty nest-hollow. In previous years the nest was not regularly visited, though the bird was seen sitting each year and young birds were frequently seen after fledging. In 1924 four young were brought off, and two in 1926. This may be a case of infertility due to old age.

J. A. G. BARNES.

COMMON BUZZARD IN SHETLAND.


In view of this statement, it may be of interest to know that I had an excellent view of a Buzzard being mobbed by a Herring-Gull near Uyeasound, on the Island of Unst, on June 16th, 1936. I was with a local Shetland lad at the time, and only the day previously he had shown me an eyrie, where he said Buzzards had nested for several years. The remains of the nest were plainly visible on an inaccessible ledge on a high sea-cliff; it was raining heavily at the time and I could see no sign of life in the nest, but could not look directly into it. The bird seen at Uyeasound on June 16th was the only one I saw during a fortnight's stay on the island, so that I can give no proof of breeding in that year.

C. J. PRING.

ASSOCIATION OF DRAKE MALLARD WITH ALARMED CALL DUCK AND BROOD.

On April 9th, 1939, at Poole Park, Dorset, a white "call" duck with a brood was suddenly alarmed by a dog which
splashed into the water near the ducklings. The duck quacked loudly and manoeuvred the brood away. Immediately the duck quacked, a wild drake Mallard (*Anas p. platyrhyncha*) detached itself from a group of drakes and swam to the duck with the brood. It remained with them and swam close to the duck, which continued to quack, though the drake showed no signs of alarm.

Although the Mallard on this pond do not live in a perfectly wild state, the drake in question was undoubtedly a true Mallard, and this instance seems to support Mr. B. Lloyd’s contention (*antea*, Vol. XXX., p. 336) that occasional association of the Mallard drake with a duck and brood is a real one and not merely fortuitous. G. K. McCulloch.

**SUMMER PLUMAGE OF FEMALE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER.**

During a visit to the Varanger peninsula, East Finmark, in June and July, 1939, I made special efforts to investigate the breeding plumage of the female Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*). It is stated in *The Handbook* (Vol. III, p. 372) that in those examined the black area round the eye was lacking, but that more material is required.

I was able to handle several birds, and besides examined over twenty individuals at close quarters with powerful binoculars. In every case the black area round the eyes was missing.

An adult breeding female (near Storelve, July 2nd, 1939, soft egg in oviduct) had moulted most of the head and throat, but not the elongated occipital feathers. The new plumage was as in winter/spring, but the black patch round the eyes was replaced by reddish brown feathers, and there was no indication of any black spotting on the throat. A few flank feathers, dark ash-brown, narrowly tipped buff-brown, had been renewed. The rest of the plumage was as winter but abraded. The bill was deep pink-brown, culmen and nail black; lower mandible paler; legs and feet deep vermilion, webs dusky; iris: rich red-brown.

John G. Williams.

**STOCK-DOVE FLOCKS IN THE BREEDING SEASON.**

With reference to the recent notes on the above subject *antea*, pp. 140, 165) I can state that both in the conifer and deciduous woods of south-west Surrey flocks of Stock-Doves (*Columba oenas*) are quite regular right through the year.
During the spring and summer these flocks rarely contain more than 20 birds but in the autumn and winter many more can be seen, though by then they are usually joined up with Wood-Pigeons.

L. S. V. Venables.

NUPTIAL SONG OF LITTLE STINT.

Of recent years in Kent I have seen a number of Little Stints (Calidris minuta) on spring passage.

It may be interesting to record that small parties of these birds in spring occasionally indulge in bursts of nuptial song. The basis of this song, a trill which may last for several minutes, appears to consist of a series of notes—"dree, de-dree dee, dirr"—variously repeated and rolled together, being uttered something like the buzzing of a bee, but the song rises and falls in a most tuneful manner sometimes sounding near, sometimes far away.

The song has always been uttered when the birds were standing on the mud, often at only a few yards distance from me.

T. C. Gregory.

PURPLE SANDPIPER AND OTHER BIRDS IN MIDDLESEX.

On November 5th, 1939, we saw a Purple Sandpiper (Calidris m. maritima) at Staines Reservoir, the second record for Middlesex, a Black Tern (Chlidonias n. niger), the latest autumn record for Middlesex, and a Slavonian Grebe (Podiceps auritus).

A. Holte MacPherson.
William E. Glegg.
G. Carmichael Low.

SOOTY TERN IN STIRLINGSHIRE.

A dead bird was found about the end of May, 1939, by Mr. Duncan, the fox hunter for Stirlingshire, on Myatt Hill, three miles from Denny, and was brought in the flesh to me by Master James Stirton of Perth, grandson of the finder.

Examination showed it to be about three or four days dead and suspecting it to be a Sooty Tern, I sent it, when set up, to Mr. H. F. Witherby, who confirmed my diagnosis and, after comparison with other specimens, sent me the following note:

"The bird is in full moult, most of the feathers being new, but the two outer functional primaries are old and the next is a new one sprouting, the rest being newly grown. The tail-feathers are mostly new, but the outermost are old. There are a few old and very worn brown feathers on the upper-parts and wings amongst the new black feathers."
I consider the old outer tail-feathers are of the juvenile plumage and that the bird was hatched last year and is moulting into its second winter plumage. The under-parts are white without any of the brown feathers of the juvenile plumage.

The bird agrees in general with others of the typical form *Sterna fuscata fuscata* from the West Indies and Florida."

This specimen has been deposited in the collection of The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. 

JOHN RITCHIE. 
MUSEUM, PERTH.

INCUBATION PERIOD OF CAPERCAILLIE AND PRECOCITY OF CHICKS.

DURING the spring of 1939 I was able to observe in Scotland the nest of a Capercaillie (*Tetrao u. urogallus*) from the start of incubation to hatching and I thought the following might be of interest:

April 30th: Nest found in Scots pine wood containing six eggs.
May 1st: Same nest contained seven eggs—bird flushed from nest.
May 28th: Three eggs show first sign of chipping—3 p.m.
May 29th: Two chicks have beaks just penetrating through shells, remaining five eggs chipped—3 p.m.
May 30th: All seven chicks hatched by 10 a.m.

During the morning of May 30th while watching and photographing from a hide, two Capercaillie chicks climbed up the tall heather behind the nest, reaching a height of approximately two feet above ground. Having attained this height they fell down—one on the back of the adult hen—and shortly after two chicks again climbed up the heather. As I have not seen this referred to in any accounts of the Capercaillie and as it is a rather extraordinary feat for chicks only a few hours old I thought it might be of interest.

ERIC J. HOSKING.

SKY-LARK NESTING IN OCTOBER IN LANCASHIRE.—Mr. Eric Hardy informs us that a Sky-Lark (*Alauda a. arvensis*) was flushed from a nest with 3 eggs by a farm-worker at Simonswood on October 17th, 1939, and reported to him. Mr. Hardy was able to photograph the nest on the 22nd and show it to others of the Merseyside Naturalists' Association. The bird was still sitting in the fourth week of the month.

BLACK KITES RELEASED IN LONDON.—Mr. Percy W. Horn of the Stepney Museum informed us that he twice saw a Kite, which appeared to be a Black Kite, flying over Stratford on October 24th, 1939. We have since learned that several
Black Kites (Milvus migrans) have recently been given their liberty at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park, and no doubt this was one of them.

**Honey-Buzzard in Yorkshire Recorded as Goshawk.**—A bird captured by a gamekeeper near Pontefract on June 6th, 1927, and recorded at the time as a Goshawk, which was said to have been attacking Partridges and even perhaps lambs! (Nat., 1927, p. 236) proves on examination by Mr. H. B. Booth (op. c., 1939, p. 288) to be a Honey-Buzzard (Pernis apivorus).

**Garganey in Pembrokeshire.**—Mr. H. A. Gilbert informs us that a Garganey (Anas querquedula) was caught at Orielton on October 24th, 1939.