

NOTES.

THE BUILDING OF A ROOKERY.

THE following notes, made on a colony of Rooks (*Corvus frugilegus*) in a Cambridge street during March, 1949, have been prompted by Mr. C. M. Ogilvie's article on this subject (*antea*, pp. 1-5). This rookery, comprising only five pairs, was a new one, probably caused by an overflow from an over-crowded rookery about half a mile away. The birds flew off to roost towards this main rookery until March 17th, when one bird of the most advanced pair remained on the nest, its mate, after a good deal of hesitation, flying off to roost elsewhere at least half an hour after the rest of the colony had left.

Most of the nesting material came from the trees of the rookery itself, and the period of maximum activity seemed to be in the early morning. Robbery was frequent, and the last pair to start building had a particularly unhappy time. For at least three days (after which my observations came to an end) the foundations of their nest were laid in the early morning, but by midday these had always completely disappeared.

Both birds of a pair took it in turns to sit on the nest and arrange the nesting material but, contrary to Mr. Ogilvie's experience, when a bird found the nest occupied on arriving with material this was almost invariably either given to the sitting bird, or else laid loosely on the edge of the nest to be built in by it. I had the impression that one bird, presumably the female, was much more frequently on the nest than the other. The bird bringing in material often showed considerable reluctance to part with it, as if it would have preferred to do the building itself.

D. G. ANDREW.

MAGPIE NESTING ON CONCRETE PYLON.

ON June 3rd, 1950, a nest of a Magpie (*Pica pica*) was noted about 20 feet above ground level on a double posted concrete electricity pylon on the South Downs near Thundersbarrow Hill, Sussex. It was placed in the angle between one of three arms supporting the cables, and one of the vertical posts.

Owing to the drastic clearance of downland for the growing of grain-crops there was, no doubt, a shortage of suitable nesting sites in the area.

The *Handbook* states that the Magpie occasionally builds on telephone-poles in Scandinavia.

L. P. ALDER.

[ON February 19th, 1942, I watched a Magpie building on an electric pylon in the centre of Chungking, China—J. D. W.]

DISTRACTION DISPLAY OF GOLDFINCH.

ON June 16th, 1949, at about 18.15 I put a Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) off a nest on the end of a branch of a very aged apple tree in a small hay field: the height of the nest was about nine

feet. The bird dropped practically vertically and fluttered, with wings fully spread and feathers on back raised, along the top of the hay to the nearest hedge about 30 yards away. The course taken had several slight bends in it and she just brushed the top of the hay all the time. As the sun was bright at the time the colours showed up well and it was a really beautiful sight. This is, I think, the only case where I have seen a Goldfinch behave in such a way.

J. H. OWEN.

DISTRACTION DISPLAY OF CHAFFINCH.

WITH reference to my previous note (*antea*, vol. xlii, p. 243) on this subject, I wonder whether "injury feigning" is not commoner in the Chaffinch (*Fringilla cœlebs*) than my previous experience had led me to suppose as I have since seen four examples of it in the same district as before. Three of these were by the same bird whose nest was nine feet seven inches from the ground in a wistaria on the wall of the stable yard at Llwynygroes, near Llanymynech, Montgomeryshire. On May 27th, 1949, I put the bird off to get my mirror over the nest, which contained three eggs. She dropped vertically down to the cobbles and fluttered into a clump of weeds on the side of the yard, through these, and then through the open doorway across the drive into the shrubbery. She actually alighted on the cobbles at every bend of a very zig-zag course and one could easily see her hop off each time to help the wing-flutter motion.

On May 29th, almost the same behaviour was observed, except that her course was much straighter and she did not go through the weeds, but made straight for the shrubs across the drive. The house was under repair and I got one of the men to watch and compare notes.

On June 3rd, I got the gardener to watch. This time the course was quite straight through the middle of the doorway and she kept up the fluttering and hopping quite 15 yards before she disappeared in the shrubs. In each case she dropped almost vertically from the nest.

On June 7th, I saw a very similar case elsewhere. Here the nest was in the fork of an elder. On my side the nest was some nine feet high. On the opposite side there was a sunken cartway at least three feet lower. This bird, on five eggs, dropped like a stone on to the roadway and shuffled across it into the weeds and bushes on the other side.

J. H. OWEN.

DISPLAY OF HOUSE-SPARROW.

ON July 18th, 1949, at 11.00, I watched a cock House-Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) making advances to a hen. He stood very upright then bowed rather stiffly, two or three times. Then he pecked three times at the surface on which he was standing and stood upright again. He then sidled the two or three inches to the hen and mounted. Sometimes there was an obviously

ineffectual copulation and sometimes he merely stood on her back. This was repeated at least 20 times before effectual copulation finally took place. The hen seemed absolutely indifferent beyond now and again slightly moving her tail and perhaps crouching slightly. She did not shuffle her feathers or do any kind of soliciting. The behaviour of the cock seems rather different from anything recorded in *The Handbook* or commonly observed.

J. H. OWEN.

“VARIANT” YELLOW WAGTAILS IN ENGLAND
IN 1949 AND 1950.

KENT.

ON April 29th, 1949, we had very excellent views of a male Yellow Wagtail variant, which appeared to resemble exactly a Sykes' Wagtail (*Motacilla flava beema*). The bird was feeding by the roadside and among some cabbages in the Hundred of Hoo, not far from Turkey Hall. We had the bird within ten yards of us and through field glasses were able to get an accurate description of the plumage. Since there are different kinds of “variants”, it seems desirable to give these details here. The bird had a pale lavender blue-grey head, which at times in the sun looked almost white. The eye-stripe was broad and white, and the chin was pure white merging suddenly into the brilliant yellow of the breast.

JEFFERY G. HARRISON AND W. W. WIGGINS-DAVIES.

NORFOLK.

IN 1941, I recorded the nesting at Hickling, Norfolk, of a pair of abnormally coloured “Yellow” Wagtails (*antea*, vol. xxxv, p. 127). The peculiar feature in these birds was that in both male and female the crown, nape and mantle were of pure pearl grey, with no trace of green or brown, while the male had only a faint tinge of yellow on the under-parts and the female none. In 1950, a pair nested at Cley, Norfolk, the male of which was of almost exactly similar type, the crown, nape and mantle being pure grey, but rather darker than in the 1941 male, and the under-parts very pale lemon-yellow. The female of the pair appeared to be a typical *Motacilla flava flavissima*. I am indebted to Mr. R. A. Richardson of the Cley Bird Observatory for calling my attention to this bird.

B. B. RIVIÈRE.

SOMERSET.

A female “variant” Wagtail, presumably *Motacilla flava flavissima*, with conspicuous white eye-stripe and with head, nape and mantle grey, was observed at Cheddar Reservoir, Somerset, on June 6th, 1950. Though in company with a normal male Yellow Wagtail it was not until June 9th, that the pair was seen feeding newly fledged young in a strawberry field adjoining the reservoir. They were constantly flying from the field to the reservoir to collect food, for insect life was very abundant. Mr. M. J. Woton also had excellent views both of the adults and

young the following day and it was agreed the female was, in practically every detail, similar to the "variant" male Yellow Wagtail illustrated in Dr. Stuart Smith's *The Yellow Wagtail*, Plate 6. There were such slight differences as more clear eye-stripe and faint greenish-yellow tinge on the otherwise grey back of the Cheddar bird. The following are the plumage details of the adult female:—Upper-parts—head, nape and mantle grey; slight greenish-yellow on the lower back; wings and tail dark brown with white outer tail-feathers; conspicuous white eye-stripe; face pale grey; throat and neck white; breast very pale yellow; lower belly yellow; bill brownish-black; legs and iris black.

This is the first recorded instance of a variant Yellow Wagtail breeding in Somerset, but in the opinion of Mr. H. H. Davis, President of The Bristol Naturalists' Society, it may not be so uncommon as might generally be supposed. BERNARD KING.

BERKSHIRE.

ON July 24th, 1950, we observed a "variant" Yellow Wagtail near Calcot, Reading. The following details were noted: nape and ear-coverts, light blue-grey; malar region, side of neck and hind neck, darker blue-grey; lores to bill, dark brown-grey; bill, normal (*flava*) colour; crown, blue-grey of a shade between nape and hind neck; forehead, very light blue-grey, the lightest part of the head except for a very narrow white eye-stripe below a brownish streak on the side of the crown; chin, chrome-yellow, as breast. The bird thus resembled a *beema* variant except for the lack of a white chin.

On the 24th it was seen with another variant which was not seen subsequently. Its behaviour suggested that it was feeding young, and Messrs. C. E. Douglas and K. E. L. Simmons found one young bird on the 26th.

R. A. F. GILLMOR AND N. G. B. JONES.

BLACK REDSTART IN SUSSEX, 1932.

As it has now been disclosed (*antea*, vol. xli, p. 149) that the locality on the south coast where the late T. A. Coward recorded the breeding of Black Redstarts (*Phœnicurus ochrurus*) in 1923 and 1924 (vol. xviii, p. 76), was between Hastings and Fairlight Glen in Sussex, it seems desirable to place on record that the place where my brother and I saw a male Black Redstart, evidently breeding, on July 7th, 1932, (vol. xxvii, p. 304) was on the cliffs between Ecclesbourne and Fairlight Glens, no doubt the same locality as recorded by Mr. Coward. H. G. ATTLEE.

HIRUNDINES PERCHING IN TREES WITH FOLIAGE.

SINCE the publication (*antea*, vol. xliii, pp. 254-256) of records of Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and House-Martins (*Delichon urbica*) perching on trees with foliage we have received several further records of this habit; our attention has also been drawn to a record in *The Scottish Naturalist* (vol. 62 pp. 56-7) by Miss

E. V. Baxter. The records include some for Sand-Martins (*Riparia riparia*), a species not previously recorded as behaving in this way. Messers R. S. R. Fitter and J. G. Warner suggest that the habit of perching in trees with foliage may be typical of birds on migration and may be stimulated by the proximity of cables or telegraph wires to the trees. The records are summarized below.

THE EDITORS.

Date	Locality	Number of birds involved	Whether seen to be taking insects	Tree	Observer's initials
1930 Aug. 29	Corby, Northants	1 Swallow	No	Copper Beech	R.S.R.F.
1935 Aug. 2	Caldecott, Rutland	Some Swallows	No	(near telegraph wires)	R.S.R.F.
1937 Sep. 19	Cambridge sewage farm	Numbers of Swallows and Sand-Martins	No	Apple	R.S.R.F.
1945 Aug. 26	Limpsfield, Surrey	Several Martins	Yes	Mountain-Ash	K.R.C.
Sep. 13	"	"	No	" "	K.R.C.
1947 Sep. 30	Burford, Oxon	Some Swallows	No	(near telegraph wires)	R.S.R.F.
1948 Sep. 12	Wisborough Green, Sussex	c. 12 Martins	?	Yew	G.N.S.
1949 Sep. 3	Upper Largo, Fife	1 or 2 Swallows Some Martins	Yes	Ash	E.V.B.
1950 July 11	Etampes, near Paris	c. 30 Swallows	Yes	Apple	M.R.K.P.
July 13	Burford, Oxon	3 juvenile Swallows		being fed by adult	R.S.R.F.
July 28	Lowestoft, Suffolk	2 House-Martins	?	Apple	J.G.W.
Aug. 14	Oxted, Surrey	3 Swallows	?	Oak	K.R.C.
Aug. 14	Potter Heigham, Norfolk	Many Sand-Martins	No	Willow	R.A.F.G. N.G.B.J.
Sep. 3, 4 & 5	Beccles, E. Suffolk	Some Swallows c. 250 Martins	No	Ash and Willow (near telegraph wires)	J.G.W.

Observers' names:—Miss E. V. Baxter, Messrs. K. R. Chandler, R. S. R. Fitter, R. A. F. Gillmor, N. G. B. Jones, M. R. K. Plaxton, G. N. Slyfield, J. G. Warner.

FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF GREEN WOODPECKER.

ON July 21st, 1950, near Tavistock, Devon, I saw two Green Woodpeckers (*Picus viridis*),—an adult female and a juvenile,—fly to a concrete fence-post where the female twice fed the juvenile,—or at any rate thrust her bill deep into the other bird's

open bill. After this, while the juvenile kept still, the adult, at the top of the post, moved her head quickly from side to side, at the same time flicking her tongue rapidly out and in several times,—presumably catching flying insects. I watched this incident through a telescope. I do not remember seeing or hearing of this method of feeding.

G. W. H. MOULE.

COURTSHIP FEEDING OF GREEN WOODPECKER IN AUGUST.

ON August 14th, 1950, I watched a pair of Green Woodpeckers (*Picus viridis*) probing for ants on my lawn at Wraysbury, Middlesex. The birds were under observation from 17.35 to 17.50, when they were unfortunately disturbed. All this while the pair kept close together. Every few minutes the female, picking a time when the male was withdrawing his beak from an ant-hole, crouched just in front of him with head elevated and opened her beak wide like a supplicating nestling. The male immediately put his beak right down her throat. This happened four times.

There did not appear to be any regurgitation on the part of the male—and I had him under close observation through a telescope. The impression conveyed therefore was that the male was directly feeding the female with the ants that he had just drawn from the hole.

No spottings or other markings could be seen to indicate that the female was a young bird. Her plumage was definitely adult and, as she showed by her behaviour in between, she was quite capable of collecting ants for herself. I heard no "hunger cry" or any other sound from her when she crouched.

Three weeks earlier I had noticed a male, probably the same one, perched at the very top of a thirty-foot willow from 7.10 to 7.25 on a sunny morning, uttering a regular succession of loud and fairly long notes, all starting at the same pitch and dropping slightly as they ended. The whole manner of the bird and the blithe delivery of the song (though not its monotony!) reminded me irresistibly of a Mistle-Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) in full song.

C. HANN.

[We have published (*antea*, vol. xxxii, p. 96) a record of courtship feeding in April. A previous case (*antea*, vol. xl, p. 87) of behaviour similar to that reported by Mr. Hann concerned two juveniles.—Eds.]

GREENLAND FALCON IN ANGLESEY.

ON January 11th, 1949, at Rhoscolyn, Anglesey, a large falcon was seen swooping on and killing a gull. The falcon followed its prey to the ground, but was prevented from completing its meal by a cottager who then placed two steel gins close to the carcass. When it returned to the spot the falcon stepped into one of the traps. It rose in the air with the trap dangling from one foot, the powerful bird having pulled the anchoring pin clean out

of the ground in its efforts to get away. The weight of the trap proved too much for the bird and it was captured uninjured, but it was eventually killed and sent to me for identification.

It was a young female, measuring 23 inches in length, with a wing-span of 51 inches, and weighed three and a half pounds. It was examined by Mr. C. F. Tunnicliffe as well as by myself and we agreed that it was a gyr-falcon, but owing to the difficulty of differentiating between young birds of the Greenland and Iceland forms we forwarded it to Mr. R. Wagstaffe at the Yorkshire Museum, after Mr. Tunnicliffe had made a series of full-scale drawings of the bird. Mr. Wagstaffe informed us that it was definitely a Greenland Falcon (*Falco rusticolus candicans*). He had been able to compare our bird with the many skins in his charge at York and with skins at the British Museum, so that the identification was established beyond doubt.

I may add that Mr. Tunnicliffe watched and sketched a gyr-falcon the previous winter in Anglesey. T. G. WALKER.

AERIAL COURTSHIP DISPLAY FLIGHT OF SOME SURFACE-FEEDING DUCKS IN WINTER QUARTERS.

THE *Handbook* (vol. iii, p. 268), quoting observations of A. Whetmore on the American Wigeon (*Anas americana*), describes a swift, erratic courtship flight on the breeding ground initiated by two males approaching a female, hovering and whistling and following her as she rose into the air. *The males dart ahead of the female setting and decurving their wings and throwing their heads up, exhibiting their striking markings to the best advantage.* In vol. v, p. 297 a very similar incident in the case of Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) is quoted on the authority of D. Nethersole-Thompson.

As far as I am aware a similar type of aerial courtship-display has not been recorded for any surface-feeding ducks in their winter quarters.

During the early part of 1950, I witnessed a similar type of aerial display in the North Kent estuaries by several species and on various occasions as follows:—

Pintail (*Anas acuta*):—January 22nd (once), February 5th (once), March 12th (once).

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*):—February 5th (twice), March 5th (once), March 19th (once), April 2nd (once) April 8th (once).

In all cases small parties of duck were involved, consisting of two to seven males and *one* female. On two occasions I was able to observe that these flights were preceded by display on the water, but in the other instances only the aerial part of the display was seen when (a) small parties appeared to be changing feeding grounds, or (b) a mass movement of duck in small and large parties was caused by the tide covering their last feeding grounds.

The aerial display that I witnessed was the same as described by Whetmore except that the flight was neither swift nor erratic.

In several instances some of the drake Wigeon were in first winter dress.

On February 19th, 1950, I witnessed an instance of aerial courtship-flight of the Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*). This display differed from that of the Pintail and Wigeon referred to above, but was in fact similar to that described in *The Handbook* under Pintail (vol. iii, p. 271), on the authority of F. Harper.

E. H. GILLHAM.

MAY NUMBERS OF FULMARS ON SHETLAND CLIFFS.
In Shetland a high proportion of Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) leave the breeding cliffs in early May (where they have been sitting, except during strong gales, since the first week of the previous November) and their return, a week or so later, coincides with the beginning of the egg-laying season.

I made regular counts over a period of three complete years on a section of cliff north of Fitful Head on the west side of Shetland, and the May figures reproduced here show the magnitude and regularity of this May exit.

				<i>Number of</i> <i>Birds</i>	<i>Number of</i> <i>on "Nest-sites"</i>
1948,	April	21	...	523	354
	May	1	...	330	259
		7	...	109	94
		15	...	155	145
		23	...	326	300
	June	1	...	356	319
1949,	April	25	...	391	277
	May	1	...	394	325
		11	...	87	76
		16	...	178	169
		23	...	364	341
	June	4	...	368	331
1950,	April	26	...	569	410
	May	1	...	250	220
		7	...	153	123
		12	...	36	35
		17	...	278	247
		24	...	391	356

Mr. G. W. Russell has observed a similar phenomenon on the east side of Shetland near Lerwick (the Battery Banks).

Fulmars also tend to leave the cliffs during onshore gales, but this May exodus occurs whatever the weather. All the above counts were taken during, and after at least 48 hours of, favourable weather.

The Fitful Head cliffs have long been colonized as a breeding site but I find that a section of cliff (Cubal Banks, Scousburgh), frequented almost entirely by non-breeding birds, is also vacated at this time, i.e. it is not merely a last minute fling before the cares of parenthood though it is rather suggestive that this might be so with the breeding stock. (First egg dates: May 17th, 1946,

May 18th, 1950 and a shot female had a complete egg with hard shell in the oviduct on May 15th, 1948).

The birds go right out of sight of land but fishing boats have reported large numbers of Fulmars out to sea at this time from distances of one to ten miles offshore.

It would be interesting to know from observers elsewhere whether this May exit is regular.

More complete data will be included in Mr. James Fisher's forthcoming monograph on the Fulmar. L. S. V. VENABLES.

NESTING OF THE "FÆROE" SNIPE.

(See Plate 13).

Mr. Kenneth Williamson's note on the breeding of the "Færoe" Snipe (*Capella gallinago "faeroeensis"*) (*antea*, vol. xlii, pp. 394-395) prompts me to add the following information on the nesting habitat of this race in Iceland. In that country, while in districts devoid of birch-scrub it nests abundantly in long tussocky grass, as described by Mr. Williamson, in localities rich in birch, it not only nests in the scrub, but even seems to prefer it. Thus in June, 1949, at Thingvellir, where there is an extensive birch "forest", Dr. K. J. V. Carlson and I found several nests amongst the birch itself. One of these was quite open and exposed, being a mere hollow in the *Rhacomitrium* moss at the foot of a birch. The site would have suited a Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) admirably. We observed with admiration the manner and ease with which these scrub snipe used their stiff-winged "shuttlecock" flight through the trees.

Although we spent much time also on more typical snipe ground, the scrub seemed to attract the majority of the birds. Icelandic birch, of course, is not very high—four to five feet.

It may perhaps also be remarked that Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) were showing every sign of nesting in this same habitat, although we never actually found a nest in such a site to prove the point. G. K. YEATES.

[Since the publication of Mr. Williamson's note the B.O.U. List Committee has agreed that "the 'Færoe Snipe' is an interesting variant or colour phase, more dominant in Iceland the Færoes and the Orkneys, but is not recognizable as a geographical race". A full report of this decision will be found in *Ibis*, (vol. 92, pp. 639-640). We have therefore placed the name "Færoe" in inverted commas. The geographical differences of habit and habitat described by Messrs. Yeates and Williamson are of interest—Eds.]

AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER IN HERTFORDSHIRE

ON September 14th, 1949, at the Marsworth reservoir, Tring, I observed an American Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*). It was feeding along the edge of the water within twenty yards

of me for over half an hour and later allowed an approach to three yards before taking flight. It returned to the same spot with three Curlew-Sandpipers (*C. testacea*).

In size it was only slightly larger than these birds, slim and very Ruff-like in stance, as the neck was often stretched up and slightly forwards. The bill was shorter and thicker than those of the Curlew-Sandpipers, with a slight de-curve at the tip. It appeared almost black with a paler base. The legs were yellow-brown. The head had a longitudinal streaked appearance, the crown dark and a paler band passing through the eye. Back boldly patterned like a Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), with some chestnut feathers towards the mid-line; chin pale, throat and breast buff, vertically streaked, with abrupt termination forming the distinctive pectoral band, the lower breast and under-parts being white.

In flight the pattern was again Ruff-like, the sides of the tail pale, with a dark centre. There was no definite wing-bar.

The note was "thrupp" uttered once, twice, or three times on different occasions in flight. When alarmed it several times crouched down low on the water whilst wading; an alternative action was the stretching up of the neck. E. L. ARNOLD.

[We regret that circumstances beyond our control have delayed publication of this record, which is the second for 1949 that has come to our notice. Larger numbers were reported in 1948 and again in 1950. The other record for 1949 (*antea*, vol. xlii, p. 395) was for a bird seen at Abberton Reservoir, Essex, on September 18th.—Eds.]

ROSEATE TERN PERCHING ON TREE MALLOW AND NESTING UNDER COVER.

THE accompanying photographs (Plates 14 and 15) of Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougallii*) perching on Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*) would seem to be the first record of these terns perching on shrubs. This habit was seen at the same place by parties of the Irish Ornithologists' Club, in both 1949 and 1950. *The Handbook* mentions that Arctic Terns (*Sterna macrura*) perch on trees in N. Europe and McGiffert has described and photographed the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) perching on Cow Parsnip (*antea* vol. xlii p. 27). Coulson has recorded an Arctic Tern perching, without effort, on a telephone wire (*loc. cit.* p. 28).

At the colony where the photographs were taken the Roseate Terns nested under the Tree Mallow. The open bare ground around the patch of Mallow was occupied by Common Terns. This preference for nesting under tall vegetation is quite noticeable in another colony in Ireland where they tend to nest under Marram Grass. This partiality to nesting under cover was recorded by Humphreys (*antea* vol. xvii pp. 5-11), but it is not mentioned in *The Handbook*. A. G. MASON.

[In Anglesey in June, 1920, I found Roseate Terns nesting among vegetation so deep that the sitting bird disappeared completely from view when it settled on its eggs; other Roseate Terns, however, had their nests on the bare rock.—A.W.B.]

COMMON TERNS PERCHING ON WIRES.

(See Plate 16).

IN view of the scarcity of records of terns using elevated perches in Britain, the following observations on Common Terns (*Sterna hirundo*) would appear to be of interest.

On July 8th, 1950, I saw two Common Terns perching on power cables at a height of about 50 feet over reclaimed land on the Durham side of the Tees estuary. While I watched them they left the wires several times to mob Herring-Gulls (*Larus argentatus*) and a Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and chase these till clear of the immediate area, when both terns would return to almost the same spot on the wires. Other Common Terns were in the vicinity, but showed no inclination to join these two.

On July 10th, 1950, I again saw two Common Terns perching on the same length of cable, but on this date, both birds were never seen on the wire simultaneously. Two photographs were taken.

On July 21st, 1950, one Common Tern was seen to perch on the wires several times. A photograph was taken through a x 25 telescope.

The last occasion on which I saw these wires being used as a perch was on July 26th, 1950, when one bird was present; after this date the terns took no further interest in this area, and presumably joined the large flocks then forming in the estuary.

Terns were again seen perching on August 2nd, 1950, on power cables at a lower level (about 25 feet high), approximately one mile distant from the position of the above occurrences. On the evening of this date, about 100 Common Terns were fishing or resting in the area, and several birds perched upon the wires. The number of birds on the wires changed continuously, the maximum observed being 25. This behaviour was terminated, after a few minutes, by the dispersal of the whole flock to feeding grounds in the estuary.

D. R. SEAWARD.

LATE GLAUCOUS GULL IN KENT.

As is well known, the majority of records for the Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) in Kent, relate to the winter months, and occurrences in the south, even in March, are rare. We think that it is therefore worthy of note, that a sub-adult was seen by us in the Sandwich area on May 11th, 1949. During the whole of that week, the wind was persistently in the north-east and for several days there was a steady northward movement of Great Black-backed Gulls (*L. marinus*). The Glaucous Gull was with two immatures of this species, and the details of its plumage were

clearly seen. The bird was in the creamy buff stage of plumage of the sub-adult. JAMES M. HARRISON AND JEFFERY G. HARRISON.

[We have already published (*antea*, vol. xliii, pp. 409 and 412) records of Glaucous Gulls in England in May, or even later, in 1950. We regret that a record for the previous year should be published subsequently, but feel that a further record of the bird's presence in the south in May is of interest.—Eds.]

ICELAND GULL IN SKYE.

AN immature Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides*) frequented Portree, Isle of Skye, in December, 1948. It was very tame and its slender bill compared with those of accompanying Herring-Gulls (*L. argentatus*) was noticeable. SETON GORDON.

UNUSUAL LEG COLOUR OF MOORHEN.

THE note on this subject (*antea*, vol. xliii, p. 383) has prompted Major A. W. Boyd to remind me of an adult albino Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) with bright yellow legs, beak and irides, which I observed at Marple, Cheshire, in 1948.

This bird, which was pure white in all its plumage, had nested during the spring, being mated with a normal adult male. The absence of the normal red or crimson irides and beak-shield, and the bright yellow legs (instead of green) suggests that these characters may be associated with tendencies to albinism.

STUART SMITH.

FEAR NOTE OF RED GROUSE.

ON October 9th, 1949, while on the Meikle Pap of Lochnagar, Aberdeenshire, I was startled to hear a loud shrill calling, rapidly and continually repeated, coming from the mists veiling Cuidhe Crom, the hill opposite. In about three seconds a pack of Red Grouse (*Lagopus scoticus*) hurtled into sight, and so far as I could discern only one bird was uttering the call. From a distance of 100 yards it sounded like "peek-peek-peek-peek", a short, high pitched note I had never heard grouse utter previously, and which resembled no other bird-call I know.

The cause of the birds' terror soon became evident. In little more than thirty seconds, by which time the grouse had disappeared beyond the northern slope of the hill, a young Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*) sailed out from the mists and started soaring on the upper slopes of Meikle Pap. In fifteen years' experience of Red Grouse and eagles I have never heard the grouse utter a similar call, which, I may add, was continually repeated during the twenty seconds that the grouse were visible, during which period they covered 300-400 yards.

ALEX. TEWNION.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE IN CORNWALL—The Woodchat Shrike reported (*antea*, p. 63) in Cornwall was seen on June 5th, 1950, not May 5th as stated.

WINTER SONG OF CHIFFCHAFF—The note (*antea*, p. 94) on winter song of Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) should have included a reference to some records to which Mr. J. Walpole-Bond has drawn our attention. In his *A History of Sussex Birds* (vol. i, p. 350) song is recorded on January 12th, 1882, at Bosham; January 29th, 1905, at Chichester; and in the last week of January, 1915, at Wadhurst.

OCCURRENCE OF BITTERNs DURING THE WINTER 1950-51—We do not normally publish records of Bitterns (*Botaurus stellaris*) seen in winter outside their breeding range, but records received recently suggest that Bitterns were unusually numerous during the winter of 1950-51. We would be glad to receive further records with a view to compiling a comprehensive note.

DIVING OF SHOVELERS—The note (*antea*, vol. xliii, p. 19) on this subject has brought in further records of Shovelers (*Spatula clypeata*) diving; Mr. John A. McGeoch saw a drake diving at Gosforth Park Lake, Northumberland, on October 16th, 1949; Mr. Robert Walker saw five females diving at Siddick Pond, near Workington, Cumberland, on August 18th, 1949. The dives were not of long duration, but Mr. Walker states that the ones he watched were neatly executed. We are grateful to Mr. G. C. S. Ingram for pointing out that this habit has been described already in our pages (*antea*, vol. x, pp. 22-23; xiii, p. 110; xxviii, pp. 206, 241). The last of these records is also for Gosforth Park Lake, Northumberland.

LARGE NUMBERS OF BLACK-TAILED GODWITS IN HANTS—With reference to the note (*antea*, vol. xliii, p. 128) on large numbers of Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) at Poole Harbour, Dorset, in March and April, 1949, Dr. C. Suffern writes that about 200 were present at Titchfield Haven, Hants, at the end of December, 1948, and about 300 on January 16th, 1949. Numbers were lower after that date, and in March and April, when the flock at Poole Harbour was largest, there were very few godwits at Titchfield.

LARGE NUMBERS OF REDSHANKS ON PASSAGE INLAND—Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Lewis inform us that on April 5th, 1949, at Haydon Drove on the Mendips, Somerset, they had close views of a party of between 100 and 200 Redshanks (*Tringa totanus*), which were evidently moving in a northerly direction. Such large numbers of this species on passage on dry ground in an inland and upland locality must be exceptional.

BILL-COLOUR OF ROSEATE TERN—With reference to the notes (*antea*, vol. xlii, p. 159; xliii, p. 162) on the bill-colour of the Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*), Mr. G. E. Took informs us that he visited a breeding colony in N. Ireland on June 11th, 1949. Amongst approximately 100 pairs nesting on a small island he saw none but black-billed birds.



"FÆROE" SNIPE (*Capella gallinago* "*færoeensis*").
NESTING IN BIRCH SCRUB, THINGVELLIR, S.W. ICELAND, JUNE, 1949.
(*Photographed by G. K. YEATES*),
(See page 137).



ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna dougallii*).

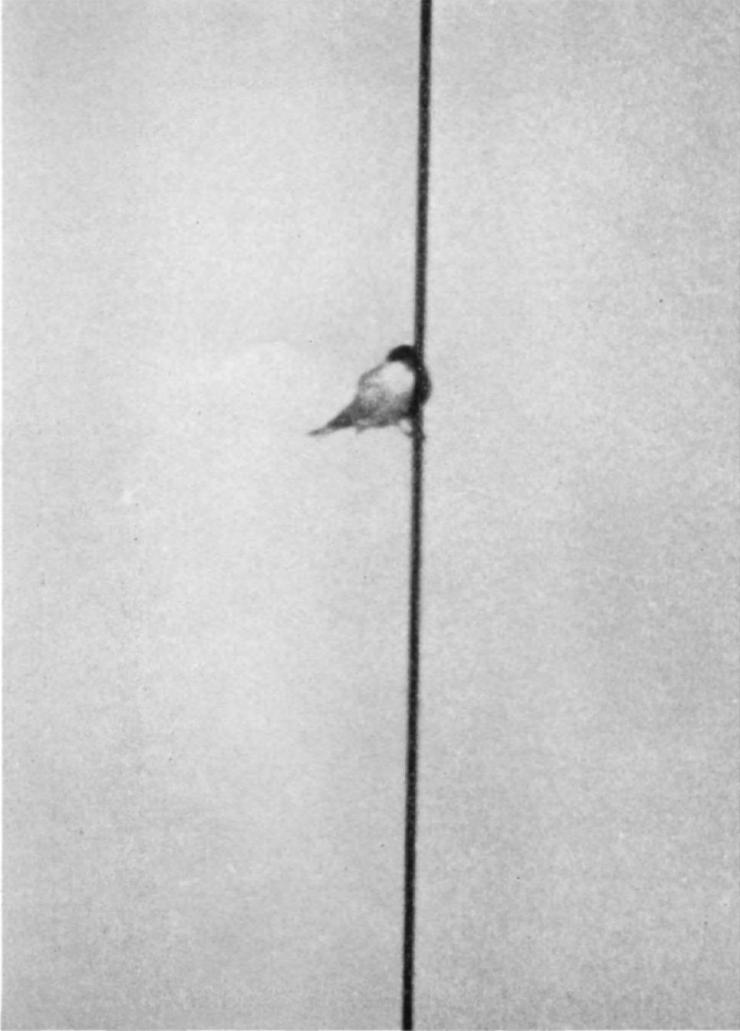
PERCHING IN TREE MALLOW AT AN IRISH COLONY, 1950.

(*Photographed by A. G. MASON.*)

(See page 138).



ROSEATE TERN (*Sterna dougallii*).
PERCHING IN TREE MALLOW AT AN IRISH COLONY, 1950.
(*Photographed by A. G. MASON*).
(See page 138).



COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*).
PERCHING ON POWER CABLE, TEESMOUTH, JULY 21ST, 1950.
(*Photographed by D. R. SEAWARD*).
(See page 139).