

Zoological Record for Derbyshire, 1909.

By REV. F. C. R. JOURDAIN, M.A., M.B.O.U., ETC.

MAMMALS.

Noctule, *Pipistrellus noctula* (Schr.).—Although not uncommon in some parts of the south of the county, this species is not common in the Ashburne district, and I have never seen a specimen in the parish of Clifton till last September. Sir O. Mosley, in his work on the *Natural History of Tutbury*, says that it is seen from April to July; but on previous occasions I have seen individuals hawking in the district as late as September 19th, and this year twice observed what was probably the same individual at Clifton on September 10th and 18th.

Otter, *Lutra lutra* (L.).—One was reported in the local papers as having been killed in March by a labourer at work below the Trent bridge at Burton. Seeing the head of the otter in the river, he threw a stone at it and killed it on the spot. One was trapped and another seen by Mr. Lupton in Monsal Dale (W. Storrs Fox).

Badger, *Meles meles* (L.).—One, weighing $20\frac{3}{4}$ lbs., was killed in Osmaston Park (near Ashburne) on March 11th.

BIRDS.

1908.

Addenda to previous report.

Among some ornithological notes kindly furnished by Mr. C. H. Wells, which reached me too late to be included in last year's report, is a very interesting note on a Brown Owl, *Syrnium aluco* (L.), which was found by him sitting on three eggs on a little ledge in the side of a pinnacle of rocky cliff

in Dovedale. Except for a few leaves, the eggs were laid on the rock, and the nesting place was quite exposed, while one egg, which was not covered, was conspicuous as the bird sat fast asleep. Curiously enough, only two days later Mr. Wells found another Brown Owl's nest in a similar site on a rocky ledge not far from Ambergate. This nest subsequently contained four eggs, an unusually high number in this county. Near Ambergate, Mr. Wells also found a Nightjar, *Caprimulgus europæus* L., sitting on two eggs in a bracken-grown firwood on June 8th, which hatched off successfully.

Little Stint, *Tringa minuta* Leisl.—Mr. T. E. Auden, of Repton, informs me that he has in his possession one of these birds, which was shot on the Burton Sewage Farm at Egginton, out of a trip of about half-a-dozen, on September 26th, 1908. This is the third definite record of this species for the county.

Mr. E. F. Wright, of Yeldersley, writes that a pinioned drake Teal bred with a wild duck Teal and reared young in 1908, and that three couple of Tufted Duck bred on the pond at Yeldersley in the same year, rearing twenty-five young between them. Only one Great Crested Grebe came to the pond, and though it stayed through the summer, it failed to find a mate.

1909.

As the weather during the spring and summer has a very important influence on the arrival of our migratory birds, as well as on their breeding, a few words on the past season may not be out of place. In early January the weather was rough, with some snow, and we had sharp frosts from the 23rd to the 28th. In February we had beautifully fine and bright but cold weather from the 16th to the 27th, when a little snow fell, which lay on the ground till March 19th. There was a heavy snowfall on March 6th, so that the rapid thaw of March 19th-20th resulted in floods, followed by rather variable but, on the whole, bright and spring-like weather in April.

With the exception of the first fortnight of August, when the weather was ideally fine, and a few scattered days at intervals, the summer was persistently wet and cold; while in autumn things were little better, and the hopes of a mild and fine autumn and winter were soon dispelled. On December 3rd the hills were white with sleet, and on the 5th even the low ground was covered thinly with snow; but the first real snowfall took place on the early morning of December 19th, when some five inches fell in the south, and nearly a foot in the north of the county.

On the whole, the spring weather was favourable to the early and regular arrival of migrants, but the summer was a very trying one to breeding birds, and large numbers of young birds must have perished from the effects of the low temperature, heavy rains, and resultant floods, with but little sunshine.

ARRIVAL OF MIGRANTS.—The first migrant of which I have any note is the Chiff Chaff, which was heard by Mr. Storrs Fox above Ashford, near Bakewell, on March 30th, but it was not met with on the 2nd April in the same locality, where it is an uncommon bird at any time. It did not reach us in the upper Dove Valley till April 11th, and one was singing away in my garden early on the morning of the 12th; but at Burton-on-Trent Mr. H. G. Tomlinson noted it on April 7th. The Wheatears probably also arrived early, for we noticed them paired and settled down in their breeding haunts on the Dovedale hills on April 8th. The next record is an extraordinary one, for Mr. W. Boulsover records a single House Martin from Bakewell on April 3rd! This is an extraordinarily early date, but Mr. Tomlinson observed it at Burton on April 9th, although it did not make its way up the Dove Valley to the Ashburne district till April 21st.

On the other hand, a few Swallows made their way up the Dove Valley very early in April, and two were seen at Okeover on April 4th by one of the river watchers, while Mr. Boulsover saw four near Bakewell on April 6th, and Mr. Tomlinson reports this species from Burton on the 8th.

The same day one was seen at Clifton, and I met with several working their way up the Dove on the 9th, and saw nine together in the evening on the 10th above Castleton. One was reported from near Chapel-en-le-Frith on the 8th, and another seen by Mr. Braylesford Bunting on the 10th above Castleton. The Sand Martin is generally the first to arrive of the *Hirundinidæ*, but though observed at Burton on the 7th, it only returned to its breeding place at Clifton on the 10th, when about nine were flying about, although a flock of thirty was reported to me from the River Dove on the 8th, which apparently passed on. The Willow Wren was noted by Mr. C. H. Wells at Brailsford on April 8th, and by me at Clifton on the 11th, but was not heard at Bakewell by Mr. Storrs Fox till the 19th.

Sandpipers were beginning to work up-stream into the Ashburne district early in April, and two were seen at Okeover on the 10th, and again on the 15th, while Mr. Storrs Fox heard one in Monsal Dale on the 19th. The first Yellow Wagtail, a fine cock bird, was seen by me at Clifton on April 11th.

A Cuckoo was calling at Mayfield on the 17th, and I heard it at 6.30 a.m. on the following day at Clifton, while Mr. Storrs Fox also records it from the moors near Bakewell on the 22nd.

A male Redstart was seen by me at Snelston on April 18th.

Tree Pipits must have arrived on the 18th at Clifton, for on the morning of the 19th I heard half-a-dozen in full song within half a mile, and a platelayer on the railway told me that he had flushed one on the previous day. They had reached Bakewell by the 21st (W. Storrs Fox). On the 23rd a Corncrake was heard by a platelayer near Clifton, and I heard another on the 27th, while one was killed by a terrier on May 1st.

A beautiful cock Pied Flycatcher was seen by me on April 24th about a mile from Clifton, in exactly the same place where I noticed one on May 1st, 1908. It is by no means common, but I have met with it on migration on three occasions

in the Henmore Valley, and have heard of two or three other occurrences in the district. The same morning I heard a Wood Wren in song also near Clifton, and saw two Greater Whitethroats, but I think I heard one of the latter on the 22nd. A single Swift made its way to Bakewell on April 24th (W. Storrs Fox), the earliest date of which I have any record for this species in Derbyshire, as it is one of our most regular migrants, and almost always appears in the first days of May. At Burton it appeared on May 3rd (H. G. Tomlinson). A Lesser Whitethroat was singing at Clifton on April 28th, and the Sedge Warbler on the 1st May.

Mr. Tomlinson notes the arrival of the Spotted Flycatcher at Burton on May 9th, and the Turtle Dove on May 11th, while the Garden Warbler was singing there on May 7th.

On reviewing the above records, it will at once be seen that a few migrants penetrated into the north of the county much earlier than usual; in fact, the dates recorded for the first Swallow, House Martin, and Swift are the earliest of which I have any exact note. This coincides with observations from other parts of the county; for instance, Mr. H. Massey writes to me from Didsbury, Lancashire, that the date of the arrival of the Swallow was the earliest recorded in his district for thirty-three years!

DEPARTURE OF MIGRANTS.—The Swifts departed in a body from the Ashburne district about August 8th, and not a single bird was seen there after the 9th; but at Mapleton, in the Dove Valley, only a mile or two away, Mr. J. Henderson saw two Swifts on August 20th. Apparently some birds migrate by this route after our local birds have gone (*cf.* last year's report in this *Journal*, 1909, p. 184).

Willow Wrens were heard up to August 26th, and a Chiff Chaff was singing on September 3rd at Clifton, but the latest date on which it was heard was September 23rd. The main body of Swallows and Martins had left the district about October 18th, and no late stragglers were met with this year.

From the above scanty notes it is pretty clear that the

departure of the Hirundinidæ and Swifts was more regular than usual, and that most of the individuals of each species left about the same time.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Raven, *Corvus corax* L.—Mr. J. Henderson, of Clifton, while walking across the fields from Osmaston to Clifton on January 17th, saw and heard a Raven. It was a misty day, and the bird perched on a tree and croaked several times as if it had a mate in the neighbourhood, but only one bird was seen.

Rook, *C. frugilegus* L.—Mr. G. Pullen noticed a bronzed or rich brown variety at close quarters at Willington in July, which was being mobbed by other rooks.

Greenfinch, *Chloris chloris* (L.).—A late nest of this bird at Snelston contained nearly fledged young on August 26th, rather an unusual date.

Lesser Redpoll, *Carduelis flammea cabaret* (Mull.).—A nest found in an elder bush at Clifton on June 17th contained the large number of six eggs.

Crossbill, *Loxia curvirostra* L.—There has been a very extensive immigration of Scandinavian birds to the British Isles during the latter part of 1908, but although they have been observed in the neighbouring counties of Yorkshire, Notts., and Stafford, none were reported from Derbyshire till the middle of November, when a flock appeared at Belper. Of these three were shot on November 19th, then five more on the 23rd, and six on the 27th, making fourteen in all. Of these half were in the red plumage and half in the green, and all appeared to belong to the Continental form, *L. curvirostra curvirostra* L. I have been informed that four others were killed in the Melbourne district.

Stonechat, *Pratincola rubicola* (L.).—A male picked up beneath telegraph wires near Edensor on May 11th (W. Boulsover).

Nightingale, *Daulias lusciniæ* L.—Mr. C. H. Wells reports a Nightingale singing in a plantation near Chellaston from 11.10 p.m. to 11.50 p.m. on May 3rd.

Pied Flycatcher, *Muscicapa atricapilla* L.—(Recorded under the head of arrival of migrants, *antea*, p. 212).

Cuckoo, *Cuculus canorus* L.—Only two Cuckoos' eggs came under my notice during the past season; the first in a Pied Wagtail's nest at Sturston on June 10th (Rev. W. M. Tomlinson), and the second in a Robin's nest at Stanton-by-Bridge, which hatched off successfully.

Wryneck, *Lynx torquilla* L.—This bird is hardly ever seen in the Dove Valley, yet one was caught alive in an orchard in Ellastone (Staffs.) on September 28th, but died shortly after owing to an accident. I saw this bird when it was being set up, so that there is no doubt as to its identification.

Little Owl, *Athene noctua* (Scop.).—It is with much pleasure that I am able to quote Mr. Wells' account of the first recorded instance of the breeding of this bird in Derbyshire:—

“On May 2nd, 1909, I discovered a clutch of six owl's eggs in the hollow interior of a dead tree in Derbyshire. Although the eggs were certainly those of an owl, they appeared too small for the species usually breeding in the county. Neither bird was to be seen, but scattered about the interior of the hollow were twenty or more freshly-killed mice, together with a few—a very few—feathers, probably those of finches of some kind.

“On visiting the site a week later, all doubt as to the species was set at rest by finding a Little Owl (*Athene noctua*) sitting tight upon the eggs. She was wide awake, staring with wide-opened yellow eyes, but refused to leave the eggs. In fact, so close was the bird sitting that she might have been taken in the hand. The sitting bird was evidently subsisting on food brought by her mate, for most of the mice had disappeared.

“Four young owls had been hatched on June 6th. They were ashy-grey in colour, with legs which appeared furred with thick grey down right to the toes. Not a scrap of food was now to be seen, but the condition of the nesting hollow, as usual with predatory birds, was becoming very unsavoury.

“By the 13th the young birds were considerably grown. They appeared to vary a little in age, the oldest giving short, sharp snaps with his bill to indicate resentment at being molested. The claws of the young birds were of needle-like sharpness. After the hatching of the eggs, neither parent was to be seen. They were doubtless roosting (in the daytime) in neighbouring trees. I noticed that these birds were by no means averse to sunlight, however, for whilst watching from a distance I frequently saw the young owls climb out of the nest and stand about on the nesting tree looking around—a dangerous habit, and one not calculated to increase their chance of survival in the event of enemies, human or otherwise, passing near.

“At the end of June the nesting site was vacant, and I have every reason to believe the birds got safely away.

“As this is, so far as I am aware, the first record of the species breeding in this county, their success is gratifying, there being good grounds for hoping that the Little Owl will become a permanent addition to the list of Derbyshire breeding birds.”

I regret to add that one or two have been shot during the year. One was sent in to Mr. Hutchinson from Burton on March 16th.

Short-eared Owl, *Asio accipitrinus* (Pall.).—Mr. W. Storrs Fox, writing from Bakewell on April 25th, says that a pair of these birds were seen from time to time during the winter on the moors above Curbar, but had lately disappeared. He also reports a pair of Merlins, *Falco aesalon*, Tunst., as seen there a fortnight before.

Hobby, *F. subbuteo* L.—I saw a beautiful Hobby at Mr. Adsett's shop on June 25th, which had been sent in for preservation from Duffield on June 2nd, just about the time these beautiful and harmless little Falcons are beginning to breed.

Wigeon, *Mareca penelope* (L.); Pochard, *Fuligula ferina* (L.); and Tufted Duck, *Fuligula fuligula* (L.).—Mr. E. F. Wright tells me that a partially warm reservoir at Butterley is generally

full of duck in winter, although close to the road. There are usually, at the beginning of April, about three or four couple of Wigeon and about the same number of Pochard. On January 30th he noticed between thirty and forty Tufted Duck, about twelve couple of Wigeon, and a few Mallard.

Dotterel, *Eudromias morinellus* (L.).—Although these birds are protected, I am informed that one was shot near Buxton about May 25th. It has been set up, and is now, I believe, in a local collection. Mr. W. Boulsover sends me the interesting information that he saw a trip of eight Dotterel in a fallow field on the high ground between Bakewell and Hurdlow on May 6th.

Common Tern, *Sterna fluviatilis*, Naum.—Mr. G. Pullen tells me that several of these birds came up the Derwent during early April; one was shot on the Long Bridge, Derby, by Mr. Sharp. Mr. Adsetts had one sent to him on April 26th.

We must not omit to chronicle the death of Mr. A. S. Hutchinson, the well-known Derby taxidermist, whose death took place during the past summer. He rendered considerable services to Derbyshire ornithology by preserving many records which would otherwise have been lost, and collaborated with F. B. Whitlock in the production of the *Birds of Derbyshire*, which appeared in 1893.

INSECTS.

COLEOPTERA (Beetles).

From Mr. G. Pullen I have received notes of the occurrence of two scarce Longicorn Beetles in the town of Derby, both probably imported, viz., *Astynomus adilis* L. (one in Derby) and *Leptura scutellata* F. (one taken in June on the Museum buildings). The latter species has not previously been recorded from Derbyshire.

LÉPIDOPTERA (Butterflies and Moths).

The season of 1909 was so unfavourable for entomology that it is not surprising that our records are very scanty.

Mr. H. C. Hayward writes from Repton to record the

capture of a fine ♂ *Tæniocampa opima*, Hb., at Sallow on April 24th at Repton. It has not been previously taken in Derbyshire, but has been recorded from Cannock Chase, as well as in S. Yorkshire, Hereford, etc.

Two other records of considerable interest received from Mr. Hayward are: *Cucullia chamomillæ*, Schiff., taken for the second time by himself in his garden at Repton; and *Sesia formiciformis*, Esp., of which a pair were taken in Cop. in an osier bed on a nettle leaf.

Mr. W. Storrs Fox reports a single *Euchelia jacobaeæ* L. taken at Bakewell on May 25th, the first observed in that district.