

Ornithological Notes for Derbyshire.

By N. H. FITZHERBERT.

THE early part of 1920 was mild. On February 4th I heard the first Chaffinch singing at Bakewell, considerably before the usual time, and a few days later Song-Thrushes were in full song, while Blackbirds had begun to sing on February 24th. On March 24th the usual Dipper's nest at the source of the Lathkill had young birds just hatched, and further down the dale there was another nest with eggs. On March 27th a Missel-Thrush's nest at Bakewell had two eggs; this species was more numerous this year, particularly in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield.

Arrival of Spring Migrants.—The spring migrants were for the most part earlier than usual, and if it had not been for the wet and lack of sun during April they would no doubt have been earlier still. The Ring-Ouzel was seen at Curbar on March 28th (E. Peat), and at Ashopton on April 5th (C. H. Wells). The Chiffchaff was seen at Somersal on March 30th and it was singing there on April 5th; one was noted in Hardwick Park on April 11th (C. B. Chambers). A pair of Wheatears was observed at Williamthorpe on March 26th (C.B.C.); on March 30th the same species was seen near Buxton (W. Shipton); on April 5th near Curbar (E.P.), on April 14th, at Bakewell (J. S. Wright), and on April 18th one was observed at Somersal on passage. Several Willow-Warblers were seen at Somersal on April 11th, but they were not singing much; on April 13th they were noted at Bakewell (J.S.W.), and on April 15th at Buxton (W.S.). A Tree-Pipit was heard singing at Somersal on April 11th and

there were several there on April 16th; on April 17th they were seen at Bakewell (J.S.W.), and near Chesterfield (C.B.C.). On April 11th two Swallows were seen at Somersal and, later in the day, four together, and on the same day they had reached Hardwick Park (C.B.C.). On April 13th they were reported at Bakewell (J.S.W.), on April 17th at Chapel (W.S.), on the 18th at Edale (R. Chislett), on the 20th at Derwent (E.P.), and on the 25th at Buxton (W.S.). On April 11th a Blackcap was singing at Somersal. On April 17th a Whitethroat was singing near Somersal, and there were several about on April 23rd. On April 17th the first Redstart was seen at Chesterfield (C.B.C.), on April 18th one was heard singing at Somersal, and on May 5th a nest was found there with six eggs considerably incubated. On May 4th one was seen near Derwent (E.P.). The first Martins were seen at Somersal on April 19th, and on May 7th they were observed at Chapel (W.S.). Yellow Wagtails were first seen at Williamthorpe on April 11th (C.B.C.); on April 17th they were noted at Chapel (W.S.), on April 18th at Bakewell (J.S.W.), and on April 21st several were seen at Somersal. On April 22nd a fine cock Whinchat was seen at Somersal; on April 24th the same species was observed near Derwent (E.P.), and on April 27th at Williamthorpe (C.B.C.). The first Sandpiper was seen at Williamthorpe on April 18th (C.B.C.); on April 20th they were noted at Derwent (E.P.), on April 21st at Chapel (W.S.), on April 23rd at Mappleton, on April 25th at Ashopton (C.H.W.), and on April 30th at Buxton (W.S.). On April 11th Sandmartins were observed in Hardwick Park (C.B.C.), and there were a few flying about over the Dove near Sudbury on the 24th. On April 17th the Cuckoo was heard near Chesterfield (C.B.C.), on April 22nd at Derwent (E.P.), on April 24th at Somersal, and on April 30th near Buxton (W.S.). The first Sedge-Warbler was heard at Somersal on April

25th and there were several in full song on the 29th. On April 25th a Lesser-Whitethroat was heard at Somersal. On April 26th I heard the first Wood-Warbler singing in Okeover Park just on the Staffordshire side of the Dove ; on May 3rd one was singing at Bakewell, and on May 19th a nest with four fresh eggs was found near Sheffield (C.H.W.). On April 27th I heard a Corn-Crake near Somersal and managed to flush him ; the same species had been previously noted at Derwent on April 20th (E.P.), and at Ashopton on April 25th (C.H.W.). The Garden-Warbler was heard singing at Somersal on April 29th. In the evening of April 30th five Swifts arrived at Bakewell, and on the same day they reached Hardwick Park (C.B.C.) and Derby (C.H.W.) ; on May 3rd they were observed at New Mills (W.S.), on May 10th at Buxton (W.S.), and on May 14th at Derwent (E.P.). On May 1st a Grasshopper-Warbler was heard " reeling " near Hathersage (R. Chislett). The Spotted Flycatcher was seen near Derwent on May 4th (E.P.), and on May 10th there were several at Bakewell. On May 9th the Turtle-Dove was noted for the first time near Chesterfield (C.B.C.), and on May 16th it was heard at Sudbury where it may have arrived some days previously. On May 14th the first Nightjar was heard near Derwent (E.P.).

Departure of Migrants.—On July 11th several Sandpipers arrived at Williamthorpe Reservoir, but had all gone by the 18th ; the last was seen there on August 13th (C.B.C.). On August 6th the last Turtle-Dove was seen near Chesterfield (C.B.C.). On August 8th about forty Swifts were seen flying south near Chesterfield, and none were noted after that date (C.B.C.) ; on August 13th one was twice seen flying round the Hall at Somersal. On August 29th a large flock of Swallows passed over Heath village (C.B.C.). On Sept. 3rd the Willow-Warbler was heard singing for the last time at Somersal ; on Sept.

18th the last was seen at Holmwood (C.B.C.). On Sept. 8th the last Whitethroat was seen near Chesterfield, on Sept. 11th the last Yellow Wagtail and Corn-Crake, on Sept. 15th the last Wheatear and on Sept. 28th the last Whinchat (C.B.C.). On Sept. 1st the Redstart was seen for the last time at Somersal, and on Sept. 21st the Chiffchaff's song was last heard, though one was heard calling on the following day. On Sept. 15th the last Spotted Flycatcher was seen at Somersal; two were noted in Hardwick Park on Sept. 19th, and on the same day about eighty Martins visited the ponds on their way south (C.B.C.).

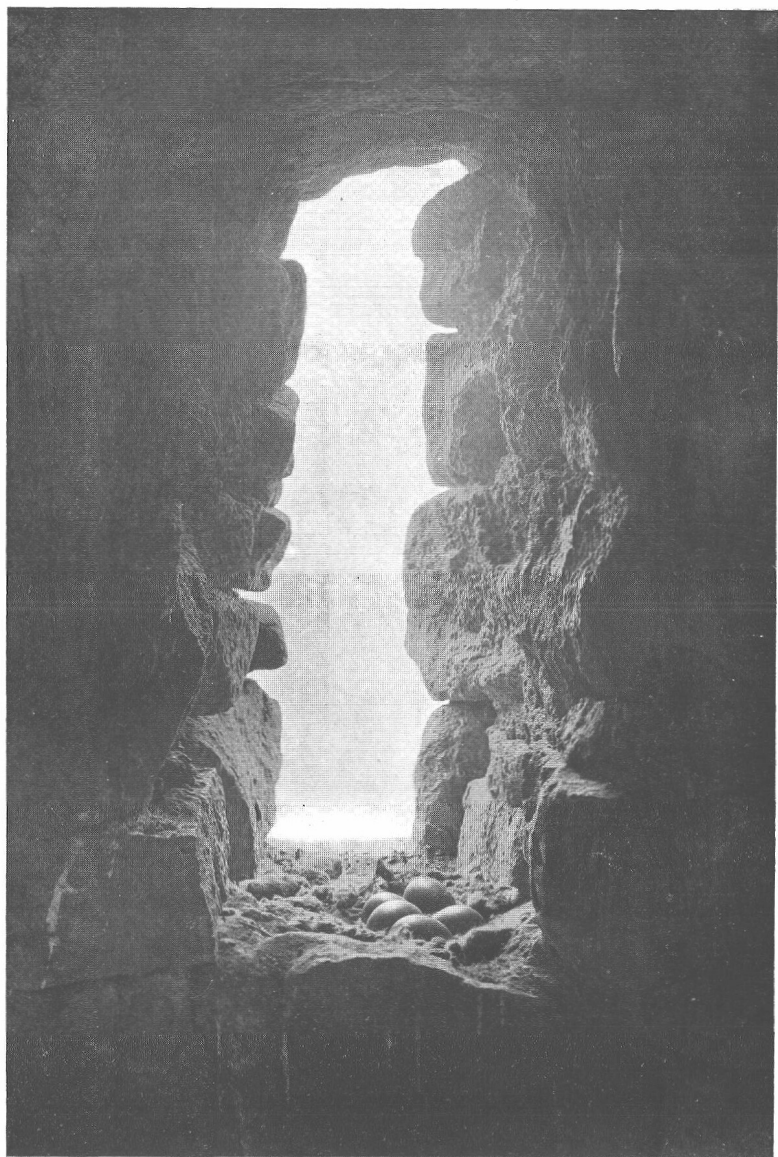
CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Siskin, *Spinus spinus*.—On November 7th a flock of about 30 Siskins was observed feeding on the alders in Hardwick Park (C.B.C.).

Robin, *Erithacus rubecula melophilus*.—On June 20th a nest was found in an oak-tree in Hardwick Park containing five eggs, all pure white, which had met the usual fate attending such conspicuous eggs and been sucked (C.B.C.).

Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dryobates maior anglicus*.—The female of this species mentioned in former articles has not come for nuts since September 7th, 1920. From September 26th 1919 onwards, complete records were kept of her visits and it was found that she came on 290 days, usually paying several visits each day. From November to May she was very regular, the number of days on which she came per month being 29, 26, 30, 29, 31, 30 and 29 respectively. During June family cares were evidently very oppressive, as the only days on which she found time to come were 1st, 3rd, 14th-20th inclusive, and 26th; she was always in a great hurry and would often leave a nut half eaten, but in July she became regular again. From December onwards nuts were placed only in the post put up for the purpose a

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Ralph Chislett.

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KESTREL'S NEST ON BARN LOOPHOLE-LEDGE.

few yards from the dining-room window. Though still very shy, the bird did not seem to mind movement in the room as long as the windows were shut, and usually a visit would be paid during breakfast, when she could be watched splendidly at such close range. On April 11th, a Great Tit, venturing too near, was punished for its temerity; the Woodpecker pounced on it, and, holding it fast against the post, gave it some vigorous jabs with its powerful beak; the Tit squeaked piteously, but after a few seconds flew off into the bushes, apparently not much hurt. On July 13th a young one was seen for the first time on the post with the mother, and for the next few days both were usually seen during breakfast. Unfortunately I was away, and the young one came for the last time on July 27th, the day before I got back, so I was unable to get a photograph of the two together. It was the prettiest sight to watch the young one being fed. It would take up its position on the post below the mother, and the latter at intervals would scramble down and put her head back over her shoulder with a piece of nut in the beak, at which the young one would peck vigorously. Once or twice the young one was seen by itself on the post as early as six o'clock in the morning. On July 27th, the last day on which it appeared, it ventured to go to the nut itself, but was driven away by the mother, who afterwards, however, consented to feed it.

The photograph reproduced shews the post mentioned, and I doubt if this species has ever been photographed so close to a house before. I am indebted to Mr. R. Chislett for very kindly preparing me a print for publication.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, *Dryobates minor*.—As this bird is by no means common in Derbyshire, especially in the north, it is interesting to record that on June 1st Mr. C. B. Chambers watched a pair feeding their young in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield. The nest was

situated in a high poplar about 60 feet from the ground.

Long-eared Owl, *Asio otus*.—On June 12th Messrs. R. Chislett and E. Peat saw a young bird of this species flying over one of the reservoirs at Derwent ; it dropped into the water about fifteen yards from the land, and using its wings and feet as oars swam rapidly to the shore, where it was rescued none the worse for its adventure.

Little Owl, *Carine noctua*.—This species is very much on the increase in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield (C.B.C.).

Rough-legged Buzzard, *Buteo lagopus*.—Early in the year a fine specimen was shot near Curbar.

White-tailed Eagle, *Haliaëtus albicilla*.—During nearly the whole of December an immature bird of this species frequented the top of the Derwent Valley and escaped the attentions of the keepers. It was seen constantly in the neighbourhood and was reported in the Sheffield papers as a Golden Eagle. It was, however, shot at last on February 8th, 1921—a most foul crime !

Honey-Buzzard, *Pernis apivorus*.—On October 6th a Honey-Buzzard was shot near Clay Cross while sitting on a hedge. This bird very rarely visits Derbyshire and has only been recorded three or four times previously.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*.—It is now possible to make allusion to the interesting event referred to in last year's notes. In 1919 for the first time on record a pair of Peregrine Falcons bred in North Derbyshire. At the time it was considered best to keep the matter dark, in the hope that a further attempt might be made in 1920, but though Peregrine Falcons have been seen at various points in the Peak district this year, no evidence as to their breeding in Derbyshire has been obtained. I am indebted to Mr. C. H. Wells for the following interesting details. The nest was situated on a deeply undercut ledge of high crags. The male was shot by a



ABOUT TO BEGIN OPERATIONS.

keeper on leaving the rocks and at the same time the female was fired at but got away, though in all probability hard hit, for she did not return to the spot, and it is to be feared escaped only to die on the surrounding moors. A search of the locality resulted in the discovery of two eggs, and the fragments of a third lay amongst the *débris* of the nest. A few old castings lay on the nesting-ledge, together with the leg-bones of a bird of the size of a Thrush, and a few green-gold feathers. The eggs when found on June 12th proved to be highly incubated and also decomposed. The exact date of laying could not therefore be determined, but they would appear to have been deserted for at least three weeks.

On May 8th, 1920, a bird of this species was observed by Mr. Chambers flying over the market-place at Chesterfield, and another on May 15th at Bolsover Castle, while on July 11th one was seen by Messrs. E. Grindey and C. H. Wells flying north over the village of Thorpe at a considerable height.

Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*.—Thanks to the kindness of Mr. R. Chislett I am able to include with these notes a photograph of a Kestrel's nest taken in North Derbyshire, rather unusually situated in the loop-hole of a disused farm-building.

Gadwall, *Anas strepera*.—On October 24th three Gadwall, all ducks, were observed on the ponds in Hardwick Park. In addition to these, Pochards, Teal, Tufted Ducks, Golden-eyes and Shovelers have been seen on these ponds in the course of the year (C.B.C.).

Jack Snipe, *Limnocryptes gallinula*.—On October 23rd a Jack Snipe was flushed near Chesterfield, which settled on a stick in a hedge three feet from the ground and remained for several minutes in this unusual position (C.B.C.).

Redshank, *Totanus totanus*.—This bird seems to be increasing its range in Derbyshire and for the last two

years has been seen frequently by Mr. Chambers in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield, and may possibly have bred in the vicinity.

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*.—On May 15th one was seen flying over in a very tired condition near Chesterfield (C.B.C.).

Lapwing, *Vanellus vanellus*.—On September 28th a Lapwing with white wings was observed near Chesterfield, (C.B.C.).

Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*.—This year in addition to the colony which has existed for the last few years on Leash Fen, another was started on Big Moor near Owler Bar.

Corn-Crake, *Crex crex*.—On January 3rd Mr. F. Lees of Ashford Hall shot a Corn-Crake near Bakewell; the bird was in poor condition but was able to fly (W.S.).

My thanks are due to those who have kindly contributed to these notes:—Messrs. C. B. Chambers, R. Chislett, E. Peat, W. Shipton, C. H. Wells and J. S. Wright.
