

## Ornithological Notes for Derbyshire, 1922.

BY N. H. FITZHERBERT.

THE spring this year was very late. On the few warm days in January and the early part of February Song-Thrushes and Missel-Thrushes were to be heard singing, but I heard no early Blackbirds. On February 7th, a bright, frosty morning, I heard a Chaffinch tuning up for the first time at Darley Dale. On March 14th, a Song-Thrush's nest at Somersal was ready for eggs and on March 19th, a pair of Long-tailed Tits had completed about half of the outside of their nest. During April there were some very cold frosts and north winds, and this caused everything to be very backward and made most of the spring migrants late. May 7th was the first real spring day, and, during the next few days, trees and hedges came out with a burst. The hedges have never offered a more glorious sight, and the fruits of all the bloom were to be seen later on in the autumn, when the hedges were red with haws, and the holly bushes literally crammed with berries, thicker than on a Christmas card. Up till the end of the year, the birds, with plenty of other food to eat owing to the mildness of the weather, had made little impression on the masses of berries, though here and there, in spite of the plenty, a watchful Missel-Thrush was to be seen keeping guard over his private preserves and driving away any venturesome Blackbird or Song-Thrush; he was not going to run the risk of a shortage.

Encouraged by the mild weather, Song-Thrushes were to be heard in grand chorus right up to the end of the

year; very few were the mornings on which they were silent. They may usually be heard singing intermittently on warm mornings throughout the winter months, but it is not often that they are so persistent as this year. Blackbirds, apparently, have a much keener sense of times and seasons and are rarely lured into song before February, at any rate in the north, and I have a shrewd suspicion that some of the southern winter-singing Blackbirds, reported in the newspapers, are in reality Missel-Thrushes.

ARRIVAL OF SPRING MIGRANTS.—The following are the dates as far as they were brought to my notice.

*Chiffchaff*—Somersal, April 10th.

*Wheatear*—near Chesterfield, April 14th (C.B.C.).

*Ring-Ouzel*—Derwent, April 23rd (E.P.).

*Willow-Warbler*—Near Chesterfield, April 15th (C.B.C.);

Somersal, April 15th; Longstone, April 18th (J.S.W.).

*Tree-Pipit*—Somersal, April 19th; near Chesterfield, April 21st (C.B.C.).

*Swallow*—Somersal, April 13th; near Chesterfield, April 13th (C.B.C.); Longstone, April 13th (J.S.W.); Hathersage, April 18th (R.C.).

*Martin*—Near Chesterfield, April 15th (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 20th.

*Sand-Martin*—Near Chesterfield, April 15th (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 19th.

*Sandpiper*—Near Chesterfield, April 23rd (C.B.C.).

*Cuckoo*—Somersal, April 17th; near Chesterfield, April 29th (C.B.C.); Derwent, May 1st (E.P.); Hathersage, May 6th (R.C.).

*Yellow Wagtail*—Somersal, April 15th; near Chesterfield, April 21st (C.B.C.).

*Whitethroat*—Somersal, May 7th; near Chesterfield, May 12th (C.B.C.).

*Lesser Whitethroat*—Somersal, May 7th.

*Blackcap*—Somersal, May 1st.

*Garden-Warbler*—Somersal, May 16th; near Chesterfield, May 17th (C.B.C.).

*Corn-Crake*—Somersal, June 11th (very scarce in this neighbourhood); Hathersage, May 6th (R.C.); near Sheffield, May 12th (C.H.W.).

*Redstart*—Somersal, April 15th; near Chesterfield, April 21st (C.B.C.); 6 eggs at Hathersage, June 6th (R.C.).

*Whinchat*—Near Chesterfield, April 21st (C.B.C.); Somersal, May 7th.

*Sedge-Warbler*—Somersal, May 8th.

*Spotted Flycatcher*—Somersal, May 8th; near Chesterfield, May 16th (C.B.C.).

*Swift*—Near Chesterfield, April 21st; Hathersage, May 6th (R.C.); Derby, May 6th (C.H.W.); Somersal, May 7th; Calver, May 8th (C.H.W.).

*Turtle-Dove*—Near Chesterfield, May 6th (C.B.C.); Somersal, June 11th.

*Wood-Warbler*—Near Chesterfield, May 9th (C.B.C.).

*Nightjar*—Derwent, May 16th (E.P.).

While the general tendency was towards late arrival, particularly in the case of the Ring-Ouzel, Blackcap, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat, there were a few early dates. The dates for the Redstart and Yellow Wagtail, at Somersal, are the earliest recorded there for the last six years, but the most outstanding instance was the appearance of a single Swift near Chesterfield, on April 21st. This species is as a rule particularly regular in its coming, which usually takes place during the last two or three days of April, or more commonly the first week in May. Single birds in advance of the main body are rarely met with, and, in places where they are common, on one day there is not a Swift to be seen, while on the next they are present in full numbers.

DEPARTURE OF MIGRANTS.—On August 8th I saw a Swift near Willington and on the following day another near Uttoxeter; on August 10th one was seen at Bakewell

(J.S.W.) On September 5th I heard the song of both Chiffchaff and Willow-Warbler at Somersal, and on September 10th the song of the Chiffchaff for the last time. Swallows and Martins were still to be seen in fair numbers when I left Somersal on Sept. 21st, but they were not observed afterwards there. On Sept. 20th I saw a Spotted Flycatcher and Tree-Pipit.

The following are the dates of the last appearances as recorded by Mr. Chambers in the neighbourhood of Chesterfield:—Swift and Turtle-Dove, August 25th; Willow-Warbler, August 30th; Redstart and Wheatear, Sept. 2nd; Sedge Warbler, Sept. 7th; Yellow Wagtail, Sept. 13th; Sand-Martin, Sept. 24th; Whinchat, Oct. 4th; Swallow and Martin, Oct. 8th.

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#### CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Siskin, *Spinus spinus*.—A flock of these birds was observed in Hardwick Park on Oct. 29th and again on Nov. 26th (C.B.C.)

Long-tailed Titmouse, *Aegithalus caudatus roseus*.—This charming little bird has to a large extent recovered from the effects of the disastrous winter of a few years ago. I am delighted to have my own experience to this effect confirmed in other localities by Messrs. C. B. Chambers and C. H. Wells. I wish the same thing could be said of the Goldcrest, another attractive little bird which also suffered great loss of numbers at the same time, but, though it is common enough in winter, as a breeding species it has by no means recovered its former status.

Great Grey Shrike, *Lanius excubitor*.—One was killed at Hathersage in October (R.C.).

Fieldfare, *Turdus pilaris*.—On May 20th and 21st a Fieldfare was seen and heard at Somersal, this being a very late date.

Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*.—On July 24th a yellow Swallow was observed at Somersal; it was almost as conspicuous and bright-coloured as a male Yellow Wagtail.

Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*.—A bird of this species, apparently unaccompanied by a mate, built a nest near Derwent but disappeared without laying (E.P.).

Merlin, *Falco aesalon*.—Of five nests examined in the Peak District, one contained the unusually large number of six eggs (C.H.W.).

Osprey, *Pandion haliaëtus*.—A bird of this species was an interesting visitor to the reservoirs at Derwent, in 1921. It was first seen on July 11th, and, from that date onwards, was frequently in evidence until August 3rd. On July 28th it was seen flying with a trout of about 1lb. in its claws, and on August 3rd it was seen to swoop down to the surface of the water and catch a fish. On each occasion the fish was carried right away to the hills. As far as is known, the bird was not destroyed, but merely left the neighbourhood (E.P.).

Common Sheld-Duck, *Tadorna tadorna*.—Three were seen on the reservoir at Derwent on Dec. 2nd (E.P.).

Common Scoter, *Oedemia nigra*.—One was seen on Hardwick Ponds on April 14th (C.B.C.).

Little Stint, *Tringa minuta*.—A specimen was obtained at Williamthorpe Reservoir on Sept. 9th (C.B.C.). This is an extremely rare visitor to Derbyshire.

Red-necked Grebe, *Podiceps griseigena*.—A bird of this species was observed on Hardwick Ponds on Feb. 5th and the following day (C.B.C.). Both this bird and the following are rarely met with in the county.

Slavonian Grebe, *Podiceps auritus*.—On Feb. 3rd a Slavonian Grebe was shot on Williamthorpe Reservoir; another was seen at the same place on Feb. 5th (C.B.C.).

My best thanks are due to Messrs. C. B. Chambers, R. Chislett, E. Peat, C. H. Wells and J. S. Wright.