

# ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORD FOR DERBYSHIRE, 1932-33.

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F.Z.S., etc.

The early part of the year 1933 was remarkable for the blizzard accompanied with heavy snowfall which swept most of the country. It began on February 24th and continued at intervals until February 27th. No more snow fell after this date, but the villages and isolated farms in the hilly district north of Ashbourne and in the Peak were cut off and completely isolated for about a week. The snow went very gradually, drifts remaining for long periods in sheltered places. Vegetation came out with a rush, and by mid-May the trees were as far advanced in south Derbyshire as in the southern counties of England. The exceptionally fine and dry summer was on the whole favourable to bird life, and the effects of the long drought were hardly felt till after the close of the breeding season.

## ARRIVAL OF MIGRANTS, 1933.

In addition to Mr. C. B. Chambers' observations in the Chesterfield district, Miss C. W. Hull contributed notes on some eleven species to the *Field* newspaper, which are incorporated in the following list together with a few from other sources.

Chiff-Chaff, *Phylloscopus c. collybita*. March 30th, reported from Hoar Cross, Staffs. (W. L. Scott); April 9th, Hazelwood (Miss C. W. Hull).

Wheatear, *Oenanthe oe. oenanthe*. April 3rd, Buxton (W. Shipton); 11th, Heath (C. B. Chambers).

Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla f. rayi*. April 13th, Ashbourne, two (Miss K. Hollick); 24th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Willow-Warbler, *Phylloscopus t. trochilus*. April 16th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); 22nd, Heath (C.B.C.).

Swallow, *Hirundo r. rustica*. April 16th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); 24th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Tree-Pipit, *Anthus t. trivialis*. April 26th, Heath (C.B.C.); May 5th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Cuckoo, *Cuculus c. canorus*. April 26th, Heath (C.B.C.); 30th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Whitethroat, *Sylvia c. communis*. April 28th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); May 7th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Swift, *Apus a. apus*. April 28th, Heath (C.B.C.); May 3rd, one Burton-on-Trent, and ten next day (B. J. R. Moreton); 5th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); 12th, Buxton (W.S.).

House-Martin, *Delichon u. urbica*. April 28th, Heath (C.B.C.); 30th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Corncrake, *Crex crex*. April 28th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); May 12th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Sand-Martin, *Riparia r. riparia*. May 4th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Whinchat, *Saxicola r. rubetra*. May 5th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.); 8th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa s. striata*. May 5th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*. May 8th, Heath (C.B.C.).

Turtle-Dove, *Streptopelia t. turtur*. May 20th, Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Mr. Chambers also reports several Swallows still present in Heath village on October 12th, but Miss Hull saw no Swallows or Sand-Martins after October 7th, and Dr. Shipton saw Swallows last on the 6th at Buxton. Last Swift seen at Buxton on August 10th (W.S.).

Redwings and Fieldfares were first noted on November 16th, 1933, at Hazelwood (C.W.H.).

Miss Hull also notes the presence of Redstarts in un-

usual numbers at Alderwasley and Ashleyhay; also that Garden-Warblers bred plentifully near Hazelwood, while Whinchats were less common than usual.

#### CLASSIFIED NOTES.

[When no year is specified, the year 1933 is indicated].

Rook, *Corvus f. frugilegus* L. Mr. A. Roebuck has given in *British Birds*, vol. xxvii, pp. 4-23, a "Survey of the Rooks in the Midlands," including the counties of Notts., Leicester, Rutland, Derbyshire and Lincoln. Derbyshire was surveyed by him in 1929, and the number of rookeries was estimated at 240, containing 10,620 nests, so that the nesting population may be taken at 21,240. This works out at one bird to every 21.2 acres of agricultural land. The article is one of much interest, but it is only possible here to refer to one or two points in it. The largest rookeries are at Catton Hall (S.W.); High Needham (7 mi. S.E. of Buxton, 1,100 ft.); Brookhill Hall (E. border); and Milford (7 m. N. of Derby). These have between 175 and 195 nests in each. There are two large areas which are destitute of rookeries: both are mountainous and are almost treeless expanses of grouse moors in the north-west and north-east of the county.

Crossbill, *Loxia c. curvirostra*. Mr. J. Armitage records this species from Kingsterndale Plantations, nr. Buxton, on April 6th and 7th, 1931 (4) and (2); also seven on January 5th, 1933.

[Cardinal Grosbeak, *Richmondia cardinalis* (L.). Mr. F. Williamson kindly sent me a note of a Grosbeak which had been seen at intervals during the winter of 1932-33 at Weston-on-Trent by Mr. T. Wrigley and others, but at the Museum, Mr. Wrigley identified the bird as a Cardinal, so that it must have been an escaped bird].

Corn-Bunting, *Emberiza c. calandra*. A few pairs noticed about Wirksworth and Wensley in May, 1932,

and again in May and June, 1933, presumably breeding (J. Armitage).

Snow-Bunting, *Plectrophenax nivalis* (L.). Mr. J. Armitage has published an important article on the association of the Purple Moor-grass, *Molinia caerulea*, and bird life, on the high moorlands of south-east Lancashire, north Derbyshire and parts of Staffordshire. The basal husks of this grass contain a mixture of animal and vegetable food: the plant cores and larvæ of Gall-midges (*Cecidomyidæ*). These maggots are present in countless millions, averaging about ten for each haulm, but in one large example no fewer than thirty-seven were counted. When the moor-grass is not covered with snow or ice it provides a practically unlimited food supply, not only for small birds, such as Snow-Bunting, Yellow Bunting, Reed-Bunting, Skylark, Twite, Chaffinch, Meadow-Pipit and Starling, but also for birds up to the size of the Partridge and probably also the Rook. Mr. Armitage gives lists of localities where he and his collaborators have found roosts of Snow-Buntings, including four localities in Derbyshire (near Cown Edge (2), near Charlesworth and at Ravens Low), and in all of these except that near Charlesworth, which is only 900 ft. high, gall-infested *Molinia* grows. The other three localities lie between 1,000 and 1,400 ft. The only midge which has been identified from these *Molinia* tufts so far is *Oligotrophus ventricolus* Rübs. For fuller details see *Brit. Birds*, xxvii, pp. 153-157.

Pied Wagtail, *Motacilla a. yarrellii* Gould. 'Roosts' of this species have been recorded several times, usually in the winter (cf. *Br. Birds*, xxiv, p. 364, etc.), but the following notes on a spring roost in Dr. Hollick's garden at Ashbourne seem to be of exceptional interest. For one or two evenings before March 22nd three or four Wagtails were noticed in the garden in the evenings, and on that day a party of 20 to 30 arrived and roosted in a large

rhododendron. They gradually increased in number until on April 13th there were between 50 and 60 birds, including two Yellow Wagtails (*M. flava rayi*). Next night the Yellow Wagtails had increased to eight, and after that, some were always present, never in great numbers though on one occasion 34 were counted. The male Pied Wagtails were often seen courting, walking round the hen with tail spread and wings lowered. On April 19th Miss K. Hollick counted 130 birds, but estimated that nearly 200 were present. They were very restless and would often fly round in great flocks at a height of about 100 ft. If a Rook flew over the garden a party of about 20 would mob it, following it for several hundred yards. One night they were all twittering at about 10 p.m. On April 27th the numbers fell considerably, and very few remained, while on the following evening only one bird, a Yellow Wagtail, was present. They did not return and have not appeared in the garden since (K.H.). The association of Pied and Yellow Wagtails and the date of flocking form interesting features in this case.

Waxwing, *Bombycilla garrulus* (L.). Mr. E. Grindey reports that two Waxwings were seen in company with a flock of Fieldfares in a large pasture field by the R. Dove, immediately above Okeover weir. They were seen by the Water-bailiff, Mr. McKenzie, on alternate days, about Christmas, 1932. The field is actually in Staffordshire, but the river forms the county boundary. The last occurrence of this species of which we have records was in the winter of 1913-14.

[Eagle, sp.? probably Sea-Eagle, *Haliaeetus albicilla* (L.). Mr. E. Grindey informs me that an Eagle was seen on two occasions in the Kinder district, by a Scottish keeper, but has been unable to obtain any further details of the occurrence].

Buzzard, *Buteo buteo* (L.) or *B. lagopus* (Brünn.). One

seen circling over the Cavendish Golf Links at Buxton on Dec. 25th, 1932 (J.A.).

[Osprey, *Pandion h. haliaetus* (L.). Reported as having been seen to plunge into a reservoir in the north of the county, so could hardly have been any other species. Unfortunately no details as to date or exact locality have been received by Mr. Grindey as yet].

Heron, *Ardea c. cinerea* (L.). One seen over Axe Edge, Buxton, a strange place to meet with this species, though it occurs regularly in the Dane, Goyt and Dove Valleys (J.A.).

Shelduck, *Tadorna tadorna* (L.). Two of these conspicuous birds were shot at Darley Dale, and sent to Mr. Adsetts for preservation on November 16th, 1932. The last time this species was observed in the county was in February, 1924, when Mr. Chambers saw two in Hardwick Park.

Tufted Duck, *Nyroca fuligula* (L.). Mr. C. B. Chambers sends an interesting note on this species taking its brood of young across country. In 1931 a duck with several young arrived at a small reservoir at Holmewood Colliery, Chesterfield. She spent the day in some briars in the Stackyard, and at night removed her family to the reservoir, where she stayed about a fortnight. Her next journey was to Williamthorpe Reservoir, through the colliery yard, among railway waggons and engines, which ended in a tragedy. In 1932 two broods arrived and a similar tragedy ensued. This year three broods arrived, but experience seems to have taught them a lesson, for they remained on the reservoir until the young were able to fly. The reservoir is about 150 yards long and 20-30 yards wide, and weedless! These birds must have come from the ponds in Hardwick Park, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles distant.

Dr. W. Shipton saw a young bird on the R. Dove near Hanging Bridge on July 15th.

Velvet Scoter, *Oidemia f. fusca* (L.). One was shot

by a farmer at Ingleby on the R. Trent, and sent to Mr. Adsetts for preservation on November 16th, 1932. There are only two previous records of this duck for the county, both dating back to the fifties.

Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps c. cristatus* (L.). Breeding reported again in 1933 on the lake at Osmaston-by-Ashbourne (K.H.). Six or eight pairs are to be found on the Butterley Reservoir nearly all the year (C.W.H.).

Ringed Plover, *Charadrius h. hiaticula* (L.). One at Williamthorpe Reservoir on August 16th and again on the 22nd and 23rd: probably the same bird, at any rate on the two latter dates (C.B.C.). Another was seen in company with two Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*, on August 30th at Barbrook Reservoir, between Baslow and Barlow, and three were also reported there as present a few days later (C.B.C.).

Little Stint, *Calidris minuta* (Leisl.). Two at Williamthorpe Reservoir on September 29th and 30th, which were under observation through a telescope for some time, and were flushed on several occasions (C.B.C.). There are only two records of this species in the *Vict. Hist.*, but there are also three subsequent notices of its occurrence in the county.

Redshank, *Tringa t. totanus* (L.). In the Buxton district the Redshank has increased enormously as a breeding species and is now to be found all round Chapel Reservoir, the Axe Edge moors and even in the barren country round Peak Forest (W.S.). Breeding has now taken place in a marshy field in Hazelwood for the third year in succession, though before this the birds were rarely seen in the neighbourhood (C.W.H.).

Red Grouse, *Lagopus s. scoticus* (Lath.). Owing to the fine weather Grouse were very forward this year and a young bird able to fly was seen on the Buxton moors on June 15th (W.S.).

In conclusion my thanks are due to all who have con-

tributed notes to this report: Misses K. Hollick and C. W. Hull; Messrs. J. Armitage, A. F. Adsetts, C. B. Chambers, F. Williamson and Dr. W. Shipton. We learn with regret that Mr. E. Grindey, of Thorpe, was prevented by illness from taking any active part in field work this year.