

Zoological Record for Derbyshire, 1912.

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



THE present instalment of this record runs from November 1st, 1911, to October 31st, 1912, as announced in the last issue of the *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, xxxiv., p. 186. A few words may be said with regard to the weather conditions during that period. It will be remembered that 1911 was a year of drought, and the early part of the winter of 1911-12 was mild and wet. On January 17th, 1912, the first real snowfall took place, but it did not lie long. However, on January 28th sharp frosts set in, and severe weather continued till February 5th, when the weather became milder, and by the 9th the snow had practically all gone. This severe weather caused a great influx of Little Auks on our east coasts, some of which penetrated far inland, and at least a dozen were picked up in the south of the county in a starving condition and much emaciated. Slavonian Grebes were also met with during February, and three specimens obtained. April was an exceptionally dry month, and it was not till the latter half of May that heavy rain fell. Many birds nested exceptionally early, especially in the South of England. The terrible monotony of the wet summer and autumn of 1912 is too fresh in our memories to need recapitulation here. One remarkable feature of the season was the unusually late stay of the Swifts, which lingered with us into September. On the whole, a more extraordinary contrast to the hot and dry summer of the preceding year can hardly be imagined.

ARRIVAL OF MIGRANTS.—The Chiff Chaff was the first of our summer visitors to put in an appearance, and was singing at Uttoxeter on March 28th (A. G. Tomlinson). This year it penetrated higher up the valley than for some time past, and was heard at Calwich on April 3rd (F. J.), and was singing at Clifton vigorously on April 9th and 12th, but apparently passed on, and did not re-colonize its former haunts near Ashburne. Wheatears were observed at Thorpe on March 29th (W. T. Mynors), and also on April 2nd (J. Atkinson). The first Sand Martin was seen in Clifton on April 1st (C. Bradbury), but it was only a straggler, and an interval of over a fortnight elapsed before others were seen on April 16th and 18th at Mapleton (J. A.), and on the same day at Melbourne (L. Coxon), while the main body reached the upper Dove Valley on the 19th. Four were seen at Bakewell on April 11th (W. Boulsover). A single Swallow reached Thorpe on April 5th (E. Grindey), and another was seen at Mapleton on the 12th (J. A.), while others reached Clifton on the 13th (F. J.), and the main body arrived on the 15th. The first Cuckoo was reported from Thorpe on the 13th (E. G.), and again on the 15th, while it was heard at Melbourne on the 18th (L. Coxon), and on the 21st at Coxbench (J. Drury). Willow Wrens had penetrated in some numbers to Thorpe by April 13th (E. G.). The Sandpiper was seen on the River Dove at Mapleton on April 14th, and a pair on the 19th (J. A.). A Yellow Wagtail was observed at Bakewell on April 9th (W. Boulsover), at Mapleton on April 17th (J. A.), and a pair on the 19th at the same place. The song of the Tree Pipit was heard at Fenny Bentley on the 19th (W. M. Tomlinson), and that of the Lesser White-throat at Norbury (W. M. T.) and Clifton (F. J.) on the 28th. Greater Whitethroats were first noted at Thorpe on April 19th (E. G.), and had settled down in many places by the 28th (F. J.); while the first Whinchat was noticed near Norbury on the 29th (W. M. T.), and at Clifton on the 30th (F. J.). Garden Warblers and Blackcaps were both recorded from Thorpe on April 20th (E. G.), and the Blackcap was

heard at Ashburne on the 25th (W. M. T.). The Redstart was also noted near Ashburne on the 25th (W. M. T.). The first Swifts arrived earlier than usual, and three were noted at Mapleton on April 27th, and four at the same place on May 2nd (J. A.), while these records are confirmed by observation at Thorpe on April 27th (E. G.) and one at Melbourne on May 2nd (L. C.). At Bakewell it was first noticed on April 28th (W. Storrs-Fox and W. Boulsover). House Martins, on the other hand, were extraordinarily late. One was seen at Mapleton on April 27th, followed by a few more on May 2nd, while at Thorpe the first was noted on April 28th, but at Hanging Bridge there was only a single bird at the colony on May 7th (F. J.), and the main body did not reach us till still later. It was, however, reported from Melbourne on April 14th (L. C.). The Corncrake's note was heard at Melbourne on April 30th (L. C.), at Thorpe on May 2nd (E. G.), and at Clifton and Fenny Bentley on the 3rd (F. J.). A single Spotted Flycatcher was seen at Mapleton on May 4th (J. A.), but these useful birds were unusually scarce in 1912. Mr. L. F. Coxon reports Nightingales as singing near Spondon for three nights between May 6th and 9th, and the Turtle Dove was heard at Snelston on May 17th (F. J.), but we have no notes of the arrival of the Ring Ouzel or Wood Wren.

From a comparison with other records of the past fifteen years, it will be found that while several of the Warblers (Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden and Sedge Warblers) arrived unusually early, as did also the Cuckoo and Swift, the main body of the Hirundines was later than the average date, although the first stragglers came quite as early as usual.

DEPARTURE OF MIGRANTS.—Of the return migration it is not possible to give details, as the material is far too scanty. The Swifts seem to have disappeared early from the Bakewell district, and the last party of seven were noted on August 4th (W. B.). They apparently left Ashburne about August 6th-7th, but on the 15th eight were again seen hawking round the

breeding place, and one was seen there on the 20th (F. J.). On August 21st Mr. J. Henderson met with a flock of about forty on the River Dove near Birdsgrove, and again on the following day saw fourteen or fifteen birds in the Dove Valley, while on the 23rd some twenty-five birds were on the wing close to the breeding place at Ashburne again (F. J.). On August 27th I saw a single bird at Ashburne, and on September 5th Mr. J. Henderson met with two at Coldwall Bridge on the River Dove. At Wirksworth Mrs. Bowles reports that they remained in unusual numbers up to August 23rd, and two pairs were seen as late as August 30th.

Mr. Boulsover remarks that Swallows and Martins were very scarce near Bakewell this year, and seem to be steadily declining in numbers there. Near Ashburne they remained till the beginning of October, but though a good many were still about on October 2nd, very few were seen afterwards, the sharp frost of the night of October 2nd no doubt hastening their departure. Five Swallows were seen at Mapleton on October 11th (M. Henderson), and a House Martin at the same place on the 12th, while a single House Martin was noted at Clifton on the 13th (M. H.).

Among those who have kindly supplied me with notes and information in the preparation of this report may be mentioned Mr. J. Drury, Mr. L. F. Coxon, and other members of the Midland Railway Natural History Society, Mrs. Bowles, and Messrs. J. Atkinson, A. F. Adsetts, W. Boulsover, W. Storrs-Fox, E. Grindey, J. Henderson, M. Henderson, G. Pullen, A. G. Tomlinson, and the Rev. W. M. Tomlinson.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Rook, *Corvus f. frugilegus* L.—On the evening of July 6th, 1912, while travelling between Egginton and Tutbury by train, I saw in a field close to the railway a large concourse of rooks. They had formed a ring about eight or ten yards in diameter, and fresh arrivals were still coming in and pitching on the outskirts. Within the ring were four or five birds. Everyone

has heard of Rook "courts," but few people have actually seen anything of the sort, and it was very disappointing not to be able to watch the proceedings to a close.

Lesser Redpoll, *Carduelis linaria cabaret* (P. L. S. Müll.).—Exceptionally early breeding of this species has been recorded from Norfolk and Staffordshire in the spring of 1912 (see *Brit. Birds*, vi., p. 218). On May 19th, 1912, Mr. W. T. Mynors found a nest near Clifton, which already contained four well-fledged young, although as a rule fresh eggs are not met with till towards the end of May.

Cirl Bunting, *Emberiza cirrus* L.—A pair of these birds was observed near Haddon in June, 1912. Previous evidence of the occurrence of this species is not at all satisfactory, so that this note is most acceptable, and we hope to receive fuller particulars next year.

Grey Wagtail, *Motacilla b. boarula* L.—Clutches of six eggs are so rare in this district that it is worth recording that on May 1st, 1912, a nest found on the Henmore brook contained six highly-incubated eggs.

British Willow Tit, *Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* Hellm.—Our knowledge of the Willow and Marsh Tits of the county is still very defective, and breeding records, in which the parent birds have been carefully identified, are much to be desired. On August 13th, 1912, I watched a Willow Tit in my garden for some considerable time. It was searching the gooseberry bushes for insects, and was extraordinarily tame, allowing me to stand within a foot or two of it, so that all the characters, such as the light edges to the secondaries and the dull black head, could be clearly distinguished.

Red-backed Shrike, *Lanius c. collurio* L.—A pair of these birds managed to rear a brood in 1911 at Thorpe, although the first nest was destroyed, and in 1912 they returned to the same district. On May 23rd we found an almost finished nest, but this was destroyed by school children. The birds nested again, but I could not ascertain whether they succeeded in bringing off their young.

Song Thrush, *Turdus philomelus clarkei* Hart.—From Cheadle Mr. J. R. B. Masefield reported a nest with four eggs on January 20th, a remarkably early date, but in the Dove Valley the first fledged young was reported as flying by the Rev. C. F. Tomlinson at Ashburne on April 1st, 1912.

Blackbird, *Turdus m. merula* L.—Nests on the ground on banksides are not at all uncommon, but one found in a marsh near Clifton on May 20th, 1912, was placed in the middle of a clump of rushes, which concealed it from above. Another nest found on May 24th contained four eggs, one of which was a dwarf and infertile, measuring only 19.7 by 11.7 mm.

Greenland Wheatear, *Enanthe cenanthe leucorrhoea* (Grn.).—This large race of Wheatear passes through the British Isles on migration to and from its breeding grounds in the far north, but has not previously been recorded from the county, although it probably occurs on both passages. On September 14th, 1912, Mr. G. L. Spilsbury shot one at Findern, which I examined while it was being set up at Messrs. Hutchinson's. It had the long wing which is characteristic of this race (see *Brit. Birds*, vi., p. 222).

House Martin, *Hirundo u. urbica* L.—A white bird was hatched off from the colony which nests under Hanging Bridge, and was first seen on the wing during the last fortnight of July, 1912, at first keeping to the reaches of the river within half a mile or so of the bridge, but afterwards ranging higher up the river towards Mapleton. It was seen at intervals till about the middle of August, when it disappeared.

Swift, *Apus a. apus* (L.).—Mr. W. Storrs-Fox sends me some interesting notes on the breeding of this species at Bakewell in 1911. Out of four nests examined on June 13th, one was in a hole under the roof, one in a Sparrow's nest, and the other two in nests of the House Martin. Each of the four nests contained three young, all at about the same stage.

Hoopoe, *Upupa e. epops* L.—Mr. J. Drury sent me a note of the occurrence of a Hoopoe near Chesterfield, which was sent to Messrs. Hutchinson's on October 6th, 1911 (see *Brit.*

Birds, vi., p. 62). This is the fourth record of this species for the county, the last having occurred at Ashburne in 1885.

Cuckoo, *Cuculus c. canorus* L.—Two Cuckoos' eggs were obtained during the spring of 1912 from the Ashburne district, both from Robins' nests, but obviously the produce of two different birds.

Little Owl, *Athene n. noctua* (Scop.).—This species continues to spread in South Derbyshire. On January 26th one was killed at Kilburn and sent to Hutchinson's for preservation, and another was accidentally trapped at Elvaston on April 29th (J. Drury). Mr. G. Pullen informs me (*in litt.*, July 14th, 1912) that a friend of his, Mr. Sowter, has a young bird alive in his possession which was taken from a nest of nine. As no nest of more than seven eggs or young has previously been recorded, I wrote again to Mr. Pullen for further particulars, and he assures me that there is no mistake, and that the birds were seen by three persons. A male was sent in from Osmaston-by-Ashburne on October 25th, 1912 (now in the collection at Osmaston Manor), and a female from Barrow-on-Trent on November 7th. From an examination of the stomachs of birds sent in, Mr. J. Drury finds that the food of this species consists chiefly of beetles and other insects.

Long-eared Owl, *Asio o. otus* (L.).—Mr. W. Storrs-Fox informs me that he and his son found no fewer than three occupied nests of this species in one afternoon in the Bakewell district on April 26th, 1912. Two nests contained four and three eggs respectively; the old bird in flying from the third dropped a young bird on the ground beneath. It is evident that this bird is not so scarce in this part of the county as has been supposed.

Sparrow Hawk, *Accipiter n. nisus* (L.).—A Sparrow Hawk's nest, about 75 feet up in a tall larch, contained a single very large egg on May 14th. By May 25th the clutch of five eggs had been completed, but the remaining eggs were much smaller, and both the first and one of the later laid eggs were infertile.

The latter egg was also more sparingly marked than the rest of the clutch.

Tufted Duck, *Nyroca fuligula* (L.).—This duck is now well established as a regular breeder at Norbury and Calwich. About six pairs breed on the Calwich ponds.

Scaup, *Nyroca marila* (L.).—One shot at Barrow-on-Trent, January 28th, 1912, and sent to Hutchinson's (J. Drury).

Shag, *Phalacrocorax g. graculus* (L.).—Mr. J. Drury informs me that one was sent to Hutchinson's from near Bakewell on January 31st, 1912, and a young male was shot on September 15th on the River Derwent at Spondon Meadow, near Borrowash, and is now in the Derby Museum.

Slavonian Grebe, *Colymbus auritus* L.—Mr. Drury sends notes of three Slavonian Grebes obtained during the month of February, 1912, at the same period when the Little Auks were met with. The first was a male bird, which was received from Barrow-on-Trent on February 10th; a female was shot by the Rev. W. Watson on February 12th at Weston-on-Trent; while a third specimen was sent from Chatsworth on February 20th. There are only two previous definite records of this species from the county. A considerable influx of these birds seems to have taken place about this time, and many were reported from different parts of England.

Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula* L.—Mr. L. F. Coxon reports a pair of these birds as seen near Melbourne on May 11th, 1912.

Redshank, *Tringa totanus* (L.).—This species is still endeavouring to extend its breeding range in South Derbyshire. On April 6th we met with a pair in the meadows by the River Dove between Hanging Bridge and Mapleton, but they were being unmercifully bullied by the Lapwings, which gave them no rest, and three days later they had disappeared. This locality is some three miles higher up the valley than they have ever been noticed previously.

Snipe, *Gallinago g. gallinago* (L.).—A nest with four eggs was found at Kedleston on April 11th, a decidedly early date

for this district, although full clutches have occasionally been recorded during March.

Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, *L. a. argentatus* and *L. fuscus britannicus* Lowe.—These gulls (as well as the smaller kinds) occur annually, but the species is, as a rule, not distinguished. One bird seen near Alsop-en-le-Dale on February 13th was certainly a Herring Gull, and three seen in the Dove Valley above Hanging Bridge on April 9th were apparently Lesser Black-backs. Others seen on May 23rd in the Dove Valley were too high to be distinguished. A pair of immature Common Gulls, *L. canus*, were sent to Hutchinson's from Markeaton early in September, 1912 (J. Drury).

Little Auk, *Alle alle* (L.).—The spring of 1912 will be memorable for the wreck of the Little Auk, of which enormous numbers were driven on to our east coasts by the stormy weather in January and February. The first was picked up exhausted at Rowsley about the end of January or early in February (W. Boulsover); the second found at Sawley Common on January 25th (Hutchinson); a third was caught alive at Ripley by Mr. Marshall and sent in for preservation on February 1st (Adsetts); a fourth was sent from Shardlow on February 3rd (Hutchinson), and another was caught at Burton-on-Trent on the same date, and is now in Mr. C. Hanson's possession (G. H. Storer). One was found alive during a snowstorm in the locomotive sheds at the Midland Railway Station at Derby on February 8th (Adsetts), and two others were brought in on the same day to Hutchinson's. Others were received from Draycott on the 9th and Shardlow on the 18th (Hutchinson), and one was sent from near Matlock during February, but the exact date was not noted. Altogether at least a dozen specimens were sent in to the taxidermists between January 25th and February 18th (see *Brit. Birds*, v., pp. 284 and 338). My thanks are due to Messrs. J. Drury and A. F. Adsetts for assistance in tracing these records.