

Ornithological Record for Derbyshire, 1919.

By N. H. FITZ-HERBERT.

I AM in the unfortunate position of being unable to mention the most interesting event which has been brought to my notice this year in connection with the bird life of Derbyshire. There are, however, good reasons for this silence and I shall be able to say more at a later date.

The Long-eared Owl was again reported in a new locality, and the cutting down of so many of its favourite woods must have made a great difference to its habitat. Nightjars were noticed by two observers as being rather scarce this year, and on the other hand it was generally agreed that Cuckoos were very numerous, though perhaps not more so than last year. Missel-Thrushes are again increasing in numbers; Mr. R. Chislett found ten nests with eggs and passed by a number of others without investigating, and for the first time for many years there was a nest in the garden at Somersal. Jays were more numerous than ever and I watched a pair building in an ivy-covered damson only a few yards from the house, but no eggs were laid; probably increased activity on the part of the keepers will soon make their numbers again decrease. Hawfinches were very common; at Bakewell they had no mercy on the peas; but at Somersal it is only fair to say that, when there were yewberries, they took them and left the peas alone. Turtle-Doves seemed to be commoner than usual, probably because of the larger acreage of corn. Long-tailed Tits are gradually recovering from the effects of the last severe winter; a pair were beginning to build at Somersal on

April 7th and I think that they brought out their young ones successfully. Tree-creepers also are increasing in numbers. On May 28th a Goldcrest's nest with five eggs was seen in a spruce near Bamford (C. H. Wells) ; I don't think they bred at Somersal, but in December there were several in a small fir plantation, together with Blue-Tits, Coal-Tits and a few Tree-creepers.

On November 14th Mr. E. Grindley had a good view of a particularly fine specimen of an albino House-Sparrow ; it was of a pale creamy white, suffused here and there with a light pinky brown tinge ; he also mentions three pure albinos of the same species being seen at Mayfield on July 5th. Mr. P. Turnbull has had for about a year in the garden of Sandybrook Hall a hen Blackbird with a wide irregular white ring round her neck, and her breast and throat freely flecked with white.

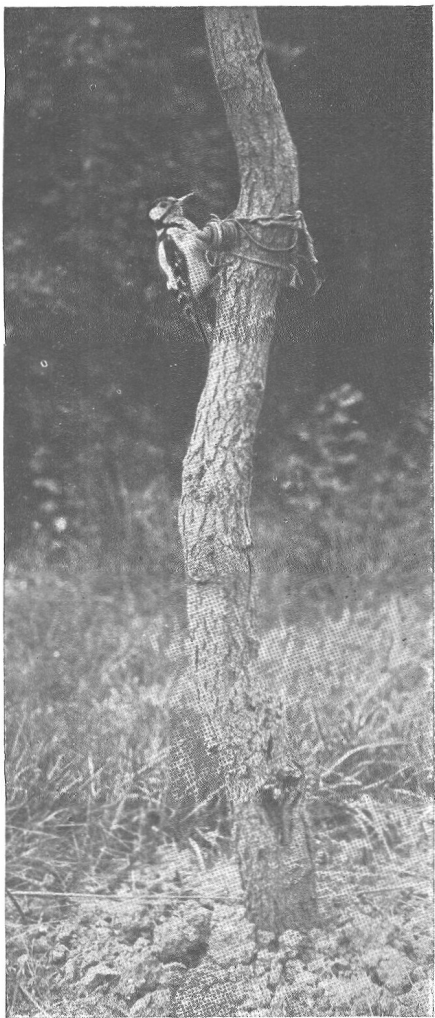
At the beginning of March the season was well forward ; the Chaffinch had begun to sing at Bakewell on February 11th, the Song-Thrush was heard on the 16th, and the Sky-Lark on the 22nd ; on the 24th Dippers had begun to build in Lathkill Dale and on the 26th the song of the Blackbird was heard ; on March 2nd the Yellow-Hammer was heard for the first time. But the frost and snow during the latter part of March and beginning of April kept everything back a good deal, though Dippers had begun to sit in Lathkill Dale on March 26th.

ARRIVAL OF SPRING MIGRANTS.—The weather during April was inclement, and most of the migrants were rather late in arriving, though there were a few very early Swallows. I have no date for the arrival of the Ring-Ouzel, but some were observed near Buxton on April 24th (W. Shipton), and a nest of young ones had just hatched near Curbar on May 14th. The Wheatear was seen near Tideswell on April 7th (W.S.) ; four were seen at Fenny Bentley on April 19th (C. H. Wells), but they had probably arrived some days before ; they did not

seem to be at all numerous in the Bakewell district this year. The first Swallow was seen at Somersal on the very early date of April 4th; I did not see one myself till the 8th and they were not at all common till the end of the month; the first was seen at Egginton on the 8th (Rev. F. F. Key), at Bakewell on the 18th (J. S. Wright), at Fenny Bentley (C. H. W.) and near Froggatt (R. Chislett) on the 19th, and on Stanley Moor on the 27th (W.S.). The first Chiffchaff was heard at Somersal on April 6th, and it was noted at Morley on the 18th (C.H.W.). It was, as usual, scarce and in the Bakewell district not heard at all. The Sand-Martin was first seen at Bakewell on April 8th (Judge A. Macpherson), and it was common there on May 4th. The first Willow-Warbler was heard at Somersal on April 13th; on the 18th there were a few at Morley (C.H.W.), and Bakewell (J.S.W.), and several at Somersal; some were seen at Edale and Hathersage on the 21st (R.C.). On the 29th the first was seen at Buxton, but they were not singing till May 2nd (W.S.). The Tree-Pipit was first heard at Somersal on April 17th and there were several on the following day; it was noted at Bakewell on the 22nd (J.S.W.), and at Ladmanlow on the 26th (W.S.). The Sandpiper was observed on the Dove at Fenny Bentley on April 19th (C.H.W.), and on the same day it was seen lower down the river near Somersal and also near Froggatt (R.C.). On May 5th they had evidently been at Chapel for some days (W.S.). On April 22nd a Yellow Wagtail was seen just on the Staffordshire side of the Dove near Uttoxeter, and on the same day they reached Bakewell (J.S.W.); one was seen at Somersal on the 30th. Near Chinley they were noted on May 3rd (W.S.). On April 24th I heard a Blackcap near Cambridge, but they did not seem to have reached Derbyshire before the end of the month. On April 27th I heard the Cuckoo for the first time near Cambridge, but I did not hear it in Derbyshire till the

30th. It was heard at Bakewell on May 5th (J.S.W.) and at Chapel on May 7th (W.S.). The first Redstart was seen at Fenny Bentley on April 19th (C.H.W.); it was not noted at Somersal till the 29th; a nest with eggs was seen there on May 21st. A single bird was seen at Buxton, where it is hardly ever found, on May 3rd (W.S.). The first Wood-Warbler was observed working up a brook at Somersal on April 29th. I did not hear one at Bakewell till May 5th; a pair had begun to build there on the 14th and an egg had been laid on the 18th; they were again very common in the district. The Lesser-Whitethroat was first heard at Somersal on April 29th; a nest at Bakewell had two eggs on May 21st. The Martins were very late; the first was seen at Somersal on May 2nd, but there were none to be seen at Bakewell on May 4th; a few had arrived on the 8th, but they were not common for some days afterwards. They were seen at Buxton on May 6th, but were very scarce this year (W.S.). The Sedge-Warbler and the Garden-Warbler were first heard at Somersal on May 10th. The Spotted Flycatcher was also seen there on the same day; it was not noted at Bakewell till May 12th; at Buxton it was first observed on May 19th (W.S.). The Swifts arrived at Bakewell on May 5th and there were large numbers in the evening. On the same day they were seen at Derby but did not reach Sheffield till the 12th (C.H.W.). They were seen at Chapel on May 7th (W.S.). I did not see a Whitethroat during the whole of April and the first I saw at Bakewell was on May 7th. The Whinchat was seen at Chapel on May 7th (W.S.), at Somersal on May 10th, and at Bakewell on May 11th (J.S.W.). The Corn-crake was heard at Chapel on May 8th (W.S.), and Somersal on May 10th. It reached Sheffield on the 16th (C.H.W.). On May 22nd I heard a Grasshopper-Warbler "reeling" near Tutbury.

DEPARTURE OF MIGRANTS.—On August 2nd a Lesser-Whitethroat and several Willow-Warblers were in song at Somersal, but as usual there was very little in the way of song during August. On August 22nd small flocks of Yellow Wagtails were seen at Fairfield, and others at Buxton at the end of August and beginning of September (W.S.). On September 2nd I saw the Yellow Wagtail, and Wheatear for the last time near Somersal. On August 9th the last Swift was seen at Buxton (W.S.); a pair remained behind at Longstone near Bakewell feeding their young several days after the departure of the others, and they were last observed on August 26th (J.S.W.). On September 5th and again on the 8th I heard a Lesser-Whitethroat singing the soft warble which is such an extraordinary contrast to its usual loud and unmelodious song; I do not remember hearing one sing in September before. On September 4th I saw the last Whitethroat and on the 9th the last Redstart. On September 2nd and 4th I heard the song of the Willow-Warbler and saw one for the last time on the 14th; one was seen at Chapel on the 12th (W.S.). On September 14th a young Cuckoo was seen in the neighbourhood of Hathersage hunting for food itself and being attended by Meadow-Pipits (R.C.). On September 18th and 19th a Chiffchaff was to be heard calling at Somersal; on the 21st and 23rd I heard the song very softly uttered, and on the 24th saw the bird for the last time. I saw no Spotted Flycatcher after September 20th. The last Swallow was seen at Buxton on September 26th (W.S.); on October 4th a brood left a nest in a shed at Thorpe (E.G.); I saw the last at Bakewell on October 13th. On October 5th a brood of Martins, which had been hatched and reared by the parent birds after several failures, took wing at Thorpe. The nest was placed in the angle of a gritstone window; in 1918 three separate attempts were made, but in each case the nest was washed down by heavy rain; this



GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER CRACKING NUTS IN A HOLLOWED OUT
COTTON REEL.

year after two disasters, the nest and broken eggs being on each occasion found on the window sill below, the persevering birds made a third attempt, this time with success (E.G.).

WINTER VISITORS.—On October 11th a small flock of Fieldfares, followed by a larger flock, was seen flying west at Thorpe and Redwings had arrived some days before (E.G.). Neither species has been very abundant so far this winter. In the spring I saw large flocks of Fieldfares on April 29th, but did not see any more after the 30th.

CLASSIFIED NOTES.

Goldfinch, *Carduelis carduelis britannica*.—During the latter part of July a family of Goldfinches was seen for several days at Thorpe; they had evidently only just left the nest. On September 9th another brood was observed at the other end of the village. It is a long time since they bred at Thorpe (E.G.). It is much to be hoped that these handsome Finches will become commoner in Derbyshire.

Siskin, *Spinus spinus*.—Early in December a flock of about twelve was seen near Chapel Reservoir, feeding at the top of an alder (W.S.).

Chaffinch, *Fringilla caelebs*.—On September 21st and the following day a Chaffinch was heard singing near Bakewell (J.S.W.). It is very unusual for the song to be heard so late in the year, though a similar instance was recorded in the notes for 1917.

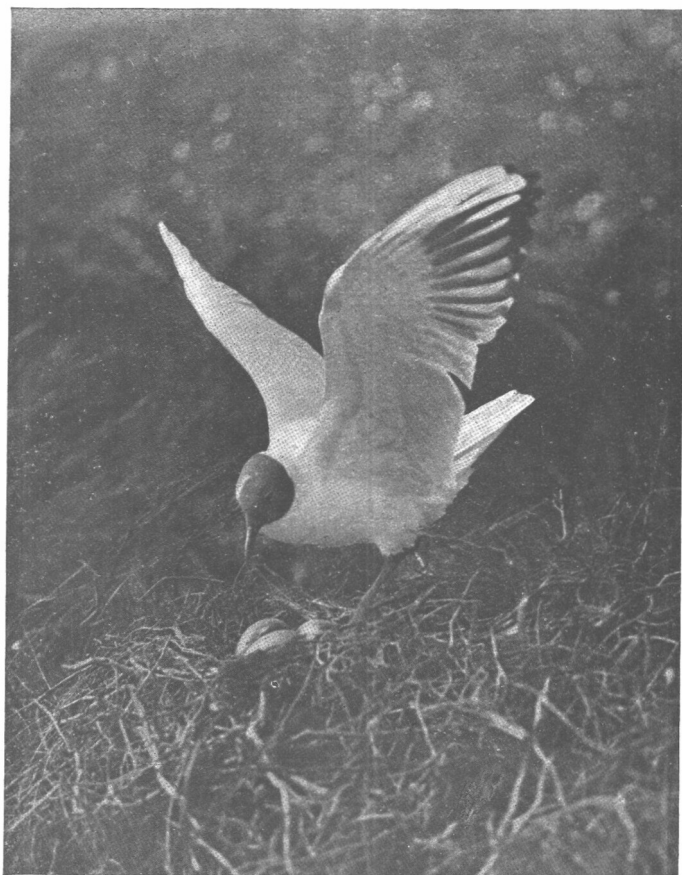
Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dryobates maior anglicus*.—Ever since August 21st, 1918 the female bird of this species mentioned in former articles has been a constant visitor to the garden of Somersal Hall in search of the nuts which are always in readiness. For a long time the nut was always placed in the hole originally used by the bird herself, but this year it occurred to me that a hollowed out cotton reel would make a good receptacle and

also bring the bird into the exact position I wanted for photographic purposes. As soon as it was fixed to the tree it was discovered by the bird, and now there are two reels one above the other as well as the original hole, and the three receptacles are visited in turn. In September a post was put up a few yards from the dining-room window with a hollowed out reel attached, and this was discovered by the Woodpecker on the next day. After a few days the reel disappeared, but a nut placed in a crack in the post was at once found, and the post is usually included in the round. Sometimes no visit is paid for several days in succession, and during the breeding season there was great irregularity, but often several visits a day will be made for weeks on end. All kinds of nuts are welcomed and even the hard shells of the almond are pierced without difficulty, while in the winter the cocoanuts put for the Tits are freely sampled. By placing a camera on a small table a few feet from the mulberry tree I was able to obtain several photographs, working the shutter by means of a thread from behind a tree a few yards away, which it was possible to reach unobserved. One of these photographs has already appeared in *Country Life*, and two others are reproduced with this article.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, *Dryobates minor*.—On July 15th a family of this species was observed near Fenny Bentley (E.G.). Being very shy and apt to escape notice, this Woodpecker is probably commoner in Derbyshire than is generally imagined. I have seen it occasionally at Somersal.

Gannet, *Sula bassana*.—As already recorded in *British Birds*, a pair of Gannets was observed passing over Fenny Bentley on April 18th (E.G.).

Wigeon, *Mareca penelope*.—During the latter part of February and the beginning of March a flock of about sixteen of these ducks frequented Ashford lake near



Ralph Chislett.

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BLACK-HEADED GULL ALIGHTING.

TO FACE PAGE 96.



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THE FIRST BLACK-HEADED GULL TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED IN
DERBYSHIRE.

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Bakewell. On March 6th Mr. W. Storrs Fox and I had a very good view of them.

Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago*.—On July 3rd a Snipe was picked up dead outside a house in Manchester Road, Buxton, more than a mile from its usual haunts; it had evidently struck the house, probably while being pursued by a Hawk (W.S.).

Curlew, *Numenius arquata*.—On August 24th some Curlews were still on the moors near Hathersage, this being a late date (R.C.). On August 5th sixteen were seen flying west over Buxton (W.S.). On April 17th one was seen near the Dove between Doveridge and Sudbury.

Black-headed Gull, *Larus ridibundus*.—The new gullery near Baslow seems to be firmly established, and there were more birds this year than last. On May 6th several nests had eggs. Thanks to the kindness of Mr. R. Chislett I am enabled to include two photographs which are interesting as being probably the first ever taken of this species in Derbyshire.

Common Tern, *Sterna hirundo*.—On May 5th a Tern, probably of this species, was seen on Chapel Reservoir (W.S.).

Red-throated Diver, *Colymbus stellatus*.—A specimen was shot on the river Dove at Birdsgrove on April 3rd (E.G.). Particulars have already appeared in *British Birds*.

Great Crested Grebe, *Podiceps cristatus*.—Two pairs bred this season on Chapel Reservoir (W.S.).

My thanks are due to those who have kindly contributed to these notes:—The Rev. F. F. Key, Dr. W. Shipton and Messrs R. Chislett, E. Grindey, P. Turnbull, C. H. Wells and J. S. Wright.