

## Ornithological Notes for Derbyshire, 1921.

By N. H. FITZHERBERT.

THE most interesting ornithological event of the last few years was the prolonged stay made by an immature White-tailed Eagle on the moors near Derwent. It was first seen early in December, 1920, and for several weeks was constantly in evidence, and was a most obliging bird in the sense that it usually shewed itself when anyone came over to see it. When I went in search of it on January 1st, 1921, in company with Dr. W. Shipton, we had no sooner got out of the car than it appeared circling round, and it remained in view for a long time. No doubt it took a certain number of grouse and ground game, and it was certainly a very disturbing element on the moors, but as it would drive the grouse from one moor to another one day and then back again the next, the actual damage done to any particular owner was not great. After escaping the keepers for several weeks it was at last killed on February 8th, 1921, when coming to roost, by Lord FitzAlan's keeper. "He did look grand," the keeper is reported to have said, but that did not prevent his shooting the noble bird, as it sat unsuspectingly. A prosecution was instituted by Mr. V. R. Cockerton of Bakewell, acting for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and the keeper was brought before the Magistrates at Chapel-en-le-Frith and fined, and an order was made for the confiscation of the specimen and for it to be handed over to Derby Museum. Considerable difficulty was experienced in the enforcing of

this order, as the bird, after being set up in London, was sent by Lord FitzAlan to Sheffield Museum 'on loan.' But after much correspondence and considerable reluctance on the part of the Viceroy of Ireland and his legal advisers the specimen was at last handed over, in accordance with the order, to the Derby Museum, where it may now be seen. An Eagle, nowadays, is such a rarity in Derbyshire that it might surely be allowed to remain unmolested and take a few grouse; while in this particular instance the bird would probably have soon gone away of its own accord. Possibly the publicity given to this prosecution may act as a deterrent in the future. The Duke of Devonshire's keeper, Mr. E. H. Peat, was presented by the R.S.P.B. with a pair of field glasses in recognition of his share in preserving the life of the bird during its long visit.

1921 was a very early year. Song-Thrushes were singing hard all through January; on February 9th, Chaffinches had begun to sing at Bakewell, and Blackbirds on February 20th, and on the 23rd both species were getting into full song. On the 25th hedges were beginning to get green even at Bakewell. In consequence of the mild weather in the early part of the year there were some very early nests. On April 14th I saw a young Song-Thrush already out of the nest at Somersal, and on the following day another flying quite strongly. The spring migrants would, no doubt, have been exceptionally early had they not been kept back by the very strong, cold north and east winds which prevailed at the beginning of April.

*Arrival of Spring Migrants.*—The following are the dates, as far as they were brought to my notice.

Willow-Warbler—Somersal, April 11th; near Chesterfield, April 17th (C.B.C.); Longstone, April 18th (J.S.W.); near Sheffield, April 22nd (C.H.W.).

Swallow—Somersal, April 11th; Hathersage, April 16th (R.C.); near Sheffield, April 22nd (C.H.W.).

Tree-Pipit—Somersal, April 12th; Longstone, April 18th (J.S.W.).

Cuckoo—Repton, April 12th (H.C.H.); Somersal, April 26th; Hathersage (R.C.), and Baslow (C.H.W.), April 30th.

Chiffchaff—Sutton Park, April 12th (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 24th.

Sand-Martin—Near Somersal, April 13th.

Yellow Wagtail—Near Chesterfield, April 17th (C.B.C.); Somersal, April 22nd.

Redstart—Somersal, April 21st; 7 eggs at Hathersage, May 22nd (R.C.).

Wheatear—Near Somersal, April 22nd.

Sandpiper—Near Somersal, April 23rd; Hathersage, April 28th (R.C.); Ashopton, May 1st (C.H.W.).

Lesser Whitethroat—Somersal, April 26th.

Whitethroat—Somersal, April 26th; Hathersage (R.C.) and Ashopton (C.H.W.), May 1st.

Martin—Somersal, April 28th.

Swift—Youlgreave and Bakewell, April 29th; Derby, April 30th (C.H.W.); near Sheffield (C.H.W.), and Hathersage (R.C.), May 7th.

Corncrake—Hathersage, April 30th (R.C.); near Sheffield, May 1st (C.H.W.); Bakewell, May 12th.

There are many omissions in this list, and nothing particularly noteworthy. The Chiffchaff and Wheatear were both noted late, but probably they arrived earlier elsewhere in the county. The Blackcap, Sedge-Warbler and Whinchat were also late in arriving at Somersal. Willow-Warblers, Tree-Pipits, Swallows and Sand-Martins all arrived in good time, and the date of the first Cuckoo at Repton (April 12th) is an early one.

*Departure of Migrants.*—On August 16th, a Swift was seen near Hope (J.S.W.). I heard the autumn song of the

Chiffchaff frequently at Somersal between August 21st and the end of September, September 29th being the last date. On September 22nd I saw the Spotted Flycatcher for the last time. On November 10th a Whinchat was shot near Chesterfield (C.B.C.), this being a very late date.

#### CLASSIFIED NOTES.

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*.—One was seen near Chesterfield on April 22nd (C.B.C.).

Fieldfare, *Turdus pilaris*.—On May 1st a pair of Fieldfares was observed near Hathersage, which appeared to be the owners of a partly built nest ; a week later, however, they had gone (R.C.).

Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*.—A decrease in numbers has been noticed in several places, but this by no means applies to Somersal, where more were breeding this year than usual.

Great Spotted Woodpecker, *Dryobates maior anglicus*.—The female mentioned in former notes has not reappeared, but its place has been taken by two males, which have paid frequent daily visits ever since October 19th. It was not realised that there were two different birds until November 28th. On this date a Woodpecker appeared on the post and began to eat the nuts, but after a short time left off eating and remained entirely motionless for several minutes. This strange behaviour was explained when a second Woodpecker suddenly appeared, drove away the first and remained to finish off the nuts. A second post was put up a few yards away from the first, and on December 1st both birds were seen together, one on each post, but the weaker one did not venture to eat, remaining quite still in the presence of its rival. The two birds are both males, but can be distinguished from one another as one is slightly larger and has brighter colours, the white being less buff and contrasting more strikingly with the black.

Little Owl, *Carine noctua*.—The increase of this species is still very marked in several districts, notwithstanding the fact that a good number find their way to the taxidermist.

Common Sheld-Duck, *Tadorna tadorna*.—On March 17th, a drake of this species was observed at Coombs Reservoir near Chapel-en-le-Frith (W.S.).

Garganey, *Querquedula querquedula*.—This little duck is very rarely seen in Derbyshire, but on October 21st two were flushed at close quarters from a thick bed of reeds near Repton. The light was good and the distinctive white eye-stripe very conspicuous (T.R.H.O.).

Dunlin, *Tringa alpina*.—On December 3rd, one was shot near Chesterfield (C.B.C.).

Golden Plover, *Charadrius apricarius*.—On November 12th, I saw a small flock of Golden Plover at Somersal, where I have never seen them before.

Manx Shearwater, *Puffinus puffinus*.—On October 3rd, one was picked up near Willington, having been injured by flying into telegraph wires (H.C.H.).

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