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A CATALOGUE  
OF  
THE BIRDS  
OF  
NORTHUMBERLAND  
BY  
GEORGE BOLAM



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PREFACE

Two Catalogues of the Birds of the District have already been published by the Society—one by P. J. Selby in 1831, the other by John Hancock in 1874. The present work, which the Council have invited me to undertake, is strictly confined to Northumberland, and in order to keep it as concise as possible, it has not been deemed necessary to recapitulate all the old records and local detail reviewed in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, published in 1912. Rather has it been assumed that every member of the Society, and anyone else seriously interested, already possesses that volume, or can obtain easy access to it in the Museum's library. This enables 1912 to be taken as a sort of datum-line from which to start afresh, and if that necessarily involves some apparent egotism it has the compensating virtue of saving much space, and thereby attaining an urgent if not very graceful end.

The frequent references to Abel Chapman's books sufficiently indicate the appreciation in which they are held. Only lack of space has prevented their being more often quoted, and it may safely be predicted that no lover of Northumberland and its wild-life who has the opportunity of picking up *The Borders and Beyond*, *Bird-Life of the Borders*, *Retrospect*, or *Memories*, is ever likely to rue the purchase.

Vast changes in ornithology have taken place since the earlier works above referred to saw the light; not merely such as have been brought about by the zeal with which migratory movements have been intensively studied; but far more by the labour and ability devoted to the scrutiny of the intricate subjects of local races,



or sub-species, and their distribution. But remarkable as have been the results of such labours, they have not yet reached a measure of finality allowing of any very helpful numerical comparison to be attempted as between say 1874 and the present day. The number of species, or sub-species, has been greatly increased, but the status of some of them is still very problematical. Briefly summarised, Hancock's Catalogue included 255 birds for Northumberland; by 1912 that figure had risen to 282; it now stands at well above 300, depending for exactitude upon what each individual reader may consider a good species or race.

And if what should be numbered as a species presents so tangled a problem, Nomenclature provides an even greater and more unfinished quest. By an almost procrustean observance of the law of priority, and in other ways, much has been done in the endeavour to reach a world-wide uniformity, but progress is avoidlessly slow and the goal yet lies beyond our horizon. It is still found to be necessary to amend or interchange (by supplementary lists from time to time published in the *Ibis*) the names in the last issued "List of British Birds compiled by a Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union," and to escape the discussion of such matters, or the expression of mere personal opinion (equally foreign to the province of a county history) it has been judged best to select some recent standard work, and to follow rigidly the classification and nomenclature therein adopted. For that purpose Dr. Eagle Clarke's edition of Saunder's *Manual of British Birds*, published in 1927, has been chosen. It is already well known amongst members of the Society and is likely to remain, for a long period, the safest and most helpful guide to the tortuous by-ways along which students of ornithology must at present grope their way.

Important changes, calling for a word of comment, are, likewise, occurring in the bird-life of the county. The most spectacular of these, the sudden and well-nigh inexplicable spread of the Fulmar, here as in other districts, is noticed on page 148. Not on

such a large scale, but scarcely less difficult to account for, has been the increase of the Shag (p. 76), a pregnant illustration of which is supplied by a glance through the Annual Reports of the Tweed Commissioners, who pay head-money for "vermin" destroyed in the interests of Salmon. Mr. R. H. Dodds of Berwick, the originator of the campaign, has been good enough to supply me with the schedule, and little excuse is, I trust, needed for reproducing it in full at the end of the Catalogue, although birds are not the only victims. It is an almost incomprehensible fact that a bird like the Shag, which was decidedly uncommon only thirty years ago, and which has no near nursery, should have increased so rapidly as now to require killing by the hundred as mere "vermin"?

The return of the Osprey to the district during recent years is another noteworthy event. Were it deemed deserving of encouragement, the erection of some suitable nesting-site (a cart-wheel on top of a pole might suffice) at one of our Loughs might have unexpected results. Coarse fish are its normal food, and a few pike or roach would never be missed? But few modern keepers can thole the sight of any kind of "Hawk" upon their beats, and of late years some of them have had the too whole-hearted support of their employers, even in the use of illegal instruments of destruction. It is a sorrow to the naturalist, and the lover of the picturesque in Nature, that these "fayrest and most knightly fowles" should be faced with imminent extermination, both here and in other countries, but regrets and pious lamentations are vain when they fall upon deaf ears.

Much more might have been said, and some other features touched upon, but a bare Catalogue resembles a hedgerow-tree in that its natural growth must be curtailed by utilitarian lopping. To many kind friends who have so generously helped with information, and in other ways, my warmest thanks are due, and are hereby tendered. They are too numerous to name individually, and any selection might be thought



invidious, but special acknowledgement must be made to Mr. George W. Temperley who has most kindly over-read the manuscript, and to Mr. T. Russell Goddard and all his staff at the Museum for the infinite trouble he and they have taken to hunt up required data and to reply to innumerable inquiries.

G.B.

ALSTON,  
April, 1932.

## THE RAVEN

*Corvus corax corax* Linn.

A resident, whose sagacity, coupled with a good deal of toleration on the part of the old land-owners and others, has enabled it to maintain a somewhat precarious footing in the county, although long since banished to the outbye portions of it. There, the tenancy of some of the older individuals must long antedate that of all the keepers, as well as of more than a moiety of the other human inhabitants. The adults remain throughout the year about their upland haunts, having favourite winter roosting-places to which they regularly resort; but some seasonal movements take place, at least locally and amongst the young birds. Whither they go, and how and where Ravens manage to obtain their food, has often excited speculation, it being very rarely that one is seen anywhere in the low country.

During the last twenty or thirty years the number of occupied eyries may sometimes have run to half a score: some of them having been so long and persistently harried as to raise astonishment that the occupation should continue. Down to about a hundred and fifty years ago, the Raven used to nest annually on the spire of what is now the Cathedral in Newcastle. Time may come when such sites prove to be safer refuges than what were once regarded as the remoter hills.

## THE CARRION-CROW

*Corvus corone corone* Linn.

A resident, as common as it is allowed to become by the game-keeper, for it is without a peer as the most destructive feathered "vermin" with which he has to deal. Its perspicacity is teaching it that its safest habitations now lie in the most thickly populated districts.



Has been known to nest on the Farne Islands, and has attempted to do so upon Holy Island. Rarely, an individual has been noticed arriving upon the coast in late autumn with other immigrants, as though it might be coming as a winter visitant to us.

### THE HOODED CROW

*Corvus cornix cornix* Linn.

A common winter visitant, most abundant near the coast, arriving from the end of September to the middle of November, and departing northwards from February to the middle of April; but it is also numerous as a passage migrant, in which category many of the late and early birds may be classed.

It is, likewise, a partial resident, since it has been known to nest in the county, perhaps more often with a black partner than with one of its own colour. The offspring of such a misalliance (one can hardly term them hybrids?) are quite fertile, doubts sometimes expressed in print to the contrary notwithstanding.

### THE ROOK

*Corvus frugilegus frugilegus* Linn.

An abundant resident, but at the same time also a regular winter visitant, passage migrant, and to some extent, perhaps, a summer visitor.

### THE JACKDAW

*Corvus monedula spermologus* Vieill.

Another abundant and increasing resident, which is also a considerable winter visitant, and to some extent a passage migrant on overseas or less extended movements.

### THE MAGPIE

*Pica pica pica* (Linn.).

Another common resident, whose numbers in given localities are dependent only upon the exigencies of game-preserving. There is occasional evidence of at least local movements on a considerable scale.

### THE JAY

*Garrulus glandarius* (Linn.).

The Jay has latterly been divided into three races or sub-species, and if these be accepted our bird becomes the British Jay *Garrulus glandarius rufitergum* of Dr. Hartert. This differs from the Continental type, *Garrulus glandarius glandarius* (Linn.), mainly in the slightly warmer (more pinkish) flush that pervades its upper plumage and in having the under parts a little more suffused with buff or rufous, differences so superficial as to be very easily overlooked. They are quite imperceptible in the field, and in long-preserved specimens have faded away into unrecognisability.

The Continental type has been recorded as an exceptional immigrant to some of the more southerly counties of England, but I have been unable to discover any Northumbrian example that could be assigned to it. It must not be overlooked, however, that quite considerable invasions of Jays have more than once been in evidence in our coastal districts, notably in the autumns of 1897 and 1901, and the early spring of 1917. Conceivably, these birds might have come from across the sea, but the only specimen critically examined (trapped at Alnwick where a few Jays have always been resident, though at the time—February 1917—a sudden increase had been reported) was pronounced to be only *Garrulus g. rufitergum*.

Once common in most of the well-wooded parts of



the county, the Jay was entirely killed out in the northern half when game-preserving was at its zenith, and greatly reduced in numbers elsewhere. In Tyne-dale generally, and to some extent in the vales of Wansbeck, Coquet, and Aln, a remnant always survived, and their rehabilitation and increase within the last ten or fifteen years has been very perceptible. Their further spread is mainly a question of tolerance. Like the Magpie, they are inveterate robbers of the nests of *small* birds, but it is chiefly on account of its pilferings from his pheasant-feeds that the modern game-keeper bears the Jay any grudge, and that is a very venial offence upon which most men are easily persuaded to turn a sympathetic eye.

Enough details of its early history and fluctuations were given in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, I will only add now that I came upon a very noisy individual at Spindlestone on July 10th, 1926; that one crossed the road in front of our car near Rock, on April 18th, 1931; and that (midst the felling of the ornamental woods, and other desecrations then in progress at Haggerston Castle) I noticed at least two or three pairs of Jays on December 29th, 1931; each of these being localities from which the species had long been estranged. Since the above was written, Mr. J. M. Craster has reported an influx of Jays in the neighbourhood of Craster in the autumn of 1931 (*Vasculum*, XVIII, p. 38).

### THE NUTCRACKER

*Nucifraga caryocatactes* (Linn.).

An accidental visitant, of which we possess but a single record, the bird referred to by Selby as having been seen in Netherwitton Wood in the autumn of 1819.

The species has now been divided into two forms or geographic races, the European or Thick-billed, and the Siberian or Slender-billed Nutcrackers. To which of the two our bird belonged it is, of course, impossible to say.

### THE CHOUGH

*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* (Linn.).

Strictly, perhaps, scarcely deserving of a place here, but may be included, as a once accidental visitant on the strength of a bird cast up by the sea at Scremerston in September 1884, which, though I did not see it, I had no doubt was a Chough. Up to within a hundred years ago the species used to nest no farther away than St. Abb's Head upon the coast of Berwickshire.

### THE STARLING

*Sternus vulgaris vulgaris* Linn.

A resident, abundant everywhere at all seasons, that has developed from a comparatively rare bird of little more than a century ago into one of the most universally common. It is likewise a summer visitant, winter visitant, and passage migrant, the last two categories each contributing greatly to the augmentation of the huge roosting-flocks of autumn with which most people are too familiar. More could hardly have been achieved in the time, but who can predict any cessation in the increase? It has already ousted the Woodpecker from many a hard-hewn hole in the woods, has invaded the haunts of the Ring-Ouzel amongst the hills, and is steadily crowding the Swift out of age-long tenancies beneath our eaves and in ancient buildings. Yet the numbers of the upstart show no present signs of minishment, and its habit of producing more than one brood in a season seems to be extending! There must still be other spheres of conquest somewhere?



## THE ROSE-COLOURED STARLING

*Pastor roseus* (Linn.).

A rare casual visitant, of which upwards of twenty occurrences in the county were noted prior to 1912, all from the neighbourhood of the coast. It seems odd that we should have had no recent records?

## THE GOLDEN ORIOLE

*Oriolus oriolus oriolus* (Linn.).

A summer visitant to southern England, of which Northumberland could claim several casual records during the nineteenth century—Tynemouth 1821, Belford 1881, Felton 1888, and probably Holy Island in 1898—but we have no note of any more recent visits, although, in the interval, it has been reported from both sides of us.

## THE GREENFINCH

*Chloris chloris chloris* (Linn.).

A common resident in our agricultural districts, becoming less numerous as the land goes out of cultivation; but likewise, to a considerable extent, both a summer and winter visitant, as well as a passage migrant.

## THE HAWFINCH

*Coccothraustes coccothraustes coccothraustes* (Linn.).

Formerly known only as a rare winter visitant, the Hawfinch has steadily, if not very rapidly, added to its

status that of a widely distributed resident. The first nest actually to be found in Northumberland was taken near Riding Mill in May 1884. The subsequent history of the bird's local increase I very fully sketched out in 1912 and it need not be repeated here. Since that date, it has bred with increasing frequency at many other places on lower Tyneside—Bywell and Stocksfield (1912 and 1913), Heddon (1915), Wylam, Corbridge, Dilston, Hexham, etc.; on South Tyne at Fourstones, Bardon Mill, Unthank and Blenkinsopp; on North Tyne at Chipchase (first nest in 1901), Park-end and Houxty (1920); in Redesdale at Catcleugh in 1928-9; and elsewhere at Alnwick (much increased since 1912), Ford, Cornhill, and other places on Tweedside, Lowlynn and Haggerston.

As indicating that the migratory habit is still retained, Mr. W. G. Watson had a young male brought to him on Holy Island, November 16th, 1921, which had been killed in a mouse-trap in one of the village gardens. In November 1897, one remained on the Island for several days. On November 15th, 1930, a female appeared at Alston amongst a large concourse of tits, bramblings and other migratory birds; and, as I write, a passing pair have been observed here March 28th, 1932.

## THE GOLDFINCH

*Carduelis carduelis britannica* (Hartert).

Once more happily restored to its ancient status as a resident in the county, the Goldfinch has continued to show a satisfactory increase since 1912, when the beginning of its rehabilitation, as a breeding species, was sketched out in detail. At the present day, although in few places more than comparatively scarce, it nests more or less regularly on Tyneside, here and there, from Newcastle to west of Haltwhistle; in one or two places in North Tynedale and Redesdale, round Alnwick, in Coquetdale, Glendale, and on



Tweedside, and has done so at Swinburne Castle, Angerton, Hauxley, near Lintley on South Tyne, and elsewhere.

The increasing frequency with which small parties—sometimes even considerable flocks—continue to appear during winter, is a healthy sign that the native stock is multiplying; while the appearance of individuals, or little assemblies, upon the coast, may indicate local movements or, possibly, more extended migration. In some of the adjoining counties, both in England and Scotland, the increase has been even more marked than in Northumberland. The popularity of the Goldfinch as a cage-bird, and the ease with which it can be decoyed, is proverbial; in September 1931, one bird-catcher caught seventeen in one day in his garden, alongside the Roman Wall! A poignant illustration of how increase may sometimes be held up or delayed; although such peccadilloes (in hard times when half-a-crown per cock made no inconsiderable augmentation to the family income) are less heinous by far than the systematic raids committed by affluent "collectors" of both egg-shells and skins on some of our rarer birds.

### THE SISKIN

*Spinus spinus* (Linn.).

As a winter visitant, arrives on the coast fairly regularly, in small parties, about the beginning of October. Gathering together into larger flocks—often of 50, sometimes twice that number—these spend some months in woods and glens where alders and birches are plentiful, and usually disappear about March or April. The Siskin is, however, very erratic in its movements. It commonly has eggs or young by May, during which month it has been seen in Northumberland on many occasions, but we have no record of a nest being actually found in the county, although it is known to have bred in both Cumberland and

Durham. A pair have been observed on Holy Island as late as May 5th (1903), I saw a small flock on Wooler Water in June (1904), and Abel Chapman has recorded its appearance during that month in more than one season about his grounds at Houxy, where he shrewdly suspected they must have bred. On May 9th, 1925, I had the unusual experience of having before me, at the same moment, a male Siskin, a Pied Flycatcher, and a Wood-Wren, all in the same old Alder tree near the junction of the Houxy Burn with the Tyne.

### THE HOUSE-SPARROW

*Passer domesticus domesticus* (Linn.).

A resident, abundant in all corn-growing districts, and common about human settlements elsewhere; but no longer to be seen in such vast flocks in the vicinity of towns as used to do so much damage to ripening grain in the heyday of agriculture. The disappearance of horse-droppings from the roads is no doubt, also, a contributory cause to the lessening of the numbers of this and other granivorous birds in our midst.

### THE TREE-SPARROW

*Passer montanus montanus* (Linn.).

A local resident, whose numbers are liable to considerable augmentation by little flocks which reach us as winter visitants from October onwards (occasionally seen arriving as late as December), and are so tardy in departing that bands of not-yet-breeding individuals may be met with up to the beginning of May. A party of eight were noticed on the Farne Islands (where it does not breed) as late as May 22nd, 1913. Some of these, perhaps, may be no more than birds of passage.



The coming of the Tree-Sparrow, and its subsequent increase and extension in Northumberland and on the Borders, I have already traced in detail. It appears to have begun about 1835, to have been more or less confined to the coastal districts for the next fifty years, but to have spread inland pretty rapidly afterwards. It is now justifying its scientific appellation by appearing (as yet only as a straggler) in the "Highlands of Redesdale."

### THE CHAFFINCH

*Fringilla cælebs cælebs* Linn.

As a resident, probably the commonest and most generally distributed bird in the country. As a migrant, it regularly appears in large flocks along our coast in October and November, and again in March and April. Some of these no doubt partly consist of home-bred birds that have moved down from inland stations, but the bulk of them are of foreign origin, many of them no more than birds of passage, though others from abroad winter here.

The Chaffinch is often extolled as a gardener's friend, and it is not pleasant to besmirch the character of so blithe and fair a creature; but (if only from its numbers) it is certainly responsible for the destruction of more fruit (by the nibbling of the buds in spring) than any of our feathered favourites—unless it be the Sparrow!

### THE BRAMBLING

*Fringilla montifringilla* Linn.

A common winter visitant, reaching us in flocks about the middle of October (a few sometimes two or three weeks earlier), and departing in early spring, exceptionally as late as the end of April. Must also be regarded, to some extent, as a passage migrant.

### THE LINNET

*Acanthis cannabina cannabina* (Linn.).

A common resident, especially in the low country, and where whins are prevalent. Considerable flocks also reach us from overseas in September and October as winter visitants, most of them departing in early spring, though emigration has been observed as late as the middle of May. Some of these it is considered may be only passage migrants on their way to and from more distant breeding quarters.

### THE MEALY REDPOLL

*Acanthis linaria linaria* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, and passage migrant; not rare, but very irregular in its appearance, sometimes coming in considerable flocks, in other years altogether absent or scarcely noticed, perhaps one or two individuals here and there amongst flocks of kindred species. It is subject to marked variation, as well in plumage as in size, some of the forms, or races, into which it has been divided, being not easy to separate or define.

HOLBÖLL'S REDPOLL, *Acanthis linaria holbællii* (Brehm), is one of them, and Mr. W. G. Watson having obtained a male on Holy Island, in November, 1923 (now in the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh), the race is entitled to mention here. It is not common, but has been recorded as a casual visitant from several of the eastern counties. Dr. Eagle Clarke regards it as "probably based upon large specimens of the typical Mealy Redpoll, which it exactly resembles in all its stages of plumage, and with which it is also identical in its geographical distribution . . . wing 75-81 mm., bill 8-9 mm.," as compared with *A. l. linaria* wing 70-78 mm., bill 6-7 mm.



## THE LESSER REDPOLL

*Acanthis linaria cabaret* (Müll.).

A resident, winter visitant and passage migrant. Tolerably common, breeding, a pair here and another there, throughout the county; but always most in evidence during the cold months when it gathers into considerable flocks to wander widely over the country; and, being of eminently sociable habit, it then often joins up with roving bands of Siskins and other finches, or even with tits, Crossbills and the like.

Associated in these winter flocks, may frequently be found individuals of one or other of the allied races of redpolls; and it is not very unusual for some of the birds, not always immature, to be adorned with a poll of bright golden yellow in place of the usual red. This is a phase of plumage to which I called attention in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 160), but it has seldom been mentioned in book-descriptions and has never been satisfactorily explained.

## HORNEMANN'S REDPOLL

*Acanthis hornemanni hornemanni* (Holb.).

Of this, the largest and whitest, as well as one of the rarest of our Redpolls, no example has hitherto been obtained in the county, but the Museum contains Hancock's well-known specimen killed at Whitburn, only a few miles south of the Tyne on April 24th, 1855, and to this species ought, I think, to be referred two birds seen in Ravensdowne, Berwick, October 21st, 1885. One or two other very white Redpolls are likewise referred to in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*. The absolute identity of these individuals can, of course, never be proved and perhaps

the species ought to be bracketed here, but since that volume was written I have enjoyed very close studies of Redpolls both in Lapland and at home, and adhere to the opinion already expressed that these were really *A. h. hornemanni*.

## THE TWITE

*Acanthis flavirostris flavirostris* (Linn.).

Can still be classed as a resident, but, like some others of our small birds, and from equally obscure causes, the Twite seems to be steadily disappearing as a breeding species with us, a feature that has been remarked upon in other districts besides our own. Personally, I have not seen a nest for years past, although a sharp look out for it has always been kept. Some of its ancient haunts amongst the hills appear to have become quite deserted, but hope still survives that this may not be permanent from the fact that Abel Chapman stumbled upon a nest with young, in the beginning of July 1925, at Elsdon, upon ground we had together been over in the previous ten or twelve years without being able to see or hear a sign of a Twite.

In the neighbourhood of Alston, it appears more or less regularly, in small parties, in autumn, and less frequently in spring; but I have never detected it breeding here. Hancock's collection in the Museum, however, contains a pair of Twites labelled "Alston, July 1838," and H. W. Wheelwright ("The Old Bushman") referred to it as nesting here in 1861.

As a winter visitant, the Twite reaches the coast pretty regularly in September and October, often in large flocks, which commonly penetrate to the foot-hills of the Cheviots and wander over the stubbles, sometimes in the company of Linnets, in the search for the seeds of Spurrey and other weeds.

The scientific designation of *flavirostris* is rather apt to mislead; for the bill is by no means always yellow;



normally, it is as often as not pale horn-colour darker towards the tip, therein differing scarcely at all from the Linnet's. The legs and feet are darker than those of that bird, whence the Twite is sometimes distinguished, locally, as the Black-legged Linnet.

#### [THE NORTHERN BULLFINCH

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula pyrrhula* (Linn.).

Has within recent years been recognised as a not infrequent winter visitant to the British Islands. One was captured near Berwick (on the north side of the river) in the autumn of 1910; while a party of more than a dozen cocks which appeared in the same neighbourhood during the hard winter of 1904-5, all large and brightly-coloured birds, were probably of the same race, although not examined in hand.

It has occurred more than once in Berwickshire and East Lothian.]

#### THE BRITISH BULLFINCH

*Pyrrhula pyrrhula pileata* MacGillivray.

A common resident in most of the wooded districts, though seldom numerous. Dr. Eagle Clarke says of it: "Has been awarded subspecific rank, but on somewhat slender grounds. When compared with the Western and Central European bird (*P. p. europæa*), with which it has for long years been considered identical, it is slightly smaller; the female has the back darker brown, and the under surface darker and browner, and the male differs even less appreciably in colour, but has the red on the under surface and the grey on the upper surface somewhat less brilliant."

#### THE SCARLET GROSBEAK

*Carpodacus erythrinus erythrinus* (Pall.).

A rare visitant from Eastern Europe, which has been recorded in this country with increasing frequency of recent years. Our only Northumbrian records are due to the perseverance of my eagle-eyed friend Mr. H. F. Witherby, who shot a young female on Holy Island, on August 30th, 1913, and saw another there on the 15th and 16th of the following month; it being pertinent to recall that in the same year Dr. Eagle Clarke saw no fewer than nine individuals, all females or young, on Auskerry, one of the Orkney Islands, between August 31st and September 30th. It is chiefly in that plumage that the bird has been noticed in this country, in which state it may so easily be mistaken for a Greenfinch that one caught by my son in a sparrow-trap outside his aviaries in Lincolnshire, was not recognised in the afternoon-light until it had been carried indoors.

#### THE PINE-GROSBEAK

*Pinicola enucleator enucleator* (Linn.).

A rare accidental visitant to any part of this country. Selby, in 1831, recorded a specimen shot at Bill Quay near Newcastle, then in the possession of Mr. Anthony Clapham and afterwards acquired by Mr. Backhouse: our only local record.

#### THE COMMON CROSSBILL

*Loxia curvirostra curvirostra* Linn.

An irregular visitant, and an almost equally casual resident, not rare in either capacity, but so notoriously



adventitious in both as to defy nice standardisation. Perhaps best described as a sort of avine gipsy that refuses to conform to any man-made rules?

Since 1838, when the first recorded nest for the county was discovered at Hesleyside, down to the present time, when a newly-fledged brood, being fed by their parents, was observed in the same neighbourhood in the last days of May 1931, the Crossbill has frequently been found breeding in Northumberland, especially in the southern half of it; while of recent years its appearance, both as a nesting species and as an incomer, has been recurring with ever-increasing frequency.

The immigrants reach us chiefly in late summer, but have been recorded at all seasons, varying from small parties, or single birds, up to large flocks. The period of their stay is as uncertain as their other movements, but often lasts through the winter; a special interest centring round the question of whither they go when they leave us, little or no evidence having ever been forthcoming of their return to the countries whence they came. Almost of necessity, they have often been observed, on their immigrations, at sea or upon the Farne Islands. On July 3rd, 1927 (a year in which we had quite a memorable invasion of Crossbills), one boarded the S.S. "Jupiter" about 35 miles east of the Longstone Lighthouse. It was cramped and wing-weary when it arrived, and after hopping about the fore-castle for a while, allowed my friend, Dr. Hugh Blair, to pick it up in his hand. It was in the green plumage of the female, and being considerably rested by the time the mouth of the Tyne was reached, was allowed to fly again, but when last seen was in the act of alighting on the deck of a pilot-boat! Perhaps its next captor might be a sailor who would carry it in triumph to his missus, as a species of young parrot, to be engaged in some seaman's parlour in Shields?

## THE CORN-BUNTING

*Emberiza calandra calandra* Linn.

A resident, common along the coast, but only locally distributed inland. A lover of arable fields, it has decreased in some places since so much land went out of cultivation, but still maintains a footing in others where no grain has been grown (except for a year or two during the war) for a long period.

It breeds on Holy Island, or used to do so; the little flocks, or smaller parties, sometimes encountered there, or elsewhere on the coast, in winter, may indicate some immigration, or may be due to mere local movements during the cold months. It remains at some of its inland stations throughout the year, but is said to be seen in others only during winter.

## THE YELLOW BUNTING OR YELLOW HAMMER

*Emberiza citrinella citrinella* Linn.

An abundant resident in all the corn-growing districts all the year round, but showing some indications of growing scarcer since so much land went out of cultivation.

The remark made with regard to migration, in connection with the Corn-Bunting, may equally apply here. Passing reference must also be made to the interesting hybrid between this species and the Reed-Bunting in the Hancock collection. It was caught on Whitley Bents in January 1886, and lived in the Museum till the following June.



## THE RUSTIC BUNTING

*Emberiza rustica* Pall.

An occasional visitant to this country, of which we possess but a single local record, a female captured at Seaton Sluice in 1903. In *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 172) a reference will be found to two small buntings which I saw together at Berwick, in December 1887, which I thought must be either of this species or the next.

## THE LITTLE BUNTING

*Emberiza pusilla* Pall.

Another occasional visitant of which our only local records are—a bird identified by Dr. Eagle Clarke on Holy Island, October 7th, 1920, and one seen by Mr. T. G. Laidlaw at the same place September 11th, 12th and 13th, 1930. (See also the last paragraph dealing with the previous species.)

## THE REED-BUNTING

*Emberiza schæniclus schæniclus* (Linn.).

A common resident, breeding in scattered pairs throughout the county, and familiarly known as the "Black-headed Bunting," or "Blackcap." Some of these remain in the neighbourhood of their summer haunts throughout the winter; some may adjourn to more hospitable quarters not far away, or may go to swell the little bands which, during the cold months,

are to be met with near the coast; while some, perhaps, may travel even farther. It is, moreover, not unlikely that we are visited by some migrants in autumn, either to winter or as mere birds-of-passage, but their actual status here is at present only surmised from what has been proved farther afield.

## THE LAPLAND BUNTING

*Calcarius lapponicus lapponicus* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, which during the present century has been shown to be of almost annual occurrence in this country, particularly in the north of Scotland. In the winter of 1892-93 there was a memorable invasion, when large numbers arrived on Ross farm (opposite to Holy Island) at the beginning of January, some of which remained till the middle of March. On January 2nd I estimated that there were, approximately, fifty in one flock, and specimens shot from it are now in the Museum. On or about January 9th one was netted near Newcastle, and on February 22nd one was picked up beneath the telegraph wire on Holy Island. On October 19th, 1893, I saw a solitary bird at Newton-by-the-Sea. Mrs. Hodgkin reported a flock of at least thirty on the links above Budle Bay on April 3rd, 1920.

## THE SNOW-BUNTING

*Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis* (Linn.).

An abundant winter visitant to the coast, scarcer inland, though frequently seen high out upon the hill-tops, even when the whole country is under snow. A few sometimes arrive in September, the greater number in October and November; the largest flocks being usually present after the New Year. The return journey takes place in February and March, a few birds



sometimes delaying their departure until April, and some till the middle of May. In 1884 one was recorded from the Farne Islands on June 7th. Some of the later birds probably represent passage migrants on their way north from countries farther south than ours; while to the same category may be referred some of those which visit us in autumn.

### THE SKYLARK

*Alauda arvensis arvensis* Linn.

A well-known and abundant resident over the entire county; but, likewise, a regular immigrant and passage migrant. The flocks which generally reach us in October and November, and again from March to May, come chiefly into the latter category, but a small portion of them remain here if the winter be mild, while, in the opposite event, some of our breeding birds may leave with the passing crowds to escape its rigour.

### THE WOODLARK

*Lullula arborea arborea* (Linn.).

A rare winter visitant of which our only records for the county are: the specimen mentioned by Selby as killed near Twizell, November 24th, 1827: one shot at Hartley Bates, in 1876, as noted by Hancock in his copy of his *Catalogue* now in the Museum; one shot on St. Mary's island in November 1877: and one obtained near Blanchland in September 1884. [Although a little beyond our limits, it may be relevant to mention that on May 3rd and following days in 1929, Dr. Hugh Blair and I saw a Woodlark near South Shields, and had many opportunities of closely observing it. More than one bird was never seen at a time, though it was

a little difficult to imagine that it could always be the same individual, as on May 4th it was seen at Frenchman's Bay in the morning and at Hebburn Ponds, four or five miles farther inland, in the afternoon.]

### THE SHORE-LARK

*Otocorys alpestris flava* (Gmelin).

A winter visitant, confined to the coast and only seen as a rule during severe weather, usually from December till February. It has, however, sometimes been noticed in October, once or twice in March, and as late as the middle of May (1880) one was identified at Scremerston. Except for one at Holy Island in 1925, and a solitary individual which alighted close to me on the shore at Waren Mill, during a westerly gale on the afternoon of December 23rd, 1931, we seem to have had no records since 1912.

### THE WHITE WAGTAIL

*Motacilla alba alba* Linn.

A passage migrant which has been noticed a good deal more frequently of recent years than used to be the case formerly; probably because of the greater number of people who now take a discriminating interest in birds. It has usually been recorded from the second week in April till the middle of May, and less frequently on the return journey in the latter half of September. Mr. Watson met with a dozen individuals on Holy Island between April 23rd and May 9th in 1923, and nearly as many in the following spring, seldom more than one or two in a day at any time. At Alston I see one at the rate of about twice in three years.



## THE PIED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla alba yarrelli* Gould.

Well known all over the county; most numerous as a summer visitant, but not rare, especially in the coastal area, during winter. Some of the flocks seen in spring and autumn are, doubtless, only passage migrants, and it is possible that lingerers from the latter may sometimes remain here as winter visitants.

## THE GREY WAGTAIL

*Motacilla cinerea cinerea* Tunstall.

A common resident, in limited numbers, throughout the county, our hill-burns being seldom without the presence of a pair or two, although the majority of those reared there move coastwards for the winter, some of them, perhaps, even quitting the country. It nests from the sources of the Cheviot burns down to sea-level (as at Howick Burn-mouth), and during hard weather may be met with foraging along the sea-shore or about estuaries.

## THE BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla flava flava* Linn.

For the most part only a passage migrant, observed in April and May, but distinctly uncommon. Has once or twice been identified at Ross and Holy Island; but it used to breed at Dunston, just south of the Tyne, and in 1928 two pairs nested at Alston, which, although in Cumberland, is well within a couple of miles of the Northumbrian march. They have not, however, returned during the last three years.

In addition to his distinguishing *white* eye-streak, the breast of the male, in summer plumage, is much brighter than that of *M. f. rayi*: he gleams like a gowan (*Caltha palustris*) in the grass, where his relative only vies with the buttercup.

## THE YELLOW WAGTAIL

*Motacilla flava rayi* (Bonaparte).

A summer visitant which, just a century ago, Selby was able to describe as common, locally; but by Hancock's time it had become quite rare as a breeding bird, and was seldom seen, even on migration, in the southern part of the county. Its full subsequent history, as a Northumbrian bird, I have already traced down to 1912, since which date it has steadily continued to increase again as a nesting species.

It is now an annual visitor to the Tyne watershed, breeding, in fluctuating numbers, from Haltwhistle downwards, and has begun to appear on North Tyne also. I saw one near Wark in the spring of 1920, and on April 22nd, 1922, the first Chapman had ever seen there was running about the haugh below his house at Houxty. It continues to nest at Goswick and has been reported from several places on Tweedside, Glendale, and near Alnwick. On Holy Island, Mr. Watson has noticed it on several occasions in May and September. On South Tyne it is becoming almost common since 1915.

Belated "Yellow Wagtails" appeared at Alston on October 31st and November 1st, 1916, and again on November 30th, 1920. They were in immature or female dress (in which state the different races are indistinguishable in the field) and might quite possibly have belonged to *M. f. thunbergi*, or to *M. f. flava* (*Vide Vasculum*, Vol. VII, p. 27, and *British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. XIV, p. 185).



## THE GREY-HEADED WAGTAIL

*Motacilla flava thunbergi* Billberg.

A rare casual visitant of which we have but a single undoubted record: an adult female, now in the Royal Scottish Museum, obtained by Mr. W. G. Watson on Holy Island, May 2nd, 1923.

(See last paragraph under the preceding species.)

## THE TREE-PIPIT

*Anthus trivialis trivialis* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, well known throughout the county, and generally common in suitable places. Its usual time of arrival is about the middle of April, but, exceptionally, it may come in March. It departs in August, seldom later than the middle of September.

## THE MEADOW-PIPIT

*Anthus pratensis* (Linn.).

A resident, the commonest nesting small-bird on all our moorlands, and the foster-parent of by far the greater number of our Cuckoos. It is also rife over most other parts of the county and, preferring grassland to tillage, is probably increasing. Most of the birds from the higher altitudes seek less bleak quarters for winter, finding them in the low country, on the coast, or by joining the numerous bands of passage migrants which visit us in autumn on their way south from more northern habitats. These return again in spring, while some of the visitors from the north remain here over the winter; so that our Pipits really hold a fourfold status.

## RICHARD'S PIPIT

*Anthus richardi richardi* Vieill.

An accidental visitant of which we have no recent records. Hancock mentioned three: one shot at Newbiggin-by-the-Sea on December 1st, 1831, one at Howick on February 13th, 1832, and the third on the Newcastle Town Moor on October 10th, 1845. To which I can only add that a large Pipit seen by my brother amongst a mixed assemblage of Larks and other migrants, on the shore near Goswick, on May 12th, 1899, possibly belonged to this species.

## THE ROCK-PIPIT

*Anthus petrosus petrosus* (Montagu).

A common resident on all the rocky portions of the coast. In autumn, and to a less observed extent in spring, our native stock is sometimes visibly augmented by passing migrants, some of which may remain over the winter.

## SCANDINAVIAN ROCK-PIPIT

*Anthus petrosus littoralis* Brehm.

A passage migrant, to which are now assigned Hancock's specimens, one at least of which he told me long ago had been sent to him from North Sunderland in 1887: others are in the British Museum.



## THE BRITISH TREE-CREEPER

*Certhia familiaris britannica* Ridgway.

An endemic race, separated from the typical European bird by Ridgway in 1882. Common, though nowhere very abundant, in suitable places throughout the county. In winter it is a roving species, readily attaching itself to the gipsy-like bands of titmice and similar birds that wander through the woods or from place to place; but that it may sometimes extend its peregrinations is evidenced by the fact of its being occasionally found on such places as Holy Island. Mr. W. G. Watson secured one of two which appeared there, on October 23rd, 1921, but it was identified by so able an authority as Dr. Eagle Clark as belonging only to the British race. Now and again one used to appear in or around Berwick.

## THE BRITISH NUTHATCH

*Sitta europæa affinis* Blyth.

Our Nuthatch has been separated, as an endemic race, under the above appellation, from the North European form (*S. europæa europæa*), which has the under parts white, and from *S. europæa cæsia* of Middle Europe, which has those parts of a still ruddier hue. So far as Northumberland is concerned, it is a very local resident, almost confined to the Tyne watershed, in which, moreover, it is very partially distributed and nowhere numerous. It still nests in a few protected areas, where I have seen it occasionally within recent years, but it does not seem to increase at all but rather to be disappearing.

## THE GOLD-CRESTED WREN

*Regulus regulus regulus* (Linn.).

A common resident wherever fir-woods prevail, as well as a passage migrant, often swarming along the coast in September and still more so in October; occasionally arriving from overseas in November and even December. The return journey is seldom so conspicuous, but takes place throughout March and April, sometimes extending into May. Some of these immigrants may spend the winter here; while, on the other hand, a good many of our home-bred birds appear to join the passing bands in autumn to seek more southern quarters for the winter.

"The British Gold-crest has been described as a racial form (*R. r. anglorum*); its upper plumage being considered darker and more olive, and its under surface somewhat more tinged with olive; but these slight distinctions are not constant and the separation is not considered to be warranted" (Dr. Eagle Clarke), an opinion in which I entirely concur. Specimens referred to the Continental type were, however, taken by both Mr. Witherby and Mr. Watson on Holy Island.

The Gold-crest is the smallest European bird. In my journals I happen to find a note that an adult male, and another probably immature, killed at Berwick on October 18th, 1882, weighed together  $\frac{1}{4}$  oz.

## THE FIRE-CRESTED WREN

*Regulus ignicapillus ignicapillus* (Temm.).

An irregular and rare winter visitant or passage migrant, for the first authentic Northumbrian record of which we are indebted to Mr. H. F. Witherby, who



obtained a young male on Holy Island, October 4th, 1912. In 1923, Mr. W. G. Watson secured a male on November 9th and saw two more on the following day; while in 1924 he got another on May 25th, which is as yet our only representative of the spring migration. All these were upon Holy Island, where, on October 10th, 1927, Dr. Hugh Blair was able to identify another amongst a numerous band of mixed migrants.

### THE CONTINENTAL GREAT TITMOUSE

*Parus major major* Linn.

A winter visitant, of which Mr. W. G. Watson obtained several examples on Holy Island, the first of them in the autumn of 1923. I am not aware that it has been identified by anybody else in Northumberland; but it differs so slightly from our native race, next to be treated of, that it would be overlooked by all except the most critical eye. It would, no doubt, be found to be a pretty constant visitor if all the Great Tits met with in our coastal areas were collected and tested by vernier; a proof which most ornithologists will be content to let pass by default?

### THE BRITISH GREAT TITMOUSE

*Parus major newtoni* Prazak.

A common resident, but likewise, to some extent, migratory. It is occasionally observed at lighthouses, and has occurred on the Farnes, Holy Island, and similar places; while at least local movements, on a considerable scale, have been noticed in Northumberland.

Has been separated from the Continental Great Tit, and awarded endemic rank as above, on account of its being supposed to have a consistently stouter and longer bill—about 1 mm. longer.

### THE CONTINENTAL COAL-TITMOUSE

*Parus ater ater* Linn.

A winter visitant; rare, and generally described as "a waif" in this country. I have no hesitation, however, in referring to this race at least one Northumbrian example, not collected but closely watched for some time, at Newton Link House on October 5th, 1896. It and some other very grey-backed birds were more particularly referred to in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*.

### THE BRITISH COAL-TITMOUSE

*Parus ater britannicus* Sharpe and Dresser.

An endemic race, common, if somewhat local, as a resident, and has been found straying, occasionally, in its autumnal wanderings, to such places as Holy Island and the Farnes.

In the first plumage, the under surface of the body, and the marks on the head which are white in adults, are more or less tinged with yellow, in some cases the warmer colouring being exceptionally bright, and retained far into autumn, or even into winter.

### THE BRITISH MARSH-TITMOUSE

*Parus palustris dresseri* Stejneger.

A resident which has been raised to endemic rank; common enough but local, and one of the least numerous of our familiar tits. In some districts it is more prevalent than the Willow-Tit, in others just the reverse.

In adults, the black upon the head of the present species is glossy, in contrast to the dull sooty head;



sometimes slightly tinged with brown, of the Willow-Tit; otherwise the two closely resemble one another in plumage as in habits; the young being practically indistinguishable.

#### THE BRITISH WILLOW-TITMOUSE

*Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* Hellmayr.

This is another endemic race, common, though local, in our county and with a very similar distribution to the last.

Although our bird so closely resembles our Marsh Tit, the Scandinavian representatives are much more easily distinguished from one another.

#### THE BRITISH BLUE TITMOUSE

*Parus cæruleus obscurus* Prazak.

Separated on slender colour-distinctions from the Continental type, the British Blue Tit is the commonest and best known of the family throughout Northumberland, although it may be outnumbered by Coal- or Great Tits in a few outlying districts. A resident; but its tendency to at any rate local migration, is demonstrated by its being occasionally met with on the Farnes and Holy Island; on the latter it has even been known to nest.

#### THE NORTHERN LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE

*Ægithalus caudatus caudatus* (Linn.).

An accidental visitant of which Hancock's specimen, picked up on Tynemouth sands, in a quite fresh state, in November 1852, is one of the few occurrences in this country. The Museum, however, contains a

second example, from the old Wycliffe collection, but without further history attached to it than that Bewick had painted its portrait.

#### THE BRITISH LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE

*Ægithalus caudatus roseus* (Blyth).

A well-known resident; seldom numerous, but nesting in many places throughout the county, and found during the cold months in roving bands of a score or two together. That this wandering spirit may sometimes carry individuals a long way from home is evidenced by occurrences at Holy Island and the Farnes, St. Mary's Island and other unlikely places, as well as by drowned birds having more than once been found washed up by the tide upon our coast. A bird more ill-equipped for an extended flight, it would not be easy to imagine.

#### THE NORTHERN GREAT GREY SHRIKE

*Lanius excubitor excubitor* Linn.

A winter visitant, arriving from the latter half of October and remaining till the end of February. Later than that it is unusual, but we have several April records, and one was picked up dead at Houxty on May 1st, 1915. A year seldom passes without one or more being seen in Northumberland, most frequently in the neighbourhood of the coast.

The Great Grey Shrike has occasionally been noticed in this country in summer, but there is no certain evidence of its ever having nested here. Attention may, therefore, be called to the somewhat doubtful record of its having done so at Newmoor Hall, Coquetdale, in 1890, referred to in my *Birds of Northumberland*



and the Eastern Borders, p. 113; and to the fact (also therein mentioned) of a pair of the birds having been seen at Fowberry Park, on June 27th, 1872, which appeared to be breeding there.

### THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE

*Lanius collurio* Linn.

A rare summer visitant; more frequently observed as a passage migrant in autumn.

Selby recorded a pair killed near Kenton, on the Newcastle Town Moor, in the summer of 1829; Hancock a bird shot at Horsley in May 1834: all three now in the Museum. One was seen at Belsay on June 10th, 1885, and in 1901, a pair nested at the same place.

Of autumn occurrences in the county, one was knocked down with a stone at Tweedmouth in August 1879; another shot near Berwick on September 15th, 1883; on Holy Island, one on September 30th, 1912, another August 27th, 1921, and others in September 1923 and 1924, all these being immature.

### THE WOODCHAT SHRIKE

*Lanius senator senator* Linn.

A rare casual visitant of which our only certain records are: one shot near Bamburgh, April 29th, 1859; and one on Holy Island in September 1876.

### THE WAXWING

*Ampelis garrulus* Linn.

An irregular winter visitant, which sometimes comes to us in quite considerable numbers. The great invasions have been in 1830-31, 1834-35, 1849-50, 1866-67,

1882-83, 1892-93, 1896-97, 1897-98, 1901-2, 1904-5, 1913-14, 1921-22, 1923-24 and 1931-32. The birds usually reach us in the depth of winter, and seldom remain after the haws and other berries have been stripped from the bushes. As an exception, I saw four Waxwings amongst a flock of Redwings and finches at Alston, on April 8th, 1922.

### THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER

*Muscicapa grisola grisola* Linn.

A summer visitant, common and well distributed throughout the county, though in limited, and somewhat fluctuating numbers. Some reach us a little earlier than that, but about the middle of May is the usual time for them to appear here; in three brief months they will be in migratory bands upon the coast again, and few are left after the middle of September.

### THE PIED FLYCATCHER

*Muscicapa atricapilla atricapilla* Linn.

A summer visitant and passage migrant; in the latter character sometimes visiting our coast in considerable bands during May and September.

As a breeding species in the county, I have already traced its early history in detail. It is now fairly established in most suitable places and, despite the raids of egg-collectors, seems likely to hold its own.

### THE RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER

*Muscicapa parva parva* Bechst.

A passage migrant which, since observation on the coast became more intensive, has been observed



somewhat regularly in this country, chiefly in September and October. The records for Northumberland are:—

One Berwick, October 5th, 1883; one Boulmer, October 1st, 1928; and on Holy Island, by Mr. W. G. Watson, one September 26th, 1922, and two the following day; one on the 8th and another on the 16th of October, 1924; two in September 1925.

### THE WHITETHROAT

*Sylvia communis communis* Lath.

A summer visitant, one of the commonest of our warblers over the greater part of the county. Arrives towards the end of April and the early part of May, and departs in August and September, an odd one or two lingering into October. Some of those seen on the coast late in May, obviously still on migration, as well as in autumn, are, no doubt, birds-of-passage to and from more northern breeding quarters.

### THE LESSER WHITETHROAT

*Sylvia curruca curruca* (Linn.).

A summer visitant and passage migrant, fluctuating greatly in numbers as between one year and another, capriciously distributed, and very fickle in returning to any given spot.

A very full account of its earlier occurrences in the county was given in 1912, and these details need not be repeated. Since that date it has appeared, and sometimes nested, as follows: In 1912 young were fledged from three separate nests at Heiferlaw Bank, one of which Mr. Murdie sent me and it is now in the Museum. Dr. E. Leonard Gill heard Lesser White-throats singing at Haggerston and Lowlynn in 1914,

and near Embleton in June 1915. In the Tyne valley, there were nests at Houxty in 1916 and 1920, at Catcleugh in 1923 and 1928; while birds were singing, and doubtless breeding, at Dipton Wood 1903, in Mr. Randle Cooke's garden at Kilbryde, Corbridge, in 1921, and elsewhere in the same neighbourhood in 1922: in Mr. J. S. T. Walton's garden at Stocksfield in May 1919, at Wheelbirks in July of the same year (undoubtedly nesting), at Bradley Hall, Riding Mill, and other places. In 1919 at least two pairs nested near Haltwhistle and a third at Bellister. [At Alston (in Cumberland) three broods were reared in 1916, probably one in 1917, at least one in 1918 and 1919, two in 1920, one in 1921, and one or two since but not in continuous years; since 1925 none of the birds have been noticed here.]

On migration, Mr. Witherby met with Lesser White-throats on Holy Island on fifteen days between September 14th and October 14th in 1912, at least seven individuals being noticed, probably more; and in 1913 at least ten different individuals seen on fourteen days during September. In 1921, Mr. W. G. Watson observed one there on October 24th, and another on September 22nd, 1922.

### THE GARDEN-WARBLER

*Sylvia salicaria* Linn.

A summer visitant, common and well distributed over the county in moderate numbers. It arrives towards the end of April and sometimes delays its departure till late in autumn. An occasional individual may winter with us: one was brought to me which had been caught at Belshill on December 15th, 1893, and I saw one in Mr. Hughes' garden at Middleton Hall, Wooler, on November 18th, 1904.



## THE BLACKCAP

*Sylvia atricapilla atricapilla* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, rather more local in distribution than the last, but fairly common over the greater part of the county: of late years it has been noticed as decreasing in numbers in certain districts. April is the usual month of its arrival; but we have several March records, and occasionally an individual may winter here. A male in the Museum was observed during late autumn and winter at Twizell House, and was picked up dead there on January 9th, 1921.

## THE BARRED WARBLER

*Sylvia nisoria nisoria* (Bechst.).

A rare passage migrant which, however, has been observed with increasing frequency of late years in other parts of the country; while Mr. Witherby has demonstrated it to be, at least in some seasons, a fairly numerous visitor to the Northumbrian coast. On Holy Island, in 1913, he identified no less than nine individuals between September 2nd and 25th, most of them being young birds showing very little of the barring on their under plumage.

On September 27th, 1924, Mr. W. G. Watson and Dr. Eagle Clarke saw a large, long-tailed warbler on the Island which the latter gentleman considered to be of this species, though its skulking habits precluded its certain identification.

## THE GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER

*Locustella naevia naevia* (Bodd.).

A summer visitant, generally distributed over the county; not uncommon, but very erratic in its occupation of many districts, colonising them intermittently and disappearing for longer or shorter periods of years. It is, perhaps, more consistently common on Tyneside than elsewhere.

Arrives about mid-April and departs in September.

## THE REED-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus scirpaceus scirpaceus* (Herm.).

A summer visitant to this country, which has seldom strayed so far north as our district. The Museum, however, contains a nest taken by the late Thomas Thompson at Blaydon (on the Durham side of Tyne) about 1860, and on May 13th, 1888, I saw a bird on Unthank Moor, three miles south of Berwick, which I was as confident as it was possible to be without actually handling the specimen, belonged to this species, although it might conceivably have been a Blyth's Reed-Warbler.

## BLYTH'S REED-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus dumetorum* Blyth.

A rare accidental visitant, of which our sole record is of a young female shot by Mr. H. F. Witherby on Holy Island, September 25th, 1912. It was, as Mr. Witherby informed me (and see his description in *British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. VI, p. 207), not quite typical but was presumed to be this; so slight are the differences in immature plumage between some of these



nearly allied species. (See the reference above to a Reed-Warbler seen at Unthank.)

### THE GREAT REED-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus arundinaceus arundinaceus* (Linn.).

An accidental visitant. The specimen now in the Museum, from Thomas Thompson's collection, shot by him at Swalwell, just south of the Tyne near Newcastle, on May 28th, 1847, was the first example to be obtained in the British Islands. It strictly, of course, belongs to Durham, not Northumberland, but its inclusion here enables a reference to be made to a bird seen by my brother, William James, at the mouth of the Whitadder on June 18th, 1899, which though no attempt was made to obtain it, could scarcely have been anything else than a Great Reed-Warbler.

### THE SEDGE-WARBLER

*Acrocephalus schænobæus* (Linn.).

A common summer visitant, occurring in suitable places all over the county. Arrives towards the end of April, or early in May, and departs in September; some of those observed at either season appearing to be no more than passage migrants.

### THE ICTERINE WARBLER

*Hypolais icterina* (Vieill.).

An occasional passage migrant, which has of recent years been found to occur in this country much more frequently than was formerly supposed.

An adult male was shot in his garden at North

Jesmond, Newcastle, by Charles Murray Adamson, on June 20th, 1889, and is now in the Museum.

On September 11th, 1930, Mr. T. G. Laidlaw saw a bird on Holy Island, which his experience of the family abroad enabled him to identify with certainty as either this or a Melodious Warbler, "the former being the most likely." (*British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. XXIV, p. 157.)

I had a good opportunity of studying the actions and voice of a pair of Icterine Warblers with their fledged young, on a birch and scrub-clad hillside in Norway, in July 1924, and the impression left upon me was that of birds more resembling large Whitethroats than Willow-Wren-like Warblers, with distinct yellow eye-stripes, yellowish under parts, nearly white on throat and towards vent, yellowish-green above: a clear alarm-note—half Whitethroat half Willow-Warbler—*check-check-ēēk*, *check-check-ēēk*, the first syllable grating like a Whitethroat's, the last clear and Willow-Wren-like.

### THE WILLOW-WARBLER

*Phylloscopus trochilus trochilus* (Linn.).

A summer visitant and passage migrant: the most abundant of our warblers. Arrives rather later than the Chiffchaff, and sometimes lingers late in autumn, though some of these aberrant examples of either species are now generally referred to one or other of the more northern races, between which only very critical examination will discover the differences.

Its "feather-poke" nest is usually built upon the ground, but exceptions sometimes occur: one near Alston in 1913 was upon an ivy-covered window-sill eleven feet from the ground; one at Houxty, in 1918, in a spruce-fir 13½ feet above the ground; and one in Whittonstall woods in the same year, in a squirrel's drey 32 feet up in a larch.

As exceptional occurrences, Mr. R. Craigs saw and



heard a Willow-Wren *singing* at Catcleugh on February 24th, 1922; Mr. Isaac Clark saw one in Newcastle on January 27th, 1912; and Mr. J. M. Craster two together at Beadnell on October 24th, 1925; but see the remarks above. In 1923, there was a solitary bird in our garden at Alston on October 12th; and on March 29th, 1927, a pair there, chasing one another amongst the bushes, though not singing.

#### THE NORTHERN WILLOW-WARBLER

*Phylloscopus trochilus eversmanni* (Bonap.).

A passage migrant, probably not very rare on our coast either in spring or autumn, but not easy of recognition by an ordinary observer.

To Mr. W. G. Watson, of Sidwood, belongs the credit of definitely adding the species to the Northumberland list. Writing from Holy Island in 1923, he says: "Many passed through between the last week in April and the third week in May. The first identified example occurred on April 25th and the last on May 21st." (*British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. XVIII, p. 19.) To which he has added (in a letter to me) that the birds were quite common on Holy Island that spring (1923) and very distinct from the typical *trochilus* in life.

#### EVERSMANN'S WARBLER

*Phylloscopus borealis borealis* (Blas.).

An accidental visitant, which has been detected (mainly by the indefatigability of Dr. Eagle Clarke) half a dozen times on the Scottish Islands during the present century; but only thrice, to date, in England—one of them a male which was obtained by Mr. W. G. Watson on Holy Island, on September 27th, 1924.

It is a bird to which I devoted particular attention

amongst the birchen woods of Lapland in 1923 and 1924, when it was fairly common. Both in actions and song it proclaims its affinities to the Wood-Warblers as distinct from the *trochilus* and *collybita* groups, and may be further distinguished by the bar across the wing caused by the pale tips to the greater wing-coverts, and a less distinct (sometimes absent) second bar resulting from the palish tips of the middle coverts.

#### THE WOOD-WARBLER

*Phylloscopus sibilatrix sibilatrix* (Bech.).

A summer visitant, locally but widely distributed over the county and often numerous in suitable places, particularly in bosky upland glens, and mature woods where deciduous trees prevail.

It seldom arrives before the end of April, and usually leaves us in August. The nest (lined with fine grasses, not feathers) is nearly always built upon the ground, the only exception to the rule known to me being one on the ivy-covered window-sill of the game-larder at Houxty, four feet above the ground, on a wooded bank close to the house.

#### THE CHIFFCHAFF

*Phylloscopus collybita collybita* (Vieill.).

A summer visitant, locally dispersed over the county but numerous in some places. It is one of our earliest harbingers of spring, usually arriving early in April, though in 1898 one was in song at Berwick for several days prior to and including February 12th. It is, likewise, later than most of its congeners in departing, examples being frequently met with in October, sometimes even in November, although these may, doubtless, often be passage migrants from more northern countries, many of them, likely enough, members of



one or other of allied races. A specimen in the Museum, shot by the late Hugh V. Charlton at Cullercoats on December 20th, 1905, is unique for our area though the bird is known frequently to pass the winter in some of the more southern counties.

#### THE SCANDINAVIAN CHIFFCHAFF

*Phylloscopus collybita abietinus* (Nilsson).

A passage migrant to and from more northern climes, probably of more common occurrence in this country than the present paucity of records might suggest. Mr. W. G. Watson, on Holy Island, is the only person who has devoted time and energy to the study of these obscure races in Northumberland, and his efforts have definitely added the Scandinavian Chiffchaff to our list. He found the bird fairly numerous on the Island in the spring of 1923, obtaining several specimens for determination between April 22nd and 25th.

#### THE SIBERIAN CHIFFCHAFF

*Phylloscopus collybita tristis* Blyth.

An occasional winter visitant to this country, for whose detection in Northumberland we are again indebted to Mr. Watson, who obtained a single individual on Holy Island, on November 10th, 1923, the first to be definitely recorded for England.

#### THE YELLOW-BROWED WARBLER

*Phylloscopus inornatus inornatus* (Blyth).

May now be ranked as a more or less regular passage migrant to the British Islands where, within recent years, it has been detected with increasing frequency in autumn, and on several occasions in spring.

Hancock's specimen in the Museum, shot by him on the sea-banks at Hartley, on September 26th, 1838, remained for thirty years the only known British example; but owing to the intensive study since paid to small birds on migration, it is now reported from some part or other of the country almost every year. Mr. Watson is again our Northumbrian protagonist; in 1922 he obtained specimens on Holy Island on September 29th and 30th and October 7th, and one in the following year on October 19th.

#### THE MISTLE-THRUSH

*Turdus viscivorus viscivorus* Linn.

A resident, common and well known throughout the county; subject to a good deal of local movement after the breeding season, and to some extent to more extended migration.

#### THE CONTINENTAL SONG-THRUSH

*Turdus musicus musicus* Linn.

Most numerous and best known as a passage migrant, in large flocks, during September and October, and again from March till early May; but some winter with us. In plumage it is slightly greyer (paler) than the British race, but the difference is purely academic and of little interest to the ordinary reader.

#### THE BRITISH SONG-THRUSH

*Turdus musicus clarkei* (Hartert).

The endemic race of the last; our well-known and appreciated songster. A resident for the most part, but subject to much local movement, and many of our



native stock are induced to join their more far-travelled relatives and indulge in a winter trip to the continent. That the majority do not do so, however, is unmistakably demonstrated by every hard winter. Few birds succumb more quickly than the thrush, and that it is the native birds that have perished is painfully evident in the paucity of songsters for the next few years.

### THE REDWING

*Turdus iliacus iliacus* Linn.

A winter visitant, arriving in large numbers in October, and departing in March and April; not unfrequently some remain into May, and, exceptionally, a few have been seen in September or even in August. Now and again Redwings have been observed here in summer, but as yet no evidence of their nesting has been forthcoming. Thus, Lord William Percy informed Abel Chapman that in 1911 one was accidentally killed in Alnwick Park on May 29th, and another on June 9th; while two or three spent the summer of 1918 at Alston (see *Vasculum*, Vol. IV, pp. 86-87).

### THE FIELDFARE

*Turdus pilaris* Linn.

Another common and well-known winter visitant, the main flocks of which reach us in October and stay till the following April or the beginning of May. Small parties are frequently seen both earlier and later and, very exceptionally, one or more have been observed during summer.

A considerable number of the Redwings and Fieldfares which visit us are no more than birds of passage on their way to and from more southern winter-retreats, and the same remark would equally apply to all the other members of the family, besides, of course, to many other birds.

### THE BLACKBIRD

*Turdus merula merula* Linn.

One of the best known residents throughout the county; but both in autumn and spring we are visited by numbers of birds which represent both winter visitants and passage migrants; while a portion of our home-bred stock (particularly the young birds) undoubtedly move southward for the winter. For definite proof of such movements we are greatly indebted to the elaborate marking schemes inaugurated by Dr. C. B. Ticehurst, and so successfully carried on by Mr. H. F. Witherby. How easy it is to jump to wrong conclusions without such positive evidence, may be demonstrated by a personal experience. The top of Cross Fell rises to just under 3,000 feet and is, of course, far above even the growth of scrub, about as unlikely a place to find a Blackbird choosing as a nesting site as could well be imagined. One bleak spring morning, some years ago, I chanced upon a fine cock Blackbird there, with an exceptionally yellow bill, and was tempted into putting him down as an undoubted bird-of-passage, and speculating upon whence he might have come and whither bound. But at the beginning of August, a year or two later, I actually captured a young Blackbird close to the summit, whose half-grown wings clearly pointed to the fact that it must have been reared not many yards away! It may appropriately be added that there is often a Thrush's nest about the buildings of the old Scree Mine not more than a hundred feet or so lower down, and I have seen the owner singing his matins from the highest available perch—the chimney of the old "shop."

### THE RING-OUZEL

*Turdus torquatus torquatus* Linn.

A summer visitant, sparingly distributed over the higher parts of the county, and a regular passage



migrant from April to the middle of May, and again in September and October, or even later. Individuals encountered during the winter months are, probably, chiefly belated birds-of-passage, though now and then one or two would appear to elect to pass the winter here.

The first eggs may be found early in April, and our nesting birds depart in autumn as soon as their wings have sufficiently recovered from the moult to be serviceable for the journey, which is sometimes not before the end of September. Their stay is also a good deal regulated by the supply of berries available, chiefly those of the moors and of adjacent gardens.

#### WHITE'S THRUSH

*Turdus dauma aureus* Hol.

A rare accidental visitant of which about twenty individuals have been recorded for the British Islands during the last hundred years, most of them during the winter months, but two in October and one as late as February 26th.

It has occurred in the adjoining counties, but the only Northumbrian record is of a bird seen by Miss E. L. Turner on Holy Island, on November 2nd, 1914. (*British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. VIII, p. 172.)

#### THE REDSTART

*Phœnicurus phœnicurus phœnicurus* (Linn.).

A summer visitant which arrives in April, usually towards the middle of the month, but sometimes a week or two earlier, to nest in suitable places, in limited numbers, throughout the county, and returns southward in August and September. But a considerable number also pay us a passing visit, as passage migrants to and from more northern latitudes, both in spring

and autumn. To a large extent the sexes travel separately, and it is to these sojourners that we owe the gay companies of cocks which often bedizen gardens near the coast for a day or two about the middle of May. To these, also, probably belong the belated Redstarts which now and then appear late in October. I saw one near Chathill on October 28th, 1889, and another at Alston on November 1st, 1916.

In June 1921, I watched a pair feeding young in a nest near Houxty, the female of which was so nearly in the plumage of the male (including a very fair presentation of the frontal white spot) that she was mistaken for that sex until her partner joined her. By a remarkable coincidence, I had, just a month earlier, found a female Pied Flycatcher in male attire at Whitfield (see *Vasculum*, Vol. VII, p. 106).

#### THE BLACK REDSTART

*Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis* (Gmelin).

A winter visitant which has occurred with some frequency since 1912.

From Holy Island we have the following records—1912, October 11th, one seen by Mr. Witherby; 1913, November 5th, an adult male killed there and sent to Mr. Witherby; 1923, November 10th, Mr. Watson got an immature bird, and saw another on 26th. At Cullercoats the late J. M. Charlton obtained a female on December 26th, 1913, and saw an immature bird on February 10th, 1914: while in November 1913 an adult male was shot near Ashington.

#### THE CONTINENTAL REDBREAST

*Erithacus rubecula rubecula* (Linn.).

A winter visitant and passage migrant, arriving from late September to early November, some of them



remaining over the winter, others passing on farther south.

It very closely resembles our familiar Robin, but is a little paler on the upper parts, whiter on the abdomen, and yellow orange on the face and breast, nice distinctions which appeal to advanced ornithologists but which are apt to leave the ordinary observer somewhat cold. A more salient feature may, perhaps, be found in the pronounced wildness of the Continental bird in contradistinction to the confiding ways of our familiar British Robin. Both Mr. Witherby and Mr. Watson found the Continental bird to be common amongst the autumnal migrants on Holy Island, the latter gentleman finding it to be also quite numerous in April. Doubtless it occurs as regularly elsewhere along our coast.

#### THE BRITISH REDBREAST

*Erithacus rubecula melophilus* Hartert.

Nobody needs to be told that our Robin is a resident, but the marking schemes so assiduously carried out under the guidance of Mr. Witherby have demonstrated the fact that many of our home-bred birds are carried along on the waves of migration, which annually sweep our Islands in autumn, and spend their winters abroad, nestling Robins marked in England having been recovered as far away as southern Holland and south-western France. Our Robin must, therefore, add to his residential title the more democratic one of summer visitant.

#### THE NIGHTINGALE

*Luscinia megarhyncha megarhyncha* Brehm.

A summer visitant; almost unknown in the British Islands, north of Yorkshire, before near the end of last

century; but which has since been found, either of its own volition or, possibly, with man's help, to be extending its range.

In my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 37) several specious records were discussed, and one undoubted Northumbrian occurrence given—at Whittingham in June 1893. Of later years, Nightingales have been reported, in the newspapers and elsewhere, to have been heard singing in quite a number of places in the county—e.g. in 1899 by Mr. William Meech in the Park at Alnwick, one night towards the end of May; in 1929, at Alnwick again in June; at Eglington in July, by Major J. Fairfax-Blakeborough; and at Powburn by Mr. M. P. Kidson, on July 20th: in 1930, at Alnwick once more, and near Gilsland, in June; and in 1931, during May and June, at Linden, Longhorsley, Heddon-on-the-Wall, and several places on Tyneside from Hexham to Bradley Hall.

But I have been obligingly informed by the Rev. Father Kuyte of Crawcrook (close to Blaydon and Bradley Hall) that he has been in the habit of keeping Nightingales in captivity for some forty-five years past (mostly imported from Germany, some from Holland), and that some of them have escaped or been set at liberty as follows: About forty years ago, two, believed to be both cocks, escaped from his house at Scotswood: in 1928, a pair were released at Bradley Hall; two pairs at the same place in the following spring, and two pairs also liberated in Alnwick Park: another pair set free in Alnwick Park in 1931. So that, in all, fourteen birds have been allowed to fly in spring (April or May). It is thus pretty evident that some of our recent songsters were probably imported birds. How far they may have wandered, can, of course, only be guessed; but it is interesting to recall that Nightingales have occurred on the Isle of May, in the Forth, in May 1911 and August 1931; at Lerwick (Shetland), in September 1929; Achnacarry, Inverness-shire, in June 1889; and that one was believed to have been rightly identified singing at Kames, Berwickshire, in May 1921.



### THE WESTERN RED-SPOTTED BLUETHROAT

*Cyanosylvia suecica gaetkei* (Kleins.).

A passage migrant. The Bluethroats have been much subdivided and now appear in at least three distinct races. By plumage, except in the case of adult males, they cannot be separated, and the two red-spotted forms differ only, slightly, in wing-measurements. It is, thus, often impossible to say to which race particular individuals belong, and the above is the only one for which a place can, as yet, be definitely claimed in this Catalogue.

The earliest known Bluethroat to have been obtained in the British Isles was a male, shot on the Newcastle Town Moor, on May 28th, 1826. It is still preserved in the Society's Museum, and has been assumed to belong to this race. Another adult male was identified by Dr. Eagle Clarke, on Holy Island, on May 9th, 1924. The sub-specific identity of those mentioned below is more problematical: 1879, October 8th, and 1883, September 15th, adult females killed at Cullercoats and St. Mary's Island: 1884, end of September, one believed to have been killed at Bamburgh; another seen during same month at Embleton: 1922, October 18th and 19th, one seen on Holy Island by Mr. Watson; where Mr. T. G. Laidlaw saw three during a fortnight's stay in middle of September, 1930. On October 23rd, 1925, a bird seen by my son and myself on banks of Tyne below Lipwood was almost certainly a Bluethroat of some kind.

### THE STONECHAT

*Saxicola torquata hibernans* (Hartert).

In general, a typical resident, but to some extent must also be classed as a summer visitant. In the former capacity it is to be found in scattered, stay-

at-home pairs braving even the most severe winters on our lonely moors, where almost its sole feathered companions are the Grouse, or perhaps a Wren. It likewise winters, in small companies, or solitary pairs, about our seaside links and similar places. In either situation, it regularly attempts to breed, but old-established nesting-stations may become deserted for longer or shorter periods, whether always due to disaster, it were idle to conjecture. Old records suggest that the species may always have shown a similar tendency to fluctuate in numbers between one year and another; but for the past two or three decades or longer, it seems to have been growing steadily and permanently scarcer, not having been seen at all, for years, at some of its ancient haunts. In any case, however, a large proportion of the young quit their natal quarters for the winter, some of them, it is believed, even crossing the sea, and some may not return.

There are several allied forms of the Stonechat, scarcely separable except by close examination in hand, and drawersful of the skins of our poor bird have been collected in the hope of finding amongst them one or other of its relatives—a drain that it is obvious so sedentary a species cannot for long be subjected to with impunity.

### THE WHINCHAT

*Saxicola rubetra rubetra* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, well distributed over the county in suitable places, and often abundant in some of them. It is, however, like the last species, subject to great fluctuations in numbers at times, and has been thought to be getting permanently scarcer in some districts.

Generally arrives about the middle of April, sometimes a week or two earlier, and departs in September; some of those seen later, both in May and October, being, probably, no more than passage migrants to and from more northern breeding-places.



## THE WHEATEAR

*Œnanthe œnanthe œnanthe* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, and passage migrant, seldom failing to put in an appearance, even amongst the hills, by the middle of April. Quite often it arrives in March, and has been seen even towards the end of February. It is a common bird over all the uncultivated areas, from the sand-hills along the sea-shore to the tops of the Cheviots. It departs during August and September, such as are seen in October being, generally, on passage from more northern countries, some of them belonging to the larger form next treated of.

## THE GREENLAND WHEATEAR

*Œnanthe œnanthe leucorrhoa* (Gmelin).

A passage migrant, not very uncommonly met with upon the coast in autumn since its sub-specific identity was recognised. Long before that recognition took place, the larger Wheatears had often attracted attention, but people fought very shy in those days of multiplying species. Perhaps that was one of the provocative causes which carried the system too rapidly forward when once the restraint had been released?

Mr. Witherby secured several Greenland Wheatears, and saw more, on his first visit to Holy Island in September and October 1912, and repeated his experience the following autumn; while Mr. Watson and others have assisted, in later years, to confirm the fact that the bird must be looked upon as a more or less regular annual visitor. In spring, it has not been so frequently noticed, possibly because critical observers have been wanting, or less alert, at that season.

## THE HEDGE-SPARROW

*Prunella modularis modularis* (Linn.).

A resident, common all over the county, and everywhere, deservedly, a favourite; with many virtues and not a single fault. Almost universally known in Northumberland by its pet-name of "Smoky."

## THE BRITISH DIPPER

*Cinclus cinclus gularis* (Lath.).

A resident. The seneschal of every waterfall, and the Orpheus who chants the rhythm of each brawling burn. It has been separated from the black-bellied form and awarded endemic rank as above. There is no record of the latter, *Cinclus cinclus cinclus* (Linn.), having ever been obtained in Northumberland.

## THE WREN

*Troglodytes troglodytes troglodytes* (Linn.).

A common resident everywhere, but, despite its weak flight, it appears that it must likewise be reckoned as, in some sort, a passage migrant, and perhaps also, to a less extent, as a winter visitant.

It has frequently been attracted to lighthouses in the company of other undoubted migrants, including the Farne Islands (where it has been known to nest), and is sometimes to be met with in considerable numbers upon our seaside links in September and October. Whether some of these winter here, or are to be looked upon as merely birds-of-passage, is a moot point, but my personal opinion inclines in the latter direction, no augmentation in the numbers of winter Wrens having ever been noticed. To come upon a Wren cheerily



singing amongst bleak upland rocks above the growth of trees, is apt to strike the casual observer as an extraordinary thing, but it is in reality quite a common occurrence. That "Wrens make prey where Eagles dare not perch" must be much truer in these latter days than when Shakespeare penned it?

### THE SWALLOW

*Hirundo rustica rustica* Linn.

### THE MARTIN

*Delichon urbica urbica* (Linn.)

### THE SAND-MARTIN

*Riparia riparia riparia* (Linn.).

Are all such well-known summer visitants that space may be saved by grouping them together. All likewise pass our coast, in considerable numbers, as passage migrants.

### THE NORTHERN GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

*Dryobates major major* (Linn.).

An occasional winter visitant, sometimes in considerable numbers. It only differs from our British race in being slightly larger, with a proportionately stouter bill, and rather whiter under parts.

It is not long since these racial distinctions were recognised, so that old records are not very helpful; but there is a typical specimen of *D. major major* in the Museum labelled, "A female, Benton, December 1886, E. Bold," while others identified as this are—one obtained at Twizell House in November 1904, another at Holywell Dene during the same month; one at Berwick in March 1906; and one obtained by Mr. Watson on Holy Island, September 28th, 1930, where

a number of Woodpeckers, perhaps of the same form, were observed during the next few days. Later in the autumn and winter of the same year, many were recorded at various places along the coast, but the only ones satisfactorily identified as *D. major major* were obtained to the south of Tyne. There can be little doubt, however, that at least some of them would belong to the present race.

### THE BRITISH GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

*Dryobates major anglicus* (Hartert).

A resident, but to a considerable extent subject to at least extensive local migratory movements. At Holy Island, and other places along the coast, it is noticed almost annually, in autumn, frequently in little parties; hardly consistent with the habits of an endemic race such as this is generally held to be?

Tradition avers that the Great Spotted Woodpecker was an ancient inhabitant of Northumberland, but its disappearance, and rehabilitation, was pretty fully gone into in 1912 and need not be repeated. The extensive felling of timber occasioned by the war was naturally disturbing to so sylvan a creature, but a reaction is already apparent and, though never numerous, the bird may now be reckoned not uncommon, locally, over the greater part of the county.

### THE BRITISH LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER

*Dryobates minor comminutus* Hartert.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has very rarely been satisfactorily identified in Northumberland, our only records, entirely beyond suspicion, being the bird killed at Wallsend in 1831 (Selby); one at Gosforth in



1841 (Hancock); and one near Beadnell in 1845 (Embleton). I referred to several less fully established occurrences in 1912, and there have been one or two others reported since, but none of them meriting further notice here.

It is a species which varies very greatly in plumage in its different habitats, and the British race has been awarded endemic rank as above. To it, presumably, must be referred the birds which have visited us.

### THE GREEN WOODPECKER

*Picus viridis virescens* (Brehm).

A resident, nesting, in limited numbers, in the Tyne watershed from about Hexham downwards. Elsewhere it is of rare casual occurrence, but has shown some indication of pushing its way northward within the last two decades. In the Wansbeck valley a nest may still occasionally be found, where William Woodman, writing of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, said the bird used sometimes to be seen in the Morpeth woods, but "had become extinct" in his day.

Mr. J. M. Craster tells me that he saw and heard a Green Woodpecker at Howick Hall, in July 1931; and Mr. Harold Hogg saw one in Fenwick Wood a few years previously. F. C. Selous, in driving past Hesleyside with Abel Chapman on September 17th, 1912, was confident that he had identified one amongst the trees there. From Berwickshire it has several times been reported of recent years.

### THE WRYNECK

*Jynx torquilla torquilla* Linn.

A passage migrant of irregular appearance, usually coming in the latter half of May, but sometimes a

month earlier, and again in August and September; but at neither season is it otherwise than rare, although several may occasionally be met with together.

### THE CUCKOO

*Cuculus canorus canorus* Linn.

A well-known summer visitant, as well as a regular passage migrant.

It is very rarely that an adult Cuckoo remains in this country after July; but near the end of October 1923, one was not only seen in the neighbourhood of Cambo, but actually heard giving vent to its familiar call by several people, including one very old friend of my own upon whose word implicit confidence can be placed. In my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (pp. 239-40) references will be found to one seen at North Charlton on February 4th, 1877, and following day, and again in the second week of March; as well as to two immature birds picked up in an exhausted condition at Hawkhill, near Alnwick, in November 1876.

The food of the Cuckoo consists chiefly of insects and their grubs, including the hairy caterpillars of some of our largest moths; but no doubt earth-worms and other creeping things must often enough be added to its commissariat, especially during spells of inclement weather. In *Country Life* for May 17th, 1913, I gave a pretty full description of Cuckoos I had watched preying upon common earth-worms upon two separate occasions during that month. Since then, I have more than once had ocular demonstration of a similar nature. At Randalholme, on South Tyne, on September 6th, 1920, a young Cuckoo, carrying a worm which dangled six or eight inches from its bill, flew from a midden in Northumberland to eat it in Cumberland within twenty or thirty yards of where I sat!

That young Cuckoos possess powers of fascination sufficiently strong to induce other birds besides their



foster-parents to take a delight in feeding them, has frequently been remarked upon; as has, also, their early ability to recognise their relationship to one another despite their alien upbringing; but both are biological facts that should attract the attention of reflective students. Some years ago, my sister and I watched three fledgeling Cuckoos that were herding together about some old walls at the side of a little wood, and saw each of them fed indiscriminately by several Pipits, and once or twice by a Robin and a Thrush, the last-named administering, on one occasion, a large mouthful of what appeared to be chopped-up worms. The Cuckoos were well on the wing, although their tails were still short of full growth. The Pipits belonged to one of those wandering bands commonly met with in autumn, but none of them displayed either solicitude or alarm on our approach such as might have been expected had any of them stood in the relationship of fosterers to the Cuckoos.

#### THE GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO

*Clamator glandarius* (Linn.).

A rare accidental visitant of which our only record is that of the immature bird shot at Clintburn, near Bellingham, on August 5th, 1870, and presented to the Museum by Dr. Charlton. It had frequented the place where it was killed "ar1 the summer, since June mebbly," but was thought to be only "a kind of hawk."

#### THE SWIFT

*Microtus apus apus* (Linn.).

A well-known summer visitant which comes to us with great regularity during the first ten days of May and departs in August. Earliest dates, April 26th (in 1878 and 1924)—on 27th in 1885, 1896, and 1916. It is only exceptionally that any remain after August, those seen later being chiefly passing migrants. In records

going back more than fifty years I find that in only five of them were Swifts seen in October, the latest being the 30th in 1928, the 19th in 1921, 14th in 1882, and the 13th in 1886.

Our Swifts do not moult in their summer quarters; while, as demonstrated by the cast quills on the floors of the caves they inhabit in Spain, the Alpine Swifts do—a subtle and rather curious distinction?

#### THE ALPINE SWIFT

*Microtus melba melba* (Linn.).

A very rare accidental visitant of which we have two records: One shot on July 18th, 1882, near Boulmer, and two seen hawking together over Holy Island by Mr. W. G. Watson on July 12th, 1930.

#### THE NIGHTJAR

*Caprimulgus europæus europæus* Linn.

A summer visitant arriving about the middle of May and departing in August and up to the end of September. Common about the fringes of moorland woods and other suitable places, though not very numerous. It seldom nests here at a greater altitude than 1,000 feet above the sea.

#### THE SAHARAN RED-NECKED NIGHTJAR

*Caprimulgus ruficollis desertorum* Erlanger.

An accidental visitant, of which Hancock's specimen in the Museum, shot at Killingworth, a few miles north of Newcastle, on October 5th, 1856, remains the sole example obtained in Europe.



## THE BEE-EATER

*Merops apiaster* Linn.

Only an accidental visitant to any part of the British Isles, although, in June 1920, a pair attempted to nest near Edinburgh (*Scot. Nat.*, 1920, pp. 151-53).

For Northumberland there is but a single record, a bird watched by the late C. J. Leyland for some time, at Haggerston Castle, on April 29th, 1897.

## THE HOOPOE

*Upupa epops epops* Linn.

A passage migrant of which I was able to refer to thirty-six occurrences in Northumberland up to 1912, amongst those for which dates had been preserved being six for April, two for May, three for August, seven for September, two for October, and three for November. A few others which have occurred since that date may be mentioned: in September 1914, one seen at Adderstone Low Mill; another shot near Berwick September 23rd, 1916; one killed on Holy Island October 8th, 1918; one seen at Bamburgh in the late autumn of 1921 was so tame that attempts were made, unsuccessfully, to catch it by hand: one seen by Mr. J. M. Craster near Embleton in September 1922: one seen by Mr. Watson on Holy Island May 8th, 1924: and one picked up dead near Hexham about the middle of May 1931.

## THE KINGFISHER

*Alcedo atthis ispida* Linn.

A resident, in limited numbers, throughout the county, its increase being held in check by the natural

process of floods which frequently drown out its nest, and the unnatural and deplorable slaughter which is sometimes committed at places where young *Salmonidæ* are hatched or reared.

It is not unusual to meet with a Kingfisher along the coast at times when the burns are frozen up, and I have occasionally seen one there in spring and autumn, thus demonstrating the inclination of individuals to wander at the seasons of migration.

## THE ROLLER

*Coracias garrulus garrulus* Linn.

A rare casual visitant at the periods of migration, of which at least thirteen occurrences in Northumberland were recounted up to 1912. The majority of these were in autumn, but several in May, and two during summer, both near the head of Redewater, one in 1878 the other in 1889. The last to which I referred as shot at Milfield in the autumn of 1902 was really killed at Kirknewton in September 1901. Since that date we seem to have had no further records.

## THE BARN-OWL

*Flammea alba alba* (Scop.).

A resident, formerly common over the county but had become nearly extirpated more than fifty years ago. Since then it has partially recovered its status, and now nests, here and there, over a considerable area. Pure white-breasted birds used to be the common form, but are now in a decided minority, most of the nesters having the under parts somewhat yellowish in hue; while in some of them the flanks are more or less marked with small black spots, a feature which I never



remember seeing amongst the breeding-birds in olden days.

It is not very unusual to find Barn Owls about the coast—even upon Holy Island—in autumn, associated with winter visitants, including both Long- and Short-eared Owls. These are certainly not all of the Dark-breasted race, next to be treated of, but whence they originate, if *Flammea alba alba* is to be regarded as a strictly sedentary species, it is difficult to say.

### THE DARK-BREASTED BARN-OWL

*Flammea alba guttata* (Brehm).

An irregular visitant which has occasionally occurred upon our coast, but whose special status it is difficult exactly to define.

Some of the specimens which I used to see more than thirty years ago, and which were then regarded as invaders from the continent taking possession of the territory from which the native birds had been expelled, would, I think, undoubtedly have passed as *F. a guttata*, but most of them were more intermediate in coloration, a character which still holds good.

A typical example of the Dark-breasted race, in the Museum, is the bird referred to in Hancock's *Catalogue* as "a remarkable variety . . . shot in the district a few years ago"; but specimens as dark as this are distinctly rare.

### THE LONG-EARED OWL

*Asio otus otus* (Linn.).

A resident and winter visitant: well distributed over the county, especially in the moorland parts of it, but which, within my time, has been elbowed out of some of its ancient haunts by the Brown Owl. It is nowhere so common as it used to be, partly, perhaps,

owing to the frequency with which, along with the next species, it falls a victim to the pole-trap upon the moors.

It is frequently in evidence upon the coast, and in coverts nearly adjoining, sometimes as early as the end of July, but more commonly after the middle of September, throughout October, and, exceptionally, even during the depth of winter. In autumn it often travels in small companies, but in spring it is more rarely noticed on migration.

The vocal efforts of this owl have been the subject of frequent discussion, and sometimes of disagreement. In addition to his ordinary hooting, the male, in spring, gives vent to a loud *boo* or *hoo*, a single note which may be repeated once or twice at short intervals, its volume being more apt to suggest the bell of a stag than the love-call of a bird. The female's answering *boo* is somewhat similar but pitched in a higher key.

### THE SHORT-EARED OWL

*Asio flammeus flammeus* (Pont.).

A partial resident, and regular winter visitant. It is in the latter character that this owl is best known, arriving, sometimes in considerable parties, in October, frequently during the previous month, and occasionally in August, and departing during March and April. As a resident it is subject to a good deal of inconstancy, but there are a few particular moors amongst the moors which are seldom without a nesting couple. In "Vole-plague" years a great increase takes place, not only in the numbers of the breeding birds, but also in the number of eggs they lay—less than six in normal years, but running up to a dozen or more when food is super-abundant.



## THE TAWNY OWL

*Strix aluco aluco* Linn.

A resident: the commonest and most generally distributed owl in the county. In autumn, considerable numbers are sometimes met with on or near the coast, in association with other migrants, but at such uncertain intervals as to seem inconsistent with the idea of regular immigrations.

"The British Tawny Owl has been promoted, by some authors, to endemic rank, as *Strix aluco sylvatica*, Shaw, on account of its being smaller than the Continental birds. The maximum wing-measurements of the British males, however, overlap the minimum of the Continental birds, as do those of the females, hence we do not consider the promotion advisable" (Eagle Clarke). With this conclusion I think most of us must agree, especially when the advocates for separation are found buttressing their claim by an appeal to colour. There are two distinct and well-known colour-phases in the plumage of this owl, a tawny and a grey, independent of sex. The former may, perhaps, be more common than the other in this country, but the assertion that the grey phase is "very scarce" amongst British Tawny Owls is certainly not borne out by experience in Northumberland.

In *The Scottish Naturalist* for March-April 1931, I drew attention to the fact that this owl sometimes hoots while upon the wing.

## THE SNOWY OWL

*Nyctea nyctea* (Linn.).

A rare, accidental, winter visitant, of which the Museum possesses two Northumbrian specimens, both recorded by Selby, and acquired with part of his collection as a gift from Mr. Alex. Browne. They are

male and female and were shot within a few days of one another, during a severe snow-storm, in January 1823, the female at Rothbury, the male in the neighbourhood of Elsdon.

On May 20th, 1922, Abel Chapman and Mr. W. G. Watson saw a Snowy Owl on the links at Holy Island. It was first noticed amongst the bents and when disturbed flew from one eminence to another. This was after 9 p.m. and it finally flew away northwards, with a strong low flight, from the Sand-Rigg where it had last settled.

## TENGMALM'S OWL

*Cryptoglaux funerea funerea* (Linn.).

Another rare accidental visitant, of which the first British example was recorded by Selby as killed at Widdrington in 1812, and is now in the Museum. One was shot at Rothbury in April 1849; another, caught at Widdrington about 1861 or 1862, lived in Hancock's possession for some time and finally escaped: one captured near Embleton in March 1861; and another at Berwick February 4th, 1873. An example reported to have been caught in Holywell Dene on December 11th, 1911, seems to be our only recent Northumbrian record, although there have been several from the other side of the Border.

## THE EAGLE-OWL

*Bubo bubo bubo* (Linn.).

We have no record of the capture of this owl in Northumberland, but Hancock referred to a bird seen on the coast at North Sunderland in October 1872, which after being shot at rose to a great elevation and circled away to the Farne Islands, and which was believed to be of this species.



Another, seen near Embleton in December 1859, which was also shot at and behaved in a very similar manner, is mentioned in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, p. 258, but shares a like somewhat problematical history.

### THE LITTLE OWL

*Carine noctua noctua* (Scop.).

Now a resident in this country partly as the result of human introduction, but in Northumberland hardly as yet more than a casual visitant: the following have been noted; doubtless others have occurred. Whitley Bay, October 1911; Bingfield, May 29th, 1919; Belford, December 21st, 1922; Belford, February 1924; Newcastle, 1924; Angerton, October 10th, 1928; Belford, April 1931. A very small owl seen on Holy Island October 10th, 1922, was probably of this species, but its certain identity was not established.

### THE MARSH-HARRIER

*Circus æruginosus æruginosus* (Linn.).

Once a well-known resident, breeding on many of our moors and mosses, but long since banished. There has been nothing to add to its history since 1912, and not so much as even a casual occurrence in Northumberland for fifty years.

### THE HEN-HARRIER

*Circus cyaneus cyaneus* (Linn.).

Once a common resident, breeding on all our moorlands, including even the Newcastle Town Moor, the "Grey Gled" is now scarcely entitled to rank as more

than a rare casual visitant. Its earlier history was fully recounted in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*; to mention some of the later visitations seems to be all that is now necessary.

In 1912, an immature female was shot in Holywell Dene in January. In 1913 an adult female at Sidwood on March 19th (set up by Robert Duncan who informed me that it had been twice previously wounded by gunshot—as disclosed by old, healed, wounds—painful testimony to the inhospitable reception now awaiting such birds?). One shot at Bonnyrigg Hall some time previously. In 1921 an adult male seen at Druridge Bay in May; another, perhaps the same bird, in Gosforth Park in June. In 1922, one killed at Whitfield in February. In 1926, a female shot at Fenwick in October, two others being seen about the same time. In 1930, one seen on Cheviot in August; an adult male appearing at Alston during the same month, possibly the same individual of whose presence on Williamson Fell, and at Wearhead, I was notified about the same time.

### MONTAGU'S HARRIER

*Circus pygargus* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, which would nest here if allowed to do so, but which can scarcely be regarded as of more than rare accidental occurrence.

Since 1912 I do not think we have had any definite records for the county, though some suspected cases have occurred, and the species has made attempts to nest in adjoining areas.

### THE COMMON BUZZARD

*Buteo buteo buteo* (Linn.).

A resident, formerly not uncommon, now reduced to the status of little more than an irregular visitant. In the days of our fathers, it had many nesting places,



especially amongst the hills, and how soon some of these would be reoccupied was demonstrated during the war when most of the game-keepers were withdrawn from their usual occupations. Then, and for a year or two afterwards, more than one nest occurred from which the young managed to fly, but the period of grace being ended, the Buzzard is once again only a poor, friendless outlaw with a price upon its head.

[Of the STEPPE-BUZZARD—*Buteo buteo vulpinus* Gloger, formerly known as *Buteo desertorum* (Daud.), two specimens in the Hancock collection were once believed to be of this race, but the one obtained at Bywell in 1830 has since been pronounced to belong to the common form, while the other has disappeared and cannot now be traced.]

#### THE ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD

*Buteo lagopus lagopus* (Brünnich).

An irregular winter visitant, which comes in certain seasons in considerable numbers, and is then, perhaps, not seen again for several years. Our last notable invasion was in the winter of 1915-16, though one or two odd birds have been noticed since then.

#### THE GOLDEN EAGLE

*Aquila chrysaëtus chrysaëtus* (Linn.).

Has not been resident in Northumberland for more than a century and a half, and has become so rare a visitant that we have no undoubted record of its occurrence to add to the account given in 1912; notwithstanding the fact that it may have nested not much more than fifty miles away during the interval.

#### THE GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE

*Aquila clanga* Pall.

A very rare accidental visitant, of which we have one record, an immature bird shot at Cresswell on October 31st, 1885, now in the Museum.

#### THE WHITE-TAILED EAGLE OR ERNE

*Haliaëtus albicilla* (Linn.).

A rare accidental visitant which seems to have ceased to breed in this country for more than a decade. Since 1912, Eagles have been reported as seen in Northumberland on several occasions, specific distinction not being always possible. Two Ernes took up their abode in Chillingham Park in January 1921 and remained for several weeks (*vide Vasculum*, Vol. VII, p. 105). During the same winter more than one Eagle was seen in the south-western part of the county without being satisfactorily identified. On December 2nd, 1923, an immature Erne (recorded in the newspapers and elsewhere as a Golden Eagle) was shot at Newsham, near Blyth, where I have since seen it, still in the possession of Mr. Beal of that place.

#### THE GOSHAWK

*Astur gentilis gentilis* (Linn.).

Now only an accidental visitant, so rare that I am not aware of any occurrence in the county since 1912, when I gave its previous history pretty fully. The specimen from Kielder in October 1849, still in the Museum, is in juvenile plumage and does not give the impression of having travelled far from the nest.



## THE SPARROW-HAWK

*Accipiter nisus nisus* (Linn.).

A resident and winter visitant; as well as, I think, to some extent, a summer visitant, since most of our young birds disappear in autumn, to return in spring; though how far they may wander from the place of their birth there is not much evidence to show. Some notes of migratory movements were given in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (pp. 285-6), and others could be added were it necessary, or did space permit.

## THE KITE

*Milvus milvus milvus* (Linn.).

Formerly a resident and not uncommon, but has for so long been no more than a name in the county that it may be regarded as extinct here. To the old records given in 1912, may be added what was probably the last Northumbrian Kite, a bird trapped by John Taylor at Featherstone Castle in, or about, 1869. It was kept alive for a day or two, and was eventually set up and remained in the possession of the then owner of the Castle, John Hope Wallace, for a long time, but has since disappeared.

## THE BLACK KITE

*Milvus migrans migrans* (Bodd.).

A rare accidental visitant, of which the adult male now in the Museum, trapped in Alnwick Park a few days prior to May 11th, 1866, was the first ever recognised in this country, the only other having been shot near Aberdeen in April 1901. It is only a summer visitor to Europe.

## THE HONEY-BUZZARD

*Pernis apivorus apivorus* (Linn.).

Must be ranked as an occasional summer visitant, since it has frequently been killed or observed in the county at that season, and has been suspected to be breeding on several occasions; but the only definite record of a nest is that mentioned by Hancock, found at Newbiggin near Hexham in 1841. It would undoubtedly have bred here oftener had it been allowed to do so, but it is significant that, while in 1912 I was able to refer to some forty occurrences, most of them no doubt only birds-of-passage, I have no note of any since that date, within our boundaries, except one shot near Barrasford July 1st, 1908; a young bird killed at The Chesters in September a few years later (in unicolorous brown plumage, examined by Abel Chapman); and one disturbed from a wasp's nest, most of the grubs from which it had already eaten, in Dipton Wood, by Mr. William F. Meech, on September 11th, 1930.

## THE ICELAND FALCON

*Falco rusticolus islandus* Bränn.

A rare accidental visitant of which the Museum contains two local specimens, a female referred to by Selby, in 1831, as having been "shot in Northumberland," and an immature male, from Hancock's collection, shot on January 20th, 1845, near Bellingham.

## THE PEREGRINE FALCON

*Falco peregrinus peregrinus* Tunstall.

A resident; long banished from all its once well-known lowland eyries, but still maintaining a precarious



footing (dependent upon the forbearance of game-preservers) amongst the hills, where some half-dozen breeding-places are more or less regularly occupied. As a wanderer and winter visitant it appears upon the coast with inconstant regularity, there, as elsewhere, making pigeons a chief quarry. Mr. Watson has recorded that in March 1922, when there were at least three Peregrines in the vicinity of Holy Island, each of the three secured a pigeon out of five liberated on the sands one morning!

### THE HOBBY

*Falco subbuteo subbuteo* Linn.

A summer visitant to this country, but cannot be included except as of rare casual occurrence here. One was shot on the Newcastle Town Moor, July 25th, 1853; another at the same place, August 15th, 1859; a third at Cullercoats, June 2nd, 1863; these are all referred to by Hancock; the first two being in the Museum. In his Presidential address to the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club, in March 1860, Canon Tristram mentioned that he had himself picked up a male dead on the Farne Islands on May 13th, and that a female had been shot a fortnight afterwards at Roddam. In August 1912, J. M. Charlton wrote to tell me that he had seen, preserved in a pitman's cottage at Seaton Delaval, a specimen that had been shot five miles higher up the Seaton Burn several years previously.

### THE MERLIN

*Falco columbarius æsalon* Tunstall.

A partial resident, and also a passage migrant, and summer visitant. Breeds on many of our moorlands as regularly as it is permitted to do, but has of late years suffered a good deal from persecution by too

zealous game-keepers. Most of those which survive, seek the coast in autumn, when nearly all the young and some of the adults leave us for the winter. During September and October we are probably also visited by Merlins from overseas, a few of which may remain over the winter.

### THE RED-FOOTED FALCON

*Falco vespertinus vespertinus* Linn.

A rare accidental visitant, of which one was killed near Morpeth in August 1858; a female near Hauxley, October 9th, 1868; and an adult male seen by Dr. E. Leonard Gill, on May 1st, 1921, between Temperley Grange and Corbridge (*vide Vasculum*, Vol. VII, p. 119). On May 5th, 1932, a male, in full black plumage, appeared at Alston and remained until the 10th, when last seen it was pursuing a westward course high overhead.

### THE KESTREL

*Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus* Linn.

A resident, and to some extent a passage migrant in September and October, and again in spring. Our commonest diurnal bird-of-prey, but always liable to fluctuate in numbers owing to the exigencies of game-preserving. Most "Keepers' Rails" usually contain enough material to demonstrate how much individual variation exists amongst Kestrels. I have already expressed my dissent from the generally held opinion that age is the governing factor in the assumption by the female of more or less of the blue colouring which is normally restricted to the plumage of the male, and the lapse of years has provided additional evidence to prove that my tenet is correct.



## THE OSPREY

*Pandion haliaëtus haliaëtus* (Linn.).

A passage migrant, which has been so often seen or killed in Northumberland as to make it unnecessary to recapitulate individual occurrences, most of which have been in the autumn (September and October), but a good many in summer and several in winter (one shot at Waren Mill November 1838; one frequented Till at Weetwood and Fowberry for a considerable time in January 1883; one shot Holy Island end of November 1891; one on Tweed at Wark, February 19th, 1896).

Attention may, however, be drawn to Abel Chapman's graphic account of an Osprey on North Tyne during the summer and autumn of 1927 (*Memories*, p. 220), where a beautiful drawing in colour by Mr. W. H. Riddell will also be found. This, or another Osprey, revisited Houxty in September 1929, being seen also by Mr. Clarence Smith at Countess Park, and other people. One, possibly the same bird, was seen at Whitfield Lough in October of the same year; and on May 2nd, 1931, one passed over Alston. On the last-named date, a bitterly cold morning, I happened to be standing on my own doorstep, a little before 6 a.m., watching three pairs of Swifts (the first of the season) hurtling due south before a strong north wind, when far up above them the Osprey appeared laboriously flapping its way to the north-west. It was pursuing a steady course, which looked as though it might have passed over Middlesbrough, and would ere long reach the Dee or Loch Ken in Galloway, a district in which Ospreys used to breed about seventy years ago. An Osprey was also seen in 1931 at Whitfield Lough and elsewhere on Tyne.

## THE COMMON CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* (Linn.)

A resident, common along the coast, though restricted as a nesting species to the Farne Islands, where it has greatly increased during my memory. It enjoys the somewhat anomalous position that, while carefully protected on the Islands, a reward is set upon its head by the Tweed Commissioners as "vermin" (see table inset facing p. 160). From amongst many entries in my Journals, bearing upon the food and swallowing capacity of the Cormorant, the following may be worth mention. Amongst those paid for on Tweed in 1913, was one whose stomach contained a sea-trout of 1½ lbs. The bird weighed 10½ lbs. before the fish was extracted, 8½ lbs. afterwards. Mr. R. H. Dodds cites an even more remarkable case of one which contained a grilse of 3¼ lbs., and weighed 9¾ lbs. while the fish was in its stomach, 6½ lbs. after it had been taken out. On July 13th, 1926, being in ambush in Mr. T. B. Short's garden close to the spot, I saw an adult Cormorant arrive on wing at the mouth of Waren Burn at dawn (4 a.m. summer time), just as the tide was at the full, and watched it, during half an hour's assiduous fishing, catch and swallow two trout and four eels. One of the former would weigh quite a quarter of a pound, the largest eel being more than a foot long and unusually thick for its length. The eels occupied more time in swallowing than in catching, each in turn twisting itself round the beak of its captor and holding resolutely on for some time. The moment they relaxed their hold they were promptly bolted, although still struggling and wriggling violently. Evidently appreciating the value of time, the bird worked strenuously, merely pausing a moment after each victory to straighten its neck and look round with a *what-d'ye-think-of-that* sort of expression in its keen, green eye. As soon as the last eel had been empouched, the bird took wing and hastened away,



apparently not in the least inconvenienced by the writhing that must have been going on in its hold! Its destination was probably the Megstone, distant a good four miles, where a hungry brood might be impatiently awaiting breakfast.

The attention of younger Naturalists may be called to the white-breasted plumage-phase of the Cormorant; a subject that might repay investigation.

### THE SHAG OR GREEN CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax graculus graculus* (Linn.).

A resident in small numbers, a pair or two having bred at the Farne Islands and Dunstanburgh, time out of mind, but without having ever shown any appreciable increase there. As a winter visitant, upon the other hand, it has increased in quite an extraordinary manner during the last twenty years. That increase was in its infancy when I commented upon it in 1912, but the next three or four years saw Shags upon the coast in flocks undreamt of before. Crowds of them took to roosting at such places as The Heugh, Holy Island, and St. Cuthbert's Island, which no such bird had ever had the temerity to attempt within living memory. Abel Chapman alluded forcibly to the invasion in 1922 (*Borders and Beyond*, pp. 159 and 163), while the necessity for adding the Shag to the black-list on Tweed is eloquent testimony to the same effect (see table inset facing p. 160). Whence the invaders come, or why, there is no evidence to show, but there is no near nesting-station populous enough to supply the numbers. The main body seems to arrive towards the beginning of October and stay about four months, but many come a little earlier and some remain perhaps a month longer.

The breeding plumage, with full crest, is usually donned before winter. A few young birds, in the brownish dress of immaturity, may be found along the

coast throughout the summer, possibly having been reared here.

The far flights of such birds, and their almost uncanny foreknowledge of well-stocked waters, is evidenced by the way in which both species of Cormorant appear from time to time at Catcleugh and other far inland reservoirs.

### THE GANNET

*Sula bassana* (Linn.).

Normally, a summer visitant, common along the coast from early spring till late autumn; but, as a few are liable to appear at any time throughout the winter, must be regarded, to that extent, as a resident, although it does not nest anywhere nearer than the Bass Rock.

Essentially a bird of the open sea, the Gannet is occasionally blown far inland during stormy weather, and has occurred from time to time as a lost vagrant in various parts of the county.

### THE GREY LAG-GOOSE

*Anser anser* (Linn.).

An autumn and spring visitant on passage; only rarely well-identified here in winter, but in this connection it must not be overlooked that many "Grey Geese" are not specifically recognised at all when casually seen. Some specific occurrences during recent years have been: Three appeared at Grindon Lough on April 17th, 1911 (Abel Chapman saw one of them the following day and the identity of its companions was assumed); three killed out of a party of ten at Titlington, September 20th, 1920, one of which weighed 9 lbs.; on November 1st of the same year one shot from a flock of six on Holy Island, a female,



weight 6 lbs. 14 ozs.; three seen at Ross, opposite Holy Island, in March 1920; and one shot there from a small flock on February 5th, 1926.

The visits of the Grey Lag to the Solway estuary have shown considerable increase during the last two decades, and a similar tendency may be taking place on our coast. About Alston I see or hear passing flocks (generally quite small ones) perhaps about once in three years.

### THE WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Anser albifrons* (Scop.).

An irregular winter visitant to the coast, usually in quite small parties. Inland it is rarer, and has most often appeared there only singly—mere lost stragglers. Details of a good many occurrences were given in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*; here it is only necessary to specify one or two later instances. At the end of November 1920, three remained on Darden Lough, Elsdon, for a day or two, two of them being eventually shot: on November 13th, 1923, one rested during a storm on the Rede at West Woodburn: On January 6th, 1924, a solitary individual passed me on Budle Bay, where three had been somewhat doubtfully identified the previous winter.

Weight of adults runs from 5 to nearly 7 lbs.; young 4 to 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs.

### THE LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

*Anser erythropus* (Linn.).

An immature specimen, now in the Museum, shot by Alfred Crawhall Chapman on Fenham Flats, September 16th, 1886, remains not only our sole Northumbrian record, but perhaps the only one for the British Islands with an entirely satisfactory pedigree. It weighed 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs.

Apart from its much smaller size (about half that of *albifrons*) it is so different in every way from its congener, *including voice*, that it amazes one who has seen both species in life, in Lapland (where both nest) to comprehend how up to a very few years ago most of even our best ornithologists should have doubted the specific distinctness of the two species.

### THE BEAN-GOOSE

*Anser fabalis fabalis* (Lath.).

A regular winter visitant arriving, often in large flocks, in September, and sometimes lingering until well into April. Next after the Pink-footed it is our commonest grey goose, and is the species most frequently sojourning inland, not only at our loughs but sometimes on flocs and mosses even on the flat tops of some of our highest hills. The chief desideratum about such resorts, is that there should be water enough to wash in. Even small peaty tarns supply that essential, and the place may be resorted to for roosting purposes for weeks at a stretch, or revisited regularly year after year. About such retreats the moorland grasses, and even the heather, are freely cropped, though flights are regularly undertaken to distant fields for main support. Greenlee Lough is a favourite sanctuary where large flocks of the birds may often be found in the depth of winter, and there I have sometimes watched the whole assembly, at midday (the regular dinner-hour of geese) making apparently a full meal on sub-aqueous vegetation, "standing on their heads" in order to reach it.

Nearer the coast, Bean-Geese resort for the night to sand-bars, where, along with the next species and other birds, they find very safe roosting-places, and assist in levying what often amounts to a fairly heavy toll on grass and seed-fields, sometimes at very considerable distances from their sleeping places.

Average weight of adults from 7 to 8 lbs.



## THE PINK-FOOTED GOOSE

*Anser brachyrhynchus* Baillon.

A common winter visitant, the most abundant of the genus upon our coast. Some reach us in September, but the larger flocks not before the middle of the following month. Should the weather be stormy, they frequently disappear for a time, but return again in great force from about Christmas up to the end of March. In the second week in April 1931 the flocks upon Ross (opposite Holy Island) were "estimated at between three and four thousand, and some of the grass fields were grazed as bare as a newly mown lawn"! Approximately equal numbers appeared in the same neighbourhood at the end of December 1925, when their unwonted fearlessness testified to their recent arrival from some quarter where they had not made the acquaintance of gunning-man, over forty of them paying for their education with their lives in about a week—all killed with shoulder-guns from ambuscades in the fields—an almost unprecedented bag?

On March 10th, 1929, Mr. T. B. Short of Waren wrote me that he had that morning witnessed a most extraordinary sight, many hundreds of loudly-honking geese flying in disorganised bands over his house and garden, some of them within easy shot, the cause of their utter confusion being a rather low-flying aeroplane which had driven them from a higher altitude and scattered their companies in every direction.

Mr. W. G. Watson informed me of a Pink-footed Goose shot on the slakes at Holy Island, on November 25th, 1921, which showed a few white feathers round the base of the bill, an aberration less common in this species than in any other of our grey geese.

In size, and in some other details, this goose is subject to considerable variation. The average weight of an adult male may be put at about 6 lbs., but some are a pound heavier, nearly double the weight of others I have handled. The largest of which I have any note,

Mr. Fred W. Smalley wrote to tell me about in 1917. He had shot it at Aberlady, the leading bird of a skein, and it pulled the scale at 8 lbs. 10 ozs. with a wing-measurement of 19½ inches.

## THE SNOW GOOSE

*Chen hyperboreus hyperboreus* (Pall.).

Only a rare casual winter visitant to any part of the British Islands.

Full details were given in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 351) of the occurrence of a flock of about twenty on the coast near Holy Island, on January 2nd, 1891; and of another single white goose, presumed to be of this species though not positively identified, which appeared amongst the Brents on the neighbouring slakes in January of the following year. We have no later records.

## THE BRENT GOOSE

*Branta bernicla* (Linn.).

An abundant winter visitant to the slakes at Holy Island, and occurring occasionally elsewhere along the coast. Essentially a bird of tidal estuaries and mud-flats, where its favourite food, *Zostera marina*, flourishes, but a lost vagrant may sometimes be found inland.

The first flocks appear about mid-October, smaller parties, or single birds, occasionally turning up perhaps a month earlier; but it is usually not until after the New Year that the main bodies arrive. Their movements are regulated by the state of the Baltic; so long as that sea remains pretty clear of ice, no great invasion of Brents need be expected here. It may safely be said that the numbers present on our slakes often run into thousands, and in really good years the figures may require to be multiplied by ten; but



estimating the numbers in large flocks of any kind requires a sort of special education in which the writer never attained efficiency. He is fain, therefore, to content himself, in the present instance, by quoting a seventeenth century writer when skilfully extricating himself from a somewhat similar dilemma, "I will save my credit in not conjecturing any number; knowing, that herein though I should *stoop* beneath the *truth*, I should *mount* above belief." The departure of the flocks usually takes place in March, but a few birds may linger into April, or (very rarely) into May; while instances of some remaining throughout the summer are not unknown.

In plumage the Brent Goose is markedly dimorphic, or even polymorphic, light- and dark-bellied phases occurring wherever the bird is common, in addition to which some individuals have the breast of a warm brownish hue instead of the usual cold slate-grey. Some of the lightest-coloured birds are sometimes so whitish as to be not very difficult to mistake for Barnacles upon the wing, the more so as "birds of a feather often flock together"; but such extremes are always scarce, dark-bellied birds being the predominating type with us. The latter is said to be more eastern in its breeding distribution and has, by some authorities, been awarded racial status as *Brenta bernicla bernicla*, the light-bellied form becoming *Brenta bernicla hrota* of O. F. Müller; but the two forms, as seen on our slakes, merge so much into one another that it is sometimes impossible to say to which a particular individual belongs, and I therefore conceive that no good purpose would be served by attempting to divide them here. Abel Chapman, who had a life-long experience with Brent Geese, particularly with their pursuit at Holy Island, ridiculed the idea of splitting them into sub-species. His delight was ever in forceful argument, and anyone interested in the subject will find both instruction and amusement in what he wrote in his *Borders and Beyond*.

Brents vary considerably in size as well as in coloration; adults average a little under 4 lbs. in weight, young ones about a pound less.

### THE BARNACLE GOOSE

*Branta leucopsis* (Bechstein).

A winter visitant, never common, but whose visits show a marked tendency towards increase during recent years. On the slakes at Holy Island it has latterly been observed almost annually, arriving in small parties about the beginning of October but seldom remaining more than a day or two; forty or fifty which appeared on October 16th, 1922, but stayed only a few hours, being the largest flock recorded.

To other localities its visits are rarer, a few of which may be noted. On October 25th, 1912, a small flock was observed at Scremerston, one of which was shot for identification: on September 26th, 1913, eighteen appeared at Goswick: in 1917, one was shot at Elsdon in September, and another solitary individual at Kirkhaugh, on South Tyne, on October 19th, the latter being an adult in full plumage. On October 26th, 1922, one was killed at Angerton: in September 1926 four were seen flying in from the sea to the mouth of Tweed; and another single bird at Goswick on the 21st.

Weight of adults about 4 lbs., young a pound less. Unlike the Brent, this goose shows no particular aptitude for *Zostera*, but prefers to graze on salt-grasses and fields, which may, in part, account for its disregard of the Holy Island slakes (where that plant forms the chief attraction) as contrasted with its abundance on the Solway where *Zostera* does not grow I think, or is at least comparatively scarce.

### THE RED-BREASTED GOOSE

*Branta ruficollis* (Pall.).

A very rare accidental visitor to any part of the British Isles, of which our only Northumbrian record



is the oft quoted instance of one shot on Fenham Flats in 1818. (See *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, p. 351.)

[THE CANADA GOOSE (*Branta c. canadensis*) has been kept in semi-domestication in this country for more than two centuries, and escapes frequently unite themselves with wild geese or swans and are seen, or shot, in various parts of the county. It continues to appear from time to time on our loughs and elsewhere; but has no more claim to inclusion in this Catalogue than the EGYPTIAN GOOSE (*Chenalopex aegyptiaca*), the UPLAND GOOSE (*Chloephaga magellanica*), the BLACK SWAN or other aliens occasionally met with in similar circumstances.]

#### THE WHOOPER OR WILD SWAN

*Cygnus cygnus* (Linn.).

A regular winter visitant; more often congregating into large flocks on our loughs (because less disturbed there) than upon the coast, where it has been much harassed by punt-gunners and others. Does not usually arrive much before the end of the year, but is occasionally noticed in October and often lingers till well into March. On April 11th, 1930, I found a pair still present on Greenlee, while another single bird was feeding at the other end of the lough in company with a Mute Swan. Just four years earlier, Abel Chapman and I had had the somewhat unusual experience of having twenty swans before us at the same time, on Broomlee Lough, on April 4th, ten of them being Mutes, eight Bewick's, and two Whoopers.

Adults weighed have varied from 16 to 28 lbs., the average being about 22 lbs.

#### BEWICK'S SWAN

*Cygnus bewicki bewicki* Yarr.

A winter visitant with the last, but a good deal less numerous. It is usually a little later in arriving and seldom stays so late.

Weight of adults from 12 to 15 lbs., immature birds 8 to 10 lbs.

#### THE MUTE SWAN

*Cygnus olor* (Gmelin).

A common domesticated species which, as such, has increased a good deal during the last twenty years, and, as the pinioning of the young ones has fallen more into desuetude, may now be met with, often in considerable numbers, throughout the county. There is no inherent reason why a bird, which breeds in a genuinely wild state no farther away than Denmark and the south of Sweden, should not visit our shores, when frozen out of its home quarters, as regularly as kindred species do; but it were futile to take up space here in discussing the claim of some of those met with to be regarded as truly wild in Northumberland.

The so-called POLISH SWAN, *C. immutabilis* of Yarrell, is now generally regarded as merely a variety of the present species. It has several times been shot in the county.

#### THE SHELD-DUCK

*Tadorna tadorna* (Linn.).

A resident, breeding numerous amongst the sand-hills along the coast, in suitable localities, the same being mostly confined to the northern end of Northumberland.

After the broods are well upon the wing, the



majority of the birds, both old and young, appear to move southward, and their places may be taken by migrants from farther north. Be that as it may, however, our coast is never entirely deserted, even in the hardest winters, and before the end of February the nesting population is again taking up its quarters. Some of the large flocks sometimes seen at the approach of winter may be passage migrants from overseas.

The evidence of birds in semi-confinement on ornamental waters (and surely few birds can be more ornamental than an old Sheldrake in the height of condition, with his coral-red bill and gay carriage?) demonstrates that, although some of them may begin to breed when two years old, they have not gained their full mature beauty till the coming of another spring.

As indicative of a wandering habit, Sheld-Ducks are occasionally found on inland waters. There are several records from pretty far up the Tweed, and some from the Northumberland Lakes. A solitary individual was observed on Greenlee as late as March 28th, 1923.

#### THE RUDDY SHELD-DUCK

*Casarca casarca* (Linn.).

This southern species occasionally shows an erratic disposition to wander northward in summer. A very full account of the great irruption of 1892, by Mr. F. Monteith Ogilvie, will be found in the *Zoologist* for that year (pp. 392-398). One of that band of migrants was obtained no farther away than Berwickshire. The only instance of the species being shot in Northumberland known to me was a specimen killed at Boulmer some time prior to 1875 and long in the possession of my great-uncle who resided there. Whether it was a genuinely wild bird or an escape can never be definitely known, but there was nothing in its stuffed effigy to suggest domesticity.

#### THE MALLARD

*Anas boscas boscas* Linn.

A well-known resident, breeding freely throughout the county, from seaside marshes to the margins of little peaty tarns far out amongst the hills. The native stock, some of which may move southward for the winter, is greatly augmented by birds which come to us at that season and leave again upon the approach of spring.

The large number artificially reared dims the perspective, as in semi-captivity the Mallard will breed with almost any duck, but wild hybrids between this species and Teal, Wigeon, Gadwall, Pintail and Sheld-Duck, occur from time to time—there is one authentic record of a cross even with the Eider—the *Bimaculated Duck* of Bewick, and other authors, was the result of a misalliance with the first named. The Society possesses another very good example of this cross, from my old collection, which was shot at flight on Fenham Slake in January 1893. It is perhaps superfluous to allude here to some of the interesting hybrid ducks raised by our President at Fallodon.

Average weight of adult males 3 lbs.

#### THE GADWALL

*Anas strepera* Linn.

A rare winter and spring visitant, which has not yet been proved to nest here, although the increasing frequency with which it has been noticed of recent years is suggestive that that contingency is only deferred.

In addition to those already referred to in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, the following occurrences have been noted: A Gadwall obtained by Mr. J. Wilson on Holy Island,



February 20th, 1917, was found to be the bearer of a ring indicating that it had been marked as a nestling in Alnwick Park on August 27th, 1915. (This was, of course, from captive parents and throws a possible light upon one of the causes of increase amongst this and other ducks in the district.) In 1920, one of four ducks coming in to the Lough on Holy Island, at dusk on January 20th, was shot and recovered, and proved to be an adult male Gadwall (sent to Mr. Chapman): another, which fell to the same shot, could not be recovered until the following morning when it had been half devoured by rats, was believed by the shooter to be "a female of the same kind." A month later (February 25th) a duck seen upon the Lough by Mr. Chapman, Mr. W. G. Watson and others, was believed to be a Gadwall, perhaps the survivor of the original four. (Fuller details were given in the *Vasculum*, Vol. VI, p. 14.) On May 15th of the same year, a pair of ducks seen upon the slakes were considered by Selby Allison and another wildfowling companion, to belong to the same species. A female in the Museum, presented by Abel Chapman, was shot on Holy Island, October 17th, 1927, where it was one of two birds that came in at flight, the other escaping; weight 22 oz.

Mr. A. M. Allgood informs me that during the winter of 1928-9, a Gadwall was shot near Acomb; and on April 11th, 1930 I and a companion found a pair feeding with Wigeon and other ducks on Grindon Lough, but by May 4th nothing could be seen of them and they were never noticed again.

Weight of adult males from 2 to 2½ lbs.

### THE SHOVELER

*Spatula clypeata* (Linn.).

A resident to some extent, since it is frequently met with in winter, but much more common as a spring to autumn visitant, nesting in suitable places, in moderate numbers, over a large part of the county.

It has been known to breed here for over a century, and was formerly, in all likelihood, only kept comparatively rare by being thoughtlessly shot whenever opportunity offered. After protection came into vogue it rapidly increased, but during the last decade or so, from some obscure cause, it appears to have rather fallen away again in numbers, in many of its nesting haunts.

Weight about 1½ to 1¾ lbs.

### THE PINTAIL

*Dafila acuta acuta* (Linn.).

Chiefly a winter visitant appearing regularly, in small numbers, about Holy Island, in September and October, and rather later in the year on inland waters. It is an early nester whose departure should take place in March or April, and the increasing frequency with which pairs have been met with on some of our loughs, at later periods during recent years, strengthens the belief that the time is probably not far distant when it will become established as a regular breeding species with us, as has already occurred on the Scotch side of the Border.

There was strong presumptive evidence that it used occasionally to nest on Prestwick Car prior to 1855, and that it may have done so in the vicinity of Grindon Lough in 1888, and about a decade later. The evidence for this is reviewed in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*. Abel Chapman's belief that it bred at Grindon in 1911, and possibly also a few years later is set forth in his *Borders and Beyond* (Gurney and Jackson 1924), and to that sumptuous volume readers may with confidence be referred for information and entertainment on this and a variety of cognate subjects. A pair of Pintails were seen by Mrs. Hodgkin on Ross Links for several days at the end of May 1928, what time other ducks were nesting, and as they always frequented the same spot she hoped that they, too, might be breeding there.



## THE TEAL

*Querquedula crecca crecca* (Linn.).

A common resident, breeding in limited numbers throughout the county, many remaining in their accustomed haunts over the winter. The large flocks found upon the coast in September and October are, partly at least, only passage migrants which do not remain there more than a few weeks, perhaps even a shorter time than that. The return movement in spring is seldom so much in evidence, but is sometimes noticeable even as late as the beginning of May, what time the home-breeding birds are engaged in incubation.

The Teal is our smallest duck, adult males seldom exceeding a pound in weight; young in August and September about half as much.

## THE GARGANEY

*Querquedula querquedula* (Linn.).

A very local summer visitant to this country, but it has bred in Co. Durham within recent years, and was suspected to have done so just across the Northumbrian march, in Roxburghshire, in 1893. Hancock gave almost irrefutable evidence that it nested on Prestwick Car in his day, and an adult female was shot on Sweet-hope Lough in May 1861; but all that was fully recounted in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* and need not be gone over again. Space may be more profitably occupied in adducing more recent facts to support the conviction that the Garganey may still breed in Northumberland, and that it will not be long before the actual finding of a nest is recorded.

It may be recalled that in 1858, Hancock and C. M. Adamson saw two males and a female on Gosforth Lake, which remained there from March 28th till April 18th. In 1929, Mr. G. W. Temperley saw a male there in company with some Teal on March 27th: it was still there on April 16th, being then accompanied by a female, but they were not to be found on June 10th when he again visited the place, nor was anything more ever heard of them. No more have been seen there since, though he has kept a pretty sharp look out for them. From the end of March 1928 until the last days of May, Mr. T. Russell Goddard and other gentlemen had a pair under observation on a small marsh formed by a "pit-creep" some ten miles north of Gosforth. The party at first consisted of five birds, but one of them did not stay long, while one of the males was shortly afterwards killed by a fox and his partner disappeared. The remaining pair vanished in June without any indications of nesting having been observed, and none have been seen there since.

In 1920, one of his fowlers on Holy Island reported to Abel Chapman on May 14th "a pair of extra bonny teal on the Lough just now, bigger than ordinary teals and the drake with a silvery wing and a different note not as loud as a teal's." These could scarcely have been anything else than Garganeys; but, be that as it may, Mrs. Hodgkin saw a pair on Ross Links on May 25th, 1928, and for a week afterwards, which she believed must be nesting there. In April 1931 Mr. Harry Tully observed a pair for a few days on his lake at Newton Hall near Stocksfield.

The Garganey is an early nester, laying usually taking place towards the end of April. I have noticed that the male of a tame pair kept by Mr. T. B. Short at Warenlee, gets into full eclipse by the end of June and does not resume his distinctive plumage till the following March, thus remaining for eight months of the year practically in the dress of the female.



## THE WIGEON

*Mareca penelope* (Linn.).

An abundant winter visitant and passage migrant, which since 1912 has established itself, likewise, as a resident, a change that was foreshadowed in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* published that year. A steady southward extension of its breeding range had been noticed on the Scotch side of the Border for some years prior to that, while it has since spread to several of the English counties and even to Wales. (Cases of suspected breeding in Merionethshire in 1905 and 1906 were recorded in my *Wild Life in Wales* published in 1912.)

In Northumberland, nests may have occurred round Grindon Lough as early as 1911 and 1912. In 1913, a female accompanied by a brood was reported to Chapman from Hallington on July 1st; and another on June 28th, 1915. More than one nest containing eggs was found near Sewingshields Lough by the Rev. Father Walmsley in 1921, and a pair of the birds spent that summer on Catcleugh Reservoir under conditions that clearly pointed to their having a nest in the vicinity though it was not found. In 1925 and 1926, Chapman actually found nests with eggs at Broomlee, and there were breeding birds at several of the neighbouring loughs in these seasons. An ill fate befell a good many of these early attempts at colonisation, both otters and pike frustrating some of them, but all that has been so recently and so charmingly told in Abel Chapman's *Borders and Beyond* that space need not now be taken up by repetition.

That the mere fact of seeing Wigeon in summer does not necessarily connote nesting, needs no stressing. Most of the birds comprising summer flocks will be found on closer observation to have not yet attained full maturity, while passage migrants on their way to and from more northern stations are sometimes in evidence upon the coast (more rarely on inland waters)

as late as May and as early as August—e.g. a flock of approximately thirty was resting on the slakes at Holy Island on May 11th, 1922; a score or two on Grindon Lough on April 11th, 1930; a small flock was on the slakes on September 7th, 1887; some very large ones a fortnight later after some very stormy weather; in 1902 large flocks arrived in August. These dates are taken almost at random from my journals, many more might be given were it necessary.

Average weight of adults, males 2 lbs., females  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  lbs., immature birds being, of course, a little less.

## THE RED-CRESTED POCHARD

*Netta rufina* (Pall.).

This southern and eastern duck is no more than a rare accidental visitant to any part of the country.

Northumberland possesses but a single record, a mature female killed on Fenham Flats, March 17th, 1857. (Was the subject of a notice by Hancock in the *Transactions* of the Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club (Vol. IV, p. 59) where the date is correctly stated; by an oversight it is given as November in his *Catalogue*.)

## THE POCHARD

*Nyroca ferina ferina* (Linn.).

A resident, the native stock being considerably increased during winter by immigrants. Although seldom numerous, it has always been well known to sportsmen during the cold months. As a breeding species, it only began to establish itself here about 1874; but, helped by the Protection Acts and by the greater respect for close-times then beginning to be observed, it soon afterwards began to appear during summer, in moderate numbers, in most suitable places



throughout the county. This position it has since maintained, subject to the periodical fluctuations dependent upon the raids of otters, foxes, and pike, the natural enemies to the increase of wildfowl upon our loughs.

Like some others of our diving ducks, male Pochards desert their consorts as soon as the eggs are hatched or, perhaps, as soon as incubation begins, and, herding together, then often betake themselves to other waters. They seem, also, to be less disposed than almost any other fowl to resume social intercourse much before the approach of another nesting season. A party of Pochards chanced upon in winter may thus be composed exclusively of drakes, which helps to explain why it is that sex which always figures largest in our game-shops, or amongst the spoils of the wildfowler.

Weight from 2 to 2½ lbs., females a little less.

Attention may be drawn to a male in the Museum in eclipse plumage, from "Holy Island August 13th, 1844"; and to the pale variety from Selby's collection, referred to in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 391) now also in the Museum.

#### THE FERRUGINOUS DUCK OR WHITE-EYED POCHARD

*Nyroca nyroca nyroca* (Güld.).

A rare accidental visitant of which we possess but a single record, the adult male killed on the Tyne near Hexham from which Selby drew the figure for his *Illustrations of British Ornithology*.

It may not be amiss to draw attention to the Pochard referred to in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 391) whose plumage had become so stained of a fine reddish hue as to be very easily mistaken for a Ferruginous Duck, such "natural frauds" being always liable to turn up again.

#### THE TUFTED DUCK

*Nyroca fuligula* (Linn.).

Now a common resident throughout the county, breeding more or less regularly about most of our loughs and reservoirs, as well as some much smaller ponds, and sometimes by the margins of rivers. In winter its numbers appear to be liable to occasional increase by immigrants from abroad, arriving in October and November and sometimes delaying their departure until well into May, by which time our native birds are laying.

The history of its colonisation and increase is very much like that of the Pochard except that it began a little earlier and that this species is now more numerous. Hancock recorded the first breeding of a pair at Wallington in 1858, and 1859, and perhaps in the following year. In 1871 a nest was taken at Broomlee Lough; but it was not before the lapse of another two decades that the Tufted Duck became a really familiar bird in Northumberland.

The male seldom reaches 2 lbs. in weight, females considerably lighter.

#### THE SCAUP-DUCK

*Nyroca marila marila* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, and passage migrant, one of the most numerous ducks upon the coast, but much more abundant in some seasons than in others: usually appears in October and remains until March, the largest flocks being generally seen in December and January.

As exceptional occurrences, Hancock mentioned one killed on Sweethope Lough in August 1840; one was shot at Ross on May 16th, 1860, two *pairs* seen on Pallinsburn Lake on May 6th, 1891, at least one pair



amongst the Tufted Ducks on Bolam Lake April 9th, 1892, and a single bird off the mouth of Tweed on June 19th, 1899. An adult female was seen on Greenlee Lough December 23rd, 1918; another picked up dead on Catcleugh Reservoir in December 1921; a young male shot at Angerton February 14th, 1922; and an adult female seen on Hallington Reservoir October 1st, 1925.

"1920, 15th October.—Two gunners (George and Ralph Wilson) while in their punt [over the slakes at Holy Island] noticed a Scaup-Duck in evident distress. Presently it disappeared, and on reaching the spot, they found and killed a big Monk-fish(?) reckoned at 2 or 3 stones' weight; and *inside that fish* was the scaup, swallowed whole and still alive, weight 1 lb. 13½ oz., now in Geoffrey Watson's collection." (Abel Chapman's *Borders and Beyond*, p. 163.)

Adult males run to about 3 lbs., females considerably less.

#### THE GOLDEN-EYE

*Glaucionetta clangula clangula* (Linn.).

A well-known winter visitant, and passage migrant, common along the coast, as well as on most of our inland waters, occasional immature birds remaining till far into summer if not actually through it. Arrives usually in October, some few in September, and stays until March.

Males, weight about 2¼ lbs., young ones ½ lb. less.

#### THE LONG-TAILED DUCK

*Clangula hyemalis* (Linn.).

Another common passage migrant and winter visitant to the coast, usually most numerous after the new-year. The earliest arrivals reach us in October, and by mid-March most of them have departed. It is not

rare, however, to meet with a flock a month after that, by which time some of the males have completed the change to their dark nuptial plumage.

Although essentially a sea-duck in winter, small numbers annually follow our larger streams a long way inland, and are liable to be found on the loughs. I saw six together on the Tyne below Hexham on February 5th, 1920. Adult males weigh up to 30 oz., young birds sometimes no more than half that weight.

#### THE HARLEQUIN DUCK

*Histrionicus histrionicus histrionicus* (Linn.).

A very rare accidental visitant to this country, of which our only local record is of three birds which appeared off the Farne Islands on December 2nd, 1886, when two were shot, the survivor sharing a like fate a day or two afterwards. All were males.

Attention may be drawn to the beautiful coloured plate of the Harlequin Duck from Mr. W. H. Riddell's gifted brush, in Abel Chapman's *Borders and Beyond*, p. 190.

#### THE EIDER DUCK

*Somateria mollissima mollissima* (Linn.).

An abundant resident on the Northumbrian coast, which, thanks to the protection afforded it on the Farne Islands, has greatly increased within recent years and is again establishing itself on Coquet Island. This is its most southern nesting place in the British Islands, and Mr. T. Russell Goddard informs me that more than thirty nests occur there now and that the increase is continuing.

Eiders are such exclusively sea-ducks with us that it is very exceptional to see one on fresh water, and then only as a lost waif on migration. It is, however, a



curious fact that on the approach of spring their habit is to forsake the sea *en masse* to do a part of their courting ashore. About the beginning of April, the sands to the landward side of Holy Island, almost a mile from salt-water at low-tide, may sometimes be seen crowded with Eiders. The party may aggregate many hundreds scattered over a wide area, but all in pairs, sitting lovingly side by side, a few feet, or yards, from their next neighbours. A large proportion of them may be lying, apparently asleep upon the sand, bills hidden beneath scapulars, but they are constantly waking up to break into song, telling the world how happy is their lot and how much they are enjoying life. It is then that the tuneful crooning of the drakes is heard to the greatest advantage, a lullaby that has earned for them the patronymic of "Coo-doo," St. Cuthbert's Doves, and "Culverts" or Cuthbert's Ducks. Adult males attain a weight of about 6 lbs., females being a full pound less, young birds in their first year seldom exceeding 4 lbs. Fully mature plumage is not acquired before the third spring.

The utter abandon with which Eiders ride at their ease on the roughest seas, climbing over the crests of the tallest "combers," or diving through them, has already been told. Another marked characteristic of the species is the habit of the young, soon after hatching, to congregate into large packs of a score or two—sometimes even as many as a hundred—and embark on foraging expeditions entirely "on their own" (to make use of a colloquialism). There may, or may not, be a "mother" or two in attendance, but in any case the young are perfectly independent of maternal care and grow up on ideal communistic lines—in the best sense of that much abused term.

It is also a curious fact, worthy of observation, that while young Eiders instinctively make towards the shore (say from the Farne Islands), Guillemots, and other diving birds of that ilk, invariably guide their young seawards to spend their adolescence afloat. The contemplative person may find further food for thought in the reflection that while none of these sea-keeping auks produce more than one young one in a

season, they have, as a class, so far outstripped the more prolific species as to become the most numerous birds in the world. Eiders, certainly no less hardy, hatch from four or five up to double that number of young at a sitting, yet have never increased so fast. Many other even more prolific birds come of course into the same category, while Fulmars might be cited as another of the single-egg-producing species which have multiplied exceedingly.

### THE KING-EIDER

*Somateria spectabilis* (Linn.).

A rare erratic visitant, which seems to have been attracted to the vicinity of the Farne Islands more often than anywhere else in the kingdom—although it is over thirty years since the last was reported to have been seen there. The following are believed to have been authentic—

- 1861. A male shot off Annestead in October.
- 1862. Two males reported by lighthouse keepers to have been seen for several weeks during the summer.
- 1873. An adult male shot in November, it or another having been repeatedly observed during the previous summer, sometimes accompanied by a duck believed to be of the same species.
- 1875. A male seen on several occasions in June by lighthouse keepers and others.
- 1880. A male again appeared in June and was repeatedly seen each spring and summer as late as the middle of June, until—
- 1885. When an adult male was shot April 25th. In more than one of these years, more than one bird was believed to have frequented the islands, sometimes accompanied by a duck. In May 1882 a male was reported to have been "obtained" but I could learn no more of it.
- 1886. A male frequently seen for about six weeks from



the middle of May: often feeding with the Common Eiders off Holy Island. Not seen after beginning of July; cause of disappearance unknown.

1899. A male reported by the watchers to have been seen round the islands in May.

### THE COMMON SCOTER

*Edemia nigra nigra* (Linn.).

A regular winter visitant and passage migrant on the coast, often in very large flocks; apt to be especially numerous during the first three months of the year. Considerable flocks (chiefly of immature birds) are also frequent off shore during summer: adults begin to appear in August, and some of them may always be seen up till about the middle of May.

Exceptionally found inland: an adult drake picked up dead at Falstone on North Tyne, March 1st, 1922: and another, so deeply in the moult that he was unable to fly, observed by Abel Chapman on the river at Houxty August 21st, 1926.

Weight of adult males about 3 lbs.

### THE VELVET SCOTER

*Edemia fusca fusca* (Linn.).

Another regular winter visitant and passage migrant on the coast, though never seen in large flocks like the last, than which it is more prone to appear in pairs both in spring and autumn. A few immature individuals occasionally remain through the summer, often associating with the flocks of Common Scoters. An adult male was under observation off the mouth of the Tweed from May till the middle of September in 1879, and one or two more summer occurrences are given in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern*

*Borders*, as well as some from inland. The immigrants arrive from August onwards, and some of them remain till the middle of May.

Weight of adult males up to nearly 4 lbs., females about a pound less, young in autumn about 2 lbs.

### THE GOOSANDER

*Mergus merganser merganser* Linn.

A regular winter visitant, more addicted to inland waters than to the coast. On our loughs, as well as on our larger rivers, the conspicuous plumage of the males renders them familiar objects, flocks of a score or so being common and of more than double that number not unusual. Its predilection for *Salmonidae* has caused it to be placed on the black-list of the Tweed Commissioners, with a reward of 2s. 6d. on its head. (See table inset facing p. 160.)

The earliest arrivals appear towards the middle of October, but the bird is always most numerous from mid-winter to early spring and of late years has shown an increasing tendency to delay its departure till the approach of summer. Some years prior to 1896, a male was shot, in May, on Sweethope Lough; and more recently pairs have been noticed on North Tyne in April, and on Tweed, occasionally, as late as May and even into June. In 1930, a pair were reported to have spent the summer on the Tyne below Beaufront. It may be worthy of mention in this connection that the Goosander was recorded as having bred in Dumfriesshire in 1926, and on the Ettrick in 1930, where a nest containing five eggs was found on April 25th, and others have occurred since.

The underparts of the male are beautifully suffused with canary-yellow, sometimes inclining to rich buff. Adult males weigh up to close on 5 lbs., females about 3 lbs.



## THE RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

*Mergus serrator* Linn.

A winter visitant and passage migrant, common upon the coast, but not prone to trusting itself upon inland waters. The first arrivals reach us in mid-August, more appearing in September and October, and departure is frequently delayed until the middle of May. Mr. Temperley saw seven on Budle Bay as late as June 24th in 1926.

The under plumage of an adult male is warmly tinted with salmon-pink, and his head nearly as green as a Mallard's, but these colours are very evanescent, and soon give place to white and black.

Weight about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., sometimes a little more; females  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. less.

## THE SMEW

*Mergus albellus* Linn.

A winter visitant, always scarce, and irregular in appearance, and seldom seen except singly or in pairs; more often met with inland than on salt-water. Some recent occurrences have been—

1916, Dec. 26th. An adult female shot on Tweed at Paxton.

1917. A male seen on Budle Bay for several days near the end of April.

1922, Jany. 2nd. An adult pair at Houxty.

Feby. 11th. A pair shot on Wansbeck, male weight 22 oz., female 17 oz., both having their maws filled with minnows.

Feby. 28th. Two immature birds on Hallington Reservoir.

1929, Jany. 1st. A female on Tweed at Coldstream, (several reported from higher up the river during this and the following month, but in Roxburghshire).

## THE COMMON HERON

*Ardea cinerea cinerea* Linn.

Still a common resident and, whether a-perch or on wing, the most picturesque of the large birds left to us. Some of our ancient heronries have disappeared, owing to timber-felling; within recent years, but others have increased or become established, as at Longridge, Ewart Park, and elsewhere; while casual, outlying nests have also, perhaps, become more frequent.

## [THE PURPLE HERON]

*Ardea purpurea purpurea* Linn.

We have no good Northumberland record, but the adult preserved in the Eden Hall collection (referred to by Gould, and Macpherson) shot near Alston about 1850, is worthy of mention. In the beginning of December 1925, a very dark Heron was reported to me as frequenting Gilderdale Burn (where it forms the boundary between Northumberland and Cumberland) in company with one of the common species, the description of which tallied well with that of a Purple Heron. I walked over the ground more than once in the hope of seeing it, but it had disappeared by December 10th, the date when I first heard of it, and was never seen again.]

## THE SQUACCO HERON

*Ardeola ralloides* (Scop.).

A rare accidental visitant of which we possess but a single record, a bird just acquiring the adult plumage, from my old collection, shot at Howick Hall, May 28th, 1884, now in the Museum.



## THE NIGHT HERON

*Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* (Linn.).

Another accidental visitant, but of much more frequent occurrence than the last. An immature bird was shot near Lilburn Tower "many years ago"; an immature female on the Cawledge Burn, near Alnwick, on November 24th, 1870, after it had been observed in the neighbourhood for about three weeks; a young male caught at Goswick December 5th, 1872; an adult male shot at Howick Hall May 15th, 1890; and another on the Coquet, above Warkworth, in February 1913, it having been noticed there for at least a fortnight previously.

## THE LITTLE BITTERN

*Ixobrychus minutus minutus* (Linn.).

Now regarded as no more than an accidental visitant to this country, although there can be little doubt that it formerly nested in England, while the frequency of its visits suggests a desire to resume its lapsed status of a summer visitor.

Northumberland can claim five occurrences, while there are as many more similar records from just ayont her marches; most of them of adult birds. The mature male from which Bewick made the drawing for his *British Birds*, was shot at Blagdon on May 12th, 1810; one at Denton Hall in April 1859, and another near Woolsington on May 31st, 1866, all within a few miles of Newcastle. A male was killed at Hawkhill, on the Aln, in May 1871; and another at Howick Hall, on May 18th, 1886, where it had been observed for ten days previously and was believed to have had a mate.

## THE COMMON BITTERN

*Botaurus stellaris stellaris* (Linn.).

Once a common resident, breeding on our mosses, can now only be ranked as an irregular winter visitant. A somewhat unusual date was one seen by Mr. Baker Cresswell near North Charlton on September 6th, 1923.

## THE WHITE STORK

*Ciconia ciconia ciconia* (Linn.).

A rare casual visitant of which we possess the following records: Wallis records one killed near Chollerford Bridge in the beginning of the year 1766; an adult was shot at Newton-by-the-Sea about the end of March 1843; Hancock saw one at Prestwick Car in May 1866; one was killed at Scremerston on January 10th, 1874; Dr. E. Leonard Gill reported having seen three flying together off Bamburgh on August 31st, 1921; Abel Chapman and Mr. W. G. Watson saw one flying high over Belford on May 10th, 1922; and in the same year an immature bird was shot at Embleton about the end of September.

## THE SPOONBILL

*Platalea leucorodia leucorodia* Linn.

A rare casual visitant at the times of migration. A mature male in the Museum was shot on Fenham Flats in May 1857, and presented by Edmund Crayshaw. About 1874, two Spoonbills came to Gosforth Lake and remained there for some days till one of them was shot and the other disappeared. In 1904, one frequented the slakes at Holy Island from May 22nd till June 6th, when it disappeared: in August 1908,



another was seen about the same place, but did not remain for more than an hour or two. In 1930, one appeared in Budle Bay on August 21st and stayed in the neighbourhood until it was shot near the mouth of the Aln in the second week of September.

### THE GLOSSY IBIS

*Plegadis falcinellus falcinellus* (Linn.).

A rare casual visitant. An individual in first plumage, from which Selby drew the figure for his *Illustrations*, was killed on the Coquet, near Rothbury, in the autumn of 1820. Another immature bird was shot at Mindrum on August 25th, 1885. On August 30th, 1908, a party of five appeared off Boulmer and frequented the burn-mouths between that place and Alnmouth for a few days; of the four obtained, two are now in the Museum, the survivor disappearing during the second week in September; although in different stages of plumage, none of them were adult.

It is, perhaps, not irrelevant to recall that a Glossy Ibis was shot on the Tweed, only a mile or two west of the Northumbrian march, on November 17th, 1902. It, also, was in immature dress.

### THE CRANE

*Megalornis grus grus* (Linn.).

A rare casual visitant on passage. Mr. A. M. Allgood and his brother (who was well acquainted with Cranes abroad), together with the late Tom Robson, M.F.H., when riding across Greyside Fell on their way to hunt at Newbrough, on October 20th, 1908, observed a Crane upon the wing. It had evidently been disturbed by them from the little pond known as Park Dam, just north of Settlingstones. It was probably

the same bird that was seen again by Mr. Robson, near his residence at Bridgeford some time subsequently.

We have no other definite records for Northumberland, but in the autumn of 1901 a bird, believed to have been a Crane, was seen by several people near Lucker. There are one or two records for neighbouring counties.

### THE GREAT BUSTARD

*Otis tarda tarda* Linn.

Long since reduced to the status of a very rare accidental visitant, although it may at one time have been resident in the county; we have had no records since 1870-71. During that winter two of the birds appeared in the neighbourhood of Beal, one of them (a female now in Berwick Museum) being shot on Fenham Flats on January 2nd; the other remained for about ten days and was, probably, the individual which was caught in a rabbit-trap upon Hepburn Moor, as related in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, p. 503.

### THE LITTLE BUSTARD

*Otis tetrax* Linn.

A rare accidental visitant of which Northumberland has three records: one, in the plumage of the female, caught at Prestwick Car about the year 1820, used to be in the collection at Ravensworth Castle; a female shot near Warkworth in the autumn of 1821, preserved at Alnwick Castle; and a male, in winter plumage, killed near Twizell House on February 1st, 1823, now in the Society's Museum.

The Little Bustard has been divided into two races, a Western *O. tetrax tetrax* Linn., and an Eastern, *O. t. orientalis* Hartert, 1916. The latter is stated to



be a somewhat larger bird with the upper plumage, especially the wing-coverts, a little darker (less sandy), but the differences are very slight. Faded by exposure and lapse of years, it is probably impossible now to say to which race any of our specimens belonged—nor can it much matter?

### THE STONE-CURLEW

*Burhinus oedipnemos oedipnemos* (Linn.).

A rare accidental visitant, properly speaking a summer visitor to this country, but occasionally occurring in winter.

A specimen in the Society's collection, from the Old Museum, was obtained on the Farne Islands some time prior to 1883. On New Year's Day 1897, an adult was shot at Backworth near Newcastle; it was accompanied by another when killed but the companion escaped. In the autumn (August or September) of 1904, as I was informed by John M. Charlton, his late father and a friend saw two together on the fell near Darden Lough, the birds passing so close to them that any error in identification was impossible. In the interleaved copy of the second edition of his *Bird Life of the Borders*, Abel Chapman has written—"1915, April 15th. On this date while at the Raven's nest at Coe Crag (which had young) three birds passed in the gorge beneath that, had it been in Spain, I should have put down as Stone-Curlews. They were clearly offset against black heather beyond. In flight, contour, plumage and general appearance they seemed unmistakable, but against that is the fact that never has this species been recorded in Northumberland! They passed 200 yards below and I had the glasses on them for quite 300 yards of flight, A. C." to which is added in red ink, "Above too uncertain to seriously accept." I quote the passage in full not only because it seems to me to leave no doubt about the identity of the birds, but provides a splendid example of

Chapman's ultra care in making records. In the *Vasculum* (Vol. XIV, p. 34) the late General G. J. Cuthbert recorded having seen a Stone-Curlew on the Whitfield moors on August 18th, 1927.

### THE CREAM-COLOURED COURSER

*Cursorius cursor cursor* (Latham).

Another rare accidental visitant of which we have only two occurrences: one shot at Cheswick, November 9th, 1846, the other at Goswick, a mile or two farther along the coast, in the first week of November 1870.

### THE GREY PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus fulicarius* (Linn.).

An irregular winter visitant and passage migrant, usually observed only during the cold months, immature birds, in moult, largely outnumbering adults. Has not been recorded of recent years so frequently as formerly, perhaps owing to lack of observers?

### THE RED-NECKED PHALAROPE

*Phalaropus lobatus* (Linn.).

A passage migrant of very much rarer occurrence than the last, but, like it, usually appearing only in the immature state, chiefly in autumn, and has been little in evidence of recent years, possibly from a like cause. In 1912 I gave details of six Northumbrian examples; since then we seem to have had no others.



## THE WOODCOCK

*Scolopax rusticola rusticola* Linn.

As a resident, is much more abundant now than used formerly to be the case, nesting in suitable places throughout the county, though some of our breeding birds may be no more than summer visitants here, arriving in March and April and departing again in early autumn. As a numerous winter visitant, it reaches us, chiefly in October and early November, and leaves again about the middle of April. In addition to this, many Woodcocks appear to visit us merely as birds-of-passage on their way to and from more northern breeding-stations and more southern winter-quarters: these passage migrants touching our shores, for the most part, earlier in the autumn than the birds which intend to winter here, and probably rather later also in spring.

In each of its rôles, the Woodcock is subject to considerable fluctuations in numbers as between one year and another and, in the event of hard weather being experienced here, many birds which would normally have wintered with us, are driven to seek milder retreats farther to the south and west.

The general colour of the Woodcock is reddish-brown, but (much the same as in Tawny Owls) there is a distinct grey phase of plumage—very conspicuous in some cases. This occurs in either sex and is not confined to any particular race, although, perhaps, most frequent amongst late-nesting birds—*i.e.* amongst our summer visitants.

I have seen eggs in our woods as early as March 3rd, but towards the middle of that month is the more usual time for the first nests to be found. Then, from about the middle of April to early May, eggs are again common; while fresh layings have frequently been observed for several weeks later, sometimes up to even the end of June. Some of these latter may be second layings, owing to first nests having been destroyed, but

there is considerable evidence to support the belief that most of them belong to birds which are only summer visitors to the country. Occasional nests found in July (and even in August) must I think be regarded as second layings, probably resulting from misfortune, for, normally, our Woodcocks appear to be only single-brooded, as demonstrated by their going into moult as soon as the young are fledged, or are able to shift for themselves.

## THE COMMON SNIPE

*Capella gallinago gallinago* (Linn.).

A common resident, nesting in suitable places throughout the county, from little above sea-level up to at least 2,000 feet on the western hills. A considerable number of our breeding birds appear, however, to be only summer visitors for, though their arrival in spring is less conspicuous, or less often noticed, their mustering in the neighbourhood of the coast about the middle of August, prior to departure, is always much in evidence. After that date, there comes an interval during which Snipe are comparatively scarce, before immigrants begin to appear towards the middle or end of October. Part of these remain only for a short time as birds-of-passage, others staying over the cold months as winter visitants and taking their departure in March and April.

To a great degree, Snipe must naturally be influenced by the weather and, during hard frosts, are commonly found resorting for food to the seashore. If the frost be protracted, the majority of them, both immigrants and residents, are driven to seek milder conditions elsewhere; while similar causes may bring large numbers here from other quarters, some of them, perhaps, to perish from starvation.

Variations in the plumage of the Snipe are not infrequent. Pale-coloured, pied, and even white varieties have frequently been recorded; while the very dark



form, formerly known as *Sabine's Snipe*, has likewise occurred in the county on several occasions. Of the somewhat intermediate form, to which racial distinction has been given under the name of *Capella gallinago farøensis* (Brehm), it is not possible to speak with so much certainty, but I have seen Northumbrian specimens which would not seem to be separable from it. The diagnosis relied upon is mainly one of colouring, however, and the extent to which our Snipe differ in details of plumage needs no stressing.

### THE GREAT SNIPE

*Capella media* (Latham).

A passage migrant, which, though always rare and generally found only singly, occurs almost annually in the county, in autumn, usually in September or October.

### THE JACK SNIPE

*Limnocryptes minimus* (Brünnich).

A regular winter visitant, in varying numbers; a few arriving from mid-September onwards, but the bulk of them not till a month later. Some of them appear to be but passage migrants, disappearing before the arrival of hard weather, and to that category belong most of those found in companies in autumn, it being unusual to meet with more than one or two of the birds in a winter's day. It commonly departs in March, and has never been known to nest in the British Islands; but, being a late breeder in the Arctic, it is not very unusual to find a Jack Snipe in Northumberland in April and, occasionally, even in May.

### THE KNOT

*Tringa canutus canutus* Linn.

A common winter visitant and passage migrant, arriving chiefly from the end of August onwards, but often in huge flocks in October and November, and departing in March and April. It is not unusual, however, to meet with passing flocks as late as the middle of May, or with smaller parties in July and early August, and at either season a few individuals in more or less red summer plumage may be found.

The Knot does not attain maturity until at least its second winter, and a few immature birds occasionally elect to spend the summer on the Farne Islands. As illustrating an eccentricity in change of plumage, mention may be made of a specimen in my collection which had already donned two-thirds of its nuptial garb before it was shot, on Fenham Flats, on January 12th, 1898. Appearances inland are rare, and I was indebted to Mr. H. C. King Webster for a male in full red dress, which he shot on his Gilderdale Moor (some 1,500 feet above the sea and over 30 miles from it and little more than a mile beyond the Northumberland march) on August 17th, 1929. It was one of two which came over his butt, the other being allowed to escape, and its empty stomach (save for a little grit) probably indicated that it had just arrived in this country.

### THE LITTLE STINT

*Tringa minuta* Leisler.

A passage migrant, now of pretty regular appearance on the coast in August and September (in small numbers and chiefly in immature plumage) though fifty years ago it was regarded as quite a rare accidental visitor. Has twice been noticed in October, at Beadnell on the 3rd in 1898, and at Ross on the 27th in 1890.



I have never known it to occur in Northumberland in spring, nor met with an adult, but there is one in the British Museum in adult plumage, marked "Northumberland, presented by J. E. Harting 1888."

#### TEMMINCK'S STINT

*Tringa temmincki* Leisler.

An irregular passage migrant of which we have no recent records. Previous occurrences have been—four at Prestwick Car, three on the Newcastle Town Moor, and one at Newton-by-the-Sea; six having been in September, one May 25th and one June 18th, only the two last named birds having been mature.

#### THE AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER

*Tringa maculata* Vieill.

An accidental visitant of whose occurrence we possess but two undoubted records: one of a bird shot on Whitley Sands, June 27th, 1853; the other by Mr. W. G. Watson on Holy Island, October 10th, 1921. The latter was accompanied by a similar-looking bird which might possibly have been of the same species; while there are one or two other somewhat ambiguous records.

#### THE PURPLE SANDPIPER

*Tringa maritima maritima* Brünn.

A common winter visitant to the rocky portions of the coast, arriving in small parties early in September, in larger flocks usually about a month later. It is not very unusual to meet with odd birds during May or June, the Farne Islands being, naturally, a favourite resort, where I have sometimes seen considerable

numbers in practically every month of the year. Some of these should, perhaps, be ranked as merely passage migrants.

#### THE DUNLIN

*Tringa alpina alpina* Linn.

Resident, winter visitant and passage migrant; abounding upon the coast in the latter categories, and thinly scattered over our moorlands as a nesting species. A few immature birds also commonly hang about the seaside throughout the summer.

Owing to their great diversity, both in size and plumage (whence one of the old names *Tringa variabilis*), the Dunlins have been separated into several races, the typical *T. a. alpina* being a northern nester; *T. a. schinzii* more southerly, breeding on the Baltic coasts, in southern Sweden, Holland, etc., including the British Islands; *T. a. arctica* in Eastern Greenland; and *T. a. sakhalina* in Eastern Siberia and North America; but the plumage-differences in summer are not great, while in winter they disappear, the races becoming indistinguishable, and their measurements overlapping. As in the case of the Golden Plovers, it is mainly a question of degree, the more northern-breeding Dunlins inclining to gayer colour-contrasts than their southern relatives, a little rustier above and with more white border to their blacker breasts. But in Lapland I have seen many breeding-males, as well as others amongst the passing flocks in May, no whit more conspicuous in these respects than those on our Northumbrian moors; while amongst the latter, a few may sometimes be met with to rival the gayest of the northern birds. *T. a. sakhalina* is thought to be consistently larger, with a wing up to 4.9 inches in males and 5 inches in females; bill to 1.4 inches in males and 1.6 inches in females; and is believed to have been obtained on Fair Isle (Orkneys) and elsewhere in Europe (*vide* Eagle Clarke): but I have shot Dunlins from the winter flocks on our coast whose measurements fully equalled these.



## THE CURLEW-SANDPIPER

*Tringa ferruginea* Brünn.

A passage migrant; formerly regarded as a very much rarer bird than has within the last three or four decades proved to be the case. It appears to be still increasing, and is now observed regularly upon our coast, in moderate numbers, in August and September, occasionally lingering into the following month and, rarely, wintering here. On the return journey in spring, it has been seldom noticed; adults being always rare at any season.

## THE SANDERLING

*Calidris arenaria* (Linn.).

Chiefly a passage migrant, occurring regularly along the coast, in small parties, from July till the beginning of October, and in larger flocks in May; but a few always remain with us through the winter and, very exceptionally, a non-breeding individual may be found in summer.

## THE RUFF

*Machetes pugnax* (Linn.).

Now reduced to the status of only a passage migrant with us, though up to 1853 it bred at Prestwick Car, and previously, no doubt, at other stations in Northumberland. It still occurs fairly regularly, in small numbers, from August to the middle of October, and has occasionally been met with in spring as well as in winter, the very great majority of our visitors being in immature plumage.

## BARTRAM'S SANDPIPER

*Bartramia longicauda* (Bechstein).

An accidental visitant, of which the female from my collection, now in the Museum, shot on the sea-banks at Longhoughton Low Stead, on November 21st, 1879, is our only record.

## THE COMMON REDSHANK

*Totanus totanus totanus* (Linn.).

A common resident, winter visitant and passage migrant, which, in each category, has increased very greatly within the last fifty years. A century ago it appears to have been a comparatively rare breeding species, almost confined to Prestwick Car and one or two other favoured localities; though it is significant to note that, in 1861, Dr. Charlton recorded it as "still nesting in certain morasses in upper North Tynedale" (*Transactions, Tyneside Naturalists' Field Club*, Vol. V, p. 101). It now breeds in almost every suitable spot throughout the county, and has begun to appear in vast winter flocks upon the coast. At the end of December 1930, Redshanks were by far the most numerous wading-bird on Budle Bay, assembling at high-water-mark in unmixed companies, many hundreds strong, in a manner such as I had never previously witnessed; while Mr. Russell Goddard tells me that he had found them just as numerous there a month before.

In former years its inland haunts used to be regularly deserted for the seashore towards the end of summer, not to be reoccupied till March or April, and a winter Redshank was looked upon as quite a *rara avis* away from salt-water. Nowadays, it is no very unusual thing to meet with it, even in little companies, on the banks of our streams at any season. The migratory bands reach the coast in August and September, and



are again in evidence in April and May when most of our breeding birds are already engaged in incubation.

### THE ICELANDIC REDSHANK

*Totanus totanus robustus* Schiöler.

The Redshank breeding in Iceland has been raised to racial rank on the somewhat slender grounds that in summer its upper plumage is darker and browner, its under parts more heavily spotted and broadly barred black-brown, and its bill "stronger and stouter." The wing is slightly longer (160-169 mm. as against 150-160 mm. in the Common Redshank). In winter plumage neither adults nor young can be distinguished from our bird, while in habits, nest and eggs the two forms are identical. So says Dr. Eagle Clarke, than whom no greater authority need be sought; but as *T. t. robustus* is believed to have been identified from Holy Island the race must be included here even though its claim to distinction be doubted. A winter visitant or passage migrant.

### THE SPOTTED REDSHANK

*Totanus fuscus* (Linn.).

A passage migrant of rare and irregular appearance in autumn, chiefly in August and September, but occasionally tarrying into the following month. Some nine or ten occurrences in the county prior to 1912 have already been enumerated in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* (p. 589); since which date we have had but three others, all in the neighbourhood of Holy Island. One seen by Abel Chapman, August 22nd, 1918, one by Mr. T. G. Laidlaw in September 1927, where it remained for some time and was no doubt the same individual as seen at the Lough by Dr. Hugh M. S. Blair on October 11th, and one by Dr. Blair September 14th to 18th, 1931.

I paid particular attention to this species at its nesting quarters in Lapland during the summers of 1923 and 1924, when we found a number of its eggs as well as newly hatched chicks. It proclaims itself a Redshank by every habit and action, but its legs, at that season, are *not* red but as black as the rest of its dusky attire, relieved only (when the bird is in hand) by a touch of orange on the upper end of the bare part of the tibia (almost concealed by the feathers) and a suspicion of the same in the wrinkles of the joints. These tints of a warmer colour are, of course, unnoticed "in the field," but the soles of the toes are dull orange which does, at times, become visible in flight. The bill, also, is very dark, almost black, except for the base of the lower mandible which is coral red. The latter relief to a very sombre figure, as the bird stands piping with the monotony of an automaton within perhaps ten or twelve yards of the intruder, readily enough catches an attentive eye, but is eclipsed, or outshone, by the bright orange of the inside of the mouth as the bill is widely opened every second or so to emit the piercing cry. It was, perhaps, in compliment to the bird's trivial name that these soft parts were originally so wrongly described, and that the description has been unwittingly followed in so many of our standard works on ornithology.

The newly hatched chick is a mere ball of fluff on what seem extraordinarily long and slender shanks. The longer, hair-like down on the upper parts of the body is black, the thicker under-down pale brown and black in longitudinal stripes, sides of head and neck palish buff passing to nearly white on the under parts. A black streak runs through the eye merging into the nape, which, with most of the crown, is also black. Bill dark horn, practically black at the tip gradually shading paler towards the feathers, a patch at base of lower mandible being of a pale slaty hue: in extreme length it measures about 20 mm. Legs and feet dusky brown, with a slight suggestion of olive, especially in front and along the toes; joints clouded with darker brown, tarsus 28 mm., middle toe 34 mm. long. This description (the first I believe to be given



in print) was taken from one of a brood found on June 23rd, 1923. It was sacrificed to science and, having been restored to a semblance of life under the care of Professor James Ritchie, is now preserved in the Royal Scottish Museum.

#### [THE YELLOWSHANK

*Totanus flavipes* (Gmelin).

A rare accidental visitor to Europe, of which Northumberland can claim no certain record; but a bird seen by Mr. Henry Grey at Longhoughton Low Stead, in October 1880, must, apparently, have been either this or the other nearly allied species. He was close to it as it stood in shallow water on one occasion, and was particularly struck by its yellow legs, and he was so well acquainted with all our ordinary shore-birds that he was very unlikely to have been mistaken. It can only be included within brackets, but I cannot pass it altogether without notice.]

#### THE GREENSHANK

*Totanus nebularius* (Gunnerus).

A regular passage migrant, sometimes in considerable numbers in autumn—August and September—and less numerously in spring from March to the middle of May: most common upon the coast, and on the salt-grasses and oozy burns on the adjoining farms, but constantly occurring, also, inland. As winter visitants, a few regularly spend the cold months at favourable coastal stations, particularly in the neighbourhood of Fenham Flats. A large majority of our earlier visitors appear in first plumage, but adults, more or less in the moult, are never rare amongst them, and by October, most of those which remain are in full winter dress. It is, perhaps, pertinent to note that within recent years the Greenshank has been

reported to have nested on the Scottish side of the Border.

#### THE COMMON SANDPIPER

*Totanus hypoleucus* (Linn.).

A well-known and always welcome summer visitant to the banks of most of our rivers and burns, as well as to many of our loughs; arriving towards the middle of April (occasionally as early as the end of March) and departing on its far-flung southern flight as soon as the young are well on wing. The latter event occurs from early in July onwards, but belated birds commonly linger about their inland haunts a full month longer. As passage migrants, from and to more northern climes, small trips of Sandpipers traverse our coast in April and May and again in August and September. Rarely, an individual has been noticed as late as October, while one was shot, on November 16th, 1839, on the banks of the Till at Ford.

#### THE GREEN SANDPIPER

*Totanus ochropus* (Linn.).

An erratic visitant, appearing most regularly on the autumn and spring migrations, but liable to be met with, singly or in small numbers, in every month of the year, sometimes even in the depth of our hardest winters, as well as in the middle of summer.

#### THE WOOD-SANDPIPER

*Totanus glareola* (Linn.).

Cannot now be regarded as more than a rare passage migrant although, as is well known, it formerly nested at Prestwick Car, whence the eggs taken by Hancock on June 3rd, 1853, still in the Museum, are the only



well-authenticated British specimens. It used to be of almost annual occurrence on the Car, and in its vicinity, and there was reason to believe that it had nested there also in 1857. Recent records are but sparse; Abel Chapman saw one on Holy Island on September 10th, 1922 (*Borders and Beyond*, p. 116), and Mr. W. G. Watson obtained one there on August 30th, 1923. All the earlier occurrences are given in detail in my *Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, pp. 579-81.

#### THE BLACK-TAILED GODWIT

*Limosa limosa limosa* (Linn.).

An uncommon passage migrant which has not within recent years been noticed except in autumn or winter, although Hancock obtained a specimen in full summer plumage from Prestwick Car in 1831, and C. M. Adamson one in similar state at Alnmouth on July 3rd, 1847; while Selby had others killed in spring. Its usual time of appearance now is in September and October and most of the specimens obtained are in immature dress. One was seen at Goswick on January 1st, 1890. Recent occurrences have been: two seen together on Ross Sands by Abel Chapman on September 2nd, 1920, and one reported by Mr. G. W. Temperley as shot in Budle Bay on August 22nd, 1930.

Of only sporadic occurrence inland. Dr. Charlton, writing in 1861, remarked that it had been killed on the morasses of Upper North Tynedale; and, although slightly outside our boundaries, it is of interest to note that Abel Chapman flushed one from a roadside pond near Brampton on September 17th, 1919 (*Borders and Beyond*, p. 113); while Miss L. J. Rintoul saw no less than five together on Hoselaw Loch, just beyond the Northumbrian march in Roxburghshire, on April 29th, 1929 (*Scottish Naturalist*, 1929, p. 163).

#### THE BAR-TAILED GODWIT

*Limosa lapponica lapponica* (Linn.).

An abundant winter visitant and passage migrant to the slakes in the neighbourhood of Holy Island; but of more uncertain appearance elsewhere along the coast.

A few non-breeding birds, in immature plumage, may occasionally be met with during summer. Passing flocks are not rare as late as even the middle of May; but the main bodies of our winter residents depart in February and March, to return again from August up to the middle of November. In early autumn, and to a less extent in spring, a few adults, in more or less perfect nuptial dress, are generally to be found. In this state, the males are full red, a plumage that seems to be seldom, if ever, assumed by the opposite sex; females during the breeding season having their feathers, at most, no more than faintly tinged with red, although that warmer tint (which usually extends even to the rectrices), as well as their browner upper plumage, and the slight transverse barring on their flank-feathers, demonstrates that they have undergone as full a moult.

#### THE COMMON CURLEW

*Numenius arquata arquata* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, passage migrant, winter visitant, and perhaps also entitled to be hypothetically included as a resident.

As a summer visitant, it arrives on our moorlands and grassy fields from the middle of February onwards, begins to lay towards the end of April, and leaves the country as soon as its young are strong enough upon the wing, which is usually in July or early August, though a few unfortunate families may be obliged, through accidents of one kind or another, to delay their departure for another month or so. As a bird-



of-passage to and from other countries it is most in evidence in April and May, and again in September, when large flocks may be encountered upon the coast. Many of these elect to remain here as winter visitants, others continue their migration to more southern climes; while some linger on through the summer as a sort of non-nesting residents. The Curlew does not breed before its second spring, and the younger generation of the migrants would not, therefore, have any special urge to travel elsewhere till they were nearly two years old. Some of them may eventually nest here, and thus earn for themselves the title of true residents. In any event, I think it may safely be said that we have more breeding Curlews upon our moors and fields at the present day than there were fifty years ago, perhaps than ever before, and the number seems to be steadily increasing.

Anyone specially interested in Curlews and their migrations should not fail to read what Abel Chapman said of them in his *Borders and Beyond* (Chap. XVII and elsewhere). It was my privilege to collaborate a good deal with him while he was engaged upon that work, and to place at his disposal the voluminous notes I had kept during well over half a century, and this reference to the gospel he has so engagingly preached will save much space and unnecessary repetition here.

### THE WHIMBREL

*Numenius phaeopus phaeopus* (Linn.).

A passage migrant, regularly appearing in May, frequently in the following month, and becoming common, upon the return journey, from the middle of July till mid-September. It is, however, very erratic and has been noticed (on Holy Island) as early as March 25th (1923), and as late as the middle of October. Naturally most frequent upon the coast, but is liable to turn up inland during any of the summer months.

### THE AVOCET

*Recurvirostra avosetta* Linn.

A rare casual visitant of which our only records are the specimen referred to by Selby as having been killed at Hartley, a little to the north of Tynemouth, not long previous to 1831; and one reported to Dr. E. Leonard Gill as having been seen near Bates' Island, in the same vicinity, by Mr. Crisp in the autumn of 1907 (*Zoologist*, 1912).

### THE SOUTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER

*Charadrius apricarius apricarius* Linn.

Both a winter and summer visitant, very abundant as a passage migrant, and probably, also, a partial resident. If the remarks made on the Curlew (at p. 123) be taken as of equal application here, it will save much space and repetition.

Most numerous upon the coast at the seasons of migration, the Golden Plover is common the year round. Our nesting birds become established upon the hill-tops early in March (depending upon the weather), begin laying towards the middle of April, and have, for the most part, left the country by the end of August. A few weeks later, flocks of passing migrants begin to arrive from farther north, and when these have, likewise, moved on southwards, still larger flocks come to winter here, amongst the latter being, no doubt, considerable numbers of the northern race treated of below.

### THE NORTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER

*Charadrius apicarius altifrons* Brehm.

A winter visitant and passage migrant forming, no doubt, a large portion of the flocks of Golden Plovers



which winter here, although, at that season, indistinguishable in plumage from the southern race.

In their summer dress, typical males are readily enough separated from their southern relatives by their much blacker and white-fringed breast and under-neck, and may be picked out from the flocks which appear on the coast (as well as occasionally inland) in April and May; but the coloration is largely one of degree. Some of our home-breeding birds have much blacker breasts than others, while in Lapland I have seen nesting males differing not at all from the typical breeders on our Northumbrian moors.

### THE GREY PLOVER

*Squatarola squatarola squatarola* (Linn.).

A regular winter visitant and passage migrant along the coast, usually in small parties but sometimes of a score or two, the great majority of them being in first plumage. These young birds do not usually arrive before September, some of them make only a short stay, but others remain, still in immature dress, till the spring. Adults are never more than comparatively rare: a few sometimes arrive in August (very occasionally in July), in the more or less worn finery of summer; while they have been recorded in that state as late as September 12th and even on October 4th. Most of them do not reach us before the middle of the latter month, by which date they have assumed their winter dress, and then chiefly break their journey for a few hours only before continuing it to more southern quarters. Similarly, in spring, a few may be found on passage, in full summer plumage, in May; and Selby mentions having met with them even in June on the Farne Islands.

It is quite exceptional to find a Grey Plover away from salt-water at any season in this country; but Dr. Eagle Clarke and I observed five immature birds in company with a pack of Dunlins on the muddy shores of Hallington Lough on September 24th, 1919.

### THE RINGED PLOVER

*Ægialitis hiaticula hiaticula* (Linn.).

A resident, passage migrant, and winter visitant: common in each capacity. Large migratory flocks visit the coast for a few days (or perhaps only for an hour or two) in spring, sometimes as late as the end of May, by which time our resident birds have hatched their young, and again in September and even into October.

As a breeding species, it is located all along the coast in limited numbers, wherever suitable beaches of sand or shingle prevail; but nests may, also, occasionally be found on adjoining fields, chiefly such as are in cultivation or lying fallow. Within the last few decades, however, it has taken to nesting regularly by the shores of many of our gravelly streams and lakes, a habit which was quite exceptional in my younger days, but which is now carrying it, in ever increasing numbers, up many of our hill-burns almost to their sources, say 30 or 40 miles from the sea.

Some of the Ringed Plovers obtained on our coast are very small and probably represent an Eastern race *Æ. h. tundra*; several skins were in the Museum but are no longer available for comparison.

### THE KENTISH PLOVER

*Ægialitis alexandrina alexandrina* (Linn.).

An accidental visitant of which we possess no record except that made by Abel Chapman in his *Borders and Beyond* (p. 113) where a sketch is given of one of an adult pair he observed amongst a mixed group of Sanderlings, Dunlins and Ringed Plovers, on Budle Bay, on August 23rd, 1918.



## THE DOTTEREL

*Endromias morinellus* (Linn.).

A summer visitant and passage migrant. Formerly of regular appearance, in small trips, in April and May, and less frequently in autumn—August and September—even to such populous places as Newcastle Town Moor and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea; but nearly banished, thirty years ago, by the insensate cupidity and ignorance of fly-fishermen and others. It still continues to be shot at times, Protection Acts and more public sympathy notwithstanding, but chiefest amongst its unfriends now must be reckoned the egg-collector and the photographer. It formerly nested on our hills and yet continues to do so, *longo intervallo*; but love, and respect for the activities and lack of thought of these gentlefolk, dries up the ink in one's pen and makes silence more golden than mere written records.

## THE LAPWING

*Vanellus vanellus* (Linn.).

A well-known resident but, likewise, to a large extent, a passage migrant, and also a winter and summer visitant. In each of these capacities, especially as nester, it fell off lamentably in numbers for some years after 1916, and has not even yet fully recovered its erstwhile abundance.

It may some day be of interest to record that in 1926 there were at least half a dozen Peewits' nests on the Inner Farne, where I do not remember ever to have seen one before. To this, in over-reading these pages, Mr. T. Russell Goddard adds that it now breeds regularly on the Inner Farne where he saw several nests on May 3rd, 1931.

## THE OYSTER CATCHER

*Hæmatopus ostralegus ostralegus* Linn.

A resident and winter visitant, much more numerous at the latter season than in summer, but most abundant as a passage migrant in September and October, and again from February to May, sometimes even to mid-June. Breeds sparingly on the Farnes and elsewhere along the coast, and of late years has shown a tendency to do so inland, on the banks of Tyne, Rede, Coquet and Tweed. Full maturity is not attained until after the second winter.

## THE TURNSTONE

*Arenaria interpres interpres* (Linn.).

A winter visitant and passage migrant, a few non-breeding birds often lingering on the coast through the summer. Arrives from early in August throughout September, and departs again in April and May. Does not attain full maturity until after its second summer. Essentially a bird of the seashore, but I have occasionally met with it inland, usually only heard passing over. One was shot at Whickhope, North Tyne, in May 1869.

## THE BLACK TERN

*Hydrochelidon nigra nigra* (Linn.).

A rare passage migrant which has been noticed with increasing frequency of recent years. Occurrences since 1912 have been: An adult on Farne Islands, May 26th, 1912; an adult on Hallington Lough, July 15th, 1914; a pair seen by Mr. G. W. Temperley on Grindon Lough, May 25th, 1920; and an immature bird shot on Angerton Lough, August 26th, 1921.



## THE WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN

*Hydrochelidon leucoptera* (Temminck)

An accidental visitor on migration of which our only record is of the two adults observed by the late E. O. Reed hawking insects over Gosforth Lake, in May about 1897.

## THE CASPIAN TERN

*Hydroprogne caspia* (Pall.).

Another rare visitant on migration of which our only record is—"One, Farne Islands, June 6th, 1880, seen by Mr. E. Bidwell, but not obtained" (*Zoologist*, 1887, p. 457).

## THE SANDWICH TERN

*Sterna sandvicensis sandvicensis* Latham.

A summer visitant, which breeds abundantly on the Farne Islands, and still continues to attempt doing so on Holy Island, and one or two places on the adjoining coast. Arrives towards the end of April, more numerous in May, and departs about the end of September, a few occasionally lingering into October. The eggs are commonly laid a week or so earlier than those of its associating species.

It is interesting to recall that a Sandwich Tern marked as a nestling on the Farnes by Miss N. H. Greig, on July 8th, 1919, was recovered by Dr. E. Leonard Gill eighty miles north of Cape Town in August 1925, six years after it had been marked and over 6,000 miles from its birthplace.

## THE ROSEATE TERN

*Sterna dougalli dougalli* Montagu.

A summer visitant which has nested, in small numbers, amongst the other terns on the Farne Islands, from time out of mind without either appreciably increasing or the reverse. In 1914 there were at least seven pairs on the Islands, of which six pairs at any rate hatched their young, and probably most of them were reared—a high-water mark, within my experience, during the last half-century. On July 12th, 1926, I noticed at least half a dozen adults fishing, with Sandwich and other terns, where the Waren Burn enters the sea. A flock of quite twenty or thirty, about half of them immature, encountered off the Megstone on September 14th, 1885, must have been, in part at least, passing migrants, as not more than the usual pair or two were nesting on the Islands that year.

Arrives in May and is seldom seen later than mid-September.

## THE COMMON TERN

*Sterna hirundo hirundo* Linn.

A common summer visitant, breeding in considerable numbers on the Farne Islands, Holy Island, and elsewhere along the coast, but always much outnumbered by both the Arctic and Sandwich Terns, with the former of which it freely associates, and from which it is best distinguished, "in the field," by its voice, a sharp *kik kik* and *tiern* (whence one of its local names), as opposed to the harsh alarm-note of the Arctic Tern *tarry* and *kaah*.

Arrives from about the middle of April, and few remain later than mid-September, although the appearance of small parties in October is not



rare and, on occasion, they have been met with even in mid-winter. Some of these late birds are, doubtless, passage migrants, and to the same category may be referred many of the wandering individuals which are from time to time observed on inland waters. The Common Tern, is, however, less restricted than the rest of its genus to seaside rocks and shingle-bars as a nesting place, and sometimes lays its eggs on marshy fields near the coast as well as, occasionally, by the margins of some of our loughs and rivers. There have been to my knowledge, single nests at Broomlee Lough in several of the last twenty years, and possibly others at Hallington and elsewhere.

#### THE ARCTIC TERN

*Sterna paradisæa* (Brunnich).

An abundant summer visitant and passage migrant, nesting in large colonies on the Farne Islands, and less numerous elsewhere upon the coast. Arrives with its kindred in April and May, and departs in August and September, but passing companies are frequent during October and have occasionally been observed some weeks later.

#### THE LITTLE TERN

*Sterna minuta minuta* Linn.

A summer visitant and passage migrant; arriving in May and remaining till August. There was an ancient habitation on the Old Law, at Ross, where Hancock found about a dozen pairs nesting just a hundred years ago, but owing to the eggs being taken, or from other causes, it had almost ceased to exist by 1856 and became altogether deserted within the next few years. For more than half a century thereafter, the species was represented by only occasional wanderers along the

coast (though there was probably a nest about Cheswick in 1890), and it was not until the war-years that any serious effort at rehabilitation took place. During that period, Little Terns, and their presumed nesting, were reported from various places on the coast, but through lack of competent observers reliable identification was seldom possible. However, there was certainly one nest on Holy Island in 1915; probably two in 1923, besides one or two on the Old Law; on June 14th that year the Rev. G. F. Courtenay found a pair nesting on the shingle at Cheswick, where Mr. T. B. Short had seen several of the birds amongst other terns in the previous July. Mr. W. G. Watson observed that at least two pairs remained on Holy Island throughout the summer of 1924; and on June 26th, 1926, Mr. G. W. Temperley found two nests containing eggs there and saw more of the birds upon the wing. Mr. T. Russell Goddard tells me that some were breeding on the Island in 1928; but since that date I have had no definite information except that the birds have been noticed each year both at Holy Island and on the mainland. It is clear, therefore, that the complete restoration of the Little Tern to its ancient status of a regular breeding species on our coast is only a question of time—and forbearance.

#### THE LITTLE GULL

*Larus minutus* Pall.

An irregular autumn and winter visitant, but occasionally appearing (usually in immature dress) in summer. In 1912 I gave details of over a dozen Northumbrian examples; since that date we have had about as many more. Except one, immature, seen near Wooler in October 1898, all have occurred upon the coast, and very few have been adults. Tabulating those of which the dates have been preserved, they have occurred—8 in January; 1 each in April, May, July, August and September; 3 in December; and 3 each in June and October. Of recent years, an immature bird



was seen at the Farne Islands on June 16th, 1914, an adult on 27th of the same month; immature birds at Holy Island September 22nd, 1922, April 14th and 15th, 1923, May 17th, 1924, and one December 3rd, 1929; one at the Farnes August 15th, 1923, and one at the mouth of the Tyne June 19th, 1929. Mr. C. Noble Rollin reported that on January 2nd, 1930, he saw a party of seven Little Gulls on the Tweed at Berwick, one of which was an adult. (*Vasculum*, Vol. XVI, p. 77.)

### THE BLACK-HEADED GULL

*Larus ridibundus ridibundus* Linn.

An abundant resident, summer visitant and passage migrant, of which the county can boast many populous colonies, some of them, perhaps, scarcely so populous as they were a few years ago. A large number of our birds leave us for the winter and return again in spring, some, no doubt, being no more than passage migrants. A large proportion of the young reared here seem to leave us on the approach of winter, and not to return again until they have assumed the fully adult dress, which is not before their second autumn. A few individuals, however, may sometimes be observed nesting although still retaining the dark terminal band on the tail and other vestiges of immaturity.

### [THE GREAT BLACK-HEADED GULL

*Larus ichthyaëtus* Pall.

Mr. Jasper Atkinson recorded (*Naturalist*, Sept. 1913, p. 321) two large gulls which he saw together at the Farne Islands on July 20th of that year, that from his description would seem to have been nothing else than this rare accidental visitant. The species has only thrice been obtained in this country, and the evidence may be somewhat slight for its inclusion here, yet I do not like to pass it unnoticed.]

### THE COMMON GULL

*Larus canus canus* Linn.

An abundant winter visitant and passage migrant, and, as it is never absent from the coast and has bred upon the Farne Islands (1910 to 1914 inclusive, but not more than one or two pairs in each year,) must also be included as a partial resident. It winters upon the coast in large flocks, the bulk of which arrive from about the middle of August and remain till April; but later than that, at both seasons, passing flocks, or smaller parties, may be met with upon the coast, as well as inland, on their way to and from more distant retreats. These frequently tarry for a week or two as they travel, attracted by good feeding-grounds, and may regularly be heard *mewing* overhead as they continue their interrupted migration after dark.

### THE HERRING-GULL

*Larus argentatus argentatus* Pontoppidan.

A resident, the most sedentary of our gulls, though always most numerous during the colder months. It has increased considerably as a breeding species on the Farne Islands during recent years, but has been driven away from its inland nesting-station on Hindlee Steel, North Tynedale. Nathless, an adult pair or so continue to appear from time to time, in the breeding season, about our loughs, or soaring over the fells, prospecting for eligible nesting sites—or slumbering keepers?



## THE NORTHERN LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

*Larus fuscus fuscus* Linn.

A passage migrant or winter visitant. It is thought probable that to this race may belong most of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls that winter on our coast, though since its sub-specific distinctness came to be generally accepted (about 1912), opportunities for investigation have not often come my way. It is darker in the mantle than our common breeding race, and the slaty-black feathers are apt to become tinged with brown as the season advances, a feature that is said not to occur in *L. fuscus affinis*.

The Museum possesses an early example of the Northern race in a specimen, a mature female, shot on the Northumbrian coast in May 1891, set up and presented by Robert Duncan.

## THE WESTERN LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

*Larus fuscus affinis* Reinhardt.

A summer visitant and passage migrant, while some of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls wintering here seem undoubtedly to belong to this race, although, so far as I am aware, no specimens have been critically examined *in hand*—almost the only means by which the sub-species can be satisfactorily differentiated.

As a breeding species, it is one of the most abundant birds on the Farne Islands, where it has long defied all attempts to check its increase. With its inland nesting colonies, gamekeepers have dealt drastically, especially during the last decade, and from most of them it has been banished. It is now chiefly only scattered nests that occur upon our moors, but the determined manner in which ancient habitations are revisited demonstrates how soon they would be occupied again were persecu-

tion staid; it may, likewise, shed some light upon the longevity of birds and their retentive memory? As a summer visitant its stay is brief, the canorous flocks, so attractive as they soar and circle high above our hills, seldom appearing much before the middle of April and beginning to depart again from mid-July onwards. Upon the coast such migrations are not so conspicuous, or are not so regularly noticed.

That the earlier departures may consist of birds whose domestic affairs have gone agley, is suggested by the fact that there are still plenty of young in down, and even nests containing eggs, in July; but the number of the early emigrants is often considerable, a July flock commonly containing a score or two of individuals—all adults. Some of them may be mere birds-of-passage southward bound from latitudes where the loss of a nest must generally connote the loss of the all-too-short arctic summer. It is always very noticeable that these early migrating bands consist exclusively of mature birds, a fact which led us, long ago, to suppose that the young must winter upon our coast, while most of their parents travelled elsewhere; but maturer reflection suggests an opposing theory. The Lesser Black-back does not attain the adult state until its fourth year, yet immature birds (except, of course, those recently fledged) are always comparatively scarce with us. Do they prefer to pass their adolescence elsewhere? and, if so, where is it that they congregate?

As has already been stated, I have had few opportunities of observing this gull, locally, since the species was divided, although in former days I had often enough seen the birds upon the Northumberland coast in winter and even handled specimens. Their presence in later years, about the mouth of the Tyne and elsewhere, has several times been reported by reliable friends, but almost my only personal notes bearing upon the point, have been:

1922 December 23rd. An adult amongst other gulls in Budle Bay, which after being carefully glassed, came so close to me that its yellow legs could be plainly seen with the naked eye. Its mantle:



was no darker than usual, and I confidently put it down as an ordinary *L. f. affinis*.

(1924 July 22nd. I was watching one of the usual migrating flocks, drifting southward high over Alston, when the glasses revealed a Peregrine circling yet higher still above them, a mere speck against the clouds to the naked eye. It drifted away south with the gulls; was it also migrating?)

1926 October 22nd. At Shitlington, North Tyne, a large cackling crowd wheeling high overhead. Unusually late for them to be still migrating?

Mr. W. G. Watson writes me, February 18th, 1932, "I never obtained a specimen of *Larus f. fuscus*. I have, however, seen Lesser Black-backs in winter, but did not then attach sufficient importance to make notes of them. These would probably be the northern form, they were only in dribbles."

It is now well known that the winter quarters of this gull extend to the Mediterranean and even farther south. Amongst the breeding colonies of the northern race on the coast of Norway, I have seen birds in the neighbourhood of Vardö, whose conspicuously paler mantles at once attracted attention and proclaimed them to belong to *L. f. affinis*. Apparently the two races were inter-breeding there, as we could never satisfy ourselves that any two of the paler-backed birds were paired together.

### THE GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL

*Larus marinus* Linn.

A resident and passage migrant, common upon the coast in winter, and never wholly absent at any season. Over the western hills it likewise occurs throughout the year, in roving pairs or small companies, being, naturally, most frequent during the cold months: one of the most picturesque of the few large birds left to add to the charm of the wild moors it frequents, and

whose raucous cry and stately flight would be missed by everybody—except perhaps the grouse-preserve?

There are no old records of its ever having nested in the county, although it seems hard to believe that in olden days some of our outbye mosses never attracted it; but in 1923 a pair successfully brought off three young on the Northumberland side of Carter Fell. I believe this to be the only known instance of the Great Black-backed Gull, having nested on the east side of Britain south of Aberdeenshire, and the credit of the record belongs to a member of the Society, Mr. Robert Craigs. The birds returned to the site in the following year but were killed by the keepers.

### THE GLAUCOUS GULL

*Larus hyperboreus* Gunnerus.

A winter visitant, irregular in appearance, sometimes present in moderate numbers, more usually seen only singly, immature birds being always largely in the majority.

### THE ICELAND GULL

*Larus leucopterus* Vieill.

Another casual winter visitant, always rarer than the last and, like it, generally appearing only in immature plumage: like it, too, it occasionally strays inland with other gulls. Abel Chapman recorded one at Houxty, on January 27th, 1915, which is farther from salt-water than these gulls usually trust themselves.

### THE KITTIWAKE

*Rissa tridactyla tridactyla* (Linn.).

A resident and winter visitant, nesting in large numbers on the Farne Islands; never absent from the coast, but usually keeping a good offing. The young



do not attain maturity before their second autumn, and those hatched here, as well as their parents, probably move southward for the winter, their places being taken by birds from more northern latitudes. The distances to which they may wander is illuminated by Mr. Witherby's ringing scheme, young Kittiwakes marked on the Farnes having been recovered as follows: one ringed June 28th, 1923, was recovered off Newfoundland August 12th, 1924, another ringed June 30th, 1924, was found off Labrador October 28th, 1925; a third ringed June 23rd, 1928, was reported from Newfoundland December 10th, 1930; a fourth ringed July 1st, 1929, picked up in Newfoundland December 24th, 1930; a fifth ringed July 2nd, 1929, caught in Davis Strait, off west coast of Greenland, and within the Arctic Circle; in July 1931.

#### THE IVORY GULL

*Pagophila alba* Gunnerus.

A rare casual visitant of which we may claim two records: a mature bird referred to by Hancock as shot at the mouth of the Tyne some years prior to 1874, and an immature individual, now in the Museum, killed at Beadnell a year or two subsequent to 1897. A photograph of the latter specimen is given in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, p. 648.

#### THE GREAT SKUA

*Stercorarius skua skua* (Brünn.).

A passage migrant of rare and uncertain appearance on the coast in autumn and winter. I referred, in 1912, to about a dozen Northumbrian occurrences prior to that date, since then we have had the advantage of Mr. W. G. Watson's residence on Holy Island, whence he reported one September 21st, 1922, which continued

to frequent the harbour for several days: one on January 30th, 1924; two on November 7th: and a fourth shot there on November 23rd, 1929.

#### THE POMATORHINE SKUA

*Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temminck).

A passage migrant and winter visitant, very irregular in its visits but sometimes coming in considerable flocks; about the middle of October being the most usual date of appearance.

#### THE ARCTIC OR RICHARDSON'S SKUA

*Stercorarius parasiticus* (Linn.).

A regular passage migrant, not uncommon along the coast, chiefly in August and September, sometimes even numerous; but much less frequently noticed in spring: rarely, it has been recorded in November and once in December—at Newton-by-the-Sea in 1867. Mr. Watson obtained one at Holy Island on May 13th, 1922: we used occasionally to see it as late off the mouth of Tweed, and sometimes even in June. Now and again it strays considerably inland and has been shot as far from salt-water as Chirdon on North Tyne, and Allendale.

#### THE LONG-TAILED OR BUFFON'S SKUA

*Stercorarius longicaudus* Vieill.

A rare passage migrant, appearing irregularly and at long intervals on our coast, usually in October. An exception, an adult bird seen off Holy Island on May 10th, 1922, furnished Abel Chapman with matter for a captivating sketch in his *Borders and Beyond*, p. 78.



## THE RAZORBILL

*Alca torda* Linn.

A resident and winter visitant, common off shore during the cold months, and nesting, in small but apparently increasing numbers, on the Farne Islands. Like most of its kindred it is liable to be blown inland occasionally; as an unusual time to find it there, one captured on Elsdon Moor on May 21st, 1913, may be mentioned.

## THE GREAT AUK

*Alca impennis* Linn.

Has long been extinct, but there is Wallis' old record of one caught on the Farne Islands some years prior to 1769.

## THE COMMON GUILLEMOT

*Uria troile troile* (Linn.).

A resident, nesting abundantly on the Farnes and, perhaps, reinforced during winter by others bred farther north.

The Ringed variety persists at the Farnes, to the (estimated) extent of about 5 per cent. of the population on the Pinnacles.

Those who are able to divide our Guillemot into a southern and a northern form may be interested to know that Mr. Witherby has announced (*British Birds* (Mag.), Vol. XXIV, p. 300) that some birds from the Farnes which he has examined, he considers to be referable to the former, upon which the designation of *Uria t. albionis* has been bestowed.

## BRÜNNICH'S GUILLEMOT

*Uria lomvia lomvia* (Linn.).

A rare accidental visitant. One was shot near the Farne Islands in the winter of 1883-84; one seen about the same place in June 1908; and one picked up by the late J. M. Charlton on the beach at Cullercoats on November 29th, 1913.

## THE BLACK GUILLEMOT

*Uria grylle grylle* (Linn.).

A winter visitant and bird-of-passage, not very uncommon at the periods of migration, but chary of too close an approach to the coast. It has on several occasions been observed in the vicinity of the Farne Islands in summer, but there is no very satisfactory evidence that it ever bred there.

## THE LITTLE AUK

*Alle alle* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, very erratic in its visits, in some seasons appearing on the coast in large storm-wrecked flocks and then liable, at times, to be blown far inland. These occurrences have generally been in the dead of winter, but have ranged from October 20th to March 24th. On May 7th, 1892, one in complete summer plumage was picked up dead in the Duke of Northumberland's park at Alnwick and submitted to me.



## THE PUFFIN

*Fratercula arctica arctica* (Linn.).

A resident, never altogether absent from the coast and breeding in large colonies on the Farne Islands; but these chiefly leave us in August and early September, to return again about the end of March. The winter-flocks are largely composed of passage migrants from more northern latitudes, some of which doubtless remain off our coast as winter visitants.

## THE STORM-PETREL

*Thalassidroma pelagica* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, and bird-of-passage, not very rare some miles out to sea, especially at the times of migration, but, like all its pelagic kindred, seldom approaching the coast except under stress of weather. We have had many records of birds picked up after or during storms, some of them at considerable distances inland, chiefly from early in September to the end of November. As unseasonable dates it may be mentioned that C. M. Adamson recorded that many appeared on our coast at the end of June 1836, one of which, killed with a stone on Cullercoats beach, June 25th, is in the Hancock collection in the Museum; and that John Crisp, the keeper of the lighthouse on St. Mary's Island, noticed passing flocks of 12, 9, 3 and 3; all flying north, on different days in the middle of June 1915 (*Vasculum*, Vol. I. p. 56).

## LEACH'S FORK-TAILED PETREL

*Oceanodroma leucorhoa leucorhoa* (Vieill.).

Another erratic winter visitant or passage migrant, scarcely less often observed than the last, and under like conditions.

## THE MANX SHEARWATER

*Puffinus puffinus puffinus* (Brünnich).

An erratic visitant to our coast, most frequently seen at the periods of migration, but has very nearly as often been met with, in small parties, especially in the neighbourhood of the Farne Islands, in the middle of summer. Despite old hopes and beliefs, however, no evidence has ever been forthcoming that the birds had more than a vagrant interest in the Islands, and no nesting-site is known anywhere on the eastern side of Great Britain. It may not be irrelevant to add that writing me an account of a visit he paid to Holy Island and the Farnes in the middle of May 1922, Abel Chapman referred to the number of Shearwaters then seen, both off Holy Island and the Farnes on different days, and added "Lilburn (one of his boatmen) put one out of a rock-hole on the Knoxes last July." No egg could be found, "but to determine for certain whether any breed there one would have to camp on the spot for a night or two." Than which, neither advice nor comment could be more to the purpose, but so far as I am aware no one has ever acted upon it.

## THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN SHEARWATER

*Puffinus puffinus mauretanicus* Lowe.

An accidental visitant to British Seas of which Northumberland can claim two occurrences; one shot off Cullercoats in September 1860, now in the Museum; the other by Mr. W. G. Watson off Bamburgh, September 8th, 1921. It was only in the latter year that the Mediterranean Shearwaters were divided into two racial forms, the bird first above mentioned having previous to that been referred to as *Puffinus yelkouanus*.



## [THE GREAT SHEARWATER

*Puffinus gravis* (O'Reilly).

A rare accidental visitant of which better authenticated records from our coast would be very welcome. A mature specimen "from the old collection" is in the Museum and was presented by George C. Atkinson about the year 1830. It was believed to have been obtained locally, but its history has, unfortunately, been lost. Mr. Henry Grey had one, caught and set up by himself, off Boulmer about 1875, which from its size and colour could hardly have been anything else than this, but it fell into decrepitude and was lost: while others seen on the coast about the same period (with the allied species) I have as little doubt were *P. gravis*.]

## THE SOOTY SHEARWATER

*Puffinus griseus* (Gmelin).

An autumn visitant, which used to be fairly frequently seen on our coast, but of which we have latterly had little news, perhaps from lack of observers? It has generally appeared in August and September, several times about the Farnes, twice at Newbiggin (in 1887 and 1897). To the Forth it is looked upon as a regular visitor in moderate numbers.

## THE FULMAR

*Fulmarus glacialis glacialis* (Linn.).

In 1912, I could only include the Fulmar as a casual winter visitant, but drew attention to its marked increase during the previous two decades; it must now rank as a resident as well, and one that is steadily increasing.

It was in 1919 that Fulmars were first noticed to be summering at the Farnes, where a pair or two continued to haunt the cliffs on the Inner Island during the two following summers. In May 1922 there appeared to be five or six pairs, but it was not until 1929 that any definite information of their actually breeding there was forthcoming. In the previous year several pairs attempted to nest at the Coves on Holy Island, but all eggs laid there were promptly "collected." During the same summer (1928) eggs were also taken at Cullernose Point, Dunstanburgh, and perhaps elsewhere along that part of the coast, but at least one or two young were reared, and the *furor* of collectors for locally-taken Fulmar's eggs having now abated, the species will no doubt go on increasing.

One hardly expects to find so thoroughly pelagic a bird to stray far from salt-water for nesting purposes, but eligible seaside cliffs, not already occupied, are scarce, and I was agreeably surprised to find last April (1931) several pairs of Fulmars frequenting some of the basaltic escarpments between Bamburgh and Spindleston, where Mrs. Hodgkin informs me they remained in possession up to the middle of July. They certainly appeared as if they might (or ought to) be nesting, but so far as I know neither eggs nor young have been seen. Some of these bluffs are nearly a mile from salt-water and even farther from the real live sea.

Unless driven in by storms, Fulmars spend most of the winter at sea. They retire from their nesting places as soon as the season is over, often beginning as early as the middle or end of July. The moult is passed on "blue water," and they begin to reappear about the cliffs, sometimes before the end of December, usually a month or six weeks later; but a long period of dalliance is spent about their breeding haunts, accompanied by pretty love-making and a good deal of quiet crooning, and eggs are not laid till well into May. Frequently this "courting" is pursued for several years before eggs appear; but whether that is



owing to the birds having a prolonged period of adolescence to go through, or at what age they become sexually mature, I have not been able to ascertain. These might be interesting points for younger naturalists to take up.

The phenomenal increase of the Fulmar during the present century has been the most striking ornithological event in this country. Whether it can be attributed to the natural outflow of a redundant population on St. Kilda must remain in the realms of conjecture. That many thousands of the birds used to be killed annually by the St. Kildans as food and fuel is well known, and that drain upon its numbers having within recent years been staid, it is obvious how the demand for additional accommodation for nesting sites must have increased. A somewhat analogous increase has, however, been reported from its Arctic Nurseries, when the vast numbers of Fulmars had long ago caused Darwin to regard it as probably the most numerous bird in the world. Extensions from any of these colonies must, of necessity, have taken a southward trend so that we are not helped much in a search for the origin of our invaders. It may be significant, however, to note the interesting fact that up till a few years ago the whole of the long cliff-girt coast of Norway had never attracted the Fulmar, and that the only individuals breeding upon that coast, up to 1924, were then only recent arrivals and were located about Stavanger at the extreme south of the Peninsula.

As is well known, the Fulmar is subject to a pronounced dimorphism in plumage, the dark phase being the northern form, the pale one the most prevalent on British seas. In *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders* I drew particular attention to a marked increase, prior to that date, of the dark phase amongst our then winter visitors, but latterly they do not seem to have been so much in evidence, though some birds of apparently an intermediate coloration have been observed amongst those breeding upon our coast. That is a matter deserving attention amongst our ornithologists. An exceptionally good example

of the dark phase, from my old collection (found at Holy Island April 27th, 1903) is in the Museum, one or two others being preserved in Armstrong College. I have heard super-critical people take exception to some of these being mounted "standing upon their toes," the ordinary habit of the birds being to rest upon the full length of the tarsus. I set up most of my birds myself and can assure the critics that I have seen Fulmars not only stand so but have actually had a weak storm-driven bird walk, or run, over the sand, *not* to escape but *towards* me in order to attack my legs!

### THE BLACK-BROWED ALBATROSS

*Diomedea melanophrys* Temminck.

A rare accidental visitant. I was able to identify a bird, seen off Holy Island on February 21st, 1895, as unquestionably an Albatross, and both in size and colour it agreed with this, the only member of the genus ever recorded from British waters: But for it to be here *in winter* is, I believe, unique.

### THE GREAT NORTHERN DIVER

*Colymbus immer* Brünnich.

A winter visitant, not uncommon along the coast from about the end of October till March or April; usually seen singly, in pairs, or in small companies, adults in full plumage being always comparatively rare. Occasionally one may appear inland. Immature birds weigh from 6½ to 8 lbs. or a little more, adults up to 12 or 13 lbs., males being always three or four pounds heavier than females.



## THE WHITE-BILLED NORTHERN DIVER

*Colymbus adamsi* G.R.Gray.

A rare accidental visitant, of which an adult "shot on a bog near Embleton, December 1829," and presented by Mr. G. Davidson (Vol. I, p. 1 of the *Transactions*) is still in the Museum. It was the first British specimen to be recognised and remains the only local one in existence.

## THE BLACK-THROATED DIVER

*Colymbus arcticus arcticus* Linn.

A winter visitant, not rare, but more numerous in some years than in others, and always much scarcer than the next. Usually appears between October and March, but sometimes lingers into April and even as late as the middle of May, by which time the full summer dress has been attained. We have, however, several instances of birds in "summer" plumage being seen or obtained in winter. Occasionally strays inland. Average weight of adults about 5 or 6 lbs., but examples have been recorded exceeding 8 lbs., females being little inferior to males in that respect. Young birds in winter run to about 4 or 5 lbs.

## THE RED-THROATED DIVER

*Colymbus stellatus* Pontoppidan.

A winter visitant, fairly common along the coast, sometimes even numerous, and more given to trusting itself inland, both on lakes and our larger rivers, than either of its congeners. Varies much in size as well as weight, adults that I have weighed running from 3 to 5 lbs., young from  $2\frac{1}{4}$  to quite 5 lbs. Examples

in summer plumage are not very infrequently met with both in autumn (from August to October) and spring (from February to May). An exceptionally late one, in full plumage, was picked up dead on Whitley Sands, June 16th, 1892.

## THE GREAT CRESTED GREBE

*Podiceps cristatus cristatus* (Linn.).

Still, as formerly, not uncommon as a winter visitant on the coast, where it has fairly frequently appeared in full nuptial plumage—more than once at the Farne Islands in the height of summer—it must now be included, also, as a resident, it having been detected breeding at several of our loughs since 1911. Average weight of immature birds on the coast about 2 lbs.; of mature males about a pound more; females always a little less.

## THE RED-NECKED GREBE

*Podiceps griseigena griseigena* (Boddaert).

A winter visitant, irregular in appearance, and generally scarcer than the last, but sometimes arrives in quite exceptional numbers, as in January 1891 and February 1922. In the latter year Mr. W. G. Watson has recorded it as being unusually numerous at Holy Island, many being washed up dead along the shore between February 3rd and 11th. Its usual time of appearance is after the New Year, but it has frequently been found as early as the beginning of September, some of the adults then retaining more or less of their worn summer livery, and the young the striped necks of immaturity. Specimens in full breeding plumage have several times been obtained in March; of one which appeared on Hallington Reservoir on May 20th, 1926, a beautiful coloured drawing by Mr. W. H.



Riddell is given in Abel Chapman's *Retrospect*, p. 12. Young birds in winter weigh up to about 20 oz.; adult males up to a full pound more, females being always a little less. Mr. Watson shot an exceptionally fine adult in October 1920 which scaled 2 lbs. 6 oz.

### THE SCLAVONIAN OR HORNED GREBE

*Podiceps auritus* (Linn.).

A winter visitant, common along the coast in moderate numbers; appearing from October onwards, but usually most numerous after the New Year. Individuals beginning to assume the nuptial livery have rarely been noted in March; but one in complete summer plumage was killed off Cullercoats on April 26th, 1830, and another at Newton-by-the-Sea about midsummer 1840. Now and again one is met with inland, it being worthy of special note that Abel Chapman has recorded seeing two together on Pawston Lough in June 1906, but not in breeding plumage.

Males, in winter, scale about a pound, females a little less, young 10 to 12 oz.

### THE EARED OR BLACK-NECKED GREBE

*Podiceps nigricollis nigricollis* C.L. Brehm.

A winter visitant, of irregular appearance upon the coast, and the rarest of the family. It does not usually come before the middle of December and has more often been observed in March, by which time some are beginning to assume their summer dress. Occasionally occurs inland, and an increasing tendency to tarry there into summer is significant. Weighs a little less than the preceding species; average rather under  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb.

### THE LITTLE GREBE OR DABCHICK

*Podiceps fluvialis fluvialis* (Tunstall).

A common resident, breeding on many of our inland waters, and frequently to be seen along the coast, especially off estuaries, in winter, when it is, at least locally, to some extent migratory. Weight about 5 or 6 oz.

### THE LAND-RAIL OR CORNCRAKE

*Crex crex* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, and passage migrant, the Corn-crake used to be a common bird throughout the county but has, unfortunately, very much decreased in numbers within recent years, especially since 1917.

Arrives about the end of April, and chiefly departs in August or early September; but for a month beyond these dates, both in spring and autumn, passing bands or individuals may be encountered, amongst the hills as well as upon the coast, the majority of which are presumed to be birds-of-passage to and from more northern stations. Occasionally, odd birds have been found in the depth of winter.

### THE SPOTTED CRAKE

*Porzana porzana* (Linn.).

A summer visitant, passage migrant, and occasional resident. In the first named capacity it arrives in April and departs chiefly in September, some of the later birds, at either season, being, probably, passing migrants. In winter it has been met with on several occasions. Was



recorded to have bred at Prestwick Car in the olden days and was believed to do so in other localities. It is probably steadily, if slowly, increasing in numbers as a summer visitor, and now nesting in some quite unsuspected places.

#### [BAILLON'S CRAKE

*Porzana pusilla intermedia* (Hermann).

Was recorded by Hancock from just south of the Tyne in July 1874; and I had reason to believe that a specimen was shot at Netherwitton in 1890, but it was never verified and might possibly have been a Little Crake. We have no good record for Northumberland of either species.]

#### THE WATER-RAIL

*Rallus aquaticus aquaticus* Linn.

A resident, winter visitant and passage migrant. In the first capacity, it has increased considerably during recent years and is now known to nest in many places in different parts of the county. Residents and migrants are not easy to separate, but during winter, numbers of the birds may be found where they do not remain to nest, while others have repeatedly been seen, or captured, both in spring and autumn (especially in March and October) under circumstances that clearly pointed to migration. How far our breeding birds remain with us over the winter is uncertain, but in some cases at any rate there is presumptive evidence that they do so. The extent to which Water-Rails vary both in size and plumage, irrespective of age or sex, was dealt with at some length in 1912.

#### THE MOOR-HEN

*Gallinula chloropus chloropus* (Linn.).

A common and well-known resident, not entirely exempt from the migratory instinct; almost universally known with us as the Water-Hen.

#### THE COOT

*Fulica atra atra* Linn.

Another common resident; but since, unlike the last species, it prefers a considerable extent of open water for nesting purposes, is more restricted in its distribution. It is, likewise, more decidedly migratory, being little more than a summer visitor to some of its breeding places which freeze up in winter. At that season most of our Coots leave us, but a few are always to be found on rivers, or brackish or even salt-water. Mr. T. Russell Goddard tells me that there are usually large numbers upon the lakes at Bolam and Gosforth in December and January.

#### THE RING-DOVE, WOOD-PIGEON OR CUSHAT

*Columba palumbus palumbus* Linn.

A well-known resident and winter visitant, abundant, and nesting throughout the county, especially where coniferous woods prevail. In winter it commonly comes to us in large, often huge, flocks from overseas, arriving from the middle of November onwards, but often most abundantly a month or six weeks later.



These incoming flocks are now, however, in my experience, very greatly reduced in numbers from what they were twenty years ago: perhaps due to the decline in agriculture providing less inexhaustible food-supplies? Weight from a pound to a pound and a half.

### THE STOCK DOVE

*Columba ænas* Linn.

Now a common resident over the county, breeding in most places, often quite numerous, although it is little more than fifty years ago since it first began to establish itself. Like the Cushat, it likewise comes to us as a winter visitant, in moderate numbers, arriving on the coast at about the same time of year; while some of those which nest here appear to make an autumn migration—at least locally. Weight an ounce or two under a pound.

### THE ROCK DOVE

*Columba livia livia* Gmelin.

In strict accuracy, the truly wild Rock Dove cannot be included here except as an accidental visitant; for, though some of our rock-building pigeons are true enough to colour, and it may be impossible to distinguish them from wild birds, all suspicion of a taint of domestic origin can seldom be ruled out. I have, however, sometimes seen birds at the Farne Islands and elsewhere, whose shyness proclaimed them as genuinely wild Rock Doves, and that is the severest test that can be applied.

### THE TURTLE DOVE

*Streptopelia turtur turtur* (Linn.).

A summer visitant and irregular passage migrant: arriving usually towards the middle of May and departing August-October, but has been noticed as early as mid-March and as late as the beginning of November.

Its earlier history was given in detail in *The Birds of Northumberland and the Eastern Borders*, and need not be repeated here. Although it had been known to nest in Co. Durham more than twenty years previously, and had been frequently seen during summer in Northumberland, no instance of its having actually bred in the latter county was known prior to 1912: but since that date it has established itself as a more or less regular breeding species in several districts. Amongst these may be included Longridge and other places on Tweedside, Ford, Chillingham, Kyloe and Lowlynn, all since about 1920: on the Aln and Wansbeck a few years earlier; while birds have been seen under circumstances which rendered it pretty certain that they were breeding, or had bred, in upper Tynedale and Redesdale since 1921, Dipton Woods and Wylam 1922, Belford in 1926, and Eals on South Tyne in 1927.

In the Corbridge district it was first ascertained to be nesting in 1919, but as by that date several nests were known in widely separated coverts, it must have established itself there some years previously. On June 11th, 1919, the late J. G. Black photographed a nest containing nearly fledged young at Howden Dene, when he was told by a keeper that a pair of *tame* birds had inhabited the wood and regularly reared young there for some years previously, and that the old birds were sedentary and did not migrate, although their young ones always disappeared before the advent of winter. That man had never known more than the old pair to breed in his woods, but the fact remains that neighbouring keepers were finding nests on their preserves. This was believed to indicate that a colony



might perhaps have originated from the tame birds; an intriguing suggestion, but one no longer possible of proof either way.

It is no more than might be expected that Turtle Doves should have been recorded in spring, with increasing frequency, from Holy Island and other coastal stations during recent years; but it is noteworthy, too, that "flocks" (though chiefly in autumn) had been noticed in Northumberland since the earliest ornithological days—*e.g.* one at Prestwick Car in 1794 from which a bird shot served Bewick as a model for one of his famous engravings—now hung in a gallery in the Museum.

#### PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE

*Syrrhaptes paradoxus* (Pall.).

An accidental visitant, of which I gave a full local history in 1912, since which we have had no further visitations.

#### THE PHEASANT

*Phasianus colchicus* Linn.

A well-known resident, which, if but a colonist, has a domiciliary title that dates back further than it can be traced. The original race, in which the cock lacks the white ring round his neck, has been so much crossed by the later introduction of the ring-necked form as to have almost disappeared in our coverts, while the Japanese *versicolor* and others have likewise been turned down, and the latest "melanistic mutants" are now appearing in some places.

#### [THE RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE

*Alectoris rufa rufa* (Linn.).

A recent introduction which has been bred and turned down in a few places in the county, but has as yet scarcely maintained a footing. It is a notorious wanderer, I have lately seen one that was shot on Alnwick Moor in October 1931.]

#### THE COMMON PARTRIDGE

*Perdix perdix perdix* (Linn.).

A well-known resident, universally common, but much less numerous now than it was a few years ago, largely due to the decline of agriculture. A passing reference may be made to the brown variety known, rather irrelevantly, as *P. montana*, for which Northumberland has long been somewhat famous, and of which the Museum possesses a good series of specimens, both adult and in juvenile plumage.

#### THE QUAIL

*Coturnix coturnix coturnix* (Linn.).

A summer visitant for the most part, arriving towards the middle of May and departing as soon as the corn is cut, but used frequently to be met with up to the middle of October, and as it has not seldom been found here during the winter months it may have some claim to be ranked as a resident.

In some summers, as in 1893, it used to be fairly common and well distributed over the county, but has latterly been very much less frequent in its visits, or been very little noticed. Mr. Goddard, however, tells me that it has bred at Stocksfield since the war.



## THE CAPERCAILLIE

*Tetrao urogallus urogallus* Linn.

There is no direct evidence that this fine bird was indigenous in the county, but as its bones have been found in caves in Durham there can be no doubt that when it dwelt there it would likewise be a native of "that great waste the Forest of Chevyot." About 1872 the then Earl of Ravensworth introduced it from Scotland to Eslington Hall, and for some years afterwards roving individuals used to be encountered in some of the neighbouring woods, but they gradually fell victims to the gun, no estate being large enough to keep such gipsies "at home."

## THE BLACK GROUSE

*Lyrurus tetrrix* (Linn.).

## THE RED GROUSE

*Lagopus scoticus* (Latham).

Writing of a county so long renowned for its moors and the sport they yield, it seems unnecessary to say more of either of these two comely residents than that each in its place holds its long-wonted sway, some of our moors being amongst the most prolific, and the most sporting, in the world.

"VERMIN" KILLED ON TWEED AND TRIBUTARIES FROM 1911 TO 1931.

	1911-12	1912-13	1913-14	1914-15	1915-16	1916-17	1917-18	1918-19	1919-20	1920-1	1921-2	1922-3	1923-4	1924-5	1925-6	1926-7	1927-8	1928-9	1929-30	1930-31
CORMORANTS	51	125	11	16	38	68	18	23	39	38	235	61	24	31	89	47	107	66	48	113
SHAGS											40	3		1	1	5	81		118	79
GOOSANDERS											9	21	18	3	17	34	54	60	27	39
PIKE			56	26	104	168	149	63	55	38	5						12	11	25	46
SEALS												3	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	3

It may be added that the season for destruction runs from February to June, the full year ending on June 30th. The head-money was at first fixed at 5/- for "Cormorants," but after 1920 this was reduced to 3/6 for "Big Cormorants," 2/6 being put upon "small" ones—i.e. Shags. Under the term Goosanders, Mergansers might be included, but the latter are never more than comparatively rare birds on Tweed.



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