

NOTES ON THE ORNITHOLOGY OF THE
COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM.

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The introduction of such a subject in a work professing to treat of architecture and antiquities, might seem to need some apology, had not our Society solicited communications on the Natural History of the County. It may be presumed, however, that those who enjoy a country ramble in search of antiquities, are not insensible to the objects of nature, which everywhere grace their path; and that the admirers of the material temples erected to God's honour, will not overlook His own works that praise Him, nor deem beneath their notice the sparrow that finds a house, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young about the altars of the Lord of Hosts. The proceedings too of kindred Societies — and we may mention especially the Somersetshire Archaeological Society, and nearer home, the example of the very interesting Museum at Hartwell House, encourage the hope that this branch of local information, so necessary to a County History, may not prove unacceptable to many of our members.

It appears from the works on British Ornithology, that our County has been unusually deficient in naturalists: or at least that if it has produced them, they have been of that modest class who keep their information to themselves. Buckinghamshire, however, has the honour of having added two species to the Ornithology of Great Britain. The Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia Curruca*) was first discovered at Bulstrode by the Rev. John Lightfoot — it is a beautiful little warbler, which is far from uncommon in our gardens and hedgerows in the summer months; and that interesting little marsh bird, (remarkable for its beautiful pendant nest) the Reed Warbler, (*Sylvia Arundinacea*) was first made known as British by the same gentleman in a communication to Sir Joseph Banks, which was read at the Royal Society, and printed in the Volume of Transactions for 1785, He found it

frequenting the reeds of the river Colne, between Harefield Moor and Iver. It has been noticed at Saunderton Ponds, and in the park at Latimer, and at the reservoirs, near Drayton Beauchamp.

Our County presents a fair proportion of the feathered tribes of our islands. The appended list of one hundred and twenty-nine species may probably be much extended. They have, with very few exceptions, come under the immediate observation of the writer. He has every reason to believe in the existence among us of several other species; but, considering that strict truthfulness is the first qualification of an observer, he has omitted those, about which there may be a doubt. From the inland situation of Buckinghamshire, it cannot number in its fauna many of the aquatic birds which frequent the shores of the island; yet representatives of several of these genera are occasionally occurring. Two species of Sea Gull and two species of Tern or Sea Swallow, have been obtained in one small parish during the last few years. It appears desirable, with a view to collect materials for a County History, that the exact locality should be noted in which any remarkable animal has been captured; and, with a view to form a nucleus round which further information of the same kind may be gathered, this rule is followed in the present paper.

The first rare bird which demands a notice is the Osprey or Fishing-Hawk, (*Aquila Haliaeetus**) that little eagle whose wild bold flight harmonizes so thoroughly with the romantic scenery of the Highland Lochs: and whose large nest built on the summit of some island crag or ruined castle, is the object of many a daring adventure. A specimen of this characteristic bird of prey was shot in the woods at Chequers, in February, 1845, and is preserved in the collection of Lady Frankland Russell. *

The Peregrine Falcon, (*Falco Peregrinus*) another species of the larger Falconidae which are now becoming everywhere rare from the increase of the population, and the pitiless use of the keeper's gun, has been obtained in Buckinghamshire of late years. One specimen which came under the writer's observation, was shot eight years

* All the Latin names in this paper are adopted from Jenyns's Manual of British Vertebrate Animals.—Cambridge, 1835.

since at Liscombe Park. It was preserved, and is in the possession of Mr. Smith, of Wing.

The three species of Buzzard have all been obtained of late years. A pair of the common Buzzard (*Buteo Vulgaris*) taken at Hampden, are in the collection of our excellent Secretary, Mr. Boughey Burgess.

A pair of the Rough-Legged species (*Lagopus*) were shot in Bledlow Woods in November, 1839; of these, the female is in the collection of the writer.

The still rarer kind, the Honey Buzzard (*Apivorus*)—the daring disturber of bees' and wasps' nests, was captured about 1842, between Great Missenden and Chessham. This beautiful bird was preserved by Mr. Allen of the latter place, and was sold in 1850 with the rest of his collection.

The Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius Excubitor*) has been obtained at Hampden, a fine specimen in the writer's collection.

The hen bird of the Ring Ouzel (*Turdus Torquatus*), now in the same collection, was shot at Risborough in the spring of 1840.

The beautiful Grey Wagtail, (*Motacilla Boarula*) the living ornament of our streams in winter, and commonly in the south of England, found only during the colder months, makes its nest and rears its young, summer after summer by the stream at Latimer.

That elegant bird, a deserter from Russia, the Bohemian Waxwing, (*Bombycilla Garrula*) was captured in several parishes in Bucks in the hard winter of 1849-50. The writer's specimen, a male, was shot at Ivinghoe Aston out of a flock, in January of the latter year.

The Cirl Bunting (*Emberiza Cirlus*) has been shot near Risborough.

The very characteristic Grosbeak (*Fringilla Coccothraustes*) has, for the last few years, appeared in considerable numbers at Latimer. The young birds, in the summer time, proving very mischievous in the kitchen-garden. The gardener of the Hon. C. C. Cavendish has shot many of them in the act of stealing the green-peas in June and July.

The Crossbill, (*Loxia Curvirostra*) another occasional visitant to this country in flocks, was obtained a few years since in considerable numbers, at Loosley Row near Risborough.

The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker (*Picus Minor*) has been obtained, in more than one instance, at Dorney, near Brill.

That beautiful African bird the Hoopoe, (*Upupa Epops*) has, occasionally, extended its flight to our County. One specimen, now in the possession of Mrs. Shard, of Lacey Green, was shot some years ago in that neighbourhood; and another exposed for some time in a shop window in Aylesbury, was killed at Aston Abbotts, in the spring of 1851, and preserved for the collection of Sir James Ross.

The Black Gronse (*Tetrao tetrix*) has been obtained in our immediate neighbourhood, though the bird shot may be regarded as a straggler. The gamekeeper of Benjamin Fuller, Esq. killed a male of this beautiful species at Hyde Heath, in the spring of 1852. It was preserved for that gentleman.

The Bittern, (*Ardea Stellaris*) the emblem of wild desolation, has been taken near Chesham. This bird in very beautiful condition, is in the collection of Mr. Elliott, of Elliott's Mill. The Rev. H. Williams, of Tring Park, has discovered, not only the bird itself, but its nest and eggs also, on the Marsworth Reservoir. This occurrence derives additional interest from the fact that the Bittern is becoming more rare in England every year, from the draining of the fen countries, and the more extended use of the plough.

That still rarer species, the Night Heron, (*Nycticorax*) is recorded as a Buckinghamshire bird by Mr. Yarrell and Mr. Jenyns. Among the less common wading birds, Princes Risborough has furnished the Green Sand-piper, (*Totanus Ochropus*); Chesham, the Greenshank, (*Totanus Glottis*); and Slapton, the Bartailed Godwit, (*Limosa Rufa*) that celebrated delicacy of Shakespeare's days. A pair of these birds were observed frequenting a field in this Parish, in May, 1846. They were in changing plumage, having nearly acquired the red breast "of their summer garb. They allowed themselves to be approached without evincing signs of fear; and one of them was captured, but, unfortunately, not preserved.

In December, 1841, an immature specimen of the Great Northern Diver (*Colymbus Olacialis*) was taken at the Reservoir, near Drayton Beauchamp. Another similar

specimen was taken alive in the Park at Chequers. The former bird which has not acquired the black band on the throat or the strongly marked white spots on the back, is in the possession of Boughey Burgess, Esq., who also obtained the same winter, the Little Auk (*Mergulus Alle*) from one of the Reservoirs. The writer had an opportunity of observing one of these singular birds, which was taken alive in the Charwell, near Oxford, about the same time. It seemed perfectly destitute of fear, and when placed in the water in a basin on a table, it swam about and preened its feathers with as much composure as if it had been on its native waters in the Arctic Regions. From its peculiar conformation it appeared unable to walk or fly when placed upon the floor.

Among the strictly oceanic birds, the Ganmet (*Sula Bassana*) has been taken at Sherington near Newport Pagnel. It was captured by the Rev. Josiah Rogers of that place, in November, 1847. By a skilful manoeuvre he succeeded in securing it, notwithstanding a desperate resistance which it made with its powerful wings and most formidable bill. It was kept alive for some time, and fed upon fish.

Of the Sea Swallows, the Black Tern (*Sterna Nigra*) has been taken at Risborough. The Common Tern (*Sterna Hirundo*) at Slapton and at Amersham; and the Lesser Tern, (*Sterna Minuta*) which appears to be very rarely found at a distance from the sea-shore, was shot on the Canal at Slapton, in May, 1850. Its flight closely resembled that of a Swallow; and it frequently dipped beneath the surface to capture minnows. The Common Gull, (*Larus Canus*) and the Ivittiwake, (*L. Tridactylus*) have been taken in the same parish, and are preserved in the writer's collection.

Another remarkable Sea Gull, probably the Pomarine Skua, (*Lestris Pomarinus*) was taken some years ago near Crendon: but this specimen is, unfortunately lost.

It is hoped that this short notice of some of the rarer birds taken in our County, may be an inducement to others to note down any similar occurrences which may come under their observation.

The writer would take this opportunity of expressing his acknowledgments of the kindness of those persons whose names he has mentioned, in communicating information on this subject.

LIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

- Aquila Haliaeetus, *Osprey*.
 Falco Peregrinus, *Peregrine Falcon*.
 ----- Tinnunculus, *Kestrel*.
 Accipiter Fringillarius, *Sparrow Hawk*.
 Buteo Vulgaris, *Common Buzzard*.
 -----Lagopus, *Rough Legged Buzzard*.
 -----Apivorus, *Honey Buzzard*.
 ----- Rufus, *Marsh Harrier*.
 Otus Brachyotus, *Short Eared Owl*.
 Strix Flammea, *Barn Owl*.
 Syrnium Aluco, *Brown Owl*.
 Lanius Excubitor, *Great Grey Shrike*.
 ----- Collurio, *Red Backed Shrike*.
 Muscicapa Grisola, *Spotted Fly Catcher*.
 Turdus Viscivorus, *Missel Thrush*.
 ----- Pilaris, *Fieldfare*.
 ----- Musicus, *Song Thrush*.
 ----- Iliacus, *Redwing*.
 ----- Merula, *Blackbird*.
 ----- Torquatus, *Ring Ouzel*.
 Accentor/Modularis, *Hedge(Sparrow)*
 Accentor.
 Sylvia Rubecula, *Redbreast*.
 ----- Phoenicurus, *Redstart*.
 ----- Phragmitis, *Sedge Warbler*.
 ----- Arundinacea, *Reed Warbler*.
 ----- Luscinia, *Nightingale*.
 ----- Atricapilla, *Black- Cap Warbler*.
 ----- Hortensis, *Greater Petty Chaps*.
 ----- Cinerea, *Whitethroat*.
 ----- Curruca, *Lesser Whitethroat*.
 ----- Trochilus, *Willow Wren*.
 ----- Hippolais, *Chiff Chaff*.
 Regulus Aurocapillus, *Gold Crested*
 Wren.
 Motacilla Alba, *Pied Wagtail*.
 ----- Boarula, *Grey Wagtail*.
 ----- Flava, *Yellow Wagtail*.
 Anthus Pratensis, *Meadow Pipit*.
 ----- Arboreus, *Tree Pipit*.
 Saxicola Oenanthe, *Wheat-Ear*.
 ----- Rubetra, *Whin Chat*.
 ----- Rubicola *Stone Chat*.
 Parus Major, *Great Titmouse*.
 ----- Coeruleus, *Blue Titmouse*.
 ----- Palustris, *Marsh Titmouse*.
 ----- Ater, *Cole Titmouse*.
 ----- Caudatus, *Long- Tailed Titmouse*
 Bombycilla Garrula, *Bohemian Wax-*
 wing.
 Alauda Arvensis, *Skylark*.
 ----- Arborea, *Woodlark*.
 Emberiza Miliaria, *Common Bunting*.
 ----- Schoeniclus, *Reed Bunting*.
 ----- Citrinella, *Yellow Bunting*.
 ----- Cirlus, *Cirl Bunting*.
 Fringilla Coelebs, *Chaffinch*.
 -----Montifringilla, *Mountain Finch*.
 -----Domestica, *House Sparrow*.
 -----Coccothraustes, *Common*
 Grosbeak.
 -----Chloris, *Green Grosbeak*.
 -----Carduelis, *Goldfinch*.
 ----- Spinus, *Siskin*
 -----Cannabina, *Common Linnet*.
 Pyrrhula Vulgaris, *Bullfinch*.
 Loxia Curvirostra, *Common Crossbill*.
 Sturnus Vulgaris, *Starling*.
 Corvus Corone, *Carion Crow*.
 ----- Cornix, *Hooded Crow*.
 ----- Frugilegus, *Rook*.
 ----- Monedula, *Jackdaw*.
 ----- Pica, *Magpie*.
 Garrulus Glandarius, *Jay*.
 Picus Viridis, *Green Woodpecker*.
 ----- Major, *Great Spotted Woodpecker*.
 ----- Minor, *Lesser Spotted Woodpecker*
 Yunx Torquilla, *Wryneck*.
 Certhia Familiaris, *Common Creeper*.
 Troglodytes Europoeus, *Common Wren*.
 Upupa Epops, *Hoopoe*.
 Sitta Europoea, *Nuthatch*.
 Cuculus Canorus, *Common Cuckoo*.
 Alcedo Ispida, *Kingfisher*.
 Hirundo Rustica, *Chimney Swallow*.
 ----- Urbica, *House Martin*.
 ----- Riparia, *Bank Martin*.
 Cypselus Apus, *Common Swift*.
 Caprimulgus Europoeus, *European*
 Goat-sucker.
 Columba Palumbus, *Ring Dove*.
 ----- OEnas, *Stock Dove*.
 ----- Turtur, *Turtle Dove*.
 Phasianus Colchicus, *Common Pheasant*
 Tetrao Tetrix, *Black Grouse*.
 Perdix Cinerea, *Common Partridge*.
 ----- Rubra, *Red-legged Partridge*.
 ----- Coturnix, *Common Quail*.
 OEdicnemus Crepitans, *Common Thick-*
 Knee.
 Charadrius Pluvialis, *Golden Plover*.
 Vanellus Cristatus, *Crested Lapwing*.
 Ardea Cinerea, *Common Heron*.
 -----Stellaris, *Bittern*.
 ----- Nycticorax, *Night Heron*.
 Totanus Ochropus, *Green Sandpiper*.
 -----Hypoleucos, *Common Sand-*
 piper.
 ----- Glottis, *Greenshank*.
 Limosa Rufa, *Bartailed Godwit*.
 Scolopax Rusticola, *Woodcock*.
 ----- Gallinago, *Common*
 Snipe,

Scolopax Gallinula, *Jack Snipe*.
 Tringa Pugnax, *Ruff*.
 Rallus Aquaticus, *Water Rail*.
 Crex Pratensis, *Corn Crake*.
 Gallinula Chloropus, *Common
Gallinule*
 Fulica Atra, *Common Coot*.
 Anser Segetum, *Bean Goose*.
 Cygnus Ferus, *Whistling Swan*.
 Anas Boschas, *Mallard*.
 — Crecca, *Teal*.
 ----- Penelope, *Wigeon*.
 Fuligula Ferina, *Common Pochard*.
 ----- Marila, *Scaup Pochard*.

Fuligula Cristata, *Tufted Pochard*.
 Podiceps Cristatus, *Great Crested
Grebe*.
 ----- Minor, *Little Grebe*.
 Colymbus Glacialis, *Great Northern
Diver*.
 Mergulus Alle, *Little Auk*
 Sula Bassana, *Gannet*.
 Sterna Hirundo, *Common Tern*.
 ----- Minuta, *Lesser Tern*.
 ----- Nigra, *Black Tern*.
 Larus Tridactylus, *Kitty-wake Gull*.
 ----- Canus, *Common Gull*.