

## **The Naturalist - York Area Bird Notes**

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As part of research into birds of the York area, historical records were extracted from The Naturalist for the period before the formation of York Ornithological Club in 1966. Those records are set out in chronological order below and give an insight into the past status of many species in the York area.

This pdf is searchable using the combination Ctrl + F. So you can search for a particular species (e.g. Nightjar) or location (e.g. Strensall).

To make searching easier, the old names which were used for four species, Green Plover, Landrail, Sandpiper and Missel Thrush, have been changed to the modern version - Lapwing, Corncrake, Common Sandpiper and Mistle Thrush. Other minor changes have been made to make searching easier e.g. Tree Creeper changed to Treecreeper.

### **1865**

Field-Day near York. No. IV. Oct. 7th, 1864. Page 270 of the 1865 volume  
Our last field day was spent on Strensall Common and Stockton Forest, about six miles from York. The soil is principally sandy: plantations of fir and alder occasionally vary the desolate tract of uncultivated heather-land.

*There are details of flora and insect life, but there are no references to birds.*

### **1875**

Riccall Common (The Naturalist 1875-76 page 37-40)

By W. Dennison Roebuck.

Riccall Common is situated in the centre of the wide low-lying plain called the Vale of York. This vale has undoubtedly been produced by natural forces acting through a long series of years, wearing away the soft triassic or new red series of strata; while the harder liassic, oolitic, and cretaceous strata of the East Riding, and the permian and carboniferous rocks of the West Riding, offering more resistance to the disintegrating forces, marine or sub-aerial, have been left standing out as hills and mountains.

*There are details of flora and insect life, but the only reference to birds is that the "Swift was noticed in plenty on the wing".*

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. The usual monthly meeting of this Society was held on Wednesday evening, Oct. 13th, at the house of Mr. Prest, Holgate Road. Mr. Wolstenholme exhibited a very fine example of the Greenshank, shot on Clifton Ings.

### **1876** The Naturalist Feb 1877 pg 112

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. Monthly meeting, Jan. 10th, 1877  
Mr. Ripley exhibited a very fine specimen of the rough-legged buzzard (*Falco lagopus*), sent by Mr. Edson, of Malton, which was taken in a trap at Langton Wold (*just outside the YOC area*); also two grand specimens of the great grey shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), one shot near York, the other near Church Fenton, also eggs of the latter; Mr. Helstrip, a specimen of the common buzzard (*Falco buteo*) in the flesh,

caught in a trap with a wood pigeon near York; Mr. White, a magnificent specimen of the hawfinch (*Fringilla coccothraustes*), shot on Knavesmire.

### **1877**

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. Annual meeting 1877 pg 144  
Mr. J. Ripley exhibited a white specimen of the skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) shot in Askham Bogs; a pied blackbird (*Turdus merula*), from Gilling Park; and a fine specimen of the hawfinch, shot in Aldby Park - all of them occurring in January, 1877.

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. Monthly meeting, Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> 1877  
Mr. Ripley exhibited a specimen of the armed Bullhead ispidophorus *Europceus*, also a specimen of the knot—*Tringa Cineria*, and the gannet *Sula bassana*, from near Malton.

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. Monthly meeting, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>,  
Mr. Helstrip exhibited a fine example of the hobby, *Falco subbuteo*, shot near York.

York and District Field Naturalists' Society. Monthly meeting, Jan. 9<sup>th</sup>, 1878  
Mr. Ripley exhibited a fine specimen of the bittern (*Ardea stellaris*), shot at Castle Howard on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup> (1877), also a specimen of the marsh harrier (*Falco rufus*), shot near Pocklington in September last.

### **1879**

YNU visit to Askham Bog 2nd June 1879

There were no representatives of the Vertebrate Section present, and the only bird reported was the House Martin, building near Chandler's Whin.

YNU visit to Riccall Common 6th September 1879

The excursion season of 1879 was brought to a close on Saturday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, by an excursion to Riccall Common (over which there is still hanging the threatened doom of enclosure), followed by a meeting at Selby.

Mr. Thomas Lister of Barnsley, president, stated that, considering the limited range of observation, the vertebrates were pretty numerous. Of resident birds upwards of twenty were observed, the chief of which were - marsh tit, blue tit, twite, greenfinch, grey linnnet, lesser redpoll, pied wagtail, meadow pipit, moorhen, little grebe, wild duck, heron, teal, kestrel, common bunting, yellowhammer; of migrants (10) - willow warbler, sedge warbler, whinchat, whitethroat, Yellow Wagtail, and swift.

### **1889**

YNU visit to Kirkham Abbey and Acklam Brow 4th September pgs 340-344

Resident Birds.

Woodpigeon

Moorhen

Song Thrush

Blackbird

Robin

Hedge Sparrow

Pied Wagtail

Wren  
Blue Tit  
Coal Tit  
Redpoll  
Trecreeper  
Chaffinch  
Bullfinch  
Yellowhammer  
Kingfisher  
Carrion Crow  
Jackdaw  
Jay  
Migrants.  
Chiffchaff  
Wood Warbler  
Swallow  
Sand Martin

### 1891

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus anglorum* near Malton [one shot at Appleton-le-Street, 26th Aug.; details given]. *Zool.*, Oct. 1891, p. 396.

Eared Grebe near York. A fine specimen (sex undetermined) of the Eared or Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) was shot on the Ouse near York, October 23rd, and brought me in the flesh. It has since been stuffed and set up by Mr. Helstrip. In the Handbook of the Vertebrate Fauna of Yorkshire (1851) this species is recorded as having occurred in Yorkshire on eight occasions only. This bird is now in my possession. Would someone please inform me of the dates of any other occurrences? W, Hewitt, 6, Howard Street, Fulford Road, York, Dec. 13th, 1890.

### 1892

Baillon's Crake near Pocklington, and White Varieties of the Jay near York. Year by year numbers of birds fall victims to the telegraph-wires, and if these patent guillotines ' continue to multiply as they are doing at present, many more casualties will doubtless occur. The number of scarce birds already on the ' list of killed ' by wires in our county is considerable, and the last which has come to my knowledge is among the scarcest. An adult male Baillon's Crake (*Porzana bailloni*) was picked up under a wire between Pocklington and Wilberfoss last Whitsuntide, and was sent to Mr. Allen, bird-stuffer, of York, to preserve, who, notwithstanding a great wound in the breast, has made a respectable specimen, and very shortly it will appear (where all scarce Yorkshire birds should) in the new British bird collection in York Museum. Previously some half-dozen specimens only of Baillon's Crake appear to have been recorded from Yorkshire.

Whilst writing I may record two varieties of the Jay which were recently acquired within a few miles from York. In one some or many primaries and greater coverts (mostly inner webs) are dusky tipped, also nearly the tail feathers; otherwise snow-white. Bill, pale horn-brown. .

The second specimen was whiter still, having a few dusky marks on the wing

only. Both birds were quite young when killed, and purport to have come from two different nests. J. Backhouse, Harrogate, Sep. 8th, 1892.

1892

YNU visit to Coxwold and Byland (including Ampleforth and Wass September (two days, but no dates given) pgs 343-354

Nothing worthy of special mention was recorded among the birds, the most noticeable fact being the almost entire absence of migrants, the Swallow and Martin being the only two species met with, for as yet it was too early for the winter visitors. Referring to the statement in the circular that nothing seemed to be known about the fauna of the district, Mr. Backhouse remarked that for some time he had paid particular attention to it, and also gave the interesting information that the Woodcock nests regularly in the vicinity.

Birds.

Mistle Thrush.

Song Thrush.

Blackbird.

Redbreast.

Goldcrest.

Hedge Accentor,

Long-tailed Tit.

Great Tit.

Blue Tit.

Wren.

Pied Wagtail.

Meadow Pipit.

Swallow.

Martin.

Greenfinch.

House Sparrow.

Chaffinch.

Linnet.

Yellow Bunting.

Starling.

Jackdaw.

Rook.

Skylark.

Sparrow Hawk.

Kestrel.

Mallard.

Ring Dove.

Stock Dove.

Pheasant.

Partridge.

Moorhen.

Coot.

Lapwing.

**1893**

Nothing of note

**1894**

Pages 61 to 67

**YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION AT POCKLINGTON.**

For the last excursion of the 1893 season, the district around Pocklington, including the villages of Barmby, Kildwick Percy, Warter and Everingham, and the now famous Allerthorpe Common, was finally selected.

Permission to visit their estates had been kindly granted by Lord Londesborough, Lord Herries, and Mr. Chas. H. Wilson, M.P. Although only planned for the two days, Wednesday and Thursday, September 6th and 7th.

The Vertebrate section was officially represented by Mr. John Gerrard, the president, who stated that at Everingham the birds are strictly protected by Lord Herries, and therefore many species, almost unknown in some districts, are quite common around there: notably the Hawfinch and Goldfinch, whilst places where three nests of the Kingfisher had come off were seen.

Mr. George Steels, who has paid special attention to the ornithology of the district, records the following, amongst others, as occurring in the district:

Waxwing.

Wood Warbler.

Mealy Redpoll.

Redstart.

Greater Spotted Woodpecker

Coal Tit.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker

Dipper.

Grey Wagtail.

Green Woodpecker.

Ring Ouzel.

Snow Bunting.

Little Grebe.

Quail.

Ringed Plover.

Grey Phalarope.

Redshank.

Common Sandpiper.

Pied Flycatcher,

Corncrake.

Bullfinch.

Hawfinch.

Siskin.

Goldfinch.

Brambling.

Grasshopper Warbler

Nuthatch.

Grey Shrike.

Lesser Redpoll.

Jay.

Woodlark.

Nightjar.

Kingfisher.

Turtle Dove.  
Water Rail.  
Coot.  
Snipe.  
Jack Snipe,  
Sanderling.  
Curlew.  
Crossbill.  
Heron

1896

Shoveler Nesting at Skipwith. A pair of Shovelers (*Spatula clypeata*) have nested this year at the disused brick-pit pond near Skipwith, where we shot a single bird last September. The female and young were generally to be seen on the pond, but the latter were taken one by one by a Pike, until by the beginning of August only three were left. One of these was shot by the occupier of the farm, and shown to me; the others disappeared. C. D. Ash, Skipwith Vicarage, Selby, Sep. 22nd, 1896.

### **March 1901**

Wild Duck at Skipwith. On 25th January, while Mr. Ingham and myself were gathering mosses on the Common, we were astonished at the large number of Wild Duck that were circling overhead. There must have been at least five hundred (Mr. Ingham thought more), and they had apparently risen from the ponds at our approach. Last year we noticed a large number there, and round one pond we found evidences of their presence in the dead and mutilated frogs which strewed the edge, but we never saw such a flight as this year. T. Ainsworth Brode, York, 15th February 1901.

### **1902**

YNU visit to Coxwold and Kilburn Whit Monday May 1902 pgs 277-284

The district is so diversified and the changes so abrupt that many kinds of birds were found "near neighbours" which are generally separated by great distances. For instance, the sheltered wooded valleys are inhabited by Willow Warbler, Wood Warbler, Whitethroat, Tits, and Finches in large numbers, while but a few hundred yards above, on the wide-stretching moors, is the habitat of the Red Grouse, Curlew, Ring Ousel, Wheatear, etc.

Byland Abbey was seen to shelter a much larger number of inhabitants than ever it had in its bygone days of magnificence, for every hole, crevice, and cranny is now the home of Jackdaw, Starling, or Sparrow, and the grand old ruins were alive with the call of hungry youngsters.

Although many of the tree trunks in the neighbourhood bore the marks of the Woodpecker's strong bill, not a single specimen was seen or heard. Amongst the Spruce and Larch on the richly-wooded hill-side was seen the beautiful little Goldcrest, active in search of food, while the twitter of the Wood Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*) was heard on all sides. Considering the time of the year, perhaps the most interesting- bird noted was the Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*). The nest was not found, but it was evidently breeding in the immediate vicinity, and it is known to do so in this district from year to year. Although most of the summer visitors were seen, including the Cuckoo and Corncrake, the lateness of the season was emphasized by the appearance of a small flock of Fieldfares. In some late

springs they may be seen near the coast, even towards the end of May, but for them to be seen so far inland as late as 19th May is very unusual. Forty-five different kinds of living birds were noted in all, and some of the party came across the shrivelled remains of Hooded Crows, Jays, Magpies, Carrion Crows, Sparrow Hawks, Kestrels, etc., the usual victims of the gamekeeper.

**1906** pg 82-82

Peregrine Falcon. There are now only two, or at the most three, pairs endeavouring to nest in the county, but they fail absolutely in their attempts to bring off their young. For years I have had their nests under observation, being particularly anxious to secure a photograph of young birds, but the eggs have invariably been taken, on several occasions when on the point of hatching. One cliff has to my knowledge been inhabited by a pair of falcons for a quarter of a century, and during that time they have not reared half a dozen broods. Unless we can give these few adequate protection, they will soon be extinct as Yorkshire nesting species.

Naturalist,

Fortune: Birds requiring Protection in Yorkshire.

Raven. This species is reduced to an odd pair endeavouring to nest, unfortunately without success, the eggs being invariably taken, like those of the Peregrine, even when on the point of hatching-

Buzzard. These birds have not nested in the county for several years; all their old haunts are deserted. An absolutely harmless species, it is a great pity that continual persecution has driven it from the county. If only from a matter of sentiment, it is a cause of deepest regret that we should have to contemplate the disappearance of these three fine birds from our area. I strongly appeal to collectors in Yorkshire and elsewhere to stay their hands, and give them a chance to again establish themselves.

Merlin. The numbers of this beautiful little hawk have been sadly thinned of late years, both by collectors and game preservers. As the food of these birds consists almost entirely of Meadow Pipits and other small birds, there is no excuse for their destruction by gamekeepers.

**Naturalist 1907** (March 1907 issue page 106)

BIRD NOTES. YORK DISTRICT (*for 1906*).

SYDNEY H. SMITH.

York.

I cannot but comment on the large numbers of Redwings that have visited us this winter. They literally swarmed all over the country during December, but I am afraid their flocks were sadly decimated by the severe weather in January. Fieldfares do not appear as plentiful as in previous years, and for some weeks I have only remarked these handsome immigrants in small batches of four to twelve birds.

Hooded Crows, locally termed Grey Backs, appeared about the middle of October, and were in full force by November, many thousands roosting nightly in Crompton Wood, their usual winter quarters, sharing the branches with parties of immigrant and local Carrion Crows and a tremendous body of Rooks and Jackdaws. At dusk the immense circling flock of dusky birds made all the din they possibly could, and was apt to leave a lasting impression on the mind of a student of nature. A small party of Grey and Pied Wagtails frequents the shallows along the River Foss.

Thanks to the Birds' Protection Order, the brilliantly plumaged Kingfisher is more often seen on both Ouse and Foss, sometimes I notice one right in the heart of the city. A few Siskins have been caught on the Malton Road, and several Bramblings seen in private gardens during the recent hard weather, when they fed along with Sparrows and Chaffinches. On the flooded meadows at East Cottingwith duck appeared in their usual number (about 400 birds), chiefly Mallard and Wigeon, with a few Teal, Scaup (occasional), Pochards, Tufted, and Goldeneye. A gaggle of geese pitched one night, but it was too dark to distinguish the species (probably brent or grey), and half-a-dozen handsome Whooper Swans spent two days on the freshwater, departing in the night to other parts. Mr. Snowden Sleights, the local fowler, sent me two female Goosanders early in January; every year a few females turn up at Cottingwith, but no males. According to Messrs. Booth and Riley Fortune, a small party of males appears in the Washburn Valley every year. The question to be settled is, are these birds all of one immigrant party, the sexes mutually agreeing to separate during their stay in Yorkshire?

Naturalist 1907 (June 1907 issue, page 218)

Arrival of Migrants near York. The following are the dates of the arrival of migrants near York. In most cases the dates are later than last year, the cold weather being no doubt responsible for the somewhat erratic arrival of the birds.

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| March 24. Wheatear.       | April 27. Sand Martin. |
| April 19. Willow Warbler. | May 1. Cuckoo.         |
| „ 19. Common Sandpiper.   | „ 8. Whinchat.         |
| „ 22. House Martin.       | „ 8. Swift.            |
| „ 22. Swallow.            | „ 10. Corncrake.       |
| „ 23. Whitethroat.        | „ 13. Nightjar.        |

Sydney H. Smith, York.

Naturalist 1908 (Feb 1908 issue, page 60)

Great Grey Shrike near York. A Great Grey Shrike was caught at Strensall, near York, on Nov. 28th last (*i.e.* 1907). It struck at the decoy bird of some 'linnet catchers,' its wing being caught on their limed twigs. The Shrike lived two days after its capture, killing mice readily, but refusing to eat them or any other food, eventually dying of starvation. Sydney H. Smith, York.

Naturalist 1908 (Sept 1908 issue, page 336)

Bird Notes from York District.

January 3rd Large flock of Golden Plover in Clifton Ings;

January 24th Large flock of Bramblings near York;

January 30th A White-fronted Goose shot at Earl Cottingwith;

January 31st A white variety of the common Wild Duck shot on the Malton Road, near York;

March 17th Eight Hawfinches seen together;

April 29th Cuckoo first seen;

April 30th Swallow first seen at Wigginton;

May 2nd Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail at Heworth;

May 6th Willow Warbler first seen;

May 8<sup>th</sup> House Martins and Whitethroat first seen;

May 9th Swifts first seen; Grasshopper Warbler and Corncrake heard;



May 16th Sedge Warblers and Whinchats arrived. The season is very late, and all migratory species are much later in arriving than even last year.

—  
Sydney Smith, York.

### 1910

Great Crested Grebe near York. A specimen of the Great Crested Grebe, a male in winter plumage, was shot in the Derwent at East Cottingwith, by Mr. T. S. Wright, on February 5th. Unfortunately it was too badly shot about the head and neck to be worth preserving.

Sydney H. Smith, York.

—  
Sydney H. Smith, York,  
February 14th, 1910.

Crossbills near York. A party of Crossbills was seen near York by Mr. George Machin. The birds were observed about the middle of November in the woodland district lying between Skelton and Wigginton, four miles north of York. Three birds were shot, two males and one female. They were dissected by Mr. Helstrip, taxidermist, who stated they had been feeding upon seeds of the plaintain. On December 15th last ten were seen in the same locality, and, I believe, are still frequenting the district.

—  
Sydney H. Smith, York.

### 1910 Ornithological Notes from York.

All the usual summer visitors have arrived at the time of writing these notes, most of them considerably later than last year, the dates of arrival being as follows :

April 10th, Swallow, Sand Martin;

April 14th, Willow Warbler, House Martin, Tree Pipit, Cuckoo;

April 21st, Redstart;

May 1st, Corncrake;

May 10th, Whinchat, Garden Warbler;

May 12th, Turtle Dove;

May 15th, Nightjar;

May 16th, Swift;

May 24th, Sedge Warbler.

On May 20<sup>th</sup> Mr. Oxley Grabham saw six Black Terns and a pair of Tufted Duck on a small lake within the York City boundary, but as these birds appear at the same place every year about this date, the exact locality is probably best not stated.

—  
Sydney H. Smith, York, June 7th, 1910.

Although many migrants were rather late in arriving, the nesting season appears to have been an early one. Swifts did not make their appearance at Harrogate until May 17th. I never knew them to be so late, the 6th of the month being their usual time of arrival, and they seldom vary more than a day.

—  
R. Fortune.

Great Crested Grebe in Yorkshire. Rather more than twenty Great Crested Grebes are to be seen on the large lake at Castle Howard. All of them bred there this year,

the bad weather appearing to have suited the successful nesting of this beautiful bird.

—  
Sydney H. Smith, York, September 16th, 1910.

Whooper Swan in Yorkshire. At East Cottingwith on November 30th, I obtained a young, but full-grown specimen of *Cygnus musicus*, measuring five feet two inches across the extended wings. The bird had not yet assumed the distinctive yellow patch on the upper mandible, but from the appearance of the part it would have done so in another month. The legs were almost black in colour, and curiously mottled with yellow on the underside of the webs.

—  
Sydney H. Smith, York, December 4th, 1910.

### 1911

The Naturalist June 1911 page 210

1911 York District Bird Notes. The following is a list of dates of arrivals of most of the local summer visiting species, and in the majority of instances, the dates of appearance are even later than last year :

—  
Ring Ouzel . . . . . March 10th;  
Swallow . . . . . April 22nd  
Lesser Whitethroat  
ChiffChaff . . . . . April 28th  
Willow Warbler  
White Wagtail .  
Swallows (numbers)  
Cuckoo ,,  
Corncrake (one) .  
Nightjar . . . . . May 6th  
Swift (several) . . . . . May 11th  
Swift (numbers) . . . . . May 13th  
Redstart . . . . . May 13th  
Blackcap  
Garden Warbler  
Wood Warbler .  
Sedge Warbler .  
House Martin  
Common Sandpiper  
Yellow Wagtail . . . . . May 14th  
Turtle Dove  
Wheatear  
Sand Martin . . . . . May 21st

I heard the first Snipe ' drumming' on March 11th, and on March 16th I noticed a flock of about sixty Wild Geese (species uncertain), flying over Huntington in a south-east direction, at the time there was half a gale blowing from the north-east. The Whimbrel occasionally visits this district during May, when passing north on its annual journey to its nesting haunts, a pair being seen feeding on some ploughed land at Wigginton, on May 15th.

—  
Sydney H. Smith,

York, May 23rd, 1911.

1912 Naturalist

Mr. J. F. Musham reports that a Leach's Petrel was picked up in a dying condition near Hemingbrough Church, on Saturday, 18th November 1911

Riccall Visit May 4th 1912 (Naturalist 1912 pg 171-178)

Birds. On the date of the excursion all the winter visiting birds had departed, and only a few of the summer visitors were in evidence. This is more particularly so this spring, the majority of migratory species being very late in arriving. In spite of these drawbacks Skipwith Common proved very interesting. The colony of black-headed gulls is of course worthy of first place; as yet they had not commenced nesting in good earnest, and there appeared to be barely more than twenty-five per cent, of the number present that was in evidence last breeding season. In addition to the usual common species we saw several whinchats, sedge warblers, and redstarts, all new arrivals, probably only of the previous night. A fine male wigeon was seen by Mr. E. W. Taylor. A pair of these birds has been noticed on the common during two past seasons, but whether they nest or not has still to be discovered. A pair of shoveler ducks was noticed, but may not have nested yet. There are generally five or six pairs frequenting the common. Other nests observed were those of the wild duck containing nine and eleven eggs respectively, and that of a teal with eleven eggs; a nest of the jay discovered by the writer held the unusual number of seven eggs, four of which were pale blue in colour instead of the usual olive green.

Mr W Parkin reported having seen a long-eared owl in one of the woods and finding remains of hatched eggs of that species. Other species observed were the common yellow and reed buntings, magpie, coot, moorhen, swift, swallow and house martin. There were also several nests of redshank and snipe that contained their full complement of eggs.

C F Proctor reported having seen a lesser backed gull on one of the smaller ponds, and on wading out to nests of the black-headed gulls, which it had been raiding, he found over a dozen clutches disturbed, and many of the eggs destroyed by the marauder.

The following is the list of dates of arrival of local migratory species. Many birds were much later than usual, and one species, the cuckoo, noticeably early. There appeared to be a much larger number of cuckoos in the district this year than is usual, and a corresponding scarcity of Corncrakes.

## 1912

Chiffchaff, York, March 29th.

Wheatear, York, April 2nd.

Cuckoo, Fangfoss, April 4th.

Cuckoo, York, April 19th.

Cuckoo, E. Cottingwith, April 21st.

House Martin, York, April 22nd.

Swift, York, April 29th.

Turtle Dove, Skipwith, April 29th.

Corncrake, York, May 1st.

Whinchat, Skipwith, May 4th.

Sedge warbler, Skipwith, May 4th.  
Redstart, Skipwith, May 4th.  
Whitethroat (Common), York, April 2nd.  
Yellow Wagtail, Stillington, April 13th.  
Swallow, Huntington, April 14th.  
Swallow, Stillington, April 27th.  
Nightjar, Sandburn, April 29th.  
Nightjar, Skipwith, April 29th.  
Pied Flycatcher, Castle Howard, April 29th.  
Spotted Flycatcher, York, May 2nd.  
Blackcap, York, May 2nd.  
Garden Warbler, York, May 2nd.  
Willow Warbler, York, April 2nd.  
Sand Martin, York, May 2nd.

During the night of April 16th and 17th, from 8-30 p.m. to 1 a.m., there was a big rush of small waders, and notes of golden and grey plovers could be distinguished; the night was clear and starry and the birds were passing over Heworth travelling South East. Again on the night of April 19th and 20th and under similar weather conditions many thousands of birds were passing, and from their call notes they seemed to be principally curlew, golden and grey plover. These also were travelling to the South East. On April 20th I saw a large flock of Fieldfares at Heworth and estimated them to be about a hundred, and again on April 21st I saw what may have been the same flock at East Cottingwith. This appears to be a very late date for this species to remain in England\*. A male Slavonian Grebe was obtained at East Cottingwith on February 10th, and is evidently one of a small party, the representatives of which distributed themselves fairly widely during January and February, as reports of observations and captures were made from several quarters. A Great Crested Grebe, male, in winter plumage, was picked up dead at East Cottingwith on February 1st. This bird had been fired at some days previously and had succumbed to a pellet that had lodged in its body. The shoveler duck occurred again at Skipwith, but as far as I can gather only one pair attempted to breed this year, and a fox took the sitting bird and destroyed the eggs just at the time they were almost hatching.

\* Flocks of Fieldfares are frequently observed in the county at a later date than this. Ed.

### **1913**

#### **BIRD NOTES FROM THE YORK DISTRICT. SYDNEY H. SMITH.**

The whole of March and the greater part of April 1913, was wet and stormy and the spring migration period was particularly distinguished by gales that were bound to act disastrously upon immigrant and emigrant species. Many were very late in arriving in their usual haunts, but in some instances, notably the swallow and the swift, the date of arrival was unusually early compared with previous years. The wheatear, a species that calls on passage, generally staying a few days, was never seen this season in one locality I know, possibly as a result of a favourable wind tempting them to continue their flight straight up country to their moorland

haunts. The Corncrake also put in an appearance several days before it was expected. Last year we had a record early date of arrival of the cuckoo. This season a corresponding fairly late date. Other records are :

| Arrival Dates 1913       |                  |                |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Chiffchaff               | York             | March 16th     |
| Swallow                  | East Cottingwith | March 27th (3) |
| Swallow                  | East Cottingwith | March 28th (5) |
| Swallow                  | Moreby Park      | April 14th     |
| House Martin             | Moreby Park      | April 14th     |
| Cuckoo                   | East Cottingwith | April 17th     |
| Corncrake                | York             | April 30th     |
| Corncrake                | Aldby Park       | May 9th        |
| Swift                    | East Cottingwith | May 1st        |
| Swift                    | York             | May 6th        |
| Blackcap                 | York             | May 5th        |
| Redstart                 | York             | May 5th        |
| Tree Pipit               | York             | May 5th        |
| Nightjar                 | Aldby Park       | May 9th        |
| Willow Warbler           | York             | March 23rd     |
| Willow Warbler (numbers) | York             | April 10th     |
| Whitethroat              | York             | April 8th      |
| Sand Martin              | Moreby Park      | April 14th     |
| Cuckoo                   | Moreby Park      | April 21st     |
| Cuckoo                   | York             | April 27th     |
| Turtle Dove              | Aldby Park       | April 27th     |
| Yellow Wagtail           | East Cottingwith | May 4th        |
| Spotted Flycatcher       | York             | May 5th        |
| Garden Warbler           | York             | May 5th        |
| Sedge Warbler            | York             | May 5th        |
| Pied Flycatcher          | Castle Howard    | May 6th        |
| Reed Warbler             | Castle Howard    | May 6th        |

Three pairs of Woodcock have nested successfully at Aldby Park (Stamford Bridge) and in two instances the four young ones got safely away. The first young ones were discovered on May 1st. On April 19th and 26th I visited the heronry at Moreby Park and found there was an increase in the number of the nests this year, the total being 23. Several of the nests were examined and found to contain four or five young birds varying from seven days to fourteen days old. In company with Mr. Riley Fortune, I visited the heronry again on May 3rd; many of the young birds were then fully fledged, but all were sitting in the nests. On attempting to photograph them we found they were able to fly short distances and no doubt most of the youngsters would be on the wing by May 6th or 7th. One young bird missing his perch came down 50 or 60 feet to the ground. He then disgorged his last meal, which consisted of about 20 sticklebacks. Early in May some heavy rainstorms resulted in the flooding of the Derwent Valley and caused the destruction of hundreds of nests of snipe and redshanks. It is possible many of these birds will nest again as the eggs destroyed

were mostly freshly laid, except in the case of Lapwings which either were almost on the point of hatching or the young were already abroad. Several nests of wild duck, teal and shoveler eggs were spoiled, and for some weeks afterwards three pairs of shovelers were frequenting the neighbourhood of East Cottingwith. A few pairs of these handsome rare ducks are nesting at Skipwith and I trust they will be successful; nearly all the nests last year were destroyed by foxes. At Kirkham Abbey, on May 28th, I saw a nest of the grey wagtail containing five eggs. This is a rather rare species locally; also two pairs of coal tits, both of which were feeding young. In the neighbourhood the bullfinch and Treecreeper were nesting.

YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT STAMFORD BRIDGE Saturday 5th July 1913  
(plate XV.).

Typically rural are the surroundings of the historical village of Stamford Bridge which the Union had chosen for the occasion of their two hundred and forty-sixth meeting. The attendance was particularly good, fourteen of the affiliated Societies being represented. Though not offering any striking geological features, the geologists under the able guidance of Mr. J. W. Stather, F.G.S., journeyed to High Catton and there examined sections of the morainic materials well exposed in several gravel pits. For the general body of naturalists there was much favourable working ground, and with Mr. S. H. Smith as guide, they spent a profitable time along the left bank of the River Derwent, in Aldby Park, and particularly in Buttercrambe Woods. Headquarters were at the Bay Horse Hotel, where, after tea, the usual meeting was held, with the President of the Union, Mr. Harold Wager, F.R.S., occupying the chair. Sectional reports were given, and thanks accorded to Major W. H. Collins for permission to visit his estate, to the guides, and to Mr. Wm. Hewett for making the local arrangements.

Vertebrate Zoology. Mr. Sydney H. Smith writes :

—  
Mr. George Hall, the head-keeper on the Aldby Park estate, accompanied us, and assisted admirably in helping to make the excursion most successful. He informed me that on June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> he saw a rough legged buzzard in Buttercrambe Wood. It was feeding upon the caterpillars of the oak-egg-moth that were dropping in large numbers from an oak tree. This is contrary to all accepted information as to the food of this species. Mr. Hall is very familiar with these birds, having shot them on the moors at Grantley. It was pleasing to hear that the buzzard left the neighbourhood without molestation. Attempts were made to obtain photographs of the fine herd of fallow deer in Aldby Park, but without much success. There were several newly-born fawns. The following is a list of the species observed upon the excursion:

—  
Mammals. Fallow Deer (an introduced species). Fox, Otter, Stoat, Weasel, Hedgehog. Brown Rat, Water Vole, Hare, Rabbit, Mole, Squirrel, Short-Tailed Field Vole, Noctule and Pipistrelle Bat.

Birds. In the brick pits near the village were the Coot, Moorhen, Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Willow Wren. The marshy ground below ' Battle Flatts ' affords a harbourage for Redshank, Lapwing, etc. In the woods and adjoining district were Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redbreast, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Hedge Accentor, Long Tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Treecreeper, Wren, Pied Wagtail, Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Chaffinch, Lesser Redpoll, Linnet, Bullfinch, Yellowhammer, Reed

Bunting, Skylark, Starling, Magpie, Rook, Carrion Crow, Hooded Crow, Swift, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Mute Swan, Mallard, Teal, Turtle Dove, Woodpigeon, Pheasant, Partridge, Corncrake, Moorhen, Coot, Lapwing, Woodcock, Snipe, Redshank.

#### 1914

Crossbills near York. On January 19th, 1913, there were about forty Crossbills in Crompton Wood, four miles from York. They were chiefly adult males, and were feeding on the pine cones. A gamekeeper caught some alive, but I believe they all died but two, which he gave to Mr. Zimmermann, one of which is still living in his aviary.

—

Sydney H. Smith.

Waxwings at York. Two Waxwings were seen in Messrs. Backhouse's gardens at Holgate, York, about January 10th. 1914. by Mr. W. Lund. They were on some evergreen shrubs near the edge of the gardens and were so close to the observer that their 'waxing points' could be plainly distinguished. Taking wing together they flew across the gardens in a S.E. direction, and were not again reported in this district. Sydney H. Smith.

Nesting of the Pochard near Selby. On June 7th, 1913, Mr. V. Zimmermann found a nest of the Pochard, with seven eggs almost hatching, on Skipwith Common. Young Pochards were seen on the Common on several dates during June and July by Mr. C. F. Procter, Mr. Zimmermann and myself, and on one occasion we had two nearly full-grown young ones under observation the whole of the afternoon.

—

Sydney H. Smith.

York Bird Notes. The Naturalist 1914 page 188

The following early nests have been found in the district Snipe with 4 eggs, April 2nd; Lapwing, one with 4 eggs and one with 3 eggs on March 25th; Pheasant's nest with five eggs on April 16th.

#### 1914 Arrival of Migrants

Chiffchaff, April 1st.

Tree Pipit, April 3rd.

Swallow, April 6th.

Willow Warbler, April 13th.

Wood Warbler, April 13th.

Wheatear, April 13th.

Sedge Warbler, April 29th.

Whinchat, April 30th.

Corncrake, May 4th.

Swift, May 4th.

Redstart, May 4th.

Common Whitethroat, May 4th.

Common Sandpiper, April 12th.

Cuckoo, April 16th.

Turtle Dove, April 20th.

Yellow Wagtail, April 21st.

Lesser Whitethroat, April 21st.

House Martin, April 21st.

Garden Warbler, April 27th.  
Blackcap Warbler, April 27th.  
Spotted Flycatcher, May 5th.  
Nightjar, May 6th.  
Nightjar, one found dead, May 16th.  
Pied Flycatcher, May 16th.  
On April 26th, I saw a party of six Fieldfares chasing each other and calling from the top of an ash tree at Wheldrake, 10 miles S.E. of York.

—  
Sydney H. Smith.

## 1915

Hawfinch nested at Brayton Barff

YNU Field Meeting Bishop Wood 19th June 1915

Glorious weather favoured the Union's visit to Hambleton, near Selby, on the third Saturday in June, and no doubt this was partly the cause of the excellent attendance, which constituted a record for the present year's excursions. With one exception all the Sections were well represented, and despite the heat, there was no lack of zest in the work put forth within the area of investigation, and if the dry conditions proved unfavourable to workers in certain sections, they had recompense from the beauties of nature on every hand apparent.

The general body of naturalists devoted the whole of its time within Bishop Wood, an area of ground covering about eight hundred acres, which, according to records, has been devoted to the cultivation of timber since Tudor times. It is one of the largest indigenous woods in the county, and to entomologists in particular has long been considered classic ground for their sphere of study. The wood is exceedingly well timbered, and although the oak is the dominant tree, there is an excellent admixture of other woodland trees. To the older members present pleasant memories were revived, inasmuch as Bishop Wood was first investigated by the members of the Union practically thirty-seven years ago, that is, in August 1878. Permission to visit the wood had been kindly granted by Mr. J. Elston Cawthorn, who, with his woodmen, accompanied the party. At noon Mr. Cawthorn invited the members to partake of an excellent lunch, and hearty thanks were accorded to him for his hospitality on the motion of Dr. Corbett, seconded by Mr. W. N. Cheesman.

The geologists proceeded to Brayton Barff, where Mr. Bruce McGray, the manager of the Selby Council's Waterworks, exhibited a series of cores obtained at the time the test was made for the present water supply on the Barff. He also produced for inspection a plan of the waterworks bore in Ousegate in 1854, and a coloured drawing showing the outer strata between Brotherton and Selby, prepared by Prof. Kendall. A detailed examination was also made of the gravels and pebbles, and altogether a most instructive time was spent.

At the meeting held at the close of the excursion, the President (Mr. Riley Fortune, F.Z.S.) moved a resolution congratulating those members of the Union who had been honoured by the Leeds University by the conferring of honorary degrees (see *The Naturalist* for June, p. 181). This resolution was seconded by Dr. Corbett, and carried with acclamation. The various sectional reports were presented, and the



meeting brought to a close with a vote of thanks to Mr. J. E. Cawthorn for permission to visit the wood, to the manager of the Selby Waterworks, to Mr. Cheesman for making the local arrangements, and to Mr. J. F. Musham and Mr. W. Reeston for acting as guides to the geological party. W. E. L. W.

Vertebrate Zoology. Mr. E. W. Wade and Mr. A. Haigh-Lumby write :—

Considerable attention was given to the edge of the wood, and the keeper's gibbets were also examined. Mr. Cawthorn informed us that there is a winter roost of the Rook in the wood, although no birds nest in the vicinity. This, of course, is contrary to the usual experience. Two members of this section report that the previous week they had seen nests of the Hawfinch, Chiffchaff and Goldfinch, but these escaped our vigilance. The species noted were:

Song Thrush, Blackbird, Whinchat, Robin, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Willow Warbler, Hedge Sparrow, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Blue Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Wren, Yellow Wagtail, Meadow Pipit, Tree Pipit, Swallow, House Martin, Greenfinch, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Chaffinch, Linnet, Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Jay, Rook, Hooded Crow, Carrion Crow, Swift, Nightjar, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Stock Dove, Turtle Dove, Moorhen, Lapwing, Redshank, Treecreeper, Woodcock, Spotted Flycatcher, Pheasant, Magpie, Grey Partridge  
*52 species*

Botany. Mr. W. E. L. Wattam writes: In all probability Bishop Wood is on the site of the ancient forest of the Ouse and Derwent. From the evidence still remaining, it was originally a Carr Wood covered by alder, willow, poplar, and birch in the wetter parts, and chiefly by oak in the drier parts. Considerable changes have, of course, taken place by reason of constant felling and replanting, but although covering such a large acreage the wood is devoid of any particular planned zonation of its timber growth. The oak, both of the types *pedunculata* and *sessiliflora*, is common, and there is a good admixture of ash, beech, sycamore, mountain elm, small-leaved elm, birch, alder, goat willow, crack willow, black poplar, white poplar, elder, geulder rose, hazel, spruce, scot's pine, and larch.

Black Grouse near Selby. On October 26th, Mr. R. Biddick unwittingly brought down a female of this species, which is an unusual event for this district. A possible solution as to the occurrence of such a local bird here, may be accounted for by the fact that the late Lord Wenlock turned several down on Skipwith Common, and asked the local gunners to respect the fact, in order to give them a chance, but I believe nothing came of the venture, and I can trace no record of this bird being indigenous to the suitable localities in this neighbourhood in former days. One may take it as probable that this example is a straggler from the above quoted attempt to establish them at Skipwith. J. F. Musham.

## 1916

York District. Mr. S. H. Smith writes: A White-fronted Goose was shot at East Cottingwith on Nov. 21st, 1914, being one of a party of six that stayed in Wheldrake Ings for several weeks. Two pairs of Pochards have successfully nested on Skipwith Common; each nest contained ten eggs. At the same place twelve pairs of Shoveler Ducks nested, about half of their clutches being hatched, depredations by foxes accounting for the remainder. Although half the heronry wood at Stillingfleet has

been cut down this year, the Herons were in nowise disturbed, as I counted thirty nests during a visit there in May. Mr. H. E. Preston, the owner of the wood, carefully protects these birds, and he informs me there has been a gradual increase during recent years, and that one pair has also nested on his Elvington estate where he is trying to establish another herony. On the 28th June I saw a pair of Common Buzzards at Poppleton, and after having them under observation for fifteen minutes they disappeared in a N.W. direction. I found the nest of a Green Woodpecker at Skipwith on July 3rd containing young, and was much struck by the peculiar noise made by the young birds, the sustained hissing closely resembling the whirr of an aeroplane.

The migrant arrival data obtained by Mr. V. G. F. Zimmerman and myself for the current year (1915) are as follows:-

Chiffchaff, April 1st;

Willow Warbler, April 3rd;

Tree Pipit, April 6th;

Lesser Whitethroat, and Swallow, April 10th;

Wheatear, April 12th;

House Martin, April 19th;

Sand Martin, April 23rd;

Turtle Dove, April 22nd;

Yellow Wagtail, April 23rd;

Common Sandpiper, April 28th;

Garden Warbler, Swift, Corncrake, Blackcap Warbler, and Spotted Flycatcher, April 30th;

Nightjar and Redstart, May 6th;

Whinchat, May 10th;

Pied Flycatcher, May 20th.

The first eggs of the Lapwing were reported on March 22nd at Thorganby, and also a party of very late staying Fieldfares in the same neighbourhood on the 13th May. Mr. Zimmerman reports a large flock of Brambling, numbering some hundreds, frequented the vicinity of Skelton village about April 4th. On May 22nd he found a nest of the Nuthatch about three miles from York, in a hole in a beech tree. It then contained two eggs, and on the 19th June he observed five young fully fledged in the same nest. A nest of the Pied Flycatcher was noted at Brockfield on June 7th containing newly hatched young. Suitable protection has been afforded to the Goldfinches, Bullfinches, and Hawfinches which have been discovered within the York district. Mr. W. H. Parkin reports the finding of a nest of the Long-tailed Tit on May 10<sup>th</sup> at Chandlers Whin. It was in a V formed by two branches of an ash tree, and about twenty five feet from the ground. The same gentleman during a visit to Knavesmire Wood on March 18th noted a variety of the Common Chaffinch. The bird was a pale cinnamon colour on mantle, head, neck and lower breast; upper breast showing the pink flush; white wing bars fully defined like a male in ordinary plumage; the beak horn colour.

## 1917

A recent writer in the Yorkshire Weekly Post gave a description of the colony of the Black-headed Gulls on Skipwith Common. In this he referred to the 'falling off' in numbers which is extraordinary and unaccountable. Since the season began, in the first week of May, the keeper has sent about 300 eggs to York, 360 to Bradford, and there were 140 in hand. A Saturday's collection numbered 70 or 80, so that there is a

total of say 900 eggs; and this, he estimates, is about half the usual yield. Normally, under protection, there are fully 500 pairs of gulls on the Common; to-day there are not more than 200. On Washdyke, for example, a deep, extensive pond, thick with reeds, and an ideal breeding place there used to be 100 nests; there is not one to be found this season. The adjacent dykes, where he used to see 50 or 60 nests, contain only one to-day, from which three eggs have been taken.'

York District. Mr. W. Hewett writes: Two Cormorants were captured in Buttercrambe Wood, near Stamford Bridge, York, on January 9th, 1917, and were kept alive for a few days. The weather was very cold at the time, with snow. The severe frosts in the spring caused great mortality among Song-thrushes and they were scarce all the summer. The spring migrants were unusually late. (taken from the 1918 issue)

YNU meeting at Bradford on February 16th 1918 (The Naturalist 1918 pg 139)  
Mr. William Hewett, in some notes from the York district, gave the following as the dates when spring migrants were first observed:

1917 arrival dates  
House Martin ... April 19  
Willow Warbler April 30  
Chiffchaff ... 24 April  
Swift May 5  
Swallow 24 April  
Corncrake 10 May  
Whitethroat 24 April  
Turtle Dove 12 May  
Cuckoo 30 April  
Nightjar 12 May

With the exception of Rook and Grey Heron all the species were late in nesting. The Turtle Dove seemed to be increasing as a nester. Among numerous ducks shot on the Derwent during the frost were the Tufted, Pochard, Wigeon, and female and young Smews. A pair of wild swans was seen on Wheldrake Ings and an Egyptian Goose was shot at Sutton on Derwent. Partridges were fairly common in the neighbourhood of York and Woodcocks were increasing as residents, about ten pairs now nesting in one wood.

## **1918**

THE YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION'S FIFTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1918.

(Presented at Leeds, 7th December, 1918).

The Naturalist 1919 page 33

York District. Mr. W. Hewett writes: My thanks are due to Dr. C. A. Lower, Elvington, near York, and to Mr. J. F. Musham, Selby, for notes which have been of use in compiling this report.

Arrival of Spring migrants:

Swallow. April 24th, Kexby; April 27th, Hammerton; April 28th, Elvington.

House Martin. April 28th, Stamford Bridge. Dr. Lower informs me that both the Swallow and House Martin have been common at Elvington.

Sand Martin. April 28th, Stamford Bridge.

Common Swift. May 5th, Gate Helmsley; May 6th, Elvington; August 19th, last seen at Selby.

Cuckoo. April 20th, Hammerton; April 29th, York; May 1st, Elvington; May 3rd, Selby; June 30th, egg of Cuckoo (of Skylark type) found in Hedge Sparrow's nest which contained three eggs, at Kelfield, near York.

Corncrake. May 7th, York; May 8th, Elvington. I have found this species in many localities near York during this summer, and believe it to have been of more frequent occurrence than usual.

Willow Warbler. April 23rd, Elvington.

Redshank. As numerous as ever in several localities near York; commenced laying on April 11th; two nests, with five eggs in each, seen on May 6th.

Black-Headed Gull. A large number assembled on Skipwith Common in April and commenced laying about May 10th.

Curlew. A pair frequented Skipwith Common during the whole of May, but so far as could be ascertained did not nest. This species nested in the locality in 1901.

Hawfinch. An immature specimen was caught by a Gamekeeper at Hammerton on July 26th.

Turtle-Dove. This species has been noted from many localities this season and is gradually extending its range.

Grey Partridge. The past season has been a favourable one for this species in the York neighbourhood. Coveys of eleven and twelve have frequently been noticed.

At 1.00am on the 17th March, great numbers of birds calling from the sky, evidently a phase of spring migration. The species seemed to consist of Redwing, Fieldfare, Starling and Skylark.

Leach's Petrel. A specimen was picked up by a cat at Clifton, York, on October 28th, 1917.

Dr. Lower informs me that, at Elvington, Ducks were much scarcer on the Derwent during last winter and no rare species were observed; that the Hooded Crow came in very small numbers and did not stay long; and that the Fieldfare was abundant and stayed until May.

Woodcock. A specimen was observed drinking in the yard behind his house at Selby, by Mr. Musham, on the morning of December 25th, 1917.

This was the last year that eggs from the Black-headed Gull colony on Skipwith Common were harvested as part of an effort to lessen the impact of war-time food rationing. However, after the loss of 900 eggs the previous year many of the gulls appear to have abandoned the gullery and only 471 were taken in 1918. These were sold locally at 1d. each, at a time when they were priced at 7d. in Leadenhall Market, London.

## **1919**

Annual Report 1919 (The Naturalist 1920 page 40)

York District. Mr. W, Hewett writes: Corncrake, heard on May 9th at Stamford Bridge. Black-headed Gulls were more numerous on Skipwith Common than has been the case for the past five years. Shoveler: Several pairs have nested and succeeded in rearing their young, and three pairs of Pochard are known to have nested on the Common and reared their young. Only three or four pairs of Redshank were noticed there this summer. A young Cuckoo, between fourteen and twenty-one days old, found in the nest of a Hedge-sparrow, was brought to me alive. I fed it on raw meat, worms, caterpillars of various species, and bread. It thrived rapidly and became quite

tame. I liberated this bird on August 4th, in a wood not far from where it was hatched. Swift: first noticed at York on the 7th May. I have also seen this bird at Wilberfoss (August 17th), Beningborough (September 14th), Easingwold, Tollerton, and Coxwold (August 31st), and my last record for it is 21st September, at Bishop Wilton.

#### YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT COXWOLD.

With a County possessing such diversified scenery it might be invidious, and perhaps controversial, unduly to assert that the members of the Union were indeed wise in choosing Coxwold for their inaugural excursion for the present year; a more charming and peaceful place could scarcely have been decided upon. This pretty village nestling at the southern end of the Hambleton Hills possesses an old-world charm eminently satisfactory to the nature student, and the glorious weather which prevailed - a touch of the real springtime - added to the completeness of the joy which was felt by all who were present, although the attendance was hardly up to expectations. The whole life of nature was only too ready to respond to the sunny days, and never a shadow crossed the happiness of those who attended the excursion; even when rest was taken from work in the field memory was enriched by the magnificent views which everywhere prevailed.

The President of the Union, Dr. W. G. Smith, was in attendance throughout the excursion, and the members greatly enjoyed his many chats upon the ecological features of the woods and moors which were traversed.

Under the guidance of Mr. Willis, of York, the party shortly after noon on Saturday, April 21st, went by way of field path and delightful country lane to the village of Oldstead, cosily situate in a sheltered hollow; afterwards proceeding through Snever Wood, eventually reaching the moor top near to the small commemorative tower known locally as the "Observatory". From here the party descended through the woods, which were rich in excellent examples of conifers, to the hamlet of Wass. On the way back to Coxwold an inspection was made of the ruins of Byland, the largest of the Cistercian Abbeys of Yorkshire.

In the evening the President opened a discussion on the "Vegetation of Flushes" pointing out many interesting features which this phase of ecological study embodied, and also dwelt upon the economic importance of flushes in the improvement of pasturage.

On the following day after inspecting the pretty village of Kilburn, the road was taken to Scotch Corner, up the old Herd Road, on to the moor top, some of the party going forward to Gormire Lake, and the remainder proceeding down Sutton Bank, examining the ground along the base of Roulstone Scar, afterwards climbing to the summit of the Scar, then to the famous White Horse of Kilburn, white no longer owing to lack of attention.

On Monday a visit was first paid to the grounds of Newburgh Priory and afterwards, thanks to the kindness of Mr. Greevz Fysher, the party was conveyed by his motor to Wass. An investigation was made of the woods and ghylls in the immediate vicinity of Wass Bank, and on reaching the top of the Bank the party crossed the Byland Moors, returning to the village of Wass through Raven Ghyll.

At the customary meeting held at the close of the excursion the President occupied the chair, and after eight new members had been elected, sectional reports were given, and thanks accorded to Lady Julia Wombwell for permission to visit her estates; to Mr. Willis for acting as guide, and to Mr. Fysher for so freely granting use of his motor car. W. E. L. W.

Vertebrate Zoology.

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Mr. Wattam writes Bird life was fairly abundant. Of migrants the following species were noted : Willow Warbler (Coxwold and Oldstead); Yellow and Grey Wagtails (Snever Wood - *outside the Club area*); Common Curlew (Roulstone Moor - *outside the Club area*); Ring Ouzel (Byland Moor - *outside the Club area*). Mr. T. Cockerline reported having heard the Cuckoo at Oldstead on the 18th April. Nests of Blackbird, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Pheasant and Grouse, containing eggs were found.

The Rook, Jackdaw (Roulstone Scar), Lapwing, Dunnock, Great Tit, and Chaffinch were not uncommon birds. Mr. Simpson reported having heard the 'call' of an Owl, and the "drumming" of Snipe during a walk on the evening of the 19th April.

## 1920

Arrival of Migrants in the York District, 1920. Naturalist pg 108

—

March 30th, House Martin, Ripon; April 1st, Dringhouses ;  
April 21st, Cattal.

April 2nd, Sand Martin, Dringhouses.

„ 9th, Chiffchaff, Dunnington; April 21st, Whixley.

„ 9th, Cuckoo, Dunnington; April 18th, Crayke; April  
24th, Askham Bog; April 30th, Grimston.

„ 14th, Yellow Wagtail, Dringhouses; May 9th, Dunnington.

„ 15th, Swallow, Haxby.

„ 16th, Willow Warbler, Heworth.

„ 18th, Whitethroat, Crayke; April 29th, Skip Bridge ;

May 1st, Huntington.

„ 19th, Swallow, Sproxton, 28th, Sandburn; May 9th,  
York.

„ 20th, Whinchat, Wigginton.

„ 27th, Corncrake, Duncombe Park; May 7th, Dunnington;

May 15th, York.

„ 28th, Wheatear, Sandburn.

„ 29th, Sedge warbler, Skip Bridge.

„ 30th, Grasshopper Warbler, Askham Bog.

May 1st, Tree Pipit, Huntington.

„ 9th, Meadow Pipit, large flocks on Clifton Ings.

„ 9th, Redstart, Strensall.

„ 9th, Common Sandpiper, Clifton Ings; Swift, Fulford, York.

„ 12th, Spotted Flycatcher, Bishopthorpe.

„ 13th, Whinchat, Bishopthorpe and Wigginton; 14th, Dunnington.

„ 15th, Wood Warbler, Sandburn.

June 2nd, Nightjar, Sandburn; Turtle Dove, Sandburn.

„ 8th, Stonechat, Gilling.

S. H. Smith, York.

YNU meeting at Kirkham Abbey July 10th 1920

Mr. S. H. Smith writes: The section was officially represented by Messrs. H. B. Booth and myself. All the common species of birds were in evidence, and in addition were the following Green Woodpecker, jay, Magpie, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Blackcap and

Garden Warbler, Whinchat, Redstart, Bullfinch, Dipper, Kingfisher, Moorhen, and Reed Bunting. Mr. Booth pointed out that Jays were very numerous, in spite of the efforts of local gamekeepers, and raised the question as to why this should be the case when, contrasted with various parts of the West Riding where there were similar conditions as to woodland habitat, and fewer gamekeepers, but no Jays. What is the particular attraction so far as concerns this handsome species in its choice of the Kirkham district, or, in fact, all the York area wherein to make its home? The same remarks might apply in the case of Magpies, of which plenty were seen, and one young Magpie, which had the misfortune to get its plumage so wet that it could not fly, was caught.

A keen look-out was kept for the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker, and Pied Flycatcher, but neither species was observed, though as they have both nested but four miles away it is quite possible they may eventually be found at Kirkham.

Great Crested Grebe. A male of this species in winter plumage, was killed at East Cottingwith on October 30th, 1920. I have been able to secure it for the York Museum.

Sydney H. Smith.

### 1921

Unusual Birds at Selby. The Yorkshire Evening News of November 3rd 1920 reported the shooting of a Greenshank at Selby. Inquiries through Mr. Musham revealed the fact that this bird was a Knot, a fairly common winter visitor. Mr. Musham also reports that a Red-throated Diver flew into a yard in Armoury Road, Selby, during the evening of November 9th, and killed itself. Mr. B. Hanley shot a solitary Snipe at Bubwith on November 1st. R. Fortune.

*NB it seems likely that the Red-throated Diver and Knot described above are the birds referred to on page 35 of the January 1922 edition of The Naturalist which mentions "a Red-throated Diver and a Knot at Selby".*

York District. Mr. S. H. Smith writes: The wet and stormy season has had a most disastrous effect on most of the local nesting species, and particularly game birds. Migrants, in nothing like their ordinary numbers, were late in arriving in their usual summer haunts. Whinchats appear to be increasing, and there was a noticeable increase amongst Corncrakes, this latter being specially significant in view of previous reports as to steady decreases. I am indebted to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann for valuable assistance in compiling the report.

1920.

Jan. 20. A Blackbird's nest containing three eggs was built in a greenhouse on Bishopthorpe Road, York; these birds have nested in the same place since 1916.

Feb. 1. A pair of Pochard and several Shoveler are frequenting the brickponds at Dringhouses, York.

„ 13. Rooks commenced building nests in an ash tree at Monkgate, York. On the 23rd they began to build in the old rookery at Heworth, York.

Mar. 14. A large flock of Golden Plover on Bootham Stray, York.

„ 16. Two skeins of Pink-footed Geese passed over Dringhouses, York, flying west.

„ 21. Several Hooded Crows were observed at Strensall.

April 13. A large flock of Brambling Finches at Dringhouses.

„ 23. The York Evening Press reports that ‘A little Grebe broke the metal top cone of a signal post at Selby station by collision when flying at night.’

May 8. Nest and four eggs of the Curlew found at Skipwith, the parent birds were successfully photographed, and the eggs hatched out on the 20th, the young eventually going away safely.

„ 9. Several small flocks of Meadow Pipits were observed on Clifton Ings, York.

„ 21. A pair of Redshanks was seen in a meadow at Grimston, near York; a very unusual district for this species.

„ 23. A Curlew’s nest containing four eggs was found on Strensall Common.

„ 24. Coal Tit’s nest, with young, in the ruins of Byland Abbey, and two pairs of Kestrels had their nests in Whitomcliff.

June 2. A pair of Curlew, two pairs of Redshanks, and three pairs of Nightjars were seen on Sandburn Common. A pair of Turtle Doves was carrying nesting material, and on the 9th the nest contained two eggs, both of which hatched in due course. A nest of the Bullfinch was found containing five eggs.

„ 13. A nest of the Garden Warbler, with five eggs, and that of a Lesser Whitethroat, with four eggs, were found at Strensall.

A pair of Curlew with three strong young birds were also observed.

„ 23. A Meadow Pipit’s nest, containing four eggs, and an egg of the Cuckoo, was found in Askham Bog.

„ 27. The Blackcap Warbler was observed at Strensall and a nest of five eggs was successfully hatched.

July 14. A pair of Great Crested Grebes, with two young ones, seen on the lake at Castle Howard. One nest of the Reed Warbler with five young ones, was found in the usual haunt by the lake side.

July 22. A Treecreeper’s nest, with four young ones, was found at Sand Hutton, York.

Aug. 1st. Four Grey Herons and a flock of sixty Mallard were seen on Strensall Common.

„ 19. Nineteen Pink-footed Geese flew over York at 7 p.m., travelling south-west. The evening was clear and calm. The following day the weather changed to very stormy, and heavy floods and storms are reported to have taken place in Scotland.

„ 18. Three parties of Common Sandpipers passed through York, one of four and two of five birds, all following the course of the River Ouse towards its mouth.

„ 20. Several more parties of Common Sandpipers proceeding down the River Ouse, all flying fearlessly through the City.

I have to thank Mr. F. Vear for his observations upon the Curlew at Skipwith, he further states that the Black-headed Gull is more numerous than ever in the well-known haunt on Skipwith Common, many new nests being built on the ponds nearest to the main road. Other species that have more than held their own in point of numbers are Tawny and Barn Owls. Kingfishers are now a common feature in the bird life of the Rivers Ouse and Foss, at York, and locally there are hordes of Wood Pigeons.

Stock Doves are reported to be very common in a plantation at Bolton Percy, and Pied Flycatchers have nested at Newton Kyme for the past five years. Dippers have been very common in all their usual local haunts.

Lapwings have fared well, and large flocks gathered together during September, and at the time of writing one favourite haunt of the species at Raskelf is crowded with



larger numbers than have been seen for several years. There is also a 'stand' of Golden Plover of perhaps one hundred birds.

YNU at Askham Bog 30th July to 1st August 1921 pgs 347-351 and 376-377

Askham Bog was visited on July 31st, and bird life was conspicuous chiefly by its absence. Many of the summer visitors have departed, and resident species are well hidden in the primeval thickets of reeds, sallows, and birches. Plenty of ringdoves, stock doves, moorhens and magpies were seen, a few whitethroats, sedge warblers, a bullfinch, sparrowhawk and kestrel, and on the old brickpond some tufted ducks and mallards. Here again swallows and martins were very scarce and Corncrakes were entirely absent. Borings of woodpeckers were seen, and may have been made by both green and great spotted varieties.

Skipwith Common had been reserved for Bank Holiday Monday, August 1st, and a full day was devoted to it. The Common is noted for its gullery, but it was too late in the year to view either adult or young black-headed gulls; they having all departed to the coast. As a result of the exceptionally dry spring and summer, the visitors had the almost unique experience of walking dry-shod across the site of the gull ponds; those ponds that still held water had attracted and retained various aquatic birds. Several small parties of herons were seen, and at one time 21 herons on the wing together gladdened ornithological eyes; these birds had most probably been bred at Stillingfleet heronry. Half-a-dozen herring gulls flew leisurely away when disturbed from a patch of ooze, and near by was seen plenty of teal (our smallest British duck), numbers of mallards and wild duck, a pochard, two golden plover, a redshank and several snipe. In the woods we observed some large parties of jays, plenty of ringdoves and stock doves. The shoveler duck and nightjar were not seen, but both species have bred on the Common this year. The writer caught a glimpse of a bird that might have been a hen harrier, probably companion to one obtained a few miles south-east of Skipwith last February. This bird was also seen by Mr. Wroot, but, unfortunately, the President, Mr. Booth, missed the sight, as he was following a flock of jays through a dense plantation at the time the harrier (?) was noticed. The lapwing or green plover appeared to be very numerous, and plenty were observed here as well as at Tillmire and Askham Bog.

Little Auk at Barmby Moor, near Pocklington.

A Little Auk in a very exhausted condition was picked up on the farm of Mr. A. Richardson, on November 23rd, 1920. This bird, which had evidently become lost in the fog prevailing at that date, was placed on a pond, but died during the night. I saw it just before it was sent to Messrs. Allen, of York, to be stuffed. Sydney H. Smith.

Hen Harrier at East Cottingwith. I regret to report the death of a female of this species as having occurred at East Cottingwith about February 19th, 1921. I saw, and identified, this bird in the flesh, previous to its being handed to the Taxidermist.

Sydney H. Smith.

## **1922**

1921 York area bird report published in The Naturalist January 1922 pgs 38-39  
York District (Sydney H. Smith):

Local game preservers have had record coveys of Partridges, and other species of game also show to good advantage. Our summer visiting birds were, on the whole, late in arriving in their usual haunts, and it is noticeable that Swallows, Martins and Swifts are again very scarce compared with other years, and the Corncrake is also becoming rarer. I am again indebted to Mr. S. J. F. Zimmerman for many useful notes, and to Mr. E. W. Taylor for notes of the arrival of migrants.

Jan. 8. Song Thrush first heard singing at York.

„ 10. Great Spotted Woodpecker shot at Clifton, York (G. E. Gibbs)..

„ 28. Little Grebe seen on the River Foss near Monk Bridge, York..

I also saw one in breeding plumage near the same place on August 30th, and for several days after.

Feb. 14. A pair of Great Crested Grebes and several Tufted Ducks on the lake at Dringhouses. Rooks commenced repairing nests in some trees in the City.

„ 19. Hen Harrier female killed at East Cottingwith.

„ 20. Woodcock seen at Sandburn.

Mar. 26 Yellow Wagtails seen at Leeming Bar (H. Houseman).

April 1. Chiffchaff arrived at Skelton.

„ 9. A pair of Hawfinches at Castle Howard (E.W.T.)

„ 10. Blackcap seen and heard at Heworth, May 5th, York (E.W.T.)

„ 13. Willow Warbler seen and heard at Heworth, May 5th, York (E.W.T.).

„ 15. Cuckoo arrived at Fairfield; 19th, Huntington; 28th,.

Knavesmire; 21st, Askham Bog; May 7th, Heworth.

„ 18 Swallows arrived at Dringhouses; 19th, Strensall; 23rd, York and Stamford Bridge.

„ 18 House Martin, Dringhouses.

„ 20. Long-eared Owl nest and eggs and young at Strensall, and a Carrion Crow's nest with eggs.

„ 24. Curlew, three pairs seen at Strensall; visited nesting boxes at Sandburn. One had a nest of Great Spotted Woodpecker; others contained nests and eggs of Blue Tit and Coal Tit, and all the others were being supplied with nesting material by species that were not determined.

„ 24. Tree Pipit seen at Dringhouses, and again on the 28th.

„ 27. Several nests with eggs of Redshank and Snipe at Wheldrake.

„ 30 Corncrake arrived Stamford Bridge; May 8th, York (E.W.T.); May 1st, Cottingwith.

„ 30. Sand Martin arrived Stamford Bridge; May 13th, Grimston.

May 1. Swift arrived East Cottingwith; May 7th, York (E. W. T.); May 8th, York (S.H.S.).

„ 4. Black-headed Gulls very numerous at Skipwith, and nests and eggs of Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Pochard, Redshank, and Snipe were seen.

„ 5 Wood Warbler seen at York.

„ 7. Sedge Warbler seen at Askham Bog; May 13th, Grimston.

„ 10. Wheatear nest and eggs at Dringhouses.

„ 13. Whinchat seen at Grimston.

„ 15. Nests with eggs of Hawfinch and Goldfinch seen at York.

16. Nightjar heard at Sandburn.

„ 22. Woodcocks nest with young birds seen at Sandburn.

„ 22. Nest of the Redstart built on the ground found at Strensall (V.J.F.Z.)

June 2. Heard the Nightingale at Harton Woods.

„ 2. Swallows were very numerous at Sutton on Derwent.  
„ 3. Turtle Dove seen at Dunnington; Raskelf, June 11th; Thorganby, June 11th; Stillington, June 12th. A nest with two young ones found at Sandburn on June 20th, and another nest with young birds at Dunnington, June 29th.  
„ 5. Curlew. Two young ones found at Strensall by Mr. T. Grey.  
July 1. Pied Flycatcher. A nest with three young ones was found in the same nesting hole as in previous years at Newton Kyme.  
„ 1. Turtle Dove, nest with young in a yew tree, Newton Kyme.  
A Turtle Dove was also seen at Bramham Park on August 6th, and one at Raskelf on September 1st.  
„ 30. Freshly killed Little Owl seen at Fulford on the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Excursion by H. B. Booth.  
Oct. 16. Starlings. I saw immense flocks of these birds near Ganton about four o'clock in the afternoon. They were all proceeding east, the weather being very fine and settled.

Little Auk near York. During very severe weather a specimen of the Little Auk was shot on Clifton Ings, on November 12th 1921, by D. Ashby, York.

—

Sydney H. Smith.

Water Rail at York. A Water Rail was killed on the night of November 11th /12th 1921 on the railway at York, by collision with the telegraph wires/and sent to me by Mr. J. Audaer. Sydney H. Smith.

Shag at York. A fine adult specimen of this rare visitor was killed on the River Ouse near Marygate Landing, York, practically in the middle of the city, by Mr. Cyril Peacock, on January 6th, 1922. The bird, which is new to our local list, I saw in the flesh, and its twelve tail feathers make the identity certain. Sydney H. Smith.

Shag at York. Further to my previous note (Naturalist, February, 1922), another shag, a mature female, has been obtained on January nth, at York, being found on the River Ouse bank, close to the Guildhall in the City, and was choked by a large roach that was firmly fixed in the gullet. Another was killed at Pocklington about January 6th. All three birds are in the hands of Mr. Allen, the York taxidermist, and if any Yorkshire Museum would like one, I am in a position to pass one specimen along to it.

Sydney H. Smith, January 14th, 1922.

#### TURTLE DOVE IN YORKSHIRE. SYDNEY H. SMITH.

The Naturalist April 1922 pg 125-127

In recent years this species is increasing its range in Yorkshire. The principal district frequented by the species in England is defined by a line from Bristol to Holyhead, thence to the Wash, south to London, and then across to Bristol. In this way is marked out well-wooded country that is the natural home of a bird of this kind. Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire is either not wooded, or is too densely populated to offer suitable environment, but proceeding through mid-Yorkshire, there are plenty of arboreal haunts to attract the Turtle Dove; hence the increasing number of records recently points to the fact that this handsome little dove had begun to appreciate the attractions of Yorkshire. This

increase may be the result of successful breeding on the part of pioneer pairs, the progeny of which are returning during the spring immigration to places where their early life was spent. It would be helpful if young birds were marked during the next few years in order to find out what proportion returned to the place of their birth. Our earliest Yorkshire records date from the time of T. Allis, and are dealt with in *The Birds of Yorkshire* and in 1844 Allis mentions that a turtle dove had been shot near Halifax 'some years previously.' Evidently the species was rare in Yorkshire during the nineteenth century, there being few records, though no doubt partly due to lack of observers.

A turtle dove was shot near Rotherham in 1824, and another at Teesmouth in 1837. Usually turtle doves depart in August, but, like Corncrakes, odd ones occasionally outstay their summer visit beyond the ordinary, as '*The Birds of Yorkshire*' records a turtle dove as having been shot at Beverley on November 18th, 1865. Apparently the farthest northerly range of the species is Cumberland, where it has been noted twice and recorded in the B.O.U. Migration Report. '*The Birds of Yorkshire*' records many isolated instances of the occurrence of the bird in Yorkshire.

The observations of the British Ornithologists' Union, published in their Migration Reports, point to the main arrival of the species as occurring between May 4th and 18th, and stragglers keep arriving from overseas until well into June. The movement is almost entirely northerly, all the early records being from the south coast, as the following extracts will prove:-

1908 Turtle Doves arrived on South Coast April 24; Yorkshire May 11

1909 do. do. April 28 do. May 1

1910 do. do. April 19 do. May 17

1911 do. do. April 18 do. May 12

1912 do. do. April 13 do. May 7

I have, with the help of Mr. Zimmerman, obtained a few details from the records of the York Naturalists' Society, and tabulate them below:

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1908 A nest with 2 eggs was seen at Crayke, Easingwold, on June 5th, and the female was sitting at the time of the discovery. V.Z.

1909 A turtle dove was seen at Sandburn on April 30th. S.H.S. and a nest with two eggs was found at Shipton. V.Z.

1910 A turtle dove was seen at Skipwith on May 12th. S.H.S.

1911 A pair of turtle doves at Castle Howard on May 13th. E. W. Taylor.

1912 A pair of turtle doves at Skipwith on April 27th, and a small party was observed at Aldby Park on April 29th. S.H.S.

1913 No record.

1914 A pair of turtle doves and their nest and eggs at Skipwith on May 17th. V.Z.

1915 A pair of turtle doves at Sandburn on April 23rd. V.Z.

1916 A nest and eggs at Escrick on May 8th, and nests with eggs at Moreby Park, Stillingfleet Wood, and Moorlands Wood, Skelton. V.Z.

1917 No record.

1918 A nest with young birds at Skelton, and nests and eggs at Alne Park, and Sutton on Forest. V.Z.

1919 No record.

1920 A nest with young at Sandburn. V.Z.

1921 A nest with young at Sandburn on June 20th. V.Z.

A nest with young at Dunnington, on June 29th. V.Z.

A nest with one young bird at Newton Kyme on July 1st. V.Z.

A turtle dove was seen in Bramham Park on August 6th, V.Z.

Several turtle doves were seen near Skelton early in May, and on May 16th a nest with two eggs was found by G. Howard.

I saw a pair of turtle doves at Dunnington on June 3rd, one at Thormanby on June 11th, one at Stillington on June 12th, and one at Raskelf on September 1st. On June 8th, Mr. Riley Fortune saw four turtle doves in a turnip field at Allerton Park, and states that there is an undoubted tendency on the part of this species to extend its range into Yorkshire.

Mr. H. B. Booth informs me that the species is a very rare visitor to the Ilkley district; he has, however, heard it in Harewood Park, and states that twenty-five years ago it bred in good numbers just south of Wakefield.

Mr. W. G. Clarke, speaking for the Scarborough neighbourhood, says that turtle doves have been increasingly plentiful during the past summer, and are extending their range in all directions, the number steadily multiplying for several years, this increase being noticeable as far north as Whitby.

Mr. Stanley Duncan informs me that, with his brother, Norman Duncan, he saw a pair of turtle doves come in off the sea and round Spurn Point at 11.30 a.m. on May 28th, 1921. This pair did not alight, but flew over the "flats" to the north shore of the Humber. Close observation has been kept here all the summer, but no more turtle doves have been seen. It is evident from this note that there must be some slight immigration from over the North Sea, and it will be advisable to keep a close watch at the east coast arriving points for immigrant bird life, to find out whether there is any definite flight line for this species over the North Sea from the continent, as all the evidence we have at present seems to shew that the spring movement is all from the south coast toward the midland and northern counties.

Mr. W. J. Bramley, of Fairburn, states that he has not observed the date of arrival of this summer visitor previously, but has noticed it in the neighbourhood of Fairburn as follows:

1921 August 9th. Six turtle doves seen feeding on a wheat stubble.

August 20th. A few turtle doves seen.

August 21st. A nest was found with two young birds just able to fly.

September 1st. Three turtle doves, seen and the last one was noticed on September 10th.

Mr. E. W. Wade informs me that the species has been distributed all over Holderness since 1918, never numerous, the country generally being too shelterless, but in certain favoured spots a pair was found. It has bred at Warter and in other sheltered valleys on the Wolds as long as the present keeper can remember, but in very restricted numbers. His first acquaintance with this species was in 1906, when he heard two or three pairs in the spinneys in low sheltered valleys. In 1907 it was noticeably spreading over Holderness, where ten years previously it had been entirely unknown. In 1909 he noted that it was still spreading. It was at Brantingham in 1911, and Ferriby, 1912, and here it has remained to date. Around the western edge of the wolds, where the valleys are more sheltered, the turtle dove was settled long before it began to extend into the bleaker country to the east. In 1916 there was a great increase at Warter, and in 1919 forty were seen during the late summer in one flock.

In conclusion, I am led to wonder why the turtle dove has increased in Yorkshire, as these notes have shewn, for, after all, the species is only a summer visitor to our shores, and in the event of some sudden storm overtaking the immigrant flocks, and

wiping out those which have our county as their objective, it is quite possible that the turtle dove will again be a rarity in Yorkshire until the cycle adjusts itself by the influence of local breeding of descendants of those pairs which may have escaped the general disaster.

(Naturalist 125-127, 1922)

Red-necked Grebe near Selby. On February 4th last,, a pair of these Birds was flushed by a local gunner on the Black Fen; one bird was shot. J. F. Musham, Selby, Feb. 10th, 1922.

Turtle Dove in Yorkshire. With reference to The Naturalist, pp. 125-127, I was living at Skipwith from 1893 to 1906, and I cannot remember a season in which there was none of these birds about, and every spring one or two pairs were nesting on the Common, particularly in some of the larger clumps of birches. Since coming to Saxton, in 1906, I have generally noted Turtle Doves close to my house, and on two occasions a pair has nested in the small belt of plantation surrounding the grounds. C. Ash, Saxton Vicarage.

1923

York District (Sydney H. Smith): The year has been the exact opposite of 1921 so far as the weather is concerned, and the effect upon bird life is marked by the destruction of both eggs and young of many species, particularly ground nesting varieties and game birds. Sunny days in April and early May raised hope that another fine year was in store. Such, however, was not to be, and how wet and disastrous were the months of June, July and August need not be recapitulated here. So far as this district is concerned I have never known such a scarcity of migrant species, such as Swallows, Sand and House Martins, Whinchats, Whitethroats, Corncrakes, etc. The latter is almost a back number. I have only heard two during the whole season, and Mr. Zimmermann tells me he also has only heard two, and this in a district where twenty years ago the noise of the Corncrake was dominant in almost every meadow.

In The Naturalist of February, 1922, I recorded the occurrence of the Little Auk and a Water Rail, both at York, on November 12th, 1921, and for the first time in twenty years two Shags were killed on the River Ouse at York, one on January 6th, and the other on January 11th, 1922. Evidently a little party of these birds had been driven inland by the hard weather prevailing at the time, as another Shag was killed at Pocklington on January 6th, 1922.

The year is marked by the visitation of Waxwings, On January 20<sup>th</sup> two were noticed at Huntington, 3 miles from York, afterwards a third was seen, and the party stayed for three weeks, On January 28th, one was killed at New Earswick, and recorded by Dr. Gaynor. Three more were seen on January 25th at Bilborough, near York, and five frequented the York and Selby road in the vicinity of Riccall, and were last seen on January 31st.

A Goldeneye Duck was shot at Sandburn on January 12th, and brought in for identification by Mr. John Hetheron.

During January and February a large flock of Wigeon, Mallard, and Tufted Duck frequented Mr. H. E. Leatham's pond at Dringhouses, York, and a pair of Great Crested Grebes appear to have settled there definitely.

July 9th, a pair of Great Crested Grebes made their nest on the lake at Castle Howard, and sat boldly in full view of the highway to Slingsby, and ultimately brought

off their young. Another pair were also seen, but I have no record of their having nested.

Numbers of Mealy Redpolls and Bramblings were seen about Dringhouses during January and February, and the local bird catcher took a heavy toll of the visitors. Goldfinches, Hawfinches and Bullfinches appear to be increasing in number

On January 14th, a Robin's nest with four eggs. was found in an outhouse at the Union Workhouse, York, but before incubation was completed a heavy snow storm filled the nest and drove the birds away. Long-eared and Tawny Owls have nested well in the neighbourhood of York.

Magpies, Carrion Crows, and Jays have been very numerous, and there appear to be more Green Woodpeckers about, particularly at Skipwith. At this place the colony of Black-headed Gulls is well populated, and other species that have nested in good numbers are Mallard, Teal, and Shoveler Ducks, and a pair of Tufted Ducks hatched eleven young.

On May 4th, Sir Edward Brooksbank, of Healaugh, reported eight pairs of Herons as nesting in the Shire Oak Wood at Healaugh.

On August 1st, Mr. Leonard Wray, of Huntington, picked up a Heron which had been in collision with the telegraph wires, and had broken one wing.

During the summer a pair of nearly white Sparrows frequented the grounds of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, York.

Migrant and General Notes.

Mar. 17. Swallow first seen at Bulmer. A small flock there on the 19th.

17. Chiffchaff first seen at Bulmer, and at Shipton, York, April 14th.

Mar. 17. Willow Warbler first seen at Bulmer, and at Shipton, April 14th.

, , 17. Yellow Wagtail first seen at Bulmer, and at Sandburn, May 4th.

, , 19. Whitethroat first seen at Bulmer, and at Beningbrough, April 14th.

Apr. 14. Three pairs of Common Sandpipers seen on the River Ouse at Poppleton.

, , 14. Sand Martins and Tree Pipits, first seen at Beningbrough.

, . 16. House Martins arrived at Beningbrough.

, , 16. Blackcap Warbler seen at Healaugh.

, , 16. Redstart first seen at Healaugh.

, , 17. Cuckoo first seen at Sheriff Hutton, and at Heworth York, and at Wetherby, April 19th. A Wheatear's nest with four eggs and one egg of the Cuckoo was found at Strensall on July 25th, by Mr. F. Vear.

Wheatears seen at Copmanthorpe, and several at Sandburn, May 15th.

, , 23. Stonechat first seen at Levisham.

, , 30. Garden Warbler and Grasshopper Warbler first seen at Sandburn.

, , 30. Whinchat first seen at Sandburn. Numerous at Strensall on July 25th.

, , 30. Two Sedge warblers seen at Strensall.

, , 30. A pair of Pied Flycatchers seen in a garden at Acomb, York.

These birds stayed until August, but we have no evidence of their having bred.

May 1. Several Swifts were seen at Heworth. Three at Dunnington, May 6th.

, , 2. Turtle Dove arrived at Heworth, York. Two more seen at Dunnington, May 17th, a nest of eggs at Dunnington, July 11th, and a nest with young just hatched at Ampleforth, June 26th.

A nest with young at Barmby Moor on July 25th.

„ 8. A large party of Swifts arrived at a favourite nesting house on Huntington Road, York, and a party of Swifts on The Mount, York, May 7th.

, 10. Corncrake first heard at Murton, and one at Earswick on May 11th.

„ 17. Nightjar first seen at Dunnington, and their nest and eggs was found on June 11th.

, 17. Several nests of Snipe and several nests of Redshank, all with eggs, at East Cottingwith.

June 7. Six nests of the Reed Bunting, each with five eggs, were seen at East Cottingwith.

„ 18. Four young Curlews seen on Strensall Common.

July 5. A Redstarts nest, with five young ones, and another with four young ones, were found in Duncombe Park.

, , 11. A pair of Reed Warblers seen on the Canal Bank at Pocklington.

Oct. 13. House Martin still feeding young in the nest at Dringhouses, York.

„ 15. A Jay was picked up in a garden at 8 Portland Street, York, evidently it had been stunned by collision with telegraph wires and recovered after attention.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann, of the York Naturalist's Society, for many valuable notes that are included in this report.

YORKSHIRE GREAT BUSTARDS. Naturalist March 1923 pgs 87-89

T. SHEPPARD, M.SC.

The photograph reproduced herewith represents a fine pair of Yorkshire Great Bustards now in the Municipal Museum, Hull. They are referred to in Nelson's 'Birds of Yorkshire' as having been killed near Malton in 1825, and were then in the Blackmore Museum, Salisbury, to the authorities of which We are indebted for kindly allowing them to come to Hull.

The specimens have been re-set recently, but attached to the case is the following label, from the nature of the lettering, etc., of which it is obviously the original label put on by the Blackmore Museum, and we should imagine is contemporary with the original case: 'Pair, male and female, Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*), killed at Malton, Yorkshire, 1825. From the collection of the late Mr. Milton, Great Marlborough Street, London, and deposited in the Salisbury Museum by Mr. Henry Blackmore.'

The particular specimens are described by Thomas Norwood of Salisbury, in Country, Vol. VIII., 11th January, 1877, page 39.

I had difficulty in tracing this old journal, and eventually Mr. R. F. Sharp, Deputy Keeper of the Department of Printed Books, British Museum, was good enough to supply me with the following copy of the entry referred to:

'The Bustards in the Blackmore Museum are those of the Great Bustard. They are four birds, two males and two females. One pair killed at Malton, Yorkshire, in 1825. The height of the male is a little under 3 ft., the tuft of feathers on each side of the lower bill about 6 ins. in length; the height of the female about 26 ins. Of the other pair, the male was shot at Berwick St. James, Wilts., 26th January, 1871. The height of this bird is 3 ft., the tuft of feathers on the lower bill is about 2 ins. in length. From this I should suppose it was a young bird. Another was in company with this one when shot, and, from the description given me at the time, I have no doubt that it was a male bird. The female was shot at Maddington, Wilts., 23rd January, 1871, by a boy employed in keeping rooks off the wheat. He approached the bird within seventy or eighty yards, and, having the gun loaded with a marble, so shot it. All these birds are in excellent plumage and condition.'



—  
Thos. Norwood Salisbury.

As is well described in the 'Birds of Yorkshire,' this species, once fairly common on the extensive downs and plains of England, was practically exterminated about the year 1840, the last fertile eggs being taken in Norfolk in 1838, and the last survivor of the Yorkshire Wolds was trapped in 1832.

During the war, the late Bulmer Rudd, of Ripon, advised me of a sale in his town of the contents of a large and well known collection, and among the specimens was an exceptionally large male Great Bustard, a Yorkshire shot specimen. Through his good offices it was purchased, and is now on exhibition with the specimens already described. Another example in the Hull Museum, which originally came from the Pease Collection, is a female which was killed at Poynings Common, Pevensey, Sussex, in 1837.

The late Thomas Boynton, of Bridlington, had a couple of birds, one from the Scarborough collection, and another, which was picked up near Bridlington Bay just dead, but still warm, in 1864 (see Zoologist, 1865, page 9442). These two examples are now in the possession of a well-known Yorkshire collector.

Of the five specimens in the Museum of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, at York, one, a female, is from 'Rufforth, Yorks., Feb., 1861, purchased.' It was shot there, and is one of the few occasional visitors to this country since the race became extinct here. Two of the others are 'locality unknown' another is non-British. The others are males. One is certainly non-British, Dr. Collinge informs me. Mr. St. Quintin, who recently presented two of them to the museum at York, states that the female is from East Prussia, and that the male was shot by John Cooper, of East Ayton, near Scarborough. He used to 'sport' on the Flixton and Staxton Wolds, east of Ganton. Mr. St. Quintin bought the bird from Mr. Cooper's son, and considers it is one of the old resident British stock, and would be killed before 1832.

Formerly there were some Yorkshire Bustards at Thorpe Hall, but they became 'mothy' and were burnt!

There is a pair of Great Bustards in the Scarborough Museum, purchased from Hugh Reid, of Doncaster, and presented in 1839. These may be Yorkshire shot birds, but there appears to be no record. Also at Scarborough is a fine male, formerly the property of the Tindall family, of Knapton, and is quite possibly a Yorkshire bird, but information on the point is wanting.

The Scarborough Museum also possesses the only Yorkshire Bustard egg known to exist. It was taken at North Dalton in 1810, and was boiled in order to preserve it! I hear it is still at Scarborough, but in bad condition, and has lost all its colour.

In the Beverley Museum is a young female Great Bustard, formerly in the Scarborough Collection (see 'Birds of Yorkshire,' page 556).

The specimens in the Sheffield Museum are from the Danube, I am informed. We should be glad to hear of any other Yorkshire specimens.

1924

York District (Sydney H. Smith):

Report for 1923

All immigrant birds were late in arrival, and few in numbers. Decreases are particularly noticeable in Corncrakes, Swallows, House Martins and Cuckoos. The former have almost disappeared, and I heard one where, 20 years ago, I could hear 40 or 50. On January 18th, a Red-necked Grebe was killed in the River Ouse at Poppleton, and proved to be a young male weighing 2 lbs. 2 ozs. A Heron was

flushed from some swampy ground in the City of York early in the morning, of January 24th, probably attracted by the numbers of small fish collected by the warm water overflow at the electricity station. A Great Crested Grebe arrived on the Dringhouses pond on January 12th, and stayed until the middle of March; this may be one of the Castle Howard Grebes, as the species nested again quite successfully on the large lake there. A big flock of gulls visited the Knavesmire on March 2nd, but my informant was unable to describe the species. Other birds on passage were a gaggle of geese (probably pink-footed) flying over the City in the N.E. direction on March 24th, and a party of Stone Curlews, whistling distinctly as they passed overhead, about 10.45pm on April 5th. On January 22nd I flushed about 100 Snipe from some marshy ground behind my house in York, and I often notice smaller parties busily probing in this place, quite unmindful of the people who constantly pass by. On March 9th a Pied Blackbird, very prettily speckled all over with white, was seen at Bishopthorpe, and as far as is known escaped being killed. On April 17th, a Skylark's nest with three eggs was discovered near York, an early date for such an inclement season. A Hawfinch's nest with five eggs was found in a pear tree at Cawood on June 12th, and about the same date several nests of Goldfinches, Wheatears, and Whinchats were observed. At least three pairs of Curlew successfully reared young on Strensall Common, and Redshanks have been well in evidence at Cottingwith and Skipwith, and three pairs are thought to have bred at Whenby. Numbers of Carrion Crows frequent Strensall Common, and during April and May a York boy collected 54 eggs of this species with little apparent effect on the numbers of 'carrions' still about the district. Jays are fairly numerous, and Magpies are particularly abundant. The effect of the protection orders is most marked in the case of Owls; Barn, Tawny and Long-eared Owls have increased very much, and a country walk at night speedily verifies the fact, as their hooting can be heard on every hand.

Kingfishers and Dippers have apparently increased on the River Ouse and various becks in the district, and Herons seem to be far more plentiful than was the case a few years ago. Black-headed Gulls are still very numerous in their breeding colony on Skipwith Common. Last year I mentioned a tendency on the part of some species of birds towards segregation of the sexes at certain times of the year, particularly Chaffinches. On May 6th, at Thirkleby, I saw a very large flock of these birds - all females. Another incident concerns the Yellow Wagtail several males of this species arrived on April 24th, but no females were seen until a fortnight later.

I am greatly indebted to Messrs. V. G. F. Zimmermann, E. W. Taylor, and H. Shorney for their valuable help with local records.

Arrival of Migrants, 1923.

Chiffchaff. Heworth, March 25th; Askham Bogs, March 29th ;  
York, March 30th.

Willow Warbler. Thirkleby, March 30th; York, April 17th ;  
Strensall, April 18th.

Swallow. Acomb, April 6th; Stillington, April 7th; Howsham,  
April 13th; York April 27th.

Wheatear. Wass, April 7th.

Sand Martin. York, April 15th; Thirkleby, May 5th.

House Martins. York, April 17th and 25th; Dringhouses, May 7th.

Whitethroat. Strensall, April 18th; Dringhouses, May 7th.

Blackcap Warbler. Moreby Park, April 22nd.

Sandpiper River Ouse, Cawood, April 22nd; Pickering, May 5th.  
Yellow Wagtail. Dringhouses, April 24th.  
Redstart. Flaxton, April 25th.  
Sedge Warbler. Flaxton, April 25th; Thirkleby, April 29th; Dringhouses, May 7th.  
Swift. Dringhouses, April 25th; Heworth, May 2nd; York, May 5th.  
Tree Pipit. York, April 22nd; Dringhouses, April 26th.  
Cuckoo. Dringhouses, April 28th; Strensall, April 28th; York, May 2nd.  
Corncrake. Fulford, May 1st; Dringhouses (1 picked up dead).  
May 5th \* Flaxton, May 6th; Thirkleby, May 10th.  
Nightjar. Flaxton, May 6th.  
Turtle Dove. Dunnington, May 6th.

pg 344 Visit to Scarthingwell Park and includes mention of Ulleskelf Mires. Bird list is limited but "The Turtle Dove and Sedge Warbler, Heron, Yellow Hammer and Greenfinch were common".

1925

York District (Sydney H. Smith) Annual Report for 1924 (pg 27):-

There appears to be an increase in the numbers of birds classed as vermin by gamekeepers; Carrion Crows, Magpies, Jays, Kestrels and Sparrowhawks; Long-eared, Tawny and Barn Owls have all been fairly numerous. Water-loving birds like Mallard, Shoveler, Wigeon, Pochard and Tufted Ducks have been well in evidence in the Derwent Valley and on Skipwith Common, and the gullery at Skipwith accommodated at least 1500 pairs of Black-headed Gulls. A Bittern frequented the reed pond at the latter place from January 31st to March 11th, and hope was expressed of its finding a mate and breeding there, but this did not materialise. A Bittern, which may have arrived in the district with the one just mentioned was shot at Stockton-on-Forest on January 21st, and was seen by me shortly afterwards. Of late years Hooded Crows have become rare locally, and we now record three that were seen on Hob Moor, York, on February 17th, and another on Strensall Common on March 30th. Several hundred Fieldfares arrived at Stamford Bridge on April 23rd, probably en route for the East Coast. Other species noticed on passage were Curlews flying over Fulford on August 13th, Golden Plovers at the same place on August 23rd, and three large flocks of Wild Geese, probably pink-footed, passing over York on October 9th.

Hawfinches have increased slightly, and a nest with four eggs was found at Aberford on May 29th. On June 4th a nest of the Goldfinch, containing four eggs, was found in a garden at Fulford.

Turtle Doves have been seen at various places near York, and maintain their numbers; a nest with two young ones seen at Ampleforth on June 17th was in the same tree where Turtle Doves nested in 1922. Two pairs of Stonechats had nests filled with young at Huggate on June 9th, and on the same date and place a pair of Common Buntings was observed.

The Corncrake has been recorded at Stockton-on-Forest, Fulford, Easingwold and Coxwold, and is apparently rarer than ever in the neighbourhood of York. Nightjars have been exceedingly scarce, and most of their local haunts were left untenanted during the season. A pair of Stock Doves reared two broods in a hole in a tree in the Deanery Gardens at York. Bullfinches, once fairly common around York, are now rare, and I have no note of their nesting this year.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmerman and Mr. E. W. Taylor for their valuable assistance in helping me with notes for this report.

1926

York District (Sydney H. Smith): Our resident bird life maintains its usual number, except that there is a noticeable increase in rooks.

Starlings and Sparrows, no doubt regretted on the part of the agriculturist. Swallows, House and Sand Martins have again been scarce, as have also Nightjars and Turtle Doves. An increase is noticed in Barn Owls, Tawny and Long-eared Owls, and just a few more Corncrakes have been in evidence during the summer months. Carrion Crows, Jays and Magpies are very common in the woodland areas, but the Hooded Crow - once common as a winter visitor - has almost passed. I saw one near my house in York on March 1st, and Mr. Zimmermann reports one at Flaxton on February 8th, perhaps the same bird. Lapwings are fairly common in this locality as a resident species, and they would increase more rapidly were it not for the destruction of their eggs by farmers' rollers on the arable land they frequent. I saw the first eggs of the season offered for sale on March 25th. On June 21st a visit to the lake at Castle Howard disclosed plenty of wild ducks (Mallard) and a few pairs of Tufted Ducks, numerous Coots and Moorhens, and a pair of Great Crested Grebes proudly escorting three young ones. There were also a few pairs of Reed Warblers, all busy with nesting operations. On June 17th a nest of the Pied Flycatcher, containing five eggs, was found at Pocklington, and on July 8th another nest of the Pied Flycatcher was found near Welburn Hall with four well-grown young ones. The Stonechat is not a local breeding species, and I was pleased to find a pair of these handsome birds feeding young on June 25th on Strensall Common. The nest was first noticed by Dr. Gaynor, and the birds were afterwards observed by Mr. E. W. Taylor and myself. Mr. Zimmermann informs me that he watched a pair of Barn Owls raiding the young Rooks from nests in the rookery between Portland Street and Claremont Terrace, York, at 11.30 p.m. on May 21st. The old Rooks were making a great commotion, but this did not deter the Owls from their work. This occurred again on the 22nd, and on the 24th he distinctly saw both owls fly away with a fully fledged young Rook. Mr. Zimmermann also informs me that he examined the nest of a Hobby containing four young ones near Terrington on July 9th. In addition to the young there were the remains of many birds, and he counted fifteen Partridge wings, four Blackbird wings, six Thrush wings, two wings of Lapwing, the skin of a rabbit, besides a lot of small bird fragments unidentifiable.

On August 19th, seven immature Herring Gulls were shot at Huggate for the purpose of examining their crops. The result disclosed a half-pint of wheat (early sown winter wheat), which a large flock of these birds were busily digging up from the field that had just been drilled.

At Skipwith the Black-headed Gulls are very numerous, and a feature of the season has been their foraging over a wide area. The Rivers Ouse and Foss at York have attracted a quota of Black-headed Gulls all the summer, and their graceful flight and appearance is worth the toll they levy on small fish life.

Snipe and Redshanks bred freely in the Derwent Valley, and at least two pairs of Curlew successfully reared young on Strensall Common.

Sparrowhawks, Kestrels, Kingfishers, Dippers, Goldfinches and Hawfinches maintain their numbers, but Bullfinches appear to have decreased.

Arrival of Summer Visiting Birds.

April 5 Chiffchaff, at Howsham.

- „ 8 Willow Warbler, at Sutton-on-Forest.
- „ 12 Sand Martin, at Howsham.
- „ 13 Wheatear, at Huggate (several hundreds in Greenwich Dale).
- „ 19 House Martin, at Castle Howard.
- Swallow, at Castle Howard.
- Tree Pipit, at Coneysthorpe.
- Whitethroat, at Coneysthorpe.
- Grey Wagtail, at Hovingham.
- Blackcap Warbler at Hovingham.
- May 6 Nightjar, at Barmby Moor.
- „ 8 Swifts, at York.
- „ 9 -Sedge Warbler, at Pickering.
- „ 10 Reed Warbler, at Castle Howard.

The general inference is that most migrant species were late in arriving in this district, and at first only in odd ones, and very small parties. The hedgerows only filled up with their noisy little feathered tenants when May was well advanced. The weather was, however, fairly suitable for successful nesting, and I believe this has been borne out in the ultimate result.

Mr. James Kendall (Selby) informs me that a pair of Great Crested Grebes attempted to nest on a pond adjoining the Selby and Drax Railway at Barlow, but was disturbed. On May 16th he saw three of these birds at the same place, and also found Kingfishers nesting. A little Owl was killed at Drax about May 12th, and a Bittern frequented the neighbourhood of Wressle during the winter of 1924-23.

I must express my indebtedness to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann for his valuable help in compiling these notes.

- „ 21 Common Sandpiper, at Poppleton Bridge.
- Cuckoo, at Poppleton Bridge.
- „ 22 Cuckoo, at Crayke.
- 3 Corncrake, at Bishop Wilton.
- Turtle Dove, at Bishop Wilton.

Little Owl at Sherburn-in-Elmet. My friend, Mr. J. E. A. Titley, has sent me a Little Owl for identification, which his keeper shot at Sherburn-in-Elmet. The keeper was stood upon the railway bridge, when he saw a strange bird, carrying something, flying up the railway track towards him, he shot it and found it was bearing the half-eaten body of a Lapwing. R. Fortune.

#### YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT CASTLE HOWARD.

The 328th meeting of the Union was held at Castle Howard during the week-end, June 19th—21st 1926. The district has on a previous occasion received the attention of the Union, when in 1916 a meeting was held at Malton, from which place an excursion to Castle Howard was the programme of one of the days; and no fewer than three Fungus Forays have been held in the same locality. Every lover of Yorkshire scenery is familiar with the extensive and well-wooded parklands, majestic avenues, brackened slopes, and picturesque walls and monuments.

Legend has it that three mighty oaks still standing in the park were too old for ship timbers in the days of Sir Francis Drake and the Spanish Armada. The castle itself is well known for its architectural beauty, both inside and out, as are also its art collections of painting and sculpture, and the thanks of the public are due to the present owner for the accessibility which he allows.

Saturday was devoted to an examination of the fish pond and the woods on the estate, a party also visiting the Castle. New ground was broken by a visit to Coneysthorpe Bank Wood, although nothing new or even of outstanding interest was discovered. Excursions to Bell Bottom Wood and Terrington Carrs were also made during the weekend, and with regard to the latter locality, Mr. Burnley contributes an interesting note.

The excursion terminated with a General Meeting held at the Guest House on the estate, under the chairmanship of the President (Mr. E. Hawkesworth), at which reports were rendered by the President, W. G. Bramley, W. J. Forrest, A. Budland, Miss D. Hilary, Greevz Fysher, and F. A. Mason. Hearty votes of thanks were accorded to the Local Secretary (A. J. Burnley), who had been obliged to leave before the meeting, and to Mr. Geoffrey Howard for his permission to visit the estate. Among York members who had been present during the excursions were Sidney H. Smith, W. Bellerby, and A. W. Ping, M.A. (Hon. Secretary, York and District Field Naturalists' Society).

Birds and Mammals (W. G. Bramley): An outstanding feature of bird life at Castle Howard is undoubtedly the Jackdaw, which is to be seen or heard everywhere. With this exception the park, which was the area investigated, proved rather disappointing, especially in the numerical strength of the smaller birds. Chief among these were the Chiffchaff, Garden Warbler and Redstart. Both the Sedge and Reed Warbler were noted, and a nest of the Reed Bunting seen. On the lake and other sheets of water the Great Crested and Lesser Grebes, Mallard, Coot and Moorhen were seen, and a Kingfisher. The finches were also scarce, but are no doubt more common about the adjacent agricultural land.

1927

Report for 1926 (1927, pgs 15-22)

York District (S. H. Smith): Species destructive to game are allowed more liberty today than ever before, and on this account observers may note Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Tawny Owl, Barn Owl and Long-eared Owl quite regularly in this area.

On Strensall Common at least four pairs of Curlew have successfully reared their young, and there is an increasing number of Mallard and Teal Ducks breeding at this place.

On Skipwith Common there is a big colony of Black-headed Gulls, apparently living in harmony with Mallard, Teal and Shoveler Ducks, and it was hoped that the Bittern would nest there this year. Unfortunately, one of these rare birds was killed by a dog on February 28th at Riccall, and this destroyed any chance there may have been during 1926.

At Castle Howard on March 29th a pair of Great Crested Grebes repaired its nest on the Lake, and on April 4th this nest contained five eggs. Another pair frequented the lake, but was not known to nest, and four young birds noticed on May 10th, no doubt belonged to the birds first observed.

Among the rarer winter visitors, a Waxwing was caught in the grounds of Walkington Hall, Beverley, by Mr. Edward Hodgson, on November 21st, 1925, and another Waxwing frequented the gardens of Hall Cottage, New Earswick, the residence of Dr. Gayner, for several weeks during that winter, and ultimately went safely away. On March 5th a Great Bustard was picked up dead by Mr. S. Garbutt, Islebeck Grange, near Thirsk.

Nightjars appeared in their usual numbers in the York district, and have bred successfully at Sandburn, Barmby Moor, Kexby and Skipwith.

Turtle Doves have been noticed in all their usual haunts, and appear to maintain their numbers.

We have no record this year of the Stonechat nesting on Strensall Common, but a female of this species frequented the usual haunt during the whole of the spring, but the lack of a partner apparently prevented a nest being built.

Two nests of the Turtle Dove were discovered at Huggate on May 26th, and a nest of the Goldcrest containing young birds was found in the gardens at Aldersyde, York, on May 23rd.

Numbers of Goldfinches and Bullfinches have been seen, and this points to the good effect of the Wild Birds Protection Acts in checking the work of the bird-catcher.

On January 31st a male Hawfinch was picked up in the Exhibition Square, York, its head almost severed by contact with telegraph wire.

On March 25th a Kestrel was seen flying around the York Minster, and it was again reported the following day by one of the Vergers, who stated that he had seen it on several occasions previously.

At 2.30 a.m., March 26th, a pair of Barn Owls was seen flying from the direction of the Museum Gardens into the turret of the York Theatre Royal, where it has nested now for a number of years.

A Green Woodpecker frequented the grounds at West Mount, York, the residence of Mr. J. B. Morrell, during the winter 1925-26.

Several pairs of Dippers have nested along Crambe Beck and Isle Beck, and Kingfishers have been numerous at both these places, and a pair of Great Crested Grebes reared their young within three miles from the centre of the city.

An Albino Swallow (pure white variety) was seen at Snowfields Farm, and another at Watermill Farm, Alne, on September 13th.

Arrival of Immigrant Birds.

Owing to the late spring and long periods of contrary winds and bad weather, the arrival of summer visiting birds was considerably impeded, and it is noticeable that large numbers must have perished during their sea passage to our coasts; this applies particularly to the Spotted Flycatcher, which has practically disappeared in the York district during 1926.

March 27th, Chiffchaff

April 5th, Swallow

April 7th, Willow Warbler

April 9th, House Martins, Cuckoo

April 10th, Lesser Whitethroat

April 11th, Sand Martins, Common Sandpiper

April 12th, Blackcap

April 18th, Yellow Wagtail, Common Whitethroat

April 23rd, Garden Warbler, Redstart

May 1st, Swift;

May 3rd, Corncrake;

May 4th, Wood Warbler;

May 12th, Reed Warbler;

May 13th, Tree Pipit.

I must acknowledge the valuable help I have received in compiling these notes from Mr. V. G. F. Zimmerman, Dr. Gayner, Mr. H. Shorney, Mr. H. Sowden.

YNU visit to Allerthorpe Common 2nd June 1927

Vertebrate Zoology (C. F. Procter): For obvious reasons, Vertebrate Zoology, on an excursion of this character, is dependent more on evidence than on specimens for its records. An extreme paucity of bird life was the rule; this seems to always occur where the protective instinct of man is not much felt, and is in no sense due to what is very commonly regarded as man's persecution. The only birds that were noticed were Nightjar, Curlews (apparently nesting), Rooks, Carrion Crows, and a few of the commoner Finches and Turdidae. The Cuckoo was heard from several directions frequently during the day. There was ample evidence of the presence, in numbers, of Owls and Hawks, although none was seen; I heard a Corncrake in two different places. This is the first time this year that I have heard a Corncrake anywhere, although the Cuckoos have been more than usually numerous.

One Fox earth was seen, and there was ample evidence that Foxes use the whole of the Common regularly.

1928

1927 Report

York District (Sydney H. Smith, F.Z.S.) : The year has been remarkable because of the abnormal rain, which has kept the country almost continually in a flooded state, and the effect on bird life has made successful nesting of both resident and summer visiting species very difficult. The effect will not be so noticeable this year as next, and it will be interesting to make comparisons in our next report.

Generally most of our summer visiting birds were late in arriving, but so far as this district is concerned, they appear to have been in their usual numbers, except those of the Swallow species. There was a noticeable decrease in the number of Cuckoos, but a distinct increase among Whinchats, Willow Warblers, Whitethroats and Common Sandpipers. The Linnet has also increased in this district, and in one field at Wigginton, no less than seventeen nests were noticed; this is undoubtedly due to the Wild Birds Protection Acts.

Corncrakes are still rare, but show a small increase on previous years; a nest containing two eggs was found among some nettles at Bishopthorpe on May 11th. Kingfishers and Dippers are generally increasing, and are quite a feature of the river and most of the streams around York. Curlews have become quite a feature on Strensall Common, and on May 12th, four pairs were seen and two nests discovered—one with two eggs, the other with four—all of which were duly hatched. Nightjars, once common at Strensall and Skipwith, have almost disappeared only one pair is reported as having nested at the latter place, and one pair were seen at Strensall, but their nesting is doubtful.

Great Crested Grebes have been noticed in all their usual haunts, and maintain themselves most satisfactorily. Some had nested on the lake at Castle Howard, as well as other places. One pair on the pond at Aldersyde, York, had their first clutch of eggs destroyed by a Coot, but another nest was constructed and two young were raised.

Only one pair of Reed Warblers were seen at Castle Howard this year, and it is evident the interesting little colony that had established themselves have suffered from repeated bad seasons, and dwindled in consequence, as I am quite sure the eggs have not been taken by collectors.



The Turtle Dove, once so rare, is now a frequent summer visitor, and is found in most of the woodlands in this area; several were seen at Ampleforth on June 7th, probably not long arrived.

The Woodcock has nested in several places, and one pair with young was observed at Kexby on April 28th.

A pair of Pied Flycatchers with five young ones were seen at Aberford on June 25th, and four young Hawfinches were seen in the nest at Pocklington on June 28th.

A pair of Kestrels were successful in rearing a brood of young in the main tower of York Minster the old birds were observed feeding their young on several occasions. Last year I recorded the raiding of a Rookery by Owls at York; this has occurred again in 1927, when a Tawny Owl raided the young rooks from nests in a tree in Bootham Park, and also from the rookery in the gardens of the Judge's House at York.

Redshanks must have suffered from the floods, as only one pair nested at Skipwith, and it is doubtful whether any were successful at Wheldrake, as the Ings at this point have been under water for long periods.

Two nests of the Marsh Tit were found on Skipwith Common, and another nest at Wigginton.

A pair of Short-eared Owls with four young ones were seen on Strensall Common on May 4th, and on the same date and place several Curlews, Carrion Crows, Jays and Magpies were seen. Both Mallard and Teal Ducks were nesting on the S Lake, and a pair of Shoveler Ducks that were seen may possibly have nested. Reed Buntings are fairly numerous, and there were plenty of Linnets amongst the gorse.

The Hooded Crow, once so common as a winter visitor, is seldom noticed, and three seen at Huggate on February 10th were at once remarked

Lapwings, which have been accorded special protection, appear to be somewhat less in number than in previous years, but this suggestion is purely local. The first nest was seen at Shipton on March 27th, and very much later than usual.

Mr. Fred Vear, of York, supplies me with an interesting report on the colony of Black-headed Gulls at Skipwith. His wonderful photographs of this species, and his close observations at Skipwith, mark him as an authority. On April 3rd there were approximately three to four hundred Gulls on the Common. The Sedgy Nesting Clumps in the main pond were almost submerged, owing to the recent heavy rains. By May 8th the number of Gulls had increased to about 1200. Nesting operations were decidedly late as compared with previous years. Very few eggs were observed on this date, but more nesting birds had occupied the 'Horse Shoe' Pond. On May 14<sup>th</sup> - still raining heavily - the number of Gulls were still increasing to an estimate of 1550. Many more eggs were in the nests, particularly those on the far side of the main pond. On May 21st there was another increase in the number of eggs, but it was also apparent that all the nests near to the edge of the pond had been plundered. No young birds were observed, although on the corresponding date in previous years fair numbers were seen.

On May 30<sup>th</sup> - a dull day, with rain at night - several young Gulls were observed amongst the rushes on the far side of the ponds, and again it was noticed that numbers of the eggs had been taken from all nests that it was possible to reach.

On June 11th, many young Gulls were in evidence, and in various stages of growth, but there was still large numbers of eggs left unhatched. The gamekeeper (Mr. J. Morris) stated that he had observed three or four Lesser Black-backed Gulls busy amongst the nesting birds. Ample evidence of this destruction was forthcoming, and empty egg-shells were found at considerable distances from the pond.

On June 30th the young Gulls were in good numbers, but mainly on the far side, or more inaccessible portion, of the main pond. The nesting clumps near the edge of the ponds only contained about twenty young birds. The general inference is that the number of Gulls breeding on the main nesting pond was considerably less than in preceding years, 1921-1926, but there was some increase in the number nesting on the adjacent pond nearest the road, this pond being much more inaccessible to the human raider.

Compared with normal seasons, the nesting operations were a fortnight later. Usually the maximum number of young Gulls have been observed on and about June 6th.

Mr. Vear asks me to deplore the plundering of the eggs, and to request that the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, and all who are interested in Yorkshire Ornithology, should endeavour to protect the Skipwith Gullery in every way where they can bring their influence to bear. The colony is a great delight to the naturalist and to everyone who can appreciate the beauties of nature, and no effort should be spared to assist the landowner in maintaining what is, in early summer, the most wonderful sight of bird life in mid-Yorkshire.

Arrival of Emigrants, York District, 1927.

April 3 Chiffchaff, seen at York (and at Brandsby, April 16th).

Swallows, seen at Welburn (and at York, April 23rd).

Whitethroat, seen at Castle Howard.

„ 14 House Martins, seen at York (and at Market Weighton, April 30th).

Sand Martins, seen at York.

23 Cuckoo, seen at Strensall and Acomb, York (and Wigginton, May 1st).

„ 28 Common Sandpiper, seen at York (and Helmsley, April 30th).

„ 29 Swift, seen at Clifton, York (and at Sheriff Hutton, May 1st).

30 Yellow Wagtail, seen at Helmsley (and at Bishopthorpe May 3rd).

May 15 Redstart, seen at Castle Howard.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmerman and Mr. Fred Vear, both of the York Naturalists' Society, for their valued assistance in compiling this report.

I am informed by Mr. James Kendall, of Selby, that the Great Crested Grebe has been successful in rearing a brood of young on a pond in the neighbourhood of Selby, but only after two futile attempts. The nest is repeatedly robbed, in spite of warnings in the form of posters at the pond, issued in the name of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union and the Selby Naturalists' Society.

(These notices may be a disadvantage, as they draw attention to the presence of this interesting species). S.H.S.

1929

1928 Report

York District (Sydney H. Smith): Castle Howard lake, a favourite haunt of bird life, was occupied by big flocks of Mallards, Teal and Coots during January and February, and on the 5th of the latter month three Whooper Swans were seen, and a Garganey Teal. On February 25th, a pair of Goosanders was seen on the lake. Great Crested Grebes are still in evidence, but do not appear to have nested successfully this year. A pair of Goosanders occurred at East Cottingwith on

February 25th; as a rule, this species, when reported in the York district, are usually females, the opposite sex seldom being in company, are often reported at the same time from the Washburn Reservoir. An old brick yard at Dringhouses, York, is now the home of a pair of Great Crested Grebes, which commenced building a nest on April 1st, and on the 8th it contained five eggs. On the 24th, the water commenced to rise very rapidly, and the Grebes made desperate attempts to build the nest higher, but helped by the N.E. wind, the water flowed over the eggs and spoiled them. The Grebes nested again when the weather improved, and reared one young bird. A pair of Pochards was on this pond on April 8th, but did not stay and make a nest.

Owls have increased to an extraordinary extent in this district, and three species. Barn Owl, Tawny Owl and Long-eared Owl, are constantly observed at various places in the City. At 3 a.m. in the morning of March 7th, both Barn and Tawny Owls were hooting in the Exhibition Square, Deanery Gardens, around the Kings Manor School, and in Bootham Park. Others are known to have nested in the turrets of the Theatre Royal and in Bootham Bar. Little Owls also have continued to increase and extend their range. On May 2nd, one was seen at Tollerton, and a pair was shot at Fulford. They are further reported as being observed at Sandburn Woods, Four Alls, Skelton, Escrick and Skipwith.

A pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers reared its brood in Suet Carr Wood, and a pair of Treecreepers was also successful at the same place. At Escrick, two pairs of Hawfinches reared young, and Goldfinches also reared their families at Acomb, Sand Hutton, Escrick and Welburn.

Curlews again nested in this district, and reared young broods successfully at Allerthorpe Common, Sandburn and Strensall. A new site was Alne, where two pairs nested on a fallow field, where several young ones were seen at the end of June. All these nesting sites are only 80 to 100 feet above sea level, and much lower than the usual moorland haunts of this species.

Kingfishers, Dippers and Common Sandpipers have all been fairly common this season on the Rivers Ouse, Rye and Nidd; and the Turtle Dove, although a summer visitor only, appears to increase, and has been observed at many different places during the summer months, notably Sandburn, Healaugh, Marston Moor, Stamford Bridge, Millington Springs, Gilling, Ampleforth and Byland Abbey.

A pair of Kestrels frequented the towers of York Minster, but this year did not make a nest as in previous years.

Nightjars have gradually decreased in number of late years, and old haunts like Skipwith Common only held one pair in 1928, and odd pairs were also observed at Sandburn, Scoreby and Helmsley.

A pair of Little Grebes successfully hatched young on a pond near Wigginton, and this species was noticed on several ponds in the neighbourhood of York, where it maintains its status.

Common species of birds – Song Thrush, Blackbird, Chaffinch, Hedge Sparrow, Spotted Flycatcher, Moorhen, Great and Blue Tits, Robin, Wren, Meadow and Tree Pipit, Whitethroat, Yellow and Reed Buntings, etc. - appear to have been in usual numbers.

The Marsh Tit nested at Skipwith, and here Linnets were few as compared with previous years, and only one pair of Whinchats was seen, whereas Willow Warblers were very common, and many more than appear to be normal numbers.

The nest of a Song Thrush was found at Skipwith, built directly upon the ground in a plantation. Mr. Year states this is the second occasion he has found this to be done by the Song Thrush.

About twelve hundred Black-headed Gulls occupied the ponds on Skipwith Common; the pond nearest the road was most attractive, perhaps because the water and mud is deeper, and consequently safer from the point of view of the Gulls. Every year egg collectors take some toll of the nests, but protection is extended by the estate to the fullest extent possible. The season was normal so far as the arrival of the gull contingents was concerned, and in respect of nesting and laying of eggs, and it is thought more young birds were successfully reared than has been the case for several years. During the third week of May, large numbers of young Gulls in various stages of plumage, were observed on the two main ponds.

Mr. F. F. Edmondson informs me of the late nesting of Partridges at Scoreby, where the sitting hen was taken off the nest by a Fox during the night of September 19th. I have to express my thanks for valuable assistance with local bird reports to Mr. Fred Year (Skipwith), Mr. Y. G. F. Zimmerman (York and Castle Howard), Mr. F. Shorney (Dringhouses), and Dr. J. S. Gaynor (Earswick).

Arrival of Migrants: York District, 1928.

Wheatear York, March 15th; Askham Richard, April. 29th.

Chiffchaff ... Askham Bogs, April 1st.

Swallow Linton-on-Ouse, April 8th; York, April 27th.

Sand Martin Linton -on-Ouse, April 8th; Dunnington, April 30th.

Cuckoo Dringhouses, April 15th; Rufforth, May 2nd.

Willow Warbler Dringhouses, April 15th.

Yellow Wagtail Acomb, April 26th

Sedge Warbler Askham Bogs, April 29th; York, May 12th.

Corncrake Boston Spa, April 27th; Marston Moor, May 13th.

Whitethroat York, April 27th; Askham Bogs, April 29th.

Common Sandpiper ... ..Hawnby, April 29th.

House Martin ... Rufforth, May 2nd.

Pied Flycatcher ... Hawnby, May 6th.

Swift ... .. York, May 12th and May 13th.

Blackcap Marston Moor, May 13th.

Quail near Selby.

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Mr. James Kendall informs me that a nest of the Quail, containing eleven eggs, was found on Selby Common on July 26th, 1929. Mr. Ben Hanley, of Barlby, who found the nest, has retained one egg for the purpose of identification; the remainder duly hatched out.

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Sydney H. Smith, York.

1930

Report for 1929

York District (Sydney H. Smith): Pheasants and Partridges have thriven abundantly, and when shooting opened it was found that the latter species were most plentiful and in coveys ranging from ten to twenty in number.

The Swallow tribe were again noticeably scarce, and it is difficult to account for the great reduction amongst all species of this family. F. Vear reports an increase in the Wigginton area near York. Many hundreds of Grey (*Golden?*) Plover were seen near Boroughbridge on April 5th, no doubt resting on passage.

The Great Crested Grebe maintains its status, and a nest was started on April 7th on the pond at Dringhouses; the female disappeared before any eggs were laid, and was not seen again. A pair that nested on Castle Howard Lake had one well-grown chick in mid-August.

The Little Grebe is also fairly common, and one pair again nested successfully on a pond at the Malton Road side, quite near to York.

A nest of fully-fledged young Song Thrushes was found at York on April 11th.

A pair of Tufted Duck frequented the Dringhouses pond during April and May, but, not satisfied with their surroundings, ultimately went away.

A pair of Pochard was seen at the same place on April 21st, but did not stay.

H. Crowther, of Leeds, informs me that a Montagu's Harrier (*Hen Harrier?*) was killed on the Escrick Park Estate about March 7th, and a Rough-legged Buzzard was shot during the month of May near Bishop Wilton.

The Stonechat again nested on Strensall Common, a nest with five young being found and photographed by F. Vear, and another nest with three young was observed by V. G. F. Zimmermann.

V. G. F. Zimmermann also reports having seen two pairs of Redstart, and several pairs of Goldfinches nested at Strensall. Many Hawfinches were also seen, and this species appears to be increasing. The Bullfinch, however, is much scarcer, and no nest was reported during 1929. The season generally has favoured smaller birds; Linnets, which were decreasing because of the efforts of bird catchers, were more in evidence, and many nests were found at Strensall.

Blue Tits, Great Tits and Coal Tits all nested in the same locality, and at least one pair of Green Woodpeckers reared young.

Other species which appear to be more numerous than in past years are the Greenfinch, Yellowhammer, Tree Pipit, Whitethroat, Pied Wagtail and Common Wren, the Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush.

I have not seen so many Cuckoos as usual. F. Vear informs me that he has seen and photographed three young ones, two of them being the offspring of one bird.

Wheatears were noticed on Fulford Golf Course at York during April, and some more were at the same place in August. This is a usual calling place for this species on its spring and autumn migration.

Corncrakes have again been very scarce, and I have heard no more than half a dozen calling during the early summer.

Kingfishers frequented all our local rivers, and young birds were successfully reared from several nests.

Dippers were observed on the Isle Beck and River Rye, and Common Sandpipers on the Rivers Rye and Ure, both species nesting freely. One pair of Common Sandpipers frequented the margin of the lake at Castle Howard all the summer.

F. Vear reports Chaffinches as being very numerous, many of their nests being found and ultimately robbed by boys, as chips of rotten wood (' touchwood ') made the nests very prominent. One nest which hatched successfully contained five perfectly blue unmarked eggs. The Chaffinch decorates the interior of its nest with

lichen, chips of bark and other distinctive materials, the above is a noticeable instance.

The rare Reed Warbler was seen at Castle Howard, and three nests were discovered among dense reed beds on Skipwith Common.

Curlews again nested at Strensall, and two pairs were seen, and one pair nested, on Skipwith Common.

The Nightjar, once common, is now very rare, and apparently only two pairs nested at Skipwith. F. H. Edmondson reports that they nested at Scoreby in one of their favourite expanses of bracken.

The Lapwing has been present in good numbers, and more nests have been seen than during the last two seasons.

Snipe also were fairly common, and many nests are reported at Skipwith and Strensall.

F. Vear states that the Black-headed Gull appears to be decreasing at Skipwith, but this may be because the ponds were so low, and the head keeper suggests that some of the birds may have gone in search of a fresh nesting site. The principal gull pond near the road was probably deserted because of constant disturbance.

Generally, the nesting period appeared to be normal.

I am indebted to E. Wilfred Taylor, F. H. Edmondson, V. G. F. Zimmermann and F. Vear for their valuable assistance in supplying notes used in compiling this report.

The West Riding section includes "the Corncrake is almost a thing of the past in most districts. W. G. Bramley thinks they are increasing near Bolton Percy, and writes that he heard at the least four calling during a half-mile walk, towards the end of May."

1931

#### 1930 Report

York District (Sydney H. Smith): On January 19th a half-starved Little Auk was picked up at Healaugh, eight miles west of York, on the estate of Sir E. Brooksbank. Its captors, with the best intention, endeavoured to sustain its life by feeding it with Canary seed, so much to the disgust of this Icelandic visitor that it promptly died. Hooded Crows, which have been noticeably scarce for several winters, appeared in greater numbers, and on January 30th, Mr. G. Machin saw ten of these birds near Elmfield College, York.

Early in February a Peregrine Falcon was shot near Sand Hutton by a farmer who mistook it for a Wood Pigeon when waiting for these birds; the specimen was presented to the York Museum by Mr. Zimmermann.

During January and February the Derwent Valley was heavily flooded, and immense flocks of wild fowl were consequently attracted to this favourite haunt, and it is many years since such large numbers of Mallard, Widgeon and Teal Duck were seen.

There were also several small flocks of Pochards and Shoveler Ducks, and at this time a pair of the rare Garganey Teal were shot on Skipwith Common.

During March a flock of 30 Pochards frequented the pond at Dringhouses, and on April 8th a pair of Tufted Duck arrived on the pond and stayed a fortnight, but did not attempt to nest. A pair of Great Crested Grebes commenced nesting operations on this pond on March 30th, and on April 14th the female was seen to be sitting on the nest; on the following day, as the result of heavy rains, the water rose a foot and the

eggs were washed away. During the following week the Grebes built another nest, and after laying two eggs the water flooded again and washed the nest away. A few weeks later, during May, the Grebes made another attempt at nesting; three eggs were laid, and ultimately two young ones were successfully reared.

A pair of Great Crested Grebes nested on the lake at Castle Howard, but I have no information whether they were successful or not. Mr. F. Vear informs me that three pairs nested on a stretch of water two miles from Selby, several young birds being reared. A female Great Crested Grebe was seen swimming in the River Ouse at York (Clifton Ings) on October 5th, and proceeding upstream.

Five pairs of Herons had nests in the Shire Oaks Wood on Sir E. Brooksbank's estate at Healaugh; all were apparently successful in rearing young, as I saw them on the wing on two occasions early in May.

A pair of Nuthatches nested in Aldby Park and the eggs were seen by Mr. Zimmermann on May 26th. The birds were protected by Col. Borwick, and the young were duly reared.

Nightingales honoured us with their presence at Skirpenbeck and Scrayingham during May and June, and two nests of young were reared.

Numbers of people listened with pleasure to the singing of these birds during the late May evenings.

A pair of Goldcrests nested successfully and reared their young at Aldersyde, on the outskirts of York, and in the grounds of the same house a pair of Bullfinches and two pairs of Lesser Whitethroats nested. Another pair of Bullfinches bred in Askham Bogs, a stones throw further on. A pair of Spotted Flycatchers occupied a nesting box at Aldersyde; this is a somewhat unusual site for these birds to select.

A pair of the rarer Pied Flycatcher was seen at Hawaby by the writer on May 17th, and on June 19th Mr. Zimmermann found a nest containing eggs at Thornton Watlass.

A pair of Grasshopper Warblers was frequently heard at Skelton Lane, on the outskirts of York during June, but their nest remained undiscovered.

Nightjars appeared to be a little more common, and were repeatedly seen at Sandburn, Allerthorpe, Skipwith and Dunnington Common. Mr. F. Vear states that three pairs of these birds successfully nested at Sand Hutton, and on June 12th the writer saw a Nightjar sitting on two eggs at the edge of the Gravel Pit at Sand Hutton. Mr. Zimmerman reports the Turtle Dove as being common in its York haunts during the early summer, and he saw a nest with two eggs in Londesborough Park on June 1st.

Kingfishers frequented all local rivers and streams, and two pairs are known to have nested near York.

Several pairs of Woodcock have bred at Strensall, Scoreby, Skipwith and Buttercrambe.

Little Owls are far too numerous, in the opinion of our local gamekeepers, and a number have been shot at Garrowby, Escrick and Sand Hutton. One gamekeeper near Pocklington killed eight during the breeding season.

Curlews again bred at Alne, on Strensall Common and Allerthorpe Common. Mr. Zimmerman states that two pairs frequented Marston Moor, but it is uncertain whether they nested there.

On June 29th a nest of a Long-tailed Tit with young was found in a Elder Bush at Poppleton (York).

Mr. Charles Elmhirst reports seeing a pair of Kestrels flying around the main tower of York Minster on June 1st; these birds have occupied this place as a nesting site on several occasions.

A pair of Stock Doves nested in the Deanery garden at York, and another pair at Elmbank, York, during April.

Barn Owls and Tawny Owls are numerous around York, and frequented many of the old haunts, being particularly common in Bootham Park, and the grounds of Bootham School, and also at Dringhouses. During the evening of September 15th Mr. E. W. Taylor saw a Tawny Owl flying around Messrs. Cooke's Works in Bishophill, York.

In the report for 1929 Mr. Vear stated that he had found a nest of the Chaffinch at Skipwith which had five blue, and otherwise unmarked eggs; he reports the discovery of a similar clutch this season, within 20 yards of last year's site, but, unfortunately, this nest was subsequently robbed. He also reported finding a nest of the Song Thrush built on the ground in a small plantation at Skipwith, and found this occurred again this year, but on a later visit the eggs were broken and the hen bird had been killed on the nest, but how this had come about was not known.

Mr. F. Vear states that the Black-headed Gulls have noticeably decreased in number on the main pond at Skipwith, but those that nested appear to have reared quite the average number of young. The Gulls also are in less numbers on the other ponds at Skipwith, and there is a general decrease.

The same informant states that Reed Buntings, Yellowhammers, Linnets, Whitethroats, etc., maintain their usual status. An albino variety of the Yellowhammer nested at Pickering, and was seen by the writer on May 10th.

Magpies are exceedingly common in the vicinity of York, and on May 16th the writer counted 18 nests in the tall hawthorn hedge flanking Monk Stray on the York-Malton Road, in a distance of two miles between York and the Hopgrove Inn.

Cuckoos have been very common, and during July numbers of young ones were reported, both in and around York. One in particular, reared in the privet hedge on the Acomb Bowling Green, was well known to the disciples of the ancient game in that suburb. Another hungry young Cuckoo was reared by a pair of Pied Wagtails on the new Fever Hospital extensions of the York Corporation at Yearsley Bridge, York, being protected by the bricklayers until it was able to take flight.

At the February Meeting of the Y.N.U. Vertebrate Section, we were asked to concentrate during the year on the Corncrake, or Corncrake, a species which of late years has almost disappeared as a summer visitor, and in spite of special enquiry I have little to report. Mr. J. H. Evers tells me that one was seen and heard on May 9th in a field 20 yards on the north-east side of the Memorial Hall at Huntington. Mr. E. W. Taylor states that two pairs frequented the water meadows at Fulford during May, and Mr. Zimmerman heard one at Skelton in May. These are all, except one, that are reported as quite near York. One was heard at Foggathorpe on May 3rd, and Mr. G. Machin heard one calling at 4.35 p.m. on May 24th in the first meadow beyond Mille Crux on the York-Haxby Road, about 500 yards from the city boundary; the same observer states that he heard another Corncrake at 8-5 p.m. on May 31<sup>st</sup> in the triangle formed by the roadway under the railway arch from the Stamford Bridge-Gate Helmsley Road, and the lane back from Stamford Bridge in the field opposite the woodman's house. Mr. Vear states that he heard the Corncrake in a field near the village of Barmby Moor on the Pocklington side on April 27th, April 30th and May 1st; he heard another one in a field near Allerthorpe Common on April 27th and on



May 1 8th, another a quarter of a mile from Skipwith on May 16th, and one at Wigginton, three miles from York, on May 21st. Additional reports I have of this bird, but outside the York area, was one heard at Lockton, near Pickering, on May 3rd, and another at Sleights early in May – no definite date being given.

I am indebted to Messrs. E. Wilfred Taylor, H. Shorney, V. G. F. Zimmerman, F. Vear, G. Machin and J. H. Evers for their valuable assistance in supplying notes used in compiling this report.

Arrival of Migrants: York District, 1930.

Willow Wren ... Dringhouses, April 10th.

Swallow ... ... Dringhouses, April 13th; York, April 24th.

Sand Martin ... ... Dringhouses, April 13th; Grimston, May 2nd.

Tree Pipit ... ... Askham, April 24th.

Cuckoo... ... Askham, April 27th; Lockton, May 3rd.

Corncrake ... ... Barmby Moor, April 27th; Allerthorpe Common, April 27th; Foggathorpe, May 3rd.

Wheatear ... ... Fulford, Mid-April (no date E. W. T.).

Swift ... ... Grimston, May 2nd; Foggathorpe, May 3rd ; Heworth, May 5th.

Sedge Warbler ... Kirby Misperton, May 10th (numbers).

Common Sandpiper ... ... Hawnby, May 11th.

Pied Flycatcher ... Hawnby, May 17th; Thornton Watlass, June 19th.

Nightingale ... ... Skirpenbeck, May 26th.

Turtle Dove ... ... Lonsborough Park, June 1st (nesting).

Redstart ... ... Lonsborough Park, June 1st (nesting).

Nightjar ... ... Sand Hutton, June 12th (nesting).

BISHOP WOOD REVISITED. YNU Field Meeting 11th July 1931

F. A. MASON, F.R.M.S., AND W. H. PEARSALL, F.L.S.

Bishop Wood, where the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union met for its 363rd Excursion on Saturday, July 11th, has undergone changes through war-time felling which render its locality almost unrecognisable as compared with its appearance when the Union last met there in 1915. A published photograph of the members present at the latter meeting strikingly emphasizes the changes that have come to the Union itself during the intervening years; on that occasion there were 31 naturalists in the field - all men. Practically all the day was devoted to the area known as Bishop Wood, a short deviation being made, after lunch, to the remains of a double-moated Grange, at Manor Garth. The weather was dry, and the walk through miles of long grass and dense undergrowth was not so intolerable as it otherwise would have been.

Vertebrate Zoology (V. F. Fearnley): The only wild mammals noted were a mole and rabbits. Mr. Tinkler, the keeper, says that a fox or a badger is occasionally taken, and that there are many stoats, weasels and hedgehogs.

All along the hedgerows, Yellowhammers were singing, and Mr. Akeroyd reported the Corn Bunting. A clump of nettles in a hedgerow contained a Whitethroat's nest, empty, but the birds appeared to be trying to lure us away from it.

In the fields were Rooks, a party of about twenty Jackdaws, Mistle Thrushes, Larks, a few Lapwings and Black-headed Gulls. Two Partridges were also disturbed. A large flock of Gulls followed a motor plough in a distant field. Swifts, Swallows and House Martins were overhead.

In the timbered part of Bishop Wood, Jays were very noisy. Other birds noted in the wood were Magpies, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robins, Willow Warblers, Hedge

Accentors, Wrens, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and Wood Pigeons. No Hawks were seen, but Mr. Tinkler pointed out a last year's nest of the Sparrowhawk that had been shot through, and said that no Sparrowhawks had bred in the wood this year. While the party was inspecting the moats at Manor Garth, two or more Sedge Warblers were singing lustily in the elder trees nearby. A Cuckoo flew across the railway lines immediately in front of us as we were returning. Blue Tits and Great Tits were in the village, and the inevitable House Sparrow. Mr. Akeroyd reported a Reed Bunting from near the keeper's house, and Mr. Wood reported a Whinchat.

Entomology (J. M. Brown) :

*Epinephele janira* (Meadow Brown) was the only butterfly at all common, and in places was very numerous. *Pyrameis cardui* (Painted Lady), *Vanessa urticae* (Tortoise-shell), *Odoipus tkaumas* (Small Skipper), and some Whites were also noted.

1932

Report for 1931

York District (Sydney H. Smith, F.Z.S.): 1931 has been a disastrous year for bird life. The Derwent Valley suffered particularly from the heavy rains, and I cannot recollect a year when floods have been so persistent and so extensive. The effect of this weather on all local wild life has been most marked.

Strensall Common affords harbourage to large numbers of Carrion Crows. Magpies are also very plentiful, and a great number of Jays, and as a result of the efforts of these three voracious species, the eggs of many small birds were destroyed.

Mr. Fred Jefferson states that 8 Bullfinches' nests within a small area at Strensall, were all destroyed by Crows and Jays. Carrion Crows are also common near Marston Moor, 9 nests being destroyed by a farmer in a space of 300 acres, most of the nests having been built in tall hedgerows.

Tawny Owls, Long-eared Owls, Barn Owls and Little Owls are quite common around York, and I have had numerous reports of both Tawny and Barn Owls in the city.

Mr. Zimmerman states that a small party of Crossbills frequented Strensall Common early in April, where they were first observed by Dr. Gayner. Mr. Zimmerman had the pleasure of watching a flock for a long time on April 19th, and again on April 28th, when he was within 20 yards of these visitors.

Several Curlews were seen about Strensall during May and June, but no nests were reported. Mr. Zimmerman reports that Curlews, again bred on Alne Moor.

Snipe appear to be breeding fairly freely, but many nests were destroyed by rain. One pair of Redshank had a nest with four eggs behind the Strensall Rifle Range. A fair number of Mallard and Teal Duck nested on the Common at Strensall, but most of the eggs were taken by the troops. Good numbers of both also bred at Castle Howard and on Skipwith Common, and several pairs of Shoveler Duck successfully nested at Skipwith.

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Half a dozen pairs of Herons again nested in the Shire Oaks Wood at Healaugh, and I saw young Herons on the wing at the latter end of May. Mr. H. Shorney states that a pair bred in Askham Bogs and got their young safely away, probably because the bogs were so deeply flooded as to prevent the nest being robbed. On May 31st, Mr.

Zimmerman saw a young Heron in a field near Askham Bogs, where it was being chased by a number of boys with sticks.

Mr. H. Shorney states that a pair of Great Crested Grebes bred on Leetham's Pond at Aldersyde, Dringhouses, and another pair bred on Hepper's Pond at Dringhouses, both being successful in rearing two broods. One pair of Great Crested Grebes nested on the lake at Castle Howard

Little Grebes were numerous in Askham Bogs, where several broods were reared, and they are also reported from many ponds in the vicinity of York.

Woodcock are fairly well established as a breeding species in the York district; one pair with young were seen near Bugthorpe on May 14th, and two pairs reared young at Warter Priory. A woodman at Kilburn found three young Woodcock there in May, and they are also reported as having bred at Aldby Park, Garrowby and Skipwith.

They also breed regularly at Scoreby. On August 1st, George Lickes, Mr. F. H. Edmondson's gamekeeper, had an interesting experience with Woodcock at Scoreby; he was in the wood near his house, when he thought he saw a Stoat, and proceeded to stalk it. He got quite near, when what was thought to be a Stoat proved to be a Woodcock, which quickly gathered a young one between its legs and flew away with it. The Corncrake is again scarce, only four records coming under my notice.

All species of the Swallow family have been very few in numbers. Mr. F. Jefferson found a brood of five young Stonechats on Strensall Common on June 20th.

Several pairs of Nightjars have bred at Skipwith, Strensall and Sand Hutton

Turtle Doves have bred at Marston, Moor Monkton, Askham Bryan and Suet Carr (Sutton -on-Forest). I also saw Turtle Doves at Aldby Park.

There is a slight increase in the number of Bullfinches and Goldfinches, both having bred fairly freely.

A nest of Wheatear containing four eggs was found on Strensall Common on May 18th by Mr. Zimmerman.

Kingfishers are fairly numerous, and there are more Dippers than trout anglers desire on the Rye and Upper Derwent.

The summer-visiting Common Sandpipers have been fairly common, but I fear their eggs would be destroyed by the floods.

A White-fronted Goose was shot at Sutton-on-Derwent by Mr. R. Cliff on February 27th, and the Tufted Duck is reported by Mr. E. W. Taylor as being seen on the River Foss within the city. The same observer states that on November 15th, 1930, a strange bird, like a very large Cuckoo, flew over the Fulford Golf Links. From the details given, I could only conclude that the bird was an escaped Macaw.

Mr. Zimmerman states that a small flock of Fieldfares arrived at Huntington on October 3rd.

Black-headed Gulls appeared on the ponds at Skipwith Common. Some Reed Warblers, Shoveler Ducks and large numbers of Mallard and Teal nested.

Lapwings are scarce in this area, although common in other parts of the York district. I think the Gulls not only destroy the eggs of the Lapwings but automatically drive them away by consuming their food.

Partridges survived the inclement weather fairly well. They were comparatively numerous at Raskelf.

I am indebted to Messrs. V. G. F. Zimmerman, E. Wilfred Taylor, and H. Shorney for their valuable assistance in compiling this report.

Arrival of Migrants. 1931

Willow Warbler. Stamford Bridge, March 20th.  
Chiffchaff ... York, April 3rd and 20th.  
Swallow York, April 7th; Stamford Bridge, April 17th; Pickering, April 22nd.  
Whitethroat ... York, April 9th; Stamford Bridge, April 18th.  
Sand Martin... York, April 12th; Stamford Bridge, April 17th.  
House Martin- Stamford Bridge, April 17th and May 2nd.  
Common Sandpiper ... Hawnby, April 21st and 24th.

Cuckoo... Hawnby, April 24th; Stamford Bridge, April 30th (two seen May 12th).  
Sedge Warbler Stamford Bridge, April 24th; York, May 3rd.  
Pied Flycatcher Hawnby, April 24th and 25th; York, May 14th.  
Redstart York, April 26th; Hawnby, May 10th.  
Wheatear Fulford, May 2nd.  
Blackcap York, May 2nd.  
Swift ... Stamford Bridge, May 2nd; Huntington, May 3rd.  
Spotted Flycatcher Hawnby, May 3rd.  
Tree Pipit York, May 4th.  
Whinchat Barmby Moor, May 4th.  
Corncrake Fulford, May 2nd; Stamford Bridge, May 4th and May 9th; Flaxton,  
May 6th; Bishopthorpe, May 7th.  
Turtle Dove... Pickering, May 6th.  
Yellow Wagtail York, May 6th  
Nightjar York, May 8th  
Reed Warbler York, May 14th.

1933

1932 Report (pgs 11-15)  
York District (Sydney H. Smith, F.Z.S.):

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Ornithological Notes. Nesting operations of wild bird life were retarded by the cold weather of March, April and May; gales of wind accompanied by cold rain and sleet were the daily obstacle of summer immigrant birds, and as late as May 4th there was a heavy fall of snow in the evening, and floods in the Rivers Ouse and Derwent and other tributary streams.

Many species of birds had their nests destroyed, the greatest sufferers being Grouse, Partridges, Wild Duck, and various other water-frequenting fowl. Later on, however, the weather cleared up and second nests were attempted, and in many cases with reasonable success. The general effect is disastrous because only a small percentage of birds whose nests are thus destroyed will essay the task again the same season.

The usual colony of Black-headed Gulls occupied the ponds at Skipwith Common and appeared to be about the same in number as last year. There were a fair number of Mallards nesting there, also several pairs of Shoveler and Teal Ducks, and two pairs of Nightjars made use of an old haunt in the bracken.

Three pairs of Nightjars nested successfully at Sand Hutton, and others were noted at Strensall and at Scoreby.

Two nests of Blackcap Warbler were found at Sand Hutton and the young hatched safely; both nests were photographed by Mr. F. Vear, who states they are the first Blackcap Warblers he has seen there for several years.

The same observer found six nests of the Treecreeper at Sand Hutton, but states that two were destroyed by the heavy rains; the species is rare in the vicinity of York, and I hope this note indicates a probable increase of such an interesting bird.

Mr. Vear also reports finding the nest of a Song Thrush built on the ground in a plantation at Sand Hutton, and a nest of the Chaffinch built in the side of a haystack at the same place - both are most unusual situations.

A Nightingale frequented the lane leading to Waplinton Hall, near Pocklington, and was singing every evening during June.

Cuckoos have been fairly numerous, although late in arriving; during July a young Cuckoo being fed by a pair of Pied Wagtails had been reared in the grounds of Allerthorpe Hall, where it was watched over by Alderman H. Rhodes Brown, J.P. (Lord Mayor of York) and his lady.

Corncrakes have been very scarce; one pair was noted at White Sike Farm, Sand Hutton, by Mr. Vear early in May, and this is the only record sent to me.

Six pairs of Herons nested in the Shire Oak Woods at Healaugh, but do not increase in number.

Lapwings are fairly common, thanks to the protection of the Wild Birds Acts, and they would increase further if their nests were not destroyed by farmers' rollers on newly seeded arable land in the spring; this destruction appears to be unavoidable.

Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann informs me that during the last week in February three pairs of Great Crested Grebes returned to the ponds at Dringhouses, York, after being absent through the winter. At the same time and place two pairs of Pochards were seen; these latter birds were noticed several times during the spring, and Mr. H. Shorney believes they bred in Askham Bogs.

The eggs in the Great Crested Grebes' nest on Mr. Hesp's pond were taken by some boys on May 8th. On May 25th there was a young Great Crested Grebe on Mr. Leetham's pond and two young ones on Mr. Hepper's pond; also the pair which had their eggs taken on May 8th had built another nest in the centre of Mr. Hesp's pond and were sitting on three eggs.

During the latter part of February there was a very large flock of Brambling Finches feeding on beech-mast in the wood between Terrington and Castle Howard, and several small flocks were noticed near Crambe Beck and the Castle Howard Farm School.

Curlews were often seen on Strensall Common and Alne Moor during the spring and summer, but I have no evidence that they bred there.

Mr. Zimmermann, in his report to me, also states:- 'On June 5th I saw a male Stonechat on Gilling Moor, and on the two following days I again saw it in the same place; evidently its mate was sitting somewhere near, as on July 10th I saw a pair of Stonechats and three young ones in the same locality.

On June 19th I saw a Reed Warbler's nest with four eggs at Nidd; the nest was built amongst some reeds in the side of the lake. 'The same evening I heard the call of the Corncrake near Ripley, also at Green Hammerton—the only times I heard the Corncrake this year. Mr. H. Shorney informs me that the only time he heard it was near Bishopthorpe on May 18th.

'During the last week of September and for a few days in October a small flock of about twenty Mealy Redpolls were to be seen every day feeding on some waste land near the River Foss at Huntington. Carrion Crows and Magpies appear to be more numerous than ever.

On September 27th I saw a large flock of Fieldfares near Storwood - an early date of arrival of these Scandinavian winter visitors.

S .H .S .I must again express my gratitude to Messrs. V. G. F. Zimmermann, Fred Vear and H. Shorney for their valuable help in compiling these notes.

Arrival of Migrants, York District, 1932.

Chiffchaff   Hawnby, March 13th; Huntington, April 3rd.

Wheatear   Strensall Common, March 17th.

Willow Warbler   Stamford Bridge, March 15th; Huntington, April 12th.

Common Sandpiper   Pickering, April 9th; Hawnby, May 1st.

Swallow   Huntington, April 9th; Stamford Bridge, April 15th; Brandesburton, April 24th.

Sand Martin   Huntington, April 12th; Stamford Bridge, April 15th, April 28th (12).

Cuckoo...   Huntington, April 26th; Stamford Bridge, April 29th; Boston Spa, April 29th; Hawnby, May 1st.

Whitethroat   Huntington, April 27th.

Sedge Warbler   Huntington, April 27th; York, April 28th.

Tree Pipit   Huntington, April 27th; Dringhouses, May 8th.

House Martin   York, April 28th.

Blackcap    Sand Hutton, April 28th.

Pied Flycatcher   Hawnby, May 1st.

Whinchat    Strensall, May 3rd.

Corncrake    Sand Hutton, May 2nd.

Swift ...   Huntington, May 3rd; York, May 6th.

Nightjar    Gilling, May 3rd; Sand Hutton, May 6th.

Turtle Dove    Ampleforth, May 3rd; Strensall, May 8th.

Yellow Wagtail    York, May 6th; Dringhouses, May 26th.

Redstart    Huntington, May 6th.

Spotted Flycatcher    Huntington, May 6th.

Reed Warbler    Dringhouses, May 8th.

Garden Warbler ...   Dringhouses, May 8th

Grasshopper Warbler    Askham Bogs, June 19th.

#### YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT SKIPWITH 1932 pgs 164-166

The extensive Commons of Skipwith cum Riccall have always held an attraction for East Riding naturalists, and their wealth of insect, bird and marshland plant life has suffered less from change due to industrial development than any area of similar size in East Yorkshire. A meeting held at Skipwith on Saturday, 13th May, was well attended by representatives of all Sections, among which, perhaps, the ornithologists were most conspicuous. Thanks to the interested ownership of Mrs. Forbes Adams, the competent vigilance of the Head Keeper, Mr. Morris, the place is virtually a bird sanctuary, and Mr. Morris's guidance later in the day proved of inestimable value. Vertebrate Zoology (C. F. Procter) : The day was a very interesting one to the Vertebrate Section, as this common comprises a number of differently conditioned shallow ponds. On most of these the Black-headed Gulls have formed colonies, but they have been very wisely prevented from monopolising the whole of the available sites. The late Lord Wenlock unreservedly protected these beautiful birds in the later years of his life, and the effect of the absence of restriction was such that at one period they overshadowed all other bird life, and between 800 and 1,000 pairs, as far as could be judged, occupied the common. The little tussocky islets that were essentially favoured were quite inadequate for their needs, and they actually built along the narrow plank bridges and all round the edges of the ponds. At the present

time, other species are given a chance, which is very much to the good of Skipwith Common as a bird sanctuary. The following birds were seen and reported: Black-head Gull, Mallard, Shoveler Duck, Teal, Coot, Moorhen, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Pheasant, Curlew, Redshank, Snipe, Ring Dove, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Lapwing, Swift, Swallow, House Martin, Thrush, Blackbird, Skylark, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Whinchat, Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler, Pied Flycatcher, Tree Pipit. The Grasshopper Warbler was heard at Bishop Wood by some of the party who visited that place.

The keeper, Mr. J. Morris, reported that he had observed a pair of Pintail Ducks and that the Shelduck and Pochard were on the common. He also reported that the Nightjar had arrived during the past week.

Nightingale Nesting near York. A pair of nightingales successfully reared four young ones, which left the nest on June 12th. The nest was a fairly large, loose structure, composed of dead beech and rhododendron leaves with the addition of a few fine grasses, and was situated on the ground among some elder sticks and common nettles on the edge of a dark shrubbery at Waplinton, fifteen miles east of York. Owing to the bad light some photographs of both parents feeding the young birds failed, and the young had flown away before a second effort was possible. S.H.S.

1934

1933 Report York District (Sydney H. Smith).

The year opened in continued frost and deep snow throughout January. A few springlike days in February tempted rooks to clean up the old nests in the trees around the York County Hospital, but more snow and rain stopped them, and the frost held on until well into March.

The long dry summer favoured visiting birds, and their nesting season has been very successful, particularly Swallows and Martins. Game birds had a good time, and the hatchings of both Pheasants and Partridges have been very good.

There have been large numbers of Cuckoos in the York district, but again I have to report the remarkable scarcity of Corncrakes, a species which has almost disappeared in this area, and I am at a loss to account for this curious decline.

Nightingales were heard at several places around York during May and June, and I have recorded the successful rearing of four young ones near Pocklington (*The Naturalist*, Aug., p. 177).

Little Owls are becoming very numerous in this well-wooded district, and they have been observed at Sandburn, Strensall, Buttercrambe, Bugthorpe, Askham Bogs, Terrington and Yedingham during the summer months. Mr. H. Shorney reports that three nests of the Little Owl were discovered along the railway embankment at Dringhouses when the grass was cut, but all were destroyed by boys out birds nesting. Carrion Crows are too numerous from a keeper's point of view, but Hooded Crows, once so common, are seldom seen, two only being noticed on April 12th at Huntingdon, and which were still there on the 22nd. Mr. J. Morris, the keeper at Skipwith, informs me that a pair of Pintail Ducks reared seven young ones on the Horseshoe Lake in June, 1932, and he hoped they would nest again this year, but as yet I have no report. He also told me that he estimated there were seven hundred pairs of Black-headed Gulls nesting on the ponds this year (1933), twenty pairs of Shoveler Ducks, twelve pairs of Pochards and fifty pairs of Teal Ducks. A Bittern was killed on the Common in 1932 much to his regret, as he had hopes of this species

trying to nest there this year. A pair of Shoveler Ducks were seen on the lake at Strensall on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and may have tried to nest there.

Two pairs of Great Crested Grebes were seen on Leethams Pond, Dringhouses, on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and one pair commenced nesting on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Another pair of these birds were observed on the lake at Sand Hutton on May 1<sup>st</sup>. On May 7<sup>th</sup> a pair of Great Crested Grebes were sitting on eggs in a nest at Hepper's pond, Dringhouses.

Two pairs of Pochards were seen on Leetham's Pond, Dringhouses, on April 4<sup>th</sup>, but did not nest there.

A Treecreeper's nest and eggs Were found in Askham Bogs on April 6<sup>th</sup>, and a Goldcrest's nest and eggs at Dringhouses on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Blackcap Warblers and several pairs of Bullfinches had nests and eggs at Waplington during June.

A pair of Stock Doves nested in the York Museum Gardens early in May.

Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Green Woodpeckers have been seen at Strensall.

Two small parties of Tree Sparrows were seen at Dunnington, and another party at Hazel Bush on March 13<sup>th</sup>, the bird being less common here than was the case a few years ago.

A Blackbird with pure White head spent the winter of 1932-33 between Thirsk and Kilburn, and was still there on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Another freak was a young Sparrow killed by a cat at Huntington on June 28<sup>th</sup>, which had a well developed wing growing on its left leg.

Several pairs of Pied Flycatchers nested near Helmsley, and a Lesser Whitethroat's nest with five eggs was found there on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### Arrival of Summer Visiting Birds.

Willow Warbler   Hawaby, March 20<sup>th</sup>; Bugthorpe, March 16<sup>th</sup>; Strensall, March 12<sup>th</sup>; Dringhouses, March 15<sup>th</sup>, numbers on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Chiffchaff.   Huntington, April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Wheatear   Strensall, April 12<sup>th</sup>; Middleham, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Sand Martin   Stamford Bridge, April 12<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>; Buttercrambe, April 20<sup>th</sup>.

Swallow   Pickering, April 12<sup>th</sup>; Huntingdon, April 17<sup>th</sup>; Naburn, April 17<sup>th</sup>;

Dringhouses, April 17<sup>th</sup>.

Sedge Warbler   Linton-on-Ouse, April 14<sup>th</sup>; Huntington, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Whitethroat   Linton-on-Ouse, April 14<sup>th</sup>; Buttercrambe, April 20<sup>th</sup>; Huntington, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Common Sandpiper   Naburn, April 17<sup>th</sup>; further parties May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Reed Bunting   Dringhouses, April 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Cuckoo...Bishop Wilton, April 24<sup>th</sup> (2); Heworth, April 21<sup>st</sup>; Keld Head, April 25<sup>th</sup>;

Stamford Bridge, April 25<sup>th</sup>; Huntington, April 29<sup>th</sup>; Haxby, May 1<sup>st</sup>; Bugthorpe, April 21<sup>st</sup>; Welburn. September 13<sup>th</sup>; others reported on this date from Stamford Bridge and Strensall.

Whinchat   Keld Head, April 25<sup>th</sup>; Strensall, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Tree Pipit   Askham Bogs, April 26<sup>th</sup>; Strensall, April 30<sup>th</sup>.

Turtle Dove   Skipwith, April 26<sup>th</sup>.

Swift.   Skipwith, April 26<sup>th</sup>; Huntington, May 3<sup>rd</sup>; Huntington, numbers May 4<sup>th</sup>;

Dringhouses, May 5<sup>th</sup>; York, May 8<sup>th</sup>; last Swift seen at Huntington on August 11<sup>th</sup>.

Yellow Wagtail   Haxby, April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Corncrake   Bugthorpe, May 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Nightjar   Skipwith, May 8<sup>th</sup>.

Grasshopper Warbler   Bishops Wood, May 13<sup>th</sup>.



Nightingale ...Farlington, May 30th; Stillington, May 30th; Waplinton, June 11th, nest and four young ones.

Winter Visiting Birds.

Fieldfare ... .. Huntington, a party arrived on September 24th.

Redwing ... .. Huntington, a flock arrived on October 6th.

For valuable help in compiling these notes, I am indebted to Dr. J. S. Gaynor, Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann, Mr. H. Shorney, Mr. F. Jefferson, Mr. Cecil H. Cobb and Mr. Arthur Smith.

1935

1934 Report

York District (Sydney H. Smith, F.Z.S.): Several Little Grebes were seen in the River Foss at Huntington on January 11th; they are not uncommon in the district and have nested on various ponds within the city boundary.

A flock of Siskins was feeding on sedges beside the Foss on the same date and place, and stayed until the 25th. The Thrush was first heard singing on January 14th, seven days later than usual.

During February a party of Bullfinches, seven males and four females, stripped fruit trees of buds at Huntington, plum trees suffered particularly, with a consequent scarcity of plums later in the year. These birds have greatly increased, and nests observed at so many points around York as not to be worth individual record.

Redwings were numerous and Fieldfares less common, a large flock of the latter being seen as late as April 27th at Huntington. Goldfinches are now quite re-established and nest in various local apple orchards.

Hawfinches nested at Huntington, and on May 15th four eggs were seen, and the young later on were reared.

A Dipper's nest with four eggs was found at Thirkleby (*outside YOC area*) on April 8th.

Curlews still frequent nesting haunts on Alne Moor and Strensall Common, a nest with three eggs being found at Strensall on May 30th.

Tawny Owls are common around York, four nests were found and also a nest of the Barn Owl. Little Owls are reported from Huntington, Flaxton, Sandburn, Escrick, Kilburn, and Crayke, and are an undoubted nuisance to gamekeepers.

Cuckoos have been fairly numerous: an unusual foster parent was noticed at Huntington, where a pair of Mistle Thrushes had their nest in an apple tree, and later were seen busily engaged feeding a young Cuckoo they had hatched with their brood.

Nightjars were scarce this summer, one pair nested at Strensall and another pair at Suet Carr. They were also seen at Skipwith.

A Nightingale was singing at Waplinton on May 28th, but no nest was found.

Linnets have been more than usually common, and there is an increase in number of Common Buntings.

A pair of Grasshopper Warblers and two pairs of Wood Warblers nested in Huntington Wood, and at the same place two pairs of Woodcock nested successfully.

I visited the Heron colony in the Shire Oaks Wood at Healaugh on May 23rd, where eleven pairs had nested. The young birds were strongly on the wing and afforded a magnificent sight as they circled overhead.

The Corncrake has almost disappeared. One was heard at Kirby Misperton on May 11th, and I heard another in June near Stamford Bridge. There may have been others in the district not reported to me.

Jays, Magpies, and Carrion Crows have been as numerous as last year, although a lot were destroyed by gamekeepers.

On July 2nd a Black Swan was seen in the River Ouse at Linton, had escaped from some private lake.

On August 14th an unusual visitor to the River Foss at York was a Cormorant. This bird appeared to have got into difficulties with some oil and probably ascended the Ouse to York (seventy miles from the sea). I saw it busily disposing of roach, which it caught readily. Later it was caught by boys, and arrangements to release it at night to enable it to get away, were successful.

The protection afforded Lapwings in Yorkshire has had the effect of forming very large flocks; they are joined extensively by Golden Plovers, and I saw about 100 of the latter species at Raskelf on September 8th.

The dry summer must have favoured Partridges, as there are some excellent coveys around York, particularly on light land around Easingwold and Raskelf.

#### Arrival of Summer Visiting Birds 1934

Willow Warbler Bulmer, March 31st.

Wheatear Farndale, April 14th; Hawnby, April 15th; Strensall, April 25th.

Chiffchaff. Huntingdon, April 15th.

Sandpiper Hawnby, April 15th.

Pied Flycatcher Hawnby, April 15th.

Sedge Warbler Huntingdon, April 16th.

Sand Martin ... Stamford Bridge, April 16th.

Swallow Pocklington, April 16th; Waplinton, April 21st; Haxby, April 26th.

Redstart Huntingdon, April 19th.

Garden Warbler Huntingdon, April 19th.

Whinchat Strensall, April 21st.

Cuckoo... Strensall, April 23rd; York, April 23rd; High Catton, April 24th; Huntingdon, April 25th.

House Martin Waplinton, April 26th; Earswick, April 27th.

Corncrake Kirby Misperton, May 11th.

Swift ... Haxby, May 15th (1); Huntingdon, May 15<sup>th</sup>, (1); Huntingdon, May 19th (2); and May 20th (20); Kirby Misperton, May 19th.

Nightjar Strensall, May 15th.

Turtle Dove Tadcaster, May 20th and June 5th.

For valuable help in compiling these notes, I am again indebted to Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann.

#### YNU at Hovingham 3rd-5th August 1935 The Naturalist 1935 251-258

The last of the 1935 season's excursions was to Hovingham on August 3rd to 5th. The fine weather, a kind permission to go anywhere on Sir Wm. Worsley's estates, and a supplementary invitation from Capt. Worsley's wife to see the grounds made the occasion most enjoyable. We were also fortunate to get the Hovingham schoolmaster, Mr. W. J. Moore, to plan the routes and act as guide. The only trouble was due to the fine weather, for the drought had dried up the countryside and the plants and insects had accomplished their year's work at a much earlier date than usual. The district proved very inviting to naturalists and we must trust that an

opportunity of revisiting it will be available in the future at a more opportune season when the birds, insects, and plants are to be seen more advantageously. Perhaps the most interesting ground was that on the further side of Southwood from Airyholme towards Wath; here we were given accounts of boggy areas where cattle were sometimes deeply immersed. The drought had altered this but large areas of *Glyceria aquatica* Wahl, some three feet high, showed that conditions were far from normal, and that places we walked over in comfort might not be passable at another time.

Vertebrate Section: Mr. H. B. Booth writes: Birds were very quiet and difficult to observe in the thick foliage. The Long-tailed Tit appeared to be common, and the most pleasant sight seen by the ornithologists was a flock of quite 150 small birds working along among the trees and bushes and feeding on their way. Nearly half consisted of Long-tailed tits, and among them were several other species of titmice, goldcrests, chaffinches, etc. Other species noted were the green woodpecker, jay, sparrowhawk, woodcock, and redstart; and a family party of carrion crows was much in evidence. The turtle dove was heard, and the nuthatch was reported in Hovingham Park, about a mile from the entrance gates.

At Wiganthorpe Hall close by, a pair of Great Crested Grebes nests annually on the lake, and they are present this season. This site, and the one at Castle Howard, are the only regular nesting places of this species in the North Riding known to the writer.

In mammals the North American grey squirrel was seen, and we were informed by the head woodman that this species is common and that the British squirrel is now very scarce.

1936

#### 1935 Report

York District (S. H. Smith): The opening months of the year were distinguished by gales of wind, accompanied by showers of snow and sleet, which delayed the arrival of most summer visiting birds, and the recorded date of arrival of most local species was generally later than usual. The cold spell lasted until June, and I have a note to the effect that 16th May was a full day of heavy snow showers.

The Swallow tribe has not yet recovered its average numbers, and nowhere in this district have any of the various species been common. There appear to be cycles of plenty and scarcity, and we may now be approaching the end of the scarce period which has obtained for some years. A pure white variety of House Martin was seen at Howsham Bridge during August.

Corncrakes are still very rare, and I cannot locate more than ten as having come within my own observations.

Two pairs of Curlews frequented Strensall Common, and another pair were located on Alne Moor, but it is doubtful that any of them nested

Kingfishers are increasing in number around York, although I know a lot are killed every year. One pair nested at Haxby. Dippers also survive in spite of angler enemies, and they have been noticed at Crambe, Byland, Helmsley, and many other places.

Hérons nested in their usual haunts at Healaugh and Pickering, and may often be seen going to and returning from their fishing expeditions.

Nightjars have gradually decreased for several years. Two pairs are reported at Sandburn, and one pair at Huntington; another pair nested at Skipwith.

Cuckoos have been extraordinarily plentiful, particularly at Strensall and Suet Carr. Little Owls have now thoroughly established themselves around York, and many nests have been found. The species is considered very harmful to game, and most determined efforts are being made to keep their numbers down.

Long-eared Owls, Tawny Owls, and Barn Owls are all very common, and three young Barn Owls were often seen hawking for Sparrows during the day-time in a stack yard near York. Many nests of all these species have been observed this year. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker was seen in Sand Hutton Lane on 14<sup>th</sup> April by Mr. Vear, and later in the day another observer confirmed the identity.

The nest of a Mistle Thrush with three eggs was found at Sand Hutton on 28th March, and that of the Song Thrush with three eggs on 14<sup>th</sup> April, this nest being built on the ground, where it remained a further five days, when it was destroyed, presumably by a Grey Squirrel. Three pairs of Long-tailed Tits nested at Sand Hutton, and a pair of Sparrowhawks reared four young in the wood near Four Alls. Chaffinches were very numerous around York, and a curious fact came under my notice where a cock Chaffinch that had confidently picked up bread crumbs in a workmen's hut at Stamford Bridge was disturbed by a dog appearing in the doorway of the hut; the bird flew to the rafters, the dog gave an excited bark, and the Chaffinch dropped dead to the floor, apparently from heart failure.

A pair of Lesser Redpolls nested near Sand Hutton, and I found one of these birds dead in my garden early in May, probably from exposure, the weather being very stormy and cold.

The woods at Coxwold held broods of a pair of Wood Warblers, two pairs of Garden Warblers, and a pair of Blackcap Warblers.

A nest of the Common Bunting was found at Towthorpe, and a walk along the River Foss bank disclosed Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings.

Little Grebes have been seen on most of the local ponds, and there were three of this species on the lake at my house at Heworth during June.

A pair of Treecreepers nested in a box in a garden at Huntington and reared four young, and other boxes found homes for Blue Tits, Coal Tits, and Great Tits.

Great Crested Grebes nested near York as follows: one pair with two young ones on the Hob Moor ponds; one pair at Aldersyde, no young reared; and one pair on the main brick pond at Elmfield, no young reared - the pond is very exposed and the Grebes, judging it lacked security, left after a short stay. Two pairs were seen on the great lake at Castle Howard, one pair of which reared four young.

There was a noticeable increase in Golden Plovers during spring and autumn; large flocks frequented fields at Haxby during January and February, and I saw a flock of more than one hundred at Raskelf in late September and October. They do not nest here.

Wild Geese often pass over York too high to be sure of their identity, but probably Pink-footed Geese. Many hundreds flew over during the night of 6th March, the weather being clear and still and the Geese travelling east to west. A large flock passed over during the evening of 12th September; my informant does not state the direction of flight.

A Nightingale frequented my garden at 'Willowsyde' York, for a few days in June, 26th to the 30th, probably on its passage south. The song period being over, the bird emitted a short trill note only at long intervals; the time the bird was usually trilling being from 1 o'clock to 2 o'clock a.m.

Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers nested at Strensall, and numbers of Magpies, Carrion Crows and Jays were observed at this well-known bird haunt.

Sparrowhawks were not so much in evidence as in past years, and the handsome Kestrel Hawk is as common as one can expect where the species has so many enemies.

Mallard, Tufted Ducks, Pochards, and Shovelers have all nested successfully at Skipwith, but were somewhat handicapped by the low state of the ponds they frequent. The Gull ponds harboured their usual complement of Black-headed Gulls, and although raiders destroyed numbers of their eggs, between six and seven hundred pairs nested there.

Lapwings are very plentiful around York, and large flocks can be seen in all their usual haunts. Partridges have had a splendid nesting season and many big coveys have been seen.

Pheasants suffered during the drought, and 'gapes' was prevalent amongst the young ones. There is, however, a fairly good show of Pheasants in the local coverts. Valuable assistance in compiling this report has been rendered by Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann, Mr. F. Year, and Mr. E. Wilfred Taylor.

#### Arrival of Summer Visiting Birds, 1935

Sand Martin ... Stamford Bridge, 9th April; Tadcaster, 23<sup>rd</sup> April; Newton-on-Ouse, 28th April; Huntington, 27th April.

Swallow ...Wigginton, 10th April; York, 11th April; Tadcaster, 17th April; Warthill, 20th April; Skipwith, 21st April; Pocklington, 22nd April; Huntington, 25th April.

House Martin Huntington, 22nd April.

Willow Warbler Shipton, 14th April.

Chiffchaff Shipton, 14th April.

Cuckoo Tadcaster, 20th April; Pocklington, 22nd April; Huntington, 27th April

Wheatear Strensall, 19th April.

Whinchat Strensall, 19th April; Askham Bogs, 30th March

Whitethroat Huntington, 20th April.

Yellow Wagtail Huntington, 20th April.

Common Sandpiper Newton-on-Ouse, 28th April; Heworth, 5th and 15th May

Corncrake Shipton, 29th April; Naburn, 27th May; Helperby, 5th June.

Spotted Flycatcher Huntington, 2nd May.

Grasshopper Warbler Buttercrambe, 4th May.

Swift ... Huntington, 5th May; York, 15th May; Shipton, 18th May.

Sedge Warbler Heworth, 5th May.

Garden Warbler Huntington, 6th May.

Wood Warbler Huntington, 6th May.

Turtle Dove Huntington, 6th May; Tadcaster, 17th May.

Nightjar Strensall, 12th May.

#### BITTERN (*BOTAURUS STELLARIS*) AT YORK

SYDNEY H. SMITH

A specimen of this rare marsh bird frequented the margin of the little beck that empties into the pond on Hob Moor, York, on January 16th 1935. The bird was flushed by two setters which were being exercised by Mr. Alec House, Electrical Engineer, York.

As the district was ice-bound at this time, the stream in question was one of the very few open places where this bird could feed. No publicity was given to this visitor, and there is every reason to hope it has succeeded in reaching safer haunts.

1937

#### 1936 Report

York District (S. H. Smith): The year opened with plenty of rain, soon changing to hard frost, with snow and sleet continuing until April and falling heavily on the 12th, 13, and 14th. There was frost at night nearly all the month, 70 F. being registered on the 19th, but little rain locally, and the weather remained dry until the end of May. There was a lot of rain during the summer and many heavy showers destroyed young game birds during June and early July.

Swallows and Sand-Martins arrived later than last year, but House Martins and Swifts both appeared on the corresponding date. Most of the summer-visiting birds were later than usual and were no doubt held up by contrary winds delaying their sea crossing from the Continent.

Corncrakes were again very scarce, and I can only locate two pairs here, as different observers undoubtedly report the same birds on varying dates.

Curlews are increasing as a breeding species and have been recorded at Buttercrambe, Strensall, Sandburn, Suet Carr, Alne Moor, Towthorpe, and Allerthorpe Common, and a number of young successfully reared. Three pairs nested at Skipwith, and Mr. Vear photographed them at one selected nest. This well-known bird photographer deplors the fact that too many people are visiting the Black-Headed Gullery on the Common and the Gulls are becoming unduly shy. They are leaving their old homes on the Gull Ponds and transferring to the line dykes, where they present a beautiful sight against the dark background of the trees. They are fairly safe on the island in the middle of the pond as the water is too deep for visitors to wade across and steal their eggs. On 31st May plenty of young birds were about and in all stages of growth; there was also quantities of litter, paper bags, orange peel, cigarette packets, etc., these latter having been dropped on some of the Gulls nests. If visitors do not stop leaving this litter it is probable that the Common will be closed in the near future.

Kingfishers nested at several points around York and are seen daily along the Rivers Ouse, Foss, and Derwent, and they regularly visit the pond in my garden to take toll of roach fry and sticklebacks. Herons have been seen regularly, and at Huntington three and sometimes four together were fishing in the River Foss.

Dippers were again nesting and several broods have been reared.

Nightjars have become more rare each year and have even deserted Skipwith, where at least three pairs always nested.

Three nests of the Turtle Dove were found at Skipwith, and Mr. Vear obtained a series of delightful photographs, and all the young birds were reared.

Other species that nested at Skipwith are Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Jays, Blackcap Warbler (two nests), Shoyeler Duck, Teal, and Mallard. Redshanks, once numerous, have gradually decreased and none were seen on the usual nesting grounds. The Brown Linnet is more numerous on the Common than for several years past, and there is a corresponding decrease there in Willow Warblers.

A Hawfinch nest with three eggs was found at Escrick Park on 21<sup>st</sup> June, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> June a nest of the Lesser Whitethroat with four eggs was found at Huntington. Several Treecreepers were seen in Hovingham Woods on 10th May. A nest of the Treecreeper with three eggs was found in Strensall Wood on 30th May, and a Goldfinch nest with five eggs at Huntington on 27th June.

On 22nd April a male White Wagtail was seen at Huntington and later seen on various dates, and evidently it nested near as on 21st May a pair of adults with three young ones were seen, they stayed about for a few days and then disappeared. A Woodcock's nest with four eggs was found at Buttercrambe on 1<sup>st</sup> April and another with three eggs at Huntington on 3rd April.

On 10th May, Pied Flycatchers, Treecreepers, and a Lesser Spotted Woodpecker were seen in Hovingham Woods.

Mr. Vear saw a female Cuckoo in the stack-yard at White Syke Farm (Strensall) on 21st June. This bird was watching from a fir tree a pair of Pied Wagtails which had a nest in a straw stack; she repeatedly flew over the stack and several times alighted on the top to stretch her wings and preen herself, and reluctantly flew away when the Wagtails attacked her. This was kept up for about one and a half hours that day and afterwards for five days when she laid an egg in the Wagtails' nest. In due course the young Cuckoo was hatched and ejected the Wagtails eggs and was reared by the foster parents. A charming photograph of a Wagtail perched on the shoulders of the interloper whilst it is being fed was the result.

Large flocks of Fieldfares visited the York district during November and December, 1935, and Redwings were also numerous - a flock seen at Huntington on 18th January, 1936, would total at least 200 birds, an unusual number for this species in this area. Hooded Crows have become very rare and I did not see one during the year.

Owing to heavy rainfall, the River Foss at Huntington flooded hundreds of acres of land, and this remained from 1st to 30th August, during which time it attracted Curlews, Snipe, Golden Plover, Herons, and a small party of eleven Greenshanks. This little flock stayed until 9th September, less one, which was shot on 5th September and determined the identity of the species.

There was considerable movement among migrating birds at the end of September, huge flocks being heard passing overhead in the nighttime. A party of Wheatears were seen at Tilmire on 26th September, evidently on migration, and on 27th September Wild Geese were going over Huntington flying S.E. 17 at 8.30 a.m., 27 at 8.45 a.m., 50 at 9 a.m., followed by two more flocks not counted; these Geese are probably Pink-footed.

Two pairs of Great Crested Grebes were seen on the lake at Castle Howard, one pair (as usual) nested dangerously near the road and on very shallow water. They were successful in spite of the risk and early in August they were feeding two well-grown young, and a single bird had another youngster in its care, the fourth adult was not to be seen.

All reports denote an increase in numbers of the Little Owl despite efforts that are being made to destroy them. On 16th April I saw a pair in an oak tree at Whenby, they had occupied a hole in the base of the tree only two feet above ground; it was, however, a very safe retreat for them and I hear they duly hatched and reared a family. Barn Owls, Long-eared and Tawny Owls are all very plentiful, and the latter particularly is now to be found in the city in several haunts.

I am indebted to Messrs. V. G. F. Zimmermann, E. W. Taylor, Fred Vear, Chas. Allen, A. W. Ping, and Arthur Smith for kindly sending notes to help in compiling this report.

Arrival of Summer Visiting Birds, 1936.

Willow Warbler York, 6th April.

Chiffchaff. York, 9th April.

Wheatear York, 11th April.

Common Sandpiper York, 13th April.

Swallow Shipton, 18th April; Cawood, 22nd April; York, 26th April; Stamford Bridge, 27th April; Huntington, 27th April.

Cuckoo... Skipwith, 19th April; Buttercrambe, 24th April; Huntington, 27th April; Stamford Bridge, 28th April.

Sand Martin York, 19th April; Stamford Bridge, 25th April; Shipton, 26th April.

House Martin York, 22nd April; Huntington, 29th April; Stamford Bridge, 7th May.

Whitethroat ... Heworth, 24th April; Huntington, 27th April.

Sedge Warbler Huntington, 29th April; York, 30th April.

Swift ... Huntington, 5th May; York, 5th May

Garden Warbler Stamford Bridge, 7th May.

Pied Flycatcher Hovingham Woods, 10th May.

Blackcap Warbler... Huntington Woods, 12th May.

Spotted Flycatcher Huntington, 12th May.

Tree Pipit Huntington, 12th May.

Whinchat Huntington, 12th May.

Corncrake Clifton Ings, 5th and 20th June; Huntington, 14th June. Also at Ruswarp, 5th June.

Grasshopper Warbler Towton Wood, 1st July.

1938

#### 1937 Report

York District (Sydney H. Smith, J.P., F.Z.S.): The early part of 1937 was marked by extremely bad weather. January was distinguished by cold rain and gales of wind; February provided a lot of snow, and a terrific storm on the 28th blocked all the roads. On March 10<sup>th</sup> there was hard frost on deep snow and the cold and winds continued, only ending on the 26th with a final fall of snow three inches in depth. The wind, mostly from the North, retarded migration and all the visiting bird life was very noticeably delayed in arriving at their usual haunts.

Perhaps it was the pressure of this bad weather which caused a large flock of Waxwings to honour us with a visit on March 13th, as on that date they were first observed by Colonel Bell, M.O., near the R.E. hut on Strensall Common. Daily visits by Mr. Zimmermann enabled the numbers to be checked, and a flock of 18 was counted on the 14th, and the following day, the 15th, 26 were seen; they were very confiding and allowed a very close approach. On March 20th, Colonel Bell reported that the numbers had increased and on viewing the flock Mr. Zimmermann estimated there was quite 200 Waxwings busily stripping the last remaining hawthorn berries from the tall bushes; the flock was extremely active and presented an extraordinary sight to bird lovers. The locality was visited on the 23rd and again on the 26th, but the Waxwings had departed, probably passing on because they had exhausted the meagre supply of haws, of which they seem to be very fond. I saw a party of 15 Waxwings at Strensall on March 14th, and these no doubt belonged to the main flock observed by Colonel Bell. During the period of the visit the weather was very wet, particularly on the 18th and 19th, and there was much flooding. Curlews have again nested in the vicinity of York. Four pairs hatched 15 young ones and eight pairs successfully bred in their usual haunt on Strensall Common; the



number of young reared is, however, uncertain. Generally there are some Redshanks with the Curlews, but this year only one pair is recorded.

Carrion Crows have decreased in numbers, and the Hooded Crow has disappeared altogether, not one being seen. Magpies and Jays are again numerous as also Barn Owls, Tawny Owls, and Long-eared Owls. There are fewer reports of Little Owls, no doubt due to the keepers' war upon this species.

Mallard and Teal Duck have been plentiful both at Strensall and Skipwith, and a pair of Pochards nested at the latter place, and another pair in one of the city parks. On March 20th five Whooper Swans flew over Heslington and settled on the Tillmire, and it may be one of these birds that took up residence in the Tang Hall Park and is still there. It is possible the 'herd' came from Harewood or Roundhay.

Great Crested Grebes at Castle Howard on March 21st consisted of two pairs and one odd bird. Mr. Taylor thinks none bred there this year. Another pair were seen at Strensall, but do not appear to have nested. Little Grebes were observed in their usual local haunts and do not merit more detail.

Kingfishers maintain their numbers and I often see one and sometimes two plunging into the old brick pond in my garden to secure the sticklebacks which are so plentiful. Common Sandpipers have nested beside the River Rye, but are noticed around York usually as they pass along the waterway in the spring and again in the autumn on migration, and on occasions I get one in my garden, just to break its journey perchance. In like manner some Sand Martins, House Martins, Swallows, and Swifts, none of them so common this year, one wonders why there is this gradual decline when Cuckoos are so numerous and the same conditions of weather and food supplies apply to all.

Again I wonder what of the Corncrake, a species that has almost disappeared in this area. I have not heard one myself this year though I am about the countryside daily. All the blame does not lie upon the close cutting grass mowers as there is still cornfield and rough pastures as harbourage.

Also, what of the Nightjar once so plentiful here in early summer? A few years ago they bred freely at Sand Hutton, Sandburn, Strensall, Skipwith, and other well-known localities, and many times I have watched six 'Fern Owls' on the wing together hawking moths in the late dusk of June evenings. The old haunts remain, and in part, the old conditions, but the Nightjars are not seen, neither is their musical 'churring' heard.

With the passing of the Bird-catcher there is a marked increase in the numbers of many species once their prey. Larks are plentiful as also Twites, Linnets, and Redpolls. Chaffinches are everywhere, one pair nested in the top of a haystack. Blackbirds and Thrushes are so common as to provide several records of being double brooded. At Huntington three pairs of Goldfinches nested quite near together, one pair choosing a tree overhanging the village pond, all were successful in rearing young.

Ring Doves, or Wood Pigeons, nest freely around York, but not the Stock Dove, hence the report of four nests of the rarer species all in old nests of Magpies, is of interest. Turtle Doves have increased of late years, but being summer visitors only are always uncertain, one pair had a nest at Sand Hutton.

The Green Woodpecker is not so common as in previous years, its relative, the Great Spotted Woodpecker, has, however, nested freely around York. The rarer Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has not been observed, although it has bred in previous years.

A pair of White Wagtails and four young ones were seen at Huntington on July 11th, and they remained there for about three weeks. Pied Wagtails have been quite common and are well-established residents. Yellow Wagtails are much rarer summer visitors and few were seen.

House Martins were still feeding young at on September 11th.

I am greatly indebted to Messrs. V. G. F. Zimmermann, Fred Vear, W. G. Bramley, and E. Wilfred Taylor for many useful notes.

#### Arrival and Departure of Migrant Species, 1937

Wheatear Heslington, two seen on March 19th; others seen at Bolton Percy on April 29th and York, April 19th.

Willow Warbler. York, April 6th; Bolton Percy, April 10th; Huntington, April 18th.

Sand Martin ... Stamford Bridge, April 7th; Huntington and Newton-on-Ouse, April 11th; Main flocks at Stamford Bridge, April 27th.

Swallow Elvington (2), April 10th; Huntington, April 12th; Numbers at York, April 26th. Last seen in York, October 6th.

Whitethroat Huntington, April 11th; Bolton Percy, May 4th; York, April 16th; Green Hammerton, May 3rd.

House Martin New Earswick, April 17th. Last seen in York, October 6th.

Fieldfare A flock of 50 at Bolton Percy on outward migration, April 25th.

Cuckoo... Bolton Percy, April 27th; Strensall, April 28th; Stamford Bridge, April 29th; One in my garden at York on August 4th, no doubt a bird of the year.

Yellow Wagtail Bolton Percy, April 29th.

Turtle Dove... Ampleforth, May 2nd; Bolton Percy, May 28th.

Chiffchaff. Kilburn, May 2nd.

Sedge Warbler York, May 3rd.

Swift ... Huntington and Sheriff Hutton, May 5th; Heworth (York), May 13th; Bolton Percy, May 23rd. Last seen at Huntington, August 12th.

Blackcap Warbler Castle Howard, May 9th

Reed Warbler Castle Howard, May 9th

Common Sandpiper Rievaulx, River Rye, May 9th; two at Bishopthorpe, River Ouse, July 26th, and one at York, August 12th, outward migration.

Garden Warbler Huntington, May 10th.

Corncrake Clifton Ings, York, May 15th; Acomb, York, May 15th; Grimston Bar, May 23rd. One heard at Bolton Percy, June 23rd, and another at Nun Appleton on July 11th

Nightjar One pair at Strensall, May 16th. The only Nightjars observed this year.

Spotted Flycatcher Huntington, May 17th. Many more seen after this date.

#### BLACK GROUSE NEAR YORK (The Naturalist 1938, pg 71)

A young black-cock was brought to me to identify, and which had been shot at Beningbrough by Mr. Councillor C. F. Oliver, of York, on December 21st, 1937.

Unfortunately, the bird had been mauled by the dog and was too badly torn to preserve.

Red Grouse have been reported from Green Hammerton, Sutton-on-Forest, Bransby, Strensall, Escrick, and Fulford, but it is many years since the former species have been driven to the lowland districts by stress of hard weather such as that experienced early in December.

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Sydney H. Smith, J.P., F.Z.S.

1939

1938 Report pgs 16-18

York District (Sydney H. Smith, J.P., F.Z.S.): The year has been marked by curiously abnormal weather, which in turn affected local bird life in various ways. February of 'fill dyke fame' was dry and free from frost and snow. March was dry and marked by gales of wind, whilst April was distinguished by many night frosts, the 28th providing the first rain for about two months. May was cold and dry, with night frosts, the drought again breaking in heavy rain on the 28th, causing rivers and streams to flood.

The summer was cold and generally wet, hence one is not surprised at the comparative scarcity of migrant species and a further decline in numbers of several others which have been under observation. There is, however, an apparent increase in the numbers of Goldfinches, Bullfinches, Lesser Redpolls, Reed Buntings, Lesser Whitethroats, Rooks, Carrion Crows, Magpies, Jays, Tawny Owls, and Moorhens. Early in the year Skipwith Common was swept by fire, consequently the Black-headed Gull colony vacated their usual nesting ponds to populate the Horse Shoe Lake, where they bred successfully.

On May 13th a pair of Black-headed Gulls started carrying nesting material to a small islet in the lake at 'Willowsyde,' Elmfield, York, and for three weeks it was expected they would settle, but the passing traffic proved too much for them and they left the place, and have not since been seen.

Mallard and Teal Ducks nested at Skipwith and Strensall, and a few pairs of Shovelers were seen at Skipwith, and on July 2nd a Pintail Duck with young was observed, but the family were too elusive to be counted.

At the same well-known bird haunt a few pairs of Snipe and Redshanks bred. Perhaps the unusual dryness of the Common and the moor fires account for comparative scarcity. Only one pair of Nightjars occupied the haunt where the keeper, J. Morris, says a dozen pairs annually nested. Another pair was located near the brickyard, Dringhouses, York, and on July 8th a pair of Nightjars were seen at Sand Hutton old gravel pit, and one pair at Buttercrambe. The species is becoming rare in this district, and it is difficult to ascribe a reason.

Many of the Heron woods around York have been cut down and the birds driven off. Herons fly over York occasionally, and one visited the lake at Elmfield early one August morning, and after taking a few small fish (probably roach) went safely away. Another came to grief in the night gale of June 29th, and falling in the Deanery grounds was cared for until July 3rd when The Very Reverend Dean of York kindly helped me to take the bird over to Skipwith Common and liberate it in a suitable place.

At Castle Howard one pair of Great Crested Grebes arrived late in February still in winter dress. Later they were seen in full breeding plumage, but were not known to nest. Another pair was observed on Leetham's pond, Dringhouses, on March nth. A pair was also seen on the Brickyard pond at Dringhouses on April 15th, and a third pair on Hepper's pond on April 24th. All these Grebes were kept under observation until June, but owing to constant disturbance they ultimately departed and no nesting has been recorded.

Corncrakes have again proved to be very scarce, and I have not seen or heard one myself. My helpers report that one was heard on Clifton Ings on May 5th, and others

at Fulford, Naburn, Poppleton, and Kirk Hammerton, and in all cases favoured water meadows and uncut grass fields as their haunt. I trust the special inquiry now in progress as to the status of the Corncrake in Great Britain will elucidate the mystery of the great decrease in numbers of this interesting summer visitor.

On March 11th two pairs of Pochards were seen on Leetham's pond, Dringhouses, but I have no knowledge of their nesting. In the grounds of Aldersyde a pair of Goldcrests successfully reared their brood, and not far away at Askham Bogs, a pair of Grasshopper Warblers are thought to have had a nest near to the place where one was found last year. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard at Terrington on May 1st, and incidentally, although outside my district, I heard of a pair being seen at Hole of Horcum, near Pickering, on July 9th.

An unusual bird in the York district is the Nuthatch, one being seen at Everingham Park on June 18th, where it may have been nesting. The species has previously been recorded as nesting at Aldby Park, ten miles north-east from York.

On October 3rd I was asked to identify a large bird that had fallen in the walled garden of the 'Fox Inn', Nether Poppleton, three miles west from York. It proved to be a Gannet in immature (black and speckled with white) plumage, and did not appear to be damaged in anyway, and readily accepted food, fresh herrings, roach, etc. In the evening of October 8th this Gannet was released at low tide on the North side in Scarborough Bay and went away quite safely; and it is hoped that it will not be molested should it stay in the neighbourhood.

Some of the winter-visiting Fieldfares stayed on in this district much later than usual, and a large flock was seen at Strensall on April 30th.

Hooded Crows, once very common winter visitors, are extremely rare, and I did not see one during the winter of 1937-38.

I am indebted to Messrs. Y. G. F. Zimmerman, A. W. Ping, E. Wilfred Taylor, H. Shorney, and A. Smith for many useful notes included in this report.

Arrival of Migrant Species, 1938.

Chiffchaff ... Askham Bogs, March 29th; Stillington Wood, April 4th; Strensall, April 6th

Willow Warbler ... York, April 3rd; 'Aldersyde' April 17th.

Swallow York, April 10th; High Catton, April 22nd; 'Aldersyde' April 26th. (A nest of young Swallows near York on September 14th).

Cuckoo... York, April 10th; High Catton, April 19th; Acomb, April 25th; Whenby, April 28th; Huntington, April 30th.

Whitethroat Huntington, April 16th.

Sand Martin ... High Catton, April 22nd; Huntington, April 24th; large numbers at Heslington, May 30th.

Lesser Whitethroat Huby, April 23rd; Huntington, April 26th.

Blackcap Warbler. Huby, April 23rd.

Sedge Warbler Huntington, April 24th; York, May 8th.

Turtle Dove Huntington Wood, April 24th.

Garden Warbler Huntington Wood, April 26th.

Grasshopper Warbler Terrington, May 1st.

Reed Warbler Castle Howard, May 1st.

Tree Pipit Strensall, May 1st.

House Martin Strensall, May 1st; High Catton, May 5th; Kirkham, May 15th.

Corncrake York, May 6th

Swift ... Heslington, May 14th; York, May 20th.

Nightjar Wheldrake, May 20th.

#### SHORT -EARED OWLS NEAR YORK

E. WILFRED TAYLOR

About four miles south-east of the city is an area of low-lying bent-covered marshy land of perhaps 500 acres in extent bounded by ditches and hedges. Here in summer Snipe, Redshank, and Lapwing nest, even in that portion given over to golf, but in winter there is an absence of bird life except for Wild Duck and occasional Whooper Swans that visit a flooded corner.

On November 12th two strange birds were seen beating backwards and forwards over the bents in the most systematic manner. Their flight was buoyant and one was twice seen to alight on the ground and scuffle with what may have been a vole. At intervals the two birds would meet and salute each other by soaring upwards until their talons almost touched and then resume their independent ways. When they came to the boundary hedge they rose buoyantly and glided round through a half circle to commence the next beat. A week later the number had increased to four, and at one time all four rose in the air and soared together at a considerable height before separating and hunting in the usual methodical manner throughout the hours of daylight. One was observed to rest in a tree a few feet from the ground for a short time, but generally all four could be seen as the wings are raised rather high above the back at times and a flash from the light coloured feathers on the flanks catches the eye. On another occasion one was seen perched high up on the branch of a tree, but posts and even the flag pole on one of the golf greens were occasionally used as perches. Because of their diurnal habits, their methodical method of quartering the ground, and their hawk-like flight which in no way resembles that of the nocturnal owls, the writer's mind turned first to Harriers, but the birds proved to be Short-eared Owls.

It was thought that the falls of snow which commenced on December 18th would make hunting difficult and that the owls might move on, but they turned their attention more to the open ditches and hedgerows and appeared to thrive. By mid-January their numbers had diminished to two, and a week later only one was seen. By the end of the first week of February all had gone, or had they fallen to the keeper's gun in spite of the writer's efforts to secure their protection?

In Witherby's Handbook the following sentence refers to this species: 'Wings in flight look conspicuously long in proportion to size of bird, being narrower and less rounded than Long-eared Owls and suggest those of some diurnal bird of prey.' They do indeed!

1939

#### SHORT-EARED OWLS NEAR YORK

Following the note which appeared in The Naturalist for May, a single specimen was seen at Tilmire on April 20<sup>th</sup> and again on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The following notes refer to the Great Lake at Castle Howard. On January 22<sup>nd</sup> a dead Red-throated Diver was seen at the edge of the lake. The webbed feet and small size made identity certain. Carpal joints to wing tip, 10\*5 inches. On the same day a pair of Goosanders was present on the lake; the cock bird, in full plumage, was a beautiful and conspicuous object and appeared much larger than the hen. On February 12<sup>th</sup> a dead Shag was seen at the edge of the lake. The identity was made doubly certain by counting the tail feathers which numbered 12. On December 24<sup>th</sup> a Cormorant (or possibly a

Shag) was seen to fly over the central tower of York Minster, which it circled as though about to alight. E. Wilfred Taylor.

1940

1939 Report The Naturalist 1940 pgs 16-17

York District (Sydney H. Smith, J.P., F.Z.S.): A winter feature of the River Ouse at York is the large flock of Black-headed Gulls which now regularly make their appearance in October, and freely take scraps thrown from the bridges. On October 27th, 1938, a Kittiwake (E.W.T.) had joined the party and later in November a number of Herring Gulls in immature plumage stayed for some days.

On December 12th, 1938, a Cormorant visited the city and circled the central tower of York Minster, and after appearing about to alight, changed its mind and made off (E.W.T.).

A Whooper Swan and Canada Goose were on the river during February, probably both were escapes, the former, perhaps, from Harewood (E.W.T.). The Whooper settled on Tang Hall Park and was there several months and may still be in the district.

A flock of about 30 Pochard wintered at Castle Howard and were joined by some 20 Teal at the end of January (E.W.T.). Large numbers of Wild Duck frequented marshy places about York during the winter, some big flocks of Widgeon being seen at Skipwith, and on February nth a shooting party got 75 during the evening flight.

There were four Great Crested Grebes in winter plumage on Castle Howard Lake, April 2nd; two pairs nested, two and one young being reared (E.W.T.); no doubt the pike are to blame for the small number of young reared, they also take a heavy toll of the young of other water fowl. On March 15th there were at Skipwith twenty pairs of Shovelers, which nest regularly on the various water splashes on the Common. At the time of writing (end of September) a good number of Shovelers are to be seen.

The colony of Black-headed Gulls is still in existence and is probably supplying the nucleus for small detached parties which tend to establish themselves in other parts of the adjoining areas.

Two pairs of Nightjars nested at Skipwith on a bracken patch near the keeper's cottage where formerly a dozen pairs occurred - why this decrease? the species is quite harmless, and except for egg collectors is not molested by any other people. Perhaps the cutting of woodlands is the reason.

A Woodcock reared young in the Nightingale Wood, Skipwith, and was photographed by Mr. F. Vear.

Little Owls are common at Skipwith and have spread right through the Yorkshire Derwent Valley; a pair of these birds have nested for the past seven years in a hole at the foot of a big oak tree on Mr. Dimmey's farm at Whenby, north-east of York, two young ones being reared. These birds were seen on September 23rd, but leave the oak tree about this time until the following March. Barn Owls, Long-eared and Tawny Owls are all fairly common in and around York, and on March 12th I saw a Barn Owl at 3 o'clock in the afternoon quartering the field behind my house in search of voles and similar small creatures. There are a few Short-eared Owls during the winter months, and E.W.T. says he saw one as late as April 25th on Tilmire.

Starlings have increased enormously in recent years, but I had to note the sky nearly black with them on the evening of March 12th and again on April 1st, they were flying at a good height east to west just before darkness set in.

All the migrant species were late in arriving and they had a most inhospitable reception during March, April, and May, the weather being bitterly cold with plenty of north-easterly gales and hail, rain, and sleet showers. Several species remained unnoticed until the weather changed in June and then all the Warblers were scarce. E.W.T. thinks they are decreasing in this district, particularly Whitethroats, and I think he is right.

Cuckoos, however, have been very plentiful as also have Sand Martins and Swallows, these last were feeding young as late as September 17th, no doubt second broods.

Curlews again nested at Skipwith and Strensall, but as our old helper, Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann, died this year his report is absent and the notes on Curlews at Alne and other of his observations ended abruptly.

An Albino House Martin was seen on July 4th at Sutton, Tadcaster, and an Albino Swallow was seen at Escrick on August 4th. I had this report also from Mr. F. H. Edmondson, Keighley, which goes to prove there are some lynx-eyed naturalists in Yorkshire.

A brood of newly-hatched Partridges was seen on August 12<sup>th</sup> (E.W.T.) this may have been a second brood.

I have observed a number of double -brooded Song Thrushes and Blackbirds this year, both species are very common about York and they penetrate fearlessly amongst the houses all over the city. Every householder nowadays takes an interest in bird protection. The first dates recorded on which migrant species were seen are all on the late side in 1939.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. E. W. Taylor for his helpful notes, and greatly miss the late Mr. V. G. F. Zimmermann, who for many years has been an accurate and valuable local observer.

#### YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT SKIPWITH 1940 The Naturalist pgs 236-238

We were still enjoying hot summer weather on June 15th when we met to revisit Skipwith and Riccall Commons; the hot dry spell had dried up the area, the vegetation had suffered seriously, and we were able to walk over many parts that are usually marshy and undesirable.

Mr. Ralph Chislett for the Ornithologists says: Skipwith Common has long been of note to Yorkshire ornithologists largely from the observations of the York Naturalists. It is still an interesting place, but the marshes and reed beds can seldom be so dry as we found them. Some of the pools had become reduced to mere sheets of damp mud. Vociferous Redshanks still flew about them, Curlews called, and Snipe were seen but were not drumming. From one pool some 200 Black-headed Gulls arose and young birds were seen in several nests. Of ducks, only the Mallard (brood seen, and one duckling caught by Mr. Bond) and the Teal were identified. Moorhens also had partly-grown chicks. In the reed-beds several Reed Warblers were heard in song. Reed Buntings were fairly common. A pair of Yellow Wagtails and an odd cock were noted. A few Lapwings were still attached to particular places, the date was somewhat early for the flock of some 50 birds seen flying away from a marshy place. In the wooded parts of the Common several Jays were noted. Chaffinches and Yellowhammers were somewhat scarce. A pair of Lesser Redpolls twittered above some birches. Tree-Pipits were numerous. Some half-dozen Cuckoos were seen, of

both sexes by the calls. The Willow Tit's note was heard and a typical nest found which, however, had been opened up and the eggs extracted. A family party of Long-tailed Tits was seen by the Rev. F. W. Bond. Willow Warblers were common and several Whitethroats were noted. Blackbirds outnumbered the very few Song Thrushes and Mistle Thrushes. Two cock Redstarts were still in song. A Green Woodpecker and a Turtle Dove were noted. The Nightjar, formerly common on this very suitable ground was not noted and the Wren was scarce. While walking from Riccall in the afternoon, Mr. Malins Smith noted three Common Buntings singing from the tops of the hedgerow. Swallows were in normal numbers, but House Martins seem to be generally scarce in Yorkshire this year. Altogether 38 species were identified.

Of Mammals, several Rabbits, a Hare, and a Stoat were noted.

1941

The Brambling at Castle Howard. Sunday, January 5th, was bitterly cold and snow lay on the ground to a depth of 2 in. or more. It lay undisturbed under the lime trees in the great avenue through the park, but under the beech trees the ground was richly coloured by the dead leaves and the snow had almost disappeared. All was then quiet but surely this was the work of the Brambling and about half a mile further on we were able to confirm this and witness the sequence of operations. A flock of about fifty Bramblings flew down to the ground below a beech tree and each at once plunged head first into the snow and with a rhythmic action of the head and wings fifty little snow ploughs went into action, throwing the snow up and behind, exposing the dead beech leaves of last autumn and these again were quickly scattered in a search for beech masts. Bramblings possess that power of widely scattering dead leaves by a flick of the beak that is so characteristic of the Blackbird when feeding among the dead leaves. In a few minutes the worked areas merged and the leaves were exposed over an almost continuous area beneath the tree when the flock flew off to a new site. At least five parties of from 30 to 50 birds were at work along the avenue and the ground under almost every beech tree had been disturbed. The birds never made the mistake of burrowing under the lime trees. The only other species interested in the evacuations was the Great Tit, and parties of about half a dozen had attached themselves to the flocks of Bramblings and were copying their tactics with considerable success.

—

E. Wilfred Taylor.

1940 Report

York District (E. W. Taylor).

The York area is undefined and the following notes include territory which is in one or other of the Ridings. The initials relate to the following: Mr. Sydney H. Smith, of York (S.H.S.); Mr. Fred Jefferson, of Haxby (F.J.); Mr. E. Wilfred Taylor, of York (E.W.T.).

The winter 1939 to 1940 was remarkable for its severity and the country was frost-bound for the whole of January and most of February. Many species of birds had to adapt themselves to most unusual conditions or perish in the attempt. The summer that followed was extraordinary for a rare prodigality of fruits and seeds and was both dry and sunny (E.W.T.).



Some species of birds suffered great hardship, the Wren in particular, and its numbers have not been made up by birds from further south. It is still a rare bird in this area (E.W.T.).

The Wren and the few Goldcrests we can usually expect to see in the district were practically wiped out. Two Goldcrests huddled together for warmth were picked up in a cowshed at Haxby, but were too exhausted to recover. I have not seen a single nest of the Wren in the Haxby, Wigginton and Strensall area this season (F.J.).

During threshing operations upon a farm near Haxby many dead bodies of Greenfinches, Chaffinches and Starlings were discovered as the sheaves of corn were unplied in the Dutch barn (F.J.).

Black-headed. Herring and some Lesser Black-backed Gulls were a common sight around York in the early months of 1940 (F.J.).

January 21st. Heavy snow on the ground and water pipes frozen all over York. Many dead birds about; Rooks, Pigeons, Starlings, Blackbirds, Thrushes, Fieldfares, etc. (S.H.S.).

Mistle Thrushes and Fieldfares did not appear to suffer unduly, but Moorhens fared badly, and one wondered whence all the Coots came that attached themselves to the lake at Castle Howard. Both Black-headed and Herring Gulls suffered severely (E.W.T.).

I have never known Moorhens to be so scarce in this district and few nests were found during the spring (F.J.).

The Titmice, including the delicate-looking Long-Tailed, do not appear to have suffered any reduction in numbers, and this applies also to the Finches (E.W.T.).

The Long-tailed Tit does not appear to have suffered from the arctic weather and I have seen several nesting parties. A nest was found at Strensall April 18th, 1940 (E.J.).

In mid-February, Wood Pigeons were invading vegetable gardens for brussel sprouts—about the only green tops showing above the snow. Turnip tops were completely hidden (E.J.). Hundreds of Wood Pigeons cleared all the brussel sprouts in the TJ garden (S.H.S.).

Subsequently to all this, lists supplied by S. H. Smith, J.P., and E. Jefferson confirm the view that dates of arrival of most of the spring migrants were only a little late. Some came to normal time. The Chiffchaff was recorded at Ampleforth on March 23rd. The Swallow and Cuckoo were seen at Haxby on April 18th and 20th respectively, the Swift on May 11th, at both Heworth and Haxby, was not delayed unduly.

Starling. A bird with a white rump nested at the cocoa works and, except for a month or so after the young had left the nest, has been seen daily up to this date (February 6th). A clear proof that all Starlings are not migratory (E.J.). And see Ringed Birds.

Corn Bunting. This species is increasing in numbers in the York district (E.W.T.).

Corn Buntings have been more numerous in this area than in previous years (E.J.).

Yellow Wagtail. Appeared in unusual numbers and was seen in many new localities (E.W.T.); and in other districts in the north of England the bird was unusually numerous (R.C.).

Great Grey Shrike. Observed for about a week at the end of January near Ampleforth College. On one occasion was seen to be carrying what appeared to be a small bird (F.J.).:

Grasshopper Warbler. This species was neither seen nor heard in the Haxby district (E.J.). A pair nested in the neighbourhood of Shipton (E.W.T.).

Sedge Warbler. Absent from the Haxby area (E.J.).

Whitethroat. All the Warblers appear to be slowly decreasing in this area and this applies particularly to the Whitethroat (E.W.T.).

Lesser Whitethroat. Particularly numerous in the Haxby district

Mistle Thrush. Uncommon during the nesting season and only isolated pairs were noted, whereas normally they are well distributed (E.J.).

Kingfisher. Upon one long stretch of the River Foss, near Strensall, where the bird has nested to my knowledge from 1920 to 1939, not a single brood was reared and only late in the autumn was a single adult bird seen. The clearing of the river may be partly responsible (E.J.).

Mallard. Following the clearing of the River Foss, resulting in few weeds and a faster current, one rarely disturbs Wild Duck in parts that they used to frequent (F.J.).

Strensall Common practically ceases to be a nesting haunt of Wild Duck as extensive drainage has been undertaken in the interests of the Military (F.J.).

Great Crested Grebe — Two pairs nested on the great lake at Castle Howard and each reared two young (E.W.T.).

Turtle Dove. Well distributed in the York area and increasing (E.W.T.).

Common Sandpiper — Seen in spring and autumn along the River Ouse and on the margins of lakes and ponds in the area (E.W.T.).

Curlew. Night and day manoeuvres on Strensall Common have disturbed the Curlew, and I doubt if more than one pair nested there during the spring of 1940. The birds have not left the York district, however, and now nest on the rough sheep pastures to the north of the city. A Curlew I was photographing between Wigginton and Haxby left her nest to drive away a curious sheep. Within a few minutes her cries brought her mate and three other pairs to the scene. One could only assume that they also were local nesting birds. Prior to the Military manoeuvres, big fires on Strensall Common drove many Curlew to nest elsewhere (E.J.).

Snipe. On January 27th a Snipe was picked up in Blossom Street, York, in an exhausted condition and died within an hour (F.J.).

Black-headed Gull.-

This species is developing a predatory habit towards the Lapwing when the latter are feeding in the fields. The Gulls mix with them and as soon as a Plover secures a grub or worm a Gull swoops down and usually manages to secure the prize before the Plover can swallow it. I first observed this habit some years ago and it is now practiced much more commonly (F.J.).

Corncrake. Only four birds were heard calling within a five miles radius of the city of York, and as they were not heard to call with any regularity it is not certain that they settled down and nested or even that they were all different individuals (E.W.T.).

Red Grouse. On August 31st small parties were seen late at night flying about the Hermitage on the Malton Road. This was a result of raiders' bombs and fire on the Helmsley Moors (S.H.S.).

YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION AT CAWOOD July 12th 1941

The Naturalist 1941 pgs 248-251

Difficulties of catering both at Selby and Hemingbrough were found when our Divisional Secretary, Mr. C. W. Mason, tried to arrange for the V.C. 61 meeting, and eventually Mr. W. G. Bramley kindly arranged for a tea and meeting at Cawood. By crossing the river we were able to work in V.C. 63 and an interesting meeting was the result.

The district has not been visited previously by the Union and few of our members will have seen the end of the River Wharfe as it joins the Ouse at Wharfemouth. Many interesting plants were seen, and probably the Clouded Yellow Butterfly has not been seen on a Union meeting before, or at least for a great many years.

Coleoptera. A most abundant plant on the banks of the Ouse is the Tansy, and examination of its leaves yielded the brilliant Tansy beetle (*Chrysomela gvaminis*). The beetle and its larva were found dispersed along the whole of the East Riding bank of the Ouse traversed on this outing, that is, between Wharfemouth and Kelfield. At Kelfield it was quite as abundant as I have ever seen it at the well-known locality for this species at Clifton Ings on the Ouse bank at York. Not only was the beetle itself common, but some of the Tansy plants at Kelfield had also hundreds of the ungainly rotund brown larvae feeding upon their aromatic foliage.

Ornithology (F. W. Bond): The district should be worth working at more favourable ornithological seasons. Actually birds were not very numerous. Sedge Warblers were common along the Ouse banks. Swallows and Black-headed Gulls were fairly evenly but sparsely distributed along the river. One Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen. A flock of about 50 Lapwings, accompanied by Starlings, rose on one side of the river, while on the other a pair of Lapwings seemed to have young about, judging by their fierce attacks on a young Carrion Crow, which was nearly overcome by fright or heat or both, and once let us catch it, though able to fly. Other birds observed in ones or twos were Magpie, Heron, Moorhen, Common Sandpiper, Cuckoo, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Corn Bunting, Yellow Wagtail, and Pied Wagtail, the last two in close company by the river's edge. There were also Rooks, Jackdaws, Blackbirds, Song Thrushes, Greenfinches, Yellowhammers, Common Whitethroats, Willow Warblers, Hedge Sparrows, Skylarks, Wood Pigeons, Swifts, Partridges, and House Sparrows. Other members of the party reported House Martins, Sand Martin, and Turtle Dove.

1942

#### THE RED-NECKED GREBE NEAR YORK

On January 25th, the Ouse was rising rapidly and the water flowing on to Clifton Ings rapidly formed a lake with a maximum depth of about two feet. A solitary Grebe occupied this area of water and in outline, with a rapier beak and long neck resembled the Great Crested, though of rather smaller size. The coloration however was quite different with a well defined white patch on each cheek, a dusky coloured upper neck and a dark tip to the beak. It dived at intervals but seemed to find movement in the shallow water difficult and soon reappeared; possibly the reason that it preferred the shallow and probably fishless flood water to the nearby river was that quantities of broken ice were being carried down by the latter. A reference to Witherby convinced the writer that this was an example of the Red-necked Grebe, as it corresponds exactly, even to the two slight patches at the back of the head.  
E. Wilfred Taylor.

#### OCCASIONAL NOTES

##### E. WILFRED TAYLOR

On February 23rd Mr. F. Jefferson, of Haxby, was out with his dog when the latter discovered a live Red-throated Diver in a dry ditch near some telegraph wires. He managed to get it into a sack, and it was later examined by Dr. Gayner and the writer. The bird appeared unhurt and was, of course, in winter plumage; the head

and upper neck were slim without that inflated appearance seen in the nesting season, and the ruby iris shone like a jewel.

It was decided to release the bird in a quiet stretch of the River Foss. On taking it out of the sack it made no attempt to walk but sat on the ground, croaked and vigorously attacked the sack, holding on so strongly with its slightly upturned beak that it was by this means dragged to the water's edge. On entering the water it wagged its tail, stretched its wings, preened itself and took a few sips of water without attempting to swim away. It then took two or three trial dives, entering the water with the slightest possible disturbance of the surface. When last seen it was some fifty yards upstream and appeared quite normal.

It seems possible that it struck the telegraph wires with sufficient violence to bring it to the ground, and that it was then unable either to walk or take wing. It is a bird marvellously adapted for life in and under the water, but on land it is almost helpless owing to the extreme position of the legs, and it also has difficulty in taking wing even when it can run along the surface of the water.

Of late one has become accustomed to the sight of a few Black Backed Gulls around York, and on February 15th a very large gull of this description was seen to alight on the frozen floods on Clifton Ings to join a party of Common and Black Headed Gulls. As it folded its great wings it was noted that the legs were pink in colour and not yellow, and a moment later it went through the ice. It soon lifted itself into the air again and alighted a few yards away; then it again went through, and this time re-alighted on the land. This is the first time the writer has seen the Great Black-backed Gull near York, but owing possibly to the reduction in the numbers of fisheries and of the quantity of fish offal available on the coast, gulls of all species, even including the Kittiwake, are coming inland much more than they did before the commencement of the war. Perhaps this tendency has been noted in other parts of the county.

#### 1941 Report

Hawfinch A pair were seen on Allerthorpe Common (E.R.) on June 15th

The Mealy Redpoll. From November 7th a flock remained at Haxby, near York, for three weeks (F.J.).

Lesser Redpoll. Small flocks were seen between Escrick and Skipwith on July 3rd, and near Huby on December 25th

Grasshopper Warbler. Singing birds were heard in the York district at Acomb Ponds on May 25th, and at Clifton Ings on July 14th (E.W.T.); at Skipwith on July 13th (K.G.P.); and S. H. Smith reports a pair at Stutton, Tadcaster, in June.

Reed Warbler. The Scarborough Mere colony had at least five pairs (T.N.R.). In the Castle Howard district E. W. Taylor reports the species as 'decreasing, if not extinct.' At four breeding colonies in the East Riding numbers were normal (G.H.A.).

Whitethroat. The earliest record was on April 29th at York (S.H.S.).

Lesser Whitethroat was not recorded until May 4th at Wigginton (Y.D.)

Pied Flycatcher. W. G. Bramley reports a male on May 1st near Bolton Percy (Y.D.) evidently on passage, and 'the only one I have seen in this locality.'

Little Owl. In the York district a nest is recorded at Whenby on March 26th (S.H.S.); and a bird at Crockey Hill on November 9th (K.G.P.), and near Pocklington on May 20th (J.S.A.).

Pintail. The species is not reported from Skipwith, where it has nested occasionally.

Common Pochard. From February 9th and onwards 12-20 pairs frequented Castle Howard Lake (E.W.T.).

Great Crested Grebe. A pair at Castle Howard had two young on June 25th.  
Curlew. Birds were noted at Strensall, Rufforth, Skipwith and Allerthorpe Common during May (S.H.S. and K.G.P.)

Jack Snipe. Two birds frequented the stream at Pocklington for most of February and March, 1941

Greenshank. A bird was feeding along the margin of the River Ouse near Bishopthorpe on October 9th (J.G.).

Common Gull. A small flock at Crambe (Y.D.) on February 23rd (E.W.T.). Flocked with Black-heads on Knavesmire (Y.D.) from August 17th onwards (E.W.T.). Seen with black-heads at Heworth and Heslington (Y.D.) in January (S.H.S.). Is now a regular visitor to the Bolton Percy area following the plough with the Black-heads (W.G.B.). In August and September there are several records of small parties of from two to six birds on the Halifax and Sheffield groups of reservoirs; thereafter I have no records until December. Why is this species developing an inland quest?

Herring Gull. Seen at York on December 17th (E.W.T.). A flock seen at Heslington (Y.D.) during hard weather in January (S.H.S.).

Corncrake. In the York district birds were heard at Sproxton on April 27th, at Tollerton on June 12th, at Naburn on July 2nd, at Clifton on July 7th (E.W.T.), and at Bramham on May 19th (K.G.P.). In the West Riding birds were heard at Addingham on July nth (W.F.F.), at Bolton Percy on June 4th, and near Nun Appleton on June 22nd-23<sup>rd</sup> (W.G.B.)

#### SIDNEY H. SMITH

Obituary September 14th, 1942. Published in The Naturalist 1942, page 162  
The death at the age of 60 of Sidney H. Smith, in a nursing home at York (of which City he was a native) has bereft the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union of a richly endowed and highly esteemed worker, whose activities covered 35 years.

He was a member of the Vertebrate Section since its first meeting on December 14th, 1907, and was President of the Section in 1921 and 1922. He was on the Mammals, Reptiles, Amphibians and Fishes and Wild Birds and Eggs Protection Acts Committees since their inception, being Chairman of the former from 1926-1938. He acted as Recorder for the York district for many years, being an ardent observer, recorder and photographer, and the annual reports will lose appreciably by his demise.

Although his chief interest was in Ornithology he was well versed in Conchology, Botany and Entomology. His services as a Lecturer were always readily given, and his lectures, illustrated as they were with his own lantern slides, were highly appreciated. He was a prolific subscriber of illustrated articles to all the nature study journals.

He was a Fellow of the Zoological Society, a Past President of the York Naturalists' Society, a Councillor of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, and Past Chairman of the Yorkshire Fisheries Board. His work on the life cycles of coarse fish and the status of the salmonidae was extensive. He was the author of a book written around the life of Snowden Sleights, who was the last of the inland wild-fowlers of the Derwent Valley.

In the last war he served as armourer-sergeant of a battalion of the West African Regiment, and was stationed on the Gold Coast, where he spent his leisure studying nature in a new environment.

He was an excellent fisherman and game shot, and there were few parts of Great Britain that he did not explore in pursuit of sport or knowledge.

Although he eschewed politics he did not evade his duty as a citizen. He was a Justice of the Peace, a Founder member of the York Rotary Club and of the Wild Fowls Association, past Secretary of the York Chamber of Trade, the Commercial Development Committee, the York Assessment Committee, and in addition found time to take a great interest in Freemasonry, holding high Provincial honours. A man of high courage, he held the Parchment of the Royal Humane Society for saving life in the whirlpool below the weir at Naburn on the River Ouse in July, 1920.

As a partner in the firm of J. H. Walker & Co., Ltd., Colliery Agents and Builders' Merchants, he was a shrewd business man. With a keen sense of humour he was yet blunt, direct and open, hating cant and sham and never passive in any of his associations. His death will leave a void in many hearts as well as places, for to know him was to love him. He leaves a widow and a son. C. F. P.

#### YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT CLIFTON INGS July 18<sup>th</sup> 1942

The Naturalist 1942, page 175

A wet unpleasant morning and travel facilities made this into the worst attended meeting of the session, but those who carried out the programme under Mr. E. Wilfred Taylor's lead seemed well pleased with the results, and interesting discussions were instituted by others who came to the meeting in the Museum later on where Mr. R. Wagstaffe welcomed the members.

Ornithology. Mr. Ralph Chislett says: Our route lay up the left bank of the Ouse from Clifton Scope for 2-3 miles, across the Ings at a narrow part, and back by the dyke, hedges and plantations bordering the rise beyond the Ings to our starting point. As with the botanists, we found it interesting to compare species noted with those seen along the banks of the Ure, near Boroughbridge, on June 27<sup>th</sup>. Here the Greenfinch, although noted, was not nearly so abundant.

Two pairs of Corn Buntings, numerous Yellow Wagtails, and some Whinchats, all obviously breeding, were noted. At least two pairs of Carrion Crows had young which had been reared in adjacent trees. By an aspen copse containing a few decaying trees a pair of Tree Sparrows were seen, and E. W. Taylor informed us that another pair have nested in an old tree nearer to Clifton Scope. High wind militated against bird observation, otherwise the list of 24 species identified would doubtless have been extended. The only birds heard singing were Corn Buntings, Reed Buntings, a Hedge Sparrow, and a Sedge Warbler. At one place where there were some scattered thorn bushes Mr. E. W. Taylor had heard the Lesser Whitethroat earlier in the season. The riverside must repay observations during the migration seasons, and among the species mentioned by E. W. T. as having been observed at such times were Red-necked Grebe, Common Scoter, Tufted Duck, Common Sandpiper, etc. Mr. A. Smith a week earlier had noted a pair of Hawfinches which, although possibly attracted by plants seeding abundantly, may have nested in a local tree.

1943

1942 Report

Pied Flycatcher. Less plentiful than formerly around Castle Howard.

Grasshopper Warbler. Heard at Askham Bog throughout May and June probably several pairs (K.G.P.).

Common Buzzard. A bird was seen in Forge Valley, Scarborough, on March 15<sup>th</sup> (T.N.R.) . Birds seen coming in from sea at Scarborough on September 4<sup>th</sup>, and

passing over Cropton on September 10th, were both probably of this species (R.M.G.). A. G. Parsons had good views of a bird disturbed from firs at Becca Woods, Aberford, on September 19th, both perched and on the wing. A single bird was seen soaring near Overton on May 4th; and a large, round-winged hawk was reported from two sources as flying over Castle Howard Lake in June (E.W.T.). On June 21st a Common Buzzard passed close to my house (New Earswick) going, I think, to hunt on Bootham Stray. It was "mewing" as it flew' (J.S.G.). On good authority, C. A. Cheetham learns that two pairs of Common Buzzards nested in N.W. Yorkshire.

Whooper Swan. There were three at Kexby early in January, ten on the Derwent near Wheldrake on January 25th and 31st, and 14 on February 1<sup>st</sup> and 17th (K.G.P.) Common Curlew. Pairs nested on Skipwith Common (two); at Castle Howard (one); on Strensall Common (several); and two birds were seen at Allerthorpe Common (K.G.P. and E.W.T.).

## YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS AT BOLTON PERCY May 22nd 1942

### *Pre Trip Notes*

*THE DISTRICT has not been visited previously by the Union. It lies at the western end of the Escrick terminal moraine of the Vale of York glacier, and consists of a series of drift hills with marshy pools in places as in the village itself. The flat fields and steep somewhat muddy bank of the River Wharfe will probably interest all sections of the Union. Mr. W. G. Bramley will act as guide and he writes: "The district has not been worked much except for fungi. The usual birds are to be found. Sand Martins nest in several places on the river bank and an odd pair or two of Whinchats have been noted in recent years. Magpies, Jays and Jackdaws are numerous. Many of the smaller mammals occur, including the rare Water Shrew.*

*This stretch of the Wharfe is much favoured by the coarse fish anglers. Little is known about the insects and snails, and the plants also require more study. Gagea lutea is frequent along the edge of Sicklepit Woods, and is here parasitised by a rust and also a smut, this being one of the three localities in England known to the writer. Many interesting fungi have been found, especially at Nun Appleton, but owing to their evanescent and erratic appearance no list is given."*

Bolton Percy has not been visited previously by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union. It stands in the triangle of land where the Wharfe joins the Ouse, the Leeds and York highway forming the base. There are no bridges here, and consequently no through traffic, and the area is little known to those living outside the Tadcaster district. The fine old church with rectory and tithe barn close at hand form a delightful picture; to the naturalist the slow running streamlet and small ponds nearby add interest to the picture.

Ornithology (Ralph Chislett): Forty-eight species identified in one small area before 6-30 p.m. on May 22nd, with Moorhen as the only waterbird, certainly constituted a good day for the small party of ornithologists.

In and close to the village Rooks and Jackdaws fed young; Swallows and Martins were in normal numbers, but no Swift was recorded; Woodpigeons and Stock doves were much in evidence; and species seen included Starling, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Tree Sparrow (one pair), Redpoll, Blue and Great Tits, Whitethroat, Spotted Flycatcher, Song Thrush, one Mistle Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Wren, Treecreeper, Cuckoo; and a Tawny Owl was heard.

An adjoining withy-bed harboured Reed Bunting (nest seen), Sedge Warbler, Willow Warbler, Common Whitethroat, and Garden Warbler; and in the boundary

hedge were nests of Bullfinch (5 eggs) and Lesser Whitethroat (1 egg), of which species the typical song, consisting of a subdued warble followed by a louder rattle, was heard.

Pleasantly walking through dyked meadows down to the Wharfe we noted Corn Buntings singing, a Linnet's nest with 5 eggs, Magpie, Jay, Skylark, Tree Pipit, Yellowhammer, Yellow Wagtail, Redstart, Redshank, and Lapwing.

Diverging from the river we entered a part of the woods near to Nun Appleton Hall where insufficient time was available to do justice to the wealth of warblers, but excellent opportunities occurred to compare the songs of several Garden Warblers with the purer notes of the Blackcap. Chiffchaffs sang. A Willow Warbler's nest held 6 eggs. Turtle Doves murmured, and a nesting platform already awaited eggs. In the same wood Bullfinch's nests found numbered three, of which two held eggs. I think it probable that the normal warbler and finch population of this wood had been augmented from woods felled in the neighbourhood, so great appeared to be the concentration.

Not a Pheasant was noted, and only one pair of Common Partridges. W. G. Bramley had heard a Corncrake that morning. A Pied Wagtail was added to the list from the railway departure platform.

#### **1943 Report**

Yellow Wagtail. On Clifton Ings E.W.T. records that about 25 pairs nested, although only thinly distributed elsewhere in the district.

Wood Warbler. The earliest report comes from Sand Hutton on April 17th (E.W.T.). Grasshopper Warbler between Acaster and Appleton Roebuck on April 29<sup>th</sup> (K.G.P.), Whinchat. Seen in South Yorkshire on April 16th (A.W.), and near Sutton, East Riding, on April 18th (G.H.A.), but did not appear on the Ings near York until May 2nd (E.W.T.).

Swallow. The earliest records are at York (E.W.T.) and East Hull (G.H.A.), both on April 6th.

Teal. Reports of Teal nesting at normal times come from Ainderby Bottoms (J.P.U.), the Whitby Moors (C.E.A.B.), Skipwith (E.R. and E.W.T.), and the lake near Houghton Woods (C.F.P.).

#### **CONTINENTAL TWITES IN YORKSHIRE**

Early last year, when looking over the genus *Carduelis* in the Backhouse Collection of bird skins, I segregated three Yorkshire specimens of *C. flavirostris* which I considered to be referable to the typical race. At that time I had every intention of ascertaining whether the Continental Twite had been recorded for Yorkshire, but illness intervened and the matter was placed in abeyance and eventually forgotten. Recently, however, a request to forward any Twites to Colonel Meinertzhagen served to remind me of this unsettled question. Accordingly I contacted Mr. Chislett, who told me (in litt.) that the Continental Twite, to his knowledge, had not been authentically recorded for Yorkshire.

I therefore append below full particulars of the three specimens in the Yorkshire Museum as recorded on the labels. The skins have been compared with a small series formerly in my possession, and by Colonel Meinertzhagen with a much larger series in his collection, and they agree in every respect with *Carduelis flavirostris flavirostris* (L.).

Spurn Point, October, 1899.

Easington, July, 1885.



Church Fenton, December 9th, 1885. R. Wagstaffe.

#### 1944 Report

Starling. A roost at Harewood, which has probably been occupied since March, 1942, was estimated to be visited by some 30,000 birds on March 14th, 1944. A roost near Escrick contained probably upwards of 10,000 birds on August 17th (K.G.P.).

#### Lesser Redpoll.

A flock of about 200 birds near Goathland on September 20th was not considered unusual (W.S.M.). The species breeds regularly over most of the county, forming small colonies not infrequently, as at Clifton Ing, York, where some six pairs nested in the boundary hedges (E.W.T.).

Pied Flycatcher. A nesting pair was seen at Hovingham on May 18th (E.R.).

Grasshopper Warbler. A pair bred near Nunthorpe in Lower Teesdale (G. Ewbank per O.C.H.). Cock birds heard singing are reported from near Tickhill on May 7th (C.L. and R.C.), near Catterick on May 8th (J.P.U.), Askham Bogs on April 26th (K.G.P.) and on April 30th (E.R.),

Whitethroat. First heard in Yorkshire at New Earswick (York district) on April 17th (F.J.),

Lesser Whitethroat. Five pairs are believed to have nested in Chaloner's Whin, York district (E.R. and E.W.T.).

Swallow. A single bird was flying south near Bramhope on April 3<sup>rd</sup> (T.R.T.). First seen at Austwick on April 4th (J.E.B.). Recorded near Selby on April 8th (A.G.P.),

Teal. Also believed to have nested at Skipwith (two pairs) where numbers are now much reduced, and at Buttercrambe (E.R.) ;

Curlew. The species is increasing as a nesting bird in the Vale of York (E.W.T.).

Jack Snipe. one flushed from the Mile Pond, Wigginton, on December 21st (F.J.).

Black-headed Gull Colonies of this species are becoming smaller, that at Skipwith is reduced to about 35 pairs (E.R.).

Willow Tit - article by Chislett in The Naturalist 1945 pgs 127-128  
"it occurs on Allerthorpe and Skipwith Commons".

#### ALLERTHORPE COMMON, June 39th.

This meeting was held on June 30th, 1945, during thundery and somewhat windy weather which intensified the shortage of insects so noticeable this year. Transport difficulties probably were responsible for the small attendance.

Owing to the closing of the Barmby Moor - Pocklington road, access to the Common is more difficult than formerly and it is twice the short two miles it was previously. A bus or car is required if much work is to be done on the Common.

Vertebrate Zoology (Ralph Chislett): Birds. Students of botany and entomology have found in Allerthorpe Common a rich field for work for many years; but scant regard for such places has been shown in many areas, even when they are scheduled for consideration as 'nature reserves' by the county agricultural committees, most of the members of which have not the knowledge necessary to balance the claims of pure natural science against those of applied agriculture. During five years of war, timber at Allerthorpe has been felled and uprooted, bushes torn out of the ground, and the ground vegetation ploughed out over a large area of the centre of the common. The timber extracted would seem to be

the sole gain resulting from the huge expenditure of labour (at a time when crops from good land could not all be harvested because of labour shortage); for surely the measly potato plants struggling to hold their heads a few inches above the sand on June 30th are not likely to yield a crop worth harvesting.

Pine and Birch and Oak still fringe the ploughed area and are reproducing themselves, and some of the typical birds of the area are still there. Green Woodpeckers were seen in several places, Carrion Crows and Jays (both accompanied by families) were too numerous, but there was no sign of the Nightjar which formerly bred there. Marsh Tit and Willow Tit were both noted, and Coal Tit and Great Tit were present. Chaffinches were scarce, Goldfinches were seen twice, but there were no Redpolls. Skylarks, Yellowhammers and Tree Pipits (nest seen with five eggs) were numerous, two cock Corn Buntings and two cock Reed Buntings sang. A Pied Wagtail was the only member of the family seen. Willow Warblers and Common Whitethroats were the only Warblers. Song Thrushes were scarce, with Blackbirds (nest with two eggs seen) more numerous. A freshly-made sandpit harboured a few Sand Martins; and occasional Swallows and Swifts flew over. Robins, Hedge Sparrows and Wrens were noted. Wood Pigeons were numerous, with Stock Doves and Turtle Doves more occasional. Two Snipe and one Curlew represented the wading family. A Pheasant had young; and two pairs of Red-legged Partridge were seen against one of Common Partridge. The species identified in the restricted area of the Common numbered 34.

On the following day by the Pocklington Canal further species were added: Rook, Magpie\* Bullfinch (young out of nest), Sedge-Warbler, Mistle-Thrush (a straggling flock of 23 birds flying from the vicinity of rowanberries), House Martin and Moorhen (nest with hatching eggs). A Turtle-Dove allowed a close inspection as she sat on her nest. A Cuckoo called (July 1st).

#### ASKHAM BOG Naturalist 1946

In recent years there has been a widespread increase in the teaching of biology in boys' schools where botany and zoology can now claim equality in status with chemistry and physics. This tendency might have been expected to result in an increase in the number of young naturalists though if the number of boys seeking membership of local natural history societies is any guide there is but small evidence of any such general increase. The preparation of candidates for examinations in biology and the inculcation of a love of the countryside and a thirst for knowledge of the animals and plants which populate it are too widely different matters, and the latter requires something more than mere scholastic competence. It has been a tradition in the Bootham School, York, to foster this love of natural history in its pupils long before the biological sciences came to the fore as subjects for inclusion in science curricula. The late R. Miller Christy and H. Stuart Thompson spring to mind as two well-known naturalists who were pupils at the school and James Backhouse, Jnr., though he probably owed most to his father, doubtless also owed much to his schooling here for the development of those faculties which made him such an acute observer and successful field botanist. For over a century there has been an active Natural History Society in the school. Its energy and enterprise have recently found expression in the production of a report on the natural history of Askham Bog. In 1879, three of the Bootham schoolmasters, J. E. Clarke, B. B. Le Tall, and J. W. Graham, assisted by local naturalists, made a detailed survey of Askham Bog and published a report on their work in the Natural History Journal, a magazine which recorded the leisure-time

activities in Friends' Schools. Last year Mr. Clifford Smith the master now in charge of biology initiated a scheme for the reinvestigation of the area by the members of the School Natural History Society. Nearly a hundred boys entered enthusiastically into the scheme and botanical, ornithological, and entomological teams were formed.

Observers worked in pairs and each week throughout the period of the survey, which covered the school terms of 1945, one pair from each team visited the area at least twice. At the end of the work reports were drawn up by each group embodying

the observations and records of its members with remarks on any significant differences as compared with the 1879 survey. These sectional surveys preceded by a foreword by the headmaster, a brief topographical introduction and a section on the geology of the area (which attracted only one worker), have been collected into a single typescript report of some sixty foolscap pages. Apart from direction and organisation the report is almost wholly the work of the boys themselves. As such, it reflects great credit on all concerned and is indeed a remarkable year's achievement.

It is only to be expected that the work of a group of inexperienced naturalists should contain errors of identification and omissions and in referring to some of these no reflection is intended upon the quality of the work as a whole which we consider highly praiseworthy. It is particularly in the long list of flowering plants that botanists familiar with Askham Bog, will notice several improbable and a few impossible entries. The Umbelliferae especially appear to have given trouble in diagnosis, probably due to their collection without fruits, and four of the species listed, viz., *Cicuta*, *Sison*, *Foeniculum* and *Carum Petroselinum* are certainly incorrectly named, while *Sium latifolium* is more likely to be the commoner *S. angustifolium* which is omitted. *Aethusa Cynapium* seems a highly improbable species to occur commonly if at all in any part of the bog proper. *Apium inundatum* is omitted and *Oenanthe aquatica* was almost certainly gathered and wrongly referred to some other species. Amongst the Compositae too *Anthemis Cotula* and *A. nobilis*, *Helminthia Echioides* and *Picris Hieracioides* are surely errors as are certainly *Prunella laciniata* and *Calamintha vulgare* among the Labiates. It would be an ecological paradox to find *Scabiosa arvensis*, *Galeopsis Ladanum*, *Anthyllis Vulneraria*, *Euphorbia Peplus*, *Hypericum perforatum* or *Rubus saxatilis* the bog itself, yet all these species are listed from the Jungle or the Far Wood (the last two were recorded also by Le Tall in 1879), and none is classed as less than occasional in the grade of relative frequency. One notes also the inclusion of *Lychnis alba*, but the omission of *L. dioica* and that *Rhamnus catharticus* is classed as common but *R. Frangula* only occasional, whereas the latter is unquestionably much the more plentiful of the two.

Some of the specific names employed are to be interpreted in a comprehensive sense; thus *Viola canina* no doubt refers to *V. Riviniana*, and *Polygala vulgaris* to *P. serpyllifolia*, while *Epilobium roseum* is more likely to be *E. obscurum*, and *Salix caprea* to be *S. atrocinerea*. The Oxlip encountered in Far Wood was the, Primrose-Cowslip hybrid, *P. variabilis*, and not the true Oxlip, *P. elatior*, which does not grow in Yorkshire. Less excusable is the inclusion of *Salix herbacea* which is limited to the summits of our highest mountains. This presumably refers to *S. repens*. But what can the plant identified as *Vaccinium uliginosum* have been? It would be interesting to know what is intended by *Orchis incarnata* which is said to be 'very rare' and to occur in the Far Wood. Evidently this is not the

plant which has for so long passed under that name and which is now known as *O. latifolia* as under the correct name *O. latifolia*, reference is made to the colonies of that species which occur in the boggy field on the South side of the wooded portion of the bog. Le Tall also recorded two marsh orchids and his *O. latifolia* which he said was much rarer than *O. incarnata* was probably *O. purpurella* as the writer once found a specimen of this in open ground on the north side of the bog. But one would not expect to encounter *O. purpurella* in the Far Wood. It is hardly surprising that with so many other plants to identify, no serious attempt was made to cope with the sedges, rushes and grasses. Only four grasses and the same number of rushes are listed from the bog proper with a few more grasses included from the surrounding fields. The very rich sedge flora, to which B. B. Le Tall added *Carex elongata* in 1892, is virtually untouched with no reference even to *Carex paradoxa*, one of the botanical treasures of Askham Bog and probably as abundant there to-day as it ever was. Of the five species of *Carex* named *C. limosa* is certainly incorrect- and probably refers to *C. pedunculata* or *C. flacca*, while for *C. caespitosa* either *O. Goodenowii* or *C. stricta* is intended.

In the section devoted to plant ecology, some quantitative data are given for soil organic matter and pH values for different areas and a few metre quadrats made in typical Birch and Reed Swamp areas of the Nearer Jungle. More detailed and comparative ecological observations would be of great interest. The Far Wood especially would repay investigation for unlike many regions of the Jungle, where lack of fencing has allowed cattle to gain entry, a factor the importance of which is underestimated, the vegetation here is quite unaffected by grazing and provides one of the most interesting areas of its kind for ecological work in the north of England.

The ornithological section of the survey gives the comparative status of species observed with that of the year 1879. Some of the changes that have taken place were to be expected having regard for events elsewhere (although the Magpie is stated to have decreased); others no doubt have followed the reduced water content of the area due to drainage.

For an accurate estimate of the avian population of any area, much depends on the ability of the observers to recognise calls and songs, without which some species may easily escape notice. How far the observers had the advantage of this quality is not clear; but they would probably have found it advantageous to have the company of someone tolerably expert in this connection to enable students to learn the more obvious notes at some field meeting in May or June. Goldfinch and Lesser Redpoll have not decreased of recent years generally but were not recorded for the area in 1945 although given as common in 1879.

The fact that the Linnet formerly bred numerous and is now a rare visitor may possibly be due to such ecological change as the loss of an area of gorse, or of low thorns by growth, away from one of which the species is seldom numerous, except on marram dunes and along low hedgerows.

One is surprised that the observers of 1879 found the Tree Pipit to be a rare breeder, although the drier ground of to-day, and possibly the growth during the intervening years of tall trees, may have bearing on it. In 1879, the Willow Tit had not been separated from the Marsh Tit, but the present ecological report shows the area to be one in which the Willow Tit might well be expected to-day.

The Great Spotted Woodpecker, stated to have increased, is certainly the commonest woodpecker in Yorkshire today. The Little Owl, naturally not mentioned in 1879, is said now to be a visitor from the adjacent Acomb Woods,

although holes and roots and banks about hedgerow and open timber are more typical breeding sites. The disappearance of the Long-eared Owl is paralleled in other areas where it was common only twenty years ago, as are also the present occurrences of Turtle Doves and Tufted Ducks, neither of which was noted in 1879. A table of foods of birds differentiates between 'land insects/ 'air insects/ and 'insect larvae/. Tits and Wrens are shown as feeding on the first-named group only, whereas actually they also feed commonly on larvae. It is also curious that the Skylark should be shown as feeding on 'air insects' whereas the species mainly feeds on the ground, taking larvae readily as well as seeds. To bracket 'Hedge and Tree Sparrows' as feeders on 'seeds, seedlings and shoots' is anything but scientific; and probably the House Sparrow is intended instead of Prunella.

The entomological contributions to the survey consist of a report on the butterflies and short notes on moths and dragonflies. There is also a negligible reference to insects in the invertebrate report under the 'Animal-life' section in which the vertebrate and molluscan faunas are briefly dealt with. Although Askham Bog is not a good locality for butterflies the entomologists were well advised to concentrate most of their efforts towards a full report on this small group rather than disperse their energies over a larger field. They were also well advised in adopting Ford's fine new book *Butterflies* as their standard work. Twelve species are listed as occurring in 1945 and one doubtful. Ten species included in the 1879 list were not seen. Of these the Greasy Marsh Fritillary and the Purple Hairstreak have not been seen in the district for many years. Some of the others were no doubt missed owing to the break in observations during the summer holiday.

The short list of dragonflies owes its brevity to the departure of its compiler before the season was far advanced. Such a prominent Askham Bog species as *Libellula quadrimaculata* which sometimes occurs as early as May should have been noted; *Aeschna grandis*, so plentiful in the bog, however, does not appear before the end of July. The writer has never seen *Cordulegaster boltonii* at Askham and would not have expected the locality to be a suitable one. If, as we hope, this work is continued in future years it is suggested that insect groups should be selected for study which include species more typical of the bog, such as the water-beetles, water-bugs, chrysomelid plant-beetles, hover flies, or even Coleoptera as a whole.

The presentation of the data assembled in the survey is excellent, and as already stated, the report as a whole deserves high praise. But although it possesses considerable intrinsic merit there is no doubt that a more valuable feature and one which Mr. Smith will have had most at heart is the training of the members of his team in patient and independent observations and methodical recording of what they have observed. Its greatest value can only be judged by the permanent effect which the work has upon the outlook of its collaborators. Some, perhaps many of them will in the course of their work have acquired an enduring interest in natural history which will bring untold satisfaction and pleasure in years to come. It is from such material that we can look for the first-class naturalists of the future. To kindle and stimulate the interest of boys in field work and to discipline and direct their energies along proper lines is surely to do a service to natural history. How better could it be attempted? W. A. S., R. C., W. D. H.

#### **1945 Report**

Rook. For the rookery count, Malet Lambert High School Naturalists counted over 4,000 nests between the River Hull and the coast (G.H.A.). In an area round Bolton Percy of some 65 square miles, W. G. Bramley counted 3,001 nests.

Yellow Wagtail. E.W.T. sends a very early record from Tilmire on April 2nd; and by April 15th the species was on its breeding ground near York.

British Willow Tit. Since publication of notes on this species in Yorkshire (see Naturalist, October, 1945), E. M. Rutter has recorded a pair that bred on Crayke Hill in 1941, some 350 feet above the eastern side of the Plain of York, 40-50 feet up in a spindly ash. The altitude of this nesting hole was much higher than any I have yet seen; and the site so high on a hill is also outside my experience. Regarding the statement that I should not expect to find the bird breeding on the Wolds, W. B. Alexander writes that he finds the species on chalk in Oxfordshire (R.C.). Two were noted at Bishop Wood, Selby, on October 3rd (J.E.B.).

Chiffchaff. Noted at Wiggington on March 30th

Reed Warbler. A bird was seen at Castle Howard (site of an old colony) on July 5th (A.C. Notes).

Short-eared Owl. one on Tilmire (York district) on December 8th (B.L., E.W.T.).

Curlew. Four pairs bred on low ground near Ampleforth (A.C. Notes).

### **1946 Report**

Mealy Redpoll. Present in the Haxby (York) district from October 24th to mid-December (F.J.).

Yellow Wagtail. 30-40 birds arrived on Clifton Ings on April 16th and became paired soon afterwards (E.W.T.).

Corn Bunting. Absent from Clifton Ings on April 28th (E.W.T.), but on June pith eight or nine breeding pairs were present (E.M.R.).

Marsh Tit. One bird at Skipwith Common on June 3rd was of this species (T.R.T., J.E.B.).

Waxwing. In the York district two birds were noted on many occasions from November 16th, and had become five by December 26th (E.M.R., E.W.T.).

Grasshopper Warbler. Earliest record at Methley on April 24<sup>th</sup> (P.B.), and at Hook Moor on April 25th (J.E.B.J) Heard later in summer at Chapeltown (W.E.H.), North Ferriby (Miss Pierson), Skipwith Common (2 pairs, E.W.T.), Staindale (R.M.G.), Gilling (Ampleforth Notes), and Nunthorpe district, where birds that had arrived by May 10th were believed to breed, two young birds being seen with an adult on June 28th (G.A.E.).

Nightjar. The species was more plentiful in the York area than for years past, several pairs nesting about Skipwith Common (E.W.T.).

Wryneck. In the York district on July 12th, General Sir Phillip Christison, who knows the species well in the East, watched an adult with 5 or 6 young as they flew over a lawn with undulating flight and alighted in a tree under which he was standing. The old bird was seen to take insects and to feed one young bird, the others seemed to be feeding themselves. A pair of Great Tits resented the presence of the Wrynecks. This species is seldom recorded in Yorkshire, especially as a breeder.

Long-eared Owl. Nested in the Nunthorpe district but was robbed (G.A.E.).

Common Buzzard. A bird that had been ringed as young near Sedbergh by the Sedbergh School on June 17th, 1945 was recovered near Barnard Castle on March 4th, 1946 (Miss E. P. Leach in British Birds). A bird soared over Methley on January 18th (P.B.) and one near York on October 6th and 7th (F.J.).

Osprey. Good views were obtained of an Osprey at Castle Howard Lake, on April 26th, by M.D. and R. Cobham (British Birds, November, 1946).

SLINGSBY, July 5th 1947

In a period of broken weather we were fortunate in getting a fine day for this meeting. Although fine there was a cool, strong wind and insects were not numerous, but in sheltered corners of the wood the troublesome woodland flies, *Hydrotaea irritans*, were a nuisance.

Our guide, Mrs. E. Brown, led us first to Slingsby Bank Wood, where a good deal of timber had been felled and much of the rough area adjoining had been ploughed out during the war. The lake at Castle Howard attracted the bird lovers and botanists; this was two and a half miles from Slingsby but the results show the effort was worthwhile.

At the meeting, where Mr. Ralph Chislett took the Chair, nine Societies responded to the roll call. Mr. J. Utley voiced the thanks of the Union to the landowners and the shooting tenant, Mr. T. E. Rickatson, who gave a generous permission, and the meeting thanked Mr. G. B. Walsh for making the necessary arrangements and Mrs. Brown for her help and guidance.

Ornithology (R. Chislett): The 50 species of birds observed, with one exception (Black-necked Grebe), included nothing which might not be expected in the area. Not a Wagtail was seen. Spotted Flycatchers were numerous, but neither the Pied Flycatcher nor the Nuthatch were noted. An odd Great Spotted Woodpecker was the only member of its order. By the lake at Castle Howard were Mallard, Lapwing, Moorhen, Coot, Little and four Great Crested Grebes, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and remains of a Common Gull were picked up. J. P. Utley had good views of a Black-necked Grebe before the main party reached the lake. Game birds were few. Other species noted were Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw (numerous). Magpie, Jay, Starling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch, House Sparrow, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Tree Pipit, Treecreeper, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Willow Warbler, Wood Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redstart, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Wren, Swallow, Martin, Sand Martin, Swift, Cuckoo (young and adult), Mute Swan, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Turtle Dove, Curlew, Pheasant.

#### **1947 Report**

Carrion Crow. During the winter a flock of about 30 frequented Clifton Ings and had not broken up by early May (E.W.T.).

Reed Warbler. At Acomb ponds a nest was found on June 8th (J.L.)

Common Whitethroat. First recorded at Hutton (E.C.) and at Buttercrambe on April 27th (J.L.)

Lesser Whitethroat. A bird was seen near Driffield on April 19<sup>th</sup> (E.C.) and at Haxby on April 24th (F.J.).

Long-eared Owl. A dead bird was picked up at Wheldrake (B.D.) during the frost. Breeding occurred near Ampleforth (W.H.W.I.).

Hen Harrier. good views were obtained of a female or juvenile hunting over Skipwith Common on November 22nd (J.L.) where a bird was seen in January (B.D.).

Osprey On May 26th an Osprey was seen leaving a tall poplar by Castle Howard Lake, carrying a large fish and being mobbed by Jackdaws (R.M.G. ).

Pochard. A few pairs were on Castle Howard Lake throughout the summer (E.W.T.)

#### **1948 Report**

Starling. A roost at Knapton on February 8th and 21st held at least 50,000 Starlings, and up to 100 Redwings, and 20 Magpies (R.H.). The Nunthorpe roost was

estimated to hold 500,000 birds on February 8th (O.C.H.). Captain Stam noted Starlings crossing the North Sea towards Europe on March 3rd (O.C.H.)

At Spurn, on October 29th, many thousands rushed down the estuaryside towards the Point (R.B., E.C., R.C.). On October 30th a number of large parties came off the sea (G.H.A.), and for some days there were packs along the promontory. Strings of Starlings flew in from the sea to Teesmouth on October 10th (A.B.). Several flocks flew in from sea to Cloughton Wyke on October 9th (A.J.W.).

The following ringing records have been reported by Miss Leach (see British Birds)  
Ringed by R. Carrick near York on 7/2/47, recovered Norfolk 19/1/48.

Ringed by R. Carrick near York on 14/2/47, recovered Sjaelland, Denmark, 9 /9 /47 -

Ringed by R. Carrick near York on 7/3/47, recovered Borger, Holland, 3/5/47.

Ringed by R. Carrick near Leeds on 18/2/47, recovered Rhyl, Flintshire, 20/1/48.

Ringed by R. Carrick near Leeds on 18/2/47, recovered Drogheda (Co. Louth) 6/1/48.

Ringed by R. Carrick near Leeds on 18/2/47, recovered Co. Dublin, 26/1 //(S.

Ringed by R. Carrick near Leeds on 19/2/47, recovered Danzig, Poland, 30/10/47.

Ringed by D. Ramsden, Northallerton, on 25/2/47, recovered Tarvin, Cheshire, 26/11/47.

Ringed by R. Chislett, Masham, on 20/3/47, recovered Denton, Manchester, 2/12/47.

Ringed by A. W. Boyd, Cheshire, on 31/1/47, recovered Askern, Doncaster, -/4 /47 -

All these birds were trapped in the severe weather of early 1947. A Starling shot near Barby, Selby, on 21/2/48, bore a Riga ring. An almost white example was seen several times in the Acomb and South Bank districts of York (F.J.).

Hawfinch. There were several nesting pairs around Oswaldkirk and Ampleforth (F.J.).

Lesser Redpoll. The species was seen near York in good numbers, especially when birch seeds were ripe in October (F.J.),

Corn Bunting. Thinly distributed in the Haxby area (F.J.), the bird was plentiful near Escrick on May 16th (J.L.).

Willow Tit. Birds were reported from Knapton on January 4th, and Healaugh (two different areas) on February 15th (J.L.);

Great Grey Shrike. A bird was picked up dead on a road near Escrick in a fresh condition on November 3rd and sent to The Game Keeper (P.Y.). A bird was present at Skipwith during the winter months (B.D.).

Pied Flycatcher. Birds were also reported in the breeding season from Chevet Wood, Wakefield (J.H.), Strines (K.W.), near Thorner (K.B.), Lindley (J. A. Forder), Birk Crag (K.I.), Loftus-in-Cleveland (R.S.), Buttercrambe (B.D.), and Dent (H.W.B.).

Grasshopper Warbler; at Selby on June 12th (P.A.H.)

Long-eared Owl. The species remains scarce; with odd occurrences reported from Temple Newsam, Ampleforth, Rowley; and Allerthorpe Common where a nest with six eggs found on March 29th by D. Wade and L. Jones was robbed by boys later on the same day.

Wigeon. A bird shot at Wressle, Selby, on February 14th, 1948, had been ringed in Iceland on July 29th, 1947.

Lapwing. ' Virtually ceased to breed ' in the Bretton area (J.C.S.E.); scarce near York (B.D.); and decreases continue near Northallerton (J.P.U.), on the lower ground near Masham (R.C.), and near Strines (K.W.); but not around Ilkley (W.F.F.). There were c. 500 in one field at Cottingham on January 30th (E.C.). Many flocks, totalling to several thousand birds flew south and west over Clifton Ings, York on February 1st



(R.H.). Very large flocks occurred in December Selby, c. 1,000 on the 19th (P.A.H.); c. 500 near Methley on the 22nd, c. 1,000 on Gorsepool Aerodrome on the 12th (A.B.); c. 500 near Methley on the 22nd (P.B.), c. 1,000 near Beverley on the 24th, and c. 1,000 to c. 2,000 around New Earswick (F.J.).

STRENSALL, July 9th 1949

Ornithology (R. Chislett): The results of the continued fine nesting weather were evident everywhere in the form of young birds, mainly concentrated in the Woods about dykes that still contained damp mud. Thirty-seven species were identified in a small area it was too hot to walk far. Warblers were quiet, and most birds only gave occasional song. Curlews were heard in the distance. It was pleasant to be able to watch a pair of Woodlarks with young on the wing.

The full list comprised:

Carrion Crow, Rook, Magpie, Jay (two family parties). Greenfinch, Linnet, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, House and Tree Sparrows, Yellow and Reed Buntings, Skylark, Tree Pipit, Treecreeper, Great, Blue, Coal, Willow and Long-Tailed Tits, Spotted Flycatcher, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Robin, Hedge Sparrow, Wren (numerous), Swallow, Green Woodpecker, Heron, Wood Pigeon, Moorhen and Partridge.

#### **1949 Report**

Starling.

Recoveries of birds ringed as adult affecting Yorkshire were reported in British Birds for September, 1949, as follows:

Ringed 3/1/46 at Thornton-le-Dale by R. M. Garnett, recovered Wadworth, -/ 12/48, 57 m. S.-S.-W.

Ringed 18/2/40 at Ackworth by A. Darlington, recovered Heligoland, 23/3/42.

Ringed 6/3/39 at York by Bootham School, recovered Forshem, Sweden, date uncertain.

Ringed 19/12/47 at York by Bootham School, recovered Ekeby (Ostergotland ) Sweden, 30/3/49.

Ringed 7/3/48 at York by Bootham School, recovered Fullerup (Fyn), Denmark, 13/7/48.

Ringed 3/3/48 at York by Bootham School, recovered Amsterdam, Holland, 15/8/48.

Ringed 10/2/48 at York by Bootham School, recovered Blankenberghe, West Flanders, 29/10/48.

Ringed 14/2/47 at Askham Bryan by R. Carrick, recovered Flensburg, Schleswig-Holstein, 11/8/48.

Ringed 6/3/47 Leeds by R. Carrick, recovered Wallasey (Ches.), 26/1/49.

Ringed 15/3/47 at Leeds by R. Carrick, recovered Nigenga, Friesland, Holland, 29/7/48.

Ringed 21/2/47 at Leeds by R. Carrick, recovered Meppel, Holland, 30/6/48.

Ringed 16/10/48 at Huddersfield by N. Sykes, recovered Liverpool, 25/2/49.

Ringed 30/1/47 at Cleveleys (Lancs.) by R. M. Baud, recovered Ilkley, 11/8/48.

Ringed 23/1/48 at Cleveleys (Lancs.) by R. M. Baud, recovered Birstall, 6/5/48.

Ringed 2/2/47 at Cleveleys (Lancs.) by R. M. Baud, recovered Mexborough, 22/2/49.

Ringed 1/1/48 at Douglas, I.O.Man, recovered Wakefield 18/8/48.

Ringed 18/12/47 at Sale, Cheshire, recovered Thorne, 1/6/48.  
Ringed 26/11/48 at Birkenhead (Ches.), recovered Bingley, 15/3/49.  
Ringed 17/2/48 at Birkenhead (Ches.), recovered Crossgates, 6/6/48.

Willow Warbler. A single Willow Warbler seen at Clifton, York, on November 26th, was unusually pale and was considered to be of the northern race (E.W.T.).

Grasshopper Warbler. There was one breeding record in the Nunthorpe district where a nest held five eggs on May 26th. The young hatched 12 days afterwards but a week later had disappeared. The old birds remained about through the summer (G.A.E.).

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Birds were also seen at Cliffe, Masham, Chevet Woods, near Sheffield, Wigginton, Buttercrambe.

### 1950 Report

Starling.

Reported fresh recoveries of ringed birds affecting Yorkshire have been:

Apperley Bridge, by R. F. Dickens, 4/12/47; re-trapped there, 18/6/50.

York, by Bootham School, 22/2/48; in Vastergotland, Sweden, 5/5/49.

York, by Bootham School, 22/2/48, Meldorf, Schleswigg-Holstein, 7/4/49.

York, by Bootham School, 22/2/48, Groningen, Holland, 21/3/50.

Leeds, by F. R. Allison, 12/2/48, Hattula, Finland, 7/4/49.

Bebington, Cheshire, 23/1/49, Rotherham, 8/12/49.

York, by Bootham School, 31/1/50, Boston Spa, 3/1 /51.

Great Grey Shrike.near Castle Howard in March (C.R.);

Pied Flycatcher. This species continues to extend its breeding areas around Harrogate, Ripley, Long Preston, Washburndale, Leathley, Castle Howard, and to Roundhay Park (Leeds), and other places.

Short-eared Owl. Three were flushed at Skipwith Common on November 17th (R.W.M.)

Red-necked Grebe. A bird on Castle Howard Lake on February 19th showed the yellow-based bill (E.W.T.).

Curlew. Many pairs now nest in the Vale of York, N.E. of the city (F. J.). A tendency to breed increasingly on lowlands has been evident for some years but is probably a return to a habit of the remoter past, never quite abandoned.

Black-headed Gull. Persecution causes this species continually to colonise fresh places Bowes Moor, c. 1,000 pairs in two places (P.Y.), Haworth Moors, c. 500 pairs (C.N.), are examples. On the other hand old colonies like Skipwith (c. 35 pairs P.A.FI.), and Altofts (21 nests J.C.) diminish.

### 1951 Report

Grasshopper Warbler. A bird singing at Harewood on May 22nd (P.E.D.), one on Yearsley Moor on May 28th (J.P.U.)

Marsh Harrier. A bird sent to the York Museum had been shot on Skipwith Common on May 5th (F.J., E.W.T.).

Common Snipe. Near Kexby, hounds drew a boggy piece of scrub in December and put up well over 100 snipe (E.B.B.).

YNU visit to Yearsley Dam 15th June 1951 The Naturalist 1951 pgs 196-199

Ornithology (J. P. Utle): An examination of recorded species shows the area covered to be most favourable to the smaller passerines. The country examined would cover about one and a half square miles and the greater portion of this was either plantation, felled plantation, or scrub. The so-called 'moor (550 ft.), although carrying calluna and erica, was also fairly densely spotted with birch scrub. There were a few rills but no real streams, so associated bird life was absent. The dams had no shingly beaches or mud flats but there was considerable cover in reed beds at the sides. The upper sheet of water seemed ideal for Great Crested Grebe but not even the Little Grebe was recorded; the pair of Mute Swans, who had a family, may be responsible for the lack of Podiceps. On the Keeper's Gibbet mentioned under Mammalia, were a few Carrion Crows, Rooks, Jackdaws, one Jay and one Little Owl. The keeper told me that both Tawny Owl and Barn Owl were present in the area, though neither species was seen by any member; he assured me that he never shot them. I asked about Magpies and he said that there were none, yet adults and a young brood were seen by some members! There were very few Cuckoos and not many pairs of Lapwings. The one Grasshopper Warbler heard was in the locality which has been favoured by the species for a number of years. A rather surprising feature was the small number of Titmice seen or heard, for the mixed hardwood and conifer plantations and the large areas covered by birch, indicated a goodly number of Earns. One species which failed to appear was Goldcrest.

A useful total of 56 species was recorded as follows: Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Starling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, House Sparrow, Skylark, Tree Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Treecreeper, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Spotted Flycatcher, Willow Warbler, Wood Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Whitethroat, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redstart, Robin, Hedge-sparrow, Wren, Swallow, House Martin, Sand Martin, Swift, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Cuckoo, Little Owl, Kestrel, Heron, Mute Swan, Mallard, Wood Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Woodcock, Lapwing, Moorhen, Coot, Pheasant and Partridge.

#### 1952 Report

Starling.

Adults ringed in Yorkshire have been recovered abroad:

York, 10/12/50, by Bootham School; at Ljungskile, Goteborg, Sweden, 22/5/51.

Thornaby-on-Tees, 13/1/51, by P. A. Rayfield; near Ljungby (Smaland), Sweden, 23/6/51.

York, 27/1/51, by Bootham School; Langae (Jutland), Denmark, 21/5/51.

York, 31/1/50, by Bootham School; Emden, Germany, 3/6/51.

York, 31/1/51, by Bootham School; South Beveland, Holland, 25/7/51.

York, 7/2/49, by A. and M. White; near Aalborg (Jutland), Denmark, 1/3/52.

Nightjar. Bred near Wakefield (J.C.), Thorne (W.B.), Bingley (J.C.L.), Esholt (J.B.N., J.C.L.), Hatfield (G.E.H.), and Strensall (E.W.T.).

#### 1953

Nothing

#### 1954

Common Scoter

It may be that many scoters that winter about the west coast may reach it overland. Canada Goose. An attempt to breed at Castle Howard (nest robbed) was the first (Lord Morpeth).

Common Snipe c. 100 on October 10th at Skipwith

Black Tern. On May 9th Black Terns were 34 at Fairburn (R.F.D.), 26 at Chelker (J.C.L.), 21 at Malham Tarn (P.F.H.), 10 at Winterset (J.C.); and smaller numbers at Swillington Ing, Eccup, Gouthwaite, Ringstone Edge, Skipwith Common, and over Tong.

Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. Bred at Helmsley, near Keighley, near York  
Grasshopper-Warbler. Bred east of Doncaster (W.B.), and in Bridlington area (G.J.B.). Also heard near Loftus, Winterset, Skipwith, Stocksbridge, Denaby Ings, York, Fairburn, Keighley, etc.

Pied Flycatcher (123). Bred in Ingleborough Hall grounds (J.K.F., A.E.L.); and attempted breeding in nest-box on Strensall Common (F. Cooke).

Great Grey Shrike. one seen near Shipton, York, on March 20th (F.J.).

Starling

Ringed Scarborough 2/2/52 by A.J.W.; Mginsk, Leningrad, Russia, 15/4/53.

Ringed Askham Bryan 10/2/47 by R- Carrick; near Viliand, Estonia, /3/50.

Ringed York 15/2/53 by Bootham School; Galterud, Norway, .1/5/53.

Ringed York 10/2/53 by Bootham School; Hamdorf, Schleswig-Holstein, 20/6/53.

Large roosts were scarce in Yorkshire in autumn, but there was a very large one near Castle Howard (A.F.G.W.); and one near Skipwith.

## 1955

Curlew.

Tendency to breed on the lower ground increasing, as about York (C.W.F.H.),

Grasshopper Warbler. Was heard singing in 20 places, seven of them in the Barnsley-Deerne-Doncaster area; four in the Leeds-Airedale district, seven in the Dales country (west and east); and at Skipwith and near Whitby.

## 1956 Report

Shoveler. Hornsea Mere showed c. 150 on November 8th (I.G.C.) which could have included some of the 68 at Fairburn on the 11th (W.C.W.), and some of the c. 50 at Skipwith Common during November (E.W.T.).

Black-throated Diver. two on the Ouse in York on February 25th (E.W.T.)

Red-throated Diver. The conditions that brought so many Black-throats inland in the early months also brought Red-throats. Two were fishing on the Ouse above York on February 5th (E.W.T.)

Osprey. An Osprey was shot at Crockey Hall, near York on or about September 8th and was taken to the York Museum (G. F. Willmott); it proved to be a female.

Nightjar. Records were few and only three referred to breeding, on Langwith Common, near York (F.E.C.)

Stonechat; near York, one on Tilmire, September 26th (E.W.T.).

Nightingale. Heard near Doncaster in May (J.S.T.), and near Seaton Ross (B.D.); and by many people near to Ampleforth College (W. Welstead).

## BISHOP WILTON, V.G. 61, July 6th 1956

Owing perhaps to distance from the larger centres of population the V.C. 61 meetings have sometimes been rather poorly attended and it was therefore very pleasing that about 40 members (and several children) were at the Bishop Wilton

meeting. Ten societies answered to the roll call at the meeting following tea at the Fleece Inn. The weather was hot and almost sultry, in spite of a breeze which freshened with an increase of cloud in the afternoon. The morning was spent in an old quarry opposite the Manor House a pleasant place with a remarkable display of Viper's Bugloss covering an expanse of steep chalk slope. After lunch, marshy ground in the valley bottom and arable ground on the hillside farther up the valley were examined and then the party went to the grounds of Garrowby Hall, the home of Lord Halifax. Here Mr. Harrison, the Head Keeper, showed us part of the grounds and woodland rides. An area near the outflow from the lake looked very interesting from the entomological point of view, but time allowed of little work. Ornithology (R. Chislett): At this date, after a long, dry period, few birds were in song. In the areas selected (mainly for botanical reasons) 40 species were identified and the list could have been extended. Only one Partridge was seen although both species occur. A Sparrowhawk (deceased) and one Kestrel represented the hawks. In the woods were noted: Turtle Dove, Tawny Owl, Treecreeper, Marsh Tit, Goldcrest and Blackcap. The Spotted Flycatcher was more numerous than I have seen it anywhere else this year. Other species noted included: Green Woodpecker, Wren (singing loudly), Whinchat, numerous Skylarks, Meadow and Tree Pipits, Pied Wagtail, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet, Yellowhammer, Whitethroat, etc.

#### 1957 Report

Water-Rail. A few odd birds were recorded elsewhere May 12th at Pulfin Bog, East Riding (B.S.P.), and on several dates at Skipwith.

Grasshopper Warbler. Inland was reported more frequently than usual, with breeding probable near Middlesbrough and in the North-East, near Ripon, near Harewood, in South Yorkshire and west of Sheffield, certainly near York, and elsewhere; with two or more pairs at several places.

Redpoll. Flocks occurred inland in many places. The largest parties recorded were: c. 150 at Fairburn on October 20th had gone a week later (W.C.W.); and c. 300 near Marr (Doncaster) on December 30th (A.E.P.). There was a great influx into the York area from mid-October one 'Mealy' Redpoll noted (F.J.).

Bootham School Bird List and Notes. 3/6 from Clifford J. Smith, Bootham School, York. Review

This is compiled from the old and recent records of the Bootham School Natural History Club and its members, of whom the list contains distinguished names.

Records include many from such well-known areas as Askham Bog, Strensall and Skipwith Commons, Castle Howard lakes and woods, and Bubwith and Wheldrake Ings. The appendices include maps of these areas and of the surroundings of York, earliest and latest dates of appearances of 20 migrants, and a list of localities mentioned in the text with map references. The Foreword mentions purposeful omission from the list of species that have been recorded very rarely; nevertheless it is rather surprising to find the Black Tern not included - holidays in August may be partly responsible! One would like evidence to justify the statement that 'many' (Bluetits) arrive for the winter, probably mostly from the continent'. The 1957-8 winter cannot be taken as average.

Carefully compiled and written well for the benefit of Bootham students, Yorkshire ornithologists without other Bootham advantages can acquire this useful duplication, and will find it well worth its modest price.

office@boothamschool.com re Bootham School Bird Records (catalog item which covers 1940-1980)

KIRKHAM ABBEY, V.C. 61, July 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> 1957

Ornithology (R. Chislett): In the Kirkham area, south of the Derwent, 45 species were identified, including Heron, Coot, Woodcock, Stock and Turtle Doves, Green Woodpecker, Jay, Grasshopper-Warbler, Sedge-Warbler, Blackcap (plentiful), Garden Warbler (scarce), Chiffchaff, Pied Wagtail, Bullfinch and Reed Bunting. A Woodpecker drumming was thought to be the Great Spotted but was not seen. The Redstart was scarce, but most of the commonest species were plentiful. Of the birds listed during the Y.N.U. visit of July 1920, Sparrowhawk, Dipper and Kingfisher were not seen. A visit to Birdsall under the guidance of the Hon. M. Willoughby added Dabchick, Curlew, Hawfinch and Marsh Tit to the list. A Lesser Spotted Woodpecker's hole used this year was shown to us bringing the total to 50.

### **1958**

1958 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist April-June 1959 pgs 37-74)

#### Teal

Derwent Valley floods with c. 540 on February 22<sup>nd</sup> which had risen to c. 1,160 on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and remained large for at least three weeks (A.F.G.W.) and had still c. 400 on April 20<sup>th</sup> (C.W.F.H.).

#### Wigeon

Numbers on the floods of the lower Derwent Valley eclipsed all others: c. 2,140, February 22<sup>nd</sup>; c. 3,740, March 2<sup>nd</sup>; c. 3,000, March 22<sup>nd</sup> (A.F.G.W.); c. 2,000, March 23<sup>rd</sup> (H.O.B.); c. 1,500, Wheldrake Ings, April 6<sup>th</sup> (S.M.); c. 4,000-5,000, April 20<sup>th</sup> (C.W.F.H. and M.R.S.), and c. 470, April 23<sup>rd</sup> (C.W.F.H.).

#### Pintail

The Derwent Valley floods showed unusual numbers, from 44 on February 22<sup>nd</sup> (A.F.G.W.) to 59 on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, c. 300 having been there on April 20<sup>th</sup> (C.W.F.H.), a larger number than previously recorded inland in Yorkshire.

#### Shoveler

Derwent Valley floods with c. 20 on March 2<sup>nd</sup> (A.F.G.W.), with c. 30 on April 6<sup>th</sup> (S.M.), c. 60 on April 20<sup>th</sup> (M.R.S.) and 31 on April 23<sup>rd</sup> (C.W.F.H.)

#### Pochard

on the Derwent Valley floods, c. 150 on March 22<sup>nd</sup>

#### Brent Goose

The Derwent Valley floods had 23 on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup>; and 3 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> (A.F.G.W.).

#### Quail

A hen and seven newly-hatched chicks were on a road near Sutton-on-Derwent on June 29<sup>th</sup> (Batley N.S. per H.H.).

#### Eagle

On January 20th, 1958, one of the green keepers of the Pike Hills Golf Club (Mr. Mason) saw a very large bird rise from a tree in the adjacent Askham Bog. It flew in his direction making height slowly, and he clearly saw its yellow cere and great hooked beak, and large talons (described as nearly as large as human hands). It had a wing-spread of at least six foot and was of a dark brown colour with a flecking of lighter feathers, but showed no white (E.W.T.). I have included it here because haliaetus is more likely than A. chrysaetos.

#### Dunlin

The recently-flooded land near Bubwith (Lower Derwent) showed c. 250 on April 23rd

#### Stonechat

Occurred on a number of dates from January to April 10th (one at Spurn) and April 22nd (one at Fly Flatts (E.C.J.S.)) in a number of areas - Teesmouth, Bridlington, Flornsea, Welton Saltings, Copgrove, Derwent floods,

1959

1959 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist April-June 1960 pgs 37-79)

#### Wigeon

The Derwent Valley floods usually show big numbers as the birds congregate preparatory to departure. Circa 3,000 were at Bubwith Ings on February 22nd (A.F.G.W.) and c. 2,000 at Aughton Ings on March 1st (H.O.B.).

#### Pintail

maxima of 16 on Bubwith Ings on February 22nd

#### Common Snipe

In a small part of the Derwent Valley floods area c. 120 were counted on March 1st (M.R.S.).

#### Black-headed Gull

Up to 8,500-10,000 came in to roost on the Derwent floods on March 1st in a steady stream from 4 to 5-45 p.m.; many were there before counting began.

The 567th Meeting WILL BE HELD AT SELBY for BISHOP WOOD Y.C. 64

On Saturday, JUNE 20th, 1959

PERMISSION has been kindly granted by the Forestry Commission. Please note that no dogs are allowed. Members are asked to have particular regard to fire precautions.

PREVIOUS MEETING. The Union visited Bishop Wood in 1915, when 31 members, all men, attended. This was prior to extensive felling during the 1914-18 War. A further visit was made in 1931, and members who can do so are strongly advised to consult the full and interesting report of that meeting in The Naturalist, especially the extensive ecological report.

ORNITHOLOGY. Ralph Chislett, M.B.O.U., writes: 'To assess the birds of a good area is always an interesting exercise. Bishop Wood is expected still to harbour the species that such a woodland should and did. Records from the wood have been few in recent years and to confirm the expected will be sufficient. If the season is

forward, some birds will have ceased to sing and others will be rearing second broods.' In 1931 no hawks were seen, though a Sparrowhawk had been shot shortly before. Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler and Whinchat are mentioned in the 1931 report, but there is no reference to owls at all.

**BISHOP WOOD, SELBY, V.C. 64, June 20th 1959**

The effects of the hot dry weather were noticeable on this meeting, but the glorious weather on the day made up for the general dryness of the ground. The Forestry Commission District Officer joined the party for the early part of the meeting and kindly provided some large scale plans of the wood. Some forty-five members attended this excursion and twelve affiliated societies were represented at the meeting held after tea. Votes of thanks were moved to the owners (The Forestry Commission), the shooting tenant and the Divisional Secretary, Miss C. Shaddick. Ornithology (R. Chislett): The small ornithological party included the Hon. Sec. and the Chairman of the Section, who were interested to see the extent to which the young, replanted woodlands had become repopulated following the extensive felling of World War I.

Dykes intersected the normally wet terrain in every direction, all of them dry after the droughts of May and June to date. A Woodcock was flushed from one of them. Black Poplars were the tallest trees and natural Birch, with Pine, Larch, Spruce now of pitwood size, and some Oak making up most of the remainder. Sitka Spruce is very attractive to the Turdidae for nesting-sites.

In the absence of old timber Tits were scarce but the five species noted included Coal, Willow, and Long-tailed. A Green Woodpecker was recorded. No hawk or owl was noted. Game birds were scarce (or very quiet). Wood-pigeons were numerous, Turtle Doves surprisingly scarce. Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay and a couple of Rooks were seen and Jackdaw heard. Wrens, Song Thrushes, Blackbirds, Robins and Hedge sparrows sang plentifully, and a Redstart was noted. Warblers were well distributed (Chiffchaff, Willow, Whitethroat, Garden and Blackcap - all in song). Goldcrest and Tree Pipit were recorded. Bullfinches were in the woods; and Greenfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch and Yellowhammer about the outskirts. Other species noted in the vicinity were Lapwing, Swift, Skylark, Swallow and Starling; bringing the total to 39.

## **1960**

1960 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist July-Sept 1961 pgs 73-125)

### **Mallard**

In the spring the numbers on the Lower Derwent floods fluctuated with as few as 50 recorded on January 10th, but 1,000 on February 21st and again on March 13th. In the autumn at Bubwith 350 had arrived by October 16th and this number increased to a maximum of almost 3,000 by December 4th, falling to just over 1,000 by the end of the month (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### **Teal**

On the Lower Derwent Floods, c. 50 were present at Bubwith Ings on January 10th (H.O.B.) but c. 1,050 were counted there on February 21st (H.O.B.). The number fluctuated slightly between 800 and 1,000 throughout February and March and in the autumn the build-up began with about 70 on October 16th to 1,600 as a maximum on November 27th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).



### Gadwall

a pair on the Lower Derwent Flats on March 20th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.)

### Wigeon

That the Derwent Valley floods usually show large concentrations of this species preparatory to departure is again confirmed by the observations made there. During February and March various observers made counts ranging from c. 2,500 to c. 5,000 but by April 10th the number had dropped to about 50.

At Bubwith the autumn influx began with c. 30 on October 16th rising to c. 2,000 by mid-December (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Pintail

the highest numbers were seen on the Lower Derwent Flats between Bubwith and Aughton. The spring numbers there fluctuated between 20 and 40 birds with maxima of 63 on February 7th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.). In the autumn these totals were exceeded when the same observers recorded over 66 on December 4th.

### Shoveler

The Lower Derwent floods were visited by maxima of 29 on March 20th and 12 in the autumn on December 11th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Scaup

On the Derwent floods only autumn records were made with four on October 23rd, nine on November 27th, one on December 4th, three on December 11th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Tufted Duck

The Lower Derwent floods attracted small numbers during March and larger numbers during November and December with maxima of c. 175 on November 27th and c.150 on December 27th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Goldeneye

The Derwent floods attracted smaller numbers in the spring but maximum of 120 were seen at Bubwith on December 11th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Long-tailed Duck

At Bubwith on October 16th and 23rd, November 27th and December 4th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

### Eider

On fresh water one occurred on the Lower Derwent Floods on December 4th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.)

### Red-breasted Merganser

Two visited the Lower Derwent floods on November 27th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.)

### Goosander

No mention of the LDV

#### Smew

One was on the Lower Derwent Floods on December 11th, 26th and 27th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.)

#### White-fronted Goose

two on Lower Derwent Floods on March 12th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.), ten in the same area on March 20th (R.H.)

#### Whooper Swan

25 including 11 immatures on the Lower Derwent floods on February 28th and 35 including 13 immatures in the same place on November 27th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Bewick's Swan

On the Lower Derwent floods the four observers named recorded numbers fluctuating from 26 to 30 between February 21st and March 20th (H.O.B., M.R.S., A.F.G.W., R.H.).

#### Buzzard

Near Pocklington up to five were present from the beginning of January to March 17th and two in the same area from September 23rd to the year end (C.N.).

#### Coot

Numbers on all the usual other waters appeared to be somewhat fewer than previously as only on the Lower Derwent Floods during November and December did any flock reach more than 100.

#### Waxwing

at least one near Pocklington on October 23rd and 24th (C.N.)

#### Hawfinch

Definite breeding was reported from Pocklington (C.N.)

1961 Report Alphabetical List of Field Meetings 1877-1961 on pgs 170 to 172

#### **1961**

1961 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist July-Sept 1962 pgs 73-113)

#### Mallard

#### Teal

Numbers increased from c. 700 on January 1st to c. 1,000 on March 5th and 19th on the Lower Derwent Floods (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Wigeon

The Lower Derwent Floods again had a spring peak of almost 5,000 on February 12th, which had halved by March 19th, the last date of recording (A.F.G.W.).

#### Pintail

During the first three months of the year the largest counts for this species in the county were made on the Lower Derwent Floods, with c. 40 on January 1st, 33 on

January 15th, c. 140 on February 12th, c. 115 on March 5th, dropping to 13 on March 19th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Pochard

Numbers on the Lower Derwent Floods in February were high c. 840 on February 12th (H.O.B.).

#### Goldeneye

Counts on the Lower Derwent floods in spring showed c. 60 on January 1st, c. 110 on January 15th, 68 on February 5th, c. 120 on February 12th, c. 85 on February 24th, dropping to n on March 5th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Whooper Swan

Between January 1st and March 5th numbers fluctuated on the Lower Derwent floods, with a peak of 35 on February 12th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Bewicks Swan

Unlike 1960 the species was more numerous in the late months, except that on the Lower Derwent floods numbers were high from late January to late February, reaching a peak of c. 200, the largest recorded in Yorkshire, on February 20th.

#### Sparrowhawk

"Continues to disappear at an alarming rate" is the comment of one recorder, and the following, though possibly not a complete coverage, constitute every record received in 1961 - *records from 18 localities, none in the YOC area*

#### Coot

Numbers on the Derwent floods rose to 350 on January 15th and had dropped to c. 20 by March 19th (M.R.S., A.F.G.W.).

#### Lapwing

For long afterwards large numbers remained about the Lower Derwent floods (c. 4,000 on February 12th, c. 5,000 on February 20th (A.F.G.W.) ).

#### Golden Plover

very large numbers over Lower Derwent Water meadows on March 19th (H.O.B.); *no figures given*

#### NEWTON-UPON-DERWENT, V.C. 61, July 2nd 1961 Field Meeting

The weather did not favour the Union on this occasion. After a Very wet night, the party left the meeting place in fine though dull conditions but before the short walk from the cars to Sutton Wood had been completed the rain started again and it was one of the wettest East Riding meetings on record. In spite of the weather however, the meeting was a success and had the day been fine there is no doubt this would have been of great natural history interest.

Some 35 members attended at some part of the day and although one or two abandoned the attempt to cover the course most carried on through the heavy rain and attended the meeting held, as usual, after tea. Fourteen affiliated Societies answered the roll-call and the Hull Society turned up in strength with a good number of keen young members including some entomologists - a very welcome addition to

the meeting. The juniors from Tees-Side also made the long journey to be present. The chair was taken by Mr. R. Chislett and the vote of thanks to the landowners the Forestry Commission, was moved by Mr. Gravett. Miss Crackles, the Divisional Secretary, was thanked by the General Secretary, Miss Rob, on behalf of all who had attended the meeting.

Ornithology (R. Chislett): After a very dry, late spring, July 2nd was wet until late afternoon. Time was used in Sutton Wood and by the river; and by and on adjacent Allerthorpe Common. Undergrowth was long and waterlogged and progress through it was slow and unpleasant. For periods both naturalists and birds kept silent under cover; and the list of species suffered. In the woods, Woodpigeons and Turtle Doves, Blackbirds and Thrushes, Blackcaps and Willow Warblers and Bullfinches were very noticeable in places; with Cuckoos, Jay, Tawny Owl, Green Woodpecker, Treecreeper and Tree Pipit only noted singly. Some Skylarks sang. Corn Buntings probably had young. Other species that made up the total of 46 identified were: Mallard, Moorhen, two species of Partridge, Pheasant, Lapwing, Snipe (still drumming), Curlew, Nightjar (heard by a member during the previous night on the Common), Swift, Swallow, Carrion Crow, Rook, Daw, Magpie, Great, Blue and Long-tailed Tits, Wren, Robin, Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat, Hedge Sparrow, Starling, Greenfinch, Linnet, Chaffinch, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, Tree and House Sparrows.

## **1962**

1962 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist July-Sept 1963 pgs 73-101)

### **Mallard**

Castle Howard c.900 on 6 Dec (MDC).

### **Teal**

the Derwent floods c.3,000 on 4 & 11 Feb (AFGW, HOB) were very high.

### **Wigeon**

Estimates on the lower Derwent floods and meadows were 4-5,000 from 11 Feb to 4 Mar (AFGW, HOB).

### **Pintail**

c.60 in the Derwent Valley on 4-11th Feb (AFGW.HOB).

### **Shoveler**

c.50 in the Derwent Valley on 11th Feb & 59 on 16 Nov (GRB, HOB)

### **Greylag**

c.20 at Bubwith on 28 Jan. 9 at Castle Howard on 19 Aug.

### **Bewicks Swan**

17-21 on the Derwent floods 4-18 Feb (3 imms)

Askham Bog (The Naturalist, 1963, details in the rear appendix page xiii  
Details prior to a field meeting there in July 1963 include the following information:  
ORNITHOLOGY (Dr. E. W. Taylor). The Birds of Askham Bog, omitting

such species as the Hedge Sparrow and Wood Pigeon, the presence of which can be taken for granted.

Those that nest with fair regularity are: Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Tawny Owl, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay, Marsh and Long-tailed Tit, Mistle Thrush, Grasshopper, Reed and Sedge Warblers, Blackcap, Common and Lesser Whitethroat, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Tree Pipit, Linnet, Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting.

More occasional visitors are: Little Grebe, Heron, Mallard, Water Rail, Snipe, Woodcock, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Whinchat, Siskin, Redpoll, Bullfinch.

Rare visitors have been: Bittern (1874), Hen Harrier (1877), White-tailed Eagle (1958), and Wood-Warbler (1799).

*NB no mention of the eagle in Mather (1986)*

ASKHAM BOG, V.C. 64, July 20th-21st

Hot sunny weather prevailed throughout the weekend. Numbers averaged 30-40 each day, but since many people came on only one of the days, between 50 and 60 members, representing 16 Societies, are estimated to have taken part.

Both days were spent at the Bog - including Challoner's Whin - and local members of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust; Miss Day, Mr. Medd, Dr. Wegener, and the Secretary, Mr. C. J. Smith, acted as guides. Their participation and help added much to the enjoyment of the meeting.

At Copmanthorpe Women's Institute an excellent tea was kindly provided by Mrs. K. G. Payne and family. Afterwards Mr. R. Chislett took the chair for the meeting when reports were given. Mr. D. F. Walker proposed and Mrs. Duncan seconded a vote of thanks to the leaders, and to Mrs. Payne and family for all their hard work. Dr. E. W. Taylor, President of the Trust, responded.

ORNITHOLOGY (R. Chislett); Among the 60 people, or thereabout, who met on one or other of the two days (and a few on both) were several ornithologists.

Birds identified totalled 41, which I thought good for this area of ancient marshy woodland in late July when few birds sang; no doubt several were missed. The Moorhen was the only large waterside bird noted: no hawks or game birds, waders or gulls were seen. Woodpigeons were conspicuous and a few Turtle Doves. Swifts and Swallows hawked above. We were very glad to record Green Woodpecker, Treecreeper and Wren. Robins were fairly numerous with both adults feeding young and other young on the wing. Five members of the crow group included a family party of Jays. Titmice included Marsh and Willow, and Long-tailed, as well as Blue and Great. Six species of Warbler did not include either Reed or Grasshopper about which there was some doubt. Tree Pipit occurred but no Wagtail. Finches included Greenfinch, Linnet (fairly numerous). Bullfinch, Chaffinch (scarce). Yellowhammer, Corn Bunting, Reed Bunting and Tree Sparrow. A Nightingale had been heard by a number of people (including Miss Day and Dr. Taylor) on several days in June.

### **1963**

1963 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist Oct-Dec 1964 pgs 114-142)

#### **Mallard**

Most other waters deserted, including the Derwent valley *NB this relates to very cold conditions in early 1963*

#### **Teal**

the largest spring count c. 1,000 in the Derwent valley on 5th April.

### Wigeon

in the lower Derwent valley: c. 600 on 10th, rising to c. 2-3,000 in late March and early April

### Pintail

c. 100 in the Derwent valley on 25th March the last count 45 on 5th April. In November, 40 (maximum) on the Derwent floods on 27th

### Pochard

c. 180 on the Derwent floods on 2nd April.

### Goldeneye

A return to the Derwent floods (4) noted on 10th March

### Goosander

Derwent floods: c. 20 on 23rd March.

### Bewicks Swan

The Derwent floods held 25 on 6th March, 41 (8 imms.) on 17th, 67 (19 imms.) on 31st, 74 on 7th April and 3 on 13th April. Also 21 on 26th December.

### Osprey

An imm. brought in to Hull on a N. Sea trawler on 2nd September, escaped 4th-6th, recaptured and released at Castle Howard on 7th (RSPCA); one, probably this bird, reported at Castle Howard on 19th, 20th and 23rd October (PJS et al.).

### Waxwing

POCKLINGTON. Six in 'November', and one on 28th December.

Waxwing Invasion of 1963-64 in Yorkshire Densley, M The Naturalist July-September 1965 pgs 83-87

The invasion of 1963-64 may well prove to have been one of the largest in Yorkshire in the present century, in the number of localities where birds were seen if not the actual number of birds involved.

#### YORK AREA

The York area was very fully covered, due mainly to an article in the local newspaper by C. J. Smith, and records were collected and tabulated by him. The majority of records appear from the north and north east parts of the area.

Many single birds were seen in November and December, mainly in the Rillington, Acomb, Heslington, and Terry's areas, and it was at Terry's that the only two January birds were seen. Up to six birds were seen in February, with several records of four birds. Between 1st and 25th March singles, and up to eight birds were reported from eight or nine areas including Norton (Malton), Cooke's, and Osbaldwick. Up to about twelve were seen at Heslington. During the period 26th March to early April, parties of up to a dozen birds occurred in many districts including Terry's, about twelve, Stockton Lane, eight, Poppleton Road, six, Rowntrees, eight, and the last were two which occurred at Haxby from 2nd to 8th April.

## 1964

1964 YNU Ornithological Report (The Naturalist Oct-Dec 1964 pgs 109-127)

### Teal

1,000 on Lower Derwent Floods on 1st March, dropping to 100 by month end.

### Wigeon

2,000 or over on Lower Derwent Floods throughout March.

### Pintail

c. 60 on Lower Derwent Floods on 9th Feb. Most records at passage times with peaks, in spring, of 26 at Fairburn on 21st March and 165 on Lower Derwent Floods on 22nd March.

### Shoveler

on Lower Derwent Floods in March with 36 on 30th.

### Tufted Duck

21 on Lower Derwent Floods on 26th March.

### Pochard

c. 100 on Lower Derwent Floods on 25th March

### Goldeneye

49 on Lower Derwent Floods on 30th March

### Greylag

1, probably "pricked", nr. Church Fenton airfield, Jan.-Mar., 1 at Castle Howard Lake on 8th April, 18th July and 5 on 14th Dec.

### White-fronted Goose

1 at Castle Howard Lake on 8th April (EGra).

### Bewicks Swan

59 on Lower Derwent Floods on 25th March where birds had been since 1st...still 19 on Lower Derwent Floods on 3rd April.

### Corncrake

1 at Church Fenton from 10th May to early June (JLL, JRM),

### Ringed Plover

3 at Church Fenton airfield on 15th March.

### Little Ringed Plover

The first 3 on Church Fenton airfield on 3rd April

### Wood Sandpiper

Church Fenton on 30th-31st May

### Long-eared Owl

Bred at Allerthorpe Common

Swallow  
20th Nov at Spurn and Castle Howard

Waxwing  
Selby. Six on 27th January.  
See York area above

Corn Bunting  
"Much reduced in the Plain of York" (*no figures given*)

1968

POCKLINGTON CANAL V.C. 61 20th July

The weather for this meeting was wet until lunchtime, but improved in the afternoon. The Divisional Secretary had arranged visits to a number of sites along the canal banks, which gave us some idea of the wide and interesting variety of its flora and fauna.

Thirty-seven members attended the meeting, representing seventeen Societies.

Mr. R. F. Dickens took the Chair at the meeting for reports after tea. A vote of thanks to the landowners who had given us permission to visit their parts of the canal banks and to Mr. E. Chicken the Divisional Secretary who had made all the arrangements, was expressed by Mrs. K. G. Payne.

Ornithology (R. F. Dickens): General weather conditions probably resulted in a lower bird total than might otherwise have been listed but, on the other hand, possibly more species were in song in the damp, still conditions. The total number of species reported during the day was 49, of which 15 were in song.

The most notable records were of a female Shoveler at Canal Head, about thirty Mallard in eclipse below the lock between Eastfield House Farm and Toft Houses. A good colony of Reed Warblers was in the same area. Kestrels had young in the nest near Westfield Farm, Melbourne, and a family of recently fledged Kestrels were near Thornton, less than two miles to the east. Here five birds could be seen in the air together. A Short-eared Owl was quartering the ings beyond the beck north from Westfield Farm.

With the improvement in weather conditions later in the morning, a movement of Lapwings became evident. Flocks of four, twenty-seven, twenty-two, and one hundred and thirty flew W.N.W. within about half-an-hour near Westfield Farm and other flocks were seen in other areas. The final observation was a Swallow's nest, reported from the ladies toilet at the Barmby New Inn.

A full list of species, with S to indicate those in song, follows: Mallard, Shoveler, Kestrel, C. Partridge, Pheasant, Moorhen, Coot, Lapwing, Snipe, Black-headed and Common Gulls, Herring Gull, Wood Pigeon (S), Stock Dove, Turtle Dove, Short-eared Owl, Swift, Skylark (S), Swallow, House Martin, Yellow Wagtail, Pied Wagtail, Wren (S), Dunnock (S), Sedge Warbler (S), Reed Warbler (S), Garden Warbler (S), Whitethroat (S), Willow Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Robin, Blackbird (S), Song Thrush (S), Mistle Thrush, Marsh Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Yellowhammer (S), Reed Bunting (S), Chaffinch, Greenfinch (S), Goldfinch (S), Linnet (S), Redpoll, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Starling, Rook and Carrion Crow.

**1970**



## YORKSHIRE NATURALISTS' UNION EXCURSIONS IN 1970

### SKIPWITH COMMON, V.C. 61 23rd to 25th May

A total of 65 species was recorded over the three days.

Willow Warblers were very common and were singing almost everywhere and Tree Pipits gave excellent views of parachute song flight. Nightjars were heard and seen and Woodcock was recorded roding. No owls were seen but raptors were represented by Kestrel and a female Sparrowhawk. Black-headed Gulls were nesting on many pools and Mallard, Teal, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Moorhen, Coot and Heron were also seen here. Woodland species were well represented with Green Woodpecker, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush being recorded. Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Linnet, Redpoll, Treecreeper, Willow Tit, Blue Tit, and Great Tit were also present. The absence of Redstart was commented upon by many members and it was thought the Jay population contributed to the low number of Wood Pigeons.

Other birds recorded were Red-legged Partridge, Partridge, Pheasant, Lapwing, Snipe with young, Herring Gull, Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Swift, Skylark, Wren, Sand Martin, Swallow, House Martin, Meadow Pipit, Pied Wagtail, Dunnock, Sedge Warbler, Reed Warbler, Whinchat, Yellowhammer, Reed Bunting, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, Starling, Magpie, Jackdaw, Rook and Carrion Crow.

### HOVINGHAM, V.C. 62 — 26th June

Ornithology (A. J. Wallis)

The morning period spent in the woodland area of High Hovingham Wood was of interest ornithologically in a comparison between those areas with tall mature timber with a thick undergrowth mainly of bramble and bracken and the cleared areas recently replanted with various species of conifer. In the mature woodland the tits, mainly Great Tits and Blue Tits, were numerous; Great Spotted Woodpeckers were about with many trees showing evidence of their nesting; Treecreepers had young, as had Redstarts, newly out of the nest; but the warblers were almost absent except for an occasional burst of song from a few Garden Warblers and Blackcaps.

The newly planted areas had both Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs singing strongly, a family of Whitethroats, Tree Pipits using the nearby tall trees as song posts, and a Grasshopper Warbler which was watched by some as it "reeled" from the top of a young spruce.

The Wath Quarry had little to offer to the ornithologist other than a Partridge which feigned injury to draw attention away from its four newly hatched chicks, and a small colony of Sand Martins nesting in a soft bank pushed up by the human activity in the quarry. The woodland behind the quarry added only Tawny Owl to the list of woodland species seen during the day.

Comparing the list with the notes of the last visit to the area in 1935, Great Spotted Woodpecker replaces Green Woodpecker, and Collared Doves nesting in the village were seen instead of Turtle Dove, which could have been expected but was not in the final list of 52 species for the day.

The full list is as follows, with (B) to indicate definite evidence of breeding noted.

Kestrel (B), Partridge (B), Pheasant (B), Moorhen, Woodcock (B), Curlew (B), Woodpigeon (B), Collared Dove (B), Cuckoo, Tawny Owl, Swift, Great Spotted Woodpecker (B), Skylark, Swallow, House Martin (B), Sand Martin (B), Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw (B), Jay, Great Tit (B), Blue Tit (B), Coal Tit (B), Marsh Tit, Long-tailed Tit (B), Treecreeper (B), Wren (B), Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redstart (B),

Robin (B), Grasshopper Warbler, Blackcap, Garden Warbler, Whitethroat (B), Willow Warbler (B), Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Spotted Flycatcher (B), Dunnock, Tree Pipit (B), Pied Wagtail (B), Starling, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Linnet (B), Redpoll (B), Bullfinch (B), Chaffinch, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow, Tree Sparrow.