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# HEREFORDSHIRE BIRDS

BY  
C. W. WALKER  
AND  
A. J. SMITH



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# Herefordshire Birds

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## FOREWORD

Among the responsibilities listed in 1851 by the founders of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club was "the formation and publication of correct lists of the various natural productions of the county of Hereford". Our local ornithology has in consequence been well documented for the past 120 years by virtue of records scattered through the Club's annual transactions, as well as by Bird Lists submitted by members and published by the club at various dates from 1860 onwards. Among these sources pride of place belongs to Dr. H. G. Bull's "Notes on the birds of Herefordshire" embodying the local ornithological records collected by the doctor from 1840 when he came to Hereford until his death in 1884.

The sources listed overleaf as "authorities" are the same as those given in "Herefordshire Birds", 1954, with the addition of the nature diaries of the late Prebendary S. Cornish Watkins, kindly lent to us by his nephew, Mr. M. P. Watkins, of Symond's Yat.

The Herefordshire Ornithological Club founded in 1950 in affiliation with the Woolhope Club has each year published a report compiled from the records contributed by its members—now numbering over 500. These reports now constitute our most valuable source of recent information, and we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Club's Hon. Editors, Mr. R. H. Baillie from 1951 to 1966, and to Mr. T. R. H. Owen from 1967 onwards, for supplying us with a great store of local ornithological data covering the 20 years which have elapsed since the last "Herefordshire Birds" was published. As that edition (1954) is now out of date, the present recension has been prepared, its lay-out unaltered from that employed previously, but with the order and nomenclature of species altered to correspond with those adopted in the B.O.U. List of 1952.

The writers apologise for the numerous shortcomings readers are bound to meet with in the work, but hope that in spite of this it may prove useful to all who are interested in the bird-life of Herefordshire.

C.W.W.

Hereford, 1976.



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## HEREFORDSHIRE BIRDS

1. BLACK-THROATED DIVER. *Colymbus arcticus* (L.)  
Rare vagrant.

One was caught at Kinnersley in 1891, and one shot on the Wye near Ross on 17th December 1927. The third and most recent bird was seen on the Wye at Hampton Bishop by K. J. Henley and D. Hughes on 25th February 1956. It remained until the following day and was seen by several other H.O.C. members.

2. GREAT NORTHERN DIVER. *Colymbus immer* (Brünn)  
Rare vagrant.

Bull records a female shot about 1867 at Ross; Horne records one at Peterchurch in 1880, while Hutchinson states that the two specimens in Hereford Museum were obtained at Clifford and Holme Lacy.

The fifth and latest record was of one found alive in a timber yard on the edge of Shobdon Aerodrome on the 17th February 1966. T. R. Ammonds released the bird on Shobdon decoy pool, where it remained until the 27th of the month. It was subsequently watched by several observers, including P. McDougall and A. J. Smith. The latter made field notes on the 26th using a 20X telescope in conditions which included satisfactory spells of sunshine. Although the bird appeared large with a heavy bill, identification rested mainly on the early signs of summer plumage, such as a distinct trace of the pale partial collar marking at the neck. Dives were timed, and varied in duration between 25 secs. and 1 min. 30 secs., averaging approximately 40 secs.

4. RED-THROATED DIVER. *Colymbus stellatus* (Pontopp.)  
Rare vagrant.

There are five records of this bird having been shot on the Wye, all in winter, and all in the neighbourhood of Ross. The most recent occurrence was in 1887.

5. GREAT CRESTED GREBE. *Podiceps cristatus cristatus* (L.)  
Resident and breeding.

BULL One shot on the Wye near Ross 1852. A male and a female shot on a Shobdon pond in spring 1880. An immature killed at Wilton, December 1881.

- HUTCHINSON Occasional visitor.  
 CORNISH "Some immature Great Crested Grebes  
 WATKINS seen on Flintsham Pool. I do not think  
 (diary) 1-9-1916 there is any actual previous record of  
 G.C.G. breeding in Herefordshire. I  
 heard that a pair had nested at  
 Eywood a few years ago".

Early in the present century the persecution of this species was brought to an end as the result of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds' campaign. Its breeding in Herefordshire then became regular, and by 1940 it was nesting annually on four waters in the county, and continues to do so.

6. RED-NECKED GREBE. *Podiceps griseigena griseigena* (Bodd.)

Rare vagrant.

Specimens have been shot on the Wye near Ross on three occasions: October, 1881, January, 1889, and 7th February, 1895.

7. SLAVONIAN GREBE. *Podiceps auritus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Hereford museum specimen is labelled "Hereford, 1849". A male bird was shot at Kingsland on 19th February, 1895.

8. BLACK-NECKED GREBE. *Podiceps caspicus caspicus* (Hablizl.)

Rare vagrant.

One was shot on the Wye near Sugwas in 1879, and one seen on Burcott pool on 14th April, 1903. One was identified on the Wye at the Field, Hampton Bishop, on 26th December, 1955, by G. C. Davis. It was seen by many members of H.O.C. between that date and 2nd January, 1956.

9. LITTLE GREBE. *Podiceps ruficollis ruficollis* (Pall.)

Common resident and breeding.

This grebe breeds on many lakes and ponds in the county and can be seen on the Wye and Lugg in winter.

12. LEACH'S PETREL. *Oceanodroma leucorhoa leucorhoa* (Vieill.)

Rare vagrant.

Specimens were picked up dead in 1832, at Dewsall in the severe snowstorm 1879-80, at Moccas in September, 1905, and at Kington on 26th November, 1929.

Dead or dying Leach's petrels were found at Pontrilas (2), Stretton Grandison, Moreton-on-Lugg and Walford, Leintwardine during the last days of October and first of November, 1952, on the occasion of the widespread "wreck" of so many of this species in this country.

14. STORM-PETREL. *Hydrobates pelagicus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

One was shot at Shobdon in December, 1867, one killed at Foy, 1877, and one was found dead at Rotherwas after a two-day gale on 12th November, 1936. One was picked up at Eastnor in dying condition on 30th November, 1954, after a gale, and one was found dead at Staunton-on-Wye on 15th November, 1959.

16. MANX SHEARWATER. *Procellaria puffinus puffinus* (Brünn.)

Rare vagrant.

There are no fewer than 17 records of dead or exhausted shearwaters occurring in the county, almost all in the month of September, and after equinoctial gales. Many of the birds were recently fledged juveniles. It has been possible in the case of exhausted and otherwise undamaged birds to return them to the Welsh coast and thus secure their survival.

26. FULMAR PETREL. *Fulmarus glacialis glacialis* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

The museum specimen (an immature bird) was caught at Pontrilas in October, 1889. The only record.

27. GANNET. *Sula bassana* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull mentions a young bird picked up in an exhausted state at Peterchurch in 1881, while Hutchinson gives two further records for that year—one near Mordiford, and one at Preston-on-Wye, and one shot or found at Hereford in 1876. An apparently uninjured adult bird was found sitting on a garden path at Aylestone Hill, Hereford, on 17th September, 1935, after a gale; it flew away westwards. An adult bird was found near Callow on 1st June, 1942, in an injured condition; it was fed on fish for about a fortnight, but died without recovering its power of flight. An injured bird was caught at Leominster on 6th June, 1949. One was found on Flintsham Pool on 22nd September, 1953, after a severe gale. Birds were seen at Kington on 20th September, 1960, and on 27th January, 1965; and at Hereford on 1st May, 1967. Gannets never willingly fly inland and occur here only as a result of disorientation under the stress of gale-force winds.



28. CORMORANT. *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* (L.)

A not uncommon visitor at all seasons.

The Rev. Prebendary S. Cornish Watkins wrote: "One of the most curious occurrences of the year was the appearance, on 14th May, of eight cormorants, who settled for a time on the tower of the Cathedral, to the great disgust of those Canons Residentiary, the jackdaws." *W.C.T.* 1929, iii, 226.

It is perhaps commonest in late summer and autumn, but a single bird or a pair may be seen in any month flying up or down the Wye or Lugg, or perched upon a post or tree to dry its wings after fishing in the river.

Most of the records refer to the winter months (November to March), when flocks of 15 or 20 are commonly to be seen on favoured reaches, such as Turner's Boat. The roosting-tree to which the birds habitually assemble may be used season after season, and becomes quite white with excrement.

29. SHAG. *Phalacrocorax aristotelis aristotelis* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

There are only four nineteenth century records and one more recent: a first-year male was killed while resting on All Saints' steeple, Hereford, on 11th October, 1876: immature bird killed at Ross in January, 1892: another at Eardisley, 22nd February, 1898: one brought alive to Mrs. Blake at Ross in January, 1902, was presented to Hereford Museum.

On February 16th, 1974, a bird of this species was found walking in Dr. Shuttleworth's garden at Grosmont: it appeared unable to fly and in spite of attempts to keep it alive it died within 24 hours.

30. COMMON HERON. *Ardea cinerea cinerea* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

BULL

Not infrequent. In the early 18th century there was a heronry at the Moor within a mile of the city of Hereford. Others at Brampton Bryan, Lingen, the Moor near Hay and at Canon Frome. Heronries existing reduced to two; one at Berrington near Leominster and the other at Letton.

HORNE

Common.

HUTCHINSON

Common resident. Nests at Bredwardine, Eywood, Knill, Canon Frome, Letton and Berrington.

*The Field*  
May 1st, 1915

Records destruction during that spring of a heronry within 3 miles of the City—16 to 18 nests. The nests were in large wild cherry trees. This was at Rotherwas.

The Rotherwas birds moved to Aconbury, but were again ousted by felling, and eventually disappeared. There has been no nesting at Letton since the freeze-up of 1963. A number of emaciated herons were found dead under the nesting trees at that time. The Berrington heronry continues to flourish under the protection of the owners, and contains 70-90 occupied nests annually. In addition one other small heronry has become established within the last 12 years. This is in low willows in Leach Pool, Clifford. There are about 16 nests there (1974).

It is thought that the heron is about holding its own in Herefordshire. The increasing rarity of the common frog must however constitute an unfavourable factor affecting the bird's well-being.

34. SQUACCO HERON. *Ardeola ralloides* (Scop.)

Rare Vagrant.

Bull records a party of five of these birds as having spent some 10 days on the Wye 5 miles above Hereford in the summer of 1873. One of these was shot.

Another shot on the Wye on 3rd May, 1867, and recorded by Bull was probably shot not in Herefordshire, but just over the Welsh border, and the occurrence is not included by Horne or Hutchinson.

36. NIGHT HERON. *Nycticorax nycticorax nycticorax* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

BULL

"The specimen in Hereford Museum . . . is labelled 'Backney Marsh, a marsh situated about two miles from Ross . . .'" (A list compiled by W. Blake, of Ross, mentions "Backney Marsh bird, 1837.")

One found above Wilton bridge, Ross, *W.C.T.* 1912, p. 47.

[Two other records, one of a bird taken about 1876 (*Vict. C. Hist.*) and one of two birds seen flying over Kington on 16th July, 1947, cannot be claimed as fully authenticated.]

37. LITTLE BITTERN. *Ixobrychus minutus minutus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Dr. Bull mentions two instances of this bird having been obtained in Herefordshire. There have been no further occurrences.

38. BITTERN. *Botaurus stellaris stellaris* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull says that the bittern was moderately plentiful in Herefordshire at the beginning of the 19th century. There are fifteen records of single birds shot in the county in the last hundred years. A bittern was seen only once in Herefordshire in the 30 years before 1917, but since its re-establishment as a breeding-species in Norfolk, four have been shot in Herefordshire—an index of ignorance or callousness not to the county's credit.

On 1st February, 1961, one was seen on a pool at Stowe Farm, Whitney, and on 11th March, 1961, one was flushed from a near-by pool—perhaps the same bird.

On 31st January, 1970, one was seen at Byton Marsh, and on 23rd February, 1970, one was seen on Winforton Common by Miss Anne Powell and several other observers.

43. GLOSSY IBIS. *Plegadis falcinellus falcinellus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

One was obtained in December, 1902, at Winforton and a second bird seen in the neighbourhood. (B.B. 14: 139.)

A young bird was shot at Castle-end, near Ross, on 2nd Sept., 1920. (W.T. 1920: 219.)

45. MALLARD. *Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos* (L.)

Common and resident. Breeding.

46. TEAL. *Anas crecca crecca* (L.)

Winter visitor in some numbers. A few remain to breed.

The teal has bred at Brampton Bryan, Sarnesfield, Moccas, Allensmore, Brockhampton near Bromyard, Letton, Bredwardine, Wigmore Moor and Byton Moor.

47. GARGANEY. *Anas querquedula* (L.)

Rare summer visitor.

There are only five Herefordshire records, a bird killed at Moccas in 1882; a pair, one of which, a drake, was shot near Leominster in the spring of 1893; a drake seen at Aymestrey pool on 7th March, 1949; a pair seen on Wigmore moor on 13th March, 1966; and a pair on Shelwick meadow near a large flock (70 birds) of teal.

49. GADWALL. *Anas strepera* (L.)

A lone female of this species was shot at Much Marcle on 31st December, 1953. On 12th May, 1957, R. H. Baillie and friends watched one in company with mallard and other species on flooded meadows at Wigmore moor. In May, 1966, a pair nested on a pool at Weston-under-Penyard. These birds originated from Rudhall pools where the species has bred for a number of years, being the descendants of pinioned birds introduced there by a previous owner.

50. WIGEON. *Anas penelope* (L.)

A regular winter visitor in numbers which vary according to climatic conditions.

The winter flocks which frequent the rivers and graze on the riverside meadows are of moderate size as long as the weather remains open, but increase greatly in flood conditions and severe cold. Flocks of 300 or 400 birds are attracted at such times to flooded meadows in the Wye, Lugg and Teme valleys.

52. PINTAIL. *Anas acuta acuta* (L.)

Winter visitor but not common.

Small flocks of pintail come every winter to the Wye or flooded Lugg.

53. SHOVELER. *Spatula clypeata* (L.)

Uncommon winter visitor. Has bred.

For some years two or three pairs of shoveler bred at Brampton Bryan (dates not recorded). A nest was found at Buckton Marsh in 1944 by A. E. W. Bolt. Two or three shoveler are usually to be seen at the H. and R. Nature Trust's pool at Eywood at all times of the year except the breeding season.



55. SCAUP. *Aythya marila marila* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

W.C.T. There are half-a-dozen records of birds shot in winter on the Herefordshire Wye—in 1851, 1855, 1890, 1892, 1894 and 1895.

The Rev. Cornish Watkins saw several scaup at Shobdon in early January, 1917.

56. TUFTED DUCK. *Aythya fuligula* (L.)

Common winter visitor, also breeding.

BULL Not an infrequent winter visitor.

S. CORNISH Seen at Kentchurch—"quite a new bird to me".

WATKINS (diary) 23-11-1900

Young broods seen in 1918 and 1919 on Rectory Pool, Shobdon (first breeding records in Herefordshire), and a nest was shown to Preb. S. C. Watkins at Eywood Pool on 13.6.21.

It has bred annually for many years now at Brampton Bryan, and sparingly and irregularly elsewhere in the county.

57. POCHARD. *Aythya ferina* (L.)

A winter visitor in small numbers to Byton, Shobdon, Eywood and Flintsham Pools. It is occasionally to be seen on the Wye.

60. GOLDEN-EYE. *Bucephala clangula clangula* (L.)

Regular winter visitor and passage migrant.

Small numbers of golden-eye winter annually in the Wye, always from January until March, but arriving occasionally as early as November.

64. COMMON SCOTER. *Melanitta nigra nigra* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

Bull says it sometimes pays a passing visit to the upper reaches of the Wye in Herefordshire. Birds were shot at Goodrich in 1891 and 1894, and seen near Backney in 1919.

An exhausted scoter drake was picked up at Wootton by Col. A. P. J. Hibbert during the severe weather early in 1947.

A drake was seen on Shobdon Decoy Pool on 20th April, 1962, a duck on the Wye at Winforton on 7th December, 1964, and a duck on Eywood Pool on 30th November and 1st December, 1968.

RUDDY DUCK. *Oxyura Jamaicensis*.

Recent visitor.

There are two Herefordshire records. A bird was seen swimming up the Wye at Hereford on 2nd January 1963, and a pair was present on Eywood Pool during July 1975.

69. RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. *Mergus serrator* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

One was shot at Garnons on January 18th, 1966. Reports of sightings have been very few in number, and data received generally insufficient for acceptance. A bird watched swimming in the Wye at Hereford on 11th November, 1959 by A. J. Smith appeared to be a female of this species. A pair were present in company with five goosander at Eywood Pool on 10th March, 1972, and were identified by Mr. and Mrs. F. S. Bromley.

70.—GOOSANDER. *Mergus merganser merganser* (L.)

Regular winter visitor, remaining until April.

Small parties winter in the Wye from January (less commonly December) until March. Hard weather increases the numbers: in early 1963 flocks of 30 and even on one occasion over 50 were seen in open stretches of river.

71. SMEW. *Mergus albellus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

W.C.T., 1895 Hutchinson, Cambridge Phillips and p. 104 Blake mention a female killed near Ross, apparently in 1895, and Phillips states that a male had been obtained by Col. de Winton (no date).

No twentieth-century record.

73. SHELD-DUCK. *Tadorna tadorna* (L.)

Uncommon passage migrant.

There are records of sheld-duck, single birds or twos or threes, nearly all on the banks of Wye or Lugg, or on flooded meadows during the winter months (November to February) almost every year. Exceptionally it has been seen as late as April or May.

74. RUDDY SHELD-DUCK. *Casarca ferruginea* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

Hutchinson reports one shot at Holme Lacy in 1892.

Two were seen flying about and settling on meadows at Shelwick on 7th February, 1937, but they were presumed to be escaped captive birds.



75. GREY LAG-GOOSE. *Anser anser* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

No occurrences claimed by Bull or Hutchinson.

A flock of this species landed in dense fog at Bucknell in January, 1959. One gander stayed and attached itself to a tame Chinese goose. It frequented Herefordshire meadows all that summer.

A flock of eight were seen on Wigmore Moors in company with the local Canada Geese on February 6th, 1971, by Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Fox. One at Leach Pool May 28th, 1972.

76. WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE. *Anser albifrons albifrons* (Scop.)

Regular passage migrant.

Grey geese pass over Herefordshire annually in some numbers.

At Slimbridge, where grey geese spend the winter in large numbers and where the geese seen over Herefordshire are passing to, or returning from, the white-fronted goose is by far the most numerous.

Skins or parties of geese are frequently reported as "unidentified grey geese". When occurring from December to March these are fairly certain to belong to this species. The only species likely to be seen from May to September is the Canada Goose.

Winter records of White Fronts in small parties, or very occasionally larger flocks of 30 or more frequenting low ground in the county, are very numerous in wet winters with some flooded grassland, but quite exceptional in dry seasons.

78. BEAN-GOOSE. *Anser arvensis arvensis* (Brehm.)

Rare passage migrant.

Bull thought that flocks not infrequently passed over Herefordshire but there are only two certain records. A bird was killed at Mordiford in 1881, and two were shot out of a flock of 14 at Wilton during the first week of December, 1921.

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE. *Anser arvensis brachyrhynchus* (Baillon.)

Rare passage migrant.

One was killed near Moccas in the winter 1879-80, and one near Lugg Mills in December, 1880.

[A solitary bird of this species frequented some stubbles at Sutton St. Nicholas during February, 1952, but its comparative tameness marked it as an escaped captive bird.]

A single bird was seen associating with Canada Geese at Leach Pool, Clifford, during February and March, 1972.

79. SNOW GOOSE. *Anser hyperboreus hyperboreus* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

A pair of these birds were seen flying north over flooded meadow land at Shelwick on 28th January, 1937. They were presumed by the observer (C.W.W.) to be escaped captive birds.

80. BRENT GOOSE. *Branta bernicla hrota* (Müller.)

Rare passage migrant.

One was shot out of a flock near Mordiford on 16th January, 1939.

81. BARNACLE-GOOSE. *Branta leucopsis* (Bechst.)

Rare passage migrant.

A female was shot at a pool near St. Weonards but no date is given by Dr. Bull for this record.

Two of this species frequented the Wye at Castleton from 28th September until 23rd December, 1969. Eight were seen on the Wye near Winforton on 21st November, 1970. One was seen at Leach Pool on 31st December, 1972. Escaped birds from Slimbridge in all probability.

82. CANADA GOOSE. *Branta canadensis canadensis* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

Two flocks were seen on the Wye in the winter of 1885-6. One male bird was shot from one of these flocks at Goodrich.

A pair took up residence and nested at Brampton Bryan in 1952. Swans drove them from Brampton Bryan in the spring of 1953, but the birds nested beside the Lugg near Leintwardine. From that date onwards Canada Geese became firmly established in the Leintwardine area, and nesting took place on the Teme, at Wigmore, Shobdon, Byton and Titley. Flocks were seen at Leach Pool, Letton, Lugg meadows and as far south as Fawley and Wyastone Leys.

84. MUTE SWAN. *Cygnus olor* (Gm.)

Common resident and breeding.

85. WHOOPER-SWAN. *Cygnus cygnus* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

BULL One shot near Ross, 1854.

HUTCHINSON Five seen at Whitney 1854, one of which was shot.

A flock of ten were seen on the flooded Lugg meadows at Tidnor on 29th and 30th March, 1947, in company with Bewick's and mute swans, and for one day in the following winter on Eastnor moat, again accompanied by Bewick's. A similar flock on Lugg meadow floods was reported in 1953, and since then the bird has been recorded in most winters, generally in very small numbers (2-6 birds) and often in company with Mute or Bewick's swans. There have been 15 such reports since 1950, and the river Wye or flooded Lugg meadows have always been the chosen sites.

86. BEWICK'S SWAN. *Cygnus bewickii bewickii* (Yarr.)

Uncommon winter visitor.

A Bewick's swan was killed near Ross in 1854. One was killed at Dadnor in the winter of 1885-6, and two immature birds, out of a flock of four, were killed in the Ross area on 28th Dec., 1890. (W.C.T. 1947, p. 162, Hutch., and V. Hist.)

Visits by this swan were quite irregular until recent years. Since the winter of 1961 flocks have been recorded annually. A flock of about 20 annually winters on the Wye or adjacent pools between Castleford and Boughrood, and flood conditions generally attract flocks (up to 50 birds) to such areas as Lugg meadows, the Arrow-Lugg confluence, Sutton meadows, or the meadows between Monkland and Irvington.

90. SPOTTED EAGLE. *Aquila clanga* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

An immature bird was shot near Brinsop Court on 15th Nov., 1915.

91. BUZZARD. *Buteo buteo buteo* (L.)

BULL The least rare of the large hawks—nested in the Doward Wood in 1881, and on the ruins of Goodrich Castle in 1886.

HORNE Far from numerous. Bred at Bishopswood in 1881.

HUTCHINSON Resident, becoming rare.

Seventy years ago the buzzard was not uncommon, at any rate in the woods near Ross. Incessant persecution caused the bird to become extinct in the county except as a rare vagrant; but after the war, 1914-1918, it returned and began to nest again. The spread of the species in this county was due to pressure from Radnorshire where it had become extremely common by 1920. Prebendary S. Cornish Watkins reported in that year "a pair nested and brought off a single young one near Shobdon". (W.C.T. 1920, p. 260).

By 1930 it was nesting all over the county, though less common in the eastern half. It will be remembered that the rabbit was abundant and increasing at this date. The advent of myxomatosis brought about a marked reduction in numbers of buzzards through starvation and depressed breeding. The adoption of new predatory habits resulted for a time in renewed persecution by farmers and gamekeepers. By the early 60s the population had steadied at a lower level, and breeding was normal.

The buzzard is now not uncommon in the western half of the county, but much more sparsely distributed throughout the eastern half.

92. ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD. *Buteo lagopus lagopus* (Pontopp.)

Rare vagrant.

A specimen was killed at Yatton Court, Kingsland, in November, 1879. (Hutch.)

One was seen on 27th September, 1964, at Turner's Boat by A. J. Smith and again on 3rd October by the same and other observers. Seen perching in a good light for some two hours, its appearance was unmistakable.

93. SPARROW-HAWK. *Accipiter nisus nisus* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

Normally well-distributed in the county its numbers were kept in check by farmers and gamekeepers. Its virtual disappearance from E. Anglia and the Midlands as a result of poisoning by insecticides was reflected by great rarity and a lack of nesting reports here about 1960 and in the following years. By 1965 and 1966 reports of sightings were numerous and there were records of nesting in different areas. It is to be hoped that this recovery will not result in a resumption of persecution.



95. KITE. *Milvus milvus milvus* (L.)

Formerly resident. Now extinct as a breeding bird.

BULL Some years ago the kite nested in Brampton Bryan Park. The keeper, by patient watching, managed to shoot the male bird; the female found a new mate and returned to share the same fate.

HORNE Getting very rare.

HUTCHINSON Resident, but becoming very rare, if not extinct in the county. Breeding.

W.C.T., 1869 p. 71 The kite is almost a bird of the past in our county. Last week in the parish of Sellack we had a fine view of a pair of these birds. In the woods that border the Wye Valley between Ross and Monmouth they may still be seen, but are rapidly disappearing under the ruthless persecution of the gamekeeper. (The Rev. W. C. Ley.)

LINGWOOD 1840 "Only inserted in list on the authority of my gamekeeper".

W.C.T., 1913 p. 124 "About 50 years ago kites are said to have been not uncommon. The last record I have is for the year 1891, when three were seen, wheeling about in the air between Kentchurch and Pontrilas"—Rev. S. Cornish Watkins.

W. CLEMENT LEY (in litt. 27-3-89) "I once saw a pair of kites soaring above my boat on the lower reaches of the Wye; below them circled a pair of buzzards; below these a honey buzzard and nearest to me a common kestrel".

A very occasional passage migrant over our county.

97. WHITE-TAILED EAGLE. *Haliaeetus albicilla* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

One was trapped at Hampton Court about 1850; a female shot at Berrington 1875; one seen near Leominster 1896, was later shot and is in Hereford Museum. One was shot near Hereford in 1908, one seen near Eardisley 1917, and one seen at Staunton-Arrow 1947.

[At about 11 a.m. on 8th September, 1969, in bright sun at How Caple four observers watched by telescope an eagle cruising at about their own level. The bird was most probably an immature sea eagle or perhaps an escaped captive Golden Eagle.]

98. HONEY-BUZZARD. *Pernis apivorus apivorus* (L.)

Formerly summer visitor and breeding, but now extinct in the county.

BULL

Some few years since the honey-buzzard was not uncommon, but it has now become very scarce from the relentless persecution of the gamekeepers. About 10 years since the Hereford bird-stuffers had two or three honey-buzzards brought to them every year. In 1880 three were brought from Whitfield to be stuffed. The old bird was sold at a bazaar in aid of St. Devereux church, and for the young birds the keeper asked the prohibitory price of £5.

HORNE

Rare.

HUTCHINSON

Rare resident from May to November. Breeding.

Bred at Whitfield, 1877.

Bred at Bishop's-wood, Ross, 1895—eggs taken and old birds killed.

W.C.T., 1869 p. 72

A female shot from her nest in Newent Wood. The nest contained three eggs.

Zoologist, 1879 p. 132

In 1877 the honey-buzzard nested at Whitfield. The young were taken and the old birds killed.

The Field

Aug. 20th, 1881

The butler at Gayton Hall reports a honey-buzzard trapped in Queen's Wood.

The Naturalist's Journal 1895, p. 276

A pair of honey-buzzards shot this summer on an estate within 5 miles of Ross. Two eggs were also taken.

Zoologist, 1911 p. 149

The latest record of nesting in England appears to be from Herefordshire in 1895. (F. C. R. Jourdain.)

Ditto, p. 199

"I found the honey-buzzard's egg on 8th June, 1867, in Penyard Wood, in an old nest—relined—of the common buzzard.

In 1868 I disturbed a honey-buzzard from an old buzzard's nest in Hacker's Hole, about half a mile from Penyard Wood". (Letter of W. C. Palmer.)

"In 1883 (or 1885) a honey-buzzard was seen on various occasions at Cradley by members of the Carter family." (Letter from Mr. G. N. Carter.)

Let us hope that both this beautiful harmless bird and the kite may return to us as the buzzard and raven have done, and that, if they do, both the gamekeeper and the collector will give protection and not molest the eggs or the parent birds.

100. HEN-HARRIER. *Circus cyaneus cyaneus* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

About 1870 not infrequently seen in the Ross district, at Breinton, Monnington and Bredwardine. (Bull, quoting Rev. C. Ley.)

There are five county records for the 1870's and 80's and six in the present century, up to 1950, after which date H.O.C. annual reports mention it most years, mostly in autumn or winter, but occasionally in April or May. See also note on next species (Montagu's harrier.)

102. MONTAGU'S HARRIER. *Circus pygargus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A pair was seen at Ross-on-Wye, 15th September, 1945. (B.B., 39:192.)

Reports of harrier spp. seen in the county are received with considerable regularity. In many cases observers are unable to decide between this and the preceding species. Some no doubt are Montagu's, especially in all probability those occurring in late spring and summer, prior to the recent nation-wide decline in the species.

103. OSPREY. *Pandion haliaëtus haliaëtus* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

BULL One was shot near Fownhope in October, 1879.

An adult bird frequented the decoy pool, Shobdon, from 23rd till 29th September, 1949. The next day an osprey was seen at Cabalva on the Wye near Whitney, where it was seen daily until mid-October. On 16th October one was seen at Whitchurch-on-Wye. It is presumed that these reports refer to the same bird.

It is noteworthy that although the osprey was unrecorded in the county for the 70 years preceding 1949, there have been no fewer than 12 records from that date up to the present. This period coincides with a time of increasing sightings in Scotland, and the resumption of breeding there from 1954 onwards. The Herefordshire records occur most commonly in April and August-September. It seems probable that the Wye forms part of a migration route continued northwards via the Shropshire lakes and the Lake District to the Scottish highlands.

104. HOBBY. *Falco subbuteo subbuteo* (L.)

BULL Not infrequent throughout the wooded districts of the county.

HUTCHINSON Rare, resident from May to September.

HORNE A few appear most summers.

The hobby is a regular summer visitor in very small numbers. It probably nests annually in the county, but the bird does not constantly use the same locality as it does in some other parts of England. Birds are seen every summer, and breeding has been proved to occur (and to have been successful) on 15 occasions since 1950—the last having been in 1974.

105. PEREGRINE FALCON. *Falco peregrinus peregrinus* (Tunst.)

BULL A very rare visitor to Herefordshire.

HUTCHINSON Now a rare visitor but formerly bred in the county.

HORNE An occasional visitor.

Until 1958 the peregrine bred regularly just beyond the county boundary. It has not bred in the Black Mountains since that date. This is part of the debacle which overtook the species as a result of poisoning by insecticides. Though nesting across the border the bird used to hunt regularly in Herefordshire and even took up winter quarters in our river valleys. Since the desertion of the Welsh eyries, the bird is seen only occasionally, foraging or on migration.

107. MERLIN. *Falco columbarius aesalon* (Tunst.)

Regular visitor, August till March. May breed?

BULL Usually a winter visitor, but sometimes stays to breed in Herefordshire. The Rev. Clement Ley has taken its eggs in May from beneath the heather on the Fwddog mountain.



HORNE Scarce.

HUTCHINSON Rare resident. Breeding.

The Fwddog, though once part of Herefordshire, is now included in Monmouthshire. The merlin breeds regularly in the Black Mountains but there has been no report of its nesting on the small section of the range which is within our county boundary, though one has been seen soaring, and two cock birds have been seen fighting in that area (2nd June, 1972). One was seen at the top of the Olchon valley on 10th August, 1974.

110. KESTREL. *Falco tinnunculus tinnunculus* (L.)

BULL The most common of all the hawks.

HORNE Very general.

HUTCHINSON A common resident but becoming rarer.

Resident and generally distributed but by no means a very common bird, owing to persecution, now much less than in the past.

In winter the kestrel becomes much commoner, especially when comparatively mild and dry conditions have favoured the field vole. The increase is no doubt due to migrant birds.

There is little doubt but that the kestrel is prevented from nesting in some areas owing to lack of suitable sites. Judicious provision of nesting-boxes might be a real help to this species, as well as to brown and barn owls.

111. RED GROUSE. *Lagopus scoticus scoticus* (Lath.)

BULL Found on Bircher Common.

The small Herefordshire population exists solely on the eastern side of the Black Mountains and is noted annually, mostly in the area above Longtown.

113. BLACK GROUSE. *Lyrurus tetrix britannicus* (With. and Lonn.)

BULL Breeds at Craswall—seen (1840) at Stoke Edith—killed on Bircher Common, Shobdon, etc.

Zoologist, 1886, Black Game have lately settled down in p. 250 Craswall. (H. W. Wood.)

Ditto, 1850, Grey hen killed at Hampton Court. p. 2852

A blackcock was seen about 40 years ago at Huntington by Dr. C. D. E. Edwards.

At one time black game existed in some numbers in the Craswall district.

Major T. P. Powell's game books record a few killed on Cefn Hill and Cusop Hill. Grey hens were not shot, but Major Powell records that a gun "in youthful ardour and blood lust" once shot three young ones out of a brood. In 1929 a pheasant-blackgame hybrid, believed to be the result of a cross between cock-pheasant and gray-hen, was shot at Cusop.

The birds became so scarce that they were believed to have become extinct. In 1938, however, a pair were seen in that area, and two henbirds in 1939. It has not been seen since.

115. RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGE. *Alectoris rufa rufa* (L.)

H.B. Introduced into Britain about 1770.

BULL A rare bird — seems to have wandered from Gloucestershire. One shot at Fawley. (1864.)

The Field, French partridge shot near Ross. The Editor states: "We do not remember to have heard of the bird before in Herefordshire".

Locally distributed resident.

While the Red-Legged Partridge has a wide distribution in the county, it is only consistently noted in certain favoured areas. Most reports come from the north and east of Hereford. No real evidence of decline, as in the case of the partridge.

116. PARTRIDGE. *Perdix perdix perdix* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

A marked diminution in numbers has been apparent especially since the mid-1960's: while both the 1969 and 1970 breeding seasons showed some improvement, the depression in population continues.

117. QUAIL. *Coturnix coturnix coturnix* (L.)

Uncommon summer visitor and breeding.

BULL More numerous in former years.

HUTCHINSON Rare.

Mrs. Armitage's painting is dated 12th October, 1867.

The parish of Shobdon seems always to have had a special attraction for this species, and is the only area in which they have occurred with some regularity over many years.

Shobdon Court records (the Bateman family papers) mention a 1772 purchase of a draught-net for quails and partridges. (T. R. Ammonds.)

H.O.C. reports show notes for somewhere in the county in each of the last 20 years, excepting only 1957. Breeding seemed certain in 1960, and was proved in 1961, 1962, 1964 and 1970. The latter two years were outstanding, with numerous records from many parts of the county.

118. PHEASANT. *Phasianus colchicus* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

H.B. Introduced into Great Britain before 1066.

119. COMMON CRANE. *Megalornis grus grus*.

"One shot on the Herefordshire border in 1859 by a farmer who, finding it described as a 'common' crane in the books, gave the body to his waggoner who cooked and ate it". H. E. Forrest "Fauna of Shropshire".

Mr. John Rock of Clungunford, an able ornithologist and collector (1817-1881), mentions this specimen calling it "this rare and splendid bird, shot at Trippleton on the Teme by Mr. Roberts of that place."

Trippleton, formerly in Shropshire, became part of Herefordshire on the redrawing of the boundary in 1894. We may therefore claim the record for this county.

120. WATER-RAIL. *Rallus aquaticus aquaticus* (L.)

BULL Breeds.

HUTCHINSON Resident.

Winter, passage, and breeding birds occur in small numbers.

Not infrequently noted in ditches and other non-breeding areas in winter.

Often heard in suitable habitats during the breeding season, and nesting was confirmed in two Herefordshire 10 km. squares during the B.T.O. Atlas Survey of 1968/72.

121. SPOTTED CRAKE. *Porzana porzana* (L.)

Bull was of opinion that "a few pairs visit the county most summers, and there is every probability that it breeds here. Four specimens were brought to the museum from April to June in the years 1880-1884—all of which came from the Lugg valley". One was shot at Allensmore in 1849, two on the Wye near Hereford in October, 1875, and another at Llangarron on 15th November, 1905. One was found dead at Bromsash, near Ross, on 14th March, 1954. No recent records.

125. CORNCRAKE. *Crex crex* (L.)

LINGWOOD, 1840 Common.

CORNISH WATKINS, "For the last 7 or 8 years at least, Land-rails have practically deserted Staunton and indeed Herefordshire in general. This year several pairs have returned again to the meadows round Staunton and Pembridge."

Formerly common summer visitor, now passage migrant and very rare breeding bird verging on extinction as such.

The voice of the corncrake is still heard from time to time in May or June, but there has been only one known successful breeding record in nearly 50 years. On the latter occasion, at Almeley Wooton in 1964, 7-8 chicks were seen and one bird actually caught and photographed. (Mrs. V. M. Jenkins.)

126. MOORHEN. *Gallinula chloropus chloropus* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

Predation by mink in some riparian areas (e.g. Lower Lugg) has noticeably reduced the numbers of this species.

127. COOT. *Fulica atra atra* (L.)

Resident.

Breeds on many lakes and ponds in the county. It is also to be seen on the Wye in winter.

129. LITTLE BUSTARD. *Otis tetrax* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

One was shot near Dorstone, and is now in Hereford museum (date unknown.)



131. OYSTERCATCHER. *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus* (L.)

Passage migrant and rare winter visitor.

Bull says it "not infrequently visits Herefordshire" and adds that "one or two are shot nearly every winter on the banks of Wye or Lugg". A single bird frequented the Lugg meadows near Hereford throughout December, 1950.

The oystercatcher has been noted on 15 occasions since 1954, and, from the evidence of the H.O.C. Reports, is clearly a passage migrant, mainly during March-April and July-September periods.

133. LAPWING. *Vanellus vanellus* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

Still relatively widespread as a breeding bird, but numbers now markedly diminished and probably still falling. It is clear that modern farming practice has, at the very least, played an important role in this decline. Mr. T. R. Ammonds farms in the north of the county, and has written authoritatively on this subject (H.O.C. Report, 1972, p. 65.) One paragraph in his article well illustrates the extent of this change in status of the lapwing on Herefordshire farmland, it reads:—"For comparison on Easthampton Farm of 230 acres 50 years ago, there were at least 80 breeding pairs, that is an average of a pair per 3 acres. I have a note of April, 1928, of 8 nests with eggs on a 10 acre field. Numbers have gradually declined over the years. When the Common Bird Census began in 1961 there were only 8 pairs on the whole farm and this year two, only one of which was successful".

The lapwing is a very common post-breeding-season passage migrant, and tends to be especially numerous during August, while the wintering population is, of course, dependent on the weather situation; when conditions allow large flocks are frequent in the county.

134. RINGED PLOVER. *Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula* (L.)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Horne states that the museum specimen was killed at Backney marsh near Ross. Recorded in 10 of the last 20 years. The occurrences span the March-May and July-October periods, with the post-breeding season sightings slightly more frequent. While most of the notes refer to single birds, an exceptional party of 5 is on record.

135. LITTLE RINGED PLOVER. *Charadrius dubius curonicus*. (Gmelin.)

Uncommon passage migrant.

The Little Ringed Plover was first recorded in Herefordshire in 1959, and subsequently in 1960, 1962, 1964, 1967 and 1970. Of these occurrences 4 were March or April migrants, and two, both immatures, appeared in August. All were singletons noted in the vicinity of the Wye or Lugg. It is very doubtful if any of the county gravel pits are sufficiently undisturbed to provide a satisfactory breeding habitat at the present time.

139. GREY PLOVER. *Charadrius squatarola* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

Seven examples have been shot in the county. A small flock was seen in the Lugg meadows on 26th November, 1936.

140. SOUTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER. *Charadrius apricarius apricarius* (L.)

Winter visitor, has bred.

W.C.T., 1897, p. 269

On the occasion of a visit to the Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains on 17th June, 1897, Mr. W. E. de Winton said the golden plover "has, as far as I can learn, never been recorded as breeding within the limits of the county. The cock bird . . . in his manoeuvres, and warning notes to his mate was well worth seeing. The hen bird ran a considerable distance from the neighbourhood of the nest before rising . . . I did not search for the nest . . . but I was perfectly satisfied that a nest of eggs was there".

The golden plover is a regular winter visitor, often in considerable numbers in a few favoured areas. This race has been noted in breeding plumage while on spring migration through the county.

NORTHERN GOLDEN PLOVER. *Charadrius apricarius altifrons* (Brehm.)

On the 27th March, 1955, a migratory flock of 85 golden plover on flooded Lugg meadows contained 12 birds of the northern race, identifiable by their distinctive breeding plumage. This was the first record of *Altifrons* for Herefordshire.

142. DOTTEREL. *Charadrius morinellus* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

A small flock was seen at Letton in 1878, and a specimen was shot on the Hereford-Monmouth border about 1890. An immature bird was picked up dead in Hereford city on 22nd September, 1906.

143. TURNSTONE. *Arenaria interpres interpres* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A specimen in the museum was labelled "Backney Marsh 1859"—Bull.

A confiding bird in winter plumage was watched feeding at the Hereford Sewage Works on 20th August, 1962.

145. SNIPE. *Capella gallinago gallinago* (L.)

Resident and breeding. Also passage migrant.

BULL

The abundance of the common snipe has given way much in Herefordshire to the reclamation by drainage of the wet marshy lands.

Dr. Bull's remarks apply at the present day, but snipe still nest on some marshy fields, though drainage has caused a great decrease in their numbers.

146. GREAT SNIPE. *Capella media* (Lath.)

Rare vagrant.

Horne gives two instances of single birds seen at Rotherwas, the dates being 1886 and 1887.

147. JACK SNIPE. *Lymnocyptes minimus* (Brünn.)

Winter visitor and passage migrant.

Occurs annually as a winter visitor, and localised observation on a daily basis shows passage, particularly in the October-November and February-April periods. The numbers involved are impossible to judge owing to the difficulty of flushing this tight-sitting bird with such a scattered distribution. They certainly appear regularly along river banks and in other wet places, almost always as single birds, although exceptionally five were found around one very small patch of floodwater.

148.—WOODCOCK. *Scolopax rusticola* (L.)

Winter visitor, also resident and breeding.

BULL

The number of woodcocks that now remain to breed is believed to exceed very largely that of former years.

One of the earliest records of nesting in England was of a woodcock's nest in Queen's Wood, Ross, in 1766. The site is in Gloucestershire, close to the Hereford border. (vide *Annual Register* 1766.)

Dr. Bull gives as the first record of breeding 3rd May, 1848.

Nowadays the woodcock nests in practically every large woodland in the county.

150. COMMON CURLEW. *Numenius arquata arquata* (L.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

BULL

Breeds on the Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains.

HUTCHINSON

Local resident during the breeding season. Nested at Shobdon and Aymestrey, 1899 (Williams).

W.C.T., 1911.  
p. 252

The President was asked if he had reason to believe the curlew was coming to cultivated land. He replied in the affirmative.

The increase of the curlew during the years 1915 to 1940 was startling. The birds now nest over all our river valleys and low ground where they were unknown before the war, 1914-18. Saturation point has probably now been reached and their numbers have remained fairly constant in recent years.

Since the above remarks were made in 1954, there has probably been a small reduction in breeding numbers although the species is still widespread. A few birds winter in the north of the county in most years nowadays.

151. WHIMBREL. *Numenius phaeopus phaeopus* (L.)

Passage migrant.

Heard and sometimes seen on passage over the county in most years. April, May and August are the usual months.

154. BLACK-TAILED GODWIT. *Limosa limosa limosa* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

The bird now in Hereford museum was shot on the Lugg in March, 1876.

The only other record was of a party of seven, in full breeding plumage, seen on the 17th April 1962 at Wigmore Moor by C. W. Walker.



155. BAR-TAILED GODWIT. *Limosa lapponica lapponica* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

One was shot at Mordiford in 1839, and one shot at Fawley in 1879 is now in Hereford museum.

The first of the two recent records was at Buckton Bridge on the 13th Sept. 1964 when Miss S. G. Dunne had a very good view of one on the Teme. The second note was of a bird heard calling in a Redshank flock on the Glos./Herefs. border on the 26th March 1969 by P. J. Wycherley.

156. GREEN SANDPIPER. *Tringa ochropus* (L.)

Regular passage migrant and winter visitor.

May be found in suitable places at migration times and throughout the winter months with some regularity. Wintering birds have become more frequent since the mid-60's. Has been recorded in every month of the year.

157. WOOD-SANDPIPER. *Tringa glareola* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

Only seven records. One was seen on the Wye bank in the winter of 1939-40 and two more in the spring, one at Winforton and the other at Bishopstone. One occurred at Hereford Sewage Works on 19th May, 1961. The remaining three were all August records, one at Sutton on 11th August, 1968, one at Moreton-on-Lugg on 3rd August, 1970, and one at Holme Lacy on 28th August, 1975.

159. COMMON SANDPIPER. *Tringa hypoleucos* (L.)

Summer visitor and breeding. Occasional winter birds.

Although still breeding in good numbers on various rivers and elsewhere in the county, probably a little less common than in former years. Last bred within the Hereford City boundary in 1962. Certainly regular watching on the Wye around Hereford produces fewer spring records of passage birds nowadays.

161. REDSHANK. *Tringa totanus britannica* (Math.)

Passage migrant, and rare winter visitor. Has bred.

Passage birds regularly noted in small numbers, mostly during the early part of the year. Much of the potential breeding habitat has suffered through improved drainage, and there has been no conclusive evidence of nesting for more than a decade.

162. SPOTTED REDSHANK. *Tringa erythropus* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

One was shot at Monkton in 1881. The next record was of a bird watched on floodwater at Shelwick on 21st July, 1968, by S. Bennett and A. R. Mountford. The third and most recent was well viewed on the Wye below Hereford by Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Fox on 12th September, 1973.

165. GREENSHANK. *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.)

Passage migrant.

The greenshank may be found by the Wye as an autumn migrant in most years, and is occasionally seen on return passage during March. Peak movement is clearly during August and September, when the bulk of the sightings have occurred. There are very few records outside this period.

Since 1958, only the 1960 and 1965 H.O.C. Reports fail to mention this species in the county.

169. KNOT. *Calidris canutus canutus* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

One was killed at Dewsall in 1879, one was seen at Llanwarne in March, 1883, and one found in a field at Newcourt in 1884.

The first sighting this century occurred in 1954, followed by an additional seven birds over the next decade. The only certain record since 1964, however, was the rather bizarre appearance of a bird in non-breeding plumage in the forecourt of a garage at Hope-under-Dinmore on the 8th June, 1971. (Dr. W. H. D. Wince.) Of the 12 Herefordshire records, 10 relate to the September-June period. Three of these occurred in March, the only month with more than a single record to its credit. In two 19th century instances the date was not mentioned.

All the records from 1958 to 1964 inclusive followed and can reasonably be assumed to result from adverse weather conditions, i.e. rain, fog or snow, together with total cloud cover.

Regular observation of birds and weather suggest that the precipitation of over-flying birds by rain and fog is clearly the most important factor in the incidence of several wader species in the county. The occurrence of sanderling on a day which was the third in succession of rain, and the second of fog, is a classic example.

171. LITTLE STINT. *Calidris minuta* (Leisler.)

Rare passage migrant.

Two were seen at Hereford in 1960. The dates were August 31st, this bird remaining three days, and October 19th respectively. The year was generally outstanding for this species.

176. PECTORAL SANDPIPER. *Calidris melanotos* (Vieill.)  
Rare vagrant.

One record of a single bird on a small reed-covered island in the Lugg at Sutton on the 24th August, 1970. The bird was well viewed at close range and detailed field notes obtained.

178. DUNLIN. *Calidris alpina* (L.) (Subsp.)  
Uncommon passage migrant.

H. Southall of Ross (W.C.T. 1883-5) says that the Dunlin "seems to occur more frequently than formerly, though by no means common". Two were shot in the Lugg meadows in 1880, and one at Eardisland on 5th November, 1895.

The dunlin is recorded in most years nowadays, and has been noted in every month but June. It is most likely to be found between September and December inclusive. May appear on any suitable mud patch, but most sightings refer to ones and twos by the Wye or Lugg. Three birds have been examined in the hand, one each from November, January and February, all belonging to the northern subspecies (*Alpina*).

181. SANDERLING. *Crocethia alba*.  
Rare passage migrant.

There are two Herefordshire records, both on the Wye at Hereford: 11th May, 1970, and 14th August, 1972. Both birds were obligingly confiding and there was no difficulty over identification. (A.J.S.)

184. RUFF. *Philomachus pugnax* (L.)  
Rare passage migrant.

While earlier records show 5 visits of the ruff to Herefordshire, one of the present writers has personal notes on five certain, one probable, and one possible additional occurrences over the last 17 years, mostly on the Wye. An assessment of the total available picture shows one late January bird, two spring records, and the remainder between July and October. Most of the latter were certainly birds of the year.

187. GREY PHALAROPE. *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.)  
Rare passage migrant.

There are seventeen Herefordshire records, six of which occurred in September and October, 1890.

The most recent occurrences were in September, 1950, involving a singleton on a large pond at Preston Wynne, and on October 30/31st, 1963, when a bird was watched feeding very close to the observers' feet near Turner's Boat by Capt. and Mrs. J. E. A. Deacon.

185. AVOCET. *Recurvirostra avosetta* (L.)  
Rare vagrant.

One was watched by Col. Wienholt from close at hand a short distance below Wilton Bridge (date c. 1931). The bird was feeding on a sandy spit in the Wye; it seemed very tame.

Two avocets frequented the edges of two shallow ponds at Parton Farm, Eardisley for five days—27th March—1st April,

189. STONE-CURLEW. *Burhinus oedicnemus oedicnemus* (L.)  
Rare vagrant.

Three birds have been killed in the county, all at Lyde, and two of them in November. The years were 1875, 1884 and 1894.

190. COLLARED PRATINCOLE. *Glareola pratincola pratincola* (L.)  
Rare vagrant.

Bull mentions one shot at Fownhope in 1854.

192. CREAM-COLOURED COURSER. *Cursorius cursor cursor* (Lath.)  
Rare vagrant.

Bull states that one was shot at Backney marsh in 1852.

193. ARCTIC SKUA. *Stercorarius parasiticus* (L.)  
Rare vagrant.

One was killed when following a plough at Staunton Park in September, 1869; one was shot at Street Court (?date); and an immature specimen was caught near Hereford on 28th September, 1900, and died later. (Museum specimen.)

195. POMARINE SKUA. *Stercorarius pomarinus* (Temm.)  
Rare vagrant.

The specimen in Hereford museum was trapped on 8th August, 1882, on the Foxley estate when it returned to devour a young pheasant which it had killed. The only other record is of an immature bird in exhausted condition picked up at Marston in October, 1902.

196. LONG-TAILED SKUA. *Stercorarius longicaudus* (Vieill.)  
Rare vagrant.

One was shot on the Herefordshire slope of the Black Mountains on 28th August, 1912.

198. GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus marinus* (L.)  
Winter visitor and passage migrant.

In winter appears regularly on the upper Wye from across the Welsh border, and also less frequently elsewhere from the Severn gull roosts. Some evidence of migration through the county, especially in the spring. Seldom more than one or two birds at a time in any event.



199. LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. *Larus fuscus graellsii* (Brehm.)

May be seen in the county on any day throughout the year, and wintering numbers have increased since the early 1950's. Largest numbers usual at migration times, and flocks of more than 400 in November, and 300 or so in March, are on record. Sizeable parties occur with some regularity during the winter months, their incidence being almost wholly dependent upon feeding conditions.

Summer birds consist mostly of apparent adult pairs, with a scattering of unattached immatures all largely confined to the Wye valley. In fact careful feather examination at close range will often reveal the superficially mature summer birds to be sub-adult.

The vast majority of Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the county at any time of the year roost at the Severn estuary: a small number of winter birds roost across the Welsh border. In addition records of small parties of high-flying birds moving away from their usual flight lines provide a good indication that direct migration can occur: this can be at any time between February and November.

*Larus fuscus fuscus* (L.)

Carefully observed birds in good light conditions in 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1972 and 1974 were reckoned to be of the Scandinavian race by one or other of the present writers.

200. HERRING GULL. *Larus argentatus argentatus* (Pontopp.)

Mostly uncommon winter visitor.

Has been recorded in every month of the year. Occurs mostly as a visitor from the Severn estuary, with the occasional bird from across the Welsh border on the upper Wye. Most records are of singletons.

201. COMMON GULL. *Larus canus canus* (L.)

Primarily a winter visitor, passage and occasional summering non-breeders occur.

All winter gulls of this species originate at the Severn roosts, excepting a small number of Welsh, probably Breconshire, birds. The first post-breeding appearance usually occurs during the third week of July, and numbers generally increase thereafter at least to several hundred birds daily under "normal" conditions. Many thousands can appear when the availability of food is high, i.e. at times of flood: on the other hand their arrival is inhibited by sustained hard weather when the ground is well frozen and numbers may then be down to a few scavenging birds, mostly confined

to the Wye and Lugg. With the spring, pre-migratory flighting begins and is usually evident between, roughly, mid-March and mid-April. During this period flocks very often 200 to 300 strong fly up from the Severn and cross the county at low altitude in a north-westerly or northerly direction. Probably few penetrate beyond the northern border and certainly many feed within the county and all return to the roost area at dusk in the normal winter manner. Their general habits are quite unlike those of the more casual winter parties. Occasional sightings in April of sizeable and notably high-flying flocks of this species on a northerly heading are believed to provide evidence of actual migration to summer quarters. A few non-breeders usually summer and such birds can very occasionally be seen in the county. These are seldom other than immature in plumage.

207. LITTLE GULL. *Larus minutus* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

A single bird was seen on the Wye near Hereford in company with black-headed gulls on the 28th January, 1950, by A. Tucker and R. Bower, the first record for the county. BB. 43: 408. An adult in winter plumage, again consorting with black-headed gulls, was seen at Hereford sewage works on 16th January, 1954.

A bird near Ross-on-Wye on the 10th January, 1959, was the third and most recent record.

208. BLACK-HEADED GULL. *Larus ridibundus ridibundus* (L.)

Winter visitor, present in summer and often breeds.

W.C.T., 1911, Contains the first mention in these  
p. 252 Transactions of the breeding of this  
gull locally.

The black-headed gull first nested in the adjoining county of Radnorshire in 1908.

The Herefordshire "gulleries" are ill defined and have had short, but chequered, histories. Most potential breeding sites are in the north and western parts of the county. Breeding occurred within 5 miles of Hereford in 1973.

Severn estuary-based birds regularly visit the county from July to March inclusive, and can penetrate as far as the Letton area on occasions. Most winter birds feeding to the north and west of this point are from across the Welsh border.

211. KITTIWAKE. *Rissa tridactyla tridactyla* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull mentions the kittiwake as having been seen on several occasions, and a record of a bird killed at Vennwood on 12th December, 1887, is added on p. xv of the introduction to his book. There are four other winter records of specimens shot or picked up dead in the county prior to 1895. W. C. Ashdown, F.Z.S., calls it "by far the most numerous of the gulls seen in Herefordshire" (W.C.T. 1890-92: 383), but in this view he is plainly in error, and he perhaps confused the kittiwake with the common gull or black-headed gull in winter plumage.

More recently, on 12th December, 1954, a dead adult was found at Lower Eggleton by H. Rendell and identified by C.W.W. Single dead birds found at Mathon on 19th and 20th February, 1957, followed the well-documented "wreck" of this species at Aberystwyth on 10th February of that year.

212. BLACK TERN. *Chlidonias niger niger* (L.)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Bull mentions one shot at the Mynde Pool in 1859. One was seen at Whitbourne Court on 22nd May, 1901, and one shot at Bridge Sollars on 16th August, 1931. Although these are the only dated records, the bird has certainly been seen more recently on a few occasions, especially at Shobdon decoy pool in springtime.

Since the above was written in 1954, there have been a further eight sightings in seven different years, involving sixteen birds. May records predominate.

215. GULL-BILLED TERN. *Gelochelidon nilotica nilotica* (Gmelin.)

A bird watched by Mrs. M. Beach and J. C. Voysey at Ross-on-Wye on 9th September, 1967, in proximity to two common terns was thought to be of this species. As the observers themselves pointed out, in the H.O.C. Report, the otherwise acceptable field notes were made without the aid of binoculars. However, other reports at about the same time, notably those at two Gloucestershire locations, support the Herefordshire record, and provide a reasonable basis for inclusion.

217. COMMON TERN. *Sterna hirundo hirundo* (L.)

Uncommon passage migrant.

Bull considered all terns rare in Herefordshire and only to be seen after severe storms. Horne saw common terns in 1889 and noted the species as a not infrequent visitor to the county. Birds

were shot near Hereford in November, 1893, and at Preston-on-Wye in September, 1896. The late Canon W. B. Glennie stated that he had often seen one or two common terns in summer pass up the river, hawking over the shallows, and return downstream later in the same day.

Common terns have been positively identified in Herefordshire in only 4 of the 19 years since 1954. Terns thought to be either common or arctic, but not separable, were also reported in 7 additional years. The distribution of the records clearly indicate that spring passage is substantially a May event, and that the return is during the August-September period.

218. ARCTIC TERN. *Sterna macrura* (Naumann.)

Rare passage migrant.

A single bird was picked up dead at Stansbatch near Staunton-on-Arrow where it had been seen flying about for several days previously—1st June, 1903.

Small parties were seen in the Lugg valley at Lugg bridge and Sutton, and also near Kington in April, 1947—a year when an exceptionally large overland migration was noted elsewhere in England.

A dead adult was found on Showle Court Farm, Yarkhill, on the 12th October, 1958.

The most recent certain record was of an adult, virtually in summer plumage, flying down the Wye at Hereford on the 24th September, 1960.

220. SOOTY TERN. *Sterna fuscata fuscata* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull records one picked up dead at Marston, near Pembridge, after stormy weather in May, 1885.

222. LITTLE TERN. *Sterna albifrons albifrons* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull cites one example, shot at Marden in September, 1869, after stormy weather, and Hutchinson records another killed at Hereford in 1876 flying against telegraph wires. A third was seen at Huntington pond by A. B. Farn on 18th April, 1912.

One by the Lugg Bridge on the 1st May, 1972, is the only recent record. (Dr. C. W. Walker.)



223. SANDWICH TERN. *Sterna sandvicensis sandvicensis* (Lath.)

Rare passage migrant.

A bird was picked up in a street in Ross-on-Wye, after it had damaged itself against a street-lamp in its flight, on 22nd October, 1886. This bird was accompanied by a second which settled for a moment on the ground beside it. (Bull.)

No other firm records.

226. LITTLE AUK. *Plautus alle alle* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A single bird was found alive in a ditch at Canon Pyon on 23rd December, 1938.

230. PUFFIN. *Fratercula arctica grabae* (Brehm.)

Rare vagrant.

There are three records, but there is some uncertainty as to the dates: Fownhope, June 1876 or 1878, Aconbury, November 1893 or 1894, Moccas 1898. All three went to Hereford museum.

231. [PALLAS'S SAND-GROUSE. *Syrhaptes paradoxus* (Pall.)

Rare vagrant.

Hutchinson states: "Mr. B. Saunders, of Kingsland states that some years ago, probably 1888, some sand-grouse flew low down over his head while playing tennis. They were travelling northward.—Williams." Probably authentic.]

232. STOCK DOVE. *Columba oenas* (L.)

Resident and breeding.

Widespread and breeds in good numbers.

233. [ROCK-DOVE. *Columba livia livia* (Gm.)

Bull's statement that the rock-dove bred at Stanner Rocks was founded on J. W. Lloyd's list (*W.C.T.* 1869: 80) and cannot be accepted without reserve.]

234. WOOD PIGEON. *Columba palumbus palumbus* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

235. TURTLE DOVE. *Streptopelia turtur turtur* (L.)

Summer visitor.

Breeds in varying numbers.

Much less common than formerly.

COLLARED DOVE. *Streptopelia decaocto decaocto*

(Frivaldsky.)

The first collared dove recorded in Herefordshire was noted at Ivington on May 7th, 1963, by Mrs. M. L. Bentley-Taylor; another was located at Ross in August of the same year. Subsequent spread was rapid and breeding birds were evident in many parts by the late 60's, characteristically centred upon the towns, villages and farms of the county. This dove is now commonplace throughout the county to such an extent that its grain-eating habits have recently provoked complaints in some quarters.

237. CUCKOO. *Cuculus canorus canorus* (L.)

Common visitor and breeding.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. The following 20 species of fosterers are recorded in Herefordshire by Dr. Williams: thrush, blackbird, tree-pipit, spotted flycatcher, robin, willow-wren, whitethroat, red-warbler, hedge-sparrow, greenfinch, pied wagtail, grey wagtail, redstart, bullfinch, wren, sedge-warbler, garden-warbler, yellow-hammer, curl bunting, chaffinch, redpoll.

The most usual cuckoo's host in lowland Herefordshire is the hedge-sparrow, next being spotted flycatcher and pied wagtail: in upland regions meadow pipit is of course preferred.

Observers are agreed that the cuckoo has become less common of recent years.

241. BARN-OWL. *Tyto alba alba* (Scop.)

Resident and breeding. Quite a rare bird.

Woolhope Club centenary volume (1951) p. 87: "The species can never achieve its former abundance for its favourite nesting-places—ancient hollow tree-trunks and the dark recesses of old rafted barns become steadily fewer with the years."

The deleterious effect on the nesting of this species arising from the ingestion of pesticide chemicals became obvious early in the 60's. The reports in recent years are largely of single birds seen in winter or early spring. Records of nesting are few in number.

244. SNOWY OWL. *Nyctea scandiaca* (L.)

The late Dr. D. C. Edwards informed us that when he was looking for snipe on a stretch of wet moorland near his home at Huntingdon he flushed a snowy owl from the ground. This was on a winter afternoon in the 1920's. He was greatly struck by the great size, white plumage and powerful flight of the visitor.

A snowy owl frequented Mary Knowle, Bringewood Chase, for several days at the end of March, 1962, and was seen three times at close quarters by Mr. Bailey, an experienced game-keeper. He described it on first view as a large bird, almost completely white. When he saw it on the following morning perched on a fence post he realised that it was an owl and that the plumage of its back and closed wings was barred greyish brown, its eyes yellow and the legs feathered.

246. LITTLE OWL. *Athene noctua vidalli* (A. E. Brehm.)

Morris's British Birds: A little owl was shot in Herefordshire in 1838.

W.C.T. 1869, p. 158. Mentioned in Rev. Robert Blight's list of birds seen at Bredwardine 1864-9. Introduced to Great Britain 1879, 1889, 1896. Recorded at Acton Beauchamp, May, 1911. *British Birds*, Vol. 5, p. 195. Resident and breeding.

It was seen in 1918 at Breinton by Canon W. B. Glennie (W.C.T. 1918) and by H. A. Gilbert at Canon Frome in 1919. The invasion came up the valleys, and the riverside meadows were first colonized. By 1922 the little owl was nesting in many places, and it is now distributed in the county, though it had decreased in numbers by 1940 and suffered a further severe reduction in the great frost of 1947.

It is commonest in riverside meadows, among pollard willows, and at the edges of woodlands.

At the dates of the records in Morris's book and Blight's list, the little owl was an extremely rare bird in Britain and reckoned by Yarrell as an occasional visitor only.

247. TAWNY OWL. *Strix aluco sylvatica* (Shaw.)

Common resident and breeding in all wooded areas.

It is not nearly so common as it used to be, or ought to be. Many are killed by keepers, and many are run over by motor cars. Suitable nesting-holes are in short supply. This could be remedied by erecting nest-boxes.

248. LONG-EARED OWL. *Asio otus otus* (L.)

Believed to be resident and breeding.

BULL Nest near Aymestrey in March, 1884.

HUTCHINSON Quotes Dr. Williams—has nested at Shobdon and Croft, and seen at Berrington.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. Two nests recorded, both at Shobdon in 1888.

We have never proved that this owl breeds in Herefordshire though we have found nests in neighbouring counties, and have seen the bird in Herefordshire. (H. A. Gilbert.)

As it is a regular nester in Radnorshire and is reported year after year from north-western Herefordshire, it is surprising that we have had no report of breeding in the county since Dr. Williams' day.

249. SHORT-EARED OWL. *Asio flammeus flammeus* (Pontopp.)

Rare passage migrant. A rare winter visitor.

BULL Always rare.

HORNE Scarce.

HUTCHINSON A rare resident.

This owl can be flushed (chiefly in November) off bracken or gorse covered slopes; and even at times out of turnip fields—but it is never easy to find, and does not breed in the county (H. A. Gilbert.)

One was seen in Lugg meadows on 11th September, 1957, and a pair were flushed by hounds on Hergest Ridge on 17th March, 1958. One was seen near Byton Moor on 12th March, 1974.

252. NIGHTJAR. *Caprimulgus europaeus europaeus* (L.)

Regular but local summer visitor and breeding, also passage migrant.

BULL Not infrequent in the northern and western districts of the county but is comparatively rare elsewhere.

HORNE Abundant in the Hereford district—may frequently be heard at Rotherwas.

HUTCHINSON A common resident from May to September.

V.C.H. A common summer migrant.



Local, tending to appear where a sloping wood has recently been cut down, and before much rank growth of herbage or scrub has asserted itself: disappearing again from that locality when the ground loses its bare character.

Haugh Wood, Checkley, Putley, Wormsley, Chase Wood, Wapley and Stanage have all been favoured localities. It deserted the Woolhope region in the early 1960's but continued to flourish at Wapley for several years. Records became very few and no reports were received in 1968 and 1969. From 1970 onwards the position has improved and breeding has been resumed at Checkley, Putley and Stanage and probably elsewhere. This is all the more gratifying as a nationwide recession of this species has set in and appears to be continuing elsewhere in England.

255. SWIFT. *Apus apus apus* (L.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

256. ALPINE SWIFT. *Apus melba melba* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A single bird of this species was seen by Rev. S. Cornish Watkins flying overhead at Staunton-on-Arrow on 16th July, 1917. He identified it by its size and white underparts.

One was watched in flight over the Herefords-Rads border near Clyro on August 14th, 1959. Already familiar with the species the observers recognised it by its purplish brown upper plumage, white belly and large size. They had good views of the bird banking in flight at close range. House martins showed great dislike of it: they may have taken it for a hawk.

258. KINGFISHER. *Alcedo atthis ispida* (L.)

Resident and breeding—here and there on all rivers.

The frozen state of all our rivers—including long stretches of the Wye itself—during the exceptional frost of January and February, 1963, brought about a very high mortality of this species. Very few sightings of kingfishers were reported and there were no records of breeding in the county in that spring. By the beginning of 1965 it could be said that the species had made a welcome recovery and that reports were numerous. (H.O.C. Ann. Report 1964.)

259. BEE-EATER. *Merops apiaster* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A pair frequented a garden at Kimbolton for about six weeks during the summer of 1875 (Hutchinson.)

On 4th June, 1959, F. W. Marston saw a bird of this species rise from the road near Aymestrey quarry at a range of about 30 feet. The black curved bill, bright yellow throat and long central tail feathers were clearly seen: the tail when fanned out gave an impression of being in two halves. It was watched in undulating flight until it disappeared in oak wood 200 yards away.

The next day a message was received from a different observer at Adforton stating that the bird had been seen there (5 miles north of Aymestrey) perched upon a roadside telephone wire.

260. ROLLER. *Coracias garrulus garrulus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

A specimen in the Hereford Museum is labelled "Goodrich 1857"—(Bull.)

261. HOPOE. *Upupa epops epops* (L.)

Rare summer visitor. Has bred.

During the period 1847 to 1892 the hoopoe was recorded 9 times. Most of these birds had been shot—the customary Victorian welcome. For the following 38 years—i.e. until 1930—there were no records for the county, but since that date one or more have been reported almost annually—36 records in all—commonly in April or May, once for ten days in September.

In 1955 a pair of hoopoes nested at Elsdon, Lyonshall. The nest was in a hole in an oak-bough about 30 feet above ground-level. Two young birds flew and were seen subsequently in the neighbourhood with their parents. The nest-hole was well-concealed and it was only after a number of days of watching by members of the ornithological club that its position was eventually discovered. (H.O.C. Report 1955 p. 122.)

262. GREEN WOODPECKER. *Picus viridis pluvius* (Hart.)

Resident and breeding.

It is less common than formerly, though its call is to be heard in most of our woodlands. Before 1963 the green was our commonest woodpecker, but the great spotted woodpecker withstood the bitter winter of that year more successfully and appears to have become the more numerous species—perhaps only temporarily.

263. GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER. *Dendrocopos major anglicus* (Hart.)

Plentiful, resident and breeding, chiefly in woodland, but also to be found wherever there is old timber in gardens or hedgerows.

264. LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER. *Dendrocopos minor comminitus* (Hart.)

Resident and breeding.

In 1829 W. H. Hill recorded (*Loudon's Magazine*, N.H. II, p. 387), that "*Picus minor*" abounds in the large oak groves in Herefordshire. It is a remarkable fact that Napoleon affected the status of the tree sparrow and the lesser spotted woodpecker in Herefordshire.

The late Mr. E. F. Bulmer pointed out to us that during the Napoleonic wars, foodstuffs such as barley became scarce and in consequence beer became expensive. The people took to drinking cider, for which there was a great demand. Hundreds of thousands of gallons were exported down the Wye, then a busy river. To fill this demand, great numbers of apple orchards were planted. This demand continued into the Victorian era, when the cider-makers began to use lead to join the two halves of the stone-crushing mills. The malic acid absorbed some of the lead, and there were cases of lead poisoning. From that moment the sale of cider ceased abruptly, but the orchards remained. Gradually the trees became old and decayed, and the orchards became a paradise for nesting tree-sparrows and lesser spotted woodpeckers. The life of an apple tree is roughly a hundred years, though it may linger on in decay up to one hundred and fifty years. Hence after the war, 1914-18, there were many old decaying orchards in Herefordshire, each the home of a colony of tree-sparrows and a pair of lesser spotted woodpeckers. However, by 1940 these orchards had nearly all disappeared, and no longer is our county the paradise for tree sparrows and lesser spotted woodpeckers which it had previously been.

Records of sightings, drumming and nesting have maintained a very steady numerical level since 1950. There was no apparent diminution as a result of the bitter 1963 winter, though that of 1947 temporarily reduced its numbers quite noticeably. It is very much a bird of orchards and gardens but is also seen in woodland and among riverside willows: though nowhere common it is very widely distributed about the county.

THE BLACK WOODPECKER. *Dryocopus martius martius* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

There can be no doubt of its having been observed on several occasions in Herefordshire. (Bull.)

In the 19th century the great black woodpecker was ranked as a British bird until 1871 when J. H. Gurney reviewed all available records, accepting none. As a result of this no subsequent reports were accepted by the authorities. Mr. R. S. R. Fitter reviewed the whole subject in the British Ornithological Club Bulletin, Vol. 79 nos. 5, 6 and 7 (1959), citing 82 British records. He comments critically on the "scant attention paid to Clement Ley's convincing observations," and gives it as his opinion that the most suggestive aggregation of records is in the Welsh border area of Herefordshire, Forest of Dean and Brecon, comprising ten reports between 1874 and 1903.

Rev. Clement Ley, who was familiar with the bird's appearance and peculiar call, had a close view of a great black woodpecker in June, 1874, in Ruckhall Wood, Eaton Bishop. His cousin, E. W. Dubuisson, then a boy of 12, accompanied him, and used to describe the occurrence in detail—the size and typical appearance of the bird seen in bright sunlight at close range (20 yards), its typical flight and remarkable call.

Mr. Ley also stated that he had "heard the cry of *P. Martius* twice unmistakably at Pengethley Gorse, Ross; once in the parish of Fownhope; once, dubiously, on the Little Doward." (C. Ley, *Zool.* 1889, p. 340.)

In 1880 Capt. Mayne Reid, the author, saw two specimens in the woods near Ross.

In 1901 a Mr. Blair, resident at Kington, with two ladies, watched from a window a large black bird—the size of a crow—climbing on a tree trunk and hammering it with its bill. They did not notice a red head. The tree was close to the window. (Rev. S. Cornish Watkins. *Diary* 7.12.01.)

Independent reports of sightings in Breconshire by two such well-known ornithologists as Cambridge Phillips and Walpole-Bond are worth mentioning as corroborative evidence of the bird's presence in this Welsh borderland region (1885 and 1903).

Any one interested in this old controversy should refer to Cambridge Phillips' paper on the subject (*W. C. Trans. and Zool.* 1889), to Mayne Reid's *Naturalist in Siluria*, 1889, Townsend's article (*Zool.* 1902) and Mr. Fitter's admirable review of the whole subject (*B.O.C. Bulletin* 1959.)



265. WRYNECK. *Lynx torquilla torquilla* (L.)

Formerly well known summer visitor and breeding—now extremely rare.

BULL A regular summer visitor and pretty generally distributed throughout the county.

HORNE A constant summer visitor.

HUTCHINSON Resident from March to September—breeding.

V.C.H. Occurs in the Ross district and locally throughout the county.

R. M. Lingwood, *Ann. Nat. Hist.*, Vol. V, p. 184 (1840), mentions the wryneck in S.E. Hereford.

CORNISH WATKINS Saw a pair in May, 1902. He calls it "quite a new bird" (S.C.W.—Diary.)

During 30 years (1910-1940) H. A. Gilbert saw the wryneck in Herefordshire only once and heard of two nests. It is a noisy bird in spring and on that account not easily overlooked. Therefore it appears that the wryneck, once well known in the county, is extinct as a breeding bird as it now is in the majority of English counties.

The wryneck was seen and heard in 1945 at Breinton, and a report of a nest near Tarrington in that year was unconfirmed.

A bird flushed from the disused railway track near King's Acre by A. R. Mountford flew to a fence-post where he observed it closely, and subsequently showed it to several other H.O.C. members—16th September, 1971.

On 31st August, 1974, P. Gardner had good views of a wryneck in his own garden at Leominster.

271. WOOD-LARK. *Lullula arborea arborea* (L.)

Formerly resident and breeding, but not recorded for several years.

BULL Not a frequent bird.

HUTCHINSON Common resident but local.

LINGWOOD Common.

The following paragraph from the 1954 edition of this work will serve to illustrate the rapidity with which the species has vanished from this county:—

"The wood-lark is resident all over the county, though nowhere is it numerous. Confined almost entirely as to its breeding area to sloping uncultivated ground, the bird is more common

in the western side of the county and is almost unknown on the heavy clay soil of the north east. It breeds, however, to the east of Ledbury in the Eastnor district. The wood-lark was almost destroyed during the great frost of 1929; and only in 1938 could it be said to have regained its former abundance. Its numbers were reduced again greatly in 1947, but are now once more increasing."

By the late 1950's and early 60's considerable improvement had taken place, evidenced by records—8 or 10 annually—in the H.O.C. reports: these were well scattered over the county. After the 1962-63 winter, however, sightings became very few and by 1966 song was heard in two localities only—Craswall and Elton, at which latter place song continued to be reported annually until 1969, since when there have been no confirmed records in spite of the mildness of recent winters.

The earliest Herefordshire ornithologist, the Rev. W. E. Evans, Prebendary of the Cathedral, who lived at Burton Court, wrote *The Songs of the Birds* (1st Edn., 1845). He knew the wood-lark well, and wrote of it as follows: "Its voice is clearer and sweeter than that of the sky-lark and seems to tell a tale of deep and tender feeling."

The following is his poem referring to the bird's song in autumn and winter:—

SONG OF THE WOOD-LARK

How sweet to me, the cold calm morn,  
When Summer's pride is ended,  
And the hoar frost hangs upon the thorn,  
With its fading tresses blended.  
Each merry voice from brake and bough  
That sung so loud—is silent now;  
And I sing upon the leafless tree,  
The last of all their minstrelsy.

My autumn note goes forth alone,  
The thrush's song is over;  
The blackbird's clear and mellow tone  
Is silent in the covert.  
My kinsman lark on quivering wings  
To the cold morn no carol sings;  
The warblers all, a fickle band,  
Have flown to seek a warmer land.

Time servers they! When fading fast  
 They saw the year declining;  
 When Summer's golden prime was past  
 His sun no longer shining;  
 Like friends untrue in grief's dark day  
 On faithless wings they fly away  
 Far from the gloom of wintry hours  
 From scenes all stript of leaves and flowers.

Tho' earth look dark and cold, that voice  
 Will still be sweetly singing,  
 And make the chilly heart rejoice  
 With notes of comfort ringing,  
 Amid the dying scenes around  
 That voice, like mine, will clearer sound;  
 And sweeter far its heavenly tone,  
 Because it sings in silence and alone.

272. SKY-LARK. *Alauda arvensis arvensis* (L.)  
 Common and resident.

273. SHORE-LARK. *Eremophila alpestris flava* (Gm.)  
 Vagrant.

A single bird was seen on the Worcester-Herefordshire border at the top of the "Happy Valley" between Great and West Malvern on the 14th January, 1920—the only record.

274. SWALLOW. *Hirundo rustica rustica* (L.)  
 Common summer visitor and breeding.

276. HOUSE-MARTIN. *Delichon urbica urbica* (L.)  
 Common summer visitor and breeding.

For a picturesque colony, look under Mordiford Bridge over the Lugg.

277. SAND-MARTIN. *Riparia riparia riparia* (L.)  
 Common summer visitor and breeding.

A marked decline in numbers has occurred over recent years, a trend clearly evident since about 1970.

278. GOLDEN ORIOLE. *Oriolus oriolus oriolus* (L.)

Rare summer visitor.

There are thirteen old records for the county, most in the month of May. Later dates were 28th August (Cusop, 1911) and 1st December (Aymestrey 1902.)

In recent years single-cock birds have been reported on four occasions, viz:—one perched on telephone wire at Canon Pyon on 26th September, 1954, one in St. Mary's Hospital grounds at Burghill on 19th June, 1955, one seen high in an oak tree at Fownhope on 22nd April, 1957, and one watched at close range at Harewood End at the beginning of July, 1971. A pair were seen on separate occasions near Clehonger 1961: firstly in an orchard in the third week of April, and secondly—by another observer—flying together at about 20 feet distance from him—on May 5th. The difference in plumage in the sexes was clearly seen.

279. RAVEN. *Corvus corax corax* (L.)

Once extinct, now rare resident and breeding.

BULL	Not uncommon in the more wild and hilly districts, 1888.
HORNE	Only now found in a few of the wildest districts in the county, 1889.
HUTCHINSON	A pair nested in the old Scotch firs at Kentchurch until 1880, when the keepers shot them. Rev. Morgan G. Watkins of Kentchurch.
V.C.H.	Quotes Hutchinson.
LINGWOOD	1840. Breeds at Stoke Park (apparently meaning Stoke Edith.)

"When I was a boy, raven trees were often pointed out by old men, in my constant and vehement birds' nesting rambles, but I never once met with a nest in a tree. Is it true that they do still breed upon trees in Herefordshire?" Thus wrote the Rev. William Clement Ley at a time during the middle of last century.

Dr. Bull mentions two ravens' nests about 1835 within this county, the first "within the memory of the old men" in Mr. Ley's own parish of Sellack, a pair of ravens built in a tall elm tree, the other in tall beech trees on Dinmore Hill. He states also that the latter nest was occupied until about 1875.



One of the last nests of the raven in Herefordshire, probably the very last, was that recorded by Mr. Morgan Watkins at Kentchurch in 1880, "when the keepers shot them." For many years thereafter the game preservers were victorious and the raven became extinct in the county of Herefordshire as a breeding species. It was indeed very rarely seen at all except as a rare vagrant from across the Welsh border in autumn and winter. Nearly fifty years later, however, the raven returned to live and nest within the county.

In April, 1924, a gamekeeper reported the presence of a pair of ravens close to Hereford. He said that he had shot one of a pair of ravens two months before, but that the survivor immediately obtained another mate and began to nest. This nest was placed sixty feet up on a branch of an enormous larch tree, and a single young one flew from the nest. Since that day a pair of ravens has nested either in the same or a nearby tree annually. The raven has steadily increased in numbers and spread eastwards over the county during the last 30 years. It is now plentiful in the west, and thinly distributed over the remainder of the county. There were at least twelve pairs nesting in 1952. The Herefordshire nests are in trees, generally—but not always—conifers. It is possible that it will be unable to continue increasing away from the hills, owing to lack of food. The raven (*Cigfran*—the flesh crow) feeds almost entirely on carrion; on the hills dead sheep lie unburied and supply their needs. On the low ground the only carrion left unburied are the rabbits either killed by stoats or dead from disease. For that meagre supply there is great competition from carrion crows, buzzards, rats, badgers, etc., hence very little food can be obtained by ravens. At any rate Herefordshire ravens appear to go great distances, fifteen miles or more, into the hills where they forage. They return at a great height and have obviously been many miles away.

Another point to record is that Herefordshire ravens now live and nest under the strict protection of landowners, a change of heart from the past when Mr. Clement Ley lamented "the ruthless persecution of the gamekeeper."

<sup>1</sup> Bull, p. 81. The Rev. W. C. Ley was curate of King's Cople from 1863 to 1871. His father, the Rev. W. H. Ley, was vicar of Sellack and King's Cople from 1841 to 1887. Presumably Mr. Ley refers to a period roughly from 1850 to 1860. See his notes: *W.C.T.* 1869, p. 71.

Since 1940 when H. A. Gilbert penned the foregoing paragraphs for the first edition of this work, the status of the raven in the county has remained unchanged. Though protected on all the great sporting estates of long standing, it is still persecuted by keepers on some of the newer areas devoted to the preservation of game, where its harmlessness to pheasants is still unrecognised.

## 280. CARRION CROW. *Corvus corone corone* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

BULL Very common 1888.

HORNE Exceedingly numerous and increasing, 1889.

The carrion-crow nests all over the county, save in a few small areas where game preservers destroy the birds. No sorrow need be wasted on the crow, oppressor of everything weaker than itself, in fact the most mischievous and destructive bird in Herefordshire, and one well able to look after its own continued existence.

## 281. HOODED CROW. *Corvus cornix cornix* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

Bull gives six records, and there have been about a dozen since, all occurring between October and February, except one seen at Brinsop in July, 1921. Since that date it has been reported only three times: March, 1956, October, 1964, and April, 1967.

## 282. ROOK. *Corvus frugilegus frugilegus* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

Dr. Bull records a rookery of 36 nests in 1884 built in the Cathedral Close at Hereford, and another of 54 nests in the Castle Green. In 1932 there were 142 occupied rooks' nests in Hereford city: in 1935 the number was 109: in 1952 there were between 30 and 40 only. No vestige now remains of the large rookeries which existed in the 'thirties at Hampton Park (Hereford) and on Aylestone Hill. At the time of writing no rooks are nesting within the city boundaries. Elsewhere in the county the nesting population has decreased greatly since the use of insecticides became widespread. The destruction of our elm trees by the recent epidemic is likely further to affect the species to its detriment.

## 283. JACKDAW. *Corvus monedula spermologus* (Vieill.)

Common resident and breeding.

Our commonest member of the crow tribe. Ubiquitous and adaptable, it shows no tendency to decrease in numbers.

## 284. MAGPIE. *Pica pica pica* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

285. NUTCRACKER. *Nucifraga caryocatactes*, subsp. (L.)

Rare vagrant.

One of a pair seen at Credenhill was shot on 19th November, 1900, and went to Cardiff Museum.

[Reports of occurrences at Fownhope in 1927, and Weobley in 1940, came from single observers, and could not be accepted as authenticated records.] 1968 was a year of nutcracker invasion in many parts of England; on October 20th in that year one was watched at close quarters for a considerable time, perched on a TV aerial at Westfield (Hereford) by a lady who also heard it utter its distinctive cry.

286. JAY. *Garrulus glandarius rufitergum* (Hart.)

Common resident. Well distributed and breeding.

288. GREAT TIT. *Parus major newtoni* (Pražák.)

289. BLUE-TIT. *Parus caeruleus obscurus* (Pražák.)

290. COAL-TIT. *Parus ater britannicus* (Sharpe and Dress.)

292. MARSH-TIT. *Parus palustris dresseri* (Stejn.)

These four tit species are common, resident and breeding, the two former being far commoner than the two latter.

A nesting-box scheme for woodland hole-nesting birds was started in 1963 under the auspices of the county Nature Trust. In recent years about 1,000 boxes have been maintained in some 40 woods well scattered over the county. We are indebted to Mr. J. L. Fox, who supervises this activity, for the following figures illustrating the comparative numbers of the above 4 tit species. In the past 8 years 1,717 broods of blue tits have fledged and 1,113 great tits, giving a blue/great ratio of almost exactly 3: 2. . . . Occupation by the other two species is tiny in comparison averaging 10 nests each per annum, marsh and coal showing almost exactly equal numbers.

293. WILLOW-TIT. *Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* (Hellm.)

Resident and breeding.

Recorded at Cradley and Acton Beauchamp. *British Birds*, vol. V, p. 189.

Prior to 1950 records of this bird were few, but it may have been overlooked. Two typical nests had been found by Capt. H. A. Gilbert at Canon Frome, and one at Yazor by Hon. G. Charteris. In addition the bird had been occasionally identified by other observers.

Since that date H.O.C. annual reports indicate a wide distribution in the county. The club's editor remarks that the reports (in 1964) amount to some 40 birds seen in 18 different places. The nesting-season records, involving song or nests found, indicate a preference for the neighbourhood of water in its choice of breeding sites.

294. LONG-TAILED TIT. *Aegithalos caudatus rosaceus* (Mathews.)

Common resident and breeding.

296. NUTHATCH. *Sitta europaea caesia* (Wolf.)

Resident and breeding.

BULL Very common.

HORNE Common round Hereford and in most of our large woods.

HUTCHINSON Common generally distributed.

298. TREE-CREEPER. *Certhia familiaris britannica* (Ridgw.)

Common resident and breeding.

BULL A small unobtrusive bird probably more common than is generally thought.

HORNE Far from uncommon.

HUTCHINSON Common resident.

V.C.H. A common resident.

299. WREN. *Troglodytes troglodytes troglodytes* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

300. DIPPER. *Cinclus cinclus gularis* (Lath.)

Resident and breeding.

BULL Not uncommon on many of the weirs, waterfalls and smaller streams of the county.

301. MISTLE-THRUSH. *Turdus viscivorus viscivorus* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

302. FIELDFARE. *Turdus pilaris* (L.)

Common winter visitor.



303. SONG-THRUSH. *Turdus ericetorum ericetorum* Turton.

Common resident and breeding.

304. REDWING. *Turdus musicus musicus* (L.)

Common winter visitor.

307. RING-OUZEL. *Turdus torquatus torquatus* (L.)

Summer visitor to the mountainous portion of the county and breeding. Elsewhere seen rarely on passage.

BULL. A summer visitant sparsely distributed through the higher uncultivated districts of the county.

HORNE. Not numerous. I have seen it a few times on Eign Hill, Hereford.

HUTCHINSON. Local resident from April to September. Breeding.

V.C.H. Summer migrant. Fairly plentiful on all the hills.

Rev. S. C. Watkins. I have seen eggs taken on Hergest Ridge, Kington (Diary).

The ring-ouzel cannot be regarded as a common bird in Herefordshire, since the high ground on which it spends the summer is limited in extent, but the bird is regularly reported as nesting on the slopes of the Cat's Back and Olchon valley, and occurs on spring and autumn passage on the lower grounds. It appears to migrate in small parties, feeding on berries as it passes through in autumn.

308. BLACKBIRD. *Turdus merula merula* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

311. WHEATEAR. *Enanthe ananthe ananthe* (L.)

Summer visitor, breeding in suitable areas on hilly ground. Also passage migrant over the county in some numbers.

Regularly noted on spring migration—March onwards—on open farm-land in small flocks, and on the return journey in September and October. Autumn flocks of up to 30 and 40 birds are reported. It breeds regularly on the Herefordshire slopes of the Black Mountains, Bradnor Hill, the Malverns and formerly

on the Merbach ridge. It is less common as a nesting species than it used to be. The reduction in numbers of rabbits since the onset of myxomatosis has resulted in fewer holes being available for the wheatear's nesting, and this factor may be partly responsible for the drop.

GREENLAND WHEATEAR. *Enanthe ananthe leucorrhoa* (Gm.)

Passage migrant.

Birds of this race have been identified on several occasions on farm-land in May of different years.

317. STONECHAT. *Saxicola torquata hibernans* (Hart.)

Resident and breeding until 1947. Status at present doubtful.

BULL. Not so common as the whinchat.

HORNE. Is occasionally found in the county.

HUTCHINSON. Local resident—frequenting hills and rough ground.

At one time a very scarce nester in the county, it frequented upland commons at Orcop, Garway and the Woolhope hills. It vanished from these areas after 1947, and there has been no report of breeding in Herefordshire since that date.

Singles or pairs and occasionally a flock continue to occur in the county, occasionally in summer, but more usually in spring or autumn, and sometimes in winter.

318. WHINCHAT. *Saxicola rubetra rubetra* (L.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

BULL. Found scattered throughout the open meadow districts, but more plentifully on the southern side.

HORNE. A regular summer visitor and fairly plentiful.

HUTCHINSON. Generally distributed.

Is found nesting in very various habitats of meadow, rough common and marsh, low scrub and hedgerows, as well as young conifer plantations in all quarters of the county, but has become noticeably scarcer during the last twenty years.

320. REDSTART. *Phoenicurus phoenicurus phoenicurus* (L.)  
Summer visitor and breeding.

The redstart is not a rare bird in Herefordshire and is found nesting both on high and low ground. Deciduous woodland, hollow trees in hedgerows and pollard willows afford typical nesting sites for the species.

Since 1969 the species has suffered a sharp reduction in numbers, apparently because of extreme drought in its African winter habitat (see also under whitethroat, p. 60). Ten to fifteen pairs of redstarts annually occupied nesting-boxes erected in woodlands under the County Nature Trust's scheme, but this dropped to three pairs in 1969 and now runs at 4 nests per annum only.

321. BLACK REDSTART. *Phoenicurus ochruros gibraltariensis* (Gm.)

Rare winter visitor.

Bull states that specimens were killed in the county in 1878 and 1879. It was recorded in January, 1895, at Canon Frome, and by the Rev. S. Cornish Watkins at Staunton-on-Arrow on 8th November, 1917. In six different winters between 1918 and 1932 it was seen at Hereford Cathedral by the late Canon W. B. Glennie, and occurred at the same place every winter for the last 5 years (1947-1951). The bird seen in 1951 (Dec. 6th) remained about the cathedral until March 25th. There have been nine subsequent records, most of them on winter dates. Spring records, however, occurred in 1958 when R. S. R. Fitter heard several bursts of song and caught sight of the songster on a roof behind the Green Dragon Hotel on 24th May. There were four other scattered spring reports in that year. In March, 1973, one was seen at Llanwarne and one at Lucton School. Two were seen in a garden near Ross on April 9th, 1974.

322. NIGHTINGALE. *Luscinia megarhynchos megarhynchos* (Brehm.)

Summer visitor and breeding. Now uncommon.

BULL

Not at all abundant and is almost confined to the southern half of the county — mentions Sellack, Broomy Hill, Aylestone Hill, Hereford, Eastwood, Ashperton, How Caple, Lyndon, etc.

HORNE

Not numerous. Fownhope, Dinedor Camp, Ewias Harold, Sellack, Ashperton, How Caple.

HUTCHINSON

Resident from April to September.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. Nest at Kingsland, 25th May, 1911. Mr. Hubert Williams informs me that this was the only occasion on which the bird nested in that district during his father's lifetime.

W.C.T., 1910, pp. 134-139. A. B. Farn reports a nest in 1908 at Norton Canon.

"As Hereford is a borderland for the nightingale it is of interest to record the details of its breeding area in the county. West and northwest of Hereford city the bird is very rare or absent. Seven miles north of Hereford the Dinmore area has been colonised since about 1933, but the colony has diminished though nightingales have bred recently in two localities near Leominster. It bred for two years prior to the last war at Shobdon. Southwest of Hereford nightingales breed annually in Allensmore parish, sometimes in Pontrilas or Vowchurch, and generally in Dulas. South and south-east of Hereford it breeds on both sides of the Wye, e.g. at Holme Lacy, Birch, Mordiford, Woolhope and Symond's Yat: to the east it is scattered in suitable woods in Westhide, Cowarne and Ledbury areas."

The foregoing paragraph represents the situation existing when it was written—1953. In the 20 years which have supervened there has been a steady southward recession of the range of the species, both here and elsewhere.

In 1971 and 1972 cock birds sang in Haugh Wood—one in each year. None was reported in 1973, either from Haugh Wood or from any other locality in the whole Woolhope region, a stronghold of the species until quite recently. In 1974 the Woolhope sites and those in the Ledbury district were deserted. The only reports came from the extreme south of the county near Kerne Bridge, and the Great Doward.

325. ROBIN. *Erithacus rubecula melophilus* (Hart.)

Common resident and breeding.



327. GRASSHOPPER WARBLER. *Locustella naevia naevia* (Bodd.)

Local, and variable summer visitor and breeding.

BULL Not uncommon in the central districts of the county and quotes (1) Rev. Clement Ley, that it is common in the Ross district "in the clover fields."

(2) Mr. W. C. Blake: Marcle Wood is a good locality for this bird.

HUTCHINSON Local resident. Common in Ross district—occurs in Bromyard district (Blathwayt); Kingsland (Williams); and Kimbolton (S. Hutchinson).

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. Five nests recorded between 1898 and 1907 at Kingsland and Aymestrey.

This bird will breed in Herefordshire wherever it finds suitable ground, such as woodlands cut down and growing back into scrub with grass and bramble; or new plantations. As the trees grow high the birds will abandon the area, hence its breeding grounds are variable. In one or two marshy areas it is constant, being a bird which breeds either on very wet or very dry ground. Its main requirement is undisturbed grass, growing in deep and matted tufts with a few brambles.

333. REED-WARBLER. *Acrocephalus scirpaceus scirpaceus* (Herm.)

Regular summer visitor; breeding only in one small area.

BULL Not common. Nest or two generally to be met with at Tyberton, Moccas, Shobdon, etc.

HORNE Not abundant; seen in north and western portions of the county (Ley.)

HUTCHINSON Rare. Resident April to September. Breeding.

Herefordshire is on the extreme western limit of the reed warbler's range. There is little ground which is suitable for its nesting habits, and the bird breeds only in one small area. Mr. Hubert Williams writes of this area: "When I was a boy, there were 40-60 pairs of reed warblers." At the present day half of that number would be nearer the actual numbers to be expected, though the region is still very suitable, comprising scattered areas of dense *Phragmites* reed.

334. MARSH-WARBLER. *Acrocephalus palustris* (Bechst.)

Rare and local summer visitor, known to have bred in 1938, possibly in previous years, and certainly annually after that date until 1953.

H.B., Vol. II Recorded as nesting in Hereford 1938.

Bull mentions it, but not as occurring in Herefordshire. Other authorities do not mention the bird. For many years we could get no trace of this warbler within the county of Hereford, though it is well known in the adjoining counties of Gloucester and Worcester. As in the case of the reed-warbler, Herefordshire seems to be the north-western limit of its range. It, of course, needs its own special type of ground in which to nest, not over water but in "rubbishy" dry ground near water as a rule, and wandering far away from water at times into corn and bean fields.

The Herefordshire nesting areas were all on stretches of river banks; (1) on the Wye bank near Hereford; (2) at various points along the lower Lugg where withies and dense herbage afforded suitable habitat, and (3) beside the Wye near Ross where conditions were similar. Although he failed to find a nest until 1938, the birds had been seen and its song heard by the Wye in June, 1936, by one of us (C.W.W.) Four or five nests were found at these sites annually from 1938 until 1953. On 2nd June, 1954, three cock birds had arrived and were in song: a remarkable period of summer rains set in, and the valleys of Wye and Lugg were deeply flooded. As a result the river-bank herbage was brought down and covered with mud: the birds left without nesting, and have never bred in the county since.

One was heard in song on May 25th, 1964, by the Wye. The last record of a marsh warbler in the county was of a cock bird seen and heard singing on June 4th, 1969, in a willow on Wye bank at Hereford by the present writers: it was not seen again.

337. SEDGE-WARBLER. *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* (L.)

Summer visitor, breeding in suitable moist localities, but is suffering from increased drainage.

BULL Common in valleys of Lugg and Arrow, and on the banks of the Wye.

HORNE & HUTCHINSON } Common.

V.C.H. One of the most abundant warblers and is everywhere common in the county.

Still present here and there throughout our valley regions, but has now become distinctly scarce.

343. BLACKCAP. *Sylvia atricapilla atricapilla* (L.)

Common summer visitor. Generally distributed in suitable places. The blackcap exceptionally winters in the county. Reports of sightings in January or February, generally of single birds frequenting bird tables, are received almost every winter nowadays.

346. GARDEN-WARBLER. *Sylvia borin* (Bodd.)

Common summer visitor. Breeding. Generally distributed.

347. WHITETHROAT. *Sylvia communis communis* (Lath.)

Summer visitor.

The commonest warbler in Herefordshire (Herefordshire Birds—1941.)

The foregoing comment has long ago ceased to be a true statement. The lower trimming and even elimination of hedgerows caused a marked gradual decrease in numbers of the species. A further spectacular reduction occurred in 1969, not only locally, but generally throughout the range of the species, the apparent cause being a profound climatic change across Africa just south of the Sahara where the whitethroat normally winters.

348. LESSER WHITETHROAT. *Sylvia curruca curruca* (L.)

Generally but sparsely distributed. Summer visitor, being commoner on the eastern side of the county than on the western. A diminishing species but not so markedly as the common whitethroat.

[352. DARTFORD WARBLER. *Sylvia undata dartfordiensis* (Lath.)

In the *Victoria County History* is the following note:—

"Two nests of this rare warbler were seen near the banks of the Teme a few years ago by Mr. Palmer of Ludlow, who not only saw the birds but found the nests. Unfortunately the gorse where the nests were placed was burnt down two years ago, and the birds have not been observed since (Pilley)."

In the *Handbook* is the following note of the distribution of this, the only warbler resident in Britain throughout the year:—

"A pair or two said to have bred tolerably regularly in one locality in Salop."

It is possible that the above notes refer to the same birds since the Teme is the border of the county, and we believe the first notes refers to a locality near Leintwardine which is in Shropshire.

We do not think the Dartford warbler is likely to be seen in Herefordshire and therefore do not include the bird in this list.]

354. WILLOW-WARBLER. *Phylloscopus trochilus trochilus* (L.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

356. CHIFFCHAFF. *Phylloscopus collybita collybita* (Vieill.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

357. WOOD-WARBLER. *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* (Bechst.)

Summer visitor and breeding in suitable woodlands.

BULL	Very local and nowhere abundant.
HORNE	Local resident.
V.C.H.	Fairly common—plentiful near Ross.

Rev. W. E. Evans, of Burton Court, in *The Songs of the Birds* (1st Edition, 1845), writes: "When any foot approaches his nest or even enters the shade of his favourite trees during the nesting season he utters a plaintive note soft and melancholy beyond description."

Possibly this is the earliest record of the wood wren's nesting note. The three leaf warblers are generally distributed over the county in suitable areas in spring and summer, the wood wren being the rarest of the three and the willow wren the most numerous. Wherever there are well-grown deciduous woods the wood wren may be met with in small numbers, chiefly associated with the oak, provided the undergrowth is not too dense, but it is nowhere so common in Herefordshire as it is in the oak woods over the border by the Upper Wye.

364. GOLDCREST. *Regulus regulus anglorum* (Hart.)

Generally distributed wherever suitable trees occur—resident and breeding but nowhere numerous.

BULL	Common throughout the county.
HORNE	Very frequently met with.
HUTCHINSON	Rare in summer.
LINGWOOD	The firecrest is commoner than the goldcrest. (This is an obvious mistake.)



There are not many Douglas firs, cedars, or firs of any sort in the county, but wherever there are any or even a couple of yew trees in a churchyard, there will be goldcrests. They leave the county completely only in the severest winter, eg. 1935-36, in which year the February frost banished the goldcrest. Successive mild winters favour this tiny bird, and in 1938, after two such winters, it was exceedingly common. In the early frosts of 1940 it was again almost exterminated and the same happened again notably in 1947 and in 1963.

As a result of successive mild winters the species is at the moment of writing (1974) at "peak" strength in respect of numbers. The replacement of deciduous woodland by conifer plantations has favoured this lover of evergreen trees.

365. FIRECREST. *Regulus ignicapillus ignicapillus* (Temm.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull records a pair seen at Sellack in 1864 by Rev. Clement Ley. This is the only old county record which can be accepted as authentic.

On 16th February, 1958, one was seen among young conifers at Lyepole by G. C. Lambourne, and at the same place by R. H. Baillie and other observers on various dates up to 20th April of that year.

366. SPOTTED FLYCATCHER. *Muscicapa striata striata* (Pall.)

Common summer visitor and breeding.

368. PIED FLYCATCHER. *Muscicapa hypoleuca hypoleuca* (Pall.)

Regular summer visitor. Breeding.

BULL A rare visitant.

HORNE Very scarce—has bred at Stoke Edith.

V.C.H. Breeds at Downton, Eywood and Croft.

W.C.T. 1899, p. 49. First recorded nest for Herefordshire found by Dr. Williams in 1889.

W.C.T. 1899, p. 109. Nests in Stoke Edith Park.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. Nest recorded at Eywood, 23rd May, 1899.

LINGWOOD A pair shot, 18th June, 1839.

There is a gap in Herefordshire, on the east of which breeds the nightingale, and on the west the pied flycatcher, while in between is barren ground where neither species is found. (H. A. Gilbert, 1938.)

The few nesting reports and sightings of males in song came from north and west Herefordshire, and no grouping was apparent before 1940, when Hon. Guy Charteris found a colony nesting high up in natural holes in old oaks in Moccas Deer Park.

Nest-boxes erected by Mr. E. F. Bulmer about the same date on alders on the banks of the river Arrow at Titley were quickly occupied and a colony had built up there by 1950.

The H. and R. Nature Trust nest-box scheme was undertaken in 1963 for the encouragement of all hole-nesting species, but especially in the hope of inducing this species to extend its range eastwards. This seems now to have been achieved, as the species has reached our eastern border, and nests in boxes at Bromyard Downs, and in the woods east of Ledbury, 15 miles to the east of Hereford which had previously marked the eastern limit of its nesting range in the county.

For the last six years the annual occupation of the Trust's nest-boxes by pied flycatchers has varied between 90 and 150 nests—indicating a county population undreamt-of 30 years ago.

371. HEDGE-SPARROW. *Prunella modularis occidentalis* (Hart.)

Common resident and breeding.

373. MEADOW-PIBIT. *Anthus pratensis* (L.)

Resident and breeding. Passage migrant and winter visitor.

The meadow-pipit, though generally distributed, cannot be described as a common bird in the county. It is commonest as a breeding bird on the Herefordshire portion of the Black Mountains, and on our few heath lands, but is distinctly rare in the agricultural area, except for flocks which winter annually on the low-lying grasslands and along the river banks.

375. TAWNY PIPIT. *Anthus campestris campestris* (L.)

Rare passage migrant.

Two were seen by H. A. Gilbert at Bishopstone on 9th September, 1931.

376. TREE-PIBIT. *Anthus trivialis trivialis* (L.)

Common summer visitor and breeding in all suitable localities.

379. [THE ROCK PIPIT. *Anthus spinoletta petrosus* (Mont.)

Is stated by de Winton to be plentiful on the Black Mountains. His note (*W.C.T.*, 1897, p. 269) reads: "Rockpipit (*Anthus obscurus*) very plentiful, young in all stages being found." This refers to a visit to the Herefordshire portion of the mountains. We believe Mr. de Winton must have been in error.]

379. WATER-PIBIT. *Anthus spinoletta spinoletta* (L.)

One of the present writers has unpublished notes on two apparent water pipits both seen with migrating meadow pipits in the vicinity of Hereford. (A.J.S.)

The notes which resulted from these observations did not seem adequate to substantiate a first county record at the time, but subsequent establishment of the water pipit as a regular winter visitor to southern Britain and further field experience elsewhere has encouraged a new look at the evidence.

The first bird was seen on October 31st, 1962, and the second on April 3rd, 1963.

380. PIED WAGTAIL. *Motacilla alba yarrellii* (Gould.)

Common resident and breeding. Also partial migrant, it is seen on passage in spring and autumn.

The pied wagtail deserts the higher ground in winter. Many migrate southward, but some remain in the valleys, especially along the river-banks, scattered by day, but roosting in flock by night.

WHITE WAGTAIL. *Motacilla alba alba* (L.)

Regular spring passage migrant in small numbers.

V.C.H. States regarding the white wagtail (*Motacilla alba alba*, L.), i.e. the continental form of the pied wagtail: "Occurs near Ludlow, and several nests with eggs have been found during recent years"; but it is not recorded by Dr. Williams, and has bred only very rarely in Britain as a whole.

Reported almost annually since 1956 on dates between 20th March and 26th April, generally single birds, once 5 in flock, and often in company with pied or yellow wagtails.

There are only two autumn records, probably because of the difficulty in identification as between *alba* and *yarrellii* when in autumn plumage.

381. GREY WAGTAIL. *Motacilla cinerea cinerea* (Tunst.)

Resident and breeding. Can be seen wherever there is a bridge, mill, waterfall, or riverside cliff: chiefly on the side streams to the river Wye.

BULL Nowhere plentiful—occurs locally about the more secluded streams in the northern district of the county.

HORNE Common in winter—a few may be seen in summer.

HUTCHINSON Common resident.

This, one of the most beautiful birds in Great Britain, is frequently confused with the yellow wagtail, though the habits and appearance are very different.

382. YELLOW WAGTAIL. *Motacilla flava flavissima* (Blyth.)

Summer visitor and breeding. Locally distributed. Numerous in certain meadows adjoining rivers Wye and Lugg.

BULL A regular summer visitant throughout the county.

HORNE Very generally diffused.

HUTCHINSON Generally distributed.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. Recorded breeding at Kingsland, 1893 and 1898.

The yellow wagtail is common in Lugg Meadows and is present elsewhere, especially in open agricultural areas. It breeds by the Wye throughout its course in Herefordshire, but its numbers have dropped, here as elsewhere, within the last few years.

BLUE-HEADED WAGTAIL. *Motacilla flava flava* (L.)

Rare summer visitor?

Bull stated that "it occurs regularly every season at Belmont, near Hereford." This may have been true in 1885, but there has been little evidence since. Yellow wagtails in aberrant plumages, and even exactly resembling this race, have been very occasionally noted on passage by the present writers.



383. WAXWING. *Bombycilla garrulus garrulus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Bull records an occurrence in 1856.

A waxwing was seen at Breinton by A. B. Farn in December, 1910, and again on 3rd January, 1911. (*W.C.T.* p. 62 and p. 256). An adult male was shot near Ross on 22nd November, 1921.

In 1947—an "immigration winter"—there were four records of waxwings in or near Hereford—one shot, two seen feeding on berries, and one caught after it had descended a chimney into a doctor's surgery in the town: two more were seen at Yatton, near Aymestrey. A waxwing was seen feeding on cotoneaster berries in a Leintwardine garden on 28th November, 1949, and a number were seen in an orchard at Lyonshall on 14th December of the same year.

In and after 1957 the waxwing has been seen in the county in every winter, often single but sometimes in small parties of two to six birds in company. Apart from a single bird in November, 1972, sightings begin in December or January and tail off in March, once (1966) as late as 19th April.

The great influx of autumn 1965 to the east coast produced many Herefordshire records from 1st December onwards. A flock of 10 was seen at Ashfield, and a flock of up to 30 birds frequented Leominster gardens from mid-December until mid-January, and fed for several weeks on a tall tree of unpicked Bramley seedlings. 36 birds were counted in a flock which frequented Chase Road, Ross, at the end of February. There were many records of smaller numbers. The birds were seen to feed on apples, berries of various kinds including haws, snowberries, cotoneaster and on rose hips.

A smaller invasion in 1970 resulted in 5 winter records, including a party of 7 at Tupsley and one of 10 at Kington, both in early December.

384. GREAT GREY SHRIKE. *Lanius excubitor excubitor* (L.)

Rare passage-migrant or winter visitor.

Prior to 1950 there had been eight county records, mostly of single birds seen in winter. The Rev. Clement Ley, however, reported seeing "a small flock in winter" on the Black Mountains (1872). There have been sixteen more recent records, including two autumn occurrences (September 27 and October 21) and two in spring (March 21 and April 1). The remaining twelve are all referable to the winter months, November, December and January.)

386. WOODCHAT SHRIKE. *Lanius senator senator* (L.)

"I chased one round an orchard at Rotherwas—I must have been seven or eight at the time—say 1898 or 9—with a catapult borrowed from a garden boy for which I could find no stones! It was quite tame. Maddening!"

(From a letter from C. W. Mackworth Praed to H.A.G.)

The late Mr. Mackworth-Praed was a distinguished ornithologist and president of the B.O.U. He was capable of identifying birds with accuracy even at this tender age!

388. RED-BACKED SHRIKE. *Lanius collurio collurio* (L.)

Formerly a regular summer visitor. Now lost as a breeding species.

**BULL** Not uncommon—its eggs are to be seen in nearly every schoolboy's collection. Built for many years in the tall hedges of the tramway within half a mile of Hereford.

**HORNE** Not numerous.

**HUTCHINSON** Generally distributed.

This species has dwindled to vanishing point of recent years. It had bred regularly in the 1930's in central Herefordshire at four or five sites within five miles of Hereford, and within the city boundary it nested in hawthorn and bramble thickets in the grounds of the old brickworks at Tupsley (now a built-up area) annually from 1933 until 1946, and near Widemarsh Common in 1951 and 1952. After that date no nests were reported except from the extreme east of the county, where it continued to nest at Eastnor until 1952 and on the Malvern Hills until 1959. A pair were seen in May, 1964, and a single bird (male) in 1965 in a garden at Ivington. On April 19th, 1968, a pair were watched on Common Hill, Fownhope.

Its loss here is of course incidental to the nationwide recession of the species.

389. STARLING. *Sturnus vulgaris vulgaris* (L.)

Common resident and breeding: also winter visitor.

390. ROSE-COLOURED STARLING. *Sturnus roseus* (L.)

Rare vagrant.

Thrice recorded. The specimen in Hereford Museum was labelled "Garway 1858". One was seen at Leintwardine 2nd-14th September, 1937, and one at Mordiford feeding in company with starlings on a bird-table during the cold weather of the 1940-41 winter.

391. HAWFINCH. *Coccothraustes coccothraustes coccothraustes* (L.)

Resident, breeding, but appears to have decreased and now quite rare.

BULL	Not a common bird.
HORNE	Not rare. Have seen many specimens.
HUTCHINSON	Commoner resident than formerly.
V.C.H.	Resident and fairly abundant. Believed to be on the increase.

WILLIAMS' COLLECTION. 13 nests recorded between 1886 and 1913.

The late Rev. Prebendary G. H. Powell, of Dorstone, used to see large winter flocks of hawfinches, amounting at times to seventy, feeding on the kernels of hawthorn berries on the hill sides to the south of Dorstone. The hawfinch, however, appears to have decreased of late years. For instance, immediately after the war, 1914-18, the birds could be seen daily round Bishopstone, and on the Garnons and Foxley estates seven or eight nests could easily be found in May. Nowadays the hawfinch is reported annually and nesting is occasionally recorded. Where hornbeams exist parties of hawfinches may be found in winter feeding beneath them on the fallen seeds. Its distribution is general but sparse. More records come from the Bircher and Ledbury districts than elsewhere.

392. GREENFINCH. *Chloris chloris chloris* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

393. GOLDFINCH. *Carduelis carduelis britannica* (Hart.)

Common resident, breeding and increasing.

BULL	Fairly plentiful.
HORNE	Generally abundant.
HUTCHINSON	A resident which the birdcatcher is exterminating.

Very few goldfinches remain in Herefordshire during the winter, but small flocks are to be seen on the river banks, or feeding on alder-fruit in any winter month.

394. SISKIN. *Carduelis spinus* (L.)

Regular winter visitor in considerable numbers.

BULL	Probably bred at Letton Court in May, 1883.
HORNE	Sparsely scattered. May be seen on alders in winter.
HUTCHINSON	Rare in summer.
V.C.H.	A resident, rare in summer and partly migratory.

Large numbers frequent the county from October until April, at first feeding on birch and larch seeds then from December onwards on alder seeds. There are no records for the months of May to September inclusive, except that a pair frequented a larch spinney at Brilley throughout the month of June, 1953. No nest was found.

395. LINNET. *Carduelis cannabina cannabina* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

396. TWITE. *Carduelis flavirostris, subsp.* (L.)

Winter visitor in small numbers. Unreported in recent years.

BULL	Winter visitant. Sometimes seen in tolerable abundance on slopes of the Black Mountains.
HUTCHINSON	Uncommon resident, local, breeding.
V.C.H.	Scarce. Has been observed on the Black Mountains.

The twite flocks are small, and do not as a rule mix with the other finches. They frequent stubbles and, when disturbed, settle again on the ground, but do not fly up into the hedges as do the chaffinches and greenfinches. It has not been recorded since 1st February, 1953, the day after the great gale and record tide which wrought such havoc in Norfolk.

397. MEALY REDPOLL. *Carduelis flammea flammea* (L.)

Scarce winter visitor.

Bull states that it often occurs but is overlooked. There are five records for the twentieth century: one bird was trapped, making the identification quite certain. There is no recent record.



LESSER REDPOLL. *Carduelis flammea cabaret* (P. L. S. Müll.)

Winter migrant in small numbers. Rare resident and breeding.

BULL Not common—small flocks seen in winter and it is believed a few remain to nest.

V.C.H. Annually observed at Kingsland where it breeds. (Williams.)

It is a common winter visitor, generally in flocks of ten to fifty birds, or in company with other finches, especially siskins and goldfinches. Alder and birch seeds form their favourite winter diet.

H. A. Gilbert once found a breeding pair of lesser redpolls—among birch trees in the south-west of the county. Dr. Williams in his catalogue records three nests, one at Kingsland (1889), the second near Kentchurch (1907), and the third at Aymestrey with a cuckoo's egg.

In recent years occasionally a single bird or a pair has been observed in Herefordshire in the breeding season, but there were no nest records for fifty years. At last, in 1973, Capt. V. Lewis found two pairs nesting in low (c. 8ft.) spruce plantation in the north of the county: two broods of young birds eventually fledged successfully.

401. BULLFINCH. *Pyrrhula pyrrhula nesa* (Math. and Ired.)

Common resident and breeding.

HORNE Becoming rarer owing to the birdcatcher.

The bullfinch, though persecuted by fruit farmers, seems to maintain its numbers.

404. CROSSBILL. *Loxia curvirostra curvirostra* (L.)

Irregular but frequent late summer immigrant and winter visitor; sometimes in considerable numbers.

BULL A frequent visitant, and sometimes stays to breed. In 1868, June was the only month out of 12 successive months in which the crossbills failed to appear in the vicarage garden at Sellack (Ley.)

HORNE Appears from time to time. Believe they breed near Kington. (Lloyd.)

HUTCHINSON An uncommon and irregular visitor.

V.C.H. Records "visitations" 1866, 1869, 1887-8, 1894, 1895.

Mrs. Armitage's painting is dated 28th January, 1889.

*The Handbook* (p. 95) gives a "probable but not positive" record of nesting in 1895.

Between 1920 and 1930 the crossbill was seen almost annually in Herefordshire, arriving in July. When they first arrive the birds have frequently been reported as a nuisance to gardeners because they have been feeding on peas.

The planting and maturation of extensive coniferous woodlands which has taken place during the last 40 years has greatly favoured the crossbill. Irruptions resulting in records of flocks seen in and after July have occurred in this county in 1949, 1953, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1962, 1963, 1967, 1970 and 1972. There have been records of song and of pairs carrying nesting material in spring in years following an irruption year, but there has been no authenticated record of nesting in the county as yet.

407. CHAFFINCH. *Fringilla caelebs gengleri* (Kleinschmidt.)

Common resident and breeding.

408. BRAMBLING. *Fringilla montifringilla* (L.)

Regular winter visitor.

The brambling can generally be seen wherever there are beech trees, for example at Foxley and Homme House.

Occasionally it appears in unusual numbers, as in the winter of 1937-38, when large flocks of 400-500 birds appeared in Hampton Bishop parish, and fed in the stubbles from December to the end of February.

Stubbles, kale or root-crops, hopyards and bush-fruit orchards are frequented each winter by flocks of moderate size, but in some winters numbers are low and the species hard to find.

409. YELLOW HAMMER. *Emberiza citrinella nebulosa* (Gengler.)

Common resident and breeding.

Altered methods in the trimming of hedgerows, and the extirpation of gorse in some upland areas have resulted in some reduction of the yellow-hammer population since the last World War.

410. CORN-BUNTING. *Emberiza calandra, calandra* (L.)

Local uncommon resident. Breeding.

BULL	Not infrequent, being fairly distributed over the arable parts of the county. It can scarcely be said to be abundant in Herefordshire.
HORNE	Does not mention the corn-bunting.
HUTCHINSON	Rare resident. Has nested in Lugg Meadows and at Mortimer's Cross (Williams.)
V.C.H.	A rare resident.
W.C.T., 1869 p. 159	Included in birds seen at Bredwardine (1864-9), by Rev. Robert Blight.
1873, p. 82	At Lingen.

Mr. R. D. Powell informs us that he has known a pair of these birds to breed near Eardisland.

There is no record of a Herefordshire nest in the catalogue of the Williams' collection in spite of the statement attributed to Dr. Williams by Hutchinson, and no mention by Lingwood.

The only eggs of this species known to have been taken in Herefordshire were found near Bodenham on 4th June, 1945, and though it is a conspicuous and easily recognised species, we have never seen the bird (H. A. Gilbert.)

A painting of a dead specimen of this bunting is in the collection painted by Mrs. Armitage of Dadnor, dated 22nd March, 1884.

Apart from the foregoing only three sightings of single specimens are recorded for this century prior to 1968, when birds were seen at Monkland, including fledged young. In 1969 at Sutton St. Nicholas several birds were seen by S. Bennett including two males in song on various dates from May 12th until June 26th. Singing males were recorded at Upton Bishop on May 16th, 1970, and on July 6th, 1972, three in song; singing males also near Ross and at Canon Pyon in May, 1971.

On June 3rd, 1971, A. Mountford found five males in song near King's Acre: later a bird was seen carrying food to the nest. On December 15th a flock of c. 40 were seen in a tree which had been used as a song-post in the breeding season. In 1972 similar observations of this small "colony" were made, including singing males (4) and food being carried to nestlings. The colony still exists (1975.)

415. CIRL BUNTING. *Emberiza cirrus cirrus* (L.)

Formerly a very rare local resident and breeding. Now probably lost to us.

BULL	A native of the county. Anyone who can distinguish its note will come to the conclusion that it is not an uncommon bird in Herefordshire. Sites mentioned: Callow Pitch, Birch, King's Caple, The Chase, Ross.
HORNE	Not so uncommon as is supposed. Occurs at Kingsland (Williams) and Kimbolton, near Leominster (S. Hutchinson).

W.C.T., 1884, p. 224.

Zoologist, 1892, p. 122. O. V. Aplin states, "Cirl bunting is resident in Herefordshire", and quotes J. B. Pilley, "must be fairly common". A nest with eggs recorded by Dr. Bull as found quite near Mitcheldean road station in 1880 appears to be the first record of a nest in the county.

It nested also at Wormbridge in 1884, and the eggs were in the possession of the late Mr. G. N. Carter.

In the Williams' Catalogue ten nests are recorded, one with a cuckoo's egg, between 1886 and 1909, all of them from the north-western side of the county.

Rev. S. Cornish Watkins saw pairs near Kington on two occasions in spring (1901 and 1902), and a flock of six at Ballingham in 1903. (Preb. S. C. Watkins' Diary.)

In 1914 a cirl's nest containing a cuckoo's egg was found at Ganarew. *Woolhope Club Transactions* 1914, p. 42.

Two nests with young and one small winter flock seen by H. A. Gilbert, a fair-sized flock seen by Miss N. Marsh, in 1931, a singing cock seen by L. Smith in 1940, a cock bird seen in May, 1950, by C. Catchpole, and one which was seen in his garden at Woonton by Col. Hibberd in March 1950, are the only six recorded sightings in the county in the last 50 years.

421. REED-BUNTING. *Emberiza schoeniclus schoeniclus* (L.)

Resident and breeding in all suitable marshy localities, osier beds, etc. Has suffered from drainage of recent years, but is still a common bird.



423. SNOW-BUNTING. *Plectrophenax nivalis nivalis* (L.)

Rare winter visitor.

A specimen in the museum was shot at Much Dewchurch in 1856. There are only eight other records for Herefordshire. In 1947, snow buntings were seen on the high ground near Fownhope during that severe winter. On Nov. 7th, 1961, a flock of seven was seen on the ground on Malvern Hills by Mrs. J. L. Fox. They flew off towards Mathon. A single bird was seen among mangolds at Burley Gate on Sept. 18th, 1964. A single exhausted female was seen on the ground on the top of Ragglestone, Malvern Hills, on March 15th, 1967. One was seen with bramblings at a roost near Ledbury by J. G. Murray in January, 1974.

424. HOUSE-SPARROW. *Passer domesticus domesticus* (L.)

Common resident and breeding.

425. TREE-SPARROW. *Passer montanus montanus* (L.)

Local but generally distributed. Resident and breeding.

Probably has decreased of late years.

BULL. Common in all suitable localities.

HORNE Sparingly distributed.

HUTCHINSON A local resident.

V.C.H. A local resident.

Decreasing as a breeding species since the ancient orchards which provided its principal nesting grounds are now rapidly disappearing (see under the lesser spotted woodpecker). It nests wherever there are old pollard willows or decaying trees in hedge-rows or parklands: also occasionally in nesting-boxes. It forms large flocks in winter, often combining with the flocks of finches or yellow buntings on farmland.