

The Entomological Section.

President—The Rev. Preb. A. P. WICKHAM, East Brent Vicarage, Highbridge.

Recorder—Mr. A. E. HUDD, F.E.S., 108, Pembroke Road, Clifton.

Treasurer—Mr. W. A. BOGUE, F.E.S., The Bank House, Watchet.

Secretary—Mr. H. H. SLATER, Brooke House, Cannington.

THIS has been a singular season for entomologists, following the most perfect spring that has been seen for years. The latter culminated in a dry and very hot June, which was rudely broken on the 29th by a violent storm and tropical rainfall—since which the weather has consisted mainly of samples. It has nevertheless been a wonderful year for butterflies, chiefly of the commoner species. The Whites have been a serious plague on farms and in gardens, and great damage has been done by them to all crops of the cabbage kind. Later, the larvæ of *Agrotis exclamationis* and *Barathra brassicæ* have taken their place, and, at the time when this is written, are doing much mischief to the same crops. It does not seem to be generally known that this mischief to greens can be kept in check by watering the plants with moderately strong salt and water; this does not injure the latter, unless the salt is excessive, as the Brassica family is of sea-side origin. The injurious larvæ of *Apamea basilinea* have been extraordinarily abundant amongst corn-crops in some places, and their numbers, as revealed by the thrashing machine, simply astonishing.

Amongst the Rhopalocera, *Io*, *Urticæ*, and *Atalanta* have been more numerous than for many years, so much so as to add an extra beauty to the flower garden. The Wych-elm Hairstreak (*W-album*) has been plentiful in its particular haunts, and Mr. Hudd tells me that *V. C-album*, the Comma butterfly, has been "common" in his garden at Clifton; but this is a sight not to be seen in Somerset south-west of the Mendips. The great butterfly event of the year, however, has been the re-appearance of *L. Sibylla*, the White Admiral. Mr. Syme has seen quite a number in Cogley Wood, Bruton, and the writer saw Mr. Mapleton take one at Ebbor on

July 11th. Only a few have been reported to have occurred in the county previously, and none of recent years.

Our membership keeps up, a little work is being done, and a few records made. (These, by the way, even if suspected records only, should be sent to our Recorder, Mr. Hudd, without delay.) Local gatherings are taking the place of the field-days, which it was decided at the annual winter meeting to discontinue for the present. We are very grateful to Mr. H. J. Charbonnier for his long-continued work on the *Diptera*, of which an instalment (Part II) is published in this volume.

Our militant members were all well at the latest reports. We are proud to learn that one of them, Second-Lieut. J. R. Hobhouse (R.G.A.), has been awarded the Military Medal.

The Ornithological Section.

Vice President—The Rev. F. L. BLATHWAYT, Melbury Osmund Rectory, Dorchester.

Recorders—Miss AMY SMITH, The Mount, Halse, Taunton ;
and Dr. J. WIGLESWORTH, Springfield House, Winscombe.

Secretary (pro temp.)—Miss AMY SMITH.

Treasurer (pro temp.)—Mr. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY,
Taunton Castle, Taunton.

THE winter of 1916-17 will long be remembered for the great destruction of our resident bird life which it has entailed. The Thrush tribe has suffered severely, especially Mistle-Thrushes and Song-Thrushes, which have perished in large numbers, whilst Blackbirds, although considerably thinned, have come off much better. Starlings also have died in great numbers. Robins have been considerably thinned, whilst Dunnocks seem to have been less affected. Amongst the Tits, the Longtailed has been especially hard hit, having apparently been completely wiped out in many places ; and the same may be said of Goldcrests. Even the hardy Common Wren has suffered to a considerable extent. The seed eating birds, such as the Finch tribe, have got through much better, for though some members of this family, such

as Goldfinches, appear to have been reduced in numbers, the majority does not seem to have been much affected; Chaffinches indeed appeared in the spring to be almost as numerous as ever. All the members of the Crow tribe appear to have come through unscathed, or nearly so, their carnivorous propensities having enabled them to keep in good condition by preying upon the smaller victims of the frost.

The Ravens in the Brean Down sanctuary reared two young ones during the past season. The most interesting fact about the Raven however, is that a pair almost certainly nested in the Cheddar cliffs last season, according to the information furnished by Mr. A. West. As it is many years since this inland station was resorted to for breeding purposes by these birds, the fact of their returning to one of their old haunts is an eloquent testimony to the value of protection in enabling these birds to increase.

The Peregrines on Brean Down were more fortunate than in the previous year, as they reared four young.

The Little Owl continues to spread, but as this is being made the subject of a special communication, it need not be further alluded to here.

Amongst interesting new records since the last report the following may be mentioned. A Great Northern Diver was shot at Meare in October, 1916, which came into the hands of Mr. Stanley Lewis; and a pair of these birds frequented Blagdon lake in November and December, of the same year, one of which was eventually shot by Mr. D. Carr in the latter month.

A male Goosander was shot at Shapwick during the severe weather in February last, which was seen and identified by Mr. C. E. Burnell.

A fully adult Arctic Skua was obtained at the mouth of the Axe, early in June, probably a unique occurrence for that period of the year.

The additions to the Museum Collections include a Montagu's Harrier, female, shot at Staple Fitzpaine, 1910, presented by Mr. W. H. Rendell; a Bittern shot in 1895 on Curry Moor, North Curry, given by Rear-Admiral C. H. Dare, *m.v.o.*; a Great Crested Grebe, female, shot on Porlock Marsh, 1917,

given by the Rev. J. A. Smart; and a Red-throated Diver shot on the lake in Enmore Castle Park, 1915, presented in its case by Mr. W. B. Broadmead.

Clutches of eggs of the Greater Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Starling, Teal and the Lesser Black-backed Gull have been presented by Dr. J. Wigglesworth.

For some years the Society has had in its Library "British Birds with their Nests and Eggs," illustrated by F. W. Frohawk, in parts. One part was missing, but this has now been provided by Mr. W. D. Miller, and the work has recently been bound in six volumes.

Mr. G. Hiscock, Secretary and Treasurer of the Section, has been called up for military service. During his absence Miss A. Smith has undertaken the duties of Secretary and Mr. H. St. George Gray, Curator of the Museum, of Treasurer.

The Botanical Section.

President and Recorder—The Rev. E. S. MARSHALL, F.L.S.,
West Monkton Rectory, Taunton.

Secretary and Treasurer—Mr. W. D. MILLER, Cheddon, Taunton.

THE annual spring meeting was held at the Museum, Taunton Castle, on Wednesday, February 28th, 1917, the Rev. E. S. Marshall, President, in the chair.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. The accounts were passed, showing a balance in hand of £1 7s. 0d.

Mr. Miller proposed, and Mr. Tite seconded, a resolution that Field Days should be suspended for the duration of the War. Mr. Watson was in favour of retaining at least one such meeting, but did not oppose the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

Several members inspected Mr. Cowan's Herbarium work, the value of which was recognized by a cordial vote of thanks.

Mr. Watson showed an interesting case of fasciation in holly, and Mr. Marshall brought a large parcel of additional plants for the Herbarium.

After an informal discussion of various botanical points, the meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the President and Secretary.

Though there has been no concerted action, and though many members have been too fully occupied to give much attention to botany, a very large number of notes has been sent in from time to time. Many of these have already been published by Mr. Marshall in the July number of the *Journal of Botany*. Some of these appear here for the second time, others being new. Considerations of space have reduced the following selection to a tithe of the notes received, and many notes almost or quite as interesting have had to be omitted.

SOME SOMERSET PLANT NOTES FOR 1917.

9. *Cochlearia officinalis*. In a deep glen on the dolomitic-conglomerate. Blagdon. H. S. Thompson. (It grows in quantity in the Cheddar gorge, 3 or 4 miles away).

Silene inflata var. *hirsuta* (Gray) seems quite frequent in North Somerset. H. S. Thompson.

1. *Viola lutea*. Near Winsford. W. D. Miller. On a grassy knoll, at 950 feet, fully 2 miles east of the only recorded station near Exford Church.

9. *Astragalus glycyphyllos*. Wood border, south side of Sandford Hill. H. S. Thompson.

9. *Galium Mollugo* × *verum*. Rocks above Cheddar, with both parents. H. S. Thompson.

2. *Vaccinium Vitis-Idaea*. Quantocks, above East Quantockshead. The Rev. C. Q. Knowles. "Quite a lot of it." With the exception of two ancient and unconfirmed records for the north of the county, the nearest known station for this plant is near Llanthony. A very interesting extension of range.

9. *Mentha citrata*. Mr. Tucker reports that this plant in Mr. White's original station near Priddy has become distinctly hairy beneath the leaves. In company with Miss Roper, he discovered another small patch, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile distant.

Galeopsis Tetrahit var. *bifida* occurs at Whitestaunton (6)

and at Clatworthy (3). W. Watson. Mr. Watson also records the variety *nigrescens* from Clatworthy, and Mr. Tucker the same plant from near Priddy (9).

6. *Scleranthus annuus*. Near Buckland St. Mary. W. Watson.

9. *Polygonum minus* var. *subcontiguum*. Near Priddy, and in Mineries Bog. B. W. Tucker. A very minute form. The type has previously been reported only from Gaspar Common and Burtle Moor.

10. *Daphne Mezereum*. Eaker Hill Wood, Chewton Mendip. B. W. Tucker. An addition to the list of apparently native stations.

8. *Potamogeton coloratus* (= *plantagineus*). Peaty ditches south of the railway, between Shapwick and Ashcott Stations. C. P. Hurst.

8. *Carex gracilis* (= *acuta*, auct.). Marsh on Burnham sandhills. H. S. Thompson.

3. *Tolypella* —? Canal at Charlton. Probably *T. prolifera*, Leonh. E. S. Marshall. If the identification is correct, new to the county.

Dr. Downes mentions that he has recorded 520 flowering plants in the Ilminster district during the season; among them the established aliens *Coronilla varia*, beside the road at Ashill, and *Amaranthus retroflexus*, at Ilminster.

Other interesting aliens noticed are *Vicia macrocarpa*, in cornfields near Chewton Mendip, B. W. Tucker, and *Echium italicum*, on Steep Holm, Dr. J. Wiglesworth.

Mr. Watson has written a paper on "New Rare or Critical Lichens," the first two parts of which have been published in the April and August numbers of the *Journal of Botany*, while the last part is yet to appear. He describes under the name of *Thelidium terrestre* a lichen new to science, found recently on a hedge bank at Cheddon. The second British record for *Polyblastia tristicula* was made at Taunton this year. It was previously found at Aviemore, Inverness-shire, in 1864.

Mr. Cowan has been continuing his valuable work on the County Herbarium at the Museum, Taunton Castle. The thanks of the Section are due to Mr. H. Clarke, of Greenway

Road, Taunton, for the gift of a large number of specimens, though unfortunately many are in poor condition. Mr. Stuart Thompson has also sent another welcome consignment. It may be mentioned that very many of the rarer or more critical Somerset plants are represented either not at all, or by inferior material, and well dried specimens of such plants would be most acceptable. They may be sent to the Secretary, or preferably to Mr. Cowan, at the Castle, Taunton.

In connection with the National Herb-growing Association's movement for the cultivation and collection of medicinal plants, a drying-room, under the trained supervision of Miss Crosfield, has been opened in Taunton at 20, East Street, and good work is being done. Full particulars of plants required, etc., may be obtained at the above address, or from Mr. C. E. J. Walkey, Edgborough, Staplegrove, Taunton.

There has been a net increase of five in the membership of the Section, which now numbers over fifty.