

The Ornithological Section

President—The Rev. F. L. BLATHWAYT, M.B.O.U., Dyrham Rectory, Chippenham, Wilts.

Vice-Presidents—The Very Rev. Prior E. HORNE, F.S.A., and Mr. BERNARD W. TUCKER, M.B.O.U.

Secretary and Treasurer—Mr. H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, F.S.A., Taunton Castle.

Committee—The President, the Secretary and Treasurer, the Rev. Preb. D. J. PRING, Messrs. E. GERALD HOLT, EDMUND PAGE, H. TETLEY and B. W. TUCKER.

THE Annual Meeting of the Section for 1934 was held in the Wyndham Hall, Taunton Castle, on 22 March, when the President occupied the chair. There was an average attendance.

The Treasurer presented the financial statement for 1933, which showed a credit balance on 31 December of £11 17s. 7d. On the other hand there was the liability of the cost of the Report for that year to be taken into consideration. There was also on deposit at the bank the sum of £23 18s. 6d.

The Officers of the Section were re-elected and thanked for their services. The Editorial Committee, consisting of the President, the Secretary and Mr. Tucker, and the Committee of seven were also re-elected to serve for the ensuing year.

The Twentieth Report on Somerset Birds (1933) had recently been issued by the Editorial Committee.

The members agreed that the Section should be affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology. The annual subscription was 10s.

Mr. B. W. Tucker made a statement on behalf of the sub-committee appointed to examine and report on the British and Foreign Birds exhibited in the Great Hall. A list of the birds in the general series had been prepared, and they had been marked 'bad', 'poor', 'fair' and 'good' specimens.

In this connection it was decided that the so-called 'Egg Cabinet Fund', placed on deposit, should be made available for improving and re-conditioning the bird collections in the Museum.

It was reported that a Snowy Owl had been given by Mr. B. W. Tucker, and that other stuffed birds had been presented by Mrs. Rendell in memory of her late husband Mr. Wyndham Rendell, and by Mr. Henry Balfour, the latter including male and female specimens of the Great Bustard.

In the afternoon Mr. G. K. Yeates, an assistant master at Sherborne School, gave a lecture on 'Bird Life in Northern Britain', which was well illustrated by lantern slides.

The autumn meeting was held at Taunton Castle on 9 October, when the president was in the chair.

In the afternoon four talks were given in the Wyndham Hall, the first three of which were illustrated by lantern slides. They were as follows :

Rev. F. L. Blathwayt, 'The International Congress Excursion to the Pembrokeshire Islands, July 1934'.

Mr. B. W. Tucker, 'Swiss Birds, 1934'.

Rev. C. J. Pring, 'Some Birds of Scotland'.

Mr. H. Tetley, 'Birds of the Barrow Reservoirs, Somerset'.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

The following are the principal records for the year extracted from the separate Report of the Section on Somerset Birds, to which, as usual, reference should be made for fuller details in many cases. The principal ornithological event of the year has been the proof of the breeding of Cormorants on Steep Holm.

RAVEN, *Corvus c. corax* L.

Three young were reared at Brean Down and four at Steep Holm (*H.C.*). Three pairs are reported along the coast near Kilve (*C.J.P.*), and the Wiveliscombe quarry site was also visited and a new nest seen (*H.B.E.*). On Exmoor the species has now become a regular tree breeder again, four tree nests being reported in 1934 (*C.J.P.*). In December a pair constantly frequented Crook Peak on the Mendips and these are believed not to have been the Brean Down birds (*K.D.S.*).

HAWFINCH, *Coccothraustes c. coccothraustes* (L.)

The Leigh Woods are undoubtedly the headquarters of this species in Somerset, and more than usual appear to have breed in 1934, some successfully, though a number of nests came to grief. Birds were also seen during the breeding season at Beggar's Bush, Abbot's Pool, Cadbury Camp and Backwell Hill (*H.T.*, *K.B.R.* & *K.D.S.*)

CROSSBILL, *Loxia c. curvirostra* L.

Reliably reported to have bred at Failand in 1933, when the parent birds were seen feeding fledgling young. No evidence of breeding in 1934; birds were seen at the end of March, but not later (*K.B.R.* & *K.D.S.*)

WHITE WAGTAIL, *Motacilla a. alba* L.

What appears to have been an unusually large passage is reported by K. D. S. on the Berrow-Weston-Clevedon coast in April. Two are also reported from Barrow Reservoirs and several from Blagdon.

WILLOW-TIT, *Parus atricapillus kleinschmidti* Hellm.

One reliably identified near Penselwood on June 19, by P. A. D. H., who knows the species.

PIED FLYCATCHER, *Muscicapa h. hypoleuca* (Pall.)

One on Steep Holm, Apr. 29 (*H.C.*). One at Winscombe, Apr. 29 (*D.B.G.*)

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

Nest with two eggs on Sedgemoor, June 13 (*F.H.*)

BLACKCAP, *Sylvia a. atricapilla* (L.)

Two birds wintered at Winscombe (*D.B.G.*)

RING-OUZEL, *Turdus t. torquatus* L.

Six to eight birds (including two males) seen on Lansdowne Racecourse, nr. Bath, Apr. 7 (*H.T.*)

BLACK REDSTART, *Phœnicurus ochrurus gibraltariensis* (Gm.)

Male seen at Downside, West Town, near Bristol, on Oct. 30 (Miss E. Mackeson—*Field*, Nov. 24, 1934, p. 1254).

SHORT-EARED OWL, *Asio f. flammeus* (Pont.)

Three specimens seen (singly) hunting N.W. of Burtle, Dec. 12 (*V.G.*)

PEREGRINE, *Falco p. peregrinus* Tunst.

One young reported reared in Avon Gorge (*H.T.*); one at Brean Down and probably three at Steep Holm (*H.C.*)

MERLIN, *Falco columbarius aesalon* Tunst.

Two pairs observed on Exmoor in May, of which one successfully reared young in an old Crow's nest (C.J.P.)

BUZZARD, *Buteo b. buteo* (L.)

Continues to be reported from various localities outside West Somerset, viz. Brean Down, Mar. 8 (H.C.), Backwell Hill (pair), May 24, and one reliably reported over the Avon Gorge about Sept. 20 (K.B.R. & K.D.S.), pair over Crook Peak, Dec. 12 (K.D.S.), and one observed occasionally during the year in woods at Hunstrete (H.L.P.)

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

A pair of hawks evidently this species were seen by Mr. and Mrs. S. H. G. Barnett at Shapwick in May, the grey male bird being seen on May 21 and the pair on May 27. H. T. failed to see anything of them on June 17 and they were not reported subsequently.

HEN HARRIER, *Circus c. cyaneus* (L.)

A pale grey hawk with black primaries seen quartering the ground at Burrington Combe on Dec. 1 by Miss P. Jenkin, was evidently a male of this species.

HERON, *Ardea c. cinerea* L.

E. G. H. reports a new small heronry of three nests established near Dunball, and J. H. S. one in Ham Woods near Langport, where about six nests were built, but probably no young reared.

PINTAIL, *Anas a. acuta* L.

One off Brean Down, Jan. 3, and subsequently two (H.C.). Drake also seen off Brean Down, Jan. 9, Apr. 17 and 21 (K.D.S.). Pair at Barrow, Feb. 25 (H.H.D. & H.T.)

SCAUP DUCK, *Nyroca m. marila* L.

The drake recorded in the last Report remained on the Barrow Reservoirs throughout the winter and was last seen by K. D. S. on May 10.

CORMORANT, *Phalacrocorax c. carbo* (L.)

Breeding was proved on Steep Holm and young birds photographed in the nest by members of the Ornithological Section of the Bristol Naturalists' Society on May 26, when ten nests were seen. Non-breeding birds have frequented the island for many years, but reports of breeding

in the past have always proved on investigation to be unreliable. H. C., however, states that they have now bred for some years.

SLAVONIAN GREBE, *Podiceps auritus* (L.)

Two Grebes, of which one seems to have been certainly and the other probably this species were observed on Barrow Reservoirs by H. H. D., H. T., K. B. R., K. D. S. and A. C. L., between Feb. 17 and Feb. 25, and one was still there on Mar. 3 (K.D.S.)

BLACK-NECKED GREBE, *Podiceps n. nigricollis* Brehm.

Single birds in summer plumage were seen at Barrow on May 10 and July 12 (K.B.R. & K.D.S.). One there, Sept. 23 and two, Dec. 30 (H.T.)

LAPWING, *Vanellus vanellus* (L.)

One ringed by E. G. H. as a nestling on Steart, June 6, 1929, was recovered near Dax (Landes), France, on Mar. 8, 1934 (*Brit. Birds*, vol. xxviii, p. 71).

RUFF, *Philomachus pugnax* (L.)

One at Barrow Reservoirs, Sept. 2 (H.H.D. & H.T.). Two (or possibly three) at Blagdon Reservoir, Sept. 30 (H.H.D.)

GREENSHANK, *Tringa nebularia* (Gunn.)

One to two birds seen at Barrow between Sept. 18 and Oct. 7 by F. L. B., H. H. D., H. T. and others.

GREY PHALAROPE, *Phalaropus fulicarius* (L.)

One was seen on a pond at Barrow Court from Oct. 27 to Nov. 8 by J. W. S. Clough and others (H.T.)

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT, *Limosa l. limosa* (L.)

Flock of twenty-three at Blagdon Reservoir, Sept. 30 (H.H.D.), twenty on Oct. 18 (F.L.B.), and twelve, Nov. 4 (H.H.D. & H.T.)

BLACK TERN, *Chlidonias n. niger* (L.)

Two at Blagdon Reservoir, Apr. 12 (H.G.Alexander).

LITTLE TERN, *Sterna a. albifrons* Pall.

One at Clevedon, Apr. 17 (A.C.L.)

ICELAND GULL, *Larus leucopterus* Vieill.

The Iceland Gull at Bristol (*cf.* 1933 Report, p. lxxxiv) was seen on numerous occasions throughout the year by various observers, the latest recorded being Nov. 5. It was also seen at Barrow Reservoirs on Mar. 23 by F. L. B., H. T. & B. W. T.

SCANDINAVIAN LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL, *Larus f. fuscus* L.

A bird of this race, which has the upper parts conspicuously darker than the British form, was identified at close range on the Avon at Sea Mills, July 21 (*K.B.R.* & *K.D.S.*)

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, *Larus marinus* L.

Has undoubtedly become much more frequent inland in Somerset in the last few years. Records show that it is now quite common on the Avon between Sea Mills and Bristol Docks, while no less than fifteen were seen at Blagdon on July 7 by *K. B. R.* & *K. D. S.* There are also several records for the year from Barrow.

The contributors of the above notes can be identified from the following list: *Rev. F. L. Blathwayt*; *H. Cox*; *H. H. Davis*; *Dr. H. B. Elton*; *D. B. Grubb*; *F. Hibberd*; *P. A. D. Hollom*; *E. G. Holt*; *A. C. Leach*; *Rev. C. J. Pring*; *K. B. Rooke*; *K. D. Smith*; *J. H. Symes*; *H. Tetley*; *B. W. Tucker*.

B. W. TUCKER.