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The Birds of the Parish of Beith and Neighbourhood.

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[Read 24th September, 1912.]

THE area included is confined to a radius of three to four miles from the town of Beith in Ayrshire. The district is well wooded, and includes some high hills. The number of species known to have occurred is 116, and of this number 83, which are distinguished by an asterisk, have bred.

*MISTLE-THRUSH (*Turdus viscivorus*).—A fairly common resident, but we do not think it has increased any in the last forty years. In autumn small flocks may be seen moving about. The nest is generally built in trees, at varying heights of from three to forty feet from the ground. We have seen a nest in an over-grown whin bush, one on the ground, though there were plenty of trees around, and one in a hedge. Nests are often found about the end of March. It begins to sing in January, continuing till May, and sometimes June. It sings also occasionally in the autumn. It is our loudest songster. In the autumn of 1889 we saw a pure white one with red eyes. It returned in the following spring, and proved to be a female. We found her nest with four eggs. The young birds turned out quite normal. The parent bird was not seen after the autumn of 1890.

*SONG-THRUSH (*T. musicus*).—Abundant. While most of our Song-Thrushes leave us in winter, a few can always be seen in

the hardest weather. The winter of 1878-79 was long and severe, and their numbers in consequence greatly reduced, but they recovered gradually again. Though well named the Song-Thrush, it is more of an orator, pouring forth its notes singly. In mild weather it begins to sing about the end of December, and goes on to July. It sings also in autumn sometimes, and we have known it occasionally to sing on the ground. Sometimes it uses an old blackbird's nest. We have known several nests partly lined with withered grass, and have seen several nests on the ground. Nests with eggs may be found in the third week in March, and on to July. While four or five is the usual number of eggs laid, we have seen a clutch of six and a nest with six young.

REDWING (*T. iliacus*).—Abundant, arriving about the first week in October, and continuing to arrive throughout the month. It may be heard when flying overhead at night, and is more nocturnal than the Fieldfare. Most leave by mid April. They warble in fine days in autumn and winter, and often sing on fine days in April. The song is not so connected as that of the Song-Thrush, which it somewhat resembles however.

FIELDFARE (*T. pilaris*).—A common winter visitor, arriving about the third week in October, and departing in April and May. They come and go later than the Redwing. In the last two or three years they have not been so numerous with us as formerly. We have often heard them making a chattering noise as if they were just going to sing, but we have never heard them singing. They roost on trees and on the ground, especially on the latter in stormy weather.

***BLACKBIRD** (*T. merula*).—Abundant. The blackbird has a fine song, though we think it inferior to that of the Song-Thrush. It is hardier than the last-named. Sometimes it rears two broods in the same nest. The white and pied blackbirds we sometimes meet with are almost invariably males. We have seen two or three clutches of six eggs and one of seven. We saw a Blackbird sitting on a clutch of eggs on a bare stone wall where the nest had been built. The nest was lying on the ground about a yard from its original position. No doubt the bird was ready to lay when the nest was removed.

*RING-OUZEL (*T. torquatus*).—Used to be fairly common, but the last visit we paid to Kaim Dam, in Lochwinnoch Parish, where we used to find nests many years ago, yielded neither bird nor nest. It has a loud and clear song, but it is inferior to that of the Song-Thrush or Blackbird.

*WHEATEAR (*Saxicola oenanthe*).—Generally arrives about the end of March or the beginning of April, and departs in September and October. It frequents the hilly and stony parts of the parish, and a few pairs may be seen on the lower levels, but it is getting scarce here. It often builds in holes in the the ground and in fissures of rocks, and if the hole is of sufficient length to allow the bird to keep out of reach it will run to the end of the hole and wait till all danger is past. It also builds in dry stone dykes, &c., and will run for some distance in the dyke before making its appearance in the open.

*WHINCHAT (*Pratincola rubetra*).—Generally arrives about the beginning of May, and departs in August and September. It frequents the hilly parts of the parish as well as the more level parts of the district, but it is getting scarcer in this locality. Its pretty song resembles the Whitethroat's, but it varies in individual birds.

*STONECHAT (*P. rubicola*).—Rare. In 1901 we saw two nests with eggs in the parish. Before and since then we saw several pairs in the breeding season.

*REDSTART (*Ruticilla phœnicurus*).—Often seen in passage, especially in autumn, usually young birds. The Redstart has a nice song resembling that of the Chaffinch, finishing with a few warbling notes. The call-notes resembles those of the Willow-Wren. We found a nest with seven young in the parish.

*REDBREAST (*Erithacus rubecula*).—Abundant. This very pugnacious bird selects a piece of ground from which it chases any of its own species attempting to cross the border line. One ascended three stairs in a tenement, and took up its abode with one of the writers, remaining for seven days. We have seen a pied Robin, and one with a white ring round its neck. Among curiosities in Robin's nests, we have seen one in a hedge, five feet from the ground, one in a spruce fir, one in a wash-house, eight

feet from the ground, and another in a flower-box. Twice we have seen clutches of white eggs. It sings in every month of the year, and is most silent in July. We consider that it sings more than any other bird.

*WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia cinerea*).—One of our commonest migrants, arriving about the first or second week in May. It frequents small plantations as well as the open country, and a few pairs may be seen in the hilly parts of the Parish. We have seen a clutch of six eggs. Mr. Kennedy, Beith, got a clutch of white eggs of this species. One of the writers and Mr A. Stewart saw a Whitethroat's nest built among grass and woven round two grass stems, but the nest was principally supported by the grass, and we have seen one since in a bramble bush, woven round two of the branches, but principally supported by the bush.

*GARDEN-WARBLER (*Sylvia hortensis*).—Scarce. Generally arrives about the second or third week in May. It frequents glens, woods, and enclosures, where there is plenty of cover, and is very timid. It has a very fine song, and although it is scarcely six inches in length the notes are almost as loud as a Blackbird's.

*GOLDEN-CRESTED WREN (*Regulus cristatus*).—Common. It frequents fir plantations, &c. We have found as many as ten nests in one season. We have seen a nest two feet nine inches from the ground, also one twenty-seven feet above the ground. Curiously enough these two nests were in the same plantation, and in the same year, and they are respectively the lowest and highest of the species we have seen, the low one being also the smallest clutch we have ever seen, there being only four eggs in it. Till 1904 all the nests we found were in Spruce Firs, since then we have found three in Yews and one in a Cypress.

*CHIFFCHIAFF (*Phylloscopus rufus*).—Rare. We have heard it on the 31st of March, but it generally arrives about the middle of April. The three nests we have seen were about a foot or two from the ground.

WILLOW-WREN (*P. trochilus*).—Abundant, arriving from 6th April onwards. It is our commonest migrant, and may be heard

pouring forth its nice swinging little song in every part of the parish. We have seen a nest on the root of a fallen tree, and another among Ivy, about three or four feet from the ground.

*WOOD-WREN (*P. sibilatrix*).—Scarce, generally arriving about the second week in May. It frequents glens and woods. We have seen about a dozen nests.

*SEdge-WARBLER (*Acrocephalus phragmitis*).—Plentiful. This migrant usually arrives about the beginning of May. It was scarce about Beith in 1909, but there was a slight increase in 1910, and a still greater increase in 1911, which has brought them up to about their normal number, but they are not so numerous as they were thirty years ago. The nest is generally built among herbage, about a foot or two from the ground. It is sometimes suspended, and woven on three or four reed stems or grass stems. We have seen a reddish-coloured egg of this species.

*GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER (*Locustella naevia*).—Generally arrives about the beginning of May, but it has been decreasing here of late years. In a plantation near Beith we found sixteen Grasshopper-Warblers' nests, and we have found three elsewhere. We have not found more than five nests in any one year.

*HEDGE-SPARROW (*Accentor modularis*).—Abundant. They generally move about in pairs. The nest is usually built a few feet from the ground, but we saw one on a tree about twelve feet up. We have also seen a nest in a wall. As a rule a Robin chases this species, but we have, on several occasions, seen a Hedge-Sparrow chasing a Robin.

*DIPPER (*Cinclus aquaticus*).—Common. We have seen this species hopping from branch to branch on a tree like one of the thrush tribe. It sings throughout the autumn and winter months and on till May, but it is occasionally heard in summer when the female is off the nest. This is usually built at no great height from the water, but we have seen two nests about thirty feet above the water, and we have seen one in an old quarry where there was stagnant water below.

BRITISH LONG-TAILED TITMOUSE (*Acredula rosea*).—Uncommon. Occasionally seen in small parties in January and November.

*GREAT TITMOUSE (*Parus major*).—Not uncommon. It frequents woods, glens, &c. Its bugle-like notes may be heard

in the early days of January. This bird will kill a Robin and pick its brains out, and if half a dozen are kept in the same cage they will fight till only one is left. One of the writers has seen a nest of this species with nine eggs, in an iron pipe thirteen inches below the surface of the ground.

***COAL-TITMOUSE** (*Parus ater*). — Common, frequenting fir plantations, &c. The male feeds the female both on and off the nest. Of nine Coal-Tits' nests found in one season eight were in holes in the ground and one in a dyke. Nine eggs is the most common clutch in our experience, but we have seen a nest with ten eggs.

***WILLOW-TITMOUSE** (*P. atricapillus kleinschmidti*). — Not common. It frequents fir plantations, hedges, &c. We watched a pair making a hole in an old decayed stump. The birds carried away the chips, but many chips fell to the ground at the foot of the stump and were left there. A nest was built in the hole of this stump. We visited the nest pretty regularly for about four months, but the female never laid an egg.

BLUE TITMOUSE (*P. caeruleus*).—This active and lively bird frequents plantations, wooded parts, &c. It is a great acrobat, and nests in holes in trees and in dykes.

***WREN** (*Troglodytes parvulus*). — Common. A peculiarity about this bird is that many nests made by the male bird are left unfinished. The female selects one and lines it with feathers. We watched one of these nests, and it was six weeks before the female laid an egg in it. The writer saw a Wren's nest in the pocket of an old coat hanging from the branch of a tree. We have seen a nest with young ones as late as 19th August.

***TREE-CREEPER** (*Certhia familiaris*).—Sparsely scattered over the parish. A few pairs have bred here and there, but the bird is more frequently found in winter.

***PIED WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla lugubris*). — Fairly common in summer, and a few may be seen in winter. It chases the Grey Wagtail, and it often has a tussle with the White Wagtail. We have seen a Pied Wagtail's nest inside a Blackbird's.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*M. alba*).—Seen in spring and autumn, less frequently in the latter. We saw a vast flock of this species feeding in a ploughed field one spring.

*GREY WAGTAIL (*M. melanope*).—Not uncommon. This graceful and delicately-coloured bird frequents quick-running streams, &c. Unlike the Yellow Wagtail, it seldom visits an open field. We once saw a Grey Wagtail's nest inside an old Dipper's. We have seen nests with eggs of this species in the first week of April.

*YELLOW WAGTAIL (*M. raii*).—Abundant. This beautiful summer visitor generally arrives about the middle of April. Our earliest date for its appearance is 7th April. This was in 1894. It is the commonest Wagtail we have in the breeding season. The nest is sometimes built in a whin bush, or on the face of a hill.

*TREE-PIPIT (*Anthus trivialis*).—Fairly common, generally arriving about the 23rd of April. It frequents plantations and other suitable localities. Although the Tree-Pipit is well adapted for perching on trees, it roosts on the ground. The flight of this bird is undulating, resembling that of the Chaffinch. The flight is a very important point in distinguishing a bird. A side view is the best, as you can see the shape of the bird; a front view is the next best, and a back view the worst. The nest is usually built in or near a wood.

*MEADOW-PIPIT (*A. pratensis*).—Abundant. This species may be seen almost anywhere in the parish, and a few are present with us even in the hardest weather. Sometimes the male feeds the female when off the nest. The Meadow-Pipit sometimes feeds the old Cuckoo. Four or five eggs are usually laid, but we have seen clutches of six twice.

GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*).—A rare winter visitor. One was shot in the neighbourhood in 1891.

*SPOTTED FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa grisola*).—Fairly common. This summer migrant generally arrives about the second week of May. It frequents glens, wooded parts, &c., where there are plenty of flies. It is a very quiet bird. The male sometimes feeds the female on the nest. In 1908 we saw a clutch of five eggs of a very pale-blue colour without markings.

*SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).—Arrives from 7th April onwards. We have never seen it later than 15th October.

There is a widespread belief that when Swallows are skimming over ponds and dipping into the water they are washing themselves. They are really in pursuit of flies on the surface of the water. If the female of this species loses its mate it soon finds another. Two white Swallows have occurred here. Both were killed with a sling. We saw one of them—a young bird. One of the writers has seen a Swallow's nest on the head of a brush.

*HOUSE-MARTIN (*Chelidon urbica*)—This summer visitor usually arrives about the beginning of May. It is scarce as a breeding species, but large flocks may be seen in August and September. The year 1911 was a record one for Swallows and House-Martins here. It was a remarkably fine summer, and migrants left earlier in the autumn than usual that year.

*SAND-MARTIN (*Cotile riparia*).—Generally arrives about the middle of April. It is scarce as a breeding species, but large flocks are often seen in spring and autumn, though the numbers are less in the latter season. Very few were seen in the spring of 1911.

*GREENFINCH (*Ligurinus chloris*).—Abundant. This species may be seen almost anywhere. Nests with eggs may be found about the third week in April and on till the third week in August, and young ones in the nest in the beginning of September; but many of these late nests are forsaken by the parent birds. Like the Canaries they occur both yellow and buff, and cinnamon specimens are sometimes met with. These, as well as those of other species, are almost invariably females. It was considered in Beith, about forty years' ago, that all cinnamon Canaries were females, but that is not the case. It all depends on how they are bred.

*GOLDFINCH (*Carduelis elegans*).—Rare. This species has nested in the district, and a pair are occasionally seen in the parish.

*HOUSE-SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*).—Abundant. We saw a House-Sparrow's nest in a Cypress tree which was only partly domed, with two holes in it for the birds to enter and leave. We believe we were the first to point out that the House-Sparrow sometimes feeds its young ones in instalments, that is, it feeds the same young one twice or three times, or different ones with

the same mouthful of food. We have seen white examples of this species of both sexes. We have also seen several black House-Sparrows. One that was brought to us had a strong smell of soot. Probably the bird had been roosting inside or close to a chimney!

***CHAFFINCH** (*Fringilla cœlebs*).—Plentiful. This cheery songster begins to sing about the end of January, and continues till the beginning of July, but it occasionally sings in October. The sexes separate in the winter, and they are principally males that are seen here, but there is always a sprinkling of females. We have seen eggs of a light-blue colour, with reddish spots at the larger end, and light-blue eggs without markings, and eggs like those of the Greenfinch.

***BRAMBLING** (*P. montifringilla*).—This beautiful winter visitor has been seen in this district in small numbers. The song is composed of a few notes which resemble those of the Chaffinch, but it is not so good a songster as that bird. It has a shuffling style of hopping like the Chaffinch.

***LINNET** (*Linota cannabina*).—Rare. This species was fairly common in this district about twenty-five years ago, since then it has been gradually decreasing. A few may be seen occasionally in the autumn and winter months. It is about twenty-two years since we saw a nest of this species. It is delightful to hear a flock of these birds singing in concert. Five or six eggs are usually laid to the clutch.

MEALY REDPOLE (*L. linaria*).—Small flocks of this winter visitor have been seen along with the Lesser Redpole in the parish. About a dozen were caught in the winter of 1910-11, and one was caught seven years ago. The call note of this species is louder and harsher than that of the Lesser Redpole.

LESSER REDPOLE (*L. rufescens*).—Fairly common. A few nests of this lively little species are annually to be found in the parish, and flocks of about two dozen are often seen in the autumn and winter months. One of the writers has kept several specimens in confinement. These caught and ate flies.

***TWITE** (*L. flavirostris*).—Scarce as a breeding species, but flocks may be seen flying about in the winter months. We found

a nest with four young ones. One of the writers took them and put them under a Canary which reared them successfully. They were three males and one female. It was an early brood. As a general rule early broods are mostly males and late broods are mostly females. The eggs vary in number from four to eight.

*BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula europæa*).—Scarce. It has bred in the neighbourhood. Four were caught in the parish in April, 1911. This species also catches flies and eats them in confinement.

*CORN-BUNTING (*Emberiza miliaria*).—Scarce as a breeding species, but flocks are occasionally seen in the autumn and winter months. We found a nest with four eggs. There was a hole in the bottom of the nest which appeared to be made by the bird's bill to allow the water to run out of the nest. In the breeding season the bird often flies with its legs hanging as if broken. It seems to be a breeding habit, as the bird does not do this in the autumn and winter months.

*YELLOW BUNTING (*E. citrinella*).—Abundant. There has been much discussion as to the number of eggs this species lays to the clutch. Our experience is there are more threes than fours, although four is quite a common number, but five is unusual. The first nest we found with five was in 1897, one in 1900, and another in 1903, and Mr. R. Kennedy found one in 1906, three years between each of the nests. The male takes part in incubation.

*REED-BUNTING (*E. schæniclus*).—Plentiful. We have seen a Reed-Bunting's nest beneath a piece of old shoe. We also found a nest with three eggs. One of the eggs was white, another was the usual colour, but abnormally large, with a double yolk, and the third was of the usual size and colour. This nest was suspended among reeds, but not interwoven in the stems. The male takes part in incubation.

SNOW-BUNTING (*Plectrophenax nivalis*).—A winter visitor, but very irregular in its appearance.

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).—Abundant. From the *Western Supplement*, Beith, of 1st April, 1911, we take the following:—
“An old tree, considered a landmark, which reared itself aloft in

a garden at the Horseshoe, has disappeared before the remorseless advance of the builder. It is stated by the oldest residents that in its branches was reared the first brood of Starlings seen in this parish, some seventy or eighty years ago. The Starling was a *rara avis* in those days, and people congregated daily to watch the strangers as they brought the young birds to maturity. The nest was in a box in the tree, fitted up for their reception. How the species has multiplied since then can be seen in late summer by the myriads of birds which flock in different parts of the district." We knew of a Starling's nest in a hole in the ground, and also saw one on the ground which was covered by a box, the birds entering and leaving the nest through a hole in the box. We have seen one in a gas lamp, one in a coal house, several in haystacks, and others on trees, open to the sky, like a Blackbird's. There is a breeding place about two miles from Beith, and every time we visit the spot during the time the birds are rearing their young there are about a dozen young birds, about half grown, lying dead on the ground. We think there must be some disease among them. The nests are very close together. Sometimes Starlings roost with Rooks, but the latter object to their company. Probably they dislike the chattering noise of these little fellows. Some years ago a flock of Rooks were roosting at the manse. The Starlings followed them several times from the Manse to Morrishill, but the Rooks had to submit to the inevitable and give up their roosting place. White examples are sometimes met with. We saw one about Beith a few years ago, and Mr. A. Stewart and one of the writers saw another white one on 7th October, 1911.

*MAGPIE (*Pica rustica*).—Fairly common, but its numbers depend largely on gamekeepers. Though the bird is cunning enough to keep out of reach of the sportsman's gun, when the nesting season comes round gamekeepers soon reduce their numbers by shooting them on the nest or when rising from it. The Magpie is an ornament to the landscape. A few years ago a gentleman, who resided in Beith, while taking a walk, saw a Pyet following a Skylark to its nest, which contained young ones. The Magpie seized one of the young Larks in its beak and flew away with it. The gentleman referred to followed the Pyet, and

when he got near it, it dropped the young bird, but it had nearly all the feathers pulled out of its victim. In 1905 we saw a flock of sixteen. The Magpie builds the largest domed nest we are acquainted with.

***JACKDAW** (*Corvus monedula*).—Plentiful, but comparatively scarce as a breeding species. We saw a curious coloured specimen of this species with some white feathers in it, and it had pink eyes.

CARRION-CROW (*C. corone*).—Sparsely scattered over the parish. Our experience is that from two to six "caws" are uttered by this species, three being most frequent.

HOODED CROW (*C. cornix*).—Occasionally seen in the neighbourhood.

***ROOK** (*C. frugilegus*).—Abundant. We have seen two nests of this species built in a chimney, although there were plenty of trees close by. One of the writers kept a young Rook for some time in confinement for the purpose of testing whether the feathers at the base of the bill were worn off by the bird boring in the ground for food, or whether it was the result of a moult, but the bird was infested with vermin so it got its liberty. Our opinion is that the feathers disappear at the moult not to be resumed again. Young birds may be seen in November with the feathers at the base of the bill, and sometimes later. Jackdaws feed in similar places to the Rook, but they do not lose the feathers at the base of the bill by boring in the ground for food. All the Rooks about this locality roost about "the Caldwell" throughout the winter months.

SKY-LARK (*Alauda arvensis*).—Plentiful in summer. In winter large flocks are often seen. The song of this bird is eminently harmonious. It sings from February to July, resuming for a short time at the end of September or in October. We timed one which sang for forty-two minutes before alighting. We have also heard several singing for thirty minutes, but from ten to fifteen minutes is the usual time. We can tell whether the bird is ascending or descending without looking at it by the different style of the song. The Sky-Lark often perches on the top of a whin bush or a hedge, and sometimes on young trees, but it

seldom perches on a tree of any great height. We saw one perched on a tree about fifteen feet high, and one on a tree about twenty feet high, and it even perches on the ridging of a house when its young ones are in a cage hung on the side of a wall. There has been much discussion as to the number of eggs this species lays to the clutch. Our experience is there are more fours than threes, although three is quite a common number, but five is unusual. We have seen two nests on the roadside, one in a young plantation, and two under a whin-bush.

*SWIFT (*Cypselus apus*).—Not uncommon. This summer visitor generally arrives about the first week in May. The majority take their departure about the middle of August, but we have seen them in September. They spend most of their time wheeling through the air catching flies. They are almost tireless on the wing, and we have never seen them perched. Owing to their long wings and short legs they can hardly rise from a flat surface. We experimented with four birds but three of them failed to rise, as they always closed their wings when attempting to rise. The other one kept its wings spread out and gradually rose up.

KINGFISHER (*Alcedo ispida*).—Scarce. We have seen two nests in the district. One that we saw fishing drew the captured fish through its bill crosswise, from head to tail and from tail to head, as if breaking its bones before swallowing it.

CUCKOO (*Cuculus canorus*).—Not uncommon. In 1889 we made our first experiment with a young Cuckoo about three days old, by putting in a House-Sparrow's egg into a Meadow-Pipit's nest, when the young Cuckoo, while still blind, hoisted the egg on its back and climbed up the side of the nest backwards and threw it out. Ten years later we got Mr. Peat Millar, Beith, to take a series of snap-shots of a young Cuckoo, while still blind, ejecting a young bird from the nest. These we believe to have been the first photographic records of this curious fact taken in this country.

BARN-OWL (*Strix flammea*).—Scarce. Mr. A. Stewart and one of the writers saw a clutch of six Barn-Owls in a dovecote in the district. Three were larger than the others and left the nest earlier.

*LONG-EARED OWL (*Asio otus*).—Fairly common, nesting in many of the fir plantations in the parish. We have never seen it flying from one plantation to another in broad daylight, although often to be seen moving about in a plantation with other birds in pursuit.

*TAWNY OWL (*Syrnium aluco*).—Scarce. This species has nested in the parish and neighbourhood. We saw a pair that came down the chimney of a cottar's house on Millbank Farm, in Lochwinnoch Parish, during the severe winter of 1894-5, and were promptly killed by the inmates, but not before they had destroyed some stuffed birds that were in the room, pouncing on them, and tearing them to pieces, doubtless thinking they were 'flesh and blood. They must have been greatly surprised when they found nothing but feathers and wool. This proves that birds of prey find their food by sight, not by smell, as some people think. The intruders now fill the places of the birds then destroyed, and were set up by the local taxidermist at Lochwinnoch.

*SPARROW-HAWK (*Accipiter nisus*).—Scarce. It nests in small numbers in different parts of the parish. We have seen eggs of this species resembling those of the Partridge in colour.

MERLIN (*Falco aesalon*).—Rare. A young bird in brown plumage was shot in 1910.

*KESTREL (*F. tinnunculus*).—Scarce in the breeding season, more frequent in winter. One flew through an open window in a house in Beith and attempted to seize a canary in a cage. It was captured. We have seen this species pursuing a Blackbird and a Skylark, but it had to give up the chase.

CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).—One was shot in one of the Beith Reservoirs, and it is sometimes seen in Kilbirnie Loch.

COMMON HERON (*Ardea cinerea*).—Not common.

GREY GEESE (*Spp. ?*).—Grey Geese have been seen occasionally, but have not been specifically identified.

*CANADA GOOSE (*Anser canadensis*).—This species is common in the neighbourhood, and has bred in the parish.

*MUTE SWAN (*Cygnus olor*).—Sometimes met with in the parish, and breeds in the neighbourhood, but in considerably reduced numbers.

*MALLARD (*Anas boscas*).—A few pairs breed in the parish and their numbers are augmented in the winter. One of the writers saw a white specimen which he took to be a female of this species. It was shot when flying along with some other Ducks, and the same writer saw another white specimen alive (male) about the same place, in 1912. There were seven white ones caught when young, but six of these died or disappeared. The Mother was also white.

*TEAL (*Nettion crecca*).—Not uncommon. A few pairs breed in the parish.

WIGEON (*Mareca penelope*).—Common from autumn to spring.

POCHARD (*Fuligula ferina*).—Not so common. Occurring sometimes till May.

*TUFTED DUCK (*F. cristata*).—Common. This species has bred in the district and has increased of late years here.

SCAUP DUCK (*F. marila*).—Sometimes seen.

GOLDENEYE (*Clangula glaucion*).—Is met with in small numbers in winter.

GOOSANDER (*Mergus merganser*).—Frequently seen in winter in small numbers.

STOCK-DOVE (*Columba oenas*).—One was shot on 8th April, 1907, at Hessilhead Castle.

*RINGDOVE (*Columba palumbus*).—Common. Builds in most of our fir plantations. We found a nest of this species with four eggs. Probably two females had laid in the same nest. There seemed to be a struggle for possession of the nest, for the next time we visited it some of the eggs were lying broken at the foot of the tree.

*BLACK GROUSE (*Tetrao tetrix*).—Not uncommon, and breeds in Kilbirnie and Lochwinnoch Parishes.

*RED GROUSE (*Lagopus scoticus*).—Plentiful.

*PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*).—Common. We have found nests in the hilly parts of the parish where we hardly expected to find them,

*COMMON PARTRIDGE (*Perdix cinerea*).—Plentiful. We found a Partridge's nest with two Pheasant's eggs in it.

***CORNCRAKE** (*Crex pratensis*).—Common. This summer visitor generally arrives here about the last week in April. We have seen a Corncrake perched on the top of a hedge uttering its well-known note. The eggs vary in number from seven to eleven, sometimes more, but nine and ten are the most common clutches. We have seen a Corncrake's nest with nineteen eggs at the back of a farm-house among nettles; probably two females had laid in this nest.

BAILLON'S CRAKE (*Porzana bailloni*).—One was got in May, 1893, which had been killed by coming in contact with the telegraph wires.

***WATER-RAIL** (*Rallus aquaticus*).—Not common, but occasionally seen and has bred in the district.

***MOOR-HEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*).—Plentiful.

***COOT** (*Fulica atra*).—Common.

RINGED PLOVER (*Aegialitis hiaticola*).—Sometimes seen by the side of the Beith Reservoir and Kilbirnie Loch in spring and autumn.

***GOLDEN PLOVER** (*Charadrius pluvialis*).—This species has bred in the parish. It may be seen feeding in grass fields, especially where horses are grazing, and moving about in flocks of twenty to fifty or more in open weather from autumn to spring.

***LAPWING** (*Vanellus vulgaris*).—Abundant. The Peewit begins to lay about the last week in March. The eggs are usually four in number, but we have seen clutches of three and five. We have taken fresh eggs on 13th June. The well-known notes of the Lapwing may be heard about the beginning of March. They appear to us to resemble "Willopo weep, weep-weep." The bird always turns on its side before uttering the last note. These notes proceed from the male only, and while the bird is on the wing. They are never uttered while the bird is on the ground, at least that is our experience. The male may be distinguished from the female, even at a considerable distance, by its darker upper parts, and it rises with a heavier flap. These distinctions only refer to the breeding season. We have seen a Lapwing (♂) with a good deal of white on its wings, and

Mr. A. Stewart and one of the writers saw one which resembled a mottled pigeon. A flock of Lapwings may be distinguished on a clear day at a distance of half a-mile or more with the naked eye by their formation. They stay here throughout the winter if the weather be mild and open, but if a long spell of hard frost sets in they migrate further south.

OYSTER-CATCHER (*Hematopus ostralegus*).—Sometimes seen moving about, also sometimes heard passing overhead at night.

*WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticula*).—Not common. Seen more frequently in the winter months. We found a nest with five eggs in the plantation we call the "Strip," and another was seen in Brownmuir Wood. Also breeds in Calder Glen, Lochwinnoch.

*COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago caelestis*).—Plentiful. We have seen this species perched on a crossbar which supports the telegraph wires. The Snipe sometimes produces the bleating sound and the "Chip, chip" note at the same time. The latter is produced by the vocal organs, which proves that the drumming sound is not produced by the vocal organs, as some people think. This species has been seen feeding its young.

JACK SNIPE (*G. gallinula*).—Some visit us in the winter.

*DUNLIN (*Tringa alpina*).—A few pairs breed annually in the parish. Small flocks of from four to eight are often seen in the spring, and single birds are occasionally met with in the winter. The writers have seen the Dunlin following the Golden Plover.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Totanus hypoleucus*).—Plentiful, generally arriving about the middle of April. We have seen several nests of this species in plantations. It begins to lay about the middle of May. It often rises off the nest, and moves away very quietly.

*COMMON REDSHANK (*T. calidris*).—Common. This species has increased of late years here. It usually lays four eggs to the clutch, but sometimes five are found.

GREENSHANK (*T. canescens*).—Sometimes seen in the neighbourhood. One year it was seen at the Kaim Dam, Lochwinnoch, in the breeding season.

*CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*).—Fairly common. This species breeds annually in the parish. It is often heard in March

passing overhead at night. The male either takes part in incubation or the female whistles as well as the male, as we flushed a bird from the nest which whistled like the male.

WHIMBREL (*N. phaeopus*).—Occasionally seen and heard during the autumn migration.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna fluviatilis*).—This species is often seen flying about the Beith Reservoirs in the summer months, but there is no evidence that it has ever bred in the district.

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Larus ridibundus*).—Fairly common. There was formerly a colony at Barcraig Meadows, but they have since left that locality.

COMMON GULL (*L. canus*).—This species is sometimes met with in the parish.

HERRING-GULL (*L. argentatus*).—Common. Often seen in flocks in winter, and a few may be seen in summer.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*L. fuscus*).—Not common. Is frequently seen in small numbers from about the end of March till September, and sometimes later. It is much less numerous than the Herring-Gull.

KITTIWAKE GULL (*Rissa tridactyla*).—One was found dead in September, 1909, near Kilbirnie Loch.

PUFFIN (*Fratercula arctica*).—One seen by us flying over Kilbirnie Loch.

LITTLE GREBE (*Podiceps fluviatilis*).—Fairly common. The nest is sometimes built on the ground, and the young ones are fed by the parent birds for a month or more after the young ones leave the nest.

STORM-PETREL (*Procellarica pelagica*).—Two were heard at night at Powgree Burn in 1889, and one was seen a few days afterwards at the same burn. The call note of this species is quite different from that of the Fork-tailed Petrel, as we heard the call notes of both species.

FORK-TAILED PETREL (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*).—One was picked up exhausted in a field near Beith, on 20th September, 1899, and we have seen other two in the district.