

SOME NOTES ON BIRDS

IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BUTE NATURAL
HISTORY MUSEUM.

By THE EARL OF DUMFRIES,
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A monograph of all the birds in the Society's collection would be tedious writing, not only because most of the birds live under the same conditions as in most other parts of Scotland, but also because since the Rev. J. M. MacWilliam published his most interesting work on the Birds of the Isle of Bute little of ornithological interest has been discovered.

I intend, therefore, merely to give a few short notes on the rarer or more interesting birds in the collection I have pleasure to look after; and also to make known a few changes which have taken place in the bird life of the island since the publication of Mr MacWilliam's book. At the same time, I also wish to bring to the notice of those interested in ornithology one or two freaks of colour and migration which we have the good fortune to possess.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the common birds in the collection of the Society is a completely albino specimen of the Common Guillemot, *Uria troille troille* (L.) I watched various breeding places of this bird for several years in succession but have never observed another albino or even partially albino specimen. None of the East-coast or West-coast fishermen or lighthouse-keepers whom I have asked about such a bird have ever seen or even heard of one. I can, therefore (seeing the large number of seafaring men I have questioned) safely say that we have in our albino Guillemot a most interesting specimen.

Another bird of outstanding interest in the Musuem is the Spotted Redshank, *Tringa erythropus* (Pall), placed with us on loan by Mr MacWilliam, a glance at Miss Rintoul and Miss Baxter's "Geographical Distribution of Birds in Scotland" will suffice to show its rarity in this country. The specimen we have on exhibition was obtained by Mr MacWilliam at Loch Fad in 1927.

Amongst other curiously coloured specimens in our collection are an absolutely white Twite, *Carduelis flavirostris flavirostris* (L), the albinism of which specimen is so pronounced that even the legs and beak are lighter than usual. (This incidentally is also the case with the guillemot aforementioned). Albinism being such a common occurrence amongst such a number of species. I only mention in passing that besides a number of albino and semi-albino moles, hedgehogs, and an albino brown rat, we have a pure white example of the House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus domesticus* (L), and Blackbird, *Turdus merula merula* (L), also some partially albino Blackbirds, one of which I only secured a few months ago, which is a particularly handsome and well-marked bird. An almost lemon coloured Common Snipe, *Gallinago gallinago gallinago* (L), is also a beautiful and valuable asset to the Wader's Case. This bird was killed in Bute in December, 1908.

On September 14th, last year (1930), while snipe shooting I bagged a snipe, which, as soon as I picked it up, gave me the impression of being different from the Common Snipe. On comparing it with other birds killed the same day I found it to be browner about the head and to have a shorter and darker bill than the others. I sent the bird to the Chambers Street Museum in Edinburgh for identification, but have not yet had an answer to my inquiry. However, whether it is a species of snipe new to the island or whether just a variation of the Common Snipe, it will be an interesting addition to the ornithological section of the Museum.

It is curious that the Little Auk, *Alle alle* (L), so common in winter along many miles of the British West coast, as far

South and even further than the Isle of Man, should be a comparatively rare bird on Bute. We have only four specimens, of which three were found dead, and the fourth picked up exhausted and weak at St. Ninians. The last bird of this species to come into our collection was found dead in a plantation by Loch Quien by Mr Angus Dott, gamekeeper, while driving the covert for pheasants and woodcock in January of last year (1930). It was a "piner," apparently driven in by the strong South-west winds amounting almost to gale force which had prevailed for three or four days during the previous week.

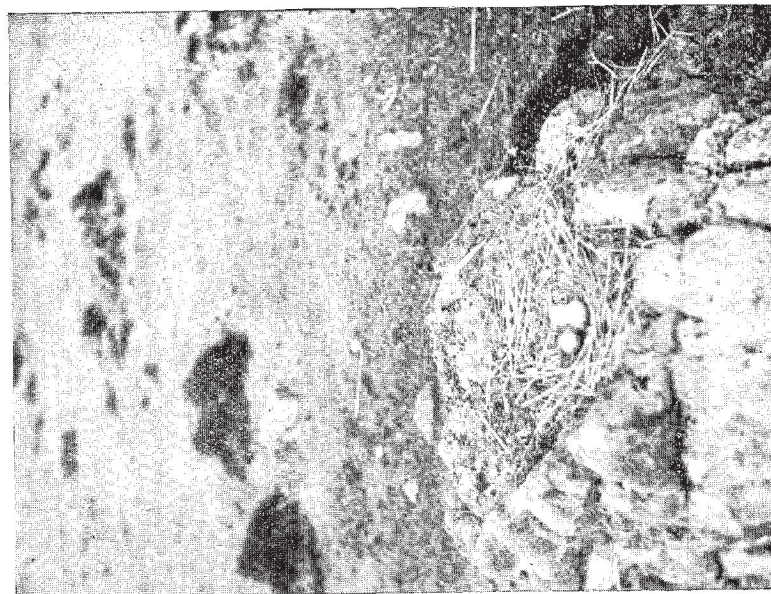
Two example of crosses between the Red Grouse, *Lagopus lagopus scoticus* (Lath), and the Black Grouse, *Lyrurus tetrix tetrix* (L), are interesting in as much as, though it is usual in such cases that these hybrids should be darker in colour than the Red Grouse, both our specimens resemble the Red Grouse in colour while their other characteristics are more those of the larger bird. The hybrid we have between the Caper cailzie, *Tetrao urogallus urogallus* (L), and the Black Grouse, however, resembles its larger parent more than its smaller. In this case the cock bird was a Black cock and the hen a caper. I should note here, that as in this case, the first sign of the coming of Caper into a new district is frequently the appearance of crosses, such as the one in our collection. The Caper hen is practically always first to arrive in a new locality, and as she has no male bird of her own species with which to mate, will almost always cross with a Black cock.

Amongst the ducks there have been several changes of late. The Goosander, *Mergus merganser merganser* (L), of which we have two specimens (one male and one female, both shot by me in winter and therefore in their best plumage), is becoming a more frequent visitor here. I have seen as many as eleven together at the same time on Loch Fad in December during the past three winters, while, as far as I can ascertain, the bird was not known in Bute ten years ago.

The Pintail, *Dafila acute* (L) has hitherto been a rare winter visitor, but last spring on the bank of a certain sheet



EIDER ON NEST.



NEST AND EGGS OF COMMON GULL.

NEST AND EGGS OF REDSHANK.



MUTE SWAN (MALE) SITTING ON NEST.



of water I came across a Pintail duck with four newly hatched young, and also have evidence, but not very conclusive evidence, of Pintails breeding near another small loch in a different part of the island. In 1928 I first discovered a Common Eider, *Somateria mollissima mollissima* (L), nesting in the County. About a dozen and a half pairs nested last season during May and June. This spring there must have been upwards of two dozen nests successfully hatched out, and I was thus able, during September, to shoot a couple of fully grown young to add to the Museum's collection of ducks, in which the Eider has hitherto been represented by but a single adult drake.

It is worthy of notice that a specimen of the Turtle Dove, *Streptopelia turtur turtur* (L), a rare bird in Scotland, is to be found in the case containing the other pigeons which are found on Bute. This bird was shot in 1909 in the early month of May.

Curiously, only one kind of Goose, the Brent, *Branta bernicla bernicla* (L), has ever been obtained on the island. I have, however, on many occasions in winter seen Barnacle, *Branta leucopsis* (Bechst), flying over, and once found a Pink Footed Goose, *Anser brachyrhynchus*, (Baillon), lying dead near Ettrick Bay, but cannot remember whether this was in December or January.

Why the Magpie, *Pica pica pica* (L), should have left Bute is rather a mystery, for surely in an island so close to the mainland, its mere persecution as vermin can scarcely account for its (most welcome) absence. However, whatever the reasons for its absence, only three specimens have been obtained since the foundation of the Museum. That it was well known in days gone by is proved by the fact that it is mentioned by John Blain, who lived in Bute from 1761 till his death in 1820, and who published a History of the Island.

These notes do not pretend to be a comprehensive description of the birds of the Island, but just a few words each about some of the more notable birds in our collection.

The photographs claim no rapport to the text, but are representatives of some of the birds of our Island.

Nomenclature throughout is taken from Hartert Jourdain, Ticehurst & Whitherby's "Handlist of British Birds."

As I finish I have to hand the report from the Chambers Street Museum on the Snipe mentioned earlier in this article. It proved to be an interesting and very unusual variation of the Common Snipe, but was, unfortunately, too flyblown to set up for exhibition or even to preserve as a skin.



A GUIDE TO THE ROCKS OF BUTE.

By ARCHIBALD LAMONT, M.A.

(Read 3rd February, 1931.)

1.—METAMORPHIC ROCKS.

The earliest formation represented in Bute is the Dalradian. This system originally comprised clays, sandstones, and pebbly rocks. These rocks were caught in the earth-storm in which, before Old Red Sandstone times, mountains were piled up high above the present peaks of the Highlands. In this folding of the crust of the earth, clays were compressed into the *slates* which we see at Port-Bannatyne; ancient sandstones gave rise to *schists*, while pebbles in the pebbly rocks were crushed and the matrix surrounding them hardened to give the *sheared grits* found in various parts of the North End.

New minerals were produced in the rocks thus altered. A well-marked succession in the occurrence of these minerals can be followed in Bute. Grey mica produced by metamorphism is seen everywhere from the Loch Fad boulder bed northward; north of Ardmaleish Point tiny white crystals of Albite appear which require an increasing degree of heat and pressure for their crystallisation; finally, in the extreme north of the island, at Black Farland, brown mica appears in the schists, indicating the intensest degree of metamorphism suffered in the island. In this way, if the most altered rocks are the oldest, the Dalradian rocks of Bute increase in age as we go towards the North.

At Ardscalpsie, south of the Loch Fad boulder bed, and at Rothesay Pier, the metamorphic formations are cut off along the Highland boundary fault. North of that tantalisingly obscured fault, there occurs on the north