

BUCKLAND

few months since. Instead of the goose teal, whistling teal, and water plover, which have gone south to escape the frosts and sharp winds, the place now swarms with various ducks, curlew, lapwing, ibis, snipe, and flocks of waders, driven from their breeding haunts in the drear tundras of Siberia, now frozen hard and covered with piles of drifting snow. Many a league of barren desert, bleak steppes, and snowy ranges have they passed on their journey to the warm plains of India. Often at night can the beat of their pinions be heard as they rush down the broad valleys and glens of the hills, following the course of the streams to the plains.

Often after a day's shooting have I stopped on the high ground to take a last look at our jewel, as it glows red and fiery under the rays of the setting sun, the reeds brown and clear against the crimson sky; skeins of wildfowl, disturbed by the shooting, wheeling and moving restlessly to and fro, now forming themselves into V-shaped phalanx; then one leg, as it were, tails out till the V becomes an L.

A few marsh harriers are still quartering the ground like pointers on the lookout for wounded birds; the harsh scream of the wobbler eagle (*Aquila fulvescens*) sounds weirdly from the clumps of gnarled and knotted acacia on the islands.

The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark.

All becomes cold and gray, it is time to move to camp, and as we retire the call of the curlew sounds fitfully—now near, now far, far away—as they sit restlessly, like spirits of the lost, across the dreary wastes of grey waters. Here it was that I once saw a wild swan, and, as I find from Jerdon that it is not recorded from India, except doubtfully from Nepal, I will relate the occurrence in full. It was on a bright morning in December, 1886, I and two friends were about separating to post for a duck-drive, when I noticed, some hundreds of yards away, a large white bird on a grassy bank. At once I recognised it as a wild swan, having seen them before in eastern England. On the first shot being fired it rose straight up, and, making two or three circles, came down wind to where I was sitting concealed behind a screen of reeds. It flew just beyond gunshot, and in the clear air and bright sun I could see its head most distinctly, noticing the absence of the knob at the base of the bill. I also saw that when standing it carried its neck and head quite erect; this and its clean-shaped small body marked it as no escaped bird. Moreover, I cannot imagine where any tame bird could have come from in that district. It flew nearly due east, and I never saw it again.

Of all wildfowl shooting, "lighting" is the most exciting. You choose a good place amongst the tussocks and withered bents, taking care to have the setting sun in your rear, the glow of sunset helping to conceal you from the coming flights, while to you they are distinctly visible as they come swiftly on. First come a few snipe, dropping in silently, and pitching almost perpendicularly when above their feeding ground. Next some dark specks appear in the warm red glow, growing rapidly bigger and bigger, till, quick as thought the mallard are on you. Two rapid shots, and down come the leaders—handsome drakes. Now they come faster and faster, and soon loud jets of fire and the dull reports of gun over the marsh testify that those to right and left are also getting shots. What various kinds of duck come part in the next hour, before the rapidly gathering darkness, the chilliness, and the wholesome dread of the fever-fiend, warn you that it is time to be up and going. How goodly a sight the bag makes when laid out in the light of the camp fire. On the right are plump mallards, next the handsome gadwall with mottled plumage, chuckle-headed

NATURAL HISTORY NOTES AND QUERIES.

SCARCITY OF FIELDFARES IN DEVON.—Up to now, I have seen a very few fieldfares this season around Newton Abbot.—R. M. J. TULL.

LANDRAIL IN FEBRUARY.—In Maidstone, on Feb. 25, I saw a landrail exposed for sale by Mr W. J. Wallond, 100, High-street, which, with a specimen of the water rail, I bought, and have since put them in the hands of a bird studier here. Mr Wallond informed me that the landrail was shot at Marden, Kent, on Feb. 20. As we know this to be one of our latest spring visitors, I can only conclude that it was hatched too late (1888) to allow it strength for migration to its winter quarters.—GEO. MILLER (Lewisham).

DISEASE IN WOODPIGEONS.—The majority of woodpigeons killed in this district are suffering from disease in the throat. I forward specimens, and shall be glad if you will, in your Saturday's issue, give me some idea of the disease and possible cause.—ALFRED BRENLEY (Chichester). [The disease is identical with that known as "canker" in domestic and fancy pigeons. It is a diseased condition of the mucous membrane of the mouth, which kills large numbers of fancy pigeons in the nest. In early stages it may in adult birds be treated successfully with carbolic acid; but this remedy is obviously inapplicable to woodpigeons.—ED.]

BIRDS-NESTING IN ICELAND.—I shall be very much obliged if any of your readers will furnish me with answers, either directed here or in your columns, to the following questions, and any hint that may, in addition, be useful to me—(1) The best time for visiting Iceland to get birds' eggs, (2) the best route thither, (3) the time it takes to get there, (4) the actual travelling expenses there and back, (5) the accommodation there to be had, (6) what outfit and commissariat I had better take, (7) would a tent be of use? (8) how often and whence do steamers run? I enclose my card.—D. P. T. (2, Coath-villas, Oxbridge).

PLAGUE OF FROGS.—Can anyone tell me a way of getting rid of frogs, or of preventing them coming near the house, &c. &c. In April last year they came in swarms into the garden and down to the pond; they were all over the place. Is there anything one could put on the ground in a circle round the house which they would not cross; also, what would be the best way to destroy them if they were collected? Would a pike or two in the pond eat sufficient spawn to keep the number down? The pond is about thirty yards square, the average depth is five feet, and the frogs were about for a week or ten days, and then all disappeared. Do they die after they have spawned? For any information on the subject, I shall feel very much obliged.—C. E. M.

HERMAPHRODITISM IN FISHES.—In reference to Mr Tegtmeyer's article on "Hermaphroditism in British Fishes," in last week's Field, it may be of interest to your readers if I add to the list of fishes which he mentions still another. The case is rarer—so far as I know, it is the only one recorded of hermaphroditism among the elasmobranch fishes—and occurred in a skate (*Raja clavata*). This fish had two testes and two ovaries, and one (the left) ovum well developed, and was figured and described by me in the *Journal of Anatomy and Physiology* of January, 1885. As there mentioned, the specimen was (some months after examination and sketching) by some mistake thrown out of the spirit tank in which it was preserved.—J. DUNCAN MATTHEWS (Springhill, Aberdeen, Feb. 21).

SCARCITY OF FIELDFARES IN CORNWALL.—In West Cornwall these birds have not been so scarce for upwards of twenty years. During the present winter to date I have not seen 100; in some years it was not at all uncommon to see thousands, some fields near the town having hundreds. Starlings are also in less numbers than usual; the enormous flocks of some years have dwindled down to comparatively very few. We are having snow to-day—a very unusual thing for this district. The weather, however, for the past fortnight has been soft and close, just like April. There is a thrush's nest within a few yards of where I write, and many others partly built near. A robin has made its nest and laid three eggs in Kimberly park. My pheasants and partridges in the pheasantry have not been so forward for years.—T. W. (Woodville, Falmouth).

BIRTH OF A RHINOCEROS AT CALCUTTA.—I enclose an extract from the *Calcutta Englishman* newspaper, notifying the birth of a rhinoceros at the Calcutta Zoological Gardens.

YACHTING.

REGATTA FIXTURES.

Wednesday, May 22.—New Thames Yacht Club; Match.
Thursday, May 23.—Royal Northern, Opening Cruise, Clyde.
Friday, May 24.—Royal London Yacht Club; Match on the Thames.
Friday, May 25.—Royal Western Yacht Club; Match.
Friday, May 26.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Match.
Saturday, May 27.—New Thames Yacht Club; Match to Harwich.
Monday, May 27.—Royal Harwich Yacht Club; Match.
Tuesday, May 28.—Royal Harwich; Match to Southend.
Friday, May 31.—Royal Clyde; Opening Cruise.
Saturday, June 1.—Royal Clyde; Match Nore to Dover.
Monday, June 3.—Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club; First Regatta, Dover.
Saturday, June 4.—Royal Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Club; Match.
Saturday, June 4.—Royal Western, Clyde; Match.
Saturday, June 5.—Royal Cork Yacht Club; Regatta, Queenstown.
Saturday, June 5.—Royal Northern Yacht Club; Regatta, Harlow.
Monday, June 17.—Royal Cork Yacht Club Regatta, Queenstown.
Saturday and Monday, June 22 and 23.—Royal Mercury Yacht Club; Regatta.
Saturday, June 22.—Royal Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Club; Match.
Saturday, June 22.—Royal Clyde; Handicap Regatta, Hunter's Quay.
Saturday, June 23.—Royal Northern Yacht Club; Regatta, Harlow, first day.
Monday, July 1.—Royal Northern Yacht Club; Regatta, Harlow, second day.
Wednesday and Thursday, July 3 and 4.—Mudhook Yacht Club; Regatta, Hunter's Quay.
Saturday, July 6.—Royal Portsmouth Corinthian Yacht Club; Match.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT is just now being made in New York to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and start a Yacht Racing Association; but the leading clubs, as before, mostly keep aloof. However, a number of delegates from clubs recently met in New York under the presidency of a member of the Yonkers Yacht Club. With an almost prophetic perception of what was likely to happen, he advised the meeting to discuss on general grounds the advisability of starting a Yacht Racing Association, and to leave the measurement question alone until after the association had been formed. However, the very first speaker, "Captain Joe Ellsworth," broke away from the advice, and suggested that a "mean length" rule is the best possible. *Forest and Stream* says the opinion of each delegate was then invited, and one after the other, after expressing an opinion in favour of the association, every speaker "branched off at length in defence of his favourite rule of measurement." Some wanted mean length, some length-plus-one-third-or-one-fifth-overhang, some length and sail area. One rule was objected to because it had "plus" in it, as no one could be expected to know what plus meant." After a time order was returned, and a second meeting called for March 3. The "mean length" rule appears likely to have a bad time of it in America; for we are assured that "no owner would consent to chop off both ends of his yacht and make her look like a dry goods box in order to race under a mean length rule." There can be no doubt that a Yacht Racing Association is much needed in America, but we are not sure that the right way to obtain one is by a federation of yacht clubs, as the opinions, good sense, experience, and wisdom of the parties most concerned—the yacht owners—are more than likely to be ignored, not to say contemned, by a committee of club delegates.

We have had a very large experience of this in the United Kingdom—so long ago as the year 1852 a "confederation of commodores" was attempted, which was to regulate sailing rules and regattas; but the yacht owners gave it no support, and it came to nothing. After this, various attempts were made to bring about uniformity in sailing regulations, classification, and rating, by means of a federation of yacht clubs, but each and all endeavours failed. In 1868-9 came the better organised "Yachting Congress," formed by delegates from

rod-crested pochards (*Fuligula rufigula*). These very handsome ducks frequent the jheels and swamps of the north-west provinces and Punjab for a few months in the cold weather, often in very considerable numbers; they are not uncommon in some parts of Europe, and have occurred on several occasions in England, chiefly on or near the east coast.

A favourite haunt of the bittern was this swamp, and often have I flushed three or four from the same patch of reeds—sometimes also seen them standing head erect and all alert, watching your approach, only taking wing when forced to do so. They all leave by the end of February, and I never remember seeing one after that month.

Occasionally I used to come across a flock of white ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), feeding in the soft boggy land along the shore, a rather uncommon bird, and by no means generally distributed, in fact, I can only remember having seen two flocks.

Another very common bird in an Indian jheel is the marsh harrier (*Circus argurus*). Two or three will often accompany the line of guns and beaters, ready to seize any dead or wounded bird. Their rich, deep chocolate plumage and white head, bright in the sun blaze, as they quarter the ground to and fro, now and then dropping slowly to the ground to seize their quarry, or rest in dead reeds and sedge, their white head and black shoulders alone being visible above the grass.

A sharp eye must be kept on the wokhab eagle (*Aquila fulvescens*) over ready to seize on the fallen duck. I remember once seeing a pochar seized almost as soon as it hit the ground and carried off to an anthill; when, with some difficulty, I got to the spot there was nothing but a few scattered feathers, and the eagle was stretching his neck and lazily gulping down the last morsel.

Our leave is over. It is time to up camp and march home, "and yet"—to quote one, alas! long since passed over to the majority, when writing of a very similar scene once familiar in eastern England—"the fancy may linger over the shining meres, the golden reed beds, the countless waterfowl, the strange and gaudy insects, the wild nature, the mystery, the majesty" of our jheel.

SHOOTING OF SAND GROUSE IN THE CLOSE SEASON.

Sir.—Three more sand grouse have been killed near Redcar. One a female, was shot from a flock of seven on the South Gare Breakwater, at the mouth of the Tees, on the 14th inst. Another female was killed at the same place on the following day, and a third example, a male, was picked up on the sand on the 16th. It had an old wound in the side—the cause of death—was very poor in body, and the flesh was quite putrid.—Both the female birds were in good condition. I inclose the crop of the one killed on the 15th. Can you name the contents?

I enclose, Feb. 22. T. H. NIXSON.
[We do not like to give any information respecting birds killed during the close season, and regret the waters were not convicted and fined under the recent Act. The females, being in good condition, would most probably have laid and reared their young had they not been illegally slaughtered.—Ed.]

THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

ADDITIONS TO THE MENAGERIE, REGENT'S PARK, FROM FEB. 18 TO FEB. 21.

Date	Name	Country	How obtained	Where located in the Gardens
Feb. 18	White Tree Frog (<i>Hyla cornuta</i>)	Australia	Purchased	Reptile House
"	Common Vulture (<i>Larus calurus</i>)	Holland	Ditto	New Heronry
19	White Stork (<i>Ciconia alba</i>)	New Zealand	Presented by Prof. T. J. Parker	Insect House
"	Hybrid Pigeon (between <i>Muscula muscivora</i> and <i>M. fano</i>)	British Islands	Presented by Mr. J. H. B. Cowley	Small Cats House
20	Common Parakeet (<i>Cyanus cyaneus</i>)	India	Born in the Menagerie	Menagerie
"	Common Swan (<i>Cygnus communis</i>)	Europe	Presented by Mr. G. Score	Swan Pond
21	Common Buzzard (<i>Buteo vulgaris</i>)	Spain	Presented by Capt. J. V. Harcourt	North Aviary
"	Macaque Monkey (<i>Macaca mulatta</i>)	India	Presented by Mrs. Nicol	Monkey House
"	Common Perch (<i>Percus fluviatilis</i>)	British Fresh Waters	Presented by Mr. H. Roberts	Fish House

am told that this is the first instance known of a rhinoceros being born in captivity. It is undoubtedly the first time that there has been a cross between the two species *Lasotus* and *Namatenensis*. With regard to the words "of Cabool," which refer to *R. Bumatrensis*, I regret to learn that the animal has been sent to Afghanistan to the Ameer Abdol Kader, in exchange for some animals that the Ameer sent to the Calcutta Zoological Gardens, but it is to be hoped that he may now be sent back to Calcutta.—G. T. BUCKLAND, P.Z.S. (2), Ashburn-place, South Kensington. [We believe it is now generally admitted by naturalists that *Lasotus* is not a good species.—Ed.]

STEEL PEN IN BODY OF SNIPE.—While out snipe shooting on 11th inst. I bagged my first couple for the season in an uncultivated paddy field not far from my bungalow. On my return home I had the birds cooked for dinner, and in separating the breast from the back of one of them, I discovered, very much to my astonishment, a J pen inside, and lying across the under part of the breast bone. I asked my servant if he knew anything about it, but he said no, and seemed quite as much surprised as I was. On examining the pen I could see that it had been in the bird for some time, for it had marks on it as of a sort of fungus. Could the bird have possibly mistaken it for an insect, and have swallowed it? I send you the pen, and you will see the marks I mention still on it. I think this is a truly remarkable case. My wife, who was at the table with me, saw me take the pen out of the bird's inside. I load my cartridges on my writing table, and by chance a pen may have got into a cartridge, but I do not think so, for two reasons: first, I do not use the kind of J pen found—one of W. Mitchell's; and, secondly, the birds were both at least twenty-five yards off when I shot them, and no light object, such as a pen, would have carried the distance.—EDW. KENSINGTON (Rathchild, Finsbury, Croydon, Jan. 31). [The pen forwarded by our correspondent was one of Mitchell's ordinary J pens.—Ed.]

GOLDEN PLOVER HELD BY AN OYSTER.—While golden plover shooting near Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, Pacific, a few days since, I broke the wing of a plover flying over my head, and the bird dropped in the water. My companion, who was some little distance off, having the retriever, and the water being fairly deep, I did not at once pick the plover up; with the assistance of the wind it managed to reach a sandy spit, where subsequently two or three more fell. I then waded over to the spit, and gathered the birds that were on the sand, with the exception of one, which I noticed about a foot or two from the bank in six or six inches of water, and although only wing-d, did not appear able to move away, and on picking it up I was surprised to find one of its toes securely caught by an oyster, which was attached to a small stone. I put them carefully in my game bag, and thought no more about it until arriving on board the ship, when, on counting over the birds, my attention was again drawn to the plover referred to, and I found the relative position of the bird and its captor unchanged. After showing them to my messmates, who agreed with me that such an incident appeared uncommon and of rare occurrence, the plover's leg, oyster, and stone were deposited in whisky. Previously, however, I fastened a small piece of cotton around the oyster, thinking the strength of the raw spirit would probably cause it to loosen its hold and let its prey free. The bottle and its contents is now produced and shown to friends visiting the ship. I fancy I recollect a somewhat similar account in *The Field* some time since; however, should you consider this likely to be interesting to any of your numerous readers at home or abroad, please insert it when convenient.—PLYMOUTH. [Some time ago mention was made in our columns of a sandpiper being found on the coast securely held by a mollusc, and another correspondent reported a snipe which, when shot, was found to have a small bivalve attached to one of its toes.—Ed.]

[Advertisement].—"The only substitute for firing horses." STAYERS' OINTMENT, after forty years' constant success, stands alone as the only really reliable remedy for all diseases of horses' legs, &c., without bleaching. Of all chemists, 2s. 6d. and 5s. per box, or post free from the proprietor, Veterinary Infirmary, 9, Park-lane, London, W.

[Advertisement].—"Smokers who appreciate a deliciously cool tobacco which possesses a fragrance and aroma of unusual excellence and power, should ask for Lord's P. and O. Smoking Mixture. The most sovereign and precious weed that ever the earth tendered to the use of man."—B. J. JONSON. In packets only, with their name and trade mark. Of all tobacconists and stores, or from R. LLOYD & SONS, Holborn Bars, London.

[Advertisement].—"Epps' Cocoa." GUATEMALA AND COMPOSITES.—"By a thorough knowledge of the natural laws which govern the operations of digestion and nutrition, and by a careful application of the fine properties of well-selected Cocoa, Mr. Epps has provided our breakfast tables with a delicately flavoured beverage which may save us many heavy doctors' bills. It is by the judicious use of such articles of diet that a constitution may be gradually built up until strong enough to resist every tendency to disease. Hindrains of subtle maladies are floating around us ready to attack wherever there is a weak point. We may escape many a fatal shaft, but keeping ourselves well fortified with pure blood and a properly nourished frame—Gill's Cocoa. Made simply with boiling water or milk. Sold only in packets, by Grocers, labelled—"James Epps and Co., Homoeopathic Chemists, London."—Also makers of Epps' Afternoon Chocolate Essence

adversely criticised that nothing more was heard of the "Yachting Congress." In 1875 the leading yacht owners themselves undertook the work, and the formation of the "Yacht Racing Association" on the basis of the Jockey Club was the result. The work of the Association has hitherto withstood the criticisms of every nautical Aristarchus, although the Association on the measurement question has been unable on all occasions to keep pace with the theoretical firebrands who would "burn, sink, and destroy" every yacht which did not conform to a particular ideal.

The Boat Sailing Association, which was recently started on the Upper Thames by delegates from the various up-river clubs, is another example in a small way of the difficulties which inherently accompany any organisation so constituted. Somehow all the rules seem inimical to the boat owner or yacht owner, as the case may be, and not in his interests; indeed, it may be found that the whole scheme of legislation is crudely directed against some particular vessel or owner. This sort of thing is usually more apparent when the rating rule is concerned, as indicated in a letter we published from "Nautilus" last week, and one from another correspondent last week. Whether or not the Boat Sailing Association was empowered to make whatsoever rules the delegates pleased, irrespective of the wishes or directions of the clubs who sent them, we will not discuss; but it seems to us that the Association would occupy a very judicious position if it had not the power. If such a power did not exist, the club delegates would simply say how they were directed to vote, and vote accordingly. The Boat Sailing Association would thus exist solely to record the result of the voting, and to watch for the probable effect of the directions given to the delegates, differing in character. With regard to the regulation, which forms the grievance in the letter of "Nautilus," that all boats shall have not less than 3ft. 9in. beam, all we can say is that such crude saving clauses are always exasperating, and, if found by experience to be required, show that the rules themselves are unfit for the purpose intended. In the case discussed by "Nautilus," the regulation as to a minimum beam appears to have been imported into the rules without adequate provocation, as the sailing caocons—the exclusion of which is aimed at—have hitherto not shown that they are unfit to compete on the river, or that they can obtain any disproportionate advantage over boats of a different type.

Mr John Hyslop, the official measurer of the New York Yacht Club, has just made a report on the working of the club rating rule during the last three years. This is a very interesting document, and no doubt the recommendations contained in the report will be regarded as of great importance by the club, as Mr Hyslop is a man of scientific attainments, and has been devoted to yacht racing from youth upwards. In the first part of the report Mr Hyslop recommends that a regulation should be adopted so that in future it will not be possible for yachts to compete without first being measured. On this side of the Atlantic the British Yacht Racing Association has already adopted such a regulation; but the new rule is not even now so stringent as some yacht owners would desire—that is to say, it provides for a yacht starting without being measured or rated if her owner obtains a written authority from the sailing committee that she may do so. Several yacht owners think that no such exception as even this ought to exist, and the clubs in the South of England are so firm about it that they are not likely to give any such written authority. It is argued, if the rule is made imperative that a yacht must be measured before starting, that either the owner must comply with the rule or give up racing. On the Turf, if an owner refused to "weigh out" we know what the result would be; and we do not see that the rule requiring a yacht to be rated before starting is more irksome than any other rule designed for the regulation of sport. Whilst on this subject, we may as well call attention to the altered rule as to the taking in and putting out of ballast after measurement. Under the old rule, it was enjoined that no ballast should be taken in or put out after 9 p.m. of the day previous to the race. This has now been altered to "after entry," and even then it must not be done if it affects the length of the load water-line without giving notice to the Yacht Racing Association. Last year there were all sorts of rumours about yachts of various sizes