

few months since. Instead of the gossie teal, whistling teal, and water pheasant, which have gone south to escape the frosts and sharp winds, the place now swarms with various ducks, curlew, grebe, ibis, snipe, and flocks of Greys of Siberia, now frozen hard, breeding amongst the tall reeds and sedges, and on the banks of the canal, and covered with piles of drifting snow. Many a league of barren desert, bleak steppe, and snowy ranges they passed on their journey to the warm plains of India. Often at night can be heard of their pinions 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 on my jhel, 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 shouting of my gun, and the flash of the fire, now forming themselves into V-shaped phalanxes; then one, 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 woshak eagle (Aquila fulvescens) sounds now and then from the clumps of gnarled acacia knotted across on the islands.

The snipe's riffs, the stars rush out. At one stride comes the dark.

All becomes cool and grey, it is time to move to camp, and as we retire to the call of a gull is more lively—now near, and now far away—they fly restlessly, like spirits of the lost, across the dreary wastes of gray water. 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, 1884, and two miles from the river, I was stopping in the 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 snow being fired it rose straight up, and making two or three circles, came down on the water as a sitting hen, and 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; its legs, and its clean-shaven bill were on one morning in December, 1884, and I can not imagine whether any tame bird could have come from that district. It flew nearly due east, and I never saw it again.

Of all wildfowl shooting, "fighting" is the most exciting. You choose a good place amongst the tussocks and withered benets, taking care to have the setting sun in your rear, so that the wind, helping to conceal the birds, may be sitting close by, while you 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, they are on you, flying rapidly and straight, and come the leaders—handsome drakes. Now they depart more faster and faster, and soon long jets of fire and the dull reports of your gun over the marsh testify that those to right and left are also getting shots. What various kinds of duck come past in the next hour, before the rapidly gathering darkness of the evening, and the few become dead of the fever, and warn you that it is time to be up and going. How goodly a sight the big makes when laid out in the light of the camp fire. On the right are plump mallards, next the handsome gadwall with marbled plumage, chinkle-headed shovellers, garganey, teal, pochard, tufted duck, and a stry curlew. It is two or three miles off the shore, the children, and the best are treated to bedouin (Puligularia). 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 northerly coasts.

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 any after that month.

Occasionally I used to come across a flock of white bittern (Threkiomis 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.

Another very common bird in an Indian jhel is the marsh harrier (Circus argenteus). Two or three will often accompany the line of guns and beaters, ready to seize any dead or wounded bird. Their rich, deep note is a hoarse, rasping sound, and it is just as they fly in the air that they quarter the ground to and fro, 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 woshak eagle (Aquila fulvescens) every ready to seize any small bird, but I never remember seeing a single one 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 hastily gulping the last morsel.

Our leave is now to be taken. I have to say good-bye to some, "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 mares, the golden red heads, the countless waterfowl, the strange and gaudy insects, the wild nature, the mystery, the majesty" of our jhel.

D. G.

SHOOTING OF SAND GROUSE IN THE CLOSE SEASON. On a fine morning three sand grouse were killed near Redcar. One, a female, was shot from a flock of seven on the South Gate Breakwater, at the mouth of the Tees, on the 14th inst. Another female was killed at the same place on the 15th inst., and a single male was shot on the 16th inst. It had an old wound in the side—the cause of death—was very poor in body, and the flesh was quite pink. Both the bird and the sex were in perfect condition, and the drop of the one killed on the 14th. Can you name the contents?

Redcar, Feb. 23. T. H. NIXSON.

We decline to give any information respecting the matter during the close season, and regret the shooters were not convicted and fined under the recent Act. The females, being in good condition, would most probably have bred and reared their young had they not been illegally slaughtered!—Ed.]

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. 1781.

LANDRILL IN FEBRUARY.—In Maidstone, on Feb. 23, I saw a landrill exposed for sale by Mr W. J. Walland, 100, High-street, which I will specimen of the water rail, I bought, and had since put up to Mr. Walland's information that the landrill 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 to the southwards, and on its way northwards to winter quarters.—GEO. MILLER (Lewisham).

DISEASE IN WOODPIGEONS.—The majority of woodpeckers killed in this district are suffering from disease of the throat. The symptoms are as follows:—(1) The bird will fly in your net, but will give me no idea of the disease and possible cause. (2) ALBERT BYRLEY (Chichester). (The disease is identical with that described above in the case of a wood pigeon, in the presence of 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 salicylic acid, but this remedy is obviously inapplicable to woodpeckers.—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 to your columns:—(1) The following questions, and may hints that may be in addition: (a) Is it 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 for the night, (6) the best time to visit, (7) the best time to take, (8) would a boat be of use? (9) how often and where do steamers run? I inclose my card.—D. P. T., 2, Coath-villa, Uxbridge).

PLAGUE OF FROGS.—Can anyone tell me a way of getting rid of frogs from the garden, and of preventing them from coming near the house, &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 can put on the ground to prevent them from coming near the house, &c. or is there any way the best way to destroy them if they were collected? Would a pipe or two in the pond eat sufficient spawn to keep the number down? The pond is about fifteen yards square, the water depth is five feet. Do they die after they have spawned? For any information on the subject, I shall feel very much obliged.—C. E. M.

HERMAPHRODITIC FISHES.—In reference to Mr Tegtmeier's "Hermaphroditic Fishes in British Fisheries," 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 has not been recorded in the British Fisheries. This fish had two testes and was hermafroditic, and one (the left) oviclude well developed, and contained and contained several embryos. The specimen was taken on the 10th of January, 1888. As there mentioned, the specimen was (some months) after examination and sketching by some mistake thrown out into the sea. It was preserved.—J. DONCAN 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 fact, they are not to be seen near the house, &c. near the town having numbers. Starlings are also in less numbers than usual; the enormous flocks of some years have dwindled down to small numbers. The weather, however, for the past fortnight has been soft and close, and like April. There is a thrushes' nest within a few feet of where I sit, and also a woodcock's nest. 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 some years.—W. C. B. 1782.

BIRTH OF A RHINOCEROS AT CALCUTTA.—I inclose an extract from the Calcutta Englishman newspaper, notifying the birth of a rhinoceros at the Calcutta Zoological Gardens. "RHINOCEROS.—At the Calcutta Zoological Gardens, on the 1st of February, 1889, a rhinoceros was born. The mother is a rhinoceros named 'Lasotis,' the wife of Rhinoceros Samatensis, of Cabool, of a son." I am glad to see this is the first instance known of a rhinoceros being born in India. It is also the first instance known of a rhinoceros being born between the two species Lasotis and Samatensis. With regard to the words "of Cabool," which refer to R. Samatensis, I regret to learn that the animal has been sent to Afghanistan to the Amerer Abdul Kader Khan. It is to be hoped that he may now be sent back to Calcutta.—G. T. BURGESS, F.Z.S., 25, Ashbur-place, London, W. The rhinoceros is not a general trade name, but by naturalists that Rhinoceros lasotis is not a good species.—E. B.

STEEL PEN IN BODY OF SNIPE.—While out snipe shooting on the 15th inst. I bagged my first couple for the season in an uncultivated paddy field, and was on my way to the house, carrying the snipe and birds cooked for dinner, and in separating the breast from the back of one of them, I discovered, very much to my astonishment, a 3 pen nib 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 got into the snipe's body in the same way as the pen nib 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 have made on it, and you will see the marks I have made on the pen nib, which 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 nib fell off the table, and I saw it on the ground. I took it up, and 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 could have got into a pen, would have been so near the table. My observations (both on the pen and on the snipe) were forwarded by our correspondent to one of Mitchell's ordinary J pens.—Ed.]

DEEDS OF 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 into the water. My retriever, which was on the beach, was waiting the retriever, and the plover being fairly deep, I did not at once pick up 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 out into the water, and got the bird on the beach. I had the exception of one, which I noticed about a foot or two from the bank in 3in. or 5in. of water, and, although only winged, did not appear to me to have been killed by the plover. I saw a small bird of its own species caught by an oyster, which was attached to a small stone. I put them carefully in my game bag, and thought no more of it. Of all the birds I saw, I saw many more plovers; but 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. I have never seen a bird of its own species taken by an oyster, and an incident appeared uncommon and of rare occurrence, the plover's leg, oyster, and stone were deposited in history. Previously, however, I had heard of a plover being held by an oyster. The bird's strength of the raw spirit would probably cause it to loosen its hold and let it prey free. The bottle and its contents is now produced and shown to me. My retriever, which was on the beach, was waiting the retriever in The Field some time since, however, I cannot recommend this likely to be interesting to any of your numerous readers at home or abroad, please insert it when convenient.—P. LYNNON.

[Advertisement.—"The only substitute for firing horns." SEEVERS' OYSTER, after forty years' constant success, stands alone as the only reliable remedy for all diseases of horses' legs, &c., without pain or swelling. Of all chemists and druggists, or direct from the proprietor, Veterinary Infirmary, 9, Park-Lane, London, W.

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YACHTING.

REGATTA FIXTURES.

Wednesday, May 21.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers of the Royal Thames Yacht Club; Monday, May 22.—Regatta, Dover; Thursday, May 23.—Royal London Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Saturday, May 24.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Friday, May 25.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Saturday, May 26.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Sunday, May 27.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Monday, May 28.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Tuesday, May 29.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Wednesday, May 30.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Thursday, May 31.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Friday, June 1.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Saturday, June 2.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Sunday, June 3.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Monday, June 4.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Tuesday, June 5.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; 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Friday, December 29.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Saturday, December 30.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames; Sunday, December 31.—Royal Thames Yacht Club; Matchers on the Thames.

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, and elected a president, and a member of the Yonkers Yacht Club. It is 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 later. His object was to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and, "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 "pitched out" at length in favour of his own rule of measurement. Some of the more important 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 restored, and a second meeting was called for the 21st inst. in New York City, and to have a bad time of it in America, for we are assured that "our 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 most necessary, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it. It is 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 later. His object was to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and, "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 "pitched out" at length in favour of his own rule of measurement. Some of the more important 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 restored, and a second meeting was called for the 21st inst. in New York City, and to have a bad time of it in America, for we are assured that "our 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 most necessary, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it.

We have had a very large experience of this in the United Kingdom, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it. The "Yonkers Yacht Club," 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 of yachts, but all have failed. In 1868-9 the better organised "Yachting Congress," formed by delegates from the leading yacht clubs. A number of rules were framed and published, but when yacht owners got hold of them they were so adversely criticised that nothing more was heard of it. "Yachting Congress" was a failure, and the only success was 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 Aristocrat, although the Association on the measurement question was not very successful. It is 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 later. His object was to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and, "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 "pitched out" at length in favour of his own rule of measurement. Some of the more important 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 restored, and a second meeting was called for the 21st inst. in New York City, and to have a bad time of it in America, for we are assured that "our 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 most necessary, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it.

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 hitherto accompany any organisation so constituted. Somehow or other, it seems inevitable 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 expensive, and is not likely to be successful. The "Yonkers Yacht Club," 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 of yachts, but all have failed. In 1868-9 the better organised "Yachting Congress," formed by delegates from the leading yacht clubs. A number of rules were framed and published, but when yacht owners got hold of them they were so adversely criticised that nothing more was heard of it. "Yachting Congress" was a failure, and the only success was 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 Aristocrat, although the Association on the measurement question was not very successful. It is 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 later. His object was to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and, "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 "pitched out" at length in favour of his own rule of measurement. Some of the more important 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 restored, and a second meeting was called for the 21st inst. in New York City, and to have a bad time of it in America, for we are assured that "our 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 most necessary, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it.

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 not only contains the regulations contained in the report, but also a great deal of information 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 a yacht to be unfairly weighted. It is 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 later. His object was to bring about a federation of yacht clubs, and, "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 "pitched out" at length in favour of his own rule of measurement. Some of the more important 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 restored, and a second meeting was called for the 21st inst. in New York City, and to have a bad time of it in America, for we are assured that "our 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 most necessary, and we are sure that we should like to be a member of it.

Table with columns: Date, Name, Country, How obtained, Where located in the Gardens. Rows include various species of frogs and birds from Australia, Holland, New Zealand, and India.