



MALE PIED JACKDAW.

Dorchester, Oxon, Dec. 15, 1920. From a drawing by F. W. Frohawk.

THE NATURALIST

PIED VARIETY OF THE JACKDAW.

ALTHOUGH the jackdaw is one of our commonest birds, occurring in abundance in many districts, especially on cliff-bound coasts, yet variation in the colouring of its plumage seldom occurs. In its near ally, the rook, no species, except the blackbird, is more liable to vary, and even in the case of the rook varieties are far from common, when the great abundance of it is taken into consideration. On two occasions only have I met with varieties of the jackdaw in a wild state, one a curiously-coloured specimen which I shot at Brighton in 1889, having the wings mottled with different shades of buff and coppery-brown; the second example being a wholly white bird seen flying with a flock near Royton, in August, 1913. As an instance of the scarcity of varieties of the jackdaw in this country, Lord Rothschild has kindly informed me that out of the series of sixteen aberrant jackdaws in the Tring collection only two are British-killed examples, one a male (obtained in Sussex, January, 1889), having the breast, shoulders, and chin somewhat mottled with white; the other being a pure white bird, likewise from Sussex. The remaining fourteen are from different parts of the Continent. Five of these are pure white, and eight are more or less mottled and splashed with white. In the remarkable collection of varieties of British birds formed by Mr J. Whitaker at Rainworth are eight jackdaws (all British); one is entirely male cream colour, one uniformly grey all over, one wholly copper-coloured, and another similar, but of a paler hue; one white, with three tail feathers edged with black and a few black feathers on the nape, where normal birds are grey, and three others more or less pied, one of these having two large white patches on the back, one a white-speckled head, and third a beautiful white specimen, with a few black feathers distributed over the back and breast, and the tail partly white.

Other singular varieties which have been recorded include one entirely grey, with a black head, another silver-grey, darkest on the head, and a uniformly pale brown example. Stevenson, in his *Birds of Norfolk*, records a perfectly white specimen shot at Smallburgh in 1854, and a pied one near Norwich in June, 1861, and states: "but varieties of this species are not often met with."

The handsome pied variety (a male) represented in the accompanying drawing has the normal black crown of the head, but only a small patch of the usual grey above the ear-coverts; the medium wing-coverts, secondaries, and tail are variegated with silver-grey, lilac-grey, and greyish-black, blackest on the tips of the primaries; the whole of the remaining plumage is pure white; the bill, legs, and feet are greyish-flesh colour; the eyes normal. For the following particulars respecting this beautiful bird, and for the facilities granted me for making the drawing, I am indebted to Messrs Rowland Ward, by whom I was received for preservation and has been very artistically mounted. It was shot by Mr C. P. Phillips on Dec. 14 last, and was first seen by him in October while out pigeon-shooting close to Dorchester, Oxon. It was invariably feeding with the large number of rooks which are always to be seen there, and later seemed to resent the presence of their strange companion, and constantly chased it. Messrs Rowland Ward tell me this is the first example of a pied jackdaw that they have received for preservation during their long experience.

F. W. FROHAWK.

ONE-HORNED RHINOCEROS OF INDO-MALAYA.

AT a recent scientific meeting of the Zoological Society Sir Sidney Harmer exhibited a female example, mounted by Messrs Rowland Ward, of the very rare species of one-horned Asiatic rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros sondaicus*). This species, which has an uncertain range in what are known as Further India and the Sunda Islands, is related to the more familiar one-horned rhinoceros (*Rh. unicornis*) of northern India, but may be at once distinguished by the fold of skin between the neck and shoulder passing right over the nape instead of ceasing on the shoulder, as in the Indian species. The sculpturing of the skin also is different, consisting of flatfish polygonal areas rather than of rounded tubercular bosses. The head, too, is said to be smaller—and this certainly is the case judging from the specimen exhibited. It will be noticed, too, that the animal carries no horn; and the available

evidence points to the conclusion that in this species the female is hornless.

The example in question was secured in Lower Tenasserim by Mr E. R. Hubback. It was caught in a pitfall, where, unfortunately, it lay in the wet for some time before being discovered. The damp destroyed the epidermis in places, so that visitors to the Natural History Museum, where the specimen is on exhibition, will notice that the sculpturing of the skin above described is not so obvious as in the living animal. I am indebted to Sir Sidney Harmer for kind permission to publish the subjoined photograph, together with the particulars giving the history of the rhinoceros.

R. I. POOCK.

NOTES AND QUERIES.

AMERICAN ROBIN IN STAFFORDSHIRE.

TO the statistics already published may be added the fact that a nest of this bird containing four eggs was found at Engheton, Staffordshire in May, 1913. —E. H. G. L.

NIGHTJAR IN HYDE PARK.

ON the evening of May 19, about 9.30 I saw a nightjar, flying along the Serpentine and over the bridge by the powder magazine. One would not expect to find a bird so particularly addicted to the wildest places making even a passing call in the middle of a city. But it passed of its identity. —F. R. R.

close by me, and I have no doubt (The Bath Club, W.)

PURPLE THORN MOTH IN BANFFSHIRE.—I took here-to-day a specimen of the purple thorn moth (*S. telulariana, ulustraria*). As Mr Richard South, in his *Moths of the British Isles*, says "it has been noted in Scotland only from Rannoch and Coos from Dunkeld" this capture in Banffshire may be worth recording. The moth was resting on the window-sill (inside in my dining room.—N. MACLAGHLEN (Ardeinacallie, Rothiemay, May 14). [This is the furthest northern locality we know of for this species, which is very rare in Scotland.—Ed.]

BLACKCAP IN LONDON.—During the present week a blackcap has been singing melodiously in the flower walk in Kensington Gardens, and I have been able to watch and hear it at close quarters in the early morning of May 24 and 26. It is a rare visitor to the gardens on migration, but I have known one which remained several weeks. As the occupation of part of the gardens by the military has led to the exclusion of children and nurses and other disturbers of peace, I hope the bird may remain.—HAROLD RUSSELL (16, Beaufort-gardens, S.W. 3)

VARIETY OF MAGPIE.—A nest containing four young magpies was recently found here by the head woodman on the estate of Lord Doverdale of Westwood. One of the birds is of an unusual colour, the customary black markings being replaced by grey, and the legs being of a similar colour. I should be glad to know if this variation has been met with before. The bird is being reared in captivity with one of its companions, and is apparently thriving.—W. J. BLAKEWAY (Hampton Lovatt, Droitwich).

OWLS AS DESTROYERS OF RATS.—If Major Hines cannot easily obtain young barn owls for his old buildings, he might try the tawny owl, which is very useful in killing rats, and has the advantage of being less conspicuous (on account of dull colour when in flight) to people with guns. When at Slinfold, Sussex, in 1911, I often watched a tawny owl which used regularly to wait on a bough for rats emerging from some farm buildings, and destroyed several to my knowledge. Two domestic hens with chicks used to wander close by evening after evening and were never harmed by the tawny owl, as rats and other rodents provided sufficient food. A similar

scene occurred here in Kent regularly where a tawny used to sit on a fowlhouse of one of my neighbours. Some years ago I watched two of these owls in flight over a large arable field (near Fawkham) which had recently grown a corn crop, and from the way they systematically searched, flying parallel to each other, they gave me the impression that they were primarily after rats a d other undesirable rodents.—FREDERICK D. WELCH (Hartley, Kent).

RED-BREASTED THRUSH, OR AMERICAN "ROBIN" IN SURREY.—Mr Harting will no doubt be interested to know that about the middle of May, 1912, an American robin appeared in Richmond Park, close to the Robin Hood Gate, where I saw it almost daily till the beginning of an adjacent garden. It was probably a hen bird, for I never heard it sing. It disappeared towards the end of June. I may say it occurred in the American robin in the United States. In the *Country Side* of Jan. 16, 1909, Mr A. B. Garland reported that an American robin, which had visited his garden in the previous January, had returned to it on Christmas Day, 1908. Subsequently Lord Northoliffe, as already stated, made an attempt on a large scale to acclimatise the American robin at Sutton Place, near Guildford; but none of the birds returned. When, however, Mr P. Bradley informed the Editor of this magazine of the arrival in April of a pair of American robins at St. Boss, in Cumberland, it occurred to him that these were probably two which I had lived in the previous summer in Surrey. Whether they were or not, he subsequently heard from Mr Bradley that they successfully brought up a brood. On July 28 Mr Bradley wrote: "I saw one of the old birds two days ago, but I fear it is too late for its own safety." I also was struck by the remarkable tameness of the bird I saw so often at Richmond Park in 1912.—J. RUDGE HARBING (Elm Park-mansions, S.W.).

—A bird reported at Kendal, Westmorland, last October was probably, from the description, of this species. On the perusal of bird books by the observers, they came to the conclusion that it was a rook thrush, but as their first description did not tally at all with this species I could not accept it, not knowing the name of the liberator of red-breasted thrushes in Surrey.—H. W. ROBINSON (Lancaster).

RARE VARIETIES OF BLACK RAT.—About ten months ago I informed you of the occurrence of black-eyed white specimens of *Mus rattus* which had been captured at Bristol, and fortunately came into my possession. Such rats seem to be of great rarity. I have been in communication with rat-catchers in the docks, who have handled many thousands of the ordinary black rats, and also with the holders of museums and zoological gardens in England, France, Germany, and America, and have nowhere learnt of the existence of similar specimens. I have now succeeded in breeding quite a number of white *Rattus* and also some rich fawn-coloured specimens. In 1912 some fawn varieties were exhibited at a meeting of the Zoological Society by Mr J. Lewis Bonhote, but my specimens are not quite identical with his. He remarked: "In the case of the young fawn rats the eye was ruby coloured." Mine, however, have very black eyes. It seems likely that students of colour breeding will obtain more variations from the black rat than from the brown rat *Mus norvegicus*. Professor Castle, of Harvard University, whose work in reducing the hoods of fawn *norvegicus* is familiar to all students of genetics, informs me that he is going to take up *Rattus*. I hope that students of colour breeding will obtain more variations from the black rat than from the brown rat *Mus norvegicus*. Professor Castle, of Harvard University, whose work in reducing the hoods of fawn *norvegicus* is familiar to all students of genetics, informs me that he is going to take up *Rattus*. I hope that students of colour breeding will obtain more variations from the black rat than from the brown rat *Mus norvegicus*. Professor Castle, of Harvard University, whose work in reducing the hoods of fawn *norvegicus* is familiar to all students of genetics, informs me that he is going to take up *Rattus*. 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