

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

NOTE ON A GADWALL COLLECTED AT KISUMU.

Among a series of bird skins which have recently been presented to the Coryndon Museum by Mr. R. T. Lambert is a female gadwall (*Anas strepera*) collected at Kisumu on 19th February, 1940.

So far as I am aware this is the first skin of this species to become available for study in Kenya, and it is doubly interesting in view of the record of this species from the Kenya-Abyssinian border reported in this issue of the *Journal* by Col. Lynn-Allen.

H.C.

NOTE ON THE FOOD OF THE PURPLE ROLLER (*CORACIURA CAUDATA CAUDATA*). The purple roller (*Coraciura caudata caudata*) has been observed eating various grasshoppers, locusts, and large caterpillars. However, it is of interest to note that it has been observed on several occasions to devour the large green (blue and red-winged) grasshopper (*Phymateus viridipes* Stal.) which is usually avoided by other birds on account of the noxious substance it vomits when handled. The roller has been observed to feed a fully-fledged young one on these insects. In each instance a large insect is beaten against a bough or stone before being devoured.

F. L. VANDERPLANK,
Old Shinyanga.

BLACK LEOPARDS. Since our troops have restored Abyssinia to its rightful owners, an ever-increasing number of black leopard skins are arriving in Kenya from that country and are in great demand for making fur-coats, capes, etc., for ladies' wear. The greater proportion of these skins are of the usual type, i.e., dark sooty-brown with slightly darker spots, and rosettes showing up in shadow form. In one of these which I examined; the hind feet were white, but in a peculiar manner. The white was confined mostly to the hair growing on the sole of the foot between the pads, extending upwards just far enough to enclose the claws. Unfortunately the front paws of this specimen had been cut off. One would have liked to see these.

A more striking form of black leopard comes also from Abyssinia. In this variety the ground colour is a medium neutral grey showing like tracery between the closely-set glossy jet-black spots. This pattern is confined to the flanks and legs.

A broad line from the head down the back and including the tail shows a dense fur of jet glossy-black.

This description, however, does not, strictly speaking, apply to them all. The shade of the ground colour varies, and in some individuals the spots on the back are isolated like on the flanks while in others the tail rings, though sometimes shadowy, are clearly defined.

I have had the opportunity of measuring many of these Abyssinian leopards and find that both varieties have compared very closely with the Kenya up-country leopard averaging 7 feet to 7 feet 6 inches in length. My measurements cannot, however, be regarded as accurate as all the skins were pulled out and pegged.

I am informed that Java—like Abyssinia—abounds in black leopards, but the Javan animal is much smaller.

M.A.B.