

IV. *Observations relating to the Migration of Birds.* By Edmund Lambert, Esq. of Boyton near Heytesbury, Wilts. In a Letter to William Markwick, Esq. F. L. S.

Read April 1, 1794.

S I R,

MY son A. B. Lambert put lately into my hands the Transactions of the Linnean Society. I could not help admiring your Remarks on the Migration of Birds; and as I am an old sportsman, and have spent much of my time in the fields and woods, I have not been wholly inattentive to the migration of the feathered race; and therefore take the liberty of making a few remarks on some of the birds, which you mention as having escaped your observation.

The Swallow.

I have seen swallows the last week in March at Stowey, near the Bristol channel, Somersetshire; and the last I saw was the 22d of November 1782. I observed two or three flying every day under the cliffs at Exmouth for a week: I left the place the 23d, otherwise I might have seen them later.

Goatsucker.

This bird flies late at night, and therefore is seldom seen. It lives chiefly on moths. Mr. Seymer, of Harford, Dorset (a great naturalist),

ralist), has complained to me of this bird; for, when he was sometimes on the point of catching a fine moth late in the evening (10 o'clock), this bird would come as swift as lightning and snap it up before him. I have shot two of these birds.

Woodcock.

The woodcock I once saw the first of October, N. S. in this inland county; and a couple was shot this present season that very same day on some heath about three miles from my house. But a person living at Uphill, the nearest point of land to the Steep Holms in the Bristol channel, and who rented that little island for the use of fishing, assured me he never knew the month of September pass without seeing woodcocks on that island. I have had two nests in my wood; the last was in the year 1789. It had four eggs. The old bird was loth to get out of the nest; as she had sat, as near as I could guess, about a fortnight. I took one of the eggs and blew it, and have it by me now. But I do not believe the young ones are ever bred up in this country to be shot at, as you have heard: for Mr. Seymer had one lived all the summer in a coppice near his house; and though it was a place well calculated to maintain a bird that lived on suction, yet the bird lost almost all his feathers, and could not fly for some time, so that it was often caught: but in the autumn it recovered its feathers and strength, and flew away. This I had from Mr. Seymer himself, and other gentlemen whom he used to shew the bird to.

Snipe.

The snipes breed in great numbers on the bogs in the New Forest, Hants; and always come to us in September, and sometimes in August. Some years ago two neighbours sent me five couple the second week in August, telling me at the same time they never saw them

them more plentiful in winter. I went out the 15th myself, and killed three couple in a little time; and the weather being extremely hot, I was obliged to come home before I intended it. They were in as good condition as in winter.

Royston Crow.

The Royston crows are very plentiful with us all the winter, though an inland county. They lay on the downs, and frequent sheep-folds and highways; the latter, to pick the horse-dung dropped on the roads. I never observed the time they go and come.

Fieldfare.

The latest fieldfare I ever saw was the 1st of May in Dorsetshire; and the earliest the 29th of September, which was killed by my game-keeper.

Redwing.

The redwing makes its appearance in this country generally before the fieldfare, and leaves it sooner.

The Land Rail.

This makes its appearance the last week in April, and leaves us the second week in October. They breed with us, and I believe every where in England. I have taken the eggs and caught the young ones of all sizes; for when the dog points at them they will not fly till full grown, and then reluctantly, especially in the spring. They are continually making a creaking noise all the spring in the fields and grass grounds. I had one making that noise in my garden last spring for three weeks. They call them in Ireland corn creaks.

Water

Water Wagtail.

The water wagtail most certainly remains with us during the winter. I had three during this whole winter about the hot-houses and green-house, catching flies in warm days; but in cold weather they get down to the river, and eat the insects on the weeds which appear when the water is turned out of its course to water the meadows. I have seen all my life-time as many water wagtails in the winter as in summer; in the former at the river, and the latter about the houses.

You may depend on the truth of the above account; and I have nothing more to add, but that my observations on the other birds you mention totally agree with yours.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your obedient Servant,

EDMUND LAMBERT:

Boyton, near Heytesbury, Wilts.

I forgot to mention the rook's antipathy (as you observe) to the raven. The truth is, a raven will not suffer any bird to come within a quarter of a mile of its nest, being very fierce in defending it. Besides, they take the young rooks out of their nest to feed their own. This I was an eye-witness to at Mr. Seymer's; for there was no peace in the rookery night nor day, till one of the old ravens was killed and the nest destroyed. A raven has built in a large beech tree of mine time out of mind. I can trace it back above an hundred years. The tree is supposed to measure at least seven tons.

V. *Account*



Lambert, Edmund. 1797. "IV. Observations relating to the Migration of Birds." *Transactions of the Linnean Society of London* 3, 12–15.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1096-3642.1797.tb00548.x>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/46221>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1096-3642.1797.tb00548.x>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/24298>

Holding Institution

Natural History Museum Library, London

Sponsored by

Natural History Museum Library, London

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.