

Notes on the transcription, kindly undertaken by Dave Barrow in March 2016.

As far as possible we have tried to reproduce a text which closely follows the original in every respect, with the exception that the type-face has been changed and species names are emboldened. We have followed what appear to be the printer's conventions, in the original, as follows:

- Full stops are followed by three spaces.
- Colons and semicolons are both preceded and proceeded with single spaces; some may be transposed, in error because of the poor resolution of the original.
- Original spellings have been retained (eg. inclosed retained for enclosed).
- The use of upper case, or not, within place-names etc. has been retained.
- Paragraph numbers are those of this document, not the original, added here in order to divide up an otherwise in parts very dense and potentially confusing text.

Word count: ca. 6,300.

NOTE. Additional copies of both parts are being sought via Inter Library Loans, not least to try and resolve some of the missing dates: Ed. 2.4.16.

Item 10.51

Notes on Shropshire Birds. Part 1

by William E. Beckwith. (1885)

The Field. 19 December 1885, page 876

ca. 2.600 words

1.1 I propose to give some account of the game birds and wildfowl, including the numerous family of waders, that are either resident in Shropshire or visit us during the autumn and winter months. The aspect of the county varies so much that it will be best to divide it into north and south, the north lying to the left and the south to the right of the Severn. The surface of North Shropshire is generally flat and fertile, there being, with the exception of The Wrekin, only a few small hills. At no very distant period this area abounded in large tracts of wild open heaths, interspersed with bogs and mosses, but these are now nearly all inclosed and cultivated, though Whixall Moss : between Ellesmere and Whitchurch, is still a wide expanse of bog and heather. The numerous meres and pools scattered throughout this part of the county are alike interesting to the naturalist and sportsman, affording, as they do, tempting retreats for various kinds of wildfowl. In contrast to this, South Shropshire abounds in hills and dales, the hills, or rather ridges of high land, having their sides usually inclosed and cultivated, and their summits covered with trees or heather. The Brown Clee hill, 1788ft, and the highest hill in the county, is in this district, the Titterstone Clee and Stiperstone Hill being little inferior to it : while the highest part of the heather clad range called the Longmynd exactly equals the Wrekin in the north, both being 1342ft. above mean sea-level. Besides the Severn, the only large rivers are the Tern and the Verniew in the north, and the Teme in the south. The area of the whole county is 844,565 acres. Nearly all the English game birds have been found in Shropshire.

1.2 Some sixty years ago, two **great bustards** were seen on the Longmynd, near Church Stretton, and I am inclined to think that about that time there was a nest on one of the heaths, between Shrewsbury and Oswestry, as a gentleman, now living at Fitz, remembers seeing some tame bustards, probably reared from eggs found in the neighbourhood, at a timber yard belonging to Lord Powis.

1.3 The **black grouse**, once common throughout the county, is now rarely seen in the north, turf cutters and railway trains having almost driven it from Whixall Moss, its last stronghold. In the south, however, it is common and in recent years has not only, where

preserved, increased in numbers, but become more widely distributed. Leland, travelling in the sixteenth century, noticed the abundance of "hethe cokks" about the Clee hills and they are still plentiful there, as well as in Corvedale, between Much Wenlock and Ludlow. Blackgame are also found in the hills around Church Stretton, the Stiperstones, Clun Forest and other hills along the Welsh borders. Of late years, too, there have been several broods on Wenlock Edge, where, if preserved, they would probably establish themselves. In spring and autumn these birds sometimes stray far away from their usual homes ; then they visit Willey Park, near Broseley, where, though strictly protected by Lord Forester, they do not remain ; and I have notes of a grey hen, killed last year on the banks of the Severn, near Cressage, and one this year at Aston Rogers, near Worthen. Several instances of **black grouse** breeding with the pheasant have occurred. In 1884 there was a brood of these hybrids at Plowden, near Bishops Castle, two or three of which were shot.

1.4 Red grouse have never been more than stragglers to North Shropshire, where one was killed near the Wrekin in 1881, but in the south it is found in several places, being most common on the Longmynd and Clun Forest. It is also found on the Clee Hills and the Stiperstones, but its numbers on both, owing to the small extent of heather, are limited. On Mr Scott's part of the Longmynd, comprising about 1000 acres, fifteen brace is an average bag for their first day's shooting, and on the Brown Clee, where Lord Boyne allows very few to be killed, the computed number of grouse is forty or fifty brace, on about 300 acres of heather. I have heard an opinion expressed that red grouse are not natives, but were introduced by a gentleman living near Church Stretton, the late Mr Pinches, of Ticklerton. This seems extremely improbable, especially when it is considered that in the adjacent Welsh counties it is undoubtedly indigenous.

1.5 The partridge is plentiful throughout the county, being abundant where preserved. Of late years, however, the proportion of old birds has often been so great that a suspicion arises of disease sweeping off the young ones. Probably **partridges** are naturally nowhere more common than along the valley of the Severn, the river affording a barrier to pursuit. The **red-legged partridge** is a rare visitant ; single birds have, however, been killed, usually late in the season, and I have a note of one caught in a trap at Acton Burnell, in April 1833. The late Lord Forester, about the year 186[3,8?] attempted to introduce these birds on his property at Willey, and in 1870 Lord Bradford repeated the experiment at Weston ; but both failed in naturalising them, and in two or three years they disappeared.

1.6 The Quail, said to have been common early in the century, was for many years seldom seen. Now, however, it is a regular summer visitant to North Shropshire and, though apparently found in very few localities, has lately become more numerous as a species. The districts around High Ercall and Waters Upton, as well as about Wroxeter and Uppington, are annually visited by it, and occasionally nests have been found in other places. I suspect, after all, quail are more widely distributed than is generally supposed. Few people know or notice their soft liquid cry, resembling the syllables "whit- whit- whit," repeated three times ; and although, like the landrail, the greater number migrate before the shooting season begins, those that remain are often mistaken for "squeaker" partridges, and not fired at. In September and October small parties of **quail**, three being very often found together, are dotted about the county and are probably migrants from more northern parts. The latest date I know of its staying here is October 18, one being killed then at St Martin's, near Oswestry.

1.7 Passing on to the numerous family of waders, some of which are frequently killed in the shooting season, the **great plover**, or **stone curlew**, is very rare, and there is no recent instance of its occurrence. **Golden plover** are regular spring and autumn migrants, sometimes remaining through the winter. In spring flocks of fifteen to twenty, or even more, are often seen along the valley of the Severn, as well as in marshy meadows in other parts of the county ; but in autumn small parties of three or four, or single birds,

are usually found, either by themselves on fallow fields or in company of **lapwings**. By putting up the flock, however, the **golden plover** are easily seen, their flight being much more rapid and snipe-like. Last January I saw two of these plovers that had been killed by the telegraph wires near Cressage.

1.8 The **dotterel** is a very rare visitant, sometimes found in South Shropshire in spring or autumn. And the **ringed plover** is also rare, though I have occasionally seen it by the Severn in April and August, and a beautiful male was shot by a small pool on Charlton Hill, near Wroxeter, in April 1876. **Lapwings**, or peewits, are very plentiful, and have much increased in numbers in recent years, their eggs being but little sought after for the table. In autumn immense flocks of lapwings frequent the large open fields along the Severn, the home-bred birds having been then joined by migrants ; and there they remain till the end of October, when the greater number leave, though, except in severe frost, some are to be seen throughout the winter. No bird is more useful to the farmer than the peewit. In late summer and autumn, especial in dry seasons, it lives principally in turnip fields, feeding on that most destructive grub, the larva of *Agrostis segetum*. I have not seen any recent specimen of the **turnstone**, and the **oyster-catcher** is very rare ; a few, however, have been obtained, both in spring and autumn.

1.9 I do not think the **crane** has ever occurred in this county, though on July 14, 1868, a young bird of this species was killed at Trippleton [SO411736] in Herefordshire, not far from the borders. Unfortunately, the farmer who killed it looked in a book of natural history, wherein he found it called the *common crane*! so gave it to his servant to eat. As soon, however, at(sic) the late Mr Rocke heard of it he asked him to come and look over the collection at Clungunford, when he immediately pointed out the crane as the bird he had shot.

1.10 The **heron**, in spite of much persecution, is still common, and besides the heronries at Attingham, Oakley Park, Walcot, and Halston, one or two pairs occasionally breed at Shavington and about Ellesmere, though the heronry on the island in Ellesmere Mere has long ceased to exist. I fear, however, the number of nests in all our heronries is gradually decreasing. It would be very interesting if someone living near a heronry would examine the remains of food brought to the young, and see what they principally feed on.

1.11 The **squacco heron** has only once occurred in this county : but a few years ago a second example was obtained on the borders of Montgomeryshire.

1.12 A very fine specimen of the **little bittern** was killed near Ellesmere on 19th of May, 1880 and in July, 1881, another was shot on the borders of Cheshire. The first recorded instance of this bird being found in Great Britain was in Shropshire, Pennant in his "British Zoology," giving a description of one killed on the banks of the Severn at Shrewsbury.

1.13 The **bittern**, once common in North Shropshire, has not bred here since 1836, when two nests were found near Shifnal. Though now rare, one or two appear every winter. Last November I saw a beautiful male bittern that had been shot near Ellesmere ; and in the early part of this year two female bitterns were killed near Montford Bridge and Baschurch. It is a great pity that these fine birds when found should be invariably shot ; if they were spared there are yet many quiet reedy pools in North Shropshire that might again tempt them to remain and breed.

1.14 The **night heron** has not been obtained since 1834. In the spring of 1854 two specimens of the glossy ibis were several times seen about a pool at Sundorne, near Shrewsbury, and were eventually shot, but as one was thrown away it was impossible to ascertain whether they were a pair

1.15 The **curlew**, during the breeding season, is almost entirely confined to South Shropshire, very few now breeding on Whixall Moss, where once it was common. In the

south, however, numbers still breed on Clun Forest, a large tract of moorland between Bishops Castle and the borders of Wales, at one time covering nearly 12,000 acres but now much reduced by cultivation, as well as on the Longmynd and other hills about Church Stretton. Of late years, too, there have been several nests in the valley to the north of Wenlock Edge, the birds laying in rough grass fields. In spring and autumn, on their way to and from their breeding grounds, **curlews** are sometimes seen in other parts of the county. A few years ago I found two near Cressage on July 19, one of which, a young one, though well able to fly, I killed ; and in October, 1883, a very fine **curlew**, a female bird, was shot on Charlton Hill. I have also notes of their being seen at these seasons about the Clee Hills, and in the low meadows round Ellesmere, Baschurch and Melverley.

1.16 The **whimbrel** is a rare visitant in spring and autumn, being most frequent in the latter season, when small flocks or single birds are sometimes found by pools, or in low marshy meadows. In October 1882, three **whimbrels**, all birds of the year, were shot near Ellesmere and it has also occurred near Baschurch. This bird, even when killed, is no doubt sometimes mistaken for a small variety of the curlew, but it is easily distinguished by its bill, which is slight and curved from the base, the curlew's being thicker in proportion and straight for a short distance from the base. Moreover the **whimbrel** has a white line over each eye, surmounted by a dark bar, which is absent in the curlew.

1.17 The **redshank** has only occurred on one occasion of late years : in the autumn of 1877 a small flock visited the streams in the neighbourhood of Clun, and, though several were shot, remained there for some time. Possibly, in bygone years, **redshank** bred at Shrawardine Pool, a large pool with several islands in it, six miles west of Shrewsbury, as a small bird is said to have come there in summer that had "bright red legs," and fled with "a quick dashing flight like a snipe."

1.18 The **common sandpiper** visits our pools and rivers in April, when for a short time it is very numerous. Then the greater number leave for the breeding season, and return again with their young in July ; but in South Shropshire, many breed by the large brooks, so common in the hilly parts of that district, and recently one or two pairs have bred by the Severn near Ironbridge. This sandpiper usually migrates south in August and September, but of late years it has occasionally remained on the Severn throughout the winter and three that I examined, all shot in December, were excessively fat.

1.19 Solitary examples of the **greenshank**, usually young birds, are sometimes found by pools or streams in autumn, from August to November ; but it has never, I believe, occurred in spring. Last August an immature bird was shot near Pontesbury, and I have known it killed on the Severn and Tanat.

1.20 The **black-tailed godwit** is very rare indeed, though in the spring of 1877 three were seen in a marshy field near Wellington.

1.21 The **bar-tailed godwit** sometimes occurs in autumn and winter. Last January one was shot on the Severn : in 1881 one was killed by the telegraph wires in Shrewsbury ; and, though usually found alone, two were killed with a right and left shot, in a turnip field at Cressage, in 1878.

1.22 The **green sandpiper** is frequently found by pools, small streams, and open drains from July to the end of December, and more rarely in the early months of the year. Single birds are most common, but sometimes two or three frequent the same stream. Occasionally these sandpipers have remained throughout the summer, probably young or barren birds, but in June, 1863, Henry Shaw found two by Condover Brook that, from their manner, he thought had a nest or young ones near. Unfortunately, however, this bird's

peculiar habit of laying it eggs in the old nest of a thrush or wood pigeon was not then generally known, and a search for the nest along the banks of course proved fruitless.

(To be continued.)

Item 10.52**Notes on Shropshire Birds. Part 2**

by William E. Beckwith (1886)

The Field. 2 January 1886, page 31

ca. 4,200 words

(Continued from page 876)

2.1 Pennant, in his "British Zoology," 1812, says the **avoset**(sic) is "sometimes found on the lakes of Shropshire," but I know of no recent instance of its occurrence. The **ruff** has been obtained two or three times, and has twice been killed in winter : one having been shot near Melverley in December, 1861, and one near Buildwas in January, 1867, both being found in hard frost. Possibly **ruffs** occasionally visit us during their spring migration as on May 11, 1881, two birds were seen by the Tanat, a small river on the borders with Wales, and one of them that was killed proved to be a reeve, or female **ruff**. Several instances of **woodcocks** breeding in Shropshire at irregular intervals have been recorded. And now, in two localities at least, one in the northern, and the other in the southern portion of the county, there are nests every year ; four or five pairs breeding on Lord Forester's property, under the Wrekin, and at Willey. **Woodcocks** appear to lay early as well as late in the summer, and probably rear two broods, though perhaps these late eggs are only laid when the first have been destroyed. In 1879 a pair of **woodcocks**, with three young ones so small they could scarcely fly, were seen near the Wrekin, in late July ; in 1882, a nest with three eggs, to which a fourth was afterwards laid, was found at Willey, on June 18 ; and in 1885, a young woodcock, that could fly well, was shot under the Wrekin, the keeper mistaking it for a hawk, on May 16. In winter **cocks** are now much less numerous than formerly, and, as the woods where they used to be found have undergone little change, this decrease in their numbers can only be accounted for by the fact that, for some unknown cause, fewer migratory ones now visit us. The largest bag of cocks recently made was at Hawkstone, where Lord Hill's party killed forty-one in a day ; but the late Lord Forester got nearly sixty couple on his Willey property in a season. To show, however, that their numbers have diminished, the late Mr George Pardoe used, twenty years ago, to shoot about twenty-five couple near the Clee hills, during the winter ; then it became difficult to get more than ten, and latterly only four or five birds were found. The catalogue of the Hawkstone Museum contains an autograph letter of the late Mr Gould's, describing a **woodcock**, shot on the property in 1871, that weighed nearly sixteen ounces.

2.2 A **great snipe** has not occurred during the last thirty years and it appears to have always been a very rare visitant. Nor does it seem more common in North Wales ; one, however, was killed near Dolgelly last September. The **common snipe** is resident throughout the county; and, whilst on Whixall Moss, the Stiperstones, Clun Forest, the Longmynd, and Clee Hills they are numerous in summer, numbers also breed on the lower hills, as well as in small bogs and marshy fields. What time **snipe** begin to lay I am unable to say, but their "bleating" may be heard in the middle of April ; and on July 19 1878 I put up an old **snipe** in a boggy field near Berrington, that fluttered and tumbled about like a bird that had young, and after a short search I found two baby snipe, a piece of shell still sticking to one of them, squatting in a tuft of rushes. After examining them for a few minutes, I put them down again, and, though so young, they at once tried to hide in the long grass. In August and September migratory snipe visit us for a short time, and they are then more numerous than at any other season. In winter, though generally distributed, snipe are nowhere abundant, and, owing to many of their haunts being drained, have become less common of late years. Fortunately, however, most of the low-lying parts of North Shropshire can only be drained by open ditches, and these afford them capital feeding ground. A few years ago a labourer took a **snipe** alive, and

uninjured, to Knockin Hall, near Oswestry, that he had caught in a curious way. As he was going to his work in the morning he saw it fluttering on the ground, and found it had "rammed" its bill so far into the mud that it could not draw it out again. The Clungunford collection contains a specimen of the large, light-coloured variety or race of snipe, purchased by the late Mr Rocke in Shrewsbury, but not killed in the county. Anyone who has carefully watched snipe when "bleating" or "drumming" can, I think, have no doubt that the noise is made by air passing through the set feathers of the wings and tail during the rapid descent or dive the bird always makes when the sound is produced; in summer the snipe's vocal note being a sharp "[?]click", often repeated as it flies, but only audible at a short distance, and very unlike its well-known alarm cry when flushed in winter.

2.3 Jack snipe, resorting as they chiefly do to small bogs and springheads, have been far more affected by drainage than the common kind, and are now comparatively rare, though a few are found scattered through the county every winter, being most common during severe frost. Usually a solitary bird, before they migrate in spring a couple of jacks (probably a pair) are sometimes found together. On April 27, 1876 I found two near Whixall that would not leave a particular part of the bog, and kept flying round and round as if they had a nest: but I could find none, nor, I believe, has it ever been known to breed in England. The latest date I know of its occurrence here is April 29, when a friend saw one on the Tanat.

2.4 The curlew sandpiper, or **pigmy curlew**, has not been noticed since 1836, when one was killed on the old racecourse near Shrewsbury. The **knot** is a rather rare and irregular visitant, but single birds are sometimes found by the Severn and other streams. Mr Rocke (*Zoologist*, 1866 p.83) says it is usually met with "in summer plumage," but I think he must refer to its occurrence in counties near the Welsh coast, as all the specimens obtained recently have been birds of the year, killed in autumn or winter, and I have no note of it being seen after February. Schinz's or Bonaparte's sandpiper was first described as British from a specimen killed on Stoke Heath in 1832, and now in Lord Hill's collection at Hawkstone. The **dunlin** rarely occurs, but occasionally single birds are obtained, and, after the tremendous gale in October 1881, I found three together in a flooded meadow near Cressage. Last October an unusually large specimen of the **dunlin**, which was at first thought to be a **curlew sandpiper**, was killed near Minsterley.

2.5 Although rare, an autumn very seldom passes without one or two **grey phalaropes** being seen, the birds occasionally having a few red feathers of their summer dress remaining, or their delicate grey garb of winter put on, but usually in the mixed plumage worn between the two seasons. This phalarope, when inland, is generally found alone, but in October, 1881, I saw two together in a flooded meadow below Eyton-on-Severn: they were swimming about with the greatest ease, reminding one rather of miniature teal, and were remarkably tame, picking up small objects off the water within a few yards of where I stood. The visits of this bird and the marine sandpipers are, no doubt, chiefly owing to stormy weather on the west coast; for, though one or other of the species I have mentioned appears nearly every year, they are of much more frequent occurrence after high westerly gales, especially in September and October.

2.6 Several of the rails are found in Shropshire. The **landrail**, or **corncrake**, arrives about the middle of April, and is very numerous during the summer throughout the county, being especially fond of frequenting low, rich valleys. Unfortunately, however, though an excellent bird for the table, it is of little value from the sportsman's point of view, as the majority migrate before the shooting season begins, and only a few stragglers are found in September and October, usually in fields of aftermath clover. Solitary **landrails** have been killed in winter, but I have no note of their occurrence in February or March. In 1883, Lord Brownlow's keeper killed one near Ellesmere on Nov. 10.; in 1879 [that sequence, sic], one was shot near Shrewsbury, on Dec. 8, Morris, in his "British Birds," mentions one obtained near Shifnal on Jan. 28 and Gould in his "Birds of Great Britain," one that he picked up dead at Hawkstone in that month.

2.7 Owing to the reclamation of so many bogs and marshes, the **spotted crane** has become rare. A few, however, still visit the upper valley of the Severn above Shrewsbury, and the neighbourhood of West Felton and Kinnerley, in autumn, it has been killed by snipe shooters in December on several occasions, but whether it usually remains during winter remains doubtful. I cannot obtain any evidence of its occurrence in spring or summer, though very probably it may be found at both seasons, but after the shooting season is over the places it frequents are seldom disturbed, and it is extremely difficult to detect the presence of such a shy skulking bird.

2.8 The same cause that has affected the **spotted crane** has in a less degree reduced the number of **waterrails**(sic) but whilst the former appears to always resort to small bogs and overgrown ditches, the latter, when these fail, is content to make its home in the reeds and thick grass surrounding large pools. At present as a winter visitant the water rail is by no means rare especial in North Shropshire, though, owing to the thick, tangled nature of the coverts in which it lives, it is not often flushed or seen. In severe frost, however, when driven from its usual hiding places to the sides of open brooks, numbers are killed. This was notably the case in the long frost of December and January 1878-9, when rails were plentiful in many places where they had not occurred for years. About Ellesmere it is known by the singular of "water weasel," and I frequently, when walking quietly by the meres, see a water rail stealing, more like a rat than a bird, along the edge of the water, or hear its peculiar squealing cry from among the reeds. I am not aware that the **water rail** has ever been known to breed in Shropshire, though a pair were killed in the summer of 1867, under the Wrekin, near Uppington, but, except by accident, its nest, built in some thick overgrown bog, is not easily discovered.

2.9 The **moorhen** is very abundant throughout the county, resorting to rivers and brooks when its favourite pools are frozen over. The **coot** resides on all our meres and large pools, and is consequently much more plentiful in North than South Shropshire ; but, except in winter, it is seldom seen on rivers, and very rarely, like the **moorhen**, on small pools. Its numbers are, in autumn, greatly increased by migrants : and probably, in winter, there are more coots on the Ellesmere meres than in the whole county during summer. **Coots** appear to feed chiefly on aquatic plants, after which they dive at all times of the day ; but their dive consists of an almost perpendicular plunge, and, though said to be able, they never, unless frightened or wounded, travel like a grebe, under water. When unmolested the **coot** becomes exceedingly tame. On Ellesmere Mere, where it is protected, it may often be seen feeding a few yards from the high road, and, when disturbed by boats, it only flies to another part of the mere. At night, judging from their traces in the snow, these birds wander some distance away from the water.

2.10 Of the real waterfowl, geese and swans have, as in most inland counties, become rare, though the former are not infrequently seen flying over. But on the lakes of North Shropshire ducks abound, and, what is still more interesting, two or three kinds, that formerly were considered migrants only, now stay occasionally, if not regularly, to breed. Numbers of common ducks, as well as **teal**, would also remain throughout the summer if the sort-sighted practice of shooting them in spring would be stopped ; but, though illegal, it is extremely difficult to enforce the law ; and when, after pairing, they retire to some pool or marsh for the breeding season, being comparatively tame, they often fall victims to prowling gunners.

2.11 About wild geese I can say very little, for though in winter they are occasionally seen, sometimes in large flocks, flying across the country, they are rarely killed. No specimen of the grey lag goose has been obtained recently though it appears at one time to have occurred. The **bean goose** is, I suspect, the most common kind, and in some winters these geese frequent a district for several weeks, taking up their abode in open fields and carefully keeping away from the hedges. In the winter of 1878-9 two flocks, of about twenty, visited the Severn meadows below Eytton, and some large fields near

Uppington. One bird was killed out of each, and both birds proved to be young birds of this species. The **pink-footed goose** is apparently very rare. In January, 1879 two geese were seen on the Severn, near Cound, by the late Mr H. J. Moseley and one that he killed was a **pink-footed goose**.

2.12 The **white-fronted goose** is nearly as rare as the last. Two were killed in February, 1855, near Ludlow; and in December, 1871, one was killed on the Teme, also in that neighbourhood. The **Bernicle goose** never appears to visit us, and the Brent goose is very rare indeed. One was shot on the Severn near Shrewsbury in the severe winter of 1861, and in October, 1883, one was killed out of a small flock on the hills near Church Stretton. **Egyptian geese** have been several times obtained, but always, I believe, young birds, that have been bred on ornamental pools, and not pinioned. Semi-wild **Canadian geese** are often also found, having escaped in like manner.

2.13 Though in these days very rare, forty or fifty years ago both the **hooper** and **Bewick's** swan were often found on the Severn, in severe weather; and in 1837 no less than twenty-five, chiefly adult **hoopers**, were killed in different parts of the county. Now both birds have almost entirely ceased to visit us. The last occasion on which any have been killed was in the winter of 1861, when two **hoopers** were shot at Halston, near Oswestry, and not far away from an extensive tract of low-lying and between Ellesmere and Baschurch, called Baggymoor (a corruption of Boggy moor) that before it was drained was a favourite resort of geese, swans and other wildfowl. On the 4th of March, 1881, I was walking round Whitemere, a large mere near Ellesmere, when a single swan got up, some distance off, from among the tame ones, and, after flying in circles till it had got to a considerable height, went away in a north-westerly direction; but whether it was a vagabond tame swan, or a wild one, I could not see. The **sheldrake** very rarely occurs and previous to the winter of 1884-5 only a few single individuals had been obtained; but in that winter a small flock visited the Severn and three of them that were killed proved to be males in nearly, but not quite, adult plumage.

2.14 Of the true ducks, the **Shoveller** is rather rare, and is more frequently found in spring and autumn, than winter. Within the last few years there have been five or six instances of its breeding in North Shropshire, and along the borders of Staffordshire, and, as in spring these handsome ducks usually appear in pairs, some would probably stay every year, if undisturbed; but unfortunately at Easter our pools are much resorted to by fishermen, and the wildfowl frightened, just at the migratory period, when they ought to be kept quiet. The **gadwall** has always been rare; about thirty years ago a young male was killed on the Severn, but I have no note of its occurrence since. The **pintail** also very seldom visits us, though it has occasionally been found on the small rivers and brooks in South Shropshire. In the north I have never seen it on the meres; but in 1863 an adult male was shot on the Severn at Wroxeter, and Col. Bridgeman informs me it has been killed on Lord Bradford's pools near Shifnal. The **wild duck** has of late years become common in summer, this increase in the number of those that remain to breed being no doubt due to the protection afforded them by recent Acts of Parliament, as, before the sale of wildfowl after a certain date was prohibited, many were killed in the breeding season. Few birds change their habits more completely, or show more solicitude for their young, than ducks; for, though generally so wild, they throw off all shyness directly they have paired, and when with her brood the old duck tumbles and plunges about in the reeds or water, and uses every effort to entice the intruder away.

2.15 The **garganey** is said to have occurred in the county years ago, but I do not know of any specimen now in existence. The **teal** has become, like the wild duck, a common resident, and the number of those that remain to breed is increasing, especially in certain districts. In one favourite locality that I know there are at least fifteen or twenty nests every year, some placed in heather, others in open places in woods, and a few among rushes. In winter **teal** are the most plentiful of any duck, large flocks frequenting meres

and pools in open heather and, should frosts set in, dispersing along rivers, brooks, and even ditches where the water is not frozen.

2.16 The **widgeon**, from some cause or other that it is impossible to explain, has of late years, become rare. Within the last twenty years it was more common in winter than the **teal** on the meres and pools of North Shropshire, and, if these were frozen, on the Severn and many of its tributaries. Now, however, only a few small lots visit the meres, and killed birds are scarcely ever exposed for sale by the local game-dealers. In Shropshire all wildfowl, except the common wild duck, are called "widgeon," the present species being termed a "magpie widgeon."

2.17 Several of the diving ducks, as they may well be called, are annual winter visitants, and one kind at least has of late become resident. They may easily be known, even at a distance, by their habit of swimming low in the water, and frequently diving, or when flying, by their heavy-looking bodies, small wings, and somewhat laboured flight. One specimen only of the **velvet scoter** has been obtained, and that, an adult male, was found exhausted and unable to fly, near Shrewsbury in November 1866.

2.18 The **common scoter** has been killed several times, usually in spring or autumn. One now in my collection, shot on the Severn in May 1876, was so tame that at first it was supposed to have escaped from a farm yard. Large flocks of **pochard** visit the meres in North Shropshire every winter, but as they usually keep out in the open water very few are killed. As a rule, with migratory ducks the females and young in their first year plumage far outnumber the old plumaged males, but with the **pochards** this is not the case the old males being the most plentiful, and it is not unusual to find twenty to thirty together or even more without a single female or young bird. Except in frost, this bird is seldom found on running water, though occasional small lots or single birds are shot on the Severn; and last November a beautiful old male was killed on the Tanat. In May 187[5?] Col. Bridgeman found a **pochard's** nest with eggs near Shifnal, and in 188[3?] I saw a pair in July, with four young ones, on a pool near Shrewsbury. I have also twice seen old birds late in spring, that probably had nests.

2.19 The **scaup duck** is very uncommon, single females or young males have, however, been occasionally killed, some of the former with the white ring round the base of the bill well defined. The old males are very rare indeed, but in January 1885, two fully adult ones out of a lot of three on the Verniew, close upon the borders of Shropshire.

2.20 The **tufted duck** is rather common on pools in winter, being often found with **pochards**: and though the females or young birds are always much more plentiful than the handsome adult males, I frequently see the latter on the Ellesmere meres. About the year 18[??] a pair of **tufted ducks** bred near Shifnal and several pairs now breed regularly in that neighbourhood. I have also seen one with young ones in June on a pool near Shrewsbury, and last summer I saw pair of **tufted ducks**, but without young, on Whitemere Mere, near Ellesmere. Except in hard frost, this duck is not often seen on the Severn.

2.21 The **long-tailed duck** has only, I believe, been found on three occasions, all in November. On Nov. 6, 18[??] Lord Newport killed a young male at Tong, near Shifnal. On Nov. 20 1881 I saw four small ducks on Ellesmere Mere that at first I could not identify, but after some time, as they were very tame, I got a good view of them, and with the aid of a telescope could see they belonged to this species, and had the same markings about the head as the right-hand figure in Yarrell's plate. Though I watched them for several hours, they never went far from the edge of the mere or joined the other waterfowl. They swam very low in the water, and kept constantly diving. On Nov. 13, 1885, I also saw a single **long-tailed duck** on Whitemere, a large mere about two miles from Ellesmere; like the others, it did not get up, but allowed me to get quite near it, and I should say, from the white look of its head and neck, that it was a male beginning to get its adult plumage.

2.22 The **golden-eye** is, in small numbers, an annual visitant, females and young males being found usually in small parties of three or four on meres and pools, or in frost on rivers and brooks. No duck is more easy to identify on the water than this, its large “bushy looking” head and short bill distinguishing it from all other kinds. Old male **golden-eyes** seldom appear, except in severe frost, and are even then rare ; but, curiously enough, in the remarkably mild winter of 1884-5 no less than three occurred, all in full plumage, and one of them I saw on the Severn as late as April 10.

2.23 Beside the ducks, the **smew**, especially the adult male, is rare ; but **goosanders**, often in flocks of sixteen or twenty, appear on the Severn whenever there is much frost, and, though many of them are in the “dun diver” plumage, old males are not unfrequent(sic).

2.24 I have now, I think, [mentioned] most of the birds likely to be killed in the shooting season, with the exception of the pheasant, and I need hardly say that this is generally distributed, in all wooded districts being abundant, and having a semi-domestic life when preserved.

2.25 In concluding these notes, I may remark that **blackgame**, if protected and the grey hens spared, would in all probability continue to increase and spread over South Shropshire. If the law, too, prohibiting the killing of wildfowl after March 1 was strictly observed, one or two handsome ducks, such as the **shoveler**, **tufted duck**, and perhaps **pochard**, might remain more frequently through the summer. The assertion, so often made, that ducks have become less plentiful in winter than they were formerly, has, I think, no foundation. It is true that **wigeon**, from unexplained reasons, are now rare, but I know of no evidence that other kinds have decreased in the same manner.

2.26 Finally, may I beg of Shropshire sportsmen who kill any of the sandpiper family, or the ducks locally called “**wigeon**,” to have the specimens identified before eating or throwing them away. Really rare and interesting birds are sometimes thus treated, from their value not being known.