

1917.  
May 9<sup>th</sup> Dartford Heath, Kent.

Stonechat.

Found 2 nests, both in fuzze, one containing young just hatched, & the other 5 eggs which proved too 'hard sat' to blow.

1917 was an exceptionally late year, frost and snow occurring almost every day in March and April up to 12<sup>th</sup> April, & everything is several weeks later than normal.

May and June.

Shooter's Hill, Woolwich. S.E.

Pied Wagtail.	22/5.	6 fresh.	{ Col. M. Green.
Cliffcheff		6 fresh.	
Blackcap	24/5.	5 eggs.	{ Lieut. Meares.
Garden Warbler.	24/5	3 eggs.	
Wren		young.	
Spotted Flycatcher.	7/6.	5 eggs.	
Robin.		6 eggs.	

We also heard Wrench repeatedly during the summer and Great Spotted Woodpecker occasionally. Wood Wrens were evidently nesting, but nest was not discovered.

May & June.

Sidecup district. Kent.

Hedge Sparrow & Cuckoo.	20/5 fresh.	D.H.M.
Blackcap.	building 26/5.	
Yellow Hammer.	clutches 5-4-2 fresh.	3/6. (Shoreham)

I only went out on two or three occasions, & heard Wrenches commonly. Tried to locate Cirls, but no success.

On 14<sup>th</sup> June. P.B.S. took 4/5 Marsh Warbler at Gloucester.

1918.

Birdnesting notes.

1918.

- 5<sup>th</sup> April. Cliffsheff arrived. Shooters Hill, Woolwich.  
 7<sup>th</sup> " Willow Wren arrived Foots Cray Common.  
 20<sup>th</sup> " Garden Warbler arrived Shooters Hill.  
 22<sup>nd</sup> " Cuckoo heard, Sidcup.  
 30<sup>th</sup> April. Great Tit in nesting box sitting on 11 eggs.  
 4<sup>th</sup> May. Swift arrived, Sidcup.  
 6<sup>th</sup> " Wrenneck & Blackcap heard Woolwich.  
 14<sup>th</sup> " took cl. & Chaffinch at Shooters Hill,  
 just like Linnets.  
 28<sup>th</sup> " Garden Warbler, 2 eggs, Castle Wood, Woolwich.  
 29<sup>th</sup> " found Yellow Hammer 1 egg & Cuckoo, Shenon.  
 2<sup>nd</sup> June. took Skylark 4 eggs fresh, near Sidcup.  
 5<sup>th</sup> " Garden Warbler 4 eggs, hard set, North Cray.  
 25<sup>th</sup> " Reed Warbler, 4 eggs, Pett Level, Winchelsea.  
 29<sup>th</sup> " Meadow Pipit 4 eggs & cuckoo, very hard set,  
 on East Cliffs, near Hastings.  
 " also observed two old & three young Peregrine  
 Falcons on the cliffs near the highest point  
 East of Hastings, where there had evidently  
 been an eyrie this year.



Balsporran Cottage, Dalwhinnie.  
 A' Marconnaich (3175 feet) behind.  
 Site for Dotterel. (See page 116).

1919. Birdsnesting Notes. 1919.

7<sup>th</sup> April. Cliffchaff arrived. Chislehurst Common.

19<sup>th</sup> " At Cooling Marshes, Cliffe. Kent.

Plover. 4 eggs.

Crow. 3 "

Cuckoo

Swallow

Reed Warbler

Tree-pipit

} had arrived.

27<sup>th</sup> April. Mistle-Thrush sitting, Shooters Hill.

Blackbird, 4 eggs. "

4 May. Heron. young. Daulson Park.

in a solitary nest on a oak on the island.

7<sup>th</sup> May. Swift arrived.

14 " Cooling Marshes, Cliffe.

Coot

Redshank

Sky-lark

Baru Owl

Reed-bunting

17<sup>th</sup> " Scadbury Park.

Woodpeckers.

Blackcap.

Cuckoo.

22<sup>nd</sup> " 2 Woodwrens building, Shooters Hill.

31<sup>st</sup> " Great Crested Grebe, young, Daulson Park.

1928.

16-17 June.

1928.

Gloucester.

After a lapse of some 10 years, during which time I did not once go away for any nesting expeditions, I visited the Gloucester neighbourhood again for Marsh Warblers. (vide June 18<sup>th</sup> 1913).

The whole district is much better known to birdwatchers than it was before the war, & I found all the usual haunts had been well trampled down both by people and cattle, & the birds were scarcer in the immediate vicinity of the city than formerly. I found a pair building on East side of River in the old "Tandy" pits just beyond the brickworks, but heard no more on that side, although I worked up to where the stream divides. Clive heard a pair here, when salmon fishing early in 1929.

On Sunday I revisited the willow-bed fully described on p. 13 which held one pair only & I found the nest ready for eggs on the stump of a pollarded osier but built into the several new stems sprouting from the stump. The nest was on the bank of the osier bed on the edge remote from the River bank.

Cattle had badly trampled the whole patch, which may have accounted for seeing only one pair here. Subsequently Mr. Thomas took both these clutches with 5 eggs each, & sent them on to me.

Mr. Ware arrived on 17<sup>th</sup> & went out to the N.W. in a motor, to visit new localities rather further away.



1929.

Dorsetshire,  
Dorsetshire.

1929.

E.P.C.

D.M.

24<sup>th</sup> May.

Edgar Chance & I motored up to Scotland from his house at Bulwell, Banchetts Green, Berkshire, calling to see Amos Bird at Ashby de la Zouch on our way. He had just taken about a dozen Tree-pipit Nests on the railway banks near his house, which we saw in the Nests in his house. We reached Lancaster on Friday evening & stayed the night at Springfield Hall, as guests of Sir Norval and Lady Helene. On Saturday we proceeded North again & reached Loch Bricht Hotel, Dorsetshire, Dorsetshire about 7 pm., about 460 miles in the two days.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May we <sup>Dorsetshire</sup> thoroughly searched the four or five large mountain tops so fully described by Stanley in an earlier page of this diary, but until noon a dense mist covered the mountains & we had to remain close to the wire boundary fence dividing Perth from Dorsetshire. We saw several pairs of birds & some single birds but they did not behave as though they were eggs, & we think Kennedy, the local keeper or his son may have taken them. Several of the birds were very tame & allowed us to approach within a few yards of them; others kept running along on the sky-line, only their heads being visible amongst the stones. We saw a few golden plovers & ptarmigan on the high ground, & found a Deulin with two eggs, in one of the short grassy patches which they like. We had a long day's tramp over many hills, but found no dotted! nest. Chance thinks that if the birds utter a call note of any sort, it is useless to search for eggs.

28 May 1929. We left the car at the cottage by the railway at Dalwaspidal (the divide) & went up Mount-Marcouach (3175 ft.) to west of road. We followed the wire fence to the top, and found four nesting pairs of Grotterel on this one Mountain top. The nests were within about 2 miles of one another & were found by us at 12.5 (E.P.C. 8 days incubated); 1.50 (J.H.M. fresh); 3 pm. (E.P.C. 6 days incubated) and 3.55 (J.H.M.; incubated 4 days).

We first saw N.1 bird running away on the Southern slope just below the Summit, & watched her with glasses from about 200 yards away. In 1/4 hour she turned back & ran by gradual stages onto the eggs & settled down. The nest was the usual slight depression in the moss & lichen, on a slightly raised mound, & was lined with leaves of bilberry plant. N.2 bird fluttered off her eggs about 50 yards away from me, just to the South of the wire fence, & ran away with drooping wings & tail fanned out. We were able to walk right up to the nest, which contained ~~four~~ <sup>three</sup> eggs incubated about four days.

N.3 bird flew off eggs between Edgar Chance & myself, walking about 150 yards apart. I was able to walk straight up to the nest, which was in a depression on the top of a hummock of moss, with ~~four~~ <sup>three</sup> eggs about a week incubated.

N.4 bird ran off her eggs about 100 yards in front of me, on the North side of the boundary fence, on rough, hummocky ground covered with dry moss & lichens. I walked up to the spot, as near as I could judge it & put my sticks into the ground. We both came up and began to search around in widening

circles for a quarter of an hour or more, & then decided to retire & watch the bird run back. On going to take up my stick we saw the nest & 3 eggs - quite conspicuous - exactly 2 yards from the stick.

We believe that four Dotterel's nests in four hours or, in fact, in one day, is a record, & we were very pleased at this wonderful success. The day was brilliantly hot and sunny. None of the birds uttered any note, & in each case we only saw the sitting bird.

On the extreme Eastern Spur of this mountain, (overlooking the road and railway) we saw another Dotterel, but we do not think this bird was sitting. We also explored far to the west, beyond the "divide" on the Summit, where the altitude is even higher, but saw no birds on this good ground. While working the North side of the wire fence Loch Dick was far away below us. There were some deep snow drifts still in the gullies, many of them hundreds of yards long, & 10-25 ft. deep.

On 29<sup>th</sup> May we revisited the same worked on our first day, following the wire fence from the road to the gale at the Summit. The day was brilliantly fine & very hot. On the most Southern spur of these mountains we found a Dotterel sitting on 2 eggs, which we left to see if she would complete the clutch.

Much further to the North, on the way to the top called "old wife" we took Golden Plover with four eggs & Dunlin 4, previously found with two eggs. Also found Golden Plover with one egg.

30<sup>th</sup> May. We again went up the hills to East of railway to revisit the dotterel sitting on two eggs. It was still sitting on two eggs, so we left it to hatch out. We had a magnificent view of a Golden Eagle to-day, sitting on a ledge about 50 yards below us, where, for a time it did not see us. Later we walked some miles over to Glas Meall Mor (3037 ft.) passing some very large herds of Red Deer, probably 1000 animals on our way, but we saw no dotterel here. We put up a good many ptarmigan on the stony hillsides, but did not find a nest. The day was again brilliantly hot & fine. Very few Golden Plover over this way, & only a few scattered pairs of Dunlin, as which we did not waste time. On our way back we saw Kennedy, who showed us a clutch of 4 Greenshank which he had taken nearly fresh on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, close to the lodge. We saw the nest, on a typical piece of burnt ground, against an ancient white tree stump. Edgar Chama took the clutch home, so far as we know it is the first authentic record for Perthshire, although Kennedy told us he had known the bird there for upwards of 20 years, but had never previously found the nest, was doubtful about it, believing it to be a redshank. This ended our nesting expedition to the Dalwhinnie-Dalnaspidale mountains & we decided to spend our last day on the Grampians, some 30 miles further North. On 31<sup>st</sup> May we returned over to Crimon, where the <sup>Ms</sup> Macbean of Loch An Silan had arranged to show us the best Greenshank & dotterel ground in her locality. She has taken over 20 clutches of both species in the last 12 years, but always allows second nests to hatch off.



I brought back a nice clutch of 9 Loosanders which she had taken on 18<sup>th</sup> April last year from a hole in an old willow at "windy corner" Loch an Eilain, in Rothiemurchus Forest: we passed the place on our way up the mountains, & saw a pair of Loosanders flying together - a very late date -.

About 11 o'clock in brilliant - very hot weather, we took the public footpath from Corriemore to Braemar. A balustrade which winds up the gorges between the high peaks of the Grampians, Cairn Torm, Ben Mc Dhuin, Cairn Toul (where Snow Bunting still nests), & other lofty snow-capped tops, usually wrapped in mists at this time of the year. The wonderful path lay for about 7 miles along the river and over pine-covered & heathery wastes, the home of Greenshank, Crested-tit, ♂ capercaillie & black grouse. We could frequently hear the "tute" as Crested-tit is called locally, in the fir tops. The path was mounting higher & higher until the trees became small & stunted and at last disappeared from the landscape. Then we left the path & struck off to our left, about N or NE, up a very stony spur on the lower slopes of Creag na Leacainn (3363 ft.) towards the top of which ptarmigan became faintly numerous. Boulder large & small completely cover this spur for miles, & make walking exceedingly difficult. A long walk over this spur brought us to some fine dotted ground, & I saw very quickly spotted a bird running near the springs here, by the side of a large snow drift, running up the opposite hillside for some hundreds of yards. After watching her through glasses for about 10 minutes she ran straight back on to her

eggs, a beautiful Three. The nest was about 100-200 ft. below the top of this plateau, in the usual moss. We then had lunch before mounting still higher to the flat, stony Summit of this peak, which we reached soon after 3 pm. We saw at least one more pair of Dotterel here, but could make nothing of them, & Mr. Macbean thought it was perhaps rather early, as birds here are usually later than at Dalwhinnie. She said she would visit the locality again at a later date, but we heard subsequently that she made several attempts to go up the mountain subsequently, but each time was prevented by fog and snow-storms, & did not get there again this nesting season. Our walk to-day was probably 25-30 miles, & was much the longest I have done for at least 20 years. The climb from Macbean's tent in the forest to the Summit took us  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours hard walking, & the descent  $2\frac{3}{4}$  hours. We started a motor back about 8 o'clock, and as we passed Aviemore we could see the hills completely covered from about half way up in mist and cloud, so that our few days in the mountains were remarkably lucky in weather. Mr. Macbean had found a ptarmigan sitting on 6 eggs near where we were to-day, but the bad weather prevented her getting up to it again. Two golden eagles had young in inaccessible precipices about 7 miles to S. and S.W. of our beat to-day, and one of the cliffs was visible through glasses. It is a wonder that any ptarmigan survive with so many eagles about; but their plumage is wonderfully protective.

8<sup>th</sup> June 1929. I met J. Wolpole-Bond at Lewes at 11 AM. We took bus to Oxford, where there is a large willow bed along side the London-Lewes railway, about 3 miles outside Lewes. Here we found one pair of Marsh Warblers, & the cock was singing vigorously from a hedge bordering the willow-bed. The nest was suspended in nettles about 5 yards from the hedge, & was quite ready for eggs. When subsequently visited by a friend of J.W.B.'s it was found to have been taken. We then look ~~at~~ taxi back, through Lewes and out on the Newhaven Road, about 5 miles beyond that town (Lewes). In a small willow bed between the road and railway we found two pairs of Marsh Warblers, only about 150 yards apart, & both nests contained 4 eggs, & were taken for me on 9<sup>th</sup> inst. by J.W.B. with clutches of 5 eggs each. Both nests were suspended in nettles & cow-parsley & were well concealed, as the vegetation was very thick in this willow-bed. It rained lightly all day, making the willow-beds very wet-places in which to walk. Both sedge-warblers and Reed-warblers were in these same beds. On the west side of the railway & about a mile away is another good willow-bed where a pair of M.W. usually nest, but we had not time this morning to visit it.

We then went on through Newhaven to the downs on the outskirts of Peasehaven to look for the second nests of a number of Grasshopper Warblers. The first sets of which had been taken 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> May, about a week later than the normal date here, owing to the very cold and backward spring. J.W.B. knew the approximate localities of 6 pairs of birds, the second nests being

8.6.29. usually within 20-50 yards of the first nests. This knowledge is absolutely indispensable with this species, as the cock ceases to sing as soon as the first egg is laid and the birds would be overlooked, as their habits are quiet & secretive at this season. If birds are heard singing, it is useless to attempt to find the nest, which can only be discovered by flushing the sitting bird.

During the afternoon we found five nests with 6, 6, 6, 5, 5 eggs, all incubated about one week. We also saw 2 nests with young, which had escaped the earlier search. Besides these, two pairs were singing, which showed that their nests must have been destroyed, probably by mice, which are very destructive to the eggs of ground-building birds. All the above pairs were in a radius of little more than half-a-mile. The nests in this district were all in very similar situations.

They are placed almost on the ground in the rough white coarse grass of the previous year, through which brambles or gorse is growing. The bramble patches are the favourite sites. Much of this ground is more or less densely covered with this bramble & gorse to a height of about 18 inches or 2 ft., and one has to beat this out by "crashing" through it close together, watching carefully for the sitting bird to slip off the nest. When one works quickly and vigorously she will slip off quietly at one's approach & disappear through the undergrowth like a mouse without being seen.

The nests are extremely well concealed, and being placed so near the ground under such thick & impenetrable tangle of herbage are quite



1929.

impossible to discover, except when the birds are building, by any other means than hard work beating every yard of the ground out. In suitable ground in this locality the grasshopper warbler is quite an abundant species, but the severe gorse & grass fires of this dry spring have destroyed, for a season, a great deal of their best ground. All the five clutches taken to-day are in my collection.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April this year I spent a week-end with Walpole-Bond to try for Dartford Warblers on the downs between Newhaven & Rottingdean. Weather was cold, but sunny & bright, but we only saw two pairs of birds and did not find a nest, although we spent many weary hours "crashing" through the tallest gorse & brambles which is the ground here that they frequent. This is very hard work & very hard on clothes & skin, but is not the best method of finding the nests of this rare warbler. When the birds are building they may be watched flitting over the gorse patches carrying small white bits of vegetable fibre & spider's webs to the nest, which can be much more easily & more certainly discovered by this means. If the bird is off the nest, or hears the noise of one's approach and slips away the "Crashing" method fails, as it did with us this week-end, despite a prodigious amount of hard work.

1930.

10<sup>th</sup> May. In Company with J. Walpole-Bond I went down to West Grinstead near Horsham, Sussex, to some extensive and very old orchards chiefly consisting of decrepid old apple trees, full of holes, dead branches & rotten stumps. We took the following nests

Little Owl cl. 4 hard sat & forsaken.

Jay cl. 6. fresh

Magpie cl. 5 fresh; taken without climbing.

Great Tit cl. 11, fresh.

Blue Tit cl. 11 fresh.

Cole Tit cl. 8, 8, almost fresh.

Marsh Tit: cl. 9, 9, 7. One 9 hard sat.

Nuthatch cl. 9. well incubated.

In view of the controversy regarding the breeding habits of the Willow Tit we were particularly careful to identify with absolute certainty the Marsh Tits found to-day, all of which remained on their nests while there were being cut out and allowed us to catch them on their nests.

The first Marsh Tit's nest was about 2½ - 3 ft. high in a rotten stump, the hole had been entirely excavated by the birds themselves. The nest was a substantial structure, quite a normal Marsh Tit's nest, containing plenty of Moss, fur, fibre etc.. The birds were somewhat demonstrative, but not nearly so much as the Cole Tit.

The second nest was in a small natural hole in a large apple tree, it took over half an hour to cut out with an axe. It was 4 ft. high and a foot deep. The cavity was large & was filled with a substantial nest of Moss, fur, wood fibre & down, quite a typical Marsh Tit's nest. The Cock was feeding the hen on the nest, and singing vigorously.

1930.

The Third Marsh Tit's Nest exactly resembled some published details of Willow-Tit's nests, so that we were careful to identify the birds without the slightest possibility of doubt. The nest was about 3 ft. high in a rotten apple stump, and had been entirely excavated this year by the birds. It was a small hole and shaft and the nest was a slight structure containing only the merest trace of moss, chiefly vegetable down & fur, and similar to nests of Willow Tit as described by recent writers, notably D. W. Munselwhite in *British Birds*. It contained 7 eggs slightly incubated, and now in my collection. The birds were not at all demonstrative after we had released the sitting bird caught on the nest. J. Walpole-Bond retained this nest, as this Marsh-Tit's Nest would appear to refute some of the definite statements attributed to Willow-Tit.

But see B.O.A. bull. of Nov. 29. 1930. Munselwhite, Jourdain and others who inspected this nest and eggs consider that it is Willow Tit. See p. 128

11<sup>th</sup> May Motored out with Dr. Charles Bryant & J. W. B. to a lane some miles beyond Lewis, & saw a large chalk-pit on the downs where Peregrines have bred at least on one occasion. Only Jackdaws and a pair of Redstarts were there this year. Bryant, although now 60 years old, climbed up to a Sparrow Hawk's nest with 4 fresh eggs.

12<sup>th</sup> May J. W. B. & I went, via Hastings and Robertsbridge, thence by Kent & East Sussex light railway to Wittersham Road station & spent a few hours on the Rother Level to the South of the station as far as the withy reed-bed marked on the map. We flushed two Garganeys, but failed, in the

1930.

short time at our disposal to locate a nest. There were a few Mallard & Shovellers about, and I saw a nest of flatter destroyed by cattle. We saw no teal. Found plow Redshank nests all with one egg, due no doubt to the cattle in the fields. Yellow Wagtails were common.

13<sup>th</sup> May. We spent the day on the Doon near the sea, between Telscombe and Newhaven Head. Saw Peregrine Falcon sitting on three eggs on a broad ledge only about 15 ft. down the cliff. A kestrel had eggs in a hole close to. I visited two Dartford Warblers's nests which J. W. B. had previously found building in gorse patches. One now was sitting on four eggs, which I took, and the other had one egg.

14<sup>th</sup> May. We worked the same locality as on 13<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Charles Bryant scooped the Peregrine's eggs with a fitting rod & net, J. W. B. took kestrel & from a hole 6 ft. over the cliff, going down a rope hand over hand!

After watching the birds for about half-an-hour we found the pair of Dartford Warblers, taken yesterday, building again in tall gorse about 50 yards from their first nest.

Dr. Bryant took clutch 5 Dartford Warblers from another gorse-patch, and we saw at least three pairs whose nests were never found.

In the tall gorse which the birds frequent on the downs, it is waste of time attempting to find the nests except when the birds are building when they fly over the gorse repeatedly carrying material to the selected spot.