



NOTES

MALLOPHAGA ON SICKLY BIRDS.

RECENTLY, through the kindness of Dr. Tom Hare, Director of the Poultry and Game Research Laboratories, I received a sample of Mallophaga collected from a Blackbird (*Turdus m. merula*), which was picked up in Dorsetshire. A post-mortem examination of the bird showed that it had been suffering from Coccidiosis. The breast of the bird was denuded of feathers and the greater part of the skin surface was heavily infested with Mallophaga. A few feathers were also sent by Dr. Hare and these were found to be very heavily laden with eggs of a Mallophagan.

The louse proved to be *Menacanthus spiniferus* (Piaget), and the eggs are almost certainly of this species, which is not, in my experience, that found commonly on the Blackbird. It is, however, a member of a large group of comparatively active Mallophaga.

In the *Ibis* (1935, p. 354), Dr. J. M. Harrison records an instance of a Jay (*Garrulus g. rufitergum*) being "rendered flightless by depluming lice". I am not aware of any such instances having been recorded although it is possible that records have been published in ornithological journals and have been overlooked in reviews of entomological literature. Unfortunately, it appears that the bird was not examined internally, and that no lice were found on the bird when it was picked up. I have examined numerous Jays but have never succeeded in finding many lice on them—in most cases none at all and, at the most, three specimens.

It is my belief that the occurrence of large numbers of Mallophaga on the Blackbird and the Jay was not the direct cause of the condition in which the birds were found but the result of an internal trouble which in turn resulted in the birds becoming considerably weakened and, in consequence, unable to free themselves of the lice to the extent to which they do so normally.

Although I am unable to give instances accompanied by adequate data I have learned from poulterers that sickly hens invariably have more lice on them than a normal healthy bird. It would be interesting to learn something about this aspect of parasitism.

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(*Spatula clypeata*) and 200 Pochard (*Nyroca f. ferina*), other species not being counted. On the 28th Messrs. W. R. Taylor, A. C. Leach, J. H. Savory and the writer visited the reservoirs and the numbers given below are the result of joint observations. There were 300 Mallard (*Anas p. platyrhyncha*), 400 Teal, 250 Wigeon, 65 Shoveler, 1,200 Pochard, 50 Tufted Duck (*Nyroca fuligula*) and an adult drake of both Golden-eye (*Bucephala c. clangula*) and Scaup (*Nyroca m. marila*), giving a total of considerably over 2,000 birds. That these numbers are entirely exceptional will be seen from the following data taken from the Annual Reports of the Ornithological Section of the Somerset Arch. and Nat. Hist. Society:—

	Normal.	Greatest No. Recorded.	Date.
Mallard	Up to 40	60-70	March 17th, 1934
Teal	„ 30	70	Jan. 3rd, 1933
Wigeon	„ 50	108	Feb. 17th, 1935
Shoveler	Occasional only	8	March 22nd, 1928 and Jan. 11th, 1932
Pochard	Up to 50, occasionally many more	332	Oct. 3rd, 1931

It seems probable that the more wintry conditions in the northern and eastern parts of the British Isles compared with the milder climate of the Bristol district may have been responsible for this great influx. A large area of the North Somerset "levels" has been under water, a not unusual state of affairs at this time of year, but one which will no doubt have provided a plentiful food-supply for such birds as Teal, which have been particularly numerous in this area.

Another possible factor for which, however, there is no proof is that during the exceptionally dry summers of 1933 and 1934 advantage was taken to clean out a lot of the sediment from the reservoirs. This, coupled with the great amount of water in the reservoirs in December, 1935, may have caused some vigorous growth of plant or animal-life sufficient to induce the ducks to come there.

KNOT (*Calidris c. canutus*).—A single immature bird seen on September 28th with other waders is the first record for these reservoirs.

AMERICAN PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*).—One seen September 28th to October 3rd (*antea*, pp. 183-185).

GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*).—Noticeably absent on the autumn migration. Usually a few on passage in September, but none were seen this year.

BLACK-NECKED GREBE (*Podiceps n. nigricollis*).—Five were seen on November 9th. Four were in a party, the other solitary at the opposite end of the reservoir.

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