

on their geographical range and habits, gathered from other authors, and theories and suppositions written doubtless in a pleasing and scientific manner, but deficient perhaps in the main point, which, in an undertaking like this, is alone worth anything—personal experience. Moreover, no single individual could do justice to the subject.

Never, as you properly remarked a few months since, has such an opportunity been afforded to naturalists for the investigation of the wide field of nature as by the establishment of your paper. No man is denied a hearing in its columns, and, as you justly observe, many gross and glaring errors which are promulgated by books and copied from one to another till they are quoted as grave matters of fact, would be impossible to remain long uncontradicted in your pages.

This subject of acclimatisation is an important one, and immense national benefits may be the result of the exertions of this society; and it is in due consideration of all this that I am induced to trouble you with this long and rambling letter.

THE ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY.

THE CHINESE GROUSE presented to this society by J. R. Dyce, Esq., Royal Artillery, are known scientifically by the name of *Syrhaptes paradoxus*; they live among the sandy deserts of northern China; the colour of the feathers is such that they could with difficulty be seen when running upon sandy ground; the legs are covered down to the extremity of the toes with short, stiff feathers; the feet are broad and flat, and the sole is coated with a strong skin, covered with projecting horny papillae.

Sir,—I am glad to hear the birds arrived safe, though I was not afraid, as they have stood a great deal of roughing already on board ship. One thing I forgot to mention, and that is that they require a great deal of sand, of which they eat a quantity. I never came across those birds till the frosts had been at Taku, when one day I saw a flock of some hundreds flying very fast, but they never alighted, so I did not then know what they were.

I have received on behalf of this society a small box of the Chinese yam, *Dioscorea Batatas*, the gift of the Société Impériale d'Acclimatisation, at Paris. This vegetable has recently been introduced into France, and also partially into this country.

That of the five or six tuber-bearing plants which belong to the family of *Solanaceae*, only one has hitherto been cultivated in Europe, the potato, or *Solanum tuberosum*. Many attempts have been made to discover some vegetable analogous to this in value and utility, and the only one that seems to approach it is the yam, or *Dioscorea Batatas*.

I have also to announce a letter from "Aristæus," a well-known correspondent of THE FIELD, who sends us from D'Urban, South Africa, seeds of the tree-pea, the running-bean, the underground-bean, the Indian pumpkin, all of which will be planted under careful superintendence, with a view to a trial as to whether they will or not grow in this country.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS. The total number of visitors to the gardens of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, on Whit-Monday, was 25,979. This was the largest number of persons that has ever been admitted to the gardens in one day since their opening to the public in 1828.

NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON NATURAL HISTORY.

EGGS OF THE GOLDEN ORIOLE.—I beg leave to inform you that Mr Fisher, naturalist, of Eton, has now in his possession four eggs of the golden oriole, which were taken near Stoke, Bucks, a few days ago.—C. W. (Eton).

HABITS OF THE NIGHTJAR.—I have had to pass daily, and at different times in the day, within ten feet of a nightjar sitting on her nest, and I have noticed that her tail always points to the sun.

WHITE STAR ON THE WILD RABBIT'S FOREHEAD.—When out rabbit-shooting to-day I bagged, among others, one with a purely white star on its forehead, in shape and proportion exactly similar to those we so frequently find in horses.

WEASELS AND SPOATS.—If any of your correspondents should happen to remember the subject in discussion, I should be obliged to them to give me their experience. I am not easily beaten by the facilities which a printer's type, readily at hand, affords to reply.

THE MAY BIRD.—Can any of your correspondents inform me of the generic name of a bird which is known in Ireland as the May bird? It is apparently of the same family as the curlew, but hardly half the size, and is very excellent for the table.

THE RED-THROATED DIVER.—Could any of your correspondents explain the following rather curious result of shooting red-throated divers? Often when shooting off Brighton I have observed, on firing at these birds, that they dive; but although the sea has been as smooth as glass from a north-east wind, neither myself, nor my friend, or sailors, could ever again see a vestige of them.

EGGS OF THE PIED WAGTAIL.—There is a pied wagtail's nest on a ledge outside the window of a spare apartment in my father's house. It contains four eggs; three of them are the natural size, but the fourth is considerably larger—in fact as large as a cuckoo's.

RARE SPECIES OF RAT.—I am much indebted to Mr Macgregor, gamekeeper, at Kinnluggie, Perthshire, for his kindness in procuring and sending for examination a rare species of black rat.

BIRDS KILLED BY FLYING AGAINST A LIGHT-HOUSE.—I should like to get the opinion of some of your numerous readers as to the cause of the following extraordinary occurrence. On the night of Saturday, May 11, at about eleven o'clock, the man on duty at the Start Light-house was surprised at discovering that a great number of birds kept flying against the lantern of that building.

BARK OF TREES SPLIT BY FROST.—Seeing in last Saturday's FIELD that one of your correspondents thinks that the bark of the chestnut-tree mentioned by J. C. was split by frost, and not by lightning, I may mention that during the frost of last winter several trees at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, split.

ON DUN HORSES, AND ON THE EFFECT OF CROSSING DIFFERENTLY COLOURED BREEDS.—I am very much obliged to Mr Bennett, for his information about Orwenan, a dun pony; but I received some years ago, through the Consul-General, at Crawe, the same account, which probably came from Mr Bennett.

THE HARE.—J. J., speaking of the fecundity of the hare, makes a statement which I find it impossible to reconcile with what I know to be the truth. He mentions the finding of a hare's nest on a manure heap in his field containing six young ones, all strong and lively, but unable to see.

kitten. It became a most interesting creature, and when looked upon as past all danger it suddenly had a severe attack of diarrhoea, of which it died in a few days. This is the only instance I ever heard of a hare being so reared; and for the first fortnight it was fed with new milk and cream from a spoon, and afterwards, when it began to take itself, with rice, milk, arrow-root, &c.

GREAT GATHERING OF BATS IN A HOLLOW TREE.—Having been very fond of natural history from a boy, I take the liberty through the medium of your journal to ask either of your correspondents if he ever knew bats congregate in large numbers in hollow trees, and if he can in any way explain to myself and other friends the extraordinary circumstance which I will relate.

THE PINIONING OF BIRDS RARELY NECESSARY.—If a pair of young gulls or peewits are to be introduced into a garden—if a gentleman wishes to turn out Egyptian geese or young water ducks into his pond—if a heron or a raven is to be domesticated, we generally find that an operation of great severity has been resorted to, and which mutilates and deforms the bird for ever; and this merely to prevent it from flying away, a purpose which would have been just as effectually attained by clipping the feathers of one wing with a pair of scissors.

THE SPITZBERGEN EXPEDITION.—A short time since I informed you of an intended expedition to the North Pole, via Spitzbergen. I now subjoin further particulars on the subject.—Two vessels are freighted—a large one, a rather poor schooner; and a sloop, a little smaller than the schooner, clumsy and heavy, like a Dutchman.

ANSWERS. BLACK WILD RABBITS.—I am surprised to see that Mr Dunsmore considers the occurrence of a black wild rabbit as a rarity. I have frequently shot them, as well as pure white and grey and white ones.