DEM ANDENKEN JOHANN S. PETÉNYI'S.

Von E. CSIKI.

Der »Bund der Ungarischen Ornithologen« enthüllte am 15. Januar d. J. die Gedenktafel des Begründers der ungarischen wissenschaftlichen Ornithologie J. S. Petényi, am alten evang. Seelsorgerhause in Cinkota bei Budapest, wo Petényi seinerzeit seine Laufbahn als Seelsorger begonnen hatte.

Petényi wurde am 30. Juni 1799 zu Abel-Lehota im Komitat Nógrád geboren, wo sein Vater ebenfalls als ev. Geistlicher ansässig war. Die Schulen besuchte er in Losonc, Besztercebánya und Selmecbánya, ging alsdann nach Pozsony um Philosophie zu studieren. Seine theologische Ausbildung erhielt er in Wien. Schon der kleine Mittelschulschüler Petényi hegte grosses Interesse für die Vogelwelt, seine ganze freie Zeit verbringt er in der freien Natur um die Lebensgewohnheiten seiner Lieblinge zu erspähen und legt schon damals eine Eiersammlung an, welche die Eier sämtlicher Vogelarten der Gegend aufweist. In Wien wird er mit Natterer, Heckel, Neumeyer, Kollar und Schlegel bekannt und bald tritt er mit Vater Brehm, Naumann und anderen in Verbindug.

Nach Beendigung seiner theologischen Studien wurde er zum Seelsorger der Gemeinde Cinkota berufen, wo er 7 Jahre, bis 1833 wirkte, dann abdankte um ganz seinen naturwissenschaftlichen Forschungen obliegen zu können. Dies dauerte zwar nicht lange, ein Jahr später wurde er schon als Kustosadjunkt am Ungarischen National-Museum angestellt. Hier entwickelte er eine grosse Tätigkeit und begründete die heute schon so ansehnliche und gut bekannte Ornithologische Sammlung. Im Museum arbeitete er 20 Jahre hindurch, bis er im zeitlichen Mannesalter im Jahre 1855 einem Magenleiden erlag.

Petényi reiste alljährlich um seine Beobachtungen zu vervollständigen, sammelte dabei fleissig und notierte seine Beobachtungen, welche zur vollständigsten Kenntnis unserer Vogelarten führten. Nach seinem Tode gingen seine Aufzeichnungen grösstenteils verloren, Otto Herman's Verdienst war einen Teil zu retten, welcher in der Zusammenstellung von Titus Csörgey [1] aber erst 50 Jahre nach seinem Tode erscheinen konnte.

[1] Ornithologische Fragmente aus den Handschriften von J. S. v. Petényi. Deutsch bearbeitet von Titus Csörgey. Mit einer Einleitung von O. Herman. Gera-Untermhaus 1905.

TWO SPRING MONTHS IN ALGERIA

By MAJOR W. MAITLAND CONGREVE M. C.

I landed at Algiers on March 4th 1930 and did noth depart until the following May 11th, so that generally speaking, I was in Algeria for the cream of the birds' nesting season. In such a vast country, comprising semi-tropical sea board, high cultivated plateaux, afforested and often snow-covered mountains and stark staring sandy desert relieved at rare intervals by saline impregnated sheets of water and date palm oases, one naturally expects to find a varied and localised bird fauna. Find it one does but naturally in the course of two months of any *one* season, one can only get a fair and somewhat superficial knowledge of the various regions which really justify serious study for *several* seasons and the expenditure of much time, money and energy.

Algeria is now a reasonably accessible country for the tourist, for besides

railways, there are numbers of reasonably good roads, even in the Sahara Desert, over which one can travel by motor car in reasonable comfort and find nightly food and accomodation at various hotels which are dotted about on the main tourist routes. These hotels are by no means cheap, but as the winter and spring tourist season is only a short one, one cannot expect otherwise than high charges and in the case of desert hotels, all food has to be imported from fertile northern regions.

One word of advice to anyone contemplating an ornithological trip to Algeria: work out your route beforehand as regards the localities to be visited for the particular birds that interest you, arrange your dates as well as you can and then endeavour to secure *guaranteed* hotel accommodation. I mention this because in a normal tourist season great motor coach parties of tourists descend suddenly upon this, that and the other hotel and the »hoteliers« are bound to find accomodation by reason of contracts made well in advance by French travel agencies. This means that the casual ornithologist may suddenly be informed that he has to vacate his room and it is by no means always easy to find one elsewhere at a moment's notice! I may say at once that my party, for there were three of us, never had any lack of accomodation troubles for the two reasons that we had engaged rooms well in adwance and the thourist season of 1930 was a failure owing to the American financial crisis.

It was on March 5th that I joined Rear-Admiral Lynes and Lieut-Colonel R. F. Meiklejohn at the famous old, Roman founded, city of Constantine. Famous, among other things, for the stupendous gorge on the sides of which the city lies and over which several bridges poise themselves at giddy heights and on which one can stand and watch innumerable birds flying to and from their nests in the great rock walls below one. I need hardly say I was now in good company. Admiral Lynes with his world-wide reputation as a pioneer field ornithologist and Colonel Meiklejohn, well known in Britain as a field ornithologist who has done interesting work in Esthonia and elsewhere in Europe. They had already made a discovery new to science, namely the finding of nests, eggs and young of Loxia curvirostra poliogyna in an aleppo-pine forest. Nidification was found to be typical of the Crossbill family and it is curious that no French ornithologist has ever made the discovery, since the localities where the bird resides are well enough known to those who have made a study of North African birds.

It was as yet early for birds nesting at Constantine and it was extremely cold and unspringlike, so we at once decided to move south to warmer climes, cutting out of our programme the possibilities of nests of Aquila chrysaëtus homeyeri, Hieraëtus fasciatus and Gyps fulvus all of which we had notes of as resident within 30 miles of Constantine.

As regards migrant birds, we saw numbers of Martins (Delichon urbica meridionalis) busy round a great mass of old nests plastered on the much ornamented face of a modern French building; while on the outskirts of the town a few white Storks (C. ciconia) were already busy at their nests. We heard an interesting story about this species, to the effect that it had much decreased from having picked up poison used to combat locust plagues. A sad pity if this is the case and Europe cannot well afford to lose many of such useful birds.

In the great gorge were to be seen numbers of Jackdaws (Corvus monedula cirtensis) busy building their nests, also numbers of more or less hybrid Rock Doves (Columba livia) and a few Kestrels (Falco tinnunculus or perhaps a few F. naumanni may have arrived).

On March 6th, we left for Biskra, the well known tourist resort of the northern Sahara. The journey there by train took about seven hours and was distinctly interesting until sunset speedily extinguished the wonderful colouring of young corn covered plain, brightly coloured spring flowers, rugged mountains and isolated peaks clear cut against an azure sky. Birds were not very easily recognisable from the terribly shaky train. Algerian railways are the worst laid of any I have been on in the many parts of the world I have visited. One had glimpses of various Alaudidae, a few Accipitres and on the poplar and pollarded willow trees round the occasional French settlements, numbers of White Storks (C. ciconia) were already busy repairing their enormous nests.

We only stayed two nights at Biskra, our object in calling there being to make arrangements for a visit at a later date. One small expedition was made to a rush and scrub covered area of the Oued Biskra valley. Here Fantailed Warblers (Cisticola) were not uncommon and their typical undulating flight and »zip zip« call at once notifying their presence.

The start of one cisticola nest was found by the Admiral who happened to catch a glimpse of the white fluff carried by a passing bird which he watched into some coarse grass and reed to the bare commencement of what would eventually become a beautiful soda-vater bottle shaped nest, barely to be distinguished from a spiders home! It was surely meet and right that the Admiral should have made the discovery for he is now known to the ornithological world as its foremost cisticola expert!

It would make this article too long if I detailed all the various species of birds we saw this day, so I propose to limit myself mainly to breeding notes.

On March 8th we left for Touggourt, the terminus of this particular north and south desert railway. This latter now landed us by 2·30 p. m. no less than 250 Kms. into the great Sahara desert at again another tourist resort fournished with some hotels. I would describe Touggourt as a typical insanitary Arab town as regards evil smells plus the normal date palm plantations irrigated by saline water pumped from underground into innumerable irrigation ditches. There are all the normal desert sights and discomforts of Arabs, camels, date palms, sunsets, heat and sandstorms etc, but ornithologically speaking, I can't recommend the place. Certainly there are a few bird species that one cannot expect to find further north at say, Biskra. For example we *heard* of the Desert Sparrow (Passer simplex saharae) but we gave it up as it meant a long and expensive motor car journey. There is a local crested Lark (Galerida) and a doubtful race of House Sparrow (Passer) but there were only two species that were as yet nesting and over which we spent most of our time. These were the Desert Grey Shrike (Lanius excubitor elegans) and the Bifasciated Lark (Alaemon alaudipes). The former, to our consternation, were found in most cases to already have young. I even chased a strong flying fledgling round a bush in one of the public gardens! Nests seen were in the majority of cases extremely inconspicuously place in the main crowns of medium sized date palms. One that was high up was *against* the trunk of a palm and was extremely inconspicuous as it was outwardly made of palm fibre and consequently blended wonderfully with the growing fibre around it. The Bifasciated Lark (Alaemon alaudipes) is a delightful bird. It has an absurdly long bill and long legs and it is hard to realise it is not a Limicolae in its general appearance and method of running about on the sand among desert bushes. Its upward flight and volplane descent as it sings its delightful, distance carrying song must be seen and heard as I have no words to describe

them. Locating these birds is by no means easy as they have a ventriloqual note which seems to carry an immense distance. However our experience of the species is that once »the territory« of a pair is discovered, the extremely conspicuous nest, planted right on the top of the normal fleshy leaved desert bushes and fully open to the sky, is by no meant difficult to find.

On this visit to Touggourt, we were too early and only found one partly built nest by watching a pair one early morning just after sunrise, however more were found here at a later date by my companions.

Passage migrants, I do not propose to say much about or attempt to detail. We saw scores of many many species, resting on the northward journey to Europe and there were few known to my readers that we did *not* see during our stay in Algeria.

On March 13th, we returned to Biskra and at once commenced serious work on foot in the vicinity or by means of a hired motorcar for localities we had notes of and which could be reached by road within 25 miles. A question often asked one by those who know a little of the Algerian Sahara and a great deal less about birds is »What sort of birds did you find there, I never saw any?« The answer to the query is that one finds birds in pathes in certain categories of desert country and it takes time to get the necessary experience of where and how to look for them. Birds are inconspicuous and there is little life and joy in them as we know them in Europe. Rarely does one see them in the air and perhaps more rarely does one hear them call or sing, but birds there are and plenty, given the suitable ground.

Near Biskra itself, acres of stony ground was the home of the Algerian desert lark (Ammomanes deserti algeriensis), quite common and rather inconspicuous. Their nests, normally shielded by some stone lying at an angle of forty-five degrees and nearly always a not inconspicuous collection of little stones and flakes of dry earth arranged as a breastwork across the open approach to the nest. The nest, a soft white pad of vegetable down and the normal clutch of 3—4 eggs.

On the steep sides of dried up watercourses and the high mud banks of the Oued Biskra, the most typical bird was probably the beautiful Tristram's Chat (Oenanthe lugens halophila). Given the necessary small hole it was by no means difficult to spot the collection of small stones which always partially blocked the mouth of the hole leading to the nest, which latter might be anything from an inch or two to, say, two feet into the bank. Occasionally one came across a pair which appeared to lack all intelligence. This was when the entrance to the hole sloped down to the outside at a steep angle. Here the stones laboriously carried and placed in position would straightaway fall to the ground level beneath and soon became absurdly conspicuous and quite useless as a protectory barrier against snakes and other reptiles. I assume that these stone barriers are entirely a protection against reptiles.

The eggs are of a milky blue colour with faintly red speckled ends and normally number 3—4.

Another species of Wheatear which becomes common in the mountainous and rocky country on the northern outskirts of the desert proper is the shy but somewhat conspicuous Black Wheatear (Oenanthe leucura syenitica). I have already mentioned stone breastworks in the case of two species but here the barrier becomes really ridiculous. Literally cataracts of stones point out the nesting holes of the species, of course absurdly conspicuous in most cases but naturally every hole

a Black Wheatear has ever occupied in the course of ages, has its stone barrier and one finds many more old nests than new ones so one has many disappointments. The normal clutch is 3—5 and the majority of eggs are probably much incubated and hatched before March is out.

Of Crested Larks (Galerida) there are two species and various races of each of these species throughout Algeria. As the two species are practically indistinguishable in the field, the careful oologist is only justified in collecting their eggs after he has obtained one of the birds from any nest found; an unpleasant necessity, only tempered by the fact that Galerida is common enough and eggs completely valueless without this one and only method of unimpeachable verification.

Undoubtedly the rarest and most interesting species of bird one met with near Biskra was that somewhat remarkable desert lark, Rhamphocorys clot-bey. We came across one pair on a certain stony plain ringed by hills and were thrilled by the prospect of finding their nest and learning something of their habits. Alas! although seen on several occasions in more or less the same place, they never appeared to be doing anything but feed and invariably made off in a northerly direction until lost to sight and we never got nearer to finding a nest, perhaps the greatest prize attainable by any ornithologist in the Algerian Sahara, than seeing this one pair.

It was on March 18th, that we explored a range of hills not many miles to the north of Biskra and here we had the good fortune to flush an African Buzzard (Buteo ferox cirtensis) from its nest, containing the large clutch of 4, moderately incubated, eggs. Subsequently two more nests were found, containing the more normal clutch of three eggs each. Beyond being redder in colouration the birds present no marked feature in the field, as compared with B. buteo of Europe.

It was on March 19th that we took our first Moorish Raven's (Corvus corax tingitanus) nest. Nothing abnormal about it as compared with cliff nesting Ravens in Europe and the nest contained six fresh eggs. On March 20th, I was lucky to take another, containing the large clutch of seven fresh eggs and subsequently, abouth a month later, saw other nests in the high mountains of Northern Algeria, where breeding takes place considerably later than in the Northern Sahara.

Various expeditions were made by motor car to sandy desert to the south of Biskra and having discovered a large area of ridge and furrow desert covered with desert scrub and occasional Zizyphus bushes, we found much to interest us. The Houbara Bustard (Chlamydotis undulata) was seen occasionally and one of my companions was brought in two sets, each of two eggs, by an Arab but we newer saw a nest in situ. Coursers (Cursorius gallicus) were common on the stony patches of desert which were frequent among the sandy wastes, but here again we were never lucky enough to come across their eggs. A good and unexpected find was the three eggs of a very tame, presumed Senegal Sandgrouse (Pterocles senegallus); just a scrape among stones but my efforts to obtain the bird from the nest were unfortunately unavailing thanks to having only my small 7 mm. collecting gun with me that day. Far too small for such a large bird, even though it approached within 20 metres of me.

Two other species of Sandgrouse (P. orientalis et P. alchata caudacutus) were frequently seen and I was sure that the nest I found could not be ascribed to either of them but I was not so sure of a fourth species (P. coronatus) whose eggs, I understand, have not as yet been taken in North Africa by any competent ornithologist.

Wheatears (Oenanthe) were a great feature of this particular patch of desert

and these nested mainly in the holes of some species of desert rodent that is very common. We had bad luck with Oenanthe moesta as the only two nests found contained well-grown young, while up to mid April, we appeared to be too early for O. deserti homochroa. Several building nests were found in recesses on the side of sandy hillocks or beneath roadside clods of earth, but by the time we left the neighbourhood, on April 13th, only one nest as yet contained two fresh eggs.

That absurd little bird, the Desert Scrub Warbler (Scotocerca inquieta sahari) was found to be common. I advisedly describe it absurd, as it is hard to imagine anything more comical than these little brown mites as they hop and dodge among the desert bushes. We found quite a number of their globular Troglodytes type nests in the low bushes, but none we found ever contained more than 5 eggs, while four and even three appeared to be the normal full clutch.

As regards the Babbler (Crateropus fulvus), which we saw in parties on several occasions in desert scrub, we only found one nest and that was already old for the young were well grown and flying in the neighbourhood. Zizyphus bushes, terrible for their thorns, but beloved by the Desert Grey Shrike (which we had already met with at Touggourt) were always objects of interest to us and an upstanding Zizyphus, as often as not had a grey Shrike perched conspicuously on top of it. This would be a signal to halt our motor car and go and make investigation. However we were extraordinarily unlucky as the big majority of the nests we saw contained young in various stages of development.

The town of Biskra itself was mainly interesting, ornithologically, for its House Buntings (Emberiza striolata sahari). This species was extremely common and we had no difficulty in procuring a guide to take us round the Arab quarter to hunt for nests and eggs in the mud dwellings. It is a fallacy to believe that Arabs always refuse admittance to strange men to their houses for fear of contaminating their women folk. Many were the mud hovels we entered and the majority contained women, who made no sort of objection to our collecting what Buntings eggs we liked. In some cases these charming and confiding little birds had their nests in niches or on roof supporting pillars of crowded main living rooms, filled with acrid smoke from the domestic hearths placed on the floor. This species is undoubtedly »sacred« to many Arabs and so it doubtless would be to any bird lover in Europe. The clutch appears to be neither more or less than 3—4. One nest was seen in the crown of a palm tree, another in an old Swallow's mud shell, while away from villages they nest in niches and recesses of caves and cliffs, so are by no means entirely dependent upon man for nesting sites.

Among the Biskra date palms, various species of birds nested, among others Doves, Blackbirds, Goldfinches, Serin finches etc, but nests were by no means easy to find, as they were normally on the crowns of 10 metre high palms and only liable to be found by natives when up the trees for work in connection with the pollination of the date flowers.

There are as yet three more interesting bird species that can be hunted for with hope of succes, with Biskra as a base. One was the desert form of the Barbary Partridge (Alectoris barbara spatzi) and we saw it both in desert scrub and also in the rugged hills towards the northern border of the desert. Only one nest was seen in situ and that was well concealed in the centre of a big clump of esparto grass growing on a rugged mountain side. The second was the well known Trumpeter Bullfinch (Erythrospiza githaginea zedlitzi) and we saw numbers of these charming little birds on stony hillsides and rocky ravines on the northern fringe of the desert. The few nests we found were tucked away into niches in

rock boulders or the earth or rock sides of watercourses, but we never had much luck with this common species and several nests contained young before we discovered where to look for them. The third I have yet to mention is the Rock Sparrow (P. petronia barbara), an elusive and difficult bird to get at the nest of. As often as not one can see them going into some crack or other of a friable mud cliff where even with a rope conditions are bad, not to say dangerous.

The nearest I got to a nest was by seeing a number of birds carrying building material down a deep dry bottomed well on a mountain side. I was lowered down on the end of a rope and found it singularly unpleasant. The earthy sides of the well showered on to my head while the heat and stuffiness were most pronounced. Of nests I saw not a sign but I did not descend more than half way down to the bottom, which was always in reasonably clear view.

On April 14th we moved to El Kantara, the gate of the desert. Here we were living in a rocky defile flanked by great cliffs and through which road, river and railway debouched into the desert. Among others, new birds seen here were Choughs, Rock Buntings, Blue and Common Rock Thrushes and Barbary falcons (P. pyrrhocorax, Emberiza cia africana, Monticola solitarius et M. saxatilis et Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides). On one occasion we even saw Gypaëtus b. barbatus, as we did also on two occasinos near Biskra.

However El Kantara was somewhat unfruitful as regards actual nests and eggs found but it was a delightful change from the heat of the desert.

On April 18th, we moved to Batna and were now in a delightful country of cornfields, rolling hills studded with juniper, ilex and aleppo pine. No longer did we feel too hot, in fact one day it snowed quite heavily for a short time, while all the birds, and there were many, were full of the joy of love and springtime and could be seen and heard in all directions. It was all such a delightful contrast to all we had been through in the way of sand, heat and elusive bird life.

Perhaps the most typical bird of the ilex scrub country was the Chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs africana), here in Algeria, markedly different in appearance to its well known European relative, but in other respects similar in all ways. A curiously late breeder for North Africa, we thought, and the majority of pairs did not appear to have as yet commenced to nest.

The Moorish Magpie, (P. pica mauritanica) was found nesting freely in the denser patches of ilex but it suffers severely from the Arab herd boys and the majority of the nests we came across had already been robbed. Neither nests or eggs show any marked differences as compared with those of our European bird, but here again we have a subspecies that at once attracts the eye as being different to our familiar home bird.

Perhaps the most striking bird, which is often to be seen in the Juniper overgrown patches amid or bordering the ilex, is Moussier's Redstart (Phoenicurus moussieri). Much like our Redstart in appearance buth with totally different nesting habits, for the nest is normally placed in or near the base of a juniper bush. One nest I saw was well concealed in a clump of coarse grass. The eggs are either of two strongly contrasting types namely blue or pure white and the full clutch appears to be four.

Two other interesting scrub inhabitants are Tristrams' Desert Warbler (Sylvia deserticola) and the North African form of the Subalpine Warbler (Sylvia cantillans inornata) but it was as yet early for nests by the time we left this district on May 2nd. On the open plain, largely corn covered, round the town of Batna itself, were various delightful songsters such as Calandra, Short-toed and

Sky-Larks. (Melanocorypha c. calandra, Calandrella brachydactyla rubiginosa, Alauda arvensis harterti) while on the borders of the plain and scrub were Tawny Pipits and Wood Larks (Anthus campestris et Lullula arborea harterti).

One three day trip made by the Admiral and myself from Batna was to entirely different country, namely the Aurès mountains which are densely clothed with magnificent cedar forests, to near their summits. The most interesting bird species seen on this trip was Seebohm's Wheatear (O. oenanthe seebohmi). At least one pair and an odd bird or two were observed at some 2000 metres above sea level on more or less snow-covered and rock-strewn ground well above tree limit. This was on 21st April and it was certainly too early for nests. Nesting sites of both the Barbaryafalcon (Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides) and Lanner falcon (Falco biarmicus erlangeri) were discovered and reached by means of ropes laid over the edges of small precipices. These contained white down covered youngsters on April 23rd. The note of the Algerian Green Woodpecker (Picus vaillanti) was often heard amid the great cedar forests but the only nesting site found was not here but near Batna and it held five slightly incubated eggs on April 30th.

Moorish Ravens (Corvus corax tingitanus) were at this altitude, now only building or laying as compared with those we had found with complete clutches of eggs a month previously near Biskra.

On May 2nd I moved further north, by myself, to Hammam Mesquotine. There I was almost within sight of the Mediterranean seaboard and again the bird fauna showed marked differences. The Admiral had now returned to England, while the Colonel had gone on a visit elsewhere and did not join me until a few days later.

Woodchat Shrikes (Lanius senator) now abounded and nested freely in the innumerable olive trees which were a feature of the landscape and I was lucky in finding two nests which contained the rare erythrystic type egg. As my readers doubtless know, erythrysism is very common with L. collurio but curiously enough quite an exception with L. senator.

An entirely new species to me was the Dusky Bulbul (Pycnonotus b. barbatus); cheerful noisy birds which were frequently to be seen among the palm trees growing in the garden of the comfortable hotel where we were staying. This is no doubt a late breeder and the parties we saw on our arrival at this place did not dissipate into pairs until about May 7th, thereafter, one would see them in dense scrub where they were doubtless about to nest. A not uncommon and interesting bird that we more often heard than saw was Cetti's Warbler (Cettia cetti). The remarkable staccato note bursts forth at intervals from densely overgrown watercourses and in my experience in Southern Spain and Africa, the nests are only to be found over or in the vicinity of water. All the nests I have ever found were discovered in an exactly similar way, and the method was as follows: I located a bird by hearing its note proceeding from some densely overgrown watercourse. Clad in strong clothes and gloves as a protection from thorns and armed with a big knife, I now forced my way to the bed of the stream and slowly and methodically fought and hacked my way up or down stream as the case required, closely scanning the overhanging creepers to right and left and overhead for an inconspicuous hay coloured nest suspended anything from two feet to six feet, either immediately over the stream itself or in its immediate vicinity. I cannot call to mind a nest supported by green herbage. It was always in the dead stems of a species of smilax that hangs in festoons from the trees, in dead bamboo and

sometimes in bramble. The remarkable and singularly beautiful red eggs, always four or three in my experience, are a welcome reward for much exhausting work in stuffy heat and the loss of a considerable amount of skin and damage to clothes by reason of the awful undergrowth!

Where, as at Hammam Mesquotine, the actual water of some of the streams is hot and sulphur impregnated as the result of local thermalaction, Cetti »crashing« becomes rather beyond a joke!

At this place again, another Crested Lark sub-species was prevalent. The soil is now dark coloured and the local G. theklae harterti is chocolate coloured instead of pale and washed out as in the desert. For a change there appeared to be only one species of Crested Lark ie. no form of Cristata. The Chaffinches (Fringilla coelebs africana) were now beginning to nest seriously and one very precocious pair actually had young even though the majority were barely, as yet, laying. Corn Buntings (Emberiza calandra) were extremely common and sat on various prominent bits of herbage and wailed out their discontented song. The true Barbary Partridge (Alectoris b. barbara) was extremely common and for some days I was puzzled by their curious cries. One nest was found by flushing a bird almost under foot. That handsome Sparrow, the Spanish (Passer hispaniolensis) was now nesting on the hotel buildings, but also in an amazing great colony in a group of olive trees. I examined large numbers of nests but few had complete complements of eggs by May 9th and there appeared to be remarkably little variation in their eggs as compared with P. domesticus of Europe.

This article had now become a very long one, much longer than the Editor of »Kócsag« probably wishes for, so it is quite time I closed with a final note to the effect that my readers should realise that there are many species of birds which I have not even mentioned but the majority of them are only the North African forms of common European ones and quite indistinguishable as such, except to a museum expert.

To me there are more interesting places than Algeria from an ornithological point of view, since, in spite of its vastness, there appear to be few unsolved problems as regards its bird fauna. It has however a charm of its own and a great variety of »terrain« which can be glanced over without undue difficulty, in the course of any one spring.

KÉT TAVASZI HÓNAP ALGIRBAN

Írta: CONGREVE W. MAITLAND.

A MULT esztendőben, a madarak fészkelésének főidején, március 4-étől máj. 11-éig Algirban tartózkodtam. Ily nagy földterületen, mely magában foglal féltropikus tengerpartot, jól mívelt fensíkokat, erdősített s gyakran hóval borított hegyeket, itt-ott sósvízű tócsákkal és datolyapálma-oázisokkal megszakított homoksivatagot, már eleve változatos és helyhez kötött madárfaunára számíthatunk. Két hónap alatt természetesen csak fölületes betekintést nyerhetünk az egyes tájak madárvilágába, mely hosszabb, több évre terjedő tanulmányozást érdemel. Algir ma elég könnyen közelíthető meg. A vasútvonalakon kívül meglehetős jó utak még a Szaharában is találhatók. A túristák főútvonalain a szállodák ugyan nem olcsók, ami a rövid téli és tavaszi túristaszezonban leli magyarázatát, azonkívül abban, hogy az élelmet a termékeny északi régiókból kell odaszállítani. Az oda utazni szándékozó ornithologus jól teszi, ha előre lefoglal magának szállást, mert a főszezonban nagyon sok alkalmi túrista látogatja e vidéket, akiknek a szál-

lodák a francia utazási irodákkal kötött szerződésük értelmében szállást adni kötelesek. Így megtörténhet, hogy egy váratlanul automobilon megérkező túristatársaság a gyanútlan ornithologust kitessékeli szobájából.

Márc. 5-én Constantine-ban két kiváló ornithologushoz, Lynes ellentengernagyhoz és Meiklejohn ezredeshez csatlakoztam. A városban számos Delichon urbica meridionalis-t láttunk egy nagy épületen elhelyezett fészkeik körül röpködni, míg a külvárosokban néhány Ciconia ciconia tatarozta fészkét. Egy nagy szakadék falán sok Corvus monedula cirtensis, Columba livia és néhány Falco tinnunculus vagy naumanni volt. Minthogy Constantine-ban a még hideg időjárás késleltette a fészeképítés megindulását, márc. 6-án Biskrába távoztunk. A lehető legrosszabb vasúti útunk alkalmával csupán pacsirtákat, néhány ragadozót és fészküket tatarozó fehér gólyát láttunk. Egy kisebb kirándulásunkon az Oued-Biskra-völgybe, szuharbujókkal (Cisticola) találkoztunk. Márc. 8-án Tuggurt-ba érkeztünk, amely egészségtelen arab város s ornithologiailag keveset nyujt. Legtöbb időnket a Lanius excubitor elegans és az Alaemon alaudipes fészkének fölkeresésére fordítottuk. Előbbinek már fiai is voltak. Fészke nem igen válik el környezetétől a datolyapálmák koronájában. Az Alaemon deserti fészke viszont könnyen található meg a sivatagi bozót csúcsán. Ez alkalommal azonban korán érkeztünk s csak egy megkezdett fészket találtunk.

Útunk alkalmával rendkivül sok Európába visszatérő vándormadarat figyelhettünk meg.

Márc. 13-án visszatértünk Biskrába s alaposan nekifogtunk a környék átkutatásához. Az Ammomanes deserti algeriensis itt közönséges. Fészkét rendesen kiálló kő alá építi s torlasz gyanánt apró köveket és földdarabkákat rak bejárata köré. A tojások száma rendesen 3—4. Oued-Biskra száraz vízereinek meredek partjain a legjellemzőbb madár az Oenanthe lugens halophila, mely a fészkéhez vezető üreg bejáratát szintén kövecskékkel rakja körül, hogy a csúszómászók ellen megvédje. A hegyes-sziklás tájakon a félénk Oenanthe leucura syenitica él, mely még erősebb torlaszt épít kövekből fészke elé, mint előbb említett két társa. A legritkább és legérdekesebb madár Biskra környékén a Ramphocorys clot-bey, melyből csak egy párt láttunk, de fészkét nem találtuk.

Márc. 18-án Biskrától északra halmos vidéken Buteo ferox cirtensis-t zavartunk föl fészkéről, melyben 4 tojás feküdt. Azután még két másik fészket is találtunk 3—3 tojással. Márc. 19-én találtuk a Corvus corax tingitanus első fészkét 6 friss tojással, márc. 20-án megint találtam egy fészket 8 friss tojással. Autókirándulásaink alkalmával a Biskrától délre elterülő homoksivatagba a Chlamydotis undulata-t észleltük, s az egyik társamnak sikerült 2 fészekaljat is szereznie egy arabtól, de a fészket a helyszinén nem láttuk. A Cursorius gallicus közönséges volt, de fészkére nem akadtunk. Nagyon megörültünk azonban annak a 3 tojásnak, melyet valószínüleg a Pterocles senegallus tojásának kell tartanunk. Azonkívül gyakran láttuk még a Pterocles orientalis-t és a P. alchata caudacutus-t.

Hantmadarak (Oenanthe) gyakoriak voltak a sivatag eme részén, fészkük rendesen egy sivatagi rágcsáló üregeiben volt elhelyezve. Az Oenanthe moesta két fészkében azonban csupán nagy fiókákat találtunk, az Oenanthe deserti homochroa egy fészkéből pedig csupán 2 tojást sikerült szednünk. Az apró Scotocerca inquieta sahari közönséges volt. Az ökörszem fészkéhez hasonló gömbölyü fészkét 3—5 tojással alacsony bokrokban találtuk. A Crateropus fulvus-nak csupán egy fészkét sikerült megtalálunk, melyből a fiókák már kirepültek. A Zizyphus-bokrokon ülő Lanius excubitor elegans-szal sem voltunk szerencsések, a legtöbb fészekben már fiókák ültek.

Magában Biskra városában az Emberiza striolata sahari nagyon gyakori fészkelő. Egy vezetővel az arabok lakta negyedbe indultunk fészkeinek és tojásainak fölkeresésére. A nagyobbrészt arab nőktől lakott kunyhókba nagy meglepetésünkre szabadon betérhettünk s akadálytalanul végezhettük gyüjteseinket. A fészkek egy része a tetőt támasztó oszlopokon volt elhelyezve, egyet egy pálma koronájában, egy másikat régi fecskefészekben láttunk. A falvakon kívül sziklaüregben is költ. Fészekalja 3—4 tojásból áll.

A datolyapálmák között galambok, feketerigók, tengelicék, csicsörkék stb. is fészkeltek, de fészkük nem volt könnyen a 10 m magas koronákban elérhető. Ez csak akkor vált lehetővé, mikor a bennszülöttek a pálmavirág beporzása érdekében fölmásztak a fákra.

Biskra környékéről még fölemlítem az Alectoris barb. spatzit, melynek egyetlen fészkét esparto-fű között találtuk, az Erythrospiza githaginea zedlitzit a sziklás domboldalakon, fészkében már fiókák ültek és a Petronia petronia barbarat, mely fészeképítéssel volt elfoglalva, egy kiszáradt kútban.

Ápr. 14-én El Kantarát, a sivatag kapuját kerestük föl s itt a sziklák között tanyázva Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocoraxot, Emberiza cia africanat, Monticola solitariust, M. saxatilist és Falco peregrinus pelegrinoidest, sőt egy alkalommal Gypaëtus barbatus barbatust is figyelhettünk meg, melyet két ízben Biskra mellett is láttunk.

Ápr. 18-án Batnába érkeztünk, ahol a vetések, borókával, ilexszel és aleppofenyővel benőtt domboldalak kellemesen hatottak ránk a sivatag tikkasztó forróság után. A fajszámban megnövekedett madarak sürgése igazi tavaszi képet varázsolt elénk. Az ilexszel benőtt vidék legjellemzőbb madara a Fringilla coelebs africana, legtöbbje ebben az előrehaladott évszakban azonban még alig fogott hozzá a fészeképítéshez. A Pica pica mauritanica a sűrűbben álló ilexbokrokra rakja fészkét, melyet az arab pásztorfiúk rendesen megdézsmálnak. A boróka között leginkább a Phoenicurus moussieri tűnik szembe. Fészkét a bokrok tövébe rakja. 4 tojást tojik, melyek kék vagy tiszta fehér színűek. A bozót két más érdekes lakója a Sylvia deserticola és a Sylvia cantillans inornata. Minthogy fészkük fölkeresésére korán érkeztünk, a vidéket május 2-án elhagytuk s a Biskra környéki vetéssel borított lapályt kerestük föl, ahol Melanocorypha calandra calandraval, Calandrella brachydactyla rubiginosaval, Alauda arvensis harterti-vel, Anthus campestris-szel és Lullula arborea harterti-vel találkoztunk.

Innen Lynes ellentengernaggyal három napos kirándulásra az Aurès-hegységbe indultam, melyet a magasabb régiókban gyönyörű cédruserdők borítanak. A legérdekesebb madár a fanövés határán túl, a hóval borított sziklás talajon, mintegy 2000 méter magasan az Oenanthe oenanthe seebohmi. Megtaláltuk a Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides és a Falco biarmicus erlangeri fészkét is, melyekhez csak kötelek segítségével férkőzhettünk. Ápr. 13-án fehér pelyhes fiókák ültek bennük. A nagy cédruserdőkben sokszor hallottuk a Picus vaillanti hangját. Egyetlen, 5 tojásból álló fészekalját ápr. 30-án Batna közelében sikerült megtalálnunk. A Corvus corax tingitanus ebben a magasságban még csak fészeképítéssel vagy tojáslerakással volt elfoglalva.

Máj. 2-án tovább északra, Hammam Mesquotine-be utaztam, ahol ismét más madarakra bukkantam. A számtalan olajfákon a Lanius senator fészkelt. Nagy örömömre sikerült ennek a madárnak két vöröses fészekalját megtalálnom. A tojások erythrismusa a Lanius collurionál igen gyakori, a Lanius senatornál azonban kivételes jelenség. Ujdonság volt számomra a szállodám körüli pálmákon tartózkodó Pycnonotus barbatus barbatus, később fészkének megépítése céljából a sűrű bozótba vonul. Gyakran hallottuk a Cettia cetti hangját, 3—4

gyönyörű piros tojást tartalmazó fészke vízmelletti sűrűségben áll s nagyon nehezen hozzáférhető. A sötét talajon a csokoládészínű Galerida theklae harterti futkosott. A Fringilla coelebs africana itt már serényen építette fészkét, egy párnak már fiókái voltak. Az Emberiza calandra és az Alectoris barbara barbara nagyon gyakori volt. A Passer hispaniolensis a szállodai épületeken fészkelt, azonkívül föltűnő nagy kolónia egy olajfacsoportban.

Cikkem hosszúra nyúlt s ezért még csak azt említem, hogy az általam beutazott területen még sok más madár is él. Ezeknek legtöbbje azonban csak északafrikai alakja az Európában előforduló madaraknak. Kétségtelenül vannak az ornithologus számára Algirnál érdekesebb területek is, azonban Algir változatos földjének is megvan a varázsa: egy tavasszal áttekinthető, anélkül, hogy túlságosan fárasztana.

A KERESZTCSŐRŰ (LOXIA CURVIROSTRA L.) ÉLETE ÉS FOGÁSA

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1 fényképpel.

Ha a Kárpátok fenyvesein keresztül haladunk nyáron, délelőtt avagy este felé, itt-ott egy éles tripp-tripp hang üti meg fülünket. A hang után indulva tarka, különféle színű madártársaságra akadunk, mely tovább is nyugodtan bontogatja a lúcfenyő tobozait, miközben csőrük és lábuk segítségével érdekesebbnél-érdekesebb tornamutatványokat végez. Ezek a madarak a keresztcsőrűek (Kreuzschnabel, Krummschnabel, Krenesz). Nevüket keresztbeálló kampós csőrük után kapták, mely a monda szerint akkor görbült meg, mikor Krisztus Urunk keresztrefeszítése alkalmával a szögeket a keresztfából ki akarták húzni.

A Kárpátokban előforduló keresztcsőrű hossza 15—17 cm, szárnyhossza 8—10 cm, farkhossza 6—7 cm, csőre pedig 1·8—2·2 cm. Zömök, erős termetű madár. Néhai Bürger Mihály körmöcbányai neves madarász, külön csoportba sorozta az úgynevezett lengyel nagykeresztcsőrűt (Polaken Krenesz, Loxia pityopsittacus Bechst.), mely szerinte sokkal nagyobb és erősebb hangú s amely inkább csak az északibb vidékeken él és csak nagy ritkán jelenik meg a Kárpátokban. Jómagam sohasem fogtam ilyet. A kárpáti keresztcsőrű színe nagyon változó. Amikor a fészekből kirepül, mindegyik világos alapon, világos és sötét barnánpettyes. A hím rendszerint sötétebb, mint a nőstény. Ezt a színt azonban már az első évben a tél beálltáig elveszti. A hím megpirosodik, a nőstény ellenben szürke és olajzöldes ruhát ölt. Ha egy pirosodó hím fogságba kerül, attól az időtől kezdve a kinövő új tollak már nem pirosak, hanem zöldek. Ennek az oka, szerintem, a tápláléknak a tollak színére való hatásában keresendő. A szabadban sem lesznek mindig tiszta pirosak, hanem többnyire zöld foltosak. A keresztcsőrűt az első évben a felvidéki német madarász »Mäusling«-nak, vagyis vedlőnek nevezi, mert a keresztcsőrű első évében egész nyáron át vedlik. Gyakran megtörténik azonban, hogy a 2-ik, esetleg a 3-ik költésből származó fiataloknál a vedlés télig nem tökéletesen fejeződik be, az esetben még a következő év tavaszán is tarkák, azokat »zujährige Mäuslinge«, vagyis megelőző évi vedlőknek hívják.

A hangjukat illetőleg vannak tiszta- és törötthangúak. A tisztahangúak között is vannak vékonyabb és vastagabb hangúak. Előbbiek a »Gip-lerek«,