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# KÓCSAG

MADÁRTANI  
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A MAGYAR ORNITHOLOGUSOK SZÖVETSÉGÉNEK  
HIVATALOS KÖZLÖNYE

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*Táblák:*

- I. KINSZKI I.: *Alauda arvensis* L.  
 II. BROOK A.: *Falco columbarius aesalon* Tunst.

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# K Ó C S A G

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## SOME NOTES ON BREEDING GREENSHANKS (TRINGA NEBULARIA), IN SCOTLAND.

By Major W. MAITLAND CONGREVE M. C.; M. B. O. U.; A. A. O. U.

Probably, to the majority of field ornithologists, there is something singularly fascinating about the search for nests of the Limicolae. The birds, themselves, are always charming in appearance, their notes delightful, they are generally associated with wide open space and desolation and finally their protectively tinted eggs and young are often so hard to find, that one's senses of hearing and sight, combined with attributes of extreme patience and perseverance, are put to the very severest possible test, if one is to be successful.

It is, of course, a truism to say that the nests of *some* of the Limicolae present no sort of difficulty. I can call to mind a day in the Marismas of southern Spain where nests of Stilts (*H. himantopus*), so covered parts of the ground that one had to be careful not to walk upon them, while on occasional small patches of sun-baked mud the eggs of Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Pratincole (*Glareola p. pratincola*), an odd Redshank (*Tringa t. totanus*) and Lapwing (*V. vanellus*) or two, were blatantly obvious for all to see. No! — I do not mean these rather exceptional species of the Limicoline family, which are more or less gregarious in the breeding season, but have in mind the rarer waders which breed in scattered pairs in arctic and sub-arctic wastes of tundra, marsh or coniferous forest growth. To the latter category belongs the subject of this article. It is not a bird that is known to Hungary, except as a passing migrant and its breeding home is in the northern regions of Europe and Asia, from the mountains of Scandania to Kamtschatka. In addition to this breeding range it nests, not uncommonly, in the northern counties of Great Britain. Somewhat of a curiosity this,

when one considers that various other Scandanavian sub-arctic breeders do *not* breed in Britain, in spite of their commonness as winter visitors.

It is of N. Britain (Scotland) breeding Greenshanks that I have gained some small experience in two springs and I propose to write down my experiences. It was in 1923 that I first tried to find a nest of this species in a northern Scottish county, where they are not uncommon. Suffice it is to say that I spent 3 weeks in a completely fruitless search and it was a most depressing experience — one saw the birds — an occasional pair or a single, most certainly, but that is as far as I ever went and it should be added that the weather was usually foul beyond description, with all its cold and snow showers. Birds seen were invariably feeding on the edge of some small lake or stream — of which there were great numbers — one would lie down and watch them and when one got too cold to continue doing so, one would flush them — off they would go with loud cries of “tchew, tchew, tchew”, a note not unlike that of the Redshank (*T. totanus*), but the bird itself, larger and with a most conspicuous white rump, and they would soon be lost to sight over the crest of one of the endless undulating heather covered hills. I was told that they made their modest nest scrapes on or beside grey stones but there were countless *millions* of stones dotted about the hill sides and I should be sorry to try to estimate how many stones I examined!

The second time I visited Scotland, in search of this elusive bird, I was better armed, both theoretically and practically. I had learned a good deal of theory from various friends who had been successful in finding one or more nests of this remarkable bird and the practical part came from a friend, who marked on a map the locations of nests he had found in a previous year and he and another friend also furnished me with introductions to various “locals” who had some practical experience of the subject. It was on April 29<sup>th</sup>, that in company with two friends, and a “local” who was thoroughly experienced as regards the nests of certain birds we were interested in, I was wandering slowly through a conifer afforested region of Scotland where a few Greenshanks are known to breed in some of the great forest clearings. This particular species was not in our minds, for the date was early for nests and we had already made our plans for hunting for them in open country, many kilos away to the north. Suddenly, as we strolled along with senses alert, we heard, apparently from many kilos away, the unmistakable distance — carrying notes of Greenshank — not just a short alarm call or casual note — but a long-continued repetition of its notes which were obviously “the love song” of the mating season. Our “local” now became extremely excited and insisted that these noisy birds were most certainly actually on or immediately over their breeding ground and also that the female had either just laid an egg or was about to do so. As it turned out this information was absolutely correct, but I felt sceptical and none of us made any suggestion that we should endeavour to locate the actual birds

which were probably several kilos away — anyway it was surely to early in the spring for a nest and eggs. By chance, or was it by design? our guide gradually led us in the direction from which we heard the birds. Now and again a note was heard and sometimes “the song” would be continuous for a minute or two, until emerging through some more and more scattered pine trees, we came in sight of a great open space with the glint of a lakes’ water showing at a far side. Suddenly “the song” started again. “There they are”, said our now really excited guide. There sure enough, clearly to be seen at a distance of two or three hundred metres, two Greenshanks flying round in circles making no end of a noise. Down we hurriedly dropped among some old tree trunks, where we where well concealed and could comfortably observe the birds. In a short time both settled on the ground, here gently undulating, sparsely heather covered, dotted all over with bleached conifer trunks, roots and branches and with here and there small hollows filled with stagnant water or boggy moss. The birds had settled some distance apart and having roughly marked the places we suddenly emerged from our hide, flushed them and saw them fly away out of sight to the far end of the open space but *not* to the lake I expected them to. We now commenced to search the ground. Don’t jump to the conclusion, my readers, that we found the nest scrape — no such luck and it’s not so easy as that. After a time we gave it up and again, knowing nothing about Greenshanks, I felt completely sceptical about the chances of a nest in the neighbourhood of where we saw the birds. There would probably be one in a week or so somewhere on the great open space but that is as far as I allowed myself to surmise. The next day, April 30<sup>th</sup> we again spent a great day in the forest and walked many many kilos, observing various birds and finding a few nests and finally arrived, somewhat tired, well on in the afternoon, on the opposite side of the open space on which we have seen the Greenshanks yesterday. A convenient hillock made a pleasant vantage point from which we could survey the plain with its occasional Grouse (*Lagopus scoticus*) and other moorland birds, but not a sound or a sight of a Greenshank, which is only what I expected. However, our homeward route would take us right over the actual corner of the plain where we had seen the birds yesterday, so that the species was in mind as we crossed the open ground in scattered formation and finally arrived on the small area where our guide insisted the birds were nesting. Suddenly! to my unspeakable amazement, up jumped a Greenshank, with a piercing cry of alarm, from the nearly bare peaty ground, within 20 metres of us! “We’ve got her, we’ve got her” cried our excited guide and so we had for *there* was the nest scrape, containing as yet only one egg, for all to see! On one side of the shallow scrape and almost touching its edge was a weathered fir stump, the surrounding black peat ground was partly covered with short and ill grown heather and the situation, elevated and dry within 100 metres of several small boggy pools in

deep hollows, a big lake just in sight about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  kilos away. What amazing luck! Presumably the bird was brooding its egg as a protection against egg hunting Hooded Crows (*Corvus cornix*) of which there was an occasional pair in the district or it might even have just laid its first egg or be about to lay its second, but surely not so late in the afternoon? On May 1<sup>st</sup> we left the district for the time being, but on May 4<sup>th</sup> ran back by motor car, a distance of at least 120 kilos, to re-visit our nest. We thought it would now contain its full complement of 4 eggs, so on nearing the spot I carried my camera all ready to snapshot the bird on its eggs. Unfortunately, for the hoped for photo, she sprang off her nest before I had time to snap her and to our disappointment the scrape contained but 3 eggs, the time being midday. Our guide now insisted that the clutch was not yet complete, but we had to give up any hope of returning to the nest again and had perforce to leave it to our guide for a later visit. It was found to contain the full complement of 4 eggs next day, May 5<sup>th</sup>, and the bird was sitting closely. The example I have given shows that *provided* one has the luck to come on a thoroughly excited pair of Greenshanks, circling and calling over a limited area of suitable dry ground, the nest can be found by a close search even *before* the clutch is complete.

We now moved away north to open moorland country where I had failed so completely in 1923. We had 5 locations marked down on a rough map but at once began to realise that it would be less useful than we had anticipated. It is true that certain hillsides and some special physical features were clearly indicated, but there were thousands of grey stones on each feature and we had been told to find certain grey stones. Never a sign of a Greenshank did we see on four out of the five locations. In the fifth place we were much more hopeful. The ground was very wet and boggy but had on it several dry circular mounds some 4 metres high and 20 metres in diameter and we had been told that on one of them a nest might be found. On May 9<sup>th</sup> a pair of Greenshanks were seen on this bog and the mounds were visited without success. On May 12 a native turned up at our camp and produced from his pocket, a small box containing a damaged Greenshank egg. He said it was one of four he had taken on May 10<sup>th</sup> and that he would show us the actual nest scrape. He had found it, by the merest chance, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, when out with his sheep dog. The dog had flushed the bird from its nest at close range, when it held but one egg which had probably been damaged by the rapid departure of the alarmed bird. We were duly conducted to the site and found it to be an insignificant little hollow lined with dry bleached grass on a tiny peat ridge, on the side of a nearly dry watercourse, bordering a great area of somewhat boggy ground which stretched away till it joined a large lake some 2 kilos away. The scrape was right against a very small grey lichen-covered stone surrounded by some very sparse weather-worn heather and quite conspicuous as

such, but the bird had only to sit closely to be practically invisible unless walked upon!

On May 14<sup>th</sup> one of my companions went to the boggy flat with the dry mounds, which we had hunted on the 9<sup>th</sup>. This time he saw one very noisy bird and also a feeding pair and the former, by its agitation, must most certainly have a nest in the immediate neighbourhood. We were now getting very hopeful of success. Next day, May 15<sup>th</sup>, we were on the marsh at 7.30 p. m. (summer time), when suddenly I spotted a bird flying at a great height towards us, making a most peculiar, constantly repeated, call, "chip, chip chip ..." For a moment I mistook the bird for a Common Snipe (*G. gallinago*), only to be put right on seeing it dive suddenly down into the marsh nearby. Almost at once it saw us and commenced to make a tremendous noise while it flew around us. My companion now went and lay on the side of one of the mounds where he endeavoured to conceal himself, while I wandered about on the marsh some distance away, in an effort to distract the birds' attention from my friend. To make a long story short, about 1½ hours later my friend saw the bird alight on a nearby mound, run, disappear and then fly away again. The two of us together, now commenced to search this mound and in a few minutes my companion spotted the nest hollow, containing four very beautiful eggs. The hollow was in a fair sized hummock of yellow grass and its edge was *touching a grey stone*. Presumably the bird we saw was intent on relieving its sitting mate on the eggs (which were incubated). The mate must have left the eggs when we were occupied watching our bird and the latter must have nearly gone on to the eggs while my friend watched, but had lacked the necessary courage, owing to our badly hidden presence. Next morning the bird was sitting on the eggs and I took two snapshots of it at a range of about 4 metres. It lay quite motionless, in a curious, unnatural, stretched out position along the edge of the gray stone, head and neck in line with body and flat against the stone. But for its beady and watchful black eyes it might have been quite lifeless. On approaching it closer it sprang from the eggs with a loud cry and disappeared into the distance and we had no time to watch it back again.

I now come to my fifth and final, very remarkable, Greenshank experience. Our aforementioned guide of the forest region, where we were hunting at the end of April, wrote to me and informed us that after many hours of watching, another nest of Greenshank had been found on May 6<sup>th</sup>, with two eggs, in an open glade where the species yearly breed. The remarkable thing about this particular glade was that in no less than *two* previous occasions *two* nests had been found within a few days of each other and in immediate proximity. Since only 3 birds were ever seen there were obviously *two* females and only *one* male. The letter went on to say that on 9<sup>th</sup> May the scrape held no less than *five* eggs! Now this was a possible, but most

unusual sized clutch, for as my readers probably know, most if not all, limicoline birds very occasionally increase their normal clutch of 4 to 5. The eggs were taken but some hours later it occurred to the finder that they *might* be the product of *two* females. Consequently a Lapwing's (*V. vanellus*) nest was now searched for, found and taken. It contained the normal four eggs, which were obviously somewhat incubated. In early dawn of May 10<sup>th</sup> the Lapwings eggs — now cold and probably addled — were placed in the empty Greenshank's nest scrape. On May 12<sup>th</sup> the scrape was re-visited and on it a Greenshank was sitting on 3 more Greenshank eggs and the four Lapwings! My readers will have observed that now no less than *eight* Greenshanks eggs had been laid in the *one* scrape — quite obviously the product of *two* females. The last 3 Greenshanks eggs were now taken and the nest occupier continued to sit quite contentedly on the Lapwing's eggs, which, in due course all hatched (Note — in spite of the fact that the embryos should have died from exposure on the night of 9—10 May!). Now, I and my companions come into the picture. On May 31 we were shown the 8 Greenshanks eggs. Two quite even clutches of different sizes and markings and obviously laid by 2 females. On June 1<sup>st</sup> we went to the nest site and there, most plainly and conspicuously before our eyes, were two extremely noisy and agitated Greenshanks in charge of 3 Young Lapwings (the fourth was probably present but not actually seen). Nearby was the old nest scrape, on a dry mound of almost bare peat, inside the sides of a triangle of bleached fir branches and in it were the remains of the Lapwings eggs! A truly unique experience.

## JEGYZETEK A SZÜRKE CANKÓ (TRINGA NEBULARIA) SKÓTORSZÁGI FÉSZKELEÉSÉRŐL.

Írta: CONGREVE W. MAITLAND.

A szürke cankó Magyarországon csak átvonul. Fészkelő helyei Európa és Ázsia északi tájai. Magam Skócia északi részében, ahol nem ritka, találtam fészkelve. Először 1923-ban kutattam ott fészke után, de 3 heti fáradozásom a kedvezőtlen időjárás következtében eredménytelenül végződött. Mert láttam ugyan cankókat táplálék után keresgélve a vizek szélén, ahonnan fölriasztva a vöröslábú cankó szólásához hasonló hangos „tyiú, tyiú, tyiú“-kiáltással emelkedtek a magasba s csakhamar eltűntek a hangával borított dombok mögött, de fészkeiket, mely egyszerű kapart mélyedés, a számtalan kő között ezúttal nem sikerült megtalálnom. Másodszor jobban felkészültem az útra, barátaim útmutatásokkal láttak el, térképen meg is jelölték azokat a helyeket, ahol fészket sikerült találniok s embereket is ajánlottak, akiknek némi gyakorlatuk volt e fészkek fölkeresésében. 1929 április 29-én két barátommal s egy környékbeli emberrel fenyővel befásított területen jártunk, amidőn egyszerre a szürke cankó „nászdala“ ütötte meg fülünket. Emberünk erre azt állította, hogy a madár fészkelő területéhez értünk, mi azonban ez időpontot korainak tartottuk. A hang irányában

haladva nagy nyílt térségre érkeztünk, ahol messziről egy tó vize csillogott. 2—300 m távolságban két szürke cankó keringett nagy lármával. Elrejtőztünk öreg fák törzse mögé s mikor a madarak leszálltak, gyorsan előbujtunk s átkutattuk a területet, de fészekre nem akadtunk. Másnap hosszabb gyűjtőkirándulás után, a délutáni órákban hazamenet a tegnapi helyen ismét fölriasztottunk egy szürke cankót s meg is találtuk fészket, melyben még csak egy tojás volt. Május 4-én délben a várt 4 tojás helyett még csak 3-at találtunk benne, május 5-én vezetónk 4 tojást állapított meg, melyeken a madár erősen ült. Ez az eset mutatja, hogy olyan területen, ahol cankópár izgatott repülését figyelhetjük meg, szorgos kutatással megtalálhatjuk fészket abban az esetben is, ha a fészkealj még nem teljes. Onnan arra a területre mentünk, ahol 1923-ban hiába kerestem a madár fészket. Május 12-én egy környékbeli ember sérült tojást hozott, melyet május 10-én 4 tojás közül szedett. El is vezetett a fészkekhez, egy apró mélyedéshez, csaknem száraz vízér melletti keskeny tőzegbarázdában, száraz, megfakult fűszálakkal bélelve. Május 15-én barátom egy szürke cankó lárájára föld-sánc mögé bujt, míg magam továbbhaladva igyekeztem a madár figyelmét barátomról elvonni. A madár 1½ óra múlva egy közeli földsánca szállt s mikor ismét elrepült, oda siettünk, ahol barátom csakhamar megtalálta a fészket 4 tojással. A fészkek szép alakú sárga fűcsomóban volt s szélével egy szürke kőre támaszkodott. Ötödik s valóban egyedülálló esetem a következő: A már említett vezetónk, akivel egyszer április végén gyűjtöttünk, arról értesített, hogy azon a bizonyos nyílt tisztáson május 6-án fészket talált 2 tojással. Meg kell jegyezni, hogy ezen a térségen már két előbbi alkalommal is találtak 2 fészket néhány napi időközben s közvetlen szomszédságban, de csak 3 madarat észleltek, amiből következik, hogy 2 tojó és csak 1 hím volt jelen. A levél szerint a fészkek május 9-én 5 tojást tartalmazott, ami nem tűnt föl különösnek, tekintettel arra, hogy a limicolák legtöbbször a rendes 4 tojás helyett olykor ötöt is tojik. A tojások elszedése után azonban a gyűjtőnek az a gondolata támadt, hogy az az ötös fészkealj 2 tojótól származhat. Ezért május 10-én, kora hajnalban 4 kissé kotlott bíbic-tojást helyezett az üres cankófészkekbe. Május 12-én egy cankó ült a 4 bíbic-tojásán, amelyekhez még 3 saját tojását is tojta. Vagyis most már 8 cankótojást tartalmazott ugyanez a fészkek, amiből világosan kitűnt, hogy ezek 2 tojótól származtak. Az újabb 3 tojás elszedése után a cankó tovább ült s ki is költötte a bíbic-tojásokat, amiről június 1-én magunk is meggyőződhattunk.

## ADATOK BARS MEGYE MADÁRVILÁGÁHOZ.

Írta: DR. DUDICH ENDRE, Budapest.

Kettős cél lebegett szemem előtt, amikor elhatároztam, hogy a Bars vármegye madárvilágára vonatkozó összegyűjtött adataimmal nyilvánosság elé lépek.

Az egyik ugyanaz volt, amely egy évtizede zoológiai munkásságot jelent jórészt irányítja: Bars megye állatvilágának kikutatása és megismertetése. Bars megyéről SCHENK (13. p. 40) azt mondotta, hogy az ornithológiai „terra incognitá”-k közé tartozik. Valóban, a megyéről eddig egyetlen felsorolás, vagy összefoglaló jellegű munka nem jelent meg, és mint látni fogjuk, az összegyűjtött irodalmi adatok