

**BRITISH BIRDS' EGGS
AND NESTS.
POPULARLY DESCRIBED**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649171163

British birds' eggs and nests. Popularly described by J. C. Atkinson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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J. C. ATKINSON

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Wm. P. Innes

from J. N. O. P.

April 13th 1897

BRITISH BIRDS' EGGS AND NESTS.

B R I T I S H
B I R D S ' E G G S A N D N E S T S
P O P U L A R L Y D E S C R I B E D

BY

REV. J. C. ATKINSON

AUTHOR OF "WALKS AND TALKS," "LAV HOURS AND HALF HOLIDAYS,"
"SKETCHES IN NATURAL HISTORY."

ILLUSTRATED BY W. S. COLEMAN

SEVENTEENTH EDITION

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LIMITED
BROADWAY LUDGATE HILL,
GLASGOW, MANCHESTER, AND NEW YORK

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MOORE'S BRITISH FERNS. With Coloured
Plates.

PREFACE.

THE object proposed in this volume is, in the first place, to present our young readers with a complete and systematic list of our British Birds:—the word British being taken to mean such as, being truly wild birds, either inhabit Britain throughout the year, visit Britain steadily for longer or shorter periods of each year, or have been proved to reach the shores of Britain two or three times or oftener, under the pressure of any incidental circumstances whatever.

In the next place, the attempt has been made to distinguish at once between the rare or casual visitors, and such as are really denizens of the Land, whether for a few weeks or months annually, or by unbroken habitation.

But the principal object and intention of the book is to present

accurate and trustworthy accounts of the Nests and Nesting-sites the Eggs, and any ascertained nesting or breeding-season peculiarities of every undoubtedly British-breeding species. And the author's difficulty has often been out of the large mass of available materials at his command, acquired by personal observation or from the reading and notes of many years, to select what might be instructive, interesting or amusing, without burdening the book with unnecessary details, or encroaching too much on the allotted space.

The principle adopted in the illustrations has been to omit all representations of eggs either white or nearly white in colour, in order to husband space for the admission of a greater number of those characterised by varied colours and markings. On the same ground, although it was earnestly desired by the artist to give more than one representation of some of the very marked variations occurring in the eggs of several species, he has been compelled to content himself with selecting and figuring the most typical or normal forms in all such cases. All the illustrations given have been carefully drawn from unquestionable specimens, and Mr. Coleman desires to acknowledge in this place the assistance, which in this matter, has been afforded him by that excellent and accurate practical naturalist, Mr. F. Bond.

An Appendix is subjoined, in which a notice will be found of the habits of nidification, the nests and eggs of several birds, which though regular inhabitants of Britain or some part of it, for a given portion of each year, still retire to foreign and distant localities for the purposes of nest-making and rearing their young.

Finally, an attempt has been made to exhibit at one glance, and in a very condensed and systematic form, as much information as possible touching the nest, its customary site and materials, and also the eggs, their number, colour, and markings, and any noteworthy breeding peculiarities of each separate British-breeding species. It is hoped this attempt, somewhat novel as it is, and almost inevitably imperfect as it must be in some respects, will not be regarded as altogether unacceptable by the youthful nest-hunter and egg-collector.

The author has only to observe, in conclusion, that he has scarcely thought it necessary in the majority of instances to notice the common and well recognised fact that the particular species under notice, in common with many or most of our common British Birds, rears two broods, or even more, in the course of the summer. Neither has he thought it requisite to attempt to

define the average season for the commencement of nidification in the case of this or that species, as they came successively under review.