

NOTES ON GENERAL ZOOLOGY.

By F. H. HAINES.

Arachnida. (ER) has sent me several notes, one or two of quite exceptional interest. He writes of *Amaurobius similis* Bl. : "Some years ago I was observing a female which had a cocoon. The eggs hatched, and the young were carefully covered with a silken cover, the female resting on the top. After a time I noticed that she was gradually being devoured by the young spiders. At first I thought that this was due to their being in a state of captivity, but I repeated the observation a number of times with the same result. This year I was able to verify the fact by a spider living under natural conditions." (ER) tells me that, in Aug. 1940, Mrs. Marshall Bell told him that she had seen a strange spider on some waste ground at Bournemouth. In Aug. 1941 she sent him a living specimen. He saw that this belonged to no recognised British species. The abdomen is striped yellow and black, and the cephalo-thorax is covered with long silvery hairs; the legs are also striped in bands; it varies from 15 to 20 mm. in length. The spider makes a geometrical web in loose grass near the ground, and the web has a zig-zag ladder of silk across the vertical diameter called a *stabilimentum*. It lives on grasshoppers. The cocoon is remarkable, about 20 mm. long, and pear-shaped with an outer covering of a paper-like substance, brown in colour, the neck filled with a thin membrane of white silk. The eggs are contained in an inner sac suspended from the neck of the cocoon, the space between the inner and outer cases being filled with loose reddish-brown silk. The colony near Southbourne is a large one and appears to have been established for some time; when and how it originated is unknown. I am not aware whether it has been decided that the spider is identical with the North American *Miranda aurantia* (listed in Nathan Banks' "Catalogue of Nearctic Spiders, 1910," as *Argiope aurantia* Lucas) or whether it is a close ally. Importation seems unlikely, considering its habits. But it is curious that in a neighbourhood as well worked as Bournemouth so conspicuous a spider should have escaped notice if it be a native, although there are instances of very rare and isolated occurrences of both insects and spiders along or near this stretch of coast. There is the example of the beautiful spider *Eresus cinnabarinus* Oliv., and, amongst insects, that of the highly local *Odynerus herrichii* Saus. No doubt a comparison of critical points of structure, in both sexes, with types of the American *M. aurnatia*, will soon be possible, if not already made. Several spiders are common to the two continents, but this may be a new race or species.

(TB) writes : "I kept a European Green Tree Frog in an aquarium. Into this one day I put a comparatively small, immature specimen of *Dolomedes fimbriatus* Wlk., with fatal results to the frog. Two or three mornings later I found the frog outstretched below the surface of the water. I immediately lifted it out and carefully examined it, and found the spider dead, but firmly fixed in the frog's throat at the back of the tongue. After removing the spider I held the frog for a while and noticed slight signs of breathing, but shortly the body began to swell and turn brown. It remained in this condition for about eight days before death."

On 29th June, *Salix scenicus* Clk. was in its usual place on an outer door. Many *Lycosidae* were observed with egg bags on 7th Sept. *Phalangidea* occurred until the end of Nov. They almost persist into winter.

Amphibia. Common Frog (*Rana temporaria* L.). Frog spawn was noted in a ditch near on 18th March, but it was not freshly deposited.

Reptilia. Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis* L.). Noted at Bournemouth on 7th March (FCF). It became common here rather later. Common Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara* Jacq.) was seen on 22nd April on verandah. It was more frequent this season than *L. agilis*, which is unusual. It was abundant through June, especially on the lower, damper ground, until the end of Sept. Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis* L.). Not noted here till 23rd May, when it became common. A large specimen was seen on 1st Aug. Grass Snake (*Tropidonotus natrix* Sch.). Remains much rarer here than the Adder, though both are protected, and play their part in keeping down the rodent population. As it is far more timid than the Adder and slips off quickly, while the latter often holds its ground, this rarity is curious: unless the threatening attitude of the latter neutralises the increased risk incurred by its greater slowness. Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca* Dum. et Bib.). Is very rare in Hampshire now, owing to heath fires and persecution; as (TB) points out is the case, also, in E. Dorset. (WB) is of opinion that it is still common on some S. Dorset heaths. (FCF) caught one in Bournemouth on 24th Aug. Adder (*Vipera berus* L.). Seen on 5th March in Bournemouth, and here on 16th: these reptiles were commoner than usual. On 2nd July, a very young one was being much molested by *Formica rufa* L. in Appleslade Enclosure. On 15th, a very large specimen was seen here, and on 28th three large, handsome specimens were seen together in Redshoot Wood, New Forest. A small one was in Webb's Copse on 1st Aug., and one two-thirds grown was watched trying to balance itself on some branches by Dockens, in a sunlit space, on 17th. Numbred by the dull day, it perpetually fell. Several of good size were seen here on 24th.

Cheiroptera (Bats). Beyond the Pipistrelle scarcely any bat was noticed. (WB) in this connection doubts if this species be always the "common" bat, and says that in the Tyneham neighbourhood (Dorset) he comes across several Long-eared Bats for every Pipistrelle, but queries whether difference of habit may not bring the last more often to his notice. He sees two large bats, most evenings, flying low and slowly, which rules out Noctules (*Vesperugo noctula* K. and B.), and thinks they are Serotines (*V. serotinus* Blas.), of which species I have no further Ringwood note.

Insectivora (Hedgehogs, Moles, Shrews). Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus* L.) have been scarce, though one nightly took milk from a saucer in June, but on the morning of the 4th Nov., after a frosty period, it appeared to have gone into hibernation, and signs of the marauder ceased. All three species of Shrew appeared rare, indeed absent. A *Sorex araneus* L. was seen on 31st Jan., but there was no sign of the usual autumn mortality, though the season was evidently a bad one for them.

Carnivora. Foxes (*Canis vulpes* L.) were barking here from 24th Feb. to 13th March, when a vixen was being answered by a dog fox in Appleslade, but they have hardly been as common around as usual. A large cub was seen on the bank of Dockens on 12th June, and unfortunately a fox was found, lately dead, on that date. Badgers (*Meles taxus* Bodd.) have apparently been rather scarcer than usual, but scraped-out nests of wasps and humble-bees have shown their presence. Stoats (*Mustela erminia* L.) with Weasels (*Mustela vulgaris* Erx.) have been scarce: a male weasel ran across our path on 9th Dec. They may increase with the "call-up" of keepers, and assist the anti-rabbit campaign. (HA) states, 3rd July: "From Sea-Pie Point, last August, I watched a Common Seal (*Phoca vitulina* L.) swim slowly past, regarding me intently every time it came up, evidently travelling towards Hurst. Can you tell me whether they are frequently seen in the Solent or not? I have been about here a good deal for several years, and have never seen one in the locality before, though a 'local' told me he once saw one in Beaulieu River."

Rodentia (Rabbits, Hares, Squirrels, Dormice, Rats, Mice and Voles). (*Lepus cuniculus* L.) have not been specially plentiful, though there was a slight

recrudescence after the breeding season. (AFLB) sends the following curious note: "I saw a small rabbit, with hind legs apparently injured, swimming on its side in my pond, just out of reach. Going to get a stick, I turned round to see it scurrying away completely unhurt." It is quite exceptional to see the Common Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris* L.) in New Forest, where they are persecuted. They are not too common in the woodlands round, nor is the Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius* L.). Writing on 20th Sept. (CF) states that a Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) was shot at Bursledon a few days before, and that when motoring over Corhampton Down, in the wooded country, one was squatting by the roadside. To gauge the fluctuations of rodent population, for economic purposes, the use of cats, sympathetically treated, seems superior to trapping and other methods, as affording a more natural index. Detrimentally to these notes, and sadly for the writer, his three she-cats who brought their prey to him died almost at the same time, so it is impossible to compare the rodent population, this year, with that of other seasons. Apparently, the Wood Mouse (*Mus sylvaticus* L.) was not at all abundant and had few and poor litters throughout. They became only a little more frequent towards winter. It was strange that a three-fifths grown Wood Mouse, found on 14th Jan., had growths on the head rather similar to those that attacked the cats. An interesting example of the way in which this mouse stores its winter food was shown by (DH): biscuits were removed from a box and carried a distance to a hiding-place—a vacuum sweeper—and packed there more neatly than could have been done by us. How the mouse got in was a mystery. The species was active indoors in Dec. here, though food was not scarce, nor the weather severe. With no cats about, rodents, including rats, may have increased, but the only Brown Rat (*Mus decumanus* Oal.) seen was a young one on 22nd Nov., and rats, mice and the three species of vole were never in evidence through the year. The scarcity of these, as of shrews, may have been apparent rather than real, owing to the lack of cats. An outdoor House Mouse (*Mus musculus* L.) was seen on 2nd Feb.

Ungulata. A herd of about eight Fallow does (*Cervus dama* L.) was seen on Rockford Common on 15th March; on 9th June, two or three, or more bucks were feeding by the house, and on 20th four or five does were by the pond. A herd of solitary bucks was noted in Jan. They have strayed here more often than formerly, and are fond of barking and nibbling ash, crab apple, sweet chestnut and willow. This habit doubtless has its effect on the survival of certain trees in woodlands. Their ravages on young yews are considerable, and they tear these and other trees about to a very damaging extent. Presumably the young, tender shoots and leaves of yew, taken when other growth is in the digestive tract, is not injurious to them. These deer are very catholic in their taste, and at times wych elm is not immune. It is interesting to note the varying size of the herds and the approximate date of segregation or fusion of the sexes.

Cetacea (Whales and Porpoises). (HA) writes, 3rd July: "I recently found a dead specimen of Risso's Grampus (*Grampus griseus* Cuv.), 10ft. 3in. long, stranded on a shingle spit (Sea-Pic Point) about 1 mile west of Needs Oar at the mouth of the Beaulieu River. It was in a decomposed condition, but in spite of that I have recovered the skull. The three pairs of teeth, in the lower jaw only, are unfortunately missing. It may have been an old beast and lost them before death. I understand they run up to about 13ft., but perhaps the females are smaller." Has this species been known in the Solent before?

Valuable assistance has been kindly given by correspondents. The following abbreviations are used:—

H. Andrews	(HA).	Col. F. C. Fraser, M.D., F.R.E.S.	(FCF).
Capt. A. F. L. Bacon, M.A.	(AFLB).	D. Homfray, Mr. and Mrs.	(DH).
T. E. Belcher	(TB).	H. Lea, Mr. and Mrs.	(HL).
W. R. G. Bond, B.A.	(WB).	E. A. Robins, P.-F.R.P.S., F.L.S.	(ER).
C. F. Fox, F.S.A.	(CF).		