

BIRDS  
AT SIGHT  
HOW TO KNOW THEM



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NET

identified it. Watch the way it hops, listen to its chirps and notice the difference in plumage between the male and female.

It is best to learn to recognise all the common birds of the garden and hedgerow, before you attempt the identification of rarer species.

When examining nests or looking at eggs never frighten the parents by a noisy or careless approach or disturb a bird when sitting on its eggs. If you feel unable to identify an egg without handling it, lift it very gently from the nest with a handkerchief or gloved hand to protect the egg from contact with your bare fingers, otherwise the parent may become aware that a human hand has touched her eggs and will possibly desert them. Replace the egg at once exactly as you found it and do not interfere with a nest if the parents are watching and anxious. Be careful, also, not to disturb the protecting leaves or grass which screen the nest, nor to unduly trample the vegetation at the approach. This might lead to its discovery by others, or by one of the bird's natural enemies.

Finally, never, under any circumstances, rob a nest by taking away any of the eggs or young birds. It is a very cruel and senseless act and unworthy of any bird-lover. The agony of bereaved birds is very real and distressing at the loss of their precious eggs and chicks. The robbing of nests is also very harmful by reducing the number of birds which are so useful in keeping down insect pests in our gardens and fields.

## OIL-CLOGGED SEA-BIRDS

All sea-birds are liable to become contaminated with the thick, black waste-oil discharged on the sea by ships and the following instructions are intended for any bird-lover who may find an unfortunate bird stranded and exhausted on the shore, and wish to do their utmost to save its life. The tar-like oil clogs their plumage and makes them quite helpless and unable to swim or fly.

The best way to remove the oil, without injuring the bird's skin, is to soften it by rubbing in a good dressing of salad oil, letting it soak in for about two hours. Then wash out thoroughly with a warm lather of soap and water. If the cleaning process is not completely successful at first, it can be repeated after a day's rest. Do not use petrol, except on wing or tail feathers, as it burns the skin. The main point to remember is that the bird is exhausted and should be kept in a safe place, quiet and warm, and fed on its natural food, raw fish. If the fish is larger than can be swallowed whole by the bird, it should be cut into long thin strips, and if refused at first, open the mouth and put a small strip of fish well down the throat. Keep the bird in a warm, airy place but away from fires, and until it regains strength, encourage warmth by means of a box of soft rags in which it can rest.

Give the bird plenty of sea-water to splash in and when liberating try it in a pool first, before putting it out of reach, but if it seems unseaworthy keep it in the most natural surroundings possible until the next moult.

Sea-water, fresh fish and somewhere to swim and dive are all essentials to an ocean bird if it has to be kept for some time. It is useless to try and keep them as permanent pets unless they are so damaged as to be unfit for their natural way of life.