

Ye Olde Plum News

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BIRD SPECIES AND THEIR HABITS

HERRING GULL

"Did yer know," he said at length, "that the Herring Gull, when it mates, swells its neck, opens its beak and regurgitates a large quantity of undigested food?" "You don't say? That isn't a part of the Church of England marriage service, is it?" (Something Fishy, 1957)

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### GREAT BUSTARD

The Great Bustard, as he had recently learned from his "Wonders Of The Bird World", when entertaining for a female bustard feelings deeper and warmer than those of ordinary friendship, does not shout proposals of marriage over the telephone. It ruffles its feathers, inflates its chest and buries its whiskers in it, thus showing tact and leading up to the thing gracefully. (Something Fishy, 1957)

"Wonders Of The Bird World", 1898, by Richard Bowdler Sharpe is a classic for ornithologists.

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SWALLOW

"I fancied I saw a swallow's nest under the eaves." "Swallow's nest?" "Swallow's nest." "Did you think swallows nested in July?" "Why shouldn't they?" "Well, they don't... April," said our usually well-informed correspondent. "What?" "April. Swallows nest in April." "Damn all swallows." (Money For Nothing, 1928)

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### DARTFORD WARBLER

Mr. Carmody was trapped early one morning on a window sill and didn't like the bird's morning anthems. They were an appalling crowd – noisy, fussy and bustling about with a sort of overdone heartiness that seemed to Mr. Carmody affected and offensive. They got on his nerves and stayed there: and outstanding among the rest in general lack of charm was a certain Dartford Warbler (*Melizophilus undatus Dartfordiensis*) which, instead of staying in Dartford, where it belonged, had come all the way up to Worcestershire simply, it appeared, for the purpose of adding to his discomfort. (Money For Nothing, 1928)

The correct latin name is *Sylvia undata Dartfordensis*. Plum used an older latin name, more impressive.

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CLARKSON'S WARBLER

Orlo Porter: "I was watching a Clarkson's warbler in that thicket over there, and I was afraid your snoring might frighten it away... Clarkson's warblers are very sensitive to loud noises, and you were making yourself audible a mile off."

Bertie: "You don't happen to have ant data relating to Clarkson, do you? I've been wondering who he was and how he got a warbler." (Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, 1974)

This species is probably a Plum invention?

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### BIRDS IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Mr Carmody was not only accompanied by the Dartford Warbler, but also by the Jay (*Garrulus Glandarius Rufitergum*), the Corvus Monedula Spermologus or Jackshaw, the Sparrow (better known, perhaps to some of my readers as *Prunella Modularis Occidental*)... the *Dryobates Major Angelicus*, the *Sturnus Vulgaris*, the *Emberiza Curlus*, and the *Muscicapa Striata*, or spotted Flycatcher. (Money For Nothing, 1928)

Perhaps Plum got his facts from a copy of Sharpe's "Wonders Of The Bird World"?

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BULL-FINCH

Beach kept a bullfinch in a cage in his pantry. Outside, there had become audible the booming sound of a bulky butler making good time along the stone-flagged corridor. The bullfinch, recognizing the tread of loved feet, burst into liquid song. (Pigs Have Wings, 1952)

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### MAGPIE

Already as a boy "Looney" Coote was superstitious and declined a smoke with his pals on the ground that he had seen a magpie that morning. Once given, the nickname stuck; and this in spite of the fact – seeing that we were caught half-way through the first cigarette and forcefully dealt with by a muscular head master – that that magpie of his would appear to have known a thing or two. (The Long Arm of Looney Coote, 1923)

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TURTLE DOVE

Any male turtle dove will tell you that, if conditions are right, the female turtle dove can spit on her hands and throw her weight about like Donald Duck. (The Editor Regrets, 1939)

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### OSTRICH

When I knew Hank out in Canada, he had the constitution of an ox. Ostriches took his correspondence course in digestion. (Ukridge Sees Her Through, 1923)

Bingo gulped like an ostrich swallowing a brass doorknob. (All's well with Bingo, 1937)

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SWAN

I was parked up on the roof beside the Right Hon. Gazing down at one of the largest and short-tempered swans I had ever seen... The swan extended another eight feet of neck and gave an imitation of steam escaping from a leaky pipe. (Jeeves and the Impending Doom, 1926)

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### RAVEN

Out in the garden under the shade of a spreading tree, Lord Uffenham, having bathed, shaved and done his daily dozen, had seated himself at a rustic table and was waiting for the ravens to feed him. (Something Fishy, 1957)

For Reggie Tennyson was one of those young men whom the ravens feed. But – and this was the point – the ravens do not feed the Ambroses of this world. (The Luck of the Bodkins, 1935)

Plum alluded to Elijah (1 Kings 17:6, KJV). "And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook."

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LINNET

And I sang, Corky, old boy. Yes, laddie, your old friend, as he strode through these country lanes, trilled like a bally linnet. (The Level Business Head, 1926)

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