

cup there were small and large patches of green and brown lichen. The walls were thin and flimsy but the rim tightly woven with cobwebs, thicker and stronger at the points of attachment to the two dead gorse twigs between which the nest was slung. The base of the cup was also tightly woven and compacted with cobwebs. Inside the cup, at the junction of walls and base, the nest was strengthened by a layer of black hairs (probably from Polled Angus cattle) forming a circle about 40mm. diameter and 8mm. broad. A few black hairs were also woven into the underside of the base. The nest was measured after the chicks had left, outside dimensions 70mm. across by 50mm. deep; inside 50mm. across by 40 mm. deep: these measurements are probably in excess of the original size of the nest, as the walls had stretched and on one side slightly torn apart with the weight of the chicks.

— PETER GROSS



WINTER FLOCKS OF FINCHES FEEDING ON REDROOT

At North Rd., Clevedon, Messrs. A. E. and J. C. Blundell, on neighbouring farms, have been growing the winter forage crop known as chou mollier. This was fed to dairy cows, being grazed in strips with the use of electric fences. The crops were free of weed for two or three years but in 1958 a weed named Red-root or Pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*) infested the crops badly. Its millions of small black seeds attracted many small birds. In 1959 M. J. Blundell (Mrs. A. E.) reported Greenfinch 100, Goldfinch 300-400, Yellowhammer 300-400, but when asked to estimate the numbers for 1960 stated that she could not attempt it owing to the great number of the birds and the mixing of the species. This difficulty was fully realised when H.R.McK., with Mrs. Blundell and R. St. Paul, on 10/6/61, went to make a count. Mixed flocks would fly up and change places. Then from a part of the crop where no birds were to be seen would erupt another large flock, so that they were never all in sight at the same time. When a flock rose and flew into the trees there was no time to count the species separately so we estimated the total and then proportioned the species. It is therefore not claimed that the numbers are correct but they are, if anything, under-estimated. The birds fed just as readily where the crop had been eaten off, the seed being still plentiful there.

Other chou mollier crops in the Clevedon district were noted. First croppings from pasture had no weed and so no birds; but one heavy crop about five miles away had much weed and only a few birds. At Alfriston where R. St. Paul was staying, a small part of a chou mollier crop had on 11/6/61 c. 1,000 Goldfinches, c. 200 Greenfinches, c. 100 Redpolls and c. 250 Sparrows. On 12/7/61 he counted in two and a half chains square 800 to 900 mixed birds. Note was taken of the small birds about H.R.McK.'s home in Clevedon, only two and a half miles from Blundells' The usual small numbers were present. No attempt is made to explain this.

Counts were made as follows:—

10/6/61. Count made by Mrs. M. J. Blundell, R. St. Paul and H.R.McK.

	J. C. Blundell's 3 acres	A. E. Blundell's 6 acres	Total
Yellowhammer	150	80	230
Goldfinch	2,500	700	3,200
Chaffinch	100	60	160
Greenfinch	30	150	180
Sparrow	100	700	800
Redpoll	20	120	140
Silvereye	20	30	50

26/7/61. Counted by H.R.McK.

	J. C. Blundell's now 1 acre	A. E. Blundell's now 2½ acres	Total
Yellowhammer	200	10	210
Goldfinch	1,500	800	2,300
Chaffinch	150	300	450
Greenfinch	700	400	1,100
Sparrow	1,200	600	1,800
Redpoll	30	50	80
Silvereye	20	0	20

27/5/62. J. C. Blundell's 3 acres.

None fed off but *amaranthus* ripe
and ripening

27/7/62 J. C. Blundell's
Now 2½ acres

Goldfinch	2	0
Yellowhammer	150	130
Chaffinch	0	150
Greenfinch	100	150
Sparrow	50	5
Redpoll	100	30
Silvereye	3	50

A. E. Blundell grew no crop this year.

The Silvereyes were feeding on *Solanum nigrum* and some Inkweed (*Phytolacca octandra*) and the numbers seen were not representative. The species in numbers to be expected of the district were Yellowhammer and Chaffinch. Goldfinches and Sparrows have not before been recorded in Clevedon in such numbers but the figures are not regarded as phenomenal.

The Greenfinch representation was really staggering, especially the count on 26/7/61, when some hours were spent checking and re-checking. It is quite a rare bird here, the only previous flocks noted by the writer being: c. 50 on 12/4/42; c. 100 from 25-29/7/47; c. 30 on 7/4/50; all at Kawa Kawa Bay; c. 100 on 20/3/48, at Moumoukai hills, where J. W. St. Paul has also seen similar flocks.

The greatest surprise of all is caused by the Redpolls. In this rich pasture land they have not been recorded in the last twenty-two years of active bird-watching, though found on rare occasions in very small flocks in the hills to the east and west. In proportion to the other birds, except the Greenfinch, the total of 140 seems fantastic. In July, 1961, quite a few were pink or red-breasted, but in July, 1962, quite 50%, no doubt the males, were in maximum colour.

— M. J. BLUNDELL
— H. R. McKENZIE