

flight line extended for about a quarter of a mile and in this distance beneath the cable there were the bodies of 21 swans, almost all of which appeared to have been killed within the previous one or two months, when up to 70 swans had been using the reservoir, of which 90% were adults. This proportion was reflected in the 21 dead, all of which were adults except two. If the flock was composed of the same birds during this period, which is a reasonable assumption, then the cable caused a mortality of 30%. It might seem surprising that the swans had not learnt to avoid the cable, which is easily visible, but one does not know at what time of day most were killed. Certainly a number caused "black-outs" at the farm during the evenings, when of course the cable would be difficult or impossible to see. Judging from the state of the bodies, the rate of kill had been fairly evenly distributed during the period. All except four, which were in water too deep to reach, were examined for rings and three adults carried them. They had been ringed as follows:—

23rd April, 1960, at Lydd, Kent, full-grown male. (Dungeness Bird Observatory);

1st August, 1960, at Lydd, pull. (Dungeness Bird Observatory);

10th March, 1961, at Maidstone, Kent, first-winter. (Mid-Kent Ringing Group).

Jeffery Harrison

Aspergillosis in an immature Bewick's Swan

AN immature male Bewick's Swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* was present at Maidstone, Kent, by the town bridge over the Medway, from 10th January to 14th February, 1962 when it was found dead. It was brought over to Sevenoaks by Mr. E. G. Still, to whom I am indebted for the specimen. It had previously been ringed by Mr. Eric Philp. The bird was autopsied on 16th February when the sex was established anatomically. There was no wasting and in fact, the bird could be described as in fat condition; death was clearly attributable to acute aspergillosis. The main fungus mass was in the bronchial tree, from whence it had infiltrated the abdomino-thoracic air-sac. It seems likely that the fungus had been ingested with bread fed to the swan by the general public. It had joined a herd of Mute Swans and had become completely tame.

I am indebted to Dr. Keith Randall, Consulting Pathologist to the Orpington and Sevenoaks Hospitals for investigating the fungus, and to Mr. A. H. Heather for culturing the fungus, which has been identified as *Aspergillus fumigatus*.

James M. Harrison

The wedge-shaped yellow area on the bill of a Bewick's Swan

AN opportunity to observe wild Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* from only a few yards occurred at the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire on 24th November, 1962, when towards the late afternoon fifteen flew into the enclosures, of which eight alighted on the largest pool in the Big Pen. An adult particularly attracted my attention because although its bill conformed in shape and size to that of the western race (*bewickii*) the area of

yellow on the side of the upper mandible was wedge-shaped and extended about an inch beyond and below the nostril, while in addition there was a narrow yellow area near and parallel to the cutting edge of the mandible. Even at so close a range, when comparisons with its companions were relatively easy, my immediate reaction leaned towards it being a Whooper Swan *C. c. cygnus*, because the bird's bill closely resembled in pattern that of the latter species. I. C. T. Nisbet (*British Birds* 52 : 393-416, 1959) considered that 5 to 10 per cent of the large influx of Bewick's Swans into Britain in 1956 may have been misidentified as Whoopers. B. King (*Wildfowl Trust 11th Ann. Report* : 156-7, 1960) observed two large-billed Eastern type Bewick's (*jankowskii*) at Durleigh Reservoir, Somerset, in February of the same year, which could have been thought to be *C. c. cygnus*. The details of the Gloucestershire bird described above emphasise the possibility of mis-identification of the two species in an appreciable proportion of cases.

Bernard King

An Eastern Greylag Goose in Somerset

WHILST on a visit to the Bridgwater Bay National Nature Reserve, Somerset, on 8th April, 1962, I observed a Greylag Goose *Anser anser* flying from Stert Island towards the saltings named 'The Fenning'. As the goose flew overhead and gradually descended I could see the large grey areas on the wings very well. It soon alighted on the saltings about 150 yards from where I was partly concealed, and stood on the alert for long periods, feeding intermittently. I was able, using a x 40 telescope, to obtain details of the bird's plumage: head and hind neck light brown; mantle brownish-grey, with conspicuous whitish or light narrow barring on mantle and scapulars, formed by well defined paler edgings of individual feathers; primaries and secondaries also pale edged and noticeable from a distance; tail brown, broadly tipped white; front and side of neck pale to whitish buff; paler on rest of very light under parts. The bill appeared clear pink with a whitish nail; the legs were the same colour as the bill. The bird was not ringed. It appears to be an example of the race *A. a. rubrirostris*, breeding in southern Russia. The possibility of the bird being an escape cannot be ruled out, although Mr. S. T. Johnstone, Curator of the Wildfowl Trust, Gloucestershire, informs me that there are no full winged *rubrirostris* or hybrids in the collection at Slimbridge; nor does he know of any 'free' Eastern Greylags in collections elsewhere. In the *Wildfowl Trust 7th Ann. Report* : 13, 1953, mention is made of three Greylags thought to belong to a Baltic or Russian population staying in or around the Trust's enclosures from 21st December, 1953, to 30th March, 1954. I saw those geese several times. The Somerset bird was even paler in appearance and its bill, except for the nail, was pinkish throughout. Peter Scott and Hugh Boyd state in *Wildfowl of the British Isles* (p. 22, 1959) that pale, pink-billed birds probably of Continental origin have been recorded as stragglers, but few detailed descriptions of such birds have been published. It seems desirable that more attention should be paid to the appearance of Greylags occurring outside their usual haunts in this country, to see how often geese from eastern populations are to be found.

Bernard King