SHORT NOTES
Roe Deer Rings

I can add the following to the information given by Mr. Taylor Page :—

A doe roe deer starts the rings and, when she comes into season, is joined by a buck and they frequent the rings together for three or four days. Apparently they remain at the rings all night leaving about 7 or 8 a.m. ; there is no sexual excitement in the mornings.

The rings may be round a bush, a tree, a patch of rushes, in thick covert, on bare ground, in oats or indeed anywhere. If they are in thick low cover the trampling of the vegetation gives the impression that a minature circus has been there ; if in very thin cover and the ground is dry, the rings are hardly noticeable.

In early October the pair return to the rings they used in early August, but in October they seem merely to feed and lie by the rings and not to use them. The purpose of this quiet return to the scene of the honeymoon is very mysterious.

A pair of roe at the rings in August go round and round in the rings, the buck repeatedly darting across the doe's front, just under her chin, and also riding her off, as at polo. It looks as if he were saying " Now I like this place, so don't you go wandering off ; we will just go round and round here ". I have seen a buck serve a doe 10 times at the rings in about 1 hour, and also 3 times in about 3 minutes immediately on arrival at the ring at full gallop. I filmed the latter performance.

I have seen this year a roe ring 2 feet in diameter made round two purple flowers. I have also seen a ring round a silver fir with stiff lower branches almost at ground level. This ring was nine yards in diameter. I have seen many rings quite close to much frequented roads. Rings, including the one only two feet in diameter, were made between a road and a river only 15 yards apart ; some of the rings were less than five yards from the road. This pair were constantly disturbed : on the second night they ate the two flowers, but continued to use the ring made round them.

It is perfectly obvious that there is some particular draw which make roe choose a certain spot for the rings and nothing seems to stop them using a spot where that draw exists—not even constant disturbance. Judging by the tests I have made by collecting all plants within a roe's reach of a roe's fresh tracks at and by the rings, and having these plants examined by
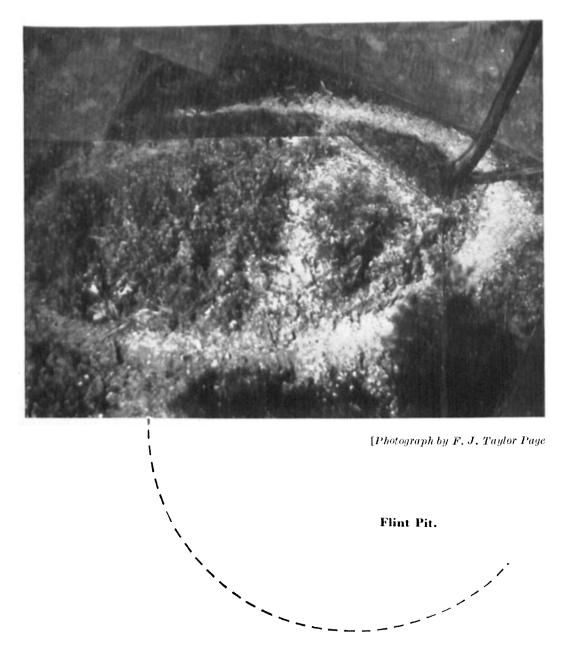
a skilled botanist, I have formed the opinion that the draw is ergot ; for this grass disease has been found on 6 different species of grass picked at the rings, but I do not claim that this odd conclusion of mine is proved.

I have no hesitation is saying that the person who knows most about roe is Professor Harry Von Eckermann, who at his home in Sweden, has had between 20 and 30 births among the roe he keeps in large enclosures round his house. His does normally produce triplets and all three normally survive, but he thinks that this is hardly ever the case in the wild state. His roe behave more like domestic dogs than deer and are taken out loose for runs in the country, their master being on a bicycle or on skis. I have never seen anything more fascinating than these tame roe and the master, but he has to take the precaution of sawing off the horns of the bucks as soon as they are clear of velvet, and substituting stiff rubber tubes in their place.— ANTHONY BUXTON.

WILD CAT SHOT

On 14th January, the Society was asked that inquiries should be made into the shooting of a wild cat by a Forestry Commission trapper, at Ardray, Eredine Forest, Lochaweside. The cat was reported to be 45 inches long.

The Forest Commission have kindly informed us that their general policy is to preserve wild cats and it is regretted that this cat was killed. Apparently the trapper got a glimpse of the animal amongst dense undergrowth and thought it was a fox. The Commission are obliged to restrict the number of foxes in their forests in the interests of neighbouring farmers.

[*Photograph by F. J. Taylor Page*

Flint Pit.

ROE DEER RING, LING HEATH, BRANDON.

This picture refers also to the " Notes on Roe Deer " by Mr. Taylor Page, published in *Oryx*, III, 3, page 157, where it was inadvertently printed upside down.