

BLACK STORK.

Ciconia nigra, Bellon.

La Cigogne noire.

AMONG the wading birds of Europe, there are few if any which excel the Black Stork either in richness of plumage or stateliness of general aspect. Although resembling the White Stork in its habits, the present bird offers many points of difference from its well-known and familiar congener.

Instead of associating in the immediate vicinity of the habitations of man, the Black Stork is much more shy and distrustful, leading a life of seclusion among the morasses and wooded districts of the central and northern portions of Europe. The interchange of forests and tracts of marshy ground, where draining and cultivation have made but little progress, afford this bird not only food, but an unmolested asylum in which to rear its brood. Notwithstanding the length of its limbs and its semipalmated toes, it perches on trees, and builds its nest on the branches, choosing for that purpose some tall pine of ancient growth, in the depths of the forest, where its colour assimilates with the gloomy hue of the surrounding objects. It appears, however, to be a bird of migratory habits, travelling northwards and southwards with the spring and autumn. Its winter residence is not precisely ascertained, but, like all birds whose sustenance is dependent on the seasons, is doubtless in a country where the rigours of winter do not lock up the marshes and lakes with ice. Dr. Latham states it to have been met with along the Caspian Sea and at Aleppo. The preference which the Black Stork manifests for a densely wooded district is doubtless one reason why it is a bird of such rare occurrence in Holland, which in other respects is well adapted for its residence, and abounds in its favourite food, namely small fishes, frogs, worms and insects. Great Britain can scarcely lay claim to the Black Stork as one in the list of her Fauna, so few are the instances upon record of its capture in our islands.

Although shy and timid by nature, this bird soon acquires confidence and familiarity in captivity, and bears the confinement of the aviary equally well with its relative the White Stork, whose docility is proverbial.

The male and female are alike in plumage.

The head, neck, chest, and all the upper parts of the body, are blackish with purple, green, and bronze reflections; the under surface is pure white; the naked space surrounding the eye, that on the throat, and the beak, crimson red; irides brown; tarsi deep red.

The young have the beak, the naked skin round the eye and on the throat, as well as the tarsi, greenish olive, and the plumage is more inclined to reddish brown.

Our Plate represents an adult bird, half its natural size.