

STOCK DOVE.

Columba ænas, Linn.

Le Colombe colombin.

ALTHOUGH the Stock Dove closely resembles many of our domestic breeds in plumage and general appearance, it is not now considered the origin of those birds; the European varieties of which are ascribed to another nearly allied species, the *Columba livia*, whose natural habitat is confined to rocks, towers and ruins, especially those adjacent to the sea-coast, whereas that of the present species is restricted to woodlands, building in hollow trees and perching on their branches. Independently of the difference of the localities chosen by each, we find the Stock Dove destitute of that peculiar mark which characterizes most of our domestic varieties, viz. the conspicuous white band on the rump and upper tail-coverts,—a feature equally distinguishing the *Columba livia* from the present bird, in which we find this part of the same lead-coloured blue as the rest of the plumage.

The Stock Dove inhabits the whole of the middle countries of Europe, becoming less common as we approach the northern and southern regions. In England it is found in several midland districts that are well covered with woods, particularly Hertfordshire and the adjoining counties.

The *Columba ænas* is one of the many of its species in which the typical characters both as to colour and form are truly developed: in its manner it closely resembles the Wood Pigeon; it differs, however, in some minor points, viz. the situation of its nest, and its more shy and retired disposition at the time of incubation. Its favourite breeding-place is among parks, beech-woods, and forests abounding with old trees, in the holes of which it frequently breeds, making but little or no nest, as is usual we believe with most of the birds of this genus. It lays two eggs of a pure white. Its food consists of peas, and other leguminous seeds, to which it adds the green tops of turnips and other vegetables.

The sexes offer no differences in plumage, and the young are only to be distinguished by the want of the changeable reflections of green on the sides of the neck, and the general dulness of the plumage.

The head and whole of the upper surface is of a beautiful blueish ash colour; the quill-feathers dark grey; the centre of the wings have two obscure spots of black, the tips of the tail-feathers being of the same colour; the sides of the neck are of a rich changeable green; the breast is tinged with vinous, and the whole of the under parts are of a more delicate grey than the upper; beak dull red; irides and feet dull scarlet. Total length twelve or thirteen inches.

Our Plate represents an adult bird of its natural size.