

WHITE WAGTAIL.

Motacilla alba, Linn.

La Bergeronette grise.

In the early part of the present work we figured the Pied Wagtail, which is a permanent resident in our island, as the true *Motacilla alba* of Linnaeus: subsequent experience has, however, convinced us that the true *Motacilla alba*, a species so common in France and Europe generally, never visits our island, and it would appear that our bird is almost equally unknown in the temperate portions of the Continent. The question therefore arises as to the species to which it must be referred: we ourselves are inclined to believe it quite distinct from *Motacilla lugubris*, a species inhabiting the eastern and southern portions of the Continent, and with which it has by some naturalists been considered as identical; should this ultimately prove to be the case, the English bird will require to be characterized under a new specific appellation. The Channel appears in fact to constitute the boundary of these species, as is also the case with *Motacilla neglecta* and *Motacilla flava*.

The true *Motacilla alba* differs from our species more in its colouring than in any other respect: neither in its full nuptial dress nor at any other period does it exhibit the deep black colouring on the back which is so conspicuous in the British species; at least after the examination of a great number of specimens, we have never been able to trace the slightest indication of it at any age.

The White Wagtail frequents meadows, particularly those in the neighbourhood of running streams, also villages, cities, belfries, towers, and similar situations. It is a common species in Africa and the high lands of India.

Its food consists of flies, millipedes, various other insects, and their larvæ.

The nest is placed in any convenient situation that may offer; in the clefts of rocks, under the arches of bridges, in towers, or among hollow trees; the eggs are six in number, and are of a bluish white, spotted with black.

In spring the forehead, sides of the neck, under surface, and the two outer tail-feathers, are pure white; occiput, nape, throat, chest, middle tail-feathers, and upper tail-coverts, black; back and sides pure ash colour; wing-coverts blackish brown bordered with white.

The female differs in having the white less clear, and the black mark on the occiput not so extensive.

In winter the throat and front of the neck are pure white; on the lower part of the neck a collar of deep black; all the ash of the upper parts less clear than in summer.

We have figured an adult male of the natural size.