## BLACK-CAP.

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Curruca atricapilla, Bechst. Le Bec-fin à tête noir.

Or the numerous migratory songsters that add a charm to our spring by their melody, the Black-cap is inferior to none, being equally distinguished for the power and variety of his own notes, as for his aptness in imitating those of other species, whether discordant or otherwise,—a habit in which he frequently indulges; and so exactly similar are the sounds he produces, that we are often deceived by the skill of the imitation: his own song is particularly liquid and melodious, and poured out with great energy. The Black-cap is common in our Island during summer, and also generally spread throughout the northern and central portions of Europe; it frequents our gardens and shrubberies, but is nevertheless a bird of shy and recluse habits, and remains concealed from observation in the thickest part of the foliage. It generally appears among us in the month of April, and departs again in September.

It is worthy of notice that the males and females of this species perform their migrations separately; and we believe this habit is almost universal among the Warblers, the males preceding the females in their arrival by about a week, commencing their song immediately, and selecting a favourable locality for the purpose of nidification, which takes place as soon as the foliage is sufficiently dense for the necessary concealment, among which they construct their nest of vegetable fibres intermingled with a little moss and grasses, in a low bush, shrub or hedgerow, the female laying four or five eggs of a dingy white, clouded with light yellow brown, spotted and occasionally streaked with darker brown. Its food consists of insects, berries, and fruits.

The male has the top of the head and occiput of a deep black; the throat and under parts of a lightish grey; the upper parts, wings and tail, of a dull olive grey; feet and beak blueish ash. The female has the top of the head reddish brown; the other portions of the plumage like that of the male, but rather more obscure, the under parts having a slight tinge of red pervading the grey.

We have figured a male and female of their natural size.