BRAKE LOCUSTELLE.

Locustella avicula, Ray.

La Bec-fin locustelle.

This species, to which the modern name of Brake Locustelle has been applied, as more appropriate than those of Grasshopper Lark and Grasshopper Warbler, by which it is known to most of our readers, is one of the migratory birds of our island, where it arrives in the month of April, and although not an uncommon bird, its secluded and shy disposition renders a sight of it extremely difficult, and were it not for its peculiar and sibilant ringing cry, repeated for many minutes and producing a kind of ventriloquism, its presence would seldom be detected. By the term Brake Locustelle our readers are at once informed of the favourite localities to which this species gives preference, in contradistinction to its near ally the Reed Locustelle, whose habits lead it to frequent wet and swampy situations, reed-beds, &c.

It is pretty generally distributed over our island, but becomes more scarce as we proceed northward. Mr. Selby states that he has known it for some years past as a visitant of several low and damp situations in Northumberland, which would appear to be its limit in that direction: according to Montagu it is also an inhabitant of Ireland.

The nest of the Brake Locustelle is constructed among the densest bramble or furze bushes, and is so secretly placed as to be very seldom found; it is formed of moss and the dried stems of ladies' bedstraw, and greatly resembles that of the Whitethroat, but is thicker and more compact in texture: the eggs, which are four or five in number, are pinkish grey with numerous specks of a deeper tint.

Upper surface brown, tinged with olive; the centre of each of the feathers, except those on the rump, dusky brown; throat white, bounded by a circle of small oval brown spots; breast and flanks pale brown tinged with olive, fading into greenish white on the middle of the belly; under tail-coverts greyish white with black shafts; quills and tail dusky, margined with pale brown tinged with olive; bill brown; legs and feet pale yellowish brown.

The sexes are not distinguishable by their plumage, further than that the male has the spots on the throat more conspicuous.

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