STONECHAT.

Saxicola rubicola, *Bechst.*

Le Traquet pâtre.

M. Temminck, whose knowledge of European birds cannot be questioned, states in his "Manuel d'Ornithologie," that the *Saxicola rubicola* is a bird of passage in Europe, but stationary in Africa: however this may be, it is certainly stationary in England, and may be observed at all seasons on commons, moorlands, and shrubby heaths, from one extremity of the British Isles to the other. It is a species possessing a wide range of habitat, as examples from India and Africa present no specific differences. Its habits and manners are somewhat in unison with its allied congener the Whinchat, but it is even more restless and noisy, flitting from bush to bush, or rock to rock, and not unfrequently perching on the tops of the flower of the thistle or highest twig of the whinbush, at the same time uttering its singular monotonous notes, which may be compared to the clicking of two stones struck together at repeated intervals.

The present bird and the Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*, Bechst.) present many points of difference, both in form and habits, from the rest of the genus: instead of being confined almost exclusively to the ground, as is the case with *Saxicola œnanthe*, *stapazina* and *aurita*, they give the preference to low bushes and shrubs, as above noticed, on which they habitually perch, constituting in this respect an intermediate grade between the genuine *Saxicolæ* and the true woodland *Sylviadæ*, or rather, perhaps, the *Muscicapidæ* (Flycatchers), which they resemble in the abruptness of their actions and in their manner of darting from their perch at insects on the wing, in pursuit of which they appear incessantly occupied. These, indeed, with larvæ and worms, constitute their food.

The Stonechat builds its nest at the bottom of bushes, or among the crevices of rocks: the eggs are pale green with a few blotches of light red.

The male and female offer a decided contrast in their colouring.

In the male, the head, throat and tail are of a deep black; the sides of the neck, the scapulars and rump of a pure white; the back deep black, each feather having a light reddish margin; wings blackish; breast deep rufous, becoming paler on the under surface.

The female has the upper surface of a brownish black, each feather having a yellowish red border, as have also those of the wings and tail, which are brown; throat black slightly dotted with white and reddish; the white space on the side of the neck and scapulars is less extensive, and the rufous of the chest less bright.

The young male closely resembles the adult female.

The Plate represents a male and female in perfect plumage, of the natural size.