## BLACK WHEATEAR.

Saxicola cachinnans, Temm.

Le Traquet rieur.

Although the most proper situation for this fine species is doubtless among the true Wheatears (Saxicolæ), yet its greater size, robust bill, and more short and rounded wings, indicate a departure from the typical form, and an approximation to some other group, which at present we have not been able distinctly to make out; we suspect, however, that the group to which it will ultimately be found to lead is one of the terrestrial division of the family of Merulidæ. Though one of the birds of Europe, we cannot include it in our native fauna: it, is indeed, confined to the southern portions of the Continent, and is common at Gibraltar, where it is known annually to breed; it is also found in all the rocky and arid districts of Spain, Sicily, and the islands of the Mediterranean, as well as on the opposite coast of Africa. Judging from its form alone, we should be led to consider that the present species is not migratory, a supposition which is confirmed by its being a resident in countries where its food is ever abundant, and by its never having been known to visit the more northern districts of Europe, to which the Long-winged Wheatears are periodical visiters. We have said, that the present species is an inhabitant of the northern coast of Africa, which country also produces another closely allied to it, differing only in having a more lengthened wing, and the top of the head of a pure snow white. These two birds are by many ornithologists considered as one species, and that the white-crowned one is the adult of the present bird. We have ourselves carefully examined both these birds, and have no hesitation in declaring that they are truly distinct, differing not only in colour, but in relative admeasurements, the white-crowned species having a body of the same size, but a wing nearly an inch longer, being in all respects a typical Wheatear. Whether this African species is also a native of any part of Europe, we have as yet had no opportunity of ascertaining. The confusion between the two species has evidently arisen from the circumstance, that the young of the white-headed or African species does not possess the white on the top of the head, and in this state cannot, except by a narrow scrutiny, be distinguished from the young or the female of the true Saxicola cachinnans.

In its manners, the Black Wheatear is shy and timid, avoiding the presence of man, and confining itself to arid rocky places, where it is rarely disturbed by his presence. Its food consists of insects, beetles, &c.

The general plumage of the male is black; the rump white, as are the tail-feathers, except at their tips, which with the whole of the two middle feathers are black; beak and tarsi black; irides dark brown.

The female resembles the male in the distribution of her colours, but the black is much less pure and strongly inclines to brown.

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The young resemble the female in their plumage.

We have figured an adult male and female of the natural size.