BLUE THRUSH.

Petrocincla cyanus, Vig.
Le Merle bleu.

Like its congener, the Rock Thrush (Petrocinela saxatilis), the present species is a native of the rocky and mountainous districts of Europe, particularly towards the south, being very abundant in Piedmont and the Apennines, and also of common occurrence throughout Spain, Sardinia, Italy and the Levant. It is met with also in the South of France, but is rare in Switzerland. India and China produce a bird in every respect identical, with the exception of size, those which are received from Asia being considerably smaller than their European representative. Although the congenial habitat of the Blue Thrush is the rocky scenery of mountain chains, among which it breeds and remains throughout the year, still in many of its characters it seems to constitute a link between the more typical form of the genus Petrocinela and that of the true Thrushes, which latter it approaches in the proportions of the tarsi and tail. In the typical Petrocinelæ, (P. saxatilis, for example,) the tarsi are strong and very elongated; but the tail is short, a conformation in harmony with strictly terrestrial habits. In the present bird, the tarsi are more moderate and the tail more developed; still, however, as its habits, style of plumage and general outline declare, it is in every sense a member of the genus in which it is now placed.

The Blue Thrush is shy and solitary, dwelling with its mate in the still and sequestered recesses of the rocks, in the clefts of which it builds its nest, though this is not always the case, as it often chooses the crumbling walls of lonely towers or buildings, and sometimes the holes of trees, in which to rear its young. The eggs are dull greenish white. Its food, like that of its congener, consists of grasshoppers, large insects in general, and wild berries.

The male and female exhibit considerable difference in their plumage, the young males of the year resembling the latter. In the adult male, the whole of the upper surface is of a deep greyish blue, many of the feathers being margined with grey; the wings and tail are black; the under surface is of a lighter blue than the upper, with obscure narrow bars of brown edged with white on the chest and abdomen; the beak and tarsi are black.

The female has the whole of the upper surface brown, obscurely barred with ash colour; the wings and tail blackish brown, each feather having a blueish margin; the throat light brown, the feathers tipped and edged with black; the chest and under surface varied with light brown, grey and black, in pointed scales and transverse bars.

The young males may be seen in various stages between this style of colouring and the rich blue of the bird in its maturity.

The state of the s

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