

CECROPIS DAURICA.

Daurian Mosque-Swallow.

- Hirundo daurica*, Linn. Mant., p. 528.—Id. Syst. Nat., Gmel. edit. tom. i. p. 104.—G. R. Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 57.—Id. Cat. of Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., part. ii. sect. i. p. 23.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 339, *Hirundo*, sp. 14.
- *alpestris*, Pall. Itin., tom. ii. App. p. 209. no. 9.—Id. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. i. p. 534, pl. 30. fig. 2.
- *Daurica*, Lath. Gen. Ind., vol. ii. p. 576.
- (*Cecropis*) *daurica*, Less. Compl. Buff., tom. viii. p. 498.
- Cecropis daurica*, Boie, Isis, 1844, p. 174.
- Daurian Swallow, Lath. Gen. Syn., vol. iv. p. 570.—Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. x. part i. p. 95.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. vii. p. 289.
- Hirundo daurica*, Swinh. in Ibis, 1863, p. 255.—Id. Proc. of Zool. Soc. 1863, p. 287.

I AM indebted to the Rev. H. B. Tristram for the very fine examples of this species from which my figures were taken. The representation of the nest is a modification of the drawing published by Pallas in the first volume of his 'Zoographia Rosso-Asiatica.' It will be seen that the rump of the Daurian Swallow is darker and more uniform in colour than that of the western *Cecropis rufula*, and, as noticed in my account of that species, the striæ on the breast are bolder and more clearly defined on a lighter ground; as Pallas expresses it "subtus corpus lutescente vel sordide albet, rhachibus lineariter nigris striatum." Striæ are also faintly indicated on the feathers of the wings. In size the two birds are very similar; but I have seen examples collected by Mr. Swinhoe that are much smaller than those I have figured. Pallas states that the Daurian Swallow inhabits the Altaian Alps, Dauria, Thibet, and China. Mr. Swinhoe adds to this range by stating that he found it in Southern China and the island of Formosa; he remarks, however, that the Formosan bird presents some peculiarities. "It is found," says this gentleman, "in the extreme north of China as a summer resident only; but in the south, where the winter climate is more genial, it stays all the year, roaming about in small parties during the cold weather, and merely shifting its haunts from exposed to sheltered localities according to the severity of the season. In Southern China it is by no means so common as the Chimney-Swallow, and far more locally distributed; but in Formosa, both north and south, it abounds in almost every homestead. Being a resident bird, and not subject to distant migrations, we should naturally expect to find it liable to some variation through its insular position; and this we do observe, in the larger form, longer wings and almost entire absence of the red nuchal collar in our bird. The same facts are observed and indirectly admitted in the variety prevalent in Japan by Professor Schlegel, who was so struck with the differences offered by the Japanese bird as to make it a subspecies under the name of *Hirundo alpestris Japonica*. The variations in the Formosan bird, however, are too trivial to found on them a new species; and were not the triple nomenclature held in such objection by the majority of modern naturalists, we could not do better than employ it in this instance. On taking possession of our native house at Tamsuy, I observed a nest of this Swallow under the rafters in the central hall. It was exteriorly built of specks of mud, like the nests of the Martin, but had a neck-like entrance, giving the whole the form of a French flask flattened against the roof; the inside was amply lined with feathers. Pallas's figure gives a very good idea of its structure; the mouth, however, does not always point upwards, but is adapted in form and direction to the shape of the spot against which it is placed. The pair to which the nest belonged returned at the close of March, and in April began to repair it. Towards the end of the latter month the female was sitting on three white unspotted eggs. The male and female shared the duties of incubation; but the female usually sat for the longest time. For the sake of science we let the birds have it all their own way, though they made a great mess about our small house, and nearly drove us wild with their loud discordant twittering.

"In a ramble one spring morning, at dawn, I saw large numbers of these Swallows perching on some high bamboos. The sun was fast dispelling the thick night-fog that still hung low and heavy, and the birds seemed in high spirits at the return of fine weather. They fluttered from branch to branch, and, as they regained a footing, rocked backwards and forwards before recovering their balance. It was in April, and they were all paired, the male being always distinguishable by his larger size and longer tail. In pairs they sang, or rather twittered, their notes *kee-wee-keé*, like sounds that might be produced by some metal instrument sadly out of tune. The male loudly sang his bar, and the female followed in a lower key; the male then fluttered his wings and began again; the female followed suit. In this manner the whole clump of tall graceful bamboos looked alive with these birds, and resounded with their strange notes. Some pairs would start away and pursue one another, at first with a smooth, skimming flight; then in an excited manner they would stagger along, and, fluttering their wings, sing lustily their notes of love."