

CECROPIS RUFULA.

Western Mosque-Swallow.

Hirundo rufula, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. iii. p. 298.—Schlegel, Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., pp. xviii et 41.—Simps. in Ibis, 1860, p. 386.—Tristr. in Ibis, 1867, p. 362.—Jaub. et Barth. de la Lapomm. Rich. Orn. du Midi de la France, p. 308.—Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 338, *Hirundo*, sp. 12.

MUCH diversity of opinion exists among ornithologists as to whether the European, the Indian, the Siberian, and Japanese birds to which the generic title of *Cecropis* has been applied are merely local races of one, or are so many distinct species. If the former be the correct view of the case, then several other birds of this form inhabiting Africa from north to south, which have hitherto been regarded as species, must also be considered to be races only. But all these birds, both Asiatic and African, exhibit differences which, although they may appear trivial to a cursory observer, are nevertheless constant; and I believe that we shall be correct in treating them as distinct. In their structure, in the arrangement of their colours and markings, in their mode of nidification, and in their actions in the air, these birds differ so considerably from the members of the genus *Hirundo*, of which the Common Swallow is the type, that in my opinion the late Prince Charles Bonaparte was quite right in separating them into a distinct genus; and I therefore unhesitatingly adopt the term *Cecropis* he applied to them.

The *Cecropis rufula* is the European representative of the eastern *C. Daurica*, from which it differs in the much lighter colouring of the breast and rump, and in the almost total absence of striæ which are so conspicuous in the Siberian and Chinese birds. The particulars in which it varies from the Indian and Ceylonese birds will be found in my accounts of those species. In Europe, and all similar latitudes as far east as the *C. rufula* has been discovered, it is a migrant, visiting those countries only in summer. In Greece, the Holy Land, and Asia Minor it appears to be more plentiful than elsewhere; in Italy, France, and Germany it must be regarded as an accidental visitor; and those individuals which are seen still further northward, as in Heligoland and the one which has been supposed to have occurred in England, must be considered mere wanderers, going they know not whither. Eastward, it is believed to extend to the confines of Afghanistan; but no one has yet observed it in India. As is the case with all the typical Hirundines, little difference occurs in the colouring of the sexes of the present species; neither are they subject to any great change of plumage. As might be expected, its habits and mode of nidification closely resemble those of the Daurian Swallow, described by Pallas; and on this part of its economy I cannot do better than transcribe the interesting accounts published by Mr. Simpson in 'The Ibis' for 1860, and by the Rev. H. B. Tristram in the same work for 1867. Speaking of the bird as seen by him in Western Greece, the former gentleman says:—"It is very singular in its nidification, always fixing its nest under a cave or projecting slab of rock. In the little Klissoura, and throughout the precipices of Aracynthus, there are plenty of these caves—in former times a convenient refuge for the Klephts, as they now are for the shepherds tending their flocks during the winter months. This eccentric Swallow, not satisfied with having a good dry cave all to himself, must needs construct a long passage to his nest, thus giving it the shape of a retort with the upper part cut away and the remaining portion glued underneath a flat surface. The entrance is narrow, but the passage gradually widens till it finally opens into a sort of chamber very warmly lined with feathers; here the little fellow and his mate are sure to be most snugly tucked in just after sundown, when they can't see to catch any more insects. Escape, therefore, is impossible when a ruthless ornithologist wishes to capture the pair for the sake of identifying their eggs. No more than one pair are ever seen to occupy a cave, though the remains of previous nests could occasionally be traced on the roofs. The same pair appear to return year after year; and their nest, unless injured by shepherd boys during the winter, will merely require a little touching up to render it again inhabitable. The fact of the same birds returning was proved by those caves being untenanted where the pair had been captured during the preceding year. Several nests with eggs were found towards the end of May and beginning of June 1859. Four seems about the complement; they are quite white, and much resemble those of *H. urbica*, which could well be passed off for them in collections."

In his notes "On the Ornithology of Palestine," Mr. Tristram, when speaking of the Swallows observed by him, remarks: "Very distinct is that charming bird, *H. rufula*, Temm., belonging to a different group containing ten Old-World species, which have been separated by Bonaparte into a subgenus *Cecropis*. This bird does not return to Palestine till the end of March. We obtained our first specimens on the 28th. It then scatters itself over the whole country, and in the warmer and more marshy regions is the predominant species. It is a beautiful bird on the wing, showing its chestnut collar and rump to great