

CYGNUS FERUS.

Wild Swan or Whooper.

Anas cygnus, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 38.

Cygnus fesus, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 37.

—— *musicus*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 830.

—— *melanorhynchus*, Wolf u. Meyer, Taschenb. Deutsch. Vög., tom. xi. 498.

—— *olor*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. xi. p. 211.

—— *xanthorhinus*, Naum. Vög. Deutschl., 1842, tom. xi. p. 478, tab. 296.

Olor musicus, Wagl. Isis, 1832, p. 1234.

AMONG the MS. notes respecting this species which are now before me, I find one which states that, during the winter months the Market of Leadenhall, in London, and that of Shanghai, in China, are annually supplied with it—a fact which will at once inform the reader how extensively the Whooper is distributed over the northern portions of the Old World. In whatever country a bird breeds, that country must be regarded as its proper home; and hence the Whooper may claim for its native habitat all the regions bordering the arctic circle of the Old World; or I may state, in other words, that Iceland (where Professor Newton says it breeds in many places), Lapland, Finland (where Mr. Dresser informs me he obtained eggs at Ijä), Northern Russia, Siberia, China, and Japan are all tenanted by this noble species, until the severities of winter impel it gradually to move southward to countries where the climate is milder, and food obtainable. It is for the like reason that the British Islands and the countries of continental Europe lying in similar degrees of latitude are frequently favoured with its presence during the winter months; its presence or absence, however, is very irregular, and apparently dependent on the degree of cold prevailing in the far north. Mr. Tristram mentions that one was brought to him in the flesh at Jerusalem, having been shot on the Pool of Solomon two or three days before, which he believes to be the most southern locality yet quoted for the species.

The principal counties in England in which the Wild Swan rests are Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk; but if these be untenable from the severity of the season, it resorts to others further south and west. From all these counties, and also from Ireland, which it usually frequents at the same period, it beats a retreat as early as the return of the sun has rendered its far northern homes suitable for its reception; and it has always been evident to me that the northern migrants to this country are as much influenced by the movements of the great luminary as those which come from the south and summer with us.

No one, perhaps, has paid more attention to the arrival and departure of the Swan than Mr. Stevenson; I therefore do not hesitate about quoting some passages from the as yet unpublished volume of his valuable 'Birds of Norfolk,' with which he has kindly favoured me.

The late Dr. Macgillivray, Professor Newton, and Mr. Stevenson term this bird Whooper instead of Hooper, the latter gentleman remarking that the trivial

"name being derived from the peculiar trumpeting note of the species, I have preferred to spell it as in whooping-cough, the word 'Hooper' having no special signification.

"Sir Thomas Brown, with his usual accuracy of observation, remarks of this species:—'In hard winters, Elks, a kind of Wild Swan, are seen in no small numbers; if the winter be mild, they come no further southward than Scotland; if very hard, they go lower, and seek more southern places, which is the cause that, sometimes, we see them not before Christmas or the hardest time in winter.' This account agrees most accurately with our experience of its habits at the present day, since (with the exception of one or two instances, in which the birds did not come under my own observation) I have no record of Wild Swans killed before December, and then only through an early commencement of frost and snow, the more usual time of their appearance extending from January to March. So much, however, do their numbers depend upon the severity and duration of frosty weather, that a record of severe winters will as surely furnish a list of great Swan-years.

"In 1854-55, a long and hard winter, when wild fowl of all kinds were extremely abundant, I saw upwards of twenty Whoopers, that had been killed on our coast or inland waters, but all of them between January and March; and this was also the case in 1860-61, when a severe frost, lasting with little intermission from December to the end of the following February, brought great numbers of Wild Swans and other fowl to our shores; though, from the broads and other inland waters being early frozen over, they were chiefly confined to the coast and salt marshes, or passed on further to the south. The return of these fine birds in spring, on their passage northward, is occasionally remarked, of which an instance occurred in the first week of March 1861, when the weather at the time being mild and open, a 'herd' of twelve were seen to alight early in the morning on the open water of 'Bargate,' at the entrance to Surlingham Broad; but, being disturbed, later in the day they again took wing and