

him come rather close before it rose. Its stomach was empty; but it was very fat, and very good eating; for we roasted it! The sex was unfortunately not noted. The glottis was peculiar, so that I suppose it must have had the powerful voice of the common species." Dr. Robinson, on being informed that it was the American Bittern, most liberally presented the bird to the Belfast Museum.

In the same month of February 1846 in which Mr. Thompson's account of the Irish bird appeared in the 'Annals,' the 'Zoologist' contained a notice by Mr. James Cooper, of Preston, of an example of this Bittern having been killed about the 8th of December, 1845, in the neighbourhood of Fleetwood, in Lancashire.

The above are, I believe, all the examples known to have occurred in our islands.

The *Botaurus lentiginosus* being strictly an American bird, it is to the writers on the avifauna of that country that I must now refer for an account of its habits and manners. But first with regard to its range. Audubon informs us that in winter it resides chiefly to the southward of the United States, the only districts in which he met with it being the peninsula of Florida and its islands and the lower parts of the valley of the Mississippi. Captain Blakiston states that it "is not uncommon in the interior of British North America." Mr. Murray notices it from the coast of Hudson's Bay; and Mr. Ross gives the range on the Mackenzie to the Arctic coast. Mr. H. E. Dresser remarked that it was common and resident in southern Texas; Mr. Salvin observed it at Dueñas and Coban (in Guatemala); it was noticed by Dr. E. Coues on his journey from Arizona to the Pacific; and Mr. Brown includes it in his 'Synopsis of the Birds of Vancouver Island.'

"In Lower Louisiana," says Audubon, "it is seldom obtained in spring, but is a regular autumnal visitant, appearing early in October and frequenting the marshes both of fresh and salt water, where many remain until the beginning of May. It is then common in the markets of New Orleans, where it is bought by the poorer classes to make gombo soup. In almost every other part of the United States it is commonly called the 'Indian Pullet' or 'Indian Hen.'"

"Although in a particular place, apparently favourable, some dozens of these birds may be found to day, yet, perhaps, on visiting it tomorrow you will not find one remaining; and districts resorted to one season or year will be found deserted by them the next. That they migrate by night I have always felt assured; but that they are altogether nocturnal is rather uncertain, for in more than half a dozen instances I have surprised them in the act of procuring food in the middle of the day, when the sun was shining brightly. That they are extremely timid I well know; for on several occasions, when I have suddenly come upon them, they have stood still, from mere terror, until I have knocked them down with an oar or a stick. Yet, when wounded and their courage is raised, they show great willingness to defend themselves; and if in the presence of a dog, they never fail to spread out to their full extent the feathers of the neck, leaving its hind part bare, ruffle those of the body, extend their wings and strike violently at their enemy. When seized they scratch furiously, and endeavour to bite; so that, unless great care be taken, they may inflict severe wounds. I never saw one of them fly further than thirty or forty yards at a time; and on such occasions their movements were so sluggish as to give opportunities of easily shooting them; for they generally rise within a few yards of you and fly off very slowly in a direct course. Their cries at such times greatly resemble those of the Night and Yellow-crowned Herons. My friends Dr. Bachman and Mr. Nuttall have both heard the love-notes of this bird. The former says, in a letter to me, 'their hoarse croakings, as if their throats were filled with water, were heard on every side;' and the latter states that 'instead of the *búmp* or *boomp* of the true Bittern their call is something like the uncouth syllables *pump-ai-gah*, but uttered in the same low bellowing tone.' An egg presented by Dr. Brown, of Boston, measures two inches in length, by one inch and a half, and is of a broadly oval shape, rather pointed at the smaller end, and of a uniform dull olivaceous tint."

It is said to extend as far northward as the shores of Hudson's Bay, in summer, and, according to Dr. Richardson, "is a common bird in the marshes and thickets of the interior of the fur-countries up to the fifty-eighth parallel. Its loud booming, exactly resembling that of the common Bittern of Europe, may be heard every summer evening, and also frequently in the day. When disturbed, it utters a hollow croaking cry. It lays, according to Mr. Hutchins, four eggs of a cinereous-green colour." They breed about the beginning of June, making their nest in swamps; and the young are said to be at first black. Their food is said to consist chiefly of fishes and aquatic reptiles; and their flesh, when in good condition, is by many persons considered excellent.

The American Bittern is readily distinguished from its European relative by its great inferiority of size, by the upper surface being darker and much more minutely freckled, and by the feathers of the neck and breast having each a broad stripe of dark rusty red down the centre.

The figure is about three fourths of the natural size.