

## COLUMBA LIVIA, Temm.

### Rock-Pigeon.

*Columba oenas*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 279.

——— *domestica*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 769.

——— *livia*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 1815, p. 278.

Of the few members of that great family the *Columbidae* which have a place in the British avifauna, the present species must ever be regarded with especial interest, inasmuch as it is one of those birds which was earliest known, and which, from its being very common in Egypt and Palestine, must have been as familiar to the Egyptians of the days of Pharaoh as it is to the descendants of that ancient people at the present day.

"On one of the walls of the Temple of Medinet Haboo," says Dr. Adams, "is a sculpture, of the time of Rameses III. (B. C. 1297), representing that famous monarch as having just assumed the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The procession is moving on in regal state and in all the pomp and splendour of the time, whilst a priest is letting off four Carrier Pigeons to announce the glad tidings to every quarter of the globe. This is very interesting, as it shows that Pigeons were then used for the purpose of conveying information. According to Horapollo, the flesh of Pigeons was greatly esteemed; and there are records of their having been eaten as early as B. C. 3000."

It is in the chasms, caverns, and holes of the most precipitous and dangerous cliffs and promontories facing the raging ocean, and the abrupt sides of rocky hills in the interior of the country, that the Rock-Dove finds a congenial home wherein to dwell and rear its young; and so strong is its rock-loving habit that it is retained by all the numerous varieties that have sprung from it, not one of which, so far as I am aware, ever exhibits any arboreal propensity.

The geographical range of the Rock-Dove is extremely extensive, the bird being found as far north as the Faroe Islands, and southward at Teneriffe and Madeira, in North Africa, most of the rocky islands in the Mediterranean and in Greece, and of course in all suitable situations in the intermediate countries; it is said to proceed as far to the eastward as Lake Baikal; and Temminck states that Japanese specimens do not differ in any respect from those obtained in Europe and Africa. The most complete account of its distribution over our islands is comprised in the following extract from Mr. A. G. More's valuable paper "On the Distribution of Birds in Great Britain during the Nesting-season," published in 'The Ibis' for 1865:—

"Commencing from the south of England, the Rock-Dove used to breed formerly at Purbeck (*Rev. H. Austin*); but there is no direct evidence of its ever having bred in the Isle of Wight. Mr. E. H. Rodd includes it in his list as breeding occasionally in Cornwall. The Rev. M. A. Mathews has obtained it building in the cliffs about Lynton. Mr. W. D. Crotch reports it as breeding in Somersetshire; and it is said to be common in Gloucester and Monmouth. Sir W. Jardine gives Caldey Island as a locality; and Mr. Tracy marks it as breeding in Pembrokeshire. The Rev. H. Harpur Crewe has observed it breeding in Denbighshire; and there are probably several other localities in South and North Wales. Mr. J. F. Brockholes tells me there is a colony at Beeston Castle, Cheshire, and that he once noticed a pair frequenting the high banks of the Mersey during the breeding-season. Mr. C. S. Gregson informs me that the Rock-Dove breeds at Whitbarrow Scar; and Mr. J. B. Hodgkinson has found its nest occasionally in Cumberland.

"The Rock-Dove is numerous in many localities along the west coast of Scotland, especially in the isles; and abounds in the Outer Hebrides, in Orkney, and in Shetland, and, though less numerous on the east coast of Scotland, breeds regularly in Caithness, Elgin, Banff, and in a few localities in Aberdeenshire, at Down Castle, Stirling, in the Isle of Man, on the Bass Rock, and at Fast Castle, Berwickshire. On the east coast of England, the Rock-Dove breeds only at Flamborough; it also breeds in a few rocky valleys or inland cliffs in Derby, York, Leicester, Stafford, Shropshire, and Somerset."

Mr. Tristram's account of this species and its ally or variety, as the case may be (the *C. Schimperi* of recent writers), as seen by him in Palestine, is so interesting that I cannot refrain from quoting the passage, since it serves to show how vastly numerous these birds are in that part of the globe where they were probably first taken, tamed, and brought under the influence of man; neither can I omit some extracts from the writings of St. John and Macgillivray on the *Columba livia* as observed by them in its British home.

The myriads of Rock-Doves in Palestine, says Mr. Tristram, "are beyond computation, far exceeding even the clouds of domestic Pigeons. Few countries are so admirably adapted for them, abounding as the