

garden suffering from caterpillars—merely the strong centre ribs of the leaves left sticking out. Perhaps you will say that this was bad farming, and that the turnips should have been lifted and stored; but on arable farms in Scotland, in the regular rotation of crops, one seventh of the farm is probably under turnips. If the crop has been good, this is more than the farmer requires; and the extra turnips are let to some butcher or sheep-farmer, and consumed by his sheep on the ground.”

“During the severe weather of January 1867,” says Mr. Cordeaux, “hundreds of these birds daily frequented the turnip-fields in North Lincolnshire, feeding on the green tops of the swedes and common turnips; they appear, however, to give a decided preference to the latter plant. In two contiguous fields, the one swedes, the other the common globe turnip, they invariably congregated in much greater numbers on the white turnips, to the comparative neglect of the swedes. They drilled holes with their bills into the bulbs, which is surprising, considering they were frozen as hard as stones; they thus often do considerable damage to the root. As a *general rule* I found that the outer skin of the swedes thus operated upon was previously more or less injured, either by the bite of hares or rabbits, or the puncture of some insect.”—*Zoologist*, 1867, p. 690.

That the Wood-Pigeon is equally destructive in the cornfields seems certain; for “*Scoticus*” says:—“In the autumn, when the wheat is just turning yellow, the Wood-Pigeons are very destructive. First one or two leave the wood and settle, generally in the centre of the field; then ensues a constant stream in the same direction of every pigeon within ken, until some hundreds may be assembled. They don’t settle, like the partridge, at the foot of the stalk on the ground, but try to alight on the standing stalks of corn; the straw breaks with their weight, and never recovers; it is not merely bent as from heavy rain. Of course they eat some grain; but in this case their actual weight is more destructive than their appetite; the corn lies matted, and, if the weather be warm and damp, begins to sprout. But it is in winter that the Wood-Pigeon is most destructive.”

The following instance of the voracity of the Wood-Pigeon appeared in the ‘Times’ of Oct. 22, 1857:—

“There was shot lately in the neighbourhood of Inverness a Wood-Pigeon, in which was found the enormous quantity of 1,100 grains of wheat, barley, and oats (together with 40 peas), the barley-grains predominating. This seems to be no unusual case. In another, killed on a neighbouring farm, was found seventy peas, and a very large quantity of the grains above mentioned, but they were not counted; it was stated, however, that the bird was full to the very bill. The quantity a flock of 100 or 200 of these destructive birds would devour in the course of a harvest season must be very considerable.”—*Inverness Courier*.

In the ‘Field’ for Jan. 1860, a Guildford subscriber writes:—“On the 17th inst. I shot, close to my own house, a fine Wood-Pigeon, and on reaching home, finding it had an immense crop, I took out its contents, which were composed of 690 berries of the ivy, also some portion of the rape-leaf, which I suppose was eaten to digest the ivy-berries.”

As a set-off to all this mischief, St. John remarks,—“Although without doubt a consumer of great quantities of grain, at some seasons the Wood-Pigeon must feed for many months wholly on the seeds of weeds, which, if left to grow, would injure the farmer’s crops to a very serious extent.”

It is a mooted question whether there be not a great influx of these birds from the Continent during the months of autumn. For my own part, I am inclined to think that there is; for how otherwise are we to account for such streams of them as those described by Mr. Illsey? That their wing-power is sufficient to enable them to cross the German ocean there can be no doubt. That great migratory movements are natural to the Pigeon tribe we have abundant evidence; but it will only be necessary to cite the case of the Passenger Pigeon of America, which excites the astonishment of every one who beholds it during its transit from north to south, or *vice versa*. Besides England, Scotland, and Ireland, the Wood-Pigeon is found over all the temperate parts of Europe; it also occurs in North Africa, Palestine, and, according to Mr. Jerdon, in Western Asia.

The breeding of this familiar species is so well known that it is scarcely necessary to allude to it. Its two oblong white eggs may be seen any day during the spring and summer months on its slight platform of sticks by any person who will seek for it in the woods and shrubberies. The nest is usually placed on the horizontal branch of a fir, or in the middle of a mass of ivy growing on large trees. It rears two, and sometimes three broods in a year. It often commences laying early in April; and its ugly squabs of a later hatching may be seen sitting side by side on their slight and flat platform as late as September and October. The male and female sit by turns.

The two sexes are alike in colour; but the female is somewhat smaller than the male. The flesh of the Wood-Pigeon is both good and palatable, especially if they have not been feeding upon turnips. The figure is of the natural size.