OXYLOPHUS GLANDARIUS.

Great Spotted Cuckoo.

Cuculus glandarius, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 169.

—— pisanus, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 416.

—— Andalusiæ, Briss. Orn., tom. iv. p. 126.

—— macrourus, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 153.

—— gracilis, Brehm, ibid., p. 154.

Coccyzus pisanus, Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., part iii. p. 1349.

Coccysus glandarius, Savi, Orn. Tosc., tom. i. p. 154.

Oxylophus glandarius, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 40. Coccystes glandarius, Keys. et Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 34.

It may seem an act of supererogation to include a figure and account of this curious Cuckoo in a work on the Birds of Great Britain, since its native country is Africa, whence it migrates to a limited extent in spring to Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Syria, and, after reproducing its kind (somewhat, but not precisely, after the manner of the Common Cuckoo), departs southward again to winter in a warmer climate; but, anxious to render this work as perfect as possible up to the time of its completion, I have followed the example of my late friends Thompson and Yarrell, and given it a place herein on the ground of an undoubted wild example having been captured in Ireland, and because I think it probable that others may have from time to time visited that country and even England, but have so far escaped detection, and that more may yet favour us with their presence during some unusual wandering.

The following, with one or two verbal alterations, is Mr. Yarrell's account of the above-mentioned example:—The Great Spotted Cuckoo was taken near Clifden, in the county of Galway, about Christmas 1843, and is now in the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin. It was taken by two persons walking on the Island of Omagh, where, pursued by Hawks, it flew for refuge into a hole in a stone fence or wall, was captured alive, and lived for four days (attempts being made to feed it on potatoes). The inhabitants had never seen any bird like it before. When chased by the Hawks, it appeared fatigued, weak, and emaciated, as though it had taken a long flight—as Woodcocks and other birds of passage do on their first arrival.

This fine bird has especially attracted the notice of every ornithological traveller who has visited the southern countries of Europe, Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, and Palestine, many of whom have published interesting notices respecting its peculiar habits and manners; and of these, not having myself had the advantage of observing the bird in a state of nature, I shall make a selection of the more important, with due acknowledgment.

The first correct account of the reproduction of this Cuckoo was inserted by Dr. A. E. Brehm in Cabanis's 'Journal für Ornithologie,' of which a translation by P. L. Sclater, Esq., appeared in the 'Zoologist' for 1853, from which the following is an extract:—"It is well known to have hitherto been undecided whether Cuculus glandarius sits upon its own eggs or not. Even I, notwithstanding my somewhat lengthened sojourn in Africa, could for a long time learn nothing certain on the subject. I was well acquainted with the bird, its laughing Magpie-like cry and all its habits; and I knew that it usually dwelt among the thick low mimosawoods, in which it is to be seen, generally in battle with another of its own species, as it flies quick as an arrow through the thickest bushes. On the 5th of March, 1850, seven examples were collected near Siut, in Upper Egypt. Among them was a female with a fully developed egg in the oviduct. Unfortunately this was destroyed by the shot; the broken fragments were bright green, with darker brown spots. On the 2nd of March, two years later, I attentively watched the motions of a Great Spotted Cuckoo in a garden near Thebes, and at last saw it slip into a large nest placed upon a rather low Salicaria tree. After rather more than a quarter of an hour, out it flew again and departed from the garden; I climbed up to the nest and found it to belong to Corvus cornix, and containing altogether six eggs. Among them I found two smaller ones belonging to some other bird, but nearly resembling those of the Crow in size and colour." Having on comparison found these eggs to agree with the fragments of the one taken from the oviduct of the female above mentioned, Dr. Brehm says:-" This discovery would have been quite sufficient to settle the question; but on the 12th of March it was still further confirmed. In one of the village gardens, thickly planted with trees, my attention was attracted by the clear-sounding but harmonious cry of an old Cuckoo, 'kiek-kiek-kiekkiek,' when I obtained two old birds, and soon after found a young one also, which was being fed and provided for by Hooded Crows."