## NUCIFRAGA CARYOCATACTES.

Nutcracker.

Corvus Caryocatactes, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 159.

—— Nucifraga, Nilss. Orn. Suec., vol. i. p. 90.

Nucifraga, Briss. Orn., tom. ii. p. 59, pl. 5. fig. 1.

—— guttata, Vieill. Gal. des Ois., tom. i. p. 166, pl. 105.

—— brachyrhynchos et macrorhynchos, Brehm, Handb. Naturg. Vög. Deutschl., pp. 181, 182.

—— Caryocatactes, Selby, Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 368.

Caryocatactes nucifraga, Flem. Brit. Anim., p. 88.

With the Nutcracker must ever be associated recollections of Alpine scenery, forests of pine, cols, and passes, the Alpine Club and its spirited climbers, the Bouquetin, the Chamois, and the Læmmergeyer; for the bird is often seen by the British tourist among the Alps. There it dwells in the forests of pine, which clothe the sides of the mountains as high as those trees can grow. If my readers wish to see the bird in its native haunts, let them look around when crossing the romantic Tête noire, the Grimsel, or while visiting the beautiful scenery of Zermatt. Wherever the Pinus cembra grows, the Nutcracker will certainly be perceived, just as we see the Jay in the oak-woods of Kent, and the Magpie in the valley of the Trent; and it may be approached sufficiently near to admit a close observation of its sprightly and singular actionsactions which always remind me of those of the Great Tit, with a little of those of the Jay. At one moment it may be seen climbing head downwards, and hammering away at a cone to obtain the seed within; at another, with its breast and tail well up, and its head thrown back—the position in which I have figured it. If disturbed by the traveller pointing his alpenstock towards it, it merely flies a few yards further off, or crosses the roaring torrent to the opposite side of the hill. Alpine Switzerland, however, is not the only place the bird inhabits; for it is found much further south and a long way toward the north. It not only visits the dark, gloomy forests of Germany, Scandinavia, and Russia, but also breeds there. It will be conceived, then, that if the kind of country I have described be essential to its existence and well-being, the British Islands can offer it but little temptation; still in its journeyings to and fro, like a mariner who has unshipped his compass and lost his way, individuals do occasionally get driven out of their course and come among us; and that such accidental visits are not unfrequent is certain, for I shall be within the mark when I say that there are at least fifty recorded instances of examples having been shot within the precincts of our islands. Sir John Crewe tells me that some years ago two were killed in Oakley Park, in Suffolk, the seat of Sir Edward Kerrison, in whose possession they now are. Macgillivray states that a specimen in the Museum of the University of Edinburgh was said to have been shot at Peterhead, and a third in Scotland; one was killed in Pepper Harrow Park, the seat of Lord Middleton; two or three more have been shot in Devonshire, and others have been obtained in Northumberland, Somersetshire, &c.

From the earliest date at which ornithology became a study this bird has been an object of interest, and to gain a knowledge of its nest and eggs a desideratum. On the subject of its nidification many pages have been written; some have asserted that the bird deposits its eggs in the holes of trees, like a Woodpecker, others that it builds a large nest among the branches; some that its eggs are very similar to those of a Jay, while others, again, describe them as nearly resembling those of a Magpie. It seems that none of these and similar assertions are to be depended upon; and the credit of ascertaining the truth of the mystery must be shared, I believe, between some gentlemen at Copenhagen and Herr Schütt, of Waldkirch in Bavaria. This last-named naturalist published, in the 'Journal für Ornithologie,' an account of the nidification of the Nutcracker, from the translation of which, given in the 'Ibis' for 1862, I quote the following extracts:—

Dr. E. Schütt, after describing the difficulties of penetrating through the fir-plantations on the south-eastern spur of the Kandel at an elevation of 3500 feet, states that he was about giving up the search, when a Nutcracker flew out a few paces before him, without uttering any cry. "This inspired new courage, and in the course of another half-hour I found a nest on a tree, 35 feet high, hard by a sledge-path, but, to my disappointment, without eggs. It was placed close to the stem, at a height of about 25 feet, and was very difficult of detection from below. It was found on the 19th of March; and on the 23rd the first egg was laid, and on each third day the two others. After the bird had been three days without laying an egg, a boy, to my regret, took the nest and eggs away. At the discovery of the nest, the bird was crying in the distance; and when we were a mile away from it the cry could still be heard. At the taking of the nest it flew off as the boy climbed up, and then, settling on the summit of the same tree, intently watched its removal. It is only to the Jay's nest and eggs that those of the present bird bear any resemblance. Outwardly the nest