CORVUS CORONE, *Linn.*

Carrion-Crow.

Corvus corone, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 29.
——— *cornix*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 18.
——— *subcorone* et *C. hiemalis*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 167.
Corone subcorone, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 99.

"Black as a Crow" is very descriptive of this well-known British bird; for it has none of the fine play of colours observable in the Rook; still some parts of its plumage are slightly glossed with purple and green, particularly the upper surface. In size and general appearance, when in the air, the two birds are so much alike that it requires a practised eye to distinguish one from the other; this difficulty, however, disappears when two freshly killed birds are laid side by side, for many unmistakable differences in their structure and plumage are then apparent. The Rook has a more lengthened, pointed, and adze-shaped bill than the Crow, except during the first year of its existence, has the nostrils and throat devoid of feathers, allowing the scurfy, greyish white skin to appear, while in the Crow the same parts are clothed with feathers at all times. In their disposition, habits, and economy, also, great dissimilarity exists.

The Rook is a sociable fearless creature, which courts rather than shuns the presence of man, as is shown by its selecting the trees around his mansion whereon to assemble in vast numbers at the close of day, and often breeding in close proximity, the assemblage of its great nests forming a conspicuous feature in the landscape. It is also less predatory, living principally upon worms and grubs, and, moreover, is highly gregarious, being often seen in large, and frequently in enormous gatherings, particularly in winter. The Crow, on the other hand, is a prowling marauder, prone to evil doings, shy and distrustful, builds a more concealed nest near the bole of an elm, an oak, or on a spreading branch of a large Scotch fir, nearly if not always in some central part of the park, where the sitting bird can see all around and escape from any threatened danger, and does not depend upon worms and grubs for its existence, but will readily attack a stranded sheep or peck to death a leveret or a Grouse. The Crow, too, commences breeding in February, which is a month earlier than the Rook and two months prior to the Daw, from each of which, as well as from the Raven and the Chough, it differs in the tone of its voice and in the hoarseness of its call.

The distribution of the Crow over our islands may be said to be very general in England and the southern parts of Scotland, whether it be along the flat muddy shores of the sea or the park- and forest-lands of the interior; in the middle and northern parts of Scotland it is very uncommon; and it appears to be entirely absent from the Orkneys and Shetlands, for it is not included in the late Mr. Dunn's list of the birds observed by him in those islands; and in Ireland it is much less frequently seen than with us. On the continent of Europe the Crow is found in all the middle, southern, and western countries, but gradually becomes more scarce as we advance towards the north; according to Temminck it is entirely absent from Sweden and Norway, and is rare in Denmark. It occurs in Algeria; but I am not aware of its having been found in South Africa; Mr. Tristram states that it does not occur in Palestine. Mr. Jerdon has included it in the birds of India on the authority of Dr. Adams, who also states that it is common in Cashmere; and Mr. Swinhoe secured one of two examples seen by him on Naochow, a small island lying off the right of the peninsula of Luichow, in China.

Some extremely curious habits have been attributed to the Crow by various writers, a few of whose statements are sufficiently interesting to warrant their being reprinted here.

St. John, in his 'Tour in Sutherland,' says:—"Amongst the curious instincts which birds display in providing themselves with food, the one most resembling reason is that which teaches the common Crow, on finding on the shore a shell containing fish, to fly with it to a height in the air, and then to let it drop in order to break the shell sufficiently to get at the animal enclosed in it. When the shell does not break the first time the Crow drops it, she darts down, picks it up, and ascends still higher, till she perceives that the height is sufficient for her purpose. Sometimes another Crow darts in to carry off the booty, upon which a battle ensues in the air.

"The Crows collect great numbers of sea-shells on particular favourite hillocks, which are often at some distance from the sea. I have frequently observed in this country great collections of this kind; and, from the state of the shells, it would appear that they bring them to the same place for many successive years."

Some part of this account is confirmed by the observation of Lord Hill, who tells me that, at Hawkstone, the Crows frequently take the mussels from the lake-side, mount with them into the air, and drop them on the hard road, never on the grass.