PASTOR ROSEUS.

Rose-coloured Pastor.

Turdus roseus, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 294.

Sturnus roseus, Scop. Ann. Hist. Nat., tom. i. p. 130.

—— asiaticus, Wirs. Vög., tab. i.

—— Seleucis, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 837.

Merula rosea, Ray, Syn., p. 67.

Pastor roseus, Temm. Man. d'Orn., p. 83.

Psaroides roseus, Vieill.

Acridotheres roseus, Ranz.

Boscis roseus, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 401, tab. 22. fig. 41.

Nomadites roseus, Petaniz.

Thremmaphilus roseus, Macg. Hist. Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 613, and vol. iii. p. 723.

Gracula rosea, Cuv.

That the Rose-coloured Pastors which have from time to time come to our island are rovers from their native country, and not regular migrants, will be admitted by every ornithologist. What impulse directs them to visit us it is not easy to understand, and in all probability will never be ascertained. When they do cross the Channel for Albion's shores, they generally take up their quarters with the Starlings, family affinities leading them to associate with birds having kindred dispositions, habits, and economy. What an assemblage of Starlings think when this richly-coloured species quarters itself among them, it would be interesting to know. Its fine dress may perhaps command the respect, and its lengthened and beautiful crest the admiration, of its less gaily attired relatives; I say relatives, because the similarity in the structure and mode of nesting of the Starling and Pastor, in the colouring of their eggs, and in the plumage of their young clearly proves them to be intimately allied; no birds, in fact, can be more alike than the young of these two species during the first autumn of their existence; and none differ more, not only from this dress, but from each other, when fully adult—the one becoming the beautifully spotted Starling, with its changeable hues of purple and green, and the other the rosy-coloured and silken-crested Pastor.

To Britain, as before stated, it is but a wanderer, nor does it seem to occur, except in this character, in Northern, Central, or Western Europe. In some districts of Southern Russia it is exceedingly numerous; but its precise distribution is not well ascertained. Pallas states that in the Lower Don, on the Irtish, and thence across to the Altai Mountains, and even to Soongaria, now more generally known as Amoorland, it is most plentiful; while, on the other hand, on the Volga, the Obi, and the Jenessie, as well as in Danuria, though these regions would seem in all respects more suitable for it, it is never seen. But it is in Persia and India that this species seems to occur most commonly; and we have accounts of its being found in the latter, and even so far to the south as Ceylon, in countless myriads.

The following extracts from an account of the migration and breeding of this species in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, by the Marquis Oratio Antinori, will, I doubt not, be regarded with interest. They are taken from Dr. Sclater's translation, in the 'Zoologist,' of the original article which appeared in the 'Naumannia' for 1856:—

"The Rose-coloured Pastors began passing through the neighbourhood of Smyrna on their northern migration about the 15th of May, on which day I observed large flights of young birds of the first or second year. On the 14th of May I saw an immense multitude of old birds, passing at a moderate elevation, near a mineral spring called Ligea, on the left of the Gulf of Smyrna. On the 26th of May, about sunrise, great numbers of these birds were sitting so closely packed upon the trees as to make them look as if they were all covered with red flowers. From the 29th of May to the 5th of June the flights were most numerous; after that time they ceased, and the birds became stationary. The fields and gardens were full of them, and even in the villages they sat on the roofs of the houses. These facts convinced me that the birds were nesting in the hills surrounding the Gulf; but in spite of all our efforts, owing to the dense ignorance of the inhabitants and the unconquerable idleness of the peasantry, we could obtain but very few eggs. The man who brought us some told us that they had been collected upon a hill seven miles off in the interior, and that the Turks, who caught him in the act, had beaten and driven him away.

"The possession of these eggs determined me to undertake at once a search for them; and on the morning of the 30th of June I set out for the village of Bournatut, where I was assured the gardens and surrounding hills were full of Rose-Starlings; and I was well rewarded; for not only on the road to, but even in the streets of the village, upon the moss-grown walls, and on the trees of the courts and gardens, I had ample opportunities for making close observations on these peculiar birds.