ÆGIOTHUS LINARIA.

Mealy Redpole.

Fringilla linaria, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 87.
Linaria borealis, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxxi. p. 341.
——— *Holbœlli*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 280?
Passer linaria, Pall. Zoogr. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 25?
Linaria minor, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Spec. of Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 75.
Fringilla linaria borealis, Jenyns, Man. Brit. Vert. Anim., p. 139.
——— *borealis*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. iii. p. 264.
Linaria canescens, Gould, Birds of Eur., vol. iii. pl. 193.
Linota canescens, Yarr. Hist. of Brit. Birds, edit. of 1838, vol. i. p. 508.
Fringilla (Acanthis) borealis, Keys. & Blas. Wirb. Eur., p. xli.
——— *canescens* (partim), Schleg. Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., p. lxiii.
Acanthis linaria, Bonap. et Schleg. Monog. des Loxiens, pl. 52.
——— *holboelli*, Bonap. et Schleg. ib., pl. 53?
Ægiothus linarius, Cab. Mus. Hein., Theil i. p. 161.
Fringilla (Acanthis) linaria, Middend. Sib. Reise, tom. ii. pl. 11, p. 150.
Ægiothus linaria, Baird, Pacific Railr. Rep., Birds, p. 428.

For many years after ornithology had become a science, two British birds of this form were confounded under one name; and I regret to say that a mass of confusion exists with regard to their true synonymy, which I fear it will scarcely be possible to unravel; indeed I know not how it can be satisfactorily effected without an examination of the type specimens to which the various appellations were applied—a measure now hardly possible. We may, however, arrive at one certain conclusion—namely, that the species to which Linnæus applied the name *Fringilla linaria* was one commonly found in Sweden; and as the only Redpole which fulfils this condition is the present, we may safely infer that it is the bird he described by that appellation.

Although the Mealy Redpole is occasionally very numerous in our islands, it must be regarded as but an accidental winter visitor. The bird-catchers, who are generally excellent observers after their own way, will tell you that this season the Mealy or Stone Redpole is more numerous than the common or lesser species, and that their takes of this bird have consequently been great—a fact which may be confirmed or refuted by a visit to that great emporium of living birds, the Dials; or they may tell you that no Stone Redpoles have been seen either in this or the last year, or that for several seasons they have not seen a bird.

"The Mealy Redpole," says Mr. Stevenson in his 'Birds of Norfolk,' "can scarcely be called an annual winter visitant, although flocks of more or less extent may be met with in several consecutive seasons; but now and then, from some cause not easily explainable, their total absence is remarked upon by our bird-catchers, and, as I have frequently experienced when most wanting a specimen to supply some loss in my aviary, not a bird has been netted the whole winter through. Their numbers and appearance also cannot always be accounted for by the severity of the weather, in this country at least, either at the time of, or subsequent to, their arrival on our coasts. In 1847 and 1855, the latter a very sharp winter, they were extremely plentiful; and in 1861, from the middle of October to the close of the year, probably the largest flocks ever noticed in this district, were distributed throughout the country. Hundreds of them were netted by the bird-catchers, being far more plentiful than the lesser species, and many still retained the rich flame-coloured tints of the breeding-season. Yet the weather throughout this period was not unusually severe; and in the previous winter of 1860--61, hardly a bird was taken, though remarkable for its intense frosts; and again in 1863 and 1864 they were equally scarce, with an almost equal degree of cold.

"I am not aware that the nest of this species has ever been found in Norfolk; but Mr. Alfred Newton has recorded the occurrence of a male specimen, in full breeding-plumage, at Riddlesworth, in July 1848, which he had 'no doubt had bred there;' I was also assured by one of our Norwich bird-catchers, that in the spring of 1862, after the large influx of the previous autumn, he observed a flock of twenty or thirty as late as the middle of April. Both the Mealy and Lesser Redpoles, from their tameness and engaging actions, are most desirable additions to the cage or aviary, but from their happy contented natures are liable to grow too fat, and, like Ortolans, when overfed, drop off the perch in a fit of apoplexy. Mr. Charles Barnard, of this city, had a brood of young Mealy Redpoles hatched off in his aviary at Stoke, in July 1860—a very uncommon circumstance with this species."

The irregularity in the visits of this bird cannot, of course, be accounted for; all we know is that the bird