CALANDRELLA BRACHYDACTYLA.

Short-toed Lark.

Alauda brachydactyla, Leisl. Ann. d. Wetter. Gesell., tom. iii. p. 357, tab. 19.

—— arenaria, Vieill. Faun. Franç., p. 169, tab. 74. figs. 1, 2.

—— pispoletta, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. i. p. 526.

—— calandrella (Bonap.), Savi, Orn. Tosc., tom. ii. p. 67.

Melanocorypha itala, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 311.

—— brachydactyla, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 311.

—— arenaria, Bonap. Geog. & Comp. List of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 38.

Calandrella brachydactyla, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 39.

Phileremos brachydactyla, Keys. und Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 37.

That a species of Lark so common on the continent of Europe, and so abundant in all eastern countries, from Palestine to China, as the Calandrella brachydactyla should have been taken in the British Islands need not excite surprise; we ought rather to be astonished that, instead of having been met with only once, it has not been more frequently seen; indeed, when we remember the extent of our island, and how few are the real observers of our native birds, we may very reasonably suppose that many other examples have, from time to time, visited us without their differences from the other members of the family having been detected. "At the end of October 1841," says Mr. Yarrell, "I received a letter from Mr. H. Shaw, of Shrewsbury, informing me that an example of the Short-toed Lark had been caught in a net near that town on the 25th of the same month; and shortly afterwards he very obligingly sent the specimen up to me for my examination.

"This species, having some resemblance to our Wood-Lark, is yet immediately to be distinguished from it by its stouter beak, its nearly plain unspotted breast, and its very short hind toes and claws—from which last peculiarities it has received its name. The whole length of the Shrewsbury specimen was five inches and three quarters; the tarsal bone three quarters of an inch; the hind toe half an inch, the claw of it only one quarter of an inch; the wing, from the carpal joint to the end of the longest quill-feather, three inches and a half; the second quill-feather the longest in the wing, the first and third feathers a little shorter; the tertials extend backwards as far as the end of the closed wing."

As I have never had an opportunity of becoming personally observant of the habits of the Short-toed Lark, I must, in order to make my readers acquainted with them, draw somewhat largely upon the writings of others; and this, with due acknowledgment, I accordingly shall do.

Temminck states that it is very abundant in Sicily, in the kingdom of Naples, in Spain, and in Italy, and that it is equally numerous in the central parts of France, and along the shores of the Mediterranean, but not in the north of France nor in Holland; Bailly that it is found in Piedmont, but not in Savoy. Polydore Roux includes it in the birds of Provence; and Brehm in those of Germany, which appears to be the boundary of its range northwards. Temminck further states that it migrates to the continent of Africa; and Loche informs us that it is found over the whole of Algeria. Mr. Salvin remarks that in the eastern Atlas it is "much more local in its distribution than the Crested Lark (Galerita cristata), its range being confined to a few favoured spots in the elevated plains. About Ain Beida it is abundant, and throughout the great plain of El Tharf it may be commonly met with; it also occurs in the neighbourhood of Djendeli. Like the rest of its congeners, it places its nest on the sheltered side of a bush—the scrubby vegetation which clothes the whole of that arid district affording the necessary protection for its offspring. The eggs of this species vary very much; even in the same nest hardly two similar ones are to be found. So different were some of the varieties, that the greatest care was requisite in identifying their true parentage." In his notes 'On the Ornithology of Northern Africa,' the Rev. H. B. Tristram says:- "Many flocks occur in winter in the neighbourhood of the oases, and on the northern limits of the Sahara. It breeds abundantly under the slopes of the Atlas, but not, so far as I am aware, in the Desert. It is extremely local in the choice of its breeding-places. Confined to the barren salt-plains in the steppes on the verge of the Desert, where the vegetation is very scanty, its nest seems to be invariably placed under the lee of a thyme-bush, in a depression much deeper than the nests of other Larks."

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Mr. E. Cavendish Taylor says that in Egypt, where it is mostly met with in small flocks, it is not to be seen before March. Mr. Chambers shot it in Tripoli, and Mr. C. F. Tyrwhitt Drake observed it on the

plains of Tangier and Eastern Morocco.

Dr. Henry Giglioli, in his account of the birds observed by him in the neighbourhood of Pisa, mentions that "in spring large flocks appear, especially along the sea-shore, near the Gombo."

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