

ACROCEPHALUS TURDOIDES.

Thrush Warbler.

- Motacilla arundinacea*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 296.
Sylvia turdoides, Meyer, Vög. Liv- und Esthl., p. 116.
Turdus arundinaceus, Briss. Orn., tom. ii. p. 219. no. 6, tab. xxii. fig. 1.
Acrocephalus lacustris, Naum. Vög., alte Ausg., Nachtr., p. 201.
Salicaria turdina, Schleg. Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., p. xxvii.
Sylvia turdina, Gloger, Handb., p. 227. no. 14.
Calamoherpe turdoides, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 552.
Turdus junco, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. i. p. 458.
Calamodyta arundinacea, G. R. Gray, Cat. of Brit. Birds in Coll. Brit. Mus., p. 45.
Acrocephalus turdoides, Cab. Mus. Hein., Theil i. p. 37. sp. 244.

THAT individuals of this large species of Sedge-Warbler so common in Holland and the fluviatile parts of France should have strayed over to England need not be a matter of surprise to any one; and that several have been killed here there can, I think, be no doubt: but I very much question if they have occurred so frequently as stated in the work of my old friend Yarrell; for I happen to know that specimens in the flesh are often sent over to Leadenhall Market in the great crates of ducks from Rotterdam, and, I suspect, are nearly as often sent into the country and palmed off upon local collectors as British-killed examples. In 1868 a farmer, whose education and position in society should have taught him better, purchased, in the above-mentioned market, a fine and tolerably fresh-killed Great Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*), which had just arrived from Norway with the usual supply of Willow-Grouse and Ptarmigan; this he pocketed the next morning when he went gun in hand round his fields, and on his return home exhibited it, to an enthusiastic observer of nature living in his neighbourhood, as a curious bird he had just shot. As a matter of course an account of the capture of such a rarity was duly forwarded to the London journals, and it was only when too late that this *practical joke*, as it was termed, was fairly acknowledged—a *joke* which, I suspect, has been often but more seriously played off with specimens of other birds obtained in a similar manner. In this way splendid specimens of the Squacco Heron, Spoonbill, and other birds now scarce with us are brought from the Continent and sold to unsuspecting collectors as having been killed in Britain. Having said thus much to show the necessity of verifying the reported capture of rare species, I now proceed to enumerate the recorded instances of the occurrence of the present bird in Britain, and furnish such details respecting it in other countries as I can find.

For our knowledge of its first recognized appearance in this country we are indebted to Mr. John Hancock, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who made it known in the following communication to the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History' for 1847, vol. xx. p. 135:—

"A male specimen of this fine Warbler was shot three or four miles west of Newcastle, near the village of Swalwell, by Mr. Thomas Robson of that place, on the 28th of last May. The attention of this gentleman, who is perfectly familiar with the song of all our summer visitants, was arrested by a note which he had not before heard; and after some search he succeeded in getting a sight of the bird. It was concealed in the thickest part of a garden-hedge close to an extensive mill-dam, which is bordered with willows, reeds, and other aquatic plants. It would scarcely leave its retreat, and, when it did so, never flew far, and always kept close to the herbage. Its habits resembled those of the Reed-Warbler, being continually in motion, occasionally hanging with the body downwards, or clinging to the branches and stretching forwards to take its prey. Its song was powerful, and resembled that of the Black Ousel, but was occasionally interrupted with the harsh croaking note common to many of the Warblers, and at intervals it uttered a single shrill cry.

"The specimen was very fat, and when opened contained small beetles and flies.

"From the nature of the locality and from the time of year when captured, there can be little doubt that this bird was breeding in the neighbourhood; and I have some reason for believing that the nidification of this species has occurred in another part of England. I have had in my possession for nearly two years an egg taken by a friend of mine in Northamptonshire, which agrees in every respect with Thienemann's description and figure of the egg of *Sylvia turdoides*; and now, since the capture of the bird in Britain, it is impossible to doubt that these eggs belong to that species. It would therefore appear that this delightful songster, the largest of the European Warblers, may be a regular summer visitant to our island. Notwithstanding its large size, it might easily pass unnoticed, skulking as it does in the low herbage and seldom exposing itself