REGULUS IGNICAPILLUS.

Fire-crested Wren.

Sylvia ignicapilla, Brehm.
Regulus ingnicapillus, Cuv.
——— *mystaceus*, Vieill.
——— *pyrocephalus*, Brehm, Handb. der Naturg. Vög. Deutsch., 1831, p. 483.

I know of no birds which have caused more confusion among ordinary observers than the two species of the genus *Regulus* inhabiting the British Islands, the Golden- and the Fire-crested Wrens. I have heard it stated by some persons that there is no difference between them, and by others that the Firecrest is constantly to be seen in our woods. Now both these assertions are incorrect, as is well known to every professed ornithologist. In the first place, no two birds of the same genus can well be more different; and in the next, the Firecrest is so rare that it is seldom met with in this country. If it be necessary to point out the distinguishing characters of the two birds, I may say that the Firecrest is larger than the Goldencrest, has the centre of the crown orange-red, the forehead crossed by a band of buff, terminating in a distinct stripe of white, which surmounts the eye and extends far towards the occiput, while the lores and the ear-coverts are blackish brown, and the sides of the neck and upper surface sulphur-green,—none of which features are found in the common species.

Whatever it may be in England, the *Regulus ignicapillus* appears to be a constant migrant in the northern parts of the European continent, passing to and fro from north to south, and *vice versâ*, like so many other sylvan birds. The merit of first introducing this species to notice as pertaining to our fauna is due to the Rev. Leonard Jenyns, who obtained a specimen in his own garden at Swaffham-Bulbeck, near Cambridge, in the month of August 1832. Since that time other examples have been occasionally seen and captured—two in Norfolk, one or two in the neighbourhood of Penzance, and some four or five in Shropshire; specimens killed in that county are contained in the fine collections of Viscount Hill at Hawkstone, and T. C. Eyton, Esq., at Wellington. Still, with these instances of its capture, it must be regarded as a very rare bird, and one which cannot be sought for, with the certainty of its being found, in any part of the British Islands. To say that it is often mistaken for the common species, pays but an ill compliment to the penetration of the observer; for, besides the differences in colour pointed out above, the actions of the two birds among the trees are equally diverse: one is shy and wary, the other tame and familiar: I can affirm this the more positively, having seen and shot the bird in Malta; this difference in their disposition is also confirmed by the remarks of Mr. J. D. Hoy on the bird as observed by him in Belgium.

"I fully expected," says this gentleman, "to have found it in some very extensive tracts of forest which I visited last summer, situated between the Meuse and the Rhine; but I could neither meet with this species, nor our common Goldcrest. I have noticed the appearance of the Firecrest in the beginning of September, at first only single birds or in pairs; the end of September and the first fortnight in October seem to be the time when they pass over in the greatest numbers. I never recollect having seen more than five or six individuals together, whereas with the common species you often find them in parties of a dozen or more. By the early part of November you will rarely find the Firecrest, while the common species is abundant through the winter. I have never heard the song of the Firecrest, but have no doubt of its differing from the other; the call-note I can readily distinguish among a host of the common; it is shorter, not so shrill, and pitched in so different a key, that to one well versed in the language of birds, it is easily discovered. I think they prefer low brushwood and young plantations of fir, to the loftier trees; but yet I have often found them in the latter situations. They associate with the Tits like the other kind; but I have found them sometimes more restless and shy. I have no doubt the Firecrest would be found early in autumn, if diligently sought for, on our south-eastern coast, by those well acquainted with its notes, without which knowledge it would be difficult to find it: when within a few yards of it, this bird is readily distinguished by the white mark above the eyes."

As so little is known respecting this species, I do not hesitate to give a somewhat free translation of the passages referring to it in M. Bailly's 'Ornithologie de la Savoie,' vol. ii. p. 454, &c.:—

"The *Regulus ignicapillus* is particularly common in Savoy during the autumn and winter; it is then that numbers arrive from Switzerland, where the species is more abundant in summer than with us. They arrive in couples, male and female, or in threes and fours at a time, and frequently in troops of from eight to a dozen individuals. When migrating, these birds frequently associate with the common species; like the latter, they approach dwelling-houses, frequent gardens, parks, and orchards, examine trees, bushes, and tufts of