

CURRUCA ORPHEA.

Orphean Warbler.

Sylvia orphea, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 1815, p. 107.

— *grisea*, Vieill. Faun. Franç., p. 209.

Curruca orphea, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 423.

Adophoneus orpheus, Kaup, Natürl. Syst.

THE propriety of including the Orphean Warbler in the present work is sanctioned by the example of one of our best, but, alas! departed, ornithologists—Mr. Yarrell—who has given a figure and description of it in the second Supplement to his 'History of British Birds,' pages 10, 11, and 12, where he says:—"The occurrence of this species in Yorkshire was communicated to the 'Zoologist,' in 1849, page 2588, by Sir William Milner, of Nunappleton, who retains the specimen in his extensive collection. 'The bird was a female, and was observed in company with its mate for a considerable time before it was shot. The other bird had a black head; and the description I received left no doubt on my mind that it was a male bird of *Sylvia orphea*. The specimen obtained was shot in a small plantation near the town of Wetherby, on the 6th of July, 1848, and had the appearance of having been engaged in incubation, from the state of the plumage. Mr. Graham, a bird-preserver of York, hearing that a very uncommon bird had been shot, went over to Wetherby and, fortunately, obtained the specimen for my collection.'"

As a slight confirmation that this bird, not only visits, but breeds in England, I may add that Mr. Howard Saunders has received eggs from East Grinstead, taken by a boy in the neighbourhood, which are exactly like those of this species, and which, when compared with others collected by Mr. Saunders himself, in Spain, presented no perceptible difference. The Nunappleton specimen I have never seen; but the judgment of the ornithologists Yarrell and Sir William Milner was doubtless correct in determining it to be a true *Sylvia orphea*: neither of my valued and departed friends could have been deceived; and I look forward with confidence to the occasional occurrence of the bird within the limits of Great Britain, perhaps more frequently than may at present be suspected.

"M. Vieillot, in his work on the birds of France, says this species is not found in the environs of Paris, but inhabits in summer the forests and dry districts of Lorraine and Provence. According to M. Temminck, it visits Switzerland; and Dr. H. R. Schinz has given a coloured representation of the bird, its nest, and eggs, in his work on the eggs and nests of the more remarkable birds of Switzerland and Germany, published at Zurich in 1819. The nest in this instance was placed among blocks of stone on the ground; but bushes and other situations are frequently chosen: in form and structure the nest is large and saucer-shaped; the foundation is of small twigs bearing a few narrow leaves; upon this are some strong bents of grass interwoven inside and outside with many long horse-hairs. The eggs are four or five in number, white, somewhat tinged with pale green, with small spots and specks of reddish yellow and light brown. The egg is also figured by Mr. Hewitson and Thienemann. The bird has a loud, sonorous, and agreeable song, as the name given to it would seem to imply. It is said to feed on small insects and berries."—YARRELL'S *Brit. Birds*, 2nd Supp. p. 11.

In Bailly's 'Ornithologie de la Savoie' it is stated that:—

"This Warbler is principally found in the southern parts of Europe—Italy, Piedmont, Provence, and the southern shores of the Mediterranean. In Savoy it is nowhere so extensively diffused on its arrival in spring as in the underwood which grows along the lake of Bourget, from Bourdeau to the Abbey of Hautecombe. It is also equally numerous in the bushes which occur on the stony places from the base of Mont du Chat nearly to the region of the fir trees, beyond which it never ascends.

"It arrives from the 8th to the 20th of April, generally the male a few days before the female. As soon as the former appears, if the weather be fine, he begins to warble a song, which, although not so prolonged as that of the Nightingale, is sweet and varied, and composed in a great measure of flute-like sounds. It sometimes imitates the notes of *Sylvia atricapilla*, *Turdus musicus*, and *T. saxatilis*. Although really near, the sound sometimes seems to proceed from a distant and opposite direction. The song is usually discontinued about the middle of July. The construction of the nest is commenced at the beginning of May, and is sometimes placed near the ground, in a thick bush or amidst the branches of dwarf trees of various kinds, including the hawthorn and holly, occasionally among the ivy and creeping plants covering rocks or masonry. Externally it is coarsely constructed of straw, dried grass, moss, and flexible roots; internally it is elegantly lined with horse- and other hairs, shreds of wool, and very fine straws.