CYANECULA SUECICA.

Red-throated Bluebreast.

Motacilla Suecica, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 336.
Curruca suecica, Selby, Trans. Nat. Hist. Soc. Northumb.
Phœnicura suecica, Selby, Ill. Brit. Orn., vol. i. p. 195.
Pandicilla suecica, Blyth.
Cyanecula suecica, Brehm.

Knowledge is imparted in various ways—orally, by written characters and by pictorial representations. Written descriptions, however accurate they may be, strike the imagination less than an oral lecture; but when either medium of communication is accompanied by a faithful portraiture of the subject, another organ, that of sight, is brought into play, and it is at once rendered clear and intelligible. I am induced to make these remarks because a written description, however impressively worded, could but convey an inadequate idea of the beauty of the Red-throated Bluebreast, which yet, I trust, is satisfactorily shown in the accompanying Plate. Had the bird been as common and obtrusive as the Robin, it would have been unnecessary to invite special attention to it; but I apprehend that few of my readers are aware that so lovely a bird occasionally comes to us as a visitor from the opposite shores of the Continent, where it and perhaps one or two more species are abundant. I say perhaps, because the birds of this form inhabiting Germany, France, and Holland are differently coloured from those frequenting Norway and Sweden: those found in the greater portion of the Continent, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, have a patch of silvery white in the centre of the throat, while those from the countries to the northward of those boundaries have a similar patch of red; and in Russia a third variety or species also occurs, in which the throat is of a uniform blue. By some ornithologists each of the latter, or at least one of them, has been considered to be a distinct species; but the propriety of their so considering is, in my opinion, very questionable; at the same time I must admit that it is a nearly parallel case to that of the Yellow Wagtails with differently coloured heads. Whatever may be the ultimate decision of ornithologists, the red-throated bird, the true *Motacilla Suecica* of Linnæus, is the only one which has yet gone so far out of the ordinary route of its migrations as to visit England, and consequently is the only one I have to describe and figure in 'The Birds of Great Britain.'

The first specimen recorded as having been killed in this country was shot, in May 1826, on the boundary-hedge of Newcastle town-moor, and is now in the Museum of the Literary and Philosophical Society of that town; a second, obtained in Dorsetshire in 1836, was preserved in the Museum of Mr. R. A. Cox. Plumptree Methuen, Esq., informed Mr. Yarrell that he had an example in his possession which had been killed near Birmingham; and Mr. Henry Stevenson, of Norwich, informs me that one was picked up dead on the beach at Yarmouth in September 1841. "This specimen," he says, "is in the collection of J. H. Gurney, Esq., who has also another, killed on the 15th of May 1856, near Lowestoft; a female in company with the latter was not obtained. Both the above-mentioned examples have the *red* neck-spot, and agree in every respect with examples from Lapland. The Yarmouth bird is apparently adult, and the Lowestoft one nearly so; but the blue and red of the throat are less defined in the latter." Doubtless many more examples have visited this country than the few above enumerated; but these alone fully justify us in regarding the bird as a member of our avifauna; and it is to be hoped that it will continue to come to our shores, for no one of the summer birds could be more welcome.

If we regard specimens from North Africa, Southern, Central, Northern, and Eastern Europe, the Altai, and India as examples of one and the same bird, the range of the species will be very wide indeed; but this is an open question, and I therefore confine my remarks to the bird which is found all over Scandinavia, from the Baltic to far within the arctic circle—the one known to Linnæus. In all these northern regions it is a summer migrant, coming we know not whence. In Heligoland it annually occurs more abundantly than many of the smaller birds which descend upon that isolated spot, which is as it were a stepping-stone for many of those species which nature prompts to proceed on distant pilgrimages. During my visit to Norway, I was particularly gratified by finding this species on the Dovrefjeld; for I did not at all anticipate the presence of so beautiful a bird at such an elevation, and was much surprised to learn that it sought so inhospitable a region for the purpose of breeding; but, unlike its near ally the obtrusive Robin, it seems to shun, in the breeding-season, the presence of man, as if its finery would be too attractive and lead to its destruction, as it doubtless does; for I question whether the old males with their beautiful blue breasts would be allowed to remain unmolested either in this country or on the Continent. Those seen by me on the Dovrefjeld were extremely shy and wary, so much so that I could not tell, until after examination, which sex I had killed. The localities affected by, and the actions of this bird resemble to a certain extent those