

the Linnean Transactions that as many as eighty-four dozen have been caught by a shepherd in one day ; and Pennant states that the numbers snared about Eastbourne amounted annually to about 1840 dozen. It is not unusual for a shepherd and his lad to look after from five to seven hundred of these traps. They are opened every year about St. James's Day, the 25th of July, and are all in operation by the 1st of August. The birds arrive by hundreds in daily succession (but not in flocks) for the next six or seven weeks, probably depending on the distance northward at which they have been reared. The season for catching is concluded about the end of the third week in September, after which very few birds are observed to pass."

Temminck says the Wheatear is found in Dalmatia and Morea ; both the late Mr. Strickland and Mr. Keith Abbott found it in Persia ; and we learn from Mr. Jerdon that it is found in India : he obtained a specimen near Mhow in the cold season ; and it is known to have occurred in the upper provinces.

"In pursuit of flies," says Macgillivray, "the Wheatear performs a short excursion in the air, springing from an eminence or even from the plane ground. Its song is a short, lively, and pleasantly modulated warble, which it performs sometimes when perched on a rock, wall, or turf, but more frequently when hovering at a small height in the air, and often in the midst of its short flights, when pursued or disturbed."

The situation of the nest and the materials of which it is composed vary according to the nature of the locality. In the 'Journal of a Naturalist,' Mr. Knapp says :—"one had made her nest deep in the crevice of a stone-quarry, so carefully hidden by projecting fragments as not to be observed from without until part of the rock was removed ; her fabric was large and rudely constructed of dried bents, shreds, feathers, and rubbish collected about the huts on the down, and contained four pale-blue eggs." According to the late Mr. Salmon, the Wheatear is very abundant on the warrens in Norfolk and Suffolk, and there usually selects a deserted rabbit-burrow, in which it places its nest at some little distance from the entrance ; it is composed of dried roots, intermixed with feathers, rabbit's down, and other light substances.

The late Mr. Sweet informs us that the Wheatear is a very interesting bird for the aviary, as it is almost continually singing, that it will sing by night as well as by day if a light be kept in the room in which it is confined, and will continue to sing its "very pleasant and variable song all the winter. When a pair are kept in a large cage, it is very amusing to see them at play with each other, flying up and down, spreading open their long wings in a curious manner, dancing and singing all the time."

Dr. Saxby states that the Wheatear is so clever at imitating the notes of other birds that it would often require a practised ear indeed to discover the deception. He has often heard it imitate the notes of the Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Rock-Pipit, Wren, and even part of the song of the Skylark.

That two very marked races of the Wheatear occur in this country, I have abundant evidence : examples of the same age and sex and killed at the same time are very similar in colour, but in size differ so much as to excite attention, and to lead to the belief that they are distinct species. I was at one time impressed with the idea that all the birds that passed along our eastern coast early in March were of the larger race, and that those which frequent the western coast were of the smaller ; but on the 9th of May, 1866, Tart, the fisherman, of Dungeness, forwarded me two males and a female, which completely dissipated this notion ; for one of the males was of the smaller, and the other of the larger kind ; and never, in all my experience, have I met with so great a difference in size and weight of birds of the same species. The least of the two, which was fully adult, as shown by its grey back, white forehead, and its nearly white breast, measured in its total length $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches, from tip to tip of the outstretched wings $10\frac{1}{4}$, from the carpal joint to the tip $3\frac{1}{2}$, bill $\frac{15}{16}$, tail $2\frac{1}{4}$, tarsi $1\frac{1}{4}$, weight 1 oz. ; while of the larger, which was suffused with brown on the upper surface, the total length was $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, extent of outstretched wings $11\frac{5}{8}$, from carpal joint to tip 4, bill $\frac{15}{16}$, tail $2\frac{1}{2}$, tarsi $1\frac{1}{4}$, weight $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz. Both exhibited new black feathers on the outer wing-coverts, near the shoulder, which contrasted strongly with the brown feathers of the remaining portion of the wing. The larger one had entirely new tail-feathers, which were black, with white tips ; in this specimen also there was a smaller amount of white on the forehead, and the breast and under surface were deep buff ; it was very fat, and appeared to be a bird of the preceding year. The female, which was of the larger race, weighed $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz., measured $11\frac{5}{8}$ inches from tip to tip of the outspread wings, from the carpal joint to the tip $3\frac{3}{4}$, bill $\frac{3}{4}$, tarsi $1\frac{1}{8}$, tail $2\frac{1}{8}$.

In spring the two sexes of the Wheatear differ very considerably in appearance ; and the autumn young birds differ from both ; it is a question, however, if they are not all very much alike in winter ; when the spring arrives, a transformation in the dress of the male takes place, of so marked a character as to render him at that period a most beautiful bird.

The Plate represents two males and a female, of the natural size. The plant is the Spider-Orchis, *Ophrys aranifera*.