

PETROCINCLA SAXATILIS.

Rock-Thrush.

Lanius infaustus, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 310.
Turdus saxatilis, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 833.
Saxicola montana, Koch, Baier. Zool., tom. i. p. 185.
Monticola saxatilis, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 552.
Petrocincla saxatilis, Vig. Zool. Journ., vol. ii. p. 396.
Petrocossyphus saxatilis, Boie, Isis, 1826, p. 972.
— *Goureyi*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 370.
— *polyglottus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 370.
Petroichla saxatilis, Keys. und Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 50.
Sylvia saxatilis, Savi, Orn. Tosc., tom. i. p. 219.

A MERE glance at the accompanying Plate will be sufficient to show that the bird it represents does not strictly pertain to our avifauna; yet it is included in all the recent lists of our native birds. That it has a claim to a place therein, rests upon the capture of the one or two specimens recorded in the Supplement to Yarrell's 'History of British Birds,' all the other accounts of its being shot not bearing the test of investigation, however positive the assertions made respecting them. This may appear a very sweeping remark; but, in my opinion, it is mainly true; and the following account, extracted from Mr. Yarrell's work above referred to, gives I believe, the only instances of the occurrence of the bird in our islands to be depended upon.

"A beautiful specimen of the Rock-Thrush was obtained, on the 19th of May, 1843, by Mr. Joseph Trigg, who shot it at Therfield, near Royston, in Hertfordshire, while it was sitting on an ash-tree, on the evening of the day mentioned. I saw the specimen before it was skinned for preservation by Mr. John Norman, of Royston, and received the first notice of the occurrence from my friend Thomas Wrotham, Esq., whose influence with Mr. Trigg obtained me the loan of the bird for my use in this work; and I beg to return my best thanks to all the parties for the opportunity thus afforded me of figuring and describing the first example of the Rock-Thrush that has been known to occur in this country. I have very recently heard of another specimen having been shot by a gamekeeper, who, unaware of the interest attached to the bird, saved only the head and neck, which being shown to a gentleman conversant with ornithology, the species, from its peculiar colouring, was identified without difficulty." The first specimen above mentioned has since passed from the possession of Mr. Trigg into that of J. H. Gurney, Esq.

If the Rock-Thrush has but slender claims to a place in our avifauna, we need only cross the Channel to find ourselves in a country of which it is strictly a native; for in certain parts of France, particularly those of a rocky or alpine character, it is very plentiful. It is, in fact, a bird of the hills, a tenant of the Alps, the Apennines, and the numerous spurs jutting out from those great ranges; it is also a common denizen of many parts of Spain, Italy, and the Tyrol; but in all parts of Europe it is strictly a migrant, coming and going with the seasons, like our own Ring-Ousel. It winters in the Atlas and other mountain-ranges of Northern Africa, and is to be found in every district of that country of a similar character. Many of the skins of the bird on sale in Paris are made in Tangiers, and others in Algiers, Tunis, and Egypt. The specimens from Tangiers are shorter in the body, and, moreover, have shorter bills, than those from the Nile; these differences, however, can only be regarded as local variations, for in colouring and markings the Nile and Morocco birds are very similar.

Mr. Wright, who has given us a List of the Birds observed by him in Malta and Gozo, states that it arrives there about the middle of March, generally in pairs, and may be seen till May, and that it reappears in September, on its voyage southward.

The Rev. H. B. Tristram, in his remarks "On the Ornithology of Palestine," says:—"Petrocincla saxatilis, whose red tail and Redstart-like habits link it most closely with the *Ruticillinae*, is, in most parts of Palestine, merely a passing traveller, and tarries but a night. On the 8th of April the whole of Mount Gerizim was covered by a restless flock of these birds, which, at a distance, we took for Black Redstarts, so exactly did they resemble that bird in their actions. They hopped restlessly from rock to rock, never taking a flight of more than a few yards; and in this fashion, in loose order, ranging for perhaps a mile in breadth, they appeared to be steadily proceeding northwards. When the foremost line had reached the valley, they took a flight across to the foot of Mount Ebal, over the gardens, and then more leisurely mounted the hill. Afterwards we occasionally met with this bird in the Upper Lebanon, in the month of June, where, no doubt, it was breeding."