

## PETROCOSSYPHUS CYANUS.

### Blue Rock-Thrush.

- Turdus cyanus*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 296.  
—— *solitarius*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 345.  
*Monticola cyanus*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 552.  
*Sylvia solitaria*, Savi, Orn. Tosc., p. 217.  
*Petrocossyphus cyaneus*, Boie, Isis, 1828, p. 319.  
*Petrocincla cyana*, Keys. et Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 50.  
*Turdus azureus*, Crespon, Faun. Mérid., p. 179.  
*Petrocincla longirostris*, Blyth, Journ. Asiat. Soc. Beng., vol. xvi. p. 150.  
—— *cyanea*, Degl. et Gerbe, Orn. Eur., tom. i. p. 448.  
—— *Pandoo*, Sykes, in Proc. of Comm. of Sci. and Corr. of Zool. Soc., pt. ii. p. 87?

THE propriety of adding this species to the British fauna, and to the list of Irish birds, rests on the authority of A. G. More, Esq., who, in a letter addressed to Mr. R. B. Sharpe, from the Natural History Department of the Royal Dublin Society, says:—"The Blue Thrush, *T. cyanus*, was, I believe, certainly killed in Ireland. The specimen came to us through a member of this Society, who saw it in the hands of Mr. Glennon, a bird-stuffer in Dublin, who told him that it had been shot associated with some Starlings in the county of Meath, and had been sent to him by a Mr. Brassington, on the 17th of November, 1866. The bird was, I hear, seen in the flesh by several naturalists, and has every appearance of being a wild specimen, the plumage being not at all frayed or worn. Like many other of the rarer visitors to Ireland, the bird seems to have arrived late in the autumn, when I have noticed that many birds migrate from east to west on the Continent; I therefore think its occurrence by no means surprising. I dare say your attention may have been drawn to this unusual line of migration, as mine was, by the occurrence of the Black Redstart in winter in England. I wrote a few remarks on the subject in the 'Zoologist' for 1859." Quite recently, indeed since my Plate of the species for the present work was drawn, Messrs. Sharpe and Dresser have thrown some doubt upon the accuracy of the above statement: thus in the account of the bird in their 'Birds of Europe' they say, "Through the kindness of Dr. Carte we have been able to examine a specimen of the Blue Rock-Thrush, said to have been killed in Ireland . . . Without commenting on the unfortunate circumstances which must have induced an example of this species to wander so far away from its natural habitat, and to occur in Ireland in the winter; we may state our opinion, based on an examination of the stuffed bird itself, that it has not been mounted when fresh killed, but from a previously prepared skin. On the other hand both Dr. Carte and Mr. A. G. More believe that the occurrence of the bird was genuine; and we therefore record the fact as being of interest, and exhibiting the highest northern range of the species in Europe." While the specimen was in London I also availed myself of the opportunity to examine it, when I found it to be an adult male in rather a bad state of preservation, and, if I recollect rightly, with one of the legs burst by the wire employed in mounting—a circumstance which frequently occurs when a specimen is mounted from a dried skin, and which may probably have given rise to the doubt in Messrs. Sharpe and Dresser's minds as to its being a genuine Irish specimen. I may here remark that there is no more improbability of the bird having been killed in Ireland than there is of the spotted Cuckoo occurring there, or of the Black Redstart in autumn in England. That sooner or later the bird would be included in the list of our accidental visitors there can be but little doubt, since it is dispersed over countries close at hand (France, Portugal, and Spain), while in those lying further to the south and east (even in India) the bird is a common denizen.

In many respects the Blue Rock-Thrush is a bird of great interest. Its habits are peculiar, its colouring is unusual; and the associations connected with it are of a pleasing character, inasmuch as by most recent writers it is supposed to be the "sparrow which sitteth alone on the house-top" of the Holy Scriptures; and from what I saw of it in Malta, where it was frequently to be seen perched solitary on the front walls of the flat-roofed houses, I think the supposition is probably correct. During my visit to the islands composing the Maltese group I never saw two together on the same wall, while sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis*) were abundant; and it must be borne in mind that one of the earliest specific designations assigned to it, that of *solitarius*, had reference to this peculiarity in its habits.

I have stated that the Blue Rock-Thrush is found in France, Portugal, and Spain; it also occurs in the south of Germany, in Savoy, Egypt, Algeria, Northern Africa, and Palestine. Mr. Moggeridge states that