Both sexes of the Water-Ouzel are so much alike that dissection must be resorted to to distinguish them with certainty; the female is, however, somewhat smaller in size. All that I have seen from Wales, Derbyshire, and Scotland have the chestnut mark across the abdomen, while in those from Sweden and Norway the chestnut mark is absent, that portion of the body being of the same sooty-black colour as the other parts of the plumage. In my work on the Birds of Europe, I gave a figure of this black-breasted bird as a distinct species, under the name of Cinclus melanogaster, but at the same time expressed a doubt if this variation in the colouring of the abdomen was not due to locality, or to some other unexplained cause. Strange to say, however, the specimens occasionally killed in Norfolk have this character also; at least, I have just received a letter from H. Stevenson, Esq., of Norwich, in which he states that he has "two Norfolkkilled Water-Ouzels, both of which have the black breast without any appearance of rufous on the abdomen." He has "also seen one or two others during the last few years, killed in that county, which exhibited the same style of plumage; they all appeared in autumn or winter, between the months of November and February. These specimens exactly agree with one collected by the late Mr. Wolley in Lapland, and now in the Norwich Museum." Can the black-breasted Water-Ouzels, which are occasionally killed in Norfolk, be stray birds from the opposite shores of Norway and Sweden, which have found their way across the North Sea? I can account for their occurrence in no other way. I may mention that Swiss examples differ both from our own and the Norwegian birds in having the crown of the head, back of the neck, and the back much lighter in colour, but resemble ours in having the chestnut-coloured abdomen. These variations, I apprehend, are due to locality only; for I cannot believe the birds to be specifically distinct.

The site chosen by the Water-Ouzel for the nest, its construction, and the characters of the young birds are all very curious. It would be supposed that the study of this part of the bird's economy would tend to enlighten us as to its natural position in our systems; but such is not the case; for, after much thought on the subject, I am necessitated to regard the genus Cinclus as one of the isolated forms of ornithology. That it appears to have some remote alliance to the members of the genera Troglodytes, Scytalopus, and their allies, I am ready to admit; at the same time this seeming alliance may be more fanciful than real. Out of Europe, the true home of the C. aquaticus, several other species of Water-Ouzels are known to exist, both in the Old and New World; their head-quarters would seem to be the great Himalaya ranges and their offsets, for we there find several species. The form also occurs in Japan. In the New World, all the temperate portions, from the Rocky Mountains to Mexico, are inhabited by a bird of this genus; and among the torrents of New Granada, Ecuador, and Peru, two species exist which are not found elsewhere.

That the Water-Ouzel changes its locality, and performs partial migrations, is certain; for at one period it may be observed in open broad rivers, at others among the high mountain-rills; and Mr. St. John states, in his 'Tour in Sutherlandshire,' that in October it "comes down the burns near the sea," and adds that "these merry little birds resort to the same stone year after year; and seem to be regular attendants on the small streams where the trout spawn." From these situations it retires, on the approach of spring, to its usual breeding-haunts, and commences the task of nidification in the month of April. A nest, taken from the shelf of a rock overhanging the stream, sent to me by Colonel Watkyns in May 1858, containing four young birds, was of a domed form, with an opening in front less neatly constructed than the other part; it was outwardly formed of green moss very firmly matted or felted together, with a very distinct, thick lining or inner nest of grasses, within which again was a layer of dead oak- and other leaves.

The eggs are usually four or five in number, of a very delicate transparent pinky flesh-colour before being blown, after which they become of a pure white. They are of an elegant, lengthened form, somewhat pointed at the smaller end, one inch and an eighth in length, by three-quarters of an inch in breadth.

The plumage of most British examples may be described as follows:—forehead, crown, space below the eye, sides and back of the neck chocolate-brown; above and below the eye a small crescent of white; feathers of the back, wing, and upper tail-coverts deep grey, bordered with blackish brown; wings and tail brown; chin and breast white; centre of the abdomen chestnut; lower part of the abdomen black; flanks and vent dark slate-grey; bill olive-black; irides dark brown; tarsi pale purplish grey in front and on the upper parts of the toes between the joints, nails nearly black.

The young, when first hatched, and until leaving the nest, have the fleshy gape or sides of the mouth dilated to an extent not observable in other birds, the Starling and Hoopoe not excepted. This gape and the inside of the mouth, too, are very beautifully coloured, as will be seen on reference to the accompanying representation of the nestling birds, with the nest entirely altered in contour by the trampling down of its sides. At this age their white abdomens are speckled with brown, and by the end of autumn they are like the adults,