

OREOCINCLA AUREA.

White's Thrush.

- Turdus aureus*, Hollandre, Faun. de la Moselle, p. 60.
—— *varius*, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. i. p. 449.
—— *Whitei*, Eyt. Hist. of Rarer Brit. Birds, p. 92, and fig.
—— *varius* seu *Whitei*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., tom. iv. p. 602.
Oreocincla Whitei, Gould, Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1837, p. 45.
Turdus humulatus, Blas. List. of Birds of Eur., Eng. edit., p. 9.
Oreocincla aurea, Bonap. Cat. des. Ois. d'Eur., p. 5.

THE known members of the genus *Oreocincla*, which are not more than three or four in number, inhabit the forests of most parts of the Old World with the exception of those of Africa. Some of them are found in the extreme south of Tasmania, in Australia, and Java; while others are distributed over India, China, and Japan; and it is from these latter countries that the few individuals of *O. aurea* that have been killed in Europe have probably wandered.

The first recorded instances of the occurrence of the bird in England will be found in Yarrell's 'History of British Birds,' where he states that, by the kind permission of the Earl of Malmesbury, he was enabled to give a figure of the species from an extremely beautiful example shot by his Lordship on his estate at Heron Court, near Christchurch, Hampshire, in January 1828, and, with reference to a second specimen, mentions that he was indebted to Mr. Jesse for an introduction to his friend Mr. Bigge, of Hampton Court, who had allowed him the use of an example said to have been shot in the New Forest, Hampshire, by one of the forest-keepers, who parted with it to a bird-preserver at Southampton, of whom Mr. Bigge bought it for his own collection; the third is stated, in the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History,' vol. xi. p. 78, to have been obtained by R. L. Allman, Esq., in the neighbourhood of Bandon, in the county of Cork, Ireland, about ten days prior to the date of the communication (Dec. 15, 1842), and to be in the possession of G. J. Allman, Esq., Professor of Botany in Trinity College, Dublin. More recently, by a happy chance for ornithologists, a fourth and living example attracted the notice of one of our best naturalists and sportsmen, Mr. Robert F. Tomes, who perseveringly followed up the bird until he obtained the prize, an examination of which led to the production of his admirable paper in 'The Ibis' for 1859, "On the occurrence of White's Thrush (*Oreocincla aurea*) near Stratford-on-Avon, with remarks on the genera *Oreocincla*, *Turdus*, and *Merula*," from which I take the liberty of making some extracts referring to the present species.

"The opportunity of examining a recently killed specimen of this Thrush," says Mr. Tomes, "occurs so rarely, that I thought it desirable to make an examination of it at once, before it had undergone mutilation of any of its parts in the process of preservation. The village of Welford, five miles west of Stratford-on-Avon, where the specimen was obtained, is situated in a bend of the Avon, on a soil of rich alluvium. Its position is highly favourable for the growth of timber and fruit trees; and it is well shrouded in orchards and small enclosures fringed with their hedgerows and ivied elms, affording a favourite haunt for many of the smaller birds—with a good supply of cherries and other fruits in the summer months, and berries through the autumn and winter seasons.

"In a small grass inclosure, immediately adjoining the village, and thickly surrounded by elms, a friend of mine observed a bird rise from a dry leafy ditch, which at the first glance was mistaken for a Woodcock, but soon recognized as one of the Thrush kind. This happened on the 6th of January; and on hearing the account, I stimulated further search, but without effect until the 23rd of that month, when the bird was again flushed from the same inclosure, and, as before, from the bottom of a dry ditch amongst dead leaves. Again on the 26th it rose from the same ditch, and within a few yards of the same spot. On each occasion it was busy in turning over the dead leaves, from beneath which it appears to have taken its food. Although Blackbirds, Thrushes, and Missel-Thrushes were abundant and seen at the same time feeding on the ivy and hawthorn berries, the present bird was always observed to resort only to the trees or hedges when disturbed, and then merely as a place of rest, remaining for some time perched in an upright position in one spot without noticing the berries or the species feeding on them. Its flight, when roused from feeding, was very undulating and low; and it often settled on the ground, only making choice of a tree when it happened to pass under one, into which it rose almost vertically. As far as its habits could be ascertained from these short opportunities of observation, it would appear to be almost entirely a ground-feeder. Mr. Blyth says the allied Indian species, *Oreocincla dauma*, is generally met with amongst bamboos, in which situation the ground would very likely be the attraction rather than the canes.