CORACIAS GARRULA, *Linn.*

Roller.

Coracias garrula, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 32.
Galgulus, Briss. Orn., tom. ii. p. 64, pl. v. fig. 2.
——— *garrulus*, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. xxix. p. 428.
Coracias germanicus, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., tom. i. p. 158.
——— *planiceps*, Brehm, ibid., p. 159.
——— *garrulus*, Cab. Mus. Hein., Theil ii. p. 117.

Although the avifauna of the British Islands is generally destitute of the gorgeous hues which distinguish the birds of the tropics, still some three or four species conspicuous for the beauty of their plumage either reside with or pay us occasional visits. The Roller is one of them; and but few of the birds of the torrid zone are more gaily attired, or more striking in appearance. That the clear blue skies and the pure atmosphere of the European continent are more in harmony with the tints which adorn this bird than the humid, uncertain, and foggy climate of our islands cannot be denied; and it is in the countries across the Straits that it is most frequently found; still we have been, and probably ever shall be, favoured with its occasional visits, the recorded instances of which, from the Land's End to the northernmost part of Scotland, are already very numerous. Nor has Ireland been unvisited by this fine bird; for Thompson informs us that the late "Mr. R. Ball, when walking through the demesne at Carton, the seat of the Duke of Leinster, in the middle of September 1831, had his attention attracted by a bird pursued by a great number of Rooks, which, instead of flying off to avoid, continued for a considerable time to dash into the midst of them, apparently for the sake only of annoyance. From the size, brilliant plumage, and singular flight of this bird, my friend was satisfied that it was a Roller." Thompson was told of another being shot in the county of Sligo, and a third in the south of Ireland; but adds, "as yet no example of the bird unquestionably killed in this island has to my knowledge come under the inspection of the naturalist." In Mr. Rodd's 'List of Cornish Birds' it is stated that a specimen had been seen near the Land's End, and that a female shot at St. Levan is in his own collection. I might continue to cite instances of its capture from this end of England to the Orkneys, were it worth while to do so; but such notices may be found in many, if not all, the works treating on our native birds, from Bewick to Macgillivray. As recently as the months of May and June 1865 I received three notes giving me accounts of its appearance, one in Devonshire, another in Essex, and a third in Dumfriesshire. The first, Mr. Gatcombe states, was killed by a farmer's boy on Spriddlescombe Farm, near Plymouth, the property of J. H. Eccles, Esq.; on dissection this proved to be a male, and its stomach contained the remains of beetles and the skins of several long whitish grubs or caterpillars; a female was seen in its company, but was not obtained. The Essex bird, Mr. Travis of Saffron Walden informed me, was shot on the 17th of May, by the gamekeeper of G. Saunders, Esq., of Little Chesterford Park; this was a male bird, and just before it was shot had been sucking an egg. The bird observed in Dumfriesshire, I learn by a note from Sir William Jardine, was seen during the previous November by the keeper of Mr. Yonstoun, of Torthorwold, flying about a thorny hedge; it could not be approached within shooting-distance; but its remains were afterwards found, and the wings and tail sent to Sir William. This poor straggler from a foreign land was evidently bewildered, and should have been in a more southern climate at that period; for be it known that the bird is strictly migratory in all parts of Europe, and is only found there in summer, as in autumn it crosses the Mediterranean for the more congenial climate of Africa, where insect food is abundant, and a genial sun reigns, under which it may preen its beautiful feathers.

Mr. Stevenson, after enumerating the numerous instances of the occurrence of the Roller in his county, remarks:—"The earliest record, however, is contained in the following remarkable note by Sir Thomas Browne, made just two hundred years ago:—'On the 14th of May, 1664, a very rare bird was sent me, killed at Crostwich, which seemed to be some kind of Jay.' After giving a description which proves that the bird was a Roller, Sir T. Browne assigns to it the name of *Garrulus Argentoratensis*."

During the summer months the Roller is found in many parts of Spain, Italy, Germany, and Turkey, to the eastward of which country it proceeds as far as Affghanistan and Cashmere; but I have not yet seen specimens from India proper, though Mr. Jerdon states that it is now and then found in its north-western provinces.

"About the wooded hills that skirt the elevated plains of the Eastern Atlas," says Mr. Salvin, "the Roller may not unfrequently be met with. In these districts it breeds in the month of May, choosing for the position of its nest a hollow in a tree, and usually preferring one that has a side entrance. In this the eggs