

NYCTALE TENGMALMI.

Tengmalm's Owl.

Strix Tengmalmi, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 291.

Noctua Tengmalmi, Cuv. Règn. Anim., edit. 1829, tom. i. p. 345.

Athene Tengmalmi, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 549.

Ægolius Tengmalmi, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 34.

Scotophilus Tengmalmi, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 217.

Nyctale Tengmalmi, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List. of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 7.

In size and general appearance the *Nyctale Tengmalmi* is very similar to *Athene noctua*; so much so, says Naumann, that superficial observers have confounded it with that bird; the ornithologist, however, sees at a glance that it is not only specifically but generically distinct—the face is whiter, the facial disk more complete, the plumage more dense and silky; the arrangement of the markings is different, and the tarsi and toes, instead of being bare, are thickly clothed with feathers. The situations the bird affects and the countries it inhabits are also very different; it keeps to the great primeval forests of spruce and fir clothing the mountains of various parts of Europe, particularly those of Norway, Lapland, and Russia; it is true that it is sparingly found in the central parts of Germany, in Switzerland, and occasionally in England, but its visits to this country must be regarded as purely accidental. Naumann states that it is not so wild in its disposition as *A. noctua*, that it sleeps more soundly during the day, and is not so easily aroused and driven from the holes in the trees in which it rests, putting up with a good deal of teasing before it will leave its retreat. Its flight is said to be like that of *Otus vulgaris*, but with a quicker flapping of the wings.

Its food consists chiefly of small quadrupeds, particularly wood- and field-mice, shrews, and bats, which latter it probably takes while in a state of rest, or when leaving their lurking-places. Naumann says it is a true nocturne, and that it retires to its resting-place before sunrise, and remains secluded therein until the close of day.

Mr. H. E. Dresser has kindly furnished me with the following extracts from letters addressed to him by his friends and correspondents in the countries mentioned below; and I insert them as an interesting addition to our small stock of knowledge respecting this species.

Mr. Edward Leidensacher, of Cilli, in Styria, says, "*Nyctale Tengmalmi* is very rare here, still it is occasionally found nesting. On the 4th of May, 1863, I received two fully feathered little owls, taken out of the nest the day previous. They were dark brown, whitish round the facial disk; the wings had white-grey spots, the bill was bluish, and their irides light yellow. I took care of them, and in the month of October they cast off the brown plumage, and became coloured and marked as Tengmalm's Owls usually are. They were taken out of a hollow tree, on the edge of a wood near Prekorje, about an hour's walk from Cilli. The female must certainly have had eggs in March."

Dr. Kutter, of Transtadt, in Posen, wrote on the 27th March, 1867, "I have found this Owl breeding five times,—twice in 1862, when I obtained three eggs on the 11th of April, and four on the 15th; and three times in 1866, viz. on the 25th of April three eggs incubated, on the 1st of May four fresh, and on the 14th of the same month four others also fresh. All were found in holes in trees at the height of about 20 feet from the ground, chiefly on the pine-thickets on the mountains.

"I have never observed the *Nyctale Tengmalmi* in the low lands, whereas, on the other hand, its relative, *Athene noctua*, occurs there; and I have never found the latter breeding in the larger forests, but invariably in trees, or buildings standing alone in fields or fruit-orchards. As to whether *Nyctale Tengmalmi* also nests in rocks I cannot say from my own personal observation; but I have been assured from a most trustworthy source that such is exceptionally the case. I have always found the eggs at the bottom of a hole in a tree, without any regular nest under them, but sometimes surrounded with a slight wreath of straws and feathers. The bird seems to sit hard, but is not so fearless as *Athene noctua*, from under which I have several times drawn the eggs without apparently disturbing the bird. The number of the eggs seems to vary between three and four, and not two and three, as is generally stated. As to whether they have a second brood I cannot say, as I have always procured the eggs when merely passing through the mountainous part of the country."

The recorded instances of the occurrence of Tengmalm's Owl in the British Islands are only six in number—five in England, and one in Scotland; Ireland is not yet able to include it in her avifauna. Of the five English examples, the first was shot near Morpeth, in Northumberland, in 1812; the second, a recently killed