

SURNIA FUNEREA.

Hawk Owl.

Strix funerea, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 25.

— *ulula*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 26.

— *doliata*, Pall. Zool. Ross.-Asiat., tom. i. p. 316.

— *hudsonia*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 295.

— *nisoria*, Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. i. p. 84.

— *arctica*, Sparrm. Mus. Carls. p. 51.

Noctua (Surnia) funerea, Cuv. Règn. Anim., edit. 1817, tom. i. p. 332.

Surnia funerea, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., tom. i. p. 101.

— *borealis*, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 100.

— *ulula*, Bonap. Consp. Gen. Av., tom. i. p. 36.

Syrnium nisoria, Kaup, Natürl. Sys. der Eur. Thier., p. 59.

THIS diurnal Owl, so commonly spread over many parts of Northern Europe, Siberia, and America, having been twice captured in England, ornithologists generally agree in the propriety of giving it a place in our avifauna: its visits, however, must be regarded as purely accidental; and destitute as these islands are of the peculiarly wild and sterile districts so frequent in the countries it inhabits, it is not likely that it will ever become a resident here. Its first occurrence in Britain was recorded by the late Mr. Thompson, of Belfast, in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London for 1835, in the following words:—" *Surnia funerea*. An Owl of this species, preserved in the collection of Dr. Birkitt, of Waterford, was taken on board a collier, a few miles off the coast of Cornwall, in March 1830, being at the time in so exhausted a state as to allow itself to be captured by the hand. On the arrival of the vessel at Waterford, whither she was bound, the bird was given to a friend of Dr. Birkitt, with whom it lived a few weeks, and then came into his possession."

The second instance of its appearance was recorded in the 'Zoologist' for 1851, p. 3029, by Mr. E. T. Higgins, who says: "The subject of this communication was shot on the 25th or 26th of August, 1847, about two o'clock in the afternoon (the sun shining brightly at the time), whilst hawking for prey on Backwell Hill, near the Yatton (Clevedon) Station, on the Bristol and Exeter Railway, and on the day following, whilst still in the flesh, came under my observation; for the genuineness of the specimen I can therefore vouch. The delay in the record of its capture has arisen from my inability to obtain the bird for description sooner. Having at length had it placed in my hands, I hasten to bring it before your readers." After giving a minute description, and a very good woodcut of the specimen, he continues: "This is in all probability a young bird; I say 'in all probability,' because the rare birds, which have at different times been obtained in England, have, with scarcely an exception, been examples of the first or second year. May we not, from this remarkable but well-known fact, reasonably conclude that the occurrence of these accidental visitors is to be attributed to their instincts not being sufficiently developed to enable them to retrace their way when carried to a distance from their natural habitat by a strong current of wind?"

For an account of the habits and economy of this elegant and singular Owl, which of course I have had no opportunities of observing myself, I must draw largely upon other ornithological writers, and shall commence with Mr. Wolley's account in the 'Zoologist,' and Mr. Wheelwright's in his 'Spring and Summer in Lapland,' both because they treat of the bird as seen nearest home, and because, in my opinion, their remarks are particularly truthful and interesting.

"The Hawk Owl," says Mr. Wolley, "is not uncommon in Lapland. It flies much in the day-time, and, with its long tail, short wings, and quick flight, has a very hawk-like appearance in the air when the large and square form of its head is not seen. Its cry, when uttered near its nest, is also similar to a hawk's; and it often sits on the bare top of an old dead fir to watch intruders, apparently without any idea that it can be in danger. It carries itself much after the fashion of the more regular Owls; but, while the feathers at the back give a great breadth to its full face, there is quite a 'table' at the top of its head. It casts its bright yellow eyes downwards with the true air of half-puzzled wisdom, or turns its head round for a leisurely gaze in another direction; to glance backwards is out of the question, and to look at any one with a single eye much beneath its dignity. I have seen it from my window fly down from its stand, and take the mouse it caught back to the tree before it began to eat it; but it shifted its place several times before it found a convenient spot for finishing the meal. When disabled, it at once 'squares' itself for defence, putting on its most formidable countenance, guarding its back and presenting its front to the enemy; silently and calmly it