

MILVUS MIGRANS.

Black Kite.

- Falco migrans*, Bodd. Tab. de Pl. Enl., p. 28, no. 472.
Accipiter milvus, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. i. p. 356.
Falco ater et *F. austriacus*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 262.
— *fusco-ater*, Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. i. p. 27, et tom. viii. p. 11.
— *ater* et *F. fuscus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 53.
Milvus niger, Briss. Orn., tom. i. p. 413.
— *austriacus* et *F. ater*, Daud. Orn., tom. ii. p. 149.
Hydroicteia atra, Kaup, Class. der Säug. u. Vög., p. 115.
Milvus (Hydroicteia) migrans, Gray, Hand-list of Birds, p. 26.

IN 1867 Mr. Hancock made known the circumstance of an individual of this species having been killed in Northumberland; and almost simultaneously a specimen was transmitted to me from Northern Australia,— facts which will give the reader an idea of how widely this species ranges over the globe. That there might be no mistake in the matter, I submitted the Australian bird to the inspection of J. H. Gurney, Esq., who immediately said it was identical with the European *Milvus migrans*; and Mr. Hancock's testimony will, I am sure, be deemed sufficient as to the identity of the British-killed or Northumberland example. Either as a bird of passage or as a migrant this species is said to inhabit most of the central portions of Europe, Asia Minor, and almost the whole of Africa; we also find it in the lists of the birds of many other countries.

“The geographical distribution of the Black Kite” says Professor Newton, in his edition of Yarrell's ‘British Birds,’ “is extensive. Though not found in Norway, Sweden, or Finland, in Russia it reaches as far to the north as Archangel, and thence across Siberia, becoming rarer to the eastward, and hardly observed beyond the Lena. It is said by Pallas to winter in Persia, where De Philippi also found it. It is very common in the Caucasus; and Messrs. Dickson and Ross obtained it at Erzeroum. In Palestine, according to Canon Tristram, it arrives about the beginning of March in immense numbers, and scatters itself over the whole country. There is much discrepancy in the accounts of recent travellers as to its occurrence in Egypt, some stating that it is very abundant there, and others that they never met with it, and that a near ally (*Milvus aegyptius*) must have been mistaken for it. The explanation of the difficulty probably lies in the fact that, while *M. aegyptius* is a resident in Egypt, *M. migrans* is a bird of passage only and may not always stop for the convenience of other travellers on its way down or up the Nile valley. Drs. Von Heuglin and E. A. Brehm include it as a bird of Eastern Kordofan and Abyssinia; and Mr. Blanford found it to be extremely common both in the highlands and lowlands of the latter country. Mr. Chapman sent specimens procured on the Zambesi to Mr. Layard; and Mr. Edward Newton shot a bird, pronounced by Mr. Gurney to be of this species, in Madagascar. Mr. Layard also records an example killed at Colesberg, in the Cape Colony; and Andersson met with it in Damara Land, where it arrives in autumn in large numbers, and remains throughout the breeding-season. In Western Africa it has been obtained at Bissao and on the Niger. It occurs in Morocco, and is very common in Algeria, breeding in the Atlas, but not occurring to the south of that range of mountains. In Europe it is said to be met with occasionally in Portugal and in Spain, where it breeds, as it also does in several parts of France. It does not seem to have occurred in Belgium; but the Leyden Museum contains a specimen killed in Holland.”

With respect to its solitary occurrence in England Mr. Hancock says (in ‘The Ibis’ for 1867, p. 253):—

“A fine mature male example of the Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*, came into my possession in a fresh state on the 11th of May, 1866. It was taken in a trap by Mr. F. Fulger, the Duke of Northumberland's gamekeeper, a few days before, in the Red-deer park at Alnwick. This is, I believe, the first time that this fine rapacious bird has occurred in Britain. The plumage was in very good condition, except on the lower part of the body (where it had sustained some injury from the trap), and agrees with that of mature specimens, in my collection, which I received from the Continent some years ago. It was proved by dissection to be a male.”

Throughout the whole of the countries embraced in its wide range the Black Kite is migratory, proceeding northward in spring and returning southward in autumn—thereby fully meriting the earliest appellation, that of *migrans*, bestowed upon it by Boddaert.

Mr. Salvin, writing of the bird as seen by him in the Eastern Atlas, says, in ‘The Ibis’ for 1859, p. 184:—

“During the breeding-season it is much more abundant in the Souk-Harras district than *M. regalis*.”