

FALCO ISLANDUS, J. F. Gmel.

Iceland Falcon.

- Falco islandus*, J. F. Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 271.
— *candicans islandicus*, Schleg. Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., p. 1.
— ——— var. *β. islandicus*, Blas. List of Birds of Eur., Eng. edit., p. 1.
— *islandicus*, Brehm, Lehrb., tom. i. p. 44.
Hierofalco islandicus, Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, p. 3.
Falco (Hierofalco) islandicus, Gray, Handl. of Birds, p. 18.

As the name assigned to this species implies, Iceland is its principal home; there it performs the task of reproduction, just as the Gyrfalcon does in Northern Europe, and the succeeding species (*Falco candicans*) in the arctic regions. It is a well-known law of nature, which more especially prevails among Eagles and Falcons, that the young are either driven forth by their parents or take upon themselves to wander into far-distant countries before they become domiciled in their native home. From this tendency of the young to wander, it is not surprising that Scotland and the northern and some other parts of England should from time to time be visited by examples of this species, records of which, and in whose collections they are deposited, may be found in the 'Zoologist' and other journals devoted to British ornithology. Nearly all, however, have been young birds of the year, which had not yet commenced the second moult, still less obtained the plumage borne for the remainder of their lives. Among these I may particularly mention a fine specimen kindly sent up for my inspection by Dr. Dewar of Glasgow, who informs me that it was shot by a friend of his in the island of North Uist, one of the Outer Hebrides, in September 1864, and sent to him in the flesh. It had frequented his friend's poultry-yard for a considerable time, and killed numbers of his chickens. It was not at all shy. In April or May 1866 the same gentleman shot another, which had frequented the poultry-yard daily for a month; this, unfortunately, was not preserved. My thanks are also due to the authorities of the Norfolk and Norwich Museum for the loan of another fine but immature example. It is probable that instances of the appearance of the adult in Britain may also have occurred; and one at least has been recorded; for Professor Newton informs us that "Mr. Borrer possesses an adult Iceland Falcon shot at Mayfield, in Sussex, in January 1845." There is also another in the British portion of the National Collection, said to have been killed in England; but where, is unknown.

There are at least four naturalists who have paid especial attention to the history and changes of this fine bird and its two allies *Falco candicans* and *F. gyrfalco*, namely the late Mr. Hoy, Mr. Hancock, of Newcastle, Professor Schlegel, of Leyden, and Professor Newton, all the more important points of whose observations have been incorporated in a valuable article on the subject in the new edition of 'Yarrell's British Birds,' to which, as it is too lengthy to be quoted, I must refer my readers, and content myself with extracting a few passages having special reference to the present species. The subject has also been most ably treated in 'The Ibis' for 1862, p. 43 *et seqq.*

"As a constant inhabitant of Europe," says Professor Newton, "the Iceland Falcon is only known in the island whence it takes its name, and is there by no means uncommon, breeding in precipitous cliffs or ranges of rock bordering the numerous lakes, which are thronged during the summer by innumerable waterfowl, and thereby securing a plentiful supply of food for its offspring, though it is stated that Ptarmigans form the chief prey of the adults, and such of the young as pass the winter in that country, when it is comparatively deserted by aquatic birds. Most of the young, however, wander southward at that season; and examples annually visit the Færoes, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Holland. In the British Islands, probably, more have occurred than of the Greenland Falcon; but of the many so-called 'Gyr Falcons' recorded as seen or taken here, the number which can be with certainty determined to be Icelanders is perhaps rather fewer.

"This bird is believed to breed in Greenland, but only in the southern parts, and seems to be of not very rare occurrence along the coast of Labrador, where, according to Audubon, it also breeds. To judge from Richardson's account, it is not uncommon in the fur-countries, where it, as well as *Falco candicans*, probably breeds. On the western side of the continent adults have been obtained in Alaska, where it is said by Mr. Dall to be resident and usually confined to the mountains, breeding, according to Professor Spencer F. Baird, both there and on the Lower Mackenzie River, indifferently, on trees and cliffs. Whether *Falco islandus* crosses to Asia cannot be determined.

"From information supplied to Mr. Hewitson by Mr. Proctor, the latter saw in northern Iceland several