

PERNIS APIVORUS.

Honey-Buzzard.

Falco apivorus, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 23.

Pernis apivorus, Cuv. Règn. Anim., 1817, tom. i. p. 323.

Falco poliorhynchus, Bechst. Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. i. p. 19.

—— *dubius*, Sparrm. Mus. Carls., tab. 26.

—— *incertus*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. i. p. 32.

Accipiter lacertarius, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. i. p. 359.

Pernis apium, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., tom. i.

—— *vesparum*, Brehm, ib. p. 47, tab. 4. fig. 3.

—— *apivora*, Macgill. Hist. Brit. Birds, vol. iii. p. 254.

Buteo apivorus, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. iv. p. 479.

THE diversities of form which exist in every great group of birds, are always accompanied by a difference in habits, manners, and economy. Among the Falconidæ many variations of this kind occur, some very marked, others but slightly indicated: thus the aerial Eagles with their ample wings and feathered legs generally prey upon living quadrupeds; the Sea-Eagles, distinguished by their scaly tarsi and more lengthened bills, occasionally appease their appetites with carrion; the swift-flying Falcons, remarkable for their great muscular power and length of wing, seize Mallards, Grouse, and other birds of like size; the insect-loving Kestrels are characterized by the feebleness of their feet and claws, and the snake-devouring Harriers by their lengthened legs. These remarks might be greatly extended, were it desirable so to do. Perhaps no circumstance connected with the Falconidæ is more remarkable than that we should find among their number a species which is in the habit of feeding on the larvæ of wasps and humblebees: yet this is really the case; for we have abundant evidence that the predatory bird represented on the opposite Plate descends to the ground and digs out the nests of those insects, notwithstanding the thousands of darts which must be hurled against this enemy of their domain and destroyer of their progeny. Of this particular Cuckoo-like form, the genus *Pernis*, there are two species, one inhabiting Europe, the other India. They both have the same habits and manners; both are natives of warm rather than cold regions; and their peculiar food being only obtainable during the summer months, it is at that season alone that the Honey-Buzzard is to be met with in this country. The bird, however, is not confined to once kind of diet; for it passes much of its time on the ground among the herbage in capturing insects of many kinds and forms, from the locust to the grass-loving moth; it will also eat frogs, snakes, and other reptiles, young birds, their eggs, and small quadrupeds if they fall in its way.

It gives me great pleasure to state that the Honey-Buzzard appears to have become much more common in England of late than it was formerly. The Kites, the Harriers, and the Buzzards are almost all gone, probably never to return; but every spring, numbers of this species visit many parts of the south of England, almost a hundred instances of its capture in the New Forest, Wales, Norfolk, and other parts of the country being on record. This being the case, it is to be hoped that the bird will meet with some degree of protection: it is, however, but a forlorn hope, I fear; for if the old birds escape the wariness of the game-keeper, to whom they do no harm whatever, their nest will be robbed of its beautiful eggs to supply the demands of collectors. It would, indeed, be a pleasant sight to see this bird skimming in silent, buoyant, and gliding flight over the inland waters, or soaring above the trees of our few remaining forests. In that of Hampshire the month of May never passes without the Honey-Buzzard forming its eyrie in some lofty tree; and if it were allowed to remain unmolested and rear its young, a greater number would doubtless return thither the ensuing year to live upon the frogs, newts, snakes, and other animals formerly kept in check by Harriers, Buzzards, &c., which no longer abide there, to say nothing respecting the great value of its services in lessening the numbers of the insects upon which it habitually feeds.

Since White published his interesting account of the nesting of this bird in Selborne Hanger, it has been observed in all parts of England, and many times captured both in Scotland and in Ireland. Mr. A. Newton, in the 'Ootheca Wolleyana,' mentions instances of its breeding in Lapland, within the Arctic Circle, and a good deal further north than its range had been supposed to extend. It also inhabits France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, from all of which countries, as well as our own, it migrates to North Africa to spend the winter, and there obtains a supply of food which would be denied it in colder regions—frost and snow being inimical to the animals upon which it feeds, and which then retire to their winter quarters.

Much diversity is observable in the colouring of this species; the young, too, differ not only from the