large Ringtail, and soared high over the hills. The eggs were all just chipped by the approaching extrusion of the young. I took one of the eggs, to see the development of the chick; it was quite naked, but the bill perfectly formed. The keeper tells me that the whole six eggs were laid twenty-seven days ago; therefore it must take about thirty days to hatch them."

ASH-COLOURED HARRIER.

Although I have called this species by the above appellation, it is far better known to British ornithologists by the trivial name of Montagu's Harrier. The wings of this bird are long and curved; and its large fan-shaped tail, crossed by numerous chestnut-coloured bars, must render it very conspicuous during flight. Judging from the result of my own observations, I should say that this is the commonest of the Harriers, and that it is certainly the one most universally dispersed over our islands. Its breeding-places have been found more frequently in Cornwall and other southern and western counties than elsewhere. So widely does this bird range that it is to be found in most of the countries between Europe and China.

I have mentioned that reptiles form no inconsiderable portion of the food of the Harriers; and in confirmation I may quote the following passage from a letter addressed to me by my friend Mr. Gatcombe, on the 3rd of May, 1872:—" A few days since, I had a fine old male Montagu's Harrier brought to me. It was killed on Dartmoor; and from its crop and stomach I took no less than *fourteen* lizards, of two kinds, all nearly perfect, and each full 6 inches long."

Family STRIGIDÆ.

In round numbers there are about 200 different species of Owls distributed over the surface of the globe, only twelve of which were known to Linnæus, by whom they were included in one genus, Strix. The entire group are now divided into two great divisions, Nocturni and Diurni, and these again into minor subfamilies, genera, and subgenera, just as the ornithologist may please to consider them. In England there are ten species, belonging to as many genera. As might be supposed, so large a family of birds vary in size from that of a small Eagle to that of a Sparrow. So extensively are they distributed over the world, that it is almost only in the arctic and antarctic regions that they are not found. They are fewest in New Zealand and Polynesia, and are perhaps more abundant in Australia than elsewhere, not less than six species of true Strix inhabiting that country, besides others pertaining to different genera, all of which find a ready means of subsistence in the many small anomalous quadrupeds of that anomalous section of the earth's surface. The excess in the numbers of the White or Barn Owls, as we call our bird, doubtless keeps a wholesome check upon the undue increase of the small animals alluded to. How strange (is it not?) that the neigh-