

SIRS,—During the past winter I have had the satisfaction of verifying the fact that the Carrion-Crow (*Corvus corone*) visits Sicily in winter, and is to be found there in considerable numbers between the months of October and April.

The occurrence of this species in Sicily has hitherto been looked upon as extremely doubtful, notwithstanding Malherbe's inclusion of it among the birds of the island, and it is only now that the doubt may be considered as entirely removed and *C. corone* allowed to take its place as a member of the Sicilian Ornis.

On the 30th of January last, through the kindness of a friend, I received a few specimens of birds, in the flesh, from the neighbourhood of Comiso in the Province of Syracuse, and among them was delighted to find an undoubted example of *C. corone*. I immediately wrote to my friend at Comiso for some more of the birds, and in a few days' time received two other specimens of the Carrion-Crow, together with three of the Rook (*C. frugilegus*), all obtained in the same district of Comiso. Finally, on the 21st of March, I received a fourth example of *C. corone* from the vicinity of Ragusa, also in the Province of Syracuse.

From the local "cacciatori" of the above-mentioned districts I learn that the "Cornacchie" (no distinction appears to be made by the Sicilian country-folk between the Crow and the Rook, and probably, through want of opportunity, the difference between the two species has not been noticed by them) visit the province of Syracuse regularly in October and November, spending the winter months there, and leaving again in the spring. Apparently neither species nests in Sicily.

The southern and south-eastern parts of Sicily seem to attract both the Crow and the Rook more than do the northern and central districts of the island, although in the latter also either one or both species may apparently be met with occasionally, and I have myself seen what, at the time, I took to be a flock of Rooks near the small town of Mezzojuso in the interior of the Province of Palermo. *C. frugilegus*, I may here observe, may often be seen in winter-time in large flocks

on the ploughed fields and cultivated land lying between Syracuse and Catania. The species has been mentioned by Doderlein and other writers on Sicilian birds as a regular winter visitor to the island.

I have lately also had the pleasure of obtaining in Sicily a specimen of Nordmann's Pratincole (*Glareola melanoptera*). This example, an adult male, was sent to me in the flesh on the 27th of April last from Marsala, having been shot in that neighbourhood.

This eastern species, so far as I am aware, has never hitherto been recorded from Sicily, and apparently it has only once before been obtained in Italy, the solitary instance of its occurrence in the peninsula being that recorded by Count Arrigoni as having taken place on the 5th of May, 1892, at Bagnolo, near Vicenza (Atl. Orn. p. 362).

Another "rara avis" for Sicily came into my possession last November in the shape of an adult male of the Lesser Redpoll (*Linota rufescens*), which was actually shot in my garden close to the town of Palermo, during my absence. This species appears to have been hitherto unrecorded in Sicily and Southern Italy generally, although it occurs in the north of the peninsula, and has occasionally been met with even as far south as Tuscany.

Though usually found in North Italy merely as a winter migrant, there appear to be undoubted instances of this species having nested in the Italian Alps.

Yours &c.,

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Palermo,
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An Ornithologists' Union for South Africa.—We learn with much pleasure that a scheme has been started for the formation of an Ornithologists' Union for South Africa. The opportunity was taken of the Second Meeting of the South-African Association for the Advancement of Science, in Johannesburg, to inaugurate this movement; and its supporters were summoned to the Government Normal Schools at that city, on April 9th last, to discuss the subject.