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Notes on the Birds of Italy and Sicily, made in 1853.

HAVING observed a list of the birds noticed by Mr. Sclater, in the market at Rome, in your last number (Zool. 4160), I am induced to send some remarks on the birds which I either saw, or procured, in Italy and Sicily, during the early part of last year. There are, as Mr. Sclater justly observes, very few birds to be seen on the Continent, unless long rambles are taken among the mountains and valleys, where many rare and shy birds may be seen. I frequently went with the cacciatori (fowlers) who know their haunts, and from whom may often be collected much interesting information.

I was very sorry to have spent only five weeks in Sicily, as I think it is one of the most interesting places in Europe for Ornithology; its extensive ranges of mountains being an asylum to the birds from the unrelenting cacciatori, who allow them no rest in the plains and gardens.

I was at Rome in May, which is too late in the season, there being most in the market during March and the beginning of April; I procured, however, several rare birds.

I believe that there is no bird-stuffer either in Rome or Florence, and only one in Naples; but there is a very good one in Genoa, where all the birds of Liguria may be obtained. I did not pay so much attention to the Sylviadæ and smaller birds as I did to the Raptores.

The species marked with an asterisk have not been observed in the British Isles.

**Vultur cinereus*. This vulture is occasionally procured in Sicily.

**Aquila brachydactylus*. I skinned two specimens at Rome: in the throat of one of them was a snake four and a half feet long. I also saw several soaring over the Campagna. I bought two at Genoa; they are common in Liguria, in the spring.

**Falco Eleonoræ*. It is sometimes met with in Italy and Sicily.

**Falco tinnunculoides*. I procured one specimen at Messina, and hope to obtain three more from the same place. It is rather rare in Sicily.

Falco rufipes. I skinned three at Rome. When I was at Tivoli, I saw a pair of these beautiful hobbies, which had their nest on a tall poplar; they circled over my head, uttering loud shrieks. I procured several in Sicily, where they are generally common, though occasionally very rare.

Pernis apivorus. I skinned a beautiful specimen at Rome.

Noctua Passerina. One of these birds lived in a hole of the wall, opposite our hotel, at Rome, always quitting it before dusk. Rather common.

**Noctua acadica*. There are several of these rare birds in the Museum at Florence, which is very rich in Raptores.

Bubo maximus. I obtained one at Nice. They breed in Liguria.

Scops Aldrovandi. Common.

Nucifraga caryocatactes. Rather rare in Italy.

**Pyrhocorax alpinus*. I obtained a fine specimen at Genoa. It is common in Liguria.

Coracias garrula. Common in the summer. I observed a pair flying across the Campagna, their wings shining splendidly in the sun.

Oriolus galbula. Very common at Naples, in May.

**Sturnus unicolor*. I procured several skins. It is common in Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the adjacent islands.

Pastor roseus. Not rare in Sicily.

Lanius excubitor. Not rare.

**Lanius meridionalis*. Rare; I could not obtain a specimen of this shrike in Italy.

**Lanius minor*. I obtained one at Messina and one at Genoa.

Lanius rutilis, and *L. Collurio*. Common.

**Muscicapa albicollis*. Not rare.

Turdus saxatilis. I obtained six specimens of this beautiful thrush, which is not rare in Sicily and the South of Italy.

Sylvia suecica. Not very rare.

Alauda cristata. This lark is common, very tame, and may be seen running about on the Campagna, with its crest elevated.

Cuculus glandarius. An occasional wanderer to the south of Italy and Sicily.

Picus martius. Very rare in Sicily. Quite common at Naples in April, though never seen in other months.

Picus viridis. In the Museum at Pisa, I observed three or four specimens with the feathers on the rump and neck quite flame-coloured, and those on the back of a bright yellow, similar to the specimen noticed by Mr. Gurney, in the 'Zoologist,' (3800). Some were brighter in colour than others. I think that they were distinguished as varieties of *P. viridis*.

**Picus medius*. Not uncommon.

**Tichodroma phænicoptera*. This beautiful creeper is not rare in Italy, but I was not fortunate enough to see it alive.

Upupa Epops. Common.

Merops apiaster. Not rare. I skinned one at Rome.

**Merops Savignii.* Occasionally seen amongst the last-mentioned.

**Hirundo rupestris.* Not uncommon in the Ligurian mountains.

When at Nice, in January, on several fine days, I saw some small swallows (like *H. riparia*), hawking for flies, near the sea.

Cypselus alpinus. I saw a great many at Palmero, about March 26th; not rare in Liguria.

**Perdix Francolinus.* Not rare in the two Sicilies.

**Perdix Græca.* Common.

Glareola torquata. Not uncommon. I procured several specimens in Sicily.

Otis tetrax. Common in Sicily: I procured two skins.

Ardea alba. Rare in Sicily.

„ *garzetta.* I obtained one at Naples.

„ *ralloides.* I procured two very fine specimens at the last-mentioned place.

Ibis falcinellus. I saw one flying over head, near Messina, and skinned one at Catania, in Sicily.

ROBERT BIRKBECK.

Keswick, Norwich, January 14, 1854.

Note on two Brown Eagles.—Two brown eagles, from Killarney, have been in the possession of the Rev. H. B. Knox for the last fourteen years till last Sunday, when the more powerful destroyed his companion, picked off all his feathers, and had eaten the flesh from the breast-bone before his cannibalism was detected. They had been fed the day before with a still-born pig, and appeared completely gorged. Stray waifs of all sorts of dead animals have been constantly supplied as parochial perquisites by the parishioners, and there was no suspicion that they had been underfed.—*J. S. Henslow; Hitcham, Suffolk, February 22, 1854.*

Rough-legged Buzzard killed on the North Tyne.—A pair of these irregular migrants have been procured on the North Tyne during the winter. One was shot in November, and the other caught in a trap, towards the end of January last.—*Thomas John Bold; Angas' Court, Bigg Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne, February 7, 1854.*

Carnivorous Propensity of the Great Gray Shrike.—I procured a great gray shrike on the 21st of December last, in the act of carrying a skylark in its feet, which it had flown about with for some time previous to my shooting it. The lark was hardly half an ounce lighter than the shrike.—*H. T. Partridge; Hockham Hall, near Thetford, Norfolk, March 4, 1854.*

Occurrence of the Shore Lark (Alauda alpestris) in Yorkshire.—I have a fine specimen of this rare bird, which was shot at Filey, on the Yorkshire coast, in the early part of March, 1853; a second was seen at the same time, but was not obtained. I