

XII. *An Account of four rare Species of British Birds.* By  
Mr. William Bullock, F.L.S.

Read November 17, 1812.

STRIX NYCTEA.

*Strix nyctea.* Linn. *Syst. Nat.* i. p. 132. 6. *Faun. Succ.* p. 25. n. 76.

*Lath. Ind. Orn.* i. 57. 20.

Great White Owl. *Natural History of Birds*, by G. Edwards,  
p. 61. t. 6.

Snowy Owl. *Lath. Syn.* i. 132. 17.

THIS remarkable species of Owl, the most beautiful and majestic of the genus, was first described by Linnæus in *Faun. Succ. ed.* i. p. 15. n. 54., and was afterwards described and figured by Mr. Edwards as an inhabitant of Hudson's Bay; later authorities mention its being found in Russia and Germany; but it has never till now been added to the catalogue of British Birds. In July last, in the island of North Ronaldsha, one of the Orkneys, I was informed that a bird of this kind had been seen on the Links or rabbit warren for several weeks; and shortly after I had an opportunity of examining it for some time at the distance of about forty yards: it was a male, and its companion had been killed a few months before on the same island. One of them had likewise visited the adjacent isle Westra, and remained there  
for

for some time. In September I was so fortunate as to procure one in Unst, the most northerly of the Shetland Isles ; it had been killed a few weeks before by Mr. L. Edmondston, a young gentleman well versed in the ornithology of that country, and from whose testimony, as well as that of several gentlemen of the Isles, I have not the smallest doubt of its breeding and remaining the whole year in the mountainous precipices of both that island and Yell : they are seen there at the end of the summer in company with their young, three or four together ; the latter are then brown. Their flight, which I had several opportunities of observing, was more light and buoyant than any of the hawks, but not so much so as our common barn owl. They prey by day on various animals : one wounded on the Isle of Balta disgorged a young rabbit whole ; and that now in my possession had in its stomach a sandpiper with the plumage entire.

#### TRINGA CALIDRIS.

Tringa Calidris. *Linn. Syst. Nat.* i. p. 252. 19. *Lath. Ind. Orn.* ii. 732. n. 2.

Dusky Sandpiper. *Lath. Syn.* v. p. 174. 18.

La Maubeche. *Brisson Ornith.* v. p. 226. t. 20. f. 1.

One of the specimens now before the Society was bought from among several at a poulterer's in May last ; the other was shot by Mr. William Strang, of the Island of Sanda, on the 20th of August last, out of a small flock on the edge of the great Lake Stennis, on the mainland of Orkney. I received it several days after it was killed, but in too putrid a state to examine the contents of the stomach or the colour of the eyes. It was unknown in Orkney.

#### HIRUNDO

HIRUNDO PRATINCOLA.

*Hirundo Pratincola.* Linn. *Syst. Nat.* i. p. 345. 12.

*Glareola austriaca.* Lath. *Ind. Orn.* ii. p. 753.

Austrian Pratincole. Lath. *Syn.* v. p. 222. t. 85.

The first instance of this bird having been killed in Britain occurs in 1807, when one was shot in the neighbourhood of Ormskirk in Lancashire : it was preserved by Mr. J. Sherlock of that place, from whom I purchased it a few days afterwards. On the 16th of August last I killed another specimen of this bird (now sent for the inspection of the Society) in the Isle of Unst, about three miles from the northern extremity of Britain. When I first discovered it, it rose within a few feet and flew round me in the manner of a swallow, and then alighted close to the head of a cow that was tethered within ten yards distance. After examining it a few minutes I returned to the house of T. Edmondson, Esq. for my gun, and, accompanied by that gentleman's brother, went in search of it. After a short time it came out of some growing corn, and was catching insects at the time I fired ; and being only wounded in the wing, we had an opportunity of examining it alive. In the form of its bill, wings, and tail, as well as its mode of flight, it greatly resembles the genus *Hirundo* ; but, contrary to the whole of this family, the legs were long, and bare above the knee, agreeing with *Tringa* ; and like the sandpipers, it ran with the greatest rapidity, when on the ground or in shallow water, in pursuit of its food, which was wholly of flies, of which its stomach was full. Whilst living, the edges of both mandibles, and the base of the lower one were bright scarlet orange, the legs purple brown, and the irides light brown. It was a male, and weighed 2 oz. 11 dwt. None of the gentlemen of the island who saw it ever observed it in the

country before. The one killed near Ormskirk is in the possession of the Right Hon. Lord Stanley, and it and the present one are the only *Pratincoles* killed in Britain, I believe, that are yet known. Those gentlemen who have added them to their collections have only foreign specimens.

ANAS AFRICANA.

*Anas africana.* *Lath. Ind. Orn.* ii. p. 875. 104.

African Teal. *Lath. Syn.* vi. p. 555. 93.

La Sarcelle d'Egypte. *Planches Enluminées* 1000.

This species of duck, several of which have come within my knowledge, were all purchased at Leadenhall market during the winter season, and were said to be taken in Lincolnshire. Dr. Latham, in his very excellent work on Birds, says they inhabit the rivers in Egypt; which, if so, is a remarkable circumstance, as few natives of so warm a country could be supposed to migrate so far north at that season. Buffon figures it in the *Planches Enluminées*, to which Dr. Latham refers his African Teal. That figure is so good as to leave no doubt of its being the bird; otherwise the var. A. of the *Anas Fuligula* of *Lath. Syn.* (*Anas Nyroca* of *Gmel. Syst. Nat.* and of *Lath. Ind. Orn.* ii. 869. 91.) might be mistaken for it. Indeed I cannot help thinking that Dr. Latham has described the same bird twice under different names. In the account of the latter it is said to inhabit the river Don, which is certainly the most probable residence of a bird that visits this country only during winter.

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