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## ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE CIRL BUNTING IN GREAT BRITAIN.

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SINCE its discovery as a British bird, in the winter of 1800, by Montagu, who found it not uncommon among flocks of Yellow Buntings and Chaffinches, and procured several specimens near Kingsbridge, in Devonshire, the Cirl Bunting has been found to be a resident species in many other parts of southern England, as well as in some of the home counties and western midlands; and of late years it appears to have been increasing its range and pushing its way into Wales. In East Anglia it continues very rare, or unknown. But it is extremely local over most parts of its range, and its distribution is to some extent sporadic. Probably its presence in, or absence from, some parts of the country may be determined by the possibility or otherwise of obtaining certain kinds of insect food. Montagu's discovery that the young were fed especially upon the common grasshopper bears upon the point, but sufficient evidence thereon is not yet forthcoming. In winter it is partial to hay-seeds. This much seems clear—that, as a resident species, the Cirl Bunting avoids the colder parts of England, and undoubtedly has its strongholds along the south coast and in the mild climate of the west. The presence of tall trees, especially elms, seems to be a desirable, if not essential, feature in those districts which it inhabits. In autumn and

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secluded portion of the forest [Charnwood]. The last year or two, however, he has failed to notice them" (Mr. F. B. Whitlock, *in litt.*). This evidence of the Cirl Bunting *breeding* in Leicestershire is hardly conclusive.

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.**—One, male, seen at Lilford, June 29th, 1866, by Lord Lilford; the only occurrence of the species in the county of which he was then aware ('Notes on Birds of Northamptonshire,' p. 110). One, male, caught by a birdcatcher in Lord Lilford's employ, on a farm of his not far from Bythorn, Dec. 18th, 1884 (Zool. 1885, p. 182). One, male, seen near Achurch, May 28th, 1889 (only the third occurrence known to the recorder). Several seen about the same spot about July 23rd, 1889 (Lord Lilford, Zool. 1889, pp. 427, 429).

**BEDFORDSHIRE.**—Its occurrence in winter is mentioned in Yarrell, a reference to 'The Zoologist' (s. s. p. 2562) being given. Mr. Howard Saunders says it is fairly common, although very local, on the chalk hills of Bedfordshire (Manual Brit. Birds).

**SHROPSHIRE.**—I take the following particulars from Mr. W. E. Beckwith's 'Notes on Shropshire Birds,' p. 79. Mr. Henry Gray, of Ludlow, wrote to Mr. Beckwith in 1882:—"On the 23rd June I saw a beautiful male Cirl Bunting near this town, and within the Shropshire boundary. It was sitting on a hedge by the road, and allowed me to approach near enough to see its black throat." One, the first in the county, is mentioned as shot on Jan. 11th, 1879, during intense frost. Its occurrence in winter is noted in Yarrell, with a reference to 'The Zoologist,' p. 9780.

**HEREFORDSHIRE.**—"This bird is a native of the county, and not an occasional visitant. 'Anyone,' says Mr. Ley, 'who can distinguish its note' will come to the conclusion that it is not an uncommon bird in Herefordshire. It takes up its residence in certain localities, where it is always to be seen year after year . . . one such spot on the Callow Pitch; another at Birch; another at King's Cuple; another at the Chase, Ross." A nest with eggs found close to Mitcheldean-road Station in 1880 is mentioned (Dr. Bull's 'Notes on the Birds of Herefordshire,' 1888, p. 39). Mr. J. B. Pilley, of Hereford, writes:—"The Cirl Bunting must be fairly common; it appears to be known by those who make no special study of birds. I have seen it within a mile of the centre of the city" (*in litt.*).

**WORCESTERSHIRE.**—Mr. C. Parkinson writes:—"The Cirl