BROWN TREE-CREEPER.

† *CERTHIA FAMILIARIS*, Linn.

PLATE CXV.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The only parts of the United States in which I have not met with this species during winter are the eastern and northern portions of the Floridas. This has appeared the more strange to me, because I have observed several of these birds in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, at that season, during which it is not rare in any of the States intervening between these and Maryland. In the spring and summer months, or what is usually called the breeding season, the Brown Creeper may be found over the whole country, from the thick woods of the northern parts of Pennsylvania to Newfoundland. None were seen by my party or myself in Labrador, and as no mention is made of this species in the *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, I suspect that the want of sufficiently wooded localities prevents it from proceeding so far north.

This bird alights on trees of all kinds, in the Carolinas on pines, in Maine on maples, in Kentucky on hickories, oaks, or ash-trees; and as, from the time when it is first able to fly, it is one of the most constant roamers of the forest, you may meet with it in almost any part of the woods. The taller trees, however, are generally preferred by it, perhaps on account of its reluctance to fly from one tree to another at a distance. It seldom leaves a tree without searching all its crannies, from near the roots to the tops of the larger branches, which it does with incomparable assiduity and care, yet by movements so rapid that a person unacquainted with it might be inclined to think that it runs up the trunk and branches, directly or spirally, above or beneath the latter, without any other intention than that of reaching the end of its journey as quickly as possible. The reverse of this, however, is the case, for, shoot one of them when you please, you will find its stomach crammed with insects and larvæ, such as occur on the trees. When these are not found in abundance, the Creeper appears to discover the scarcity very soon, and instead of continuing its search, abandons the tree when not many yards from the ground, and launching off shoots downwards in its usual manner, and alights a little above the roots of another in the neighbourhood. I have observed it when satiated, remain still and silent as if asleep, and, as it were, glued to the bark, for nearly an hour at a time. But whether the

bird was really asleep, or wished to elude us, is more than I can affirm, although I am inclined toward the latter supposition, because toward night it retires to a hole, where frequently as many as a whole brood repose together, as I have on several occasions witnessed.

When on the move, the Brown Creeper emits at short intervals a sharp, quick, rather grating note, peculiar to itself, and by which you may, if acquainted with it, discover from a distance of more than sixty yards, in calm weather, where it is. Yet, after all, it requires some time, and a good eye, to perceive it, if on one of the upper branches of a tall tree. The name of "Gleaner," applied to this bird, is, in my opinion, very inappropriate; for instead of its following the different tribes of small Woodpeckers, or even Nuthatches, which, however, are at times found in company with it, I have seen our little hunter travel over every part of a large and tall tree, and afterwards remove to another, before the Woodpecker had hammered its way to a grub, which it knew to be under the bark; and all the activity of our Nuthatches does not perhaps surpass that of the present species. Yet they all pursue their avocations at the same time, and now and then on the same trees, although this is by no means a constant habit with them.

WILSON was of opinion that the Brown Creeper moves "rapidly and uniformly along, with his tail bent to the tree, and not in the hopping manner of the Woodpecker;" but I must differ from him, for the bird at each move actually hops, assisted by the pressure of its elastic tail, which indeed is the case with all our Woodpeckers, whether on the upper or the lower surface of a branch. This may be easily seen on placing a Brown Creeper in a cage containing a piece of a branch covered with scaly bark.

This bird breeds in the hole of a tree, giving a marked preference to such as are small and rounded at the entrance. For this reason, perhaps, it often takes possession of the old and abandoned nests of our smaller Woodpeckers and Squirrels; but it is careless as to the height of the situation above the ground, for I have found its nest in a hole in a broken stump which I could reach with my hand, although I could not examine it on account of the hardness of the wood. All the nests which I have seen were loosely formed of grasses and lichens of various sorts, and warmly lined with feathers, among which I in one instance found some from the abdomen of *Tetrao Umbellus*. The eggs are from six to eight, but in some instances I have found only five, when I have supposed them to belong to a second brood. They measure five-eighths and three-fourths of an inch in length, four and a quarter eighths in their greatest breadth. Their ground-colour is white, with a yellowish tint, irregularly marked with red and purplish spots and dots, which are larger and more crowded toward the broad end, leaving a space at its apex nearly free, as is also the case with that of the narrow end; there are small

dots of pure neutral tint here and there, but none of those "streaks of dark brown" described by WILSON.

The young, like those of our Woodpeckers and Nuthatches, remain about the nest until they are able to fly, and in their minority are well supplied with food. The members of a family usually remain together until the next spring.

The males of this species are larger than the females. This difference is very apparent in the bill. In the winter months, the Brown Creeper is not unfrequently seen in orchards, and at a short distance from farm-houses; but in the breeding season it retires to the interior of the forests. Its food consists chiefly of ants, larvæ, small insects, and particles of lichens; and, if one be placed near the nose, it is generally found to emit an odour like that of ants.

BROWN CREEPER, *Certhia familiaris*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. i. p. 122.

CERTHIA FAMILIARIS, Bonap. Syn., p. 280.

BROWN CREEPER, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 585.

BROWN CREEPER, *Certhia familiaris*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. v. p. 158.

Adult Male.

Bill a little shorter than the head, arched, very slender, much compressed, acute; upper mandible with the dorsal line arched, the ridge narrow, the sides sloping at the base, nearly erect in the rest of their extent, the edges sharp and arched, without notch, the tip acute; nasal groove rather long, narrow, feathered; nostrils linear-oblong, operculate; lower mandible with the angle rather long, narrow, and pointed, the outline decurved, the sides erect and convex, the edges inclinate, the tip acute.

Head rather small, ovato-oblong; neck short; body slender. Feet rather short, very slender; tarsus rather shorter than the middle toe, very slender, much compressed; toes extremely compressed; the first comparatively large, longer than the middle toe, including the claws; the inner toe shorter than the outer; claws long, slender, extremely compressed, laterally grooved, acute, that of the hind toe very long.

Plumage long, loose, very soft; the feathers ovato-oblong, with disunited filaments. Wings of moderate length, very broad; the first quill very short, being ten and a half twelfths shorter than the second, which is four-twelfths shorter than the third, the fifth longest but scarcely exceeding the fourth, which is one-twelfth longer than the third. Tail long, graduated, of twelve moderately stiff pointed feathers, of which the lateral are eight-twelfths shorter than the middle.

Upper mandible brownish-black, lower flesh-coloured, with the tip dusky. Iris brown. Feet light reddish-brown, claws yellowish-grey. The upper

parts are reddish-brown, the head darker, the rump light brownish-red; all the feathers with a central dull whitish streak. Wings deep brown, the coverts tipped, the secondary coverts barred at the base with dull yellow, of which a broad band in the midst of a brownish-black space crosses both webs of the quills, excepting the inner webs of the outer four, and the outer webs of the outer three; most of the quills have also a greyish-yellow patch along the outer web toward the tip, which is dull white, the tail-feathers are yellowish-brown, with shafts of the same colour, the webs darker toward the end. A silvery white band passes over the eye; the cheeks are dark brown; the lower parts are silvery-white, the sides tinged with brown.

Length to end of tail $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches; to end of wings 4; to end of claws $4\frac{1}{4}$; extent of wings $8\frac{1}{2}$; bill along the ridge $\frac{7\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, along the edge of lower mandible $\frac{10}{12}$; wing from flexure $2\frac{7}{12}$; tail $2\frac{9}{12}$; tarsus $\frac{6\frac{3}{4}}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{3\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{5\frac{1}{2}}{12}$; middle toe $\frac{5\frac{3}{4}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$.

Adult Female.

The Female is considerably smaller, and generally of a darker colour, but otherwise similar.

Length to end of tail $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, to end of wings $4\frac{1}{4}$, to end of claws $4\frac{1}{2}$; extent of wings 8; bill along the ridge $\frac{6\frac{1}{2}}{12}$.

The shafts and webs of the tail are somewhat undulated, so as to give the appearance of their being barred with dusky. Younger individuals have the rump less red. Some have the lower parts almost pure white, while in others they are dusky white, being soiled by matter rubbed from the trees.

On comparing four fresh and several dried specimens shot near Edinburgh, with eight dried specimens from America, one of which is from the Columbia river, I can find nothing on which to found a specific distinction.

The roof of the mouth is flat, but the mandible concave; the posterior aperture of the nares linear, margined with two rows of papillæ. The tongue is slender, decurved, long, measuring $6\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths, deeply emarginate and papillate at the base, concave above, horny in the greater part of its length, and tapering to a point. The œsophagus is 1 inch 8 twelfths long, of moderate width, its average diameter $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfth, without dilatation. The proventriculus is enlarged to 2 twelfths. The stomach is a muscular gizzard, of a somewhat elliptical form, 5 twelfths long, $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth; its lateral muscles very strong, the tendons of moderate size; the epithelium thin, tough, longitudinally rugous, reddish-brown. The contents of the stomach are remains of insects of various kinds, and one large particle of quartz. The intestine is short, being only $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches long; its greatest diameter 1 twelfth; the rectum is dilated; the cœca, which come off at the distance of 5 twelfths from the extremity, are $\frac{1}{2}$ twelfth long, and $\frac{1}{4}$ twelfth in breadth.

Brown Tree-creeper.

1 Male 2 Female

Audubon, John James. 1841. "Brown Tree-Creeper, *Certhia familiaris*, Linn. [Pl. 115]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 2, 109–112. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319228>.

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