PINICOLA ENUCLEATOR.

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Pine-Grosbeak.

- Loxia enucleator*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 81.
—— *psittacea*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 5.
Fringilla enucleator, Temm. Man. d'Orn., p. 198.
Pyrrhula enucleator, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2nd edit. tom. i. p. 333.
Pinicola, Vieill. Ois. d'Amér. Sept., tom. i. p. 4.
Strobilophaga enucleator, Vieill. Nouv. Dict. d'Hist. Nat., tom. ix. p. 609.
Corythus enucleator, Cuv. Règn. Anim., edit. 1816, tom. i. p. 415.
Pyrrhula (Corythus) enucleator, Keys. & Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 40.
Pinicola enucleator, Cab. in Ersch u. Grub. Encycl., 1st sect. vol. 50. p. 219.
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ARE there any among the writers upon our native birds who have seen the Pine-Grosbeak in a state of nature ? I really think not. Pennant, it is true, states that he saw a small flock flying about in the forest of Invercauld ; but as it does not appear that he obtained a specimen, I am inclined to believe that he was deceived as to the species, and mistook Crossbills for Pine-Grosbeaks. Messrs. C. J. and James Paget mention, in their 'Natural History of Yarmouth,' that a flight was seen in November 1822, on the Denes,—a very unlikely place to see Pine-Grosbeaks ; and as no specimen was obtained, I must be allowed respectfully to doubt the fact. I question if Montagu, Gilbert White, Selby, Yarrell, or Macgillivray ever saw a living example ; neither have I, who have travelled far and wide, with an eye always attentive to the appearance of any bird strange to me. Mr. Ryland, in his 'Catalogue of the Birds of Lancashire,' includes the Pine-Grosbeak as having been obtained in Hulstone fir trees, on the authority of T. K. Glazebrook, Esq.; "and a female in my own collection," says Yarrell, "was shot some years ago at Harrow-on-the-Hill." These assertions are a little more tangible, but still to me doubtful. Mr. Stevenson, in the first volume of his 'Birds of Norfolk,' repeats the account of the flight seen on the Denes, in 1822, and the statement in the 'Zoologist,' p. 1313, that a pair were shot in Raveningham in the act of building. Mr. Lubbock also states that a pair were preserved in Yarmouth, which had been shot near that city ; but as these, according to Mr. Stevenson, are no longer in existence, there remains no proof that the species was actually killed there. I would not for a moment have it inferred that the bird has no claim to be admitted into the avifauna of Great Britain ; at the same time, I consider it is but an indifferent one. That it has now and then visited us is certain ; and that it will continue to do so occasionally is more than probable, particularly when we remember that a mere strait of sea, as compared with the Atlantic, separates our island from the bird's natural home. If we pay a visit to the great primeval forests of Norway, Lapland, Finland, and Russia, we shall, with the aid of a little patience, be able to view this true pine-loving bird in its native haunts, and by diligent search find its nest and have an opportunity of observing its curious and interesting habits. Mr. Wolley made himself as much acquainted with them as circumstances would admit, as did also Mr. Wheelwright. From the writings of both of these gentlemen (who, unhappily, now only live in our memory) I shall make such extracts as bear upon the present subject.

Those who have read the foregoing lines will have gleaned that the bird is only an accidental or very occasional visitor to these islands, and that its true home is the northern part of the adjoining continent. Most authors have affirmed that it also inhabits Northern and Arctic America ; but latterly, and I think rightly, the American bird has been regarded as distinct from the European, and the name of *Canadensis*, proposed for it by Brisson as long ago as 1760, reinstated. The American birds are always much larger in every respect than those inhabiting Sweden and Lapland ; but in colour they are very similar. As, however, species are often instituted upon much more slender differences, they may be regarded as distinct. They are the only known members of a form to which at least six generic terms have been applied ; of these, *Pinicola* appears to be the oldest ; and I have therefore, like some of my more recent contemporaries, adopted it.

"The following quotations," says Mr. Hewitson, "are from the pen of Mr. Wolley, to whom naturalists are greatly indebted for having so perseveringly traced out and brought home the previously unknown eggs of this species :—The Pine-Grosbeak, though plentiful in Sweden during the winter, has been supposed to go to the East for the breeding-season ; and, generally speaking, this is probably true ; but in the northern and eastern part of Swedish Lapland, as well as in Finnish Lapland, a few Pine-Grosbeaks make their nests."

"Mr. Wolley made frequent excursions during the winter months, in the hope of finding old nests by which to guide his search in the ensuing spring, and on one occasion found a nest very like that of the Turtledove, in a young fir tree, six feet above the ground, which he had no doubt belonged to this species.

“ ‘As the days grew longer I eagerly listened to the beautifully clear music of the bird in more than one locality; and on a snowy morning I saw a female watching me so very unconcernedly from a tree, that I climbed up to try to catch her in my hand. It was not until I nearly touched her that she flew off, as though she thought I was carrying the joke too far, but in a way that convinced me she had no nest. I had made arrangements for working another part of the country; but I left a trusty Lap in strict charge to visit a spot in Finland where I had ascertained that in previous years the bird had bred. On my return to the neighbourhood at the end of summer, I watched day after day for the arrival of my faithful Lap. The nights were already becoming dark, when one evening I saw the well-known figure in a boat approaching our strand. I had scarcely shouted welcome before his wallet was in my hand, and my English friends and myself were in triumphal procession to the house. First made its appearance a grim wolf's head; then came forth some rein-deer gad-flies; next there was extracted an unknown nest; then a skinned Pine-Grosbeak; and at last were carefully unwrapped from a little case the wished-for eggs, and there they lay in all their fresh-discovered beauty before us.’

“A nest, which was first found on the 27th of May, contained four eggs, and was in a young spruce fir tree at about six feet from the ground. It did not touch the bole of the tree; and the branches about it were thin, short, and open; and to identify them completely, the hen was snared upon it. ‘At Midsummer a nest was found, with four fully fledged young, about a hundred yards from the spot where the former nest had been. It is now in the British Museum. Externally it is made of remarkably open work of twigs and roots, mostly in very long pieces; in the centre of the platform there is an inner bedding of barkless fibrous roots, with a little of the hair-like lichen which grows so abundantly on trees in Lapland forests.’”

Mr. Wheelwright says:—“I was much pleased on my arrival at Quickiock to see in the fir-forests close to the village small flocks of Pine-Grosbeaks, which appeared to have remained there throughout the winter; but they might have migrated and returned again; for I have noticed that, when the Grosbeaks come into the Wermland forests in winter, they usually arrive early in November, and leave in February. By the first week in May they had paired, and on the 4th of June we took a nest from a small fir, at about ten feet from the ground, on the side of a fell, in by no means a large wood; and I may here remark that all the nests taken were placed close to the stem, in small firs, never high from the ground or in deep woods, and generally in rather conspicuous situations; all the trees in the Quickiock forests are so small and stunted, and the branches so bare, that scarcely any bird, except the very small kinds, builds its nest on the branches. In all, I found five nests; of these, two contained four eggs, which I take to be the full number, although, like the Cross-bill, the Pine-Grosbeak appears sometimes to sit on three; and two had young in them. The nest is neither large nor deep, but is very compactly and neatly built, like basketwork, of very fine fir branches and thin cranberry fibres tightly interlaced, and lined with fine stiff grass and a little hair. The eggs vary much, both in size and colouring, but are usually about the size of those of the Hawfinch, and of a pale bluish green, blotched and lined with light-purple and dark-umbre spots, and minute dots thickest towards the larger end; they average one inch by three quarters.

“The food of the Pine-Grosbeak is not, like that of the Cross-bill, the seed of the fir-cones, but the small buds or embryos of the young branches which shoot out from the lateral limbs of the firs and pines. They can, however, pick out the seeds from the cones both of the pine and fir quite as cleverly as the Cross-bills. The song of the male, both in winter and early spring, is delightful, being clear and flute-like. I have also heard it on a frosty winter day sing in the air while floating from one tree to another, and noticed that the sexes often keep up a very low pretty twitter as if conversing. As soon, however, as they begin to build, the sweet song of the male entirely ceases, and he assiduously assists the female in gathering sticks and fibres for the construction of the nest. Not a note do they utter, except a gentle “cluck,” as if conversing together in an under tone; and nothing in their note or actions indicates the proximity of the nest. It is a very fine, bold, tame bird, rather foolish than otherwise (for the boys often snare it from a tree with a hair noose on a long pole), and an excellent one for the cage, but must not be kept too warm, or it will soon die.”

It would appear that the Pine-Grosbeak is subject to the same changes and states of plumage as the Cross-bills: thus, while some of the males are clothed in ashy grey, others are red, and others, again, sulphur yellow. Mr. Wheelwright believed that the red birds were adult, and the yellow still older males, and that the ashy-grey colouring was characteristic both of the female and of young males, which, although capable of breeding, had not yet assumed the fully adult livery.

The Plate represents the two sexes, of the size of life.

Gould, John. 1873. "Pine-Grosbeak, Pinicola enucleator [Pl. 44]." *The birds of Great Britain* 3, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323934>.

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