



TURNIX AFRICANUS, Desf.

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Andalusian Turnix.

Turnix africanus, Desfont. Mém. de l'Acad. des Sci., 1789, p. 500.

——— *sylvaticus*, Desf. *ibid.*

Tetrao gibraltarius et *T. andalusicus*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 766.

Turnix andalusica, Bonn. Ency. Méth. Orn., part 1.

Perdix gibraltaria et *P. andalusica*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 656.

Hemipodius tachydromus et *H. lunulatus*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 1815, pp. 314, 315.

——— *andalusicus*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 558.

Ortygis andalusica, Keys. et Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 66.

Turnix sylvatica, Desf., Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., 1866, p. 210.

IN the warmer portions of the Old World there occurs a group of small birds which have been classed, and perhaps correctly, with the *Gallinacæ*; in size they resemble the Quails; some of the species are a little larger than those birds, and others much smaller. They are all solitary in their habits, and never go in covies or bevers; some have stout rather heavy bills, while in others this organ is slender and longer than in any other Gallinaceous birds of the same size. These, the *Turnices* or *Hemipodes*, have, as the latter name implies, but three toes, while, as is well known, the Quails, Partridges, &c. have a fourth generally well-developed hind one; they all have short rounded wings, and rise with a loud whirring noise from the arid and scrubby plains they frequent. The females, which are by far the largest in size, and the finest in the colouring and distinctness of their markings, invariably lay four eggs in a slight depression of the ground, with little or no nest. Their flesh is dry and not very good for the table, although they are often pocketed by sportsmen and taken home as bush-game.

Of this group of birds many species inhabit India, China, the Philippines, Java, and Australia, and some Africa, one of which, the bird represented on the opposite Plate, has two or three times been killed in England; hence arises the necessity for giving it a place in the Birds of Great Britain. The circumstances under which it has a claim to be included in our avifauna are briefly these:—

In the month of November 1844, Mr. Thomas Goatley, of Chipping Norton, in Oxfordshire, sent a communication to the 'Annals and Magazine of Natural History,' in which he stated that he had lately received a bird which appeared to be new to this country,—a Quail having no hind toe, and not mentioned, he believed, in any work on British ornithology to which he had access, but which appeared to agree with Latham's description of *Perdix gibraltarius*. The bird was shot on the Cornwall estate, about three miles from Chipping Norton, in a field of barley, on the 29th of the previous October, after which date another was killed near the same spot by the same person; but its head was shot off, and it was otherwise so mutilated as to be unfit for preservation. This might probably have completed the pair, the former being a male. It had in its gizzard two or three husks of barley, several small seeds like charlock, and some particles of gravel, and was very fat. It was considerably injured by the shot; but Mr. Goatley had it set up, and justly considered it as a valuable addition to his small collection of British birds. The above is the specimen the occurrence of which is noted in the 'Zoologist' for 1845, p. 872, and of which a woodcut is given at page 989 of the same volume; it was also the subject of the article "Andalusian Hemipode," in the supplement to Mr. Yarrell's 'History of British Birds,' p. 43. It remained the solitary example of the occurrence of the bird in our islands until the year 1865, when Alfred Beaumont, Esq., exhibited, at the Meeting of the Huddersfield Naturalists' Society held on the 21st of June, an example which was taken alive at Fartown, near Huddersfield. This specimen Mr. Beaumont kindly sent up for my inspection accompanied by the following note:—"The bird was purchased alive by the son of S. D. Mosley, a birdstuffer of Huddersfield, from two Irishmen on the 7th of April, 1865, near the Fartown bar on the Bradford Road. He saw it in the hand of one of the men, and thinking it a novelty gave them sixpence for it; the Irishmen regarded it as a young Partridge."

Considerable confusion appears to exist respecting this bird in the works of the earlier writers, by whom it was characterized as two distinct species; this is now known to be an error, since only one bird of this form is found in Europe and on the opposite coast of Barbary. According to Latham, "it occurs in considerable numbers in all the environs of the Garrison of Gibraltar, but not upon any part of the Rock itself. It appears at the same time as the Common Quail, and continues there throughout the winter and spring, but about the breeding-time disappears for the summer; yet there is no reason to suppose that it quits the

country, but rather that it resorts to the upland tracts for the season. It is known to English sportsmen by the name of Trail or Terrail, runs with wonderful agility, and none but the most staunch and excellent dogs are able to flush it. The Spaniards often bring it to market, but are so ignorant of its true history that they suppose it to be young of the Common Quail, from its being a much smaller bird."

Captain Loche informs us that it inhabits the three provinces of Algeria, and Mr. Tristram says that, "although not rare in the wooded districts of the northern part of that country, its nest had, until last year, eluded the researches of all the French collectors. Various eggs had from time to time come into the hands of the Paris dealers, the produce of birds in captivity; but the two eggs figured by Mr. Hewitson in 'The Ibis' for 1859, pl. ii. are, as far as I can ascertain, the very first from a bird in a state of nature. They were taken by Captain Loche, of the French army, in Kobah Forest, on the 11th of July, 1857. The nest contained seven eggs, nearly fresh. It was placed on the ground in the midst of a dense thicket of underwood, most ingeniously concealed, and where no dog could penetrate to put up the bird. It was in such situations that I had frequently before found the bird, which never occurs in the plains or in the desert. When disturbed it is scarcely possible to make it take wing; when beaten out of a bush it half runs, half flies to the nearest cover, somewhat after the manner and with much of the appearance of Baillon's Drake. I do not believe that it migrates in the Atlas, as specimens are occasionally found at all times of the year; nor does it appear ever to congregate, either in flocks or bevs, after the manner of the Quail, to which, indeed, in all its habits it affords a striking contrast. The female is very much larger and generally more brilliant in colouring than the male, and is at least one third heavier than her mate. I was out with Captain Loche when he discovered the nest, of which he kindly allotted me three eggs."

"The eggs," remarks Mr. Hewitson, "bear but little resemblance to those of other gallinaceous birds. The shell is delicate and thin, and touched with a neutral purple tint, which gives them some likeness to those of the Pratincole." The eggs figured in 'The Ibis' for 1859, in illustration of Mr. Hewitson's "Recent Discoveries in European Oology," differ somewhat in size and form, one being rounder than the other, and measuring one inch and a sixteenth in length, while the more oval one measures one inch and an eighth; both are three-quarters of an inch in breadth and very similar in appearance, their ground-colour being a creamy white tinged with purple, and numerous spotted with various shades of purple and brownish black.

In a subsequent communication to 'The Ibis,' 1860, p. 72, Mr. Tristram says, "I have some doubt whether this bird, so peculiarly a denizen of the thick scrub of the Atlas, can be reckoned in the Saharan catalogue; but French officers have assured me that they occasionally find it in the hills between Djelfa and El Aghouat. I have not met with it there myself; but so shy and solitary a bird might easily escape observation."

With respect to Mr. Tristram's statement that there were seven eggs in the nest found by him and Captain Loche, it is not for me to contradict it; but if, when in Australia, I met with more nests of any one group of birds than another it was those of Hemipodes, and they invariably contained four only, and as invariably were placed in the open, undulated, scrubby, and grassy flats, and never among the thick brushwood nor in the woods; and in a note kindly communicated to me by Lord Lilford he says, "it may interest you to know that a nest of *Turnix africanus*, containing four eggs (one of which is in my possession), was taken near Gibraltar this summer (1869), being, as I believe, the first instance of the nest being found in Europe."

Besides the countries above mentioned, the Andalusian Turnix is found in the southern portions of Europe, from Spain to Italy, but more particularly in various parts of the first-mentioned country, from Gibraltar to Arragon; and the Rev. A. C. Smith informs us that "this pretty species is by no means rare in Portugal; indeed Professor Du Bocage told me that he had often eaten it like any other game, which he naturally considered a decisive proof of its abundance. I was assured by sportsmen that it is found in wooded districts and not in the sandy plains assigned as its habitat by Temminck, Yarrell, and others."

Temminck states that MM. Cantraine and Bibron informed him that this species is common in Sicily in the environs of Catania, where it is known by the name of *Tringine*, that it is found in the same places as the Francolin, and he believes it does not emigrate, because it is found there in November and December.

The figures represent a male and female, from Tunis or Gibraltar, of the natural size.



Gould, John. 1873. "Andalusian Turnix, Turnix africaus [Pl. 16]." *The birds of Great Britain* 4, -. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.323975>.

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