

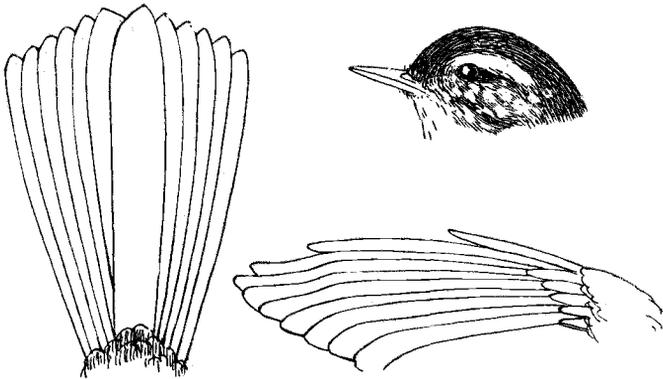
## THE DUSKY WARBLER IN ORKNEY.

## A NEW BRITISH BIRD.

MR. W. EAGLE CLARKE writes to the *Scottish Naturalist* (1913, pp. 271-3) that during the past autumn he and Dr. C. B. Ticehurst with George Stout were observing migration on Auskerry (Orkneys), and that on October 3rd, 1913, a strange warbler was detected and eventually secured. This proved to be a female example of the Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) which breeds in Siberia and winters in India, China, and Japan. This far-eastern species is certainly a remarkable addition to the British List, and it does not appear to have been taken before in Europe, though Gätke thought he saw one on Heligoland on October 24th, 1876.

We give below a full description of this new British warbler, and also some notes regarding its habits which have been kindly contributed by Mr. E. C. Stuart Baker.

## DESCRIPTION.



*Phylloscopus fuscatus* (nat. size).

*Adult male and female.—Winter.*—Fore-head, crown, mantle, scapulars, and wing-coverts dark olivaceous-brown (often slightly tinged rufous); rump rather paler; upper tail-coverts more rufous; lores and behind eye dark-brown;

superciliary-stripe (from nostrils to nape) rufous-buff, paler in front of eye; ear-coverts and sides of neck same, mottled dark brown; centre of throat and belly whitish; sides of throat, breast, and under tail-coverts rufous-buff; flanks darker washed greenish-brown; axillaries and under wing-coverts bright pinkish-buff; tail and wing-feathers dark brown with the outer webs more rufous, fringed very pale pinkish-buff on inner webs and narrowly fringed pale buff on the outer webs of the outer primaries. This plumage is acquired by complete moult in September or October. *Summer*.—The body-feathers and inner secondaries are moulted in March and April but apparently not the tail and rest of the wing-feathers. Coloration as in winter.

*Nestling Down*.—Unknown.

*Juvenile*.—Much resembling adults but greyer on breast, not so buff on flanks, eye-stripe and ear-coverts greyer, not so buff. All the body-feathers of a very loose structure.

*First-winter male and female*.—Resembling adults but more yellowish on the centre of the throat and belly and a yellowish rather than rufous tinge on the rest of the under-parts. The juvenile body-feathers are moulted in August but apparently not the wings and tail. *Summer*.—Like the adults and moult the same.

*Measurements and structure*.—♂ wing of twelve 57-66 mm., tail 44-53, tarsus 20-22, bill from skull 12-13. ♀ wing 53-61. First primary about twice primary-coverts and half second primary, second between eighth and tenth (very seldom so long as eighth), fourth and fifth about equal and longest, third and sixth 1-3 mm. shorter, seventh 5 shorter, eighth 7 shorter. Third to sixth emarginated on the outer webs. Secondaries equal to the tenth primary. Bill fine; a few longish rectal bristles.

*Soft parts*.—Bill: upper mandible dark brown, lower yellow; legs and feet yellowish-flesh; iris dark brown.

*Characters*.—The long first primary, rufous-buff eye-stripe and under-parts and dark flanks are distinctive.

H. F. WITHERBY.

#### HABITS.

Whether the Dusky Warbler ever remains to breed in any of the higher eastern Himalayas or the high mountain ranges of west central China is not certain, but there is, in any case, no doubt that the nest and

eggs attributed to it by Jerdon, and described in Hume's *Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds*, are really those of some other bird.

In the lower ranges of the Himalayas *Phylloscopus fuscatus* arrives about the middle of September and after this date spreads rapidly throughout the foot-hills and into the plains. Its return migration does not appear to commence until the end of March, and during this month it is exceedingly common about Calcutta. After March few individuals are to be found in the plains, but it is still common on the foot-hills throughout April and stragglers stay on until well into May.

In its habits it is a curious mixture of excessive activity and lethargy. During the greater part of the day it restlessly pursues its insect-food, scrambling up and down bushes and trees, from the lowly scrub to the tops of lofty trees, hunting each bough and branch above and below, twisting like a titmouse or tree-creeper from one point to another, or occasionally fluttering into the air, more like a flycatcher or warbler of the *Cryptolopha* group, after some insect it has disturbed from its hiding-place.

In the heat of the day, however, it rests on a branch of some tree, generally over rather than under twenty feet from the ground. Here it sits with its feathers puffed out and its head drawn back between its shoulders—not tucked under its scapulars—and dozes away the hours. At these times it is very loth to move and if disturbed and forced to fly either returns at once to its former perch or selects one close at hand, where it once more relapses into quietude.

Its note is very much like that of the Chiffchaff, but I noticed that the birds which haunted my garden in North Cachar had also another note, a very low soft "chi-chirree" twice or three times repeated, which reminded me very much of the call of the Little Red-breasted Flycatcher.

E. C. STUART BAKER.

The following is a free translation from the German of Dybowski's account of the breeding-habits of *Ph. fuscatus* (*J. f. O.* 1872, p. 357):—

The spring passage of this bird takes place in the last days of May, and it is found in considerable numbers throughout the whole summer in the district south-east of Lake Baikal, inhabiting valleys overgrown with low scrub or woods on the sides of the lower hills, especially those which border swamps. Soon after its arrival one hears its monotonous song which resembles the syllables "Tsius-tsius-tsius."

The nest is built on hillocks overgrown with high grass or in bushes, generally in one close to running or stagnant water, and is either close to the ground or else about eighteen inches above it. The nest is domed, with a side entrance. The material used is dry grass mixed with some moss, and lined with a quantity of feathers. The grasses used are much finer than those employed by the Chiffchaff. About the middle of June the female lays five or six pure white eggs, without gloss, and usually more or less distinctly pointed in shape, measuring  $18 \times 12.5$  mm.;  $15.3 \times 12$  mm. The hen sits very closely and usually only leaves the nest when the grass or scrub among which the nest is placed is disturbed, when she is joined by the male, attracted by her cries. If one withdraws for a few paces she returns at once to the nest. Cuckoos' eggs are frequently deposited in the nests of this species. In autumn they remain to mid-September, but single individuals are also seen up to October.

The species should be added to the *Hand-List* as follows:—

**128a. *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (Blyth). — THE DUSKY WARBLER.**

*PHYLLOPNEUSTE FUSCATA* Blyth, Journ. As. Soc. Bengal, xi, p. 113 (1842—Calcutta).

*Phylloscopus fuscatus* (Blyth), Clarke, Scot. Nat., 1913, p. 271.

**DISTRIBUTION.**—*Scotland.*—One, a female, Auskerry (Orkney), Oct. 3, 1913 (*ut supra*).

**DISTRIBUTION.**—*Abroad.*—Breeds from Yenisei eastward to Sea of Okhotsk, and from Mongolia and Manchuria northwards, probably to about lat.  $64^{\circ}$  N. On migration, occurs in China, Japan and Mongolia, wintering in Formosa, south China, Burma, Assam, Nepal, Tenasserim, and plains of northern India.