

# NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF TORY ISLAND,

BY GEORGE C. HYNDMAN. AUGUST, 1845.

## ZOOLOGY.

### MAMMALIA.

- Mus musculus*,—the Mouse, common in the houses.  
(*Mus decumanus*,—the Rat, is not found on the Island. The common opinion among the people is that it will not live there: they state as a fact that a couple which once came ashore from a vessel were found dead next morning.)
- Lepus cuniculus*,—the Rabbit, is common, burrowing in various places, often close to the cliffs.
- Phoca*?—Seals are said to be found about the island, but it is not known that they breed here.
- Whale,—We saw one spouting off Horn Head. It several times threw a jet of water 6 or 8 feet high in the air. There was a play of Gulls near, as if the whale was among a shoal of fish. It was, perhaps, 20 to 25 feet in length.  
(Five Whales were taken, 2 or 3 years ago, off Dunfanaghy or mouth of Mulroy Bay.)

### BIRDS.

- Haliaeetus albicilla*,—the Sea-Eagle. A pair of this bird was seen on the island; it is said to be occupied by a pair every year, but never by more.  
A tame one was seen at Dunfanaghy, where it was allowed to fly about and always returned. It appeared pleased when noticed by its owner.
- Falco peregrinus*,—the Peregrine Falcon, was not seen by any of the party, but is said to breed regularly on the island.
- Saxicola oenanthe*,—the Wheatear, several were seen.
- Motacilla Yarrellii*,—the pied Wagtail, one or two seen.
- Anthus petrosus*,—the rock Pipit, a few seen along the shore.
- Emberiza miliaris*,—the common Bunting, a few seen.
- Passer domesticus*,—the common Sparrow, several seen about the Round Tower and the Houses.
- Sturnus vulgaris*,—the Starling, numerous on the island. Several were seen among the rocks on the edge of the cliffs, where they were said to resort generally, except in the breeding season, when they took possession of the Round Tower, which is surrounded by the cabins of one of the "Towns." (A young bird of this season was shot by one of the party.)
- Fringilla monticola*,—the Chough, was seen in numbers about the rocks.
- Corvus corax*,—the Raven, its CROAK was heard on the island. It is said that one pair and never more frequent Tory.
- Corvus cornix*,—the hooded Crow, seen.
- Cuculus canorus*,—the Cuckoo, was said to be occasionally heard on the island, "once in seven years," and its note is considered a good omen for the crops.
- Hirundo* ———: One species was said to breed either against the cliffs or in the caves. We saw some of the birds on the wing as we rowed along the rocky coast.
- Columba livia*,—the Rock Dove, builds in the caves along the coast.
- Scolopax gallinago*,—the common Snipe, is said to come to the island in winter, but is not known to breed there.
- Crex pratensis*,—the Corncrake, or Landrail, was heard by us every day whilst we remained. It is said to visit the island regularly.
- Uria Troile*,—the common Guillemot, was seen swimming between Tory and Horn Head, one pair with young ones full grown.
- Fratercula arctica*,—the Puffin, a few were seen swimming between Tory and Horn Head.
- Laridae* ———  
Several of the Gull Tribe breed here in the season, but we were too late to see them in numbers.
- Larus marinus*? and *argentatus*?—were probably the species seen perched on the isolated pinnacles of rock, of which there are many on the N.E. end of the island.
- Thalassidroma pelagica*,—the Stormy Petrel, called by sailors Mother Carey's chickens. These birds breed in numbers in the Rabbit burrows of the cliffs on the northern side of the island, out of which they were drawn by the boys with their hands: when so far in that they could not be reached, the entrance was broken down by the feet until the birds were within reach. There seemed to be only a single nest in each burrow. The season was rather far advanced for the eggs to be found plentiful, but about 6 or 8 were procured, as also about half a dozen of young birds, all in the down, but of different ages. Fully twenty old birds were taken and many more could have been had, but as we had no wish to allow them to be destroyed wantonly, about the half of those taken were set at liberty. When released from the top of the cliffs which were 200 to 280 feet high, they shot off immediately in a straight line down towards the water, their flight resembling that of a swallow. The boys who caught the birds seemed desirous to prevent me from seeing how they took them, so that I did not get a good opportunity of seeing if any nest was formed, but I believe not, and that the eggs are laid on the soft dry mould in the burrows: I observed that the boys put their ears to the holes while others stamped over them, by which they seemed to know if the birds were within. In the few cases I had an opportunity

of observing I never saw more than one young bird or one egg taken out of one burrow, but I could not ascertain if more than one old bird was ever taken in one nest.

I was surprised to hear one of the old captives, when held in the hand, warbling some sweet notes, which resembled the swallow's twittering, but of a stronger tone. Several when first taken ejected food from their stomach, which appeared to be the remains of fish. I did not observe any of them to eject oil from their nostrils, as they are said to do, although I tried to make them do so. The natives called them by an Irish word which signified OIL BIRD.

From the circumstance of these birds being generally seen at night, which is their regular time for feeding, the people here imagine that they would be killed by the Gulls, and that this is the reason of their not being seen by day. One bird which escaped from me was watched to see whether it would not be attacked by the Gulls before it reached a place of safety, but nothing of the kind took place, nor is it likely from the rapid flight of the Petrel that any Gull could molest it.

All the birds seen by me were the common Petrel, and I offered an extra reward for the capture of a fork-tailed Petrel. (*P. Leachii*.) nor was it long till a specimen was brought to me manufactured on the instant by the middle-tail feathers being extracted, and the outer ones left. A little fellow, perhaps, 10 or 12 years of age, came forward seriously to claim the reward of one shilling for this Fork-tail!

#### REPTILES.

None of this tribe, not even the Frog, is found in Tory.

#### FISHES.

*Cottus bubalis*,—one taken in the rock pools.

*Pagellus centrodonatus*,—this fish is called the "Brazil" by the people at Tory and along the coast of Donegal adjacent. It is taken in great numbers by the people who go out to fish in their corraghs with fishing rods, using the animal of the common Limpet as bait.

Soomber Soomber,—the Mackerel, we caught a single specimen only on the evening of our return from the Island.

*Blennius pholis*,—common in the rock pools.

*Blennius gunnellus*,—taken with the last.

*Gobius niger*,—taken under stones left dry at low water.

*Labrus maculatus*.—The Wrasse, or Bavin, two specimens caught by fishermen, were seen and purchased: one of them was very large, spotted and barred with orange and purple, the other was a uniform dark green and small size.

*Clupea harengus* or sprattus,—Herrings or Sprats, (if the former the young,) are occasionally taken in great quantities, simply by creels let down from the cliffs, in which they were said to be drawn up in hundreds. I saw their remains scattered about

on the grass. The people think that they are driven in thus close to the shore by the large fish which prey on them.

The Tory people have no nets nor long lines, nor any effective apparatus for fishing but their rude corraghs.

When at Milford, I saw at table, plenty of sprats (as ascertained by the late W. Thompson, Esq., from two specimens I brought home,) which had been brought from Donegal Bay, where they were said to be taken in great quantities occasionally; they are carted through the country and sold at a cheap rate.

*Gadus Morrhua*, *G. Eglefinus* and *Lota molva*,—the Cod, Haddock and Ling, are said to be abundant off the coast in the season and to be taken by the people in their usual way out of the corraghs with hand lines.

*Motella mustela*,—five bearded Cod, one specimen taken in a rock pool.

*Lepidogaster cornubiensis*.—Cornish Sucker. Of this curious and beautiful little fish several specimens were taken under stones left uncovered at low water.

*Syngnathus lumbriciformis*,—a few taken under stones at low water.

#### MOLLUSCA.

*Helix nemoralis*,—a single dead specimen only found, but it may be indigenous. (The species is extremely common among the Sand-hills on the coast near Dunfanaghy).

*Limax agrestis*,—several were seen.

*Limneus pereger*,—several were found in the bog holes.

*Littorina littorea*,—found on the rocks.

" *rudis*, do.

" *neritoides*, do.

*Rissoa parva*

" *interrupta*.

" *rubra*.

*Lacuna quadrifasciata*.

*Phasianella pullus*—adhering to a large *Holothuria*.

*Trochus cinereus*—on the rocks.

" *umbilicatus*, do.

*Nassa macula*—several found alive among the rocks at low water.

*Purpura lapillus*—common on the rocks.

*Cypræa europæa*—one found living among the rocks at low water.

*Lottia virginea*—two specimens found alive on the rocks.

*Patella vulgata*.—This shell is very abundant, and of large size, and is of great importance to the islanders. It is taken in quantities by the women, off the rocks, by means of a flat sharp edged piece of iron, apparently made for the purpose, and used as bait for fish, principally, (at the time of our visit,) for the Brazil, (*Pagellus centrodonatus*). I could not learn that it is ever eaten by the inhabitants.

Large piles of the shells were to be seen before the doors of the cabins, and the only lime to be had on the island is procured from the burnt shells. This seems to have been the case from remote times, as the mortar of the Round Tower, and the old churches, and the castle, seems to have been formed solely of this material. We also saw some of the houses that had been recently whitewashed from the same lime.

- Patella pellucida*—found on the rocks.  
 " *lævis*, or *cœrulea*—from the root of *Laminaria*.  
*Chiton cinereus*—two specimens on the rocks.  
*Mytilus edulis*, var. *incurvatus*—was the only bivalve seen on the island. It was abundant, clustering in the crevices of the rocks, exposed to the sea, as I have seen on the coast of the Giant's Causeway.  
*Teredo navalis*—seen in several pieces of drift wood, lying at one of the towns.  
*Anatifa lævis*—on drift timber with the last.  
*Balanus punctatus*—covering the rocks.

#### CRUSTACEA.

- Xantho floridus*—was abundant under rocks and loose stones, near low water mark.  
*Cancer pagurus*—the common Crab, was seen very large and fine.  
*Homarus vulgaris*—the Lobster, also very fine.  
*Portunus puber*—several were found of full size, under stones, just changing their shells.  
*Porcellana platycheles*—with the last.  
*Amphipoda*—three species.  
*Orchestia littorea*?  
*Talitrus locusta*?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ not ascertained.  
*Idotea* \_\_\_\_\_ one species, do.  
*Lygia oceanica*—on the rocks, at the sea side.

#### ANNELIDA.

Three species.

#### ECHINODERMATA.

- Ophiocoma neglecta*—three or four among the sand, under stones.  
*Asterina gibbosa*—several adhering to the under side of stones.  
*Echinus sphaera*—a few at low water.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *lividus*—numerous among loose rolled stones of Granite, at low water mark, (consequently not burrowing.)  
*Cucumaria* \_\_\_\_\_ under a large stone at extreme low water.  
 A very large species, like the "Nigger."  
*Syrinx granulatus*—two specimens under stones.

#### ZOOPHYTES.

*Actinia mesembryanthemum*—plentiful.

#### AMORPHOZOA.

(Sponges,) three species.  
*Halychondria seriata*.

#### LITHOPHYTA.

(Corallines,) *corallina officinalis*—common.  
*Nullipora polymorpha*,—a singular variety was found, encrusting the rocks, and sometimes covering the clusters of Mussels.

#### INSECTS.

The common white Butterfly and the small copper, were seen in the Hollow (Legareighy): a large Moth was also seen flying about in the evening. The common Earwig and a few Coleoptera were all that time permitted to observe.

List of Birds killed against the Light House, and preserved by Mrs. Bailey.

House Martin—A Bird of this species was found in Dec. 1844. "Its body was much wasted as if it had been long without food."

*Tringa variabilis*.

Fieldfare?

Redwing?

Wigeon—This Bird struck the copper dome, above the light, with such force that the sound was mistaken for that of a cannon shot fired by some vessel as a signal of distress, so that the Light House keeper actually went out to ascertain if such was the case. The Bird was found killed the next morning.

Puffin,

Oyster catcher,

Ring Dotterel.

Wood cock.

Land Rail.

Stormy Petrel—The fork-tailed Petrel had never been seen by Mrs. Bailey.

(Two sorts of West Indian seeds were in Mrs. Bailey's collection found on the shore.)

#### BOTANY.

List of Plants found on Tory Island:—

40 *Phænogamia*—Two Ferns.

*Ranunculus flammula*.

*Crambe maritima*.

*Polygala vulgaris*.

*Silene maritima*.

*Spergula arvensis*.

*Sagina procumbens*.

*Arenaria rubra*.

*Sedum anglicum*.

*Peplis portula*—in a boggy swamp by the road side.

*Lotus corniculatus*.

*Potentilla anserina*.

*Tormentilla officinalis*.

\* *Rosa spinosissima*,—almost herbaceous, and I saw only two little specimens, which I abstained from pulling, lest I might deprive the island of its last rose.

\* *Angelica sylvestris*

\* *Crithmum maritimum*—(samphire) on the cliffs, at the west end of the island. Brought to me by a man who said he had to be let down by a rope to reach the plant. I did not see it growing.

\* *Lonicera periclymenum* (Honeysuckle.)

\* *Hedera Helix* (Ivy.)

A single plant of Ivy was found climbing a little detached pinnacle of rock on the precipitous side of a curious deep Hollow (called by the natives *Lag-a-reithe*, (pronounced *Lagareighy*) the Ram's Hollow. This seemed to have been originally a large cave, communicating by an arched passage with the sea, the roof of which had afterwards fallen in. The passage to the sea still remained, but blocked up by loose stones.

The Plants marked \* were only found in this place.

*Jasione montana*.

\* *Solidago virgaurea*.

*Bellis perennis* (the Daisy, "blossoms everywhere.")

*Carduus* — one species of the Thistle seen.

*Apargia* — (species seen by Dr. Harvey, but could not be determined from the badness of the specimen I had.)

*Plantago maritima*.

*Statice armeria*.

*Calluna vulgaris*.

*Erica tetralix*.

\* — *cinerea*.

*Erythraea centarium*.

*Gentiana campestris*.

*Anagallis arvensis*.

——— *tenella*—very abundant on the damp soil, flowering profusely.

*Euphrasia officinalis*.

\* *Thymus serpyllum*.

\* *Rumex acetosella*.

*Atriplex patula*.

*Salix fusca*, v. *argentea*.

\* *Juniperus communis*.

*Juncus bufonius*.

Two Grasses. *Agrostis canina*.

*Holcus lanatus*.

*Asplenium marinum*.

*Athyrium filix femina*.

#### ALGÆ, (Seaweeds.)

† *Fucus vesiculosus*.

† ——— *nodosus*

† *Himantalia lorea*.

† *Laminaria digitata*.

*Rhodomenia laciniata*.

*Plocamium coccineum*.

*Ptilota plumosa*.

*Conferva rupestris*.

*Codium tomentosum*.

——— *adhærens*? (examined by Dr. Harvey, and considered by him to be this species.)

† These are used in making Kelp. The manufacture of which has been latterly revived, on account of the quantity of Iodine which can be extracted from it. This substance is now used in the arts in dyeing some particular color, as well as in medicine. The Tory Island Kelp is found to be of very good quality, owing to the large Algæ being principally used in making it.