

Genus ZAPORNIA, *Leach.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* slender, shorter than the head, acuminate, compressed, acute ; the upper mandible gradually incurved. *Nostrils* linear, lateral, placed at the base of the beak. *Neck* elongated and slender. *Legs* long, slender, cleft, with three toes in front : the hinder toe elevated from the ground at its base : the tibiæ half naked.

SPOTTED CRAKE.

Zapornia porzana.

La Poule d'Eau Maronette.

ALTHOUGH the group of which the Land Rail is the type, and the members of the present genus, approximate very closely, still they differ so much in their general habits and in their style of colouring that we are inclined to admit the validity of their separation ; and although the present bird was not included by Dr. Leach in the genus he established, we conceive that it strictly belongs to it, and have consequently associated it with the two other species *Zapornia pusilla* and *Zap. Baillonii*.

With regard to their economy and habits, while the Land Rail is entirely confined to meadows and fields, the Spotted Crake and its congeners, on the contrary, are strictly aquatic, so much so, indeed, as to make the waters their constant asylum ; and although not web-footed, they swim with the greatest facility. The dense vegetation along the borders of marshes and pools is the situation to which they are particularly attached : they are rarely seen on the wing, and are scarcely ever flushed unless closely pursued by a dog.

The Spotted Crake is found in the North of Asia, is particularly abundant in the northern and eastern parts of Europe, and in the British Islands is a periodical visitor, arriving early in spring and departing on the approach of the severities of winter.

"Its nest," says Mr. Selby, "is built among the thick sedges and reeds of the marshes, and from the foundation of it being frequently placed in water, is composed of a large mass of decayed aquatic plants interlaced, with the hollow neatly formed, and comfortably lined. The eggs are eight or ten in number, of a yellowish grey colour, with a tinge of pink, and with round spots of umber brown of various sizes, and with other secondary colours of a lighter shade. It feeds on worms, aquatic insects, slugs, seeds, &c. ; and its flesh is sweet and well flavoured. In autumn it becomes loaded with fat, a layer of nearly a quarter of an inch in thickness covering the whole surface of its body."

The sexes have no distinguishable difference in the colouring of their plumage, nor do the young of the year offer any considerable variation in their colour or markings.

Crown of the head and the whole of the upper surface deep greenish olive speckled with white, the centre of each feather very dark ; wing-coverts and secondaries spotted and crossed transversely with irregular markings of greyish white and black ; primaries dark olive brown, edged with greenish olive ; stripe over the eye and throat grey ; sides of the neck, breast, and under surface pale greenish olive, spotted and transversely barred with greyish white bounded by black ; bill red at the base and yellow at the tip ; legs olive yellow.

The Plate represents an adult of the natural size.