

## Genus PORPHYRIO.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* shorter than the head, strong, hard, thick, concave, nearly as high as long, culmen of the superior mandible depressed and dilated upon the forehead. *Nostrils* lateral, placed near the ridge, and pierced through the mandible. *Feet* strong. *Toes* long; each furnished with a fine lateral membrane. *Wings* moderate, the third or fourth quill-feather the longest.

## HYACINTHINE PORPHYRIO.

*Porphyrio hyacinthinus*, Temm.

Le Talève Porphyrion.

THE birds forming the restricted genus *Porphyrio* may be readily distinguished from the Gallinules (*Gallinula*) by the greater depth and richness of the colour of their plumage, by the extraordinary development of the feet, and by the robust form of the bill. Although the number of species is somewhat limited, they are widely distributed over the tropical portions of the Old World,

Independently of the southern and eastern parts of Europe, the marshes of which are the places of constant resort for this beautiful bird, its range is extended over a great portion of Africa to the south, and as far as the mountains of the Himalaya to the east. In Europe it is especially abundant in the Grecian Archipelago, the Levant, and the Ionian Islands; it is less common in Dalmatia and Sardinia. The southern provinces of Hungary and Russia, and the borders of the Caspian Sea, may also be enumerated among its European localities.

Like the Water-hen, or Common Gallinule, it dwells on the borders of rivers and in all marshy situations. In its food it is partly herbivorous, feeding on various kinds of marine vegetables; still, as the robust and hard character of its bill implies, it is destined to live upon other food, and hence we find it frequently giving a preference to hard seeds and grain, to which are added snails, frogs, and other aquatic animals.

Although its form would seem to deny the fact, its actions and appearance on the land are both elegant and graceful. It is extremely quick in all its movements, running with ease and swiftness; and from the great expansion of its feet it is enabled to pass with facility over soft oozy mud, aquatic herbage, &c.: but although much agility characterizes this species on land, its aerial evolutions are heavy, and apparently performed with considerable difficulty.

The sexes offer no difference in the colour of their plumage. They breed in marshes, much in the manner of the Common Gallinule, giving preference to the sedgy parts of the morass and partly inundated rice-fields, where it constructs a nest of aquatic plants, and lays three or four white eggs that are nearly round.

Bill fine red; legs and feet fleshy red; irides lake red; cheeks, throat, sides of the neck, and chest turquoise blue; remainder of the plumage deep dull indigo blue, having the edges of the greater and lesser coverts of the wings lighter in colour and more brilliant; under tail:coverts white.

The Plate represents an adult of the natural size.