

Genus NUMENIUS, *Lath.*

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* long, slender, incurved, slightly compressed, rounded through its whole length, with the tip of the upper mandible projecting beyond the lower one; hard, and semi-obtuse; laterally furrowed for three fourths of its length. *Nostrils* basal, placed in the lateral groove, linear, and covered above by a naked membrane. *Lores*, or space between the bill and eyes, covered with feathers. *Legs* long, slender, naked above the tarsal joint. *Feet* four-toed; three before and one behind; the front ones connected at the base by a large membrane. *Toes* short; the outer and inner ones of nearly equal length; hind toe short, and articulated above the plane of the others, upon the tarsus, its tip only resting upon the ground. *Claws* short and blunt. Front of the tarsi partly scutellated; back reticulated. Front of the toes scutellated.

COMMON CURLEW.

Numenius arquata, *Lath.*

Le Grand Courlis cendré.

SINCE the North American Curlew (*Numenius longirostris*, Wils.) has been found to possess good specific differences, the range of the present species will be restricted to the regions of the Old World; and different as the climates of this vast range must necessarily be, the Common Curlew is found equally diffused from the sultry portion of the torrid zone to the frozen countries of the North: the islands of the Pacific Ocean, particularly New Holland, are not devoid of its presence, and we also possess examples from China, Nepaul, &c. In its disposition the Common Curlew is extremely wary and distrustful; and it resorts to such wild and open situations that the greatest ingenuity is required to approach it, which, indeed, is seldom accomplished except by the sportsman secreting himself in the neighbourhood of its haunts, and thereby obtaining an opportunity of shooting it while flying over the place of his concealment.

It is migratory in its habits; at least those which frequent the temperate portions of Europe pass the winter on the sea-coast and the neighbouring marshes, and retire to the high lands of Norway and Sweden during the months of summer, such situations being conducive to its security during the period of incubation. From the circumstance of a few of these birds being left on most of our extensive moors and wild open districts during the breeding-season it may be considered a permanent resident in England, although the greater number of those which winter on our shores do certainly retire northwards to the Western, Orkney, and Shetland Islands, whence probably many of them cross the Channel to Norway and Sweden. The Common Curlew possesses extraordinary powers of flight, and is consequently enabled easily to pass from the shores of the sea, at every rising tide, to inland wilds, fields, morasses, &c., and by some peculiar instinct to return again to the coast almost at the moment of the commencement of the ebb, when it follows the receding waves, and feeds upon such marine worms, crustacea, &c. as are left on the sands. We cannot refrain from here inserting an interesting note on the habits of this bird by Sir Wm. Jardine, Bart., copied from his edition of Wilson's American Ornithology.

The Common Curlew, "*Numenius arquata*, during the breeding-season, is entirely an inhabitant of the upland moors and sheep-pastures, and in the soft and dewy mornings of May and June forms an object in their early solitude which adds to their wildness. At first dawn, when nothing can be seen but rounded hills of rich and green pasture, rising one beyond another, with perhaps an extensive meadow between, looking more boundless by the shadows and mists of morn, a long string of sheep marching off at a sleepy pace on their well-beaten track to some favourite feeding-ground, the shrill tremulous call of the Curlew to his mate has something in it wild and melancholy, yet always pleasing to the associations. In such situations do they build, making almost no nest, and, during the commencement of their amours, run skulkingly among the long grass and rushes, the male rising and sailing round, or descending with the wings closed above his back, and uttering his peculiar quavering whistle. The approach of an intruder requires more demonstration of his powers, and he approaches near, buffeting and *whauping* with all his might. When the young are hatched, they remain near the spot, and are for a long time difficult to raise; a pointer will stand and road them, and at this time they are tender and well-flavoured. By autumn they are nearly all dispersed to the sea-coasts, and have now lost their clear whistle."

The sexes are alike in plumage, and their flesh is by many considered as a great delicacy for the table.

Bill blackish brown for half its length from the tip, the rest being fleshy white; head, neck, and upper surface light grey, the centre of each feather being dark brown; rump white; tail transversely barred with brown and white; quills dark brown, the shafts being white, and the inner webs barred with the same colour; throat, neck, and chest yellowish white thickly striped with olive brown; rest of the under surface white; legs and feet bluish lead colour; irides dark brown.

The Plate represents an adult male of the natural size.