

Genus VANELLUS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* shorter than the head, straight, slightly compressed; the points of both mandibles horny and hard. *Nasal groove* wide, and reaching as far as the horny tip. *Nostrils* basal, linear, pierced in the membrane of the nasal groove. *Legs* slender, with the lower part of the tibiæ naked. *Feet* four-toed; three before, and one behind, united at the base by a membrane; hind toe very short, articulated upon the tarsus. *Tarsi* reticulated. *Wings* ample, tuberculated or spurred; the first three quill-feathers notched or suddenly narrowed towards their tips, and shorter than the fourth and fifth, which are the longest.

LAPWING.

Vanellus cristatus, Meyer.

Le Vanneau Huppé.

THE Lapwing, or Peewit, both with respect to the elegance of its plumage and the general outline of its contour, and the light and graceful manner in which it trips along the ground, together with its habits and economy, is one of the most interesting of our native Plovers. When we consider that all this grace and elegance is appointed by nature to add life and cheerfulness to bleak moorlands and swampy plains, far from the habitual resort of man, we cannot but feel that those desolate spots in creation are not without their peculiar attractions. Those of our readers who would wish to observe this bird in a state of nature will be amply repaid by a visit to its native districts; and as there are no heaths, wide moorlands, or swampy places of any extent throughout the British Islands without the presence of the Peewit during summer, their natural habits and manners may be investigated with great ease and with but little expense or trouble.

This species is distributed over the whole of Europe, everywhere inhabiting situations similar to those it occupies in our own island. We have also seen specimens in collections from India and Africa. Although this individual species is confined to the Old World, America is not without this peculiar form, as the collection formed by Capt. P. P. King during his late survey of part of the southern coast, and since presented by him to the Zoological Society, fully confirms.

The flight of the Lapwing is heavy, flapping, and apparently performed with considerable exertion. If the breeding-place be approached, the male utters his call of *Peewit* repeatedly, and at the same time exhibits a series of aerial evolutions peculiar to himself; and although no great velocity distinguishes his flight, his numerous turns are made with great quickness and dexterity.

Its nidification, like that of the rest of its allied race, takes place on the bare earth, no nest being made for the reception of the eggs, which are four in number, of an olive colour blotched and spotted with black.

They perform the task of incubation at an early season of the year, commencing on our heathy moorlands in the month of March, soon after which they deposit their eggs, which are eagerly sought for as a luxury for the table; hence immense numbers are annually gathered and transmitted to the various markets: nor are the birds themselves less esteemed. Their food consists of insects, worms, and slugs.

The sexes are much alike in plumage; the male, however, exhibits a richer tone of colouring and a longer occipital crest. Some little variation takes place between the summer and winter dress, the male in the former season being adorned with a fine black throat, which changes to white in winter. The young attain the adult plumage in their second year.

Adults have the top of the head, crest, and breast black; the upper surface black, with green and bronzed reflections; many of the back feathers edged with brown; the under parts pure white; the tail-feathers white largely tipped with black; the outer tail-feathers white; the upper and under tail-coverts rufous; the beak black; and the legs reddish brown inclining to purple.

The Plate represents a male and female in the summer and winter plumage.