

Genus **ÆDICNEMUS.**

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* longer than the head, straight, strong, a little depressed towards the tip; *culmen* of the upper mandible elevated; lower mandible forming an angle. *Nostrils* placed in the middle of the beak, cleft longitudinally to the horny part of the beak, open before, pierced from side to side. *Tarsi* long, slender. *Toes* three before, united as far as the second articulation by a membrane which advances along their edges. *Tail* strongly graduated. *Wings* moderate, the first quill-feather a little shorter than the second, which is the longest.

THICK-KNEED BUSTARD.

Ædicnemus crepitans, Temm.

L'Ædicneme criard.

WE are here presented with one of those peculiar and interesting forms which serve as a link to connect two important groups. The groups to which we allude are the Bustards on the one hand, and the Plovers on the other; and we have often had occasion to remark, that while the normal or typical groups are abundant in species, the aberrant forms, which appear to be created for the purpose of filling up the intervening chasms, are restricted for the most part to a limited number of species: such is the case in the instance before us, for while the Bustards and Plovers comprise a vast multitude of species, the genus *Ædicnemus* contains at most but five or six, and these confined entirely to the regions of the Old World. The Thick-kneed Bustard is the only one of its genus which is known in Europe, in most parts of which it appears to be migratory. It arrives in the British Islands at the commencement of spring, giving the preference to elevated downs, commons, and heaths, particularly those of barren and sterile districts, confining itself, however, principally to the midland counties, being especially abundant in Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, and Hampshire. It first appears in small companies, which soon after separate to breed. The eggs are two in number, and are placed on the bare ground, without any trace of a nest: the place of incubation is generally among loose stones and flints; and the young, which are capable of running as soon as excluded, are not to be discovered without great difficulty, their colours assimilate so closely with the surrounding objects. On the Continent it is found dispersed in similar situations, and is especially abundant, not only in the southern and eastern portions of Europe, but on the adjacent borders of Asia and Africa.

The Thick-kneed Bustard is no less distinguished for its rapidity on foot, than for its sweeping and powerful flight, which is generally performed in wide circles. Its food consists of slugs, worms, reptiles, and, not unfrequently, mice, &c.

The sexes offer little or no difference in their plumage, and the young assume the adult plumage at an early period.

The top of the head, cheeks, and whole of the upper surface brownish ash, with a tinge of vinous, each feather having a central dash of umbre brown; throat white, the same colour being obscurely indicated both above and below the eyes; a pale yellow bar passes longitudinally across the shoulders; the greater coverts are tipped with white; flanks and under surface yellowish white, the former having the shaft of each feather streaked with brown; naked skin round the eyes, the irides, and the basal half of the beak bright yellow; tarsi and toes yellow, with a slight tinge of green.

The Plate represents an adult of the natural size.