

## Genus PHŒNICOPTERUS, *Linn.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak*, thick, strong, the depth exceeding the breadth, serrated, conical towards the point, naked at the base; the upper mandible suddenly bent and curved at the tip over the inferior mandible, which is of larger size than the upper. *Nostrils* longitudinal, placed in the centre of the beak, pierced through, and covered above by a membrane. *Tarsi* of great length. *Toes* three before, united by a web as far as the nails, and one behind, which is very short and placed high on the tarsus: nails short and flat. *Wings* moderate, the first and second quill-feathers the longest.

## COMMON FLAMINGO.

*Phœnicopterus ruber*, *Linn.*

Le Flamant.

OF all the forms in ornithology, none is more extraordinary than that of the Flamingo, whose singularly shaped bill, long and slender neck, stilt-like legs, and brilliant colouring render it a most striking object. The present form exists in all the warmer portions of the continent of Europe, Asia, Africa and America. We are acquainted with at least three or four species, but we are still uncertain whether that found in America be or be not identical with the one found in Europe; we therefore consider it best to confine our remarks to the range of the species inhabiting the Old World: we may observe, however, that should the identity of the European and American birds be hereafter satisfactorily ascertained, M. Temminck's proposed specific title of *antiquorum* must be given to the bird found in the Old World.

In Europe the only countries regularly visited by the Flamingo are those which form the coasts of the Mediterranean. It is abundant in Sicily, Calabria, and Sardinia; it occasionally occurs in France, and even in Germany, as is proved by its having been killed on the banks of the Rhine. In Asia and Africa it is very extensively spread, and, indeed, is one of the commonest birds along the whole of the African shores. Its favourite haunts in all countries are morasses, the sides of rivers, and the low muddy and sandy shores of the sea, creeks, and inlets. Admirably formed for seeking its food in these situations it is enabled from the length of its legs to wade to a considerable distance from the shore, while the corresponding length of its neck enables it to reach the bottom with its beak, which in collecting its food is placed with its upper mandible downwards, a position quite contrary to that of every other bird at present known, but for which the acute bend in the upper mandible is expressly adapted. Its food consists of small molluscos animals, the fry of fishes, and other marine productions. Though it possesses a webbed foot, this structure appears to be more for the purpose of enabling it to traverse soft and muddy places without sinking, than for the purpose of swimming, which it seldom or ever attempts. In its native haunts it is mostly seen in small bands or companies, and is extremely watchful and cautious, so that it is not without the greatest difficulty a person can get within gun-shot range. Its flight when elevated in the air is rapid, and the troop assumes a wedge-shaped form, as is the case with the Wild Geese.

Not having had an opportunity ourselves of observing its nidification, we give the account published by M. Temminck and other writers, who state that it erects among the morasses an elevated mound of mud and earth, on the top of which, in a slight depression, the female deposits her eggs, placing herself astride to cover them, the great length of her limbs precluding the possibility of her assuming the usual position: the eggs are said to be two in number, of an oblong form and of a pure white.

The sexes, although differing but little in colour, may be readily distinguished by the greater size of the male. During their progress from youth to maturity, which occupies a space of four years, they undergo a considerable change of plumage; besides which, we believe, there are differences depending upon season, the beautiful rose red being characteristic of the spring and summer. The young before the first moult are of a uniform grey, with the exception of the secondaries and tail, which are black. As they approach maturity they gradually assume the snowy white and scarlet plumage of the adults, which may be thus described:

Head, neck, upper and under surface beautiful rosy white; centre of the wing bright scarlet; primaries black; bill blood red at the base and black at the tip; tarsi and toes rosy red.

The Plate represents an adult and a young bird about half the natural size.