

Genus **CURSORIUS**, *Lath.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* shorter than the head, depressed at its base, slightly convex at its points, and somewhat curved and pointed. *Nostrils* oval, surmounted by a small protuberance. *Tarsi* long and slender. *Toes* three before only, entirely divided, the inner toe scarcely equalling half the length of the middle toe. *Wings* long; the first and second quill-feathers nearly the same length, and the greater coverts as long as the quill-feathers.

CREAM-COLOURED COURSER.

Cursorius Isabellinus, *Meyer.*

Le Court vite Isabelle.

THE most superficial view of the structure and proportions of this singular and elegant bird, would at once enable us to perceive that it is a fleet and rapid courser, peculiarly fitted for dry and sterile situations, such as sandy deserts, plains, and open tracts of country.

Although in many respects it approaches the Bustards, yet it has with great propriety been separated from that group into a distinct and well-defined genus, which now includes five or six species, closely united to each other in form and general habits, and, as well as the genus *Otis*, strictly confined to the older known portions of the globe. Africa supplies some peculiar species, continental India one or two others; and we have seen one from the islands of the Indian Archipelago differing from every other.

The present species, the *Cursorius Isabellinus*, although frequently visiting Southern Europe, and occasionally our own island, is, strictly speaking, a native of Northern Africa and Abyssinia, where, from the remarkable similarity of the colour of its plumage, it finds security among the sandy deserts and plains, from which it can hardly be distinguished, and where it speeds along with the swiftness of an arrow, in pursuit of its food, which consists principally of the insects peculiar to such situations. Of its nidification no authentic information has reached us; but most probably, like the Bustard, it incubates among loose stones and the scanty herbage of the desert.

We have had the good fortune to obtain examples of the young, in addition to the adults, of both sexes, which latter do not offer any material difference of plumage. The young, although nearly arrived at its full size, may be distinguished by the absence of the black occipital patch, as well as the bands of black and white which pass from behind the eye, and by its plumage being obscurely waved with dusky, transverse and somewhat arrow-shaped markings.

The general plumage of the adult is of a delicate fawn colour above, lighter beneath, the occipital and quill-feathers being black; from above the eye to the back of the neck extends a white line, circumscribing the black portion of the occiput, beneath which, from the angle of the eye, runs a similar, but still narrower band of black; tail, with the exception of the two middle feathers, banded near its extremity with black, and tipped with dull white; beak black; legs light cream colour.

The Plate represents an adult male, and a young bird of the first autumn, both of the natural size.