

Genus BONASIA.

GEN. CHAR. *Head* crested; *tarsi* and *toes* unplumed; and a tuft of feathers projecting from each side of the neck; in other respects as in the genus *Tetrao*.

HAZEL GROUSE, OR GELINOTTE.

Bonasia Europæa.

Le Tetras Gélinotte.

IN the days of Linnæus and the older writers every species of Grouse was comprised in a single genus (*Tetrao*); subsequent research, however, having added many other species, and even new forms, modern naturalists have been induced to subdivide this interesting family into smaller groups, each distinguished by characters peculiar to itself: it has, moreover, been considered expedient to apply to each of these minor subdivisions a generic title, retaining the old name *Tetrao* for the most typical Grouse; the Ptarmigan necessarily forms another group, and the bird under consideration a third. The half-plumed tarsi, the crested head, and the tuft of feathers on each side of the neck are features peculiar to the genus *Bonasia*: in the European Hazel Grouse this latter character is but slightly indicated, but is exhibited to a greater extent in a species from America. The *Bonasia Europæa* is the only species yet discovered in the Old World, but it has its representative in the New, in the well-known Canada Grouse, *Bonasia umbellus*, and others. These slight differences in structure are, as might be supposed, always accompanied by some difference of habits. The feet of the Ptarmigan are as ill adapted for perching on trees as the pectinated toes of the Capercailzie are expressly fitted for that purpose. Although the Hazel Grouse does not equal the Ptarmigan in flight, its powers in this respect are far from being inconsiderable. They frequently perch on trees, and love to dwell in wooded plains skirting hilly and mountainous districts; they feed on alpine fruits and berries, to which are added the tops of heath, fir, juniper, and other tender shoots. They fly in packs or companies, and are not so shy or distrustful as most other members of this family; when disturbed they perch on trees, and are then easily approached and shot.

The Hazel Grouse is dispersed over the continent of Europe from north to south, inhabiting nearly all the elevated ridges and natural boundaries of the different countries. Dr. Latham states that they are so abundant on a small island in the gulf of Genoa that the name of Gelinotte Island has been given to it. It also inhabits France, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, thus extending itself from the sultry regions of Italy to the limits of the arctic circle. No instance is on record of its having been discovered in England, and so exclusively does it appear to be confined to the European continent, that we have never observed it in collections from other countries.

The eggs of the Hazel Grouse are from ten to twelve in number, of a rusty red, thickly spotted with a darker colour, and are deposited on the ground at the foot of a fern or hazel-stem.

The male may be distinguished from the female by the red naked skin behind the eye, the black mark on the throat, and by the bright and more contrasted markings of the plumage. The young during the first autumn are without the black throat, in which state the colouring of the plumage nearly resembles that of the female.

The Hazel Grouse is held in high esteem for the table, its flesh being both delicate and of good flavour; for which purpose thousands are yearly captured; and it not unfrequently happens that small packages of them in good preservation arrive from Norway and Sweden, in the markets of our Metropolis.

The male has the top of the head, crest, and upper surface varied with markings of reddish brown, black, and grey, disposed in zigzag lines across every feather; the scapularies and secondaries having a large spatulate mark of white running down the stem of each feather; the primaries are brown on their inner webs and varied with buff and brown on the outer; the feathers of the tail, with the exception of the two middle ones, which are grey finely freckled with black, are strongly banded with black near their tips, which are grey; the throat is black, encircled with an obscure band of white, which extends to the shoulders; naked skin over the eye scarlet, bounded above by a patch of white; the feathers of the chest and flanks are black and red with a white tip; those of the breast and belly and the tail-coverts are white, each having a black centre; bill, feet, and eyes brown.

The female differs from the male in not having the black throat and the red naked skin over the eye, and in being less brilliant in all her markings.

The Plate represents a male and female of the natural size.