

### Genus TICHODROMA, III.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* very long, slender, slightly arched, cylindrical, angular at the base, and depressed at the point. *Nostrils* basal, pierced horizontally, naked, partly closed by a membrane. *Toes* three before, the external united at its base to the middle one, and one behind with an elongated nail. *Tail* slightly rounded with feeble shafts. *Wings* large and rounded.

### WALL CREEPER.

*Tichodroma phœnicoptera*, Temm.

La Tichodrome échellette.

THE form and plumage of this beautiful bird would induce most persons to suppose it a native of a tropical clime; it is, however, strictly an inhabitant of Europe, although its local distribution appears to be confined exclusively to the middle and southern portions of the Continent. Unlike most of the smaller birds, it frequents the naked and precipitous parts of the most elevated mountains, such as the Alps of Switzerland, the Apennines, and Pyrenees. Among these towering rocks, where the ruins of castles and fortresses are not unfrequent, this pretty bird is seen flitting from crevice to crevice, enlivening the solitude of the scene by its presence. In the choice of its food it is curious and peculiar, being particularly partial to spiders and their eggs, which with various species of insects and their larvæ constitute its diet: for these it is incessantly on the search, not however creeping up and down the sides of the rock or the face of the wall, as is the case with the true *Certhia*, but hopping or flitting from one crevice or projection to another; hence we see the tail-feathers feeble and not furnished with stiff springy shafts, since they are not required to aid the bird in the same manner as they do in the Woodpeckers or Creeper. The grasp of its long and slender toes is peculiarly tenacious; the least roughness, or any hold however slight, is therefore sufficient to afford a resting-place. Connecting the habits and the situation which this bird occupies with the means bestowed upon it, we cannot but see how suitably it is endowed; the slender bill, its tenacious feet, its broad and rounded wing, giving a flitting character to its mode of flight,—all combining to qualify it for its mountain habitat. The moult is double, occurring in spring and autumn, and the two sexes are alike in plumage except during the breeding season, when the throat of the male is black, and the crown of the head of a somewhat darker grey. Before the autumn moult comes fairly on, the feathers of these parts are exchanged, and the markings disappear; the two sexes are then undistinguishable.

The head, neck, back, and upper surface generally are of a delicate grey; the under parts of a darker tint of the same colour; the whole of the wing-coverts and the outer edge of the greater quills for half their lengths, of a lively crimson; the remainder of the quill-feathers black, each having two spots of white on the inner web, so as to form a double bar when the wing is expanded; tail black tipped with white; beak, irides, and tarsi black.

We have figured a male and female in full plumage, and of the natural size.