

LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER.

Picus minor, Linn.

Le Pic épeichette.

THE present elegant species of Woodpecker, which has received from the older ornithologists the specific title of *minor*, is, indeed, the least of all the European Woodpeckers ; but if we include India and other portions of the globe, we find species considerably smaller, rendering its appellation erroneous, unless we consider it as strictly in reference to its European congeners. As far as we have been able to ascertain, this portion of the globe forms the restricted habitat of this species, over the whole of which, however, it is pretty generally distributed, confining itself to the precincts of woods, parks, and orchards. In England it is far more abundant than is generally supposed ; we have seldom sought for it in vain wherever large trees, particularly the Elm, grow in sufficient numbers to invite its abode : its security from sight is to be attributed more to its habit of frequenting the topmost branches than to its rarity. Near London it is very common, and may be seen by an attentive observer in Kensington Gardens, and in any of the parks in the neighbourhood. Like many other birds whose habits are of an arboreal character, the Lesser Spotted Woodpecker appears to perform a certain daily round, traversing a given extent of district, and returning to the same spot whence it began its route. Besides the Elm, to which it is especially partial, it not unfrequently visits orchard-trees of large growth, running over their moss-grown branches in quest of the larvæ of insects, which abound in such situations. In its actions it is very lively and alert. Unlike the Large Woodpecker, which prefers the trunks of trees, it naturally frequents the smaller and more elevated branches, which it traverses with the utmost ease and celerity : should it perceive itself noticed, it becomes shy, and retires from observation by concealing itself behind the branch on which it rests ; if, however, earnestly engaged in the extraction of its food, its attention appears to be so absorbed that it will allow itself to be closely approached without suspending its operations. When spring commences, it becomes clamorous and noisy, its call being an oft-repeated single note, so closely resembling that of the Wryneck as to be scarcely distinguishable from it. At other times of the year it is mute, and its presence is only betrayed by the reiterated strokes which it makes against the bark of trees.

Like the rest of its genus, it deposits its eggs in the holes of trees ; the eggs being four or five in number, and pure white.

The sexes offer no other difference than that the female has the crown of the head white, whereas in the male it is of a fine scarlet.

The young attain the plumage of adults immediately after they leave the holes in which they were reared.

The adult male has the crown of the head scarlet ; the cheeks, stripe over the eye, sides of the neck, and under parts dull white ; an irregular black band passes from the beak down the sides of the neck ; back of the neck, upper part of the back, rump, and middle tail-feathers black ; wings and centre of the back barred with black and white ; outer tail-feathers white, obscurely barred with black ; faint longitudinal dashes of the same colour are also observable on the breast.

The Plate represents an adult male and female of the natural size.