

## Genus CORVUS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* strong, conical, cultrated, straight at the base, but bending slightly towards the tip; *nostrils* at the base of the bill, oval and open, covered by reflected bristly feathers. *Wings* pointed; the first feather being much shorter than the second and third, and the fourth the longest. *Legs* and *feet* strong, plated, with three toes before and one behind. *Claws* strong and curved. *Toes* divided. *Tarsus* longer than the middle toe.

## R A V E N.

*Corvus corax*, Linn.

Le Corbeau noir.

THE Raven is so extensively diffused, and is in consequence so universally known, that the name at once reminds us of its general character. The largest and strongest of its genus, and bold as well as cunning, it is always an object of suspicion to shepherds and husbandmen, from its daring attacks upon the young or weak among their flocks and herds, and in times of superstition was regarded as a bird of ill omen, its hoarse croaking being supposed to announce some impending calamity.

With a quick, searching eye, and a keen sense of smell, the Raven is ever on the watch to satisfy his appetite, and no sooner does the defenceless state of an animal, and the absence of the herdsman, afford a chance of success, but the Raven is there upon the ground. At first he makes his approach obliquely and with great caution. He is shy of man and of all large animals in motion, because, as it has been aptly observed, though glad to find others' carrion, or to make carrion of them if he can do it with impunity, he takes good care that none shall make carrion of him. If no interruption occurs, he makes his first attack upon the eye, afterwards feeds at his leisure, retires to a small distance to digest his meal, and then returns again.

The Raven is met with in almost every part of the globe. Rocks on the sea shore, mountain ridges and extensive woods are its most usual haunts: and are all equally favourable to its habits, occasionally it visits open plains and large fields, especially when they are used as pasture. Like the other birds of this genus the raven is not particular in selecting food, but eats indiscriminately small mammalia, eggs, reptiles, dead fish, insects, grain and carrion; they have also been seen feeding their young out of the nests of a rookery.

The male and female are frequently observed together, and they are said to pair for life. There is no difference in the plumage of the sexes, and they are subject to only one moult. They build on high trees, or if near the shore, in the crevices of the most inaccessible parts of rocks, and use the same nest, formed of sticks, wool and hair, for years in succession. The eggs, four or five in number, of a blueish green blotched with brown, are produced very early in spring. The female during incubation, which lasts about twenty days, is regularly attended and fed by the male bird, who not only provides her with abundance of food, but relieves her in turn, and takes her place on the nest. The young birds are driven away as soon as they are able to provide for themselves. If taken young, the Raven is easily domesticated, and becomes very tame and familiar, imitating different sounds correctly, and has often been taught to pronounce a variety of words distinctly. They are also noted for carrying away and hiding pieces of polished metal.

The whole of the plumage is black, the upper part glossed with blue; feathers on the throat narrow and pointed; tail rounded at the end; beak, legs and toes black; claws black, strong and curved.

Our figure represents an adult bird, one fourth less than the natural size.