

## Genus NUCIFRAGA.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* conical, longer than the head, straight; the upper mandible having the *culmen* rounded, overhanging the lower, both terminating in an obtuse and depressed point. *Nostrils* basal, round, open, concealed by hairs directed forwards. *Toes* three before and one behind, the two outer being united at their base. *Tarsus* longer than the middle toe. *Wings* long and pointed, the first quill-feather being the shortest, and the fourth and fifth the longest.

## NUTCRACKER.

*Nucifraga caryocatactes*, *Briss.*

Le Casse noix.

WE are sorry that it is not in our power to give a detailed account from personal observation of the manners of this singular and interesting bird, which with one other from the Himalaya mountains form the only known species of the present genus, which seems to connect the order with several other groups, of which we may enumerate that of *Picus* among the *Zygodactylous* birds; and Mr. Vigors considers it to assimilate in some degree to that extensive family the *Sturnidæ*, especially to the genera *Cassicus* and *Barita*: it must be acknowledged, however, that some other interesting form seems to be required in order to make the link of approximation complete.

The native habitat of the Nutcracker is the mountain woods of Switzerland and Germany, and indeed the greater portion of Europe, in the northern parts of which it is strictly migratory.

Its claim to a place among the birds of the British Islands rests on a few rare instances of its having been captured in this country. Its habits and manners accord with what we might expect from its peculiar form, bearing a marked resemblance to those of the Woodpeckers: like them, it ascends the trunks of trees, strikes the bark with its bill in order to dislodge the larvæ of insects which lurk beneath, and upon which it feeds, together with worms, fruits, nuts, the seeds of pine, &c.

It incubates in the holes of decayed trees, frequently enlarging the cavity to the necessary size, and lays five or six eggs, of a yellowish white.

The sexes, as in the *Corvidæ* in general, offer no external difference of plumage; the female is, however, somewhat smaller than the male, and perhaps a little more obscure in her markings.

The whole of the plumage is of a deep reddish brown, inclining to umber; the body varied, except on the head and rump, with large spots of white, occupying the centre of every feather; wings and tail brownish black, with green reflections, the latter being tipped with white, the two middle feathers excepted; bills and legs brownish black.

We have figured the bird of the natural size.