

## Genus PYRRHULA.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* very short, and thick at the base; both mandibles convex, particularly the upper one, the point of which overhangs the point of the lower; *culmen* rather compressed and advancing upon the forehead. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, round, concealed by short feathers. *Wings* rather short, the fourth quill-feather the longest.

## BULLFINCH.

*Pyrrhula vulgaris*, *Temm.*

Le Bouvreuil commun.

THIS handsome bird is the only one of the genus *Pyrrhula*, as restricted by modern naturalists, which has been hitherto discovered in Europe, that is to say, provided we consider the Bullfinch found in Germany and some other parts of the Continent (which in relative admeasurements is nearly a fourth longer,) as a variety merely, and not truly a distinct species. In our examination of this bird, had we been able to detect any difference of markings, or to ascertain that any dissimilarity existed in their habits and manners, we should not have hesitated on the subject; at present we remain in doubt on this point, which those who have an opportunity of examining the bird more closely than ourselves, and in a state of nature, can alone determine.

The interesting little group of which the present species forms a typical example, appears to be confined exclusively to the regions of the Old World, more particularly its northern and mountain districts. The elevated range of the Himalaya has not only produced an additional example, published by us in our work on the birds of that range under the specific title of *erythrocephala*, but we have since received another species from the same locality, and which is at present undescribed: we allude to this fact here, as confirmatory of the justice of separating birds possessing well-defined forms, however limited their numbers may be, into distinct genera, assured that future researches will increase the catalogue of species.

The Bullfinch is a constant resident in our island, although we are informed by continental writers that it is strictly migratory on the Continent generally, over the whole of which, except in Holland, where it is somewhat rare, it is plentifully dispersed. The habits of the Bullfinch are somewhat shy and retiring, giving preference to secluded thickets and coppices.

Its food consists for the most part of berries, seeds, and the buds of trees; hence in the spring no bird is accused of greater mischief in orchards and gardens.

The nest of the Bullfinch is rather loosely constructed, flat in its general form, and composed of small sticks lined with fibrous roots, and wool: it is mostly placed in the forked branches of trees and shrubs. The eggs are four or five in number, of a bluish white spotted with reddish brown. Although not entirely devoid of song, it is by no means remarkable in its wild state for its musical powers: its call note is a plaintive monotonous whistle. In captivity it is much valued, not only for its beauty, but for its powers of imitation, being capable of learning and repeating tunes and even words.

The sexes offer, as the Plate will show, a considerable difference in their colouring.

The male has the top of the head, the circle round the eye, the throat, wings, and tail of a deep glossy black; the back of the neck and mantle ash-colour; the cheeks, neck, chest, and flanks fine red; rump and abdomen pure white; a band of greyish white crosses the wing; the beak and irides black; tarsi blackish brown.

In the female, the red of the chest, neck, and flanks is exchanged for dusky greyish brown; the white of the rump is less conspicuous, and the markings of the head are not so pure and decided.

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