

Genus **COCCOTHAUSTES**, *Briss.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* very stout, swollen, thick ; the *upper mandible* straight, entire.

**HAWFINCH.**

*Coccothraustes vulgaris*, *Briss.*

Le Gros-bec.

THE Hawfinch appears to have an extensive range through the countries of Europe, especially its midland districts. In the British Isles it has until lately been regarded as a bird of considerable rarity, and principally as a winter visitor. Of late years it has certainly been more common, and we are inclined to suspect that this will be found to support an opinion we have long since formed, that certain birds which have for a number of years been scarce, suddenly become numerous and continue so for an indefinite period, when they again retire and are as scarce as before. It is not in the present bird alone that we have observed this singular phænomenon ; we may instance for example the Godwits, of which the Black-tailed species, a few years ago, was so abundant in the London market as entirely to exclude the Bar-tailed, which has now taken the place of the former. Our much-esteemed friend Mr. Henry Doubleday, of Epping, has by his ardent research in British Ornithology made us better acquainted with the history of this bird than any other person. "The Hawfinch," says he, "is not migratory, but remains with us during the whole of the year : " and he assigns as a reason for its not being more frequently discovered, the fact of "its shy and retiring habits leading it to choose the most secluded places in the thickest and more remote parts of woods and forests ; and, when disturbed, it invariably perches on the topmost branch of the highest tree in the neighbourhood." Epping Forest, where Mr. Doubleday discovered it breeding in considerable abundance, affords, from its solitude, a place at once congenial to its habits and retiring disposition.

We have known the Hawfinch to breed at Windsor, and a few other places ; but certainly nowhere so abundant as on the estate of W. Wells, Esq., at Redleaf, near Penshurst, Kent, who lately informed us that he has, with the aid of a small telescope, counted eighteen at one time on his lawn. M. Temminck informs us that it evinces a partiality to mountainous districts, and that it is a bird of periodical passage in France, but irregularly so in Holland.

Its food consists of berries, seeds, and the kernels of stone-fruits, for the breaking of which its strong beak and the powerful muscles of the jaws are expressly adapted. In winter, its principal subsistence is the Haw, whence its common appellation.

According to Mr. Doubleday, this bird breeds in May and June ; in some instances in bushy trees at the height of five or six feet, and in others near the top of firs, at an elevation of twenty or thirty feet ; the nest is remarkably shallow and carelessly put together, being scarcely deeper than that of the Dove ; in materials it resembles that of the Bullfinch, but it is by no means to be compared to it in neatness and compactness of construction ; it is chiefly formed of sticks, interspersed with pieces of white lichens from the bark of trees, and is loosely lined with roots : the eggs are from four to six in number, of a pale greenish white, varying in intensity, spotted and streaked with greenish grey and brown.

The young birds before the moult, exhibit considerable difference in plumage from the adult : the throat, cheeks and head being of a dull yellowish colour with the under parts white, the flanks marked with small streaks of brown, and the general plumage of the upper parts being spotted with dirty yellow.

In the male, the beak and feet in winter are of a delicate flesh brown, the former becoming in summer of a clear leaden blue, the ends straw-colour, and in some instances white ; the top of the head, the cheeks and rump of a chestnut brown ; a narrow circle round the beak, and a broad patch on the throat are black ; back of the neck ash-coloured ; mantle and shoulders deep brown ; the quills and secondaries, which latter appear as if cut off abruptly at their ends, are of a deep black with purple and violet reflections ; most of the greater and the last row of the lesser wing-coverts are white, so as to produce a large central mark ; the outer tail-feathers are blackish brown, the middle ones white on their outer and brown on their inner edges ; the under parts of a light vinous red.

The female has the plumage of a paler hue, the white of the wing being more dull, the head more dusky, and the under parts less pure.

We have figured a male and female of their natural size.