

Genus **CARDUELIS.**

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* conical, longer than deep, compressed anteriorly, and drawn to a very acute point; culmen of each mandible narrow; tomia of the upper mandible angulated at the base, and slightly sinuated. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, and hidden by incumbent bristles. *Wings* of mean length; the first quill-feather rather shorter than the second and third; which are nearly equal, and the longest of all. *Tail* rather short and forked. *Legs* having the tarsi short; lateral toes of equal length. *Claws* curved and acute; hind toe tolerably strong, with the sole broad.

GOLDFINCH.

Carduelis elegans, Steph.

Le Gros-bec Chardonneret.

THE present beautiful species, with one characterized by us from the Himalaya mountains under the name of *Carduelis caniceps*, and an undescribed species from China, should form, we conceive, a restricted genus, from which we would exclude the Siskin and several others which have hitherto been associated in the genus *Carduelis*.

The European continent appears to be the utmost range of the Goldfinch: it gives preference to high lands and mountainous districts during winter, particularly such as are wild and barren, and afford a plentiful supply of the thistle, plantain, &c., the seeds of which constitute its favourite food: at this period it is generally to be observed congregated in small flocks, flying through the air and suddenly settling among its favourite food. When the spring advances and the trees display a verdant appearance, the Goldfinch separates in pairs, each male taking a mate and quitting the wild and open country for woods, orchards, and gardens, and on the Continent to the rows of fruit-trees that border the road-side. As soon as the foliage becomes dense enough to conceal the nest, the task of incubation is commenced: the nest is placed in the fork of a branch, and is of the neatest construction, being composed of lichens, moss, and dried grasses, lined with hair, wool, and the seed-down of the willow and thistle; the eggs are four or five in number, of a bluish white spotted over with dashes of brown towards the larger end.

The sexes are so nearly alike in the colour of their plumage that the duller tints of the female are the only difference. The young, until the first change, are characterized by a plumage very different from that of the parents, the head being greyish brown, and having none of those beautiful and contrasted markings of scarlet and black which so strikingly ornament the adult: in this state of plumage they are termed Branchers by the London bird-catchers, by whom thousands are annually caught and caged for sale. The traffic in these birds and the adults, which are taken at every season of the year, forms no inconsiderable trade, although it must be acknowledged that the bird is more to be valued for its beauty than for its song, which is very inferior to that of the Linnet or Canary.

The adult has the forehead and cheeks rich orange scarlet; a black line passes from the base of the beak to the eye, the top of the head, and occiput, the latter having a white space between it and the scarlet of the cheeks; back and sides of the chest olive brown; wings black, each feather being tipped with white, and the centre crossed by a bright band of yellow; tail black tipped with white; under surface greyish white; beak horn-colour; legs and feet flesh-colour.

In the young the whole of the head, back, and sides of the chest are greyish brown; the wings resemble those of the adult, except that the band of yellow is neither so broad nor so bright, and the markings on the wings are brownish white instead of pure white.

The Plate represents an adult and a young bird of the natural size.