

LESSER REDPOLE.

Linaria minor, *Ray*.

Le Gros-bec sizerin.

THE Lesser Redpole is a native of the northern portions of our island and all the higher latitudes of the adjacent continent; from these districts numbers migrate southwards on the approach of winter, spreading themselves over every part of England, and most of the southern districts of Europe. In habits and manners it is gregarious, and is often found in the company of Linnets and Aberdevines. Its food consists almost exclusively of the seeds of various plants and shrubs, giving a decided preference to those of the alder, hazel, and willow; hence it resorts habitually to low and swampy situations, where its favourite food abounds. In habits and manners it is lively and active, and displays the greatest agility and address in picking out the seeds and buds of the smaller branches; nor is it less to be admired for its great docility and tameness, being at all times captured without any difficulty, and soon becoming familiar. The song of the Redpole, though not loud, is nevertheless simple and agreeable. It is found to breed in tolerable abundance in Scotland and in the northern portions of Europe. Its nest, which is particularly neat and compact, is placed in a low bush of willow, alder, or hazel, and sometimes furze, and is composed of grass and moss intermixed with the down of the catkins of the willow; the eggs are four or five in number, very small, and of a pale bluish green spotted with orange.

The beautiful rosy tints which pervade the breast of the male during the whole of the summer, render this little favourite one of the most elegant of our native finches. We may here remark, that when in a state of captivity, it loses the livery of summer, and does not regain it on the approach of the same season as it would do in a state of freedom, a circumstance which should render us cautious in drawing any conclusions respecting the changes of the plumage of birds from those that are kept in confinement. The female does not at any season acquire the fine tints which characterize the male during spring and summer.

The young of both sexes during the first autumn resemble the female, and do not require any further description than to say that the entire colouring is somewhat more tawny, and the rump only slightly tinged with rosy red.

In summer the adult male has the tip of the bill black, with the base of both mandibles fine horny yellow; space between the bill and the eye, the chin, and throat blackish brown; crown of the head and rump blood red; neck and breast rosy red, inclining to carmine, but becoming less pure on the flanks, which are slightly streaked with brown; middle of the belly, vent, and under tail-coverts white; the whole of the upper plumage tawny brown, each feather having a darker centre; primaries dark hair brown edged with yellowish white; tail brown, each feather having a lighter edge.

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