

Genus LINARIA, *Auct.*

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* straight, conical, entire ; mandibles compressed in front, and forming a very sharp point. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, concealed by incumbent feathers. *Wings* long, acuminate ; first, second, and third quill-feathers of nearly equal length. *Tail* more or less forked. *Tarsi* slender, short. *Feet* having the lateral toes of equal length ; the hind toe with its claw as long as the middle one. *Claws* slender, acute, curved, that upon the hind toe larger, and in old birds much longer than the rest.

COMMON, OR BROWN LINNET.

Linaria cannabina, *Swains.*

Le Gros-bec Linotte.

THE seasonal changes of plumage to which the *Fringillidæ* are generally subjected is in no one of the tribe more strikingly exemplified than in the birds constituting the restricted genus *Linaria*, of which the Common Linnet is the largest, and offers the most contrasted changes, being in winter clothed in a sombre and nearly uniform dress of brown, which in spring is exchanged for a rich rosy red on the crown of the head and breast, and in autumn it resumes the sombre winter colour : this diversity of plumage has caused some confusion, and added numerous synonyms to the name of the Common Linnet, and its nearly allied species the Redpole.

The Linnet is strictly indigenous to the British Islands, over the whole of which, and Europe generally, it is plentifully dispersed. It associates in flocks, and feeds upon small seeds, particularly those procured from the wild cruciform plants, &c. Open districts, such as commons and furze fields, constitute its favourite localities. The thickest parts of the furze bushes are generally selected for the sites of incubation, and the building of the nest is commenced early in the spring : it is constructed of moss, small twigs, and the stalks of grass, interwoven with wool and lined with hair and feathers ; the eggs are mostly four in number, of a bluish white speckled with purplish red colour. "In winter," says Mr. Selby, "these birds assemble in very large flocks, and descend to the sea-coast, where they continue to reside till spring again urges them to pair and seek their upland haunts."

The Linnet is not more highly prized for the lovely hues of its summer dress than for the sweetness of its simple song, on which account great numbers are annually captured and reared for the purpose of being kept in confinement.

The female does not possess the rich colouring that characterizes the male in summer. Mr. Selby having taken considerable pains to ascertain and point out the various changes which this bird undergoes, we take the liberty of availing ourselves of his very accurate description.

"Bill deep bluish grey ; forehead and breast of a bright carmine red ; throat and under part of the neck yellowish white streaked with brown ; crown of the head, nape, and sides of the neck bluish grey, in many instances varied with a few darker streaks ; back, scapulars, and wing-coverts chestnut brown, with the margins of the feathers palest ; flanks pale brownish red ; middle of the belly and the vent greyish white ; quill-feathers black, with more or less white on the basal half of their webs, and forming a distinct bar across the wings when closed ; tail considerably forked, with the two middle feathers wholly black and pointed ; the rest black, margined both on their inner and outer webs with white ; legs and toes brown.

"In younger individuals the red upon the breast and head is not so pure in tint, nor to the same extent as in the older birds ; the grey upon the crown of the head and the neck is also more varied with spots and streaks."

The female is inferior in size to the male, and has the "head and upper parts of the body umber brown, the margins of the feathers passing into yellowish brown ; wing-coverts chestnut brown ; throat and sides of the neck yellowish white, streaked and varied with yellowish brown ; breast and flanks pale reddish brown, streaked with umber brown ; middle of the belly yellowish white.

"The winter plumage of the male (after the first year) is nearly as follows : crown of the head varied with large black spots, which occupy the centre of the feathers ; back and scapulars chestnut brown, but deeply margined with pale yellowish brown ; breast reddish brown, with the tips of the feathers reddish white ; flanks with large oblong brown streaks."

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