

## SNOW FINCH.

*Fringilla nivalis*, Linn.

Le Gros-bec niverolle.

THIS species of Finch approximates so closely in form and general style of colouring to one species of the genus *Plectrophanes*, that it has been with some difficulty we have decided upon following the arrangements of M. Temminck in still retaining it in the genus *Fringilla*. We find that this bird, as it departs from its more typical relations, exhibits the same differences, and assumes almost the same characters and general appearance, as the Snow Bunting, *Plectrophanes nivalis*: the construction of its bill, however, which more strictly resembles that of *Fringilla*, denotes its true situation, and a more beautiful link could not be conceived, uniting as it does in the most complete manner the species of two genera, viz. the Buntings and Finches. Still it cannot be denied that the Snow Finch has as great a claim to a new generic title as the Snow Bunting, possessing as it does characters so essentially different from the true Finches.

We are led to believe from its form and the imperfect accounts published respecting its history, that its habits are in a great measure terrestrial, although it chooses the most elevated situations, such as the Alps, Pyrenees, and other mountainous districts of Europe, the British Isles excepted. In these wild and barren regions, upon the very verge of perpetual snow and ice, it dwells in unmolested security, and there finds that food which nature has destined for its support. This, according to M. Temminck, would seem to be of a mixed nature, consisting of seeds of various kinds, often that of the fir cone, and various species of insects. It builds its nest in crevices of the rocks, laying four or five eggs of a light green, irregularly sprinkled with ash-coloured dots, intermingled with blotches of dark green.

The sexes offer but little difference in plumage; neither does the summer and winter dress exhibit much variation, the beak being more or less yellow in winter, but deep black in summer.

In the male the top of the head, the cheeks and back of the neck are of a blueish ash; the scapulars and the two secondary feathers nearest the body are deep brown; all these feathers being bordered with a lighter colour; the remainder of the secondaries, the wing-coverts and the coverts of the tail are pure white; tail white, with the exception of the two centre feathers, which are blackish, and the whole tipped with the same colour; quill-feathers deep black; the under parts are white or whitish according to age; feet brown. This description applies to the female also, except that we find in her the ash colour of the head tinged with rusty brown, and the quill-feathers brown instead of black.

We have figured a male in summer plumage, and a female in that peculiar to winter.