

Genus FRINGILLA.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* concave, longer than deep, straight, and pointed; cutting edges entire, and forming a straight commissure. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, oval, partly hidden by the frontal plumes. *Tail* slightly forked. *Legs* having the tarsi of mean length, with the toes divided and adapted for hopping or perching. *Claws* sharp.

CHAFFINCH.

Fringilla Cœlebs, Linn.

Le Gros-bec pinson.

THIS ornamental Finch is so well known to all persons whose attention has been directed to the habits of our native birds, that we doubt whether we can offer any novelty relative to its history. It appears to be very generally distributed over every portion of Europe, in most parts of which it is stationary. "All the ornithologists," says Mr. Selby, "describe this species as permanently resident with us, and nowhere subject to that separation of the sexes, and the consequent equatorial movement of the females, which is known to take place in Sweden and other northern countries. The fact, however, is otherwise, as the experience of a series of years has evinced that these birds, in a general point of view, obey the same natural law in the North of England. In Northumberland and Scotland this separation takes place about the month of November, and from that period till the return of spring few females are to be seen, and those few always in distinct societies. The males remain, and are met with, during the winter, in immense flocks, feeding with other granivorous birds in the stubble lands, as long as the weather continues mild, and the ground free from snow; and resorting, upon the approach of storm, to farm-yards, and other places of refuge and supply." The remarks which we have quoted from Mr. Selby will apply to the habits and manners of this bird in the South of England. We have observed that during autumn and the early parts of spring our gardens and orchards are comparatively deserted by this handsome bird, and that it must then be sought for in the wide fields and hedge-rows, far removed from our immediate precincts. It pairs early in the spring, and again returns to enliven our gardens and orchards by its simple song and sprightly actions, when the work of nidification is soon commenced. The nest is of the neatest construction, being outwardly composed of the most delicate lichens, (generally obtained from the apple-tree,) interwoven with wool, and lined with feathers and fine hair; it is placed in various situations, such as the branch of an apple-tree, the whitethorn, or any other shrub or tree whose foliage affords it a sufficient shelter to protect the eggs, which are four or five in number, of a pinky white spotted with reddish purple.

The food of the Chaffinch is of a mixed nature, feeding in winter on grains and seeds, and in summer on most species of insects and their larvæ, which it devours with avidity.

The sexes, as is the case with most of the true Finches, offer a contrasted difference in their colouring; neither can the beautiful spring plumage remain unobserved, when compared with the sober livery of winter.

The male in spring has the bill of a fine blue grey; the crown of the head and nape rich grey; the centre of the back chestnut; rump greenish yellow; lesser wing-coverts white; quills black, edged with yellowish white; two middle tail-feathers grey, tinged with olive; three next, on each side, entirely black; the outer ones with a large white spot on their inner webs; the cheeks, neck, throat, and under surface chestnut brown; lower part of the belly and vent white; legs and feet brown. In the female the whole of the upper surface is olive brown, becoming richer on the upper tail-coverts; cheeks, throat, and under surface greyish brown; vent and under tail-coverts white; the wings and tail as in the male, but the white marks less distinct.

The young males in autumn resemble the females.

Our Plate represents the birds in their spring plumage, although we must acknowledge our inability to do justice to the rich and harmonious tints which pervade the feathers of the living bird, and which afford so much attraction and ornament to our lawns and shrubberies.