

REED BUNTING.

Emberiza Schœniculus, Linn.

Le Bruant de Roseau.

THE situations to which the Reed Bunting gives preference are the edges of rivers, large ponds, and beds of osiers; though at certain times, particularly during severe weather, it quits its marshy abode and associates with the Yellow-hammer and other small granivorous birds, frequenting at such periods the open fields, and, when pressed by hunger, visiting even the farm-yard, in search of a more abundant supply. It appears to be indigenous in every portion of Europe, or if not in every portion, at least through the whole of the centre. Like some other species of its genus, its summer and winter plumage exhibits a remarkable contrast; the male being characterized during the former season by a jet black head and throat, rendered more conspicuous by the white stripe from the base of the bill, and the collar of the same colour round the back part of the neck: in winter the male loses the black plumage of the head and throat, and is then scarcely to be distinguished from the female. The assumption of the black colouring commences early in spring, and is fully accomplished at the approach of the breeding-season, which begins as soon as a sufficiency of fresh herbage and the young shoots of the willow have rendered the reed a covert dense enough to shelter the nest from observation. The nest is generally placed near the ground, on a low stump of willow or any entangled herbage: the eggs are five or six in number, and of purplish grey, streaked and spotted with dark red brown.

The Reed Bunting is not at all remarkable for its song, which consists of only a few simple notes delivered without either energy or execution.

In summer the male has the whole of the head, ear-coverts, and throat black, the two latter being separated by a white stripe, which extends from the base of the bill to the sides of the neck, where it meets a collar of the same colour extending from the back of the neck; the whole of the upper surface of a rich brown, the centre of each feather being of a darker hue; the two middle tail-feathers brownish black edged with brown, the outer feathers largely blotched with white at their extremity; under surface white clouded with brown; flanks spotted longitudinally with obscure dusky lines; bill black; feet and legs brown.

The female differs from the male in having the general plumage more obscure, and in the total absence of the black head and white collar which are so conspicuous in the male; her flanks are also more largely spotted with brown.

The Plate represents a male and female in their summer plumage, of the natural size.