

## LARK-HEELED BUNTING.

*Plectrophanes Lapponica*, *Selby*.

Le Bruant Montain.

So little is known of the history and changes of plumage which this scarce bird undergoes, that we are left in doubt as to whether the tricoloured livery of the upper bird in our Plate, which is that of the male in summer, is exchanged in winter, as in the case of the Snow Bunting, for a more uniform and sober dress, or whether, like some of the more typical Buntings, (*Emberiza Schœniculus*, Linn., for example,) it retains its strongly contrasted colouring throughout the year. We make this observation because there have been frequently examples killed in England, all of which resembled the lower bird of the Plate. Some of these, on dissection, proved to be males, and were most probably immature birds, the migrations of which are known to be, according to the general rule, both more widely diffused and more irregular in their course than those of mature birds.

The summer retreat of the Lark-heeled Bunting, where it incubates and rears its brood, is within the limits of the arctic circle, from whence, as winter approaches, it gradually passes southwards, in Europe as far as Switzerland, and in America visiting the northern parts of the United States in considerable abundance. Its nest, according to Dr. Richardson, who observed it in the arctic regions of the American continent, is placed upon a small hillock, among moss and shrubs, and is composed externally of the dried stems of grass interwoven to a considerable thickness, and lined very neatly and compactly with deer's hair. The eggs are usually of a pale ochre yellow, spotted with brown.

In habits and manners the Lark-heeled Bunting resembles very closely the Snow Bunting, with which it is sometimes found associated; and it is worthy of remark, that the examples killed in England have been found among the vast quantities of Larks exposed for sale in the markets of London and other large towns, a circumstance indicating its almost exclusively terrestrial habits. Its food consists of grain, the seeds of various mountain plants, and perhaps insects.

The colouring of the adult male may be thus detailed:

The top of the head, cheeks, throat, and chest jet black, interrupted by a line of white, which passes from the base of the beak over the eye, behind which it dilates and extends to the occiput, bounding the ear-coverts; a broad band of chestnut passes across the back of the neck; the whole of the upper surface is brown, each feather being edged with rufous, and having a black dash in the centre; the sides of the chest and under surface white, the flanks with a few dashes of black; bill yellow, passing into black at the tip; tarsi blackish brown; irides hazel.

The female, according to M. Temminck, resembles the young bird in her general colouring, except that a band of reddish white occupies the same place as in the male, and unites with a white streak, which passes from the angle of the beak; the throat is white, bounded laterally by a broad band of brown; the breast is marked with blotches of grey and black, and the under parts are white.

The young birds, as we may presume those to have been that were taken in this country, have the whole of the upper surface brown, each feather bearing a reddish edge, and a dark central dash; the under surface dirty white, with dashes of brown along the sides.

The Plate represents an adult male, and a young bird of the year, of the natural size.