

Genus CALAMOPHILUS, *Leach*.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* nearly as in the genus *Parus*, but the upper *mandible* at its tip is somewhat curved. *Tail* elongated, wedge-shaped. *Legs* very slender.

BEARDED TIT OR REED BIRD.

Calamophilus biarmicus, *Leach*.

La Mesange moustache.

DR. LEACH was induced to separate this very interesting and elegant bird from the genus *Parus*, in consequence of its differing in several minor characters from the other species of that genus, particularly in the situation it affects as a place of abode and nidification; constructing a nest on or near the ground in wet and marshy places: its food is also very different, consisting of the seeds of reeds, with aquatic insects and minute shelled-snails, for the trituration of which it is furnished with a strong muscular gizzard. It inhabits England as well as most of the temperate countries of Europe, but is more particularly abundant in the low and marshy districts of Holland, France and Germany. Its disposition is timid, and its manners shy and retired, dwelling in situations both local and difficult of access; a circumstance which, until lately, has prevented naturalists from giving any minute details respecting its peculiar habits. We are indebted to Mr. Hoy, an intelligent observer of nature, for the best account of this bird yet published, from which, as given in "The Magazine of Natural History," vol. 3. p. 328, we take the liberty of making the following extract.

"The borders," says Mr. Hoy, "of the large pieces of fresh water in Norfolk called Broads, particularly Hickling and Horsey Broads, are the favourite places of resort of this bird; indeed it is to be met with in that neighbourhood wherever there are reeds in any quantity, with fenny land adjoining. During the autumn and winter they are found dispersed, generally in small parties, throughout the whole length of the Suffolk coast, wherever there are large tracts of reeds. I have found them numerous, in the breeding season, on the skirts of Whittlesea, near Huntingdonshire, and they are not uncommon in the fenny district of Lincolnshire; whether they are to be met with further north I have had no means of ascertaining, but they do not appear to have been noticed north of the Humber. It begins building in the end of April. The nest is composed on the outside of the dead leaves of the reed and sedge intermixed with a few pieces of grass, and invariably lined with the top of the reed, somewhat in the manner of the nest of the Reed Wren (*S. arundinacea*, L.), but not so compact in the interior. It is generally placed in a tuft of coarse grass or rushes near the ground, on the margin of the dikes, in the fen; sometimes fixed among the reeds that are broken down, but never suspended between the stems. The eggs vary in number from four to six, rarely seven, pure white, sprinkled all over with small purplish red spots, intermixed with a few small faint lines and markings of the same colour; size about the same as that of the Greater Tit, but much more rounded and shorter. Their food during the winter is principally the seed of the reed; and so intent are they in searching for it, that I have taken them with a birdlime twig attached to the end of a fishing-rod. When alarmed by any sudden noise, or the passing of a hawk, they utter their shrill musical notes and conceal themselves among the thick bottom of the reeds, but soon resume their station, climbing the upright stems with the greatest facility. Their manners in feeding approach near to the Long-tailed Tit, often hanging with the head downwards, and occasionally assuming the most beautiful attitudes. Their food is not entirely the reed-seed, but insects and their larvæ, and the very young shelled-snails of different kinds, which are numerous in the bottom of the reedlings. I have been enabled to watch their motions when in search of insects, having, when there has been a little wind stirring, been often within a few feet of them, quite unnoticed, among the thick reeds. Was it not for their note betraying them, they would be but seldom seen. The young, until the autumn moult, vary in plumage from the old birds; a stripe of blackish feathers extends from the hind part of the neck to the rump. It has been said that the males and females keep separate during the winter; but I have always observed them in company; they appear to keep in families until the pairing time, in the manner of the Long-tailed Tit; differing in this respect, that you will occasionally find them congregated in large flocks, more particularly during the month of October, when they are migrating from their breeding-places."

To this interesting account we may add, that they are to be met with occasionally on the banks of the Thames, from the thick reed-beds of Erith in Kent throughout the course of the river to Oxford; but their visits are by no means regular, or to be calculated on with certainty.

The total length of the male Bearded Tit is about six inches; the beak orange, the upper mandible longer and overhanging the under; irides yellow; feet black; crown of the head, nape, and cheeks delicate ash colour; between the base of the beak and the eyes is a black mark, which proceeds down the side of each cheek, and terminates in a fine and lengthened moustache; throat white; breast vinous grey; the sides of the breast, the back, and the four middle tail-feathers fine reddish orange; primaries brown externally, edged with white; secondaries the same colour as the back, with a black longitudinal stripe; vent black; tail graduated, and about three inches in length.

The female is rather less than the male, of a more uniform ferruginous colour, with a few dashes of black on the upper part of the neck and back, and has a faint yellowish white instead of a black moustache.

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