

LONG-TAILED TIT.

Parus caudatus, *Linn.*

Le Mésange à longue queue.

INDEPENDENTLY of the deviation from the form of the rest of the genus which this little Tit exhibits, its habits, mode of nidification, and food, also tend to place it in an isolated situation, and it is questionable whether it might not be with justice considered as the type of a new and distinct genus.

Few persons who have been accustomed to observe the habits of our native birds can have failed to be struck with the peculiar actions of this bird, which is continually wandering from tree to tree and hedgerow to hedgerow, diligently traversing every branch in quest of insects and their larvæ, which constitute almost its sole food : these peregrinations appear to be repeated day after day over a given circuit, and it often happens that at the same hour, on several successive days, they may be found at the same place ; during the breeding and summer seasons there is, however, an exception to this general rule, which leads us to suspect that these wandering parties consist of the broods of single nests which continue to associate together till the following summer causes them to separate into pairs for the purpose of breeding. Noted as birds of this genus are for their active and restless habits, the Long-tailed Tit is conspicuous among them as being the most agile and expert ; clinging in every possible attitude to the branches with the utmost ease, and prying into every bud and crevice, even along the under sides of the twigs, with the strictest scrutiny.

Among the nests of our British birds, that of the Long-tailed Tit is pre-eminent for beauty and the ingenuity displayed in its structure : in form it is oval, and domed over at the top, and is generally fixed in the forked branches of a low tree or tall bush in a dense hedgerow ; it is composed externally of moss, lichen, fibres, and wool, admirably interwoven together, and is lined internally with feathers : in this secure and warm receptacle, the female lays her eggs to the number of twelve or twenty, white in their colour, with obscure reddish spots at the larger end.

Though not a songster, this interesting bird utters during the season of love a few simple, twittering notes ; but these cease with the summer, a chirping call being its only note during the rest of the year. Its flight from tree to tree is tolerably rapid, but cannot be maintained for any distance.

The top of the head is white ; a black mark passes through each eye to the occiput, and joining there with that of the opposite side, runs in a broad streak down the back, passing off at the edges into a rose red, which is the tint of the upper surface ; the quills are black ; the secondaries edged with white ; cheeks and throat greyish white, under parts pinky grey ; tail long and graduated, the four middle feathers black, the two next tipped with white, the rest with the outer webs white also ; beak and tarsi black.

The female does not differ from her mate in colouring.

We have figured a pair of the natural size.