

COLE TIT.

Parus ater, Linn.

La Mésange petit charbonnière.

THE Cole Tit appears to give a preference to woods of birch, oak, and pine, in hilly and mountain districts; nevertheless, it frequents, in tolerable abundance, hedgerows, shrubberies, and gardens, over nearly every portion of Europe.

In its habits and manners it is remarkably quick and active, searching with great assiduity among the twigs and buds of trees for insects and their larvæ, upon which it feeds, while every action is animated and sprightly. It braves with indifference not only our severest winters, but even those of the northern portion of the Continent. Its nest is placed indifferently according to circumstances, being sometimes formed in the hole of a decayed tree or old wall, and at others on the ground: it is composed of moss and wool, generally lined with hair. The eggs are from six to ten in number, of a pure white, sparingly dotted with reddish brown.

The sexes offer little or no difference in their plumage, and the young assume at an early period the colouring of maturity.

The top and sides of the head are black; a white mark occupies the occiput; throat black; sides of the face white; upper surface grey, with a slight tinge of brown; wings and tail brownish black, the former having two transverse bands of white; flanks and under-surface white slightly tinged with rusty brown; bill black; tarsi lead-colour; irides hazel.

MARSH TIT.

Parus palustris, Linn.

La Mésange nonnette.

THE Marsh Tit is slightly superior to the Cole Tit in size, and differs from it also in the situations it frequents, giving the preference to low tracts of land, covered with thickets, in the neighbourhood of swamps and marshes; it is also found in orchards, gardens, and similar localities. It appears to be more abundant in Holland than in any other country; it is, however, very generally spread, and is found in very high northern latitudes. In England it is as equally diffused as the rest of the genus, and is as active and sprightly in its habits, prying in search of food with the same dexterity and adroitness. It constructs its nest in the holes of trees, and lays from ten to twelve eggs, of a white colour, dotted with reddish brown spots. It may be observed that the Marsh Tit and the Cole Tit often associate together during winter, and it not unfrequently happens that the Crested Wren and other small birds join their company.

The sexes offer no distinction, except that the colours of the female are more obscure.

In the male the top of the head and back of the neck are deep black; the upper surface, wings, and tail are greyish brown, the latter being somewhat the darkest; breast black; cheeks and throat white; the under surface white, clouded with dusky brown; bill black; legs lead-colour; irides dark hazel.

The upper bird in our Plate represents the Cole Tit, the lower the Marsh Tit, both of the natural size.