

Genus PARUS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* strong, short, somewhat conical, slightly compressed, sharp-pointed, and hard. *Nostrils* basal, round, covered with reflected bristly feathers. *Feet* with three toes before and one behind ; the fore ones divided to their origin ; the hind toe strong and armed with a long hooked claw. *Wings*, the first quill of moderate length or almost obsolete ; the second shorter than the third ; the fourth and fifth longest.

GREAT TIT.

Parus major, *Linn.*

Le Mésange charbonniere.

THE Great Tit, as its name implies, is one of the largest and most typical of the native examples of the present genus ; and it is also certainly one of the most beautiful, from the contrasts of its colours, which are brilliant and decided. In its habits and manners, as well as the places it frequents, it strictly agrees with its congeners. It is distributed throughout the whole of the wooded districts of Europe, being stationary in almost every locality : in the British Islands it is certainly so. In severe winters it often leaves the hedges and fields for the warm thickets, coppices and gardens, and not unfrequently farm-yards, where it becomes bold in its endeavours to obtain a subsistence. Its summer food consists of insects and their larvæ, together with the buds of trees and fruits ; to these it adds the scattered crumbs from the cottage-door, of whatever matters they may by chance consist, whether animal or vegetable, its digestive powers being apparently adapted to a great variety.

On the approach of spring it becomes noisy and restless, betaking itself to the top branches of high trees, where it utters its harsh note for the day together : the note greatly resembles the noise made by the filing of a saw, or the creaking of a gate on rusty hinges.

It builds a nest in the holes of decayed trees, in the crevices of walls, often in the deserted nest of a crow, a bed of cow's hair and feathers being the receptacle of the eggs ; these vary in number from eight to fifteen, and are of a white colour spotted with reddish brown.

The sexes offer but little difference of plumage, the female having less brilliancy of gloss.

The head, throat, and lower part of the neck glossy black ; occiput white ; back olive green ; rump grey ; under parts fine yellow, with a black mesial streak ; tarsi bluish grey ; bill black.

Our Plate represents the male and female of the natural size.