Genus MELIZOPHILUS, Leach.

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Gen. Char. Head large; bill short, greatly arched from the base, compressed, with the tip finely emarginated; tomia of both mandibles inflected towards the middle; gape slightly bearded. Nostrils basal, lateral, longitudinally cleft. Wings short, rounded, the first feather very small, the second shorter than the third, fourth, and fifth, which are equal and longest. Tail long and soft. Legs having the tarsi strong, and longer than the middle toe, which is nearly equal in length to the hind one.

DARTFORD WARBLER.

Melizophilus provincialis, *Leach*.

Le Pitte-chou de Provence.

WE adopt the present genus as constituted by Dr. Leach, in the formation of which we consider him borne out by the striking difference this bird exhibits in its characters to all the other European Sylviadæ. Its form closely allies it to the Superb Warblers (Malurus, Vieill.) of New Holland, while its relationship to the Common Whitethroat, Curruca cinerea, is strikingly apparent: its rounded wing and very graduated tail, however, form just grounds of distinction. To the British Ornithologist, the Dartford Warbler is a bird of peculiar interest. It is a permanent resident in this island, a fact which is proved by our having received it in a recent state at all seasons of the year. It is nevertheless far from being universally distributed, being principally, if not exclusively, confined to the southern and south-western districts, where it resorts to commons, heaths, and moorlands, clothed with thick furze and heather, living in a state of complete seclusion, being habitually addicted to threading the thickest portion of the brushwood, whence it is not easily driven. In the spring, at the season of pairing and nidification, it is more lively and more frequently visible, rising on quivering wing above the tops of the furze, and uttering a hurried babbling song, much after the manner of the Whitethroat; at these times it erects the feathers of its head into a crest, and distends the throat, exhibiting various attitudes and gesticulations. The nest is composed of dry stalks and grass, intermingled with wool and vegetable fibres: it is in general placed in the thickest part of a furzebush, at a short distance from the ground. The eggs, according to Montagu, are very similar to those of the Whitethroat, being speckled with brown and cinereous spots on a greenish white ground.

The Dartford Warbler is found tolerably abundant on all the heathy commons in the immediate vicinity of London, as well as those of Bagshot, Chobham, &c., but it is more particularly abundant in Devonshire and Cornwall. In no place, however, is it to be found more plentiful than in the neighbourhood of Oakingham in Berkshire, whence specimens have been sent us by John Rogers Wheeler, Esq., whose fine and choice collection contains the most beautiful examples. On the Continent it is more abundant throughout Spain, Italy, and the South of France, than in Germany and Holland.

Its food consists of various species of insects and their larvæ, to which are added, as the season affords, berries and fruits of various kinds; at least they feed on such substances in confinement where they become tame and reconciled.

The head, the back of the neck, and the upper plumage deep grey; the under plumage deep reddish brown, with a ferruginous tint; throat mottled with white; wings and tail brown, with the exception of the outer feathers of the latter, which have white tips and exterior edges; bill yellow at the base, black at the tip; legs brown.

The female resembles the male, except that her plumage is duller, the back being dusky brownish, and the throat merely exhibiting traces of the white edging to the feathers so conspicuous in the male.

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