

Genus ORIOLUS.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* conical, straight, and sharp-pointed, flattened at its base; upper *mandible* ridged and slightly notched at the point. *Nostrils* basal, lateral, naked, and pierced horizontally in a large membrane. *Feet* three toes before and one behind, the external toe united to the middle one at its base. *Tarsus* not exceeding the middle toe in length; third *quill-feather* the longest.

GOLDEN ORIOLE.

Oriolus galbula, Linn.

Le Loriot.

THE genus *Oriolus*, as restricted by modern authors, comprises a group of birds pre-eminent for their beauty and the contrast of their colours, rich yellow and deep black dividing the plumage in proportions varying according to the difference of species; and there is no genus the members of which are more naturally united to each other than the present.

The Orioles are strictly confined to the older or longest known portions of the globe; various species being respectively disposed over Asia, Africa, the islands of the Indian Archipelago, and the southern and eastern portions of Europe. Their place in America appears to be supplied by the *Icteri* and the other genera of the family of *Sturnidæ*.

The Golden Oriole is to be considered as merely an occasional sojourner in England, its visits being but few, and only during the months of summer. Although undoubtedly scarce, it is by no means the most rare of those birds which, from their occurrence in England, have been admitted to a place in its Fauna. We are not aware that there are any instances on record of its breeding in this country: still we have reason to suppose that such would be the case, if, when it favours any part of our island with its residence, it were permitted to remain unmolested. In Italy and the whole of the southern provinces of Europe it is very abundant, and is also far from being uncommon in France, Holland, Germany, and some of the districts of Russia; paying all those countries an annual visit, for the purpose of incubation. We have received numerous specimens of this bird from Tripoli and the whole line of the northern coast of Africa, where it is exceedingly common; and to which country, or at least its more northern parts, we have reason to suppose it migrates when absent during the winter months from Europe. We have never received this identical species from India, although there is one, the *O. aureus*, which closely approximates to it, but which may at once be distinguished by its rather smaller size, and by the black line passing through and beyond the eye, while in the European species the black colour reaches only to the anterior edge of the orbit. We have been informed that this latter species has also been found in Europe, which is not unlikely, as the border line of the two continents is merely conventional.

The nest of the Golden Oriole, like that of many of the natives of the tropical climates, is a striking example of ingenuity: it is composed of fibres of hemp or other vegetables ingeniously interwoven together, lined with fine moss or lichen, and suspended at the extremity of the tallest branches of lofty trees; the eggs are four or five in number, the ground-colour being a pure white, marked by a few well-defined purple brown, or black spots. Its food consists of wild berries and fruits, as well as insects and their larvae.

In the male, the beak is brownish red; irides red; general plumage fine king's yellow, a black streak intervening between the beak and eye; the wings black with a bar of yellow; all the quill-feathers tipped with yellowish white; the two middle tail-feathers black; the rest have their basal half black, and the other portion yellow; tarsi lead-colour; claws black. Length of the bird ten inches.

In the female, the yellow of the upper parts is clouded with an olive tinge, and below with grayish white, each feather having a longitudinal mark of a darker colour; the wings are brownish black, and the tail-feathers, where black in the male, are obscure olive.

The young of the year resemble the female, but have the longitudinal markings of the lower parts stronger; the irides brown, and beak of a dark gray.

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