Genus CAPRIMULGUS, *Linn.*

Gen. Char. *Bill* very short, weak, curved at the tip, broad and depressed at the base; the upper mandible deflected at the point; gape very large, and extending to or beyond the posterior angle of the eyes; basal edge of the upper mandible bordered with strong moveable bristles, directed forwards. *Nostrils* basal, tubular, or with a large prominent rim, clothed with very small feathers. *Wings* long, the first quill shorter than the second, which is the longest of all. *Tail* rounded or forked, of ten feathers. *Tarsi* short. *Toes* three before and one behind, the anterior ones united as far as the first joint by a membrane; the claw of the middle toe broad, and serrated on the inner edge.

EUROPEAN GOATSUCKER.

Caprimulgus europæus, *Linn.*

L'Engoulevent ordinaire.

The *Caprimulgus europæus* was until within the last few years the only species of this curious and interesting race of birds known to inhabit Europe; a second has, however, been discovered by M. Natterer in the South of Spain, and described by him under the name of *Caprimulgus ruficollis*, from the conspicuous red band which crosses the back of the neck, certainly a far more appropriate term than the one (*europæus*) given to the present bird, which is now applicable to both species, or to any others that may hereafter be discovered.

The European Goatsucker is a migratory bird, inhabiting all the temperate portions of Europe during summer, and retiring southward beyond the Mediterranean on the approach of winter. It arrives in the British Islands from the middle to the end of May, and departs again about the latter end of September or beginning of October. While here it is distributed over the whole of the kingdom, residing in woods, plantations, thick beds of fern, (whence its provincial name of Fern Owl,) and districts clothed with tall grasses. Being strictly nocturnal in its habits, it avoids as much as possible the bright light of day, but on the approach of twilight it may be seen hawking for *Melolonthæ*, *Phalænæ*, and other nocturnal insects.

The flight of the Goatsucker is rapid in the extreme while in pursuit of its prey, and is accompanied by a number of evolutions, similar to those of the Swallow, but which are, if possible, performed with still greater ease and facility.

It makes no nest, but lays two eggs on the bare ground, amongst fern, heath, or long grass, sometimes in woods or furze, but always near woods, in which it may conceal itself by day. The eggs are white, marbled with light brown and grey.

The Goatsucker reposes mostly on the ground; and when it perches on the limb of a tree, it is commonly along the branch, and not across it like other birds.

" The male," says Montagu, " makes a very singular noise during the period of incubation, not unlike the sound of a large spinning-wheel, and which it is observed to utter perched, with the head downwards; besides which it emits a sharp squeak, repeated as it flies."

The whole of the upper surface and the throat are of an ashy grey, numerously spotted and streaked with dark brown, and tinged with pale or yellowish brown; the head and back streaked longitudinally with black; beneath the base of the under mandible runs a stripe of white, which extends along each side of the head; in the centre of the throat a patch of white; under surface yellowish brown, transversely barred with black; outer webs of the quills blotched with red brown, the three exterior feathers having a large white patch on the inner webs near their tips; tail irregularly marked with black, grey, and yellowish brown, two outer tail-feathers on each side deeply tipped with white; bill and irides dark brown; tarsi pale brown.

The female differs from the male only in being destitute of the white spots on the quill-feathers, and of the white tips of the lateral tail-feathers.

We have figured a male of the natural size.