

LITTLE OWL.

Strix nudipes, Nilsson.

Noctua nudipes, Mihi.

La Chouette chevêche.

THE *Strix passerina* of Linnæus, of which *Acadica* is a synonym, is the title of a very different bird from the one here figured; and, although most modern naturalists from some unaccountable cause have assigned the term *passerina* to the present species, as if it were that which Linnæus so designated, we have thought it necessary, in justice to truth, to correct this misnomer by restoring the old name of *nudipes* given to it by Nilsson.

The Little Owl must be considered one of the rarest of our occasional visitors; its presence appearing to depend entirely upon accidental circumstances. It is plentifully distributed over the whole of the temperate portions of Europe. M. Temminck states that it is abundant in Holland and Germany, but that it is never seen in high northern latitudes.

We cannot undertake to say whether the Little Owl is to be classed among the migratory birds of its race, as we are not in possession of any details of its habits and manners. It appears, however, to display all the characteristics of the genus to which it belongs, preying in the dusk of the evening and during twilight on mice, moles, small birds, and large insects. Having had an opportunity of observing it in captivity, we are enabled to state that its conduct under such circumstances is precisely similar to that of other species when in a similar situation. During the day it sits in almost motionless repose, occasionally snapping with its bill, when disturbed, but resuming its quiet position as soon as the annoyance ceases: on the approach of evening it becomes lively and alert, and by its animated manners betrays its anxiety for food and liberty. Its eggs, which are four or five in number, are deposited sometimes in the holes of trees, but more frequently in old walls and ruined towers.

The sexes are alike in plumage, and the young attain at an early period the adult colouring.

The upper parts are of a brownish grey marked with large irregular blotches of white, the feathers on the top of the head being regularly spotted with yellowish white; throat white, separated by a brown belt from the chest; a white circle surrounds the eye; the whole of the under parts dusky white, irregularly clouded and blotched with brown; tail brown, barred with yellowish brown; bill and feet yellowish straw colour; irides straw yellow.

The Plate represents an adult of the natural size.