

Genus SCOPS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* curved from the base; the upper ridge of the culmen flattened; the cere short. *Nostrils* round, placed in front of the cere. *Facial disc* small, and incomplete above the eyes; auditory conch small, and without an operculum; forehead with egrets or tufts. *Wings* long, the third feather the longest. *Tail* even or slightly rounded, concave beneath. *Legs* rather long. *Tarsi* feathered to the toes, which have their upper joints reticulated, and the anterior ones scutellated. *Claws* sharp, moderately curved, and partially grooved beneath. Plumage soft and downy.

SCOPS-EARED OWL.

Scops Aldrovandi, *Will.* and *Ray.*

Le Petit Duc.

THE range of this beautiful little Owl is so extensive, that few of the larger species are more widely distributed. Independently of its existence throughout most of the countries of Europe, it is found both in Africa and Asia; and individuals from China have come under our notice, differing in no respect from specimens killed in our own island. Its occurrence here is, however, extremely rare in comparison to adjacent parts. It is abundant in France, Switzerland, and all the southern and eastern portions of Europe: in Holland and the north-western portion of the Continent it is almost as rare as it is in England.

In Europe it appears to be strictly migratory, arriving late in spring, when moths and the larger coleopterous insects, upon which it principally subsists, abound; but in the hotter portions of the Old World, where such insects are always abundant, numbers of these birds are stationary throughout the whole of the year: to these, its most common food, are added birds, mice, and other small animals. In its manners it is principally nocturnal, issuing forth from its hiding-place on the approach of twilight, in chase of those insects which are also roused from their state of repose to activity at the same time. In confinement it is docile and contented, and especially interesting from its minute size and the elegance of its markings.

It breeds in the holes of decayed trees, clefts of rocks, and old buildings, the eggs being four or five in number, of a pure white.

The sexes offer little or no variations of colour; indeed the female so exactly resembles the male as not to be distinguished except by dissection.

The general colour is grey blended with brown; and freckled with minute markings of black, relieved by bold longitudinal dashes down the centre of most of the feathers; the head is ornamented with egrets capable of being elevated and depressed at will; a few black dashes encircle the disc of the face; the quills are barred alternately with rich brown and yellowish grey; irides and feet brilliant yellow.

The Plate represents an adult bird of the natural size.