

Genus **ELANUS**, *Savig.*

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* weak, of mean length, compressed, nearly straight at the base, the tip hooked. *Wings* long, with the second feathers generally the longest, the first and second having their inner web strongly notched. *Tail* long, more or less forked. *Tarsi* short, feathered for half their length, and the naked part reticulated. *Claws* strong and incurved; the under surface in some species partly rounded.

BLACK-WINGED KITE.

Elanus melanopterus, *Leach.*

L'Elanion blanc.

WHEN we consider the wide range of this beautiful species, scattered as it is over all the temperate and warmer portions of the Old World, it is a matter of no surprise that its capture has of late years been so frequent in Europe. It is abundantly dispersed along the banks of the Nile, and in fact the whole of Africa and India is inhabited by it; neither do specimens from Java and New Holland present any specific differences from those taken in Europe. In all probability no part of Europe affords it a permanent residence. Spain, Italy, and the Grecian Islands are the portions of our quarter of the globe most frequented by the Black-winged Kite; instances are, however, on record of its having been captured in the middle of Germany: it must therefore, like many other species, be regarded merely as an irregular visitor which has crossed the Mediterranean from the opposite shores of Africa. From the great length of its wings, together with its short and feathered tarsi, we are led to infer that it is capable of rapid and powerful flight, and that like its allies in America it possesses the power of remaining suspended in the air for a great length of time.

Its food consists principally of insects, chiefly captured in the air, to which are sparingly added lizards, frogs, snakes, and birds.

The sexes are very much alike in colour, but the female is said to be rather larger than her mate. The young of the first autumn may be distinguished from the adults by their having the back strongly tinged with brown, and the end of each feather encircled with buffy white; the sides of the chest brown, and the feathers on the breast streaked down the centre with dark brown.

The adult has the head and the whole of the back of a fine grey; the centre of the wings black; the primaries and secondaries greyish brown, with lighter grey edges; the shoulders of the wings, throat, all the under surface, and tail pure white; cere and toes yellow; bill and claws black; irides orange.

We have figured an adult and a young bird of the natural size.