

H O B B Y.

Falco subbuteo, Linn.

Le Faucon hobereau.

THE Hobby, although possessing all the typical characteristics of the genus *Falco*, is nevertheless wanting in that determined spirit and energy which distinguishes, not only the large, but also many of the smaller species of its race,—for example, the Merlin, which boldly attacks and kills birds far larger than itself, while the Hobby, which is a miniature representation of the Peregrine Falcon, (a bird noted for its daring and rapacious habits,) subsists in a great measure on insects, which it takes on the wing, and for the capture of which its rapid flight gives it great facility: nevertheless, it also attacks the smaller kinds of birds, especially Larks, among which it makes great havoc; and has been even trained, though not without difficulty, to fly at Quails and Partridges. The Hobby has a wide range throughout Europe, where it appears to be universally migratory, passing southwards with the approach of winter. In our island it arrives in spring, and departs in the month of October, and, with the exception of the Kestrel and Sparrowhawk, is one of the commonest of our smaller birds of prey. It frequents in preference wooded districts, near the margins of rivers, along which it may be observed to glide, rapidly darting from its perch in pursuit of dragon flies and the larger coleoptera. Its nest is built in trees, and, according to M. Temminck, sometimes even in bushes of moderate size: it is said occasionally to usurp the nest of the Crow,—a circumstance in which it agrees with many of its congeners. The eggs are three in number, of a dull white mottled with reddish brown.

Among the true Falcons, no bird presents less sexual difference either in size or colour. The male, in its adult plumage, has the upper surface of a deep blackish blue; the throat white with a black moustache passing from beneath the eye and stretching downwards to the sides of the neck; the lower parts whitish with longitudinal dashes; the thighs and lower tail-coverts reddish; the tail obscurely barred with black; the beak lead colour; the cere, eyelids and feet yellow; and the irides brown. Length fourteen inches.

The female is but little larger than the male, and the young soon assume the markings of the old birds; but the tints are duller, and the feathers are strongly edged with rufous, which prevails especially over the head; the longitudinal dashes of the under parts are brown, the ground colour inclining to light reddish yellow; the cere and tarsi yellowish green.

The Plate represents an adult male and female of the natural size.