

Genus ASTUR.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* short, bending from the base, compressed ; upper mandible festooned on its cutting margin. *Nostrils* oval, opening obliquely forwards. *Wings* short, when closed reaching only one half the length of the tail ; fourth quill-feather the longest ; inner webs of the first five deeply notched. *Legs* covered in front with broad scales ; middle toe much longer than the lateral ones, which are equal ; hind toe strong ; claws curved, strong and sharp.

G O S H A W K.

Astur palumbarius, *Bechst.*

L'Autour.

THE *Falco palumbarius* of Linneus, the *Astur palumbarius* of the present day, may be regarded as the most noble and typical species of its genus,—a genus separated from the Falcons by the absence of the true dentation of the mandibles, and by possessing a short and more rounded form of wings, together with a slender and less robust body ; and distinguished from the genus *Accipiter* by its short and powerful tarsus, and by the diminished length of the middle toe, which, from its length, in the latter genus forms so conspicuous a character.

The genus seems somewhat extensively distributed, both in the Old and New World : from India in particular we know of several interesting examples ; while at the same time America is not deficient in birds of this form, the well-known *Astur atricapillus* of the northern portion of that country being the nearest representative of our species, and until lately confounded with it.

The *Astur palumbarius* is found in considerable abundance in all the wooded districts of Central Europe, though in the present day of very rare occurrence in our own island. M. Temminck informs us that it is also equally scarce in Holland.

This elegant and noble bird minutely resembles in its general habits our well-known Sparrow Hawk, and is not excelled in spirit or daring by the noblest of the Falcons. Its manner of taking its prey, however, appears to us exceedingly different. Pursuing it with assiduity, undaunted courage, and perseverance, it does not stoop upon it like a Falcon, but glides after its victim, in a line, with the utmost velocity. It was anciently much esteemed in falconry, and its mode of taking its prey is more successful than that of the Falcon, although it does not exhibit those aerial evolutions which are so much admired in the Jerfalcon. The Goshawk was especially used for taking hares and partridges,—game which do not call into play the Falcon's peculiar mode of flight.

The male and female offer the same disproportionate difference in size as the Sparrow Hawk, and the former has the transverse markings finer and more distinct. The colouring of the two sexes is otherwise closely similar. The young, in the first and second year, possess, instead of the transverse bars on the breast, large oblong dashes of brown, upon a ground of white tinged with rufous.

In the adult, the whole of the upper surface is of a dull blueish grey, the under surface white with transverse somewhat zigzag bars of black, and wavy lines of the same colour across the shaft of each feather ; the tail ash-coloured above, with four or five bars of blackish brown ; irides and feet fine yellow.

The Plate represents a female in full plumage, and a young bird in its immature stage about three fourths of the natural size.