

## Genus BUTEO.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* rather weak, bending from the base, sides compressed, widening from the base, where the culmen is broad and flat; under mandible shallow, with the tip obliquely truncated. *Cere* large. *Nostrils* pyriform. *Wings* long and ample, the third or fourth quill-feather being the longest, the first four having their inner webs deeply notched, the third, fourth, and fifth having their outer webs deeply notched. *Tarsi* short, naked or feathered to the toes. *Toes* rather short, the front ones united at the base. *Claws* strong but not much hooked.

## COMMON BUZZARD.

*Buteo vulgaris*, *Bechst.*

La Buse.

UNLIKE the true Falcons, whose vigorous flight and aerial disposition place them at the head of the Raptorial birds, or the spirited and bold short-winged birds of the genera *Astur* and *Accipiter*, the species of the present genus, though possessed of considerable bodily powers, are sluggish, timid, and inactive; still they are admirably adapted by nature to fill the office for which they are designed in the œconomy of the creation. Slowly soaring on buoyant wings, the Common Buzzard surveys the earth beneath in search of the smaller mammalia and reptiles which constitute its food, and upon which they pounce with a rapid and noiseless descent; nor does it disdain, when pressed by hunger, to partake of carrion, or such offal as chance throws in its way. Such may be regarded as the character of the Buzzard, which is an inhabitant of all the wooded districts of the British Islands, more particularly those of the southern districts. It is still more abundant in France, Holland, and all the temperate parts of Europe, being everywhere stationary.

To illustrate all the changes which this bird undergoes, and which are, indeed, characteristic of the Buzzards in general, would far exceed the space allotted to each subject of the present work; we have therefore given a figure of the bird in that state which is most common to the species: it is these changes that have led to a great multiplication of the species, and to no little confusion, in the works of the older ornithologists.

Its nest is constructed of sticks in the densest part of the wood, and it sometimes takes up with the deserted nests of Crows, Pies, &c. The eggs are two or three in number, of a dirty white colour, slightly spotted with reddish brown.

From our own experience, we are enabled to say, that the birds of one year old are much lighter in their plumage, particularly on the under surface, than those of the succeeding year, and may be easily recognised by their having the upper portions of their plumage, which is of a very dark brown with violet reflections, edged on each feather with a light yellowish white margin. The next year they become still darker, the back and breast assuming an almost uniform tinge of the same colour, being irregularly broken with transverse bars of yellowish white: the tail is also darker, particularly towards its base, which is generally white or whitish in the bird of the year. In the very advanced stage the colouring is still more uniform, of a pale cinereous brown, with faint indications of an occipital crest, which is represented by two or three feathers more elongated than the rest, and of a darker colour; the cere and legs lemon yellow; irides hazel.

The Plate represents an adult bird about two thirds of the natural size.