

Genus CIRCAËTUS, Vieill.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* robust, convex, compressed laterally; the upper mandible with its edges straight, and the point crooked; the inferior blunt at its tip. *Nostrils* oval and transverse. *Tarsi* naked, reticulated, elongated, and thick. *Toes* short, the outer two united at their base by a web; the lateral and hind toes nearly equal; nails short and strongly curved. *Wings* long, the third quill-feather the longest; the first shorter than the sixth.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE.

*Circaëtus brachydactylus*, Vieill.

L'Aigle jean le blanc.

IN the present Eagle is exhibited one of those links which in the family *Falconidæ* are so numerous and so clearly appreciable, uniting group to group by intermediate forms so nicely balanced as to embody in themselves the main characters of the more typical genera between which they are interposed. In the "Règne Animal" of the Baron Cuvier, that great naturalist judiciously observes that the genus *Circaëtus* holds an intermediate place between the fishing-eagles (*Haliaëtus*), the ospreys (*Pandion*), and the true buzzards (*Buteo*); and he adds that it has the wings of the eagles and buzzards, with the reticulated tarsi of the ospreys.

Of all the eagles and buzzards none appear to have a wider range than the Short-toed Eagle. Its European localities, according to M. Temminck, are principally Germany and Switzerland: in France it occurs occasionally; but in Holland and the British Islands it has never been seen. It is also dispersed nearly through the whole of Africa and India, countries peculiarly favourable to it, in as much as its food consists principally of snakes and reptiles, which especially abound in the hotter portions of the globe. In the nature of its food and in the elongation of its tarsi we cannot fail to trace a marked approximation to the true Harriers, which, it is well known, are inveterate destroyers of every kind of reptile.

Like most of the *Falconidæ*, the Short-toed Eagle undergoes a succession of changes before it attains a permanent state of plumage. The colouring is so well detailed by M. Temminck that it is useless to attempt any addition. He states that the young have the upper parts of a deep brown, but that the base of each feather is of a pure white, the throat, breast, and belly being of a reddish brown, little or not at all blotched with white; the bars on the tail almost imperceptible; the beak bluish; the tarsi greyish white.

The colouring of the adult male is as follows:

The head is very large; below the eye is a space clothed with white downy feathers; the top of the head, cheeks, throat, breast, and belly are white, variegated by a few blotches of light brown; shoulders and wing-coverts brown, the base of every feather being white; tail square at the end, of a greyish brown barred with brown of a deeper tint, and white underneath; tarsi long, and, as well as the toes, of a light bluish grey; beak black; cere bluish; irides yellow.

The female is distinguished by having less white in her plumage, and by having the head, neck, and breast more thickly blotched.

Our Plate represents a bird in a state intermediate between youth and maturity, in which, as may be observed, the flanks and thighs are transversely barred with brown: the figure is about one third less than the natural size.