

Genus PANDION.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* short, strong, rounded and broad, cutting edge nearly straight. *Nostrils* oblong-oval, placed obliquely. *Wings* long; the second and third quill-feathers the longest. *Legs* strong and muscular; tarsi short, covered with scales. *Toes* free, nearly equal in length; outer toe reversible; all armed with strong curved and sharp claws; under surface of the toes rough and covered with small pointed scales.

OSPREY.

Pandion haliaëtus, Sav.

Le Balbuzard.

THERE is no species of the great family of *Falconidæ* whose range of habitat is so universal as that of the Osprey; and there certainly is none to whose habits attaches more interest than to those of this noble bird. While some of its race prey upon quadrupeds, and others upon the feathered tribes, the Osprey gains his subsistence almost exclusively from the waters, the scaly tenants of that element constituting its food: hence it is observed, that the countries in which he takes up his abode must be at least temperate, since it is evident that if the waters be frozen, he would be compelled by necessity to seek a more congenial climate. Such is evidently the case; and hence the Osprey is everywhere migratory, visiting the northern latitudes only during the months of spring and summer. In Europe this bird is but thinly dispersed; but to counterbalance this it is found in every portion of it, at least where wide rivers, lakes and arms of the sea offer it the necessary supply of food. The British Isles are not so much frequented as other parts of Europe; and when one of these birds does make its appearance, its magnitude and peculiar actions call forth the attacks of so many assailants, that it is either quickly destroyed or driven to seek a safer asylum elsewhere. Indeed it can hardly be said to be a welcome visitor, since it makes the greatest havoc among the stock of fish-ponds and rivers, not readily leaving if once established where its prey abounds.

In some parts of America the Osprey is very common, especially in the United States, where it makes its appearance on the return of spring: hence it is a welcome visitor, since its arrival betokens the opening of the rivers and the return of the hordes of fish. Here along the borders of mighty streams, undisturbed and unmolested save by the Bald Eagle, its professed enemy, it builds its nest in tall trees, constructing it of sticks and turf, so as to form a large mass, on the edges of which other small birds congregate and nidify without the slightest injury: in fact, the Osprey, or Fish-Hawk, is a quiet bird, with little ferocity or daring in his temperament. His manner of taking his prey is very remarkable: hovering for a time on wide-spread wings over the water, he then sails about, intently gazing on the element beneath. The moment a fish appears, down he plunges like an arrow, almost disappearing beneath the water, but rising in a moment, with the victim grasped in his strong and incurved talons: throwing the spray from his burnished plumage, he soars aloft, and hastens to his nest to share the spoil with his young, or feast upon it at leisure. Often, however, is the Osprey robbed of his prize. We have alluded to the Bald or White-headed Eagle as his foe, who frequently chases him when loaded with his booty, which he is forced to relinquish to his stronger opponent. The spirited narrative of the contest between these two birds—the one to retain, the other to obtain, the booty—in Wilson's American Ornithology, is probably familiar to all our readers; if not, we recommend them to peruse it. The eggs are generally three, of a dull white, blotched with dark red or yellow brown.

In the adult state of plumage, the whole of the upper surface is of a rich glossy brown; the top and sides of the head are mingled white and brown, and a brown line passes from behind the eye to the shoulder; the throat, chest and underparts are white slightly dashed with a few lines of rusty brown; tail barred; cere and nostrils light brown; tarsi blueish lead colour; irides yellowish orange.

The young are distinguished by the feathers of the upper surface being edged with whitish, and the chest being almost wholly of a pale brown.

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