

GENUS GYPALUS, Steud.

Gen. Char. Head straight, its base covered with sebaceous feathers trending forward, rounded above; the under mandible furnished at the base with a fasciculus of stiff and elongated feathers. (See colored with feathers. Very short, feathered.

BEARDED VULTURE or LAMMER-GREY.

Gypalia barbuta, Steud.

Gypalia barbuta

Gypalia barbuta has had no little difficulty to contend with in relation to the confusion which the numerous synonymy of this bird have occasioned; in fact, as far as our observations have extended, there is but one species comprehended in the present name—a genus distinguished by characters which place it intermediate between the Vulture and Eagle. The characters of being the African species, and of the others on Indian (Barbuta) are all referable to the same, which I have supposed to extend to a certain range of elevation over the vast continent of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The last species reached it from the Himalayas, where it was observed in very considerable numbers. In Europe it is confined to the highest ranges of mountains, such as the Alps and Pyrenees, but more especially the range of the Pyrenees.

The habits and manners of the Lammer-grey, also point out its true position in nature to be intermediate between the Vulture and Eagle; and authors have accordingly referred it to each of these groups. The first who pointed out its true position was the eminent naturalist Steud., who referred it to a genus with the expressive name of Gypalia. The genus thus established has become now, with justice, universally adopted. I follow the typical Lammer-grey, which are distinguished by their bare neck, indicative of their propensity for feeding on carcases; the Lammer-grey has the neck thickly covered with feathers, resembling those of the true Eagle, which it also imitates in its flight and predatory habits; possessing with evident impressiveness an animal exceeding itself in size; hence the name Lammer-grey. With them, the Mountain Hawk and various species of birds that in a formidable and voracious manner having seized its prey, the Lammer-grey remains it upon the spot, the straight form of its wings showing them from carrying it to a distance. It retains flesh in a state of putrefaction until it is completely decayed; hence Lammer-grey has been the species as to numbers, while on the other hand to the Vulture, who are destined to clear the earth of animal matter in a state of decomposition, and thus render the manner service to man in the countries where they abound, she has given an almost incredible instance.

M. Temminck informs us that it subsists on the remains of quadrupeds and insects, making no nest, but having two eggs, to the naked surface, of a white colour marked with blotches of brown.

The adult birds offer no second difference of plumage, and less of size than is usual among rapacious birds.

The head and upper part of the neck are of a dull white; a black line extends from the base of the bill;

and passes above the eyes; another beginning behind the eyes occupies the occipital; the lower part of the neck, the breast and under parts are of an ashy grey; the back and tail-feathers grey;

greyish brown, the centre of each feather having a white longitudinal line; the yellow and tail-feathers grey with white spots; the legs and feet are of an ashy grey; the bill black; and nails black; white claws.

The young of the year have the head and neck dull brown; the under parts dull grey with spots of white;

the upper parts blackish, with lighter spots; the under parts, and feet black. In this state it has been called

Lammer-grey.

We have figured an adult male one third its natural size.