

## Genus VULTUR, *Linn.*

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* strong, thick and deep, base covered with a cere ; *upper mandible* straight until it reaches the point, where it is hooked abruptly ; *under mandible* straight, rounded and becoming narrower towards the point. *Head* naked or covered with short down ; *nostrils* naked and pierced diagonally at the cere. *Feet* very strong, furnished with nails slightly hooked ; the middle *toe* very long and united at the base to the external toe. *Wings* long ; first *quill-feather* short, the fourth the longest.

## GRIFFON VULTURE.

*Vultur fulvus, Linn.*

Le Vautour Griffon.

PRE-EMINENT for size and strength, the Vultures exceed all other birds whose powers of wing are adequate to sustain continued flight. They are a race peculiar to hot climates, and their food consists of putrid animal substances, for the removal of which (where indeed a quick removal is called for,) they seem expressly appointed. Their flight is wonderfully rapid and graceful, and they are led by some faculty, not yet fully understood, (but most probably by the sense of smell,) from astonishing distances, and an elevation in the atmosphere beyond the reach of human sight, to their foetid repast. In a tribe of birds thus characterized the Griffon Vulture is one of the most conspicuous, particularly among those individuals who inhabit the older continent.

The present species takes a wide range, inhabiting, in considerable abundance, Spain, Turkey, and the whole of the southern portion of Europe, as well as the northern portions of Africa ; they also occur in the mountainous parts of the northern and central countries, but we are not aware of its having ever been seen in a wild state in the British Islands.

Like the rest of its family, except when pressed by the utmost necessity it never preys on living animals, but prefers carrion and putrid substances, and when fed to repletion is easily made captive. There is nothing, however, of ferocity or wildness in the disposition of this bird, as in that of the Eagle ; hence in captivity it becomes gentle and domestic : its principal enjoyment consists in the gratification of its appetite, and that accomplished it seems perfectly contented.

It breeds among the most inaccessible precipices ; its eggs are of a dull greyish-white slightly marked with spots of a pale reddish colour.

In the adult bird the head and neck are covered with short white downy feathers ; the lower part of the neck is surrounded with a ruff of long slender feathers of the same colour or slightly tinged with red ; on the breast there is also a space covered with white down ; the whole of the upper and under surfaces, except the quill- and tail-feathers, which are blackish-brown, are of a fulvous grey, the belly having a slight tinge of rufous ; beak bluish yellow ; cere darker ; irides hazel ; feet light brown : total length about four feet. The male is, as usual with other rapacious birds, smaller than the female.

Young birds differ considerably from the adults ; the downy feathers of the head and neck being dirty white varied with brown, and the rest of the plumage of a very light yellowish colour, interspersed with large markings of white or grey.

Our Plate represents an adult in perfect plumage.