PYRRHULA VULGARIS.

Bullfinch.

Loxia pyrrhula, Linn. Faun. Suec. p. 81.
Fringilla pyrrhula, Temm. Man. d'Orn., (1815) p. 200.
Pyrrhula europæa, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. & Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 13.
——— *rubicilla*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. xi. p. 7.
——— *vulgaris*, Temm. Man. d'Orn., 2d edit. tom. i. p. 338.
——— *rufa*, Koch, Baier. Zool., tom. i. p. 227.
——— *pileata*, Macgill. Hist. Brit. Birds, vol. i. p. 407.

Before writing a history of our own Bullfinch, it may not be uninteresting to give a short summary of the known members of the remarkably well-defined genus *Pyrrhula*, an old-world form, the various species of which enjoy a range of habitat extending from the British Islands through Asia to Japan. None have yet been discovered in America; and North Africa would seem to be equally unsuited to these birds, since our own well-known species is the only one that has been found therein. The great Himalayan range of mountains appears to be their headquarters; and, so far as I am aware, none occur in the southern parts of India, the Malay peninsula, or in any of the islands to the southward. It is therefore strictly a northern genus. On the continent of Europe there are two species, *Pyrrhula vulgaris* and *P. coccinea*; *P. murina* inhabits the Azores; *P. nipalensis* Nepaul, Sikhim, and Bootan; *P. erythaca* the mountains bordering Nepaul and Sikhim; *P. erythrocephala* the Western Himalayas; *P. aurantia* Cashmere; and *P. orientalis* Japan. Our favourite Bullfinch is so generally distributed over England that it would be useless to particularize any one county in which it may be found more than another: at the same time, it is not alike plentiful in every district; for there are localities in which it is seldom seen, while it is abundant in others. In Scotland and in Ireland it is less generally distributed. It may be described as a woodland bird, affecting more especially those parts in which the larch is the prevailing tree. It is, however, found in the hedgerows and plantations, both of lowland and hilly districts, and at certain seasons of the year, as every horticulturist knows, visits the gardens, and commits depredations on fruit-trees to an extent unequalled by any other of our native birds. This trait in its character has very justly obtained it many enemies; for to allow such havoc to go on unchecked would be beyond the patience of mortals whose gardens are their joy, and whose fruit-trees are part of their existence. On examination, however, of the form and structure of its scoop-like bill we become at once aware that it is "Bully's" nature so to feed, and that its attacks upon the flower-buds of trees are in strict accordance with nature's intentions—as it is for the Haw-finch to split open the hard seeds of the whitethorn, the cherry, and the laurel, to obtain the kernels within. Throughout this work I have been a champion for our poor persecuted birds, and defended them as well as I could in words, on account of the great amount of good they effect; at the same time I am not unmindful of the destructive propensities of many of them. Mr. Smither, of Churt, informs me that two or three Bullfinches will strip an entire fruit-tree of its buds with such rapidity that in a few hours the ground beneath will be entirely covered with their outer coverings. It has been said that the buds are removed in order that the bird may secure the insect-larvæ supposed to be within them. But while the buds of cherries, blackthorn, and larch, and the seeds of heath, are constantly found in their crops, Mr. Selby, who dissected dozens of these birds, never found any remains of larvæ in their crops or stomachs; and Mac-gillivray states that the only substances he detected therein were small seeds of various kinds, and particles of quartz. Of the individuals examined, some were shot in February and April; but as the species was not common in any place where he had resided in spring, he was unable to ascertain whether in destroying buds and flowers the bird was searching for insects or feeding on those substances. I am sorry to give such a character to so fine a bird as the Bullfinch, or to be the cause of a single hand being raised against one so interesting; but the truth must be told; and that he is a sadly destructive little fellow there is no doubt.

Speaking of the Bullfinch in Ireland, Mr. Thomson says, "In some picturesque and extensive glens in the county of Antrim, near Belfast, the bird was common so long as the hazel and holly of natural growth maintained their ground; but as these were swept away, it deserted such localities as abodes, and 'few and far between' are even its temporary visits. In the neighbouring county of Down it finds a home in sequestered situations, where the hazel predominates, and in this shrubby tree commonly builds. In 'Nature's wild domain' the Bullfinch looks eminently beautiful, and can be admired without the alloy associated with it in the garden or the orchard, where it proves so destructive by eating the buds of the