CALAMOPHILUS BIARMICUS.

Bearded Tit.

Parus biarmicus, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 342.

Lanius biarmicus, Linn. Faun. Suec., no. 84.

— barbatus, Briss. Orn., tom. iii. p. 567.

— russicus, Gmel. Reise, tom. ii. p. 164, tab. 10.

Panurus biarmicus, Koch, Syst. d. Baierisch. Zool., 1816, p. 202; Cab. Mus. Hein., Theil i. p. 89.

Calamophilus biarmicus, Leach.

— barbatus, Blas. and Keyserl.

Paroides biarmicus, Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. i. p. 193, Paroides, sp. 5.

That the progress of agricultural science, and the consequent high style of farming, has a tendency to diminish and occasionally to extirpate some of our native animals, we have abundant evidence to prove; as instances in point, I may cite the noble Bustard among birds, and the beautiful copper Butterfly (Chrysophanus dispar) among insects. The draining of our extensive meres and flat lands, particularly in Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Norfolk, has certainly rendered those parts of the country unsuitable to the habits of the Bearded Tit, which I fear is far less numerous in England now than it was formerly. Birds, as well as men, must yield to circumstances; but every ornithologist will learn this fact with regret,—the extreme delicacy of its tints, the elegance of its form, and the docility of its disposition rendering it an especial favourite with every one who has a love for our native birds. In Great Britain, although local, it is by no means scarce; every tyro in ornithology is acquainted with it: but there are, doubtless, numerous persons to whom it is comparatively, if not entirely, unknown; to the latter, then, I would say that the beautiful bird portrayed on the accompanying Plate is constantly resident with us, that it inhabits all the fenny districts of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, and Huntingdonshire, and that it is found in smaller numbers, and with less certainty, on the tidal shores of the Thames and Medway, and in still less abundance on the borders of most of our sedgy rivers, from Cornwall to Yorkshire. It must be understood, however, that it is only in the five counties above mentioned that it may be looked for with the certainty of being found at any time; for I believe its occurrence in any other part of England to be accidental, and the period of its visit uncertain. I might easily extract from the various works on British ornithology a list of the particular places in which this bird has been shot, and add to it others with which I am myself personally acquainted; but this would answer no useful end, and the above general remarks will comprise all that need be said on the subject of its distribution in England. In Ireland I have only heard of its being killed in a single instance; in Scotland, I believe, it is unknown. On the Continent, as in England, it is very local; for, although it is found from Italy and Turkey to Denmark and Russia, it is more abundant at the embouchures of the Rhine and the Danube than elsewhere. The marshy districts of Holland, where the character of the country assimilates very closely to the eastern parts of England, may be considered its head-quarters. In France, Germany, and Austria it is sparingly dispersed, and only to be met with in reedy situations and on the borders of those rivers whose banks are fringed with its favourite plant (Phragmites communis).

I have not failed to observe that specimens killed in Holland are larger, more delicately coloured, and altogether more beautiful than those shot in England; those differences, however, are scarcely sufficient to constitute a race. Insular birds in many parts of the world differ slightly from others of the same species found on a continent, as I have frequently had occasion to notice in the present work. Many interesting passages have been written respecting the habits, actions, and economy of the Bearded Tit; and I think it will only be fair to the authors, as well as advantageous to my readers, if I extract some of them. A contributor to Loudon's 'Magazine of Natural History,' speaking of a flock of eight or ten found by him in a large piece of reeds below Barking Creek in Essex, says:—"They were just topping the reeds in their flight, and uttering in full chorus their sweetly musical note: it may be compared to the music of very small cymbals, is clear and ringing, though soft, and corresponds well with the delicacy and beauty of the form and colour of the birds. Several flocks were seen during the morning. Their flight was short and low, only sufficient to clear the reeds, on the seedy tops of which they alight to feed, hanging, like most of their tribe, with the head or back downwards. If disturbed, they immediately descend by running, or rather by dropping. The movement is rapid along the stalk to the bottom, where they creep and flit, perfectly concealed from view by the closeness of the covert and the resembling tints of their plumage."

"The borders," says the late Mr. Hoy, "of the large pieces of fresh water in Norfolk called Broads, particularly Hickling and Horsey Broads, are the favourite places of resort of this bird; indeed, it is to be met