

Genus PODICEPS.

GEN. CHAR. *Bill* lengthened, strong, slightly compressed, straight, and pointed. *Nostrils* lateral, basal, linear, pierced in the middle of the nasal fosse; space between the corner of the bill and the eye naked. *Wings* short and concave. *Tail* none. *Legs* placed at the posterior extremity of the body, the *tibiae* being inclosed within the integuments of the abdomen. *Tarsi* much compressed. *Feet* consisting of four toes, three before and one behind; the front ones much flattened, and each furnished with a broad membrane. *Nails* large, flat, and broad. *Plumage* soft, downy, and thick, with a silky lustre.

G R E A T C R E S T E D G R E B E.

Podiceps cristatus, Lath.

Le Grebe huppé.

THE *Podiceps cristatus* is not only the largest of all the European species of its genus, but may be regarded as one of the most typical examples. It is a native of the British Islands as well as of all the temperate portions of continental Europe, everywhere frequenting lakes, large ponds, the mouths of rivers, or the borders of the sea. In these situations it remains during the greater part of the year, eluding pursuit by its extraordinary powers of diving, and capability of remaining submerged beneath the surface of the water. We have also received numerous examples from Asia and Africa, which proved to be strictly identical with European specimens.

The Plate represents a young bird of the year, and an adult during the season of incubation, at which period it assumes the rich ornamental crest and tippet which are then so conspicuous. It is the immature bird which is described by the older writers as the Tippet Grebe, and which so nearly represents the adults in their winter dress, as to render any further description unnecessary; a mistake which modern ornithologists have rectified.

The full or red stage of plumage, in which the frill and crest appear, is not acquired until the third year, and even then, in its greatest luxuriance, is only the ornament of the season of pairing and incubation, the elongated plumes of the cheeks and head being lost, as we suspect, on the approach of winter. There is another peculiarity common to this and the rest of the Grebes which requires notice; we allude to the circumstance of the stomach being found after death commonly filled with a mass of feathers from the breast, but whether swallowed for the purpose of assisting the powers of digestion or not, it is impossible to conjecture. The nest is composed of masses of decayed aquatic vegetables, secured amidst the herbage on the margin of the water, with the variations of which it rises or falls. The eggs are three or four in number, of a greenish white stained with brown. Their food consists of fish, crustacea, and aquatic insects.

The plumage of this species may be thus described: Crown of the head and occipital tuft or ear-feathers deep greyish black; the frill black at its extreme edge, and rich chestnut throughout the greater part of the rest of its length, gradually fading off into the white of the cheeks and throat; the whole of the upper plumage brownish black, with a white bar across the wings; the under surface silvery white, becoming rufous on the flanks; the tarsus and toes dark olive green on the upper side, on the under side pale yellow; bill dark horn colour; irides red.

In winter the plumage resembles that of the summer, except that the richly coloured frill and elongated ear-feathers are wholly wanting. The sexes at either season offer no external differences in the plumage.

The figures in the Plate are somewhat less than the natural size.