

Genus CYGNUS.

GEN. CHAR. *Beak* equally wide throughout its length, much higher than broad at the base, where it is swollen or tuberculated ; depressed towards the tip ; nail of the upper mandible deflected, and covering that of the lower, which is flat. Both mandibles laminato-dentate, with the lamellæ placed transversely, and nearly hidden from view when the beak is closed. *Nostrils* oblong, lateral, placed near the middle of the beak. *Wings* large and long. *Legs* short; feet four-toed, three before, one behind; the front toes entirely webbed, the hind toe small and free.

DOMESTIC SWAN.

Cygnus mansuetus, Gmel.

Le Cygne.

THE Domestic Swan, the stately ornament of our lakes and rivers, is too well known to render much description necessary. The ease and grace with which this bird ploughs its course along the rippled surface of the water, has raised it to that high rank in general estimation to which its extreme beauty and peaceful habits so fully entitle it.

The Swan is one of the largest of our indigenous birds, frequently weighing from twenty to twenty-five pounds. The bill is orange colour, the base and cere reaching to the eye, black, and surmounted with a fleshy knob of the same black colour ; the legs and feet are also black ; all the other parts in the adult bird are of a pure and spotless white. The first plumage of the Cygnet, or young Swan, is of a dull brownish ash colour, afterwards varied with white ; but the young birds do not attain their pure and perfect white appearance till their second year, and are incapable of breeding before the third year. The parent birds drive away from them the brood of the previous year as soon as the revolving seasons again produce the period of incubation. At this time the male assumes an appearance of boldness and contempt of danger which plainly indicate the change in his habits which the season has produced. The male may be distinguished from the female by his thicker neck and his wider and shorter body ; and the female appears to swim deeper in the water.

The female lays six or seven long oval-shaped eggs, of a greenish grey colour, and sits about forty-five days. During this extended period, the male keeps watch at a short distance from her nest ; and when the young brood are produced, and take to the water, he is incessant in his care and guardianship, and boldly advances to repel the intruder upon every appearance of danger.

Formerly young birds of the year were in great request as an article of food, and were frequently served up as a choice dish on great occasions ; even now young Swans, intended for the table, are occasionally to be seen, in their grey plumage, at the shops of our London poulterers.

Although a few Swans may be observed on most of the lakes which ornament the parks and grounds of the nobility and others, they are nowhere very numerous, if we except the swannery of the Earl of Ilchester, at Abbotsbury in Dorsetshire, where a large stock has been maintained for many years. The various parts of aquatic plants are the natural food of these birds, in search of which they examine all the shallow parts of the water they inhabit, and are able to keep their head below the surface for a considerable length of time, but are never seen to dive. In confinement they feed readily on grain, for the comminution of which their large and powerful gizzard seems well adapted.

The voice of the tame Swan is feeble, plaintive, and not unmusical ; but this bird does not possess internally that convoluted structure of trachea which has made the examination of the various wild species an object of so much interest, and which we shall have occasion to notice more particularly when describing the Hooper and Bewick's Swan. Our Domestic Swan is said to exist in a wild state in Russia and Siberia ; but we must not omit to mention, that a species called the Polish Swan has lately been introduced to this country, which, compared with the subject of our present Plate, exhibits a slight difference in the distribution of the colours on the beak, and in the situation of the nostrils : the legs and feet are of a greyish ash colour, and the young birds are said to be white from the egg, never afterwards assuming any of that ash colour which distinguishes till their second year the Cygnets of other white Swans.