GENUS IV.—SYRNIUM, *Cuv.* HOOTING-OWL.

Bill short, stout, broad at the base; upper mandible with its dorsal outline convex to the end of the cere, then curved, the sides sloping and nearly flat, the tip compressed, decurved, acute; lower mandible small, with the dorsal line convex, the tip narrow, the edges decurved toward the end. Nostrils large, elliptical. Conch of the ear of medium size, and furnished with an anterior semicircular operculum, beset with slender feathers. Legs rather short; tarsi very short, and with the toes feathered. Claws slightly curved, long, slender, compressed, acuminate. Plumage very soft and downy; facial disks complete. Wings very large, much rounded, the outer quill with the tips of the filaments separated and recurved, as are those of the terminal portion of the next; the outer six with the inner webs sinuate. Tail broad, rounded.

 GREAT CINEREOUS OWL.
† SYRNIUM CINEREUM, *Linn.*

PLATE XXXV.

This fine Owl, which is the largest of the North American species, is nowhere common with us, although it ranges from the north-eastern coast of the United States to the sources of the Columbia River. It has been procured near Eastport in Maine, and at Marblehead in Massachusetts, where one of them was taken alive, perched on a wood pile, early in the morning, in February, 1831. I went to Salem for the purpose of seeing it, but it had died, and I could not trace its remains. The gentleman, Mr. Ives, in whose keeping it had been for several months, fed it on fish and small birds, of which it was very fond. Besides shewing me various marks of attention, he gave me a drawing of it made by his wife, which is still in my possession. It uttered at times a tremulous cry not unlike that of the Little Screech Owl, *Strix Asio*, and shewed a great antipathy to cats and dogs. In the winter of 1832, I saw one of these Owls flying over the harbour of Boston, Massachusetts, amid several Gulls, all of which continued teasing it until it disappeared. I have seen specimens procured on the Rocky Mountains by Mr.

A. T.

Great Cinerous Owl.

TOWNSEND, and several brought to London by the medical officer who accompanied Captain BACK in his late Arctic journey. Among the individuals which I have examined I have found considerable differences as to size and markings, which may be attributed to age and sex. My drawing was taken from a remarkably fine specimen in the collection of the Zoological Society of London.

The comparatively small size of this bird's eyes renders it probable that it hunts by day, and the remarkable smallness of its feet and claws induces me to think that it does not prey on large animals. Dr. RICHARDSON says that "it is by no means a rare bird in the Fur Countries, being an inhabitant of all the woody districts lying between Lake Superior and latitudes 67° or 68° , and between Hudson's Bay and the Pacific. It is common on the borders of Great Bear Lake; and there, and in the higher parallels of latitude, it must pursue its prey, during the summer months, by day-light. It keeps however within the woods, and does not frequent the barren grounds, like the Snowy Owl, nor is it so often met with in broad day light as the Hawk Owl, but hunts principally when the sun is low; indeed, it is only at such times, when the recesses of the woods are deeply shadowed, that the American hare and the murine animals, on which the Cinereous Owl chiefly preys, come forth to feed. On the 23d of May I discovered a nest of this Owl, built on the top of a lofty balsam poplar, of sticks, and lined with feathers. It contained three young, which were covered with a whitish down. We got them by felling the tree, which was remarkably thick; and whilst this operation was going on, the two parent birds flew in circles round the objects of their cares, keeping, however, so high in the air as to be out of gunshot; they did not appear to be dazzled by the light. The young ones were kept alive for two months, when they made their escape. They had the habit, common also to other Owls, of throwing themselves back, and making a loud snapping noise with their bills, when any one entered the room in which they were kept."

GREAT GREY OR CINEREOUS OWL, *Strix cinerea*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 128.

CINEREOUS OWL, *Strix cinerea*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 77.

GREAT CINEREOUS OWL, *Strix cinerea*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 364.

Upper parts greyish-brown, variegated with greyish-white in irregular undulated markings; the feathers on the upper part of the head with two transverse white spots on each web; the smaller wing-coverts of a darker brown, and less mottled than the back; the outer scapulars with more white on their outer webs; primaries blackish-brown toward the end, in the rest of their extent marked with a few broad light-grey oblique bands, dotted and

undulated with darker; tail similarly barred; ruff-feathers white toward the end, dark brown in the centre; disks on their inner sides grey, with black tips, in the rest of their extent greyish-white, with six bars of blackish-brown very regularly disposed in a concentric manner; lower parts greyish-brown, variegated with greyish and yellowish-white; feet barred with the same.

Female, $30\frac{1}{2}$, $48\frac{1}{2}$.

THE BARRED OWL.

+ *SYRNIUM NEBULOSUM*, Linn.

PLATE XXXVI.—MALE.

Should you, kind reader, visit the noble forests of the lower parts of the State of Louisiana, about the middle of October, when nature, on the eve of preparing for approaching night, permits useful dews to fall and rest on every plant, with the view of reviving its leaves, its fruits, or its lingering blossoms ere the return of morn; when every night-insect rises on buzzing wings from the ground, and the fire-fly, amidst thousands of other species, appears as if purposely to guide their motions through the sombre atmosphere; when numerous reptiles and quadrupeds commence their nocturnal prowlings, and the fair moon, empress of the night, rises peacefully on the distant horizon, shooting her silvery rays over the heavens and the earth, moving slowly and majestically along; when the husbandman, just returned to his home, after the labours of the day, is receiving the cheering gratulations of his family, and the wholesome repast is about to be spread out;—it is at this moment, kind reader, that your ear would suddenly be struck by the discordant screams of the Barred Owl. Its *whah, whah, whah, whah-aa* is uttered loudly, and in so strange and ludicrous a manner, that I should not be surprised were you to compare these sounds to the affected bursts of laughter which you may have heard from some of the fashionable members of our own species.

How often, when snugly settled under the boughs of my temporary encampment, and preparing to roast a venison steak or the body of a squirrel, have I been saluted with the exulting bursts of this nightly disturber of the peace, that, had it not been for him, would have prevailed around me, as well as in my lonely retreat! How often have I seen this nocturnal marauder alight within a few yards of me, expose his whole body to the glare of my fire, and eye me in such a curious manner that, had it been

A. T.

Great Cinerous Owl.

Audubon, John James. 1840. "Great Cinereous Owl, *Strinum cinereum*, Linn. [Pl. 35]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 1, 130–132. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319148>.

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