

THE TOWHE GROUND-FINCH.

+PIPILO ERYTHROPHthalmus, *Linn.*

PLATE CXCV.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The flight of the Towhe Bunting is short, low, and performed from one bush or spot to another, in a hurried manner, with repeated strong jerks of the tail, and such quick motions of the wings, that one may hear their sound, although the bird should happen to be out of sight. On the ground, where it is more usually to be seen, it hops lightly, without moving the tail more than the Common Sparrow of Europe. It is a diligent bird, spending its days in searching for food and gravel, amongst the dried leaves and in the earth, scratching with great assiduity, and every now and then uttering the notes *tow-hee*, from which it has obtained its name. At other times, it ascends to the top of a small tree, or its favourite low bushes and briars, on which it sings very sweetly a few continued mellow notes.

This species constructs a larger nest than birds of its size usually do, and scoops out a place for its foundation in the earth, sometimes in an open spot, more commonly at the foot of a small sapling or large bunch of tall grass. The nest is sunk into the ground, so as to be level with it at top, and is composed of dried leaves and the bark of vines, lined with grasses of fine texture, as well as fibrous roots. The female lays from four to six eggs, and rears two, sometimes three, broods each season. If disturbed while sitting, she moves off apparently in great agony, but with more celerity than most other birds, by which means she generally prevents her nest being discovered. Snakes, however, suck the eggs, as does the Crow. The young leave the nest long before they are able to fly, and follow the mother about on the ground for several days. Some of the nests of this species are so well concealed, that in order to discover them, one requires to stand quite still on the first appearance of the mother. I have myself several times had to regret not taking this precaution.

The favourite haunts of the Towhe Buntings are dry barren tracts, but not, as others have said, low and swampy grounds, at least during the season of incubation. In the Barrens of Kentucky they are found in the greatest abundance.

Their migrations are performed by day, from bush to bush, and they seem to be much at a loss when a large extent of forest is to be traversed by them.

They perform these journeys almost singly. The females set out before the males in autumn, and the males before the females in spring, the latter not appearing in the Middle Districts until the end of April, a fortnight after the males have arrived. Many of them pass the confines of the United States in their migrations southward and northward.

Although these birds are abundant in all parts of the Union, they never associate in flocks, but mingle during winter with several species of Sparrow. They generally rest on the ground at night, when many are caught by weasels and other small quadrupeds. None of them breed in Louisiana, nor indeed in the State of Mississippi, until they reach the open woods of the Choctaw Indian Nation.

I have represented the male and female moving through the twigs of the common briar, usually called the *black briar*. It is a plump bird, and becomes very fat in winter, in consequence of which it is named *Grasset* in Louisiana, where many are shot for the table by the French planters.

Male, $8\frac{1}{2}$, 12.

Breeds from Texas along the Atlantic districts, as well as in the interior, northward to Labrador. Abundant. Migratory.

TOWHE BUNTING, *Emberiza erythrophthalma*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 35.

FRINGILLA ERYTHROPHTHALMA, Bonap. Syn., p. 112.

GROUND ROBIN OR TOWHE FINCH, *Fringilla erythrophthalma*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 515.

TOWHE BUNTING, *Fringilla erythrophthalma*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 150; vol. v. p. 511.

Adult Male.

Bill short, robust, narrower than the head, regularly conical, acute; upper mandible almost straight in its dorsal outline, as is the lower, both having inflected edges; the gap-line nearly straight, a little deflected at the base. Nostrils basal, roundish, open, partially concealed by the feathers. Head rather large, neck shortish, body robust. Legs of moderate length, rather robust; tarsus longer than the middle toe, covered anteriorly with a few longish scutella; toes scutellate above, free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws slender, arched, compressed, acute, that of the hind toe long.

Plumage rather compact above, soft and blended beneath. Wings of ordinary length, the third and fourth quills longest, the first much shorter, the secondaries short. Tail long, rounded, the lateral feathers slightly curved outwards towards the tip.

Bill black. Iris bright red. Legs and claws pale yellowish-brown. Head, neck, and upper parts generally, deep black. A white band across the primaries, partly concealed by their coverts; outer edge of first quill white; margins of the last secondaries brownish-white. Lateral tail-feathers

white, excepting at the base, and a longitudinal streak towards the tip, on the outer web; the next two white on the inner web, towards the end. Breast white, abdomen pale red; sides and lateral parts of the breast brownish-red.

Length $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, extent of wings 12; beak along the ridge $\frac{1}{2}$, along the gap $\frac{2}{3}$; tarsus $1\frac{1}{3}$, middle toe 1, hind toe $\frac{5}{8}$.

Adult Female.

The female is scarcely smaller, and differs from the male in having the parts which in him are of a deep black, reddish-brown, excepting the bill, which is almost entirely light blue, the ridge of the upper mandible only being dark brown.

Length $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

In the adult bird the iris is bright red, but in the young it is frequently brown, and sometimes yellowish-white. In some instances, one eye is brown and the other red.

In an adult male preserved in spirits, the palate is ascending and deeply concave; its two longitudinal ridges uniting in front, where there is a considerable soft prominence; the upper mandible beneath flat, with a median ridge and two lateral, broad and flattened ridges. The width of the mouth is $5\frac{3}{4}$ twelfths. Posterior aperture of the nares linear, and strongly papillate, as in all the species. Tongue $5\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths long, fleshy above, toward the end horny, convex, and with a median groove. Œsophagus 2 inches 4 twelfths long, its greatest width 3 twelfths. Stomach a strong muscular gizzard, 6 twelfths long, $10\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths broad; the epithelium dense and longitudinally rugous. Contents of stomach, seeds and husks of barley. Intestine $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, 2 twelfths in width; the cœca $4\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths long, $1\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths in breadth, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the extremity; rectum very slightly dilated.

Trachea 1 inch $7\frac{1}{2}$ twelfths long, 1 twelfth in breadth; its rings 75, besides 2 dimidiate rings. Bronchi very slender, of 15 half rings. The muscles as in all the other species.

THE BLACKBERRY.

RUBUS VILLOSUS, Willd., Sp. Pl., vol. ii. p. 1085. *Pursch*, Fl. Amer., vol. i. p. 346.—*ICOSANDRIA POLYGNIA*, Linn.—*ROSACEÆ*, Juss.

Pubescent, prickly, with angular twigs; the leaves ternate or quinate, with ovato-oblong, serrate, acuminate leaflets, downy on both sides; the calycine leaves short, acuminate; and a loose raceme of white flowers. The berry is black. This species grows abundantly in old fields and by fences.



Towhe Ground Finch.

1. Male. 2. Female.

Common Blackberry.



Audubon, John James. 1841. "The Towhe Ground-Finch, *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*, Linn. [Pl. 195]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 167–169.

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