

GENUS XI.—ERYTHROSPIZA, *Bonap.* PURPLE-FINCH.

Bill rather short, robust, bulging, conical, pointed; upper mandible a little broader, with the nasal sinus very short and broad, the dorsal line a little convex, the ridge indistinct, the sides rounded, the edges a little inflected, ascending at the base, afterwards direct, the notches faint, the tip slightly deflected, rather acute; lower mandible with the angle short and rounded, the dorsal line ascending, straight, the back and sides rounded, the edges involute, the tip acute. Nostrils roundish, partially concealed by the short reflexed bristly feathers. Head large, roundish-ovate; neck short, body moderate. Tarsus short, slender, compressed, with seven scutella; toes rather small, first stout, lateral nearly equal. Claws slender, much compressed, well arched, acute. Plumage soft and rather blended; feathers of the hind head somewhat elongated and pointed. Wings of moderate length, rather pointed, the outer four quills longest. Tail of moderate length, deeply emarginate. Upper mandible concave beneath, with two prominent lines, of which the lateral are much larger; tongue higher than broad, channelled above, the tip somewhat rounded and concave; œsophagus dilated about the middle; stomach roundish, muscular; intestine short; cœca very small.

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 THE PURPLE FINCH.
†ERYTHROSPIZA PURPUREA, *Gmel.*

PLATE CXCVI.—MALE AND FEMALE.

From the beginning of November until April, flocks of the Purple Finch, consisting of from six to twenty individuals, are seen throughout the whole of Louisiana and the adjoining States. They fly compactly, with an undulating motion, similar to that of the Common Greenfinch of Europe. They





*Crested Purple Finch.*

1 Males. 2 Female.

*Red Larch Lark Americana.*





alight all at once, and after a moment of rest, and as if frightened, all take to wing again, make a circuit of no great extent, and return to the tree from which they had thus started, or settle upon one near it. Immediately after this, every individual is seen making its way toward the extremities of the branches, husking the buds with great tact, and eating their internal portion. In doing this, they hang like so many Titmice, or stretch out their necks to reach the buds below. Although they are quite friendly among themselves during their flight, or while sitting without looking after food, yet, when they are feeding, the moment one goes near another, it is strenuously warned to keep off by certain unequivocal marks of displeasure, such as the erection of the feathers of the head and the opening of the mouth. Should this intimation be disregarded, the stronger or more daring of the two drives off the other to a different part of the tree. They feed in this manner principally in the morning, and afterwards retire to the interior of the woods. Towards sunset they reappear, fly about the skirts of the fields and along the woods, until, having made choice of a tree, they alight, and, as soon as each bird has chosen a situation, stand still, look about them, plume themselves, and make short sallies after flies and other insects, but without interfering with each other. They frequently utter a single rather mellow *clink*, and are seen occupied in this manner until near sunset, when they again fly off to the interior of the forest. I one night surprised a party of them roosting in a small holly tree, as I happened to be brushing by it. In their consternation they suddenly started all together, and in the same direction, when, not knowing what birds they were, I shot at them and brought down two.

It is remarkable that, at this season, males in full beauty of plumage are as numerous as during the summer months in far more northern parts, where they breed; and you may see different gradations of plumage, from the dingy greenish-brown of the female and young to the richest tints of the oldest and handsomest male; while along with these there are others which, by my habit of examining birds, I knew to be old, and which are of a yellowish-green, neither the colour of the young males, nor that of the females, but a mixture of all.

The song of the Purple Finch is sweet and continued, and I have enjoyed it much during the spring and summer months, in the mountainous parts of Pennsylvania, where it occasionally breeds, particularly about the Great Pine Forest, where, although I did not find any nests, I saw pairs of these birds flying about and feeding their young, which could not have been many days out, and were not fully fledged. The food which they carried to their young consisted of insects, small berries, and the juicy part of the cones of the spruce pine.



They frequently associate with the Common Cross-bills, feeding on the same trees, and like them are at times fond of alighting against the mud used for closing the log-houses. They are seldom seen on the ground, although their motions there are by no means embarrassed. They are considered as destructive birds by some farmers, who accuse them of committing great depredations on the blossoms of their fruit-trees. I never observed this in Louisiana, where they remain long after the peach and pear trees are in full bloom. I have eaten many of them, and consider their flesh equal to that of any other small bird, excepting the Rice Bunting.

This species was seen by Dr. RICHARDSON on the banks of the Saskatchewan river only, where it feeds on willow-buds. It arrives there in May, and resides during the summer. The eggs have been procured in the State of Massachusetts by my friend Dr. T. M. BREWER. They measure seven-eighths and a quarter in length, four-eighths and a half in breadth, and are thus of an elongated form, rather pointed. Their ground-colour is a bright emerald-green, sparingly marked with dots and a few streaks of black, accumulated near the apex, and some large marks of dull purple here and there over the whole surface. The following note is from the same gentleman:—"The passage of the Purple Finch through this State on its way north, is so rapid, and the number of those that stop to breed here so small, that I can furnish nothing respecting its habits, except that there is good reason to believe the accusation which has been brought against it, of injuring the blossoms of fruit trees. Last year, the trees were in full bloom at the time this bird was migrating, and I saw them plainly clinging to the branches, and at work upon the blossoms; so that under some trees the ground was literally strewn with the result of their destructiveness, although they did not appear to feed on the blossoms. I have had the good fortune to meet with its nest and eggs this season. Mr. CABOT found another, and is probably the first naturalist who has done so. The nest which I found was built in a cedar tree, at the distance of five feet from the ground. The tree stood by itself in a small sandy pasture, which was sparingly covered with half-grown cedars. The nest itself was rudely constructed: it was composed externally of coarse grass and weeds, lined with fine roots of the same, and little care seemed to have been bestowed on its completion. The diameter of the exterior was 9 inches, the brim 3 inches, the depth 1 inch, the external depth 2 inches, giving it thus a shallow or flattish appearance. The eggs, four in number, were of a bright emerald-green."

I have found this species from Labrador to the Texas. Mr. NUTTALL and Mr. TOWNSEND met with it on the Columbia river, and all the way to St. Louis. In South Carolina, where it appears only during severe winters,



it feeds on the berries of the Virginian juniper, commonly called the red cedar; and when the berries fall to the ground, it alights to secure them. Dr. BACHMAN has kept it in aviaries, where it became very fat, silent, and only uttered its usual simple feeble note. After moulting, the males assumed the plumage of the females. The next spring a very slight appearance of red was seen, but they never recovered their original brilliancy, and it was difficult to distinguish the sexes. It breeds sparingly in the northern parts of the State of New York. In June 1837, I met with three pairs, within a few miles of Waterford, that evidently had nests in the neighbourhood.

Palate gently ascending; upper mandible considerably concave, with three prominent lines, of which the two lateral are much larger; mandibles nearly equal in breadth, the lower deeply concave. Width of mouth 5 twelfths. Tongue 5 twelfths long, sagittate and papillate at the base, much compressed, being higher than broad, channelled above, the channel becoming somewhat dilated toward the end, and approaching to that of the Pine Grosbeak and the Crossbills. Œsophagus 2 inches 2 twelfths in length, its greatest width 4 twelfths. Stomach  $5\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths long,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths broad; its lateral muscles of moderate size, the epithelium tough and longitudinally rugous. Contents of stomach, seeds of various sorts. Intestine  $8\frac{3}{4}$  inches long, its width from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths to  $\frac{3}{4}$  twelfth; cæca  $\frac{1}{2}$  twelfth long,  $\frac{1}{4}$  twelfth broad, 9 twelfths distant from the extremity.

Trachea 1 inch  $7\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths long, flattened, nearly 1 twelfth in breadth; the rings 66 and 2 additional; bronchial rings 12; muscles as usual in this family; as are the salivary glands.

Male, 6, 9.

During winter, from Texas to the Carolinas, and northward to Kentucky. In summer, from St. Louis to the Columbia, and in the Fur Countries. Abundant.

PURPLE FINCH, *Fringilla purpurea*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. i. p. 119.

PURPLE FINCH, Bonap. Syn., p. 114.

FRINGILLA PURPUREA WILSON, *Crested Purple Finch*, Swains. and Rich. F. Bor. Amer., vol. ii. p. 264.

PURPLE FINCH, *Fringilla purpurea*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. i. p. 24; vol. v. p. 500.

#### Adult Male.

Bill shortish, robust, bulging, conical, acute; upper mandible with its dorsal outline a little convex, under mandible with its outline also slightly convex, both broadly convex transversely, the edges straight to near the base, where they are a little deflected. Nostrils basal, roundish, open, partially concealed by the feathers. Head rather large. Neck short and thick. Body full. Legs of moderate size; tarsus of the same length as the



middle toe, covered anteriorly with a longitudinal plate above and a few transverse scutella below, posteriorly with an acutely angular longitudinal plate; toes scutellate above, free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws slender, arched, compressed, acute, that of the hind toe not much larger.

Plumage compact above, blended beneath, wings of moderate length, third and fourth primaries longest, second and first very little shorter. Tail forked. The lateral feathers curved outwards toward the tip.

Bill deep brown above, paler and tinged with blue beneath. Iris blackish-brown. Feet and claws brown. Head, neck, breast, back, and upper tail-coverts of a rich deep lake, approaching to crimson on the head and neck, and fading into rose-colour on the belly. Fore part of the back streaked with brown. Quills and larger coverts deep brown, margined externally and tipped with red. Tail feathers deep brown, similarly margined. A narrow band of cream-colour across the forehead, margining the base of the upper mandible.

Length 6 inches, extent of wings 9, beak along the ridge  $\frac{5}{12}$ , along the gap  $\frac{7}{12}$ , tarsus  $\frac{2}{3}$ .

Female.

The young bird so closely resembles the adult female, that the same description will answer for both. The general colour of the upper parts is brownish-olive, streaked with dark brown. There is a broadish white line over the eye, and another from the commissure of the gap backwards. The under parts are greyish-white, the sides streaked with brown. The quills and tail-feathers are dark brown, margined with olive.

#### THE RED LARCH.

*LARIX AMERICANA*, *Pursch*, Fl. Amer., vol. ii. p. 645. *Mich.*, Arbr. Forest. de l'Amer. Sept., vol. iii. p. 137, pl. 4.—*MONGECIA POLYANDRIA*, *Linn.*—*CONIFERÆ*, *Juss.*

This species of larch, which is distinguished by its short, deciduous, fasciculate leaves, and short ovate cones, occurs in the more northern parts of the United States, and in the mountainous regions of the middle states. It attains a height of sixty feet, and a diameter sometimes of two feet. The wood is highly esteemed on account of its excellent qualities.





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*Red Larch Lark Americana.*





Audubon, John James. 1841. "The Purple Finch, *Erythrospiza purpurea*, Gmel. [Pl. 196]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 170–174. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319309>.

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