

GENUS XV.—PITYLUS, *Cuvier*. CARDINAL GROSBEEK.

Bill rather short, very robust, much higher than broad, tapering to a point; upper mandible considerably smaller than the lower, with the dorsal line convex, the ridge indistinct, the nasal sinus very wide, the sides convex, the edges ascending rapidly for a third of their length, then direct, with a slight festoon, slightly inflected, the notches faint, the tip a little deflected and narrow; lower mandible with the angle semicircular, the dorsal line straight, the sides at the base inflected, toward the end convex, the edges involute, the tip acute. Nostrils basal, round, concealed by the feathers. Plumage soft and blended, feathers of the head elongated and erectile; distinct bristles at the base of the upper mandible. Wings of moderate length, much rounded, the fourth and fifth quills longest, the first and eighth about equal. Tail long, rounded. Tarsus short, compressed, with seven scutella; toes moderate, hind toe stout, broad beneath, outer toe slightly longer than inner, and adherent at the base. Claws moderate, arched, compressed, acute. Upper mandible concave beneath, with three longitudinal ridges; tongue as high as broad, convex above, tapering to a point. Œsophagus nearly uniform, stomach pretty large, roundish, its lateral muscles strong.

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THE CARDINAL GROSBEEK.
PITYLUS CARDINALIS, *Linn.*

PLATE CCIII.—MALE AND FEMALE.

In richness of plumage, elegance of motion, and strength of song, this species surpasses all its kindred in the United States. It is known by the names of Red-bird, Virginia Nightingale, Cardinal-bird, and that at the head of the present article. It is very abundant in all our Southern States, as well as in the peninsula of the Floridas. In the western country a great





*Common Cardinal Grosbeak.*

*1. Male. 2. Female.*

*Wild Almond. Prunus caroliniana.*







number are found as far up on the Ohio as the city of Cincinnati, and they extend to considerable distances into Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. They are found in the maritime districts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where they breed, and where a few remain the whole year; some are also seen in the State of New York, and now and then a straggler proceeds into Massachusetts; but farther eastward this species has never been observed.

This fine songster relishes the interior of the forest, and the heart of the deepest cane-brakes or retired swamps, as well as the neighbourhood of cities. It is constantly found in our fields, orchards and gardens; nay, it often enters the very streets of our southern towns and villages to breed; and it is rare that one goes into a planter's yard without observing the Red-bird skipping about the trees or on the turf beneath them. Go where it may, it is always welcome, and every where a favourite, so rich is its song, and so brilliant its plumage.

The Cardinal-bird breeds in the Floridas. In the beginning of March I found them already paired in that country, and on the 8th of February near General HERNANDEZ's. In the neighbourhood of Charleston, as well as in Louisiana, they are nearly a month later, and much the same lapse of time takes place again before they form a nest in the State of New Jersey or in that of Kentucky.

The nest is placed, apparently without much consideration, in some low briar, bush, or tree, often near the fence, the middle of a field, or the interior of a thicket, not far from a cooling stream, to which they are fond of resorting, for the purpose of drinking and bathing. Sometimes you find it placed close to the planter's house or in his garden, a few yards from that of the Mocking-bird or the Thrasher. It is composed of dry leaves and twigs, together with a large proportion of dry grass and slips of grape-vines, and is finished within with bent-grass, wrought in a circular form. The eggs are from four to six, of a dull white colour, marked all over with touches of olive-brown.

In the Southern Districts they now and then raise three broods in the season, but in the Middle States seldom more than one. The young on leaving the nest, frequently follow their parents on the ground for several days, after which they disperse and seek for food apart. During the pairing season, the males are so pugnacious, that although they breed near birds of other species, they never allow one of their own to nestle in their vicinity. One male may be seen following another from bush to bush, emitting a shrill note of anger, and diving towards the fugitive antagonist whenever an opportunity offers, until the latter has escaped quite beyond his jurisdiction, when the conqueror, elated, returns to his grounds, ascends his favourite tree, and pours out his song in full exultation.



Those which migrate to the eastward begin to move about the commencement of March, usually in the company of the Towhee Bunting and other Sparrows, hopping and passing from bush to bush during the whole day, announcing to the traveller and husbandman the approach of a more genial season, and resting at night in the secluded swamps. The males precede the females about ten days.

Towards autumn they frequently ascend to the tops of tall trees in search of grapes and berries, being as fond of succulent or pulpy fruits as they are of the seeds of corn and grasses. On the least appearance of danger they at once glide into the interior of the nearest thickets. During the summer heats they frequently resort to sandy roads to dust themselves, carelessly suffering people to approach them until within a few yards, when they only remove to the nearest bushes, until the intruders pass.

They are easily raised when taken from the nest, and breed when kept in aviaries. My friend Dr. SAMUEL WILSON of Charleston, has had them breeding with him, having placed straw-baskets for the purpose, in which the female deposited her eggs, without improving the nest any more than by placing in it a few grass-blades, perhaps pilfered from some of her neighbours. The purity of its colouring is soon lost when it is kept in confinement, where it is gentle, easily fed on corn or hemp-seed, and it sings when placed in a cage for several months in the year.

During winter the Cardinal Grosbeak frequently shews itself in the farm-yard, among Turtle-Doves, Jays, Mocking-birds, and various species of Sparrows, picking up its food from the store daily supplied to the poultry. It now and then seeks refuge at night in the lee of some haystack, or throws itself with many other birds among the thickest branches of the nearest evergreen tree.

The flight of this species is strong and rapid, although seldom continued to any great distance. It is performed by glidings and jerks of the tail. When the bird is alighted it also frequently juts its tail with grace. Like all birds of the genus it hops, but does not walk.

Its song is at first loud and clear, resembling the finest sounds produced by the flageolet, and gradually descends into more marked and continued cadences, until it dies away in the air around. During the love-season the song is emitted with increased emphasis by this proud musician, who, as if aware of his powers, swells his throat, spreads his rosy tail, droops his wings, and leans alternately to the right and left, as if on the eve of expiring with delight at the delicious sounds of his own voice. Again and again are those melodies repeated, the bird resting only at intervals to breathe. They may be heard from long before the sun gilds the eastern horizon, to the period when the blazing orb pours down its noonday floods of heat and



light, driving the birds to the coverts to seek repose for awhile. Nature again invigorated, the musician recommences his song, when, as if he had never strained his throat before, he makes the whole neighbourhood resound, nor ceases until the shades of evening close around him. Day after day the song of the Red-bird beguiles the weariness of his mate as she assiduously warms her eggs; and at times she also assists with the modesty of her gentler sex. Few individuals of our own race refuse their homage of admiration to the sweet songster. How pleasing is it, when, by a clouded sky, the woods are rendered so dark, that were it not for an occasional glimpse of clearer light falling between the trees, you might imagine night at hand, while you are yet far distant from your home—how pleasing to have your ear suddenly saluted by the well known notes of this favourite bird, assuring you of peace around, and of the full hour that still remains for you to pursue your walk in security! How often have I enjoyed this pleasure, and how often, in due humbleness of hope, do I trust that I may enjoy it again!

This species is very abundant in Texas, where, as in our Southern States, it is a constant resident. Mr. TOWNSEND has observed it on the waters of the Upper Missouri. According to Dr. T. M. BREWER, it is but a chance visitor in Massachusetts during summer, indeed so rare, that he never knew certainly but of one pair which bred in the Botanical Garden, Cambridge, about six years ago, and departed in the fall, with their young. The eggs measure one inch and half an eighth in length, five-eighths and a third in breadth, and are thus elongated, although the smaller end is well rounded.

Male,  $8\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $11\frac{1}{2}$ .

Breeds abundantly from Texas to New York. Very rare in Massachusetts. Valleys of the Mississippi and Missouri, Kentucky and Ohio. Resident from Maryland southward.

CARDINAL GROSBEEK, *Loxia cardinalis*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. ii. p. 38.

FRINGILLA CARDINALIS, Bonap. Syn., p. 113.

CARDINAL GROSBEEK OR RED-BIRD, *Fringilla cardinalis*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 519.

CARDINAL GROSBEEK, *Fringilla cardinalis*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 336; vol. v. p. 514.

#### Adult Male.

Bill short, very robust, conical, acute, deeper than broad at the base; upper mandible with its dorsal outline a little convex, the sides rounded, the edges sharp and inflected, the tip slightly declinate; lower mandible broader than the upper, with its dorsal line straight, the back broad, the sides rounded, the edges inflected; the gap-line deflected at the base. Nostrils basal, roundish, concealed by the feathers. Head large, neck short, body robust. Legs of moderate length, rather strong; tarsus compressed, anteriorly covered with a few scutella, posteriorly sharp; toes scutellate above,



free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws slender, arched, compressed, acute, that of the hind toe considerably larger.

Plumage soft and blended, slightly glossed. Wings of moderate length, broad, much rounded, the fourth quill longest; primaries rather broad, rounded, from the second to the sixth slightly cut out on the outer web, secondaries rather narrow and rounded. Tail long, straight, rounded. Feathers of the crown long, pointed, and erectile.

Bill of a tint approaching to coral-red. Iris dark hazel. Feet pale umber. The whole upper parts of a deep dusky-red, excepting the head, which is vermilion. The anterior part of the forehead, the lores, and the upper anterior part of the neck, black. The under parts are vermilion, which is brightest anteriorly. Inner webs of the quills light brown, their shafts and those of the tail-feathers blackish-brown.

Length  $8\frac{1}{4}$  inches, extent of wings  $11\frac{1}{2}$ ; bill along the back  $\frac{7}{12}$ , along the edge  $\frac{3}{4}$ ; tarsus  $1\frac{1}{2}$ .

Adult Female.

The female has a crest as well as the male, which it resembles in the texture of its plumage, but the tail is proportionally shorter. The general colour of the upper parts is dull greyish-brown, slightly tinged with olive; the longer crest-feathers are streaked with dull red, the wings, coverts, and outer edges of the quills, are of the same tint; the edge of the wings and the lower coverts are pale vermilion, and the inner edges of the quills are of the same tint, but paler. The parts surrounding the base of the bill, which are black in the male, are blackish-grey, and the lower parts in general are pale greyish-brown.

Length  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

In a male preserved in spirits, the palate ascends very abruptly, and has two very elevated soft ridges, at the junction of which anteriorly is a prominent soft space, on the lower mandible beneath are three longitudinal ridges with four grooves, of which the two lateral are much wider. The tongue is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths long, emarginate and papillate at the base, convex and fleshy above, as high as broad, horny beneath, tapering to a point. The width of the mouth is 6 twelfths. The lower mandible is broader than the upper, exceedingly strong, and very deeply concave. The œsophagus is 2 inches 5 twelfths in length, 3 twelfths in width. The stomach pretty large, roundish,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  twelfths long, 7 twelfths broad; its lateral muscles strong, the tendons large, the epithelium very dense, longitudinally rugous, brownish-red. The stomach is filled with seeds, which have all been husked. Intestine  $10\frac{1}{4}$  inches long, its width from 3 twelfths to 2 twelfths. Cæca 3 twelfths long,  $\frac{1}{2}$  twelfth broad, 1 inch distant from the extremity. Cloaca ovate, 4 twelfths in width.



Trachea 1 inch 10 twelfths long, from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  twelfths to  $\frac{1}{2}$  twelfth in breadth; its rings 52; the muscles as in the other species. Bronchial half rings about 12.

## THE WILD ALMOND.

PRUNUS CAROLINIANA, *Willd.*, Sp. Pl., vol. ii. p. 987. *Pursch*, Fl. Amer. Sept., vol. i. p. 330.—ICOSANDRIA MONOGYNIA, *Linn.*—ROSACEÆ, *Juss.*

Flowers in racemes; leaves evergreen, oblong-lanceolate, mucronate, serrate, without glands at the base. The *wild almond* is altogether a southern tree. Its height now and then is as much as twenty-five feet, the stem in that case being a foot or more in diameter. The usual rounded form of its top, and the persistence of its foliage, together with its white flowers, and dark coloured fruits, render it a very agreeable object. Many are planted around the plantation grounds or the gardens of our southern cities, on account of their beautiful appearance. The fruits are greedily devoured by many species of birds, but are unpalatable to man. I have not observed it to the east of Virginia, nor farther west than the town of Memphis on the Mississippi. The wood is seldom applied to any useful purpose.

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GENUS XVI.—COCCOBORUS, *Swains.* SONG-GROSBEAK.

Bill rather short, extremely robust, almost as broad as the head, and somewhat compressed, tapering to a point; upper mandible considerably smaller than the lower, with the dorsal line convex, the ridge indistinct, the nasal sinus very wide, the sides convex, the edges ascending for a third of their length, then direct, with a slight festoon, and inflected, the notches faint, the tip a little deflected, and narrow; lower mandible with the angle short and semicircular, the dorsal line straight, the sides at the base inflected, toward the end convex, the edges involute, the tip acute. Nostrils basal, round. Plumage somewhat compact, blended; distinct bristles at the base of the upper mandible. Wings of moderate length, pointed, the outer three quills nearly equal, the second longest. Tail of moderate length, slightly emargi-





*Common Cardinal Grosbeak.*

1. Male. 2. Female.

*Wild Almond. Prunus caroliniana.*





Audubon, John James. 1841. "The Cardinal Grosbeak, *Piotylus cardinalis*, Linn. [Pl. 203]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 198–203. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319316>.

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