nate. 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 rather wide, dilated about the middle; stomach rather small, roundish, compressed, with its muscles distinct and of moderate thickness, the epithelium longitudinally rugous; intestine short, and of moderate width; cœca very small.

THE BLUE GROSBEAK.

+ COCCOBORUS CÆRULEUS, *Linn.*

PLATE CCIV.—MALE, FEMALE, AND YOUNG.

While the Cardinal Grosbeak enlivens the neighbourhood of our southern cities and villages, and frequents the lawn of the planter's habitation, the present species, shy and bashful, retires to the borders of the almost stagnant waters used as reservoirs for the purpose of irrigating the rice plantations. There, where the alligator, basking sluggishly on the miry pool, bellows forth its fearful cries, or in silence watches the timid deer, as it approaches to immerse its body in order to free it from the attacks of myriads of tormenting insects; where the watchful Heron stands erect, silent, and ready to strike its slippery prey, or leisurely and gracefully steps along the muddy margins; where baneful miasmata fill the sultry air, now imbued with a virus almost sufficient to prostrate all other beings save those whose nature enables them to remain in those damps;—there you meet with the Cœrulean Grosbeak, timidly skipping from bush to bush, or over and amid the luxuriant rice, watchful even of the movements of the slave employed in cultivating the fertile soil. If the place is silent, and the weather calm, this cautious bird gradually ascends some high tree, from the top of which it pours forth its melting melodies, the female sitting the while on her eggs in her grassy nest, in some low sheltered bush hard by. Her mate now and then relieves her from her task, provides her with food while she sits, and again lulls her to repose by his song. One brood and again another are hatched, reared, and led forth to find for themselves the food so abundantly

Blue Long Grosbeak.

1. Male. 2. Female. 3. Young.

spread around them. Humbly and inconspicuously clad as the young birds are, most of them escape the talon of the watchful Hawk, or the fire of the mischief-loving gunner. The parents soon join them, and no sooner is their favourite rice gathered, than the whole fly off, and gradually wend their way to warmer climes.

Although this sweet songster spends the spring and summer in our Southern States, it must be considered as a rather scarce bird there. It seldom enters deep woods, but prefers such low grounds as I have described above, or the large and level abandoned fields covered with rank grasses and patches of low bushes. It arrives in the lower parts of Louisiana about the middle of March, the males appearing eight or ten days before the females, in small parties of five or six, when their common call-note, a single chuck, is frequently uttered to attract the females. They proceed through Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas, in all which districts they breed. Beyond this, however, few are to be met with. I never observed this species on the Mississippi farther up than the neighbourhood of Natchez; nor is it ever seen in Kentucky, or in any other part of the western country. Along the Atlantic coast it is rarely found beyond the State of New Jersey.

It is remarkable that, although this bird seldom places its nest more than a few feet from the ground, it is fond of ascending to the tops of the tallest detached trees, to sing, during the spring and summer, rarely performing that pleasant duty among the low bushes which it usually inhabits.

One or two pairs of these birds generally take possession of a field, for the purpose of breeding, making choice of one little frequented by other birds. There, in the most secluded part, the Blue Grosbeak builds its nest, placing it in the upright fork of some small slender bush, or attaching it to the tall blades of a tuft of rank grass. It is composed of fine dried grasses, which are more carefully arranged towards the interior, and is lined with a few delicate fibrous roots, dried moss, or horse-hair. There are seldom more than four eggs, but two broods are raised in the season. When the first broods leave their parents, the young birds assemble in small flocks composed of a few families, and resort mostly to the rice fields, feeding on the grain when yet in its milky state, and until it is gathered. The parents join them with their second brood, and shortly after, or about the first days of September, they all depart southward.

In the summer of 1829, I accidentally met with a nest of these birds in the State of New Jersey, a few miles only from Philadelphia. I was attracted towards it by the cries of the birds, both of which were perched on a tall hickory tree, standing on a piece of barren ground, near a swamp, well known on account of the visits it receives during the Woodcock season. I looked for the nest for some time in vain. The parents left the tree, flew

about as if much alarmed and distressed, and at last alighted on the ground not far from me. Following them gradually, I saw them go up to one of their young, and on reaching the place, saw the nest in a low bush of the dogwood. In it were two young ones dead, and one alive, covered with large insects. Presently I heard the chirp of a fourth, which I found within a few yards of the place. Concluding that the insects were the cause of all the distress I saw, I destroyed them, and replaced the young birds in the nest, where I left them. Visiting them repeatedly afterwards, I saw them grow apace, until at length they flew off, when I cut the twig, and drew it with the nest, as you now see it in the Plate.

My friend BACHMAN has favoured me with the following remarks, which I have pleasure in recommending to you. "Being desirous of procuring and raising the young of this bird, I made considerable exertions to find a nest. Having found four in the course of one spring, I observed that two of them had been robbed of their eggs before incubation commenced. The young of the third were destroyed by a snake, which I found in the act, and shot from the bush. Those of the fourth escaped until nearly fledged, when going towards them one morning to carry them away, and being within twenty steps of them, I heard them chirping loudly, as if anxious to be fed, when I saw a black snake a few yards before me, with its head raised high above ground, as if listening to their cries. It went in a straight line to the bush, as if following the sound, and before I came up to the place, it had swallowed one, and was trying to escape with another in its mouth. I carried the two remaining home, raised them with great ease, and kept them in an aviary for two years. They proved to be females. On taking them out of the nest, I had with me a trap cage, in which I tried to catch the old ones. They were both very shy, suspicious, and so cautious that the female alone was inclined to enter it, and was secured. When left with her young, she noticed them not, and although I kept her for several years, she never attempted to build a nest. A full-plumaged male purchased in the market, and put in the aviary, mated on the following spring with one of the young females, took possession of the nest of a Cardinal Grosbeak, which they drove off, carefully repaired it, rendered it neat and comfortable, and laid two eggs, which unfortunately were destroyed by the rats. In the aviary these birds are generally silent, and during rain appeared delighted. They clung to the bars, driving all other birds away, as if determined to enjoy the whole pleasure themselves."

The food of this species consists principally of different sorts of seeds. They are fond of those of rice and grass of all kinds during spring and summer. Towards autumn, they now and then throw themselves into the

fields of Guinea corn, the seeds of which they easily break with their strong bills. I never saw them eat fruits or berries.

The song of the Blue Grosbeak is prolonged or rapidly renewed, and resembles that of the Rice-bird (*Dolichonyx oryzivora*), but it seldom sings after the breeding season. Its flight is prolonged, undulating, and rapid, resembling that of the Rose-breasted species. They hop on the ground, where they pick up gravel to mix with their food, and frequently bathe. They are confined to the maritime districts, seldom going more than forty or fifty miles inland.

Individuals are now and then exposed for sale in the markets of the southern cities, where, on account of the difficulty experienced in catching them, they sell for about a dollar the pair.

The young, which has heretofore been represented as the female, does not attain its full plumage until the third year, and in the mean time varies but little from the one represented in the plate. In the course of the second autumn, it shews spots of blue irregularly placed on its back, and the following spring acquires its full beauty. The male and female represented in the same plate are both adult, and in their perfect spring plumage. They retain their colours unimpaired during winter, while in confinement, which is therefore probably the case in the countries to which they resort at that season.

The Blue Grosbeak extends to the Rocky Mountains, on which it has been procured by Mr. TOWNSEND. I found it abundant and breeding in the Texas. In confinement it suffers greatly during the moult. One which is now in my possession in Edinburgh, and which was raised from the nest, obtained its full summer plumage in the month of September, but was about two weeks nearly naked. The feathers of the wings and tail fell gradually off whilst those of the other parts were growing, and in about a fortnight more, when the bird was about one year old, it became of a beautiful blue. This bird frequently sang in the night, and before dawn. It was extremely tame, going out and returning to its cage, generally perched on the head-dress of my wife, or on the heads of other members of the family, alighted on the table, and fed on almost any thing given to it. It is curious that if a gold or silver coin was thrown on the table, while he was near, he went to it, took it up in his bill, and tossed it about apparently with pleasure. After bathing he invariably went to the fire, and perched on the fender, to dry himself. Two or three other birds were put into the cage with him, but were instantly attacked. He now and then held his food in his claws like a Hawk.

Male, $7\frac{1}{2}$, 11.

From Texas to New Jersey, and up the Mississippi to Memphis. Rocky Mountains. Rather rare. Migratory.

BLUE GROSBEEK, *Loxia cerulea*, Wils. Amer. Orn., vol. iii. p. 78.

FRINGILLA CÆRULEA, Bonap. Syn., p. 114.

BLUE GROSBEEK, *Fringilla cerulea*, Nutt. Man., vol. i. p. 529.

BLUE GROSBEEK, *Fringilla cerulea*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. ii. p. 140; vol. v. p. 508.

Adult Male.

Bill rather short, robust, bulging a little at the base, conical, acute; upper mandible with its dorsal outline very slightly convex, as is the lower, both rounded on the sides, the edges acute and 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, body robust. Legs of moderate size; tarsus of the same length as the middle toe, covered anteriorly with a few scutella, the upper long, posteriorly sharp edged; toes scutellate above, free, the lateral ones nearly equal; claws slender, arched, compressed, acute.

Plumage soft, rather compact above, blended beneath. Wings of moderate length, third and fourth primaries longest. Tail rather long, emarginate.

Bill pale greyish-blue beneath and on the edges of the upper mandible, the rest of which is dusky. Iris brown. Feet dusky. The general colour of the plumage is deep purplish-blue. Lore, chin, and a line round the base of the mandibles, black. Quills and larger coverts brownish-black, the primaries edged with blue, the secondary quills, secondary coverts and first row of smaller coverts light reddish-brown. Tail feathers brownish-black, edged with blue, as are the under tail coverts.

Length $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches, extent of wings 11; bill along the ridge $\frac{7}{12}$, along the edge $\frac{10}{12}$; tarsus 1.

Adult Female.

Bill as in the male, but paler. Feet brown. Head and hind part of the back, as in the male; the back, sides of the neck, and fore part of the breast greyish-brown, tinged with dull blue. The rest of the under parts yellowish-grey. The wings are nearly as in the male, but lighter, and the black at the base of the bill is wanting. The dimensions are somewhat less than those of the male.

Young bird fully fledged.

Bill yellowish-grey, dusky above. Feet brown. The general colour is light greenish-brown, the upper part of the head, the back, smaller wing coverts and upper tail coverts tinged with dusky. The wings and tail are as in the female.

Blue Long Grosbeak.

1. Male. 2. Female. 3. Young.

Audubon, John James. 1841. "The Blue Grosbeak , *Coccyborus coeruleus*, Linn. [Pl. 204]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 204–208. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.319317>.

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