

JUVENILE HISTORY

OF

BIRDS.



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JUVENILE HISTORY

OF

BIRDS;

OR THE

POWER AND WISDOM

OF

THE SUPREME BEING

IN THE

Works of Creation,

ATTEMPTED TO BE UNFOLDED TO YOUNG MINDS.



LONDON:

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DEAN AND MUNDAY, 35, THREADNEEDLE-STREET.

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Ann Beacchassop

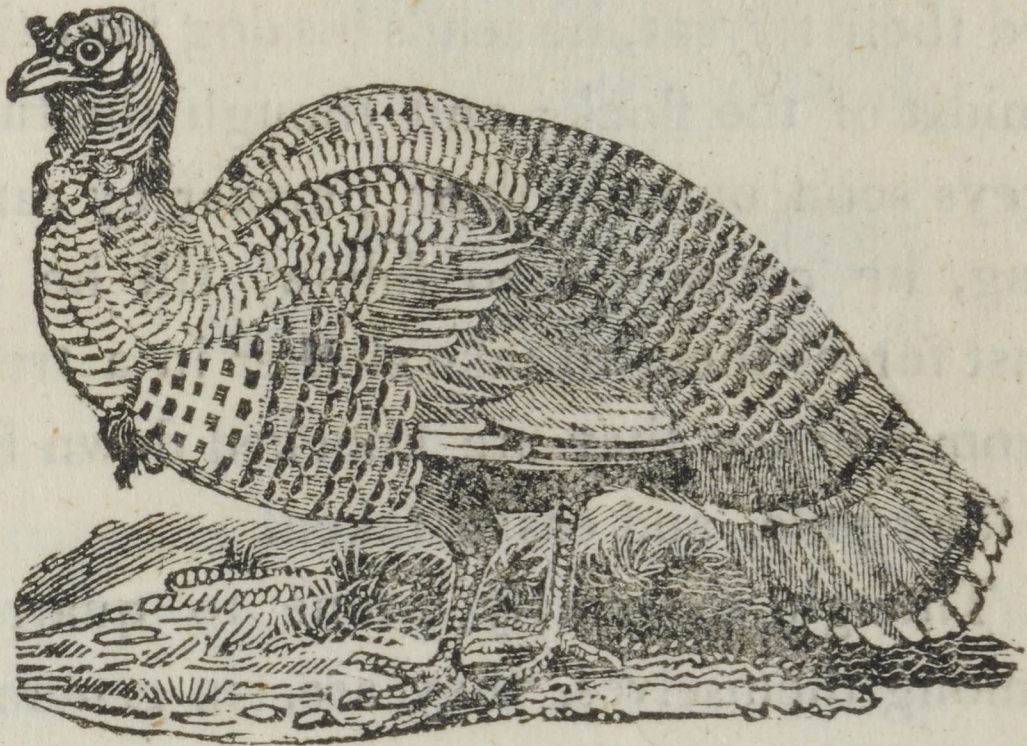
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March 30. 1820

NATURAL HISTORY OF
BIRDS.



THE TURKEY.



THE turkey, when young, is generally considered as one of the tenderest of birds: yet in its wild state it is found in great plenty in the forests of Canada, which are covered with snow above three parts of the year. It is there, also, much larger than in a state of captivity, and its feathers are much more beautiful being of a dark gray, bordered at the edges with a bright gold colour.

The hunting of these birds forms one of the principal diversions of the native Indian, as their flesh contributes to the support of his family. Having discovered their retreat, he sends his dog into the midst of the flock; and though the turkeys soon outstrip their pursuer by running, he continues to follow, till he at last forces them to take shelter in a tree, from whence they are knocked down by a long pole, and easily taken.

Though extremely prone to quarrel among themselves, they are, in general, weak and cowardly against other animals, and are seen to fly from almost every creature that will venture boldly to oppose them.

They are particularly fond of eggs of ants and caterpillars. The female lays about eighteen or twenty eggs, and when her young begin to follow her in search of food, she rather warns them of danger than prepares to defend them.

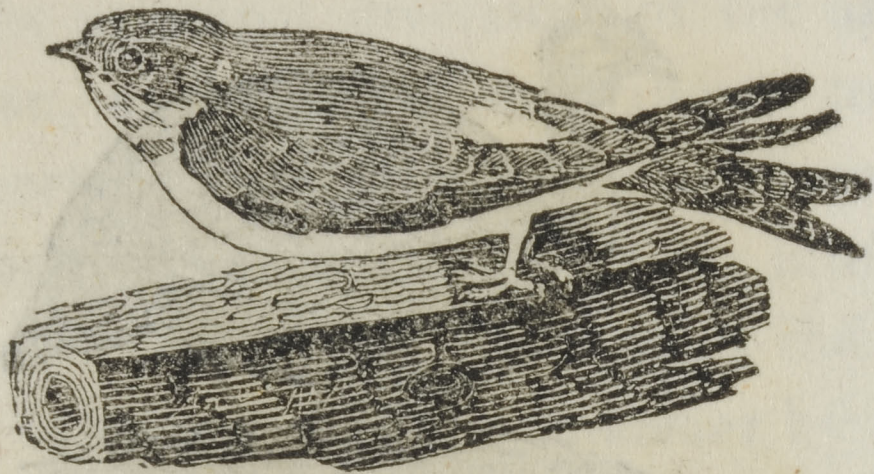
THE GUINEA HEN.



THIS singular bird is about the size of a common hen, but, being supported on longer legs, it looks much larger. The head is covered with a kind of helmet; the back is round; and the tail turned downward, like that of a partridge. The whole plumage is black, or dark gray, diversified with white spots; and the wattles, proceeding from the upper chap, gives it a very peculiar aspect.

In our climate the females lay but five or six eggs in a season; but in their native regions they are far more prolific.

THE MARTIN.



THIS bird is inferior in size to the swallow, and its tail is much less forked. The plumage, however, is nearly the same: the upper part of the body, wings, and tail being black glossed with purple; and the under parts white. These birds sometimes build against the sides of cliffs that overhang the sea; but more frequently under the eaves of houses, and in the corners of windows. The materials of the nest are earth, tempered and mixed with straw, and lined with feathers.

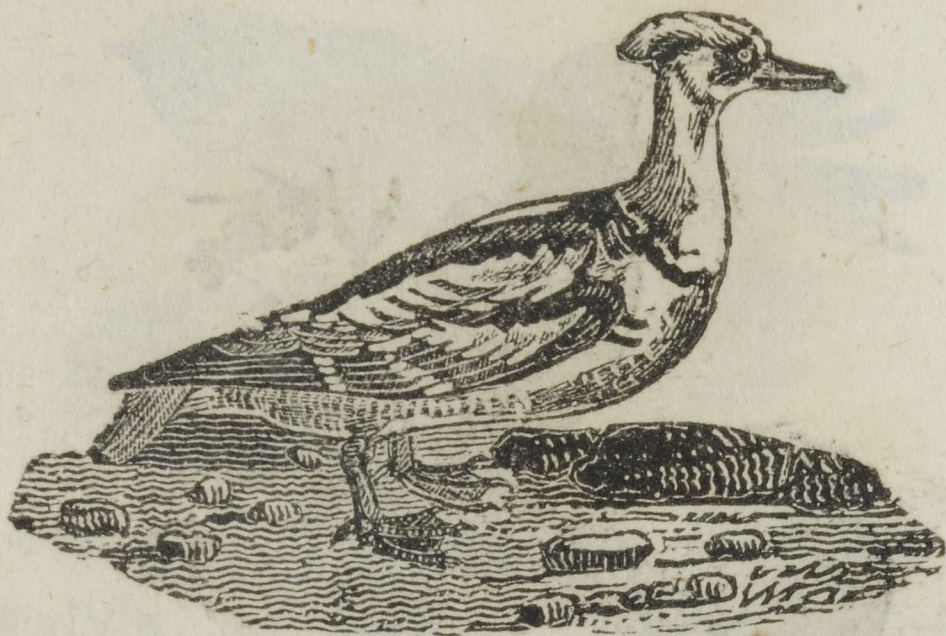
It would be extremely difficult to bring up these birds in a state of confinement, owing to their subsisting entirely upon insects.

THE COCKATOO.



THE cockatoo is a beautiful bird of the parrot kind: its plumage is white, its beak round and crooked, and its head is adorned with a crest of long feathers, which can be erected or lowered at pleasure, and gives the bird a strikingly fine appearance. It is a native of the East Indies, where it is frequently known to build on tops of houses. Like the rest of the parrot kind, it is capable of uttering sea-phrases and sentences, with equal propriety of tone and volubility.

THE SMEW.



THIS bird measures from the point of the bill to the end of the tail near eighteen inches, and weighs about a pound and a half. It has a fine crest upon its head, which falls down towards the back part of it, the back and the wings are of an agreeable mixture of black and white.

The female has no crest; the sides of the head are red, the throat white, the wings of a dusky ash-colour; in other respects it agrees with the male. They feed on fish, but are very rarely seen in England, except in the hard seasons, and then not more than three or four together.

THE EIDER DUCK.



THE eider duck is about twice the size of the common English duck; but more handsome. Its bill is black and cylindrical; the feathers of the forehead and cheeks advance far into the base.

It is principally found in the western isles of Scotland, on the coasts of Norway, Iceland, and Greenland, and in many parts of North America. In Iceland, the eider ducks generally build their nest on small islands not far from the shore; and sometimes even near the dwellings of the natives, who treat them with so much attention and kindness, as to render them nearly tame.

THE FERN OWL.



THIS is a very beautiful bird for colour, and somewhat resembles the cuckoo; it is very easily distinguished from all other birds, by the structure of its bill and feet. Its bill, in proportion to its body, is the least of all birds, and a little crooked. It has a huge wide mouth and a swallow; the under side of the body is painted with black and red.

It frequents rocks, caverns, and ruined buildings, and builds its nest in the most retired places; it lays five eggs, spotted with white and yellow.

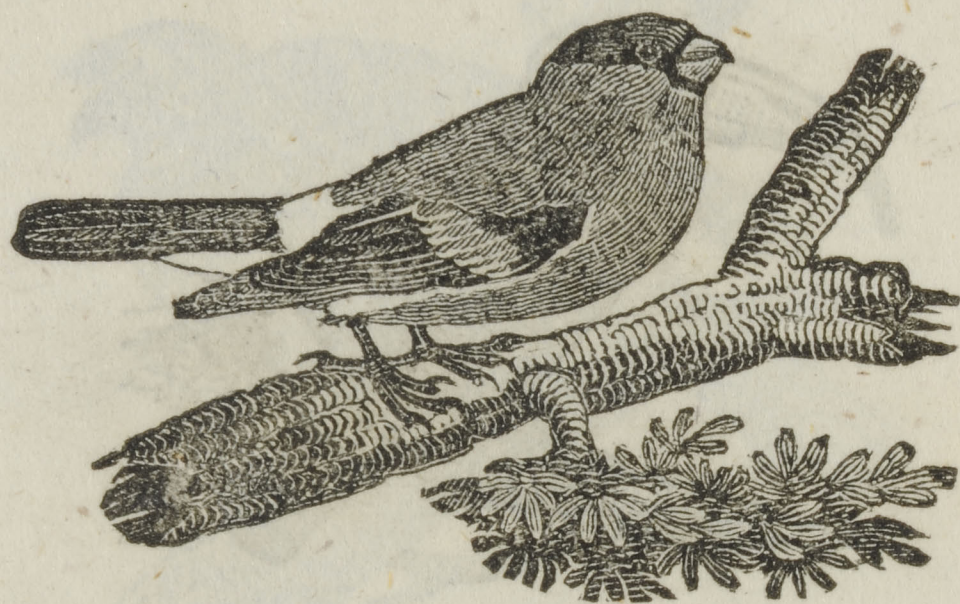
THE TOUCAN.



THIS curious bird is almost twenty inches in length; the bill is six inches long, and near two inches thick. This bird is a native of Guinea and Brazil, and is said to be in great request in South America; both from the delicacy of its flesh, and on account of the beauty of its plumage, particularly the feathers of the breast.

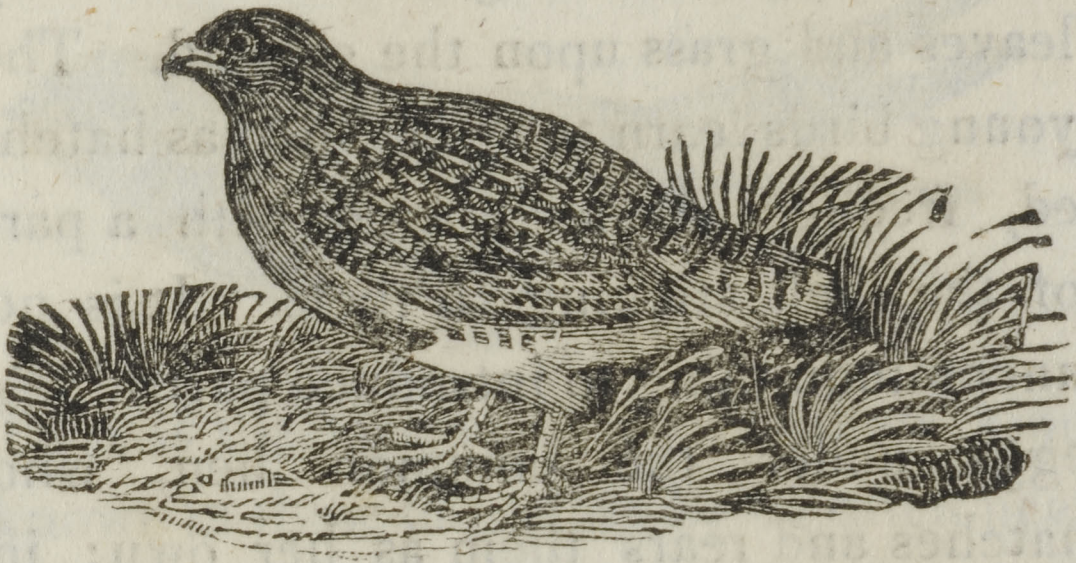
The skin of this part the Indians pluck off, and when dry, glue to their cheeks; they consider this an irresistible addition to their beauty. The female lays two eggs, and it is probable, they have more than one brood in the year. They generally feed on fruits.

THE BLACKCAP.



THIS bird is somewhat about five inches in length, a native of Italy and Spain, and visits us about the middle of April, and retires in September; it frequents gardens, and builds its nest near the ground; it is composed of dried grass, moss, and wool, and lined with feathers. They lay five eggs, and the male and female sit by turns; he likewise procures her food, such as flies, worms, and insects. This bird sings sweetly, and so like the nightingale, that in Norfolk it is called the mock-nightingale. Black-caps feed chiefly on flies and insects, and not unfrequently on ivy and other berries.

THE PARTRIDGE.



THE length of this bird is about thirteen inches; the general color of its plumage is brown and ash, elegantly mixed with black: on the breast there is a crescent of a deep chesnut color; the tail is short; the legs are of a greenish white, and are furnished with a small knob behind: the female has no crescent on the breast, and her colours in general are not so distinct and bright as those of the male. Partridges are found chiefly in temperate climates; the extremes of heat and cold are equally unfavorable to them.

These birds pair early in the spring;

females lay from fourteen to eighteen or twenty eggs, making her nest of dry leaves and grass upon the ground. The young birds learn to run as soon as hatched, frequently encumbered with a part of the shell sticking to them. It is no uncommon thing to introduce partridge's eggs under the common hen, who hatches and rears them as her own; in this case the young birds require to be fed with ants' eggs, which are their favorite food, and without which it is almost impossible to bring them up; they likewise eat insects, and when full grown, feed on all kinds of grain and young plants. The affection of the female for her young, is peculiarly strong and lively; she is greatly assisted in the care of rearing them by her mate: they lead them out in common, call them together, point out to them proper food, and assist them in finding it by scratching the ground with their feet.

THE SWIFT.



THIS is the largest of the swallow kind known in these climates; being often near eighteen inches long, though the entire weight of the bird is not more than an ounce. The whole plumage is of a sooty black, except the throat, which is white: the feet, which are so small, that the actions of walking and rising from the ground seem very difficult, are of a particular structure, all the toes standing forward. It spends more of its time on the wing than any other swallow, and its flight is more rapid. It breeds under the eaves of houses, in steeples, and other lofty buildings; and makes its nest of grass and feathers.

These birds retire from the country

before the middle of August, generally by the tenth, and not a single straggler is to be seen by the twentieth. This early retreat is totally unaccountable, as that time is often the most delightful part of the year.

This is one of those incidents in natural history, which not only baffle our researches, but elude our conjectures; and which none but Him who supports them can resolve.

By the myriads of insects which every kind of swallows destroy, in the course of a summer, they defend us in a great measure from the personal and domestic annoyance of flies and gnats; and what is of infinitely more consequence, they keep down the number of our minute enemies, who either in the grub or winged state, would otherwise prey on the labours of our husbandmen, so that every person who destroy swallows or martins, do a real injury to society.

INDIAN BEE-EATER.



THE Indian bee-eater is about the size of a common blackbird, and has a bill near two inches long; the eyes is a fine red; a black stroke is extended on each side of the head, which begins at the corners of the mouth, and passes beyond the eyes, and is altogether a most beautiful bird. They principally feed on bees, beetles, grasshoppers, and other insects: they build in hollow places or caverns, three or four cubits deep, and lay six or seven eggs.

THE STORMY PETRIL.



THE stormy petril is not larger than a swallow; and its color is entirely black, except the coverts of the tail, the tail itself, and the vent feathers, which are white. Its legs are long and slender.

It is found in most seas, and frequently at a vast distance from the land, where it braves the utmost fury of the storm, sometimes skimming along the hollows of the waves, and sometimes over them. It is an excellent diver, and often follows vessels in great flocks, to pick up any thing that is thrown overboard; but its appearance is always looked upon by the sailors as a sure presage of stormy weather in a few hours.

THE HUMMING-BIRD.



OF this curious little bird there are six or seven varieties, from the size of a small wren down to that of a humble-bee. The smallest humming-bird is about the size of a hazel-nut. The feathers on its wings and tail are black; but those on its body and under its wings, are of a greenish brown, with a fine red gloss, which no silk or velvet can imitate.

The bill is black and slender, and the head is adorned with a small crest, which sparkles in the sun, like a little star in the middle of the forehead; the head is small, with little round eyes, as black as jet.

In the West Indies and South America

as soon as the sun is risen, the humming birds of different kinds are seen fluttering about the flowers, without ever alighting upon them: their wings are in such rapid motion, visiting flower after flower, and extracting its nectar, as with a kiss, while the motion of their wings produces a humming sound, which first gave rise to their name.

The nests of these birds, which are about the size of a hen's egg cut in two, are not less curious than the rest: they are suspended in the air, at the point of the twigs of an orange, a pomegranate, or a citron-tree; and are composed of cotton, fine moss, and the fibres of vegetables. The female lays two eggs about the size of small peas, and as white as snow, with here and there a yellow speck; and at the end of twelve days the young ones appear; these are at first bare, but get gradually covered with down, and at last with feathers.

THE QUAIL.



THIS bird is not much above half the size of a partridge. The feathers on the head are black, edged with rusty brown; the breast is of a yellowish red, spotted with black; and the plumage on the back is marked with lines of pale yellow. Its form is exactly that of the partridge; and it resembles the generality of the poultry kind in its nature and habits.

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