

THE GROUND HEMLOCK.

TAXUS CANADENSIS, *Willd.*, Sp. Pl., vol. iv. p. 856. *Pursch*, Flor. Amer. Sept., vol. ii. p. 647.—DIECIA MONADELPHIA.—CONIFERÆ, *Juss.*

The *ground hemlock*, or *Canadian yew*, is abundant on the declivities of the mountains from Maryland to Maine. It is a low tree, or rather bush, often almost prostrate, and frequently hanging from the rocks. The leaves are linear, distichous, revolute at the margin. The berries, which are oblong or globular, and of a pale red colour, are eatable.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK.

+COCCOBORUS MELANOCEPHALUS, *Swains.*

PLATE CCVI.—MALE AND FEMALE.

The following account of this Grosbeak affords another proof of the ardent zeal of my excellent friend THOMAS NUTTALL, who, though more especially engaged with botany on his recent journey to the Columbia, has not neglected opportunities of noting many interesting facts relative to birds.

“On the central table-land of the Rocky Mountains, and on the upper branches of the Colorado of the west, we first heard the powerful song of this most delightful Finch. From thence, in the thick groves of all the streams on our western course to the borders of the Columbia, and throughout the dense forests of that river nearly to the sea, we were frequently cheered amidst the wildest desolation by the inimitable voice of this melodious bird. Jealous of all intrusion on his lonely and wild haunts, it was seldom that we had the opportunity of witnessing this almost fairy musician, which gave a charm to the saddest gloom, and made the very woods as it were re-echo to his untiring song. With the modesty of superior merit, and almost with the solicitude of the Nightingale, our favourite Finch seeks the darkest thicket of the deepest forest. The moment his eye rests on the intruding observer he flits off in haste, calls to his mate, and plunging into the thicket sits in silence till he is satisfied of the restoration of solitude, when he again cautiously mounts the twig and pours out afresh the oft-told



R.S.

Black-headed Long-Grosbeak.

1. Males 2 Female.

but never-tiring tale of his affection and devotion to the joys of nature. His song, which greatly resembles that of the Red-breasted Grosbeak, is heard at early dawn, and at intervals nearly to the close of night. It is a loud, varied, high-toned and melodious fife, which rises and falls in the sweetest cadence; but always, like the song of the Nightingale, leaves a sensation of pleasing sadness on the ear, which fascinates more powerfully than the most cheering hilarity. In fact, the closing note of our bird is often so querulous as to appear like the shrill cry of appealing distress; it sinks at last so faintly, yet still so charmingly on the sense. When seen, which is only by accident, he sits conspicuously on some lofty bough, below the summit of the tree, and raising his head, and swelling his throat with a rising motion, almost amounting to a flutter, he appears truly rapt in ecstasy, and seems to enjoy his own powers of melody as much as the listener. Even the cruel naturalist, ever eager to add another trophy to his favourite science, feels arrested by his appeal, and connives at his escape from the clutch of the collector.

"About the month of July, in the Rocky Mountains, I observed the female feeding her fledged young, and they also spent the summer in the thickest branches, but with the nest and eggs I am unacquainted. The song, as I have heard it, in the forests of Columbia, seems to be like the syllables, 'tait, weet, teet, weowit, teet weowit, teet weowit, verr, and sometimes terminating *weet, weet, weet*, every note a loud tender trill of the utmost sweetness, delivered in his own "wood-notes wild," mocking nothing, but still exulting in his powers, which, while exerted, seem to silence every songster around. The Robin seems almost his pupil in song and similarity of expression, but falls short, and after our Orpheus, seems at best but a faltering scholar."

Male, $8\frac{1}{2}$, wing, $4\frac{1}{4}$.

Central table-land of Rocky Mountains. Common. Migratory.

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK, *Fringilla melanocephala*, Aud. Orn. Biog., vol. iv. p. 519.
 GUIRACA MELANOCEPHALA, Swainson.

Adult Male.

Bill rather short, very robust, bulging at the base, conical, acute; upper mandible with its dorsal outline a little convex, the sides rounded, the edges sharp, ascending from the base to beyond the nostrils, then deflected with a slight median festoon, and an obscure notch close to the tip; lower mandible with the angle short and very broad, the dorsal line straight, the back very broad at the base, the sides high and convex, the edges inflected, the tip acute. Nostrils basal, roundish, partly concealed by the feathers.

Head large, roundish-ovate; neck short; body rather full. Legs of mode-

rate length, rather strong; tarsus anteriorly covered with seven scutella, posteriorly with two plates forming a sharp edge; toes rather large, the first stout, the lateral nearly equal, the middle toe much longer. Claws rather long, arched, much compressed, acute.

Plumage soft and blended. Wings of moderate length, broad. The first quill two-twelfths shorter than the second, which is longest, but scarcely exceeds the third, the fourth longer than the first; secondaries slightly emarginate. Tail rather long, nearly even.

Bill with the upper mandible dusky, the lower white. Iris hazel. Feet and claws wood-brown. Head, cheeks, and a small portion of the throat black; the upper parts brownish-black; the feathers on the lower part of the hind neck all round, a streak over each eye, another along the middle of the hind head, the greater part of the rump, and the lower parts generally, yellowish-red or brownish-orange; the edges of some of the feathers on the back, a broad band formed by the first row of small coverts, a narrow band formed by the tips of the secondary coverts, a band on the base of the primaries, the outer web of the first excepted, the margins of three of the primaries toward the end, and a spot on the outer web of most of the secondaries at the end; a large patch on the inner web of all the tail-feathers, excepting the two middle, and largest on the outer, pure white; the middle of the breast and abdomen, with the axillaries and lower wing-coverts, yellow.

Length to end of tail $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches; wing from flexure $4\frac{1}{4}$; tail $3\frac{8}{12}$; bill along the ridge $\frac{9}{12}$, along the edge of lower mandible $\frac{10}{12}$; tarsus $\frac{11}{12}$; hind toe $\frac{4\frac{1}{2}}{12}$, its claw $\frac{5}{12}$; middle toe $\frac{8}{12}$, its claw $\frac{3\frac{1}{2}}{12}$.

Adult Female.

The female is much less beautiful. The bill is of a lighter brown above, brownish-white beneath, with the edges and tip of the lower mandible light brown; the feet and claws wood-brown. The upper parts are wood-brown, the head darker, with three longitudinal bands of brownish-white; a band of reddish-white across the hind neck, the feathers of the back margined with whitish; the wings marked as in the male, but with brownish-white; the tail without white spots. The lower parts are of a much paler tint than those of the male; the axillars and lower wing-coverts yellow.

Length to end of tail $8\frac{1}{4}$ inches; bill along the ridge $\frac{9}{12}$; tarsus $\frac{11}{12}$; middle toe and claw $1\frac{3}{12}$.



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Black-headed Long-bills.

1. Males 2 Female.



Audubon, John James. 1841. "Black-Headed Grosbeak, Coccochorus melanocephalus, Swains. [Pl. 206]." *The birds of America : from drawings made in the United States and their territories* 3, 214–216.

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