

PICUS ERYTHROCEPHALUS, (Linn.)—THE RED-HEADED WOODPECKER.

SPECIFIC CHARACTERS.—*Head and neck bright crimson, that colour descending on the foreneck, and margined with a semilunar band of black; back, wings, and tail, glossy bluish black; inner secondaries, rump, and lower parts, pure white; young, with the head and neck brownish grey, streaked with dusky, edged with grey; secondary quills, yellowish white, barred with black; lower parts, greyish white; the sides, streaked with dusky. Male, 9, 17; Female, 8½. Audubon's Synopsis, page 184. The specific name is from the Greek, (Erythraios,) red; and (Kephale,) the head. Breeds from Texas to Nova Scotia, and throughout the British Provinces.*

The Red-headed Woodpecker—the most common and the most observed of all the tribe in North America, subsists partly upon insects and in part upon vegetable food. Wild cherries, apples, Indian corn, and various kinds of berries constitute a portion of his food while they are in their season, and in making his selections he is known to exercise the taste and judgement of a connoisseur. The Indian corn is taken in its rich succulent milky state; and in the orchard, if you wish to find the earliest and sweetest apples, you have only to approach those trees on or near which our red-headed friend may be seen loitering. “Though this bird (says Wilson,) occasionally regales himself upon fruit, yet his natural and most useful food is insects, particularly those numerous and destructive species that penetrate the bark and body of the tree to deposit their eggs and larvæ, the latter of which are well known to make immense havock. That insects are his natural food, is evident from his wedge-formed bill, the length, elasticity, and figure of his tongue, and the strength and position of his claws, as well as from his usual habits. In fact, insects form at least two-thirds of his subsistence, and his stomach is scarcely ever found without them. He searches for them with a dexterity and intelligence, I may safely say more than human; he perceives by the exterior appearance of the bark where they lurk below; when he is dubious, he rattles vehemently on the outside with his bill, and his acute ear distinguishes the terrified vermin shrinking within to their inmost retreats, where his pointed and barbed tongue soon reaches them. The masses of bugs, caterpillars, and other larvæ, which I have taken from the stomachs of these birds have often surprised me. These larvæ, it should be remembered, feed not only on the buds, leaves and blossoms, but also on the very vegetable life of the tree—the alburnum, or newly forming bark and wood; the consequence is, that the whole branches and whole trees decay under the silent ravages of these destructive vermin. Will any one say, that taking half a dozen or half a hundred apples from a tree is equally ruinous with cutting it down? or that the services of a useful animal should not be rewarded with a small portion of that which it has contributed to preserve? We are told in the benevolent language of the scriptures, not to muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn, and why should not the same