

SQUACCO HERON.

Ardea comata, Pallas.

Le Heron crabier.

THE Squacco Heron is one of those birds whose occasional visits have procured for it a place in the Fauna of Great Britain. We are in possession of several facts relative to its capture in different parts of England, but more particularly Norfolk and Lincolnshire, and within the last few years we know of more than one killed in the marshy districts surrounding Great Yarmouth ; in addition to which Dr. Latham mentions two or three instances of its capture, one in Wiltshire by Mr. Lambert, and another which became entangled in a fisherman's net, whilst it was spread for drying, at Ormsby in Norfolk. The native locality, however, of this beautiful species appears to be along the western confines of Asia, extending into Turkey, the Islands of the Archipelago, and Italy, where it inhabits the banks of stagnant waters, morasses, the sides of rivers, and the low lands on the sea shore ; it also visits some parts of Germany, Switzerland and France, but has never we believe been known to extend its migrations to the more northern regions of Europe.

The total length of the present species is about sixteen inches. The top of the head is ornamented with long yellowish feathers having marginal stripes of brown ; these feathers become much more elongated at the occiput, whence spring seven or eight long slender flowing plumes of a yellowish white edged with black ; throat white ; neck, back, and the long filamentous feathers which rise from it, of a tawny yellow ; these feathers, however, sometimes assume a vinous tinge ; beak azure-blue at the base, passing through greenish white, to its tip which is black ; the naked skin around the eyes and the feet of a greenish olive ; irides fine light yellow.

The adult males and females differ but little.

In the young, the upper parts of the body and the scapulars are tinged with brown more or less decided ; the beak and legs are not so brilliant in their colouring, but more inclined to a dull yellowish olive ; nor do they assume the long occipital plumes or the lengthened feathers which ornament the head and back of old birds in their perfect livery, until they are more than two years old.

According to M. Temminck the nest is built in trees ; but nothing is known respecting the colour or number of its eggs.

It subsists on small fish, frogs, marine insects, and mollusca.

We have figured a male in its full plumage, somewhat less than the natural size.