

PROCELLARIA GLACIALIS, Linn.

Fulmar.

Procellaria glacialis, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 51.

Fulmaris glacialis, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 234, pl. 27.

Procellaria hiemalis, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 800.

Rhantistes glacialis, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 105.

PENNANT remarks that no bird is of so much use to the islanders of St. Kilda as the Fulmar Petrel; for it supplies oil for their lamps, down for their beds, a delicacy for their tables, a balm for their wounds, and a medicine for their distempers. Besides being abundant in this great nursery, the Fulmar occasionally occurs all round the coasts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as well as the seas of the Arctic regions generally, especially those of Hudson's Bay, Davis's Straits, and Baffin's Bay. It is also to be found in Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Spitsbergen, Greenland, and Norway, and occasionally on the coasts of Holland and France; and Audubon states that it extends along the eastern side of America as far south as Long Island. To me, the most interesting account of the bird and its habits, the manner of its capture, and the uses to which it is applied by the St.-Kildians is that furnished by Mr. John Macgillivray to his father, from actual inspection, in 1840, a part of which I take the liberty of transcribing.

"St. Kilda has long been noted as the only breeding-place in Britain of the Fulmar Petrel. It exists there in almost incredible numbers, and to the natives is by far the most important of the productions of the island. It forms one of the principal means of support to the inhabitants, who daily risk their lives in its pursuit. The Fulmar breeds on the face of the highest precipices, and only on such as are furnished with small grassy shelves, every spot on which, above a few inches in extent, is occupied by one or more of its nests. The nest is formed of herbage, seldom bulky, generally a mere shallow excavation in the turf, lined with dried grass and the withered tufts of the sea-pink, in which the bird deposits a single egg, of a pure white when clean, which is seldom the case, and varying in size from 2 inches 7 lines to 3 inches 1½ line in length, and 1 inch 11 lines to 2 inches in breadth. On the 30th of June (having partially descended a nearly perpendicular precipice 600 feet in height, the whole face of which was covered with the nests of the Fulmar) I enjoyed an opportunity of observing the habits of this bird, which has fallen to the lot of few of those who have described them as if from personal observation. The nests had all been robbed about a month before by the natives, who esteem the egg of this species above all others—those of the Auk, Guillemot, Kittiwake, and Puffin ranking next, and the Gannet, Scart, and Cormorant last of all. Many of the nests contained each a young bird, a day or two old at furthest, thickly covered with long white down. They were very clamorous on being handled, and vomited a quantity of clear oil, with which I sometimes observed the parent birds feeding them by disgorging it. The Fulmar is stated, in most works of ornithology, to possess the power of ejecting oil with much force through its tubular nostrils, as a means of defence; but although I surprised several upon the nest, I never observed them to do so. On being seized they instantly vomit a quantity of clear amber-coloured oil, which imparts to the whole bird, its nest and young, and even the very rock it frequents, a peculiar and very disagreeable odour. Fulmar oil is amongst the most valuable productions of St. Kilda, and is procured of two kinds by different processes. The best is obtained from the old bird by surprising it at night upon the rock, and tightly closing the bill until the fowler has secured the bird between his knees with the head downwards. By opening the bill the Fulmar is allowed to disgorge about a table-spoonfull of the oil into the dried gullet and stomach of the Solan Goose, used as a reservoir for that purpose. These, when filled, are secured with a string, and hung on cords across the interior of the huts until required for use. The oil thus procured and preserved, besides supplying their lamps, is used by the inhabitants as a medicine, being sometimes of considerable efficacy in chronic rheumatism, and acting as a cathartic; while, from its nauseous taste and smell, it would doubtless prove an effectual emetic also to any but a St.-Kildian. In the beginning of August the natives descend the rocks for the young Fulmars, which are then nearly fledged, and, by boiling with water, in proper vessels, are made to furnish a large quantity of fat, which is skimmed off, and preserved in casks in the solid form. The old Fulmar is much esteemed as food by the St.-Kildians, principally on account of its subcutaneous covering of fat, a substance of which they are immoderately fond.

"The Fulmar flies with great buoyancy and considerable rapidity, and when at sea is generally seen skimming along the surface of the waves at a slight elevation, though I never observed one to alight on or pick up any thing from the water. Several which I dissected had the stomach filled with pure oil, mixed up with the indigestible horny mandibles of some of the Sepiadæ, which, we may conclude, form their principal food. It is partially a nocturnal bird; for I seldom observed it at any distance from St. Kilda,