

is nothing more than a few pieces of dried hay, laid in a hole scratched in the ground, always in the vicinity of water. I never saw one on a real snow-fell. Although the bird lives in colonies, you do not find the nests close together. None breed close to Quickiock; but on the fells about thirty miles westward they do in great numbers. No birds are more tame or fearless during the time they have eggs; for they come sailing close over your head when searching for the nest, performing the most beautiful aerial gyrations, during which their long sharp wings and pointed tail give them a singular and pretty appearance. Their cry is a loud dismal shriek, '*i-i-i-ah, je-ah, je-oh, je-oh*,' and may be heard day and night over their breeding-place. As soon as the young are hatched off, their nature seems to be entirely changed; they never approach within gunshot, and wisely do not betray the proximity of the young (who always manage to hide themselves very cleverly) by any gestures of anxiety. Of all the specimens I have examined, in one alone did I ever find the remains of a Fell Lemming, and in only one other the remains of a mouse. Their principal food appears to be the common crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), a large beetle, and small crustacea. I never found anything, except crowberries, in the stomachs of the young ones. The Laps have an idea that they will kill and eat the young Ptarmigan. I have certainly seen this Skua chase an old Ptarmigan; but this seemed to be from mere wantonness rather than anything else. I could scarcely distinguish the male from the female by the plumage. In one example the long middle tail-feathers measured 13 inches, and extended 9 inches beyond the rest. Much confusion has existed respecting the different members of this genus. Few birds are subject to so many changes of plumage, owing to age and the different shades which appear at the same season of the year.

"The young much resemble the young of the Common Skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*); the tail is perfectly even, no one feather being longer than the others. On carefully comparing the eggs of Buffon's Skua with those of Richardson's Skua, I could see no very apparent difference in the size. The former may perhaps be a trifle smaller than the latter, but they vary in this respect; for I have seen them quite as large, while from one nest I took two eggs which were at least one-third smaller than any I had before seen. I noticed also that the egg of Buffon's Skua is thicker and blunter at the larger end than the other. The colour is much the same in both, and is subject to the same variations."

It is not to be supposed that the inland wastes, above referred to, are frequented at any other time than the breeding-season. The important duty of incubation accomplished, the bird in a few hours, if so disposed, can fly to the neighbouring seas in search of victims, from whose labours it may obtain its chief if not its only subsistence: not always industrious enough to fish for itself, the Long-tailed Skua gives chase to Gulls, Terns, or any other bird that may have been successful in fishing; these it buffets and persecutes until, in order to lighten themselves, and by flying faster gain the chance of escaping, they disgorge the contents of their stomach, which is immediately and adroitly seized before it reaches the water or land as the case may be; this end attained, the parasite ceases the persecution until the craving of hunger again prompts him to single out another victim and do the like. Scenes like these may frequently be witnessed in all the seas from Iceland to the Mediterranean; for wherever Gulls and Terns abound, there also will their tormentor be found.

The young of the year are blackish brown, each feather of the back being bordered with yellowish, more or less tinged with brown; abdomen brown, streaked with dull white; lower tail-coverts streaked with brown and ochre; wings and tail blackish brown; base of the bill ochreous; tarsi, hind toes and claws, and the base of the interdigital membranes dull yellowish; feathers of the tail rounded, the middle ones not projecting.

The figures in the accompanying Plate were taken from two specimens killed, on the 10th and 12th of June respectively, on their breeding-fells at Quickiock in Norway. I, for one, and most other ornithologists have believed that the style of plumage there represented, when once assumed, is retained ever after; but I have now some reason to think otherwise—that, as is the case with the Divers and other water-birds, it is merely a summer dress, and that after the birds have done breeding they are rayed with brown and white after the manner of, but more conspicuously than in the immature state. Besides other examples I have seen, Mr. Bond has a Cornish-killed specimen bearing out these remarks. It remains to be proved whether or not my opinion be correct; if so, the same law will govern other species of the genus. I may further remark that I have reason to believe that our islands are occasionally visited by another bird of this form, rather larger than the *S. parasiticus*, which has not yet been described, although perhaps it is the one noticed by Mr. Coues in his investigation of the genus in the 'Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia' for 1863.