

scarcely perceptible undulations. When approaching a bird at full speed, it flies directly forward with frequent flaps; in pursuit it turns, ascends, falls, and glides with the most elegant motions. The pirate can neither dive nor plunge; but it swims with ease, and sits lightly on the water. It seldom fails in catching the fish that has been dropped; yet this sometimes happens, and I have seen it pick it up after it had fallen on the water, although at other times it did not attempt to obtain it, possibly because it had sunk beyond its depth. The pirate cannot be said to live without labour; for the trouble of compelling its unwilling vassals to disgorge is apparently greater than what would abundantly supply it with honestly obtained food."

The late Mr. Dunn, speaking of the bird as seen by him in Orkney and Shetland, about 1832, states that it appears there regularly in May, and leaves in August. The place where he "found it most numerous in the former country was the Holm of Eddy; and in the latter, on the island of Noss, near Lerwick. It constructs its nest on low, wet, mossy heaths in exposed situations. The female lays two eggs, and has recourse to the same stratagem that the Plover employs to decoy you from the nest, but, when a person approaches the place where the nest is deposited, becomes bold and fierce, and strikes severely with the feet and bill. A dog I had with me on my first visit had been so repeatedly and severely struck by this bird, that when he heard one cry he would instantly come behind me for protection; and all my efforts to make him hunt again were ineffectual until we had got some distance from the place. Another dog, possessing more courage than the former, after feeling the effects of their bills once or twice, and appearing much astonished at such a foe, would watch the bird pouncing at him, and spring from the ground to meet the attack, and by this means escaped many severe blows."

In some notes recently transmitted to me by Mr. J. H. Dunn, he says, "There is only one place in Orkney where the bird now breeds; and that is the island of Hoy. The proprietor allows no one to land with a gun. I have been there myself; but I found only a small number, and in a few years there will probably be none on any of our other islands. The hills on Pomona, or the mainland of Orkney, are now all divided; so that every man knows his own, and where he can make improvements and bring the ground under cultivation—a process which is gradually proceeding, and which, of course, tends to diminish the numbers of such birds as the Arctic Skua."

Mr. Newton informs us that in Iceland this bird is "common enough throughout the island; for it occasionally occurs, and even breeds, on the moors far inland. According to Faber, it arrives about the 25th of April, and remains until the middle of September."

We learn from Mr. Hewitson, that in Norway the Arctic Skuas breed mostly apart from each other, each pair taking possession of a separate island, upon the highest point of nearly all of which they are constantly to be seen perched, and upon it they usually lay their eggs, sometimes, however, choosing the lower grounds. Here also they are the persecutors of the other species of sea-birds, even sucking the eggs of those who may have left them uncovered.

The nest is usually made of dry grasses and mosses, and placed upon a slight but dry eminence. The eggs are commonly two in number, of an olive-brown, spotted with dark brown, and are about two inches and eight lines in length by one inch and eight lines in breadth. But Macgillivray states that they "differ greatly in size, form, and colours, the ground-colour being brownish green, olivaceous, umber-brown, light yellowish brown, pale yellowish grey, or light greyish green, spotted and patched with umber or blackish brown and purplish grey.

The normal plumage of the Arctic Skua is doubtless that represented by the hinder figure in the accompanying Plate, in which, as will be seen, the under surface is white. The common variety is that shown by the figure in which the plumage is of uniform tint, except the ear-coverts and the lengthened feathers on the sides of the neck, which are buff. In the young state, or the plumage of the first autumn, the under part of the body is rayed with markings of white and brown, and on the upper the feathers are margined with buff. At this age the tarsi are bluish, and the toes are dark. The nestling-plumage, again, differs; for the chick is clothed in a hairy down of a uniform sooty black, and has the bill very light bluish horn-colour, darkest on the culmen from the nostril to the point; irides bluish black; legs and toes light slaty blue, tinged with purple, which is darkest at the joints; web slight stone-colour, with a tinge of blue near the toes.

The figures are of the natural size.