

HYDROCHELIDON LEUCOPAREIA.

Whiskered Tern.

- Sterna hybrida*, Pall. Zoog. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 338.
—— *leucopareia*, Natt., Temm. Man. d'Orn., 1820, tom. ii. p. 746.
—— *Delamotta*, Vieill. Ency. Méth. Orn., part i. p. 350.
Viralva indica, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. p. 171.
—— *leucopareia*, Steph. ibid., vol. xiii. p. 169.
Pelodes leucopareia, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 107.
Hydrochelidon leucopareia, Boie.
—— *hybrida*, G. R. Gray, Gen. of Birds, vol. iii. p. 660, *Hydrochelidon*, sp. 1.

WHY Pallas should have named this well-defined species *hybrida* I am at a loss to imagine; I must therefore dissent from those of my contemporaries who persist in perpetuating, on the score of priority, such a misnomer; surely the laws of nomenclature are not so rigid as to demand that an appellation so singularly inappropriate shall not give place to the better one of *leucopareia*, applied to the bird by the late John Natterer, and which, like my friend Schlegel and some other scientific writers, I adopt. It is true that the bird possesses certain characters which would seem to unite *Hydrochelidon* to *Sterna*; but these relate to colour rather than to structure; a moment's glance at its feet will show its true position; and on investigation it will be found that its entire actions and economy assimilate to those of the Marsh- rather than to those of the Sea-Terns.

The characters by which it is most nearly allied to the members of the genus *Sterna* are the possession of a black cap in summer, a portion of which disappears in winter, and the whiteness of the face; the under surface is suffused with bluish black during the summer months, a style of colouring common to all the Marsh-Terns; these peculiarities in its colouring are of much interest as proving the Whiskered Tern to be distinct from both *Hydrochelidon nigra* and *H. leucoptera*.

The *Hydrochelidon leucopareia* is justly entitled to a place in our avifauna; for it has been several times killed in our island, both in its youthful light and in its mature black livery; one in the former state was obtained at Scilly, while the specimen which, through Dr. Heysham's instrumentality, came into the possession of Mr. Yarrell, another obtained in Ireland, and a third kindly sent to me by Mr. Gatcombe, are in the latter dress. The British Islands are not, and never have been, one of the true homes of the bird; those homes lie far south and east of them, for they are the fluviatile marshes and inland waters of the countries bordering the Mediterranean, in Hungary, and in the Crimea. The bird appears in Malta in spring and autumn, but, according to Wright, is not common. The individuals that are then seen are doubtless on their passage to and from Algeria to Southern Europe. It frequents all the great lakes and swamps of North Africa, and is probably common in all parts of that country and thence eastward to the Nile, in Persia, India, and China. The Rev. Mr. Tristram, speaking of the bird as seen by him in North Africa, under the name of *Sterna hybrida*, says:—"Hundreds of lovely Terns were hovering about or dipping headlong into the dark still water of Lake Halloula. I shot several, and found most of them to be the Whiskered Tern (*Sterna hybrida*); but mingled with them were many of the Black and Lesser Terns (*S. nigra* and *S. minuta*). *Sterna hybrida* is easily distinguished by its note, which is less shrill and more rapidly repeated than that of *S. nigra*; but in general appearance it very closely resembles the *S. arctica*, so familiar on our own Northumbrian coasts, with its lake-red bill and feet and its black head. Searching for the nesting-place of the Terns, I was surprised to find the whole colony of Whiskered Terns (*S. hybrida*) breeding in the nests of Eared Grebes, and that apparently without having at all repaired the nests, which could have been only a few days evacuated by their constructors, as we saw hundreds of young Eared Grebes paddling about and living in the open air with their parents. My series of eggs of *S. hybrida* shows a decided tendency to pale green as the ground-colour, and a type clearly distinguishable from that of any other Tern, though somewhat approaching the character of *S. leucoptera*, which, however, are much smaller, and only exceptionally of a greenish ground. The markings are nearly as large as in the eggs of the Common Tern. A favourite food with these birds appeared to be a large hairy caterpillar, which covered the neighbouring marshes at this time in thousands. They were also plunging into the lake in quest of the frogs and newts with which it abounds."—*Ibis*, 1860, pp. 157, 164.

Lord Lilford informs us, in his paper "On the Birds observed in the Ionian Islands," &c., published in the same volume of the 'Ibis,' that the "Whiskered Tern (*Sterna leucopareia*) is common in winter at Butrinto, and breeds in the marshes of Durazzo" (p. 357).

Speaking of the bird under the name of *Hydrochelidon indica*, Mr. Jerdon says:—"This Tern is