

cerned," says Dr. Macdougall, "by the comparative shortness of wing, whiteness of plumage, and by the elegance and comparative slowness of motion, sweeping along, or resting in the air almost immovable, like some species of hawks, and from the size being considerably less than that of *Sterna hirundo*." Mr. Selby remarks that "it is easily to be distinguished when on wing from all the other species, its flight being peculiarly buoyant, and sustained by a slower stroke of the pinions. The length of the tail is also characteristic; and its cry is different in expression, resembling the word *crake* in a key not unlike that of the landrail."

On the 11th of June, 1827, Mr. Thompson and a friend visited one of the three Copeland Islands, outside the southern entrance of Belfast Lough,—a low flat rocky islet with short pasture affording food to cattle, a chosen breeding-place of the Terns, and which, from these birds or gulls having formerly frequented it, is called Mew Island. "Immense numbers of Terns," says he, "were flying around us, uttering their wild cry as we passed between the Mew and Lighthouse Islands, and it was extremely interesting to observe their evolutions. Poised in the air, with their wings merely wafting or beating to maintain their position, they looked out keenly for their finny prey, which being perceived their wings were drawn quick as thought close to the body, and, like an arrow from a bow, they shot from such a height into the water, within a few yards of us, as to be wholly immersed—or more rarely obtained their prey at the expense of a partial ducking. Landing on the Mew Island, we found a number of their nests, containing generally three eggs, deposited either on the surface of the dried *Zostera marina*, which had been drifted on the island, or on the bare sand between the ledges of the rocks. One or both of each pair seemed to keep fishing within sight of their nest; for although we did not see any birds sitting on the eggs, they instantly and hurriedly made their appearance overhead on our near approach to their treasures, uttering their hoarse jarring cry, and continuing to fly about with great anxiety and consternation. After firing for some time at all the birds that came within shot, and having killed thirteen, we ceased, and found that, of these, two were Roseate, three Common, and eight Arctic Terns. On the 13th of June, 1832, the Mew Island was again visited; and by shooting a few indiscriminately, we procured one Roseate, one Common, and eight Arctic species. I could distinguish the Roseate when on the wing from the other two by its colour and by its note, which, as observed by Mr. Selby, resembles the word *crake* uttered in a hoarse grating key. Its flight is still more graceful and buoyant than that of the other species. When 'it sails upon the bosom of the air,' the tail is borne so as to appear pointed; but it is generally widely spread when the nest is approached and the bird swoops towards the intruder in anger." On the 24th of June, 1833, the Mew Island was visited for the third time; and Mr. Thompson remarks, "Of Terns generally I perceived a great diminution in numbers since 1827; but the Roseate, compared with the others, was much more common than in that year and 1832. Aware of Mr. Yarrell's opinion that the egg of the Roseate Tern is longer, narrower, and more pointed than that of the Arctic or the Common species, I examined all the eggs I saw in nests on the island, if nests they should be called, as all the eggs seen to-day were laid on the short pasture; and, out of about fifty, only one would be called by Mr. Yarrell the egg of the Roseate; yet, from the number of that Tern seen, I cannot but think that many more of the eggs examined must have been those of the Roseate. On seeing a boat's crew landing to collect eggs, we remarked to our boatman that the season was now so far advanced that many of them might be found incubated; but he replied that, on the contrary, they were all fresh-laid that morning, the islands being not only visited by egg-gatherers, but that boys sometimes remain all night, sleeping under the shelter of a rock, that they may be the first at the following gathering. So incessantly are the poor birds robbed of their eggs that our boatman stated they can never hatch their young until the time of hay-harvest, when the people are too much occupied to molest them.

"The birds themselves, too, suffered much this year. In one forenoon, at the end of May, a party butchered not less than fifty, of which about a dozen were the Roseate; and all were afterwards flung away as useless. Our boatman stated that they remembered when these birds were ten times as numerous as at present. Their diminution is owing to their eggs being more than ever sought after, and to the increasing wanton persecution to which the birds themselves are subjected in being killed by heartless shooters who have no object in view but their destruction."

The other localities in Ireland in which this bird has been seen are the barren Rockabill (four and a half statute miles from the Skerries), on the Dublin coast, Lambay Island, and the bays of Drogheda and Dublin, the coast of Wexford, and Roundstone on the coast of Galway.

Mr. Harting informs me that as late as the year 1864 he shot a Roseate Tern on Walney Island, off the coast of Lancashire, and that two naturalist friends of his (Dr. Embleton, of Beadnell, Northumberland, and Mr. H. Burnett, of Newcastle-on-Tyne), who visit the Fern Islands several times annually during the nesting-season, have each obtained eggs of this bird on those islands within the last five years.

The figures are of the natural size.