

STERNA PARADISEA, Brünn.

Roseate Tern.

Sterna paradisea, Brünn. Orn. Bor., p. 46.

—— *Dougalli*, Mont. Orn. Dict., Suppl.

—— *Macdougalli*, Macgill. Man. Brit. Orn., vol. ii. p. 233.

Thalassea Dougalli, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 97.

Hydrocecropis Dougalli, Boie, Isis, 1844, p. 179.

WIDESPREAD indeed are the Terns or Sea-Swallows; for the sandy shores of every country are frequented by them. In many instances the species are strictly local—so much so as to be confined to a single group of islands; while others are very widely spread, some inhabiting not only the higher regions of both hemispheres but dwelling in more temperate zones.

Of all the family, numerous as are its members, the Roseate Tern is probably the most elegant in form and beautiful in colouring that has yet been discovered; and it was doubtless these peculiar features in the bird which procured it the name of *paradisea*. If we examine its structure, we find that its bill is more slender than that of most of its allies, and that the rich orange-colour of its feet offers a strong contrast to the hue of its breast, which has obtained for it the trivial name of “roseate.”

Although nowhere very numerous, this species appears to enjoy an unusually wide range; for it is said to frequent the whole of the sea-shores of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean; and we know that it is also found on all those of Northern Europe. In America Prof. Baird states, in his list of the birds of that country, that it extends from Florida to New York; and it occasionally occurs in India. Formerly there was scarcely a large sand-spit or rocky promontory in the British Islands suited for the reproduction of the *Sterninae* that had not its little colony of Roseate Terns. The Scilly, Lundy, Walney, and Fern Islands, the Firth of Clyde, and most of the islands of the Irish coast were but the other day constantly and annually resorted to for this purpose. Now it is to be feared that they have either been killed off from many of these hitherto favourite localities, or have deserted them for others where they are less subject to molestation. I have reason to believe, however, that a few pairs still resort to breed on Scilly and the Fern Islands, and many more to some parts of the Irish coast; and if allowed to remain undisturbed, they would doubtless continue their visits and increase their numbers. If we wish to preserve this interesting species as a member of our avifauna, we must cease to destroy it, and seek a supply for our museums and private collections from more distant countries where the bird is not held in such estimation. The Roseate Tern must be regarded as a southern species; for it seems not to breed so far north as the Arctic or Common Terns; and in all probability the British Islands are nearly its limit in this direction. It is a question not easily answered, Where do the vast hordes of Terns go during the winter (I mean the Roseate, the Common, the Arctic, and Little Terns)?—for we seldom meet with any of them during that inclement season. That they have migrated in a southerly direction is almost certain; and as they are seldom found out of soundings, the probability is that they then resort to the coasts, the estuaries, and embouchures of the great tidal rivers of Africa and America, and there, like the Land-Swallows, await the return of the sun before again visiting their breeding-places in the north, which they do with the utmost regularity; for as certain as the month of May comes round, these birds reappear to enliven the beach and the great shingle-beds of our sea-shores with their elegant movements and thousand voices. The present species, like all the other Terns, is subject to a seasonal change in the colouring of the head; but I am unable to say whether the roseate tint of the breast is worn during the nuptial season alone, or is retained throughout the year. In all probability, when the forehead becomes white in lieu of black, as represented in my Plate, the breast is also destitute of the rosy blush: one thing is certain, it is very evanescent after death.

As many of my contemporaries have written the history of this bird, and I have had but little opportunity of seeing it myself, I shall give such extracts from their writings as appear to me to be of interest; particularly from the ‘Birds of Ireland,’ by the late Mr. Thompson, and an additional note kindly sent to me by that careful observer of nature, the author of the ‘Birds of Middlesex,’ Mr. J. E. Harting.

The occurrence of this elegant Tern in Britain was first made known by Montagu, and named *Dougalli* in honour of Dr. Macdougall of Glasgow, who obtained an example, in July 1812, on the Cumbrays, two small flat rocky islands in Milford Bay, in the Firth of Forth; and as *Sterna Dougalli* the bird is very generally known; but modern research has shown that it had been described by Brünnich, in 1764, as *S. paradisea*, by which name it must in future be designated. “It was dis-