

eggs from that locality, and have invariably found from my own observations, and also heard from the peasants, that one pair of birds never suffer another to breed near them. The number of eggs, so far as my experience goes, is more frequently two than three."

Jerdon, in his 'Birds of India,' says:—"This fine Tern is by no means uncommon in most parts of the country, frequenting rivers, jheels, and tanks. It is generally seen alone or in pairs, rarely a few together; and it feeds chiefly on fish and prawns. It does not appear to breed in India, and probably retires to Central Asia for that purpose." Pallas states that it "only lays two eggs, pale livid in colour, with dusky spots. *Sylochelidon strenuus* of Gould is apparently very closely allied to this bird, if not identical with it."

Having seen much of this bird in a state of nature during my visit to Australia, and, moreover, taken many of its eggs, it may be as well to give a short extract from what I have written on the subject in my 'Hand-book' to the birds of that country. "The Caspian Tern frequents Southern Europe, India, Africa, and all the shores of Australia, but is, perhaps, more numerous on the islands in Bass's Straits and Tasmania than elsewhere. Its favourite breeding-places are the promontories of small islands, spits of land running out from the shores of the mainland, extensive flats at the entrances of large rivers, and all similar situations. I never observed it breeding in company, and seldom met with more than a pair on an island, unless it was one of considerable extent. It lays two eggs, on the bare ground, often within a very short distance of the water's edge. No bird watches its eggs with greater assiduity, or defends them with greater courage; and woe betides the unlucky Gull or other natural enemy that may wander within the precincts of its breeding-place. I could always discover its eggs by the clamorous, cackling, screeching note which it constantly uttered while flying over the place where they were deposited. The breeding-season comprises the months of August, September, and October, during which period the crown of the head is of a deep black hue, which gives place to a spotted appearance at other seasons. Both sexes are subject to precisely the same changes; and so much are they alike, that it is only by the somewhat smaller size of the female that they can be distinguished. The extensive development of the wings gives this fine species immense powers of flight; it also plunges into the water with the greatest impetuosity, and brings from beneath the surface fishes of a very considerable size. The eggs are of a stone-colour, marked all over with large and small blotches of umber-brown, a great portion of which appears as if beneath the surface of the shell; they are about two inches and five eighths long by one inch and three quarters broad."

The Plate represents an adult male, and a young bird in a state of change, of the size of life.