

## HYDROPROGNE CASPIA.

### Caspian Tern.

- Sterna caspia*, Pall. Nov. Comm. Petrop., tom. xiv. p. 528.  
—— *tschegrava*, Lepechin, Nov. Comm. Petrop., tom. xiv. p. 500.  
—— *megarhynchos*, Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl. Vög., tom. ii. p. 457.  
*Thalasseus caspius*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 563.  
*Hydroprogne caspia*, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 91.  
*Sylochelidon caspia*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 770.  
—— *baltica*, Brehm, ib., p. 769.  
—— *Schillingii*, Brehm, ib., p. 770.  
—— *strenuus*, Gould, Handb. Birds of Australia, vol. ii. p. 392.

Four or five instances are on record of this large and magnificent Tern having been killed in Norfolk and Suffolk; there cannot, therefore, be any doubt as to the propriety of admitting it into the avifauna of Great Britain. It is tolerably common in many parts of the continent of Europe; in Africa and India it is still more abundant. Mr. Swinhoe states it is found all over China; and both Dr. Baird and Mr. Coues include it in the birds of North America. When I wrote my work on the birds of Australia, I considered the Great Tern of Tasmania, from its somewhat larger size, to be distinct; but Jerdon and others are of opinion that I was in error in so doing. Yielding to their judgment I now place the name *strenuus* I had assigned to the Antipodean bird as a synonym with those given to the bird found in Asia. Presuming this view of the case to be correct, the range of the species is wide, indeed far wider than I at that time supposed, since Tasmania must now be included in its habitats.

The following extract from Yarrell will furnish all the information respecting the occurrence of the Caspian Tern in England up to the date at which he wrote (since then, however, Mr. Stevenson has recorded another example, of an adult male killed on Breydon Broad in 1862; *vide* Zoologist, 1862, p. 8093):—

“Several specimens of this fine large Tern, called the Caspian Tern, have been killed within the last few years on our eastern coast, particularly in the counties of Suffolk and Norfolk. Two early examples are those mentioned by the Messrs. Paget in their ‘Sketch of the Natural History of Yarmouth and its neighbourhood,’ one of which was killed in October 1825; another was presented to the Norwich Museum by the Rev. G. Steward, of Caistor, near which place it was shot. Three or four were seen at Aldborough, in Suffolk, and one of them shot, which is now preserved in the Museum of the Philosophical Society of Cambridge, as mentioned by the Rev. L. Jenyns in his ‘Manual of British Vertebrate Animals.’ Mr. Heysham sent me notice of a Caspian Tern shot in Norfolk in 1839; and I have received other communications on this subject, which might possibly refer to some of those instances already mentioned; but enough has been said to entitle this species to a place in our catalogues of British birds.

“The Caspian Tern is reported to breed annually at Sylt, an island of Denmark, on the west coast of Jutland. M. Nilsson says it visits also the mouth of the Baltic, and is seen in the vicinity of the Elbe. It is included by several naturalists in their birds of Germany; M. Temminck mentions that he has himself killed it, though rarely, on the coast of Holland; and it visits the coasts of France. M. Necker and Professor Schinz include this species among the birds of Switzerland, the former quoting four instances of its capture in the vicinity of Geneva; the latter calls it the king of the Sea-swallows, in reference to its very large size. M. Temminck says it has been met with and killed on the extensive rocks near Bonifacio, a seaport of Corsica. M. Savi includes it in his work on the birds of Italy; it inhabits the Grecian archipelago; and the Russian naturalists who have lately visited the Caucasus found it in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea, where it was originally found, and whence it received its first name from Pallas. The Caspian Tern has been found at Senegal and at the Cape of Good Hope.”

That the Caspian Tern breeds freely in many parts of Northern Europe we have abundant evidence from the writings of continental authors: but it would appear to be not so numerous in others; for in a note written for this work by Mr. H. E. Dresser, kindly forwarded to me some years since, he says:—“I observed this bird to be breeding sparingly on the small islands in the Gulf of Bothnia. On one of them, outside Uleåborg, called Krassili, I found a nest on the 12th of June, 1861, and shot the bird. The nest was merely a hole scratched in the sand, with a few straws arranged round the inside, and contained only one egg. The mate of the bird I shot continued flying close over our heads the whole time we remained on the island, crying in the hoarse manner from which its Swedish name ‘*Skräutärna*’ is derived. I have several times had the