

but he had never seen its eggs. At this season, we know that it also visits Russia, and even Siberia. Temminck states that it frequents the rivers, lakes, and seas of the eastern portion of Europe, occurs accidentally in Holland and Germany, and sometimes, but very rarely, on the lakes of Switzerland, but is most abundant in Russia, Livonia, and Finland. In winter, like the more delicate Terns, it proceeds further south, and is then to be found on the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black Seas, where, indeed, according to Temminck, a few are to be met with at all seasons. Savi includes it in the birds of Italy; and M. Cantraine has killed it in winter at Cagliari, during May in the Straits of Bonifacio, and at the end of June in the Port of Zara.

Lord Lilford states that it is tolerably common in the Ionian Islands during winter, particularly in the Yacht-harbour of Mandrachio, at Corfu, and that it arrives near the end of October and departs about the beginning of March. According to Mr. Wright, the Little Gull "is pretty plentiful some years in the harbours of Malta, and not unfrequently arrives in September. Its great tameness and fearlessness of danger are a remarkable feature in its disposition. I have shot as many as nine or ten in the course of a few hours, and might have shot more. It may be easily recognized on the wing by its small size, peculiar, light, butterfly manner of flight, and dark under wing-coverts. I have never seen it here in the breeding-plumage. Besides the general name of *Gauja*, or Gull, the Maltese call it *Cerleua*, or Tern, from its somewhat similar mode of flight."

To these brief notices of the Little Gull I have much pleasure in adding the very interesting notes respecting it included in Mr. W. H. Simpson's 'Fortnight in the Dobrudscha,' published in 'The Ibis' for 1861, p. 362:—"The first object that greeted my arrival in port was a flock of Little Gulls (*Larus minutus*) flying about in the harbour. This I considered a good omen, and even indulged in hopes of finding their breeding-quarters, as many were already in good plumage. This species was subsequently noticed in immense numbers, between the 20th and 24th of April, especially on the first of those dates. At that time the bulk of the flocks were frequenting a lake of fresh water, called 'Sud Geul,' which extends for several miles in a northerly direction parallel to the sea, from which it is separated by a narrow isthmus. On this occasion the flocks of *Larus minutus*, associated with a few individuals of *Sterna cantiaca*, were literally swarming in the air a few feet above the surface of the water, like Swallows over a river on a summer's evening. Far as the eye could reach, looking northwards down the lake, these elegant little birds were to be seen on the feed, dashing to and fro most actively. In most of them the head and upper part of the neck were of a brilliant jet-black, producing a singular effect in the mass when contrasted with the white of the rest of the plumage. Upon those which were nearest, a faint rosy tinge, confined to the upper part of the breast, was also noticeable. This, I think, is more marked in the living bird than in preserved specimens. In the distance they looked like mosquitoes over the water, the flocks probably extending to the furthest end of the lake, which cannot be less than eight or ten miles off. Here, then, it seemed, was the home of the birds, for which the late John Wolley and myself, misled by a false description, had vainly sought in Oland during the spring of 1856. The isthmus between the lake and the sea, uneven with swampy hollows and dry hillocks that support a coarse and scanty vegetation, might surely be their appropriate breeding-places, where, in company with Terns, Pratincoles, Stilts, *et hoc genus omne*, they might be expected towards the end of May to deposit their eggs. Never was there a greater mistake. A few days later and the thousands have become hundreds; yet a few days more and these will have dwindled down to tens, so that by the middle of May it is possible that not a pair will remain behind. Doubtless they continue their northward journey along this coast of the Black Sea; but it is in the marshes and lakes of Central Russia, in the great plains of the Volga, and possibly also those of the Bug, the Dneiper, and the Don, that oologists must look for the eggs of *Larus minutus*."

Notwithstanding the numbers of this bird that have occasionally visited our coasts, it has never been known to breed in any of the British Islands, and it must therefore be placed in the list of our accidental visitors.

The figures in the accompanying Plate represent an adult male in its summer dress, another, in that of winter, and a young bird of the year, all of the natural size; and as these are correct portraitures, they will convey a more vivid idea of the appearance of the bird at the different periods than any description, however minute; I must, however, remark that, while the under surface of the wing of the youthful bird is silvery white, the same part in the adult is dark smoky grey, and that, while the colouring of the head changes at opposite seasons, that of the under surface of the wing, when once assumed, does not alter in summer or winter.