

middle of June: most of these had only one egg in the nest; but a few of them had two. Their nests are made of the tops of reeds and sedge, and are very flat at the surface. The eggs vary so much in size, shape, and colour, that a person not well acquainted with them would suppose some of them to belong to a different species of bird. Some are thickly covered with dusky spots; and others are of a light blue colour, without any spots at all. The young birds leave their nest as soon as hatched, and take to the water. When they can fly well, the old ones depart with them and disperse themselves on the sea-coast, where they are found during the autumn and winter. By the middle of July, they all leave Scoulton, and are not seen there again till the following spring. We were a little surprised at seeing some of these Gulls alight and sit upon some low bushy willows which grow on the island. No other than the Brown-headed Gull breeds at this mere: a few of them also breed in many of the marshes contiguous to the sea-coast of Norfolk.

“The Rev. Richard Lubbock, who sent me some particulars of this species from Norfolk, mentions that he saw several of these birds in June 1841, dashing round some lofty elms catching cockchafers. The eggs are yellowish olive-brown, spotted with two shades of darker brown; the length two inches one line and a half, by one inch and six lines in breadth. When their nests are robbed, the birds are induced to lay two or three times; and Mr. Hewitson mentions that the eggs produced at these second and third layings are sometimes one third less than the natural size. Mr. Thompson says this species is a constant resident in Ireland. Mr. J. Macgillivray noticed that it was abundant in summer on the marshes of some of the islands of the Outer Hebrides. It was observed to be plentiful on some of the reedy lochs of Sutherland; and a few breed on the boggy parts of some of the islands of Orkney and Shetland; but Dr. Fleming mentions that these birds leave Scotland in winter.

“This species breeds in Sweden, in Russia, and in Siberia. It is included by several naturalists among the birds of Germany. M. Temminck says it is abundant in Holland at all seasons. It is common on the French coast in winter; and a few of them breed near the lakes and rivers of the interior. It visits Switzerland in summer, is not uncommon at Genoa, is included by M. Savi in his ‘Birds of Italy;’ and the Zoological Society have received specimens sent by Keith Abbott, Esq., from Erzeroom.”

Mr. R. Gray, speaking of this bird as seen by him, says, “This beautiful Gull is very abundant in the West of Scotland, extending to all the outer islands. Its breeding-haunts are also numerous throughout those districts in which it meets with encouragement. I have visited many of these on the mainland, and on both groups of islands, and find a great similarity in choice of situation, construction of nests, time of breeding, and general habits of the birds in localities widely apart. The two best-known to myself are both within easy reach of Glasgow. One of these interesting nurseries is on a small marshy islet in Hairlaw Loch, a patch of water, partly artificial, situated near Neildon Pad, which is within full view of the city. There are, perhaps, from 500 to 800 pairs to be found breeding there every year.

“Another numerous colony of Black-headed Gulls has for many years frequented the island of Inchmoin, on Loch Lomond. This island, which is about two miles in circumference, is quite flat, and stands but little above the level of the water. In wet seasons, therefore, it is to a great extent converted into a wet marsh. About the centre, where the ground is firmer, the Gulls construct their nests, which in some cases measure about eight inches in height; so that the contents are always safe against damp. Here, as well as at Hairlaw, many of the nests contain four eggs, though three is the usual number. Great variety also exists in the markings, some being pale blue and slightly spotted, others entirely of a dark colour, like some varieties of the egg of Richardson’s Skua. In one nest on Inchmoin I found two eggs, one of which was much elongated, pale green in colour, and spotless, while the other was much shorter, nearly twice the thickness, and almost as black as a piece of bog-oak.”

The principal figure in the accompanying Plate is of the size of life, and young four or five days old.