

PAGOPHILA EBURNEA.

Ivory Gull.

Larus eburneus, Phipps, Voy. towards the North Pole, App., p. 187.

— *niveus*, Mart. Hist. de Spitzb., t. 4. f. A.

— *candidus*, Fabr. Faun. Grœnl., p. 67.

Cetosparactes eburneus, Macg. Man. of Nat. Hist., vol. ii. p. 252.

Pagophila eburnea, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 69.

Gavia eburnea, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 563.

— *nivea*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 766, tab. 38. fig. 1.

Pagophila brachytarsa, Holb. ?

It will be seen in the sequel that this beautiful Gull has occurred in our seas several times, and hence it is necessarily included in the avifauna of Britain; but the glacial seas of the extreme north are its natural home, for in those inhospitable regions it breeds and rears its young. If the North Pole be ever reached, and salt water be found to exist there, I predict that the Ivory Gull will be one of the birds enlivening the scene. Among the specimens that have come under my notice I have observed much difference in the size of the individuals, and it is a question whether there is not more than a single species of this particular form; still our acquaintance with these Gulls and the localities in which they were procured is not sufficiently perfect to enable us to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Mr. Newton believes there is only one. As regards the sexes, but little difference occurs in size, and none in the colouring of adults; the young, on the other hand, accord with the young of some other Gulls in having their plumage spotted and barred with brown, a state represented by the hinder figure in my Plate, which will give a more accurate idea of its appearance than pages of writing.

The Ivory Gulls obtained in the British Islands are but few in number (seven or eight in England, three or four in Scotland and its islands, and one or two in Ireland). Captain Sabine states that it is abundant in Baffin's Bay, and Dr. Richardson that it also frequents Davis's Straits and various parts of the shores of the American continent, and he observed it breeding in great numbers in the high perforated cliffs which form the extremity of Cape Parry, in latitude 70°. It is generally met with out at sea in company with the Fulmar, and, like that species, is a constant attendant upon the whale-fishery, greedily feeding upon the blubber, which with other animal matter constitutes its food.

"The Ivory Gull, first scientifically described by Lord Mulgrave," says Mr. Newton, "is of all others the bird of which any visitor to Spitzbergen will carry away the keenest recollection. One can only wish that a creature so fair to look upon was not so foul a feeder. Contrary to the experience of almost all other observers, I once saw an Ivory Gull of its own accord deliberately settle on the water and swim. This was in the Stor Fjord. There is a very great variation in the size of different specimens of this bird, which is not at all to be attributed to sex or, as I think, to age; but I do not for a moment countenance the belief in a second species, which some ornithologists have endeavoured to establish under the name of *P. brachytarsa*. Some years ago I had the pleasure of announcing, at a meeting of the Zoological Society, that the Swedish expedition to Spitzbergen in 1861 had obtained some eggs of this bird, the first well-authenticated specimens brought to Europe. I here transcribe what Dr. Malmgren, the fortunate finder, says about them:—'On the 7th of July, 1861, I found, on the north shore of Murchison Bay, lat. 80° N., a number of Ivory Gulls established on the side of a steep limestone precipice some hundred feet high, in company with *Larus tridactylus* and *L. glaucus*. The last-mentioned occupied the higher zones of the precipice. *Larus eburneus*, on the other hand, occupied the niches and clefts lower down, at a height of from fifty to a hundred feet. I could plainly see that the hen birds were sitting on their nests; but these to me were altogether inaccessible. Circumstances did not permit me, before the 30th of July, to make the attempt, with the help of a long rope and some necessary assistance, to get at the eggs. On the day just named I succeeded, with the help of three men, in reaching two of the lowest in situation, of which each contained one egg. The nest was artless and without connexion, and consisted of a shallow depression eight or nine inches broad, in loose clay and mould on a sublayer of limestone. Inside it was carelessly lined with dry plants, grass, moss, and the like, and also a few feathers. The eggs were much incubated, and already contained down-clad young. Both the hen birds were shot upon their nests, and are now in the National Museum. The cocks were at first observable, but they vanished when we began the work of reaching their nests.' The locality just mentioned will