

"The Kittiwakes," says Macgillivray, "arrive along our coasts in the end of March, and betake themselves to high maritime cliffs, selecting those most inaccessible and generally such as are frequented by Auks, Guillemots, and other sea-birds. To these favourite places of resort they return year after year; nor am I aware that with us new stations are ever occupied, or colonies formed. In Scotland their principal breeding-places are St. Kilda, Berneray of Barra, the Shiant Isles, on the east side of Lewis, the Flannan Isles, on the west side, some of the Shetland Islands, the Bullers of Buchan, near Peterhead, Fowlsheugh, near Stonehaven, the Red Rock, near Montrose, the Isle of May, and the Bass Rock, in the mouth of the Firth of Forth, and St. Abb's Head, to the southward of it. England, however, is less plentifully supplied with Kittiwakes, the Fern Islands and Flamborough Head being, I believe, the only breeding-places there. On the coasts of Ireland it breeds in great numbers.

"The Kittiwakes generally select the lower part of the cliffs, from almost the edge of the water to the height of about one hundred feet, the space above being occupied by Auks and Guillemots. When these birds are not present, they occupy a more extended space, and are not apt to descend so far. The nests, bulky and formed of grass and seaweeds, are placed on the shelves and small projections, as well as in crevices and on the walls of caverns—sometimes, also, on grassy spots. Frequently they are deposited on so narrow a space as to seem stuck against the face of the rock, like those of the Swallows. Rowing along the bases of the cliffs, one cannot fail to view with delight these beautiful birds perched here and there, sometimes in groups, often singly, at short intervals, each in a horizontal position, singly seated on its comfortable-looking nest. The individuals not thus occupied fly about incessantly, uttering their loud and clear cries, and often approaching so near as to be easily shot. . . . The noise of guns does not always frighten the sitting birds from their nests; and those which have left them, presently return when the boat has advanced a short way.

"The Kittiwake feeds on small fishes (which it picks from the water, hovering with elevated wings), as well as crustacea, small shell-fish, and other marine animals (which it procures along the shores). It walks little (and not with ease, owing to the shortness of its legs), rests either standing or lying, associates occasionally with Gulls and Terns, is of a gentle disposition, social and amiable.

"With us it is scarcely ever seen inland. It flies with a rapid and constant beat of its curved wings, glides and wheels, and hovers over the smooth sea, or skims lightly over the high waves, descending into the furrows, and rising buoyantly to surmount the advancing ridge. Its cry is clear and rather sharp, but mellow, and resembles the syllables kitteaa or kitteweea, whence its common name of Kittiwake, or, on the eastern coast of the middle division of Scotland, 'Kittiweeak.'

"The eggs, two or three in number, are of a broadly oval form, two inches to two-twelfths more in length, and an inch and a-half in breadth; of a pale yellowish grey, greenish white, or light olive-green; spotted and dotted all over with dark brown and pale purplish grey. The young continue in the nest, or in the vicinity, until they are able to fly," and, Mr. Selby says, "seem instinctively to be aware of their perilous situation, where sometimes the least movement would precipitate them into the waves beneath, and are observed seldom to change their attitude in the nest till sufficiently fledged to be enabled to provide for their own safety. During incubation the females are very tame and will sit upon their eggs or callow young though closely approached; at the same time the males continue to fly round in circles, uttering the frequently repeated cry which has obtained for them the common English name of *Kittiwake*."

With reference to this bird as seen in Ireland, Dr. J. D. Marshall informed Thompson that "on nearly all the precipitous headlands north of the Bull, in Rathlin, these birds take up their summer residence, and, during my visit in June, were in such countless multitudes as to darken the air above our heads. Along the headlands of Raghery every pinnacle and ledge of rock was tenanted by the Razor-Bill, Puffin, or Kittiwake; and numerous as the others were, the last far outstripped them in numbers."

I cannot close this page without recording my obligations to Mr. Gatecombe, of Plymouth, for his obliging attention in procuring me fine examples of this bird at different seasons for the purpose of this publication, whereby its interest has been greatly enhanced.

The summer and winter plumage of the adult Kittiwake are precisely alike, except in the colouring of the head, which at the former season is pure white, and at the latter is streaked and blotched with greyish brown.

The young, as will be seen on reference to the accompanying Plate, where it occupies the foremost place, is very different in colour from the old birds, particularly in the tail, the upper part of the back, and shoulders, which, during the first autumn, are marked with black on the usual snow-white ground of the fully adult. The sexes are similarly clothed.

The Plate represents an adult, in summer plumage, and a young bird, in that of autumn, of the size of life.