

tame. Those bred at St. Kilda and Haskeir rocks betake themselves in autumn to the western side of the islands of Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, and South Uist, and are easily approached. I have shot very interesting specimens there, showing the last remains of the immature plumage, sprinkled in brown spots over the back of the birds and the wing-coverts, giving them a marbled appearance, the rest of the plumage being complete."

"The flight of this Gull," writes Macgillivray, in his 'History of British Birds,' "is strong, but buoyant, direct, and unwavering when the bird is proceeding towards a distant place, and then usually elevated, but on ordinary occasions somewhat devious, although from its size this species is not capable of turning and winding so dexterously as the smaller kinds. When engaged with a shoal of fry, the Herring-Gulls hover over the water, now ascending to the height of perhaps twenty feet, then skimming close over the surface; and on observing an object, stretching upward and vibrating their wings and letting down their feet so as to touch and sometimes pat the water, they pick it up without alighting. Sometimes they plunge partly into the water, and occasionally pick up their prey while swimming. All this while they emit now and then a loud and rather shrill cry. Their food consists of fishes of small size, occasionally large dead fish, crabs, echini, asteriæ, and mollusca. In winter and spring they often travel in bands over the fields, searching the pastures and, more especially, ploughed land for worms, grubs, and insects.

"At that season they may sometimes be seen on lakes, either solitary or in small flocks. They walk and even run with ease, and not ungracefully. Often, on the sands, they may be seen rapidly patting the surface with their feet; but the purpose of this action is not understood, although some have supposed it to be the causing of worms to emerge.

"In the beginning of May they resort to their various breeding-places along the coast, often in great numbers, betaking themselves to small unfrequented islands, frequently also to the faces of abrupt cliffs, but sometimes settling here and there in pairs. The nest, which is often bulky, is formed of grass and herbaceous plants of various species, according to the locality. The eggs, which are generally three, vary greatly in size and colour, the smallest being two inches and a half in length, and the largest two inches and ten twelfths, their breadth from one inch and eight twelfths to two twelfths more; the ground-colour pale yellowish grey, brownish grey, light brown, or olivaceous, sometimes dotted with dark brown and purplish grey, sometimes clouded in large patches, and sometimes dotted, spotted, and clouded or even covered with tortuous and angular markings."

"In Shetland," as Dr. Edmonston informs me, "the Herring-Gull breeds almost always in cliffs of difficult access, hardly ever in flat situations." Now, as in the Outer Hebrides it very often breeds on islands as flat as they can be in a gneiss country, and very seldom in cliffs, the difference in habits must depend upon circumstances, perhaps not easily appreciable. On an island in the Bay of Fundy, Mr. Audubon found it nesting on fir trees, and was informed that, some time before, it had bred on the flat ground in the neighbourhood. "It is," Dr. Edmonston continues, "the most elegant and most sagacious of all our birds. Of all birds this is the most indefatigable persecutor of the sportsman. At all seasons it is the watchful guardian of wild animals. This habit, however, so generous and interesting, is often fatal to itself, by exciting the vindictive feelings of man. Its carriage is stately and dignified. The young are generally three in number; and long after they have left the nest the parents continue to watch and feed them. Altogether it is a most interesting and delightful bird. Those who have made the name of Gull synonymous with stupidity have known little of the Herring-Gull, or they have meant the contrary to what they have said. In spring it is found in flocks on the corn-fields, picking up whatever seed the harrow may have left uncovered; and at this season it is excellent eating."

The principal figure in the Plate is about two thirds of the natural size.