

length, and an inch and ten twelfths in breadth, their ground-colour being dull yellowish grey, light brown, or olivaceous, with spots and patches of purplish grey and dark brown. The young leave the nest at any time, if molested, but generally remain a fortnight or longer. If pursued they readily betake themselves to the water, where they swim with ease, although not with much speed."

Mr. Hewitson observes that "upon the Fern Islands, off the Northumberland coast, this species appears to prefer those which are the most bare and barren, and where there is the least herbage; and though they have their choice, very few of them deposit their eggs on the grass; and yet they rarely lay them without making a tolerably thick nest for their reception; it is of grass loosely bundled together in large pieces, and placed in some slight depression or hollow of the rock. Amongst upwards of a hundred that I examined, one or two only had small pieces of seaweed mixed with the other materials. This species will frequently leave the coast, and, winging its way far inland, make its nest upon the margin of some lake or island, surrounded by its waters. I have had the eggs from a small island in the lake of Ullswater, where I have seen the birds during the summer-season.

"No class of birds are so regular in their time of breeding as those which frequent the ocean. Whilst most of our land-birds have been for two months or more irregularly engaged, either in building their nests, in incubation, or have already reared their young, they have deferred it to a much later period, and, urged by one impulse, the numerous species which inhabit these islands resort to them at once, and all is noise and bustle. This occurs every year upon the Fern Islands within a few days of the same date of time, the first or second week of June. This late period of breeding is, no doubt, influenced by the weather, which, at an earlier season, would, in situations so exposed, be too severe for the rearing of their young ones. After these birds have begun to sit they become very bold and daring in the protection of their eggs. Whilst among them I was amused by one, near the nest of which I was sitting; it retired to a certain distance to give it full force in its attack, and then, making a stoop at my head, came within two or three yards of me, repeating its attack without ceasing, till I left the place. Mr. Darling, under whose hospitable roof at the lighthouse I have enjoyed many pleasant hours during my various visits to these islands, informs me that the bonnet of an old woman, who was in the habit of gathering the eggs of the sea-gulls, was riddled through and through, and almost torn to pieces with their bills."

Mr. Selby states "that the young, upon exclusion from the egg, are covered with a parti-coloured down of grey and brown, which is rapidly hidden by the growth of the regular feathers, and in a month or five weeks they are able to take wing;" and Mr. Yarrell, that "the young birds of former seasons, while yet immature in plumage and incapable of breeding from want of sufficient age, are not permitted by the adult and breeding birds to inhabit the breeding-stations during their breeding-season, but are driven away to other localities."

The young birds, during the first year, are distinguished by a mottled-brown plumage and by having a black bill; after that period has elapsed the adult livery is gradually assumed during the succeeding two years, and the only change that subsequently takes place is that the head and neck are slightly streaked with brown or greyish-brown during the months of winter and spring.

Mr. Selby says, the Lesser Black-backed Gull readily submits to confinement, and may be reared from a tender age, as it thrives upon worms or any kind of offal; and he frequently kept it for the sake of witnessing the changes in its plumage in its progress to maturity, which, as in other large species, occupy three years. Its digestion is rapid and its voracity very great. An individual he kept in a garden made no difficulty of swallowing whole young Plovers of both kinds when fully half-grown.

"I have seen a good deal of rearing birds from the nest," remarks Mr. George Dawson Rowley, "and am often astonished to observe with what different dispositions and characters they are hatched, which variations they preserve through life. I find in the same brood the greedy, the quarrelsome, the timid, and the mischievous. Of some Lesser Black-backed Gulls (*Larus fuscus*) kept in my garden, the prevailing characteristic of Mr. Jack is mischief; and his tricks, if related, would fill a small book. Bob, one of his companions, on the contrary, is the most quiet, unobtrusive creature possible, presenting a most marked difference." Thus it would seem that Lesser Black-backed Gulls, like many other created beings, exhibit great diversity of disposition.

The Plate represents an adult in summer plumage and a young bird about the natural size.