

COLYMBUS SEPTENTRIONALIS, *Linn.*

Red-throated Diver.

Colymbus septentrionalis, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 220.

—— *striatus*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 586.

—— *stellatus*, *borealis*, et *Lumme*, Brünn. Orn. Bor., nos. 130, 131, 132.

—— *septentrionalis*, *Lumme*, et *borealis*, Brehm, Handb. der Naturg. aller Vög. Deutsch., pp. 976, 978, 979.

—— *rufogularis*, Meyer, Taschenb. Deutschl., tom. ii. p. 453.

Mergus minor, Briss. Orn., tom. vi. p. 108, pl. 10. fig. 2.

—— *guttur rubro*, Briss. ibid., p. 111, pl. 11. fig. 1.

Plotus claudicans, Scop. Ann. Hist.-Nat., tom. i. no. 93.

Eudytes septentrionalis, Ill. Prod. Syst. Mamm. et Av., p. 283.

Cepphus septentrionalis, Pall. Zoogr. Ross.-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 342.

If a census of the *Colymbi* could be taken, it would probably be found that the individuals of this species far exceed in number those of the other members of this truly northern form, since the bird is distributed far and wide, from the most northern regions that have been explored to the latitude of the Mediterranean, south of which its appearance must be regarded as accidental. On our own seas and in all the inlets and bays of our coasts it is to be found at one season or the other; in like manner it frequents the inland tarns and deep fjords of Norway, Lapland, Sweden, and Iceland, goes as far north as Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla, and also inhabits Davis's Straits, Baffin's Bay, and Greenland. In the inland lochs of these countries, as well as in many of our own, it breeds and spends the summer months, feeding as readily upon trouts and other fish of the fresh water as it does when at sea upon those of the ocean. At this season the bird is in its finest dress; the sun is now at the zenith, and all nature smilingly bows to his benign influence. Soon after this period the feathers become worn and abraded; and although the faded plumage is carried until the end of July or the beginning of August, a moult gradually takes place, and, by the time the birds which have bred have conducted their young to the salt waters, many new white feathers have appeared on the throat and neck, and in an incredibly short time the winter garb is assumed. With the assumption of its new livery, the bird commences its usual mode of life in its winter quarters: instead of among lacustrine plants, it now fishes over beds of kelp and beautiful corallines (where they occur); while the young betake themselves to sand-banks, bays, and the sheltered inlets which indent the coast, and gradually accustom themselves to the sea; for at first they are, of course, more feeble than the adults, and less capable of resisting the turbulence of the waves. At this period they are carrying their speckled plumage above, with a snow-white under surface, their general appearance being very similar to, but prettier or more spangled with white than that of the adult. In all probability, when these youthful birds assume the red throat and grey neck for the first time, they put on these hues earlier in the year than those which have bred. If this view be the correct one, it may account for our finding individuals thus coloured at a period when we do not expect it; indeed I cannot assign any other reason for this seeming precocity. At all seasons, whether it be that of spring, when the fully adult birds have red throats, grey cheeks, and striated manes, or that of winter, when they are brown and white, the sexes are alike. The young at first are clothed with a thick, nearly black, hairy down; in the next state the feathers of the upper surface are brown-spangled, and streaked with white. In some instances the specimens bearing these spangled feathers are also adorned with red throats; but I have skins in which this red mark is clear and well defined, while the stellations of the back are entirely absent: these latter are doubtless very old birds.

Of the occurrence of this bird in the British Islands it will be quite unnecessary for me to say a word for the information of professed ornithologists; but I may state to those who do not pay such close attention to the subject, that it breeds on many of the inland waters of Scotland and Ireland, and the Hebrides or Western Islands.

"In the end of spring," says Macgillivray, "the Red-throated Divers, having paired, retire northward, the greater number probably betaking themselves to the Arctic Regions, although very many remain to breed by the inland lakes of the Highlands, Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland Islands. In Lewis, Uist, and Benbecula, which are singularly intersected by arms of the sea, and covered with pools and lakes, great numbers are seen during the breeding-season. The sea being at hand, they usually fish there, returning at intervals to the lakes until incubation has commenced. The nest is placed on an island or tuft, or among the herbage near the margin, or even on the stony beach of a lake or pool, and is composed of grass, sedge, and heath, or other easily procured plants, generally in small quantity, and neatly put together. The eggs, in so far as I am aware, are always two; but it is stated that three frequently occur. They are of an elongated-oval form, the two