

what remarkable quickness the Dabchick scratches the weeds over her eggs with her feet when she perceives herself observed, so as not to lead even to the suspicion that any were deposited on the ill-shapen floating mass: this work of an instant displays as much skill in deception as can well be imagined. The eggs thus covered, which were originally white, are so stained with the colouring-matter of the weeds, that they assume an unnatural appearance. One of the most interesting points in the bird's history has yet to be detailed, namely, the peculiar colouring of its infantine age, or at the age of one or two days; and as this state is very rarely seen, I have considered it advisable to illustrate it on the accompanying Plate. So active and truly aquatic is the Dabchick, even at this early period of its existence, that it is almost impossible to see it in a state of nature; for immediately after the young birds are hatched they either take to the water of their own accord, or cling, when not more than an hour old, to the backs of their parents, who dive away with them out of harm's way. To gain an intimate acquaintance with these little creatures, it would be well, if the morning of hatching could be ascertained, to take one or more of the eggs and place them in a small basket, lined with flannel or other warm material, before the fire, when the tiny occupants will soon crack their shells and emerge into the world; in an hour their downy feathers will become dry, and the birds be ready to sit for their portraits. Such was the mode I adopted for procuring the subjects of the accompanying illustration. In another instance, when out fishing, a friend, Mr. Elliot of Chesham, shot a Dabchick whilst diving across a shallow stream; on emerging, wounded, at the surface, two young ones, clinging to her back, were caught in my landing-net. The delicate rose-coloured bills, harlequin-like markings, and rosy-white aprons of these infant Dabchicks render them extremely interesting. As they advance in age, these markings gradually give place to a uniform olive-grey plumage on the upper surface and silvery-grey on the abdomen—a style of dress characteristic of the adults in winter.

The food of the Dabchick consists of insects of various kinds and their larvæ, the fry of fishes, and doubtless their ova. That fish are taken we have positive evidence from examples having been repeatedly picked up dead by the fishermen of the Thames, with a Bull-head or Miller's Thumb (*Cottus gobio*) in their throats, and by which they had evidently been choked in the act of swallowing them. That it is especially fond of insects is shown by the great activity it displays, when in captivity, in capturing house-flies and other Diptera. Those who have visited Paris will probably have seen the Grebes in the window of the restaurateur in the Rue de Rivoli. For years have a pair of these birds been living, apparently in the greatest enjoyment, within the glass window, attracting the admiration of all the passers-by. The extreme agility with which they sailed round their little prison, or scrambled over the half-submerged piece of rock for a fly, was very remarkable. That no bird can be more easily kept in a state of confinement is certain; and it is to be regretted that neither the directors of the Crystal Palace Company at Sydenham, nor the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park, have succeeded in procuring them for their ponds: for a more attractive object for the basins within the Crystal Palace could scarcely be found.

The plumage of the adults in summer may be briefly described. The male has the crown of the head, all the upper surface, chest, and flanks olivaceous black; abdomen silvery black; chin and bill jet-black; sides of the neck and throat rich chestnut; irides dark brown; feet greenish black, nails white; gape greenish yellow; inside of the mouth fleshy white, tinged with green: weight 7 ounces.

The female is very similar in colour, but somewhat smaller in size.

In winter both sexes have the crown of the head and all the upper surface of the body silvery grey; the upper mandible olive-brown; under mandible fleshy white; legs as in summer.

The colouring of the young, from a day to a week old, is as follows: bill rosy flesh-colour; crown, neck, and upper surface downy black, with harlequin-like stripes of white about the sides of the head and face, and broad stripes of rich light chestnut-brown down the front part of the neck and the whole of the upper surface; the belly white.

The Plate represents a male, a female, and a nest with a brood of young, a day old, all of the natural size. The plant is the *Ranunculus fluitans*.