

## PODICEPS AURITUS.

### Horned Grebe.

*Colymbus auritus*, Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 222.

*Podiceps arcticus*, Boie.

——— *cornutus*, Temm.

I REGRET exceedingly that the specific term *cornutus* cannot with propriety be retained for a bird which has hitherto been so familiarly known by that appellation to every British ornithologist, inasmuch as no doubt remains on my mind that it was to this species that Linnæus originally applied the term *auritus*, and not to the Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*). On a perusal of my account of the latter species it will be found that it is a native of the warmer portions of Europe and of North Africa; while the Horned or Slavonian Grebe, as it is frequently called, habitually frequents all countries suitable to its habits lying northward of Britain as far as the Arctic circle. Nilsson states that it breeds in the reedy parts of the shallow waters of Sweden; Temminck that it is more often seen in Germany and the eastern parts of Europe, and that it is also found in France, Switzerland, Provence, and Italy. It is said to inhabit the northern parts of Asia and the vicinity of the Caspian Sea, America, from Hudson's Bay and the fur-countries (where Dr. Richardson tells us it is very common on every lake with grassy borders), Canada, and the United States, to Florida. In England it resorts to the coast and the few fenny districts yet remaining; it is not uncommon in several parts of Ireland in winter; and Macgillivray informs us it is not unfrequently to be met with in the estuaries of Scotland at the same season, and is sometimes shot in considerable numbers. Specimens have been killed in Cornwall, Devonshire, Sussex, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, and on the coasts of Durham and Northumberland. Mr. Dunn, in his useful 'Ornithologist's Guide,' says:—"This beautiful species is extremely rare both in Orkney and Shetland; but I saw seven or eight, in the month of April. It is a very shy bird, and, when alarmed, dives to a great distance, and on coming to the surface immediately takes wing. The young, known by the name of Dusky Grebe, is very rare. Two or three pairs used to frequent the Loch of Stenness, in the neighbourhood of Stromness." Sir William Jardine, who considers it to be, next to the Little Grebe, the most common species in Scotland, remarks that specimens occur during the whole winter in the Edinburgh markets.

In Ireland, according to Thompson, it "can be positively announced only as an occasional winter visitant." A few individuals, killed in the north of Ireland in winter, had come under his observation—one obtained in Strangford Lough, in November 1821, and others near Whitehouse, below Holywood, and near Bangor (all in Belfast Bay), in Coleraine, near Dublin, &c. In Wales, a specimen was shot at Penrice, near Swansea, by C. M. R. Talbot, Esq.

Mr. Newton, in his notes "On the Ornithology of Iceland," says the Horned Grebe is very generally distributed on lakes throughout the western half, and probably the whole, of the island. It arrives at the beginning of April or the first week in May, and, after breeding, departs in the autumn.

Mr. Proctor, the subcurator of the Durham University Museum, who visited Iceland in the summer of 1837, observed that "this bird frequents the fresh waters and breeds amidst the reeds and other rank herbage. The nest is large, and floats on the surface of the water, with which it rises and falls. It is composed of a mass of reeds and other aquatic plants. The eggs when first laid, are of a bluish white; but they soon become stained by the materials of which the nest is composed. Having observed one of these birds dive from its nest, I placed myself with my gun at my shoulder waiting its reappearance. As soon as it emerged, I fired and killed it, and was surprised to see two young ones, which, it seems, had been concealed beneath the wings of the parent bird, drop upon the water. I afterwards shot several others of this species, all of which dived with their young under their wings. The young were placed with their heads towards the tail and their bills resting on the back of their parents."

Mr. Stevenson informs me that "the Horned Grebe is by no means uncommon in Norfolk throughout the autumn and winter, when both young and old are to be met with in severe weather. Occasionally it remains late enough in the spring to acquire its rich breeding-plumage. A splendid pair, in full nuptial attire, in my own collection, and a young bird in that of Mr. Gurney, were killed on the 16th of April, 1862, on Sutton Broad. On dissection, they proved to be an old male and a young male and female. Their stomachs were crammed with a compact mass of feathers, mixed with, and stained by, the green *Conferva* from the surface of the water, the only particle of food being a small brown beetle in the stomach of the female. The fact of the Grebes swallowing their own feathers has been alluded to by Yarrell, Macgillivray, Fleming, and other naturalists; but no satisfactory conclusion has, I believe, been arrived at, either as to