

days old, have the elongated form of the adult, and a silken kind of plumage well adapted to resist wet. The colouring of their bodies is not without beauty. When feathers take the place of the infantine costume, the birds grow so rapidly that in four or five weeks their full size will be attained. Both males and females are now alike; and the style of dress assumed is carried by the former until the second year, when it suddenly changes to the finer dress.

So graphically has Mr. Selby described the habits of this bird, that I do not hesitate to give the following extract from his 'Illustrations of British Birds;' to which I shall add a copy of a letter received from Jeffery Whitehead, Esq., of Devonshire Villa, Muswell Hill, furnishing some particulars of the colouring of the bird in the month of January, when it appears to be in its most beautiful state of plumage.

"Upon the Northumbrian and other coasts of the north of England," says Mr. Selby, "the species is a regular winter visitant, but always more abundantly in severe than in mild seasons. It haunts the bays and inlets where small streams discharge themselves, as well as the estuaries of rivers, but seldom advances far beyond the influence of the tide. In the Highlands and Isles of Scotland these birds are found at all seasons of the year, making the freshwater lakes of the interior their residence during the summer, and in winter, should they become frozen, resorting to the salt-water inlets. They breed upon the margins of the lakes, or in preference upon the islets with which many of them are diversified. Upon Loch Awe, in the Western Islands, they are common; and their nests have been repeatedly found by Sir William Jardine and myself upon the several islands that beautify its western extremity. The nest is always situated a few yards beyond the highest water-line, frequently beside a large stone covered with brambles and coarse herbage, or under the shelter of some thick bush. It is composed of dried grass, small roots, &c., intermixed with feathers and a quantity of down of the bird, which appears to be added to as incubation advances. The eggs are from seven to eleven in number, of a colour intermediate between cream-yellow and wood-brown, and in size and shape like those of the Common Duck. The bird sits remarkably close, and will sometimes allow itself to be almost trodden upon before it will quit the nest. The Merganser is an excellent diver, remaining for a long time submerged, during which it makes rapid progress. In this way it frequently escapes when wounded, merely raising its bill above water to take breath and again dipping down, without causing any perceptible disturbance of the surface."

"The male Merganser," says Mr. Whitehead, "which I have requested Mr. Leadbeater to submit to your inspection, was shot by myself on Loch Fleet (a salt-water loch) on the east coast of Sutherlandshire, on the 1st of January. Much of its beauty has faded already; for when I first handled it I was much struck by the exquisite pink colour of the lower part of the breast and belly. I know not what to compare it to; it was more delicate than that of the Roseate Tern as figured in your 'Birds of Europe:;' it vanished within two or three hours after death."

The adult male has the head and upper part of the neck dark shining green, and the occipital crest still darker, approaching to black; neck white, with the exception of a narrow line from the occiput to the back, which, as also the shoulders, are black; shorter scapularies white, the longer ones black; on each side immediately in front of the wing a conspicuous tuft of feathers of a pure white, broadly margined with rich velvet black; lesser wing-coverts white; greater coverts and secondaries black at the base, their outer halves being white, and with the lesser coverts forming three conspicuous white bands on the wing; primaries brownish black; tertiaries white, edged with black; lower part of the back and upper tail-coverts, sides and flanks grey, minutely freckled with black; tail brownish ash-colour; lower part of the neck pale reddish brown, streaked and varied with black; breast and under surface very delicate pinkish salmon-colour; under tail-coverts white; bill bright red, the culmen dark brown, and the nail somewhat lighter; irides red; legs and toes reddish orange; membranes dark reddish brown.

The female has the head, occipital crest, and back of the neck dark brown; back, scapularies, and lesser wing-coverts umber brown; greater coverts and secondaries brownish black, terminated with white, forming two white bands; primaries and tertiaries dark or brownish black; neck mingled reddish and pale brown; under surface pale buff; upper tail-coverts and tail ashy brown; sides of the bill and nostrils fleshy red; culmen reddish black; irides red; legs and toes very fine reddish orange; the membranes olive-brown.

The young birds, when a few days old, have the head and all the upper surface light chocolate-brown; above the eye a small patch, and below it a stripe of white; below this and on each side of the neck is a wash of rusty red; all the under surface, the shoulders, and the extremity of the abbreviated wings and three large spots on the sides, within the dark tint of the upper surface, white; bill and legs pale fleshy red.

The Plate represents a male, a female, and five young birds about the size of life.