

Mr. Proctor informed Mr. Hewitson "that the Harlequin Duck is by no means common in Iceland, where it chiefly frequents cascades and-rapidly running streams, building its nest (which is composed of dry leaves, grass, and reeds, lined with down) amongst low bushes and water-growing plants, the eggs being from six to eight in number . . . . Mr. G. C. Atkinson, of Newcastle, whilst visiting the celebrated Geysers during a summer's ramble in Iceland, had the eggs brought to him, together with the bird, which had been shot in rising from them . . . . I have to thank Mr. Henry B. Milner," continues Mr. Hewitson, "for the following particulars:—Of this species, which is scattered throughout the island, though nowhere abundantly, I was fortunate enough to discover one nest containing six eggs. It was situated on an island, in the rapid river Laxa, nearly in the centre, amongst the low arbutus; I also saw a female and two half-fledged young ones in a stream near the Geysers. As far as I could observe, the Harlequin Duck only haunts the rapid rivers and streams. I saw about twelve pairs while in Iceland, and never in one instance observed them in any of the numerous lakes which abound throughout the island.' . . . Holbøell says that this is a rare bird in North Greenland, whilst it is very common between 62° and 65° N. lat. The nest is always on the bank of a very rapid brook, and is so well concealed under plants and willows that it is very rarely discovered. The young ones are immediately led into the sea. They like a ruffled sea, and, when not breeding, are usually found at the most outward islands, where they dive in the midst of the breakers."

Audubon states that the flight of the Harlequin Duck "is rapid and generally straight. At sea it flies at a small height; but when flying over the land or even when approaching it, should there be any suspicion of danger, it rises to a considerable height. Its food consists of shrimps, small fishes, roe, aquatic insects, and mollusca, which it procures by diving. The flesh is dark-coloured and generally tastes of fish; but that of the female is good during the period of her sojourn on the freshwater ponds."

The same author informs us that "the male takes three years to acquire his full plumage, though many individuals breed in the second year;" but neither Audubon nor any other author, so far as I am aware, informs us whether the fantastic colouring of the male is constant, or if it be only assumed during the breeding-season—that is, a nuptial dress only. Judging from what is known with respect to the Mergansers and the diving ducks allied to the Harlequin, probably the latter is the true state of the case, and in winter both sexes are very similarly coloured.

The eggs are pale buff with a slight tinge of olive, and are two inches and an eighth in length by one inch and five eighths in breadth.

"The colour of the male is so singularly diversified," says Swainson in his 'Animals in Menageries,' "as to require much precision in a description which is to convey any accurate idea of the bird. We should say that the ground-colour of the whole plumage, both above and below, is bluish black—of different tints, indeed, but in all parts dark; upon this ground are many bold bands, stripes, and spots of white, giving the bird a most elegant appearance. A large patch of this sort fills up the head between the eye and bill; another, small and round one is just on the ear; and a third, longer and narrower, is behind it; the crown is margined on each side by a stripe of white, which changes to ferruginous after it passes the eye; at the bottom of the neck is a narrow white collar, which separates the deep black of the head and throat from the cinereous or lavender-black of the breast; on each side of the breast is a broad transverse stripe of white, margined above and below by a narrow one of velvet black; the greater wing-coverts terminate in a white bar, and the outer edges of the tertials are marked with black and white stripes; the speculum, which covers all the secondary quills, is of a very dark glossy blue; sides of the body and flanks chestnut-brown; vent, rump, and tail-coverts velvet black; at the base of the tail on each side is a white spot; quills and tail brownish; bill and a small fleshy flap of naked skin at the base of the upper mandible bluish black, tip and legs brown."

The female is thus described by Dr. Richardson:—"Above, dark liver-brown; quills and tail blackish brown; rump and the flank-feathers that hang down over the thigh pale umber; a spot behind the ears, a smaller one on each side of the forehead, and some mottling under the eye white; upper part of the breast and the sides under the wings yellowish brown, edged with brownish grey; rest of the under plumage greyish white, broadly barred across the middle of each feather with dove-brown. The size is much inferior to that of the male."

The Plate represents a male, of about the natural size, a female, considerably reduced, and a second male in the distance.