

is, I believe, but one person who has actually witnessed the manner—the clergyman at Quickiock, in Lulea, Lapmark, near the source of that chain of vast lakes whence the Lulea river flows, who was once a witness, and who, while botanizing by the side of the lake near Quickiock, where the bird breeds in great numbers, saw a Golden-eye drop into the water, and at the same instant a young one appear; after watching some time, and seeing the bird fly backwards and forwards from the nest five times, he was enabled to perceive that the young bird was held under the bill, and supported by the neck of the parent.”

The advantage taken by the natives of Lapland and Finmark of the bird's habit of laying its eggs in the holes of trees and similar situations is mentioned by nearly every writer on the natural history of those countries. Linnæus, when near Lycksele, had his attention drawn to the cylinders of wood, closed at top and bottom, and with an aperture on one side, which were placed on the highest part of the loftiest fir trees, in order to tempt the wild ducks to lay their eggs in them. Mr. Wheelwright mentions that he always took the eggs from the *holkar*, or tubs set up in trees, or from the hollows of trees themselves, and never from the ground; and Pastor Sommerfeldt informs us, in his ‘List of Birds observed in East Finmark,’ translated by Mr. H. E. Dresser, that, in order to obtain possession in the easiest manner of the eggs of this bird, the Lapps put up, along the Tana river and in the woods, hollow trees about two ells high, with a hole in the side. When the bird has discontinued laying, they empty the nest. Occasionally the cavity chosen is so small that it would seem impossible for a duck to enter it. Mr. Hewitson mentions one, observed by him in Norway, that was about twelve feet from the ground and about a foot in diameter inside, with an entrance so narrow as hardly to admit the hand.

The Golden-eyes, “like most of our Ducks,” says Macgillivray, “betake themselves to the Arctic regions, whence they return in autumn, making their appearance in the beginning of October, and continuing to increase in number until the winter has fairly set in, when they are met with in all parts of the country, from Shetland and Orkney on the one side, and Lewis Island on the other, to the southern extremity of England. In Ireland, also, they are regular winter visitants. It is chiefly to lakes, pools, and rivers that they resort. But, although essentially lake-ducks, they often, especially in frosty weather, resort to estuaries, as well as the open coasts, where they procure testaceous mollusca, crustacea, and fishes.

“Owing to the pied appearance of the males, the Golden-eyes make a fine show on the water, and especially on those dull dark pools of the North Highlands and Hebrides of which the surrounding scenery is dismal enough at all seasons, but especially in winter. When undisturbed, they float lightly, but if alarmed have the faculty of sinking deeper, swim with great speed, dive instantaneously, and are active and lively in all their movements,” except on land, where, Mr. Selby states, it “proceeds in a shuffling ungainly manner, from the backward position of its legs and the great size of its feet.” “They fly with rapidity, and in a direct manner; their small, stiff, sharp-pointed wings producing a whistling sound, which, in calm weather, may be heard at a considerable distance. If shot at while feeding, they dive, and appear, after a considerable interval, at a great distance; but, owing to their vigilance and activity, it is difficult to get near them, although, when without a gun, I have several times been allowed to approach within shooting-distance, and on such occasions they merely swim slowly away. In rising from the water, they strike it with their feet and wings to the distance of several yards; but on occasions they can rise at a single effort, especially when there is a breeze.

“The females and young are greatly more numerous, in proportion to the males, in the southern parts of the country; and in the northern, flocks are sometimes seen composed entirely of males. It is said that, in their southward migration, the males advance first, the young remaining a considerable time behind the females; and in proceeding northward, the males again take the lead, being several days in advance.”

Mr. Wheelwright states that “the egg of the Golden-eye varies very much in colour and size; and it is remarked by the old settlers, who watch the habits of the bird closely (for its eggs afford them a good supply of food), that the old birds always lay the fewest, finest, and largest eggs.” How many eggs are deposited at a laying does not appear to have been correctly ascertained: from five to ten would seem to be the normal number; they are of a beautiful pale pea-green, and are two inches and three-eighths in length by one inch and five-eighths in breadth.

Few Ducks present so great a contrast in the size and colouring of the sexes as the male and female of the present species; irrespective of the difference in their plumage, the latter may always be distinguished from the former by the eye being pale straw-yellow instead of a rich golden. In all probability the old males, after the breeding-season, change their brilliant plumage of winter to one closely assimilating to that of the female, and again assume it late in the autumn. The young males closely resemble the females.

The Plate represents a male and a female of the size of life, with reduced figures of two males in the remarkable attitude above described.