

twenty from October until the 20th of April, when they migrate to the north. The Sound above mentioned is their favourite resort; and although a few are found in the neighbourhood, yet they are never so plentiful elsewhere. They are strictly marine in their habits, and hardly ever come to land: their power of diving is extraordinary, and is not surpassed by any other bird with which I am acquainted, except the Great Northern Diver; for they can remain under water nearly two minutes, and always seem to dive to windward. Though they are usually very wild, yet from their great weight, and the small size of their wings, they are very slow in rising, and a shot may easily be obtained by running down on them before the wind, as they are then obliged to rise towards the boat. They are extremely hard to kill—so much so that, out of fourteen we knocked down, only four were procured, all of which were shot in the head. The white bar on the wing is very conspicuous during flight, and distinguishes them from every other bird. Their food consists chiefly of small shell-fish, which they procure at a great depth; and consequently their flesh is very strong and fishy." In order to obtain the correct colouring of the bill, which Captain Elwes had omitted to note, I wrote to Mr. J. H. Dunn, of Stromness, and requested him to shoot a fine old male, and immediately send me the head by post. This he did, after a voyage of ten miles taken expressly for the purpose; and I should be wanting in courtesy did I not here acknowledge his kind attention. With the head were transmitted the following notes:—

"The Velvet Scoters generally arrive here early in, or not later than the middle of, October; they remain all the winter, and depart about the beginning of May. Occasionally I have seen an odd one or two later in the season, but these were doubtless either unhealthy or wounded birds. While here, they are most numerous about the islands of Cava, Ryssay, and Fara, and may there be seen in small companies of from two or three to twelve or fourteen in number. Their departure and arrival are both very gradual. They begin to disappear toward the end of April; and by the close of May all have left. They reappear in like manner, and all have arrived about the beginning of November. In the places above mentioned as many as sixty or eighty may be seen any day during winter. It is equally plentiful in other parts of Orkney besides those above mentioned; but in Shetland I only saw two or three during a residence of eleven years."

That the Velvet Scoter is occasionally found in considerable numbers on the sea bordering the marshy county of Norfolk is certain; for Mr. Lubbock speaks of upwards of twenty specimens having been obtained there in the winter of 1829-30; and in some notes supplied to Mr. Stevenson by the late Sir William Jackson Hooker, no less than nineteen are stated to have been killed on the coast, near Yarmouth, in March 1832. Mr. Stevenson does "not know of any instance of so many being taken in one season of late years; but several males, females, and young birds have been shot on the coast during the last few winters. Like the common species, they are occasionally found on the larger Broads and other inland waters."

The egg of the Velvet Scoter is very correctly figured in Mr. Hewitson's 'Coloured Illustrations of the Eggs of British Birds,' from an example in the Lapland collection of the late Mr. John Wolley, who states that "the bird makes its nest under the sweeping branches of a small Norway pine, if such is to be met with; but in the colder regions of the country, it must find some other shelter. When it prefers an island, which it more seldom does, in the inhabited districts at least, it chooses a dry spot a few yards from the water's edge. It is one of the latest breeders among the ducks, and the number of the eggs is very variable." "The usual number," according to Yarrell, "is six, and they are of a nearly uniform cream-colour, two inches and three quarters in length by one inch and seven eighths in breadth." Mr. Dann informed Mr. Yarrell that "it is common during the summer months in the interior of the whole of Scandinavia, north of latitude 60°. It frequents and breeds on the large lakes of the mountainous districts, especially those of which the shores are flat and boggy and covered with vegetation. In Lapland it is numerous everywhere, and the eggs are much sought after by the natives. It is also abundant in the Dovre-fjeld, appearing at the latter end of May. They hatch very late, seldom before the end of July. Their nests are placed on hummocks, amongst the willow-swamps or long grass near the water. They frequent the lakes as high as the birch grows."

The Plate represents a male, a female, and some young birds, about the size of life, the latter being figured from a specimen kindly lent me for the purpose by Arthur W. Crichton, Esq.