

appointed. The assemblage is large, filling the inns and the lodgings to be had at private houses. In the morning, at the sound of a drum, the embarkation takes place on the lake named for the first attempt. The boats, filled with sportsmen, form an extended circle round the flocks of birds at one part of the lake; the boats then draw in, diminishing the circle by degrees, till the crews are within gunshot of the intended victims. At a well-known and preconcerted signal, a partial discharge takes place at the unfortunate birds while swimming on the surface of the water. Many are killed on the spot; those which escape the first fire attempt to save themselves by flight, when a second discharge assails them in the air; many more fall, and with broken wings and loud cries are picked by the shooters, who divide the spoil, not without many altercations, and return to land. After a short respite, the birds having again collected together on that or some other neighbouring lake, a second advance takes place in the same manner, and the day is passed in making a succession of attacks, each followed by a retreat for a time to allow the birds to reassemble. A *chasse*, as it is termed, of a somewhat similar character, is performed near Bastia, the capital of Corsica; but in this locality the Scoter is always accompanied by numbers of the Red-throated Diver, which appear to act the part of sentinels outside the flock of Ducks; and so quick-sighted are these sentinels, and so instantaneously do they dive, and so rapidly do they swim under water, that hundreds of Scoters are killed to one couple of Divers."

Enough has been said to show that this bird is strictly a winter visitant with us; but that it does remain within the precincts of the British Islands until late in the spring, and even in some instances until summer has fairly set in, is evident, Mr. Dann having seen flocks off Dungeness as late as the middle of June; and a writer in 'The Zoologist' states that the Lake of Windermere is visited every year, about the first week in July, fourteen having been observed off Wray Castle at that period in 1848. The Scoter must, therefore, commence the task of nidification immediately after its return home. Up to the present time we have no record of its having bred in the British Islands. Mr. Dann states that it breeds in Scandinavia, where Wallengren makes it a bird of his second or Birch-region, nesting as it does from 800 to 2000 feet below the snow-line; and Mr. Procter found it breeding in Iceland, which is probably its most western limit, for Professor Reinhardt does not include it among the birds of Greenland. Eastwardly, according to Pallas, it visits the Caspian Sea. In the far north, the late Mr. John Wolley found it breeding at Muionioniska in Lapland, late in the season; and Mr. Alfred Newton informs me that "it is plentiful enough in the interior of that country, where it is known as the 'Sea-bird' *par excellence*, and its musical notes add to the pleasure with which a naturalist explores the countless lakes of that desolate region." The nest is generally placed in some sheltered spot on the ground, and the eggs, which are six or seven in number, are of a pale buff slightly tinged with green, somewhat more than two inches in length by about one inch and three-quarters in breadth.

The diving powers of the Scoter are as perfect as those of any other species which resorts to that mode of procuring its food from the bottom of the turbulent sea; its whole structure, its flattened tarsi, large feet, and dense plumage are all admirably fitted for the purpose. Its flight is rapid, straight, and of sufficient duration to convey the bird from the sea to the inland lakes, or from one part of its feeding-ground to another; generally, however, these passages from place to place are performed near the surface of the water; but it is said to mount higher in the air when necessity requires it so to do.

The entire plumage of the male is deep black glossed with greenish blue; irides brown; eyelash orange; base of the bill bluish black, the remainder dull black, except a narrow line of orange down the middle of the tubercle at the base, and the central portion of the upper mandible, which around the nostrils is orange, and towards the tip yellow; legs and toes reddish black.

The female differs in being dark brown instead of black, in having the chin and throat greyish white, the under surface silky brocoli-brown, and in the tubercle at the base of the bill less elevated.

Mr. A. Newton has kindly sent me the following description of the young before they are able to fly, from Mr. Wolley's 'Loose Memoranda.'

"Dull sooty black above, neutral tint beneath, the feathers towards the middle of the body shading into white at the tips. Top of the head black to a little below the eye, where a light-grey patch commences. Many of the light feathers tipped with darker colour, so as to give a somewhat pepper-and-salt effect. Under wing-coverts tipped with white. Down greyish white. Nostrils nearly halfway between the base of the bill and the tip, somewhat elevated towards the back. Nail of the bill very large and expanded. Inside of mouth yellowish. Feet and shanks yellowish brown, darker at the joints."

The Plate represents two males and a female, a trifle less than the size of life.