

## BRANTA RUFINA.

### Red-crested Duck.

*Anas rufina*, Pall. Reise, tom. ii. p. 713.

*Branta rufina*, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.

*Fuligula rufina*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 188, pl. 54.

*Callichen ruficeps*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 922.

——— *rufinus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 924, tab. 42. fig. 4.

*Netta rufina*, Kaup, Natürl. Syst., p. 102.

*Mergoides rufina*, Eyton, Cat. of Brit. Birds, p. 57.

*Aythya rufina*, Macgill. Man. Nat. Hist., Orn., vol. ii. p. 191.

So many instances are on record of the occurrence of this fine Duck in England, that I have no hesitation in following my contemporaries in giving it a place in our avifauna, and a figure of it in the present work. It must, however, be regarded as a southern and eastern rather than a northern species, and consequently as an accidental visitor to our islands. That it is tolerably common in North Africa is certain, since the late Captain Loche states, in his 'Catalogue des Mammifères et des Oiseaux observés en Algérie,' that it is abundant on all the great lakes of that country; and Mr. Salvin, in his 'Five Months' Birds'-nesting in the Eastern Atlas,' states that he frequently saw several pairs in the open pools at the upper end of the marsh of Zana; where two nests were obtained, one of which contained seven eggs, of a most brilliant fresh green colour while unblown, but which, when the contents were expelled and the shells had become dry, were sadly diminished in beauty. As we might reasonably infer, its range extends in an easterly direction from this country to India; for we learn, from Mr. Jerdon's work on the birds of that country, that it is there found throughout the greater part of the peninsula, but is more rare in the south. It chiefly frequents the larger tanks and jheels, generally keeps to the middle part of the water, and is a wary bird, not usually allowing a near approach. Its flesh is juicy, tender, and high-flavoured, and by some persons is considered the finest Duck for the table. A writer in the 'India Sporting Review' remarks that "during the day the Red-crested Ducks are constantly on the move, now pursuing one another, now screaming, all up at once, then down again." I have received specimens from the Himalayas; and Colonel Sykes includes it in the 'Birds of the Deccan,' but observes that it is rare in that part of India. According to Dr. Latham, it inhabits the vast lakes of the desert of Tartary, and is sometimes seen on the great lakes lying on the east side the Uralian Mountains, but not elsewhere in Siberia.

The *Branta rufina* is included in works on the birds of Germany, is mentioned by Necker in his notice of the birds of Geneva, has been observed at Genoa; Savi includes it in his 'Ornithology of Italy;' and "it will be recollected," says Mr. Yarrell, "that our celebrated countryman Willughby obtained this duck in the market at Rome." Bailly states that it is rare in Savoy, and, when it occurs, generally arrives towards the end of winter or the beginning of spring, sometimes in couples, at others in small parties of from three to six in number; and he adds that in Switzerland, where it is more numerous, it arrives about the same time. According to Degland it is found on the shores of the Black Sea and in various parts throughout France. Benoit, in his 'Ornitologia Siciliana,' states that it is common and stationary, especially during winter and spring, in some parts of Sicily, but that large accessions are seen to arrive from the eastward. Mr. H. E. Dresser informs me that the bird is not uncommon at a lake called "Albufueras," near Valencia, in Spain, and is often to be bought in the market of that city. He was told by a person who lives close to the lake that it breeds there, but he knew nothing of its habits. Lord Lilford found it common at Butrinto during the first winter he passed at Corfu, but saw very few the succeeding one. Temminck states that the Red-crested Duck inhabits the countries of North-eastern Europe, and migrates periodically over the Caspian Sea to Hungary, Austria, and Turkey, less regularly to the great lakes of Switzerland, but never resorts to the shores of the Ocean: that it also visits Holland is certain; for I have myself found the bird in the flesh in our London market, among a great mass of ducks sent to us from that country. This brings us nearly home to England, where, as before stated, it has several times been killed.

"I had the pleasure," says Mr. Yarrell, "of first noticing this handsome Duck as an occasional visitor to this country in January 1826, when a male was shot near Boston while feeding in fresh water in company with some Widgeons. Though a well-known species, it had not previously been recorded to have been killed in England. During the same winter several others were obtained; more than one occurred in the London markets, and were eagerly purchased for collectors. Since then a specimen has been killed at Yarmouth, another at Colchester; and the female figured by Mr. Gould, in his 'Birds of Europe,' was killed out of a flock of eighteen on the Thames, near Erith, in Kent."