

NYROCA LEUCOPHTHALMOS.

White-eyed or Ferruginous Duck.

- Anas nyroca*, Güld. Nov. Comm. Petrop., tom. xiv. p. 403.
— *ferruginea et africana*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 522.
— *glaucion*, Pall. Zoog. Rosso-Asiat., tom. ii. p. 268.
— *leucophthalmos*, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 1009.
Nyroca leucophthalmos, Flem. Hist. of Brit. Anim., p. 121.
— *leucophthalma*, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List of Birds of Eur. & N. Amer., p. 58.
Aythya nyroca, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.
— *leucophthalmos*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 917.
Fuligula nyroca, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 201, pl. 55.
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NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous specimens of this trim little diving Duck that are to be found in the public and private collections of Great Britain, it is by no means a common bird with us; and by far the greater number of the examples alluded to have been purchased in our markets, to which they have been sent, with other wild fowl, from Holland. There is no reliable evidence of its having been procured in Scotland, although one is said to have been seen in the Edinburgh market by Sir William Jardine; and Thompson states that it has not been obtained in Ireland. Mr. Rodd does not include it in his 'Ornithology of Cornwall.' There are, however, several recorded instances of its having been killed in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and other parts of our eastern coasts; even in Western Europe it is much more scarce than in the eastern portions, such as Turkey, Southern Russia, &c.; there, however, it is abundant enough, and in Asia Minor, Persia, and some parts of India. It also frequents the greater part of North Africa. In France, Italy, Portugal and Spain it is not scarce, but it is not to be met with every time the sportsman goes out. It is in autumn and winter, and probably in those seasons only, that it is to be found in the western parts of the Continent, the same periods of the year in fact in which it usually occurs with us. On this head, Mr. J. H. Gurney, jun., writes to me thus:—"According to my experience most Nyrocas are got in Leadenhall market in November. I should say it was very rare to see an adult male, and probably never so early as the month I have named; although I have had at least eight of these Ducks, four of which were bought in English markets, I never saw but one; and in none of the foreign markets have I ever seen a really adult bird: but I have bought what is even more interesting—the nestling. I doubt if it be possible to tell young male Nyrocas from young females by the plumage alone. They present every variation of shade. Even females vary very much in plumage, but get lighter as the spring advances."

Although Temminck states that this bird occurs only accidentally and in small numbers in Holland, it is certainly thence that the greater number (both living and dead) are brought to our markets; his statement, therefore, requires some qualification.

The White-eyed Duck may be readily kept in confinement if provided with suitable ponds, such as those in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, where it not only thrives, but, I believe, has bred. It swims and dives with the greatest ease, and often remains for a long time beneath the surface. Except during its migrations, it generally flies at a low elevation, with a somewhat heavy action. The Rev. F. O. Morris states that "its food consists of the roots, buds, shoots, and seeds of various aquatic plants, insects, small frogs, the fry of fish, but rarely, according to Temminck, of the fish themselves. Its nest is built among the rushes bordering rivers, ponds, and marshes, is usually composed of the same materials, and is well supplied with down from the breast of the female as a lining. The eggs, which are nine or ten in number, are white, slightly tinged with green, and measure about two inches in length by one inch and a half in breadth. The young are taken to the water and provided with food by their mother as soon as hatched."

The following notes respecting this species by more recent writers will probably be regarded with interest.

"Although the White-eyed Duck," says Mr. Stevenson, "has been killed in many instances in Norfolk, it can only be considered a rare visitant, occurring at uncertain intervals, and generally in severe winters or during the succeeding spring months. Of recent examples I may mention the following:—

"An adult male killed at Horsey, near Yarmouth, on the 16th of April 1850, and four examples shot near Yarmouth in the remarkably cold spring of 1855; of these an adult male was killed on the 12th of February, two other birds during the first week in April, and the fourth about the same time. Of the three last, two were also males in perfect plumage. A pair shot at Dorsingham, near Lynn, in March 1868—the