

NYROCA FERINA.

Pochard.

Anas ferina, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 45.

— *rufa*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 515.

Fuligula ferina, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 193.

Nyroca ferina, Flem. Phil. of Zool., vol. ii. p. 260.

Aythya ferina, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.

— *erythrocephala*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 919.

THE Pochard, like so many other members of the *Anatidæ* or Duck tribe, must be regarded as a migrant rather than a resident species in the British Islands; for although it has been known to breed therein, the instances are but few in number, and have occurred at uncertain intervals. It is, indeed, strictly a winter visitant, arriving in autumn from, and departing again in spring to, more eastern and northern countries. The numbers which resort to Ireland are but few as compared with those that visit Scotland and England; and even here it is less abundant in the western portions of the country than it is in the eastern and southern. In Iceland it has been seldom observed, and is said to be only occasionally seen in Norway, Sweden, and Lapland. Temminck gives as its habitat "the north; tolerably common in Russia, in Denmark, and the north of Germany; appears twice a year as a migrant on the coasts of England, Holland, and France; common in autumn on the seas, the lakes, and rivers of Germany, Holland, and France." It is also found on the great lakes of Algeria; and Mr. Jerdon informs us that it occurs throughout the whole of India, in small parties, generally on the larger and more open tanks, but appears to be more abundant in the western provinces than in Bengal. North America was also included among its habitats until a very recent period; but Dr. Baird and some other ornithologists regard its American representative as distinct, and it is now known as *N. americana*.

As an article of food the Pochard ranks among the best of our winter ducks; but I imagine that its excellence in this respect depends greatly upon the nature of the food of which it has partaken for some time previous to its capture; for, like that of the celebrated Canvas-backed Duck of America (to which it is nearly allied), the flavour of its flesh is somewhat uncertain; under favourable circumstances it doubtless merits the description given of it by Mr. Walker in the 'Original,' "Its flesh is exquisitely tender and delicate, and may almost be said to melt in the mouth; but it has little of the common wild-duck flavour and is best eaten in its own gravy, which is plentiful, without either cayenne or lemon-juice."

The entire structure of the Pochard denotes that its diving-powers are of no common kind; and accordingly we find that it spends some portion of its time on the ocean diving for mollusks and other marine objects; at the same time it evinces a great partiality to rivers, broads, inland lakes, and ponds, on the borders of which it finds an abundance of those succulent grasses and roots of plants which communicate both flavour and tenderness to its pectoral muscles.

No bird is better adapted for the aviary and ornamental waters than the Pochard, and, from the tameness of its disposition and the beauty of its appearance, it is often selected for this purpose.

"Although this well-known bird," says Swainson, "truly belongs to the natural division of the *Fuligulinae* or Sea-Ducks, it is yet one of those very few which frequent fresh water in preference to salt; and it possesses, moreover, a very decided aptitude for domestication; hence, from being almost a common bird in a state of nature, and therefore easily procured, it is one of those which every gentleman may possess with advantage if his grounds contain a piece of water sufficiently large to admit of enjoyment to the bird, and where its dexterity in diving may interest and amuse the spectator. It becomes very tame in confinement; and we have Colonel Montagu's authority for saying that no bird appears sooner reconciled to the menagerie. One that was in his possession, and that had been winged, took to feeding on corn immediately, and after three years' confinement was in high health and very tame; it should nevertheless have free access to water, being unable to exert itself much on land from the backward position of its legs and the great size of its feet.

"In the British Islands it is, then, most abundant in the fens of Lincolnshire and Norfolk; but of late years the numbers have very considerably diminished, and the majority of those that are sent to the London markets, where they are often called Dun birds, are procured by shooting. Mr. Selby says that in the northern parts of England, and in Scotland, it is somewhat rare. This he attributes to the deficiency of some particular food or from those districts being out of its migratory line; we are more disposed, however,