

That the Pintail does not habitually breed in this country is certain; but Mr. John Hancock informed Mr. More that he has known it to breed spontaneously in a swamp in Northumberland, which is now drained, and he believes the bird still breeds occasionally on the Northumbrian moors.

The evidence adduced by Mr. Henry Milner and Mr. Wolley in the following extract from the last edition of Mr. Hewitson's 'Illustrations of the Eggs of British Birds,' tends to prove that the eggs of the Pintail are unusually small for the size of the bird, and, moreover, are very like those of the Long-tailed Duck (*Harelda glacialis*); hence it will be read with interest.

"A few years ago," says Mr. Wolley, "I was very much surprised at the appearance of an egg given me by a gentleman (Mr. Henry Milner), who had brought it from Iceland in 1846, and who assured me it was out of a nest from which he himself had shot a female Pintail as it rose. It seemed so small for the bird, was so different from eggs previously supposed to be genuine, and looked like what I had been accustomed to consider Long-tailed Duck's. This single egg from Iceland, I accordingly valued very highly, and looked upon it as a veritable Pintail's, though this discovery of Mr. Milner's, like all others founded upon single nests, perhaps still wanted confirmation.

"In common with some other ornithologists, I had long been almost in a state of despair about most of those Ducks which do not occasionally, at least, breed in Great Britain. It was this which, more than anything else, determined me to take a journey to the far north; and, for many reasons, the fenny regions beyond the gulf of Bothnia seemed the most promising. On the 7th of June, 1853, I was some hundred miles up the river which forms the boundary between the territories of the King of Sweden and the Czar. Stopping at a house by the water-side, I could get nothing to eat but a few eggs, among which were nine of some kind of Duck, the appearance of which was exactly like the one I have mentioned as being brought from Iceland; but, having no means of identifying them, I dropped them into the kettle without the least remorse. On the 14th of June, some hundred miles further north, in fact within half an English mile of where I am now writing (Muonioniska), after a long and fruitless search for eggs, a Duck fluttered up a few yards off. There was a rush to the spot, greatly to the peril of the nest, sunk as it was in the moss. It was lined with down, and contained four eggs. The place was marshy, a few yards from the forest, on the rise of the hill. At midnight I went again to try and obtain the bird; it was just taking a circle over the nest, and it bent its long neck down to see that all was safe. I had a good look at it, as the sun was still shining. Twelve hours afterwards I had a shot at it as it rose rather wildly; but it did not seem to be hurt, and, as I had to continue my journey, I now reluctantly took the eggs; but I hoped that the down would serve to identify them, for amongst it were several breast-feathers. In the meantime, if I could trust my eyes, the bird was a hen Pintail; the eggs were, perhaps, a week sat upon, and just like some others I had attributed to the same bird. On the 18th of June, I and my line of beaters put up the old ones from three nests at different times in the course of twenty-four hours in a large marsh. I saw two very well, one of which I examined with my glass as it stood with its neck up in an open place some sixty or seventy yards off. It was a Pintail. All the eggs were nearly hatching, and the young, of which I preserved one or two, were all of the same species. I also kept the down and scattered feathers from each nest; and now I considered I had genuine Pintail's eggs of my own taking. But the most permanent proof was still wanting—the skin of a bird I myself should obtain from the nest. It was not till last season that I got this proof. On the 20th of May, 1854, I visited the same marsh; and in a little wooded island of a few yards in circuit, a Duck rose almost under my feet, and I shot it, feeling sure it was a Pintail, as it proved to be. There were six eggs, a day or two sat upon. The nest was made of a few twigs, mixed and lined with down from the mother's breast. It is usually made of long bleached grass, or anything that comes to hand. This bird breeds generally in marshes, and not very near large pieces of water. The eggs seem to be usually six or seven in number. The Pintail is one of the earliest breeders among the Ducks. They appear as soon as the water begins to open, and may be seen standing in pairs at the edge of the ice. As soon as the Ducks are hard sitting, the Drakes go about in flocks, having apparently deserted their mates." The eggs are of a clay-colour, slightly tinged with olive, and measure about two inches in length by one inch and a half in breadth.

In Lapland Mr. Wheelwright always found the nest of the Pintail in the small willow plantations that skirt the foot of the fells. He obtained his first nest on the 4th of June.

Different as is the garb of the two sexes in winter, as shown on the accompanying Plate, soon after the female has incubated her eggs, the male throws off his finery, and assumes a dress so like that of his mate, that, except in size, the two sexes are very similar in appearance; the summer dress, however, is carried but a short time; for early in autumn the fine winter costume of the male is again assumed. Selby believed that these changes were produced by a change in the colour of the feathers, rather than by a renewal of them; but I think that this is not the case, and that the feathers are shed upon each occasion.

The Plate represents an old male, of the size of life, with a reduced figure of a female in the distance.