

congregates in immense numbers, in decoys it does not fly in such large flocks as many other Ducks, from twenty to twenty-five Teal being a considerable number. I have once known of a flock of sixty, but this is a very singular occurrence."

Unlike most other kinds of birds, all the Ducks undergo a second seasonal change, and the Teal among their number: during the spring and the early part of the summer the male is dressed in gay attire, which, after the breeding-season, is exchanged for a more sombre livery, so closely assimilating to that of the female that it is not easy to distinguish one sex from the other; this plumage is carried until late in the autumn, when it is again exchanged for the gayer dress.

The flight of the Teal is dashing and spirited; it rises directly from the water, and flies off in a straight line, or threads with vast facility through the branches of the alders and other trees growing by the sides of the little nooks and secluded places in which it is frequently flushed. Wonderfully rapid, indeed, is the flight of this bird when fairly on the wing, or when it comes sweeping round the sportsman, who may be on the *qui vive* for a shot, and who must be quick, indeed, if he wishes to bag any of the flight.

On the water the Teal is light and buoyant, swimming high above the surface, and displaying its fine plumage to the greatest advantage, particularly the beautiful buff stripe near the scapularies of the male; on the land it has none of the awkward gait of the diving-ducks, but walks with ease and comparative elegance of movement.

The Teal readily becomes semi-domesticated, and will breed in the ponds and lakes of the pleasure-ground, even in such situations as the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park. The decoys, in which the greater number sent to our markets are taken, differ much in their character; some are great open sheets of water, like Fritton in Suffolk, while others comprise a number of ponds, as at Nacton in the same county. In that first named, Mallards, Pintails, Widgeon, and Teal are often to be seen indiscriminately mingled; but at Nacton it is far otherwise: there each pond is tenanted almost exclusively by a single species, the Teal always going to the smallest and the highest up the glen—a circumstance of great advantage to the owner, G. Tomline, Esq., who, through his clever decoy-man, Skelton, can obtain a dozen Teal any morning he pleases, without disturbing the Mallards and other birds below. I shall not easily forget how much I was interested by the sight presented to me on visiting this peculiar decoy, nor Mr. Tomline's kindness in forwarding to me from time to time examples of all the Duck tribe, taken therein in their finest states of plumage, for the furtherance of the present work—an act of courtesy and liberality which I have much pleasure in here acknowledging.

"The well-known Teal," says Mr. Jerdon, "is one of the most abundant of the visitors to India. It frequents tanks and rivers, often in immense flocks. Large numbers are netted or caught in various ways to supply the Tealeries. It is strictly a night-feeding species; and about sunset immense flocks may be seen and heard flying in different directions to their feeding-grounds." In Cunningham's 'Ladakh, Physical, Statistical, and Historical,' it is mentioned that he "shot three Teal on the Saraj Dal, a small lake at the head of the river Bhága, at an altitude of 16,000 feet."

That ardent lover of nature, and excellent sportsman, St. John, speaking of the Teal as seen by him in Sutherlandshire, says it "can scarcely be called a winter bird with us, although occasionally a pair or two appear; but in spring they come in numbers to breed and rear their tiny young in the swamps and lochs. Nothing can exceed the beauty and neatness of this miniature Duck. It flies with great swiftness, rising suddenly into the air when disturbed, and dropping as quickly after a short flight. In spring the drake has a peculiar whistle; at other times the note is a loud quack. A pair of Teal, if undisturbed, will return year after year to the same pool for the purpose of breeding. Like the Wild Duck, they sometimes hatch their young a considerable distance from the water, and lead them immediately to it. In some of the mountain lakes the Teal breed in great numbers. When shooting in August, I have occasionally seen a perfect cloud of these birds rise from some grassy loch."

The eggs are of a lengthened form, measuring one inch and nine lines in length by one inch and four lines in breadth: they are of a creamy white, and eight to twelve in number. The nest is composed of grasses, pieces of flags and various kinds of herbaceous plants, and lined with down and feathers.

In North America our Teal is represented by a distinct species, the *Querquedula Carolinensis*, which much resembles it; but the males of the Transatlantic bird are easily recognized by the absence of the buff stripes on the back, and the presence of a light-coloured crescent on either side of the breast, just in front of the wing.

The accompanying Plate represents a male and a brood of young, of the size of life, with a reduced figure of a female in the distance.