

That the bird also breeds in Dorsetshire is certain, two young birds which are in the collection of W. Thompson, Esq., of Weymouth, having been shot in the Frome river, a few miles below Dorchester, in July 1867.

The Shoveller seldom, if ever, dives for its food; neither does it ramble by night over the land far away from water. Its principal nourishment consists of aquatic grasses and other succulent plants, to which is probably added small freshwater mollusks, worms, and insects, for securing which its remarkably constructed bill is admirably adapted, the edges of both mandibles being thickly beset with fine pectinated laminae, aptly compared by Wilson to a weaver's reed, by means of which the bird has the power of retaining any nutritive matters it may find, and of rejecting the mud and other substances not congenial to its stomach.

The Shoveller is subject to two very marked seasonal changes of plumage. During winter and spring its black bill, blue-green head, white breast, chestnut-coloured abdomen, blue shoulders, and black and white streaming tertiaries render him a very beautiful object, his beauty being greatly enhanced by his pale yellow pupils, seated like gems in the centre of his blue-green head; but, as soon as the female begins to incubate, those colours disappear, and, like the Mallard and the Teal, he assumes the more uniform brown colouring of the female; this garb is again thrown off in October or November, and the former one reassumed.

Mr. J. H. Gurney, Jun., has called my attention to a fact, which, indeed, had not escaped my notice, that some females are more red or chestnut-coloured on the abdomen than others, the reason of which is not well understood; it may be due to age, or to the normal change not having taken place. On reference to the accompanying Plate it will be seen that, ordinarily, the female, besides differing from her mate in having a mottled brown garb, has the eyes brown and the bill olive, while the legs and feet are, like those of the male, of a fine orange-yellow.

As a tenant for the aviary or home ponds and lakes no bird is better adapted than the Shoveller, its disposition being as tame as its plumage is ornamental. When in good condition its flesh as a viand for the table is unsurpassed by that of any of the Duck tribe; indeed so much is it prized on this account, that authors on both sides of the Atlantic bear testimony to its excellence. Selby says "it is very delicate and well-flavoured, and, in consequence, highly esteemed;" Wilson that it is uniformly juicy and well-tasted; and Audubon that "no sportsman who is a judge will ever pass by a Shoveller to shoot a Canvass-back," the excellent quality of whose flesh is proverbial. As an article of food it is therefore much sought after; and hundreds are sent from Holland to the London markets during every autumn and winter.

The Shoveller breeds in the central parts of marshy districts, the nest, which is placed on the ground, being usually formed in the tufts of coarse herbage abounding in such situations. The eggs are from ten to twelve in number, of a buffy white, with a faint tinge of green, and measure a trifle more than two inches in length by one inch and a half in breadth.

The young were formerly stated to be at first very shapeless and ugly, and the bill to be as broad as the body; but this was long since disproved by Mr. Youell, in the thirteenth volume of the 'Transactions of the Linnean Society,' and by Yarrell, who says:—"That the bill of the young Shoveller, when hatched, is not dilated laterally, I can myself answer. During the summer of 1841 a pair of Shovellers made a nest and brought out their young on one of the islands in the Gardens of the Zoological Society. The bills of these ducklings were as narrow and the sides as parallel as the bills of some Gadwalls which were hatched at the same time on another island in the same piece of water."

The Plate represents two males and a female, of the natural size. The plant is the Marsh Marygold (*Caltha palustris*).