

SPATULA CLYPEATA.

Shoveller Duck.

- Anas clypeata*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 42.
—— *rubens*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 519.
Spatula clypeata, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 564.
Rhynchaspis clypeata, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 115, pl. 48.
Spathulea clypeata, Flem. Hist. of Brit. Anim., p. 123.
Clypeata macrorhynchus, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., p. 876.
—— *platyrhynchus*, Brehm, ibid., p. 877.
—— *pomarina*, Brehm, ibid., p. 878.
—— *brachyrhynchus*, Brehm, ibid., p. 879.
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ALTHOUGH not very numerous at any time either in England, Scotland, or Ireland, we have abundant evidence of the occurrence of the Shoveller Duck, both in summer and winter, in all the three countries. It is especially partial to meres, ponds, and shallow waters, such as are seen in Holland, Belgium, and elsewhere, and, in India, to tanks and reservoirs; indeed it appears to have an instinctive knowledge of countries, however distant, that are subject to heavy rains, as an evidence of which, I may mention that I saw our Shoveller in the southern parts of Australia during the rainy season of 1839, when nearly the whole of the grassy flats were covered with water, and shot at a pair that rose before me on the shallow lagoons at Segenoe, in New South Wales, but did not succeed in killing either. The late Mr. Coxen, of Yarrundi, obtained a fine male, the skin of which I examined, and am therefore certain as to the identity of the species; unfortunately it was so much mutilated by rats a few days after, that it was not worth preserving, or I should have brought it with me on my return to England. Since that period I have never seen an Australian specimen, neither have I been favoured with a sight of one from Java or any of the adjacent islands; but that it does visit those important countries, and also Borneo and the Philippines, is more than probable, since it is a common bird in India and China, and, according to Temminck, is as numerous in Japan as it is in any portion of Europe, over the whole of which, except in the extreme north, it has been observed; it is also found in Africa, and extends its range over the northern portions of America, specimens having been received by me from as far south as Guatemala; at the same time it appears to be less numerous in the New than it is in the Old World. By some of our earlier writers the Shoveller was regarded as a winter visitant only to our islands; but the following extracts from the works of more recent authorities will show that it very frequently breeds therein:—

Mr. Hewitson tells us that “Mr. John Hancock has the nest and eggs of the Shoveller, which were found upon Prestwick Carr, a piece of waste ground of considerable extent near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, covered with heath and furze, boggy and intersected with drains, and having a piece of water near its centre. From thence towards the end of May, a nest was brought to him containing nine eggs; it was composed of grass, mixed with the down of the bird, and was placed in the centre of a furze bush, by which it was sheltered. Two or three weeks after this a second nest was found, at a short distance from the spot from which the other had been taken: it was constructed of the same materials, was similarly situated, and contained ten eggs; these were quite fresh, and led to the supposition that they belonged to the same bird which had been previously deprived of its eggs.

“I have likewise received the eggs of the Shoveller from Norfolk, from Mr. Salmon, taken on the 10th of May from a nest which was placed amongst a quantity of green rushes, but without the profusion of feathers so generally observed in the nests of this tribe of birds, there being barely a sufficient quantity of dry grass to keep the eggs from the bare sand; it was much exposed, and contained eight eggs, which were within a few days of hatching.

“The Messrs. Paget state that the Shoveller is occasionally not at all uncommon in Norfolk, and that several nests, containing altogether fifty-six eggs, were found, during one summer, in Winterton Marshes.

“Mr. Charles St. John has found the eggs of this species on the banks of Loch Spynie, in Morayshire; and Mr. Henry Milner tells me that it breeds on the Hornsea Mere, in Yorkshire. The eggs differ considerably in size.”

Further evidence of the bird's breeding in Norfolk is contained in the following note, obligingly forwarded to me by Lord Walsingham, from Merton Hall, Thetford, on the 24th of June, 1869:—“You may perhaps care to know that not less than eight or ten pairs of Shovellers are in the habit of breeding here every year; this summer we gave away two sittings of eggs to a neighbour, who was anxious to rear some.”