

CASARCA RUTILA.

Ruddy Sheldrake.

Anas rutila, Pall. Nov. Comm. Petrop., tom. xiv. p. 579, tab. 22. fig. 1.

— *casarca*, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat., tom. i. p. 511.

Tadorna rutila, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 563.

Vulpanser rutila, Keys. und Blas. Wirbelth. Eur., p. 84.

Tadorna casarca, Macgill. Man. of Nat. Hist., Orn., vol. ii. p. 163.

Casarca rutila, Bonap. Geog. and Comp. List. of Birds of Eur. and N. Amer., p. 56.

FROM the circumstance of the trivial name of this species being "Ruddy Sheldrake" it would naturally be supposed that it is closely allied to the bird figured in the preceding plate, the *Tadorna vulpanser*; and to a certain extent it is; but, as every ornithologist is aware, the two birds have been generically separated. The Common Sheldrake is one of the most ornamental of our water-fowl, graceful in its actions, beautiful in its markings, and domestic in disposition—traits which render it an especial favourite; the Ruddy Sheldrake, on the other hand, although a finely coloured bird, and by no means devoid of beauty, is more *Anserine* or Goose-like in its actions and economy, and is more adapted for the land than the water, on which element it is less graceful and buoyant; its bill and legs, too, are coarse and black—instead of being richly coloured, like those of the Common Sheldrake.

The *Casarca rutila*, unlike the *Tadorna vulpanser* (which is indigenous to our islands), is merely a visitor, and one of the rarest birds so classified in our lists, its occurrences here being few and at periods far apart. The first British specimen is said to have been killed as long ago as 1776, and to still form a part of the collection at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The late Mr. Fox, of Durham, appears to have been the first to notice it as British, from the example above alluded to, which previously belonged to Marmaduke Tunstal, and which was believed to have been shot at Bryanstone, near Blandford, in Dorsetshire. Yarrell states that two other specimens have since been killed—one in the south of England, now in the collection of the late Mr. Selby, and the other in January 1834, at Iken, near Orford, on the coast of Suffolk, which passed into the possession of Mr. Manning, of Woodbridge. Thompson, in his 'Natural History of Ireland,' states that an example of this species was shot "on the Murrough of Wicklow, by Mr. John Moreton of that town, on the 7th of July, 1847. The Murrough is an extensive low sandy tract bordering the sea, such as is resorted to by the Common Sheldrake (*T. vulpanser*) for the purpose of breeding." "On the next day," adds Thompson, "the specimen came into the possession of T. W. Warren, Esq. Its plumage indicates a male, nearly adult." Besides the above, the Rev. F. O. Morris speaks of another as having been obtained on Sanday Island, one of the Orkneys, by Mr. Strang, in October 1831.

The range of the Ruddy Sheldrake over the surface of the globe appears to be almost as extensive as that of the Common Sheldrake; for it is found in most of the warmer parts of Europe and, I believe, the whole of Africa, from the Cape of Good Hope to the Mediterranean, and, like most other species which frequent the latter part of that continent, Palestine, the Holy Land, Asia Minor, and Persia; it is also one of the commonest species of Ducks in the peninsula of India, in Thibet, China, Formosa, and Japan. The justly celebrated Russian naturalist, Pallas, states that it does not extend beyond 50° N. lat., and that in Mongolia, where it breeds in Marmot-holes and hollow trees, it is held sacred by the Mongols and Calmucks. Dr. Hooker observed it breeding in the rocks of the Himalayas, and Dr. Adams in Sikhim and Ladakh. The following extracts will show that the bird has many habits in common with the Sheldrake, particularly that of breeding in holes; like that species, too, it is said to be almost unfit for human food:—

Mr. W. H. Simpson, in his 'Fortnight on the Dobrudscha,' says, "The earth-cliffs about Kustendjé" (the eastern terminus of the Danube and Black-Sea Railway) "are much resorted to by birds for breeding, from the facility with which they are perforated. The Ruddy Shelduck breeds in these places, and also in the holes of Trajan's Wall, and in other holes up the country. Though the bird is plentiful, it is by no means easy to obtain the eggs. I and my friend spent the greater part of the day in driving a tunnel into a bank where one had been seen to come out. But our labour was in vain; for, after advancing several yards, working one at a time, prostrate and in the dark, the original hole was found to fork off into two branches. The natives sometimes obtain a sitting, and the young ones are brought up for domestic purposes."—*Ibis*, 1861, p. 365.

"Hundreds of these birds," says the Rev. H. B. Tristram, in his 'Notes on the Ornithology of North Africa,' "resort to the salt lakes of Bou Guizoun, Waregla, Tuggurt, &c. At Bou Guizoun I captured some half-dozen nestlings of various ages in the downy state, some of them scarcely more than a day old; and yet the only place where they could possibly have bred, and where we had procured a nest three days