

BERNICLA BRENTA.

Brent Goose.

Anas bernicla, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 40.

Anser bernicla, Ill. Prod. Syst. Mamm. et Av., p. 277.

—— *torquatus*, Frisch, Vög. Deutschl., tom. ii. p. 156.

—— *brenta*, Leach, Syst. Cat. of Indig. Mamm. and Birds in Brit. Mus., p. 37.

Bernicla torquata, Boie, Isis, 1822, p. 363.

—— *melanopsis*, Macgill. Man. of Nat. Hist., Orn., vol. ii. p. 151.

—— *brenta*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xii. p. 46.

To see this species in a state of nature, the ornithologist must go down, during November and the three following months, to the embouchure of the Thames, visit the inland waters of Southampton, the low salt marshes of the coasts of Sussex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, or any locality of a similar character in other parts of England, in Scotland, and in Ireland. Companies of forty, fifty, or sixty individuals will there attract his attention as they wing their way from one part of the flat shallow estuary to another; or he may have an opportunity of seeing flights of hundreds or, speaking within bounds, of thousands; yet the London excursionist to Herne Bay, Margate, or Ramsgate will never see one, for the simple reason that, at the period of the year when those places are resorted to, the bird is far away, performing the duties of incubation in countries so distant that, with few exceptions, the hardest of our mariners and the most enthusiastic of egg-collectors have failed to reach its breeding-home—a long distance within the Arctic circle being, doubtless, the principal cradle of this common winter-bird with us. In the eastern parts of America it is as numerous in winter as in our islands, and equally scarce at other times, but, according to Dr. Baird, of Washington, has not yet been found on the Pacific side of that continent.

During the summer months, the Brent Goose is to be met with at the Faroe Islands, and in Iceland, where, according to Faber, it arrives about the middle of April, but seems to be rare, as it is only met with occasionally here and there throughout the island. Dr. Richardson states that it breeds in numbers on the coasts and islands of Hudson's Bay and the Arctic Sea, but is rarely seen in the interior. Captain James C. Ross says that it did not remain near Felix Harbour, Boothia, to breed, but went still further north, and that it is to be met with in summer in the highest northern latitudes that have been visited. It was found breeding on Parry's Islands, in lat. $74^{\circ} 75'$. In Parry's Expedition, on the 16th of June, a nest with two eggs was brought on board from Ross Islet, lat. $80^{\circ} 48' N.$, perhaps the most northern land ever visited by man. It was at the same time seen in large flocks about Walden and Little Table Islands. Mr. Newton informs us that it is numerous all round Spitsbergen, except perhaps on the east side, and that "Dr. Malmgren found it breeding on the Dépôt Holm and also on the shores of the mainland, in Treurenberg Bay; Messrs. Evans and Sturge found it breeding on the South-Cape Islands; and one of our party killed a young bird, hardly able to fly, on Round Island." That the bird is confined to the northern regions there can be no doubt; and it would seem that the Mediterranean is the limit of its occurrence in a southern direction, since Loche states that it only occasionally appears in Algeria.

Let us return to our islands. "Upon the Northumbrian coast," says Mr. Selby, "a very large number of these birds annually resort to the extensive muddy and sandy flats that lie between the mainland and Holy Island, and which are covered by every flow of the tide. In this locality, tolerable-sized flocks usually make their appearance in the early part of October, which are increased by the repeated arrival of others till the beginning of November, at which time the equatorial movement of the species in this latitude seems to be completed. This part of the coast appears to have been a favourite resort of these birds from time immemorial, where they have always received the name of *Ware Geese*, given to them, without doubt, in consequence of their food consisting entirely of marine vegetables. This I have frequently verified by dissection, finding the gizzard filled with the leaves and stems of a species of grass that grows abundantly in the shallow pools left by the tide, and with the remains of the fronds of the different algæ, particularly of one, which seems to be the Laver (*Ulva latissima*). These were mixed with a considerable quantity of sharp sand, but without any portion of animal or shelly matter, although Wilson states they feed occasionally upon small univalve and bivalve mollusca. In this haunt they remain until the end of February, when they migrate in successive flocks as the individuals happen to be influenced by the season; and before April the whole have disappeared. When they depart, the flock about to migrate rises high into the air by an extensive spiral course, and then moves