

ANSER ALBIFRONS.

White-fronted Goose.

Anas albifrons, Gmel. edit. Linn. Syst. Nat. tom. i. p. 509.

Anser albifrons, Bechst. Naturg. Deutschl., tom. iv. p. 898.

THE White-fronted Goose is a regular winter visitor to the British Islands. It is supposed to come from the north; but from what particular regions is not known with certainty. Mr. Newton has confirmed Faber's observations that at least a few summer in Iceland, by stating that on the 11th of May 1858 he saw several freshly killed examples at Reykjavik, in that country; Reinhardt includes it in the birds of Greenland. Lapland is also said to be frequented by it: but this is certainly not the case; for Mr. Wolley remarks that the only White-fronted Goose he met with in that country was the small species which Mr. Newton believes to be true *Anas* (*Anser*) *erythropus* of Linnæus, and for which the Laps have a name, while they have none for *A. albifrons*; he was also of opinion that Nilsson is in error in assigning it a place in the Fauna of Sweden, and in stating that it is the common Fell Goose of that country. As regards Norway, however, Messrs. F. and P. Godman affirm that they frequently saw flocks of from seven to ten feeding in the pools and creeks of the marsh near Bodo, in Norway, from which they all departed towards the end of May; but those gentlemen make no mention of *A. erythropus*, and possibly the birds they saw belonged to that species.

Sir John Richardson states that in spring White-fronted Geese pass through the interior of the fur-countries of America in large flocks to their breeding-places in the woody districts skirting the Mackenzie, to the north of the sixty-seventh parallel, and also the islands of the Arctic Sea; but whether his remarks have reference to our bird or the American, which is now regarded as different, and named *Anser Gambeli*, is a question I cannot determine. Their migration southwards commences in September; and their return to the fur-districts is often the first indication of winter having begun within the Arctic Circle. In England the *A. albifrons* arrives in September and October, occasionally appearing in very large flocks, and departs again in March and April to its breeding-haunts. In like manner, and at the same periods, it is very generally dispersed over the southern portions of the European continent; and there also similar movements take place. Temminck states that it is very common in Holland during its autumnal migration, but is less numerous in Germany and the interior of France. Lord Lilford found it to be common in winter in Epirus and continental Greece. The Russian naturalist Ménétriés says that, at the same period it appears in considerable flocks in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea, particularly near Bakou and the neighbouring lakes, where it passes the winter, and departs towards the end of February. Dr. Leith Adams states that it is the most common Goose on the Nile, and is usually seen in vast flocks at daybreak, returning to the shallows from feeding all night in the wheat-fields, but decreases southwards, and is rarely seen beyond the marsh at Edfoo. The same gentleman elsewhere states that this bird is a winter visitant to the lakes and rivers of the Punjab. In China, according to Mr. Swinhoe, it forms part of the wild fowl procurable in the markets of Shanghai and Tientsin; and he has also met with it between Takoo and Peking in North China; and, lastly, Temminck affirms that examples from Japan are exactly like our own birds.

I have been favoured by several kind friends with some fine examples of this Goose for the futherance of this work. The Earl of Enniskillen sent me a pair from Ireland; and the Earl of Ducie, besides kindly obtaining permission from Lord Fitzhardinge for examples to be forwarded to me from his Lordship's estate in Gloucestershire, transmitted the following note:—"When you are writing on the Wild Geese, you ought to hear something of those frequenting the Severn, and their habits on the alluvial flats belonging to Lord Fitzhardinge. The spot is about ten miles from here (Tortworth Court, Wotton-under-Edge). There the Geese are regularly preserved, and the shooting of them affords great sport. I have been out the only two days of shooting this year, and on each day we killed nine. They are first found feeding on the grass, and about noon are driven over towards the guns, which are posted between them and the Severn. They then betake themselves to the mud flats, and when hungry attempt to get to the grass-meadows again. By this time the guns are posted under hedges at right angles to their probable line of flight; and as they come over, in flocks of varying size, shots are fired with long guns at from forty to seventy yards distance. The whole system is, I believe, unique in this country. The Geese arrive about the 23rd or 25th of September, are never known to be two days later, and generally leave again about the end of November. The White-fronted are not so numerous as the Pink-footed, but are increasing in number."

As a bird for the table the present species is perhaps one of the best of the wild geese; and there are few