

our native birds should form a conspicuous feature in the present work ; and I think that, so far as the marsh-birds are concerned, this intention has been fully carried out in my plates of the Coot, the Moorhen, and the Water-Rail. I have ever regarded these newly hatched creatures with great interest. At first the old birds attend them assiduously in the daytime, and shelter them under their wings during the night ; but, from the hour they are hatched, the nestlings are endowed with the requisite power for gaining their own subsistence, and they grow so rapidly that a few days only elapse before the downy covering is thrown off, and stub feathers appear, as shown in my figures of the young Land-Rails. The development of these feathers progresses with rapidity, and nature perfects a structure adapted for performing a distant migration in a surprisingly short space of time. How wonderful is all this ! June has probably far advanced before the eight or ten eggs of the Spotted Rail are deposited, and July fairly commenced before their young see the light of day ; and yet in two months' time they are performing what we must consider a perilous journey over extensive seas, with instinct alone for a guide as to the route they are to pursue ; and thus we see that the little balls of black glistening down, represented in the accompanying Plate, are converted into an aerial form in a few weeks.

The range of the *Porzana maruetta* is most extensive ; for not only is it an inhabitant of every part of Europe suited to its mode of life, but it is also found over the greater part of Africa, Persia, and India : in most if not all these countries it is a migrant, visiting the temperate and northern ones in summer, and the southern at the opposite season.

The flight of the Spotted Crake is of the same heavy and laboured character as that of the Land-Rail. When compelled to take wing, it rises with its legs hanging behind it, and merely passes over the tops of the reeds to some place of security a short distance off. On the other hand, it runs with great celerity, and threads the tangled herbage with the ease and facility shown by the Water-Rail. It swims in like manner ; and in case any of my readers should consider that I am incorrect in figuring the young on the surface of the water, I may mention that, if they do not habitually, they very frequently, take to that element the hour they are excluded from the shell, and, like young Moorhens, run over the floating leaves, and scramble down the fallen rushes, at one moment swimming, at the next catching insects from the surface or the underside of the aquatic plants forming part of the herbage among which they are dwelling. Broods of Spotted Crakes have doubtless been reared in the middle of a marsh, and under these circumstances may not be able to get to the water for some days.

Mr. Selby states that the flesh of the Spotted Crake is sweet and well-flavoured, and that in autumn the bird has a layer of fat, nearly a quarter of an inch in thickness, over the whole surface of the body ; and I have myself seen fully fledged young birds so fat, that in hot weather they almost melted in the hand : could they be procured in any number, they would doubtless be much sought after as a *bonne bouche* for the epicure.

The Plate represents a male and a female, with a brood of young about two days old, of the size of life. The plant is the *Ranunculus fluiatilis*. I am indebted to Edward Cock, Esq., of Lydd in Kent, for the very fine example from which my principal figure was taken.