

early part of October, a friend of mine bagged 10½ couple in one day to his own gun. A very curious and most unusual pied variety of this bird was killed recently at Lingwood, in this county."

The following description of the nest of this species was published by Mr. John Smith, of Yarmouth, in the 'Annals of Natural History,' vol. ii. p. 78:—The bird had selected for her nest a thick tuft of long grass, hollow at the bottom, on the side of the reed-pond; the nest, about an inch and a half thick, was composed of withered leaves and rushes; it was so covered by the top of the grass, that neither bird, nest, nor eggs could be seen; the entrance to and from the nest was through an aperture of the grass directly into the reeds opposite, where any one could stand to see the nest. The lengths of the eggs, on an average, were one inch and a half, some near a tenth more, others near a tenth less; weight seven drachms; colour light cream, thickly spotted at the larger ends with bright rusty red intermixed with sunk faint lilac spots, thinly and finely spotted at the lesser ends with the same colours, with a blush of pink over the whole egg, but more towards the lesser ends; the yelk a bright blood-red, brighter than that of any egg I ever opened; and I think that the pink tint of the shell is owing to the redness of the yelk, for after emptying the eggs it was hardly perceptible. On the 20th of June I found another nest in the same reed-pond, built among the reeds, and very near the water. On the 10th of July I obtained a third nest from the same place, of eleven eggs, within two or three days of hatching, the nest and situation much like the last."

I am indebted to Mr. H. Smither, of Churt, for the examples of the young figured in my Plate, and which he informs me were taken from the edge of Frencham ponds, the nest in which they were placed being in a sedgetolt, as they are there called, a tall mass of sedge, sometimes two or three feet high, surrounded with water.

When moving about in security in search of food, the Water-Rail often flirts up its tail, and exposes the large creamy-white under-coverts; it swims and dives with readiness, and occasionally runs over the surface of the water, supported by the floating herbage, for traversing which its widely expanding feet are well adapted. Worms, slugs, insects, shelled mollusks, and the leaves and seeds of certain aquatic plants are doubtless the principal articles of its diet; but that it partakes of many other things is certain. Mr. Bond informs me that a friend of his, who had some Water-Rails cooked Snipe-fashion (that is, with their trails in them), when they came to table, found a small Shrew-mouse in one of them. In this habit of feeding occasionally on small animals the Water-Rail assimilates to the Moorhen, which, on reference to my account of that species, will be found to live upon birds, animals, and many other objects it is not supposed to eat. A Water-Rail kept alive by Mr. Selby for some time was fed entirely upon earth-worms, upon which it continued to thrive until an accident deprived it of life; and that it will readily live in confinement is further proved by an example which has been in the Gardens of the Zoological Society for a considerable period.

Upper surface, secondaries nearest the body and tail olive-brown, streaked with blackish brown down the middle of each feather; spurious wing, primaries, and outermost secondaries dusky olive-brown; chin greyish white; neck and breast dull greyish blue; abdomen and inner part of the thighs cream-coloured; larger wing-coverts and flanks barred with black and white; under tail-coverts creamy white, the smaller feathers barred with black; irides reddish brown; upper mandible olive, lower mandible and gape bright red; legs light reddish brown, toes somewhat darker.

The Plate represents a male and female, and a brood of young ones two or three days old, all of the natural size.