

as far south as the Cape of Good Hope. It is an inhabitant of the salt lakes of Tartary and the shores of the Caspian Sea; and Mr. Swinhoe observed it both in Formosa and China, in which latter country he saw it on the banks of the Peiho in November, and frequently met with it in the market at Tientsin; it also occurs in Lower Bengal and other parts of India.

The genus to which this bird belongs is very limited in the number of its members, only four species being known; these are the European *Recurvirostra Avocetta*, the *R. americana* of North America, the *R. rubicollis* of Australia, and the *R. occidentalis*, if the bird so called be not identical with *R. americana*.

Latham states that the Avocet is said to feed on "worms and insects collected from the mud, chiefly *Cancer pulex* and *Locusta* (the sea-flea and locust)," and that it is "often seen to wade far into the water; it will also occasionally swim, but always close to the shore, is very bold in defence of its young, and, when disturbed in the breeding-season, hovers over the sportsman's head like a Lapwing, and flies with its legs extended. Its note is sharp, and resembles the word *twit* twice or oftener repeated; hence it has received the trivial name of Yelper. Its actions and the form of its bill have also obtained for it in some counties the names of Butter-flip, Scooper, Picarini, Crooked-bill, and Cobbler's Awl."

"At the beginning of this century," says the Rev. Mr. Lubbock in his Observations on the Fauna of Norfolk, "the Avocet used to breed constantly and in considerable numbers at Horsey, but has not done so of late years. On the authority of an old and respectable fen-man, it bred regularly forty years ago near the Seven-mile House, on the North River; occurs still sometimes upon Breydon. The last I know of, positively, in the fens was a small flock which visited Sutton Broad in 1828. Avocets used formerly to breed at Salthouse, near Holt, but are extinct there. The provincial name is 'Shoeing-Horn.'"

Mr. Yarrell states that "some years ago I was told that more than twenty specimens were received at Leadenhall Market for sale within one month, but now scarcely an example appears once a year; the last I heard of was in the spring of 1837."

After mentioning that Avocets are occasionally, but rarely, met with in the north of England or in Scotland, Mr. Selby says, "They assemble in small flocks, and frequent oozy and muddy shores, particularly those of the mouths of rivers, where they obtain a plentiful supply of food, consisting of small worms, marine insects, and young univalve and bivalve Mollusca. Their mode of feeding is by scooping, or in appearance beating the soft mud with their flat and upturned bill; and when thus engaged, they frequently wade up to their breasts in the pools left by the receding tide. They are never seen to swim voluntarily, although furnished with feet so extensively palmated as to constitute an admirable provision for enabling them to traverse the soft and yielding substance in which they find their food. Their legs also are formed for wading, being laterally compressed and thin, and thus offering the least possible resistance to their progress through the water. They are quick and active birds; and their flight, from the form and dimensions of their wings, is powerful and rapid. In spring they resort to those marine marshes which are only occasionally or partially covered by the tide, and select the driest part for the purpose of nidification. If disturbed at this season, particularly when the young are first excluded, they fly round in repeated circles, uttering at the same time without intermission their peculiar cry, which resembles the word *twit* twice repeated."

The eggs (which are said to be deposited in a small depression of the surface in the drier part of the marsh, either on the bare ground or on a small quantity of dry grass) are two and sometimes three in number, of an ochreous brown, spotted and speckled with black, some of the spots appearing as if beneath the surface of the shell; they are about two inches in length by one inch and a half in breadth. "Some specimens," says Mr. Hewitson, "are larger and more irregularly and closely covered with unequal blotches of colour, a good deal like those of the Peewit, from which they may always be distinguished by the greater quantity of ochreous yellow in the ground-colour."

The sexes present little, if any, difference in the colouring of their plumage; neither am I aware that the bird is subject to any seasonal change; having attained their full dress, they are ever after distinguished by their black and white livery.

The young, until they are clothed with feathers, closely resemble the young of the Summer Snipe (*Actitis hypoleucos*). It will be seen by the accompanying drawing, that at this early period their legs and toes are very similar to those of the adult in colour, except that they are tinged with green; they are, however, disproportionately large, and very tumid at the joints.

Crown, occiput, nape, back of the neck, scapularies, lesser wing-coverts, and primaries black; the remainder of the plumage pure white; beak black; irides reddish brown; legs and toes pale blue; webs dark brown; nails black.

The young at about three weeks old, when they are beginning to assume their stub-feathers, have a dark line before and behind the eye, and the upper surface of a pale creamy brown, crossed by irregular bars of dark brown, and a wash of rufous on the scapularies; some of the more elongated feathers are said to retain a reddish-brown tint on their ends until the autumn moult of the bird's second year of existence.

The Plate represents an adult and two young birds about three weeks old, of the natural size.